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THE DRINK QUESTION
IN IRELAND
1856-1901

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Elizabeth Malcolm

This thesis is a study of political, religious and social aspects of drink and temperance in Ireland in the second half of the nineteenth century. It seeks to examine the revival of the temperance movement after the collapse of Fr Mathew's crusade in the 1840s and also the work of temperance organisations in parliament and the various churches from about 1870.

The first two chapters examine the development of the drink industry and changes in temperance ideology during the course of the century, as a necessary background and context for the later chapters. Drink consumption, especially the consumption of spirits, declined during the period and the government achieved considerable success in both suppressing the illegal industry and regulating the legal one. The temperance movement took an active part in this endeavour. In the 1830s middle-class protestants led a campaign to stop spirit drinking, while in the 1840s Fr Mathew engaged the catholic masses in a crusade against all forms of alcohol. But the apparent failure of these voluntary efforts convinced the Irish temperance movement of the need for legislatively enforced controls, if not for outright prohibition.

The third and fourth chapters of this thesis examine the efforts of temperance societies from the 1860s to secure such legislation. Some important successes were achieved, especially in the 1870s, but the major goals of local option, total Sunday closing and ultimately of prohibition were not realised. Though Ulster unionist M.P.s vigorously supported such legislation, the tories in England were generally hostile. The home rule party, as it forged an alliance with the drink trade in the 1880s, also became increasingly hostile. Nor were the liberals, given their preoccupation with home rule, able to satisfy the Irish temperance movement, though in the English context they became identified with the temperance cause.

Within the Irish churches there was a revival of interest in the temperance issue from the 1870s, with most of the protestant churches, especially in Ulster, adopting total abstinence as a goal. The catholic church remained divided on the issue, however. The hierarchy tended to pursue a moderate course, upholding temperance and only advocating total abstinence in certain specific instances. But with the establishment of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart in the 1890s, a new catholic total abstinence crusade was launched which was to rival the success of Fr Mathew's crusade of the 1840s. Most previous temperance organisations had spurned or reacted suspiciously to efforts to ally temperance with Irish nationalism. Even the alliance between O'Connell's repeal campaign and Fr Mathew's crusade had been an uneasy one at best. But the pioneers joined the Gaelic revival with enthusiasm, encouraged by their leader Fr James Cullen. Thus by the end of the century the temperance movement had, for the first time, entered into the mainstream of catholic and nationalist life in Ireland.

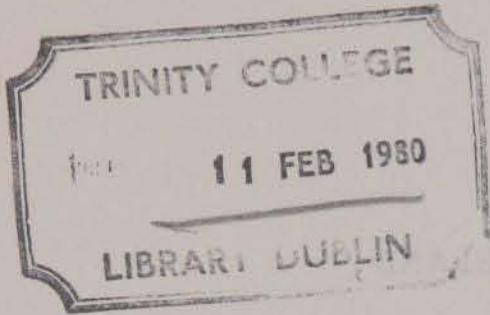
THE DRINK QUESTION IN IRELAND,

1856-1901

by

Elizabeth Letitia Malcolm, M.A.

A thesis submitted for a degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
University of Dublin
1979



THESIS

190

DECLARATION

This thesis has been researched and written under the direction of Dr T.W. Moody of Trinity College, Dublin. It has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and is completely my own work.

Elizabeth Malcolm

August 1979

Elizabeth Malcolm

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Declaration	i
Abbreviations and footnotes	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Preface	v
 Chapter I DRINK IN IRELAND AND THE ORIGINS OF TEMPERANCE	
i) The drink industry: brewing and distilling	1
ii) Licensing laws and the retail drink trade	30
iii) Rural and urban drinking customs and habits	73
iv) Origins of the temperance movement up to 1830	129
 Chapter II THE CASE AGAINST DRINK: PERSONALITIES AND PRINCIPLES	
i) The anti-spirits movement of the 1830s	156
ii) Total abstinence in the 1830s and Dr John Edgar	188
iii) Fr Mathew: mass temperance and Irish nationalism	201
iv) James Haughton: the road to prohibition	216
v) T.W. Russell: the retreat from prohibition	235
vi) Fr Michael Kelly and the catholic temperance movement of the 1880s and 1890s	251
 Chapter III AFTER FR MATHEW: THE TEMPERANCE REVIVAL OF THE 1850s AND 1860s	
i) The catholic church and Fr Mathew's disciples	274
ii) Temperance in Ulster: the Irish Temperance League	300
iii) The legislative campaign of the 1860s	325
 Chapter IV TEMPERANCE IN PARLIAMENT AFTER 1870	
i) The fight for Sunday closing, 1870-78	348
ii) Temperance and the liberal government, 1880-85	409
iii) Temperance and the home rule party	430
iv) Temperance in decline from 1885	437
 Chapter V TEMPERANCE AND THE CHURCHES AFTER 1870	
i) Temperance and the protestant churches	456
ii) Temperance and the catholic church	489
iii) Fr James Cullen and the pioneers	511
 Chapter VI CONCLUSION	536
 Appendices	
i) Spirit and beer consumption in nineteenth-century Ireland	550
ii) Irish liquor licences	551
iii) Liquor retailers, 1820-1900	553
iv) Major Irish temperance societies, 1829-1901	554
 Bibliography	556
 Map	
T.W. Russell's travels, December 1865-June 1866	318

ABBREVIATIONS

C.I.T.S.	Church of Ireland Temperance Society
D.M.P.	Dublin Metropolitan Police
D.T.A.S.	Dublin Total Abstinence Society
D.T.S.	Dublin Temperance Society
<u>F.J.</u>	<u>Freeman's Journal</u>
H.T.S.	Hibernian Temperance Society
I.A.P.I.	Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance
<u>I.E.R.</u>	<u>Irish Ecclesiastical Record</u>
I.P.B.A.	Irish Permissive Bill Association
I.S.C.A.	Irish Sunday Closing Association
<u>I.T.</u>	<u>Irish Times</u>
I.T.L.	Irish Temperance League
<u>I.T.L.J.</u>	<u>Irish Temperance League Journal</u>
<u>I.T.S.</u>	<u>Irish Temperance Star</u>
L.G.V.A.	Licensed Grocers and Vintners Association
R.I.C.	Royal Irish Constabulary
<u>T.V.</u>	<u>Temperance Visitor</u>
U.T.S.	Ulster Temperance Society

FOOTNOTES

As far as possible all footnotes in this thesis follow the system set out in T.W. Moody, 'Irish Historical Studies': rules for contributors (2nd rev. ed., Dublin, 1975).

In quotations, where necessary for clarity, the spelling and punctuation have been modernised.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For their advice and encouragement, I would like to thank Dr T.W. Moody of Trinity College, Dublin, who supervised the writing of this thesis, and Professor Patrick O'Farrell of the University of New South Wales, Sydney, who suggested the topic. Also thanks are due to the members of Dr Moody's graduate seminar group in 1975-7, especially Dr W.E. Vaughan, Dr W.J. Lowe, Dr Brian M. Walker, Dr Jacqueline Hill and Dr R.V. Comerford, all of whom provided me with valuable information from their own researches.

PREFACE

This study was begun in Australia in 1972 under the guidance of Professor Patrick O'Farrell, and was conducted on a part-time basis for two years. At that stage, it was intended to be an examination of the catholic temperance movement in Ireland during the 1880s and 1890s. The starting point for the research was the collection of notes and newspaper clippings dealing with the anti-drink movement in Ireland, held in the archives of St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney. This had been compiled by Michael Kelly, archbishop of Sydney from 1911 to 1940. Kelly, as chapters II and V show, was an important publicist for total abstinence within the catholic church. In a series of articles, published in 1889 and 1891, just before he left Ireland, he laid the doctrinal, historical and organisational bases for a purely catholic teetotal movement. As so frequently happens, however, the study quickly exceeded its original bounds. It became obvious that there was a significant temperance movement during this period outside the catholic church and that this was equally worthy of detailed examination. The protestant churches, especially in Ulster, had had vigorous temperance societies since at least the 1870s, while there were also large secular societies, some dating back to the 1850s. These latter were mainly committed to the struggle for temperance legislation, which began in the 1860s. In 1975 I started full-time research on this topic in Dublin under the supervision of Dr T.W. Moody. There the events setting the limits to the study were finally fixed as the death of Fr Mathew in 1856 and the establishment of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart in 1898-1901.

Within this period I have sought essentially to examine the revival of the temperance movement after the collapse of Fr Mathew's crusade and its work both in parliament and in the various churches. The campaign for legislation is dealt with in chapters III and IV, while the church-based temperance organisations are examined in chapter V. This study of the temperance movement from 1856 to 1901 has, however, to be placed in the context of developments in the drink industry and of changes in temperance ideology. The first two chapters deal with these issues.

Chapter I outlines significant developments in the production, retailing and consumption of drink, many of which had an impact on the course of the temperance movement. In discussing the decline in spirit consumption and the increase in beer consumption in the latter half of the century, I have relied heavily on three studies: E.B. McGuire, Irish whiskey (Dublin and New York, 1973), Patrick Lynch and John Vaizey, Guinness's brewery in the Irish economy, 1759-1876 (Cambridge, 1960) and G.B. Wilson, Alcohol and the nation (London, 1940). Wilson charts general trends in the production and consumption of drink in the United Kingdom and provides much valuable statistical data; McGuire's detailed account of the Irish distilling industry and the laws regulating it is especially useful; unfortunately brewing has not been as well served, for Lynch and Vaizey only deal with one brewery, albeit the biggest, and their study stops at 1876, the promised second volume not having yet materialised. Retail licensing is probably an even more complex subject than production, but an important one, as the temperance movement believed, with some justification, that shortcomings in the laws regulating the sale

of drink generated many abuses. It thus campaigned assiduously for law reform and frequently challenged the issuing of licences in the courts. There are several handy guides to the nineteenth-century liquor laws, most notably Andrew Reed, The liquor licensing laws of Ireland (Dublin, 1889), M.B. Kavanagh and A.W. Quill, The licensing acts, 1872-4 (Dublin, 1875) and the Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance's Handbook of the liquor licensing laws of Ireland (Dublin, 1896). The need then, as now, for such guides highlights the complexity of the licensing laws, which was in itself a serious problem. Much information on the legal and policing problems associated with the implementation of these laws can be found in the Chief Secretary's Office, registered papers, and in the opinions of the law officers, which are held in the State Paper Office, Dublin Castle. The licensing acts of 1872 and 1874 closed many of the loopholes in previous legislation and as far as Ireland was concerned, except for acts to regulate beerhouses and introduce partial Sunday closing in 1877-8, they were not significantly altered till after the turn of the century. In the third section of this first chapter I have endeavoured to sketch the social circumstances in which drinking occurred in nineteenth-century Ireland, pointing to important changes in rural drinking patterns after the famine. Some interesting sociological and anthropological work has been done on drinking in Ireland and among the Irish in America. The two most recent of such studies to appear are Joyce O'Connor, The young drinkers (London, 1978) and Richard Stivers, A hair of the dog

(University Park, Penn., and London, 1976). Though such works deal with the contemporary situation, they contain much suggestive material for the student of nineteenth-century Irish drinking patterns. The first chapter concludes with a discussion of the origins of the temperance movement, essentially showing that it did not appear unexpectedly in 1829. Concern about spirit drinking and drunkenness had existed from at least the middle of the eighteenth century and in the 1790s the Irish parliament was legislating to encourage the brewing industry partly as a means of curbing drunkenness. The first anti-spirits societies are usually considered to have appeared in New Ross, Belfast and Dublin in August and September 1829, but they had forerunners in west Cork and Dublin from as early as 1817.

The second chapter continues this examination of the early anti-spirits movement¹ in the context of a survey of the views of leading temperance advocates from the 1830s to the 1890s. The five chosen for examination - Dr John Edgar, Fr Theobald Mathew, James Haughton, T.W. Russell and Fr Michael Kelly - were not necessarily the dominant figures during their periods, but each represents a different aspect and a different phase of the movement. Edgar inspired the anti-spirits movement of the 1830s and Fr Mathew the total abstinence crusade of the 1840s; Haughton, who was a staunch temperance advocate from the 1830s till his death early in the 1870s, illustrates the trend towards more extreme measures, which developed out of the failures of earlier

¹ G.C. Bretherton, *The Irish temperance movement, 1829-47* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1978). The anti-spirits movement and Fr Mathew's crusade are treated in more detail in this thesis. Unfortunately I have not had access to it.

decades; Russell, on the other hand, shows how this extremism was tempered in the parliamentary agitation of the 1870s and 1880s; finally Kelly illustrates the attitudes of the catholic total abstinence movement, which emerged within the church in the 1870s and took organisational form in the Pioneer Association in the late 1890s. These men have also been chosen for examination simply because their views are available at length in print: in pamphlets, speeches, letters, articles and in evidence given before select committees. This latter source is especially important. Select committees dealing solely or substantially with Irish drink legislation sat in 1867, 1877, 1878 and 1888, while in 1896-8 a royal commission on the liquor licensing laws devoted much attention to the Irish situation. The evidence of such inquiries is full of information on the views of temperance advocates, clergy, police, M.P.s, magistrates, publicans and, even occasionally, of working men.

Chapter III takes us back to the 1850s and 1860s and begins the detailed analysis of the temperance revival. It describes the efforts of both catholic clergy and Ulster business and religious leaders to revive the temperance movement after the collapse of Fr Mathew's crusade. The catholic church remained largely apathetic, with the exception of a handful of enthusiasts, but in Ulster, stimulated by the revival of 1859, a major new temperance organisation appeared. This was the Irish Temperance League, affiliated with the United Kingdom Alliance, which was to be the strongest of the Irish temperance societies in the latter part of the century. An extremely professional organisation, the league was more a business than a crusade.

It ran profitable cafés and employed paid agents to propagandise and lobby on its behalf. But the league remained essentially an Ulster society, though it encouraged the establishment of societies in the south and worked with them in the legislative campaign. It was committed to prohibition to be achieved through the introduction of local option, but it was prepared to support lesser measures, like shorter trading hours, which were more popular among the southern temperance organisations. These were regarded, however, merely as steps towards the ultimate goal of prohibition. The work of the league can be studied in detail through its journal, the Irish Temperance League Journal, which began publication in 1863, and through the minute books of its executive committee, which survive from 1872 and are held by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in Belfast.

√The third section of chapter III and also chapter IV deal with the campaign conducted from 1867 by various Irish temperance societies to secure restrictive legislation. The most notable success of this campaign was the partial and temporary Sunday closing act passed in 1878. But other goals, such as local option, shorter Saturday trading hours and total and permanent Sunday closing, had not been achieved by 1900. In the 1880s especially, the temperance issue simply lost out in parliament to more pressing Irish concerns, like the land and home rule questions. Moreover, the home rule party came increasingly during the 1880s to ally itself with the drink industry, for this provided important financial and organisational support to the nationalist cause. The failure to achieve the desired legislation, despite a

prolonged, well-organised and expensive campaign, had by the 1890s considerably demoralised both the secular and protestant temperance societies. The Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance, which was established in Dublin in 1878 as the southern counterpart of the Irish Temperance League, was particularly badly affected. The league was cushioned somewhat: financially by its successful food and drink retailing, and psychologically by its greater fanaticism. But by 1900 the legislative campaign appeared to have reached a deadend. This campaign can be studied through Hansard, through the chief secretary's papers and through newspapers, like the Freeman's Journal, the Irish Times and The Times. The views of the temperance societies involved are also well documented: in the Irish Temperance League Journal, from 1873 to 1878 in the annual reports of the Association for Stopping the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday in Ireland (henceforth, the Irish Sunday Closing Association) and from 1878 to 1900 in the annual reports of the Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance.

The final chapter deals with the same period, that is 1870 to 1900, but looks at the growth of temperance societies in the churches, both catholic and protestant. The early 1870s, which was a period of increasing drink consumption and heightened political interest in the drink question, saw the establishment of important church-based temperance organisations. Both the presbyterians and the methodists moved towards the full acceptance of total abstinence and with it the elimination of all connections between their churches and drink. Much controversy surrounded the use of wine for communion and most of the protestant churches had done away

with this by the end of the century. The Church of Ireland, however, remained more flexible, establishing a temperance society in 1876 which included both moderationists and teetotallers. This society, which was also deeply involved in the legislative campaign, can be studied through its annual reports from 1879 to 1893, through the minute book of its general council from 1896 to 1904 and through its journals, the Temperance Visitor and The Lighthouse, all of which are held by the Church of Ireland Library at Braemor Park in Dublin. The catholic church was by no means immune from the controversy over total abstinence. The Irish hierarchy took up a position not dissimilar to that of the Church of Ireland; in other words, the bishops endorsed moderation and accepted total abstinence in the case of certain clearly defined groups: the young, former drunkards and religious enthusiasts. However, the catholic church in the United States and England, struggling to secure the social and economic elevation of an Irish slum population, was much more inclined to recommend a general total abstinence. In Ireland a significant total abstinence movement emerged within the church in the 1870s. This movement found a strong supporter in Michael Warren, bishop of Ferns (1876-84), who encouraged both Fr James Cullen and Fr Michael Kelly in temperance work. We examined Kelly's views in chapter II, but it was Cullen who put such views into practice by establishing a major, new catholic temperance society. His Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart was to prove both more enduring than Fr Mathew's crusade and more popular than the secular temperance societies. Its success can, to some extent, be explained by the fact that

it was allied with powerful contemporary religious and political forces: on the one hand, with what Professor Emmet Larkin has called the 'devotional revolution': the growing militancy and asceticism of the Irish church; and, on the other, with the new cultural nationalism which emerged after the fall of Parnell and which emphasised personal as well as national regeneration. Cullen's personal papers have disappeared, but his biographer, Fr Lambert McKenna, had access to these and in his book, Life and work of Rev. James Aloysius Cullen, S.J. (London, 1924), he has produced a valuable account of Cullen's temperance work. Cullen wrote on the subject of temperance in the Irish Ecclesiastical Record, in the Irish Messenger of the Sacred Heart, which he established in 1888, and in the Irish Catholic from 1912 to 1921, so that his thinking can be studied over a considerable period.

Essentially, therefore, this study examines the various manifestations of the temperance movement in Ireland in the second half of the nineteenth century. The movement was both religious and secular, catholic and protestant, moderationist and teetotal, conservative and nationalist. It was largely middle class and largely urban, but by no means exclusively so, especially in Ulster, where it had greatest support. This study also seeks to set the temperance movement against the background of developments in drink production and retailing and of changes in drinking habits. And finally it explores the relations between the different aspects of temperance and the various nationalist movements of the nineteenth century: repeal, Young Ireland, fenianism, home rule and the Gaelic revival.

CHAPTER ONE

DRINK IN IRELAND AND THE ORIGINS OF THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

The awful spectacle of those drunken men in the morning haunted him like a nightmare. They had risen half drunk from their hot, hard bed, and stupidly had passed him near the gangway with a maudlin: 'Fi morn'n, Fizzer!'. And he was studying all day the mighty problem, that has occupied more attention than half the more serious problems of the world. What is it? What is it? - the fatal bias towards intoxication that seems to distinguish the race? Indolence, vacuity of thought, the fatal altruism of the race? What is it? Or is it only a political calumny?... Let it alone, Luke, let it alone! Except, indeed as an exercise, to while away a long afternoon under sleepy awnings, and to soothe your nerves with the dull mechanic interplay of questions that are forever seeking and never finding an answer. Let it alone, let it alone! But Luke was not made thus. He had a great taste for the insoluble.

Canon P.A. Sheehan, Luke Delmege (London, [1901]), p. 98.

Any attempt to trace the development of the Irish temperance movement in the latter part of the nineteenth century must necessarily be prefaced by an examination of the drink industry during and immediately prior to the period. This first chapter is devoted primarily to three aspects of the industry: production, retailing and consumption. We shall first survey the growth of brewing and distilling during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, then examine the retail trade in drink and the major laws regulating it, and finally attempt to describe the patterns of drinking, both rural and urban, which characterised Ireland at the time. When we come to examine the temperance movement in detail in later chapters we shall see that it too was deeply concerned with each of these topics. It accumulated endless statistics on drink production in order to gauge rises and falls in consumption; through parliament and the courts, it tried to reform and effectively enforce the licensing laws; and with regard to drinking customs and habits, it attempted to change both public attitudes and behaviour by education and legislation. Finally, in this first chapter, we shall look briefly at the beginnings of the temperance movement in Ireland in the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth century, before going on in the second chapter to survey developments in the movement during the remainder of the century.

The drink industry: brewing and distilling

A glance at the figures for alcohol production in Ireland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would seem to suggest an enormous increase in consumption. In 1720 some

460,000 gallons of spirits were distilled or imported, while some 570,000 barrels of beer were brewed and 1.3 million gallons of wine imported. In 1900 the figures for spirits and beer had risen to 14.5 million gallons and 3 million barrels respectively, though wine consumption had fallen.¹ In 1911 it was estimated at 900,000 gallons in Ireland.² However, the picture is by no means as simple as these statistics might suggest; firstly, because figures for drink production are notoriously unreliable, particularly before the middle of the nineteenth century, owing to illicit distillation and to the various forms of fraud practised by licensed brewers and distillers in collusion with the excise authorities; and secondly, because, as the nineteenth century advanced, brewing and distilling became two of Ireland's main export industries, and thus substantial amounts of Irish liquor never reached the home market. Nevertheless, one can, albeit roughly, chart rises and falls in alcohol production in Ireland and speculate upon the relationship between such fluctuations and temperance activity.

Lack of information, and especially accurate statistics, makes it very difficult to study the development of the drink industry prior to 1780. However, the picture is generally one of numerous small breweries and distilleries

¹ Samuel Morewood, A philosophical and statistical history of the inventions and customs of ancient and modern nations in the manufacture and use of inebriating liquors (Dublin, 1838), p. 727; E.B. McGuire, Irish whiskey (Dublin and New York, 1973), pp 246, 300.

² G.B. Wilson, Alcohol and the nation (London, 1940), p. 200.

scattered fairly widely throughout the country, though with Dublin as the main centre. In 1790 there were 646 retail brewers and 291 factory-type firms, Dublin having 47 of the latter. The importance of brewing in Dublin is reflected in the fact that the city paid about half the total excise collected on beer.¹ Nor was this a new situation, for in 1672 Sir William Petty had remarked upon the city's 91 breweries and 1,180 alehouses.² In the eighteenth century, Cork, Kilkenny, Limerick and Waterford were the other main centres of the industry. But outside these cities and towns retail brewing was the rule and this frequently meant the local publican making his own supplies.³ As for distilleries, there were 1,152 in 1779, most using small stills in the range of 200 to 250 gallons, though Dublin had two stills and Cork one which could produce a thousand gallons or more. Dublin, Cork and Clonmel were the major centres of the distilling industry in the late eighteenth century.⁴ As can be seen, the centres of the drink industry tended to be concentrated in the south and east, generally in or close to ports through which raw materials and the finished product could be traded.

Determining the actual production of alcohol is well nigh impossible, especially in the case of spirits. Unlicensed or illicit distillers flourished, operating mainly in

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 417.

² Sir William Petty, Political survey of Ireland, with the establishment of that kingdom, when the late Duke of Ormond was lord lieutenant (2nd ed., London, 1719), pp 13-14.

³ L.M. Cullen, An economic history of Ireland since 1660 (London, 1972), p. 92.

⁴ McGuire, op. cit., pp 128, 147; George O'Brien, The economic history of Ireland in the eighteenth century (Dublin and London, 1918), p. 213.

remote areas; domestic stills were popular and legal, if used solely for the needs of the household; and registered distilleries themselves engaged extensively in illegal production. Imports of spirits were substantial and with them went a good deal of smuggling. French and Spanish brandy, West Indian rum and Dutch gin were all smuggled, though French brandy was the most popular item and, according to Professor Cullen, it accounted on a conservative estimate for as much as one-third of the total consumption of spirits in Ireland from the 1730s into the 1770s.¹ In the face of such competition it is hardly surprising to find licensed distillers resorting to illegal production, especially when revenue officials were easily corrupted.² Wilson quotes the inspector-general for Ireland on this subject, and although his report dates from 1822, it doubtless describes the situation at an earlier date as well.

There was scarcely a distillery near a town of any consequence in Ireland that had not a number of persons employed - men, women, and children - in conveying their spirits out constantly in small quantities, less than a gallon and not requiring a permit, and therefore not liable to seizure. They took it out in gallons, bottles, and even bladders. Towards evening and at night large quantities were sent out with gangs of men guarding them, so that no excise officer ventured to attack them without the military. Women carried as much as six gallons at a time. They had pockets made of tin, exactly like women's pockets, with a sort of breast-plate, and so, covered with a cloak, they passed undetected. Distillers made one-fourth more than they paid duty on.³

The main competition for Irish distillers came from imported spirits and in particular rum. A direct trade had

¹ L.M. Cullen, 'The smuggling trade in Ireland in the eighteenth century' in Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, lxvii, sect. C (1968-9), p. 169.

² McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 110.

³ Quoted in Wilson, Alcohol and the nation, p. 17.

developed with the West Indies and ships carried Irish goods there to return with rum and sugar.¹ Although domestic distilling expanded some eight-fold between 1700 and 1770, the quantities imported rose also, and in 1777 legally-produced Irish spirit was still only about half the quantity imported. Wine imports in 1715 were almost 1.2 million gallons or about ten times the amount of spirit distilled in Ireland. In 1763 wine imports had only risen to nearly 1.4 million gallons and by 1777 the amount of spirit distilled had almost reached the level of wine imports.² It must of course be remembered that quantity alone is not a fair comparison in this case as it takes no account of alcoholic strength and, gallon for gallon, spirits coming off the still would be of the order of at least five times stronger than the strongest wine. Thus, while wine imports rose only slightly between 1720 and 1780, spirits distilled legally in Ireland had risen from 136,075 gallons to 1,229,416 gallons. The distiller was far more than containing the competition from wine.³ By 1780 home-produced spirits had also finally surpassed the amounts being imported to command the larger share of the spirit market. This trend continued and by 1795 Irish spirits were seven times the amount imported.⁴ Distillers and merchants specialising in

¹ L.M. Cullen, Anglo-Irish trade (Manchester, 1968), p. 76.

² Wine was never smuggled in great quantities as it was unsuited to this sort of trade, though smuggling families, like the O'Connells of Derrynane, County Kerry, might have brought in small amounts for their own personal consumption; see Cullen, 'The smuggling trade in Ireland in the eighteenth century', p. 168.

³ McGuire, Irish whiskey, pp 116-17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

the importing of wine and spirits became increasingly prosperous during the course of the eighteenth century. Edward Byrne, considered the richest merchant in the country, was largely engaged in this enterprise. Byrne moreover was a catholic, for catholic merchants, who frequently had family connections with the wine-producing regions of France and Spain as well as the rum-producing West Indies, were especially prominent in the drink industry.¹ Travellers agreed in praising the quality and inexpensiveness of Irish wines and spirits. John Bush considered the claret 'marvellous',² and though Arthur Young disagreed, nevertheless he found Irish port 'incomparable'.³

Beer, the remaining competitor for the Irish liquor market, never seriously challenged the dominance of spirits, whether home-produced or imported, during the eighteenth century. At the beginning of the century the annual output of Irish beer was about 600,000 barrels, but by 1772 it had fallen to 433,000 barrels; and imports, which had averaged about 300 barrels a year in the 1720s, were now approaching 50,000 barrels a year.⁴ The market for commercial beer at this period was restricted to the towns and to the better-paid classes in the towns. The drink of the majority of

¹ Maureen Wall, 'The rise of a catholic middle class in eighteenth-century Ireland' in Irish Historical Studies, xi, no. 42 (Sept. 1958), pp 105, 108, 114.

² John Bush, Hibernia curiosa: a letter from a gentleman in Dublin, to his friend at Dover in Kent, giving a general view of the manners, customs, dispositions, &c., of the inhabitants of Ireland (2nd ed., London, 1782), p. 21.

³ Arthur Young, A tour of Ireland, 1776-9 (reprint, with intro. by A.W. Hutton, Shannon, 1970, of 4th ed., 2 vols, London, 1892), ii, 152.

⁴ Patrick Lynch and John Vaizey, Guinness's brewery in the Irish economy, 1759-1876 (Cambridge, 1960), p. 46.

the population, and of nearly all rural drinkers, was spirits or home-brewed beer. The quality of Irish beer, whether commercial or home-brewed, was, however, generally very bad, while at the same time it had to compete against substantial English imports. Again, this was not a new situation. MacLysaght found that while seventeenth-century accounts of Irish whiskey, brandy and claret were almost unanimous in their praise, they as frequently condemned as praised Irish beer. The quality varied greatly from brewery to brewery and common practices like using gutter water in brewing doubtless contributed a good deal to the often dubious quality of the product.¹ One English traveller of the period described Irish beer as 'a thick muddy stuff that I dare not taste'.² However, by the middle of the eighteenth century the brewing industry's biggest problem was English competition. Between 1689 and 1741 English brewers received fiscal advantages over the Irish, so that, for instance, while the import duty on English beer coming into Ireland was only ten per cent ad valorem, the duty on Irish beer exported to Britain was prohibitively high. Thus, while Irish beer had little success in the English market, English beer was cheaper than the local product in Ireland. It was also of superior quality, and Lynch and Vaizey consider that this contributed more to its success than its cheapness.³ In the 1740s large-scale porter breweries were established in London and these quickly

¹ Edward MacLysaght, Irish life in the seventeenth century (2nd ed., Cork, 1950), p. 255.

² Quoted in Hugh O'Grady, Strafford and Ireland: the history of his vice-royalty with an account of his trial (Dublin, 1923), i, 312-13.

³ Lynch and Vaizey, Guinness's brewery, pp 52-3.

developed a substantial Irish trade.¹ Imports jumped from nearly 2,000 barrels in 1740 to over 12,000 in 1750 and continued to rise rapidly, reaching 109,000 barrels in 1790.² As we have seen, over the same period Irish production tended to stagnate, if not decline.³ By the 1770s the Irish industry was in fact on the verge of collapse and in 1771 a parliamentary committee was established to investigate. The industry was eventually saved partly by the introduction of good quality Irish porter, which proved a very popular drink, and partly by changing government attitudes. Growing concern about drunkenness, which was generally ascribed to the increase in spirit consumption, led the Irish parliament in the last quarter of the century increasingly to adopt measures favourable to the brewing industry. The most important piece of legislation was passed in 1795 when the tax on beer was removed while that on malt was increased. This immediately gave Irish beer an advantage over both English beer and Irish whiskey. Distillers continued to be double-taxed on both malt and whiskey, while the English beer tax was not removed till 1830.⁴

At about the same time Irish brewing was also relieved of much of the pressure of English competition by the wars

¹Peter Mathias, The brewing industry in England, 1700-1830 (Cambridge, 1959), p. 153.

²Morewood, A philosophical and statistical history ... of inebriating liquors, p. 727.

³Mathias, op. cit., p. 153.

⁴Lynch and Vaizey, Guinness's brewery, pp 65-8; see below, pp 129-34.

with France. Mathias concludes therefore, that

it is little wonder that the Irish brewers stormed their markets with unnatural speed under cover of this battery of statutes, with the state fighting their domestic battle with the distillers for them, and the French becoming indirectly their ally in the struggle against English rivals.¹

Both Thomas Newenham and Edward Wakefield in their major studies of Ireland, published in 1805 and 1812 respectively, support Mathias's assessment of the rapid recovery of Irish brewing. Newenham remarked upon the growth of porter and ale breweries and in County Cork found beer 'actually to be the favourite liquor among the lower orders. Twelve years ago, they seldom or never drank it'.² By 1810 in fact Cork had begun to export beer, and Dublin followed suit probably in 1811.³ Wakefield, who deplored the prevalence of spirit drinking and considered beer 'healthful and invigorating', commented approvingly on the decline in English imports and the growth of the indigenous industry.⁴

A veritable revolution in the distilling industry also occurred in Ireland in the last two decades of the eighteenth century. An alteration to the distilling laws in 1779 resulted in a rapid upheaval. An attempt was made to limit the extent of evasion of the spirit duty by prescribing a minimum revenue for each still. This minimum was based on the estimated number of times a still could be worked off

¹ Mathias, The brewing industry in England, p. 160.

² Thomas Newenham, A statistical and historical inquiry into the progress and magnitude of the population of Ireland (London, 1805), pp 141, 234.

³ Mathias, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁴ Edward Wakefield, An account of Ireland, statistical and political (London, 1812), i, 745.

in twenty-eight days.¹ The new regulation came into force in September 1780 and for the first year the minimum was well within the compass of any distiller, so that the effects of the change on the industry were negligible. A year later the minimum was raised. The effect was immediate and a quarter of the legal distilleries closed. The process of raising the minimum charge continued until 1823 when the system was so discredited that it had to be abandoned. McGuire in his major study of Irish distilling, says that the 'revenue authorities gave no indication that the minimum charge was anything more than an effort to reduce evasion', but that it was 'to become an uncontrollable monster'.² It caused the number of legal distilleries to fall catastrophically. Evasion in legal distilleries was not checked and the number of illicit distilleries greatly increased. The minimum charge also fostered official corruption to a point, says McGuire, 'where a regular system of fees, indistinguishable from bribes, was openly condoned by the revenue commissioners'.³ Any distiller who did not conform to the customary dishonest practices could not survive. When the revenue bill was presented in 1779 there were said to be 1,152 registered distilleries and when the act came into force in 1780 there were 1,228. By 1790, however, the distilleries had fallen to 246 in number while the quantities distilled, or more

¹ For a detailed technical discussion of the minimum charge see McGuire, Irish whiskey, pp 128-33.

² Ibid., p. 127.

³ Ibid.

correctly the quantities charged with duty, had risen from 1.2 million gallons in 1780 to 3 million gallons in 1790.¹ From the administrative point of view, therefore, one good result was a greater concentration of the industry. Against this advantage, however, must be set the facts that evasion had not been stopped, production of spirits continued to rise, and numerous illicit distilleries took the place of the small legal stills.

J.H. Johnson in an important study of the Irish economy, says that 'poteen making had been a normal part of the subsistence economy for many centuries, but at the beginning of the nineteenth century it reached its period of greatest importance as a commercial activity'.² It was stimulated by the increased duties on whiskey which had all but destroyed the local or domestic distiller after 1780. McGuire in fact thinks that 'many a licensed distiller took his small still out of the town to a quiet spot and used his skill to make poteen'.³ In trying to counteract evasion in legal distilleries the government was thus only driving the small distillers into the illegal trade. The effect was most noticeable in the north and west. In the Cavan excise district legal stills fell from thirty-nine in 1782 to two in 1796; in Killybegs they fell from eighteen in

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 128.

² J.H. Johnson, 'The two "Irelands" at the beginning of the nineteenth century' in Nicholas Stephens and R.E. Glasscock (ed.), Irish geographical studies in honour of E. Estyn Evans (Belfast, 1970), p. 232.

³ McGuire, op. cit., p. 393.

in 1782 to three in 1790; in Armagh from seventy-four in 1782 to nine in 1796; and even more dramatically in the Londonderry and Strabane districts from nineteen and seventy-four respectively in 1782 to none in 1796. According to McGuire, there is 'no indication either of changing drinking habits or of spirits being imported into these areas so the conclusion is inescapable that the gap in the market was filled by illicit spirits'.¹ The government further unwittingly contributed to the growth in illicit distillation by dramatically increasing the cost of legal whiskey or 'parliament' whiskey, as it was popularly known. The original duty, first imposed in 1661, had been 4d. a gallon. By 1785 this had reached 1s.2d. and it continued to climb steadily during the wars till in 1815 it was 6s.1½d. K.H. Connell, in his important essay on illicit distillation, comments aptly:

The exchequer, of course, was hard-pressed; but it was questionably wise to increase so substantially the price an impoverished people was asked to pay for parliament whiskey; a people, moreover, whose social life was hinged to cheap drink; who knew how to make poteen, and were not notably law-abiding.²

The illicit distiller was mainly active in Connacht and west Ulster, though in 1812 Wakefield claimed that 'this practice is now extending to the south, having long been established in Cavan, Fermanagh, Sligo, Donegal, and Tyrone'. According to him, the mountains were covered with stills and poteen was 'sold as openly as if it had been gauged by the excise officer'.³ The manufacture and sale of poteen in the

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 394; K.H. Connell, Irish peasant society: four historical essays (Oxford, 1968), pp 36-9.

² Connell, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

³ Wakefield, An account of Ireland, i, 728-9.

north and west was in fact a regular commercial activity with well-organised markets where the spirit was sold and materials for its production bought. Farmers in Counties Antrim and Londonderry, for example, were growing barley for distillers in Donegal, and farmers in Clare were producing barley for Connemara distillers. There were even reports of regular exports of poteen to Scotland and London.¹ More than a thousand government agents were employed at this time to stop the manufacture of poteen, but Robert Shipkey is doubtless justified in concluding that 'throughout the early nineteenth century, the policing efforts of the excise commission could never effectively keep pace with the individual ingenuity of an Irish farmer or with the collective connivance of his community'.²

The prevalence of illicit distillation before 1823 is easily understood. 'I confess', said H.R. Pakenham, M.P., in 1823, 'I am at a loss for a proper term to apply to a system that offers to supply the community with a bad article at an expensive rate, and then endeavours to force consumption of the stuff, rendered pernicious by their own regulations, by multiplying gaugers, revenue police, employing military and so on.'³ But after the 1820s, although the quality of Irish spirits improved and the excise duties were lowered, illicit distillation persisted, for in some

¹ Johnson, 'The two "Irelands" at the beginning of the nineteenth century', p. 232; Connell, Irish peasant society, pp 13-15.

² Robert Shipkey, 'Problems of alcoholic production and controls in early nineteenth-century Ireland' in Historical Journal, xvi, no. 2 (1973), p. 296; for descriptions of the actual process of distilling see Connell, op. cit., pp 3-12 and William Carleton, The emigrants of Ahadarra: a tale of Irish life (London, 1848), pp 33-46.

³ Quoted in McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 406.

areas it had virtually become part of the economy. Smallholders, particularly on marginal land, could resort to distilling when grain prices were low, while other small farmers simply found supplying distillers or distilling themselves essential if they were to survive. Connell suggests that before the famine many people looked upon poteen making as their only chance of making ends meet.¹ Landlords frequently encouraged illicit distilling, or at least turned a blind eye to it and did not go out of their way to assist the revenue men. Illicit distilling often ensured that a tenant could pay his rent and Galway landlords even accepted poteen in lieu of rent.² The early 1830s appear to have been the peak period for the illicit industry, if one can rely on figures for detections of stills and on contemporary opinion. Before 1834 detections were running at between 5,000 and 8,000 a year and in 1834 they reached 8,192.³ The evidence of Dr John Edgar, founder of the Ulster anti-spirits movement, before the 1834 select committee on drunkenness, seems to confirm this impression. He was of the opinion that 'at the present time, private distilling has seldom, if ever, been worse' and he attributed this to the low prices being paid for grain. He referred to illicit distillers travelling through the country and distilling grain for farmers who wished to make better profits.⁴

¹ Connell, Irish peasant society, p. 26.

² Ibid., p. 29; McGuire, Irish whiskey, pp 407-9.

³ Ibid., p. 229.

⁴ Report from the select committee on inquiry into drunkenness, pp 67-8, H.C. 1834 (559), viii, 67-8.

He described how a fellow presbyterian minister had told him that,

not long since, in a very civilised district, he went into a mill in the middle of the day within a mile of a large town; he saw the miller preparing grain for illicit distillation; he expressed his surprise that such a business should be going on within a mile of the revenue station. The miller laughed at the idea of there being any danger in the case; 'why', he said, 'if the horse police were to set their noses out of the end of the town, the cry of "mad dog" would be up over the whole country, and before they could be the half of the road, everything would be cleared away'.¹

Edgar was concerned at the extent to which legal distillers also evaded the regulations, It was his opinion that 'for each gallon which pays duty, another is run by the licensed distiller'. This meant that with regard to parliament whiskey 'according to a common saying, that for one gallon made for the king, another is made for the queen'. Edgar believed that in 1823, for instance, instead of the approximately three million gallons officially recorded as being produced, more like ten million gallons were actually made.² It is impossible to know how accurate such an estimate is, though other observers, like Wakefield, also maintained that only about one-third of spirits produced in Ireland paid duty. Another one-third was produced illegally by registered distillers and the final third came from illicit distillation.³

But from the middle of the 1830s detections of illicit stills began to fall. They did remain consistently and

¹ Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, p. 73.

² Ibid., p. 67.

³ Wakefield, An account of Ireland, i, 730; Wilson, Alcohol and the nation, p. 17.

considerably higher throughout the century than similar figures for England and Scotland, though many of the offences recorded were rather trivial.¹ Illicit distilling retreated before improved policing; an act of 1831 consolidated the laws and gave revenue authorities greater powers, and in the 1850s the constabulary took over from the revenue police and introduced a much more thorough and better organised system of supervision. Also, after the reform of the industry in 1823, the quality of legal spirits improved and the numbers of small-scale provincial distilleries began to increase. Better quality beer and especially porter also were to provide competition for the illicit distiller, as well as an alternative market for the small farmer's grain.² For a summing up of the development of illicit distillation during the period, we can do no better than quote McGuire's excellent study.

It is clear that it emerged from domestic distilling when duties on spirits were imposed in the seventeenth century and that such distilling was widespread in most parts of the country till the late eighteenth century. After 1780 there was a fairly rapid change in this picture owing to the introduction of the still licence charge on legal stills and a steady increase in the number of these charges. In the northwest and west the small legal stills were displaced by the illicit distiller and in the rest of the country there was severe competition between the legal distiller evading the duty and the illicit distiller, with the former generally winning. Nevertheless in the whole of Ireland at this time large quantities were coming from illicit stills and they were a real threat to the legitimate industry as well as the revenue. There was a turning point in 1823 when the method of charging duty was changed though it is very doubtful if this was realised at the time. Licensed distillers could use better apparatus and increase the size of their operations. Their produce, too, was

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 420; Connell, Irish peasant society, pp 22-3.

² Connell, *op. cit.*, pp 46-8; McGuire, *op. cit.*, pp 414-24.

greatly improved and their working much more economical. Licensed distilleries were established in notorious illicit distilling areas and competed successfully. Better methods for suppressing the private still were evolved, the revenue police strengthened and reorganised, and the illicit distiller degenerated into a small-time distiller with a strictly local market generally of persons who could not afford to buy legal whiskey... Detections were, for the most part, trivial cases of no more consequence than poaching. So far as the distilling industry was concerned, illicit distilling could be ignored. The industry's main competitors were, as fundamentally they had always been, the spirit importer and the brewer.¹

We have seen how legislation in the latter part of the eighteenth century stimulated the illegal spirits industry; as for the legal industry, the effects of this legislation were almost wholly disastrous. As the number of still charges for spirit duty rose so competition became fiercer, technical development and economy in production were disregarded, quality was secondary to quantity, and fraudulent practices were forced on distillers. For distillers it finally became a matter of survival rather than profit.² Abuses were so glaring that finally in 1821 a commission of inquiry was established, which led in 1823 to a new distillery act. This long and detailed act, which applied to Scotland as well and was largely extended to England in 1825, introduced a new formula for the assessing of duty as well as a whole series of regulations to control strictly all aspects of the distilling process.³ With these improvements, the government began seeking to raise the level of duty on Irish spirits to bring it into line

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 431; for a personal description of the decline in illicit distilling in Donegal see W.R. LeFanu, Seventy years of Irish life (London, 1893), pp 272-6.

² McGuire, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

³ *Ibid.*, pp 215-21.

with the situation prevailing in the rest of the British Isles. However, experience in the 1820s had shown that raising the duty led to a fall in the gallons charged and lowering it led to an increase - again the illicit distiller being the one who filled the gap. For instance, spirits paying duty rose dramatically from 4.3 million gallons in 1820-24 to 8.8 million in 1825-9.¹ This was not due so much to increased consumption as to drinkers switching from poteen to parliament whiskey, which was much cheaper owing to the substantial reduction in duty which had occurred in 1823. Changes in excise policy were thus very much dictated by fear of the illicit distiller. When detections of illicit operations began to fall dramatically in the mid 1830s, the government was encouraged to raise the duty slowly and steadily. From 2s.8d. in 1840 it was raised by 1860 to 10s., which was the level prevailing in the rest of the United Kingdom, and it remained at this level till 1890. The government, said the chancellor of the exchequer in 1856, was anxious to extract 'from spirits as large an amount of revenue as the article can afford provided always that we do not incur the evil of increasing illicit distillation'.² Further legislation in 1860 and 1880 consolidated the distilling laws and eased some of the more stringent and unpopular regulations, which the distillers had laboured under since 1823.³

Overall, however, the consumption of spirits declined in late nineteenth century Ireland, usually in reaction to

¹ Wilson, Alcohol and the nation, p. 340.

² McGuire, Irish whiskey, pp 228-31.

³ Ibid., pp 243-5.

increases in cost, though the temperance movement, particularly during the 1840s, certainly played a part. Despite the anti-spirits movement, the amount of spirits charged with duty rose during the 1830s, and in 1839 it was 10.8 million gallons. In the following year it fell dramatically to 7.4 million, partly in response to the raising of the duty by 4d. and partly as a result of Fr Mathew's total abstinence crusade. The decline continued during the early 1840s but there was a recovery during the famine and by 1852 8.2 million gallons were charged. From this peak there was another significant decline during the 1850s and the gallons charged remained between 4.0 and 4.5 million throughout the 1860s.¹ This decline in the 1850s, which was not a period of intense temperance activity, was probably largely due to substantial increases in duty. The duty was raised in 1853, 1855, 1858 and 1860. From 2s.8d. before 1853 it was 10s. by 1860, the same figures as in the rest of the United Kingdom. In 1896 the royal commission investigating the financial relations between Britain and Ireland found that in the 1850s taxation of Ireland had increased about forty per cent, mainly due to the quadrupling of spirit duties and the introduction of income tax.² The Irish members of the commission were particularly critical of the equalising of spirit duties, for this meant that whiskey, which was the most popular form of liquor in Ireland, was much more heavily taxed than beer, which was more

¹ Wilson, Alcohol and the nation, pp 336-8.

² Royal commission on the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland, p. 9 [C-8262], H.C. 1896, xxxiii, 71.

popular in England. Rather than seeing this as a prejudice against spirits, which the government asserted it was, the home rulers in particular saw it as a prejudice against Ireland and a typical example of economic exploitation.¹ Consumption recovered somewhat in the more prosperous 1870s and between 1873 and 1879 was consistently above six million gallons per annum. But it declined again in the 1880s to about five million per annum, and this trend continued in the 1890s when between 4.5 and 5.0 million gallons per annum were charged.² Given that illicit distilling had ceased to be a major industry, that illegal production by licensed distillers had been largely eliminated and that the population decline was not the determining factor, one can with some confidence conclude that spirit consumption declined in Ireland during the second half of the nineteenth century. McGuire provides a good summary of the reasons for this decline, though these must be largely speculative.

It could be due to more sobriety following persistent temperance missions and restrictive legislation aimed at the retail trade, a rise in educational standards, alternatives such as interest in athletics, as suggested by the police witness before the royal commission in 1898, or a switch to beer and wine drinking, or a combination of all these factors. The rise in the number of public houses indicates that beer drinking was probably the main reason for the drop in spirit consumption.³

The distilling industry would have suffered severely if it had been relying solely upon the Irish market, but by

¹ Royal commission on the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland, 1896, p. 21/83.

² Wilson, Alcohol and the nation, pp 338-9. See appendix I for a diagram of spirit consumption in the United Kingdom and Ireland between 1800 and 1900.

³ McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 298. For a further discussion of this issue see chapter VI.

the 1870s a significant and lucrative export trade had been developed. With the equalising of spirit duties throughout the United Kingdom in 1860 a mass of complex and discriminatory customs regulations were done away with, and the shipment of spirits was treated in the same way as a removal by land between warehouses. Despite the difficulties a substantial export trade had developed before 1860, based to some extent on Irish immigrants in England. Exports in 1840 amounted to some 320,000 gallons and had risen by 1860 to over a million gallons a year. There are problems in extracting accurate figures for Irish exports after 1860,¹ but it seems that in 1870 over 979,000 gallons were sent to England and over 47,000 to Scotland.² The report of the inland revenue for 1871-2 noted that: 'Gin in England and malt whisky in England and Scotland are giving way to Irish whisky'.³ Despite fierce competition from Scotch whisky in the English market, Irish exports to England had risen by 1900 to 4.2 million gallons, while 682,000 gallons were being sent to Scotland.⁴ Exports to other countries are almost impossible to determine as they are recorded as British and Irish spirits, or merely as British spirits, though they included Scottish and Irish whiskey as well as English spirits. However, consistently after 1870 Ireland exported over a million

¹ Wilson for instance gives contradictory figures for the early 1860s; Wilson, Alcohol and the nation, pp 341, 346.

² Ibid., p. 346; McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 273, gives the date as 1871 when it should be 1870.

³ Quoted in Wilson, op. cit., p. 21.

⁴ Ibid., p. 347.

gallons of spirits a year and by the late 1890s exports had risen to over four million. More than half the amount of whiskey produced in Ireland each year was being exported.

The establishment of a system of warehousing was an important stimulus to the export trade. The various acts dealing with warehousing were consolidated in 1880, which meant that whiskey could be made, warehoused, prepared for the market or exported, without the payment of any duty. So the owner of the spirit was able to defer paying duty until he had found his best market. In 1880 for instance 11.1 million gallons were distilled in Ireland; duty was paid on 7.3 million of which 5.2 million were retained for home consumption, while there were 20.8 million gallons in bonded warehouses. The amount bonded had jumped from 8.5 million gallons in 1870 to 14.6 million in 1875 to 20.8 million in 1880. McGuire contends that: 'In 1900 a large and thriving distilling industry was in being and after the changes in 1823 it would be impossible to select any more important factor than warehousing duty free in bringing the industry to this flourishing position!'.¹ Warehousing enabled distillers to keep prices lower than they would otherwise have been and also to dampen down price fluctuations, while marketing could be very carefully planned.²

It is more difficult in some respects to trace the history of brewing in nineteenth-century Ireland than it is to outline that of distilling. Accurate statistics on Irish

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, pp 261-2.

² Ibid., pp 262-3; Cullen, An economic history of Ireland since 1660, p. 158.

production are difficult to obtain as they tended to be lumped together with figures for the rest of the United Kingdom.¹ Moreover, the major study so far published in the field is of Guinness's brewery only and it is questionable to what extent one can generalise from Guinness's experience. As had happened in distilling, although the number of commercially-producing companies fell throughout the century, the output rose considerably. At the end of the century there were about forty breweries producing four times the quantity of beer that over two hundred commercial breweries had produced at the beginning.² Brewing also developed as an important export industry, and commercial, as opposed to local, beer became increasingly popular in rural Ireland. The export and provincial trades were largely based on porter. Irish porter was generally better in quality than its British equivalent and the Irish were also able to undercut British prices, mainly, it appears, through extensive evasion of the malt duty. Licensed malt production fell in the first part of the century, but Lynch and Vaizey consider that this was due to tax evasion and that actually there was a rapid expansion of Irish brewing in the early nineteenth century, interrupted by the post-1815 depression and resumed in the late 1820s.³ Beer output reached its pre-famine peak in 1837 when a little over a million barrels were produced, about

¹ Wilson, Alcohol and the nation, p. 369 and Joseph Lee, 'Money and beer in Ireland, 1790-1875' in Economic History Review, 2nd ser., xix, no. 1 (1966), pp 183-5, present significantly different figures.

² Lynch and Vaizey, Guinness's brewery, p. 78.

³ Ibid., pp 83-4.

900,000 of these, according to Joseph Lee's estimate, being drunk in Ireland. But after then a drastic decline set in, being less severe in Guinness's case however. Overall production fell consistently after 1837 and was down to 500,000 barrels by 1845, the lowest recorded output for forty-three years.¹ It recovered somewhat in 1846, but fell again another twenty per cent between 1846 and 1850.² Guinness's production fell between 1839 and 1843, but only from 87,322 barrels to 68,664. By 1846, for the first time, it had risen to over 100,000 barrels, and though it fell again during the famine, by 1850 it was back over the 100,000 level.³ Lee attributes the general decline to various factors, including the 'downswing in the trade cycle and the failure of beer prices to follow suit until 1842, poor harvests, livestock diseases, the temperance crusade of Fr Mathew', but, whatever the reasons, the figures do support his contention that 'Guinness's experience is an unreliable guide to the short-term fluctuations in the beer industry'.⁴

Between 1800 and 1850 Guinness's production increased from 10,000 barrels to over 100,000, but by the latter date Guinness's market was chiefly in England. In 1855, for instance, 400,000 hogsheads of double stout were sold in England and 16,000 in Ireland - 6,000 of these in Dublin - while a further 15,000 hogsheads of single stout or porter

¹ Lynch and Vaizey, Guinness's brewery, p. 80.

² Lee, 'Money and beer in Ireland', p. 185.

³ Lynch and Vaizey, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

⁴ Lee, *op. cit.*, pp 185, 189.

were sold in Ireland - 8,000 of these in Dublin.¹ Between 1800 and 1815 production increased six fold. In 1812 agents in Liverpool are identified for the first time. In 1816 the first steamship service between Dublin and Holyhead began, and in 1824 between Dublin and Liverpool, and these were developments which undoubtedly stimulated the export trade. But, as we have seen, the provincial Irish market was also important, and as early as 1817 there is reference to some twenty or more towns being supplied by Guinness. Lynch and Vaizey estimate that, by 1840, fifty-three per cent of Guinness's sales in bulk were in England and Scotland and about sixty per cent by value. The remaining forty per cent was probably equally divided between Dublin and the rest of Ireland. They believe that the 'growth in Guinness's trade was connected with the rising incomes of the middle classes, and the recruitment of efficient agents at Bristol, London and other British towns'.²

Only in the late 1850s did overall beer production recover to reach its 1837 level. But between 1858 and 1861 it rose almost sixty per cent, from 910,000 barrels to 1.4 million, while over the same period spirit consumption fell forty per cent from 6.8 million gallons to 4.2 million.³ As we have seen, the fall in spirit consumption was due to substantial increases in duty during the 1850s. Presumably there was a shift to beer drinking, rather than to illicit distillation as there might have been in the past, and this

¹ Lynch and Vaizey, Guinness's brewery, p. 120.

² Ibid., p. 140.

³ Wilson, Alcohol and the nation, p. 337.

accounts for the remarkable increase in beer production. We shall see later that the government at this time was actively pursuing a policy of encouraging beer and wine consumption, at the expense of spirits, and appropriate licensing legislation was being passed.¹ Shipkey, though referring only to the early years of the century, sums up this policy generally when he says: 'High taxes on distilled products were often excused in terms of encouraging the Irish public to drink beer. The government's tactic was designed to price whiskey out of the home market without damaging the developing export trade, and the resulting "benefit to health and morals" was the maxim often proclaimed to achieve this aim'.²

If one looks at the Guinness figures for the third quarter of the century, there is a remarkable growth in the Irish trade, particularly outside Dublin. Sales in Dublin rose from 14,000 hogsheads in 1855 to 100,000 in 1875; in the rest of Ireland the rise was 17,000 to 161,000, reaching 230,000 by 1880; while in England sales rose from 40,000 hogsheads to 178,000. From being twenty-one per cent of Guinness's business in 1855, the trade with the rest of Ireland had risen to forty per cent by 1880.³ Lee takes issue with Lynch and Vaizey as to the reasons for this rise and again accuses them of misconstruing the picture by regarding Guinness's growth as representative of the whole industry. He notes that though Guinness's sales in Ireland rose 600 per cent between 1840 and 1870, the rate of growth

¹ Lee 'Money and beer in Ireland', p. 184. See also below, pp 46-9.

² Shipkey, 'Problems of alcoholic production and controls', p. 295.

³ Lynch and Vaizey, Guinness's brewery, pp 199-200.

for the whole industry between 1837 and 1871 was only forty-five per cent. The collapse of the provincial brewing industry in the 1840s, plus the spreading of the railways and the rapidly increasing cost of spirits in the 1850s, all doubtless contributed to the growth of the commercial brewing industry.¹

The north and west were the last areas of the country to be penetrated by the products of the big commercial breweries. Commercial brewing was little developed in Ulster, though distilling certainly was. As early as 1790 the overwhelming majority of Ulster brewers were small retailers, probably mostly publicans.² In 1850 there were nine breweries in Belfast, but by 1900, though the population of the city had trebled, the number of breweries had fallen to three, and these were small. Lynch and Vaizey speculate that the lack of breweries in Ulster was due to 'the initial absence of barley in Ulster, to the difficulty of finding a water supply suitable for brewing or to the competition from Scottish brewers'.³ However, they overlook two other important factors: firstly, that Ulster continued throughout the century to be the centre of illicit distilling in Ireland, and secondly, that it was also the stronghold of the temperance movement. Both factors, in their different ways, would have militated against the growth of large-scale brewing. This picture of the spread of commercial beers, and in particular of Guinness's stout, in rural Ireland in the late nineteenth century, penetrating the west and north

¹ Lee 'Money and beer in Ireland', p. 184.

² McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 417.

³ Lynch and Vaizey, Guinness's brewery, p. 98.

last of all, is confirmed from the archives of the Folklore Commission. Michael Corduff, a farmer near Ballina, County Mayo, born in 1881, told an interviewer in 1956 that in his youth whiskey was the most common alcoholic drink and 'this liquor was practically all poteen'.¹ Porter did not make its appearance in the area till around 1900 but there were never any local breweries. He remembered a jar of porter being at a wedding 'by way of a novelty'. 'Guests merely tasted the porter for the first time, but would not drink it. They said it was like a soot and water mixture, nauseous in the last degree and revolting as a drink, but the mountain dew was the elixir of life or "visce beatha" with all and sundry.'² At Ballycastle in County Antrim they drank whiskey from nearby Bushmills or from Coleraine, County Londonderry, and Comber, County Down, in the 1870s and 1880s.³ But a publican's wife from Fairhead, north Antrim, reported that her father, who was born in 1861, 'never saw stout when he was young' and 'he never drank it'. The first stout to arrive in north Antrim came from Belfast, but again around 1900 Guinness was becoming popular.⁴ But reminiscences of County Tyrone in the 1870s and 1880s, as in Mayo, still spoke of the prevalence of illicit distilling, of stills hidden underground or on remote mountainsides and of narrow escapes from the police.⁵

¹ Folklore Commission archives, Folklore Department, University College, Dublin, MS 1540, p. 4.

² Ibid., p. 6.

³ Ibid., p. 42.

⁴ Ibid., p. 43.

⁵ Ibid., MS 1215, pp 119-20.

There are serious difficulties in trying to calculate accurately both overall beer production and home consumption. The various writers on the subject tend to present differing figures. McGuire sums up the difficulty.

Before 1880 there are no revenue statistics for beer as the duty was levied on malt. After that date the duty was paid on beer, but like the proof gallon for spirits, the revenue statistics for beer are for barrels calculated at an original gravity of 55° and not on the bulk quantity. Estimation of beer consumption in the earlier years is further complicated because the malt used by distillers would be included in the revenue figures. The malt duty until 1855 was charged and the distillers later got a drawback. After that year the revenue figures do show the malt used for distilling, but the quantities were approximately half the total. Thus in 1879 the last year of the malt duty, 3.5 million bushels of malt were made of which 1.7 million were used by distillers. At the conversion rate presumed by the 1880 act, this would result in 1.8 million standard barrels of beer.¹

Lynch and Vaizey's study of Guinness's ends in 1876 and the projected second volume has so far not appeared. However, it would seem that the last quarter of the century was a period of substantial growth for the Irish brewing industry. According to Wilson's figures production rose steadily from two million barrels in 1875 to three million in 1900. This rate of growth substantially exceeded that of the English brewing industry over the same period.² Exports were important, though not as important as they were to the distilling industry. In 1896 it was estimated that twenty-three per cent of Irish beer was exported each year to England.³

The general picture which emerges from this survey of the Irish drink industry is one of substantial growth and consolidation during the nineteenth century. In distilling

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 299.

² Wilson, Alcohol and the nation, pp 369-70.

³ Ibid., p. 9; Cullen, An economic history of Ireland since 1660, p. 158.

the competition of the illicit distiller was brought under control by the middle of the century, and, in the face of tax increases in Ireland during the 1850s which diminished the home market, the industry turned more and more to the export trade, so that by 1900 more than half the whiskey produced in Ireland each year was being exported. Irish spirit consumption declined consistently, except during the late 1860s and early 1870s when alcohol consumption in the United Kingdom generally reached record levels. Punitive taxation was probably the main factor producing this decline, though increased beer consumption and temperance propaganda doubtless played a part. Beer production expanded steadily after 1860, most spectacularly in the case of Guinness's brewery. Again the export trade, especially in England, was important, but commercial beer in substantial amounts also came to penetrate rural Ireland for the first time. It is against this background of changes in the drink industry that we shall later examine the temperance movement and its assessment of Irish drinking patterns.

Licensing laws and the retail drink trade

The first licensing act to control the retail drink trade in Ireland was 10 & 11 Chas. I, c.5 which was passed in 1634. The preamble to the act indicated the conditions prevailing at the time.

Forasmuch as it is found by daily experience that many mischiefs and inconveniences do arise from the excessive number of alehouses, from the erection of them in woods, bogs, and other unfit places, and many of them not in townships but dispersedly, and in dangerous places, and kept by unknown persons not undertaken for, whereby many times they become receptacles for rebels and other malefactors, and harbours for gamesters and other idle,

disordered and unprofitable livers, and that those that keep those alehouses for the most part are not fitted or furnished to lodge or entertain travellers in any decent manner; for the redress of these inconveniences and to reduce those needless multitudes of alehouses to a fewer number, to more fit persons, and to more convenient places.¹

This act contained the cardinal provisions of the licensing law as it applied to Ireland even during the nineteenth century. It provided for the supervision of licensed houses by licensing commissioners, generally magistrates; that licences should not be granted except to proper persons and for suitable premises; that the annual licensing quarter sessions should be held one month after Easter; that two justices at least should grant the licence; that drunkenness, gambling and unlawful games, and the harbouring of improper persons on licensed premises were illegal; that each publican should pay a licence duty to the king, a fee on grant of the licence and afterwards annually to the clerk of the peace; and finally that a register of licences should be kept by the clerk of the peace. The act also specified that the licensed premises were to be advertised by the displaying of a sign, stake or bush.² Originally this act was only intended to control alehouses, but in practice it was extended to all liquor shops. Though not till 1665 was an act passed formally to extend the licensing system to spirits, New licensing commissioners were appointed, but the act was badly drafted and their functions overlapped those of the excise commissioners.³

¹ Quoted in Wilson, Alcohol and the nation, p. 122.

² Andrew Reed's evidence in Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, pp 10-11, H.C. 1877 (198), xvi, 26-7.

³ McGuire, Irish whiskey, pp 101-2.

By the early eighteenth century the excise board had taken control of the issuing of licences and the collection of licence duties. The board's inefficiency and corruption, however, were notorious and critics of Irish drunkenness blamed it for issuing too many licences to undesirable individuals. In 1730 for instance it was estimated that thirteen per cent of the houses in Dublin were alehouses.¹ Sporadic attempts were made to reform the retail trade, but with little success before the 1790s. In 1735 licensed retailers were precluded from using the courts to recover debts exceeding one shilling incurred for drink sold on credit. In 1760 parliament discussed the question and resolved that the small sums paid for spirit licenses greatly contributed to the multiplicity of traders. Some members suggested that the fees should be raised, but this motion was defeated in favour of an ineffectual reminder to the excise board of its duty to enquire into the character and suitability of applicants for licences.² Finally, after much criticism of excessive drinking and a vigorous campaign by brewers to improve their position vis-à-vis distillers, a new licensing act, 31 Geo. III, c.13, was passed in 1791. This significantly increased the licence duties and specified that a magistrate's certificate of good character was necessary before a collector of excise could issue a licence. This act was quickly followed by another, 32 Geo. III, c.19, in 1792. Under it retail licences were only to be granted to innkeepers, tavernkeepers and

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 121.

² Ibid., pp 122-3.

victuallers if they sold good strong beer or ale at reasonable prices and, further, they were not permitted to sell spirits before 1 p.m. on Sundays or before sunrise on other days. Meals had to be available at inns and taverns.

McGuire thinks that the policing of these clauses must have been a problem, for, since beer could be sold at any time but not spirits, the fact that a public house was open was no indication that the law was being violated. The act obviously aimed to encourage beer consumption, as retailers in Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick could obtain reductions in their licence fees if they sold in excess of prescribed amounts of beer. This act was clearly in line with that passed in 1795 to free brewers from the beer tax and thus stimulate the industry.¹ An arrangement was also instituted for parishes in Dublin to appoint overseers of licensed premises. These overseers had powers similar to the chief constable and were responsible for seeing that drinking places were conducted in an orderly manner. Only members of the established church could hold this position. There were other measures to stop such practices as paying workmen's wages on licensed premises, paying wages partly in spirits and stopping wages to recover drink debts. Unlicensed selling was to carry heavy penalties: a fine up to £40 in Dublin and £20 elsewhere.²

Grocers had first been licensed in 1785 by 25 Geo. III, c.8, the licence being issued by the excise collector without reference to the justices. They could sell small amounts of

¹ For a discussion of the efforts to stimulate beer consumption in the 1790s see below, pp 131-4.

² McGuire, Irish whiskey, pp 160-61; Wilson, Alcohol and the nation, pp 122-3.

spirits for consumption off the premises. The 1792 licensing act defined spirit grocers more clearly. Another act in 1796 extended some of the provisions introduced in 1792, like the rebates for beer sales and the system of overseers, and it also made more explicit the law regarding spirit grocers. Provided a man was licensed as a grocer, the excise collector could issue a spirit grocer's licence without charge for the sale of not less than one pint of spirits, to be consumed off the premises. The grocer in turn had to furnish a bond with two sureties for £50. Presumably a pint was chosen as the minimum because it was more than a customer was likely to consume immediately in the shop. With supplies being drawn from a cask, however, detecting consumption on the premises was a difficult task.¹

In the following year, 1797, there was another licensing act correcting minor defects and making some changes in the procedures for acquiring a licence. This act also clearly favoured the sale of beer over that of spirits. A licence for the sale of wine or ale for consumption on the premises could be issued by the collector of excise without a justice's certificate or any other formality. Under these licences any quantity of bottled porter could be sold though there was a limit on sales from bulk, of one gallon in the case of wine and ten gallons in the case of beer or ale. These were very generous allowances. Spirit licences, on the other hand, came in for further formalities and the machinery for their issue was changed. Special licensing sessions of the

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 162.

courts were to be held between July and September and the granting of a certificate of good character was made conditional upon the applicant taking an oath of allegiance. This reflected the growing disaffection in the country which led to rebellion in 1798 and the fact that rebels were known to use public houses as meeting and recruiting places. Having obtained a magistrate's certificate, the applicant presented it to the excise collector, paid the licence duty and had his certificate endorsed. He then went to the clerk of the peace who actually issued the licence. There he had to present in addition to the endorsed certificate, a licence to sell beer. The spirit licence specified precisely where sales were permitted and any sales in other rooms or different premises were deemed unlicensed and thus illegal.¹

'The sale of spirits was truly being circumscribed within narrow limits and it needed a persistent man to pursue so restricted a trade', particularly when licence duties were very heavy. They were increased in 1799, in Dublin by fifty per cent to £30 per annum. According to McGuire,

so far as laws could go, beer sales were being promoted and spirit sales severely handicapped. If these laws had been really effective distillers would have had great difficulty maintaining their market against the loaded competition from brewers. The public taste for spirits was, however, stronger than the law as the continued rise in spirit production proved. Attempts to force up the price of whiskey to a point beyond the reach of the poorer classes had failed and had only given added incentive to every form of evasion. The illicit distiller and the shebeen thrived in this fertile soil. It

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, pp 162-3.

is worth noting that distilling was forbidden in 1796 and 1797 without seriously affecting the trade.¹

The government's punitive policy towards spirits continued after the union. Over twenty years the licence duties rose by about one-third. The regulations governing a publican before 1825 were made clear in the conditions attached to the retailer's £50 bond. This stated that the keeper of a victualling house, inn or tavern must provide strong beer and food of good quality at reasonable prices and supply all travellers; he could not sell any spirits on Sunday or wine and beer on Sunday before 2 p.m.; he could not sell drink at an unreasonable hour, except to travellers; he could not allow the payment of wages on his premises, nor permit an unlawful assembly, nor admit armed persons unless they were lawfully carrying arms; and he was not to sell spirits which had not paid duty. Certain persons were specifically excluded from the retail trade: distillers, rectifiers, compounders and anyone who was not a victualler, innkeeper or tavernkeeper was incapable of holding a licence, grocers being the exception. The retail licence permitted sales up to twenty-five gallons at a time, but, except in the main towns and their attached counties, there was a reduction in the licence duty if this limit was not reached. Thus a licensee in an area where the full duty was £22, permitting sales up to twenty-five gallons, could obtain his licence for £15, with a limit of twenty gallons, or £11, with a limit of ten gallons. Beer sellers, on the other hand, obtained

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, pp 163-4.

licence rebates if they sold more, rather than less, of prescribed amounts. Licence fees thus discriminated in favour of beer sellers and against spirit sellers, though how such regulations were enforced, given the inadequacy of the revenue police, is a matter for speculation. The issuing of licences had been transferred in 1804 to the stamp duty office, but in 1815 it was returned to the excise. This may have indicated an effort to tighten up on the issuing of licences, but if so, it failed and only demonstrated the muddled thinking behind the administration of the licensing laws.¹

At the beginning of the century spirit grocers were not eligible for a retailer's licence, but paid a special licence duty of £3 in Dublin and £2 elsewhere. This enabled them to sell spirits for consumption off the premises in quantities of not less than two quarts. This favoured position was withdrawn in 1813 when their licence duties were raised to about three-quarters of the full retail licence duty; thus, for example, a grocer's spirit licence in Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick was now £30. In 1818 they were allowed to sell less than two quarts, but at the same time the licence duty was further raised to equal that of the spirit retailer. McGuire thinks that this 'was a heavy burden for what is now known as an off-licence'. The most likely explanation, according to him, is that 'surreptitious drinking on the premises was a common practice and therefore it was fair to tax the grocer as heavily as the spirit retailer'.² The grocer,

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, pp 201-3.

² Ibid., pp 203-4. For complaints from and about spirit grocers see below, pp 61-3.

however, did still have the advantage that his licence did not need the approval of the magistrates. Before 1825, in addition to the spirit grocer, there were three other types of spirit licence. We have already referred to the spirit retailer, who, after 1818 paid the same licence fee as the spirit grocer, but could sell in quantities up to twenty-five gallons for consumption either on or off the premises. There was also the spirit factor, paying a licence duty of £20 and selling on commission not less than fifty gallons at a time, and the spirit dealer, selling two or more gallons with a licence duty ranging from £10 to £25, according to the town in which he operated. In order to illustrate how heavy the spirit licence duties were, McGuire has calculated that a spirit retailer in Dublin or Cork would have to have sold over 300 gallons of spirits annually merely to recover the cost of his licence. At the time there were some 10,000 retail licences and five million gallons of spirits paying duty. So, on the average, a spirit retailer would have sold 500 gallons of legal spirit each year. Therefore, sixty per cent of his business went to paying the licence fee. Of course, when one takes into account illicit distillation and illegal production by registered distilleries, it is clear that double and even treble five million gallons were sold. But these calculations by McGuire show why retailers were so willing to participate in the trade in illegal spirits.¹

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, pp 204-5.

The licensing legislation still in force in Ireland during the latter part of the century began in 1825 with 6 Geo. IV, c.81. All Irish licences were withdrawn and replaced by new ones at English rates of duty. This reflected the urge to assimilate the revenue systems of the two countries, which was also behind the moves to equalise spirit duties in the 1850s. For spirit retailers this meant a graduated levy based on the rateable valuation of their premises, which was a nearer approximation to the value of the extent of their trade. Spirit dealers were now licensed at a flat rate of £10 per annum. The new law allowed spirit grocers to continue, though they were not found in England, with licence duties also related to the value of the premises. The differences between the old and new laws were appreciable and in all the new ones were fairer. Under the old laws a public house in one of the main cities paid £40 whether it was a hovel or a well-appointed house in a good situation. After 1825 the licence duty ranged from £2.2s.0d., if the house was rated under £10, up to £10.10s.0d. for a rateable value of £50 or more. But the new regulations still worked to discourage spirit grocers. The licence for a grocer was reduced to eleven shillings, but the additional spirit licence was now approximately £3 more than that paid by a publican. But a grocer still was not required to have a certificate of good character from the magistrates.¹

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 280; Andrew Reed, The liquor licensing laws of Ireland (Dublin, 1889), p. 7; M.B. Kavanagh and A.W. Quill, The licensing acts, 1872-4 (Dublin, 1875), pp 87-92.

The next major piece of licensing legislation enacted for Ireland was 3 & 4 Wm IV, c.68 of 1833, also known as Perrin's act. In its preamble it stated that 'whereas the laws for granting such certificate or authority by the justices of the peace and magistrates in Ireland have become confused, doubtful, and complicated, and the requiring the said certificate or authority imposes great difficulties and hardships on persons applying to be so licensed', new measures were needed 'to amend and simplify the same'. This act was an interesting example of what McGuire calls the 'third party' interest. It specified that the licence of a publican, who had been licensed in the year immediately preceding, could be renewed on production of a good character certificate signed, not by the magistrates, but by six householders of the parish, 'two of them being residents of the same or next adjoining townland, or street if in a city or town, in which such house is situate'. ✓ The third party principle, that householders living near a public house should have some say in its licensing, was to be more fully developed in later years by the temperance movement into the concept of local option. With regard to new licences, the third party interest was strengthened by the provision that twenty-one days' notice had to be given by the applicant for a magistrate's certificate. The clerk of the peace, ten days before the licensing sessions, was to produce a list of the names and circumstances of the applicants, which was to be circulated to all magistrates in the city, town or county. Applicants' names were to be read out in open court during the actual quarter sessions and objections

called for. Any magistrate, church warden or inhabitant of the parish concerned could deliver an objection in writing prior to the sessions or state it verbally before the assembled magistrates. The magistrates were to examine the applicant and any objections and either issue the certificate or withhold it, though if it was to be the latter, then the reasons for the withholding of a certificate had to be stated. Objections to the granting of a certificate could only be made on one of three grounds: that the character and conduct of the applicant were unsuitable, that the premises were unfit or inconvenient, or that there were already too many licensed houses in the neighbourhood.¹ Sales of liquor were forbidden between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. and between 11 p.m. on Saturday and 2 p.m. on Sunday. During these times constables, magistrates and church wardens were entitled to enter licensed premises and remove anyone found drinking or gambling. A licensee, who 'for the space of ten minutes after demand made of entrance delay or neglect to admit' such officers, was liable to a fine of £2. Further local control was ensured by the provision that overseers of public houses were to be appointed by the parishioners in vestry. These overseers, not exceeding five in number, were to have full powers to enforce the act and for the purposes of the act were to be deemed constables. In the event of 'any riot or tumult' or the fear of such, two magistrates were empowered to

¹ In 1878 the third ground for objection was dropped as regards transfers. The Irish temperance movement fought this decision in the courts, but unsuccessfully. For an account of the legal implications see the evidence of the Irish solicitor-general in Royal commission on liquor licensing laws, pp 5-8 [C-8980], H.C. 1898, xxxviii, 539-42.

order public houses in their jurisdiction to be closed for any length of time they saw fit.¹

Perrin's act was amended in 1836 by 6 & 7 Wm IV, c.38, mainly in order to close certain loopholes. The procedure for the renewal of a licence was tightened up. It would have been easy for a publican wanting a renewal to have organised six friends or relations to provide him with a good character certificate, so, in addition to this certificate, one was required from the chief constable of the district or from two of the parish overseers. A retailer was, moreover, forbidden to permit societies declared to be illegal to meet on his premises, or those that required an oath or ceremony before membership, nor was he to allow to be displayed on his house any 'flag, symbol, colour, decoration, or emblem' of such a society. This is another example of measures stemming from the late eighteenth century to prevent agrarian secret societies using public houses as meeting places. Under this act hours of sale on Sunday were shortened, houses having to be closed from 9 p.m. on Sunday evening to 9 a.m. on Monday morning. This did not satisfy temperance advocates, some of whom had argued for total Sunday closing before the 1834 select committee on drunkenness, though the shortening was probably a result of the committee's report. Apparently the parish overseers had not been fulfilling their functions properly for the act provided that annually, or oftener if necessary, vestry should appoint between ten and twenty overseers, with the powers of constables, to inspect the

¹ For summaries of the main provisions of this act see Kavanagh and Quill, The licensing acts, 1872-4, pp 92-101 and Reed, The liquor licensing laws, p. 7.

public houses of the parish. Overseers who neglected or refused their duties were liable to a fine of one pound, while, if the vestry failed to appoint overseers, two justices at petty sessions were empowered to do so.¹

The major licensing legislation of the 1830s was completed in 1839 with the passing of 2 & 3 Vict., c.79, which was aimed at the illicit trade in spirits. The act authorised justices at petty sessions to examine witnesses and, upon satisfying themselves that there was 'reasonable ground for suspecting that spirits are sold or kept for sale in any house or place within the county not licensed for the sale thereof', to grant a warrant lasting for seven days to enable police to enter a suspected house during daylight hours and seize any spirits found within. A person convicted of selling liquor without a licence was liable to a fine not exceeding £2. For such a penalty to be incurred it was sufficient to 'prove that such beer, cider or spirits was kept for sale by such person, or on his premises with his knowledge'.² The phrase 'kept for sale' was very important as it meant that a person could be convicted of selling liquor illegally without the police actually having to prove that a sale had taken place. This would not have been easy to do, and so, under the act, proof of an intention to sell became sufficient grounds for a conviction.

The law with regard to spirit grocers was tightened in 1845 by 8 & 9 Vict., c.64. This act authorised justices, constables and overseers to enter spirit-grocer shops at any

¹ Kavanagh and Quill, The licensing acts, 1872-4, pp 102-11; Reed, The liquor licensing laws, pp 7-8.

² 2 & 3 Vict., c.79, sections 1 and 2.

time at which they were kept open for the sale of spirits and, if any person was found therein 'who appears to be or to have recently been drinking or tippling spirits', the grocer was liable to a £2 fine and the forfeiture of his licence. The offence was again so defined as to facilitate conviction. It was also an offence for a grocer to 'oppose', 'obstruct', or 'delay to admit' the police. Later acts were to drop the offence of delaying to admit, though temperance men claimed that this gave grocers the opportunity to remove all signs of drinking while they delayed police entry. They campaigned for the reinstatement of delay as an offence, regarding it as a sure sign that illicit drinking had been taking place.¹

The 1839 act regulating the illicit trade having expired, its provisions were continued and extended in 1854 by 17 & 18 Vict., c.89. One or more justices were permitted, upon a sworn information, to issue police with a warrant to enter a house, suspected of illegally selling, keeping for sale or exposing for sale liquor, at any time and the warrant was to last for one month instead of one week, as under the old act. Spirits and the vessels containing them could be seized, while the penalties for this offence were generally increased. The act in fact was very sweeping. For a conviction it was

sufficient to prove that wine, spirits, beer, ale, cider, or perry, was kept for sale or exposed for sale by such person or on his premises, or had been illegally consumed on such premises, at any time within two months preceding such alleged offence; and if any person be found drunk in such house, or having the appearance of having recently been

¹ Kavanagh and Quill, The licensing acts, 1872-4, pp 111-12; see 37 & 38 Vict., c.69, section 23; for the present law on the matter see J.V. Woods, Guide to intoxicating liquor acts (Cork, [1974]), pp 6-7.

drinking, it shall be deemed evidence of his having been drinking in such house, and of the unlawful consumption of wine, spirits, beer, ale, cider, or perry, unless the contrary be proved.¹

As part of the effort to stamp out illicit distilling, the act empowered the constabulary to demand a permit from any person removing spirits in any quantity over one gallon, to endorse the permit on production, and, if no permit was forthcoming, to arrest the person, seize the spirits and the vessels and vehicle conveying the spirits. Penalties for illicit distillation were also increased and the lord lieutenant was empowered to declare that illicit distillation was prevalent in a county or part of a county. Such a proclamation could last for up to three years and, during that time, the constabulary in the area were invested with all the powers of excise officers in order that they might suppress the illegal trade. This tightening of the law relating to illicit distilling and trading in 1854 was undertaken in conjunction with increases in spirit duties. Fearing an upsurge in the illicit industry as legal spirits became more expensive, the government tried to head off such a development with stiffer laws. Giving the police the powers of excise officers, which is still the situation today, was an important development and considerably strengthened the forces arrayed against the illicit distillers. Detections of illicit stills had been falling in the 1840s and though they did increase in the 1850s and 1860s, the rise was not great and the decline was resumed in the 1870s.²

¹ 17 & 18 Vict., c.89, section 3.

² Kavanagh and Quill, The licensing acts, 1872-4, pp 113-20; McGuire, Irish whiskey, pp 423-6; Wilson, Alcohol and the nation, p. 19.

Another tactic adopted by the government in the early 1860s, as part of its campaign to discourage spirit consumption, was the promotion of alternative forms of liquor, most notably wine and beer. However, this effort was to produce unforeseen and unwelcome complications for both the Irish liquor trade and the temperance movement. Under 23 & 24 Vict., c.107, known as the wine licences act of 1860, new licences were introduced to facilitate the sale of wine in Ireland. Refreshment houses, defined as 'houses, rooms, shops, or buildings, kept open for public refreshment, resort, and entertainment at any time between the hours of nine of the clock at night and seven of the clock of the following morning', were permitted to take out licences to sell wine for consumption on or off the premises. The house had to have a rating valuation of at least £15 in places with a population over 10,000 and at least £8 elsewhere. These licences were to be granted by the excise authorities and applications were to be submitted to them with copies going to the police and the magistrates. The licence would be granted unless, within thirty days, the police lodged an objection with the magistrates. Such objections could be based on a number of prescribed grounds: that the house was not a refreshment house as defined under the act; that it did not have the specified rating valuation; that it was a disorderly house frequented by prostitutes or members of unlawful societies; that the owner was a member of such a society or a convicted criminal or had previously forfeited another liquor licence. The magistrates could also object to the renewal or transfer of a

retail wine licence, though, if his application was refused, the refreshment house owner could apply to the quarter sessions or to the recorder. The licence permitted the sale of wine in unlimited quantities for consumption on or off the premises.¹ This act also introduced another new wine licence which permitted the retailing of wines in any shop for consumption off the premises. The wine was to be sold in reputed quart or pint bottles in quantities less than two gallons. This licence was also obtained from the excise authorities and merely required a certificate from the police verifying that the applicant was the proprietor of a shop.²

Under section 20 of the wine licences act, the police could visit and inspect refreshment houses and anyone who 'shall refuse to admit or shall not admit' a constable could be fined. It should be noted that the offence, 'delaying to admit', had been dropped. This omission was confirmed by the licensing act of 1874. But there was another complication with regards to this act, which amply confirmed Gladstone's remark of 1868 that 'so great were the difficulties and so anomalous our licensing laws that every attempt which has hitherto been made to reduce them to something like order or principle had failed'.³ The act produced considerable confusion in Ireland as to the opening hours of licensed premises. Section 43 stated that a retailer selling for consumption on the premises could keep

¹ Kavanagh and Quill, The licensing acts, 1872-4, pp 126-43.

² 23 & 24 Vict., c.107, sections 1-4.

³ Quoted in McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 292.

his house open and sell at any time between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m., except on Sunday, Good Friday and Christmas Day, when the hours were reduced to between 2 p.m. and 11 p.m. As we have seen, these were the hours laid down by Perrin's act in 1833, but they had been reduced in 1836 to between 2 p.m. and 9 p.m. Now, with little explanation and much to the annoyance of the temperance movement, the two hours were restored for wine retailers and were quickly extended to the whole trade.

Another effort by Westminster to encourage alternatives to spirits followed soon afterwards. This involved two acts: a revenue act in 1863, 26 & 27 Vict., c.33, and the beerhouses act of 1864, 27 & 28 Vict., c.35. The former permitted wholesale beer dealers, that is 'any person having taken out an excise licence to sell strong beer in casks containing not less than $4\frac{1}{2}$ gallons or not less than two dozen reputed quart bottles at one time to be consumed off the premises', to take out an additional licence, on payment of the excise duty of one guinea, to sell beer in any quantity less than the above, for consumption off the premises. This retail beer licence required no certificate of good character, the only qualification necessary being the possession of a wholesale beer licence. The beerhouses act of the following year attempted to restrict eligibility for the retail licence by specifying that the excise authorities could not grant such a licence or its renewal without a certificate from the magistrates attesting to the good character of the applicant and the suitability of his premises.¹ Section 6 of the act also applied the

¹ 27 & 28 Vict., c.35, sections 3-5.

prohibitions and penalties with regards to hours of trading and conduct of the premises, which already applied to publicans, to retail beer dealers. However, the act was very poorly drafted in that it did not specifically withdraw the right of a wholesale beer dealer to obtain a retail licence simply on payment of a fee, as laid down in 1863. Therefore, persons seeking a retail licence found that they could circumvent the requirement of a magistrate's certificate by first acquiring a wholesale licence from the excise, which required no certificate, and then taking out a retail one. In these circumstances, under the 1863 act, no certificate was required for the retail beer licence. As a result of this loophole, during the 1860s low beerhouses proliferated in Ireland, as they had done in England after the passing of the beer act of 1830.¹

In 1867, 1868 and 1869 a series of Irish Sunday closing bills were introduced and gave rise in 1868 to a select committee on the subject. But the issue was dropped by Irish M.P.s on the understanding that the liberal government would introduce, in the near future, a major piece of legislation dealing with the whole question of licensing. In 1871 the home secretary, H.A. Bruce, introduced a radical bill which, not only aimed to curtail hours of opening, but to reduce substantially the number of licences. But the bill was withdrawn in the face of vigorous opposition from the drink trade and from substantial numbers of tory M.P.s, and a milder bill was put forward by the liberals in 1872.² Andrew

¹ See appendix III for the numbers of beerhouses in Ireland from 1865.

² Paul Smith, Disraelian conservatism and social reform (London, 1967), pp 147-8. See below, pp 348-9 for a more detailed discussion of the 1871 bill.

Reed, a barrister and inspector-general of the R.I.C., later described this measure as 'one of the most complicated acts that has been passed in modern times' and declared that 'its complexity is principally owing to the fact that the act was originally intended to apply only to England, and was adapted for extension to Ireland by means of numerous omissions and modifications'.¹

Sections 3 to 11 of the 1872 licensing act dealt with illicit sales and considerably increased the penalties for 'selling or exposing for sale' without a licence and for allowing sales on premises which were not licensed. A first offence would henceforth incur a penalty of up to a £50 fine or one month in jail and a second offence, a £100 fine or three months in jail, plus a disqualification from holding any liquor licence for up to five years. The act in fact established three classes of offences: offences, convictions for which were not to be endorsed upon the licence; offences, convictions for which must be endorsed upon the licence; and thirdly, offences, convictions for which were to be endorsed upon the licence, unless the magistrate directed otherwise.² Three endorsements meant the automatic loss of the licence, plus a five-year personal disqualification and a possible two-year disqualification for the premises. Sections 12 to 18 dealt with offences against public order. In section 12 three forms of drunkenness were defined: simple drunkenness in public; drunkenness in public attended with riotous or disorderly behaviour; and drunkenness attended with a refusal to leave

¹ Reed, The liquor licensing laws, p. 11.

² Kavanagh and Quill, The licensing acts, 1872-4, p. 6.

licensed premises. Again the penalties were severe, the second form of drunkenness, for instance, incurring a forty shilling fine or a possible one month's imprisonment. Some of the onus with regard to drunkenness was also placed upon the licensee. Licensees were empowered to refuse to admit or to eject drunken persons and were liable to a £10 fine if they sold to a drunken person or permitted drunkenness and riotous behaviour on their premises. A publican who allowed his premises to be used as a brothel was liable to a £20 fine, forfeiture of his licence and perpetual personal disqualification. These measures all reflected the liberals' desire to eliminate abuses, especially unlicensed selling and drunkenness, which were among the prime concerns of the government. The one deprived the state of revenue in terms of licence fees, while the other cost the state money in terms of policing and imprisonment. Both liberals and conservatives were anxious to remedy such problems, aside from any considerations of temperance.

The act, however, did contain some specifically temperance-inspired clauses. Under section 49, for instance, a new type of publican's licence, the six-day licence, was introduced. It was obviously intended as a sop to the advocates of Sunday closing. An applicant was entitled to apply for a six-day licence, which meant that he could not trade on Sunday, and for this he paid 6/7 of the normal licence fee. Another provision of great interest to the temperance movement was that which specified that the excise could only grant or renew a spirit grocer's licence when the applicant produced a certificate, signed by two magistrates at petty sessions or in Dublin by a divisional justice,

attesting to his good character and the orderly conduct of his premises.¹ Thus was the spirit grocer at last brought under the control of the magistrates. If a purchaser of spirits drank them on the grocer's premises or 'on any highway adjoining or near such premises', the grocer, 'if it shall appear that such drinking was with his privity or consent', was liable to a £10 fine for the first offence and £20 for subsequent offences. Whether the grocer's licence would be endorsed was left to the discretion of the magistrates.² The hours for spirit grocer shops were to be the same as those for publicans,³ but here again the wording of the act created confusion.

Section 78 dealt with trading hours and specified that selling on Sunday, Good Friday and Christmas Day should be unlawful 'after nine o'clock within any city or town the population of which according to the last parliamentary census shall exceed five thousand, ... elsewhere after seven o'clock at night on such days, and on other days after ten o'clock at night'. So Sunday trading hours were reduced from between 2 p.m. and 11 p.m. to between 2 p.m. and 9 p.m. in cities and towns and between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. elsewhere. But the last phrase in this section, referring to 10 p.m. closing on other days, created confusion. Did it only apply to cities and towns or did it apply over the whole country? Kavanagh and Quill in their guide to the act interpreted it to mean the latter, but still the wording was open to conflicting interpretations.⁴

¹ 35 & 36 Vict., c.94, section 82.

² Ibid., section 83.

³ Ibid., section 86.

⁴ Kavanagh and Quill, The licensing acts, 1872-4, pp 43-4.

With the liberal defeat in 1874 the Tories moved immediately to modify the 1872 act, along lines generally more acceptable to the drink trade.¹ This time Ireland was dealt with in a separate act, 37 & 38 Vict., c.69, the Licensing Act (Ireland) 1874. The act in some respects facilitated the renewal of a licence once granted, but at the same time placed further restrictions upon the granting of new licences. Under section 14 a person applying for a renewal was no longer required to attend the court in person and he had to be given seven days' notice of any objections to the renewal, or the objection would not be heard in court. Further, evidence relating to an objection had to be given on oath. But, at the same time, under section 9, the act stated unequivocally that all excise licences in their granting, renewal and transfer, required a certificate of good character and suitability or orderly conduct of premises from the magistrates. Such measures were in the interests of the drink trade which did not particularly favour the creation of more licences and thus more competition, but wanted to facilitate the renewal and transfer of existing licences. The publicans especially favoured the extending of the magistrate's certificate requirement to the spirit grocers as they felt that lawless grocers were giving the whole Irish trade a bad name and inviting punitive legislation.

Section 21 of the act left the recording of convictions on licences to the discretion of the magistrates, another

¹ Smith, Disraelian conservatism, pp 208-13. For correspondence between Dublin Castle, police, magistrates and the drink trade critical of the 1872 act see Michael Dwyer to Sir Michael Hicks Beach, 16 Apr. 1874; memorandum of Dublin magistrates on the draft licensing bill, 8 Sept. 1874; Commissioner Lake to T.H. Burke, 7 May 1874 (S.P.O., R.P. 1874/9655).

measure favoured by the trade. But section 38, in repealing the sections of the 1872 act dealing with mandatory endorsements, was so worded as to imply that the whole endorsement procedure was to be dropped. Further confusion arose over the words 'licence' and 'excise licence' and whether they could be used interchangeably in the light of previous definitions. Kavanagh and Quill were unable to resolve these problems arising from loose and contradictory wording in the act, and, like so many other confusions created by poorly drafted licensing legislation, they were left to the courts to try and sort out.¹ The temperance lobby considered these changes undesirable, for magistrates were notorious for their reluctance to endorse licences.

Various new types of licences were introduced, such as the early closing licence, which necessitated closing an hour earlier and in return provided a 1/7 remission in the licence duty; the six-day early closing licence, which provided a 2/7 remission.² These were clearly intended to encourage a voluntary shortening of trading hours. But some existing licences, such as occasional and theatre licences, were amended to extend rather than reduce their hours of trading.³ Section 11 of the act permitted two magistrates, or in Dublin an assistant police commissioner, to issue on payment of 2s.6d. an exemption order, which would allow licensed premises in the vicinity of a market or fair to be free of restrictions with regard to trading hours, except only for the requirement that they close between 1 a.m.

¹ Kavanagh and Quill, The licensing acts, 1872-4, pp 6-7.

² 37 & 38 Vict., c.69, section 2.

³ Ibid., sections 4-7.

and 2 a.m. Thus, whereas the act introduced flexibility of hours on the one hand to encourage earlier closing, on the other hand flexibility was also used to extend the trading hours of certain types of licence. But, as few publicans took advantage of the new restricted licences, the general effect of the 1874 measures with regard to trading hours was to extend rather than diminish them. Section 67 of the 1872 act had set twenty shillings as the minimum penalty for all offences connected with licensing laws, and, though the Tories generally did not lower the penalties imposed in 1872, they did repeal this particular section of the Liberals' act.¹ Again the discretion of the magistrates was to be the determining factor with regard to penalties and again the temperance movement criticised this change as it considered the magistrates too lenient.

Section 8 of the 1874 act was especially important as it closed the loop-hole in the retail beer licensing procedure by decreeing that the excise could not grant, renew or transfer a wholesale beer dealer's licence without a magistrate's certificate. So, from 1874 all beer dealers, as from 1872 all spirit grocers, now required a certificate from the magistrates, like that long demanded of publicans, before they could receive a retail licence. Section 12 was also important for it made significant changes in Irish licensing procedure. It empowered the lord lieutenant to declare one of the petty and quarter sessions to be the annual licensing sessions, at which all certificates would be granted. Thus, instead of licensing going on throughout the year at all sessions, the granting and

¹ 37 & 38 Vict., c.69, section 20.

renewal of licences was restricted to a limited period. October was the time subsequently designated for the annual licensing petty sessions.¹ The temperance movement welcomed this provision, as it made it easier for both the authorities and the critics of licensing to monitor and control the situation.

Despite these major licensing acts, concern about liquor licensing in the Irish temperance movement remained intense throughout the rest of the 1870s and into the 1880s. Numerous bills, mainly aimed to limit hours or establish local option, were introduced during this period, but, for reasons that we shall discuss in more detail later, few passed. In 1877 the Beer Licences Regulation (Ireland) Act, 40 & 41 Vict., c.4, was passed. This act, sponsored by Charles Meldon, M.P. for County Kildare, was a further attack upon the beer-houses, which had proliferated after 1863-4, and was instigated by the temperance movement.² It decreed that the excise authorities could not grant a retail beer licence except to premises rated at £10 or upwards and in cities and towns with a population exceeding 10,000 rated at £20 or upwards. The act also specified that the licensee should be the sole occupant of the premises. These two provisions were aimed against the practice, most prevalent in Dublin, of setting up beer shops in the rooms of tenement houses where police supervision was virtually impossible. However, in attacking the beerhouses, the temperance movement was leaving itself open to the charge of encouraging spirit consumption, for

¹ Kavanagh and Quill, The licensing acts, 1872-4, p. 64.

² For correspondence about this bill between Dublin Castle, the police and the temperance movement see T.W. Russell to Hicks Beach, 4 Apr. 1876; Lake to Burke, 6 and 15 Apr. 1876 (S.P.O., R.P. 1876/6090).

the beerhouses had been established specifically to bring about a shift from spirit to beer drinking in Ireland.¹

In the 1870s, the main preoccupation of the campaign for restrictive liquor legislation in Ireland was Sunday closing. Prior to this period, as we have seen, there had been four significant changes in the law with regard to the closing of public houses on Sundays. In 1833, under section 14 of Perrin's act, they were permitted to open between 2 p.m. and 11 p.m. But, in consequence of the report of the 1834 select committee on drunkenness, these hours were reduced in 1836 to between 2 p.m. and 9 p.m., with opening on Monday morning being set at 9 a.m. The next act to affect Sunday hours was, as we have seen, the wine licence act of 1860, which set 11 p.m. as the Sunday closing time for all establishments holding wine licences. However, in practice this was held to apply to all premises licensed to retail liquor, and so the situation as it had existed between 1833 and 1836 was restored. This state of affairs remained till 1872, despite bills introduced in 1867-9 aimed at restricting hours further. Under section 78 of the 1872 licensing act, it was decreed that the Sunday hours should be between 2 p.m. and 9 p.m. in all cities and towns with a population exceeding 5,000, and between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. elsewhere. But even before the 1872 act was passed, the campaign for total Sunday closing in Ireland had begun and its supporters were not deterred by the reduction in hours enacted by the liberals. The first Irish Sunday closing

¹ See for instance the evidence from Belfast in the Fourth report from the select committee of the house of lords on intemperance, p. 432, H.L. 1878 (338), xiv, 432.

bill was introduced in February 1872 and such bills continued to be introduced each year up to 1878 when the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Act, 41 & 42 Vict., c.72, was finally passed. We shall look at this campaign much more closely in chapter IV, but it should be noted here that in getting through a Sunday act the temperance lobby had to make major concessions to its opponents. Thus, under the 1878 act, the five main Irish cities, Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Limerick and Waterford, were excluded, the opening hours in these being set at between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., while a five-year limit was placed upon the operation of the act in the rest of the country.

By the 1880s in Ireland there were fourteen distinctly different types of licence permitting the retail trade in intoxicating liquors, and each licence had attached to it a different set of operating conditions.¹ But, for our purposes, only four of these licences are of major significance. They were the most widely held and thus attracted most attention from the temperance movement. They include the public house licence, the spirit grocer licence and the wholesale and retail beer dealer's licences. Although we have already looked at much of the legislation relating to these licences, it would perhaps help clarify this complicated subject if we examined each licence in turn, even at the risk of some repetition.

The public house licence was the licence granted to 'inns, alehouses, or victualling houses' for the sale of beer and other intoxicating drinks in any quantity to be consumed on

¹ See appendix II for a list of these licences and the major pieces of legislation relevant to each.

or off the premises. A publican could not take out a licence to sell spirits or wine unless he had taken out a licence to sell beer, but he could take out a licence to sell beer only. By the mid 1870s there were four classes of publican's licence: the ordinary or seven-day licence, which was most commonly held; the six-day licence, which, up to 1878, usually involved Sunday closing, and had been introduced in 1872; and the early closing and six-day early closing licences, both of which had been introduced in 1874. These last three types were intended to encourage publicans to shorten their trading hours, particularly at night and on Sundays, and lower duties were held out as an incentive. However, the statistics show that only a small proportion of publicans took advantage of this opportunity. Thus, out of 16,654 public house licences in 1877, 13,920 were seven-day, while 1,897 were six-day, 115 early closing and 722 six-day early closing.¹ All public house licences were issued by the excise authorities upon the production by the applicant of a certificate, granted by the recorder or the magistrates at quarter sessions and signed by the clerk of the peace. These certificates attested to the good character of the applicant, the fitness of his proposed premises and the desirability of further licensed premises in the neighbourhood. The police were empowered to appear before the recorder or the magistrates to object to the granting of a certificate, but such an objection had to be based on one of these three grounds. Licences had to be renewed each year, their expiry date being 10 October, and this procedure

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 356/372.

required the production of two certificates, both testifying to the good character of the applicant and the orderly conduct of his premises during the preceding twelve months. One certificate had to be signed by six householders of the parish and the other by the magistrates.¹

Publicans were a prosperous group in both town and country and a group that wielded considerable political power.² Even their temperance critics agreed that most publicans were 'respectable'. Samuel Lee Anderson, one of the law officers at Dublin Castle, who took a special interest in licensing questions, thought that publicans were law-abiding simply because their licences were too valuable to put at risk.³ Corporations were frequently dominated by publicans, most notably the Dublin corporation, which repeatedly petitioned against temperance legislation.⁴ Benches of magistrates were also frequently accused of being too much under publican influence.⁵ In cities like Dublin and Cork many publicans were substantial merchants with other business interests as well. In 1878 A.M. Sullivan, a home rule M.P. and temperance advocate, estimated that the

¹ See above, pp 39-43.

² See chapter IV for the publicans' political influence.

³ Fourth report from the select committee of the house of lords on intemperance, 1878, p. 407.

⁴ The Times, 30 Mar. 1883; 15 July 1887. See also the evidence of the M.P. Maurice Healy in Report from the select committee on Sunday closing acts (Ireland), p. 418, H.C. 1888 (255), xix, 418.

⁵ Royal commission on liquor licensing laws, 1898, p. 32/566.

marketable value of Dublin public houses had increased 500 per cent over the previous twenty years. This was largely because the recorder, Sir Frederick Shaw,¹ had refused to grant new licences.² In 1868 Michael Carey, representing the Dublin publicans, had told a select committee that public houses in the city cost between £700 and £800 to buy and another £2,000 to decorate.³ But ten years later, in 1878, public houses in the centre of Dublin were selling for £3,000.⁴ In Ireland public houses continued to be owned by individuals, not by breweries and distilleries as was becoming common in England, but from the 1880s chains began to appear, like the Mooney chain in Dublin.⁵ Those who could not afford to buy a public house or were unable to secure a new licence usually had to settle for a spirit grocer's licence.

The spirit grocer licence, which first appeared in 1785 and was not dropped till 1910, was largely regulated by the excise licences act of 1825. Under this act a grocer was defined as 'any person dealing in or selling tea, cocoa-nuts, chocolate, or pepper', and, once such a person had acquired a liquor licence by paying a fee to the excise, he could sell

¹ Shaw was recorder for nearly fifty years, from 1828 till his death in 1876 when he was replaced by F.R. Falkiner; see D.N.B.

² Fourth report from the select committee of the house of lords on intemperance, 1878, p. 347.

³ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, p. 78, H.C. 1867-8 (280), xiv, 636.

⁴ Freeman's Journal, 18 May 1878.

⁵ For criticism of the establishment of the Mooney chain see Tenth annual report of the I.A.P.I. for the year 1887-8 (Dublin, 1888), p. 11.

any quantity of spirits, not exceeding two quarts at a time for consumption off the premises. This licence was therefore relatively easy to obtain and persons wishing to sell drink, who were unable to acquire a public house licence due to the stringent requirements and the reluctance of magistrates in some areas to grant new ones, could without much difficulty set themselves up nominally as grocers in order to qualify for the spirit grocer licence. Robert Lindsay, a Belfast merchant and magistrate, estimated in 1868 that only 5 per cent of the city's 102 spirit grocers were genuine grocers, selling tea, coffee and sugar in significant amounts. The rest relied almost solely on the trade in spirits.¹ In other ways also the provisions of the laws relating to spirit grocers only seemed to court abuse. Michael Ralph, president of the Spirit Grocers' Association of Dublin, explained to the 1868 select committee on Sunday closing that, although spirit grocers were permitted to sell up to two quarts at a time, the most frequently purchased amount was a 'noggin' or two glasses. The grocer would supply this in a bottle, though often the customer brought his own bottle and might even insist upon pouring in the liquor himself.² 'When he does that', Ralph told the committee, 'he may drink it on the premises in spite of all I can do.'³ Yet, under section 5 of the 1872 licensing act, the penalty for this offence was raised to a £10 fine plus the possibility of an

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 45/603.

² 'A bent hag crossed from Cassidy's clutching a naggin bottle by the neck'; James Joyce, Ulysses (New York, 1934), p. 61. Spirit grocers, among many other criticisms levelled against them, were particularly accused of encouraging drinking among women.

³ Report ... 1867-8, op. cit., p 34/592.

endorsement. Richard Corr, superintendent of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, told the same committee that the 'majority of spirit grocers in Dublin violate the spirit of their licence', though, at the same time, he agreed when the committee's chairman, Myles O'Reilly of Longford, described some of the provisions of the spirit grocer licence as 'absurd'.¹ The 1872 licensing act attempted to improve the situation by bringing spirit grocers for the first time under the control of the magistrates, requiring for their licence a good character certificate, similar to the one needed by publicans. However, the magistrates' power to refuse such a certificate was circumscribed, while the applicant could appeal against such a refusal. In 1877, in summing up his opinion of spirit grocers, Captain George Talbot, assistant commissioner of the D.M.P., declared that 'as long as a spirit grocer can sell a glass of whiskey it will be consumed on the premises'.² In February 1877 the D.M.P. sent the chief secretary a report on the city's spirit grocers which estimated that 150 out of the 306 grocer shops were not 'well conducted'.³

Relations between the publicans and spirit grocers were generally far from amicable. The publicans felt that they were acquiring a bad name and having unnecessary restrictions imposed upon them because of the reckless conduct of the spirit grocers and also the beer dealers. They were as well

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 82/640.

² Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 21/37.

³ Return of spirit grocers in the D.M.P.D., 28 Feb. 1877 (S.P.O., R.P. 1878/3243).

losing business to these traders who were more ready to stay open during prohibited hours, when respectable public houses were shut. Thus, in the 1860s and 1870s, we find the publicans frequently in agreement with the police, the magistrates and even with temperance advocates on the need for stricter regulation of these areas of the drink trade. They even went so far as to send deputations to London in 1876 to lobby in favour of Meldon's bill imposing minimum rating valuations on beerhouses.¹ The spirit grocers, for their part, resented the fact that they had to pay a higher licence fee than the publicans, while at the same time their rights were more limited. Michael Ralph, who claimed to represent the majority of the 198 spirit grocers in the Dublin metropolitan area in 1868, said that they wanted one licence for all liquor retailers to sell for consumption on or off the premises, the cost of the licence being a function of the valuation of the house. He added also that he wanted all beerhouses suppressed, and on this point at least the publicans and the spirit grocers were in substantial agreement.²

As we have seen, in 1863-4, in an effort to encourage the consumption of liquors other than spirits, parliament passed two acts which permitted persons to take out a licence to sell beer in any quantity less than 4½ gallons for consumption off the premises. But, due to poor drafting, it

¹ F.J., 6 Apr. 1876.

² Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 32/590; for the spirit grocers' case see also Statement on behalf of the Licensed Grocers and Vintners Trade Protection Association of Dublin, to the Right Hon. the Marquis of Hartington, chief secretary to the lord lieutenant of Ireland (Dublin, 1872).

was possible for such a licence to be taken out without a magistrate's certificate. By the end of 1864 there were already 300 beerhouses in Ireland, and within five years they had risen to nearly 900.¹ Condemnation of the beerhouses, before they were substantially reformed in 1874 and 1877, was widespread and severe. The Freeman's Journal editorialised against them throughout the 1860s and early 1870s, describing them on one occasion as an 'unmitigated evil', which 'generate and shelter ... hideousness and abominations'.² Charles Joseph O'Donel, after ten years' experience as a Dublin divisional justice, portrayed the beer dealers as 'a miserable type of penniless paupers' and he claimed that the whole profit of their trade was on Sunday morning up to 2 p.m., their 'dens' being 'frequented by hundreds of the lower ranks of the labouring class'.³ However, it was a working man, Patrick Higgins, master cooper at Guinness's brewery and president of the Coopers' Society, who most graphically set out the modus operandi of the beerhouses.

It was [he said] the system with the people in the lower parts of the city, if they had only a dozen of turf, to bring it into the shop or cellar, it did not matter which, and a few pipes, and some bottles with Guinness's label on them; and they would pick up an old label of Guinness's or Mander's, and would stick them in the window. There was sufficient guarantee for the person that owned the apartment to go and get out a licence to sell beer from six o'clock in the morning until six o'clock the following morning, night and day.⁴

The beerhouses were reformed in 1874 and 1877, with the introduction of magistrate's certificates for wholesale beer

¹ See appendix III and also Return of persons to whom beerhouse licences have been granted, Jan. 1871 (S.P.O., R.P. 1871/3070).

² F.J., 21 May 1872.

³ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p.123/139.

⁴ Ibid., p. 162/178.

licences, prescribed rating valuations for retail licences and an exclusive occupation provision. As a result the numbers of beer dealers in Ireland fell dramatically. Wholesale dealers fell from 1,223 in 1873 to 635 in 1878-9, while, over the same period, retailers fell from 939 to 466.¹ The story of the beer licence, however, provides a classic example of how well-intentioned licensing legislation only succeeded in creating rather than solving problems. Much of the criticism directed against beer dealers, spirit grocers and, to a lesser extent, publicans really concerned the regulations under which they operated, for these regulations were frequently inadequate, confusing, impossible to enforce and sometimes simply absurd. Sections of the Irish temperance movement therefore devoted much of their attention to the issue of licensing, believing, rightly or wrongly, that reform in this area would go a long way towards solving the problem of excessive drinking.

The complex series of licences examined above by no means exhausts the forms of liquor retailing practised in late nineteenth-century Ireland. It merely covers the legal trade, recognised and administered by the government. The illegal trade, carried on in 'night-houses' and 'shebeens', was clearly a significant feature of the period. How it compared with the legal trade in numbers of houses or quantity of liquor sold is impossible to determine with any accuracy. But the continued existence of an obviously substantial illegal trade, particularly in Dublin, plus the contempt for licensing laws so frequently demonstrated by spirit grocers and beer dealers, was attributed by many supporters of

¹ Wilson, Alcohol and the nation, pp 403-5.

temperance reform to laxity on the part of the police forces. A.M. Sullivan claimed in 1878 that the 'police in Dublin could put their hands in a morning upon nearly every shebeen in the city; those places are very well known'.¹ T.W. Russell, secretary of organisations promoting Sunday closing and the permissive bill, on his late-night tours of spirit grocer shops in Dublin, found constables standing on the pavement outside, making no effort to intervene in the illegal drinking that was going on inside. When, Captain Talbot, who had replaced Lake as chief commissioner of the D.M.P., told the lords committee on intemperance in 1878 that Sunday drunkenness was not a great problem in Dublin, temperance men were out on the following Sunday between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m., watching fifty public houses in the city. They counted 1,066 drunken men emerging from these houses, whereas police arrests for drunkenness on that day amounted to only 38.² In November 1876 the Irish Permissive Bill Association submitted a lengthy statement to the commissioner accusing spirit grocers of 'habitually' violating the law and the police of largely ignoring this state of affairs. The I.P.B.A. had employed an 'informer' to gather evidence against the police. Lake, however, rejected the charges, pointing out that in 1876 the D.M.P. had taken out nearly 700 summonses against drink sellers, 600 of which had led to convictions.³

¹ Fourth report from the select committee of the house of lords on intemperance, 1878, p. 351.

² Ibid., p. 391.

³ Licensing laws: case of the I.P.B.A. deputation, 15 Nov. 1876: statement of the commissioner of police in reply, n.d. (S.P.O., R.P. 1878/3243).

To conclude that the police did not properly enforce licensing laws because too many had relatives in the drink trade or aspired on retirement to own a small pub of their own, as the I.P.B.A. claimed in 1876, would be to grossly over-simplify the situation, though doubtless there was an element of truth in this claim. The police, however, did face genuine difficulties in their task. The new recorder of Dublin, F.R. Falkiner, summed up one of these problems well in 1877, when he said,

it is fair for me to say with respect to the police, that I believe any supineness on their part which has been in the past, is to a large extent a reflection of the general apathy on the part of the public largely. I think that the police force can do anything in which they are supported by the public voice and by their own authorities; but it could not be expected that a policeman would wish to take the invidious position of summoning and having heavily fined, or having a man's livelihood taken away, by opposing at the renewal sessions a person who was not committing a police offence, as a policeman's idea would understand it, that is to say, who was not committing any breach of the peace, but who was quietly going in and getting a glass of whiskey.¹

So, while the public chose to regard petty breaches of the licensing laws as no crime at all, policemen were naturally loath to pursue too vigorously those selling or consuming liquor illegally. But perhaps an even greater obstacle to the effective policing of the retail drink trade was to be found in some of the provisions of the laws themselves. We have already seen how shortcomings in the laws regulating spirit grocers and beer dealers opened the way for illegal trading. And, it is only fair to point out, that senior police officers were very much to the fore in identifying these shortcomings and suggesting ways in which they could be overcome. John Lewis O'Ferrall, commissioner of the D.M.P., placed a comprehensive plan before the 1868 select

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 64/30.

committee on Sunday closing for reforming the laws relating to spirit grocers and beer dealers, and many of these suggestions found their way into the major licensing legislation of the early 1870s.¹ The police in fact repeatedly complained of unnecessary restrictions placed upon their power to enter suspected houses, of poorly defined offences and of the lack of effective penalties.

We have already seen that the illicit trade was regulated by the unlicensed houses acts of 1839 and 1854 (2 & 3 Vict., c.79 and 17 & 18 Vict., c.89), which authorised magistrates to issue police with warrants to enter suspected houses and set a maximum £2 fine as the penalty for 'selling, keeping or exposing for sale' liquor without a licence. By the 1860s the police were complaining of the inadequacy of this penalty, and, as a result, in the 1872 licensing act the penalty was raised substantially, to a maximum £50 fine or a month's imprisonment for the first offence. But, at the same time, the definition of the offence was narrowed by the omission of the phrase 'keeping for sale'. This had the effect of making successful prosecutions of unlicensed traders far more difficult, for the police had now to prove that an actual sale had occurred, not merely that it was intended. Talbot admitted before the 1877 select committee that this was 'almost impossible'.² The police therefore found themselves having to revert to the 1854 act, which had not been repealed, in order to ensure a conviction. As Talbot explained, 'we entered under the act of 1874, but

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p.119/677.

² Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 38/54.

were directed to proceed under the 17th and 18th of Victoria'.¹ But the problem with envoking the old act was that the maximum penalty for the first offence then remained at a £2 fine. In other important respects also the 1872 and 1874 licensing acts curtailed police powers. Previously it had been an offence to 'oppose, obstruct or delay to admit' a constable onto licensed premises at any time. Under sections 35 of the 1872 act and 23 of the 1874 act, however, the offence became 'refuses or fails to admit' a constable and it carried a penalty of up to £5 for the first offence. Again Talbot explained the considerable practical implications of this apparently minor alteration in wording.

The consequence is that when we go to the premises, and ask to go in, they may have drinking inside, but they delay to admit us; then, after they have cleared away everything from the police, and let the men out, perhaps by the back premises, they open the door and say, 'we have not failed to admit you'.²

The dropping of delay as an offence clearly made the policeman's task more difficult. Thus, although the 1872 and 1874 licensing acts facilitated regulation of spirit grocers and beer dealers through the introduction of magistrate's certificates for both, they made policing of illicit traders more difficult through the omission of the offences of keeping for sale and delaying to admit.

On top of legal impediments, police tactics also probably contributed to their lack of success in enforcing the licensing laws, in Dublin at least. Here the police authorities strongly resisted the suggestion that plain-clothes men should be used in the detection of illicit

¹ Fourth report from the select committee of the house of lords on intemperance, 1878, p. 336.

² Ibid.

trading, though they were used successfully in Belfast for this purpose. Talbot claimed that the magistrates were hostile to such tactics and moreover that plain-clothes men would be looked upon as 'common informers' by the people. He then went on to describe the procedure employed by the D.M.P.

We do not put a man to watch the public houses; he walks his beat, for instance, from King Street to Stephen Street, or to George Street, and he walks back again, and he watches the whole of the public houses on that beat, and if he detects an infringement of the law, he reports it to the serjeant, because there is a serjeant armed with warrants, whose particular business it is to go through every district watching the public houses and entering them; and if they find breaches of the law it is reported to the commissioner of police, who orders a summons to take place.¹

Here then is the explanation for the constables T.W. Russell saw standing outside spirit grocer shops. Constables of the D.M.P. were considered too young and too inexperienced to be allowed to enter and investigate licensed premises, unless specifically called in by the owner to maintain order in the house. Only specially selected serjeants were permitted to enter such dangerous territory. In Belfast, on the other hand, every policeman was charged with enforcing the licensing laws. As well, there were at least two plain-clothes men assigned to each of the city's four police districts. Such an officer was not to act as an agent provocateur, encouraging illicit sales, but merely to observe sales to others and prosecute the seller. The Belfast police authorities seemed satisfied with this system and claimed that it kept the illicit trade in check.² In

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 37/53.

² Ibid., p. 226/242.

Dublin, however, the problem was obviously much greater. John Duignan, secretary of the Brassfounders' Society, in urging greater police vigilance in 1877, drew on his own experience to illustrate the success of illicit traders in Dublin.

I live [he said] at 17, Lower Gloucester Street, and there is in that street the Gloucester diamond. I generally go to prayers in the morning about 8 o'clock, or a little before, and in the centre of that diamond I see a boy, or a young lad perhaps, 16 or 18 years of age, or sometimes younger, and he can see up and down and crosswise. A policeman could not come within 300 or 400 yards before he would be seen, and I have heard some shrill whistle given by the lad putting his finger in his mouth,¹ and I have seen men coming out of the houses immediately.¹

A cautious police force, hampered by poorly drafted legislation, and reluctant to incur public odium by too vigorous enforcement of the law, was hardly a match for the resourceful shebeen operators of Dublin.

We shall in chapter IV look more closely at the campaign for licensing reform conducted by the Irish temperance movement in the latter half of the century, and most successfully in the 1870s. This survey of the relevant laws and the different types of licences, however, does demonstrate that inadequacies in legislation created problems both for the drink traders and for those seeking to regulate the trade; problems, which otherwise would not have existed. The temperance movement, therefore, came to see licensing laws as part of the problem, and reform of the existing laws, as much as the enactment of totally new temperance measures like local option came to occupy much of its time and energy.

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p.151/167.

Rural and urban drinking customs and habits

Having examined the producers and retailers of drink in nineteenth-century Ireland, it is now time to turn to the third, and perhaps the most interesting, element in the drink industry, the consumers. The Irish, as a nation, have a reputation for being excessively fond of drink. Leaving aside the thorny question of whether this reputation is merited or not, it is certainly a long standing one. Barnaby Rich, an English adventurer with many years experience of Ireland, wrote of Dublin in Elizabethan times that 'the whole profit of the town stands upon ale-houses',¹ while Sir William Petty estimated in Charles II's reign that ale-houses formed one-third of the total number of houses in the city.² Sir John Carr, a 'stranger in Ireland', described the number of dram-shops as 'truly shockingly great' in 1805 and claimed that in Thomas Street alone 52 of the 190 houses were licensed to sell spirits.³ Not only in the capital was drink plentiful. Luke Gernon, referring to his visit to an Irish castle in the south west in 1620, described the way in which a guest was traditionally received.

The lady of the house meets you with her train ... salutations past, you shall be presented with all the drinks in the house, first the ordinary beer, then aqua vitae, then sack, then old ale: the lady tastes it, you must not refuse it ... In the morning there will be brought upon you a cup of aqua vitae ... When you are disposing of yourself to depart, they call for a dogh a dores [deoch an dorais, a stirrup cup] ... There you are presented again with all

¹ Quoted in Constantia Maxwell, Dublin under the Georges, 1714-1850 (London, 1936), p. 119; for further views by Rich on Irish drinking see D.B. Quinn, The Elizabethans and the Irish (Ithaca, N.Y., 1966), p. 50.

² Petty, Political survey of Ireland, p. 13.

³ John Carr, The stranger in Ireland; or, a tour in the southern and western parts of that country, in the year 1805 (London, 1806), p. 488.

the drinks in the house, as at your first entrance. Smack them over and let us depart.¹

Numerous synods from the late seventeenth century condemned excessive drinking at wakes and funerals, while Archbishop Oliver Plunket attempted to stamp out drunkenness among the priesthood, where it had clearly gained a strong hold.

Forbidding priests to drink whiskey in public, he wrote:

'Give me an Irish priest without this vice and he is assuredly a saint'.² But it is not till the early eighteenth century that statistics, albeit far from reliable ones, become available for the consumption of liquor in Ireland. These, as we have seen, reveal a substantial import trade, mainly in brandy, rum and wines, with a weak but growing domestic brewing and distilling industry. The eighteenth century in Ireland, as in England, was filled with complaints about drunkenness, produced among the lower classes by spirits and among the upper by wine. The statistics that are available would seem to support the impressionistic reports of travellers and the complaints of the authorities that drinking had increased substantially during the course of the century. In 1765, for instance, 2.1 million gallons of spirits were imported and 700,000 gallons produced in the country, though McGuire estimates that spirit consumption was probably more in the region of 5 million gallons. The liquor market also received 1.4 million gallons of wine and 700,000 barrels of beer, plus an unknown quantity of illegally produced and smuggled liquor. All this was for a population of only

¹ Quoted in Quinn, The Elizabethans and the Irish, p. 75.

² Rev. P.F. Moran, Memoirs of the Most Rev. Oliver Plunket, archbishop of Armagh, and primate of all Ireland, who suffered death for the catholic faith in the year 1681 (Dublin, 1861), pp 78, 131-2.

about 2.5 million.¹ Moreover, except for wine and home-brewed beer, consumption of all other forms of liquor had increased many fold since the beginning of the century and continued to do so till the 1790s, when imports began to decline.

According to John Bush, who visited Dublin in 1764 and published his Hibernia curiosa five years later, no man was seriously considered a drinker who could not 'take off his gallon coolly'. Unlike many other observers, Bush was impressed by how much the Irish could drink without showing any apparent ill-effects.

I believe [he wrote] it may be said with a great deal of truth, that the Irish drink the most of any of his majesty's subjects with the least injury. 'Tis hardly possible, indeed, to make an Irishman, that can in any sense be called a drinker, thoroughly drunk with his claret; by the time he had discharged his five or six bottles, he will get a little flashy, perhaps, and you may drink him to eternity he'll not be much more.²

But pity the poor English traveller who had to compete with Irish hosts the likes of these. Bush thus found Irish hospitality, though extremely generous, also 'superlatively contemptible'. 'Having five times as much liquor poured down his throat as he would choose', he considered a sign of very bad taste indeed.³ Bush is clearly referring to the Anglo-Irish gentry and their notorious fondness for claret, for Irish farmers, labourers and tradesmen were equally famous for not being able to hold their whiskey well. But rough whiskey on a near empty stomach is a very different matter from expensive imported wine with, or after, a

¹ McGuire, Irish whiskey, p. 123.

² Bush, Hibernia curiosa, pp 21-2.

³ Ibid., p. 17.

substantial meal. Still, Lord Chesterfield during his term as viceroy in the 1740s, was horrified at the amount of wine the Irish gentry drank, considering that it destroyed the 'constitutions, the faculties, and too often the fortunes of those of superior rank'.¹ The cultured John Boyle, Lord Orrey, was similarly dismayed and in a letter written in 1736 he observed that:

Drunkenness is the touchstone by which they try every man, and he that cannot, or will not drink, has a mark set upon him ... A right jolly glorious memory hibernian never rolls into bed without having taken a sober gallon of claret to his own share. You wonder perhaps what this animal is? It is a yahoo that toasts the glorious and immortal memory of King William in a bumper without any other joy in the revolution than that it has given him a pretence to drink so many more daily quarts of wine. The person who refuses a goblet to this prevailing toast is deemed a jacobite, a papist and a knave.²

Sir Patrick Rackrent, who, according to his epitaph, 'lived and died a monument of old Irish hospitality' was typical of the hard-drinking gentry of the period.³ Perhaps the best descriptions of the class, however, come from Sir Jonah Barrington's Personal sketches, published in the 1820s and 1830s. Deploring the 'lilliputian' appetite of the present generation, 'sipping their acid claret, disguised by an olive or neutralised by a chestnut', he described a Christmas banquet given by his family in 1778, which went on for seven days and involved the consumption of a hogshead of 'superior claret', that is fifty-four gallons.⁴

¹ Quoted in Maxwell, Dublin under the Georges, p. 84.

² Quoted in Constantia Maxwell, Country and town in Ireland under the Georges (London, 1940), p. 21.

³ Maria Edgeworth, Castle Rackrent (London, 1800), p. 23.

⁴ Hugh Staples (ed.), The Ireland of Sir Jonah Barrington: selections from his 'Personal sketches' (London, 1967), pp 41-8.

But, as Barrington implies, by the end of the century and certainly in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, this sort of extravagant drunkenness appears to have gone into decline among the gentry of Ireland. As early as the 1770s, Arthur Young asserted that 'hard drinking is very rare among people of fortune', and spoke of the gentry's reputation for drinking and duelling as being a thing of the past.¹ Such an assessment would find support in the stability of wine imports during the latter part of the century and in the decline of spirit imports from the 1790s; imported wines and spirits being the gentry's favourite forms of alcohol. And, as we shall soon see, the first organised temperance movement in Ireland was most strongly supported by the protestant gentry, clergy and professional classes. By the 1840s the Halls observed that:

Among the gentry, however, this most pernicious practice [drunkenness] has been latterly not only in disuse, but treated as disreputable and disgraceful; and gentlemen after dinner have ceased to be disgusting in the drawing-room.²

Thus, extravagant drinking seems to have gone out of fashion among the gentry first, around the turn of the century. And it was from this class that many of the early critics of spirit drinking among the lower orders, both of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, were drawn.

English travellers of the eighteenth century were also impressed by the amount of spirit drinking which went on among the Irish lower classes. Young commented that an 'Irishman loves whiskey as well as an Englishman does strong

¹Young, A tour of Ireland, ii, 152.

²S.C. and A.M. Hall, Ireland, its scenery, character, etc. (London, 1841), i, 34.

beer' and moreover he considered that this contributed to their inability to work hard.

When they are encouraged, or animate themselves to work hard, it is all by whiskey, which, though it has a notable effect in giving a perpetual motion to their tongues, can have but little of that invigorating substance which is found in strong beer or porter; probably it has an effect as pernicious as the other is beneficial... I have known the Irish reapers in Hertfordshire work as laboriously as any of our own men, and living upon potatoes which they procured from London, but drinking nothing but ale. If their bodies are weak I attribute it to whiskey, not potatoes; but it is still a question with me whether their miserable working arises from any weakness, or from an habitual laziness.¹

Thus did Young try to reconcile the Englishman's image of the lazy, drunken Irishman with the fact that Irish labourers and seasonal workers in Britain undertook some of the hardest and heaviest manual labour. For Young it proved the beneficial effects of English beer as opposed to the pernicious effects of Irish whiskey, and, as we have seen, efforts to wean the Irish off whiskey and onto beer characterised government policy from the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth. Some elements within the temperance movement, especially during the 1830s, were also sympathetic to this policy. But the Irishman remained loyal to whiskey, though porter became increasingly popular in the second half of the century due to the high cost of spirits. In the 1840s the Halls found the Irish 'proverbial for intoxication' and remarked that 'to picture an Irishman truly, either by words or on canvas, or to represent him accurately on the stage, it was considered indispensable that he should be drunk'. For 'wherever twenty persons assembled within reach of spirits, nineteen of them were certain to be

¹ Young, A tour of Ireland, ii, 44.

drunk ... drunkenness was inculcated as a merit, and almost as a duty'.¹

It is no coincidence perhaps that these vivid and harsh descriptions of Irish drunkenness come from English visitors. Some Irishmen, while not denying the charge of excessive drinking, however, looked at the matter from a rather different angle. Bishop Berkeley in The querist was particularly concerned about the drain of the country's resources occasioned by the enormous imports of liquor. 'How much of the necessary sustenance of our people is yearly exported for brandy?' he asked, and went on to wonder 'whether if people must poison themselves, they had not better do it with their own growth?'.² In these remarks we can detect an early example of the nationalist approach to the Irish drink question - the view that, by their drinking, the Irish were only lining the pockets of foreigners, notably the English, and contributing to their own impoverishment as a nation. Dr William Drennan, a Belfast United Irishman, carried this view a step further when, writing to his sister in 1796 from Dublin, he said:

Sunday in the catholic part of this country is much the most sinful day of the week, for, on going home in the evening, I counted more than thirty who had certainly spent the earnings of eight days before. The abolition of Sunday would be a blessing here, and Ireland must continue as she is, while her lower orders are kept in a state of intoxication, perhaps designedly, for this keeps them beasts of burden; not strong, however, as they appear generally feeble, withered animals - a perfect contrast to the aristocratic cast of country and city; yet these will say, 'you see how Sunday is spent, the only idle day'. Will anything of a reforming

¹ Halls, Ireland, i, 33-4.

² George Berkeley, The querist, containing several queries, proposed to the consideration of the public (Dublin, 1725), p. 31.

cast remove the habits of this people, high and low, with the one-half wine the chief good, and with the other whiskey.¹

Perhaps the most interesting remark in this revealing extract is Drennan's speculation that the Irish were being deliberately kept submissive through drink. That the Irish drink problem was the result of an English conspiracy was a view that was to recur in both nationalist and temperance circles in Ireland towards the end of the nineteenth century. That it was also the result of English oppression was another opinion expressed by some. Gustave de Beaumont, a French visitor, put forward this view in 1839, when he wrote:

Irish intemperance and love of whiskey, one of the most deplorable of the national vices, arise from the same source. As he believes it impossible even to establish any durable accordance between his income and his expenses, he dissipates without scruple the moderate wages of his temporary employment. Scarcely has he received his wages, when he runs to the whiskey shop, and, for some moments at least drowns his misery in drunkenness and brutalisation ... Let Ireland be carefully studied, and it will be seen that the misery and corruption of the people are everywhere spread in the same proportion as the tyranny which oppressed each district. Ulster is less unhappy and less vicious, because it has been less persecuted.²

Observers as different as Thomas Davis and Frederick Engels said exactly the same thing in the 1840s.³

Trying to penetrate behind these general observations on Irish drinking, often made by foreigners, is not easy. Drinking customs and patterns were different in towns as opposed to the countryside and in Ulster as opposed to the

¹ D.A. Chart (ed.), The Drennan letters (Belfast, 1931), p. 238.

² Gustave de Beaumont, Ireland: social, political and religious (ed. by W.C. Taylor, London, 1839), ii, 26, 34.

³ Nation, 28 Jan. 1843; Frederick Engels, The condition of the working class in England in 1844, with a preface written in 1892 (London, 1892), pp 92-3.

rest of Ireland. Before the lords select committee on intemperance in 1878, A.M. Sullivan, a Kerryman, former editor of the Nation, a home ruler and, since Fr Mathew's time, a temperance supporter, tried to describe the nature of Irish rural drinking.

In Ireland [he said] drinking is what I call circumstantial. At all events, I know from years of mixing with the mass of people, especially the country people, that they never care about it unless when they meet at fairs or markets, as a matter of good fellowship and neighbourly custom, and that when removed from drink they hardly even think of it.¹

T.W. Russell, another temperance leader, said much the same thing when he observed: 'You will not find in the agricultural populations a drop of drink in an Irish peasant's home from one year's end to another, but whenever a man goes to a fair or market, or to mass on Sundays, that is the time when drinking takes place'.² That this had for long been the pattern in Irish rural society is confirmed by the observations of Fynes Moryson, secretary to Mountjoy, who published his memoirs in 1617.

For howsoever while they live in woods and in cabins with their cattle they could be content with water and milk, yet when they come to towns nothing was more frequent than to tie their cows at the doors, and never part from the taverns till they had drunk them out in sack and strong water, which they call usquebaugh [whiskey]; and this did not only the lords, but the common people, though half naked for want of clothes to cover them.³

Drinking in rural Ireland was clearly associated with certain specific occasions, often rites of passage, but also fairs, markets and patterns. The accounts of

¹ Fourth report from the select committee of the house of lords on intemperance, 1878, p. 354.

² Ibid., p. 396.

³ Quoted in Quinn, The Elizabethans and the Irish, p.78; see also Constantia Maxwell, The stranger in Ireland, from the reign of Elizabeth to the great famine (London, 1954), pp 68-77.

travellers, reminiscences of the older, traditional Gaelic-speaking society, like those of Maurice O'Sullivan and Tomás Ó Crohan, novels dealing with country life, like those of Carleton, Kickham and Canon Sheehan, as well as the archives of the Folklore Commission, all tend to confirm this observation.

In his classic account of life on the Blasket Islands, off the coast of Kerry, Tomás Ó Crohan (1856-1937) painted a vivid picture of wild drinking sprees, particularly at weddings and wakes, though he personally had doubts about the propriety of drunkenness on the latter occasions. Ó Crohan, however, was at some pains to explain this drinking, obviously suspecting that his urban readers would disapprove of it.

You may understand from this [he wrote] that we are not to be put in comparison with the people of the great cities or of the soft and level lands. If we deserved blame a little at times, it would be when a drop of drink was going round among us. The drink went to our heads the easier because we were always worn and weary, as I have described, like a tired horse, with never any rest or intermission... It wasn't thirst for the drink that made us want to go where it was, but only the need to have a merry night instead of the misery that we knew only too well. What the drop of drink did to us was to lift up the hearts in us, and we would spend a day and a night ever and again in company together when we got the chance.¹

For Ó Crohan drink played a vital part, along with singing and talking, in enlivening the social occasions of a hard-working and poor people. So doubtless it had done since time immemorial, without giving rise to temperance movements. Before leaving Ó Crohan, however, it is worth noting a song he quotes, which he heard in the 1870s, for it too reflects the rural attitude to drink.

¹ Tomás Ó Crohan, The islandman (trans. by Robin Flower, Oxford, 1951), pp 243-4.

'Tis the best of the doctor's prescriptions
If whisky and porter are cheap,
For it cures us of all our afflictions
And puts all men's sorrows to sleep.
And the old woman, wheezing and groaning,
A-bed for a year in despair,
When she sups her half-pint, stops her moaning,
And kicks the bedclothes in the air.¹

Alcohol had important utilitarian, as well as social, functions. It was, for instance, widely prescribed and used for ailments of many sorts. Morewood contended that 'aqua vitae' was in fact first used in Ireland only as a medicine and was, as the name suggests, considered a panacea for all disorders.² In the nineteenth century it was still used as a preventative and a palliative against damp and cold. John Gamble on his travels in Ireland in 1812 reported the widespread custom, especially in the north, of offering a guest in wet weather a warm footbath, accompanied by liberal amounts of whiskey punch.³ Presumably this practice was similar to that described by Gernon in 1620. G.W. Carr, one of the founders of the Irish anti-spirits movement, testified before the 1834 select committee on drunkenness that it was widely believed that spirits prevented cholera infection.⁴ Alcohol was generally used as a painkiller, while beer especially was regarded as energy-giving. And, curiously perhaps, drink came to be

¹Tomás Ó Crohan, The islandman, p. 139. For the place of drink in Irish traditional medicine see Patrick Logan, Making the cure: a look at Irish folk medicine (Dublin, 1972).

²Morewood, A philosophical and statistical history ... of inebriating liquors, p. 616.

³John Gamble, A view of society and manners in the north of Ireland, in the summer and autumn of 1812 (London, 1813), p. 159.

⁴Report from the select committee on inquiry into drunkenness, 1834, p. 302.

considered a cure for the after-effects of its own excess consumption, described colourfully as 'a hair of the dog that bit you'.¹ Even the anti-spirits movement of the 1830s permitted its members to break their pledges in order to take spirits for medicinal purposes. Later in the century, however, the temperance movement was to devote much time and energy to trying to convince the medical profession that alcohol had no medicinal benefits whatsoever. But the American sociologist, Robert Bales, is doubtless correct in his conclusion that, 'it is hard to think of a medicinal use of alcohol which has not been current, at one time or another, in the Irish culture'.²

However, it was probably for the social uses of alcohol that the Irish were more noted.³ Rites of passage, especially marriages and deaths, were almost invariably celebrated with much drinking. The church had repeatedly condemned excessive drinking at wakes since the seventeenth century⁴ and Edward MacLysaght, in his study of Ireland during that period, tends to agree with the clerical critics. The abuses connected with wakes [he writes] were more serious than the mere indecorum of merrymaking on a solemn occasion; the merrymaking was frequently not of an innocent kind, for it involved not only excessive drinking but also practices which were always coarse and very often actually licentious. A great deal of evidence of this has already been collected in print, all pointing in the same direction. While some

¹ Robert Bales, 'Attitudes toward drinking in the Irish culture' in D.J. Pittman and C.R. Snyder (ed.), Society, culture and drinking patterns (New York and London, 1962), pp 180-81.

² Ibid., p. 182.

³ For a recent discussion of drink in pre-famine Ireland, which relies heavily on Bales's work, see James R. Barrett, 'Why Paddy drank: the social importance of whiskey in pre-famine Ireland' in Journal of Popular Culture, xi, no. 1 (Apr. 1977), pp 155-66.

⁴ Seán Ó Suilleabháin, Irish wake amusements (Cork, 1967), pp 16-23, 146-54.

writers charitably designate as 'this jovial crew', or as 'revellers as if at one of the feasts of Bacchus', the participants in what others describe as orgies, that abuses existed is denied by none.¹

That wakes were lively social occasions is further demonstrated by Maria Edgeworth's comment that, 'more matches were made at wakes than at weddings'.² But weddings too contained their fair share of drinking and drunkenness. In 1812 Wakefield had singled out weddings for especial condemnation in this regard.³ It was common practice, for instance, to adjourn to the public house after the wedding. This was then often followed by a race back to the bride's house, the nature of which is revealed by its title: 'the race for the bottle'.

Another important social ritual in rural society was the market or fair.⁴ E. Estyn Evans argues that these grew out of ancient ritual assemblies, held on hilltops at fixed times, marking the beginnings of the celtic seasons. Thus, even today, May and November remain the favourite periods for country fairs, while in the nineteenth century February and August fairs were also of considerable importance. The great Lamma fair at Ballycastle in north Antrim lasted a full week, while before the famine, the fair at Ballinasloe, County Galway, handled as many as 90,000 sheep and 20,000 cattle. It was by such fairs, rather than by the calendar,

¹ MacLysaght, Irish life in the seventeenth century, pp 167-8.

² Quoted in W.R. Wilde, Irish popular superstitions (Dublin, [1852]), p. 169.

³ Wakefield, An account of Ireland, i, 730-31, 765.

⁴ For an interesting account of English fairs, see R.W. Malcolmson, Popular recreations in English society, 1700-1850 (Cambridge, 1973), pp 20-25, 77-9.

that the farmer dated events.¹ Also associated with these fairs was an absence of moral restraint, which, in the case of the fair held at Donnybrook in Dublin, added a new word to the language.² Again Evans postulates an ancient origin for this characteristic.

The periodic gatherings in which they [fairs] originated were associated with ritual and emotional experiences connected with the celebration of recurring events such as seed-time and harvest. Breaking the routine of toil, it is characteristic that much licence was permitted on these occasions. Until recent times a strong spirit of revelry and a temporary slackening of the moral code distinguished the great Irish fairs ... it is recognised as a time of special licence. Games, dancing and faction fights were the order of the day once the buying and selling were over.³

The pre-Christian origins of fairs can still be seen today in the strange rituals which, for example, mark the 'Puck fair' at Kilorglin in County Kerry. Drunkenness, of an extreme and extended kind, was permissible on such occasions. Evans sees such orgies as having a 'cathartic' effect and as serving to 'dissipate overcharged tensions' and thus ultimately to help perpetuate the life of the community.⁴

Patterns, also clearly deriving from a pagan past and often associated with fairs, had an equally notorious reputation for drunkenness. St Bridhid's Day on 1 February, which marked the end of winter, was celebrated

¹ E.E. Evans, Irish heritage: the landscape, the people and their work (Dundalk, 1942), pp 157-8.

² The fair was suppressed in 1855 with the support of temperance leaders like Fr Mathew, Dr Spratt and James Haughton; see Laurence O'Dea, 'The fair at Donnybrook' in Dublin Historical Record, xv, no. 1 (Oct. 1958), pp 11-20.

³ Evans, op. cit., p. 161.

⁴ E.E. Evans, Irish folk ways (London, 1957), p. 292.

with fairs and much drinking, though especially noted for its drunkenness was 17 March, St Patrick's Day. Numerous travellers from the seventeenth century onwards deplored the amount of drinking associated with the national saint's day. Thomas Dinely in his journal for 1681 remarked that very few celebrants were sober by the evening, while in 1727 Caleb Threlkeld referred to the popularity of the custom of 'wetting the shamrock' and drinking pota Pádraig or St Patrick's pot.¹ Easter Sunday and Monday, May Day, Whit Sunday, St John's Eve (23 June) harvest time in late July and August, Lammass (1 August), the Assumption (15 August), All Hallows' Eve (31 October), Michaelmas (11 November), and the various Christmas and New Year festivals - all these were occasions for patterns, holydays and fairs. At the beginning of the eighteenth century thirty-five holydays were celebrated in Ireland, all requiring attendance at mass and no work. These were reduced in 1778 to thirteen, in 1829 to eleven and in 1831 to ten.² In 1812 Wakefield had complained that 'one third at least of the time of the labouring classes in Ireland, is wasted in holy-days, funerals, weddings, christenings, fairs, patterns, races, and other recreations'.³ That drinking was closely tied to traditional festivals and thus tended to vary according to the seasons has been confirmed by Hugh Brody in his recent study of rural life in County Clare.⁴

¹ Quoted in Kevin Danaher, The year in Ireland (Cork, 1972), pp 58-66.

² Ibid., p. 266; see also Malcolmson, Popular recreations, pp 89-117.

³ Wakefield, An account of Ireland, ii, 810.

⁴ Hugh Brody, Inishkillane: change and decline in the west of Ireland (London, 1973), pp 31-4.

These celebrations of seasons and rural activities, often masquerading as saints' days, came in for censure increasingly as the nineteenth century advanced. On this point, Kevin Danaher aptly comments:

Although it is true that many of these local celebrations had degenerated into debauchery, it is also unfortunately true that in the course of the nineteenth century, when Victorian 'respectability' had for many of both clergy and laity assumed the sanctity of moral law, many quite harmless customs were discouraged or forbidden because they offended the sanctimonious.¹

Sir William Wilde in his delightful Popular Irish superstitions, published in 1852, mourned the passing of many popular festivals and superstitions and saw the famine as to a large degree responsible for this change, though he believed that Fr Mathew's temperance crusade had also played its part.

The old forms and customs ... are becoming obliterated; [he wrote] the festivals are unobserved, and the rustic festivities neglected or forgotten; the bowlings, the cakes and prinkums (the peasants' balls and routs), do not often take place when starvation and pestilence stalk over the country... The native humour of the people is not so rich and racy as in days of yore... Well honoured be the name of Theobald Mathew - but, after all, a power of fun went away with the whiskey. The spirits of the people isn't what they were when a man could get drunk for three halfpence, and find a sod on a kilpeen² over the door of every second cabin in the parish... The fairies, the whole pantheon of Irish demigods are retiring, one by one, from the habitations of man to the distant islands where the wild waves of the Atlantic raise their foaming crests, to render their fastnesses inaccessible to the schoolmaster and the railroad engineer.³

Despite his eloquent lament for the passing of the popular festivals, Wilde was by no means sympathetic to the drunken

¹ Danaher, The year in Ireland, pp 14-15.

² 'A sod of turf stuck on a sally switch or kippeen and placed in the thatch of an Irish cabin, is the sign of "good liquor within".' Wilde, Popular Irish superstitions, p. 16.

³ Ibid., pp 14-16.

orgies which frequently accompanied them. He noted with disapproval that publicans had tried to revive the May Day celebrations at Harold's Cross in Dublin in 1836 by erecting a pole, though obviously this was only an effort to drum up business.¹ However, he quoted approvingly the complaint of an unnamed catholic friend, to the effect that the 'tone of society in Ireland is becoming more and more "protestant" every year ... even the priests are becoming more protestant in their conversation and manners. They have condemned all the holy wells and resorts of pilgrims, with the single exception of Lough Derg'.²

That there was a change in religious practice after the famine, which involved the abolition of various traditional celebrations, is confirmed by David Miller in a recent article on 'Irish catholicism and the great famine'. According to Miller, 'canonical' religious practices tended to replace those of a 'customary' nature. Clergy before the famine had either been hostile to customary practices because of their pagan and licentious nature, or they had worked to christianise them. But Miller sees the famine as striking a death blow at customary religion in Ireland. Its practices were essentially intended to promote growth and so, with the repeated crop failures during the famine years, the system was discredited. In the second half of the nineteenth century canonical practices, like regular attendance at mass, frequent communion and various new devotional exercises,

¹ Wilde, Popular Irish superstitions, p. 62.

² Ibid., p. 17.

replaced the old rural festivals.¹ It perhaps hardly needs to be said that these religious developments were vital to the church's attitude to temperance. Customary religious practices were frequently condemned because of the drunkenness often associated with them, while temperance societies were an important aspect of the 'devotional revolution', as Emmet Larkin has termed the changes in the church after 1850. However, as we shall soon see, simple opposition to drink or drunkenness was by no means the position of the church after the famine. The drink question raised profound problems of a theological, social, economic and political nature for the church, and its response was accordingly complex.²

Wilde had seen traditional society, after the famine, retreating to the western islands, and certainly towards the end of the century it is to the writers of the Aran and Blasket Islands that we must go for a picture of the place of drink in the older, Irish-speaking society. But the role of drink in the more anglicised, post-famine rural society of Leinster and the easterly parts of Munster and Connacht has in recent times come under the scrutiny of various American sociologists, beginning in the 1930s with the pioneering work of Arensberg and Kimball.³ Though dealing with the twentieth century, and frequently drawing

¹ David Miller, 'Irish catholicism and the great famine' in Journal of Social History, ix, no. 1 (Sept, 1975), pp 81-98.

² See chapter V for a more detailed discussion of the church's attitude.

³ C.M. Arensberg and S.T. Kimball, Family and community in Ireland (2nd ed., Cambridge, Mass., 1968) and C.M. Arensberg, The Irish countryman: an anthropological study (reprint, Gloucester, Mass., 1959, of orig. ed., London, 1937).

comparisons with the Irish community in the United States, such writers have also indulged in interesting speculations about the role of drink in late nineteenth-century rural Ireland.

The change in the marriage pattern after the famine, with marriages becoming fewer and generally being entered into later in life, had a profound effect on drinking customs and habits. Robert Bales, as part of a comparative study of alcohol addiction among Irish and Jewish immigrants to the United States, examined the attitudes towards drinking in post-famine Irish culture. Beginning with the observation that, in the United States, alcohol addiction rates for Irish males during the period between 1900 and 1940 were relatively high in comparison to other groups. Assuming a modal age of 35 or 40 for these addicts, the time of birth and socialisation of many of these men fell in the last quarter of the 1800s, and, taking the socialisation period of their parents into account as relevant, we may see that the usages in Ireland as early as the first part of the last century are germane.¹ Bales sought to examine the 'life cycle of the male of the small farmer class in southern Ireland, born around 1825 and living till around 1900'.² In his somewhat speculative study, Bales tried to identify those factors in nineteenth-century Irish rural society which could conceivably have contributed to high rates of alcoholic addiction among Irish-American men in the first half of the twentieth century. He, too, noticed the importance of alcohol in celebrating the rites of passage and its

¹ Bales, 'Attitudes toward drinking in the Irish culture', p. 158.

² Ibid. For a recent critique of Bales's work see Joyce O'Connor, The young drinkers (London, 1978), pp 9-10.

prevalence at social occasions, like fairs, dances and patterns. Thus, from infancy, the Irishman in the nineteenth century would have seen a great deal of drinking. While recognising important opponents of drink among the clergy, Bales nevertheless characterised the church's general attitude as 'tolerant and permissive'.¹ This he attributed to the fact that many priests had themselves sprung from rural backgrounds and therefore tended to reflect the prevailing lay attitudes.

But, aside from these undoubtedly important factors, Bales identified two others which he saw as especially significant in determining Irish drinking habits. He felt that drink acted as an important substitute, on the one hand for food, and on the other for sexual gratification. Relying largely on Michael McCarthy's far from sympathetic study of Ireland, Irish land and Irish liberty, published in 1911, Bales noted a tendency 'to substitute drinking for eating in response to certain situations'. Irregular and inadequate food supplies, combined with the encouragement to fast given by the church, he thought, had produced in the Irish a 'careless, somewhat depreciatory regard of food', and the 'tendency to neglect meals'.² McCarthy had observed that drink and food tended to be separated in Ireland and that the 'main differences between the drinking habits of Ireland and Great Britain is that Irishmen drink fasting, while Englishmen drink with and after food'.³

¹ Bales, 'Attitudes towards drinking in the Irish culture', p. 164.

² Ibid., p. 159.

³ M.J.F. McCarthy, Irish land and Irish liberty (London, 1911), p. 296.

Further, drink was a synonym for hospitality in Ireland and was 'idealised in Ireland more than in England, through not being kept in the home and taken with meals as it is in England'.¹ This substitution both increased drinking and also aggravated drunkenness. Drinking occurred outside the home, away from meals, at social gatherings and in public houses. Moreover, drink taken on an empty stomach was more likely to lead to drunkenness. Thus, as numerous observers noted, public and aggressive drunkenness was much more common in Ireland than in England.² Furthermore, after the famine, with fewer and later marriages, the all-male drinking group became an important social phenomenon. Subordinated to elderly parents, perhaps well into middle age, and thus unable to marry, the Irish countryman gravitated into male groups centring on the public house. Bales regarded the heavy drinking which characterised such groups as the 'release of sexual tensions'.³ This interpretation, he felt, was confirmed by the attitude to the teetotaler, which Arensburg found displayed in rural communities. The teetotaler was considered a 'menace to society' because, without the public house to entertain him, he was likely 'to prowl around the streets getting girls into trouble and destroying their characters'.⁴ Many traditional songs

¹ M.J.F. McCarthy, Irish land and Irish liberty, p. 297.

² See, for example, John Dunlop's evidence in Report from the select committee on inquiry into drunkenness, 1834, pp 406-7

³ Bales, 'Attitudes towards drinking in the Irish culture', p. 168.

⁴ Ibid., pp 168-9.

also suggest this substitution; the 'Cruiskeen Lawn', for instance, with its chorus: 'The love of my heart is my little full jug,/ Here's health to my darling girl!'

Thus, according to Bales,

the drunkard in Ireland is not condemned, unless he is married and his drinking threatens the family's cash resources or tenure on the land, when he is said to 'go to town and drink the money', or 'drink the land up', leaving nothing for his parents, siblings or children. When drunkenness begins to interfere with the primary family system and its economic base, rather than to facilitate its preservation, it is condemned. Short of that, drunkenness, as Arensberg says, is 'laughable, pleasurable, somewhat exciting, a punctuation of dull routine to be watched and applauded, and drunken men are handled with care and affection'.¹

That drink was a vital component of the socio-economic structure which arose in rural Ireland after the famine is further demonstrated by Brody's study of rural Clare, Inishkillane. In the villages he studied, Brody found an important division between the society of the bar and that of the shop. In the bar were the older farmers and bachelors, upholders of the traditional way of life, but around the shop collected a younger group of both boys and girls, many of whom had taken the pledge and were determined to leave the village at the first opportunity. To them, drink clearly symbolised the traditional rural way of life, by adhering to the pledge, they were signifying their opposition to it and their ultimate determination to abandon it.² Drinking with others certainly signified group solidarity, an identity of interests, and so it was an important part of many business transactions and group

¹ Bales, 'Attitudes toward drinking in the Irish culture, p. 170.

² Brody, Inishkillane, pp 172-4.

activities. Again, Bales ably summed up the various manifestations of such social drinking and we can do no better than to quote him.

What the individual does express and communicate to others by acts of convivial drinking in the Irish culture is his solidarity with certain groups within the social system. Thus, drinking together is a symbolic certification or manifestation of the solidarity of 'friends' or kinship groups, of the acceptance of the individual male as a 'man among men', as an equal in his own solidarity age group; drinking together is a manifestation of the equality and solidarity of town and country folk, of the guest and the host, the politician and his constituents, the seller and the buyer. Refusal of men of different classes to drink with one another indicates a lack of solidarity, but as the lack of solidarity passes into hostility, drinking, rather than abstention, again becomes the vehicle for expressing hostility - the covert aggression of the 'boys' toward the 'old fellows', covert and open aggression against disliked members of the community. Finally, drinking is both a manifestation of, and an actual utilitarian preparation for, faction and party fights, attacks on informers, and the perpetual rebellion against the age-old enemy, England.¹

We shall have more to say later about the connection between drink and rebellion, but, for the moment, drink can be seen as fulfilling important functions in the development of the all-male group, which was a notable social phenomenon in rural Ireland after the famine.

Bales's research was done early in the 1940s, but his theories have been taken up and elaborated upon recently by Richard Stivers in a study entitled, A hair of the dog. Stivers also traces the development of strong, all-male, drinking groups, based on what he terms an 'avuncular relationship', from the late-marriage pattern. According to him, 'relatively few marriages, a late age at marriage among those who did marry, a religiously imposed chastity on the unmarried, an extensive segregation of the sexes,

¹ Bales, 'Attitudes toward drinking in the Irish culture', p. 184.

and negative (authoritarian and hostile) relationships between father and son and between husband and wife combined to make all-male groups even more important in the maintenance of communal social order than they had been before the great famine'.¹ In Stivers's view, hard drinking came to symbolise the solidarity of the male group, its manliness and distinctiveness from women. Thus, a man could rise to prominence without land, wife or children. 'His hard drinking commanded prestige from fellow males, and helped anchor his identity as a man.'² Stivers puts less emphasis on heavy drinking as an outlet for sexual frustrations, seeing it more in this role of establishing individual identity and group solidarity. 'The bachelor group became a means of controlling unmarried males by diverting their interest from the responsibilities of marriage, family and farm ownership and redirecting it toward the freedom from responsibility found in sports, storytelling, and hard drinking.'³

Stivers, perhaps even more clearly than Bales, sees the all-male drinking group, which acted as a substitute for land and marriage, as essential to the maintenance of the post-famine socio-economic structure. Such a state of affairs naturally posed severe problems for the catholic church with regard to its attitude to drink. The church, particularly through its encouragement of sexual repression and its acceptance of the system of land inheritance, upheld

¹ Richard Stivers, A hair of the dog: Irish drinking and American stereotype (University Park, Penn., and London, 1976), p. 77.

² Ibid., pp 87-8.

³ Ibid., p. 165.

the post-famine socio-economic structure. Miller sees the church as playing an important role by providing 'moral authority for measures taken to maximise the stability of rural society'.¹ Yet, if Bales and Stivers are right, hard drinking by the bachelor group was essential to the maintenance of this stability. The church was, in fact, indirectly encouraging hard drinking. On the other hand, at different times, especially in the 1840s and from the 1870s, there were powerful movements from within the church aimed at totally eliminating drink. For most of the period, however, the church was divided on the subject of drink and temperance. It did not adopt the vigorous and absolute opposition to alcohol, found from an early date among the protestant churches of Ulster, but periodically it was swept by such enthusiasm. Stivers sees the church attempting to mediate between temperance groups and hard drinkers with the rubric, moderate drinking.

The catholic church [he writes] advocates either moderate drinking or abstention from drink for religious reasons. Thus both structures of drink in Ireland - the bachelor group and temperance - can lay claim to church support. The theme of moderate drinking provides the basis for minimal agreement on both sides, some degree of order ... With few exceptions, bachelor₂-groups devotees and temperance advocates are both catholic.²

However, in practice, the pressures of the male group on the one hand and of the temperance society on the other tended to mean that men were pushed either into heavy drinking or

¹ Miller, 'Irish catholicism and the great famine, p.93.

² Stivers, A hair of the dog, p. 97.

into total abstinence. The middle ground of moderate drinking did not prove to be a viable option. This polarisation of the Irish with regard to drink has one particularly important side effect, which is worth noting. It distorts general statistical measures of the drink problem. Ireland has a reputation for heavy drinking and recent studies of admissions of alcoholics to psychiatric hospitals in the Republic,¹ as well as the researches of Bales and others on alcoholism among Irish-Americans would seem to confirm this impression. Yet Irish figures for per capita alcohol consumption are low compared with many other countries.² This inconsistency can be explained by the phenomenon of polarisation, but it does make study of the problem exceedingly difficult.³ We shall have occasion in the course of this work, and especially in chapter V, to examine more closely the catholic church's attitude to drink during the nineteenth century. And we shall see there that Bales's and Striver's emphasis on the ambivalent attitude adopted by the church is not mistaken.

The sociological studies we have been looking at deal solely with the place of drink in Irish rural society. They seem to suggest that the occasional outbursts of heavy

¹ Dermot Walsh, 'Alcoholism in the Republic of Ireland' in British Journal of Psychiatry, cxv (1969), pp 1021-5.

² O'Connor, The young drinkers, p. 148; Richard Lynn, 'National differences in anxiety' in Papers of the Economic and Social Research Institute, no. 59 (Feb. 1971), pp 34-9.

³ J.M. Owens, J.T. Quinn, Joan Graham and J.M. Rao, 'Drinking patterns in an Irish county' in Irish Medical Journal, lxxix, no. 6 (Mar. 1976), pp 134-5; for a useful short discussion of the problem see the article by Dr Dermot Walsh in Irish Times, 8 Dec. 1977.

drinking, associated with weddings, wakes, fairs and patterns, gave way after the famine, in some areas at least, to more consistent heavy drinking by one particular group: young and middle aged, unmarried men. Circumstantial drinking certainly continued in connection with the rites of passage and fairs, as Sullivan and Russell, two knowledgeable observers, testified in the 1870s. But among many young Irish countrymen a different pattern was evident. As yet, there has been no similar examination of drinking patterns in the cities or in Ulster, as opposed to the rest of the country. The Irish temperance movement, however, had its headquarters in Belfast and Dublin and campaigned most vigorously in these cities, believing that the drink problem was worse there than in country areas. To gain an insight into urban drinking customs, we must turn to the evidence presented to the various select committees which examined aspects of the Irish drink question in the latter part of the century.

In 1877 Charles Joseph O'Donel, for ten years a Dublin magistrate, told a select committee on Irish Sunday closing that,

Dublin is saturated with drink, it is flooded with drink, it is the staple manufacture. Every kind of drink which the people care to consume is manufactured in unlimited quantities in Dublin; every third or fourth house, even in respectable streets, deals in drink. The whiskey is excellent and the porter ditto.¹

Allowing for some exaggeration, the general impression that O'Donel's comment conveys is nevertheless accurate. The facilities for drinking in Dublin at the time were

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 122/138.

considerable. In 1877-8 within the Dublin Metropolitan Police District, which covered an area of thirty-six square miles and had a population of 337,589, there were 1,066 public houses, 310 spirit grocer shops, 137 beer dealers, 77 refreshment houses and, according to police estimates, 209 unlicensed houses selling drink.¹ This adds up to one retail liquor outlet for every 194 inhabitants. That these shops were well patronised was shown by a survey of public houses conducted by the police on Sunday, 30 April 1876. In the city of Dublin, covering six square miles within the canals, there were 765 public houses, 660 of which were open on that particular Sunday. The police counted 122,899 persons entering these public houses, which was almost exactly half the population of the city. Even allowing for some inflation of this figure due to the same people entering public houses more than once on that day, it is still a rather startling statistic. On Sunday, 13 February in that same year, a similar survey had been conducted in the other Irish cities and the percentages of the total population entering public houses had been: in Cork 37%, in Waterford 35%, in Limerick 31%, in Belfast 24% and in Londonderry 16%. The overall percentage for the six cities was 37%². Thus, the public houses of Dublin were significantly more heavily patronised than those in other Irish cities.

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 339/355; Fourth report from the select committee of the house of lords on intemperance, 1878, p. 332.

² Return showing the number of persons entering public houses, 1 May 1876; Lake to Burke, 15 Apr. 1876 (S.P.O., R.P. 1876/6443). See also Report ... 1877, op. cit., p. 345/361.

Yet Dublin was a depressed city, by-passed by industrialisation. While Belfast's population increased 218% between 1861 and 1911, Dublin's population increased only 19%. The main areas of employment tended to be those requiring unskilled labour and irregular work. The growth of the railway network centring on Dublin and the development of the city as a port made it the transportation and distribution centre for Ireland. Thus there were numerous porters, carters and labourers who were frequently unemployed and earned at best a subsistence wage. The building industry, which was another major employer, only afforded irregular and ill-paid work. With a largely static population and little industrial development, workers congregated in decaying eighteenth-century houses, subdivided into tenements. As the city centre declined, the middle classes moved out beyond the canals to the prosperous townships of Rathmines, Pembroke, Drumcondra and Clontarf. Without large-scale industrial employment for men, women and child workers were common, particularly in marginal occupations. Mary Crowley, in her interesting socio-economic study of Dublin between 1860 and 1914, suggests that the basic characteristics of the city were 'lack of security, chronic unemployment and subsistence wages, resulting on the whole only in prosperity to public houses, slum landlords and secondhand clothes shops'.¹ The poverty of the city centre and the flight of the wealthier classes beyond the city boundaries left the corporation with a meagre income from rates. It

¹ M.E. Crowley, A social and economic study of Dublin, 1860-1914 (unpublished M.A. thesis, University College, Dublin, 1971), p. iii.

therefore campaigned consistently to have the boundaries of the city extended beyond the canals, but, in the face of fierce opposition from the suburban townships, this was not achieved till 1900. This situation retarded urban development. The Dublin main drainage scheme, for instance, could not be built in the 1870s because the valuation of the city would not support the necessary borrowing. In 1911, according to Crowley, 34% of Dublin's population were living in poverty, and, of these, some 50% to 60% were living in 'primary poverty', as defined by Joseph Rowntree - that is, their total earnings were insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of mere physical efficiency.¹ Or, as Sir Francis MacCabe, commissioner of the local government board, put it in 1900: 'a large proportion of the population of Dublin, living in these tenement houses, really live on the borderland between habitual privation and absolute destitution'.²

The poverty of the city was most obvious in two areas: firstly in its notorious overcrowding, and secondly in its high death-rate. Overcrowding was such that a study in 1861 noted a population density in the poorer districts of 3.59 persons per room and 2.71 persons per bed.³ In 1880, according to James Boyce, the city's executive sanitary

¹ Crowley, A social and economic study of Dublin, pp 79-82.

² Report of the committee appointed by the local government board for Ireland to inquire into the public health of the city of Dublin, p.12 [C-243], H.C. 1900, xxxix, 726.

³ Crowley, op. cit., p. 175.

officer, the average density within the municipal boundaries was 65 to 68 persons per acre, though in one area it reached 242, and over a large area it was 154.¹ In 1900 the density was 65.6 and MacCabe commented that he knew 'of no place - except, perhaps, certain districts in Bombay - where there is in the empire a denser population'.² In 1800 there were 23,830 houses in Dublin, of which 9,760 were tenements. Of these tenements, about 4,000 had a rateable value less than £10 per annum and 2,300, housing some 30,000 persons, were classified as unfit for human habitation.³ Substantial re-housing schemes were undertaken, particularly after 1880, but these made little impact on the problem and may in fact have worsened the existing situation. Such schemes were generally undertaken by profit-seeking companies, like the Artisans' Dwelling Company, which had strong support from the temperance movement, and also by breweries and distilleries, most notably Guinness's, rather than by the impoverished corporation. The corporation, according to Sir Charles A. Cameron, the superintendent of health, wanted to re-develop the Bride's Alley area near St Patrick's Cathedral, but the four-acre site cost £30,000 to acquire. Interestingly one house

¹ Report of the royal commissioners ... on sewerage and drainage of the city of Dublin, p. 24 [C-2605], H.C. 1880, xxx, 60.

² Report of the committee... to inquire into the public health of the city of Dublin, 1900, p. 12/726.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 11/725; *Report ... 1880, op. cit.*, p. 24/60.

alone cost £4,500 to buy - it was a public house.¹ However, Guinness's cleared away numerous tenements to build the Belview buildings between the two cathedrals, the South City Market Company demolished 119 tenements in order to rebuild much of George's Street, while the Artisans' Dwelling Company undertook substantial schemes in Plunket Street and the Coombe in the 1880s.² But such schemes, with their emphasis on profit, tended to displace more people than they re-housed, and those displaced were usually poorer than those provided with new homes. Crowley quotes a letter to the Irish Times in 1890 which stated that, between 1879 and 1890, 30,000 persons had been turned out of insanitary dwellings, but of these only 12,000 were re-housed. The result was that, whereas in 1879 twelve persons per house was the average, by 1890 this had risen to twenty per house.³ So the re-housing schemes were only aggravating overcrowding, while at the same time they paid a handsome dividend of from 3% to 4% to investors. Crowley concludes that, 'there is no conclusive evidence that the standard of housing of the poorest section of the community had been significantly improved by the housing ventures of this twenty years - 1880 - 1900'.⁴

¹ Report of the committee ... to inquire into the public health of the city of Dublin, 1900, p. 32/746; for the cost of Dublin public houses see p. 61.

² Crowley, A social and economic study of Dublin, p. 175.

³ Ibid., p. 191.

⁴ Ibid., p. 198.

The city's death-rate was also alarmingly high. In 1865-6, 1871-2 and again in 1878-9 there were serious epidemics, predominantly of cholera and smallpox. In 1865 there were 71 deaths from smallpox and 526 from unspecified fever, while in the following year there were 1,186 deaths from cholera. In 1871 smallpox claimed 865 lives, with the Coombe, Merchants Quay and Townsend Street areas being the most seriously affected. This last epidemic led to the setting up of the Dublin Sanitary Association, another middle-class temperance-inspired body, aiming to educate public opinion on sanitary matters and to lobby the government for reforming legislation.¹ But smallpox and typhoid struck again in 1878 claiming 739 lives and the epidemic continued into 1879, a year of bad weather and general depression. These epidemics were generally blamed on the pollution of the river Liffey and the lack of an adequate drainage system. The agitation of the Dublin Sanitary Association with regard to this issue gave rise in 1880 to a royal commission on the sewerage and drainage of Dublin, the minutes of which provide a wealth of information on the living conditions of the poor. However, the commission concluded that bad housing and overcrowding were more likely to have been responsible for the epidemics than inadequate drainage, and thus this report gave impetus to schemes for clearing away tenements. But the death-rate remained high and a commission established to look into the matter in 1900 found that for persons aged between one and sixty, the

¹ See the evidence of F.W. Pim, honorary secretary of Dublin Sanitary Association, in Report of the royal commissioners ... on sewerage and drainage, 1880, pp 90-4/126-30; Crowley, A social and economic study of Dublin, pp 155-9.

Dublin death-rate was 75% above the rate prevailing in England. In Dublin the death-rate was 18.1 per 1,000, compared with 10.5 per 1,000 in London. These figures again bear witness to the extreme poverty of the city, for they relate to the adult death-rate and do not cover infant mortality. The registrar-general, who supplied this information, attributed the high death-rate to bad housing, poverty leading to lack of proper clothing and food, to intemperance and neglect of sanitation. To illustrate the extent of the problem of intemperance, he pointed out that in 1898 28 per 1,000 of the population of the metropolitan police district had been convicted for drunkenness.¹

As O'Donel indicated, Dublin's economy was dominated by the drink industry. Yet, in many respects, the industry brought little benefit to the city. Guinness's, for instance, relied very much on economies of scale. The brewery was capital intensive, with a total capital of £5 million when it became a public company in 1886, but with a labour force of only about 2,000. As early as 1877, the main labour cost was salaries, not wages.² Despite a spectacular growth in output, Guinness's labour force remained at between 2,000 and 3,000 from 1885 to 1904. The situation in other breweries was similar: the Anchor brewery in the 1880s employed only 300 men, while Jameson and Pim had only 175. Distilling, too, was capital rather

¹ Report of the committee ... to inquire into the public health of the city of Dublin, 1900, p. 7/721; Crowley, *A social and economic study of Dublin*, p. 206.

² Report ... 1900, op. cit., p. 189/903; Crowley, op. cit., p. 66.

than labour intensive. In 1887 George Roe and Company could produce two million gallons of spirit with a labour force of 200. In that year there were in fact six distilleries in Dublin, employing in all only about 1,100 workers.¹ It was indeed unfortunate for Dublin, with its desperate need of regular employment, that its most prosperous industry employed relatively few workers. With regard to Guinness's at least, the majority of its employees were not even Dubliners. The company took an unusual interest in its employees' health, establishing a dispensary in 1870, and laying down basic physical requirements. Thus a man had to have a minimum height of 5 feet 3 inches and a chest measurement of 37½ to 40½ inches in order to qualify for employment at Guinness's. Dubliners found it very difficult satisfying these requirements and 51% of applicants for jobs at the brewery were turned down on physical or medical grounds.² Most of the labour force was therefore country-bred. The temperance movement was convinced that workers in the drink industry were more prone to drunkenness and diseases associated with excessive drinking than were other workers. Rev. Gilbert Mahaffy, rector of St Peter's and a leader of the Church of Ireland Temperance Society, claimed in 1900 that after the age of forty Guinness's workers had a much higher death-rate from diseases of the respiratory and digestive organs than did others. Mahaffy's medical opinions were not particularly reliable, however, for he claimed that distillery workers 'went off like a thatched

¹ Crowley, A social and economic study of Dublin, pp 67-8.

² Ibid., p. 25.

house on fire' if they contracted a lung inflammation.

'Their system was so impregnated with combustible matter that they could not stand the illness, and in times of epidemics they suffer hopelessly.'¹ Yet, he does seem to have a point with regard to Guinness's at least. Dr Lumsden, the brewery's dispensary doctor in 1900, admitted that between 1878 and 1898 the death-rate among the company's workers was 20 per 1,000. This is significantly higher than that prevailing for adult Dubliners as a whole.² Moreover, Crowley found that deaths from tuberculosis among Guinness workers over forty were well above average.³

The importance of the drink industry, particularly the retail end of it, was also reflected in the politics of Dublin. As we shall see later, during the 1860s and 1870s supporters of temperance challenged the city's representation in parliament by those connected to or sympathetic with the drink interest. This interest, however, was even stronger at the level of the corporation. According to figures supplied by Crowley, throughout the period 1860 to 1910 seldom less than a third, and sometimes as high as 40%, of the members of the Dublin corporation were producers or retailers of drink. In the earlier part of this period representatives were frequently substantial brewers or distillers, but, as catholic

¹ Report from the committee ... to inquire into the public health of the city of Dublin, 1900, pp 94-5/808-9.

² Ibid., p. 189/903.

³ Crowley, A social and economic study of Dublin, appendix J, p. iii.

nationalists came increasingly to control the corporation, so there was a gradual decline in the socio-economic status of the representatives of the drink industry. Retailers, particularly successful publicans, rather than producers, became the most numerous group.¹

It is against this background of poorly paid and irregular work, unsanitary housing, overcrowding, high death-rates, and a city dominated economically and politically by the drink industry that we must examine the drinking patterns in late nineteenth-century Dublin. Dublin magistrates, especially, showed an awareness of the influence that this socio-economic background might have upon drinking habits. Again, O'Donel's evidence in 1877 presented the issue in clear and forceful terms.

I believe [he said] it is utterly hopeless, and beyond the scope of legislation, to improve the conditions of the working classes in Dublin until their domiciles, their homes, the places in which thousands of them live, are swept away, and proper houses built for them to reside in. As a sanitary magistrate I have come to the conclusion that anything like the vile abomination, the filth, and the squalid and helpless misery of those unhealthy overcrowded tenements is not to be found elsewhere.

And in reply to a question from Sir Michael Hicks Beach, as to whether Dublin was especially bad in this respect, O'Donel said:

I believe it is the worst place in the world; at least, I cannot imagine anything worse. Now I ask myself, when I come to think of these things, if a person of education were condemned to live for a fortnight or three weeks by some fatality in a place of that description when he came home from toil, whether mental toil or bodily toil, on a Saturday night, and saw his family about him in this fetid, close, and heavy atmosphere, positively one would think, as a matter of medicine, that a doctor would prescribe alcohol as a stimulant, to enable him to bear up against such foulness. I do not think that you have the slightest possibility of improving the condition of

¹ Crowley, A social and economic study of Dublin, appendix B, pp iii-iv; see also Irish Catholic, 12 Dec. 1903.

the working classes in Dublin by shutting up public houses, for alcohol they will have as long as people have money in their pockets, and all the police in Dublin, if you were to double them, will not keep the drink out of their throats.¹

Temperance advocates were naturally far less pessimistic and generally also less sympathetic to the plight of the poor than O'Donel, for their view was that, rather than poverty and squalor driving people to drink, the reverse was true: excessive drinking created poverty and the kind of conditions about which O'Donel complained. John Cooke, a temperance enthusiast and the honorary secretary of the Dublin branch of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, put this attitude succinctly when in 1900 he said, 'as a rule, we find that men start well, have good employment, have been earning a good wage, and that they sink down into only occasional wage-earning in consequence of drink'.²

However, even if the causes were debateable, there was a good deal of agreement on the main characteristics of Dublin drinking. Urban drinking resembled the rural pattern in that it was essentially a social occupation, was closely related to work and markets and was also a sign of group solidarity. Most drinking was done on Saturday nights and on Sundays and, accordingly, most

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 126/142.

² Report from the committee ... to inquire into the public health of the city of Dublin, 1900, p. 212/926. For recent studies which throw light on the relationship between poverty and drink see J.B. Brown, 'The pig or the stye: drink and poverty in late Victorian England' in International Review of Social History, xviii, pt 3 (1973), pp 380-95 and A.E. Dingle, 'Drink and working-class living standards in Britain, 1870-1914' in Economic History Review, 2nd ser., xxv, no. 4 (Nov. 1972), pp 608-22.

arrests for drunkenness occurred at these times. We have already seen that a significant percentage of the Dublin population frequented public houses on Sunday, but Saturday night drinking caused as much, if not more, concern. It was the custom in Dublin to pay workmen late on Saturday afternoon or on Saturday evening. This occurred particularly in tailoring, shoemaking and in the building trades. Workers usually received large bills, and at such a time it was only in the public house that money could be changed. In 1868 John Keegan, secretary of the United Trades Association of Dublin, described the system to the select committee on Sunday closing.

A large portion of the working classes who are what is called out-working tradesmen, generally bring home their work on Saturday night at seven, and their average time of payment is about nine, and ... they are sometimes paid two or three together with a large note, which they have to go to a public house to get changed; there they ask for change, and order some drink, in order to get accommodated. And there is a large class of people depending upon them for payment, such as female sewers and so on; and if the public houses were closed earlier than at present, it would be productive of serious pecuniary losses, and the people would have to buy liquor and groceries which they required at small shops, thirty per cent dearer in price, and fifty per cent worse in quality.¹

On Saturday night also some ten or twelve food markets operated in the city, particularly in Thomas, George and Moore Streets. These lasted till midnight and during or after their shopping, people generally resorted to the public houses to meet friends and spend some of their week's money. But Saturday night drinking in Dublin did not cease with the closing of the public houses at 11 p.m. There were numerous shebeens and spirit grocer

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 104/662.

shops which only opened to receive customers after the legal trade had ceased. Keegan named Stephen Street and Golden Lane, and 'low neighbourhoods like that' as the main areas for after-hours drinking.¹ William Woodlock, the magistrate responsible for the southern section of the city, mentioned two streets in his area in 1878 as being 'perfectly notorious' for shebeens. These were Plunket Street, 'a wretched den of crime and a miserable place', and Kevin Street.² Shebeens were also often situated near churches, like the one close to St John's in Thomas Street referred to by Captain Talbot in 1877, so that drinkers could slip in after mass on Sundays.³ Shebeens operated on Sunday evenings, as well as in the mornings, and were frequently busy well into Monday. Thus, the phenomenon of 'Saint Monday', high absenteeism from work on Mondays, was very familiar to Dublin employers.⁴

The kind of liquor served in some of these drinking dens was described by Superintendent Corr in 1877. He

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 103/661.

² Fourth report from the select committee of the house of lords on intemperance, 1878, p. 384.

³ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 17/33.

⁴ One temperance observer found in Limerick and Waterford that 20% fewer men attended work on Monday morning than on any other day of the week; Report ... 1878, op. cit., p. 471. For general discussions of Saint Monday see Douglas A. Reid, 'The decline of Saint Monday, 1766-1876' in Past and Present, no. 71 (May 1976), pp 76-101 and E.P. Thompson, 'Time, work-discipline, and industrial capitalism' in M.W. Flinn and T.C. Smout (ed.), Essays in social history (Oxford, 1974), pp 50-52.

had once known a 'notorious night-house keeper', he said, who was in the habit of getting what is called 'a first polish' in a druggist's shop, and with a pint of that and a pint of bad night-house whiskey, it was strongly rumoured, and I have no doubt in the world but that it was correct, that he could make six or seven gallons of night-house whiskey out of it.¹

Complaints about adulteration were in fact numerous. Talbot even claimed that Guinness was diluted with inferior stout in some shebeens.² Descriptions of shebeens given by magistrates and police agree as to their filth and squalor. According to Woodlock, the houses were 'of the most squalid description'. 'When I say houses,' he went on 'it is really rather a room that is occupied as an illicit drinking place, than a house ... it is in the most obscure and filthy neighbourhoods, the room is dirty, the whole place is utterly disreputable.' Further, Woodlock charged that a large number he had dealt with were brothels and the 'illicit drinking, although it is very bad, is still only a secondary consideration'.³ In 1888 Commissioner David Harrel described the mode of operation of the shebeens in some detail, illustrating at the same time why they were so difficult to police.

The shebeening is not carried on in Dublin in houses where it is well known that you could go and get drink every night in the week, or even every Saturday night. The practice is that a room, which is generally in a

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 56/72.

² Ibid., p. 30/46.

³ Ibid., p. 97/113.

greengrocer's, or in a very small shop in a back street, is taken for the night, and immediately it becomes known in the neighbourhood that in that room drink is to be had, usually porter. Very often the person who is doing the business is not the proprietor of the room at all. The owner of the room gets a consideration for the use of it for the night. The man rents it for the night for the sale of ale or porter, or whatever it may be; and although there are rooms which are known to be constantly used in that manner, still a room used on one Saturday night might not be used for a month or six weeks again.¹

The rooms which Harrel and Woodlock refer to were of course in tenement houses. Yet, such rooms, when transformed for the night into a shebeen, provided the warmth and cheer that was so lacking in the overcrowded dwellings of the poor. Police and magistrates might deplore the squalor of the shebeens, but they were certainly no worse than the rooms in which a substantial percentage of the Dublin population was living. When trying to account for the popularity of public houses in Dublin, as shown by the vast numbers who used them, we must keep in mind the conditions in which most of these people were living. Sir Francis MacCabe clearly appreciated the situation when he commented in 1900, 'if it was my fate to be a working man in Dublin, and that after a hard day's work I was obliged to return to the squalor and discomfort of a room in one of these tenement houses, I should greatly prefer to spend my evening in the bright surroundings and warmth and attractiveness of a well-conducted public house'.² Thus, it is perhaps not going too far to see in both the large public house and the one-room shebeen a form of home for

¹ Report from the select committee on Sunday closing acts (Ireland), 1888, p. 30.

² Report from the committee ... to inquire into the public health of the city of Dublin, 1900, p. 12/726.

the Dublin poor, so many of whom had no real home of their own.

Nearly half the spirit grocer shops in Ireland were to be found in Dublin and these, as we have already seen, were notorious for their illegal trading.¹ T.W. Russell described how he and other temperance men had toured the slums on Saturday nights and Sunday mornings and had been repeatedly served for consumption on the premises in spirit grocer shops. 'In most cases', according to him 'men were drinking at the counter. In other cases they were drinking in a room behind, separated from the shop by a partition, a check-string from behind the counter opening the door.'² Russell found that Clarence Place, off Great Brunswick Street, and Stephens Lane were particularly popular illegal drinking spots. Though in Mercer Street, they had 'noticed a boy at a spirit grocer's door and ... stopped and put ourselves into ambush and we saw for about twenty minutes a stream of frowsy-looking debauchees going to the place, and being let in by this boy. We satisfied ourselves that they were going in for the consumption of drink.'³ Russell was infuriated by the failure of the police to stamp out illegal drinking, but, as we have seen, they were impeded by the laws themselves and also by the cleverness of the illegal drink-sellers.

¹ At the end of 1877 310 of the 641 spirit grocer shops in Ireland were in Dublin; Fourth report from the select committee of the house of lords on intemperance, 1878, pp 332-3.

² Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 144/160.

³ Ibid.

Woodlock described the ingenious devices used by spirit grocers to avoid prosecution.

We have waged a species of war, I may say, against a particular obstruction which they set up. There was nothing more common in these grocers' establishments than to find the shop divided into two by a large wooden partition reaching up nearly to the ceiling, with a door in it, and behind that partition illicit drinking would be carried on. We have, when renewing licences, and also when convicting, done all that we could to get those partitions removed, so as to allow the police to see the whole shop clear from the street; and I think we have been in some instances successful, but I cannot say how long that success will last. Another way in which that works is this, that not merely may drinking be carried on without being seen, but that when the policeman enters in the discharge of his duty he finds the door closed against him; no doubt he has only to lift the latch, but that causes a little delay, and during that delay the liquor and the signs of drinking are removed.¹

Whether legally or illegally, in public houses, spirit grocer shops, beerhouses or shebeens, Dubliners did most of their drinking on Saturday nights and Sundays. Woodlock had more cases of drunkenness on Monday than on any other day of the week. Heavy drinking on Saturday night was condemned in that it might mean that a man did not go to mass the next day, but instead treated himself with 'a hair of the dog'. Thus, drinking on Saturday led on to drinking on Sunday, which in turn created Saint Monday, or, as T.W. Russell put it, 'just as the Saturday involves the Sunday, the Sunday involves the Monday'.² In this situation pawnshops flourished, as Mary Crowley indicates. According to Woodlock, having spent most of his wages on food and drink on Saturday, the Dublin workingman had no money left by Wednesday. It became

¹ Fourth report from the select committee of the house of lords on intemperance, 1878, p. 374.

² Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, pp 95/111, 145/161.

necessary therefore to pawn clothing or household implements till they could be redeemed on Saturday.¹ Harrel in 1888 underlined the importance of the pawnbrokers by way of explaining that the late hours kept by people on Saturday nights had been shortened.

At present [he said] the habits of the people of Dublin on Saturday night are very much earlier than they were twenty years ago ... Now I may say that the streets are tolerably cleared at twelve o'clock on Saturday night as compared with two o'clock on Sunday morning some years ago. As another instance of how things are progressing in that way, on Saturday night the pawnbrokers, a very large and influential trade as regards the convenience of the poor, a short time ago voluntarily agreed to close their premises absolutely at eleven on Saturday night ... The people have just got into the habit of doing their business before eleven o'clock instead of before twelve or one o'clock on Sunday morning as formerly was the case. The bulk of marketing at present is over at ten o'clock on Saturday night.²

He might also have added, by way of explanation, that a successful campaign had been conducted, strongly supported by the temperance movement, to convince employers to pay their workers much earlier on Saturdays, so they would not have to resort to the public house in order to change their money.³

Undoubtedly the public houses of Dublin provided vital centres for the social life of the poor, acting, as we have suggested, almost as substitute homes. Michael Dwyer, secretary of the Licensed Grocers and Vintners Association, in defending the publicans from their temperance critics,

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 95/111.

² Report from the select committee on Sunday closing acts (Ireland), 1888, p. 30.

³ A Dublin Saturday Half-Holiday Association, modelled on similar organisations in England and Scotland, had existed for many years; see Irish Times, 16 Nov. 1866.

chose to portray the public houses in this way.

Two-thirds of the population of Dublin have literally no dwellings, no private houses [he said]; they have simply a place to sleep in; and if you consider a man with a wife and children, and perhaps the children a little cross occasionally, you could hardly, surely, take 30,000 or 40,000 people and mew them up in that way. What are they to do; they cannot go and sit on the flags in the open street, and yet you shut against them the houses where they really have a very good amount of accommodation in proportion to their circumstances and means. The accommodation that they have in a well-conducted public house in proportion to their circumstances is as good as gentlemen have in a club.¹

In this view, Dwyer was supported by that eminent advocate of temperance, Cardinal Manning, who claimed in 1868 that, the 'one great cause of driving a man to a public house where he has the benefit of a fire and a clean room, at least, is because the homes in which they live are not fit for human habitation'.² Manning, like many Englishmen, also saw the Irish character as an important factor. Being more light-hearted and jovial than any other race he knew, the Irish, he felt, were tempted into public houses by the need for companionship.³ Urban, like rural, drinking was therefore essentially a social activity. This is very clearly seen in the custom of treating. Joseph Briscoe, a coachbuilder and the representative of the temperance-sponsored workingmen's club of York Street, explained some of the social pressures involved in Dublin drinking. 'I just go into public houses because you cannot avoid

¹ Report from the select committee, on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 107/123.

² Special report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday Bill, p. 102, H.C. 1867-8 (402), xiv, 130.

³ Ibid., p. 107/135.

them so long as they are there [he said]; if you meet a man you would be considered a churl if you did not go in along with him. There are many men who ask you to stand a drink.'¹ Drinking together and buying each other drinks was an important expression of friendship, hospitality and of group solidarity. But temperance men particularly deplored treating, as they felt it added substantially to the amount of alcohol consumed. When a group of men went into a public house, instead of having just one drink each, they were obliged to treat each other and thus ended up having four or five glasses. T.W. Russell ascribed this custom to Irish hospitality and noted that those who did not indulge in it were considered 'terribly mean' fellows.²

Not only did the Dublin public house provide a warm and comfortable place in which to meet and socialise, but it also fulfilled more practical functions as well. We have already seen that men were paid there or changed their money there, but the public house also provided a much-needed meeting place. Many organisations, from benevolent societies to revolutionary cells, held their meetings in public houses. John Thomas Duignan, secretary of the Brassfounders' Society of Dublin, told the 1877 select committee that his society met in the Metal-Bridge Tavern at 1 Bachelor's Walk. Most of the other seventeen

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 165/181.

² Fourth report from the select committee of the house of lords on intemperance, 1878, p. 397.

trade societies, that he represented before the committee, also met in public houses, for they had no trades' halls. However, in response to a question from A.M. Sullivan, Duignan was quick to deny that publicans were thus able to exercise influence over trades' organisations.¹

We finally come to the question, what did Dubliners drink? 'Judging from what I see', Woodlock remarked in 1877, 'I think they drink everything. They drink porter, they drink whiskey, they drink port wine, and they drink sherry, and Madeira, or what is called such.'² Other observers, however, noticed more well-defined trends. Duignan considered that more porter than whiskey was drunk, because whiskey was very expensive. You could have a pint of Guinness XX for 3d., while good whiskey was 4d. a glass. He personally preferred draught XX to bottled porter and said that many people did not like the taste of bottled porter, believing that there was soda in it.³ James Sullivan, a silkweaver at Pim Brothers, testifying in 1868, and Michael Dwyer, testifying in 1877, both agreed that draught porter was the most popular drink. They felt, however, that its popularity was due, not to taste, but to the fact that it was cheaper than bottled porter.⁴ Dwyer reported that receipts in Dublin were

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, pp 152/168, 157/173.

² Ibid., p. 99/115.

³ Ibid., pp 152/168, 154/170.

⁴ Ibid., p. 106/122; Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 31/589.

about half and half as regards whiskey and porter, but of course porter was less expensive than whiskey. Some rum and brandy were also drunk, while brandy and wine were popular in the more affluent sections of the city, but in the poorer areas, according to Dwyer, porter was the main beverage. But the popularity of porter was a recent development. Dwyer claimed that consumption had doubled over the previous ten years and ascribed this to the increasing cost of whiskey caused by the equalisation of duties in 1860.¹ In 1900 Mahaffy commented on the remarkable popularity of Guinness in Dublin. There was a 'very wide superstition', he said, that 'Guinness's porter is food and drink', and thus people took it, 'to an extent that you could hardly conceive, as a substitute for food'.

I was startled to find some years ago [he went on] that about one-third of Guinness's stout that is manufactured was consumed in Dublin, and nearly a third of it in Ireland at large, and that only one-third of it was exported. That shows that the people consume an enormous quantity of it. The women take it ... as a substitute for food, and that is especially so with regard to nursing mothers ... I believe a great deal of the sickness of the children is due to the drink-poisoned condition of their mothers, and to the actual giving of drink to the young children themselves. They give it to infants. I have seen children of five and six drinking the porter as they carried it home from the public house.²

Our previous examination of the growth of Guinness's brewery would certainly support Mahaffy's observation as to the popularity of Guinness in Dublin and also in rural Ireland in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 106/122.

² Report of the committee ... to inquire into the public health of the city of Dublin, 1900, p. 95/809. At the age of ten, Brendan Behan began drinking in exactly this way, while bringing pints to his grandmother from the public house; see Ulick O'Connor, Brendan Behan (London, 1972), p. 17.

The survey of the use of public houses on Sunday, conducted in 1876, showed that the northern cities, Belfast and Londonderry, were well behind their southern equivalents; 24% of the Belfast population entered public houses on 13 February in that year, compared with nearly 50% of the Dublin population on 30 April. Yet, in 1877 the Belfast metropolitan district, covering $10\frac{1}{2}$ square miles and with a population of 210,000, had 826 retail liquor outlets. This is one for every 254 inhabitants, compared with Dublin's one for every 194 inhabitants.¹ So, Belfast was not that far behind Dublin in its ratio of public houses to population. In 1868 Robert Lindsay, a merchant and magistrate, had complained of the excessive number of public houses in Belfast. According to him, in the fifty principal streets of the city there were 3,199 dwelling houses and 364 public houses, a ratio of one to eight.² But Lindsay singled out the spirit grocer shops, of which there were 102, for his severest condemnation. He claimed that they functioned much like public houses, that is selling for consumption on the premises, and were usually established

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 225/241. This figure for Belfast would seem to fit into the long-term decline in public houses noted by Sybil Baker. She found one public house to 100 inhabitants in 1836 and one to 328 in 1900; see Sybil E. Baker, 'Orange and Green: Belfast, 1832-1912' in H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff (ed.), The Victorian city: images and realities (London and Boston, 1973), ii, 807.

² Report from the select committee of the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 42/600; see also Rev. W.M. O'Hanlon, Walks among the poor of Belfast, and suggestions for their improvement (Belfast, 1853), pp 9, 131-2.

by people who could not secure a publican's licence.¹ The retail drink trade in Belfast, and in Ulster generally, was dominated by catholics. According to the 1871 census 55.5% of Ulster publicans were catholics.² Even in protestant areas of Belfast the publicans were frequently catholic, though this made them natural targets during periods of sectarian rioting. In the 1886 riots, for example, of the thirty public houses looted in protestant areas, twenty-eight were owned by catholics.³ The catholic church in Belfast showed little enthusiasm for the temperance cause. Bishops Dorrian (1865-85) and Henry (1895-1908) of Down and Connor both opposed Sunday closing.⁴ Thus conflict between drink and temperance in Belfast took on a distinctly sectarian character.

Heavy drinking on Saturday night was also the pattern in Belfast, but the sabbatarianism of the north's protestant population meant that Sunday drunkenness was a much less serious problem. Voluntary closing of public houses on Sunday was practised on a much greater scale in Belfast. In 1868, for instance, 146 out of 535 public houses closed voluntarily on Sunday,⁵ while in 1876 the figure was 179 out of 642.⁶ Similarly, when six-day and early-closing

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 45/603.

² Brian M. Walker, Parliamentary representation in Ulster, 1868-86 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, 1976), p. 72; Peter Gibbon, The origins of Ulster unionism (Manchester, 1975), pp 92-3.

³ Report of the Belfast riots commission, p. 11 [C-4925], H.C. 1887, xviii, 11.

⁴ Royal commission on liquor licensing laws, 1898, p. 288/322.

⁵ Report ... 1867-8, op. cit., p. 45/603.

⁶ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p.361/377.

licences were introduced in the 1872 and 1874 licensing acts, they were more popular in Belfast than in Dublin. In 1877 Belfast had 96 such licences, compared to Dublin's 69.¹ Drunkenness generally, and Sunday drunkenness in particular, if one looks at arrest statistics, seem to have been less of a problem. In 1874, for instance, 16,574 Dubliners, or about 5% of the city's population, were arrested for drunkenness, 2,286 of these arrests occurring on Sunday. In Belfast, on the other hand, the figures were 7,104 and 376 respectively.² Arrest statistics are far from reliable evidence, but the difference in Sunday arrests does reflect genuine differences in Sunday behaviour in the two cities. As early as the 1790s, as we have seen, Dr Drennan had remarked upon how much more drunken was Sunday in the south of the country compared with the north.³ In 1877 Henry Thynne, sub-inspector of the Belfast constabulary, described Sunday in Belfast as the 'most orderly day of the whole week', and he quoted statistics to show that nearly half the arrests for drunkenness on Sunday occurred before 6 a.m. They were, therefore, almost certainly the result of drinking begun on Saturday night. But it was a 'rare thing', said Thynne, to see a drunken man on Sunday in the streets of Belfast, and he went on to describe a typical Belfast Sunday.

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 356/372.

² Ibid., pp 66/82, 227/243, 148/164; Fourth report from the select committee of the house of lords on intemperance, 1878, p. 334.

³ See above, pp 79-80.

Sunday is very strictly observed in Belfast, and there are no facilities, or very few, given by the railway companies, or any of the public bodies, for the recreation of the people on Sunday; even the tramcars are not allowed to run on Sundays in Belfast... The only thing that people do is either to go to church or take a walk. There are two boats on the river in summer, which go for a few months to Bangor, and are very much crowded on fine Sundays; but as a rule, the people of Belfast do not go on excursions on Sundays. They observe the sabbath very strictly; what they generally do is to walk in the suburbs. On a fine Sunday you see thousands of people walking in the suburbs. They leave home after their dinner, about two o'clock, and return about six or half-past six, in time to go to evening service;... many of those people before they come back, take their glass of beer in a public house, but they do not abuse the privilege.¹

The Irish temperance movement from the 1860s occupied itself especially with the issue of Sunday closing, and many of its critics saw in this an attempt by an organisation, centred on the north, to impose northern sabbatarianism on the catholic south. p/c

The differences in the Dublin and Belfast figures of overall arrests for drunkenness, we cannot, however, simply ascribe to less drunkenness in the north. Clearly other factors could have played an important part, the most obvious being housing. The industrialisation of Belfast in the second half of the nineteenth century brought with it a dramatic increase in population. From 87,000 in 1851, the population of Belfast soared to 349,000 in 1901. The industrial working class was largely housed in mean, little cottages and terraces in the hundreds of tiny streets running off the Falls, Shankill, Crumlin and Antrim Roads, to the north and west of the city centre. But, however inadequate these houses might have been by modern standards, working families frequently did own them

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877,
p. 229/244.

and were not confined to one room, as was so often the case in Dublin. In 1900, for instance, there were between 80,000 and 90,000 houses in Belfast, compared with only 25,000 in Dublin. Thus, whereas on average ten people lived in each Dublin house, in Belfast the figure was only 4.5.¹ In Belfast, therefore, the public houses did not operate as substitute homes to quite the same extent as they did in Dublin. Even without taking into account the greater hostility to drunkenness evident among the north's protestant population, the different housing situations in the two cities would have tended to produce less public drunkenness in Belfast. This is not to say that the citizens of Belfast drank less than those of Dublin - it would be impossible to know this for certain - rather, that Belfast's distinctive socio-economic and cultural characteristics made it less likely that its citizens would become drunk in public and be taken up by the police. Arrests for drunkenness would therefore be considerably lower in Belfast, but from this fact we cannot necessarily draw conclusions about relative alcohol consumption.

As in Dublin, the workers in Belfast were often paid late on Saturday and did their marketing on Saturday evening. Thynne described the drinking on Saturday nights in the city as, 'something frightful'. But, he claimed that 'practically speaking the drinking is stopped when the public houses are closed' at 11 p.m. Some 'half-drunken fellows' might go from the public houses to the

¹ Report of the committee ... to inquire into the public health of the city of Dublin, 1900, p. 18/732.

shebeens, but Thynne clearly did not consider this a major problem. Shebeens had declined in Belfast since 1872 and in 1876 the police estimated that there were only 28 of them, compared with an estimated 200 in Dublin.¹ Unlike their Dublin counterparts, the Belfast police did proceed against shebeens under the 1872 licensing act with its maximum £50 fine for a first offence.² According to Thynne, the magistrates generally imposed a £25 fine or four months' imprisonment in default, which was a much severer penalty than the £2 fine which still tended to prevail in Dublin. We have already noted the greater vigour and resourcefulness with which the Belfast police enforced licensing laws. 'We are very strict about enforcing the licensing laws in Belfast', said Thynne, and John Charles O'Donnell, a stipendiary magistrate for fourteen years, noting that arrests for drunkenness had been declining in the early 1870s, attributed this to the vigilance of the police.³ All observers agreed that tippling in spirit grocer shops was a problem and O'Donnell wanted the spirit grocer licence to be eliminated altogether, but again it did not exist on the same scale as in Dublin.⁴ Belfast spirit grocers had not erected screens to hide illegal drinking, as had been done in Dublin.⁵ The Belfast

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, pp 226-7/242-3.

² For a discussion of the legal problems involved in prosecuting illegal traders see above, pp 69-70.

³ Fourth report from the select committee of the house of lords on intemperance, 1878, pp 434-5.

⁴ Ibid.; Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, p. 226/242.

⁵ Ibid.

police in their strict enforcement of licensing laws were supported by substantial and powerful sections of public opinion and were not impeded in this respect as the recorder of Dublin had claimed his own police force were.¹

In comparing Dublin and Belfast, it would seem that breaches of the licensing laws did not occur as frequently in the latter as in the former. Shebeens were fewer in number in Belfast and, except for the spirit grocers, licensed traders seem generally to have been law-abiding. Moreover, in Belfast the police were more vigorous and more successful in prosecuting illegal traders. Public opinion in the north, influenced by a strong pro-temperance sentiment within the protestant churches, was more critical of drunkenness and more ready to approve police action against it. Also, public houses were not in general as important in the social life of the population as they were in Dublin. This fact alone would have tended to diminish illegal tippling and drunkenness. These differences in drinking patterns also reflect important social, economic and religious differences between the two cities, and, at the same time, they underline the uniqueness of Dublin and explain why so much attention was devoted to it by the temperance movement.

We shall now turn, in the remainder of this chapter and in the following one, to examine the development of the Irish temperance movement. But, its ideas and its growth must be seen against the background sketched in so far. Consumption of alcohol in Ireland did increase

¹ See above, p. 68.

dramatically in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, though after 1850 the picture becomes less clear. Whiskey consumption declined as increased duties priced it out of the Irish market and distillers looked more and more to the export trade. Irish drinkers, in both town and country, turned increasingly to beer and in particular to Guinness's porter. The traditional circumstantial drinking pattern also underwent important changes during the course of the century. Heavy drinking among young, unmarried countrymen became common, while the peculiar socio-economic conditions prevailing in Dublin gave rise to heavy drinking on Saturdays and Sundays among the working class of that city. At the same time the upper and middle classes were drinking less than they had done in the preceding century and providing many of the leaders of the temperance movement. The move by drinkers from whiskey to beer was encouraged by the government and a great deal of legislation was passed, especially in the 1860s and 1870s, to control the drink trade. Some of these laws seemed to create more problems than they solved, but both illegal production and illegal selling did gradually decline in the face of more effective policing. It is a question, however, to what extent these changes were brought about by the temperance movement, or to what extent the movement was itself a product of them.

The origins of the Irish temperance movement to 1829

The beginning of the temperance movement in Ireland is usually dated in the year 1829, when anti-spirits

societies sprang up almost simultaneously in New Ross, Dublin and Belfast, largely in response to developments in the United States.¹ However, concern about drunkenness, and the excessive consumption of spirits especially, had been voiced for many years prior to the 1820s. We have seen that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries English travellers in Ireland were already remarking, often critically, upon the local drinking habits, and by the eighteenth century this criticism had become very widespread.

The case against drink in eighteenth-century Ireland was advanced mainly by doctors, clerics and by those with an economic interest in the matter. Much of the debate was in fact a function of the competition between brewers and distillers for the larger share of the lucrative Irish market. In our examination of the drink industry in the eighteenth century we saw that whiskey was the principal form of liquor consumed, imported rum being its main competitor among the spirits. Beer production was hampered by poor quality and by substantial competition from superior English imports.² Thus, while in 1720 136,075 gallons of spirits were legally distilled in Ireland and 327,082 gallons imported, these figures had risen by 1790 to 2,926,795 and 1,472,822 respectively. Brewing, on the other hand, presented rather a dismal picture. Irish production in 1720 was 574,687 barrels, with only 292 barrels being imported. But in 1790 these

¹ See below, pp 156-88.

² See above, pp 6-9.

figures were 434,397 and 109,049 respectively.¹ The brewers by no means calmly accepted their inferior and, by the latter part of the century, declining, position in the Irish drink industry. Faced with the twin problems of heavy taxation and cheaper, better imports, they waged a prolonged campaign to have their industry freed from what they regarded as crippling taxes. A major argument advanced during this campaign was that drunkenness in Ireland was increasing dangerously, and, according to the brewers, whiskey was the real culprit. The Dublin brewers, for instance, petitioned parliament along these lines in 1760 and, as a result, the commons pronounced that keeping whiskey at a high price would greatly contribute to the health, sobriety and industry of the ordinary people. In the following year the duty on spirits was increased marginally, though more for financial than moral reasons, and the excise board was reminded of the need to check carefully the suitability of those applying for retail licences.² But none of these measures significantly affected the brewers' position.

The brewers, however, did increasingly find political allies who, in their detestation of spirit drinking, were prepared to regard the brewing industry as an instrument of social reform.³ The Irish parliament was generally alive to the problems created by the massive increase in

¹ Morewood, A philosophical and statistical history ... of inebriating liquors, p. 727.

² McGuire, Irish whiskey, pp 122-3.

³ For the situation in England at the same time, see Peter Mathias, 'The brewing industry, temperance and politics' in Historical Journal, i, no. 2 (1958), pp 97-114.

spirit consumption.¹ But, with so large a public demand for alcoholic drinks, many M.P.s thought the best solution was to wean the public taste away from spirits by making beer and ale more attractive through a reduction in price and by making it easier for the retailer to obtain a licence to sell these drinks. Chief among those of this persuasion was Henry Grattan, who declared the drinking of spirits to be 'a great national evil' and urged the 'substitution of an wholesome and nourishing beverage for a liquid poison'.² In 1791, in a debate on a new licensing bill, one M.P. alleged that there were about 8,000 spirit licences in Ireland, yet parish returns showed that 90,000 houses, out of 640,000 in the whole country, sold whiskey. Thus about one house in seven was a whiskey shop and less than ten per cent of them paid the licence duty.³ The licensing acts passed in 1791 and 1792 attempted both to tighten up the procedures for issuing licences and also to promote the consumption of beer.⁴ In the 1791 debate Grattan said that he favoured reducing the price of beer by removing the excise duty on it and by keeping a moderate tax on malt. Four years later, under continual pressure from the brewers and their political allies, the house resolved to adopt Grattan's proposal. The shift in tax from beer

¹ For an outline of the problems, see Agricola's letters to right hon. the chancellor of the exchequer, demonstrating the pernicious effects of the cheapness of spirituous liquors etc. (Dublin, 1791).

² Quoted in Lynch and Vaizey, Guinness's brewery, pp 65-6.

³ McGuire, Irish whiskey, pp 158-9.

⁴ See above, pp 32-3.

to malt improved the competitive position of the brewers vis-à-vis the distillers because it meant that whiskey was now double-taxed. Lynch and Vaizey, in their history of Guinness's brewery, describe this measure as the 'most decisive and important single event in the whole history of Irish brewing'.¹ Certainly it demonstrates that by the 1790s, forty years before the appearance of the first anti-spirits societies, the Irish parliament was seriously alarmed at the increase in spirit drinking and was prepared to legislate in order to counter this trend.

Innumerable contemporary accounts support the statistics in demonstrating that spirit drinking increased enormously in Ireland during the eighteenth century. While brewers campaigned to increase beer consumption and blamed spirits for drunkenness, Bishop Berkeley worried about the drain on the country's resources occasioned by liquor imports.² Some United Irishmen saw drunkenness as a government plot to keep the people submissive and obedient.³ But the most constant and complete critique of drink at this time, in both England and Ireland, was supplied by doctors and, to a lesser extent, by clergy. Graphic descriptions of the physical damage caused by spirits abound, especially in medical tracts.⁴ Dr Stephen Hales, one of the leaders of the campaign to curb the gin

¹ Lynch and Vaizey, Guinness's brewery, p. 68.

² See above, p. 79.

³ See above, pp 79-80.

⁴ All the eighteenth-century works discussed in this section were either written by Irishmen or reprinted in Ireland.

craze in England,¹ included a section on spirit drinking in his famous treatise on ventilators. According to him, caustic burning spirits, by inflaming the solids, and coagulating and thickening the fluids, cause obstructions, which bring on many fatal diseases; such as hectic fevers, jaundices, dropsies, etc. whereby multitudes are daily and yearly destroyed. And also ... they rot the entrails, suchæ liver, stomach and bowels; as is evident ... not only by opening the bodies of those who are killed by drinking them, but also by what is observed in Germany, of the effects which the caustic, fiery, remaining wash of distillers has on the guts of hogs, which are thereby so rotted, that they cannot make hogs puddings with them.²

Despite such gory catalogues, few, if any, of these writers advocated total abstinence from all forms of alcohol. Dr John Armstrong remarked in his poem The art of preserving health: 'We curse not wine: the vile excess we blame'.³ And Dr George Cheyne, while observing that spirits 'should never be taken but by the direction of a physician, or in the agonies of death', nevertheless was at pains to declare that he had

no intention here to discourage the innocent means of enlivening conversation, promoting friendship, comforting the sorrowful heart, and raising the drooping spirits, by the cheerful cup and social repast. Perhaps I may like the harmless frolic, the warm reception of a friend, and even the dulce furere itself, more than I ought: persons sober in the main, will receive little prejudice from such a fillip, when the occasions happen but seldom, and especially when they make it up, by a greater degree of abstinence afterwards. But a sot is the lowest character in life.⁴

¹ For interesting accounts of the gin craze, see M.D. George, London life in the eighteenth century (2nd ed., London, 1930), p. 27 ff and Brian Inglis, The forbidden game: a social history of drugs (London, 1975), ch. 5.

² Stephen Hales, A new-years-gift to dram-drinkers, being an earnest address to them;... reprinted out of his 2nd vol. on ventilators... (2nd ed., Dublin, 1762), pp 2-3.

³ John Armstrong, The art of preserving health: a poem (Dublin, 1744), p. 30.

⁴ George Cheyne, A treatise on health and long life (10th ed., Mullingar, 1787), pp 38-9.

Dr Cheyne clearly appreciated, and himself enjoyed, the social pleasures of wine and beer consumed in moderate amounts. Excess, especially in spirits, was the chief target of his criticism. But spirits, more so in Ireland than in England, was the drink of the lower classes. Thus, those who chose to condemn spirits, while approving of wine consumption, were leaving themselves open to the charge of class bias. The anti-spirits movement of the 1830s and later moderationist temperance societies, with their middle-class leaderships, were to find this a difficult accusation to refute. Total abstinence, whatever its other shortcomings, was at least undiscriminating in this regard.

Moral and religious considerations, as well as medical ones, figure in this eighteenth-century literature. Dr Hales, who was a doctor of divinity, not of medicine, observed that,

spirits deprave the tempers of mankind, by heightening their passions, or making them perverse and cross. They tend greatly also to the depraving of their morals, by quenching the spirit of religion to such a degree, as to make them profane and abandoned, as to all sense of duty to God and man but what is infinitely worse, and an astonishing consideration, their souls are debased and sunk at so vast a distance from all the healing influences of religion, that they have no sense of, nor longings after, the fountain of ever-living waters: for human nature is so excessively debased by distilled spirituous liquors, that it would be no inconsiderable degree of happiness to be raised thence, even no farther than to the low state and condition of brute creatures.¹

That drink reduced humans to a brute state and obliterated the divine in their natures was to be a recurrent theme in nineteenth-century temperance literature, especially in

¹ Hales, A new-years-gift to dram-drinkers, p. 4.

that emanating from religious groups. Hales could only conclude from this that 'by their mischievous effects' spirits 'seem to claim satan himself for their author'. In associating drink with satan, Hales evoked the concept of the 'demon drink': the idea that drunkenness was a form of demonic possession. Religious writers especially found such an idea essential in explaining the loss of self-control, the alteration in personality and the blind destructiveness often associated with drunkenness. To Hales the fact that consumption of these noxious concoctions, which ruined health and destroyed all sense of religion and morality, was encouraged by the state was especially appalling. The revenue which the state derived from spirits was not sufficient justification: 'to do evil that good may come of it' was not to Hales's mind a valid proposition.¹ Hales joined, among others, Bishop Berkeley in extolling the virtues of tar water,² but otherwise he was singularly lacking in suggestions as to how this evil should be combated. He urged the 'most pathetic expostulations to rouse the attention and indignation of mankind against this greatest of all plagues that ever befell unhappy man',³ but at the same time considered that 'this enchanting liquor so infatuates the nations, that nothing

¹ Hales, A new-years-gift to dram-drinkers, p. 11.

² See, for example, Stephen Hales, An account of some experiments and observations on tar water (London, 1747); George Berkeley, The medicinal virtues of tar water (Dublin, 1744); John Smith, The curiosities of common water (8th ed., Dublin, 1725).

³ Hales, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

less than an extraordinary hand of providence can deliver mankind from this favourite, much-beloved, mighty destroyer'.¹ He himself wrote tracts deploring the effects of spirit drinking and lobbied the government with a view to stricter regulation. But such tactics met with only limited success, while there was no indication, at least during Dr Hales's lifetime, that the 'hand of providence' had entered the battle against spirit drinking.²

In the first three decades of the nineteenth century various religious groups and concerned individuals campaigned to curb drunkenness in Ireland. In 1813 Charles Sneyd Edgeworth arranged to have Dr Thomas Beddoes's popular tract, Hints to husbandmen, reprinted in Dublin. While not disputing the 'propriety of drinking freely of some kind of liquor', Beddoes strongly warned against the practice of providing large quantities of alcohol to rural workers during harvest time. The labourer would 'get the rot completely ere harvest is over', wrote Beddoes.³ He was primarily thinking of the ale and cider supplied to English workers; how much worse was the Irish situation, wrote Edgeworth in his introduction, where whiskey was the drink most commonly provided.⁴ In

¹ Hales, A new-years-gift to dram-drinkers, p. 13.

² A.E. Clark-Kennedy, Stephen Hales, D.D., F.R.S., an eighteenth-century biography (Cambridge, 1929), pp 120-24. This biography deals primarily with Hales's religious and scientific career, but there is discussion of his efforts to reform the gin act.

³ Thomas Beddoes, Hints to husbandmen (reprint, with intro. by C.S. Edgeworth, Dublin, 1813, of orig. ed., London, 1808), pp 10, 17. Edgeworth was a half-brother of the novelist, Maria, and Beddoes was their brother-in-law. See D.N.B.

⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

1823 another attack on whiskey was published in Dublin. But this curious work presented its views in appalling doggerel. The author, William Kertland, blamed whiskey for marring the fortunes and killing the minds of 'Carolan and bonnie Burns'. The poor, he thought, developed 'idle habits and sloth' through drinking. But worse than these were drunken women.

A drunken man's a brute at best,
Prepar'd and prim'd for ev'ry evil,
But woman drunk! - we scorn, detest -
And whiskey makes a wife, a devil! ¹

That drinking among women was a greater evil than male drunkenness is a view that pervades temperance literature from the eighteenth century onwards. If 'the hand that rocks the cradle' was a drunken one, then temperance advocates felt there would be little hope of ensuring the sobriety of future generations. Doubtless also drunkenness in women was highly offensive to the male ideal of feminine virtue.²

Among religious groups in Dublin during this period both the quakers and the catholics were active in seeking to curb drinking. In 1815 and 1818 the Dublin Tract Association, established by the quakers in 1814, published tracts on temperance. The first, Temperance and chastity inculcated, was an extract from Henry Tuke's

¹ William Kertland, The woe of whiskey, or the sorrowful history of Patrick and Kathleen: an Irish tale; 'too true!' (Dublin, 1823), pp 12, 14. This rare work is among a large number of early temperance tracts in the Haliday collection, Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

² See, for example, An epistle to the fair-sex, on the subject of drinking (Dublin, 1744). For later discussions of women and drink, see Temperance Visitor, xiii, no. 3 (Mar. 1891), p. 44 and C. Mahon, Women and total abstinence (Dublin, 1920).

The duties of religion and morality, which had been published in York about 1807. Using biblical sources as his authority, Tuke put the case for moderation in drinking, at the same time by implication rejecting total abstinence.

We are not called upon to deny ourselves of the moderate, and what is, in the event, the most pleasurable, gratification of those appetities, which our all-wise creator has made necessary for our existence. We know, that 'every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving'. But to this, and to all other knowledge, we are required to add temperance; and so to regulate our conduct as to fulfil the apostolic precept: 'Whether ye eat or drink; or whatsoever ye do; do all to the glory of God'.¹

The second tract, published in 1818, was titled The importance of sobriety, illustrated by the evils of intemperance. It also, as the title implies, was an attack on intemperate drinking. Drunkenness was claimed to destroy industry and health, to produce poverty, gambling, lying, swearing and fighting, to impair reason and ultimately to bring about a miserable death.² Various authorities were quoted in support of these views and it is obvious that the writer of the tract was familiar with both the English and American temperance literature of the period.³ In publishing these tracts, the Dublin quakers were ahead of their counterparts in other centres. Tract associations had been established in London in 1813 and in New York

¹ Henry Tuke, Temperance and chastity inculcated (Dublin, 1815), p. 3. The third edition of this tract, published in 1823, is collected in the Dublin Tract Association's Tracts on moral and religious subjects (vol. 1, Dublin, 1830).

² The importance of sobriety, illustrated by the evils of intemperance, in extracts from several authors (Dublin, 1818), pp 5-10.

³ For instance, Dr Benjamin Rush's famous tract, An inquiry into the effects of ardent spirits upon the human body and mind, which was first published in Philadelphia in 1785, and Dr Thomas Trotter's Essay on drunkenness, published in London in 1804.

and Philadelphia in 1817. The London association's first temperance tract appeared in 1819, though not till 1822 was one published by the New York organisation. The date in Philadelphia is less certain, but it appears to be 1818.¹ This precociousness is indicative of the interest in the temperance issue displayed by the Dublin quaker community. It was an interest sustained throughout the century.

The quakers were not the only religious group in Dublin at the time concerned about the evils of intemperance. Several catholic priests showed an even more active interest in the problem. Fr Henry Young and Dr Michael Blake of the parish of SS Michael and John established the Purgatorian Society of St John in 1817. Members of the society were to attend the sick and dying, to read religious literature to them and to prepare them for the last sacraments. They were also to prevent wakes being marred by drinking.² We have seen that the church had tried for many years to banish drink from wakes and funerals. However, the purgatorian society, which soon spread to other Dublin parishes, went further than this. In a booklet of rules for the society, published in 1821, rule 17 stated that, 'no member of this society shall sit down in a public house in the parish, on a Sunday or pay-day, without leave of the president, under the

¹ Joseph Smith (ed.), A descriptive catalogue of Friends' books, or books written by members of the Society of Friends (London, 1867), ii, 759, 807-8, 813.

² Dr Myles Ronan, An apostle of catholic Dublin: Father Henry Young (Dublin, 1944), pp 138-9.

penalty of 10d., and if any member be seen drunk, he must pay 2s.6d. for the first offence, and 5s. for the second; if he be drunk a third time, he shall be expelled from the society, and his name erased from the books'.¹

Young's biographer believes that he was responsible for this rule; certainly he took a special interest in the problem of intemperance, publishing a tract on the subject in 1823 'in his own quaint, earnest and simple manner, for the poor and ignorant'.² In 1827 Young began a series of missions in County Wicklow, which lasted till 1840. During these he tried to eliminate drinking both at wakes and at fairs. He anticipated the later tactics of the temperance movement by seeking to provide counter-attractions to drink. Thus, at fairs and patterns he set up stalls selling coffee and buttermilk, but these were not an economic success and he was forced to discontinue them. As well he established purgatorian societies and, in the 1830s, temperance societies.³ Young was not alone in his temperance work in the 1820s. He was assisted and supported by his brothers, Fr James Young, P.P. at Howth and later Finglas, and Fr William Young, P.P. at Baldoyle, who in the 1840s conducted temperance missions in Cornwall.⁴ Dr Blake, who later became bishop of Dromore (1833-60), and Dr Yore, the P.P. of St Paul's, also encouraged Young's work.

¹ Quoted in Ronan, Father Henry Young, p. 142.

² Ibid., p. 149. For a discussion of this tract, see below, pp 161-2.

³ Ibid., p. 218.

⁴ Ibid., pp 248-9.

Yore and Blake's successor at SS Michael and John, Fr Andrew O'Connell, were later to join Dr John Spratt in leading the Dublin section of Fr Mathew's total abstinence crusade.¹ Young, who lived till 1869, was also a strong supporter of Fr Mathew in the 1840s, though Yore, O'Connell and especially Spratt were the Dublin leaders. However, Young was working with Yore at St Paul's during this period and presumably he took a large share in Yore's temperance work.

Brian Harrison, in his invaluable history of the English temperance movement, refers to the establishment of a temperance society in Skibbereen, County Cork, in 1817. However, he considers this society 'irrelevant' to the history of the temperance movement, because 'if it existed', it wielded 'no influence outside its locality'.² Harrison is in fact paraphrasing the judgment of Dawson Burns, who wrote the standard nineteenth-century history of the temperance movement.³ The society certainly existed and it may have had more general significance than either Burns or Harrison is willing to concede.⁴ It was begun in June 1817 by Jeffrey (or Geoffrey) Sedwards (1776-1861), a nailer, who convinced twelve friends, most of whom were heavy drinkers, to join. The organisation was referred to as an 'abstinence society' and its first

¹ Ronan, Father Henry Young, pp 189-95.

² Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, p. 103.

³ Dawson Burns, Temperance history (London, [1889]), i, 13-14.

⁴ Accounts of it are given by John Finch in his History of temperance, which appeared in Liverpool in 1836, and in the Southern Reporter, 23 Jan. 1841.

rule stated that, 'no person can take malt or spirituous liquors, or distilled waters, except prescribed by a priest or doctor'. The reference to malt, as well as spirituous, liquors and the use of the word abstinence suggests that the society was in fact based on total abstinence. This has led to it being described as 'Europe's first total abstinence society'.¹ It seems in fact to have operated as a benefit society, with members making small regular contributions to insure themselves against illness and death. Branches were established in neighbouring towns, firstly in Glandore, then in Rosscarbery and Clonakilty.

The society later merged with Fr Mathew's crusade, but, even in the 1820s, it was by no means an isolated organisation in west Cork. About 1823 James Redmond Barry, a wealthy catholic landowner and merchant from the Clonakilty area, acquired land at Glandore, a village on the coast a little to the east of Skibbereen. There, influenced by both Bentham and Owen, he began to organise a model community. Glandore was visited in February 1834 by John Finch, a Liverpool merchant, who was instrumental in introducing teetotalism to Ireland. In July of the same year Finch described the Glandore experiment to the select committee investigating drunkenness. Barry let small farms on long leases and at reasonable rents and encouraged improvements. He also established a school for his tenants' children and sought to develop a fishing

¹ Rev. James Coombes, 'Europe's first total abstinence society' in Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, lxxii, no. 215 (Jan.-June 1967), pp 52-7.

industry in Glandore. Finch then went on to outline the methods Barry used to stop drunkenness, which he regarded as a major cause of poverty.

He shut up the dram-shops in the village except two, and those were placed in a conspicuous part of the village, and there was only one way into them, and that from the public street of the village, and no back way; the consequence was, that every person that went in was seen, and those places were deserted, and the whole place had become sober and industrious, and they are all doing well.¹

From 1814 to 1833 an estate about three miles to the north of Glandore was owned by William Thompson, the socialist philosopher. During that period Thompson, following the example of Bentham, was a total abstainer, as well as a vegetarian and a non-smoker.² There is no evidence of contact between Barry and Thompson, but given their geographical proximity over at least ten years and the similarities in their views, it is hard to believe that they did not consult. Moreover they had acquaintances in common: Finch also visited Thompson and was named an executor in his will. Another factor linking Barry and Thompson was the Ralahine cooperative. This Owenite community was established by John Scott Valdeleur on his estate at Ralahine in County Clare and flourished from

¹ Report from the select committee on inquiry into drunkenness, 1834, pp 649-50; R.B. Rose, 'John Finch, 1784-1857' in Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, cix (1957), p. 184.

² R.K.P. Pankhurst, William Thompson (1775-1833): Britain's pioneer socialist, feminist, and co-operator (London, 1954), pp 8, 15. Both Rose and Pankhurst in fact attribute Barry's work at Glandore to Thompson.

³ Rev. James Coombes, Utopia in Glandore: James Redmond Barry and William Thompson, socialist (Butlerstown, County Cork, 1970), pp 18-22.

1831 till it was gambled away by Vandeleur in 1833.¹ Both Finch and Thompson visited it, while Barry had a copy of its rules. Rule 31 stated that 'no spirituous liquor of any kind, tobacco or snuff be kept in the store, or on the premises'. A member who brought in such articles or knew they were being used could be fined; repeated breaches would ultimately lead to expulsion.² The diet at Ralahine, which Finch praised highly, consisted primarily of milk and vegetables. Thompson was so impressed with the experiment that he decided to begin a similar venture on his own estate, but he died in March 1833, having advanced no further than laying the foundations of labourers' cottages.³ William Pare, the historian of Ralahine, who travelled extensively in the south of Ireland in the autumn of 1833, linked Ralahine with Glandore. 'Two green spots live in my memory, [he wrote many years later] Ralahine and Glandore ... what I found in action at Glandore, which I well recollect, struck me as a very oasis in the desert of Irish misery and discontent.'⁴

¹ For accounts of this experiment, see James Connolly, Labour in Irish history (Dublin, 1910), ch. XI; R.G. Garnett, Co-operation and the Owenite socialist communities (Manchester, 1972), pp 100-29; Cormac Ó Gráda, 'The Owenite community at Ralahine, County Clare, 1831-3: a reassessment' in Irish Economic and Social History, i (1974), pp 36-48.

² E.T. Craig, An Irish commune: the history of Ralahine (Dublin, n.d.), p. 39.

³ Daniel Donovan, Sketches of Carbery, County Cork (Dublin, 1876), pp 199-203; W.J. O'Neill Daunt, A life spent for Ireland (reprint with intro. by David Thornley, Shannon, 1972, of orig. ed., London, 1896), pp 133-5.

⁴ William Pare, Co-operative agriculture (London, 1870), pp 70, 130.

Given Barry's work at Glandore, it is not surprising that a branch of the Skibbereen society should be a success there. How closely Barry was involved with this society is impossible to say, though when it held a major festival in January 1841 in Skibbereen, it is interesting to note that Barry chaired the meeting.¹ When Fr Mathew visited the west Cork coast several times in the early 1840s, he found a flourishing total abstinence movement, as the Sullivan brothers of Bantry attest.² In A.M. Sullivan the area produced a man who was to be an important leader of the temperance movement in the 1860s and 1870s.³ Even O'Donovan Rossa, the fenian from Skibbereen, whose later wild actions were to be attributed by his enemies to drunkenness, pointed out in his memories that he had been a total abstainer in the 1840s and 1850s.⁴ The Phoenix Society, which Rossa joined in the late 1850s, and which was centred on west Cork, initially forbade its members to drink.⁵ The Skibbereen temperance society was still active at this period. It had suffered a major

¹ Southern Reporter, 23 Jan. 1841.

² A.M. Sullivan, New Ireland: political sketches and personal reminiscences of thirty years of Irish public life (London, 1877), pp 50-51; T.D. Sullivan, Recollections of troubled times in Irish politics (Dublin, 1905), pp 1-2.

³ See below, pp 410, 418-19.

⁴ O'Donovan Rossa, Rossa's recollections, 1838-98 (reprint, with intro. by Seán Ó Lúing, Shannon, 1972, of orig. ed., New York, 1898), p. 151; William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan (ed.), Devoy's post bag, 1871-1928 (Dublin, 1948), i, 316-19; Major Henri Le Caron [Thomas Beach], Twenty-five years in the secret service: the recollections of a spy (reprint, Wakefield, Yorks., 1974, of 10th ed., London, 1893), pp 2, 103.

⁵ R.V. Comerford, Irish nationalist politics, 1858-70 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, 1976), p. 219.

set-back in 1854 when its hall was destroyed by fire, but a new one was opened by the bishop of Ross in 1863.¹

The evidence, though far from complete, would suggest that from at least the 1820s, if not from 1817, there was a teetotal movement in west Cork, centring on Skibbereen and Glandore. How widespread or popular this movement was is impossible to say, but in the 1840s it gave strong support to Fr Mathew and, though the area was particularly badly affected by the famine, it appears to have survived. The Skibbereen society is thus more significant than the leading historians of the temperance movement have been prepared to admit. Whether it influenced the Cork teetotallers, who induced Fr Mathew to join them in 1838, is a tantalising question, which cannot unfortunately be answered at present. However, if it did, then the history of the origins of the temperance movement in Ireland would have to be rewritten.

In Ulster there is also some evidence of a growing awareness of the evils of intemperance prior to 1829. Dr James Morgan, a presbyterian clergyman and later one of the leaders of the anti-spirits movement, said in his memoirs that he had given up drinking, except on social occasions in the early 1820s.² While working in Lisburn from 1824 to 1828 he attempted to convince the town's butchers, who were notoriously intemperate, to limit their drinking. 'It will give some idea of the state of

¹ Coombes, 'Europe's first total abstinence society', p. 56.

² [Dr James Morgan], Recollections of my life and times: an autobiography by the Rev. James Morgan, D.D., late minister of Fisherwick Place church, Belfast, with selections from his journal, edited by his son (Belfast, 1874), pp 103-4.

matters [Morgan wrote] when I say that the smallest quantity I could induce them to promise to use was three glasses of spirits in the day; but this their wives and friends considered to be a great reformation.'¹ Dr Thomas Houston of Knockbracken, another presbyterian temperance leader, recalled that a cheap edition of Lyman Beecher's influential work, Six sermons on intemperance, was circulating in the north of Ireland in 1828 and early in 1829.² Visits by American clergy further assisted the spread of information about the temperance movement in America. Most notable among these was Rev. Joseph Penny, an Ulster presbyterian who had settled in New York. In the summer of 1829 he returned to his native land full of enthusiasm for the efforts of American clergymen to promote temperance. He discussed the matter with various leading Ulster presbyterians, among them Dr John Edgar, with whom he had gone to school.³

Edgar, who had been educated in Belfast and Glasgow and ordained by the seceding presbytery of Down in 1820, was a man of vast energy and determination.⁴ His work

¹ [Morgan], Recollections of my life and times, p. 35.

² Dr Thomas Houston, 'Personal reminiscences of the first temperance movement in the north of Ireland' in Frederick Sherlock (ed.), Fifty years ago: or, Erin's temperance jubilee (Belfast, 1879), p. 10.

³ Dr W.D. Killen, Memoir of John Edgar, D.D., LL.D., professor of systematic theology for the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland (rev. ed., Belfast, 1869), pp 28-9.

⁴ For descriptions of Edgar's personality, see *ibid.*, pp 16-17; Dr W.D. Killen, Reminiscences of a long life (London, 1901), pp 187-92; Central Presbyterian Association, Three great leaders: Cooke, Edgar, Morgan: a tribute to their memory (Belfast, 1899), pp 21-32.

with various benevolent institutions, particularly the Destitute Sick Society of Belfast, had brought him into contact with the greivous social problems arising from rapid industrialisation and urban poverty. In 1824 he had assumed the secretaryship of the presbyterian religious tract society and this office afforded him access to a powerful agency of propaganda for any cause he might choose to champion. Thus, in many respects, he was peculiarly well placed for the leadership of a reformist movement. At the time of his contact with Penny, Edgar was involved in a campaign to check desecration of the sabbath and in the words of his friend, Dr Houston:

At a public meeting of ministers and civil authorities ... Dr Edgar expressed himself unfavourable to the idea that the best way to check the evil was by civil enactment; and maintained that the drink traffic and drinking customs, above all other things, led to wide-spread sabbath profanation: and that it appeared to him to be a primary duty to do something effectual to oppose and diminish these evils.¹

It is often reported that Edgar signalled his conversion to the anti-spirits movement by pouring the family bottle of whiskey out of the parlour window.² Whether this particular story be true or not, it is certainly clear that Edgar acted quickly and decisively once he had been convinced of the need for a temperance campaign. On 14 August 1829 a letter by him appeared in the Belfast News-letter describing the movement in America and appealing

¹ Houston, 'Personal reminiscences', p. 10.

² Killen, Memoir of John Edgar, pp 28-9. Killen reports that it was the 'remaining part of a gallon of old malt whiskey purchased, some time before, for family consumption'.

to the temperate men of Belfast to take up the issue. In this first letter Edgar was adamant that it was 'not necessary, for insuring success, to reform the present generation of drunkards', rather did he look to the temperate to bring about a change by abandoning spirits.¹ More and longer letters appeared in the same paper in the following month² and these were almost immediately reprinted by the tract society for distribution. Edgar, and the anti-spirits movement in general, relied heavily on short tracts to spread their message. Edgar personally wrote over ninety and by the end of 1830 nearly 100,000 copies of such tracts, mainly by Edgar, had been distributed from Belfast.³ After private conferences with friends regarding the best course to pursue in promoting temperance, Edgar met with five others in the committee room of the tract society on 24 September. They all signed a pledge to abstain from distilled spirits and formed the Belfast (later Ulster) Temperance Society. The foundation members, aside from Edgar, were Dr Morgan, Dr Houston, Rev. Thomas Hincks, an anglican, Rev. John Wilson, a congregationalist, and Alexander Smith Mayne a presbyterian teacher and publisher of religious literature.⁴

¹ Belfast News-letter, 14 Aug. 1829.

² Ibid., 4 and 11 Sept. 1829.

³ P.T. Winskill, The temperance movement and its workers (London, 1892), i, 50. A substantial number of early Ulster temperance tracts are in the Haliday collection in both the Royal Irish Academy and the National Library of Ireland. Another large group is held by the Linenhall Library in Belfast, though these are uncatalogued.

⁴ Ibid., pp 48-54; Dawson Burns, Temperance history, i, 31-3.

This, however, was not the first Irish anti-spirits society. Rev. George Whitmore Carr of New Ross, after reading Edgar's first letter and corresponding with him, formed the New Ross Temperance Society on 20 August during a meeting in a quaker hall. Carr appears to have shared Edgar's drive and determination. Killen said that when Carr was convinced 'he was in the way of his duty, prudential considerations were at once shoved aside'.¹ Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, he served with such distinction at the defence of New Ross during the 1798 rebellion, that he was made a burgess of the town the following year at the age of nineteen. He was ordained in the established church in 1800 and took charge of the local endowed school from his father two years later. But in 1811, after an energetic ministry, he resigned all his positions and left the church because of objections he had developed to the baptismal and burial offices. Carr appears, however, to have retained the goodwill of his fellow townsmen, for he soon had his own meeting hall and a new congregation. He was also on good terms with Dr James Doyle, the catholic bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, who actively supported his temperance work. Carr remained important in the temperance movement in the south east of Ireland, both as an agent of the British and Foreign Temperance Society and a supporter of Fr Mathew, till his death in 1849.²

¹ Killen, Memoir of John Edgar, p. 37.

² W.G. Carroll, A memoir of the Right Rev. James Thomas O'Brien ... notices of his fellow-townsmen ... and of the town of New Ross (Dublin, 1875), pp 41-7; Halls, Ireland, i, 36. Curiously, while referring to Carr as 'a near and dear connexion of our own', the Halls nevertheless describe him as 'a clergyman of the established church'.

In the four months, from Carr's establishment of the New Ross society to the end of the year, twenty-five temperance societies with 800 members appeared in Ireland.¹ By June 1830 membership was estimated at 3,500.² Edgar especially worked strenuously to spread the movement. Killen, his biographer, says that in the first year he spent over £100 of his own money on travelling and at the same time corresponded with over 160 people on temperance matters.³ After Edgar's society, the most important begun in Ireland in 1829 was the Dublin Temperance Society, which claimed national status early in 1830 when it changed its name to the Hibernian Temperance Society. This organisation arose out of a correspondence between Dr Joshua Harvey, a quaker from Youghal, and Dr John Cheyne, a Scotsman, who had spent thirty years as an army doctor, the last fourteen of them as physician-general in Ireland. Together with Philip Cecil Crampton, later Irish solicitor-general, Dr William Urwick, of the York Street congregationalist church, and Richard Davis Webb, a quaker printer, they formed their Dublin society in September or October. Harvey acted as its secretary till 1836.⁴ This society, like its counterpart in Ulster, directed much of its energies in the first year or two into the production of temperance literature. By the

¹ Killen, Memoir of John Edgar, p. 46.

² Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, p. 104.

³ Killen, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁴ Dawson Burns, Temperance history, i, 48-9; E.H. Cherrington, Albert Porter, W.E. Johnson and C.F. Stoddard (ed.), Standard encyclopedia of the alcohol problem (Westerville, Ohio, 1927), iii, 1354-5.

end of the first year it had produced at least fifteen numbered tracts and six papers, plus an indeterminate number of individual tracts. Most were printed at Webb's office in William Street, which acted as the society's depository.¹ Unlike the Ulster movement, however, the Dublin group right from the start showed an inclination in the direction of total abstinence. Their fourth tract, written by Urwick and published in November 1829, specifically recommended abstinence from all intoxicating drinks.² Anne Jane Carlile, the widow of a presbyterian minister and one of the early members of the Dublin society, was also an important pioneer of total abstinence. In 1830 she helped organise the Port of Dublin Temperance Society in Poolbeg Street, which in 1837 was transformed into the Dublin Total Abstinence Society.³ She also instigated the band of hope movement in 1847 in Leeds which aimed to promote total abstinence among children.⁴

If the Irish anti-spirits movement was stimulated by developments in America, it in turn provided encouragement for the movement in the rest of Britain. Immediately after the foundation of the U.T.S., Edgar travelled to

¹ These tracts are all in the National Library of Ireland, catalogued under Hibernian Temperance Society. The Royal Irish Academy also has a number of them.

² See below, p. 190.

³ For accounts of Mrs Carlile's long career in temperance in both England and Ireland, see Frederick Sherlock, Anne Jane Carlile: a temperance pioneer (London, 1897) and T.J. Barron, 'Anne Jane Carlile: a temperance pioneer' in Breifne, ii (1963), pp 234-7.

⁴ L.L. Shiman, 'The band of hope movement: respectable recreation for working-class children' in Victorian Studies, xvii, no. 1 (Sept. 1973), pp 49-74.

Scotland where he assisted John Dunlop, who had just established the first Scottish society in Glasgow.¹ Similarly, G.H. Birkett, a quaker merchant from Dublin, began anti-spirits societies at Warrington and Manchester in April and May 1830, which were the second and third to appear in England; the first being established at Bradford in February under the influence of the Glasgow society.² The Dublin quakers, however, made an even more significant contribution to the English total abstinence cause when Nathaniel Card, Birkett's nephew, suggested the formation of the United Kingdom Alliance in 1853.³

The anti-spirits societies, which appeared in Ireland in 1829 and flourished till overtaken by the total abstinence movement in the mid 1830s, were essentially urban-based with their members drawn from the protestant upper and middle classes. Information about American temperance societies was an important stimulus to the movement in Ireland, for these societies provided models which could easily be imitated.⁴ But there had been great concern voiced about spirit drinking in Ireland by clergy, the medical profession and M.P.s from at least the middle of the eighteenth century. In the 1820s this concern reached new heights as the consumption of spirits, produced

¹ Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, p. 104.

² Cherrington, Porter, Johnson and Stoddard (ed.), Standard encyclopedia of the alcohol problem, i, 346.

³ Harrison, op. cit., p. 197.

⁴ For an interesting discussion of the underlying forces giving rise to the anti-spirits movement, see *ibid.*, pp 87-103.

both legally and illegally, rose dramatically. At the same time, drink consumption among the upper and middle classes was declining and heavy drinking had become decidedly unfashionable well before 1829. It was to these classes that the anti-spirits movement appealed, urging them to set an example to their social inferiors by abandoning spirits and moderating other forms of alcohol consumption. Thus the movement sought to reinforce an already existing trend among one class, while simultaneously controlling and disciplining another. In the following chapter, in the context of a general survey of the principles of the Irish anti-drink movement, we shall look more closely at the ideology of the early anti-spirits societies.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE CASE AGAINST DRINK: PERSONALITIES AND PRINCIPLES

Listen, O Daughters, to my voice. Listen to the Words of Wisdom,
So shall you govern over all; let Moral Duty tune your tongue.
But be your hearts harder than the nether stone ...
Compell the poor to live upon a Crust of bread, by soft mild arts.
Smile when they frown, frown when they smile; and when a man looks pale
With labour and abstinence, say he looks healthy and happy;
And when his children sicken, let them die; there are enough
Born, even too many, and our Earth will be overrun
Without these arts. If you would make the poor live with temper,
With pomp give every crust of bread you give; with gracious cunning
Magnify small gifts; reduce the man to want a gift and then give with pomp.
Say he smiles if you hear him sigh. If pale say he is ruddy.
Preach temperance: say he is overgorg'd and drowns his wit
In strong drink, tho' you know that bread and water are all
He can afford. Flatter his wife, pity his children, till we can
Reduce all to our will, as spaniels are taught with art.

William Blake, 'Vala, or the Four Zoas' in Blake: complete writings
(ed. Geoffrey Keynes, London, 1966), p. 323.

The anti-spirits movement of the 1830s

The Irish anti-spirits movement of the early 1830s bore a great similarity to the contemporary movements in the United States and Britain.¹ It was largely composed of the wealthy and educated protestant upper classes - some aristocrats, but mainly businessmen, doctors, lawyers and clerics. It did not consider that there was a drink problem among the upper classes, but saw the danger arising from excessive spirits consumption among tradesmen, labourers and farmers. By refraining themselves from spirits and publicising their example, anti-spirits advocates aimed to reform their social inferiors and thus they expected to eliminate drunkenness, disease, crime and poverty. The movement was not on the whole in favour of decisive government intervention, looking to parliament merely for minor licensing reforms. While congratulating themselves on their own moral superiority, anti-spirits advocates reviled drunkards, dissidents and often the poor generally. The movement showed little appreciation of the difficulties faced by its social inferiors and considered their defects to be the product of moral failings rather than social or economic forces. Excessive consumption of spirits was considered to be both an economic and a political threat. The movement viewed with horror its servants and workmen becoming addicted to spirits, while it felt that drink could only exacerbate the rebelliousness of the disaffected catholic masses.

¹ For discussions of the English and American anti-spirits movements, see Brian Harrison, Drink and the Victorians (London, 1971), ch. 4 and Joseph Gusfield, Symbolic crusade (Urbana, Ill., 1963), pp 36-54.

Anti-spirits societies were concentrated in urban areas, particularly in Belfast, Dublin and Cork. There seems to have been some success in establishing provincial branches in Ulster, but the rest of the country remained relatively untouched by the anti-spirits movement.¹

Anti-spirits literature of this period focused especially on the physical and moral pathology occasioned by intemperance and reiterated many of the arguments of the eighteenth century. But, at the same time, a more sophisticated analysis of the problem, encompassing socio-economic factors particularly, was beginning to emerge. Again medical practitioners and clerics were very much to the fore in this campaign. Dr John Cheyne wrote several of the earliest and most influential medical tracts against spirit drinking produced by the Hibernian Temperance Society.² The first was a letter, dated 15 August 1829, replying to an appeal by Dr Joshua Harvey to join a crusade against drunkenness. With heavy irony, Cheyne drew attention to the rewards which the medical profession derived from intemperance.

How could you suppose me so great a simpleton as your letter would imply? To enlist in a crusade against intemperance, indeed! Why, if an end were put to the

¹ As early as 1830 there were complaints in the south that the movement was showing no signs of spreading beyond Dublin; see H.T.S., Do we love our neighbours? (Dublin, [1830]). The Report of the committee of the U.T.S. for 1838 (Belfast 1838), pp 6-10, on the other hand, demonstrated a large and active provincial organisation.

² Cheyne wrote the first two tracts issued by the D.T.S. in 1829 and later reissued by the H.T.S.: A letter on the effects of wine and spirits, by a physician (Dublin, 1829) and A second letter on the effects of wine and spirits, by a physician (Dublin, 1829). Pre-dating these was his appeal to Harvey to help establish a temperance society, entitled A statement of certain effects to be apprehended from temperance societies; by a physician (Dublin, 1829).

drinking of port, punch, and porter, there would be an end to my worldly prosperity ... Nay, the whole profession, if we except the accoucheurs,¹ would suffer. Physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries, would be ruined, the medical-halls would be stripped of their splendour; and diseases becoming comparatively rare, simple, and manageable, the clinical physician would lose the benefit of teaching, and the student the opportunity of learning his profession, in our flourishing hospitals.²

Cheyne, rather after the manner of his eighteenth century namesake, attributed every disorder from palsy to heart disease and insanity primarily to the influence of intemperance. Here is the medical argument against spirits in its most extreme form. Cheyne, however, did not take his own profession to task for prescribing spirits actually to cure disorders. In fact the anti-spirits movement was still generally ready to concede that spirits did have some medicinal value. 'The object of temperance societies' said Dr John Edgar in 1830 'is not to banish ardent spirit from the shelves of the apothecary, but to them'.³ Later writers on temperance were to be much concerned with this issue and with convincing doctors that all forms of alcohol had no medicinal benefits whatsoever.⁴ In alerting moderate drinkers to the dangers of spirits, Cheyne was at pains to emphasise not only that alcohol was insidiously addictive, but that the inclination to intemperance could be passed from one generation to the next.

¹ Male midwife, though also used to mean midwives generally.

² A statement of certain effects, p. 1.

³ H.T.S., Proceedings of the first annual meeting held at the Rotunda on the 7th of April 1830 (Dublin, 1830), p. 28.

⁴ See for instance, Fifty doctors against alcohol: a call to national defence (London, n.d.).

Those who are drunkards, would seem often to transmit to their children not merely unsound bodies, ... but ... the propensity to liquor, which in the parent may have arisen from a neglect of the admonitions of conscience, appears sometimes in the son as a matter of inheritance, and hence such a family, while it exists, is a valuable heir-loom descending in our profession from age to age. Unfortunately, however, for us, Darwin's observation that a line of drunkards is generally extinguished in the third generation is not without foundation.¹

Thus, not only did the anti-spirits movement consider the drunkard's case to be a hopeless one, but it was convinced that several generations of his descendants were doomed to a similar fate.

The anti-spirits movement was very conscious of the addictive properties of spirits and how moderate consumers could fall into intemperance without even being aware of what was happening to them. Lyman Beecher in his Six sermons on intemperance, first published in Boston in 1826 and probably the most influential of all the anti-spirits tracts,² used the addictiveness of alcohol as a means of explaining the indifference with which intemperance was generally treated. According to him,

this heedlessness arises from the undefined nature of the crime in its early stages, and the ignorance of men, concerning what may be termed the experimental indications of its approach. Theft and falsehood are definite actions. But intemperance is a state of internal sensation, and the indications may exist long, and multiply and the subject of them not be aware that they are the signs of intemperance. It is not unfrequent

¹ A statement of certain effects, p. 3. The Darwin referred to is Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles Darwin and Francis Galton, who put this theory forward in his Zoonomia: or, the laws of organic life (rev. ed., 4 vols, London, 1801).

² This tract was already circulating in Ulster in 1828, according to Dr Thomas Houston, and was one of the first tracts reprinted by the U.T.S. in 1830. Many early Irish anti-spirits tracts were in fact mere paraphrases of Beecher. See p.148 and Lyman Beecher, Six sermons on the nature, occasions, signs, evils, and remedy of intemperance (reprint, with intro. by Dr John Edgar, Belfast, 1830, of 8th ed., Boston, 1829).

that men become irreclaimable in their habits, without suspicion of danger.¹

In the first sermon, entitled 'The nature and occasions of intemperance', after recounting the physical, economic and social effects of intoxication, Beecher declared emphatically: 'Let it, therefore, be engraven upon the heart of every man, THAT THE DAILY USE OF ARDENT SPIRITS, IN ANY FORM, OR IN ANY DEGREE, IS INTEMPERANCE'.² Aware of the danger of addiction Beecher concluded that 'habitual tippling is worse than periodic drunkenness'.³ In his second sermon on 'The signs of intemperance' Beecher showed a remarkably perceptive clinical ability in describing the various medical and physical effects of excessive alcohol consumption. He was clearly very well read in the eighteenth-century medical literature on the subject. He saw intemperance as 'a disease as well as a crime' and compared its infectiousness to that of the plague.⁴ But it did remain a crime, and ultimately, a sin. From Beecher's point of view, therefore, the greatest evil of habitual intemperance was not the physical damage that it caused, but the moral. 'It is the moral ruin which it works in the soul that gives it the denomination of giant-wickedness' wrote Beecher.⁵ In this view Beecher was followed by most members of the Irish anti-spirits movement. Some even resented the need to argue

¹ Beecher, Six sermons on intemperance, p. 25.

² Ibid., p. 27.

³ Ibid., p. 25.

⁴ Ibid., p. 47.

⁵ Ibid., p. 25.

the case on anything other than religious grounds. Dr Harvey lamented in 1829 that the perversion of human nature was so great that men were not willing to 'pursue what is right, because it is right, and ... the command of God', but instead they had to be convinced that their interests were connected with the fulfilment of these commands and in some cases only 'bitter experience' could bring them to heel.¹

Fr Henry Young of Dublin expressed a similar view to Beecher's in his 1823 Short essay on the grievous crime of drunkenness. Here he presented the drunkard's crime and inevitable fate in verse form.

Your will, quite prone to drink, is bent on ill,
Is stain'd with mortal sin, which merits hell:
Your conscience is defil'd, and black like coal;
The demon's pit is open for your soul ...

Where then, O drunkard, shall your dwelling be?
Where will your soul remain eternally?
Among the devils, in sulphurous flames,
Where endless woes combine, and racking pains.²

Thus, while recognising that 'nature, taught by habit to require what once she did not need, demands gratification now with a decision inexorable as death, and to most men as irresistible',³ Beecher still maintained that these sufferings of 'animal nature' were nothing compared with the 'moral agonies' which convulsed the soul. The drunkard

¹ D.T.S., Political evils of intemperance: or, a few observations and statements, pointing out intemperance or drunkenness to be as disadvantageous to a nation, as it is ruinous to an individual; by J.H. (Dublin, 1829), p. 3.

² Short essay on the grievous crime of drunkenness in prose and verse, by a Roman Catholic clergyman (Dublin, 1823), p. 2.

³ Beecher, Six sermons on intemperance, p. 30.

might struggle, but 'he is in chains' and lost. When 'these paroxysms of his dying moral nature decline ... a fearful apathy, the harbinger of spiritual death, comes on'.¹ Young, the Dublin catholic priest, saw the moral destruction wrought by intemperance in similar terms to those of Beecher, the New England calvinist.

Almighty God in his justice and anger cuts the thread of life by a sudden death, in the midst of their drunkenness, rioting, perjuries, curses, blasphemies, impurities, and other heinous crimes; he then summons these drunken souls, thus stocked with treasures of iniquity, before his awful and rigorous tribunal, and there fulminates against them the most dreadful sentence of reprobation and condemnation to the eternal torments of hell, which are intensely great, in proportion to the measure of their manifold crimes. The devils immediately seize on their black, hideous, and defiled souls, which they drag down into the lowest abyss of this infernal region.²

Thus did the anti-spirits movement condemn the drunkard to the grave and beyond that to eternal torment, along with several generations of his descendants. But from such an awful fate it sought to save the so-called temperate drinker. Beecher's method for eliminating intemperance was directed to these moderate users. 'Let the temperate cease to buy,' he urged 'and the demand for ardent spirits will fall in the market three-fourths, and ultimately will fail wholly, as the generations of drunkards shall hasten out of time'.³ Dr John Edgar,

¹ Beecher, Six sermons on intemperance, pp 30-31.

² Short essay on the grievous crime of drunkenness, p. 14. For other severe condemnations of drunkards from catholic sources, see H.T.S., Two letters from the Right Rev. Dr Doyle, Roman Catholic bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, on temperance societies (Dublin, n.d.) and Rev. W.B. Ullathorne, Substance of a sermon against drunkenness, preached to the catholics of divers parts of New South Wales (intro. by Fr Theobald Mathew, Dublin, 1840).

³ Beecher, op. cit., p. 67. For a discussion of Beecher's views see Gusfield, Symbolic crusade, p. 42-4.

the instigator of the anti-spirits movement in Ulster, was a faithful disciple of Beecher's. According to him, it was 'the imperative duty ... of every temperate man, to draw between himself and drunkards a clear and well-defined line of distinction, by abstaining from the use of ardent spirits, inducing others to follow his example, and discountenancing, by all proper means, the causes and practices of intemperance'. If this was done by temperate men, then, according to Edgar, drunkards would be known both to themselves and to others, 'their foreheads ...branded with infamy' and thus the road leading to drunkenness would be closed. Because no man knew 'when, in moderate use, he has passed the bourns from which there is no return', it was imperative for temperate drinkers to abandon spirits altogether.¹ Even if a moderate drinker was able 'to escape out of the world without the disgrace of drunkenness', there was still the effect of his example upon his dependents and subordinates to be considered.

Remember [warned Edgar] how long the influence of your example may be working evil among posterity, whilst you are lying in the grave; remember what time, and substance, and opportunities of usefulness your moderate drinking destroyed; and what irresistible temptations you laid in the way of your children, when they were unable to employ that caution, by which you, in the midst of regular drinking, preserved in a community whose ideals were grievously perverted the character of temperate men.²

At the inaugural meeting of the Hibernian Temperance Society in April 1830, P.C. Crampton, soon to be Irish

¹ John Edgar, intro. to Beecher, Six sermons on intemperance, p. 15.

² Ibid., p. 18.

solicitor-general,¹ made an emotional appeal to 'the influential portion of the Irish public' to join him in a crusade against the 'dangerous disorder' which had been undermining the country's constitution and now threatened her very existence. He identified Beecher as the guiding light of the Irish anti-spirits movement. Previous anti-drink writers had taken an 'erroneous view' is not opposing the moderate consumption of spirits and in seeking to reclaim the habitual drunkard. 'They attempted to set bounds to intemperance, and to say, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther". They did not see that they themselves were sowing the seeds of that growth of intemperance which they were labouring to cut off.'² It had been reserved to Beecher to discover 'the true principle, and apply the true remedy'. According to Crampton: 'The principle is prevention, the remedy is public opinion; the fundamental doctrine is, total abstinence from ardent spirits on the part of all the temperate'.³ The remedy was a cheap one, Crampton told his audience; it was not their money that the H.T.S. wanted but their example and their influence.

The anti-spirits movement recognised, however, that though the remedy was cheap its implementation was by no means easy. Edgar, for instance, fully appreciated the

¹ The Hon. Philip Cecil Crampton (1782-1863) was as ardent a unionist as he was a temperance man. He was one of the judges at O'Connell's trial in 1844 and recommended the heaviest sentence for the Liberator. He adopted total abstinence early and supported the movement liberally with money; see his obituary in the Irish Temperance League Journal, i, no. 1 (Feb. 1863), p. 19.

² H.T.S. Proceedings of the first annual meeting, p.10. It is interesting to note that Crampton's criticisms of the pre-Beecher writers were exactly those later used by total abstainers in their attack on the anti-spirits movement.

³ Ibid.

social importance of drink, or what he termed the 'tyranny of custom'.¹ The use of spirits had identified itself with the very existence of society, and drinking was an important part of social and economic intercourse.

Every bargain is settled by drinking; every act of hospitality must comprise drinking; christenings must be drinking matches; marriages must be celebrated with drinking; no wake would be deserving of the name which afforded no drinking; and to bury a man without drinking, would be giving him, in the opinion of many, the burial of a dog. Then, the session-house of each congregation must have its cupboard and its bottle.²

Such was the extent of drinking in fact that 'men who refused to drink are the butts of ridicule, and are hooted at, as wanting the courage or generosity of men. The man abstaining from the use of intoxicating liquor, is considered unfit for social enjoyment; he is treated as a spy, or felt as a grievous eyesore, marring the pleasures of conviviality'.³ The temperance society was intended to give such social misfits support and encouragement in their stand against spirits and hopefully prevent them from succumbing to the enormous pressure upon them to conform to the accepted social practices.

According to Edgar, 'the great practical remedy' to the excessive consumption of spirits was 'moral influence'. Here again he was echoing Beecher who had written: 'Our

¹ Edgar, intro. to Beecher, Six sermons on intemperance, p. 9.

² John Edgar, Address to the temperate (Belfast, 1829), p. 4.

³ Edgar, intro. to Beecher, Six sermons on intemperance p. 9. More recent sociological research has confirmed this view, that the non-drinker is regarded with fear and suspicion in traditional Irish society. For a discussion of possible reasons for this see Robert F. Bales, 'Attitudes toward drinking in the Irish culture' in D.J. Pittman and C.R. Snyder (ed.), Society, culture and drinking patterns (New York, 1962), pp 168-9.

fathers could enforce morality by law; but the times are changed, and unless we can regulate public sentiment, and secure morality in some other way, WE ARE UNDONE'.¹ Beecher considered that too much capital was invested in the spirits industry and there was too brisk a demand to render mere legal enactments effective. Education of the moderate drinker, through literature and meetings organised by temperance societies, and the exclusion of spirits as an auxiliary to labour in agriculture, commerce and manufacturing - these were the specific remedies prescribed by Beecher.² Edgar wholeheartedly endorsed this view, but in giving evidence to the select committee on drunkenness, after five years' experience in the temperance movement, he seemed to envisage a greater measure of government involvement than Beecher had apparently been willing to permit. Edgar felt that governments could assist the temperance cause by at least removing the obstacles which they themselves had placed in the way of reformation. These included the opening of public houses on Sundays,³ the permitting of grocers to sell spirits,⁴ the issuing of far too many retail licences⁵ and the issuing of spirit rations to the

¹ Beecher, Six sermons on intemperance, pp 65-6.

² Ibid., pp 84-5.

³ 3 & 4 Will. IV, c.68, Perrin's act of 1833; see above, pp 40-42 for a discussion of this act.

⁴ 25 Geo. III, c.8; see above, pp 33-4 for a discussion of this act.

⁵ See Thomas Hincks and John Edgar, Three years' history of the publicans on a mile of road, in a country district of Ulster (Belfast, n.d.), for a strong argument against the numbers of retail spirit licences being issued.

army and the navy.¹ Edgar was less certain about the policy of increasing duties in order to discourage consumption, but he urged strongly the raising of licence fees in order to decrease the number of retail outlets.² He also drew the committee's attention to the amount of drinking that occurred at public amusements, such as horse racing and cock fighting, as well as the introduction of music and dancing into public houses in order to make them even more attractive. Though reluctant to admit that he wanted such activities banned, in case his puritanism should offend his worldly audience, Edgar nevertheless emphasised that they did encourage drunkenness and that their regulation was within the power of parliament.³ But basically Edgar was seeking a complete change in the general attitude of government to the drink industry; a change from an attitude of tolerance, if not sympathy, to one of outright hostility.

I have no doubt [he said] that the government of the country might, through their different officers and organs, exercise a very important influence on behalf of temperance, if it were known by the servants of government that it was the real wish of government to discountenance the use of spirituous liquors, ... but at present it appears to be the general impression that a man is going in opposition to the government and the interests of the country when he speaks of refraining from spirituous liquors; and I must say that the whole course of legislation towards Ireland, in regard to spirituous liquors, ... seems to have had for its object the getting of money, no matter what might be the consequence to the morals of the people.⁴

¹ See Dr John Cheyne's evidence with regard to the army in Report from the select committee on inquiry into drunkenness, pp 303-6, H.C. 1834 (559), 303-6.

² Edgar in *ibid.*, pp 82-5.

³ *Ibid.*, pp 85-6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

The anti-spirits movement was convinced that the consumption of spirits was the basic cause of much of Ireland's crime, poverty and misery. The very first resolution passed at the inaugural meeting of the H.T.S. stated: 'that the unhappy propensity of our countrymen to the use of ardent spirits is one of the chief causes of pauperism, disease and crime prevalent in Ireland'.¹ Edgar considered that the promotion of temperance should be undertaken by the government in order to prevent crime and he suggested the employment of chaplains in the country's jails to dispense temperance propaganda. But in order to be effective anti-spirits regulations enacted by the government would require the support of the public. Here Edgar considered education to be vital. Firstly, he looked to a national system of education which would 'train up the rising generation to take as their motto, in regard to distilled spirit, "Touch not, taste not, handle not"'.² Secondly, he saw temperance societies playing an important role in educating the adult public on the evils of excessive consumption of spirits. Temperance societies could in fact create 'the public sentiment and feeling to bear out and to carry into effect such legislation'.³

Other leaders of the Irish anti-spirits movement, however, looked to the government for even more decisive action than Edgar did. G.W. Carr of New Ross told the

¹ H.T.S., Proceedings of the first annual meeting, p. 18. P.C. Crampton argued the same point strongly at the meeting, *ibid.*, pp 5-7.

² Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, p. 87.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

1834 select committee that the 'radical and grand remedy would be, the total prohibition of the distillation of spirits as an article of diet and common beverage'.¹ Recognising that the government might 'be not ready to act thus vigorously at once', Carr suggested that in the meantime it should 'abolish retail spirit shops, which have been designated palaces, to which persons resort not for refreshment, but for drunkenness'.² To Carr's mind, 'one of the greatest hindrances to the progress of the temperance society' was the government's failure to take decisive action against spirits.³ And he even urged the government to appoint temperate men, if not actual members of temperance societies, to be police and revenue officers, logically arguing that one could not expect 'constant frequenters of public houses and companions of the most notorious drunkards' properly to enforce laws aimed at suppressing drunkenness.⁴ But Edgar probably more truly represented the attitude of the early anti-spirits movement to prohibitory legislation when he said in 1830:

Let those who trust to acts of parliament for the suppression of drunkenness learn at length, that laws in a free country are a dead letter where they are not supported by the general voice of the people; and that no legislative interference can truly reform the principle or dispositions of the people;... if we would promote a genuine reformation, we must employ moral means.⁵

¹ Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, p. 257.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., pp 260-61.

⁴ Ibid., p. 262.

⁵ H.T.S., Proceedings of the first annual meeting, p. 37.

Edgar and Carr did agree, however, in attacking the licensing system and in particular Sunday opening of public houses and the spirit grocers' licence. To Carr, Perrin's act of 1833, which permitted public houses to open between 2 p.m. and 11 p.m. on Sunday, Good Friday, Christmas Day or any day appointed for a public fast or thanksgiving,¹ was 'most strange and unhappy legislation'. He accused the government of total indifference to the 'sacred day' in sanctioning the sale of 'that pernicious, demoralising evil on a day when, very properly, not even wholesome food is allowed to be sold'.² The inconsistency of allowing drink to be sold on Sundays, while banning the sale of other goods and services, was to be a recurrent theme in the temperance movement's battle to restore Sunday closing to Ireland.

The spirit grocers' licence, introduced in 1785, permitted grocers to take out licences to retail spirits, not exceeding two quarts at any one time, for consumption off the premises.³ Carr considered this licence to be 'a very fertile source of the increase in Ireland of spirit drinking' and

a ready step, whereby any person, especially a female, who is yet ashamed to enter the dram-shop, by getting the poison in a more respectable way in a grocer's shop, may become a candidate for the dram-shop. Many servants, formerly respectable, especially female and confidential servants, have been thus brought to ruin; a screen of tea chests in the grocer's shop allows the cordial, which is given as a mark of regard and gratitude for good custom, to be taken by the female unseen and unsuspected.⁴

¹ 3 & 4 Will. IV, c.68, section 14.

² Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, p. 262.

³ See above, pp 33-4.

⁴ Report ... 1834, op. cit., p. 232.

The corruption of women by spirits was contemplated with particular horror by the temperance movement. Women were rearers of children, upholders of the family and its civilising virtues, pillars of the churches and the great restraining influence on the cruder appetites of the male.¹ If the 'fair sex', especially the more respectable element of it, took to drink in large numbers then the most basic institutions of society would be under threat. Similarly, to middle-class anti-spirits advocates, the corruption of household servants, to say nothing of employees generally, was a matter for the gravest concern. In Carr's slightly hysterical tone we can detect an apocalyptic vision of all the basic bonds of society, familial, economic and religious, dissolving amid an irresistible flood of spirits. P.C. Crampton clearly shared this vision for he characterised the object of the H.T.S. as being 'to raise a barrier against that overwhelming flood of intemperance which now threatens to lay waste our land, and to bury in one common ruin the institutions, morals, and character of our people'.² Crampton saw the struggle in military terms with the anti-spirits societies as an army having 'declared war against the tyrant ardent spirit', and in such a war none could be indifferent, 'neutrality is treason'.³

The anti-spirits movement also put considerable emphasis on the economic consequences of intemperance.⁴

¹ See above, p. 138.

² H.T.S., Proceedings of the first annual meeting, p.4.

³ Ibid., p. 14.

⁴ For a detailed economic argument against spirits, see the H.T.S.'s tract no. 6, A letter to a member of the Dublin Temperance Society, on the supposed value of ardent spirits, in relation to national wealth, government revenue, rent, and agricultural profits (Dublin, 1830).

Consumption of spirits had increased some three fold during the course of the 1820s though it did stabilise in the early 1830s.¹ Edgar was appalled by the sheer amount of money that the people of Ireland spent on spirits; by his own calculations in 1828 alone this came to some £6.3 million.² This sum was taken, not only from a country which could ill afford such wasteful expenditure, but it was taken principally from the poorest of the people. To the simple monetary cost had to be added the costs in terms of working time lost through drunkenness, grain consumed in distillation, and the need to maintain large police and revenue forces to deal with the crime produced by drink. 'While travelling lately in districts of the south of Ireland', observed Edgar in 1834, 'police offices and barracks seemed to be the only prosperous places'.³ However, there was a strong economic argument in favour of spirits, mainly in terms of the revenue derived by the government from excise duties. The opponents of temperance asked: 'Can you advocate an association whose first effect would be to cut off four millions of revenue? You cripple the hands of government, you endanger the safety of the state'.⁴ But temperance men answered simply that the abolition of spirits would generate more revenue than their perpetuation. Dr Harvey summed up this argument when he

¹ See appendix I.

² Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, p. 66.

³ Ibid., p. 68.

⁴ H.T.S., Proceedings of the first annual meeting, p. 17.

wrote:

Can it be supposed that a drunken population, living in a most degraded state, and clothed only with a covering of dirty rags, the results of drunkenness ... can yield that revenue and profit to any state, which would readily be yielded by a sober, healthy, industrious, well-clad population, seeking and enjoying a number of rational luxuries, besides the necessities of life - consumers themselves of the grain and cattle which their country exports so abundantly, and customers for a hundred articles demanded by improved and civilised life, each of¹ which articles would afford its suitable tax or revenue?

The restoration of order and industry would thus recompense the treasury many times over for the loss of excise revenue. Also temperance men argued that it was immoral for a government to make money out of the corruption of its own people. The loyal Crampton refused to believe that, when properly enlightened, the legislature could continue to 'cherish the vices of the people as legitimate sources of public income'.²

As for the drink industry, Edgar thought that there were few fortunes to be found in it and that spirits were in fact as ruinous to the purveyors as they were to the consumers.

It is pretty generally believed [he reported] that money made in the spirit trade seldom descends to the grand-child. The opinion of some careful observers is, that twelve out of thirteen, and of others that nine out of ten, who have been for any length of time engaged in the retail spirit trade, exhibit, either in their own persons and property, or in the habits of members of their families, melancholy specimens of the destruction caused by distilled spirit. Many spirit shops are kept by³ widows whose husbands killed themselves by drinking.

¹ D.T.S., Political evils of intemperance, p. 6.

² H.T.S., Proceedings of the first annual meeting, p. 17.

³ Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, p. 68.

Edgar thus felt that the publican and his family would suffer much the same fate as the drunkard and his. Others, however, were not so complacent. Fr Henry Young had fulminated against the 'masters and mistresses of these public places of drunkenness and infamy' and warned of the 'most dreadful account' such householders would have 'to render at the divine tribunal of our sovereign judge after death, for their porter and punch, spirit and liquor business'.¹ Still others in the anti-spirits movement were strongly opposed to any attack on the retail drink trade. Harvey thought that it was quite natural for persons to pursue a business which was not only very well patronised but encouraged by the laws of the land;² while Beecher had argued that 'language of impatient censure' against spirit traders could only be counter-productive in that it would 'irritate and arouse prejudice, and prevent investigation, and concentrate a deaf and deadly opposition against the work of reformation'. To expect the capitalist, who had invested his money in the trade, to abandon his business was asking too much, but 'let the consumer do his duty, and the capitalist, finding his employment unproductive, will quickly discover other channels of useful enterprise'.³ Carr, like Beecher, trusted to the workings of a free enterprise economy and was sure that distillers and spirit retailers could

¹ Short essay on the grievous crime of drunkenness, p. 16.

² H.T.S., Some observations and advice, addressed to the mechanic and industrious classes, on the use of ardent spirits; ... by J.H. (Dublin, 1830), p. 8.

³ Beecher, Six sermons on intemperance, p. 67.

quickly adapt their premises to other purposes.¹ But, as the drink trade had been encouraged by government legislation, if the government was suddenly to reverse its attitude and begin legislating in ways damaging to the trade, as some in the temperance movement demanded, then the question of compensation would arise. Should the government be obliged to compensate the trade for losses incurred through punitive legislation? This was a serious problem for those temperance men who believed both in capitalism and in the efficacy of anti-drink legislation. Carr, however, was in no doubt on this point and he registered his opinion through an analogy. 'I do not think', he said, 'for instance, that the apothecary who earned a livelihood by inoculation with smallpox, and by attending persons thus infected, could call on government to compensate him because he lost money by the introduction of vaccine inoculation'.²

The use of public houses by respectable societies for their meetings and by employers for the payment of wages was another issue which deeply concerned the anti-spirits movement. Edgar explained to the committee on drunkenness that 'each individual who receives his money is expected to purchase at least one glass of spirits, as a compensation to the house', but, once begun, such drinking

¹ The most detailed study of this subject produced by the Irish anti-spirits movement concluded that many in the spirits industry would suffer severely and permanently by its suppression, but the author justified this on grounds of the general good which would result; see H.T.S., A letter ... on the supposed value of ardent spirits, pp 5-6.

² Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, p. 261.

often did not end till all the men's wages were gone. Some employers also paid their workmen with large notes which could only be changed in a pub. In these practices Edgar detected collusion. In some cases, he said, 'an employer has a friend, a spirit seller, whose prosperity he is interested in promoting; in other cases a foreman is allowed to drink without cost at the public house to which he brings the men; or it may be not unfrequently the employer or foreman is himself a spirit seller'.¹ The anti-spirits movement appealed particularly to the middle-class employer not to corrupt his workmen by supplying them with spirits and to set them an example by refraining from spirits himself. The possibility of establishing alternative places of recreation for the working classes was mooted, but it was left to a later generation of temperance men to implement this idea on a large scale. Dr Harvey suggested the establishment of coffee houses where workers 'could get at all reasonable hours, a pint of very good hot coffee, with bread and butter, for less money than a tumbler of punch or a pot of porter', and where they could read the newspapers. However, curiously enough, he envisaged these institutions being set up, not by the temperance movement, but by the publicans themselves.²

¹ Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, p. 71.

² H.T.S., Some observations and advice, addressed to the mechanic and industrious classes, pp 8-9. As well as their tracts addressed to the middle classes, the anti-spirits movement did produce some propaganda directed at the working classes; see for example H.T.S., Dialogues on whiskey, between John Sheppard, the millwright and Peter Carroll, the cooper; by a lady (Dublin, 1832) and Darby and Paddy: in two dialogues, by George Downes, A.M., sec. to the Ballitore Temperance Society (Dublin, [1832]). Such works appear to be modelled on Mary Leadbeater's popular, Cottage dialogues of the Irish peasantry (Dublin, 1811).

Needless to say, nothing came of this unrealistic suggestion.

The anti-spirits movement repeatedly emphasised that intemperance in spirits produced not only physical degeneration and disease, but poverty and crime as well. Some had argued that poverty in fact led to excessive drinking, but Dr Edgar felt on the contrary that 'poverty makes many a man sober'. With regard to Belfast and its vicinity, the area that he was most familiar with, he told the 1834 committee that 'there was no tradesman who might not be comfortable, if he would allow himself to be so by being temperate'. Edgar considered tradesmen and farmers to be the main consumers of spirits, rather than urban or agricultural labourers. He estimated that the average tradesman spent six shillings per week on drink and that 'generally speaking ... those who receive most, drink most, and the families of those persons who make 30s. per week, are very often indeed not so comfortable as those who receive perhaps 8s. or 10s.'¹ Lord Cloncurry, a vice-president of the H.T.S., endorsed this view when he observed:

A temperate person, out of the smallest earnings, may make some little saving; a drunkard, gain what he may, must end in beggary. I have labourers at seven shillings a week, well clad, their gardens in good order, their cottages clean and comfortable: I have had tradesmen at a guinea, themselves and their families in squalid misery.²

As for farmers, though 'much depressed' at the time, they still consumed large quantities of spirits and, according

¹ Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, p. 70.

² H.T.S., Proceedings of the first annual meeting, p. 52.

to Edgar, 'many of them attend markets apparently for little other business than obtaining whiskey'. The illogicality of tradesmen squandering their meagre prosperity and impoverished farmers spending all they had on a useless article was to Edgar but another example of the hideous power of ardent spirits. 'When a man becomes attached to spirit drinking', he concluded, 'it is no question with him whether he can afford the cost of it or not'.¹ Thus the anti-spirits movement showed little sympathy for the poverty of their social inferiors, considering it to be the result of their own moral failings rather than the product of any grave shortcoming in the Irish political or economic system.

Drinking among the 'higher class', as he called them, Edgar did not consider to be anywhere near as great a problem: firstly because they mainly drank wine, which was not considered to be as detrimental as spirits, and secondly because there had been a great improvement in their behaviour; 'the habits of old fox-hunting times are gone' said Edgar.² But nevertheless the anti-spirits movement came under attack for this apparently biased approach. Bishop Doyle of Kildare and Leighlin, the famous J.K.L., was a vice-president of the H.T.S. and the leading catholic supporter of the anti-spirits movement, having been persuaded to join by his friend G.W. Carr. Yet Doyle had grave doubts about the whole movement and its sectional nature troubled him particularly. In his

¹ Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, p. 81.

² Ibid., p. 72.

frequently reprinted letter to Carr in December 1829 on the subject of temperance societies, he emphasised the gulf existing in Ireland between the classes, and how small - how very small the moral influence is of those called the upper ranks over those called the lower orders of the people! Gentlemen, therefore may unite and preach to the people a temperance which they themselves do not always practise, whilst the people, who have not before experienced their friendship and protection, will hear them without attention, or scoff at their advice.¹

Carr appears to have shared this attitude to some extent for he emphasised how much easier it was for the family of the wealthy drunkard to escape his pernicious influence. 'Not so with the family of the poor... Here is no withdrawing room or retreat from the execrations and brutalities of the intoxicated monster.'² Similarly he felt that the poor man's example and influence were to be prized, for nothing could 'more encourage the friends of this cause than to see the poor come forward'.³ However, as we have already seen, this was not the general attitude of the anti-spirits movement. It did not seek to find excuses for the poor drunkard, let alone to attempt to rescue him from his fate.

As for the charge that the movement indulged the rich by allowing them to continue their consumption of wine,

¹ H.T.S., Two letters from the Right Rev. Dr Doyle, p. 5. This first letter was reprinted in an appendix to Harvey's advice to the mechanic classes, included by Carr in his evidence to the 1834 select committee, reprinted in Dublin in 1840 to coincide with Fr Mathew's visit to the city and reproduced again in W.J. Fitzpatrick, The life, times and correspondence of the Right Rev. Dr Doyle, bishop of Kildare and Leighlin (new ed., Dublin, 1880), ii, 178-9. The letter was clearly considered to be the main statement by a catholic spokesman on the anti-spirits movement.

² H.T.S., Proceedings of the first annual meeting, p. 54.

³ Ibid., p. 58.

this was answered in several ways. Crampton pleaded on the one hand that they were simply imitating their successful American predecessors and on the other that wine was too dear for common use: 'excess in wine drinking must therefore of necessity be confined to a few, and as in the upper classes intoxication is now a sin against good breeding, there is little to be apprehended from the vicious example of wine drinkers'.¹

Spirits were the real cause of drunkenness and not only that, but the drunkenness which they induced was more severe and more damaging to health than that induced by wine. Last, though far from least, was the argument that the consumption of wine was justified by reference to it in the Bible.² When total abstainers, therefore, attempted to banish wine they succeeded in stirring up a complex and protracted biblical debate. The paternalistic tenor of the anti-spirits movement's attitude to the lower classes is probably best expressed by Dr Joshua Harvey in his observations and advice to the mechanic classes, written in 1830.

Some are well aware [he commented] of the difficulties you have to contend with, and sincerely and deeply lament the temptation with which you are, on all hands, surrounded; especially those which beset you in an endless multiplicity of drinking houses and dram-shops, with their various seductions, and which depend on the encouragement given by legal regulations, as well as by your own thoughtlessness, to the use of that real curse of the country, ARDENT SPIRITS. But they trust a benevolent government, before long, will give due consideration to these things. And they hope the days

¹ H.T.S., Proceedings of the first annual meeting, p. 17.

² H.T.S., Wine? (Dublin, n.d.), p. 6. This anonymous defence of wine drinking published by the H.T.S. reflects the controversial nature of the subject in that, though written by a member, a note makes clear that it does not have the society's authority.

are coming when governors will act on the principles of good and wise parents acting for their children. In the meantime, dear brethren, is there nothing you (you who may be well-disposed), can do for yourselves? Will you not refrain from all unnecessary drinking of strong liquors, from wasting your laborious earnings to fill the pockets of distillers and others.¹

Bishop Doyle was as severe in his criticisms of drunkards and excessive drinking among tradesmen as Edgar, Crampton, Harvey or any of the other temperance leaders, and he supported the anti-spirits movement. But his reservations were profound. 'I am not prepared', he wrote 'to express to others a confidence which I do not feel, that such societies in this country, at this time, and with our present laws and social government can be productive of any great, or extensive, or permanent good'.² Doyle feared the united power of drunkards, publicans, spirit grocers, brewers and distillers, 'with the swabs and wits and idlers who appertain to them', and doubted that anti-spirits advocates could overcome such a formidable alliance. But to him the really 'great and insurmountable obstacle to the progress of temperance societies' was the revenue law.³ Unlike his loyal, protestant co-temperance advocates, Doyle had little faith in the benevolence or morality of the British government. At the same time he doubted the practicality of trying to convince the Irish people to abandon spirits totally, for he thought that 'it would be as easy to stop the mouths

¹ H.T.S., Some observations and advice, addressed to the mechanic and industrious classes, p. 8.

² H.T.S., Two letters from the Right Rev. Dr. Doyle, p. 5.

³ Ibid.

of the Euphrates as to stop the mouths of those who now drink whiskey in Ireland'.¹ The best that could be expected was a substantial decrease in whiskey consumption and the way to bring this about was for the government to promote alternative beverages, particularly beer. 'I have no hesitation in stating', said Doyle 'that if malting and brewing were exempted from tax and the impost on whiskey raised, drunkenness in a little time would almost disappear from the country'.² In conjunction with this measure, Doyle wanted to see a reduction in retail spirit licences to about one-tenth their existing number, and the granting of such licences only to persons whose property and character furnished security for their good conduct. Until distillation was actively discouraged by the government, Doyle believed that temperance societies could only produce 'very limited good'. And yet he was at pains not to condemn the whole enterprise for he felt that even 'a small good' was 'worth seeking after'.³ However, with his emphasis on the need to encourage other forms of alcohol than spirits, Doyle was totally out of line with the trend of the temperance movement during the course of the 1830s.

If the anti-spirits movement did not condone the use of public houses for meetings and business transactions by honest workingmen, it condemned even more forcibly their use by subversive societies. Here, while under

¹ H.T.S., Two letters from the Right Rev. Dr Doyle, pp 5-6.

² Ibid., p. 6.

³ Ibid., p. 7.

the influence of drink, individuals could be exposed to revolutionary doctrines and enticed into joining illegal organisations. Edgar was in no doubt about the strong connection between spirit drinking and political disaffection.

There is a strong temptation [he said] for persons to unite themselves with political societies, on account of the spirit drinking which frequently takes place in the lodges of these societies; and again, the spirit drinking carried on at these lodges is calculated to create drunken habits; and thus political societies¹ and spirit drinking act reciprocally on each other.

In support of this view, Edgar referred to some of the atrocities committed in 1798 when the perpetrators had been drunk. If excessive consumption of spirits destroyed morality and reduced men to the condition of brutes, then only barbarism could be expected from a population habitually addicted to spirits. The temperance movement felt that this was particularly so in Ireland, given the character of the people. Dr Crampton² told the H.T.S. that the chief feature of the Irish character was a 'morbid excitability', 'a promptness ... to rush upon any action without due consideration of the consequences'.³ At the same time he described the physiological effect of spirits as being to excite the

¹ Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, p. 70.

² Sir Philip Crampton (1777-1858) was one of the most eminent Irish surgeons of his time, three times president of the Dublin College of Surgeons, surgeon-general of the forces in Ireland and a consultant to the queen. He was a kinsman of P.C. Crampton; see D.N.B.

³ H.T.S., Proceedings of the first annual meeting, p. 22. John Dunlop, the founder of the anti-spirits movement in Scotland, told the 1834 select committee that the 'characteristic of the inebriation of Ireland is drunken madness, bursting forth ... into wild riot and confusion'; Report... 1834, op. cit., pp 406-7.

'animal' in the human brain while paralysing the moral and intellectual faculties. Thus the effect of spirits upon an Irishman was to make him a 'willing instrument' in any act however cruel or desperate. This propensity would then be transmitted to the offspring 'until the brute nature ... prevailing over the human, the whole race scarcely exhibit any of the attributes of humanity except in the outward form, and are only to be governed - if indeed they can be governed - by the force of arms instead of the force of opinion'.¹ Crampton felt that this described parts of Ireland at that time. It was a frequent theme of the anti-spirits movement that much of the violence and disaffection in the country was due to the evil effect of spirits on the peculiar character of the people. Dr William Urwick, a Dublin congregation- alist minister and active temperance man, wrote in 1829 that:

Intemperate habits prevailing in a community reduce it to barbarism, and arm it with unrestrained ferocity. What occasions the fights and disturbances common at wakes and fairs through this country, but the excitement produced by liquor? Without this, the antipathies of ancient clans, the bigotry of religious differences, and the spirit of disaffection to the government, if not altogether allayed would be comparatively harmless. A population addicted to intemperance is ready to obey the call of every political incendiary who addresses their passions, while they are backward to regard reasoning and expostulation; nor will they be deterred from advancing in the career of rebellion though the gibbet or the scaffold be in view.²

The putting down of intemperance therefore became a patriotic duty for all loyal Irishmen. To Urwick

¹ H.T.S., Proceedings of the first annual meeting, p. 23.

² D.T.S., Remarks on the evils, occasions, and cure of intemperance; by W.U. (Dublin, 1829), p. 13.

intemperance was 'a huge incubus' and 'a vast cancerous affection' torturing every nerve of the political body and paralysing the energies of Ireland. He called on patriots to free the country from her troubles and distractions and make her 'a great and a happy nation'.¹

Temperance men were the main upholders and beneficiaries of the existing political and economic system in Ireland. Its shortcomings they thus attributed to an external factor - the excessive consumption of spirits by their social inferiors - which required little or no self-criticism or self-reform on their part. Lord Cloncurry for instance felt that much drunkenness in Ireland was occasioned by the large number of saints' days and holydays observed by the catholic church and he suggested to the bishops that these be considerably reduced in number. This brought him into conflict with his fellow vice-president of the H.T.S., Bishop Doyle, who rejected the idea. Drunkards would drink at all times, thought Doyle, and when they had not a holyday ready-made they would themselves create one, as had happened in the case of Saint Monday.² With such attitudes it is not to be wondered at that the anti-spirits movement won little catholic or working-class support.

The movement also concerned itself with the issues of illicit distillation and adulteration of spirits. Edgar told the 1834 select committee that 'private

¹ D.T.S., Remarks on the evils, occasions, and cure of intemperance, p. 24.

² Fitzpatrick, Life, times and correspondence of Dr Doyle, ii, 173-4.

distillation has not been for a long period worse in Ireland than it is at present'. Far from being restricted to mountainous and inaccessible areas as it had been in the past, it was now to be found in thickly-inhabited parts of Down, Antrim and Armagh.¹ Called on to account for this state of affairs, Edgar maintained that though 'Innishowen whiskey is considered remarkably fine ... a large portion of the privately distilled spirit is not considered to be equal to the regular distilled spirit'. But he added, with some psychological insight:

One thing calculated to encourage private distillation is oftentimes the mere secrecy of transactions; the idea of secrecy (stolen water is sweet) sometimes gives a sale to privately distilled spirit, in spite of threatened heavy penalties; and I know it to be a fact that persons go round and gain their support by buying common spirits from spirit sellers, which they afterwards sell as privately distilled spirits, and get a good sale by vending it in secrecy.²

The possession of illicit whiskey was in fact something of a status symbol. 'It is considered to be a sort of feat to have a good bottle or two of good Innishowen, or other privately distilled spirit.' It was widely believed that the high duties placed on legal production encouraged the illicit industry, but neither Edgar nor Carr wholly subscribed to this view. Carr, in his characteristically blunt way, argued that 'the practice of illicit distillation does not originate in high duties, but in the existence of the drunken habits and appetites fostered by the government countenance and legalisation of ardent

¹ Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, pp 73-4. See also K.H. Connell, Irish peasant society: four historical essays (Oxford, 1968), pp 22-3.

² Report ... 1834, op. cit., p. 75.

spirits'.¹ The more scholarly Edgar reviewed the figures on consumption, rates of duty and population increases for the preceding hundred years, but was not able to establish a clear correlation between increased duty, decreased legal production and increased illicit distillation.² However, his figures were by no means reliable and he ignored many significant variables, such as changes in the price, quality and strength of poteen, increases in beer consumption and the frequent campaigns to suppress illicit distillation.³ Heavy duties and complex regulations, which meant that legal whiskey was generally expensive and of poor quality, without doubt stimulated the illegal industry.⁴

An evil often associated with illicit distillation was adulteration. Edgar considered this also to be very widespread. 'I know the usual reason for having got drunk, is not the quantity drunk, but its desperate bad quality' and he referred to a 'fiery liquor ... sold by retail at very nearly as low a price as it can be obtained by wholesale', which in his neighbourhood was called 'kill the beggar':

It first makes the beggar and then kills the beggar; though in these powers it is not peculiar; it is hot and violent, having the appearance of great strength; mild spirit is, with the mob, of low repute. Another description of what could be termed adulterated spirits is by the vulgar termed 'corduroy', on account of the rough feeling which it

¹ Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, p. 261.

² Ibid., pp 77-8.

³ Connell, Irish peasant society, pp 1-50.

⁴ Ibid., pp 1-2.

imparts to the tongue and the palate. It is notorious that many ingredients are used for mixing by spirit dealers; I have heard spirit sellers myself boast that they never did adulterate, as though their conduct was a happy exception. Some spirit sellers, it is alleged, can make a puncheon of whiskey go three or four times further than others.¹

However, Edgar was anxious to point out that adulteration was not the real problem. On the contrary, it was the contention of his movement that all spirits, whether legally or illegally produced, whether adulterated or pure, were evil and should be done away with. Thus illicit distillation and adulteration were not major concerns of the Irish temperance movement.

Total abstinence in the 1830s and Dr John Edgar
Right from the start of the agitation against spirits in Ireland there were those who felt that the movement did not go far enough; that by being selective in its attack and limited in its aims the anti-spirits movement was being illogical and inconsistent. The first numbered tracts published by the Dublin (later the Hibernian) Temperance Society in 1829 were Dr Cheyne's two letters directed against the consumption of wine as well as spirits. In the first he argued principally against the prescribing of wine for patients suffering from fever, hysteria and digestive disorders, and he summed up his views thus:

I am most cordially of opinion, that ardent spirits ought to be relinquished by all persons in health, as most noxious superfluities; that not one in fifty, who is entitled to be considered healthy, requires wine, and not one in a thousand requires more than four ounces of wine (port or sherry).²

¹ Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, p. 72.

² D.T.S., A letter on the effects of wine and spirits, p. 18.

In his second letter Cheyne was even more categorical, stating as basic principles that 'ardent spirits and wine ought to be discontinued by all who are in the habit of drinking them', and that those who did not drink fermented liquors should continue in this course unless directed to take wine for medical purposes by a doctor, who himself was not a wine drinker.¹ Cheyne differed from many of his temperance colleagues not only in condemning wine as well as spirits but in being more optimistic about the reclamation of the drunkard. While admitting that he had 'not seen many persons who have acquired a taste for ardent spirits voluntarily relinquish their use', he nevertheless went on to foreshadow ways in which this could be brought about. The drunkard, according to Cheyne, 'labours ... under a disease of the stomach, the principal symptom of which is a thirst for strong liquors; and which nothing but the supervention of some other disease is likely to displace'.² Thus, following an attack of palsy or gout the drunkard, having stopped drinking and finding his health improved, may never resume the habit. Above all else, however, Cheyne was convinced that if a drunkard wanted to stop drinking he should do so immediately and totally. He rejected the view that a drunkard should be weaned off drink slowly so as to prevent damage to his health. 'In truth', wrote Cheyne, 'his safest attitude is that of Christian in the Pilgrim's progress; he ought to put his fingers in his

¹ D.T.S., A second letter on the effects of wine and spirits, p. 19.

² Ibid., p. 11.

ears, and having done so, run for his life, not looking behind him'.¹

Dr Cheyne was therefore prescribing immediate and total abstinence from all intoxicating liquors for the drunkard, and something not far short of this for the moderate drinker. This was certainly a more advanced view than many in the anti-spirits movement at the time were prepared to adopt, for it was in essence proclaiming abstinence as the basic principle of the anti-drink movement rather than temperance. But Cheyne did have his supporters. Writing in November 1829, Dr Urwick argued that anyone who daily resorted to wine or spirits, without medicinal need, was intemperate. Urwick's solution to the problem was, in his own words, 'simple'.

It is, the total, prompt, and persevering abstinence from all intoxicating liquors. It has been proposed by some to change the kind, or to diminish the quantity, or to lessen the frequency of their use. But the probability, I had almost said the certainty, is, that if indulgence in them be allowed at all, the sensation produced by them will continue, the desire for them will be sustained, and the door yet left open by which temptation may return, and again lead the half emancipated victim captive.²

And there were those who even went beyond total abstinence. Dr James Henry³ issued an appeal to the anti-spirits movement in 1830 to add coffee and tea to their growing index

¹ D.T.S., A second letter on the effects of wine and spirits, p. 16.

² D.T.S., Remarks on the evils, occasions, and cure of intemperance, p. 19.

³ James Henry (1798-1876) received M.A. and M.D. degrees from Trinity College, Dublin, but developed unconventional medical and religious views. He had a passionate interest in Virgil and gave up medicine in 1845 to spend most of the next thirty years travelling in Europe collecting manuscripts, translating them and writing studies of the Aeneid; see John Richmond, James Henry of Dublin (Blackrock, County Dublin, 1976).

of proscribed liquids.¹

John Edgar quickly discerned this trend towards extremism in the movement he had helped to launch, and he set himself firmly against it. In April 1830 in his speech to the first annual meeting of the H.T.S. he began by commenting: 'as I came into this room today, I observed that the word abstinence, and not temperance, was whispered from the various circles of conversation'. And he went on to devote much of his speech to an attack on what he termed 'the magic of a word'.² Edgar took his stand against total abstinence largely on the belief that it was contrary to biblical teachings and the Christian faith. Drawing on Paul's letters to the Romans and Timothy,³ he argued that:

The Christian has the fullest liberty to use flesh as a portion of his ordinary food; yet when his exercise of that liberty would hurt the conscience of a brother, excite prejudice against religion, or by the influence of example, be to others an occasion of sin, then the motto of his practice is: 'If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, if thereby I make my brother to offend'. He is far from pronouncing every use of wine to be sinful, yet when he finds that his use of it would be the means of throwing temptation in his brother's way, or affording an apology for excess; ... then the rule of conduct furnished to him by the word of God is: 'All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; and it is good neither to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak'.⁴

¹ James Henry, A letter to the members of the temperance society showing that the use of tea and coffee cannot be safely substituted for that of spirituous liquors (Dublin, 1830). Henry also attacked Bishop Doyle's advocacy of beer and in 1840 wrote an amusing satire on drunkenness; see James Henry, An account of the drunken sea (Dublin, 1840).

² H.T.S., Proceedings of the first annual meeting, p. 25.

³ The relevant passages are Romans, chap. 14, ver. 14-20 and 1 Timothy, chap. 4, ver. 1-4.

⁴ H.T.S., op. cit., p. 26.

Edgar considered 'abstemious rigor' to be contrary to the word of God and a form of manichaeism. The Bible taught that all things were pure and that there was nothing unclean of itself. It was man who esteemed a thing as unclean and thus made it unclean to him; and such a judgment was only justifiable on the ground that the object in question was injurious to another. However, to Edgar's mind total abstinence implied that all intoxicating drinks were unclean of themselves, by their very nature, irrespective of the evils which their use might lead to. Yet, in the Bible he found many passages approving the consumption of wine:

wine, as a wholesome beverage, was given by God; was offered to him in his ancient service; was used, without sin, by men of whom the world was not worthy; and also by Jesus himself, who appointed it as an appropriate emblem of his blood.¹

Excess in wine and drunkenness were frequently condemned and sobriety upheld as a virtue in the scriptures, but nowhere could Edgar find total abstinence from intoxicating drinks advocated.

Though prophets and apostles, and Christ himself, were fully aware of the enormous and multiple evils arising out of excess in the use of fermented liquor, yet none of them ever pronounced the use of it sinful, or proposed its utter extermination, as the means of preventing or curing drunkenness; but, on the contrary, they drew a clearly defined line of distinction between the lawful use of such liquor, and guilty excess. Their denunciations were hurled against drunkenness, arising from the abuse of that which might be lawfully used.²

¹ John Edgar, Christian temperance (no. 2, Belfast, [1843]), p. 1. This series of five short tracts advocating temperance as against abstinence was among Edgar's last statements on the subject before he turned his attention to other social problems, notably prostitution, and to the famine; see W.D. Killen, Memoir of John Edgar, D.D., LL.D., professor of systematic theology for the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (rev. ed., Belfast, 1869), pp 117-18.

² John Edgar, The intoxicating drinks of the Hebrews: a discourse (Belfast, n.d.), p. 2.

The situation with regard to distilled spirit was wholly different for it was but a recent invention, unknown in biblical times. 'It is an invention of man in the same sense as gunpowder', wrote Edgar, 'and the mere circumstance of its possessing intoxicating power, like wine, no more gives a warrant for its customary use, than the intoxicating property of laudanum or of other poisons warrants their use'.¹ Distilled spirit was a poison and though, like other poisons, it may have limited medicinal benefits, it should never have been considered as a legitimate article of human food.²

It appears that Edgar did himself abstain totally and he certainly upheld the right of an individual to abstain from anything if he so desired.³ But once a man set up abstinence as a virtue and branded moderation as a crime, then, according to Edgar, he was 'in league with Anti-christ'. For he was boasting of a standard of morality higher than that taught by the Bible and was by implication charging God with folly for merely denouncing drunkenness. In his well-known sermon on scriptural temperance Edgar began by declaring: 'it is said, that when the devil cannot upset a coach, he mounts the box and drives. Swarms of fanatics rose in Luther's day, under the bright sun of reformation; and should it seem strange for the temperance reformation to have its

¹ John Edgar, The temperance of Christ: a sermon (Belfast, n.d.), p. 6.

² Edgar, Christian temperance, no. 4, p. 1.

³ Central Presbyterian Association, Three great leaders: Cooke, Edgar, Morgan: a tribute to their memory (Belfast, 1899), p. 24.

extravagances and ultraisms too?'¹ And he went on, with considerable bitterness, to attack 'all new-fangled short-cuts to morality'.

One man is going to bring up the world to the tip-top perfection of 'optimism' by co-operative societies; another will make men all they ought to be by establishing bowling greens and tea gardens... Owen will dance the world into perfection, if his plans are encouraged; and, though last but not least, here comes a modest proposal to prevent the possibility of drunkenness, on the single condition that nobody shall drink. Give me, it says, a place to stand on, and I will move the world!!²

To witness the campaign he had done so much to initiate taking directions which he violently disapproved was clearly a source of much annoyance to Edgar. His attacks on the total abstinence principle and those of his colleagues who adopted it were accordingly severe.³

Yet under the impact of total abstinence, with its emphasis on reforming the drunkard, the anti-spirits movement and Edgar, as its chief spokesman in Ireland, were compelled to confront the problem of the drunkard, which previously they had attempted to dismiss. By 1835 Edgar was prepared to concede that in considering the drunkard irreclaimable in the past and concentrating on the prevention of drunkenness, temperance societies had been in error. Cure as well as prevention was possible.

¹ John Edgar, Scriptural temperance: a discourse, preached in Fisherwick-place church, Belfast, at the request of the committee of the U.T.S. (Belfast, n.d.), p. 1.

² Ibid., p. 6.

³ Later temperance historians, being teetollers, judged Edgar himself severely; see for example Dawson Burns, Temperance history (London, [1889]), i, 33, 157. Burns blamed Edgar for creating dissension and holding up the progress of total abstinence in the north of Ireland.

Writing for the leading English anti-spirits society, the British and Foreign Temperance Society, Edgar endorsed the view that Cheyne had put forward some six years before - that the drunkard could only be redeemed by immediate and total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks.¹ 'Turning from spirits to ale or wine will not do; he must decidedly, and at once, shake himself free from all the fascinations of the intoxicating cup.'² But Edgar recognised how hard it was for a repentant drunkard to maintain his abstinence, given the prevalence of drink and its connection with so many social customs and occasions. Here he considered the role of the temperance society to be vital and he advised drunkards to take the temperance pledge - 'We resolve to abstain from distilled spirit, and promote temperance' - and join these societies. Societies of ex-drunkards, as he called total abstinence societies, Edgar regarded as of little use since they did not afford the security and elevating atmosphere which characterised temperance societies. The example of the temperate abstainers must impress the drunkard, Edgar felt, and help keep him from relapsing.³ Again we see the self-righteous, patronising attitude which so characterised the anti-spirits movement. Even when it did interest itself in the plight of the drunkard, it was still in terms of the temperate, from their superior social

¹ John Edgar, The drunkard reclaimed; a full illustration of temperance societies as a system of cure (London, 1835), pp 30-31.

² Ibid., p. 34.

³ Ibid., p. 83.

and moral position, providing an example calculated to uplift their inferiors.

The anti-spirits movement counselled abstinence with regard to spirits, the consumption of which it saw as the primary cause of drunkenness, and later total abstinence for the drunkard, as the only practical means of reclamation, but it saw no reason to deprive its mainly middle-class adherents of the pleasures of moderate wine or beer consumption, particularly as wine was apparently sanctioned by both religion and tradition. The total abstinence movement, on the other hand, as it focused on the drunkard and the poorer classes generally, saw a strict and total abstinence from all forms of alcohol as the only method likely to yield any results. Its adherents did not accept the distinction between spirits and other intoxicating drinks as a valid one. From the teetotaller's point of view they were all essentially the same and certainly produced similar evil effects. The anonymous author of a letter addressed to Edgar on the subject in 1838 claimed that Edgar's own digest of evidence before the 1834 select committee¹ had convinced him of the validity of the teetotal case. For he found that in parts of England beer produced more intemperance than did spirits, while the beer act of 1830 which legalised beershops had led to a great increase in drunkenness.²

¹ John Edgar, Digest of evidence before the committee of parliament on the extent, causes, and consequences, of drunkenness (Belfast, 1835).

² Temperance societies, and tee-total temperance societies: a letter to the Rev. Dr Edgar by a member of the temperance society (Belfast, 1828), p. 4.

The banning of spirits alone was thus no guarantee of an end to drunkenness.

Temperance societies [the writer went on] may be said to have despoiled the giant with whom we have to contend, of his armour of brass, for he is now ashamed to show himself in good society. But, in Ireland, has this reformation extended, in like ratio, to the abodes of the poor? Every day's experience shows us that it has not.¹

Teetotalism, which had 'its peculiar attractions for the working classes', was the method by which intemperance would be combated among the lower classes.

In another tract emanating from Dublin and directed against Edgar, Thomas Dixon ridiculed the notion of only recommending abstinence rather than pledging it, especially in the case of the drunkard.

Finding him on the brink of a frightful precipice [wrote Dixon], they do venture to 'recommend' him not to plunge himself into the unfathomable abyss, which yawns beneath his tottering feet, but there they stop: they would not do a thing so 'horribly profane' as to attempt to rescue him from his perilous position by means of this 'horrid pledge'.²

Dixon was so convinced of the futility of Edgar's efforts with regard to drunkards that he vowed to sign and recommend the U.T.S.'s pledge himself if the society could prove that a single drunkard in Belfast had been reclaimed through its efforts.³ Irish total abstainers attacked Edgar and the anti-spirits movement principally on the grounds that the methods recommended by them simply did not work in the case of drunkards and had little appeal

¹ Temperance societies, and tee-total temperance societies: a letter to the Rev. Dr Edgar, p. 5.

² Thomas Dixon, Is abstinence a duty when 'temperance' becomes 'inexpedient'? With another question or two for the solution of Dr Edgar of Belfast (Dublin, 1838), p. 24.

³ Ibid., p. 26.

to the mass of the population. Actually the two movements had different aims, and it was this that dictated their different methods. The Irish teetotal movement, in line with similar groups in Britain and the United States, sought to generate a mass crusade of self-examination and reform, led and organised as much as possible by the people themselves. Its appeal was more emotional and less rational than that of the anti-spirits movement; it sought to convert rather than to convince.

As for the biblical case against total abstinence, so vigorously argued by Dr Edgar, teetotallers answered it in various ways. Cheyne in 1829 asserted simply that the use of fermented liquors for their own sake was irreconcilable with religious principle.¹ This almost immediately elicited a tract in support from another Dublin doctor, William J. Morgan. Using most of the same biblical passages later quoted by Edgar, Morgan reached a wholly different conclusion.

Can any doubt [he asked] that the use of wine and ardent spirits, as we daily see them employed, even at the tables of those who otherwise 'acknowledge the Lord in all their ways', is contrary to the allegiance which is due to the King of Kings, to our own spiritual welfare, to the welfare of our brethren and is, more than any thing else calculated to oppose that for which the Saviour spared not his own blood, the salvation of sinners?

As Paul had counselled Timothy, so man should only use 'a little wine' for medicinal purposes and lay it aside as soon as he was cured, as he would any other medicine.³

¹ D.T.S., A letter on the effects of wine and spirits, p. 1.

² [W.J. Morgan], The habitual use of wine and spirits irreconcilable with religious principle ... by W.J.M. (Dublin, 1829), pp 17-18.

³ Ibid., p. 30.

J.F. Maguire in his tract The doctrine of total abstinence justified, published in Cork in September 1838 and dedicated to Fr Mathew, showed very clearly the chief preoccupations of the Irish teetotal movement. Maguire defended total abstinence on the basis of simple expediency, without recourse to biblical exegesis. For him total abstinence was wholly justified by the fact that it worked. It seemed self-evident to Maguire that the best way to rid the land of drunkenness was to abolish drinking.

Therefore, the only way by which we can bring about this desired end is by placing beyond the reach of erring man the cause of drunkenness - intoxicating drink. How is it possible that with any appearance of consistency, one could preach against drunkenness; picture its consequences, and warn man against falling into this dreadful vice; and, at the same time, not remove all danger of temptation from him, and arm him with the only power of resistance, - which is, the complete¹ surrender of what may again be the cause of his fall.

The motif of the fall figured prominently in Maguire's discussion of intemperance. Man's 'proneness to fall into temptation', Maguire considered 'a part of our nature' bequeathed to us and all mankind by 'our first parents'.² Thus in the battle between man and drink the former was condemned, through inherent moral weakness, to inevitable defeat. Only by strictly isolating themselves from the temptation and creating an uncontaminated elite could the opponents of drink hope to win the fight. Moderate indulgence was clearly out of the question and,

¹ J.F.M. [John Francis Maguire], The doctrine of total abstinence justified (Cork, 1838), pp 63-4.

² Ibid., p. 53.

as Edgar complained, teetotallers excluded alcohol from the injunction: 'every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving'.¹

Maguire was also at pains to emphasise that total abstinence held out great advantages especially for the lower classes: 'the true legislator for the poor and humble man' was how he described it.² Under the 'more liberal policy of our age', education had been extended already to the poorer classes who were now regarded as 'human beings by their legislators' rather than mere tools in the struggles of ambitious men. In this more enlightened atmosphere there was 'no situation to which a man may not aspire, if he but fit himself for it by cultivation'.³ And there was no fitter man than the total abstainer. Although Maguire's doctrine may have appeared radical to some, in that he spoke of breaking down the 'artificial barriers that often severely divide the rich from the poor',⁴ and saw teetotalism outstripping the 'slow progress of all political reform' and sweeping away the 'abuses of centuries',⁵ nevertheless his views were essentially conservative. Like many of the earlier protestant temperance leaders he blamed poverty on drunkenness, arguing that the 'wages of an industrious man

¹ 1 Timothy, chap. 4, ver. 4.

² J.F.M., The doctrine of total abstinence justified, p. 74.

³ Ibid., p. 30.

⁴ Ibid., pp 26-7.

⁵ Ibid., p. 74.

are sufficient for every necessary and reasonable purpose'.¹ Tradesmen and labourers were adequately paid but by squandering their money on drink they impoverished themselves. Maguire thus attributed the drink problem to moral failings in the individual not to shortcomings in the socio-economic system. Total abstinence was a universal panacea, for if the individual would simply stop drinking then the great flaws marring the society - crime, poverty, ignorance and disease - would disappear.

The doctrine of total abstinence with its emphasis on reclaiming the drunkard opened the way for a mass, popular anti-drink movement. However, in Ireland at least one should not ignore the substantial element of continuity between the temperance movement of the 1830s and the subsequent teetotal movement. Teetotalism, despite its lower-class following, was still led and organised by the middle class - with the important addition of the catholic clergy. And the movement continued, though with increasing difficulty, to proclaim itself loyal and peaceful, non-sectarian and non-political.

Fr Mathew: mass temperance and Irish nationalism

The power of total abstinence to capture vast mass support was at no time better demonstrated than during Fr Mathew's crusade of the late 1830s and early 1840s. Teaching a simple doctrine of material and spiritual regeneration through the total abandonment of alcohol, Fr Mathew persuaded something of the order of six million people,

¹ J.F.M., The doctrine of total abstinence justified, pp 61-2.

or three-quarters of the Irish population, to take his total abstinence pledge.¹ Fr Mathew appealed to the general population and especially to the catholic lower classes with all the authority of a priest, and a saintly one at that. His arguments against drink were much the same as those used by his protestant temperance predecessors, though usually put in a simpler, more emotive form calculated to move a listening audience. He avoided the lengthly and complex medical, economic and religious arguments which had figured in temperance pamphlets aimed at middle-class audiences and presented his case through colourful anecdotes and dogmatic statements. However, his appeal cannot be measured solely in terms of his words, for observers agreed that Fr Mathew's appeal lay as much in his manner and reputation as in his arguments.²

On the question of total abstinence versus temperance Fr Mathew's views were very straightforward. On his first visit to Dublin in March 1840 he told a meeting behind the Custom House that no individual was free from the debasing vice of drunkenness but a teetotaler. No human being was ever born a drunkard, said Fr Mathew, thus rejecting the

¹ This figure is supplied by J.F. Maguire in his notoriously unreliable biography of Fr Mathew, but other estimates range from five to seven million. See F.J. Mathew, Father Mathew: his life and times (London, 1890), p. 9; Lambert McKenna, Life and work of Rev. James Aloysius Cullen, S.J. (London, 1924), p. 302; Richard Stivers, A hair of the dog: Irish drinking and American stereotype (University Park, Penn., and London, 1976), p. 41.

² See for example A.M. Sullivan, New Ireland: political sketches and personal reminiscences of thirty years of Irish public life (London, 1877), pp 50-51; S.C. and A.M. Hall, Ireland, its scenery, character, &c. (London, 1841), i, 43; J.G. Kohl, Travels in Ireland (London, 1844), p. 66.

claim that a tendency towards drunkenness could be inherited, but from the first glass he could no longer reckon himself secure.

No temperate man that goes into society, where habits of drunkenness may prevail, does not at first sight entertain feelings of disgust at what he sees; but, by constantly witnessing the same, the canker of the same vice at length fastens on him, and he also becomes a drunkard.¹

Thus Fr Mathew was an uncompromising total abstainer, believing that it was impossible for the individual to control his drinking. He did permit those who had taken the pledge to be released from it for medical reasons, but as requests for this privilege poured in upon him he came increasingly to regret this concession and express the hope that doctors would cease altogether from prescribing alcohol.²

Fr Mathew was convinced that total abstinence was the key to material prosperity.

Prosperity, and plenty, and happiness flowed in upon them since they had renounced altogether the use of intoxicating liquors. Yes, there was a blessing of heaven upon teetotallers - they possess comforts in this life which they have never known before - their homes were the homes of peace and comfort³ - their wives and their children were contented and happy.

Like Maguire, Fr Mathew believed that the lower classes could prosper on their existing means if they would simply desist from squandering it in public houses. The

¹ An accurate report of the proceedings of the Very Rev. Theobald Mathew, in Dublin, in the cause of temperance (Dublin, 1840), p. 20.

² Such letters can be found in the Mathew correspondence held at the Capuchin friary, Raheny, Dublin. This vast collection is unfortunately uncatalogued, but a partial calendar exists: Paul Murphy, Calendar: Theobald Mathew correspondence, 1840-9 (Dublin, n.d.).

³ An accurate report of ... Theobald Mathew, in Dublin, p. 20.

money thus saved could also be used to educate the children of teetotallers 'in such a manner as might raise them to the first order in the scale of society'.¹

Materialism and social mobility formed the basis of the utopian doctrine taught by Fr Mathew, though an equally important element was the elimination of unrest and conflict in Ireland. Fr Mathew emphasised continually that the total abstinence movement embraced all creeds and philosophies and he saw in it a powerful instrument for reuniting the peoples of Ireland.

The history of Ireland in times past [he told another Dublin audience in March 1840] was the blackest on the book of time; but henceforward it would be equally remarkable for peace, prosperity, and the total disappearance of religious differences. Teetotalism and charity would heal the wounds which were inflicted by political and religious dissension and bigotry. All creeds and classes will live together in unity and harmony, and, in a word, as Christians should live.²

Although a Capuchin friar, Fr Mathew had been brought up in, for the period, a surprisingly non-sectarian family. The aristocratic Mathews of Thomastown, County Tipperary, were to be found in both catholic and protestant churches and this produced, what Bishop David Mathew later termed, 'a very neutral attitude in religious questions ... as the port circulated in the dining room at Thomastown'.³ A cousin was a protestant clergyman, two aunts had married into the local protestant gentry, while the

¹ An accurate report of ... Theobald Mathew, in Dublin, p. 40.

² Ibid., p. 52.

³ David Mathew, intro. to, Patrick Rogers, Father Theobald Mathew: apostle of temperance (Dublin, 1943), pp xx-xxi.

catholicism of Fr Mathew's father, James, was 'rather shadowy'.¹ Fr Mathew himself was no theologian. Maguire tells us that his preaching was devoid of 'sectarian bitterness' and that 'controversy ... was not suited to his natural temperament'.² This background made him eminently suited to lead a movement which had been begun by protestants and which now sought catholic support, though not at the cost of alienating its original adherents. While recognising that a remarkable degree of religious unity was achieved, one cannot overlook the considerable strains in Fr Mathew's movement caused by sectarian rivalry. Although they supported him, many protestants were unwilling to take the pledge, with its accompanying medal and card, from a Roman Catholic priest. The ceremony had strong religious overtones in that the intending teetotaler was required to kneel before Fr Mathew, repeat the pledge and receive the priest's blessing.³ Many protestants were unwilling to go through this exercise, especially as it was usually conducted before vast audiences. The involvement of priests, often as the leaders of local teetotal societies, and the superstitious reverence which was accorded Fr Mathew, further added to the sectarian image of the movement. Fr Mathew himself tried continually to placate

¹ David Mathew, intro. to Rogers, Father Theobald Mathew: apostle of temperance, p. xxi.

² J.F. Maguire, Father Mathew: a biography (London, 1863), p. 69.

³ See Fr Mathew to Mary Shackleton of Ballitore, 4 Aug. 1841 (N.L.I., MS 5 5,055). In this letter Fr Mathew tried to persuade Mary Shackleton of the well-known quaker family to take the pledge, which she was apparently reluctant to do.

both religious groups, but often only succeeded in getting involved in petty squabbles which alienated sympathisers. In trying, for instance, to win over Bishop Denvir of Down and Connor Fr Mathew caused a serious split by annoying Dr Spratt and James Haughton, leaders of the movement in Dublin and two of his most energetic supporters.¹

Divisions arose not only out of religious differences but from politics as well. Initially many loyal protestants and the government also suspected that the total abstinence movement was in fact a Trojan horse disguising the organisation of a subversive political movement.² In March 1840 therefore Dublin Castle set out to determine the nature and extent of the movement by circulating a questionnaire to all county inspectors and magistrates. A variety of questions were asked, including: the respective numbers of catholics and protestants joining the movement; the numbers joining from the middle and upper classes; whether the movement seemed to have any religious or political objective; how many who had taken the pledge subsequently violated it; whether those taking it had previously been sober or not; the effect of the movement on the general behaviour of the population, on the crime rate and on publicans'

¹ James Haughton to Fr Mathew, 21 Nov. 1845 (Capuchin friary, Raheny, Mathew correspondence, uncatalogued); Northern Whig, 13 Oct. 1846.

² In 1842, for instance, Lord Downshire claimed that Fr Mathew's 'originally laudable object' had been 'perverted' to 'political party purposes', and opposed the Capuchin's visit to County Down; see Fr Mathew to Lord Downshire, 1 Apr. 1842 (P.R.O.N.I., Downshire papers, D671/C/12/808) and Lord Downshire to Dr John Sheil, 3 Dec. 1842 (P.R.O.N.I., Downshire papers, D671/C/12/821).

business, and how the movement was organised at the local level.¹ Police and magistrates generally reported that the movement was overwhelmingly catholic, in some places exclusively so.² It was also mainly composed of the lower classes, including small farmers and labourers. However, in areas where it had been longer established a more respectable class was increasingly joining. They were largely sober, middle-class catholics, with some protestants. Violations of the pledge were infrequent and nearly all reports were agreed that the pledge, card and medal, and Fr Mathew himself were objects of superstitious veneration. The head constable of Ballickmoyler, Queen's County, for instance, declared that the people believed pledge breaking would incur divine displeasure leading to insanity or blindness. On the other hand, however, many officials reported that great numbers took the pledge in a state of extreme intoxication. The sub-inspector of Bansha, County Tipperary, explained that this was because, after determining to take the pledge, many went out and got drunk by way of a farewell to whiskey. But on the whole most officials were impressed by the improvement in behaviour, shown in the lack of drunkenness at fairs and, in some cases, a fall-off in crime.³ Again the longer the movement had been active

¹ Reports of temperance enquiry, 1840 (S.P.O., Miscellaneous papers, 1799-1868, nos 2-10 [1799-1840], IA/76/3).

² See for example, report from sub-inspector of Cahir, County Tipperary, 27 Mar. 1840, *ibid.*

³ See report from Captain Leyne, magistrate at Nenagh, County Tipperary, 11 Mar. 1840, *ibid.*

in an area the more organised it seemed. In some places there was no organisation at all, merely numbers of pledged abstainers,¹ but in others committees, usually headed by the local priest, had been established, and regular meetings and parades were being held. Some societies even had their own rooms where newspapers could be read and coffee drunk.²

The possible political or religious goals of the teetotal movement proved a contentious issue. Some government officials were adamant that there were none,³ but most were suspicious. There was a feeling that such a movement in Ireland at the time could not help but develop political overtones. The sub-inspector at Enniscorthy reported that ribbonmen were joining in large numbers, while from another part of Wexford with vivid memories of '98, Arthurstown, the sub-inspector wrote: 'it is whispered about here that if the battle was to be fought over again it would not be lost in consequence of intemperance as before'. The same theme was to be found in the report from Charleville, County Cork, where some workmen had been overheard declaring: 'We lost the battles of Vinegar Hill and Ross by drunkenness, but we are more secure and united now when the battle comes.' From Kenmare, County Kerry, came the opinion that the movement was making the people 'self-sufficient and insolent' for:

¹ See report from sub-inspector at Philipstown, King's County, 22 Mar. 1840 (S.P.O., Misc. papers, 1A/76/3).

² See report from sub-inspector at Bansha, County Tipperary, 19 Mar. 1840, *ibid.*

³ See report from Captain Leyne, 11 Mar. 1840, *ibid.*

'by the commonality it is thought that what they vaguely call the cause of the people is the object of the society ... and from it they fancy to derive some share of importance'.

Fr Mathew's background was impeccably loyalist and conservative, and he emphasised repeatedly the non-political nature of his work. But the officials who reported to Dublin Castle early in 1840 were probably right - a movement promising the moral, social and economic regeneration of Ireland must inevitably attract those seeking political change, by whatever means. Fr Mathew severely condemned secret societies¹ and tried strenuously to prevent links forming between total abstinence and O'Connell's repeal movement. He ordered teetotallers not to meet in repeal rooms and not to allow their bands to provide music at repeal demonstrations. And, much to the annoyance of repeal wardens, he tried at times to convince teetotallers not to join the repeal movement.² But despite Fr Mathew's efforts the two organisations did overlap to a very considerable degree.³ O'Connell certainly sought to promote this connection between temperance and repeal. At Easter 1842 he insisted, as lord mayor of Dublin, on participating in a great temperance procession in Cork, though,

¹ See for example extracts from his speech against ribbon societies at Lucan, June 1842, in Maguire, Father Mathew, pp 216-17.

² For a complaint from a repeal warden about Fr Mathew's attitude, see J.J. Cantillon of New Glanmire, County Cork, to T.M. Ray, 30 May 1843 (N.L.I. O'Connell papers, MS 13,625 (56)).

³ Maguire claimed that nine-tenths of teetotallers were also repealers; Maguire, Father Mathew, p. 230. See Patrick Quinn of Emly, County Tipperary, to T.M. Ray, 1 Sept. 1841 (N.L.I., O'Connell papers, MS 13,622(16)), who says that he and all his fellow repeal wardens in the area are teetotallers.

according to Maguire, Fr Mathew was privately opposed, fearing that O'Connell's involvement would compromise his reputation for political neutrality and lose him support in loyalist circles. O'Connell had taken the pledge himself in 1840, though he soon joined those withdrawing for medical reasons.¹

There is little doubt but that O'Connell in his support for Fr Mathew was motivated by political expediency. Up until the 1840s his personal and political record was anything but in line with an anti-drink philosophy. He was a man who enjoyed lively company, food in vast quantities and the drinking which inevitably accompanied such occasions. The large dinner parties and substantial meals of Derrynane were described by many an admiring visitor. Gavan Duffy, writing to Thomas Davis from O'Connell's home in September 1844 and referring to his host's appetite, warned, 'let no puny nibblers of toast or sippers of tea pretend to resist a titan like this'.² In the early 1830s O'Connell along with one of his sons and his friend, P.V. FitzPatrick, had invested heavily in a Dublin brewery, which they called O'Connell's Brewery.³ At the same time in parliament he was vigorously defending the interests of Irish spirit grocers and distillers against legislation which they considered

¹ Maguire, Father Mathew, pp 233-7; Edward Norman, A history of modern Ireland (London, 1971), p. 75.

² Charles Gavan Duffy, Young Ireland: a fragment of Irish history, 1840-5 (rev. ed., London, 1896), ii, 105.

³ For letters between O'Connell and FitzPatrick dealing with the brewery, see W.J. Fitzpatrick (ed.), Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell the Liberator (London, 1888), i, 420-21, 462-3.

detrimental. His lack of success in this latter activity led some of the spirit lobby to suspect that he was compromised by his brewing interests.¹ However, his hostility to temperance was very clear. He amused the house mightily by pouring scorn on the 1834 report of the select committee on drunkenness.² O'Connell in fact considered brewing and distilling important Irish industries which had suffered unjustly under the union and whose only hope was in repeal.³

Despite his frequently expressed admiration for Fr Mathew⁴ some aspects of the Capuchin's teaching did trouble O'Connell. He told a Dublin meeting, called to honour Fr Mathew in January 1843, that he felt the temperance movement in extolling its own achievements passed 'too heavy a censure ... on the former condition of the country'.⁵ And he went on:

It would appear as if, prior to the temperance movement, the Irish were a depraved people - emphatically a drunken population - and that it required some mighty apostle of the living God to rescue them from their depravity. Take

¹ Fitzpatrick (ed.), Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell, ii, 60-64, 142. Writing to FitzPatrick on 11 Feb. 1832, O'Connell explained that he was not able to help the brewery as much as he would wish because of his public commitment to the distillers; *ibid.*, i, 288. For the grocers' point of view, see Most important to grocers and spirits retailers: the only full report of the interesting proceedings of two great meetings held on the 23rd and 26th of August, 1836, to protect the Irish grocers: with an exposure of Shaw's pernicious scheme (Dublin, 1836).

² Killen, Memoir of John Edgar, p. 72.

³ In a letter to FitzPatrick on 17 Aug. 1839 O'Connell claimed that he had done all he could for the grocers and that their only hope now was repeal; Fitzpatrick, *op. cit.*, ii, 201.

⁴ See for example his letter to James Haughton on 26 Oct. 1844 in *ibid.*, p. 337.

⁵ Nation, 28 Jan. 1843.

notice that, in saying this, I do not mean in the slightest degree to detract from the great merits of what has been done by the Rev. Mr Mathew. I admit that he has performed a mighty moral miracle; but at the same time utterly deny that the people of Ireland were at any time inferior to their neighbours, or to the people of any foreign country, in any part of the globe.¹

O'Connell was at pains to demonstrate that prior to Fr Mathew's crusade the Irish did not consume more liquor than their neighbours. Referring to parliamentary returns he claimed that for every pint of whiskey drunk by an Irishman the Scotsman drank two.²

O'Connell then, although he associated himself with teetotalism in the hope of strengthening his own repeal movement, remained basically ambivalent about the matter. He did not want to see brewing and distilling, two of the few remaining prosperous industries in Ireland, destroyed. Nor is it likely that the strongly conservative, middle-class, protestant aspect of the movement appealed to him much. Certainly attacks on the Irish people for their drunkenness, coupled with calls for the restoration of law and order and frequent expressions of loyalty to the government, were not calculated to endear the total abstinence movement to O'Connell.

Yet by no means all nationalists were suspicious of Fr Mathew's crusade. As we shall see, Irish nationalists throughout the nineteenth century tended to be divided in their attitudes to the temperance movement. If O'Connell

¹ Nation, 28 Jan. 1843.

² Ibid. For a discussion of O'Connell by an ardent teetotaler, see Richard Dowden's speech in Southern Reporter, 10 Nov. 1839. Dowden's papers, mainly consisting of scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings and handbills dealing with temperance, repeal, chartism and abolition, are in the Cork County Library, uncatalogued.

embraced the movement with severe reservations, the Young Irelanders took it up much more wholeheartedly. A strong personal link had been forged between Fr Mathew and Charles Gavan Duffy to the extent that Fr Mathew broke his pledge of political neutrality by acting as a character witness at Duffy's trial in 1849.¹ But on an ideological level as well Young Ireland had much sympathy for Fr Mathew's endeavour.

To Thomas Davis and his colleagues, unlike O'Connell, reform of the country's political and economic grievances was inseparable from the moral elevation of the Irish people. Only by cleansing themselves of laziness, dissipation, ignorance and selfishness would the people be capable of winning and maintaining national independence. Personal regeneration was the indispensable precursor of national regeneration. A clear believer in the perfectability of man, Davis preached an all-embracing heroic and romantic nationalist creed, strongly influenced by contemporary Italian and German nationalism. Personal knowledge, self-reliance and restraint were at the core of this doctrine, and an essential precondition was sobriety. Thus Davis welcomed Fr Mathew's crusade as signifying the beginning of a new era for Ireland.

Irish intoxication [he wrote] was the luxury of despair - the saturnalia of slaves. Irish temperance is the first fruit of deep-sown hope, the offering of incipient freedom. The moment when political organisation, social action, and the rudiments of education

¹ See Fr Mathew to Charles Gavan Duffy, 28 Sept. 1845 (N.L.I., Gavan Duffy papers, MS 5,756) and 17 Nov. 1848 (N.L.I., Gavan Duffy papers, MS 5,757).

had set the people thinking, hope came down upon them like dew, and the fever of their hearts abated.¹

Fr Mathew's crusade seemed to prove that the Irish people could be roused to decisive and united action for the betterment of themselves and their country by a reasoned appeal, and this was exactly what the Young Irelanders were seeking to achieve. Thus Irish temperance did not offer hope to the people alone, but to Young Ireland as well.

Davis was also able, unlike O'Connell, to integrate the problem of Irish drunkenness into his overall nationalist interpretation of Irish affairs. He believed that the Irish people were driven to drink by misery and despair, and thus their drunkenness was unlike that of other nations. Many of the happiest, wealthiest and most moral peoples in Europe drank more man for man than the Irish. But, according to Davis, these people drank everyday as part of their normal sober diet. Very different was the Irish drinking pattern.

[The Irishman] drank nothing for some 350 days in the year; but once or maybe oftener in the month, he got roaring drunk. This occasional debauch was the Lethe-moment of all his sorrows. He then forgot all his wrongs. His cabin was warm, his belly full, his back covered - for an afternoon; but he woke in the morning penniless, broken-hearted, guilty, conscience-sore. During his intoxication he had flung off his chains, and his duties too. He lost sight of his own miseries and the comfort of his wife and children also; and for this transient flush of intemperance he not only inflicted severer privations on himself, but

¹ Nation, 28 Jan. 1843. For articles by Davis on Fr Mathew, see ibid., 19 Nov. 1842 and 28 Jan. 1843; by Gavan Duffy, ibid., 10 Dec. 1842, 19 Aug. 1843, and by John Blake Dillon, ibid., 19 Nov. 1842. For a discussion of Davis's nationalism, see T.W. Moody, Thomas Davis, 1814-45: a centenary address delivered in Trinity College, Dublin, on 12 June 1945 at a public meeting of the College Historical Society (Dublin, 1945). For Lalor's views see Lilian Fogarty (ed.), James Fintan Lalor, patriot and political essayist (rev. ed., Dublin, 1947), p. xxvi.

the hearth of his bosom's wife was colder and the board of his young ones more scanty for months to come. Narrowed means, injured character, and sourest temper, with starvation and quarrels and degradation were a fearful penalty for a short pleasure. Still the very greatness of his suffering was his excuse - his natural excuse for making it greater, in order to achieve liberty and luxury for an hour by the magic of intoxication.¹

Davis felt no need to deny the drunkenness problem as an insult to Irish nationalism, rather he turned it into an argument supporting the nationalist cause. And, unlike conservative temperance advocates who saw intemperance as a product of individual moral failings and as the cause of Ireland's poverty and disorder, Davis regarded Irish drunkenness as ultimately the result of Ireland's political subjugation and as a significant cause of her poverty. In his mind the relationship was cyclical: poverty and despair produced periodic drunken debauches which in turn fed poverty and despair. Only through education and self-discipline within a nationalist philosophy could this vicious circle be broken.

Thus Davis demonstrated for the first time in Ireland that temperance could be turned from being a conservative movement, basically seeking to shore-up the existing socio-economic structure, into a radical philosophy attacking this very structure and the political system which lay behind it. Some, though by no means all, later Irish nationalists were to use temperance in this radical, political manner. But on the whole the conservative religious element was to remain supreme in the movement.

¹ Nation, 28 Jan. 1843. See also Arthur Griffith (ed.), Thomas Davis, the thinker and teacher: the essence of his writings in prose and poetry (Dublin, 1914), p.145. Griffith unfortunately does not give the date or source for the extracts that he presents.

Temperance during the 1830s in Ireland was, as we have seen, largely a middle-class protestant movement seeking to strengthen the social and economic status quo. Total abstinence under Fr Mathew in the 1840s, on the other hand, appealed to a much wider audience and found its strongest support among the catholic lower classes. Thus, while temperance sought by reforming the protestant upper and middle classes to bolster the existing socio-economic system, total abstinence sought to broaden its base by enabling a reformed catholic lower class to participate more fully in the system and so share its material benefits. Both movements, however, were agreed in attributing most of Ireland's problems, particularly crime and poverty, to excessive drinking. With some notable exceptions, neither movement attacked the political union between Great Britain and Ireland, and in fact the aim of both, implicitly if not explicitly, was to strengthen it by relieving socio-economic grievances and promoting peace and order.

James Haughton: the road to prohibition

After the failure of Fr Mathew's crusade the middle-class protestant wing of the Irish anti-drink movement tended to ally itself more closely with the British movement and to demand increasingly harsh legislation against the drink industry. Catholic temperance went in the opposite direction by becoming localised and dependent on the enthusiasm of individual priests and bishops. Not till the 1890s did another catholic anti-drink movement appear successfully at the national level.

James Haughton, a unitarian merchant, was the backbone of the temperance movement in Dublin from the late 1830s until his death in 1873. With the aid of Dr John Spratt¹ he sustained the cause in the city through the dark days of the 1850s following the collapse of Fr Mathew's crusade. For many years the two ran a total abstinence society in Cuffe Lane, amid the slums of Dublin, as well as contributing energetically to many more substantial temperance organisations. Of quaker background, Haughton was born in Carlow in 1795 and educated in the well-known quaker school at Ballitore, County Kildare, under James White, who was also the teacher of Cardinal Cullen. After five years working for an uncle in Cork, Haughton came to Dublin in 1817 and established a successful corn and flour business with his younger brother, William. In 1850, however, he relinquished his business interests, except for several directorships, in order to devote his energies fully to his many philanthropic enterprises.²

Haughton was active in most of the major reformist movements of his day and in some of the minor ones as well. In the 1820s he supported catholic emancipation and the extension of the franchise; a friend of John Bright's, he campaigned for repeal of the corn laws and an end to the East India Company's monopoly; he joined the Repeal Association in 1840 and became friendly with

¹ For a discussion of Spratt's work, see below, pp 295-8.

² Haughton's son, Samuel, produced a useful account of his father's life shortly after his death; see Samuel Haughton, Memoir of James Haughton, with extracts from his private and published letters (London, 1877).

O'Connell, though he subsequently withdrew in protest at O'Connell's treatment of the Young Irelanders.¹ But he remained active in Irish politics, working for the Fenian amnesty campaign and at the very end of his life lending his name, though with reservations, to the emerging home rule movement;² outside of Ireland, he was a leading advocate of the abolition of slavery;³ as a convinced pacifist he was active in the Peace Society as well as the Anti-Capital Punishment Society; he was also for a time president of the Vegetarian Society, while the Contagious Diseases Acts found in him a fierce opponent.⁴ But according to his son, it was the temperance cause which was nearest to his heart. His views on the subject are clearly set out in the dozens of letters he wrote to the newspapers between 1838 and 1872, in articles in temperance publications, in

¹ According to his son, Haughton did not altogether agree with the Young Irelanders' ideas, but he admired their spirit and thought their expulsion was against Repeal Association principles. With Duffy, Dillon and O'Gorman, he saw O'Connell and tried unsuccessfully to effect a reconciliation; Haughton, Memoir of James Haughton, pp 81-4.

² Samuel claimed that his father had come to believe that an end to the union was only possible if majorities in both Ireland and Britain wanted it. Lacking this, James was not very optimistic about home rule. However, it is clear that Samuel, writing from the perspective of 1877, is anti-home rule and this may have influenced his interpretation of his father's views; *ibid.*, pp 249-51.

³ Along with R.D. Webb, Haughton was an uncompromising abolitionist in the W.L. Garrison tradition. This led both into conflict with Fr Mathew, O'Connell and John Mitchel, all of whom adopted a more conciliatory policy towards the south. For discussions of Irish attitudes to abolition, see Douglas C. Riach, 'Daniel O'Connell and American anti-slavery' in Irish Historical Studies, xx, no. 77 (Mar. 1976), pp 3-25, and Malcolm Brown, The politics of Irish literature from Thomas Davis to W.B. Yeats (London, 1972), p. 139.

⁴ Hannah Maria Wigham, A christian philanthropist of Dublin: a memoir of Richard Allen (London, 1886), p. 14.

papers presented to the Dublin Statistical Society, and in his one book on teetotalism.

Although Haughton's father, who died in 1828 at the age of eighty, had been a teetotaler for the last forty years of his life, James's own acceptance of the principle developed but slowly. His name was among the subscribers to the Hibernian Temperance Society in 1832, but not until 1838 did he really become an active force in the temperance movement. His son Samuel reported that:

The gradual advance to strict total abstinence by James Haughton had been slow but steady; it had caused a severe struggle in his mind to give up not only the customs of society, but to become to a great extent antagonistic to many of his most intimate friends. He had at first banished spirits only from his table... He was afterwards a practical total abstainer for some time before he banished all kinds of intoxicating drinks from his house, where they never reappeared. It was in 1838 that he became quite decided, and in 1839 a pledged teetotaler.¹

Haughton's development seems in fact to have mirrored that of the anti-drink movement generally, involving the progress from a rejection of spirits only to an uncompromising total abstinence. Haughton appears to have been stirred to action by the visit to Dublin early in 1838 of John Hockings, Birmingham's 'teetotal blacksmith'.² His first letter to a newspaper on the subject of temperance was written in February of that year; another dated 7 April and quoted by his son refers specifically to the importance of Hockings's visit. In this latter

¹ Haughton, Memoir of James Haughton, p. 40.

² For the account of another who was deeply influenced by Hockings, see Temperance societies, and tee-total temperance societies, p. 4; for a discussion of Hockings's lecture technique, see Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, pp 129-30.

publication Haughton claimed that so long as the government derived revenue from spirits, 'the nation at large sanctions the use of an article which is productive of ... misery and degradation'. He urged 'the propriety of a petition to our young and gracious queen, requesting her to call on parliament at once to relinquish all revenue derived from ardent spirits'.¹ Haughton combined opposition to the union with intense loyalty to the throne, and he did subsequently organise several such petitions, though to no obvious effect. Haughton joined the Dublin Total Abstinence Society, of which he later became president. This, the first total abstinence society in Dublin, had grown out of the Port of Dublin Temperance Society which had been founded for sailors by Mrs Anne Jane Carlile² in 1830. It had first appeared in November 1836 under Robert Guest White, a merchant and former sheriff of Dublin,³ but had been reorganised in March 1837.⁴ Haughton, in company with John Hockings, Richard Allen and R.D. Webb, attended the society's first annual general meeting on 2 May 1838, thus signalling the beginning of his complete commitment to total abstinence.

¹ Haughton, Memoir of James Haughton, p. 39.

² See above, p.153.

³ See White's evidence in Report from the select committee on drunkenness, 1834, pp 265-74.

⁴ E. MacDowel Cosgrave, Incorporated Dublin Total Abstinence Society, diamond jubilee celebrations: brief history of the society (Dublin, 1897). Because of the complex origins of the society, different dates are given for its establishment; however, as its jubilee celebrations indicate, it considered 1837 to be the correct date.

Haughton, as president of the D.T.A.S., had at first wholeheartedly supported Fr Mathew's crusade, believing that preaching, education and example would be sufficient to stamp out intemperance. But strains quickly developed between the two men. Haughton, the successful businessman, found Fr Mathew's incompetence with regard to money infuriating. Although he tried to organise help at the time, later he was to blame the Capuchin for his 'childlike' attitude. As well he considered Fr Mathew's criticisms of Dr Spratt to be unjust and the product of 'an unworthy jealousy'. Fr Mathew's reluctance to condemn slavery during his visit to America in 1849-51 was the ultimate betrayal as far as Haughton was concerned. In 1862 he told a London temperance convention that such 'dark passages in Fr Mathew's life' served to show that 'even the best men have serious imperfections of character'.¹ Haughton attributed Fr Mathew's failure partly to the reluctance of the upper classes to join him. He 'held the hearts of the Irish people in his hands', he 'exorcised the demon of party and put to sleep for a season the hitherto sleepless monster of sectarianism', but the 'nobility, the gentry, the clergy, and the educated classes generally kept aloof from him. They stood at a civil distance, perforce admiring the man, applauding his wonderful works, and astounded by their magnitude; but they gave no active assistance.' This considerably weakened the movement

¹ James Haughton, 'Ireland and Fr Mathew' in J.C. Street, F.R. Lees and Dawson Burns (ed.), Proceedings of the international temperance and prohibition convention, held in London, September 2nd, 3rd and 4th, 1862 (London, 1862), p. 69.

Haughton felt and thus the 'roots of the cancer were not extracted'.¹ But more importantly Fr Mathew's failure converted Haughton, and many other temperance workers as well, from a belief in the efficacy of moral suasion to a faith in the power of legislation. Haughton described this transition most succinctly in 1862.

For a long period it was believed by many that moral suasion - that is, the force of mind acting upon mind - would prove sufficient for our purpose. Fr Mathew's career exhibits the fallacy of this idea. That force was uniquely used in Ireland, and has been found wanting in continuous power. It is now, therefore, nationally proposed to add to this mode of action another force - the product of the general will, expressed through our legislature.²

The career of Fr Mathew, concluded Haughton, 'I think, proves the necessity of such legislative measures as are contemplated by the United Kingdom Alliance'.³ The legislation which Haughton had in mind was in fact prohibition, or as it was more frequently termed at the time the Maine law.⁴

With slavery Haughton had taken up the most extreme abolitionist position, and so it was to be with temperance. In both cases he quickly came round to the view that total and immediate legislative suppression was the only real solution to the problem. In 1862 he informed the U.K. Alliance that 'their proper business' was to labour for

¹ James Haughton, 'Ireland and Fr Mathew', p. 70.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ In the United States, as in Britain and Ireland, the moral suasion movement of the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s was giving way by the 1850s to a new movement advocating harsh legislative measures and ultimately prohibition. Maine, led by Neal Dow who later toured Ireland, became the first state to impose prohibition by law in June 1851; see Neal Dow, The reminiscences of Neal Dow (Portland, Maine, 1898); J.A. Knout, The origins of prohibition (New York, 1925).

the 'entire overthrow' of the drink industry, 'leaving to others the adoption of minor issues, and waste their strength, if they will, in fighting a sham-battle with the enemy'.¹ And he seemed largely convinced that public opinion would support such a measure. In 1854 he told the select committee on public houses:

I have no doubt the public houses might be closed altogether without fear of serious dissatisfaction on the part of the people, who are, as far as I have observed, in favour of a Maine liquor law. We had several meetings on the subject, and in no instance has there been any opposition to our opinion upon that subject on the part of the people; they seem to understand quite well that the law passed in Maine would be advantageous, inasmuch as it would take away temptation altogether; and I believe that the drunkards, or those who are most strongly attached to the use of intoxicating drinks, would be probably the foremost in coinciding with us in that view.²

The naivety of this opinion hardly needs commenting upon. However, later in his evidence Haughton seemed a little less sure of popular support for prohibition, for referring to the Irish people he said, 'though I hold the opinion strongly that they would go entirely with us, I am not certain of it, therefore I would not recommend legislation without consulting them upon the subject'.³ One can only conclude that though Haughton very much wanted to convince himself, and others, that the people supported prohibition, he found it hard at times to maintain the delusion.

Haughton's views on the whole question of drink and temperance are set out most comprehensively in his book A plea for teetotalism, and the Maine liquor law, which

¹ James Haughton, 'Ireland and Fr Mathew', p. 70.

² Report from the select committee on public houses, p. 142, H.C. 1854 (367), xiv, 406.

³ Ibid.

was published in London in 1855, at a time of great controversy regarding licensing hours.¹ In this work Haughton sought to analyse both the attractions and the evils of drink. He attributed the popularity of alcohol to two factors: ignorance of its detrimental effects and its addictive properties. 'In ignorance', he declared, 'is to be found the root of our sorrows. Ignorance and appetite combined drag us down from that high estate which we should otherwise occupy in God's glorious universe.'² Again the emphasis was on the moral culpability of the individual. As for the argument that moderation in consumption was the answer, Haughton dismissed it out of hand with a popular teetotal simile.

It is an admitted fact that alcohol is a poison. Is it not, therefore, erroneous reasoning to talk of moderation in its use? We might, with equal reason, talk of the moderate use of arsenic, or of prussic acid, or of opium ... In truth, moderation is a misnamed term in relation to all these articles, their constant tendency being to sap the foundations of health, in whatever quantities they may be used.³

From Haughton's point of view, in fact, the moderate drinker was far more dangerous than the drunkard. The drunkard was 'a beacon to warn the thoughtless', but the moderate drinker was 'a lure, to entice the young into paths which lead to certain misery'.⁴ Thus, whatever

¹ Efforts to restrict trading particularly on Sunday, following the report of the 1854 select committee, produced serious rioting in London in 1855; see Brian Harrison, 'The Sunday trading riots of 1855' in Historical Journal, vii, no. 2 (1965), pp 219-45.

² James Haughton, A plea for teetotalism, and the Maine liquor law (London, 1855), p. 41.

³ Ibid., p. 97.

⁴ Ibid., pp 94-5.

qualms Haughton may have had in the 1830s about total abstinence, twenty years later there was no room in his mind for doubt on the subject.

For Haughton the evils of alcohol were manifold. Firstly, and most obviously, it undermined the health of the individual, while, secondly, it ruined the prosperity of society. This latter evil he felt was particularly plain in the case of Ireland. Haughton believed that 'Ireland is in reality a rich country; and that if our wealth were properly applied, all our people might be comfortable and happy'. The climate was temperate and the soil fertile. Minerals were abundant. All that was needed to exploit these assets was the industry of man. However, these blessings of providence were being squandered as the Irish people wasted their time and money 'in the gratification of a ruinous appetite for strong drinks'. The result was misery, 'which for its intensity, has made Ireland a word of contempt to almost every other nation'. 'With natural advantages unsurpassed on earth, our wretchedness is proverbial. Even in less civilised and less cultivated countries, the inhabitants are better fed, better housed, and better clothed than the men and women of Ireland.' Haughton denied that the Irishman was 'deficient in ability and shrewdness', as many of Ireland's severest critics maintained. For in other countries 'the Irishman takes an equal place with his fellow-man; he assumes his rightful position; and in the race of competition he does not allow himself to be outstripped'.¹ But unlike other critics of the union,

¹ Haughton, A plea for teetotalism, pp 30-32.

Haughton did not lay the blame for this sorry state of affairs at the door of the British government. The root of the problem, according to him, was intemperance. 'This one bad habit appears sufficient in itself to counteract all the advantages we enjoy.' Haughton, the successful businessman, the man who lived by the rules of order and restraint, castigated his fellow Irishmen for their foolishness and extravagance.

All are taught that to save money is mean and poor-spirited; to spend it is hospitable and manly. Hence arises the poverty of Irishmen. We must change these habits, or we can never become a wealthy people; and without some accumulation of wealth, there can be few of the comforts of civilisation. Without wealth there can be no employment. The capitalist must be found, or there would be no work for the man who lives by his daily labour. We are far from recommending parsimony; but without thrift neither individuals nor nations can attain independence.¹

According to Samuel Haughton his father refused to pretend that Ireland's troubles were due solely to political tyranny, bad as he considered many of the government's actions to be. He refused to see the Irish people in the same light as the black slaves for whom he campaigned so vigorously. 'He was too clear-sighted and too honest not to see, and also to tell the people openly, that much of their own misfortune and misery were due to their own misconduct and want of prudence, and that the remedy was to a considerable extent in their own power.'² Thus Haughton focused on the individual, believing that each man must accept responsibility for his own misfortunes, but at the same time that

¹ Haughton, A plea for teetotalism, p. 36. See also James Haughton, The use of alcoholic liquors economically, socially, and morally wrong: a paper read before the Dublin Statistical Society (Dublin, 1849).

² Haughton, Memoir of James Haughton, p. 144.

each man had within himself the power to make good. Anonymous forces like government, economics or heredity were ultimately subservient to the will of the rational man.

Haughton long argued the close connection between intemperance and crime, as well as intemperance and poverty. Prostitution for instance he could only explain in terms of drunkenness.¹ In 1849 he told the Dublin Statistical Society that 'poverty, intemperance and ignorance being the most fruitful sources of crimes, are of course the evils which all rational beings should be most anxious to remove altogether'.² And he went on to spell out the exact relationship between these evils.

Ignorance is the great characteristic of our criminals, and the drinking customs of society may be set down as one great cause of ignorance; inasmuch as they not only deprive the people of the means of providing education for themselves and their children, but they destroy all desire for the acquisition of knowledge.³

Thus intemperance produced poverty and ignorance which in turn produced crime. But 'simply investigating the causes of existing evils' was not enough, Haughton told the society. 'It is our business, as rational, intelligent, and accountable beings, to do our utmost to dry up the source whence the evil flows.'⁴

Knowledge is a word that figures repeatedly in Haughton's writings. He considered it the strongest weapon in the

¹ James Haughton, On the connexion between intemperance and crime: a paper read before the Dublin Statistical Society (Dublin, 1849), p. 8.

² Ibid., p. 3.

³ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴ Ibid., p. 9

arsenal of the temperance movement. In an article he wrote for T.W. Russell's Irish Temperance Star in June 1866, entitled 'The influence of knowledge', he confessed that the men of Great Britain and Ireland were not yet ready to receive the great truths of the temperance reformation. 'Ignorance with her leaden wings still broods over the nation.' But he remained optimistic for 'the leaven of knowledge is at work' and the time would come, he predicted, 'when it will not be possible for the people to resist the influence of that knowledge which will not force them, but induce them, ... willingly, and as it were with one accord, to say to the destroyer alcohol, begone and begone for ever'.¹ But what exactly was this power which Haughton was prepared to rely so heavily upon? Basically it seems to have been reason. In his book on teetotalism Haughton likened the mind of man to a field.

Left to its native barrenness, its products will yield nothing tending to develop the seeds of civilisation. The growth of passion and appetite will smother the buried seeds of virtue; and the result will be, as the history of our race has always shown it to be, the free indulgence of sensual desires. Cultivate the mind; cast into its deep recesses the seed of knowledge, and you at once stimulate into activity a desire for purer enjoyments.²

Haughton had prefaced his book with Pope's lines, beginning: 'A little learning is a dangerous thing'. Haughton however had dissented from the poet, arguing that all must have a little before they can have much of this 'invaluable possession', this 'priceless acquisition'.³

¹ James Haughton, 'The influence of knowledge' in Irish Temperance Star, i, no. 6 (June, 1866), pp 86-7.

² Haughton, A plea for teetotalism, pp 122-3.

³ Ibid., p. 1.

Haughton, like many of his deeply religious fellow-temperance workers, considered crime, poverty, disease and squalor by no means the worst fruits of intemperance. 'It is on the ground of the moral evils which are produced by the use of alcoholic drinks that our case must principally rest', he wrote in 1855.¹ For Haughton the moral evils seemed to consist mainly in the loss of rationality, control and will-power which tended to accompany heavy drinking. In a striking passage, which is worth quoting at length, Haughton went on to equate reason with the soul, thus raising it above all other virtues.

Reason is the best gift of God to man: by it alone he is raised above the inferior animals of creation. Should not this noble gift be his chief care?... What is drunkenness but a temporary overthrow of reason? And drunkenness is a voluntary crime. Our body is the temple of God. Reason is His vicegerent there. By the use of alcoholic drinks we often drive this divine representation out of its temple, and thus leave the body soulless for a time. Rightly viewed, can a greater calamity than this befall a man, that he should, by his own act, be transformed into a soulless being?²

Drunkenness thus became the very negation of Christianity. The latter elevated man to a position in creation but a little lower than that of the angels, while the former reduced him to the level of a soulless brute. Perhaps this explains why Haughton became so extreme in his advocacy of the anti-drink cause. For him intemperance became not only the root of all the great social ills of the age, the chief cause of Ireland's degradation as a nation, but it took on the features of satan himself in attempting to steal away the very soul of man. Surely

¹ Haughton, A plea for teetotalism, p. 53.

² Ibid., p. 124.

Haughton's reasoning here is a fine example of reductio ad absurdum; for him drink was literally the root of all evil.

The converse of the case which stressed the evils of intemperance was one which presented the teetotal utopia. While denying he believed that 'teetotalism secures all earthly happiness', Haughton certainly did paint an exceedingly rosy picture of the society in which total abstinence prevailed. Poverty would be eliminated, for if the money wasted on liquor 'were laid out in the purchase of food and clothing and furniture, and in the erection of comfortable and suitable houses for the working classes, employment for all would be abundant'.¹ Instead of labour pressing upon capital, capitalists would be seeking labour, and with good wages artisans and labourers would have the means of supplying themselves with all the comforts of life. Haughton's teetotal economics at least had the virtue of being simple and clear-cut. Not till the drinking customs of society were eliminated would 'virtue, morality and religion' prevail, opening the way for the social and political advancement of Ireland.

Nor did Haughton harbour any doubts as to the ultimate triumph of total abstinence. 'A great truth, when once launched into existence, can never be arrested in its course' he insisted, and he went on to predict that teetotalism 'will march on its majestic career, until it overthrows all opposition; and then mankind will have overcome the greatest impediment to the acquisition of the largest amount of property, and of comfort and happiness destined for us in

¹ Haughton, A plea for teetotalism, p. 88.

this life'.¹ Haughton clearly saw total abstinence as the panacea for material deprivation. But when would this triumph occur? None can foretell, wrote Haughton, but either the progress of civilisation will be arrested (a circumstance not to be contemplated in the future history of our race), or it must arrive some day, for knowledge is the power which rules mankind, and that power must grow stronger and stronger as years roll over, until it shall drive before it the greatest curse which afflicts our country.²

Optimism was an essential ingredient in the total abstinence philosophy: 'we must not yield to a feeling of despondency, because difficulties, which sometimes seem insurmountable, arise to impede our onward progress'.³ For Haughton, doubts as to the ultimate triumph of 'reason over appetite, of virtue over vice' were nothing less than 'treason to our faith in the progress of our race'.⁴

A man of almost fanatical faith, Haughton himself refused to be discouraged by failure and for almost forty years he preached the virtues of teetotalism. However, if he was dogmatic in matters of doctrine, he showed a far greater degree of flexibility with regard to tactics. By 1855 he had come to see the temperance movement as having three phases: the anti-spirits movement, teetotalism, and the Maine law. To his mind the Maine law or prohibition was the only satisfactory answer. Moral suasion alone, 'working on the hearts, and the conscience, and the religious sentiment of the people' had not proved powerful

¹ Haughton, 'The influence of knowledge', p. 86.

² Ibid., p. 87.

³ Haughton, A plea for teetotalism, p. 106.

⁴ Ibid., p. 77.

enough, as Fr Mathew's crusade had amply demonstrated, and thus Haughton argued that as the 'traffic in strong drink is sustained by law, law is, therefore, needed to supplement and assist other instrumentalities for its overthrow'.¹

Haughton, as his son explained, preferred prohibition, but he was to spend the last fifteen years of his life campaigning for the permissive bill or local option. In this he was merely following the policy of the U.K. Alliance, of which he was a vice-president. The Alliance, established in Manchester in 1853 at the instigation of Nathaniel Card, an Irish quaker, had quickly realised that in the climate of the 1850s immediate, complete, national prohibition was exceedingly unlikely, and thus it had fallen back on gradualism. To members like Haughton this was a necessary change in tactics, not a change in policy. Prohibition was still the ultimate aim, but it was hoped to win this by instalments once districts had the power of local veto.² But surely there was something ironic in the fact that the temperance movement, having failed to convince the public of the merits of its case, then turned to seeking restrictive legislation only to find itself forced, for tactical reasons, to resort to legislation which required popular consent? Although Haughton and other members of the Alliance lauded the permissive bill as an exercise in decentralised democracy, there is little doubt, in Haughton's case at least,

¹ James Haughton, 'Work without ceasing' in I.T.S., i, no. 12 (Dec. 1866), p. 184; see also Haughton's article in Alliance News, 24 Aug. 1867.

² See Nathaniel Card's evidence in Report from the select committee on public houses, 1854, pp 98/362-110/374; on the Alliance's policy generally see Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, pp 197-8.

that he would have preferred national prohibitive legislation. Haughton's preference for restrictive legislation in this respect seemed at odds with his general advocacy of individual initiative and especially with his support for free trade. In a paper entitled 'Free trade and direct taxation', read before the Dublin Statistical Society in December 1868 he set out to resolve this apparent contradiction, and in so doing stated the case for the permissive bill most succinctly.

I am an advocate for the 'permissive bill'. If that act were passed, and the people at large were thereby permitted to decide whether the liquor traffic should be continued or abolished altogether, and that the majority voted for its continuance, I should say, in such case, that the trade should be open to all who inclined to embark in it. A trade which it is right for one man to follow ought to be free to all: but if, on the contrary, it was the decision of a large majority - which I believe it would be - that this traffic was a common nuisance, no one should be allowed to engage in it... The liquor traffic ... in justice to the safety of life and property and the maintenance of good morals, has no place in the category of trade useful in the sight of God or man; and it should, therefore, be prohibited as a curse to our country; but this is a question for the people to decide, when the legislature gives them the power to do so.¹

By the late 1860s then Haughton saw no middle ground with regard to the issue of drink, the alternatives for him were complete free trade or, as he personally desired, total suppression.

James Haughton thus personifies the progress of the Irish temperance movement from the early 1830s to the early 1870s; the progress from an organisation trying to persuade people to abandon spirits through meetings and pamphlets, to an organisation lobbying parliament for legislation aimed at totally suppressing the drink industry and trade. It was a

¹ Haughton, Memoir of James Haughton, p. 222.

formidable leap in just forty years and the direction was unerringly towards the more extreme and the more authoritarian. Nor should one overlook the fact that this progression from moderation to total abstinence, from moral suasion to legislative coercion, was fuelled by failure. Changes in both policy and tactics were due, not to the success of their predecessors, but to their failure. It is in this context that we should view Haughton's dogged optimism and his strictures against disillusionment. Clearly there was to be no quick victory launched on a wave of popular enthusiasm, the battle against drink was to be long and hard and the temperance movement needed, not part-time philanthropists nor charismatic preachers, but skilled and dedicated organisers and publicists. The way was opened for the full-time professional temperance agent.

The 1850s and 1860s were difficult decades for the temperance movement after the heady early days in the 1830s and 1840s. Disillusionment was rife. Parliament seemed consistently unresponsive to temperance pressure and the permissive bill was repeatedly and overwhelmingly defeated. Worse still, after a marked decline in the 1840s, drink consumption was again on the increase. It was during this trough in the movement, after the failure of Fr Mathew and before the major legislative initiatives of the 1870s, that Thomas Wallace Russell first entered vigorously into the temperance campaign.

T.W. Russell: the retreat from prohibition

Perhaps the most active campaigner for temperance legislation in Ireland during the latter part of the nineteenth century, Russell was born in 1841 at Cupar in Fife, the son of a stone mason. He came to Ulster in 1860¹ and was employed for nearly five years in Brown's soap factory at Donaghmore near Dungannon, County Tyrone. There he began a long friendship with his Sunday school teacher,² Thomas A. Dickson, who later³ held the seats of Dungannon and Tyrone for the liberals.

Russell's temperance career began in 1863 when he was elected secretary of the Dungannon Temperance Society. He quickly progressed in 1864 to being the agent of the Irish Temperance League in the south of Ireland, with his permanent headquarters in Dublin; then in 1869 to being secretary of the Irish Permissive Bill Association; in 1873 secretary of the Irish Sunday Closing Association; and, when these two organisations merged in 1878, secretary of the resulting Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance. At the same time he conducted a successful business as a temperance hotel proprietor, running the very popular Russell Hotel in St Stephen's Green, Dublin. Finally in 1886 Russell entered parliament as the liberal unionist M.P. for south Tyrone.

¹ Some sources give 1859 as the date but Russell himself gives 1860; see T.W. Russell, Ireland and the empire: a review, 1800-1900 (London, 1900), pp 56-7.

² Russell's religious affiliations are a trifle obscure. During his temperance career he identified himself as a presbyterian, but later in his life he was to claim membership of the Church of Ireland; see Fermanagh Times, 18 Jan. 1906. I would like to thank Mr Jack Johnston of Clogher, County Tyrone, for drawing my attention to this report dealing with Russell's conflicting statements with regard to his church membership.

³ Thomas MacKnight, Ulster as it is, or twenty-eight years' experience as an Irish editor (London, 1896), ii, 158-9.

But this was only the beginning of a very stormy political career which lasted till 1918 and which saw Russell transformed from a unionist into a vigorous champion of Ulster tenant farmers and ultimately of home rule.¹ But before entering parliament Russell was for twenty years in the thick of Irish temperance politics, as publicist, lobbyist and administrator. His attitudes are thus crucial in any attempt to understand the rationale behind the demand for temperance legislation in Ireland, which was at its height in the 1870s.

In its first issue of February 1863 the Irish Temperance League Journal had deplored the sorry state of the temperance movement in Dublin. Only the D.T.A.S. and the Cuffe Lane society, run by Haughton and Spratt, were conducting regular meetings.² Thus in March John Pyper, the league's agent and lecturer, visited the city to conduct meetings and also to organise a Dublin branch.³ In August Pyper was lecturing to the Dungannon Temperance Society and there he noted the society's 'energetic' young secretary, T.W. Russell.⁴ When therefore late in 1864 it was decided to appoint a permanent agent in Dublin to revitalise the movement in the south, young Russell was the league's choice for the job. His task was 'to convert opponents into followers' and 'to instruct the illiterate without offending the taste of the well-informed'.

¹ For discussions of Russell's career see MacKnight, Ulster as it is, ii, 158-9; T.J. Campbell, Fifty years of Ulster, 1890-1940 (Belfast, 1941), pp 263-4; J.F. Harbinson, The Ulster unionist party, 1882-1973: its development and organisation (Belfast, 1972), p. 241.

² I.T.L.J., i, no. 1 (Feb. 1863), p. 18.

³ Ibid., i, no. 3 (Apr. 1863), p. 59.

⁴ Ibid., i, no. 8 (Sept. 1863), p. 145.

In return for undertaking this formidable task he was to receive 'a large and, no doubt, progressive salary'.¹ In examining the long lists of speeches given, meetings attended and articles written by Russell in the subsequent years, one cannot doubt that he well earned his large and progressive salary.

He was a man of great energy and determination. Soon after his appointment to Dublin he wrote an interesting article for the league's journal entitled 'A false stereoscope', which began:

Although not belonging to, the writer of this paper is daily reminded of, the existence of a class, who in the sincerity of their hearts believe that the world is getting worse - who do not doubt that just as God was tempted of old by the wickedness of man to visit the world in judgment - so again the wrath of the Most High will be made manifest in these latter days.²

Russell was decidedly not of this pessimistic frame of mind: 'ascend the hilly crags of the past', he advised 'see what the Lord hath done, and return from the survey with renewed strength and invincible determination'.³ Russell had no time whatever for those who sighed after the 'simple manners and rude life' of the past. He did not see the path of mankind as leading inevitably downwards, away from the golden age; quite the contrary. Russell had an unshakeable faith in progress,⁴ in the concept that human affairs were

¹ I.T.L.J., ii, no. 10 (Oct. 1864), p. 176. For Russell's work, see pp 315-19.

² Ibid., iii, no. 2 (Feb. 1865), p. 17.

³ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴ Characteristically in his own Dublin-based journal, the Irish Temperance Star, Russell headed his regular column giving accounts of temperance meetings and lectures, 'The voice of progress'.

were gradually evolving out of suffering and barbarism towards rationality and prosperity. But in Russell's view there was still 'one blot upon the present, a stain that should have been washed away long, long since had the church of Christ done its duty'. This blot was of course the consumption of alcohol. Although drunkenness was no longer as fashionable as it had been in the eighteenth century, drinking was still exceedingly popular. But typically Russell refused to be pessimistic about this state of affairs, and in fact he found much that was encouraging. Who, he asked, twenty years ago would have dreamed that temperance would be preached on the floor of the house of commons? Who would have imagined that it would create a literature of its own, and that from the halls of science, from the bench and the bar men would flock to do battle on its behalf?¹ Like Haughton, Russell displayed, in his public statements at least, a determined optimism. He told the annual conference of the I.T.L. in March 1865 that they might not live to see the ultimate triumph of their labours, but he was in no doubt as to that ultimate triumph.²

Russell was no believer in mass temperance of the sort Fr Mathew had inspired. He envisaged the temperance campaign being prosecuted 'in many a town and in many a village' by 'a few earnest spirits ... toiling amid much that is discouraging'. Russell's concept of the temperance movement was basically elitist rather than democratic, closer to the ideas

¹ I.T.L.J., iii, no. 3 (Mar. 1865), p. 34.

² Ibid., iii, no. 9 (Sept. 1865), p. 134.

of the 1830s than the 1840s. He made this perfectly clear in the second instalment of 'A false stereoscope' in March 1865.

I speak the truth when I say that nearly all the good that is done in the world is the work of a few. The great mass stand aloof. Should they catch the echo of a cheer they will give a brave hurrah, but on some pair of shoulders must fall the heat and burden of the day.¹

Russell clearly saw himself as having such a pair of shoulders and indeed he was to carry much of the burden of the Irish temperance movement in the 1870s. And what was the ultimate goal of this great labour? Although he may have differed from Fr Mathew with regard to tactics, Russell too was inspired by a millenarian dream. He, like other disciples of progress, saw the millenium in terms of a golden age of materialism here on earth. Through all ages there was an 'increasing purpose', he wrote, and that was the widening of the thoughts of man; 'as they widen, so will the time draw nigh when the war drum shall cease to throb, when the battle-flag shall be furled "in the parliament of man the federation of the world", and old king alcohol shall be driven from the throne where he has so long reigned and ruled at will'. Then would the 'weary workers' rest and 'forget the sorrows of a long night in the joy of a glorious morning'.² Despite his somewhat sentimental prose, there is no doubt that Russell was genuinely inspired by this vision of a better world for he vigorously exerted his not inconsiderable talents in the pursuit of it.

In Russell's scheme of temperance reformation parliament was to be the vital agency of change. It was via this medium

¹ I.T.L.J., iii, no. 3 (Mar. 1865), p. 34.

² Ibid.

that the temperance elite would ensure the triumph of their ideas at the national level. In 1866, writing, with his fellow editor J.A. Mowatt, in the I.T.S., Russell put forward his views on the licensing laws and on the general question of legislative reform. If the liquor trade was good, they wrote, there was no reason why any and every man should not be able to engage in it. The very fact that government found it necessary to restrict the trade attested to its evils. Over 400 licensing acts had been passed since the time of Queen Elizabeth, all with the avowed object of keeping the liquor traffic within bounds and of lessening if possible its injurious effects upon society. The failure of these measures was amply illustrated in police returns and crime statistics. Mowatt and Russell's solution to this dilemma was both extreme and simple: 'if the trade be a useful and beneficial one, let it be wholly free; if it be an injurious trade, producing great evils and no counteracting good, let it be, not licensed, but prohibited'.¹ Russell was therefore beginning his career in the temperance movement with exactly the view which James Haughton had arrived at only after many years of thought and study. Free trade and prohibition were the only viable alternatives, the middle ground of licensing was swept aside as a proven failure.

Free trade in liquor was so unthinkable that Mowatt and Russell did not take the time even to argue against it. For them prohibition was the simple answer to all the problems

¹ I.T.S., i, no. 10 (Oct. 1866), p. 145. Mowatt was a Dublin insurance agent, active in the statistical society, and a determined campaigner for disestablishment of the Church of Ireland.

of liquor licensing; in effect, legislatively abolish the problem. They admitted that prohibition was claimed to be unworkable in practice, but again their response to this objection was direct and simple, to the point of naivety in fact. 'Our ... laws against theft, burglaries, and even murder are violated. But that is not the fault of the law.'¹ Addressing the I.T.L. in March 1865 Russell had outlined three main areas of activity for the temperance movement. The first was 'to reclaim the lost' - in other words to convince drunkards to take the total abstinence pledge; the second was 'to win the young', to indoctrinate them before they began drinking to ensure that they never would; and the third and main area of activity was legislative prohibition. 'Sweep away not only the god they worship, but the altar at which so many bow with more than an eastern devotion', advised Russell.² Attempts to 'patch up some "amended" licensing law' would no doubt continue, but Russell was convinced 'that licensing must ultimately be abolished, and the entire liquor traffic ... be treated only as a public nuisance'.³

In a second article on licensing laws in the November 1866 issue of the I.T.S. Mowatt and Russell sought to explain why the drink trade could not 'be left to the stern laws of demand and supply' as other trades were. The temperance movement generally was at pains to dissociate drink from legitimate business and trade, and to reassure its middle-class supporters that the attack on the drink industry could

¹ I.T.S., i, no. 10 (Oct. 1866), p. 147.

² I.T.L.J., iii, no. 9 (Sept. 1865), p. 134.

³ I.T.S., op. cit., p. 148.

in no way be construed as part of a general assault on free enterprise principles. Noting the addictive properties of alcohol, Mowatt and Russell argued that the supply of drink created the demand for it, thus 'reversing all the ordinary laws of trade and commerce which regulate all other businesses'.¹ And if the demand was allowed to be satisfied without restraint 'it would wholly ruin the people of these kingdoms'. To Russell then the drink trade was a positive public nuisance and this justified the use of the most extreme legislative measures against it. Doctrines upholding individual rights or freedom of trade were totally inappropriate in such circumstances. As 'private rights must ever yield to social rights' and 'the state has a perfect right, in the interests of society at large, to restrict individual liberty', so practices harmful to the individual or the community were legislated against. Murder and suicide were forbidden and increasingly there were laws against industrial nuisances like smoke and foul smells. On the basis of consistency alone, Mowatt and Russell could not see why drink did not fall into the same category. 'We prohibit the smoke and the smell from the bakery, chandlery, and vitriol works, while we license the public house to deal out ruin and death. We cannot see upon what principle of law or equity this class of distinction is made.'²

However, like Haughton, Russell could not ignore the realities of the political situation at Westminster. And so, though his 1866 articles on licensing argued strongly for a 'full and perfect' prohibition as the only ultimate solution,

¹ I.T.S., i, no. 11 (Nov. 1866), p. 166.

² Ibid., p. 167.

in the short term he too was forced to fall back on the expedient of local option. A number of American states had passed prohibition laws with the most beneficial results, but whether 'we can in these lands carry through a parliament of brewers and distillers and landlords a bill to prohibit the sale of drinks, is questionable'. However, 'in the growing feeling which exists against the present licensing system', Russell felt that there was a chance of carrying a permissive prohibitory liquor bill.¹ Mowatt and Russell lauded the situation at Bessbrook, County Armagh, where John Grubb Richardson had imposed prohibition on the 2,500 employees of his spinning and weaving factory.² Why, they asked, should not the inhabitants of every town be able to do for themselves what had been done at Bessbrook? In this they rather glided over the fact that prohibition had been imposed on Bessbrook from above by the all-powerful mill-owner, it had not been voted for from below by the townspeople. The tactical change from national prohibition to local option in fact led to a fundamental inconsistency in Russell's thinking. We have seen that his view of the temperance movement was basically elitist in that he thought the most important activity, lobbying parliament for repressive legislation, should be conducted by a small and dedicated band of workers. He showed little faith in the

¹ I.T.S., i, no. 10 (Oct. 1866), p. 148. The temperance movement, with its repeated references to American achievements, was often accused of trying to 'Americanise' British habits and institutions. In this article, rather than denying the charge, Russell argued that on the whole 'Americanisation' would amount to an improvement.

² Local option at Bessbrook, the temperance colony in Ireland (London, 1884); Charlotte Fell Smith, James Nicholson Richardson of Bessbrook (London, 1925).

capacity of the general population to lead the way in temperance reform. But, in being forced to take up local option, he and the movement generally had to revert to the sort of tactics that had been discredited in Ireland in the 1840s, campaigning for mass support. Russell himself knew that the public were not 'seriously alive to the evils which flow from the traffic' and that the 'entire country would not at once put such a permissive act in force'. But ever the optimist, or perhaps because really he had no alternative, he chose not to regard this as an argument against local option. Districts might not act immediately against the drink trade but eventually some 'startling homicide, or frightful scene' produced by drink would convince them, and then the unheeded permissive act could be 'taken down, dusted, and enforced against the fearful public house nuisance'.¹

The retreat from prohibition to local option was by no means the last such tactical exercise that Russell was to undertake during his temperance career. Between 1866 and 1873 an equally important transition occurred. Russell had explicitly ruled out measures aimed merely at patching up the existing licensing laws.² Therefore when the issue of Sunday closing came increasingly to the fore in the Irish temperance movement during the late 1860s Russell was faced with a dilemma. He did not wish to reject it, as it was supported by powerful pro-temperance forces³ and seemed to

¹ I.T.S., i, no. 11 (Nov. 1866), p. 168.

² See for example his speech in Rathmines, Dublin, reported in the Freeman's Journal, 6 Jan. 1872.

³ I.T.S., ii, no. 13 (Jan. 1867), p. 1. Russell and Mowatt noted that Haughton, Spratt, Archbishop Trench and Cardinal Cullen were all supporters of Sunday closing.

have some chance of success in parliament, but at the same time it was exactly the sort of remedial legislation which he considered both theoretically unsound and practically futile. His first article on the subject in the I.T.S., following the establishment of the Irish Sunday Closing Association in November 1866, is thus particularly interesting. Russell was both sympathetic and cautious. He saw two related arguments in favour of the measure, one concerning the nature of the day and the other the situation in which working men found themselves on that day. The first argument was basically sabbatarian, combined with a plea for consistency. If useful trades were prohibited on Sunday for religious reasons, why should an evil one be permitted to continue? 'The proposed measure seeks no more ... than to put the liquor traffic on a footing with all other trades', he wrote. The second argument Russell termed the 'special facility' argument and he outlined it thus: 'Working men received their wages in great part on Saturday evenings. Sunday with them is an idle day. With plenty of money and nothing to do the temptation to drink is greater on that day than on any other.'¹ Russell swiftly dismissed claims that Sunday closing had not diminished drunkenness in Scotland where it had been in operation since 1854, that people could not be made virtuous by act of parliament, and that Sunday closing was 'class legislation' in that it would bear more heavily upon the lower than the upper classes - which were to be the major arguments against Sunday closing in Ireland in the 1870s. Having apparently put a strong case for Sunday closing, Russell then revealed his true intent.

¹ I.T.S., ii, no. 14 (Feb. 1867), p. 17.

Arguments advanced by Sunday closers against the liquor trade, he declared, 'cannot stop at Sunday - they hold good for the entire week'.¹ And he went on to broaden the Sunday closing case into a general attack on drink. At the same time he was careful to emphasise that his discussion was conducted in 'no factious spirit' and to offer his 'best wishes' and 'heartiest efforts' to the Sunday closing movement. Russell's concluding remarks are very interesting, though they were to come back to haunt him ten years later when he was organising the campaign for Sunday closing in Ireland. Referring to the I.S.C.A. he declared:

It is not, strictly speaking, a temperance agency. But let the general public not be mistaken. 'The ship was built and launched by the despised teetotallers.' Yes, and by those whose views it suits sentimentalists to denounce as extreme. And even now it is in great part manned by such a class, by men whose aspirations point high above the mists of Sunday closing up to the clear and blessed atmosphere of total prohibition. In the presence of such men lies the safety of the measure. And we have a word of caution to those who see in Sunday closing a remedy for the drunkenness of Ireland. Do not be mistaken. It will accomplish much, but not all that you expect. No cutting or pruning of the branches will cure the evil. The tree must be rooted up ... Scotland is in possession of the boon you seek, and today the voice of Scotland is louder and clearer for total prohibition than it was ten years ago. The lesson is obvious. Surely the true, the virtuous, and the good cannot much longer fail to draw it.²

Thus for Russell, Sunday closing became, like the permissive bill, merely a step on the road to total prohibition.

Russell's support for temperance legislation was dictated by pure expediency. Prohibition remained the ultimate goal, but short of that he was prepared to work for reformist measures which seemed to have a chance of getting through parliament. At times, largely depending upon his

¹ I.T.S., ii, no. 14 (Feb. 1867), p. 20.

² Ibid., p. 22.

audience, he portrayed such measures as leading on to prohibition or as an end in themselves. Thus, as the demand for Sunday closing came to dominate the Irish temperance campaign, clearly superseding the permissive bill which was repeatedly defeated in parliament, Russell came more and more to speak in its favour as a measure likely to bring real improvement. Finally late in 1873, after the launching of a major campaign to secure the passage of an Irish Sunday closing act, Russell accepted the secretaryship of the I.S.C.A. while retaining the same position with the Irish Permissive Bill Association.¹ Russell's action signalled the merging of the two organisations, though this was not fully realised till five years later with the creation of the Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance. However, in the short term it meant the subordination of the campaign for local option to the campaign for Sunday closing, as the latter held out a greater chance of success than did the former.

Between 1873 and 1878 Russell found it expedient to portray Sunday closing as an end in itself, as a measure that would achieve a significant reform and satisfy its supporters. Before the 1877 select committee on Irish Sunday closing, Russell was asked three times by Maurice Brooks, M.P. for Dublin city and an opponent of temperance legislation: 'Will your friends accept the Sunday closing bill as any more than an instalment of what they believe to be a righteous claim to put an entire stop to the traffic in drink in Ireland?' Each time Russell was somewhat evasive, replying for instance: 'I am here as the secretary

¹ See below, pp 362-3.

of the I.S.C.A., and the great majority of that association are totally opposed to other measures dealing with this traffic, and would be perfectly satisfied with this bill'. Pressed again by Brooks, Russell said that he personally would also favour earlier Saturday night closing, which some of the licensed grocers and vintners themselves had been suggesting - though he failed to mention, as he well knew, that this was only a tactic on their part to counter the campaign for Sunday closing. 'Would you rest there?' demanded Brooks, and Russell replied: 'If Sunday closing and Saturday evening closing diminished drunkenness to such an extent as to greatly mitigate the evils that exist now, I do not think that you would get a public opinion in Ireland to sanction further legislation of that kind'.¹ A cunning answer indeed, for, as we have already seen, Russell did not in fact believe that tinkering with trading hours would significantly diminish drunkenness.

Before the lords' select committee on intemperance in 1878 Russell was apparently even more moderate in his views. On the issue of Sunday closing he was eager to point out that the majority of Irish people supported the measure, as shown by the results of canvasses conducted by temperance organisations. 'I should say that upon no other question which has ever been submitted to the Irish people, has there been so much pains taken to reach the bona fide opinions of the people of all shades and classes, and upon no other question has the result been so clear and so specific.' The question

¹ Report from the select committee on Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, pp 135-6, H.C. 1877 (198), xvi, 151-2.

of public opinion had dominated the campaign and Russell had found himself spending as much time trying to win popular approval as lobbying M.P.s. He denied that Sunday closers were largely motivated by sabbatarian feelings, claiming that the 'principal men who are promoting the Sunday closing movement are the very people who have done most to open parks and coffee houses, and everything to benefit the people'. He omitted to mention, however, that the facilities run by the temperance organisations were frequently closed on Sundays. He also claimed that Sunday closing would bring about a very substantial improvement in the drink problem, for 'by Sunday closing we should not only get rid of Sunday drunkenness, but should get a rest from drinking on the Sunday, which would carry us through the rest of the week.'¹

Russell then went on to lay before the lords' committee a comprehensive scheme of liquor licensing reform, exactly the sort of programme that he had been ridiculing for years. He proposed a uniform licence to cover all retail houses, a single annual licensing sessions, a rating valuation for public houses as well as beerhouses, increased duties on both licences and alcohol generally, a significant reduction in the numbers of retail outlets, and earlier closing hours. He even had a kind word, albeit heavily qualified, for the publicans of Dublin: 'I am bound to say that with the exception of playing cards, supplying drink to children, and selling drink to drunken persons, we saw no very serious matter of complaint against the public houses'.² Yet Russell

¹ Fourth report from the select committee of the house of lords on intemperance, p. 393, H.L. 1878 (338), xiv, 393.

² Ibid., p. 396.

had by no means abandoned the permissive bill, at least not in principle, though in practice he came to advocate it less and less. He told the lords that if it was right for J.G. Richardson to tell the people of Bessbrook: "'You shall not have a public house for the sale of liquor because I think it will injure your interests and my interests"; I do not think it can be wrong to allow occupiers of property to say it, if they wish to say it, in their localities'.¹

A comparison of the careers of James Haughton and T.W. Russell is instructive in showing two men inspired by questions of principle and morality who were nevertheless driven primarily by expediency, though ironically in opposite directions. Haughton, having found efforts to suppress intemperance by argument and example in the 1830s and 1840s unsuccessful, came in the 1850s and 1860s to advocate coercive and repressive legislation - just the sort of legislation which he was fighting against on other issues. Russell's evolution may not have been as protracted and extreme as Haughton's but it also led to strange inconsistencies and contradictions in the man's public statements. Having agreed with Haughton in the 1860s on the need for nothing short of legislative prohibition, Russell quickly backtracked to become the leader of the campaign in the 1870s and 1880s for reformist legislation. At the bottom of these vacillations was the repeated failure of the Irish temperance movement to achieve its aims. These aims admittedly were grandiose: the suppression of intemperance and alleviation of most of the major social problems of the

¹ Fourth report from the lords select committee on intemperance, 1878, p. 398.

age. But Fr Mathew's crusade had apparently proved that this was indeed possible. His success, based on an emotional appeal to the catholic masses, had been temporary but the largely protestant, middle-class movement which followed sought to make these achievements permanent through the imposition of repressive anti-drink laws. If Irish history teaches anything, it teaches the futility of trying to change people's beliefs and customs by coercive legislation.

Partial and temporary Sunday closing was introduced in Ireland in 1878 largely owing to the efforts of Russell and his colleagues, but no such success attended the campaign for the permissive bill. In the 1880s the Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance, with Russell as secretary till he entered parliament himself in 1886, concentrated on trying to extend and make permanent the Sunday legislation, but without a great deal of success. With the issues of land reform and home rule at their height, it was much more difficult for the Irish temperance movement to win a hearing in parliament. To Irish as well as English politicians during the 1880s the drink question was rather low on the list of priorities.¹ However, as temperance declined in the 1880s as a legislative issue, it was on the rise within the Irish catholic church as a religious question.

Fr Michael Kelly and the catholic temperance movement of the 1880s and 1890s

In 1890, as part of the celebrations to mark the centenary of Fr Mathew's birth, the archbishop of Dublin together with the bishops of Kildare and Leighlin, Ferns and Ossory issued a

¹ See chapter IV for a detailed examination of the legislative campaign of the 1870s and 1880s.

pastoral letter to the clergy and laity of their dioceses on the subject of temperance.¹ The pastoral called for the establishment in every parish of temperance organisations which would be both 'durable' and 'widespread', and it urged its hearers to enrol themselves as 'soldiers of Christ, in a holy warfare against the debasing sin of intemperance'. The bishops were at pains to emphasise that drunkenness was no mere 'innocent failing' but rather 'a sin of deadly malice', and they quoted numerous biblical references in support of this view.² Reviewing previous assaults on drunkenness by the church, in particular Fr Mathew's crusade and the plea for sobriety contained in the Maynooth pastoral of 1875, they concluded that these efforts had failed due to lack of 'unity of purpose and of effort'.³ But now was the time for a new attempt and this attempt was not to be 'left to depend for its prospects of success merely upon the strength to be derived from the efforts, however energetic, of desultory individual zeal': It was to be 'taken in hand by the bishops, as a work to be carried on with the sanction and under the blessing of the church'.⁴ The new temperance societies were to 'rest upon the solid foundation of religion',⁵ and thus the bishops entered upon their work 'not in a spirit merely of natural philanthropy, nor for the sake merely of securing for

¹ Pastoral letter of the archbishop of Dublin, and the bishops of Kildare and Leighlin, Ferns and Ossory, to the clergy and laity of their dioceses (Dublin, 1890), p. 4.

² Ibid., p. 7.

³ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

you those worldly advantages that cannot fail to flow from it, but for the sake of your eternal salvation, as the pastors of your souls'.¹ While not wishing to slight the work of others, many non-catholic, in the cause of temperance, the bishops were emphatic that the issue was a religious one and thus only the catholic clergy were competent to minister to the catholic people of Ireland.²

We shall examine later the effects of the bishops' statement, but for the moment it is important to note the attitude to intemperance displayed in the pastoral and also the strategy suggested to counter it. The bishops sought to raise the issue out of the secular sphere and into the higher sphere of religion. Thus they did not concern themselves so much with the physical and material damage caused by drunkenness, as had earlier phases of the Irish temperance movement; rather they dwelt upon the spiritual consequences. Drunkenness was condemned severely and repeatedly by the scriptures, both old and new testament. It was a sin, a 'work of the flesh', catalogued with fornication, idolatry, covetousness, adultery, theft and murder.³ Those who committed such sins were damned, excluded from the kingdom of heaven. It was the church's duty to prevent its people from falling into such sins and where they had fallen to try to redeem them.

Here it is crucial to understand the bishops' position with regard to temperance and total abstinence. The pastoral

¹ Pastoral letter, 1890, pp 14-15.

² Ibid., p. 15.

³ See for example 1 Corinthians, chap. 5, ver. 11 and Galatians, chap. 5, ver. 19-21.

condemned drunkenness, the consumption of alcohol to excess, not the consumption of alcohol of itself. Temperance, the avoiding of all excess, was one of the four cardinal virtues and therefore an obligation upon all members of the church. They were bound to it at the time of their baptism and if all had remained faithful to it there would be no need to talk of total abstinence. Total abstinence, unlike temperance, was not imposed upon mankind by any law of God, nor was it one of the baptismal obligations. But rather, said the bishops, it was an 'obligation for all those for whom its observance is, in practice, a necessary means for the observation of the law of temperance', and they quoted Cardinal Manning in support of this view.

So long as a man who has been in the habit or danger of intoxication continues to drink, the temptation to drink will be full upon him; so long as he continues to drink, he will go to the places where drink is sold; so long as he goes to places where drink is sold, he will be habitually in the company of associates who will easily overpower his best resolutions. For such men, I believe total abstinence to be almost the only hope; and what is true of men, I believe to be tenfold more true of women.¹

The bishops endorsed total abstinence for the drunkard, while advocating temperance for all, thus taking up much the same position on the question as that assumed by Dr John Edgar nearly sixty years before. However, as we shall see, the bishops did go further in advocating total abstinence as both an act of charity and of mortification for those not likely to fall into the sin of intemperance. In this they differed from Edgar who denied that religious merit could be derived from the practice of total abstinence and considered such a view manichean. Even so, the bishops' attitude was relatively moderate compared to that of some of their more

¹ Pastoral letter, 1890, pp 16-17.

zealous clergy.

The bishops endorsed the total abstinence pledge as 'the most efficacious remedy, if indeed it be not the only efficacious remedy, that can be employed for the reclamation of those who have become entangled in the snares of Satan through indulgence in drink'.¹ However, they were careful to explain that the pledge was not an oath or a vow and was not of itself binding under sin, though, at the same time, they warned that it would be a 'deplorable error' for anyone to look upon pledge-breaking with indifference. They sought to clarify this confusing situation further by quoting the rules of Cardinal Manning's League of the Cross on the subject: 'it would be a sin for those to break the pledge who know that they would thereby expose themselves to the danger of intemperance; and, even where there is no such danger, those who have taken the pledge ought never to give it up, unless they feel convinced for some grave reason that it would be better for them to keep it no longer'.² The pledge, said the bishops, obviously feeling that even further explanation was necessary, should be regarded as a promise or a firm resolution, similar to the resolution of amendment made at confession or the resolution in an act of contrition. Despite the pope's recent approval of the total abstinence pledge, it still remained a controversial issue within the church as the bishops' protracted explanations show. On the question of the time limit for the pledge the bishops were flexible, being prepared to accept both resolutions for life and for shorter periods.³ Again, as we

¹ Pastoral letter, 1890, p. 18.

² Ibid., pp 18-19.

³ Ibid., p. 20.

shall see, in the context of the emerging catholic temperance movement this was essentially a moderate position.

In setting out their programme for temperance societies the bishops placed the organisation of children before that of adults. While there might be questions and difficulties associated with adult total abstinence, the situation with regard to children was very clear. 'If they are brought up without knowing the taste of [drink] , they will know no longing for it, and there will be no grave temptation to them to abandon the principles of total abstinence in after life.'¹ Efforts to reform drunkards and moderate drinkers would never of themselves lead to the total elimination of intemperance, but the production of new generations of young people who had never tasted alcohol must inevitably produce this result. The bishops thus ordered their clergy to administer the total abstinence pledge to all children at confirmation to last till the age of twenty-one.² In outlining the proposed adult organisations the bishops extended the application of the total abstinence pledge. It was the only means by which drunkards could be reclaimed, but it was not to be restricted to drunkards alone. The pledge could also be taken as an especially meritorious act of Christian virtue.

The observance of temperance is, in itself, meritorious, even though it be observed only in so far as it is a matter of obligation for all: much more meritorious, then, is its observance in the far higher form of total abstinence, in which it assumes, in a high degree, the special merit of an act of Christian mortification.³

¹ Pastoral letter, 1890, pp 20-21.

² Ibid., p. 22.

³ Ibid., p. 25.

The total abstinence pledge could also be taken as an act of charity, for the sake of others who might be encouraged by the example of so generous a sacrifice to imitate that example.¹ Thus, while temperance was expected of all catholics, total abstinence was an especially pious act, the sacrifice made by a truly ardent believer. The emphasis was being shifted from total abstinence as the sign of a reformed drunkard to total abstinence as the sign of a good catholic.

On these issues of intemperance as a sin, the importance of total abstinence, the nature of the pledge, and the need for children's societies the 1890 Leinster pastoral reflected the increasingly coherent body of views about temperance which had been developing within the catholic church. The failure of Fr Mathew, together with the often bitter controversies generated by his attitude to protestants and his use of the pledge, had severely retarded zeal for the anti-drink cause among his fellow catholic clerics. Individual enthusiasts continued the work in their own parishes or dioceses, but the church as a whole gave no indication of being willing to take up the temperance cause on a national level, and, as we have seen, from the 1850s to at least the end of the 1870s the initiative in the Irish temperance movement lay with the largely protestant advocates of legislative reform or coercion. But under the surface significant developments were occurring within the church which were to produce a comprehensive and coherent, though by no means unchallenged, attitude to temperance by 1890, and, perhaps even more importantly, by the end of the century a durable

¹ Ibid., p. 26. This act of sacrifice is what the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association called the 'heroic offering'; see pp 521-2 and The Pioneer: 'Heroic offering' golden jubilee number (Dublin, 1939).

organisation to give expression to this attitude. We shall examine these developments in more detail later, but they were part of what Professor Emmet Larkin has termed the 'devotional revolution'.¹ Larkin identifies after 1850 a vast improvement in the numbers and calibre of clergy and in the wealth, general organisation and discipline of the church. The increasing zeal and piety of the clergy were reflected in the introduction of a whole series of devotional exercises designed to encourage both more frequent participation in the sacraments and a greater veneration for their beauty and mystery. The new devotions, writes Larkin, were mainly of Roman origin and included the rosary, forty hours, perpetual adoration, novenas, blessed altars, Via Crucis, benediction, vespers, devotion to the sacred heart and to the immaculate conception, jubilees, triduums, pilgrimages, shrines, processions, and retreats. These devotional exercises, moreover, were organised in order to communalise and regularise practice under a spiritual director and included sodalities, confraternities such as the various purgatorian societies, the Society of St Vincent de Paul, and Peter's Pence as well as temperance and altar societies.²

As Larkin indicates temperance, or more accurately total abstinence, was an important element in these new devotions. The bishops' insistence on temperance as a religious issue and the development of an organisation like the Pioneer Association with its devotion to the sacred heart, has therefore to be seen in the context of this upsurge in religious zeal and piety.

¹ Emmet Larkin, 'The devotional revolution in Ireland, 1850-75' in American Historical Review, lxxvii, no. 3 (June 1972), pp 625-52.

² Ibid., pp 644-5. For further discussions bearing upon the devotional revolution see David Miller, 'Irish catholicism and the great famine' in Journal of Social History, ix, no. 1 (Sept. 1975), pp 81-98 and Patrick O'Farrell, Ireland's English question: Anglo-Irish relations, 1534-1970 (London, 1971), pp 223-9.

As we have said the bishops' position on temperance as expressed in 1890 was essentially a moderate one. For a sample of a more committed, and thus more extreme, view we have to turn to the priests who actually organised and led the revival of temperance within the church during the 1870s and 1880s. The diocese of Ferns under bishops Furlong (1857-75) and Warren (1876-84) was a temperance stronghold in Ireland during the period and provided a training ground for several of the leaders of the new movement. The two most notable were Fr James A. Cullen (1841-1921), founder of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association,¹ and Fr Michael Kelly (1850-1940), rector of the Irish college in Rome (1891-1901) and archbishop of Sydney (1911-40).² Both men spent the early years of their priesthood in the House of Missions established at Enniscorthy by Bishop Furlong in 1866, and both, with the encouragement of successive bishops, conducted numerous temperance missions. Kelly's removal to Rome and later Sydney cut short his career as a leader of the Irish catholic temperance movement, but not before he had published two long and important articles on the subject in the Irish Ecclesiastical Record. The articles entitled 'The suppression of intemperance' and 'The catholic temperance movement: the surest way to its success' both appeared in three parts in 1889 and 1891 respectively, and together they

¹ For an account of Cullen's life and temperance work, see below pp 511-35.

² Kelly's papers are held in the diocesan archives, St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney. They include a collection of newspaper clippings, pamphlets and notes, organised by this writer, dealing with the Irish temperance movement from 1865 to 1916. For a description of Kelly's personality and views, see Patrick O'Farrell, The catholic church in Australia: a short history, 1788-1967 (Melbourne, 1968), pp 205-9.

provide a valuable summary of the new thinking on temperance within the Irish catholic church.

The first article in essence outlined the problem, describing the history of intemperance in Ireland and previous efforts to suppress it, and concluded by listing the principles on which a successful movement should be founded. The second, relying to some extent on the 1890 pastoral, set out in detail the aims and basic structures of a catholic temperance movement. While fully recognising the many problems which beset Ireland, Kelly nevertheless was unequivocal in his view that intemperance was Ireland's 'greatest national evil'.¹ But at the same time he argued that it was of relatively recent origin. Pre-Christian Ireland was 'unstained by intemperance, or by sensualism of any kind', and the coming of Christianity had ushered in an age of 'sanctity and learning'. Though the Danish invasion brought 'turbulence and bloodshed among kings and chieftains; ... there was no intemperance'.² The hospitality of the Celt was simple, cordial and abundant. 'If hate was wrathful and affection warm, Christian virtue reigned in Ireland, and the usages that prevailed in regard of food itself were stamped by the very rigorous austerity which in part came down nearly to our own time.'³ While intemperance was rife in England from the fifth century, Ireland knew nothing of it before the twelfth. But the 'Anglo-Normans ... of course, brought with them their characteristic vices; and at once we find "works

¹ Michael Kelly, 'The suppression of intemperance' in Irish Ecclesiastical Record, 3rd ser., x, no. 3 (Mar. 1889), p. 245.

² Ibid., no. 7 (July 1889), p. 623.

³ Ibid., p. 624.

of the flesh", intemperance included, "manifest in Ireland"¹. Still, intemperance mainly prevailed among the rulers while the people were largely uncorrupted. 'By divine favour, faith, hope and charity, and patriotism, were indestructible in Irish hearts; ... and the pastors of the flock, however persecuted and diminished, opposed this all-devouring wolf with saintly zeal and no small success.'² However, in the late seventeenth century for the first time Kelly found evidence of drunkenness among the general catholic population. This spread, 'canker like', and by the latter part of the eighteenth century intemperance had become 'general'. Nor was Kelly in any doubt as to why, after resisting for so long, the Irish people finally succumbed to this 'debasing vice'.

Competent writers ascribe this to the enforced idleness and wretchedness of the people. Confiscations, imprisonments, tortures, &c., had ceased; but legal disabilities debarred Irish youth from the learned professions; industries were suppressed; wholesome education impeded; and the peasantry were held in absolute thralldom and in desperate misery. The poor turned to drink, as the one earthly comfort within their reach. The rich sought in drink a pastime and a pleasure.³

This passage bears a striking resemblance to the views of Dr Drennan⁴ and Thomas Davis,⁵ for here again is what could only be called a nationalistic view of Irish intemperance. Like Davis, Kelly saw the people as driven to drink by oppression, and he went further in laying the

¹ Michael Kelly, 'The suppression of intemperance', p. 624.

² Ibid., p. 625.

³ Ibid., p. 626.

⁴ See above, pp 79-80.

⁵ See above, pp 213-15.

responsibility for the original introduction of drunkenness at the door of the Normans and their heirs, the English rulers of Ireland. Irish history was falsified in order to produce a history of intemperance which would conform to nationalist principles. Responsibility was lifted from the shoulders of the Irish people, where the protestant temperance movement had sought to place it, and transferred to an external agency. Thus were the demands of nationalism satisfied. The gravity of the problem could now be emphasised without fear of offending nationalist sensibilities. So the argument ran that the English had brought intemperance to Ireland, had driven the Irish to excessive drinking by oppression, and continued to encourage it in order to raise revenue and also to keep the people servile. We have seen that temperance was becoming the sign of a good catholic, but in Kelly's view it was the sign of a good Irishman as well. A drunken Irishman was not only the slave of his own evil appetite but easy prey for a tyrannous government. This linkage was to have important consequences for Irish nationalism as well as for the Irish temperance movement. Davis had been premature in his views and they had not taken hold within the Irish nationalist tradition, whether revolutionary or parliamentary. The fenians were notorious for their patronage of public houses both as drinking and meeting places.¹ John Devoy's account of his activities as a fenian recruiter among the Dublin garrison

¹ See for instance the evidence of the magistrates Christopher de Gernon and E.F. Ryan in Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, pp 6-19, H.C. 1867-8 (280), xiv, 564-77; Irish Times, 26 Nov. 1866.

reads in places rather like a guide to the city's more squalid drink shops.¹ But Devoy in his Recollections and Charles Kickham, writing in the Irish People in 1865, denied that fenianism 'usually turned up in a tap-room, and was invariably "under the influence"'.² Certainly the generation of fenian leaders was also the generation of boys and young men who had flocked in such vast numbers to take the total abstinence pledge from Fr Mathew. Such diverse figures within fenianism as John Denvir,³ Charles Kickham and O'Donovan Rossa took the pledge in the 1840s, but, more interestingly, Denvir and Kickham maintained it throughout their lives. However, fenianism had no overall, coherent attitude to temperance. The leadership tended to put the goal of political independence first and to dismiss social problems, like drunkenness, as either enemy propaganda or as distinctly secondary to the primary goal.⁴ At the local level, fenianism fulfilled an important social function, bringing together young men, mainly of the working class, with

¹ John Devoy, Recollections of an Irish rebel (New York, 1929), pp 63-4; for discussions of the army and drink see David Haire, The British army in Ireland, 1868-90 (unpublished M. Litt. thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, 1973), p. 319 and A.J. Semple, The fenian infiltration of the British army in Ireland 1864-7 (unpublished M. Litt. thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, 1971), pp 27, 100.

² Devoy, Recollections, p. 63; Irish People, 17 June 1865. For Kickham's attitude to temperance see his novel, Knocknagow, or the homes of Tipperary (Dublin, 1879) and R.V. Comerford, Charles J. Kickham (unpublished M.A. thesis, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, 1972), p. 6.

³ For a discussion of Denvir and temperance see below, pp 491-2.

⁴ John O'Leary, Recollections of fenians and fenianism (reprint, with intro. by Marcus Bourke, Shannon, 1969, of 1st ed., London, 1896), i, 38.

nationalist inclinations, in the isolated towns and villages of Munster and Leinster and in the cities of Dublin and Belfast. The spirit of fraternity was strong, even if political awareness was not always of a very high order. The public house, with its warmth and conviviality, functioned as an important meeting and socialising centre for such groups. Support for fenianism was correspondingly high among publicans, who made up a substantial number of those arrested as fenians in the late 1860s.¹ As the same time, however, it has to be said that even if fenianism had shown any systematic interest in the anti-drink cause, the conservative Irish temperance movement of the 1860s would doubtless have spurned the attentions of a revolutionary secret society. When we come to examine the home rule movement's attitude to temperance, we shall see that it too was largely hostile, though with significant individual support being given.² But if we look at the nationalist movement from the fall of Parnell to 1916 the picture is rather different. Again we find a romantic, all-encompassing movement, like Young Ireland, not one focused almost exclusively on tactics, like fenianism or home rule. In such a nationalist movement, which considered the moral, physical and intellectual quality of the individual to be a vital issue, temperance had an obvious and important place. There was no room for drunkards among Pearse's warriors, imitating the

¹ R.V. Comerford, Irish nationalist politics, 1858-70 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, 1976), pp 207-11, 219; John Harcourt, sub-inspector, Mullingar, to inspector-general, R.I.C., 10 Feb. 1871 (S.P.O., R.P. 1871/4467).

² For home rule and temperance, see below, pp 430-37.

sober Celts extolled by Michael Kelly, nor among the proletarian vanguard led by Larkin and Connolly. Thus the connection between temperance and nationalism, first hinted at by Drennan in the 1790s, amplified by Davis in the 1840s, and strongly endorsed by Kelly in the 1880s, was to take a prominent place in the puritanical nationalism which developed after the death of Parnell.¹

✓ After explaining how, when and why the Irish people had been corrupted by intemperance, Kelly went on to examine the temperance movement from the 1830s to his own day and especially why it had failed to combat this degradation. Again his interpretation tells us more about his own preconceptions than it does about Irish history. The protestant anti-spirits and total abstinence movements of the 1830s he disposed of in a few sentences. Some Christian, though non-catholic, gentlemen, he wrote, had endeavoured as best they could to organise societies against first spirits and then all strong drinks. 'But they had not the passport to the nation's confidence. They only showed what might be done by those who had the power. This was indeed not a little gain. It was the occasion of Fr Mathew taking total abstinence into serious and practical consideration.'² So to Kelly the temperance movement of the 1830s was only significant in that it paved the way for Fr Mathew. Fr Mathew's failure Kelly ascribed partly to the effects of the famine, but more importantly to the movement's lack of organisation. This latter judgment

¹ For temperance and nationalism in the 1890s see below, pp 531-3.

² Kelly, 'The suppression of intemperance', p. 628.

was to be the great lesson drawn by the catholic temperance movement from Fr Mathew, and 'organisation' was to be the watchword of the later movement. What Fr Mathew needed, according to Kelly, was 'an extended and self-perpetuating organisation'. 'At the bidding of God', wrote Kelly 'he had let down his net; now his nets are breaking on account of the very multitude of fishes, and he has not the needful aid of companions within call'.¹ Kelly in fact acknowledged that Fr Mathew had not received the full support of the church. He noted for instance that the synod of Thurles in 1850 had concluded its deliberations without any official recommendation or recognition of Fr Mathew's work. While acknowledging and approving the church's suspicion of 'novelties', nevertheless he felt that it was a matter for 'regret' that Fr Mathew had been left with no adequate organisation to which he could commend his wonderful reformation. But the church was preoccupied with other apparently more pressing problems and the people were severely demoralised.

Miseries and calamities helped the evil as before, through hopeless prospects and dire distress. Pestilence had prevailed; eviction was rampant; emigration was sweeping away the people. A difficult and dangerous conflict with the enemies of catholic education overcharged the chief pastors. So the 'demon of drink' again gained ground.²

Over the preceding twenty years, however, things had improved as Fr Mathew's principles had been 'vindicated and confirmed' by many a prelate and priest, and even by the pope himself. Kelly reviewed the work in Ireland of

¹ Kelly, 'The suppression of intemperance', p. 631.

² Ibid.

Dr John Spratt, Bishops Furlong and Warren, and Archbishop Leahy and, among the Irish communities overseas, of Cardinals Manning and Moran, Archbishop Ireland and Fr Nugent. And he reproduced the letter from Pope Leo XIII to Archbishop John Ireland of St Paul, Minnesota, dated 27 March 1887, which endorsed total abstinence and the pledge and welcomed the campaign against intemperance within the church.¹ According to Kelly, 'this declaration from the chair of truth, given two years ago, sealed the principles of Fr Mathew with the stamp of perpetuity and catholicity'.² 'Perpetuity' and 'catholicity', like 'organisation', were key elements in the movement that Kelly was seeking to promote. But in his examination of catholic temperance in the 1870s and 1880s Kelly focused especially on the work of Bishop Warren of Ferns, from his consecration in 1876 to his death in 1884. Acknowledging his own 'intimate connection' with the bishop,³ he went on to claim that the bishop's vigorous prosecution of the temperance cause in his own diocese, plus his influence upon Cardinals McCabe and Moran, had been crucial in opening the way for a more general acceptance of the total abstinence movement within the church.⁴ The pope's letter of approval reflected the success of this campaign. We shall have occasion later to examine Kelly's assessment of Bishop Warren's achievement.

In concluding the second part of his article, Kelly wrote: 'the evil, though radical, is not ancient, and it

¹ Kelly, 'The suppression of intemperance', pp 632-43.

² Ibid., pp 635-6.

³ Ibid., p. 637.

⁴ Ibid., p. 641.

has been dealt with effectively for a season - more than once. The general remedy - at home and abroad - is RELIGION.¹ But that religion might be employed effectively, works were required. These were the practical means by which the goal of an end to intemperance in Ireland would be realised. Kelly listed five such works and devoted the third and final part of his article to an elaboration of them. They were:

- 1 unanimous counsel and harmonious action on the part of our priesthood,
- 2 assiduous preaching against intemperate customs,
- 3 prayer, with frequent confession and communion,
- 4 abstinence in accord with the spirit of the church, not only for drunkards, but also, and chiefly, for the young, and for all to whose example the young look up,
- 5 convenient organisation, always religious, or closely allied to religion.²

Again the themes of catholicity and organisation with an emphasis on the young are apparent. Kelly urged the bishops to launch a crusade against intemperance. Acknowledging that 'practical men' might think a time of 'political excitement is inopportune, and fatally so, for the crusade proposed', Kelly then proceeded to turn the argument on its head by claiming that a 'favourable settlement of the most important political questions, and the successful use of the chief political agencies, must be promoted, and even ensured by the suppression of intemperance'.³ The motto of 'Ireland sober is Ireland free' clearly dictated Kelly's approach to nationalist politics. But while an end to Irish drunkenness might facilitate the solution of the country's

¹ Kelly, 'The suppression of intemperance', p. 643.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., no. 12 (Dec. 1889), p. 1106.

political problems, the reverse did not apply - political action alone would not solve the problem of intemperance. Kelly explicitly rejected the legislative tactics employed by prohibitionists, permissive bill advocates and Sunday closers over the preceding thirty years.

Civil legislation [he wrote] is inadequate to deal with moral vices. It can punish evil doers; it can deal with external agencies. In this sphere it can afford valuable assistance; but it cannot reform. The charge of social as of private virtue rests mainly with the church; and for all moral reformation we must look to her.¹

While intemperance was certainly a serious social problem, to the catholic temperance movement it was above all else a sin. Thus the church and not parliament was the proper agency to deal with it.

In his 1891 article, 'The catholic temperance movement: the surest way to its success', Kelly, with the motto 'organisation' as always before his eyes, set out the basic principles and strategy to guide the movement inaugurated by the Leinster bishops in their 1890 pastoral. Their aim, according to Kelly, was 'the promotion of the glory of God and the salvation of souls by the suppression of intemperance'. To this general end there were three principal means: the first was the rescue of the intemperate, the second was the preservation of the temperate, especially the young, and the third was the elevation of society in general above the numerous and fatal temptations to intemperance.² Essentially Kelly saw the total abstinence pledge as the answer to the

¹ Kelly, 'The suppression of intemperance', p.1105.

² Michael Kelly, 'The catholic temperance movement: the surest way to its success' in I.E.R., 3rd ser., xii, no. 1 (Jan. 1891), pp 15-16.

first two problems. With regard to drunkards he was merely reflecting a long-standing view in the temperance movement, both catholic and protestant, but in proposing that a total abstinence pledge without limit of time be administered to children he was adopting an extreme position even within the catholic movement.¹ However, his thinking was in line with the tendency of the temperance movement, which we have repeatedly observed, to adopt absolutist positions like total abstinence or prohibition.

The third means adumbrated by Kelly, the 'general elevation' of society, posed a much more difficult problem. Like the anti-spirits advocates of the 1830s, Kelly felt that public opinion needed to be enlightened as to the true nature of drink and that the many social customs which enshrined drinking had to be abolished.² But, unlike his predecessors, Kelly put little faith in 'human means alone'. He did not believe for instance that science, legislation, knowledge or consciousness of sin were sufficient remedies of themselves. But he did not despair. Like Haughton and Russell he was a never-failing optimist. 'Withal we say: Nil desperandum! Cannot catholic Ireland, by her faith which "overcometh the world", overcome one vice, and that a vice from which even the Turk is free?'³ Kelly's answer to the dilemma was again similar to that of the anti-spirits movement: it was the creation of an elite who by their example would ultimately

¹ Kelly, 'The catholic temperance movement', no. 2 (Feb. 1891), p. 166.

² Ibid., no. 3 (Mar. 1891), p. 242.

³ Ibid., pp 242-3.

sway the mass. And he quoted St Augustine in support of this tactic: 'first the spiritual will be moved, or those who are nearly spiritual; and afterwards by their authority and gentle yet urgent admonitions, the multitude will be induced to give way'.¹ The elite proposed by Kelly were to be especially pious catholics bound together by the total abstinence pledge, taken as an 'heroic offering' in order to redeem their erring fellow countrymen.

We find [he wrote] that total abstinence practised by an organised association, comprising especially the good and perfect members of society, and established upon a basis widespread as may be, is the surest, if not the only sure, means of procuring the necessary reformation of the popular notions and usages which lead to and perpetuate intemperance, despite all opposition, social and religious.²

Here we have set out the essential principle of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart, the major temperance organisation in twentieth-century Ireland.

Kelly left for Rome the year that his second article appeared, but Fr James Cullen, his friend and fellow temperance worker from Enniscorthy, in these years 1889 to 1891 had been slowly developing many of the chief features of the pioneers, though the association did not emerge in its completed form till 1901.³

The Irish temperance movement in the nineteenth century, as we have examined it in this chapter, takes a curiously circular course. Beginning as an elitist movement based

¹ Kelly 'The catholic temperance movement', p. 247. The quote came from a letter of St Augustine to Aurelius, bishop of Carthage, dealing with the suppression of intemperate abuses.

² Ibid., p. 256.

³ For a discussion of Cullen's life and work see below, pp 511-35.

largely on the protestant middle class, which was attempting to bolster both its moral and socio-economic status, it became, in turn, a mass catholic crusade for social and political advancement, again a largely protestant middle-class campaign, though this time for mass reformation through coercive legislation, and finally, an elitist catholic association with strong devotional and nationalist overtones, organised from within the church. Through these various metamorphoses the arguments for temperance or total abstinence, first laid down in the 1820s and 1830s, remained fairly constant, though with significant changes in emphasis usually dictated by tactical considerations. Thus the campaign for coercive legislation in the 1860s and 1870s in appealing to M.P.s tended to dwell upon the socio-economic problems caused by intemperance, while the catholic temperance movement of the 1880s and 1890s was more alive to the spiritual evils which resulted from excessive drinking. Perhaps less obviously the Irish temperance movement also had important political implications, Loyalists saw in it a means of relieving socio-economic distress, of promoting law and order, and of making Ireland more amenable to British government. Nationalists, on the other hand, when they did not dismiss temperance as evangelical fanaticism or a plot to discredit the good name of the Irish people, saw that it could be used as a powerful weapon to promote thrift, discipline, and self-respect among the ranks of those struggling for Irish freedom. In this view intemperance became a British plot, encouraged by Ireland's rulers in order to raise revenue and to keep the population degenerate and submissive. The

various incarnations of the Irish temperance movement are indeed impressive for it could be both loyalist and nationalist, religious and secular, popular and elitist, catholic and protestant. Thus during the course of the nineteenth century the banner of temperance was carried by a remarkable variety of Irishmen and for an equally remarkable variety of reasons, many having little to do with the actual effects of drink.

CHAPTER THREE

AFTER FR MATHEW: THE TEMPERANCE REVIVAL OF THE 1850s AND 1860s

And we, among the rest, shall strive
These healing truths to keep alive,
Which Mathew spread o'er all the land;
Well aided by a faithful band,
Of whom a portion still survive
His glorious efforts to revive,
Until the happy end be gained,
And home enjoy what vice maintained.

Irish Temperance Star, i, no. 1 (Jan. 1866), p. 14.

Contrast the present time with the time of the erection of the statue to Father Mathew [in Cork in 1864]. The enthusiasm of the people then, the crowds on that day, their joy in its erection, their exultant pride;... And now where does he stand? Is it in a park surrounded with nature's foliage? No! in the street of St Patrick, where he is surrounded with everything offensive to his teachings. On the steps of the monument too often the drunkard sleeps off the sleep of drunkenness. On his right hand and on his left hand are the ever-flowing fountains of drink, flowing through all the hours of the day, and late into the night.

Mrs J.F. Maguire, Father Mathew and his times: the contrast of the present with the past (Dublin, 1903), pp 8-9.

The catholic church and Fr Mathew's disciples

Although Fr Mathew lived on, physically and emotionally exhausted, till December 1856, the movement that he had launched was effectively over by 1846.¹ Whether it was destroyed by the famine, or whether the famine only accelerated an existing decline, is arguable.² But, either way, the temperance cause was eclipsed in Ireland from the late 1840s into the 1860s. In retrospect, however, one can clearly see the seeds of a revival in the 1850s. Activities in England, such as the establishment of the United Kingdom Alliance in 1853, and in the United States, especially the passing of a prohibitory law in the state of Maine in 1851, were to prove important stimuli to the cause in Ireland. Indigenous events also played their part. Ulster saw the establishment of the Irish Temperance League in 1858, and in 1859 the province was swept by a great religious revival which focused attention on the problem of intemperance. In the south, from 1857 various catholic bishops tried to introduce Sunday closing in their dioceses, while in Dublin Haughton and Spratt laboured on tirelessly.

In these various activities two significant trends are observable, and both, in different ways, constituted a reaction against the mass, ecumenical crusade led by Fr Mathew. Firstly the protestant wing of the Irish temperance movement came increasingly to look to parliament for legislative action against the drink trade. The catholic wing,

¹ Patrick Rogers, Father Theobald Mathew: apostle of temperance (Dublin, 1943), pp 141-6; F.J. Mathew, Father Mathew: his life and times (London, 1890), p. 217.

² Cornelius Lucey, 'Father Theobald Mathew' in Irish Ecclesiastical Record, 5th ser., lxxxv, no. 12 (Dec. 1956), pp 369-76.

on the other hand, was brought slowly under the control of the hierarchy and integrated into existing church organisations. The Irish temperance movement from the death of Fr Mathew to the rise of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association at the end of the century, illustrates the working-out of these two trends. Contrary to Fr Mathew's wishes, the movement took on a distinctly sectarian character, with the various churches forming their own societies and adopting different tactics. The centenary of Fr Mathew's birth, which was celebrated in 1890, saw in Ireland a temperance movement stronger and better organised than it had been at his death, but more divided and institutionalised, and appealing to a significantly smaller section of the population.

Following the rapid decline of Fr Mathew's movement, the catholic hierarchy was left distinctly suspicious of the temperance cause. Paul Cullen, while still in Rome, had corresponded with Fr Mathew and been generous in his offers of assistance. 'Should I have it in my power to do anything to promote the cause you are engaged in', he wrote in October 1841 'I will not fail to show my readiness to assist '. Fr Mathew had written seeking help after he had been attacked by clerical critics, most notably Archbishop MacHale of Tuam. He requested that his obedience be transferred from his immediate superiors to the Sacred Congregation, so as to afford him greater freedom to carry on his crusade. Cullen arranged for him to be appointed missionary-apostolic of the Capuchin order in Ireland, and commented: 'I regretted greatly to learn that persons high in dignity in Ireland

were beginning to give you public opposition. Our poor country has always had the misfortune to see its best interests ruined by dissensions or by jealousy'. At the same time, however, Cullen showed that he himself had reservations about Fr Mathew's methods.

In some of the sermons preached by you or attributed to you in the public papers [Cullen continued], you appear to entertain sentiments too liberal towards protestants in the matter of religion. I suppose there is no real foundation for this complaint except in the report of newspapers which are generally incorrect. However it is well to be cautious. We should entertain most expansive sentiments of charity towards protestants but at the same time we should let them know that there is but one true church and that they are strayed sheep from the old fold.¹

Archbishop MacHale had objected to the life-long total abstinence pledge, considering it to be impractical; to Fr Mathew's habit of travelling from diocese to diocese without the approval of his superiors; to the commercial aspects of the crusade, especially the selling of medals and cards; and last, but not least, to Fr Mathew's efforts to win the support of protestants.² Other bishops agreed: Bishop Denvir of Down and Connor, for instance, who also did not approve the protestant tone of the movement and did not want Fr Mathew preaching in Belfast.³ In trying to placate Denvir in 1845, Fr Mathew wrote a public letter in which he stated that his 'great object' was to 'connect teetotalism with religion, and to place the parish priest at the head of the Roman Catholic members of our sacred society'. But this effort to placate

¹ Peadar MacSuibhne (ed.), Paul Cullen and his contemporaries, with their letters from 1820 to 1902 (Naas, County Kildare, 1962), ii, 8-11; Rogers, Father Theobald Mathew, pp 74-6.

² Ulick Bourke, The life and times of the Most Rev. John MacHale (4th ed., New York, 1902), pp 137-9.

³ Rogers, op. cit., p. 58.

the hierarchy only succeeded in bringing forth an angry charge of sectarianism from James Haughton, one of the movement's leading protestant supporters.¹ As criticism descended on him from all sides, Fr Mathew wrote despairingly:

The condition of this country is most extraordinary. No one can assist or advise the people for their advantage without having sinister motives attributed to him. The evangelical party oppose me because I am strengthening (as they term it) the scandals of popery. The nationalist party oppose me for upholding the landlords by enabling by temperance the people to pay high rents. Yet, I have no object in view but to redeem my countrymen from shame, degradation, misery and crime.²

Another major contentious issue was the life-long total abstinence pledge which Fr Mathew imposed. MacHale felt that it was asking too much of people, given 'man's weak nature', to insist that they pledge themselves for life, and he would only demand one-, two-, or at most five-year pledges.³ James Dowling, parish priest at Mulifarnham, near Mullingar, wrote to Fr Mathew in July 1840 on the subject of the pledge. He had assumed initially, he said, that anyone could withdraw from his pledge if he wished, but now it was suggested that the pledge should be binding indefinitely.

The idea [he wrote] of having the whole people of a country bound for life to abstain from a thing lawful in itself when not abused, has startled many and has hindered some of the priests from joining or giving full sanction to the society... There is also a great anxiety to know whether you regard the obligation of the pledge as a mere obligation of honour or whether you regard it as binding in conscience per se and exclusive of all scandal and if so you regard it as so binding sub gravi or not?⁴

¹ [James Haughton] to Fr Mathew, 21 Nov. 1845 (Capuchin friary, Raheny, Mathew correspondence, uncatalogued).

² Quoted in H.B.P. Shaw, *The life and times of Fr Theobald Mathew* (unpublished M.A. thesis, University College, Cork, 1939), p. 280.

³ Bourke, Most Rev. John MacHale, p. 138.

⁴ James Dowling to Fr Mathew, 31 July 1840 (Capuchin friary, Raheny, Mathew correspondence, uncatalogued).

The total abstinence pledge had been devised by protestants and, in the absence of formal endorsement by the Irish hierarchy or by Rome, many doubted that it was binding upon catholics. The issue was debated widely in the church and discussed at length by Frederick Lucas in the Tablet, and the general feeling was that Fr Mathew's view of the pledge as binding was not justified.¹ Even in the diocese of Ferns, later to be the stronghold of the catholic temperance movement, Fr Mathew found that he was not welcome. The bishop, Dr Keating, did not want the apostle of temperance to enter his diocese as he felt that a movement lacking the full cooperation of the clergy was bound to fail, and in failing it would do more harm than good.²

The decline of the temperance crusade from the middle of the 1840s thus seemed to vindicate its critics, and it certainly left the church with little enthusiasm for a new venture into the field. Catholic temperance advocates would in future eschew the tactics used by Fr Mathew, while at the same time praising his admirable intentions. Cooperation with protestants and the emerging movement for licensing reform, dominated by protestants, was minimal. Moreover, the unresolved problem of the church's attitude to the total abstinence pledge continued to be a major obstacle. The synod of Thurles in 1850 pointedly made no reference to the temperance crusade. We have already noted that in 1889 Michael Kelly regretted this fact and attributed it to the church's natural suspicion of novelties and its preoccupation at the

¹ Lambert McKenna, Life and work of Rev. James Aloysius Cullen, S.J. (London, 1924), p. 305.

² Ibid.

time with the land and education questions.¹ But, doubtless, the hostility to Fr Mathew's methods felt by many of the clergy was another reason for not raising what could have been a divisive issue.

During his primacy it was clear that Cardinal Cullen did not consider temperance a vital issue on a par with the various political, economic and educational questions which confronted him. His lenten pastorals usually contained a strong but rather conventional condemnation of the evils of drunkenness, and this altered little over the years. His 1865 pastoral is typical:

As to drunkenness, dearly beloved, all we shall say is, that it is a most disgraceful and fatal sin. It deprives man of the use of his most noble faculty, and sinks him to the level of the brute; it entails disease and sickness on his shaken limbs, it shortens his unhappy days, and oftentimes brings on an unprovided and an untimely death. How many tradesmen have been reduced to the lowest state of destitution by indulging in drink! How often do they bring disgrace and infamy, and ruin on their wives and children! How many are now pining away in want, who, if they had been temperate, might have happy homes and cheerful families! How many other crimes have their origin in drunkenness, such as illegal combination in secret societies, faction fights, public assaults, and scandalous immoralities! Would to God that the drunkard, entering into himself, would consider how fallen and degraded is his state; how he is scoffed at by all, how he is despised by the world, how he is trusted by none. And if his fate be sad in this world, what will it be in the next, when his lot will be in burning fire, and when he shall have to suffer an unceasing thirst for having in the present time gratified the cravings of his corrupt appetite?²

This attack on drunkenness for the physical and economic damage it caused, as much as the moral, avoided the controversies of total abstinence by simply proposing no specific remedy for the evil. Only in 1857, following the death of Fr Mathew, did a more urgent note enter into Cullen's lenten pastoral, and

¹ See above, p. 266.

² P.F. Moran (ed.), The pastoral letters and other writings of Cardinal Cullen (Dublin, 1882), ii, 342-3.

again in 1867, when an Irish Sunday closing bill was before parliament, and Cullen urged legislation to impose total Sunday closing.¹

In the latter year Cullen, with ten other bishops, signed a declaration addressed to the Irish M.P.s, supporting legislation to prohibit Sunday trading.² Henry Wigham and Dr Spratt, the honorary secretaries of the Irish Sunday Closing Association, discussed the question with Cullen in letters and at two personal interviews, and apparently secured his support.³ However, before the select committee investigating Irish Sunday closing in 1888, Dr P.J. Tynan, who had been Cullen's secretary from 1872 till his death, claimed that the cardinal had been deceived by the association. Tynan was himself strongly opposed to the closing of public houses on Sunday, believing that it would only lead to an increase in home drinking and in illegal drinking in shebeens and bogus clubs. Moreover, he considered the motivation behind the demand for Sunday closing was essentially protestant-inspired sabbatarianism. Yet Cullen had been a vice-president of the I.S.C.A. But, according to Tynan,

Cardinal Cullen was not in favour of Sunday closing; he was in favour of earlier closing on Saturday evenings... I remember on one occasion a deputation came asking Cardinal Cullen to support Sunday closing, and he refused to do so, unless early closing on Saturday evening was added. The deputation gave him a distinct promise (at least I had it from his own lips; I was not present) that they would add on early Saturday closing to Sunday closing. On that condition his name appeared as a promoter of what you call

¹ Moran (ed.), The pastoral letters of Cardinal Cullen, i, 474-5; iii, 57.

² Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, p. 128, H.C. 1867-8 (280), xlv, 686.

³ Report from the select committee on Sunday closing acts (Ireland), p. 276, H.C. 1888 (255), xix, 276.

the Sunday closing association, but he was very bitterly disappointed when he saw afterwards that early Saturday closing was not added on according to the promise given him. He was in favour of Sunday closing; that is to say he would give in on that point if the Sunday closing association would give in upon the other.¹

T.W. Russell, who was a member of the select committee, questioned Tynan closely on this point, obviously feeling that his evidence was damaging to the Sunday closing cause. He also took up the matter with Henry Wigham, who was the next witness to appear. Wigham maintained stoutly that Cullen had indeed supported Sunday closing of itself, and quoted from a letter to this effect written by the cardinal to the association in October 1876.² He conceded that Cullen was probably 'even more in favour of early Saturday closing than of total Sunday closing', but denied that he had made his support for Sunday closing conditional upon the association accepting early Saturday closing. Wigham concluded by claiming that Tynan was mistaken and had confused events in his mind.³ However, in a letter apologising for his inability to attend a conference organised by the association in December 1873, Cullen had said:

In order to give greater efficacy to so laudable an object, I beg to say that it is necessary that steps should also be taken to secure the early closing of public houses on Saturday evenings. If this be not done the movement against the sale of liquors on Sunday will not produce the desired effect. Many of the working classes, having received their week's wages, forgetful of the necessities of their families too, spend on Saturday night in a few hours all, or a great part of what they had earned by hard labour and the sweat of their brow during the preceding days. Hence they often spend the Sunday without thinking of God or religion.⁴

¹ Report from the select committee on Sunday closing acts (Ireland), 1888, p. 270.

² Ibid., p. 283.

³ Ibid., p. 285.

⁴ Freeman's Journal, 10 Dec. 1873.

This letter would certainly seem to support Tynan's claim that Cullen considered Saturday closing as important as Sunday closing. He must therefore have been very disappointed when the I.S.C.A. did not take up the former issue. As evidence presented to the various select committees investigating Irish licensing laws showed that in Dublin at least Saturday night was the most popular drinking time, the association's rejection of Cullen's view certainly suggested that it was motivated by other than practical considerations.¹

Tynan, who had also been secretary to Cardinal McCabe from his accession in 1878 to his death in 1885, went on to state that McCabe too had been no friend of the Sunday closing movement. When Russell pointed out that McCabe had signed a declaration in favour of Sunday closing, Tynan replied that in private McCabe had withdrawn his support.

Cardinal McCabe [he said] was worried very much by many persons before his death, and his failing health made him approve of certain things which afterwards he disapproved of, and amongst those was the declaration which he signed in favour of Sunday closing.²

There is plenty of evidence to support Tynan's claim. For instance, while a parish priest at Kingstown, McCabe had given evidence before the 1868 select committee on Sunday closing. Then, he had indeed opposed Sunday closing and advocated early Saturday closing as a more worthwhile remedy. He felt that public houses 'should be left open sufficiently long to afford poor people an opportunity of getting the

¹ See above, pp 110-21 for a discussion of Dublin drinking patterns.

² Report from the select committee on Sunday closing acts (Ireland), 1888, p. 271.

refreshment which they might naturally be expected to look for on Sundays'.¹ The hours he proposed were 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. in winter and 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. in summer. He wanted to do away with the practice of men going straight from mass to the public houses and believed that putting the opening hour back from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. would achieve this. Also he wanted the public houses to close during the daylight hours as he thought that men would be less likely to get drunk if they knew they would have to go home without the protection of darkness. As for Saturday, he suggested closing at 9 p.m. instead of 11 p.m. He felt that this would compel employers to pay their workers earlier and there would thus be more likelihood of the wages going to the family rather than to the publican.²

But, as Tynan suggests, by the early 1880s McCabe's views had become considerably less coherent. In February 1882 he spoke at the first anniversary of the Father Mathew Temperance Hall in Halston Street, Dublin. Although the hall was operated under the auspices of the Father Mathew Total Abstinence Society, McCabe chose in his speech to attack total abstinence. He urged total abstainers not to 'put themselves forward as censor of those who might very likely be better than themselves', but who had not taken the pledge. 'He did not wish [he said] to convey to them that every bishop should be a teetotaller, and further, he did not wish to make them understand that every priest was bound to

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 105/663.

² Ibid., pp 106-7/664-5.

become a teetotaler. Some people could not get on without the use of spirituous drinks, and, indeed, those who could get on without them deserved little credit for abstaining.' And he urged total abstainers to be 'temperate in advocating the cause of temperance'.¹ This speech evidently provoked controversy. Fr Mitchell, president of the society, preserved a copy of it in a private notebook, plus a copy of a letter written by McCabe a week later that sought to clarify his views. Describing total abstinence as a 'prescription of stern necessity' or a 'precaution of wise prudence', he went on to ask, 'are there not many of us who are called on by the law of charity to stretch forth a hand to a perishing brother, and by the example of a generous sacrifice to encourage him to rise from his misery?' The tone is far more accepting of total abstinence than had been his recent speech, and may have signalled a diplomatic retreat on McCabe's part.² In June of the same year the Father Mathew Total Abstinence Society called on McCabe to unite all the total abstinence societies in the archdiocese, 'so that we may have all the same fundamental rules, help one another, interchange ideas with one another'. But McCabe did not take up the suggestion, and in his reply was more preoccupied with political issues. 'The secret societies, he was afraid, had got a terrible hold on their country', and he advised them to 'repudiate all politics in connection with their association ... whether Tory, home rule, repeal, or anything else'.³ Tynan's specific claim that McCabe, before his

¹ F.J., 14 Feb. 1882.

² Notebook of Fr D.A. Mitchell, O.S.F.C. (Capuchin friary, Raheny, uncatalogued).

³ Ibid.

death, repudiated the declaration he had earlier signed in favour of Sunday closing, is confirmed by another source. In June 1884 Dr Lyons, home rule M.P. for Dublin city, read to the commons a letter written by McCabe on 18 February 1884. McCabe said that the clergy of Dublin were divided on the issue of Sunday closing, though most wanted shorter hours on both Saturday and Sunday rather than total Sunday closing. Referring to the declaration in favour of Sunday closing which he had signed, he said: 'I feel now that I should not have been persuaded to sign the document in question'. And he went on to propose as a compromise Saturday closing at 10 p.m. and Sunday trading hours of 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.¹

Both Cullen and McCabe were obviously reluctant to commit themselves to the temperance cause. Neither endorsed total abstinence, for the pledge remained suspect in catholic circles. By focusing almost exclusively on Sunday closing, the campaign for licensing reform raised for many catholics the spectre of sabbatarianism. Tynan certainly believed that the preoccupation with Sunday and the tendency to consider Saturday less significant, though heavy drinking in towns and cities usually began on Saturday night, proved that the temperance movement was less interested in the drink problem and more in imposing 'certain pharisaical views regarding the observance of the sabbath'.² In other words, temperance remained in the eyes of many catholics what it had originally been, before Fr Mathew's crusade, a protestant-inspired movement.

¹ Hansard 3, cclxxxix, 1599.

² Report from the select committee on Sunday closing acts (Ireland), 1888, p. 267.

Despite this hostility to sabbatarianism, there had been in the 1850s and 1860s a movement from within the catholic hierarchy in favour of Sunday closing. The archbishop of Cashel and the bishops of Ferns, Kilmore, Clogher, Ossory and Galway had all established Sunday closing of public houses in their dioceses.¹ The movement was begun by Dr Thomas Furlong in Ferns in 1857, though its most vocal advocate was Dr Patrick Leahy, archbishop of Cashel from 1857 to 1875. Furlong and Leahy, in their largely rural dioceses, were chiefly concerned with 'circumstantial' drinking - excessive drinking after mass on Sunday, on holydays, or at markets - rather than with the regular Saturday night and Sunday drinking which characterised Dublin and the large towns. Furlong began his campaign in his cathedral town of Enniscorthy, with a temperance mission which culminated on the Feast of SS Peter and Paul, 29 June, in 1857. He called on publicans not to sell drink on that day or on future Sundays and festivals of obligation. In the following autumn he issued a pastoral letter on temperance, ordering a novena for the conversion of drunkards and the suppression of intemperance to be celebrated before the Feast of All Saints. Then he slowly extended his prohibition of the sale and purchase of drink on Sundays and holydays to the whole of the diocese. Various other devotional exercises were introduced associated with temperance, and Furlong went so far as to ban the holding

¹ Report from the select committee on Sunday closing acts (Ireland), 1888, p. 286; for the work of Dr Nicholas Conaty in Kilmore, see F.J., 20 Mar. 1868, and for Dr Charles MacNally in Clogher, see MacNally to the priests of the diocese, 28 Oct. 1862 (P.R.O.N.I., Clogher diocesan papers, DIO(RC) 1/10C/8).

of fairs on holydays.¹ He also established temperance sodalities and was the first bishop to introduce at confirmation the pledge of total abstinence till the age of twenty-one.²

Archbishop Leahy had been a great admirer of Fr Mathew and on his accession he resolved to promote a temperance crusade in Cashel. He explained his methods in some detail to the 1868 select committee on Sunday closing.

I have devoted myself to the work of propagating temperance among the people by a variety of ways and means: sometimes by administering pledges of temperance for a long or short time, according to the nature of the case, sometimes by exhortation as I went through the diocese performing the duty of visitation, but the principal means that I had recourse to for the purpose of enforcing temperance through the diocese, and especially on Sundays, was what we call in our diocese the Sunday temperance law.³

Leahy was concerned to avoid Fr Mathew's mistake in imposing life-long total abstinence pledges. In 1863 he said: 'A pledge for life, except in rare instances, or of total abstinence, except in the case of confirmed drunkards, I have seldom, if ever, administered, preferring easy temporary pledges as more likely to do good to the mass of the people'.⁴ Also in Sunday closing he thought he had found a new and important weapon in the struggle against intemperance.

¹ Michael Kelly, 'The suppression of intemperance' in I.E.R., 3rd ser., x, no. 7 (July 1889), pp 632-2.

² Pastoral letters of Bishop Furlong of Ferns for 1865, 1867 and 1871 (St Mary's Cathedral archives, Sydney, Kelly papers, uncatalogued); McKenna, Cullen, pp 306-7.

³ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 20/578.

⁴ Limerick Reporter, 24 Apr. 1863, quoted in Christopher O'Dwyer, The life of Dr Leahy, 1806-75 (unpublished M.A. thesis, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, 1970), p. 649.

Sunday closing had been introduced in Scotland in 1854 and had been tried unsuccessfully in England in 1855, and its clerical advocates in Ireland were probably influenced by these events. Leahy's 'law' laid down that:

Whosoever, unless in the case of necessity, of which the clergy in their respective parishes are the judges, buys or sells anything spirituous on a Sunday, in a licensed or unlicensed house, is hereby deprived of the use of the sacraments, by the withdrawal of faculties from the clergy until the person transgressing presents himself or herself to the bishop of the diocese. ¹

Leahy insisted on dealing with breakers of the law personally, and reproved priests who took it upon themselves to grant absolution. ² He demanded that each transgressor come to him, 'even from the most distant parts of the diocese', and he induced Sunday drinkers to tell him where they had bought liquor. Having thus uncovered the offending publican, Leahy instructed the parish priest to visit the seller and remonstrate with him. ³

Again probably influenced by Fr Mathew's failure, Leahy was extremely cautious in introducing his Sunday 'law'. He had introduced it first by degrees, as I went from one parish to another in the visitations: it was a kind of experiment. I did not introduce it altogether, or at once, till I had felt my way, and made sure that I could induce the people to observe it. I tried it first in one parish, and then in another, until I had gone through the greater part of the diocese, and then I made it a general regulation. I had been trying it two or three years in that way, up to 1861, when I made it a rule for the entire diocese. ⁴

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 22/580.

² D.K. Lanigan, P.P., Abington, Murroe, Limerick, to Archbishop Leahy, 22 Dec. 1873 (N.L.I., Leahy papers, no. 49, P 6010).

³ Report ... 1867-8, op. cit., p. 23/581.

⁴ Ibid., p. 20/578; Pastoral letter on temperance of the Most Rev. Dr Leahy to the clergy and people of Cashel and Emly (Thurles, 1861).

Leahy told the 1868 committee that his aim was two-fold: to prevent drunkenness and also desecration of the Lord's Day. He considered Sunday drunkenness a major problem, remarking that 'in the towns throughout my diocese most disgraceful scenes used to take place on the Sunday; and it was the principal object with me to prevent that unchristian desecration of the Lord's Day'. Since the 'law' had been operating, Leahy said he now felt that 'Sunday was really the Lord's Day'.¹ Leahy was clearly not troubled by the question of sabbatarianism. Travellers were exempted from the rule, they being defined as persons who had travelled at least seven Irish miles, and they could apply to any public house for service on Sunday. It was then up to the publican to decide if they were indeed bona fide travellers. As we have seen, exemptions were also made in cases of what the 'law' termed 'necessity', and here, if possible, the parish priest was to be the judge.²

Besides introducing the Sunday 'law' and administering the pledge, Leahy adopted other means to encourage temperance. He established the Pious Society for the Conversion of Poor Sinners given to Drinking. The society admitted two categories of members, the temperate and those who were anxious to reform from a life of drunkenness. The aim of the society was to encourage moderation in drinking and to promote the Sunday 'law'. However, former drunkards were required to abstain completely from drink, at least for a trial period of one year before becoming full members of the

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 23/581.

² Ibid., p. 20/578.

society. Leahy also sought to promote temperance through other diocesan organisations, like young men's societies. Side by side with this, he enforced the ban on drinking at wakes and funerals, which had been in operation for many years, but had fallen into disuse. The law prohibited drinking until after the burial had taken place. Leahy revived the rule in 1862 and ordered it to be read in church once a quarter.¹

In 1868 Leahy testified that, to his knowledge, the people of the diocese reckoned the Sunday temperance 'law' to be the 'greatest possible blessing'.² Committals for drunkenness to the Cashel bridewell, for instance, had declined from 522 in 1858 to 184 in 1867, while, over the same period, committals for Sunday drunkenness had declined from 97 to nil.³ Violations of the 'law', according to Leahy, were 'extremely venial, no more than a glass of beer, or something as small as that'. However, the town of Tipperary did not observe the 'law' as scrupulously as the rest of the archdiocese, mainly because several publicans insisted on keeping their houses open.⁴ As to protestant attitudes, Leahy stated that there were only two public houses owned by protestants. One of these had stayed open on Sunday, hoping thereby to gain extra business, but the owner then had great difficulty in getting his licence renewed by the magistrates, who were

¹ Dwyer, Dr Leahy, p. 653.

² Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 20/578.

³ Denis O'Kearney, Cashel bridewell, to Archbishop Leahy, 20 Mar. 1868 (N.L.I., Leahy papers, no. 30, P 6009).

⁴ Ibid., and 19 Apr. 1868 (N.L.I., Leahy papers, no. 37, P 6009).

also protestants. The licence was finally renewed, but only on condition that the publican observe the Sunday temperance 'law'. Leahy was clearly extremely conscientious in enforcing Sunday closing, throwing the full weight of his considerable authority behind the Sunday 'law'. He even threatened to deny Christian burial to breakers.¹ However, the results of his efforts were not quite as impressive as he claimed. The 'law', for instance, did not apply to holydays when a great deal of drinking occurred at markets and fairs. Leahy tried to have fairs prohibited on church holydays, but Sir Robert Peel, who introduced a bill to regulate fairs and markets in 1862, replied that this was 'hardly possible' and despite further efforts by Leahy, the 'law' was never extended to these days as it had been in Ferns.² Reports from county inspectors, ordered by the chief secretary in 1867, prior to the select committee, generally agreed that the rule worked well with regard to Sunday.³ But, while the R.M. for Tipperary, Christopher de Gernon, who had arrived in the area in 1863, praised the effects of the 'law' in lowering crime and disorder, he pointed out that the people of County Tipperary 'were as much addicted to drinking ... as they are in any other place on weekdays'.⁴ Moreover faction fighting, though much diminished, continued to be a problem and was frequently associated with drinking at fairs. In 1861 and 1862 and again between 1872 and 1874 there were

¹ O'Dwyer, Dr Leahy, p. 657.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 658.

⁴ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, pp 6-7/564-5.

flare-ups of faction fighting in the diocese of Emly. Leahy organised retreats, issued pastorals and upheld the Sunday 'law' in the face of these outbreaks.¹

Another problem for the archbishop was the attitude of his clergy. Leahy was not particularly popular among them and found it difficult to enforce his wishes. 'It is evident' wrote one of them, Fr O'Carroll, in his diary in December 1863, 'that he aspires to be a big man before the country, while in his own diocese he is the reverse'.² The elections of 1857, 1866 and 1868, for instance, produced deep political divisions among the clergy, charges of riot, bribery and intimidation being levelled against them. Even Leahy himself and one of his brothers were implicated in electoral bribery by an investigation in 1870, which recommended that the borough of Cashel be abolished and included in County Tipperary.³ Many of his priests disagreed with his very conservative political views and with his extravagant plans for the building of Thurles Cathedral; and O'Carroll, at least, was irritated by the amount of time the archbishop insisted on devoting to the Sunday temperance question. O'Carroll sourly described the 'law' as Leahy's 'hobby horse', and remarked that it was 'almost his never-failing theme of conversation among a gathering of priests'.⁴

¹ O'Dwyer, Dr Leahy, pp 671-7; Patrick O'Donnell, The Irish faction fighters of the nineteenth century (Dublin, 1975), pp 46-63.

² Quoted in O'Dwyer, op. cit., p. 604.

³ Minutes of the evidence taken before the select committee on the Tipperary election petition, with the proceedings of the committee, H.C. 1867 (211), viii; Report of the commissioners appointed for the purpose of making inquiry into the existence of corrupt practices at the last election for Cashel, H.C. 1870 [C 9], xxxii.

⁴ O'Dwyer, op. cit., p. 654.

Leahy's decision to take charge of the enforcement of the Sunday 'law' may thus have reflected, not only his own enthusiasm, but the unreliability of his clergy.

If Leahy had difficulty in extracting obedience from his own clergy, he was equally unsuccessful in convincing his fellow bishops with regard to the temperance issue. He said in 1868 that he believed one reason why so few bishops had followed his example was that Sunday closing was extremely difficult to enforce. He emphasised that 'what we have done was attended with a great deal of trouble; it required constant vigilance and exertion'. And he went on to say

I feel pretty sure that the reason why the other bishops have not done the same thing has been that they apprehended that the experiment might not succeed, and that, if it succeeded for a short time, it could not be upheld; that, I suppose was the reason why not more than two or three have made a similar attempt.¹

Or, to put it in other words, the bishops feared that Sunday closing would follow the same course as Fr Mathew's crusade, and be only a transient success. Leahy was equally unsuccessful in convincing M.P.s of the need for Sunday closing legislation, though he argued for it strongly before the 1868 select committee.

Despite the apparent success of his rule in Cashel, Leahy was by no means convinced that it would work in the rest of Ireland. In fact, he felt that in cities such as Dublin, Cork and Limerick, it would simply be impractical. The authority of the clergy would not be sufficient in such places to close all the public houses, and, even if only a few remained open, in a short time the rule would be

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 24/582.

undermined. 'Nothing' said Leahy, 'could arrest intemperance in large towns but an act of parliament'.

Where the voice of the minister of religion would not be heeded either by the publican or by the man given to drink, the strong arm of the law would shut the door of the public house in spite of both the publican and the drunkard. If the secular and ecclesiastical authorities all through the country were to go hand-in-hand, each supplementing the work of the other, they would be irresistible.¹

As for the nature of the proposed legislation, Leahy would hear of nothing short of total, compulsory Sunday closing. He rejected shorter hours, the permissive principle, the selling of liquor only with meals or only for consumption off the premises, as well as the selling of beer only on Sundays. 'I think' he said 'every measure, short of the total closing of public houses on Sunday, would be altogether inefficacious, or at least to a great measure inefficacious'.² This answer was elicited by a question from N.D. Murphy, M.P. for Cork city, and a staunch opponent of temperance legislation.³ The bill that the committee was examining aimed essentially to shorten Sunday hours and was sponsored by Myles O'Reilly, M.P. for Longford, a friend of Leahy's. But, by insisting on total closing as the only measure likely to achieve results, Leahy was playing into the hands of the bill's opponents and providing them with ammunition to use against it. The committee did not in fact accept Leahy's views and endorse

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, pp 21/578, 25/583.

² Ibid., p. 27/585.

³ We shall hear more of Murphy in chapter IV. He came from the well-known Cork family of brewers and was chairman of the brewery as well as a director of Cork Distilleries. He seldom attended at Westminster except when there was a debate on the drink issue and then he was very vocal. He led the struggle against the Irish Sunday closing bill from 1872 to 1878. I would like to thank Mr Pádraig Ó Maidín, the Cork county librarian, for supplying me with information on N.D. Murphy.

total Sunday closing, and it radically amended O'Reilly's bill. So Leahy's campaign for Sunday closing in Cashel, in the absence of real support from his own clergy, from his fellow bishops and from parliament, only succeeded to the extent that it did through his own personal exertions. The parallel with Fr Mathew's crusade was obvious and damaging.

The best known catholic advocate of temperance, after Fr Mathew in the 1840s and Archbishop Leahy in the 1860s, was Dr John Spratt (1795-1871), the provincial of the Carmelite order from 1863, who was also noted for his charitable work among the Dublin poor. He had joined the committee of the Hibernian Temperance Society in 1832, but, like his friend James Haughton, Spratt had grativated to total abstinence. He supported Fr Mathew vigorously and was the acknowledged leader of the movement in Dublin. However, unlike Fr Mathew, Spratt was an active supporter of repeal and clearly found the Capuchin's conservative political views unacceptable. Under Spratt's leadership, money was collected for O'Connell at temperance meetings and temperance processions often carried repeal banners.¹ Later, with Haughton, Spratt raised money for Young Ireland prisoners and agitated for their release. His most bitter clash with Fr Mathew, however, occurred in 1846. Fr Mathew had passed through Belfast in August 1842, on his return from a visit to England and Scotland, but had desisted from preaching there due to the hostility of Dr Denvir, the bishop of Down and Connor.² But in November 1845, Spratt had extended the crusade

¹ Dr John Spratt to under-secretary, 20 Feb. 1841 (S.P.O., R.P. 1841/9/5701); James Haughton to Lord Eliot, 22 Oct. 1844 (S.P.O., R.P. 1844/014836); O'Dwyer, Dr Leahy, pp 49-51.

² Rogers, Father Theobald Mathew, p. 80.

to the north by preaching in Dundalk, and in September 1846 he travelled to Belfast, after an invitation from the city's total abstinence society. He addressed large meetings in Wellington Place and administered the pledge to about 5,000 people. Fr Mathew was furious at Spratt's flouting of the bishop's wishes and complained of his 'over-zeal for the temperance cause'. The controversy led to bitter exchanges in the Dublin and Belfast press, and, as we have seen, James Haughton defended his friend in an angry letter to Fr Mathew.¹ Mathew and Spratt were in fact seen as rivals for the leadership of the temperance crusade. Spratt's biographer later noted with satisfaction that more of those taking the pledge from Spratt 'kept their promise, comparatively speaking, than did those of the great apostle himself'.² And even Fr Mathew's biographer admitted that the cause of temperance was upheld more staunchly in Dublin after the famine owing to Spratt's efforts.³

Spratt continued to rely primarily on the total abstinence pledge, despite clerical opposition to it. Moreover, the societies he supported were both catholic, like the various Dublin parish total abstinence groups, and non-denominational, like the Dublin Total Abstinence Society. He also supported the new campaigns for legislation which emerged in the 1860s, and was, from 1866 till his death, one of the honorary secretaries of the Irish Sunday Closing

¹ Northern Whig, 13 Oct. 1846; Rogers, Father Theobald Mathew, p. 116; O'Dwyer, Dr Leahy, pp 44-5.

² A.E. Farrington, Rev. Dr Spratt, O.C.C.: his life and times (Dublin, 1893), p. 169.

³ Rogers, op. cit., p. 119; J.F. Maguire, Father Mathew: a biography (London, 1863), p. 546.

Association. Temperance was a vital element in Spratt's philanthropic work to improve the lot of the Dublin poor.¹ He and Haughton conducted temperance meetings every Sunday evening at their temperance hall in Cuffe Lane, and in 1863 between five and six hundred were attending weekly.² As well, Spratt worked for nearly forty years on behalf of the Sick and Indigent Roomkeepers' Society, one of the city's oldest charities; in 1860 he established a refuge for homeless women, St Joseph's Refuge in Brickfield Lane; and St Mary's Catholic Asylum for the Industrious Blind, now on the Merrion Road, was another institution which resulted from his efforts.³ Like Haughton, Spratt regarded drink as the root cause of most of the poverty, disease and crime with which the city was afflicted. Tradesmen and labourers, he wrote in 1867, 'might be comfortable and happy; they are now poor and miserable; they might be virtuous and respectable; they are vicious and despised'. Teetotalism he believed would 'enable them to educate and clothe their children, who are now ignorant and in rags, and to lay up some subsistence for their helpless age; but the public house leaves their children destitute and sends themselves - through want of the necessities of life - to premature graves'.⁴

Spratt, as we have seen, helped induce Cardinal Cullen to support Sunday closing publicly. But Cullen was suspicious

¹ Dr John Spratt, Appeal to the people on the horrid crime of drunkenness (Dublin, 1869).

² James Haughton, 'The temperance movement in Ireland: importance of union' in Irish Temperance League Journal, i, no. 5 (June 1863), pp 90-91.

³ Peter O'Dwyer, Father John Spratt: beloved of Dublin's poor (Dublin, 1971), pp 29-38.

⁴ Alliance News, 20 July 1867.

of the political connections of the Dublin temperance movement, as well as of its protestant character. Just as he had worked to secure the release of Young Ireland prisoners after the 1848 rebellion, so Spratt joined the fenian amnesty campaign after 1867. In September 1869 he and Haughton signed a memorial addressed to the queen, on behalf of the D.T.A.S., seeking clemency for the men 'whom erroneous patriotic feelings led astray'.¹ At the same time Cullen was trying to prevent priests cooperating in fund-raising for the Fenian Amnesty Committee. In a letter to Archbishop Leahy on the subject in April 1869, Cullen complained particularly that temperance organisations had given money to the cause.² So, like Leahy, though for very different reasons, Spratt was an individual enthusiast and did not command a following within his church.

When, in 1889, Fr Michael Kelly came to review the history of the catholic temperance movement, he saw the work of Furlong, Leahy and Spratt in the 1850s and 1860s, like that of Fr Mathew in the 1840s, as having essentially failed. A firm believer in the total abstinence pledge, Kelly felt that the partial pledges employed by Furlong and Leahy were ineffective. Nor did Kelly have much faith in the reformist legislation championed by Spratt. Like Fr Mathew, the three did not leave behind a powerful organisation to perpetuate

¹Samuel Haughton, Memoir of James Haughton, with extracts from his private and published letters (London, 1877), p. 239; O'Dwyer, Dr Leahy, pp 53-4; Freeman's Journal, 24 Nov. 1873.

²Cardinal Cullen to Archbishop Leahy, 7 Apr. 1869 (N.L.I., Leahy papers, no. 20, P 6009); see also Tomás Ó Fiaich, 'The clergy and fenianism, 1860-70' in I.E.R., 5th ser., cix, no. 1 (Jan. 1968), pp 91-2. It is interesting to note that the Irish People, the fenians' Dublin newspaper, regularly carried an advertisement for the D.T.A.S.

their work. James Haughton's son, for instance, in his biography of his father, reported that no priest could be found to replace Spratt in Cuffe Lane after his death in 1871, and that the society had begged Haughton to administer the pledge himself.¹ Similarly, Kelly noted that, though sympathetic to the temperance cause, Archbishop Croke did not maintain the Sunday temperance law in Cashel.² Like Mathew too, Leahy and Spratt provoked controversy within the church by their methods and alienated many of the clergy. For Kelly, the culmination of this work was to be found in the 'woeful declaration' issued by the Maynooth Synod in 1875 and signed by 'Dr Leahy's successor and Dr Furlong in person'.³

With the deepest pain, and after the example of the apostle, weeping, we say, that the abominable vice of intemperance still continues to work dreadful havoc among our people ... Is it not, dearly beloved, an intolerable scandal, that in the midst of a catholic nation, like ours, there should be found so many slaves of intemperance, who habitually sacrifice to brutal excess in drinking not only their reason, but their substance, their health, their life, their souls and God himself?

Having deplored the vice, the bishops then went on to advise on how it could be combated.

Against an evil so widespread and so pernicious, we implore all who have at heart the honour of God and the salvation of souls, to be filled with holy zeal... The habit of daily prayer faithfully persevered in; frequent and worthy approach to the holy sacraments; the devout hearing of the word of God; and the avoiding of dangerous occasions, are the only sure means by which intemperance can be overcome.⁴

¹ Haughton, Memoir of James Haughton, p. 272.

² Kelly, 'The suppression of intemperance', pp 632-5.

³ Ibid., p. 635.

⁴ 'Maynooth Pastoral' in I.E.R., 1st ser., xii, no. 4 (Oct. 1875), pp 9-10.

In Kelly's eyes this declaration admitted the failure of the catholic temperance movement after nearly forty years of work. Yet, it provided no concrete new remedies. The pastoral, he commented, 'doubtless in wisdom ... employs ... general phrases' and 'directs the earnest and fervent employment of the general means of grace'. But Kelly clearly did not consider these views wise, and he remarked on the lack of a 'suggestion regarding the special antidote of total abstinence'.¹ Kelly was forced to turn outside Ireland, to England, the United States and Australia, to find clergy pursuing the 'traditions of Fr Mathew' with good results. The only bright spot in Ireland in the 1870s was the diocese of Ferns, where the new bishop, Dr Warren, had continued Bishop Furlong's work and launched a new temperance crusade.²

Temperance in Ulster: the Irish Temperance League

The anti-spirits movement had flourished in Ulster in the 1830s, under the leadership of Dr John Edgar. But Edgar's subsequent opposition to total abstinence split the northern campaign. Moreover, when Fr Mathew became the leader of the total abstinence crusade in the 1840s, the enthusiasm of many northern protestants for the cause waned. Dr Edgar, according to his biographer, largely ceased his temperance work in 1841 owing to ill-health, though doubtless the apparent triumph of total abstinence played a part in his decision.³ In 1847 he sought, in the wake of the decline of Fr Mathew's movement,

¹ Kelly, 'The suppression of intemperance', p. 636.

² See below, pp 518-19 for a discussion of Warren's work.

³ W.D. Killen, Memoir of John Edgar, D.D., LL.D., professor of systematic theology for the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (rev. ed., Belfast, 1869), pp 117-18.

to revive the anti-spirits cause, but in this he was unsuccessful.¹ Thus, by the late 1840s and early 1850s, the temperance movement in Ulster was in serious decline. Rev. W.M. O'Hanlon, after his walks among the poor of Belfast in 1853, deplored the amount of intemperance he had witnessed and the apparent apathy of both government and church towards it. He praised the work of the Scottish Temperance League, and asked: 'Is it not discreditable that in Ireland sufficient zeal does not exist to support either periodical or agent in connexion with this all-important object?'²

But already there were moves, mainly from within the presbyterian church, to rectify this omission. A total abstinence society for presbyterian clergy had been established in 1850-51, while in 1854 the general assembly set up its own temperance committee.³ Then in January 1856 Alexander Smith Mayne issued an appeal aimed at reviving the temperance movement in Ulster. Perhaps he had read O'Hanlon's criticism, for he specifically urged the appointment of agents to organise meetings and referred to the fact that in Scotland six or eight agents were thus regularly employed. 'The churches in Ireland' Mayne went on 'have many missionaries abroad, but have not a single temperance agent at home. If every abstainer or friend of temperance in Ulster would give one shilling per annum, several such agents might be at once appointed'. By such a movement, Mayne said he hoped to

¹ Dawson Burns, Temperance history (London, [1889]), i, 298.

² Rev. W.M. O'Hanlon, Walks among the poor of Belfast, and suggestions for their improvement (Belfast, 1853), p. 147.

³ For a more detailed discussion see below, pp 456-7.

'revive the work, and prepare the way for getting a sabbath or Maine law, so much required in this kingdom'.¹ Mayne, who was a printer and the proprietor of a religious book and tract depository, had been an important figure in the Ulster temperance movement since the beginning. He had belonged to Dr Edgar's church and had been one of the small group which established the Belfast (later Ulster) Temperance Society in September 1829. However, he soon broke with Edgar, being convinced of the merits of total abstinence as early as 1832.² As a result of Mayne's appeal, a committee was formed to collect funds and late in 1856 the first agent, an Englishman named Revel, was appointed at the salary of £100 per annum. During 1857 Mr Revel, 'with his concertina, temperance melodies, and other credentials', travelled widely, giving lectures and forming bands of hope. When he went to America in 1858, he was replaced by the Rev. J.B. Smith of Bristol.³ Early in that year, Mayne and his supporters decided that a new association was needed to continue and extend the work that they had begun. Thus the Irish Temperance League was formed. Its object was 'the suppression of drunkenness by moral suasion, legislative prohibition, and all other lawful means'. Each member of the league, however, was to be a teetotaller, and to contribute to its funds not less than 2s. 6d. per annum. Each society affiliating with

¹ Alexander Smith Mayne, 'Reminiscences of a few years' temperance work' in Frederick Sherlock (ed.), Fifty years ago: or, Erin's temperance jubilee (Belfast, 1879), pp 31-2.

² P.T. Winskill, The temperance movement and its workers (London, 1892), i, 53.

³ Mayne, op. cit., pp 20-22.

the league was to subscribe not less than one pound per annum, for which it would receive occasional lectures 'and some other advantages'.¹ The league was therefore committed to total abstinence, though the methods by which it proposed to operate were varied. Its founders were mainly Belfast business and professional men, who, in their preoccupation with subscriptions, were anxious to establish a secure financial basis for the organisation.

In 1866, in discussing its origins, the league's journal admitted that it had had 'a small and, some would say, unpromising beginning', for 'difficulties were encountered at every step'.² Without doubt though, the religious revival which swept Ulster in 1859 provided an important stimulus to the struggling temperance movement. The revival began in mid-Antrim, in Ahoghill, Ballymena and Kells late in 1858. By May and June 1859 it had spread north to Ballymoney, Portrush and Ballycastle, east to Larne, Carrickfergus and Belfast, and into County Down. In June it was brought to Derry by revivalists from Ballymena, while later in the month and in July it appeared in Tyrone and Armagh. Fermanagh, with its substantial Church of Ireland population, was little affected.³ Many contemporary accounts of the revival commented particularly on the decline in drinking and drunkenness which seemed to accompany it. Rev. Hugh Hanna reported from Belfast in September 1859: 'You rarely see a drunken man now; brawling and disorder are consequently rare; and our police hardly

¹ I.T.L.J., iv, no. 5 (May 1866), pp 47-8.

² Ibid.

³ J.E. Orr, The second evangelical awakening in Britain (London and Edinburgh, 1949), pp 46-53.

know what to do with themselves'.¹ Of the revival in Derry, Rev. Richard Smyth wrote: 'Drunkards have become sober ... some publicans have given up their unsanctified calling ... our churches are crowded with eager worshippers'.² Rev. William Gibson, in his important study, The year of grace published in 1860, quoted numerous reports attesting to the improvement in public morals. Rev. Archibald Robinson of Broughshane near Ballymena, wrote in April 1860, for instance, there is a marked improvement in the public morals of the community. Men are ashamed of doings that formerly were considered things of course. Two public houses have been obliged to close. The owners of others have assured me their trade is gone, and two more intimated their intention not to renew the licence... Sabbath desecration, profane swearing, drunkenness, uncleanness, unseemly strife, and such like sins, are much abated and decreased.³

Benjamin Scott, in another substantial study published in 1860, quoted the evidence of more than sixty witnesses, almost all of whom mentioned decreased drinking and drunkenness as one of the most obvious results of the revival. Newspapers at the time were struck by the sobriety displayed at fairs and markets, traditionally occasions for heavy drinking. The Londonderry Standard reported in July 1859 that in Limavady on market days, the people 'transact business without lying and cursing [and] at an early hour they return to their homes in sobriety'. Similarly, the Coleraine Chronicle in December observed that, whereas fair days in Larne had long been 'notorious for the

¹ Quoted in Rev. John Weir, Irish revivals: the Ulster awakening: its origin, progress, and fruit, with notes of a tour of personal observation and inquiry (London, 1860), p. 150.

² Quoted in R.M. Sibbett, The revival in Ulster: or the life story of a worker (Belfast, 1909), p. 88.

³ Quoted in Rev. William Gibson, The year of grace (jubilee ed., London, 1909), p. 40.

scenes of drunkenness and turbulence, ... a correspondent informs us that on the last fair day he saw only three drunken persons, and that long before the evening the great bulk of those who had been present had wended their way homeward'.¹

But, even at the time, there were those who challenged this exceedingly rosy picture. The Northern Whig, which was not sympathetic to the revival, pointed out that in 1859 arrests for drunkenness in Belfast had increased substantially over those of the preceding year. In 1858 2,539 people in Belfast had been arrested for drunkenness, while in 1859 this figure had risen to 3,112. The Rev. Richard Oulton of Armagh, a Church of Ireland critic, in noting these figures, attacked the revivalists for 'the most absurd extravagances and the most melancholy delusions' in claiming that 'drunkenness and vice had literally disappeared from some localities'.³ Supporters of the revival countered by arguing that, to quote Gibson, 'no person has, during the year in question, been before the police court of Belfast, on a charge of drunkenness, who had ever been brought under religious influences'. It was well know, he continued, that

¹ Quoted in A.R. Scott, The Ulster revival of 1859 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, 1962), p. 400.

² Gibson, The year of grace, p. 253.

³ Rev. Richard Oulton, A review of the Ulster revival in the year 1859 (Dublin, 1859), pp 97, 143; for further debate on the significance of the revival, particularly between anglican and presbyterian clergy, see Rev. James McCosh, The Ulster revival and its physiological accidents (Belfast, 1859), Rev. Edward Hincks, God's work and Satan's counter-works, as now carried on in the north of Ireland (Belfast, 1859), James C.L. Carson, Three letters on the revival in Ireland (Coleraine, 1859) and Rev. George Cron, The Ulster revival: a discourse delivered in the Evangelical Union Church, Wellington Place, on sabbath evening, 25 September 1859 (Belfast, 1859).

the majority of the 'drunken' cases are persons who make no profession of any form of protestantism, and who constitute the lower stratum of the population of Belfast. There is reason, indeed, to believe that the immense majority of them are nominally Roman Catholics.¹

Dr Hanna also laid the responsibility for the increase in Belfast drunkenness at the door of the city's catholic population.² Benjamin Scott, during his investigation, personally visited prisons in Belfast to check on the character of their inmates. He claimed that the catholic third of Belfast's population supplied half of the committals in normal times, but nearly all of them since the revival, five out of six on the day of his visit being catholic.³

The debate over the effect of the revival on drunkenness continued into 1860, and even 1861. The Times referred on a number of occasions to increases in arrests for drunkenness, when expressing scepticism about the impact of the revival, while both the Irish and English religious press answered the charge by laying the blame on catholics. Orr in his 1949 study examined criminal convictions in the six counties from 1855 to 1861 and found that there was a significant decline in 1859 in all counties, but that there was already an existing trend in this direction. Convictions had fallen from 889 in 1855 to 636 in 1858 and were down to 475 in 1859.⁴ Oulton had noticed this in 1859 and wrote: 'The statistics of more flagrant crime have long shown a decrease in Ulster and other parts of the country to a very considerable extent. It is not

¹ Gibson, The year of grace, pp 253-4.

² Quoted in Weir, Irish revivals, p. 190.

³ Benjamin Scott, The revival in Ulster: its moral and social results (London, 1860), p. 40.

⁴ Orr, The second evangelical awakening, p. 179.

easy to see why such a decrease should therefore, all at once, be ascribed to the revival'.¹ But, at the same time, Orr's investigation did seem to confirm the revivalists' claim that catholics considerably out-numbered protestants in the province's prison population. On the night of 7 April 1861, when the census was taken, there were 679 catholics in Ulster gaols compared to 413 protestants.²

As well as arguing that drunkenness had not declined to the extent that the revivalists claimed, critics also attributed the decline that had taken place to causes other than the revival. Oulton, as well as noting that the decline in drunkenness was a long-term one, attributed the decrease in whiskey consumption to the substantial increases in duty which had occurred in the 1850s. Certainly in Ireland as a whole spirits charged for home consumption fell dramatically at this time. From a little over 8 million gallons in 1855, the figure was down to 5.4 million gallons by 1859, and continued to decline to 3.9 million gallons in 1864, after which there was some increase.³ A decrease of this magnitude, even given the corresponding increase in beer consumption, would inevitably have produced some decline in drunkenness.

However, even if the decline in drunkenness and crime generally was not as spectacular as revivalists claimed and may largely have been due to other factors, the revival certainly helped foster the temperance movement among Ulster's evangelical churches. Drunkards 'saved' during the revival,

¹ Oulton, A review of the Ulster revival, p. 97.

² Orr, The second evangelical awakening, p. 179.

³ G.B. Wilson, Alcohol and the nation (London, 1940), p. 337.

toured the province preaching against the evils of drink.¹

Dr Hanna considered that, as a result of the revival, temperance societies had lost their raison d'être.

Our temperance societies [he wrote] were numerous and active, but they made small progress in reclaiming the masses. But the gospel has annihilated the temperance societies - not all, but many of them. A higher argument and influence than they can wield, has regenerated the masses.²

Dr Hanna's judgment was a trifle premature, for, on the contrary, the revival stimulated organisations like the Irish Temperance League. The temperance committee's report to the general assembly in 1859 was 'of an encouraging character'.³ The Belfast Total Abstinence Association at its annual general meeting in July 1859 noted a large increase in members since the previous meeting.⁴ As for the league, in August 1858 it had secured the services of Benjamin Benson, 'a man of colour, formerly in slavery', who had been brought from America by the returning Revel.⁵ Benson was employed as an itinerant lecturer and took full advantage of the revival to extend the league's work. At the organisation's first annual general meeting in January 1860, he reported that in the previous year he had 'formed 18 auxiliaries, lectured in 40 towns and villages, held 224 public meetings, visited 1,400 families, distributed 7,000 tracts, and enrolled 5,440 members'.⁶

¹ Orr, The second evangelical awakening, p. 214.

² Quoted in Weir, Irish revivals, p. 150.

³ Belfast News-letter, 7 July 1859.

⁴ Ibid., 16 July 1859.

⁵ Mayne in his reminiscences gives August 1859 as the date of Benson's arrival, but reports of his lectures appear in the Belfast press from October 1858. Mayne's dating is generally confused and inaccurate. Mayne, 'Reminiscences of a few years' temperance work', p. 25; Belfast News-letter, 21 Oct. 1858.

⁶ Mayne, op. cit., p. 27.

The league's first president was William M. Scott, a chandler. He was followed in 1860 by John Coates, a solicitor,¹ in 1862 by J.P. Corry, a timber merchant and shipowner, and later the conservative M.P. for Belfast (1874-85) and County Armagh (1886-91), and in 1866 by M.R. Dalway, later the conservative M.P. for Carrickfergus (1868-80).² The secretary was William Church, a printer, who worked for the Belfast News-letter and had previously been secretary of the Belfast Total Abstinence Association. Church was also the first editor of the Journal till 1866, when John Pyper took his place. Pyper had been appointed an agent in 1863, having previously worked at the Belfast Mercantile Academy. He was an enormously energetic man, like his counterpart in Dublin, T.W. Russell, and was later, as a congregationalist clergyman, to be at the centre of the Bible wine controversy.³ The league won the support of many of the leading survivors of the anti-spirits movement, except of course for Dr Edgar, who died in 1866.⁴ Drs Morgan of Fisherwick Place Church and Houston of Knockbracken were among its vice-presidents, as was James Haughton. These three, plus Dr Urwick of York Street Church, Dublin, were also voluntary lecturers. A study of the league's committee in 1863 shows that it was run largely by Belfast protestant clergy and businessmen. Of the 35 vice-presidents, 18 were clerics, and of these 12 were presbyterians,

¹ See obituary in I.T.L.J., xxxiii, no. 10 (Oct. 1896), p. 147.

² For Corry's and Dalway's political careers see Brian M. Walker, Parliamentary representation in Ulster, 1868-86 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, 1976), pp 195-7, 282-7, 340-41, 401-3.

³ See below, pp 460-63 for a discussion of this controversy.

⁴ For an obituary of Edgar by Pyper, see I.T.L.J., iv, no. 10 (Oct. 1866), pp 107-9.

including Dr Hanna. J.L. Rentoul of Ballymoney, convenor of the general assembly's temperance committee, was among the voluntary lecturers. All the vice-presidents, except Haughton, were northerners, and 16, plus the 3-member executive, lived in Belfast.¹

In September 1863 the Journal informed its readers that the league was 'lengthening its cords and strengthening its stakes', and certainly during the 1860s the organisation grew steadily.² In that year it already had 100 affiliated societies.³ Its own affiliation in the previous year with the United Kingdom Alliance was an important step in its development. The financial support which it thereby obtained enabled the league in 1863 to establish its own journal, to employ another agent and to open central offices in Donegall Street. William Church, its new secretary, had already produced the short-lived monthly Irish Temperance Standard and Band of Hope Record, and within a month of taking up his position had brought out the first issue of the league's own journal.⁴ Revenue jumped from a mere £101 in 1859 to £309 in 1863 and £500 in 1864.⁵ In return for the alliance's support, the league vigorously took up the causes of prohibition, the

¹ I.T.L.J., i, no. 1 (Feb. 1863), p. 20.

² Ibid., i, no. 8 (Sept. 1863), p. 143.

³ Dawson Burns, Temperance history, ii, 27.

⁴ Mayne gives the date of Church's appointment as 1860, but this is contradicted by I.T.L.J., i, no. 1 (Feb. 1863), p.17. The twelve issues of this journal, Irish Temperance Standard, for 1861 are held in the Linenhall Library, Belfast, uncatalogued. The I.T.L.J., volumes 1-40, 1863-1903, with the volumes for 1878, 1879, 1883 and 1884 missing, is held in the Public Record Office, Northern Ireland, D 2663.

⁵ Dawson Burns, op. cit., i, 432 and ii, 41.

permissive bill and Sunday closing, which were being agitated for in England in 1863-4. Some's Sunday closing bill was before parliament in 1863 and in 1864 Sir Wilfrid Lawson introduced his first permissive bill. The league's constitution had stated its object to be the suppression of drunkenness, and, as we have seen, proposed various methods to achieve this end, including moral suasion and legislative prohibition. But, in its connection with the U.K. Alliance, the league was demonstrating a preference for the second agency, as this was the alliance's stated object. In 1860 the league had taken over the Band of Hope Union, which had been established in Belfast in 1856, and had added this name to its title. In 1862 the title was further lengthened with the addition of Permissive Bill Association, to signify the league's commitment to Lawson's cause. In March 1863 the Journal sought to clarify the league's methods by saying that it 'stops not at merely "moral suasion", but goes forward to seek for legal prohibition'. It 'would seek not only to make men sober, by inducing them to become total abstainers, [but] keep them from falling into the evil habit of partaking of strong drinks, by removing out of their way the tempting whiskey shops'.¹ The league thus committed itself to total abstinence and to prohibition: the former to be achieved through the promotion of bands of hope and adult teetotal societies, and the latter through the agency of a permissive bill passed by parliament.

Drawing on the Journal, one can study the league's activities in some detail from 1863. In that year there were

¹ I.T.L.J., i, no. 2 (Mar. 1863), p. 36.

at least five major temperance societies in Belfast, plus a growing number of local groups associated mainly with presbyterian and methodist congregations. Pyper and Church maintained close contacts with all these organisations. Pyper, for instance, as well as being the league's agent, was president of the Ladies Temperance Union, vice-president of the Revival Temperance Society, and president of the Olive Branch Band of Hope. Church was a former secretary of the Belfast Total Abstinence Association, the oldest of the city's temperance societies, and he maintained close contact with it. The Friends' Total Abstinence Association held their regular meetings in the league's offices. Moreover, the league's officials regularly presided at and lectured the meetings of these groups. But, not only did the league coordinate the work of the various Belfast societies, it sought to build up a network of temperance societies throughout the country, though its greatest strength lay in the north. The league also devoted much effort to the promotion of bands of hope and of the Rechabites.¹ The first tent of the latter organisation was established in Belfast in 1857,² and in 1863 it was headed by John Reid, the agent of the Belfast Total Abstinence Association. There were as well tents in Lisburn and Lurgan, and in May 1863 one was established in Dublin.³ The league looked upon Rechabitism as 'part and parcel of the great temperance reformation', for it helped 'to make men provident, and teach and train them up in habits of

¹ I.T.L.J., i, no. 2 (Mar. 1863), p. 36.

² Irish Temperance Standard, i, no. 8 (Aug. 1861), p. 64.

³ I.T.L.J., i, no. 9 (Oct. 1863), p. 160; Sherlock (ed.), Fifty years ago, pp 92-4.

forethought, carefulness and economy'.¹ The other great temperance friendly society, the Good Templars, was established in Belfast in 1870. John Pyper was one of the first members and in 1871 became head of the organisation in Ireland.²

As well as providing the league with a subsidy, which amounted to £200 per annum by the early 1870s,³ the U.K. Alliance also supplied visiting lecturers. In the early part of 1863, for instance, Dr F.R. Lees, one of the alliance's leading spokesmen, toured Ireland to promote the permissive bill.⁴ But the league's own agent, John Pyper, was also extremely active. His itinerary for July and August 1863 is by no means untypical.

July 1 Strabane, Co. Tyrone	August 3 Pomeroy, Co. Tyrone
3 Omagh	4 Dungannon
7 Belfast, Co. Antrim	5 Dungannon
8 Belfast	6 Dungannon
10 Belfast	7 Dungannon
15 Caledon, Co. Tyrone	10 Bangor, Co. Down
16 Glennan	11 Donaghadee
24 Hyde Park	12 Newtownards
27 Coalisland	13 Comber
28 Stewartstown	14 Killinchy
29 Lurgan, Co. Armagh	17 Ballyclare, Co. Antrim
30 Moira, Co. Down	18 Glenarm
31 Magheralin	19 Ballycastle
	20 Ballycastle
	21 Ballycastle
	24 Ballymena
	25 Ballymena
	26 Ballymoney
	27 Coleraine, Co. Derry
	28 Portrush, Co. Antrim ⁵

¹ I.T.L.J., i, no. 2 (Mar. 1863), p. 36.

² Sherlock (ed.), Fifty years ago, pp 86-7; in 1877 the organisation began publication of a journal in Belfast, The Irish Templar.

³ Minute book of the executive committee of the I.T.L., 24 May 1872 (P.R.O.N.I., D2663/A1/1).

⁴ I.T.L.J., i, no. 3 (Apr. 1863), p. 58.

⁵ Ibid., i, no. 7 (Aug. 1863), pp 128-9.

At each place Pyper attended at least one meeting of the local temperance society and delivered a lecture. Typical of such meetings was the one held at Caledon, County Tyrone, on the evening of Wednesday, 15 July. To quote the report which appeared in the Journal:

A meeting of the Caledon Temperance Society was held in the town hall. There was a numerous attendance, and the chair was occupied by the Rev. W.B. Armstrong. A logical and conclusive lecture having been delivered by Mr Pyper, Mr Joseph Worthington ably moved a resolution in favour of the permissive bill. The motion was seconded by Mr Robert Lindsay, and carried unanimously.¹

At the annual meeting of the league in April 1863, Pyper said that 'he did not see why they should not occupy a similar position in this country to that which the great alliance did in England'. The league aimed to be an umbrella organisation, co-ordinating and assisting the work of local temperance societies, and, with the support of the popular movement thus created, lobbying parliament for prohibitive legislation. However, the so-called national conference on temperance, which followed the 1863 annual meeting, clearly revealed the sectional nature of the league. Delegates from twenty-four cities and towns attended, as well as a delegation from the Scottish Temperance League. But, with the exception of the three delegates from Dublin, who included James Haughton, all the places represented were in the north of Ireland, most being in Counties Antrim, Down and Derry.² Yet, as Pyper indicated, the league did aspire to be a national organisation. Thus, in March, before the Belfast meetings, Pyper had accompanied Dr Lees to Dublin, and, while Lees gave public

¹ I.T.L.J., i, no. 7 (Aug. 1863), p. 128.

² Ibid., i, no. 4 (May 1863), pp 78-9.

lectures, Pyper addressed the city's main temperance societies, including the D.T.A.S., Dr Urwick's York Street group and special meetings called by presbyterians and quakers. He was anxious to extend the league's work to Dublin and felt that the temperance cause in the city needed to be revitalised. Finally a meeting, sponsored by the Dublin branch of the U.K. Alliance, which had been established in 1858, was held. This meeting resolved that a branch of the I.T.L. should be established in Dublin and that it should supercede the alliance branch.¹ But it was not till the appointment of T.W. Russell in September 1864 as the I.T.L. agent for the south of Ireland, with his headquarters in Dublin, that this branch really became active.²

In January 1865 the I.T.L. opened offices in Dublin at the Metropolitan Hall in Molesworth Street, and, like the offices in Belfast, these were made available, rent free, for the use of other temperance societies. This stimulated temperance activity in the capital. The Dublin Temperance Tract and Visiting Association, established in July 1864, was able to commence operations in January 1865, using the league offices. In its 1866 report the association announced that it had circulated 10,319 Stirling, Norwich and Scottish Temperance League tracts, visited 5,539 persons and administered 112 pledges. Five thousand copies of a tract entitled Water, by the association's president, George Checketts, had been published and the association was looking forward to the creation of an indigenous temperance literature. The

¹ I.T.L.J., i, no. 3 (Apr. 1863), p. 59.

² Ibid., ii, no. 10 (Oct. 1864), p. 176; iii, no. 10 (Oct. 1865), p. 148.

association also began in November 1865 the publication of a monthly journal, the Irish Temperance Star, with T.W. Russell and J.A. Mowatt as editors.¹ There had been plans late in 1865 to publish the league's journal in Dublin, but when these fell through, Russell and the Tract Association got together to produce a journal themselves. The position of the I.T.S. was slightly confusing. 'Although the Star has never appeared as the recognised organ of the southern branch of the league, [wrote Russell late in 1866] it will be easily understood from the position of the publisher and the editor that it really acts as such.'² Like Pyper in Belfast, Russell in Dublin attempted to maintain close contacts with the city's various temperance societies. These included the old D.T.A.S., and groups which met in Mary's Abbey presbyterian church, in the Friends' Institute in Molesworth Street, in Urwick's York Street church, in temperance halls in Cuffe Lane and Marlborough Street, and in schoolrooms in Plunket Street and Blackhall Place.³ In 1866 as well a Ladies Metropolitan Temperance Union was commenced under league auspices. The names of its founders - Miss Urwick, Mrs and Miss Mowatt and Mrs and Miss Russell - reveal its close connections with the existing movement.⁴

Russell's report for 1865-6 indicated the progress made during the first two years of his agency in Dublin. In the year 1866 he had addressed 152 meetings and helped form a

¹ Irish Temperance Star, i, no. 2 (Feb. 1866), pp 30-31.

² Ibid., i, no. 12 (Dec. 1866), p. 186.

³ I.T.L.J., i, no. 7 (Aug. 1863), pp 128-9; iii, no. 3 (Mar. 1865), p. 48.

⁴ I.T.S., i, no. 2 (Feb. 1866), pp 30-31.

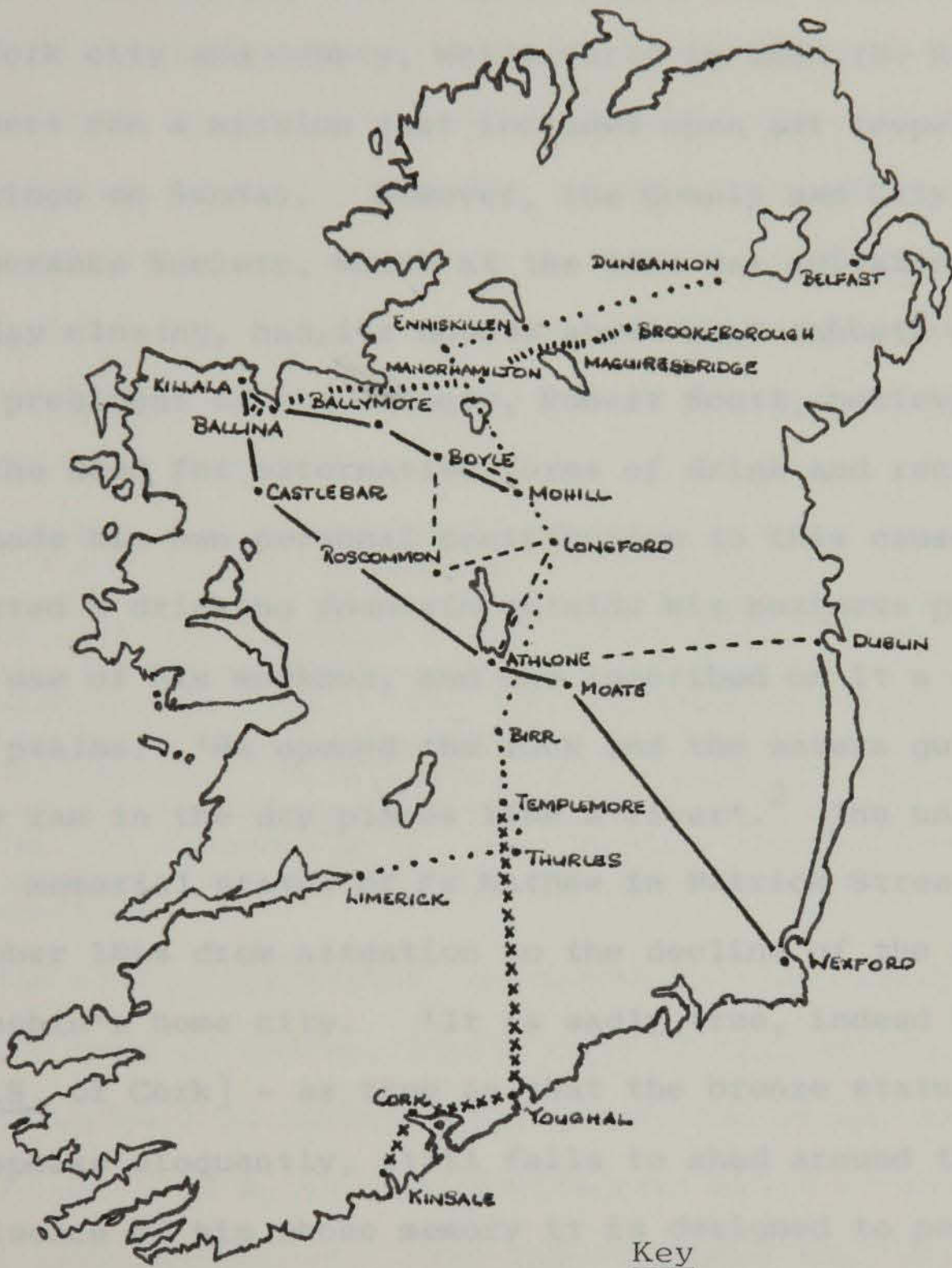
chain of societies throughout the south and west. The accompanying map illustrates the extent of his travels from December 1865 to June 1866. Russell himself noted that he 'had to travel very considerable distances, and that by methods not familiar to such a province as Ulster'. However, he observed that the extension of the railways into even the remotest parts was making travel easier and less expensive. During his two years, Russell had 'opened up eighteen of the twenty-three counties to our care'; Galway, Kilkenny, Kerry, Carlow and Meath being those still without I.T.L. affiliates.¹ Visits from leaders of the temperance movement in Britain and America were also eagerly sought as a means of gaining publicity and sparking enthusiasm. During the period in question, as well as Dr Lees, James Raper, the alliance's parliamentary agent, Edward Grubb, Joseph Thorp, president of the British Temperance League, Neal Dow of Maine, and various other U.K. Alliance officials had visited Dublin and addressed meetings. Russell also joined the battle to decrease the number of liquor licences issued in the city. He and other leaders, including Haughton, Spratt, Mowatt, Urwick, Henry and J.R. Wigham, formed deputations to lobby the recorder on the issue.² In November 1866 a Sunday closing association was formed in Dublin to agitate for an Irish Sunday closing bill, and in January 1869 a permissive bill association also appeared. In both Russell was to be a driving force. That Dublin became the focus for much of the parliamentary agitation of the 1870s, despite the strength of the I.T.L. in the north, must in fact be largely attributed to the work of

¹ I.T.S., i, no. 12 (Dec. 1866), pp 186-7.

² Ibid.

T.W. Russell's Travels, December 1865 - June 1866

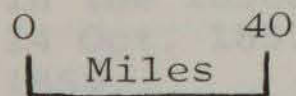
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Key

- December 1865 -----
- December 1865 (dotted)
- February 1866 xxxxxx
- March 1866 (dotted)
- May-June 1866 _____

Scale



T.W. Russell in the city from 1864.

In Cork too there was something of a revival in the 1860s. According to the I.T.L.J. in 1863, the temperance cause in that city had been in 'rather a languishing state for some time'.¹ Late in 1862 Benjamin Benson, the I.T.L.'s black itinerant lecturer, spent some weeks conducting meetings in Cork city and county, while early in 1863 the Redemptorist fathers ran a mission that included open air temperance meetings on Sunday. However, the County and City of Cork Temperance Society, which at the time was agitating for Sunday closing, had its doubts about such sabbath meetings. The president of the society, Robert Scott, believed rather in the need for alternative forms of drink and recreation. He made his own personal contribution to this cause when he erected a drinking fountain outside his business premises for the use of his workmen, and had inscribed on it a text from the psalms: 'He opened the rock and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river'.² The unveiling of the memorial statue of Fr Mathew in Patrick Street in October 1864 drew attention to the decline of the cause in the Capuchin's home city. 'It is sadly true, indeed [wrote the I.T.S. of Cork] - as true as that the bronze statue, whilst it speaks eloquently, still fails to shed around the genial influence of him whose memory it is designed to perpetuate - that the old spirit is dead.'³ But in June 1865 the Cork and

¹ I.T.L.J., i, no. 1 (Feb. 1863), p. 18; for the movement in the 1850s see Cork Examiner, 17 Oct. 1856, 31 Dec. 1856 and 14 Oct. 1857, and Southern Reporter, 19 Nov. 1859 and 28 Nov. 1859.²

² I.T.L.J., i, no. 3 (Apr. 1863), p. 58; the psalm is no. 105, ver. 41.

³ I.T.S., i, no. 3 (Mar. 1866), p. 48.

South of Ireland Temperance League was inaugurated and it established the Cork Refreshment Rooms Company Limited. Among the company's directors were J.F. Maguire, the friend and biographer of Fr Mathew, Robert Scott, who was also a vice-president of the I.T.L., and Frederick Allman, the son-in-law of Richard Dowden, one of Cork's temperance pioneers.¹ Like Scott's fountain, the company was aimed to provide alternative attractions to the public house, but in this case it was to be cheap meals and non-alcoholic drinks. In January 1866 a refreshment house was opened on Lavitt's Quay by the mayor, Sir John Arnott. A description of the establishment appeared in the I.T.S., presumably written by Russell, who had visited the city in February.

The ticket office confronts the visitor on entering, at which a card for dinner, breakfast or luncheon, as the case may be, must be received. The tables are placed in two long rows, and, along with the attendants are scrupulously clean; the 'bar', where everything is served out, being at the extreme end of the commodious building. The fare is most excellent - the tea and coffee being infinitely superior to that often served up at a private hotel. Prices, too, are remarkably low. Imagine breakfast, including tea, bread, and egg for 3½d.! Yet this is paying the shareholders; and the nine hundred men who daily throng the place attest that the labours of the directors are appreciated.

In the first five months, according to the company's report, 34,675 cups of coffee, 15,250 cups of tea, 44,473 bowls of soup, as well as numerous buns, eggs and pounds of butter were sold. In April more substantial meals of meat and Irish stew were introduced. The report stated that between 500 and 700 people visited the rooms each day. 'As a financial undertaking, [it went on] the shareholders are not likely to be

¹ I.T.S., i, no. 1 (Jan. 1866), p. 15.

² Ibid., i, no. 3 (Mar. 1866), p. 48.

disappointed.' After paying all its expenses, the company made a profit of £124 for the first six months of operation, and, as a result, it proposed to open a second house on Bachelor's Quay.¹ Other temperance groups in Dublin and Belfast were soon to follow Cork's example, finding that coffee stalls, cafés and temperance hotels could be profitable commercial ventures, as well as a means to further the cause. The I.T.L. made a great success of its coffee stalls and Lombard Cafe in Belfast, while in Dublin T.W. Russell established his own temperance hotel on the corner of Harcourt Street and St Stephen's Green.²

A number of new temperance societies also appeared in Belfast early in the 1860s. In 1861 the societies in the city included the I.T.L., the Belfast Total Abstinence Association, the Ulster Band of Hope Alliance, the Melbourne Street society attached to the primitive methodist chapel, the Frederick Street Total Abstinence Association attached to the wesleyan chapel, and the York Street Band of Hope and Total Abstinence Society attached to the presbyterian church.³ In 1862 a Ladies Temperance Union was established,⁴ and by 1863 there were societies in Welsh Street, Lynas Lane, Alfred Place, Sandy Row and ones attached to the Falls Road wesleyan chapel, the Belfast Parochial Mission, Christ Church, the Berry Street congregational church, the Wesley Place methodist chapel and to the 14th Depot Battalion. But, the

¹ I.T.S., i, no. 7 (July 1866), pp 111-12.

² Freeman's Journal, 5 May and 17 Sept. 1875.

³ Irish Temperance Standard, i, no. 9 (Sept. 1861), p. 70.

⁴ I.T.L.J., i, no. 1 (Feb. 1863), p. 17.

sectarian riots which swept the city in August 1864 and were accompanied by much drunkenness, suggested that the temperance movement's success among the city's protestant working class had been rather limited. The later riots, especially those of 1872 and 1886, only confirm this impression.¹ However, the Belfast temperance movement in the 1860s did make some efforts to reach the working classes. In May 1863 the I.T.L.J. commended the building firm of Kent and Smith of York Street for, at the completion of a substantial project, providing their men with tea and a lecture from Pyper in lieu of flag money.² This apparently inspired the league to begin a series of lectures in mills and factories. In June, for instance, Church addressed a meeting at the Johnston and Carlisle mill in the Crumlin Road, and similar meetings were held in September at the Ewart, Greeves and Wolfhill mills.³

At the league's annual meeting in March 1865, T.W. Russell said:

I think, without laying myself open to the charge of enthusiasm, that the present position of the temperance reformation may be pronounced, if not satisfactory, at least extremely hopeful. It is something, surely, that a great national organisation exists, that its machinery is spread over the country - north, south, east and west - that two officials, and a host of honorary and willing workers are hard at work.

Russell was especially optimistic about prospects in the south of the country.

The sons of the north, stern in their loyalty, and manly in their independence, have responded to the call. The point of the plough has been stuck into the south, and in that glorious part of our country, where the air is milder, where the fields

¹ Andrew Boyd, Holy war in Belfast (2nd ed., Tralee, 1969), pp 44-89; Report of the Belfast riots commission, H.C. 1887 [C-4925], xviii.

² I.T.L.J., i, no. 5 (June 1863), p. 95.

³ Ibid., i, no. 6 (July 1863), p. 112 and no. 9 (Oct. 1863), p. 160.

are greener, and where the redberry gleams with a brighter hue than here, the sun shines upon the upturned land.¹

We have already noted Russell's stubborn optimism. For the league, however, there were still problems, the most serious being financial. The 1866 report showed the organisation to be £118 in the red, though the U.K. Alliance had promised a substantial contribution to help clear this debt. But, as a result of it, the lecturing programme had to be curtailed and it was found impossible to employ counsel to oppose licence applications in court. The circulation of the Journal had doubled over the preceding year and the number of affiliated societies was rising steadily, but financial problems, particularly once the league involved itself in election contests and political lobbying, were to remain a major obstacle.²

In 1866 Russell listed the numbers of abstaining clergy in Ireland. They were:

Episcopal 60	Wesleyan 44
Roman Catholic 3	Congregationalist 5 ³
Presbyterian 200	

This is [he went on] the mere skeleton of the frame, and there cannot be a doubt that were the clergy of all denominations, in Ireland, to give their influence heartily and earnestly, were they to enter upon this crusade, determined that drunkenness should be exorcised, the country would soon present a very different aspect.⁴

Total abstinence was making headway among the clergy of the presbyterian church, considering that only twenty ministers

¹ I.T.L.J., iii, no. 9 (Sept. 1865), p. 133.

² Ibid., iv, no. 5 (May, 1866), p. 57.

³ I.T.S., i, no. 12 (Dec. 1866), p. 188.

⁴ Ibid. For a discussion of the churches and temperance after 1870 see chapter V.

had attended the first meeting to establish a temperance society for presbyterian clergy in 1850. But in 1865, in his report to the general assembly, J.L. Rentoul was exceedingly pessimistic, claiming that the cause had 'not received that amount of public attention, within the boundaries of our church, that it deserves and that the state of society required'. Rentoul ascribed this to the lack of a paid agency and the need therefore to rely on individual and local effort. He pointed to John Pyper's work for the I.T.L. as an illustration of the value of such an agency. He concluded his report by urging greater efforts, specifically the introduction of an annual temperance sermon in churches, support for the Sunday closing campaign, the encouragement of presbyterian magistrates to oppose licence applications and the instruction of theological students on the subject.¹ The temperance cause in the 1860s was making but slow progress in the churches, even in the presbyterian church, where it had most support. We have seen that the catholic hierarchy, with one or two notable exceptions, were highly suspicious of the movement. So, stimulated by the example of the U.K. Alliance in England, Irish temperance advocates looked to secular societies, agitating mainly for legislative action, as the best means of furthering the cause. An extensive and well-organised network of such groups was built up in the 1860s, largely owing to the labours of the I.T.L.'s agents: John Pyper in the north and T.W. Russell in the south. These groups were later to support, with money and publicity, the campaign for restrictive legislation. However, in both religious and socio-economic

¹ I.T.L.J., iii, no. 9 (Sept. 1865), pp 135-6.

terms, these societies were sectional, being composed largely of middle-class protestants. Geographically too, despite Russell's travels in the south and west, they remained limited, being most numerous in Ulster and in Dublin. Though better organised than Fr Mathew's popular, ecumenical crusade of the '40s, the temperance movement which revived in the 1860s was more sectional and sectarian.

The legislative campaigns of the 1860s

From 1863, when an English Sunday closing bill was before the commons, and 1864, when the permissive bill was first introduced, the Irish temperance movement became largely preoccupied with campaigns to secure these two pieces of legislation. In this the movement worked closely with its English counterparts especially the U.K. Alliance. The permissive bill was intended to apply to the whole of the United Kingdom, but, after it became clear that Sunday closing was unlikely to be introduced in England, the Irish movement began to work for a separate Irish Sunday closing bill.

The I.T.L. strongly supported total Sunday closing from the start, though, at the same time it regarded the permissive bill as more important and more likely to produce significant results. In April and May 1863 the league Journal urged 'active efforts' to secure the passage of Somes's bill to close public houses on Sunday in England, advising its supporters to write to M.P.s on behalf of the measure. The league objected to the desecration of the 'pearl of days', and complained of the inconsistency of closing baker shops, butchers, grocers and booksellers on that day, while permitting the publican 'to drive his

demoralising trade in pernicious and poisonous beverages'.¹ Its arguments were inspired as much by sabbatarianism as by temperance sentiment, perhaps more so, for it did not consider that Sunday closing would radically affect the drink problem. But the meetings and lectures organised by the I.T.L. remained primarily concerned with the permissive bill.² When *Somes's* bill was defeated in the house by a majority of 175, the league began to stress the special situation of Ireland. There was no necessity for Sunday trading in Ireland, said the Journal, whatever might be the situation in England. 'Here the people are unanimously opposed to that mode of profaning the Christian's holy day. And it is the opinion of many of our friends, whose views are entitled to much weight, that we should agitate for a Sunday closing bill.'³ The league argued that Sunday drinking created particular problems in Ireland, problems which were not to be found in England. 'When, and where, [it asked] are most of our red-handed Irish crimes concocted? In the public house on Sunday.' With money and leisure on that day and little open except the public house, people were tempted into drinking, gambling and, worst of all, conspiring against the government. It is notorious [the article went on] that illegal societies are got up by publicans to promote their business, and that the time of meeting is usually Sunday evening. It is well understood in Leitrim, that the real 'Molly Maguire' was a publican, who got up the organisation as a whiskey-selling speculation.⁴

¹ I.T.L.J., i, no. 4 (May 1863), p. 78.

² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³ *Ibid.*, i, no. 6 (July 1863), p. 112.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Similar charges were soon to be levelled against the fenians, who did indeed make considerable use of public houses for their meeting and recruiting.¹ The league claimed that crime generally, and drunkenness especially, were more prevalent in Irish towns on Sunday than on any other day of the week. Thus, it was absurd for parliament to go on making laws against secret societies and agrarian outrage, on the one hand, 'while all the time fostering the system that nurtures them - the Sunday liquor trade!'. It was not necessary, the Journal went on, to argue the issue on religious grounds, as 'Irish religious people will, as a matter of course, protest against Sunday liquor selling'. But, having to convince politicians called for different arguments. So Sunday drinking as the 'fountain of Irish crime' needed to be stressed, plus the unanimous opinion of the Irish people in favour of Sunday closing. English members, thought the league, 'will scarcely have the hardihood to deny us one of the few things about which we are agreed'.

But, in fact, the league looked well beyond Sunday closing. The discussion we have been examining thus concluded:

Having succeeded in closing the public houses in Ireland on the sabbath day, the friends of temperance will be cheered onward in their mighty mission for the total suppression, not on one day alone, but on all days, of the man-debasing and God-dishonouring traffic in intoxicating beverages.²

A similar attitude prevailed with regard to the permissive bill: it was seen as a means of introducing prohibition.

¹ For the fenians and public houses see above, pp 262-3.

² I.T.L.J., i, no. 6 (July 1863), p. 112.

In August 1863 this was stated in the Journal in quite unequivocal terms.

To prohibition, a permissive act would stand in the relation of an instrument - of means to an end - of, for example, a lever to a weight to be raised. Much nonsense, or worse, has been talked and written charging the alliance with coming down, and relinquishing the agitation for total and immediate prohibition. The sole means of obtaining local prohibition is a permissive act, which is only sought by the alliance in order to secure local prohibition, and thence prohibition throughout the whole kingdom.¹

The league therefore entered upon the legislative campaign firmly committed to prohibition and viewing Sunday closing and the permissive bill merely as means to this end.

In September 1864 a Sunday closing association was established in Belfast by leaders of the I.T.L. to agitate for an Irish bill. H.C. Knight, the new secretary of the league, told the inaugural meeting that, although Somes's bill had been heavily defeated, more Irish members had voted for it than against it. In fact the majority in favour was only 2, 20 having voted for and 18 against. But, undeterred by this, the association resolved to seek funds and to find an M.P. who would be willing to introduce an Irish Sunday closing bill.² In the latter task, however, the association made no headway. Somes himself, after his defeat, had concluded that it was impossible to carry 'so complete a measure' at present, and had urged supporters of Sunday closing to be satisfied with agitating merely to shorten Sunday trading hours.³ But the Belfast association persisted

¹ I.T.L.J., i, no. 7 (Aug. 1863), p. 126; for the U.K. Alliance's political tactics with regard to the permissive bill see D.A. Hamer, The politics of electoral pressure: a study in the history of Victorian reform agitations (Hassocks, Sussex, 1977), pp 165-304.

² I.T.L.J., ii, no. 10 (Oct. 1864), p. 158.

³ Ibid., i, no. 7 (Aug. 1863), p. 127.

in canvassing support for a bill to close Irish public houses all day Sunday. In October 1864 a deputation, including the mayor, Corry, the president of the league, and Knight called on Sir Hugh Cairns, one of the conservative members for the city, and asked him to sponsor such a measure. Cairns told them that he thought opposition to Sunday closing in England was very strong and that, even in Scotland, support for the Forbes Mackenzie act had waned considerably since 1854. Thus, to get an Irish bill through would require the wholehearted support of the Irish M.P.s. This he felt was lacking. Out of 105 Irish M.P.s, only 38 had bothered to vote in the division on Somes's bill and the majority in favour was very small. Moreover, 14 out of the 20 for the bill were protestants. Only 6 Irish catholic M.P.s had supported the measure. Thus, although some members of the catholic hierarchy had spoken out in favour of Sunday closing, Cairns said that he was not impressed by the support for the measure among catholic M.P.s. He therefore refused to sponsor a bill.¹

The league fared little better in its campaign to win support for the permissive bill. It canvassed the Belfast candidates on the subject before the 1865 elections. Sir Hugh Cairns declared outright that he would not vote for it as 'there was something tyrannical about it'. Lord John Hay, the liberal candidate, refused to commit himself one way or the other, but S.G. Getty, the other conservative M.P., declared that he would certainly vote for its first and second readings, though he would 'not pledge himself to

¹ I.T.L.J., ii, no. 10 (Oct. 1864), pp 172-4; for the names of the 38 Irish M.P.s voting on Somes's bill see ibid., ii, no. 6 (June 1864), p. 95.

endorse everything contained in it'. The league had to be satisfied with this far from total commitment, and in July it endorsed Getty and recommended the 'friends of temperance' to vote for him. When Cairns and Getty were re-elected, the league expressed satisfaction at the result.¹ It was hardly much of an achievement, though in Dublin the situation was even worse. Deputations, consisting of, among others, James Haughton, Richard Allen, T.W. Russell, J.A. Mowatt, Henry and J.R. Wigham, had called on the conservative members for the county, Colonel Taylor and Ion Trant Hamilton, and also on two of the candidates for the city, John Vance, the conservative member and Jonathan Pim, the liberal candidate. Sir Benjamin Lee Guinness, the brewer and second conservative candidate, had refused to receive a deputation. There had been a 'vigorous argument' with Taylor and Hamilton, who would only promise 'careful consideration' of the permissive bill. Vance received them 'favourably', and Pim, though also 'favourable', would not pledge himself to vote for the measure in the house.² Taylor and Hamilton were elected, as were Guinness and Pim. The I.T.L.J. commented that the 'metropolis had been disgraced for the present by the return of Mr Benjamin Lee Guinness'. Haughton had written a public letter to Guinness, after he had declined to receive a deputation, enclosing with it a copy of the electoral address of the Dublin branch of the U.K. Alliance, and informing him that he was 'unfitted' to be a member of parliament because of his brewing interests. Guinness clearly did not appreciate Haughton's opinion, and his reply was little

¹ I.T.L.J., iii, no. 8 (Aug. 1865), pp 117-20.

² Ibid., p. 128.

short of insulting. He refused to read more than the first page of Haughton's letter.

Such [he wrote] has been my habit for many years with anything written by you, or reported as spoken by you. I return herewith the letter alluded to, and as I have no respect for, and take no interest whatever in, your vagaries, I beg to decline any further communication with you.¹

It was perhaps an unnecessarily harsh letter to write to a man, who, for all the excesses of his many enthusiasms, was much respected for his charitable work and his nationalist sympathies. The I.T.L.J. certainly thought so, remarking that the reply of the 'head beerseller of all Ireland' displayed 'an amount of gentlemanly bearing, intelligent appreciation of great public questions, and a desire to thoroughly understand all the topics of the day, such as could only be found among beersellers everywhere'.² The Journal's sarcasm doubtless concealed its disappointment at the election results.

The campaign for Sunday closing and the permissive bill nevertheless continued, As we have seen, a Sunday closing association, linked to the I.T.L., had been formed in Belfast late in 1864. Two years later similar organisations appeared in England and in the south of Ireland. In Manchester in October 1866 the Central Association for Stopping the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday was formed, while in November in Dublin the Irish Association for Closing Public Houses on Sunday was established.³ The Irish Sunday Closing Association was formed on 29 November at a meeting held in

¹ I.T.L.J., iii, no. 8 (Aug. 1865), p. 121.

² Ibid.

³ I.T.L.J., v, no. 2 (Feb. 1867), pp 13-14.

the Rotunda. The meeting was attended by most of the capital's temperance stalwarts, including Haughton, Spratt, Urwick, Richard Allen, Henry and J.R. Wigham. As well, present were the Rev. Nicholas Dunscombe from Cork, Edward Alworthy from the I.T.L., Dr Lees from the U.K. Alliance and representatives of the recently formed English Sunday closing association, notably the Rev. Dr John Garrett, its secretary. The meeting referred to the work of Leahy and Furlong and the establishment of the English association, and declared that an Irish association was needed to lobby to have Sunday closing made general by law throughout the country.¹ No mention was made of the Belfast organisation, which presumably had lapsed through its inability to find sympathetic M.P.s. The supporters of temperance, especially Dublin's quaker merchants, quickly subscribed £160 to the new association. Henry Bewley gave £50, six members of the Pim family gave £35 between them, Richard Allen gave £10 and the Wighams £15. It is perhaps interesting that T.W. Russell was not involved in the setting up of the new association and Haughton only subscribed £1 to it.² Both were committed to prohibition at the time and, as we have seen, doubted the efficacy of partial measures like Sunday closing.³ The association began by calling on the mayor to organise a public meeting on Sunday closing in the Mansion House. The Irish Times commented that the resolutions to be put to the meeting were intended to serve as the basis for future legislation. The meeting on

¹ F.J., 30 Nov. 1866.

² Ibid., 20 Dec. 1866.

³ See above, pp 232-3, 244-6.

19 December passed, not without opposition, a series of resolutions in favour of Sunday closing and urged the Dublin M.P.s to support an Irish Sunday closing bill.¹

The I.T.L. did not see the immediate need for a similar meeting in Belfast 'as the voice of Ulster is already unanimously in favour of the God-honouring, man-loving cause, it would be a useless expenditure of time and money to do so'. Instead, the league advised presbyteries, church conferences and committees of temperance societies to get up petitions in favour of Sunday closing. Petition forms were sent to clergy and temperance societies, who were told, if ~~they~~ needed more, to contact either Garrett in Manchester, Henry Wigham in Dublin or H.C. Knight in Belfast. The English and Irish Sunday closing associations and the I.T.L. were working together to have bills introduced. The league, however, remained firmly convinced that Ireland should be dealt with in a separate bill.

Were we [it said] to unite with England in asking a joint bill for both countries, there might be years of delay; but seeing Ireland is much riper for the reform than England, let us at the earliest possible moment secure for ourselves an act similar to that enjoyed by Scotland, and afterwards let us render all the assistance we can to our English friends.²

The league was anxious to enlist all temperance sympathisers in the cause, whether they were teetotallers or not, and to have the campaign appear as widespread and representative as possible. Perhaps a hint of misrepresentation crept in for this reason, 'While temperance friends and societies will have the greatest part of the work to do in getting up the petition, yet for obvious reasons it will be more prudent to

¹ Irish Times, 20 Dec. 1866.

² I.T.L.J., v, no. 2 (Feb. 1867), p. 14.

do it, not in the name of their organisations, but as from the community generally.'¹ The league advised teetotallers to work with others, and 'for the time to hold their distinctive principles in abeyance'. But, at the same time, it warned Sunday closers not to be ashamed of teetotalism or to consider it a 'nuisance', for without teetotal support Sunday closing would never have been gained in Scotland, nor would it come in Ireland or in England.² The league felt it impolitic to parade teetotalism and prohibition in the Sunday closing campaign. More support could be gained by stressing sabbatarianism in the north and general temperance principles in the south. When the league publicly urged this deception, it provided ammunition for its critics, who were frequently to claim in the years ahead that Sunday closing was regarded by its supporters as the first step on the road to prohibition. The league obviously hoped that they were right. 'Sunday closing [the Journal said in 1867], of which all Christians must approve, when fully "carried through", implies teetotalism, the great principle we advocate from month to month... It is the thin edge of the wedge which when properly driven home will yet utterly demolish the infernal traffic and custom together.'³

Once the temperance movement had compromised on prohibition and decided to support lesser measures, even if only as a means to prohibition, the question of where to draw the line arose. The permissive bill and Sunday closing would be supported, but what about measures merely to shorten hours of trading?

¹ I.T.L.J., v, no. 2 (Feb. 1867), p. 14.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., v, no. 3 (Mar. 1867), p. 26.

Disagreement within the Irish temperance movement on where to draw this line was in fact to destroy any small chance there was of getting an Irish Sunday closing act in the 1860s. In March 1867 a large public meeting was held in the Ulster Hall in Belfast and a deputation appointed to go to London and help organise the introduction of an Irish Sunday closing bill. A similar deputation went from Dublin, and they met with Dr Garrett to work out such a bill. However, Garrett, in the meantime, had resigned as secretary of the English Sunday closing organisation because, like Somes, he had become convinced that it was impossible to obtain total Sunday closing at the present time. He and others were thus working towards the introduction of bills for England and Ireland that would merely limit the hours of trading on Sunday. J.A. Smith, liberal M.P. for Chichester, and Major Myles O'Reilly, liberal M.P. for County Longford, had agreed to introduce these bills. The Belfast deputation did not know of this change in Garrett's stance before they met him.¹ The Dublin deputation was convinced by Garrett of the need for this compromise, but the men from Belfast would not commit themselves. On 26 March a meeting in Belfast rejected it and appointed a committee, consisting of Corry, Knight, Alderman Robert Lindsay and Rev. John Macnaughtan, to go to London and uphold the principle of total Sunday closing. But O'Reilly refused to introduce such a measure. The Dublin movement supported him and no other cooperative Irish M.P. could be found. The Belfast temperance societies were then faced with the unpleasant choice of supporting or opposing the partial bill proposed. They chose the former course. 'It would be wrong [said the I.T.L.]

¹ I.T.L.J., v, no. 8 (Aug. 1867), p. 85.

to oppose friends who were zealously and conscientiously working in the direction of that which we aimed at.' But, at the same time, it 'felt disheartened by the mutilated form of the bill', and 'from that time forward little active support was given to the measure in the north of Ireland'.¹ The league and its agents, like Pyper and Russell, concentrated their attention on the permissive bill. Sabbatarians were equally disappointed and the committee on sabbath observance of the general assembly severely criticised O'Reilly's bill.²

In Dublin the bill attracted little attention. The Freeman's Journal and the Irish Times were preoccupied with the reform bill, with the fenian threat and, later in the year, with the issue of disestablishment. However, in May the Licensed Grocers and Vintners Association decided to petition against the bill and raise money to mount a campaign against it. They sent a delegation to London to see Lord Naas, the chief secretary, and to lobby Irish M.P.s. In this they were assisted by Sir John Grey and Sir Benjamin Lee Guinness, whose brewery contributed ten guineas to the publicans' fund. But, even the trade seemed rather apathetic, and not wholly convinced of the need for vigorous opposition. In June at a special meeting of the L.G.V.A. there was much criticism of the lack of interest being shown in O'Reilly's bill. James Carey, one of the London delegation, informed the meeting that Sunday closing was 'the beginning of the end', for behind it were the 'canting hypocrits' and 'puritans', whose real aim was to introduce the permissive bill and ultimately the Maine law. Carey clearly felt that the only

¹ I.T.L.J., v, no. 8 (Aug. 1867), p. 86.

² Ibid., v, no. 12 (Dec. 1867), p. 134.

way to arouse the trade was, not to attack Sunday closing of itself, but to portray it as the first step towards prohibition. With regard to the views of the I.T.L., he was perfectly correct. He also evoked the cause of economic nationalism by claiming that the anti-drink movement sought to strike a blow 'at the last remnant of manufacture in this country by closing the breweries and distilleries'.¹ This argument was presumably aimed at brewers like Guinness and nationalists like Grey, who were important allies of the publicans.

The bill introduced in 1867 was sponsored by three Irish liberal M.P.s. As well as O'Reilly, they were Jonathan Pim of Dublin and Lord Cremorne of County Monaghan. The bill proposed that spirits, wine and beer should be sold for consumption off the premises on Sunday, between 1 p.m. and 2.30 p.m. and between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m., and that keepers of eating houses should sell liquor for consumption on the premises to purchasers of food. The bill aimed to do away with drinking in public houses on Sunday, while, at the same time, permitting drinking at home and with meals in cafés and restaurants. It was felt by the less extreme advocates of temperance that these latter forms of drinking were legitimate and were likely to cause less drunkenness than public house drinking. Both the English and Irish bills were read for the first time in March, though Smith subsequently withdrew his. The I.T.L.J. believed this was because the bill had no chance of success, as Smith 'had not the cordial support even of the temperance community'.² O'Reilly however, went

¹ F.J., 13 and 27 June 1867.

² I.T.L.J., v, no. 8 (Aug. 1867), p. 86.

ahead and on 5 June moved the second reading. The bill's opponents countered by urging the setting up of a select committee to investigate the matter. Lord Naas, representing the government, did not oppose the second reading, but was far from enthusiastic in his speech. He pointed out that drunkenness was not increasing greatly in Ireland at the time, and therefore there was 'no special evil to meet'. Police and magistrates were divided in their opinions: those in Cork welcoming the bill, but the D.M.P. fearing an increase in illicit drinking if it was passed.¹ The second reading was deferred till July, and when the bill came up again, Naas was definitely in favour of a select committee. O'Reilly correctly interpreted this as an effort to kill the bill. Naas's comments were far more hostile than they had been in June. 'If they attempted legislation in the sense of this measure [he said], it would be necessary to review the whole licensing system in Ireland', and he clearly had no intention of doing this. On a motion moved by N.D. Murphy of Cork, the bill's chief opponent, it was referred to a select committee by 92 votes to 71.² At the division 54 of the Irish M.P.s were absent, and of the 47 who voted, 25 were in favour of the second reading and 22 for the select committee. Even J.F. Maguire, Fr Mathew's biographer, was among those voting, in effect, against the bill.³ The division bore out Cairns's assertion in 1864, that there was little support for Sunday closing among Irish M.P.s. The I.T.L.J. was appalled

¹ Hansard 3, clxxxvii, 1645-8.

² Ibid., clxxxviii, 918-22.

³ For the names of the M.P.s concerned see I.T.L.J., v, no. 8 (Aug. 1867), p. 86.

at the committee proposed and suggested that it indicated O'Reilly's 'indifference'. For, of the seventeen members, seven had actually voted against the bill, only three for it, and the remainder had been absent during the division.¹

However, this may merely have reflected O'Reilly's conviction that the committee would never sit. Such was in fact the case. It was too late in the session for a select committee to begin its operations and so the order was discharged.

O'Reilly introduced the bill again in the 1868 session and this time quickly agreed to a select committee in order to forestall opposition and delay. On 16 March the fifteen members of the committee were nominated, with O'Reilly as chairman. O'Reilly exercised his right to nominate six members, but the nine-man majority was composed either of outright opponents, like Murphy, William Stacpoole of Ennis and N.P. Leader of County Cork, or of sceptics, like the Earl of Mayo (formerly Lord Naas) and Chichester Fortesque of County Louth. If the committee was not particularly sympathetic to the bill, neither were the witnesses. Well-known and influential advocates of Sunday closing, like Archbishop Leahy, played into the hands of the bill's opponents by calling for total Sunday closing and denying that shorter hours would make any difference. Even those who supported shorter Sunday hours, generally wanted a two-hour reduction in the evening, from 11 p.m. to 9 p.m., rather than the complex arrangements proposed in the bill. Then there were witnesses opposed to any change at all. All in all there was hardly anyone with a good word to say for the bill in its existing form. It suffered the fate of so many compromise

¹ I.T.L.J., v, no. 8 (Aug. 1867), p. 86.

schemes, it failed to satisfy either side. The committee therefore voted to amend the bill drastically. Hours of sale on Sunday were to be reduced, to between 2 p.m. and 9 p.m. in towns with more than 5,000 inhabitants, and to between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. elsewhere. These were the hours later to be introduced by the liberals in their 1872 licensing act. As a result of the drastic amendments proposed, O'Reilly was forced to withdraw his bill.

The Irish Times considered the original bill to have been 'remarkably bad' and expressed itself pleased at its mutilation. In May 1868 a special correspondent wrote:

This bill, principally through the exertion of Mr Murphy, one of the members for Cork city, has been cut to pieces, and out of the very small remains of Mr O'Reilly's handiwork on a subject about which he knew very little, if anything, a new measure more in consonance with the spirit of the times and the equitable claim to protection of a large and respectable interest, has been prepared.¹

Certainly the new bill found more support among the trade, though even less among the teetotallers. Carey, the president of the L.G.V.A., was prepared to consider it more sympathetically than the previous one. Some publicans welcomed the proposed shorter hours. 'A vintner', writing to the Irish Times, warned against 'having some unpopular, troublesome and impractical bill passed into law - the work of enthusiastic religionists of every denomination, and of utopian teetotallers'. But, at the same time, 'A vintner' acknowledged that there was a public demand for shorter hours and sympathy for this measure from within the trade. He therefore advised the publicans to take action themselves 'to have prepared a well-digested substitute for every inadmissible proposal in this Sunday closing bill'.² The Grocers'

¹ I.T., 25 May 1868.

² Ibid.

Assistants Association came out strongly in favour of Sunday closing, as they wanted their members to have one free day a week. Jonathan Pim identified himself with their cause, and made sure that their case was heard in parliament and before the select committee.¹ Others were less pleased, and especially the teetotallers. Mowatt assailed the select committee for being biased and only taking evidence which supported its preconceived ideas. He claimed that it had accepted evidence from working men opposed to Sunday closing, but would not hear working men in favour of the measure, who had been selected by the I.S.C.A. Nor would it hear him, although he was prepared to pay his own expenses in going to London.² However, despite its 'mutilation', the Irish bill had at least fared better than the English one. Smith had reintroduced his bill in 1868 and it too had been referred to a select committee. But in June, after examining 59 witnesses, the committee voted by 7 to 6 to reject the bill totally.³

O'Reilly persevered and introduced the amended bill in 1869, presumably hoping that the new liberal government would be more sympathetic than its tory predecessor had been. During the second reading debate, the bill's supporters were at pains to stress its moderateness and how small a change it in fact involved. Chichester Fortesque, the new chief secretary, spoke on its behalf, and, as a result, Murphy and the bill's other opponents withdrew their objections.⁴ But, in June, during the committee stages of the bill, Chichester

¹ F.J., 10 and 16 Mar. 1868.

² Ibid., 26 May 1868.

³ I.T.L.J., vi, no. 8 (Aug. 1868), p. 113; Dawson Burns, Temperance history, ii, 93-4.

⁴ Hansard 3, cxciv, 989-95.

cf Fortesque announced that the government was planning a major reform of the licensing laws. He hoped, he said, to introduce a measure next session to 'put an end to the anomalies and evils of the licensing system in Ireland', and Sunday trading hours would certainly be taken into account. With this assurance, O'Reilly agreed to withdraw his bill, saying that he believed the government's proposed measure would restrict Sunday trading hours along the lines suggested in his own bill.¹

At the time the L.G.V.A. was meeting in Dublin. They received a telegram from Carey, who was with their delegation in London, announcing the withdrawal of O'Reilly's bill. The telegram stated that the bill 'had been withdrawn, thanks to the efforts of Mr Murphy, M.P. for Cork, many other members of parliament, and the good sense of the government'. The announcement was received with applause. The publicans had received assistance from the English trade associations in their campaign against O'Reilly's bills, but, by March 1869, their efforts had cost them over £300. Understandably they were happy at their victory, though Chichester Fortesque's pledge of sweeping reform in the near future made it clear that they had won only a battle and not the whole war.² The Spirit Grocers Association, on the other hand, welcomed the chief secretary's promise. They took it as an endorsement of their complaints against the publicans, and hoped that he would very soon bring in a bill 'to equalise the licensing system, and place all in the trade on the same footing'.³ As for the

¹ Hansard 3, cxcvi, 1451-7.

² F.J., 11 Mar. and 10 June 1869; I.T., 4 Mar. 1868.

³ F.J., 12 Mar. 1869.

I.T.L., it had long before written its epitaph for O'Reilly's bills. In August 1867, after his first bill had been referred to a select committee, the Journal said:

No Sunday closing measure of any value can ever be got for Ireland unless it be based upon some principle that will command the confidence and secure the co-operation of the friends of both the sabbath and of temperance. Major O'Reilly's bill was minus the former element, and had but little of the latter; and we trust its fate, which, as a publican triumph, we sincerely deplore, will teach a useful lesson in the future.¹

O'Reilly's failure to get either of his bills through was not perhaps such a 'publican triumph' as the league believed. The Irish trade was divided over the question of Sunday hours and had been slow to organise a campaign. The failure was more due to divisions in the temperance movement and the unsympathetic attitude of successive governments. However, the conflict over O'Reilly's bills had the effect of convincing both sides of the need for unity and for more effective political lobbying. The temperance movement closed ranks on the issue, shorter hours were rejected and total closing became the aim. The publicans, on the other hand, employed a former journalist and election agent, Michael Dwyer, as their secretary, and he proved a formidable publicist and lobbyist on their behalf during the 1870s. In T.W. Russell, the temperance movement was to find the equal of Dwyer.

The 1868 elections saw the I.T.L. much more politically active than it had been in 1865. With O'Reilly's bill before the house and another permissive bill proposed, it was essential to secure the election of sympathetic M.P.s. Pyper therefore travelled extensively through the province interviewing candidates and trying to persuade them to endorse both

¹ I.T.L.J., v, no. 8 (Aug. 1867), p. 86.

the permissive bill and Sunday closing. Temperance, however, was not a particularly significant issue as the electorate was much preoccupied with disestablishment, land reform and denominational education. But, the results were more encouraging than in 1865, especially in Ulster. There four liberals were returned, William Kirk in Newry, Richard Dowse in Derry, Thomas M'Clure in Belfast and Captain Saunderson in Cavan, all publicly committed to support temperance legislation. Among the conservatives, some, like Sir Hervey H. Bruce in Coleraine, Colonel Knox in Dungannon and Colonel Cole in Fermanagh, made it very clear that they would not vote for such legislation. But in Carrickfergus the president of the I.T.L., M. R. Dalway, was elected, while William Johnston, another staunch temperance advocate, was returned for Belfast.¹ Benjamin Whitworth, a vice-president of the U.K. Alliance, was re-elected as liberal M.P. for Drogheda, though later unseated on petition. In Dublin Pim was returned with Sir Arthur Guinness. But Guinness was unseated on petition and replaced in 1870 by Sir Dominic Corrigan, a liberal, who, though he did not support the permissive bill, was a strong believer in Sunday closing. In Longford O'Reilly was returned unopposed, while his chief opponent, N.D. Murphy, was easily re-elected in Cork. So, although the temperance issue played no great part in the elections, a small group of M.P.s committed to supporting temperance legislation had been sent to Westminster.

In their disappointment at O'Reilly's Sunday closing bill, Irish teetotallers campaigned vigorously on behalf of the

¹ I.T.L.J., vi, no. 12 (Dec. 1868), p. 196; for a detailed analysis of the election in Ulster see Walker, Parliamentary representation in Ulster, pp 186-216.

permissive bill. Sir Wilfrid Lawson had decided to re-introduce the measure in the 1869 session. In support of this, on 26 January 1869 a permissive bill association was formed in Dublin, with T.W. Russell as secretary, and A.M. Sullivan, the influential editor of the Nation, as chairman of the executive. On the general council of the organisation were various members of the Webb, Wigham and Allen families, who formed the backbone of many of the city's temperance societies from the 1830s to the end of the century. James Haughton, too, joined, as did J.G. Richardson of Bessbrook, who was later to be president of the I.T.L. In four months the association had raised £450 and collected 100,000 signatures on petitions in favour of the permissive bill.¹ But, when the bill was introduced, the home secretary informed Lawson, as the chief secretary had informed O'Reilly, that the government was proposing a general reform of licensing laws in the next session, and would thus oppose any piecemeal reforms at the present time. This statement, according to the I.T.L.J., took many votes from the bill, and, including tellers and pairs, it was defeated 200 to 94. The Irish vote was 20 for and 15 against, with 12 of those for being Ulster M.P.s and only one of those against. Lord Hill Trevor of County Down was the only M.P. to 'disgrace' Ulster, as the I.T.L.J. described it.² In 1864, when the bill had first been voted on, it had been defeated by 297 to 40, so the 1869 vote, although still a defeat, was a considerable improvement as far as the temperance movement was concerned. The I.T.L. was particularly

¹ F.J., 26 May 1869; Dawson Burns, Temperance history, ii, 123-4.

¹ I.T.L.J., vii, no. 6 (June 1869), pp 81-2.

pleased with the Ulster vote, seeing in it the culmination of over ten years' work. Irish M.P.s voting for the bill outside Ulster included several well-known for their temperance sympathies, like J.A. Blake of Waterford, M'Carthy Downing of County Cork, W.P. Urquhart of Westmeath and Thomas Whitworth, who had replaced Benjamin in Drogheda. The majority of Ulster M.P.s supporting the bill were of course conservatives, but the 8 supporting it outside Ulster were all liberals. But, although the temperance movement was making progress among Ulster M.P.s, the overall picture with regard to Ireland was still fairly bleak. Only 35 out of 105 Irish M.P.s had bothered to vote in the division on the permissive bill, and over 40 per cent of these were opposed to it.

By 1870 the Irish temperance movement was considerably stronger and better organised than it had been at the death of Fr Mathew, nearly fifteen years before. But it had assumed a very different character from that which the apostle of temperance had led. It was no longer a loose, mass movement of catholics and some protestants, seeking material advance through the total abstinence pledge. It was, by 1870, a coalition of protestant-dominated temperance societies, closely tied to similar English organisations, whose attention was largely focused on getting anti-drink legislation of various sorts through parliament. While temperance languished within the catholic church, it was making progress among the presbyterians and non-conformists in Ulster. The campaign for repressive legislation also involved M.P.s, and thus made the attitudes of the political parties of vital importance. Parliamentary lobbying became

a significant activity for temperance advocates, and successful lobbyists came to the forefront of the movement. This legislative campaign also had the effect of involving the drink industry, especially retailers, more directly and actively than ever before. Finding their livelihoods under threat, the publicans responded by organising defence associations and mounting their own campaigns to win over M.P.s. In the 1870s therefore, and to a lesser extent till the end of the century, parliament became the chief arena for the Irish temperance movement.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEMPERANCE IN PARLIAMENT AFTER 1870

... in accordance with the order of the day, an honourable member rose to propose a pet measure of his own for preventing the adulteration of beer by publicans. He had made a calculation that the annual average mortality of England would be reduced by one and a half per cent, or in other words that every English subject born would live seven months longer if the action of the legislature could provide that the publicans should sell the beer as it came from the brewers. Immediately there was such a rush of members to the door that not a word said by the philanthropic would-be purifier of the national beverage could be heard. The quarrels of rival ministers were dear to the house, and as long as they could be continued the benches were crowded by gentlemen enthralled by the interest of the occasion. But to sink from that to private legislation about beer was to fall into a bathos which gentlemen could not endure: and so the house was emptied, and at about half-past seven there was a count-out. That gentleman whose statistics had been procured with so much care, and who had been at work for the last twelve months on his effort to prolong the lives of his fellow-countrymen was almost broken-hearted. But he knew the world too well to complain. He would try again next year, if by dint of energetic perseverance he could procure a day.

Anthony Trollope, Phineas redux (London, 1874; reprint, St Albans, Herts., 1973), pp 584-5.

The fight for Sunday closing, 1870-78

In 1869 the liberal government had committed itself to a major reform of the licensing laws in the following session. A licensing bill was announced in the queen's speech in February 1870, but the government failed to introduce it, much to the disappointment of the temperance movement in both England and Ireland. However, the government indicated that it would bring in such a bill in 1871. In the meantime both the Irish Permissive Bill and Sunday Closing Associations continued their agitation for their respective measures. Lawson's bill was introduced again in 1869 and 1870, but was defeated soundly in both cases - 193/87 and 121/90. Lawson 'noted how in permissive bill debates the sound of the division bell caused members to rush out of the house instead of rushing in; in a division where public feeling ran high both for and against, members wanted to save their consciences and their seats'.¹ Doubtless many Irish M.P.s found it expedient to be absent during divisions on Irish temperance legislation, for absenteeism proved a continuing problem for temperance lobbyists. During these years the Sunday closing association held numerous meetings and petitioned the government to include total Sunday closing in their proposed bill, rather than a shortening of hours as O'Reilly's bill had envisaged. But when the government bill, drawn up by H.A. Bruce, the home secretary, finally appeared in April 1871, it infuriated the trade on the one hand, while failing to satisfy the various elements in the temperance movement, on the other.

The bill was imaginative, far-reaching and also very complicated, running to some ninety foolscap pages.

¹ Brian Harrison, Drink and the Victorians (London, 1971), p. 261.

Essentially it proposed four types of licence: publicans' general, for on and off the premises sale of all liquors; publicans' limited, for on and off sale of all liquors except spirits; innkeepers', for on the premises sale in houses accommodating travellers and providing meals; and eating house, for the sale of all liquors, except spirits, to be consumed on the premises with meals.¹ As well, the bill stated that all existing licence holders were to be entitled to renew their licences for ten years at a small charge and that no reduction in the numbers of licences was to occur during this period. However, at the end of it, the licensing authorities were to decide, according to a prescribed formula, how many licences were to be issued for the next ten years, and these were to be sold to the highest bidder - the process to be repeated every ten years. The proportion of licences to population was to be 1 per 1,000 in urban areas and 1 per 60 in rural areas. If the magistrates proposed to grant more than the allotted quota, a poll of ratepayers was to be taken. A majority vote of 60% against such an extension could prevent it.² Thus, the bill contained an element of local control. Bruce also proposed a sharp reduction in hours of opening and admitted another local control mechanism when he specified that 60% of ratepayers could empower the magistrates to curtail weekday evening closing to 9 p.m. and to close public houses totally on Sunday.³

¹ Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, p. 264.

² G.B. Wilson, Alcohol and the nation (London, 1940), p. 106.

³ Harrison, op. cit., p. 265.

The English drink trade mounted a fierce campaign against this bill. In the wake of the Paris Commune, they called Bruce a 'communist', claiming that in effect the measure meant that after ten years their property would be confiscated.¹ An increasing number of conservatives came to support the vintners and eventually, in the face of mounting opposition, the government decided to drop the bill. In April 1872 Bruce brought in a second licensing bill, far more moderate than the first, which became the licensing act of 1872.² The U.K. Alliance had also condemned the 1871 bill, but, in its case, for not going far enough, and it devoted much of its attention to the permissive bill, which was introduced again in 1871 and 1872.³ Under this barrage of licensing legislation in the early 1870s, the political parties were becoming polarised: the liberals, tending to look more sympathetically upon bills aimed to restrict the drink trade, while the conservatives began to appear as champions of the drink industry. This trend can be seen clearly in the division lists for the permissive bill. When the bill was first introduced in 1864 151 liberals and 111 conservatives had voted against it. Ten years later, however, in 1874, these figures were 78 and 192 respectively. Leaders of the U.K. Alliance, like Sir Wilfred Lawson and G.O. Trevelyan, who were both also liberal M.P.s were beginning to speak of the liberal party as the 'temperance party'.⁴

¹ For a detailed discussion of reaction to Bruce's bill and particularly tory opinion, see Paul Smith, Disraelian conservatism and social reform (London, 1967), pp 145-8.

² Ibid., pp 166-9; see also above, pp 49-52 for a discussion of the contents of this act.

³ Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, p. 269.

⁴ Ibid., p. 270.

The Irish temperance movement was also deeply involved in these developments. In 1870 and 1871 the Irish Permissive Bill Association was especially active, holding meetings throughout the country. Resolutions in favour of the permissive principle, passed at such gatherings, were forwarded to Dublin Castle and to Westminster.¹ Bruce's gesture towards local option in his 1871 bill was welcomed, but generally regarded as not going far enough. In April 1871 a meeting in Ballymena passed a resolution expressing 'satisfaction' with Bruce's bill, 'so far as it concedes the principle of a ratepayer's veto, and curtails and limits the sale of intoxicating liquors'. But, at the same time, the meeting protested

in the most emphatic manner against those clauses by which the ratepayer's veto is limited, by which a ten years' lease is granted to present holders of licence certificates, and by which new licences will be granted for ten years instead of one as at present.²

Other gatherings, organised by the I.P.B.A., passed almost identical resolutions.³ The association lobbied the members for Dublin city, Jonathan Pim and Sir Dominic Corrigan, but, while both supported Sunday closing, neither would commit himself to the permissive principle.⁴ In that year, however, 33 Irish M.P.s did vote in favour of Lawson's bill, with 18 voting against it.⁵ But abstentions remained high, while those in favour of the bill were overwhelmingly M.P.s representing Ulster constituencies. In January 1872 a

¹ For some of these resolutions, see S.P.O., R.P. 1870/4043, 1871/2229, 1871/2378.

² Ibid., 1871/7506.

³ See, for example, *ibid.*, 1871/8773.

⁴ Freeman's Journal, 24 Nov. 1871.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3 Jan. 1872.

deputation from the I.P.B.A. saw Lord Hartington, the chief secretary, who made it clear that the government had no intention of supporting their measure. They were followed, on the same day, by a deputation from the I.S.C.A. To them Hartington said that the government would limit Sunday trading hours in its proposed bill, but that it would not introduce total Sunday closing.¹ Within a month Pim and Corrigan, who had accompanied both delegations, had, with the support of several Ulster M.P.s, introduced an Irish Sunday closing bill.

There was clearly more support in Ireland for measures to limit hours and restrict licences, than there was for the permissive bill. On 11 December 1871, in an editorial dealing with what it saw as the approaching crisis in the licensing question, the Freeman's Journal urged the vintners to take a more positive stance.

We freely acknowledge, as we have often acknowledged before, [said the paper] that the vintners of Ireland constitute a body of staunch friends of the Liberal Party, and of willing helps in every cause of charity that is put before them. But, in this matter of licensing they have seemed to fancy every man's hand was lifted against them, and it was needful to clothe themselves all over in an impenetrable panoply.²

But the Freeman's Journal felt that 'to rest content with picking holes in the well-meant proposals of others, and to take no share in the suggestion of better', was a 'mistaken policy'. For it was 'beyond dispute' that reforms were called for. 'We have only to walk in our streets [the editorial went on] to be made sensible that drunkenness is not decreasing in our midst.' The Freeman's Journal suggested that Sunday opening be restricted to three or four hours, that

¹ F.J., 31 Jan. 1872.

² Ibid., 11 Dec. 1871.

weeknight closing be set at 10 p.m. and that trade societies be forbidden to meet in public houses.¹ The response of the Licensed Grocers and Vintners Association, however, was to shift all the blame on to their competitors, the spirit grocers and the beer dealers. A deputation from the association saw the chief secretary on 12 January 1872 and told him that these other drink traders should be more strictly controlled and that illicit selling should be stamped out.² The Freeman's Journal professed itself disappointed, for 'nothing was proposed - nothing was suggested' and it went on to charge that, 'whilst vintners and spirit grocers are warring about points of trade our people are being ruined and slain by the demon evil that is amongst us'.³ But the paper took up some of the publicans' suggestions and added to its earlier list of reforms, the suppression of beer-houses and good conduct certificates for spirit grocers. However, it opposed total Sunday closing, believing that this would cause great inconvenience to the public and that it would lead inevitably to an increase in illicit drinking.⁴

But, on 28 February, Sir Dominic Corrigan introduced just such a bill. In moving the second reading in June, Corrigan stressed that the bill only aimed to introduce in Ireland the system that had been in existence in Scotland for many years. He stated categorically that the bill was not in any way connected with the permissive bill agitation. Corrigan personally did not support local option, but as we have

¹ F.J., 11 Dec. 1871.

² Ibid., 13 Jan. 1872.

³ Ibid., 15 Jan. 1872.

⁴ Ibid., 17 Jan. 1872.

already seen, the Irish Temperance League and the vintners both regarded Sunday closing as merely a step on the road to prohibition. The second reading debate was adjourned at the dinner recess and never resumed.¹ The Times, in commenting on the bill, admired Corrigan's courage, in introducing such a measure, for he had aroused the 'fierce hostility of the vintners', who exercised great political influence in Ireland and especially in Dublin.² The Dublin vintners were certainly infuriated. They claimed not to have been informed of Corrigan's intention to move such a bill and they immediately sent representatives to London, both to see Corrigan and also to organise opposition with the help of the English trade.³ As a result, W. St J. Wheelhouse, M.P. for Leeds, who was one of the English trade's staunchest parliamentary supporters, gave notice of a question concerning the undue haste with which the bill was being proceeded. The vintners believed that this quick action on their part, with English help, led to the delaying of the second reading till June and ultimately to the demise of the bill.⁴

On 15 March the Dublin vintners' association held a general meeting at which Corrigan was present. Michael Dwyer, their hard-working secretary, attacked the bill savagely, labelling it a 'penal law', which was aimed against Corrigan's own constituents. He claimed that it was 'vexacious' to raise the question of Sunday closing just when the government was proposing comprehensive legislation. Corrigan, in reply,

¹ Hansard 3, ccxii, 258.

² The Times, 1 Apr. 1872.

³ F.J., 6 Mar. 1872.

⁴ Ibid., 16 Mar. 1872.

denied that he had rushed the bill, arguing that there would be plenty of time to discuss it during the committee stages. He also said that support for such a measure was widespread, instancing the various religious and political allegiances of its movers. He referred to the dioceses in which Sunday closing had been operating for more than ten years, without increases in illicit drinking, nor protests from the inhabitants. Laurence Byrne, the chairman of the meeting, responded by regretting that Corrigan had allowed himself to become 'an instrument' of the 'platform patriots, and the sham philanthropists of the permissive society'. The meeting thereupon passed a resolution calling for the withdrawal of the bill.¹ At their regular meeting the following week, Byrne answered Corrigan's remarks further by pointing out that in 1870 most of them had voted for him rather than for Guinness, whom they might have been expected to support out of trade interests. They thus now felt betrayed by one who they had expected to act as their champion. Byrne went on to deplore the fact that William Johnston of Ballykilbeg, who was notorious for his sectarian views, was one of the bill's sponsors. Byrne argued that voluntary Sunday closing carried out by the clergy, traders and people cooperating together was a very different matter from a 'coercion bill smuggled through parliament'.²

The Irish vintners found themselves working closely with the English trade to fight temperance legislation, for the English trade already had well-organised defence associations and a strong parliamentary presence. But this drew the Irish

¹ F.J., 16 Mar. 1872.

² Ibid., 22 Mar. 1872.

vintners, who were generally liberals, closer to the conservatives. In April 1872, for instance, the vintners received urgent requests from trade societies in London, Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool, asking them to rally Irish M.P.s to support the conservatives' licensing bill proposed by Sir Henry Selwin Ibbertson.¹ The Dublin association, however, waited till the last minute hoping for the government's proposed measure to appear, as they were most reluctant to support a conservative bill. Finally they did ask Irish M.P.s to attend and support the bill. Sir John Grey, for instance, wrote that he had attended at their request, but the bill had been talked out.²

As well as Sunday closing and licensing bills, 1872 also saw the permissive bill again before parliament. The Irish vintners lobbied Irish M.P.s against this measure, circulating all of them with a document attacking the bill. The vintners claimed in this that the power the bill would give would be 'confiscatory of vested interests', that it would create such insecurity that capital would withdraw and the trade fall into disreputable hands and that, as there were already several licensing bills before parliament, to press another was both 'uncalled for' and 'mischievous'.³ In 1872 with regard to the permissive bill the trade was in fact saved by an Irish supporter of the measure. Sir Frederick Heygate, conservative M.P. for County Londonderry, during the second reading on 8 May moved the adjournment so as to afford an

¹ For a discussion of this bill, see Smith, Disraelian conservatism and social reform, pp 167-8.

² F.J., 20 Apr. 1872.

³ Ibid., 10 May 1872. The same circular was issued in the following year and sent by Dwyer to the chief secretary; see S.P.O., R.P. 1873/6572.

opportunity for discussion of the bill in relation to Ireland. But the adjournment debate took so long that there was no time for a division on the second reading and thus the bill was dropped. Had the division taken place, the correspondent of the Freeman's Journal claimed that about forty Irish M.P.s would have supported the bill, with between fifteen and twenty voting against it. He noted that T.W. Russell, Henry Wigham, A.M. Sullivan, J.H. Swanton, William Gernon and J.A. Blake, all representing the I.P.B.A., had been vigorously lobbying both in parliament and at the clubs for several days before the debate. Naturally they were 'deeply mortified' at the manner in which the bill had been lost.¹ Whether or not this estimate of Irish support for the permissive bill is correct is hard to say. Byrne of the vintners' association certainly seemed concerned at the growing support among Irish members. This he explained by claiming that most of the Irish members who voted for 'this preposterous bill, did so as a general expression of their approval of sobriety, and with no notion that such a bill could become law'.² The unfortunate Heygate was himself a recent convert. He believed that while local option was impractical in England, it might help curb drunkenness in Ireland.³

At a special conference on licensing, organised by the Dublin vintners, in June, the problems faced by the trade were made clearer. Byrne said that:

With regard to Sir Dominic Corrigan's Sunday closing bill, their society opposed it, and would continue to oppose it,

¹ F.J., 9 May 1872.

² Ibid., 10 May 1872.

³ Ibid., 15 May 1872.

firstly because it originated with the agents of the permissive bill association, who merely used it as a weapon to strike at the trade, and who, if they succeeded with Sunday closing, would simply regard it as a first step towards carrying their pet scheme, viz., the total closing of licensed houses on weekdays as well as Sunday. But they opposed it still more because of the disastrous effect their adherence to such a scheme would have on their relations with the English trade, to whom they were under many obligations and whose interests they would be sacrificing by going in for Sunday closing.¹

So Byrne was not arguing that the Irish trade was against Sunday closing per se, but that opposition was necessary for tactical reasons. He feared that Sunday closing, if conceded, would strengthen the hand of the prohibitionists. Moreover, the Irish needed to remain on good terms with the English trade which was not prepared to make any concession on the issue of trading hours. These pressing considerations doubtless accounted for the vintners' negative attitude, of which the Freeman's Journal had complained. But they were under pressure in the other direction as well. They were sensitive to criticism, particularly from sympathetic sources like the Freeman's Journal. The support given by Cardinal Cullen and a number of the bishops to Sunday closing was an embarrassment, while they found themselves in the invidious position, for an Irish organisation, of being dependent on the English trade and increasingly committed to supporting conservative policies. From this political impasse the Irish vintners were ultimately saved by the emergence of the home rule party. Support for it allowed them to reconcile their political principles with their material interests.

The liberals' 1872 licensing act did not satisfy the Irish temperance movement as it did not contain any local option mechanism and merely shortened Sunday trading hours

¹ F.J., 20 June 1872.

along the lines proposed in O'Reilly's 1869 bill. Other matters arising from the act also created concern. In September a deputation from the I.P.B.A. saw Colonel Henry Lake, the chief commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, and presented him with various questions regarding the operation of the act, particularly concerning the definition of a town under the act and after-hours sales in hotels and taverns.¹ At the same time, the I.T.L. wrote to Hartington pointing out confusions in the act with regard to trading hours.² This forced the vintners into the position of defenders of the act. Certainly it was less unacceptable to them than the 1871 bill and than the measures proposed by the temperance movement. Writing to Hartington in May 1873, Dwyer conceded that there had been 'some petty misunderstandings in its administration by the magistrates', but that, despite these, the act had 'already effected a very great amount of public good'.³ Several drafts of bills to amend the 1872 act with regard to Ireland were prepared by Dublin Castle early in 1873. On 31 July Colonel Lake wrote to the under secretary at the Castle, T.H. Burke, urging the 'expediency of passing, if at all practicable, before the session closes, the bill prepared to amend the licensing act, 1872'. However, on 2 August Hartington noted on this letter: 'I found that it was useless to introduce this bill, as any amendment of the licensing act would be made use of for the

¹ Minute from Commissioner Lake, 7 Sept. 1872 (S.P.O., R.P. 1874/9655).

² I.T.L. to Lord Hartington, 3 Sept. 1872 (S.P.O., R.P. 1873/10450 (1914/13590)). For a discussion of these confusions see above, p. 52.

³ Michael Dwyer to Hartington, 5 May 1873 (S.P.O., R.P. 1873/6572).

purpose of re-opening the discussion on the whole question'.¹ Doubtless Hartington was correct. The temperance movement had numerous objections to the act, while, as we have seen, one of the first actions of the new tory government in the following year was to introduce a major licensing bill.

As well as criticising the liberals' licensing act, the Irish temperance movement during 1873 continued its campaign for Sunday closing. Corrigan re-introduced his bill, though, as in the previous year, he had great difficulty in getting time for a second reading debate. He did not secure this until July, which meant that the bill had little chance of getting through. In his speech he urged the house to complete what the licensing act had begun.

I do not want [he said] to interfere with England - give us what they have in Scotland... I appeal now to English members. If drunkenness, with its train of vice, fighting, and murder - has become a national disgrace in Ireland, who inflicted it on us? Not an Irish, but an English parliament.²

Although personally opposed to home rule, Corrigan was here showing that the licensing question could easily be turned into an argument in favour of an Irish parliament. The ensuing debate showed the Irish members to be deeply divided over the question. Philip Callan, liberal M.P. for Dundalk, opposed the bill as coercive, discriminatory legislation, which would only promote the growth of shebeens, though, at the same time, he upheld the permissive principle.³ Henry Bruen, conservative M.P. for Carlow, criticised the bill as too extreme, but, as he had received a petition from his

¹ Lake to T.H. Burke, 31 July 1873 (S.P.O., R.P. 1873/10450 (1914/13590)).

² Hansard 3, ccxvii, 97-8.

³ Ibid., 102-6.

constituents in its favour and none against, he felt obliged to support the second reading at least.¹ Sir Frederick Heygate, conservative M.P. for County Londonderry, took a similar line for the same reason.² But Sir Patrick O'Brien, liberal M.P. for King's County, who also opposed the measure personally and had received petitions in its favour, decided to abstain.³ Sir Hervey Bruce, conservative M.P. for Coleraine, opposed the bill as discriminatory, as did Serjeant Sherlock, liberal M.P. for King's County. McCarthy Downing, liberal M.P. for County Cork, like Callan, supported local option, but felt that Sunday closing would discriminate against the poor and so was opposed to it. John Martin, the nationalist M.P. for Meath, on the other hand, supported the bill, believing it was what the Irish people wanted. With more true commitment than Corrigan, he also evoked the spectre of home rule, adding that if an Irish parliament was sitting in College Green the wishes of the people would certainly be observed.⁴ Ironically the nationalist Martin found a supporter in Colonel Stuart Knox, conservative M.P. for Dungannon, though Knox argued in favour of Sunday closing from a very different premise. According to him, fenians used public houses on Sundays to hold meetings and seek recruits and thus Sunday closing would be an important blow against them.⁵ As this example shows, the debates in parliament on Irish temperance legislation produced curious political

¹ Hansard 3, ccxvii, 109-10.

² Ibid., 116.

³ Ibid., 118.

⁴ Ibid., 117-18.

⁵ Ibid., 119.

alignments, sometimes throwing nationalists and conservatives together and sometimes driving nationalists and liberals apart. In this particular debate, Hartington replied for the government by arguing that the new licensing act was adequate to handle all the problems that existed. The government therefore opposed any further legislation.¹ Wheelhouse, who also spoke, contented himself with the simple, but powerful, warning to English members, that if Sunday closing was passed for Ireland, England would be next.² That this argument carried much weight was shown by the division which followed. Callan's amendment that the bill be read three months hence was carried by 140 to 83. The majority in favour was largely composed of English M.P.s.³

The defeats of 1872 and 1873 forced upon the Sunday closing movement the need for reorganisation. English M.P.s had to be shown that there was a strong popular demand for Sunday closing in Ireland. On 9 December 1873 a national conference was held in Dublin aimed at revitalising the campaign. It was attended by leaders of the Dublin temperance movement, protestant clergy, magistrates and aldermen. T.W. Russell was present and agreed to become secretary of the association, while retaining the same position with the I.P.B.A. An important step was thus taken towards uniting the two organisations. Corrigan became president, with thirty-six vice presidents. Twenty of these were clerics, including Archbishop Leahy of Cashel, Archbishop Trench of Dublin, seven catholic and three Church of Ireland bishops,

¹ Hansard 3, ccxvii, 113-16.

² Ibid., 119.

³ F.J., 10 Dec. 1873.

the presbyterian moderator and the leaders of the wesleyan and primitive methodist conferences. The executive committee consisted of twenty-four members, with the names Allen, Webb, Wigham and Pim being prominent. P.P. McSwiney, the future lord mayor of Dublin, and A.M. Sullivan, the future home rule M.P., were also members. The conference appointed agents, both to lobby M.P.s and to publicise the cause in Ireland, and resolved to raise a fighting fund of £1,000.¹

The unexpected general election of February 1874 set both the reorganised Sunday closing movement and the publicans' associations campaigning vigorously. With more temperance legislation pending, both were anxious to increase their support in parliament. The Dublin vintners' association sought to avoid the problem of its divided political loyalties by declaring itself politically neutral, but determined to prevent the election of persons hostile to trade interests. In an election manifesto they reiterated their argument that Sunday closing was merely a front for the prohibitionists.

Those who, from religious motives, would be favourable to Sunday closing, if it were possible to enforce it without vastly increasing the illicit drinking in beerhouses and unlicensed premises, now so extensively prevalent throughout the city and suburbs, are respectfully reminded that the present attack is mainly supported by the paid agents of the United Kingdom Alliance for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic, whose avowed object is to injure the licensed traders as much as they can, and who, if they succeed in closing licensed houses on one day of the week, will be encouraged to make redoubled efforts to shut them up during the other six days also.²

The vintners' tone was injured and a trifle bewildered, but at the same time they were careful to emphasise their

¹ For the speeches and resolutions of this meeting, see Report of the national conference for closing public houses on Sundays, held in Dublin, 9 December 1873 (Dublin, 1874).

² F.J., 27 Jan. 1874.

political power. James Mooney, the new president of the association, noted that they had 'borne very calmly the insults which had been freely heaped upon them by people from whom they did not deserve them', while the former president, Byrne, remarked that they were 'as respectable as any other class of traders, had as much ideas of right and wrong' and were merely trying to protect their vested interests and their good name. But he followed this by warning that there were 800 licensed traders in Dublin, with quite enough votes between them to determine the election in the city.¹ That this was no exaggerated claim was clearly demonstrated by the election result. Corrigan did not even stand, concluding that his opposition to home rule, combined with the hostility of the vintners towards him, 'made his candidature hopeless'.² Pim was soundly defeated. He had been in Florence when the election was announced and did not get back to Dublin till 31 January. But his opposition to home rule and denominational education, plus his support for Sunday closing, were probably the main reasons for his defeat.³

Both the I.P.B.A. and the I.S.C.A. lobbied candidates and issued addresses urging voters only to support those who had pledged themselves to vote for temperance legislation.⁴ The I.S.C.A. issued a special address in Dublin supporting Pim, but the influential Freeman's Journal supported Maurice Brooks, the lord mayor, and rejected both Pim and Guinness

¹ F.J., 27 Jan. 1874; Irish Times, 27 and 29 Jan. 1874.

² F.J., 5 Feb. 1874. See also the appreciation of Corrigan written at his death in 1880 by E.D. Mapother, president of the Royal College of Surgeons (N.L.I., Corrigan papers, MS 15,485).

³ F.J., 24 Jan. 1874.

⁴ Ibid., 27 and 28 Jan. 1874.

because they were hostile to home rule.¹ In Dublin Guinness topped the poll with 5,213 votes, followed by Brooks with 4,838, and with Pim a distant third, receiving only 1,937 votes.² The Freeman's Journal attributed Guinness's victory in large measure to his having won the votes of liberal vintners and to Pim splitting the rest of the liberal vote by standing against Brooks as an anti-home rule candidate. 'But for the vote of liberal vintners [said the paper], which naturally went to their trade champion, the lord mayor would have been at the head of the poll.'³

The 1874 election was a disaster for the liberals, and no more so than in Ireland. In 1868 66 liberals had been elected for Irish constituencies, in 1874 the figure was 10. The conservatives fell from 37 to 33, while in 1874 60 M.P.s, committed in varying degrees to home rule, were elected.⁴ Although Corrigan, Pim, Lord Claud Hamilton and Thomas M'Clure, all sponsors of the 1872-3 Sunday closing bill, were defeated, the overall results were rather pleasing to the Irish temperance movement. It was estimated that, as a result of the election, between 60 and 70 Irish M.P.s supported the principle of Sunday closing, about 15 were definitely hostile and the rest were uncommitted.⁵ Temperance had not been a particularly prominent issue in the south,

¹ F.J., 6 Feb. 1874; for Brooks see *ibid.*, 21 Feb. 1874.

² *Ibid.*, 7 Feb. 1874. See also B.M. Walker (ed.), Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922 (Dublin, 1978), p. 272.

³ F.J., 9 Feb. 1874.

⁴ There is some disagreement about these figures. Those given here are from Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

⁵ Report of the Association for Stopping the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday in Ireland, for the year 1873-4 (Dublin, 1874), p. 6; see also T.W. Russell's analysis of the result in F.J., 5 Mar. 1874.

where home rule and the education question occupied most attention. However, the loss of Corrigan and Pim, the parliamentary leaders of the Sunday closing campaign, was a salutary reminder of the political power of the drink trade, especially in Dublin.

In Ulster the temperance issue, particularly the permissive bill, was considerably more significant, largely due to the vigorous campaign mounted on its behalf by the I.T.L. The league was much better organised than the Dublin-based I.S.C.A. and began its work early. In July and August 1872, with the cooperation of the Good Templars, it had established a temperance electoral association to work at parochial, municipal and parliamentary level.¹ At the same time a vacancy occurred in Londonderry city, owing to the appointment of Richard Dowse, the liberal member, as baron of exchequer. The executive committee of the league estimated that between 400 and 500 electors in the city would be prepared to vote for a permissive bill candidate and contemplated standing its own candidate. The league's local contacts advised against this and agents were sent to lobby the existing candidates. Ultimately C.E. Lewis, a conservative, was returned over Christopher Palles, the liberal candidate.² The league was pleased with this result for Lewis was strongly committed to temperance legislation and was to lead the Ulster conservatives in supporting the Sunday closing bill. It is a measure, however, of the

¹ Minute book of the executive committee of the I.T.L., 28 June and 9 Aug. 1872 (P.R.O.N.I., I.T.L. papers, D2663/A1/1).

² Ibid., 26 July and 8 Nov. 1872. For a discussion of this contest, see Brian M. Walker, *Parliamentary representation in Ulster, 1868-86* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College, Dublin, 1976), pp 234-8.

temperance movement's growing disenchantment with the existing parties that it should, at this early stage, have already been thinking about putting forward its own candidates. Future events were only to work to deepen this disenchantment.

Like the U.K. Alliance,¹ the league had begun to give serious and detailed thought to the criteria on which it should endorse candidates. Publicly the league stated it would support those who pledged themselves to vote for the second reading of the permissive bill, but privately it fully realised that the situation would seldom be as simple as this. What if there were several candidates prepared to pledge different degrees of support? In December 1873 this issue was discussed at the league's general council meeting. There it was suggested that not only should the league work on the principle of getting supporters of the permissive bill elected, but also on the principle of attempting to prevent opponents of the bill getting in. Thus, if there was no candidate in favour of the bill, the league should encourage voters to support a candidate who at least would not oppose it, over one who would. 'When we cannot gain a vote for the bill, let us try to prevent the publicans gaining a vote against it.'²

The general election in the following month put such principles to the test. The biggest problem occurred in Belfast where the sitting members were William Johnston, a conservative, and Thomas M'Clure, a liberal, both of whom

¹ D.A. Hamer, The politics of electoral pressure: a study in the history of Victorian reform agitations (Hassocks, Sussex, 1977), pp 212-13.

² I.T.L.J., xiii, no. 1 (Jan. 1874), p. 11.

had sponsored the Sunday closing bill and voted for the permissive bill, since their election in 1868. Now, however, M'Clure refused to renew his pledge to vote for the second reading of the bill. His main opponent was the conservative, J.P. Corry, the former president of the I.T.L. and a staunch supporter of local option. In this case, despite strong representations from M'Clure's supporters, the league urged voters to return Johnston and Corry.¹ Corry topped the poll, with Johnston a close second and M'Clure a distant third. M'Clure had been elected in 1868 on a pro-disestablishment platform with both catholic and presbyterian support, but his endorsement of denominational education and his refusal to commit himself to local option, doubtless alienated many of his presbyterian supporters. The temperance issue was prominent in several contests, but nowhere more decisively than in Belfast.²

On the whole, the league was very pleased with the Ulster results. Of the 29 M.P.s returned, 20 had pledged themselves to vote for the permissive bill, 3 were definitely opposed to it and 6 were unclear in their views. The league estimated it had lost one vote, that of Lord Claud Hamilton in Tyrone, but had gained six, including William Whitworth in Newry, T.A. Dickson in Dungannon and Richard Smyth in County Londonderry, all liberals. M.R. Dalway, the league president, had been returned for Carrickfergus, while a former

¹ I.T.L. executive committee minute book, 29 Jan. and 2 Feb. 1874.

² See the discussions of Armagh, Coleraine and Newry in Walker, *Parliamentary representation in Ulster*, pp 278-81. For the election generally see David Thornley, Isaac Butt and home rule (London, 1974), pp 178-120 and Thomas MacKnight, Ulster as it is, on twenty-eight years' experience as an Irish editor (London, 1896), i, 290-93.

president had been elected in Belfast. But three declared opponents of the bill, all conservatives, had been re-elected: Thomas Conolly in Donegal, H.A. Cole in Fermanagh and John Vance in Armagh city.¹ Also, it is clear that some supporters of the league, particularly liberals, began to have doubts about the organisation's electoral strategy as a result of the election. The policy of endorsing candidates solely on the basis of their personal attitude to the permissive bill, had meant, as in Belfast, that the league sometimes supported conservatives and opposed liberals. Yet, in England the Tories were being increasingly identified with the drink interest, while the liberals showed much greater sympathy to temperance. Would it thus be wiser for the I.T.L. to support the liberal party and all liberal candidates, regardless of their individual views? Writing in April 1874 in the league Journal, 'A.J.C. of Londonderry' acknowledged that 'some of our friends ... say our principles are right when they help to gain a seat for a liberal candidate, but wrong when they throw our votes into the conservative scale'.² 'A.J.C.' criticised such 'friends' for caring more about the 'party cry of political faction' than about the drink problem and went on to attack the previous liberal government for its failure to pass temperance legislation. A liberal government, unparalleled in power, swayed our legislature during the past five years. With an overwhelming majority it carried almost impossible measures, but it quailed before the liquor traffic, and, in its failure, we read the lesson that from no party, merely in virtue of either its conservatism or its liberalism, can we expect true temperance legislation, while we fail to compel attention to our claims, by having our parliamentary representatives pledged to support them.³

¹ I.T.L.J., xiii, no. 3 (Mar. 1874), pp 49-51.

² Ibid., xiii, no. 4 (Apr. 1874), p. 56.

³ Ibid.

Perhaps the real truth was that, with the virtual destruction of the liberal party in Ireland, the Irish temperance movement had little choice but to do the best it could with the conservatives in the north and later with the home rulers in the south. But, in the long run, as we shall see, the fact that the political party which was most strongly committed to temperance was also the weakest in Ireland, was to severely handicap the Irish temperance movement.

The reorganised I.S.C.A. was anxious to introduce its bill into the new parliament, but, with the defeat of four of its previous seven sponsors, new ones had first to be found. The association invited Richard Smyth, a presbyterian clergyman and liberal M.P. for County Londonderry, to be the bill's leading sponsor. He accepted, as did another seven M.P.s, representing, so the association claimed, 'every political and religious party in the country'.¹ Of the previous seven sponsors, three had been liberals and four conservatives, three had been from the south and four from Ulster. Of the eight selected in 1874, two were liberals, three conservatives and three home rulers, while three were from the south and five from Ulster.² The relative decline

¹ Report of the I.S.C.A. for 1873-4, p.6. For a discussion of Smith see MacKnight, Ulster as it is, i, 138, 353-4.

² The sponsors in 1872-3 were Sir Dominic Corrigan (liberal, Dublin city), Jonathan Pim (liberal, Dublin city), Viscount Crichton (conservative, Enniskillen), Lord Claud Hamilton (conservative, County Tyrone), William Johnston (conservative, Belfast), Thomas M'Clure (liberal, Belfast), Edmund Dease (liberal, Queen's County).

The sponsors in 1874 were Richard Smyth (liberal, County Londonderry), the O'Conor Don (home rule, Roscommon), Viscount Crichton (conservative, Enniskillen), Edmund Dease (home rule, Queen's County), William Johnston (conservative, Belfast), W.A. Redmund (home rule, County Wexford), J.P. Corry (conservative, Belfast), T.A. Dickson (liberal, Dungannon). Crichton dropped out in 1876 when he became a treasury lord and was replaced by C.E. Lewis (conservative, Londonderry city), while in 1878 the O'Conor Don took over leadership from the ailing Smyth.

in the number of liberals sponsoring the bill and the relative increase in the numbers of Ulster M.P.s, do reflect significant changes in support for temperance legislation among Irish M.P.s as a result of the 1874 general election.

Smyth introduced the bill in March 1874 and its second reading was set for May. But, without government assistance, he was not able to get a night for the debate, so he withdrew the bill and introduced instead a resolution in favour of Sunday closing for Ireland. In his first major parliamentary speech on the subject, Smyth was careful not to offend the Irish drink trade. He 'emphatically disclaimed making the motion a basis of attack upon a trade which has the sanction of the legislature, and which is meeting what is still regarded as a want of the community'.¹ Instead he attacked the English trade, claiming that the main opponent of the Irish bill was the National Licensed Victuallers Defence League of England.

I am quite willing [said Smyth] that Ireland should be ruled by the queen, lords and commons of this united kingdom ... but I am not willing that the licensed victuallers of Birmingham should constitute themselves a parliament for Ireland.²

Smyth argued that Sunday closing was a local Irish question and thus had to be considered purely in terms of Irish conditions. The Irish, for instance, did not drink beer as part of their ordinary diet, as the English did. The Irish workers and farmers drank whiskey 'at fairs, and markets, and for good companionship'. Such drinking was particularly

¹ Hansard 3, ccxviii, 1992.

² Ibid., 2000. Criticism of the 'interference' of the English drink trade in Irish affairs became common in temperance propaganda at this time. See, for example, the resolutions of a public meeting held at Athlone, 3 Dec. 1874 (S.P.O., R.P. 1874/16812).

prevalent on Sundays. Irish legislation needed therefore to be adapted to Irish conditions and treated quite separately from English legislation. Like his predecessor, Corrigan, Smyth, although a staunch unionist, was not above parading the threat of home rule before English M.P.s in order to add weight to his arguments.

I am among those [he said] who have thought that the interests of Ireland would be best maintained by an unimpaired union with the sister countries; but when we find the members of parliament, to whose counsels we cling, coming down to this house to overbear the Irish vote on a question which concerns only the social habits of the people, and has no political significance whatever, there will be secret reflections whether we are much wiser than many of our fellow-countrymen who have disavowed all confidence in the present government of their country. Even to carry this resolution I do not want an Irish parliament; but I must add that if we had an Irish parliament, it is among the first that would be carried.¹

Smyth's mixture of cajolery and threat was to no avail, however. The new tory government was strongly opposed to the resolution. Sir Michael Hicks Beach, the new chief secretary, accepted and repeated the publicans' argument that Sunday closing would in fact create more problems that it would solve, by giving encouragement to the illicit trade. He ascribed the agitation for both Sunday closing and the permissive bill to a 'number of philanthropists', and not to popular feeling. Moreover, he denied that the measure could or should be treated as a purely Irish matter, as Smyth had argued. The whole British parliament had a right to deal equally with all matters brought before it.² The government's uncompromising opposition put the many Ulster conservatives, who had pledged themselves to support Sunday closing in the recent election, into a difficult position.

¹ Hansard 3, ccxviii, 2001.

² Ibid., 2012-18.

Thomas Conolly of Donegal, who supported Sunday closing but opposed the permissive bill, warned the government that he had 'no hesitation in the line which I shall adopt; I shall be true to my constituents'. Conolly thought the government had come to a 'very precipitate determination' as regards the resolution; it was not, he said 'graceful in them to drive their best friends away from them'.¹ The resolution was rejected by 220 votes to 129. As the supporters of Sunday closing had feared, they were overwhelmed by English M.P.s. Of the 220 members voting against, 206 were English, 10 were Irish and 4 Scottish. Of the 129 in favour, 50 were English, 42 were Irish and 37 Scottish. Of the 42 Irish M.P.s in favour of the resolution, more than half, 25 to be exact, represented Ulster constituencies. No Ulster M.P. voted against. The 42 were composed of 20 conservatives, 16 home rulers and 6 liberals, while the 10 against included 3 conservatives, 6 home rulers and 1 liberal.² Clearly the Ulster conservatives had followed Conolly in revolt against the government, for, out of 21 of them, 18 had voted for the resolution. But absenteeism continued to run at nearly fifty per cent. The temperance movement was having more success than the Irish publicans in rousing M.P.s on the issue, though it still had a long way to go to win over even half the Irish representatives. It also was relying very heavily on Ulster M.P.s, just as the Irish drink trade was relying on sympathetic English members.

The government's opposition to the Sunday closing resolution and its licensing bill, which made significant

¹ Hansard 3, ccxviii, 2019-20.

² I.T.L.J., xiii, no. 6 (June 1874), pp 89-91.

concessions to the drink trade,¹ convinced the Irish temperance movement that it was facing a 'publicans' parliament', as the I.T.L.J. called it.² This judgment was further strengthened in June when the permissive bill was defeated by 318 to 92. The Irish M.P.s, however, voted 30 to 18 in favour of the bill and of the 25 Ulster M.P.s voting, 19 were for and 6 against.³ The I.T.L., noting that the Ulster vote was three to one in favour and formed nearly two-thirds of the Irish vote for the bill, 'heartily congratulated' the Ulster members and all their friends who had worked so hard for this result. Despite the overall defeat, the league remained doggedly optimistic. 'Temperance reformers [it said] will not accept this vote as decisive, even in a parliament whose councils are admittedly swayed by the great principle of beer!,,, Defeat in a good cause has ever inspired men with fresh ardour.'⁴ Certainly, as far as Ireland and Ulster particularly were concerned, there was reason for optimism. The Irish vote for the bill was slowly rising, from 23 to 30 between 1873 and 1874, while the vote against was falling, from 20 to 18 over the same period. Convinced that 'truth must ultimately triumph', the I.T.L.J. assured its readers that the victory of the bill was merely a matter of time.

¹ For a discussion of this bill see above, pp 53-6.

² For recent studies questioning this assessment, see H.J. Hanham, Elections and party management: politics in the time of Disraeli and Gladstone (reprint with new intro., Hassocks, Sussex, 1978, of orig. ed., London, 1959), pp 222-5, and Robert Blake, Disraeli (London, 1966), pp 534-8.

³ The six against were Thomas Conolly, John Vance, Colonel Cole, Daniel Taylor, John Mulholland and J.W.E. Macartney. All, except Taylor, were conservatives and all had voted in favour of Smyth's Sunday closing resolution; see I.T.L.J., xiii, no. 7 (July 1874), p. 119.

⁴ Ibid., pp 105-7.

The Irish Sunday closing movement too was campaigning assiduously in the latter part of 1874. Meetings were organised particularly in the constituencies of hostile members, such as Athlone, Bandon, County Dublin, Dundalk, King's County, Kinsale and Waterford city, and numerous petitions were collected.¹ The I.S.C.A. was determined to take up Hicks Beach's challenge and demonstrate that there was widespread public demand for Sunday closing in Ireland. By May 1875 parliament had received over 1,000 petitions from Ireland in favour of Sunday closing, bearing over 200,000 signatures. By the end of the session the number of petitions had risen to 1,500 with 225,000 signatures.² Deputations from the I.S.C.A. saw Hicks Beach in December 1874 and the lord lieutenant in the following February.³ At the end of April Disraeli received a deputation including Russell and Wigham from the association, the mayor of Belfast and ten Irish M.P.s. Colonel Taylor, who had been conservative chief whip for many years and was now chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, presented a memorial in favour of Sunday closing signed by 2,484 clergymen, 1,413 magistrates, 774 doctors, 1,991 poor law guardians, 596 town councillors and 453 merchants and employers of labour.⁴ Smyth

¹ Report of the I.S.C.A. for 1874-5, pp 5-6.

² F.J., 10 May 1875; Report of the I.S.C.A. for 1874-5, p. 5.

³ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴ Ibid., pp 7-8; F.J., 1 May 1875. The I.S.C.A. report and the F.J. give rather different figures for the number of signatures on this memorial. I have given here the former figures. The clergy signing were composed of:

Church of Ireland	1,119
Roman Catholic	864
Presbyterian	342
Wesleyan	73
Primitive Methodist	34
Others	52
	<u>2,484</u>

said that the petitions had proved that, except for the publicans, there was no substantial opposition to the bill in Ireland and he asked for government backing. But Disraeli refused to give any undertaking, merely saying that he would consider the memorial. During this massive campaign by the I.S.C.A., the vintners had not been idle. They were certainly less active than their opponents, presumably putting their faith in the hostility of the government and most English M.P.s to the bill. However, early in May a deputation of publicans saw Hicks Beach in London. They told him that the 'wants and wishes of the working classes were ignored or misrepresented by the advocates of the Sunday closing bill'. According to the Freeman's Journal, Sir Michael paid 'much attention' to these statements and 'occasionally verified them by reference to official returns'.¹

The second reading debate took place on 5 May. In the preceding week a deputation from the I.S.C.A., assisted by representatives from the I.T.L. and from the English Sunday closing movement, saw some 200 M.P.s in last minute efforts to ensure a majority for the bill.² Smyth in his speech reiterated most of his arguments of the previous year, again warning English M.P.s not to deny Ireland its just demands.

I am far from calling in question the right of English members to pronounce judgment on this Irish question, and to pronounce it adversely to our wishes. But is that any reason for refusing us something that cannot by any possibility affect the social condition of the English people, or the political relations of the two countries? Scotland got this boon when Scotland asked for it. We admit your right to refuse it to Ireland, but there is a political prudence that ought to be allowed to take its place alongside parliamentary rights. You have a right, which I do not

¹ F.J., 5 May 1875.

² Report of the I.S.C.A. for 1874-5, p. 8.

question, to overwhelm the Irish members in the vote to be given today. But when you have scored another victory over this peculiar idea of our country there will be a parliamentary equity to identify itself with the cause of Ireland, and to proclaim that it too has been defeated in the unequal contest with English power.¹

Supporters tried to appeal to the English by arguing that Sunday closing would lessen sedition and disaffection in Ireland. Edmund Dease, M.P. for Queen's County, described it as the 'best peace preservation measure that could be given to Ireland'.² But the government remained firm in its opposition. Hicks Beach claimed that Sunday closing had not lessened drunkenness in Scotland; that, though the middle classes in Ireland supported it, the working classes were largely ignorant on the subject and thus that the enforcement of Sunday closing might lead to the kind of riots that England had experienced in 1855. Moreover, the government's licensing act of the previous year needed more time to show what effect it would have on the situation.³ The I.S.C.A. was disappointed by this speech as it had hoped for more sympathy from the government in the light of its recent campaign.⁴ Hicks Beach, however, was largely repeating the views of Commissioner Lake of the D.M.P., who informed him that the 'persons, who have signed petitions in favour of Sunday closing, do not represent the class against whom legislation on the subject is directed'. Lake considered the bill 'class legislation', which would

¹ Hansard 3, ccxxiv, 103-4.

² Ibid., 137.

³ Ibid., 138-43. See also Report of the I.S.C.A. for 1874-5, pp 11-14 and I.T.L.J., xiv, no. 6 (June 1875), pp 89-91.

⁴ Report of the I.S.C.A. for 1874-5, p. 11

greatly interfere with the privileges of the artisans and labourers, who, it must be remembered cannot of course afford to become members of clubs, or obtain refreshments at hotels, and should the proposed bill be passed, I foresee much trouble and difficulty if not absolute danger in carrying out the provisions of it in the city of Dublin, and throughout the Metropolitan Police District.¹

Moreover, he felt that the bill would do a 'serious injustice' to the publicans, who would have a strong case for demanding compensation for lost business.

Gladstone, who followed Hicks Beach in the debate, saw the issue in very different terms. He was not essentially concerned with where and when the Irish drank, but that the country should receive fair and equitable treatment in the British parliament.

I have had credit and discredit - to neither of which I am entitled - [he remarked] for having, as was supposed, delivered myself of the sentiment that Ireland ought to be governed by Irish ideas. I never gave utterance to such a sentiment without appending to it a vital qualification which has been forgotten both by foes and friends, I said that Ireland might be properly and justly governed by Irish ideas on those matters as to which imperial interests did not call for uniform legislation. It is a fair question to put whether the particular question before us falls into the class of those subjects with respect to which the local opinion, so to call it, of one of the three kingdoms is fairly entitled to prevail. Upon that I say that parliament has already given a judgment in the case of Scotland... If in that case we yielded to the judgment of Scotland, much more, in the present case, has the judgment of Ireland been clearly expressed.²

Gladstone thus endorsed the principle which the supporters of the bill were urging upon English M.P.s: that in a local matter of this sort, English members should accept and follow the wishes of the majority of Irish M.P.s and not overwhelm the Irish with their votes. Towards the end of the debate, Charles Lewis of Londonderry, who was emerging as the leader of the Ulster conservatives, appealed strongly to

¹ Lake to Burke, 21 May 1875 (S.P.O., R.P. 1876/6443).

² Hansard 3, ccxxiv, 146-7.

English conservative members for support.

He appealed to them [he said] not to send them back unable to reply to the arguments of home rulers, who would then be able to point out that, on a social question upon which Irishmen were substantially agreed, they were overwhelmed by English votes. He was not disposed to believe the slander hurled against honourable members who sat on that side of the house, that the conservative party was placed in power solely by the English publicans; but if they wanted to give force to that opinion - if they desired to turn a political fiction into a plausible fact, they would, upon that occasion, troop into the lobby for the purpose of imposing upon the Irish members those exceptions from which they desired to be free.¹

However, Murphy of Cork and Wheelhouse of Leeds, amid considerable uproar and cries for a division, were able to talk out the bill.

The Freeman's Journal, which opposed the bill, was disturbed by Gladstone's intervention, seeing it as a step towards Sunday closing 'being sucked into the vortex of party politics'.² The vintners also deplored what they saw as Gladstone's effort to 'make political capital' out of the issue. Dwyer and a delegation from the Dublin association had been lobbying in London before the debate. As well as seeing Hicks Beach, they had had discussions with the 'most influential members of the trade in the metropolis' and had seen many home rule M.P.s. The vintners were gratified that five home rulers had spoken against the bill in the debate. Certainly they were finding their most vocal Irish parliamentary supporters, like Murphy, Callan, W.H. O'Sullivan of County Limerick, Eugene Collins of Kinsale, Richard Power and the eccentric Major O'Gorman of Waterford city, from among the ranks of the new nationalist party. But the delegation admitted that they had had

¹ Hansard 3, ccxxiv, 150.

² F.J., 6 May 1875.

'uphill work ... in canvassing the members of parliament against a measure which was supposed to be backed by a large proportion of the upper and middle classes in Ireland'.¹ Added to this, the revolt of the Ulster conservatives and the growing liberal sympathy for Irish Sunday closing, shown by Gladstone's intervention, must have caused some alarm among the trade.

Smyth tried to secure another day for the resumption of the debate, but, given the pressure of business and the government's lack of sympathy, this proved impossible. However, in June and July the I.T.L. began to suspect that the government's opposition was weakening. Their task, with the approval or even the neutrality of the government, said the Journal, would be 'comparatively easy'.² In June the league circulated a letter on the subject among its members. This claimed that if the division had taken place in May the bill would have been carried by between 50 and 60 votes. But it was feared that if this had happened, the government would have reacted by proposing an amendment to exempt large towns from the legislation. The league instructed its supporters to write to M.P.s stressing that the bill must be passed in its entirety, without exemptions. The league felt that if the pressure could be kept up on Irish M.P.s and on the government, Sunday closing was within their grasp. Thus, it stepped up its campaign of meetings, petitions and lobbying. All M.P.s received a letter supporting the bill, signed by, among others, the mayors of Belfast, Londonderry, Limerick and Sligo, the chairmen of the town commissioners of Galway

¹ F.J., 13 May 1875.

² I.T.L.J., xiv, no. 7 (July 1875), p. 117.

and Coleraine, the president of Queen's College, Belfast, and the moderator of the presbyterian general assembly.¹ In November a conference on Sunday closing, under the auspices of the I.T.L., was held in Belfast. David Fortune, the league's secretary, reviewed the history of the Sunday closing movement in Ireland since 1864 and expressed satisfaction at its slow but steady progress. The conference resolved to hold a series of meetings throughout the province to get up petitions and also to send a delegation to put the case, once again, before the chief secretary.²

In Dublin the I.S.C.A. was also extremely active. It organised meetings in Birmingham, Liverpool, Newcastle, Bolton, Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, Exeter, Bristol and Leicester, in order to put pressure on English M.P.s. As well it held a canvas in Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Waterford, Limerick and Londonderry to sample public opinion on the issue. In Dublin, for instance, 28,500 were polled, of whom 25,408 were in favour of Sunday closing and 3,092 against. Among publicans the figures were 326 and 225 respectively. In Belfast, of the 26,083 canvassed, 23,274 were for and 2,809 against. There the publicans were 229 to 138 in favour of Sunday closing.⁴ When the canvas was complete in Dublin, the organisers called a meeting in order to present the results to the city's M.P.s, Brooks and Guinness. Guinness refused to attend and Brooks was obviously discomfited and embarrassed

¹ I.T.L.J., xiv, no. 6 (June 1875), pp 102-3.

² Ibid., no. 12 (Dec. 1875), pp 193-6.

³ Report of the I.S.C.A. for 1875-6, pp 3-4.

⁴ For the full results see I.T.L.J., xv, no. 2 (Feb. 1876), p. 22.

by the proceedings. William Gernon of the I.S.C.A. told him that they did not come to handle him with 'kid gloves', but 'had assembled to tell him some plain facts, whether they were palatable to him or not'. Brooks replied by doubting the accuracy of the association's figures.¹ At their next meeting the vintners criticised the way in which Brooks had been treated by the I.S.C.A. and reiterated his scepticism about the canvas.² Dublin Castle had already looked into this question. In November 1875 Burke had written to Lake asking him to check the accuracy of the canvas. Lake replied that his men had made enquiries in the Royal Exchange ward and found 'strong reasons' for doubting the figures given. What these reasons were, beyond that 'in some instances women signed the voting papers without consulting their husbands', Lake did not specify, going on merely to repeat his objections of the previous May. He argued that the patronage given by the working classes to the public houses on Sunday demonstrated their popularity and the strength of the opposition to Sunday closing in Dublin. This remark led Hicks Beach to ask for accurate statistics on the numbers of persons visiting public houses on Sundays in the main Irish towns.³

In the 1876 session the ballot went against Smyth and he was not able to get time for a second reading debate. So he withdrew the bill and introduced a resolution in favour of Sunday closing, as he had done in 1874. Again he attacked

¹ F.J., 1 Feb. 1876.

² Ibid., 2 Feb. 1876.

³ For a discussion of the results of this canvas see above, p. 100 and for Hicks Beach's remarks on it and the I.S.C.A. canvas in parliament, see Hansard 3, ccxxix, 518-20.

the discriminatory treatment Ireland appeared to be receiving with regard to this issue.

It was once suggested [he said] that the best cure for Ireland would be to put it at the bottom of the sea for a short time; but I am inclined to think that if it could only become Scotland for one session of parliament, the advantage to us would be very great, for then we should have no difficulty in carrying a remedial measure like this, which is supported by four-fifths of the people of Ireland.¹

The publicans of England, however, were 'to a man against it' and Smyth was very conscious, reflecting upon recent political history, of the 'formidable power' which the English trade wielded. Hicks Beach's speech clearly signalled that the government was contemplating concessions. 'If they were to alter the present law on this subject [he said], they should proceed tentatively.' He then proposed that Sunday hours should be shortened to between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. in towns and to between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. in rural areas, shortened, in other words, by two hours. If this measure proved a success then the government would consider introducing total Sunday closing. The chief secretary advised Smyth to withdraw his resolution and allow the government to legislate for shorter hours. But, at the same time, he attacked conservatives who argued that Ireland should be treated separately in this matter, saying that they were in effect arguing for home rule. As for the home rulers who supported the bill, Hicks Beach accused them of seeking to impose coercive legislation on Ireland.² He was doubtless correct in detecting curious alliances and inconsistent arguments among the advocates of the bill.

¹ Hansard 3, ccxxix, 496.

² Ibid., 521-2, 526.

In the course of the lengthy debate which followed, John Bright attacked Hicks Beach for merely proposing shorter hours, when it was known that in the previous session the government had been considering accepting the bill with the exclusion of the large towns. Bright indicated that the liberals would have been prepared to accept this latter compromise. But he felt that the government was trapped by its commitments to the English drink trade, which wanted no compromise. 'It has come to this [he concluded] - government must choose this day whom ye serve. Will you serve the conspiracy of the vendors of drink in England, or will you obey the will and the eloquent voice of the whole people of Ireland.'¹ Hicks Beach had indeed suggested Sunday closing with the exclusion of the main towns to the cabinet, but this had been rejected by his colleagues in favour of shorter trading hours.² Charles Lewis followed Bright and again warned the government that it would lose support in Ulster if it continued to oppose the bill. 'Every Irish conservative member of that house felt that his position was undermined, that the interests of his constituents and party were being imperilled by the conduct, in this matter, of the government he was sent there to support.'³ The chancellor of the exchequer, Sir Stafford Northcote, repeated Hicks Beach's offer, but was answered by Gladstone in a strong speech, which concluded:

¹ Hansard 3, ccxxix, 562.

² Lady Victoria Hicks Beach, Life of Sir Michael Hicks Beach (Earl of St Aldwyn) (London, 1932), i, 50-51.

³ Hansard 3, ccxxix, 564.

If after giving [Sunday closing] to Scotland you withhold it from Ireland, you lay down the principle of inequality in your dealing between the three countries, the adoption of which principle, in my opinion, makes those who adopt it far more deadly enemies to the union of the two countries, both by law and by sentiment, than are any of those who recommend the dissolution of the union as a mere abstract opinion of politics, or may attempt to recommend it to any portion of the United Kingdom, provided only they are unable to support their arguments by clear evidence and demonstration that inequality governs the policy of parliament in dealing with the respective sections of the United Kingdom.¹

Gladstone personally was not particularly sympathetic to temperance legislation,² but he obviously felt that England was only playing into the hands of the home rulers by ignoring the demands of the Irish middle class for such legislation.

In the division which followed the debate, the resolution was carried by 224 votes to 167, with 59 Irish M.P.s voting for and only 11 against. Of those in favour, 26 were Ulster M.P.s, comprising 18 conservatives, 6 liberals, and the two Ulster home rulers, J.G. Biggar and C.J. Fay of County Cavan. Of the 33 Irish M.P.s representing southern constituencies who voted for the resolution, 27 were home rulers, 2 liberals and 4 conservatives. The recently elected M.P. for Meath, C.S. Parnell, was among this group of home rulers. The 11 against the Sunday closing resolution comprised 9 home rulers and 2 conservatives. Most represented cities and towns with important drink industries, like Brooks and Guinness for Dublin, Murphy for Cork, Power and O'Gorman for Waterford, Callan for Dundalk, Stacpoole for

¹ Hansard 3, ccxxix, 577.

² For Gladstone's views on temperance legislation, especially in relation to his Irish policies, see D.A. Hamer, Liberal politics in the age of Gladstone and Rosebery (Oxford, 1972), pp 88-9 and Michael Barker, Gladstone and radicalism: the reconstruction of liberal policy in Britain, 1885-94 (Hassocks, Sussex, 1975), pp 208-11.

Ennis, while W.H. O'Sullivan, M.P. for County Limerick, was himself a publican.¹ It is striking that no liberals and no Ulster M.P.s voted against the resolution. Of the three Ulster M.P.s who did not vote, William Johnston of Belfast was necessarily absent and paired in favour of the resolution, Viscount Crichton of Enniskillen, who was a junior member of the government, left the house rather than be compelled to vote against it, while Conolly of Donegal was suffering an illness, which would soon prove fatal.² Only two Irish conservatives, Guinness and Lord Charles Beresford, M.P. for County Waterford, followed their government's line and voted against the resolution. Others, like Colonel Taylor, chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, and D.R. Plunket, the Irish solicitor-general, joined Crichton in a pointed exit prior to the division.³ This was indeed a substantial revolt of the government's Irish supporters. Among the home rule M.P.s opinion on Sunday closing was somewhat more divided, the vast majority of those voting against being nationalists. But 29 home rulers, almost exactly half their numbers, voted for Sunday closing. This was a significant increase over the 1874 figures, when only 16 home rulers had voted for the resolution and 6 against.

The Irish M.P.s had voted 5 to 1 in favour of Sunday closing and understandably, as a result, the Irish temperance movement was jubilant and increasingly confident. In July 1876 the I.T.L.J. wrote:

The Sunday liquor traffic in Ireland we regard as doomed, and it is but a question we opine whether 1876 or 1877 is to be the great year of deliverance for our beloved country

¹ I.T.L.J., xv, no. 6 (June 1876), pp 90-92, 102.

² Ibid., p. 102.

³ Hansard 3, ccxxxi, 426.

which has struggled so dauntlessly to free itself from this terrible incubus.¹

The Freeman's Journal, though it still preferred shorter Sunday trading hours to total closing, had also to admit that legislation was now inevitable. But it urged the vintners to support Hicks Beach's suggestion of shorter hours and thus try to forestall the introduction of total closing and the 'furtherance of a gloomy principle of rigid, unsocial, and objectionable sabbatarianism'.² The following day, in another leading article on the subject, the paper sourly commented on the claim by the London Times that the defeat of the resolution would have given an enormous filip to the home rule cause:

Are the arguments applicable to no question but that of Sunday closing? Is there no other matter which purely concerns Irish constituencies, and on which the expressed opinion of the vast majority of the representatives of Ireland has been overborne.

And it went on to mention education, land reform, union rating, railways, borough franchise, grand jury reform and fisheries as only the beginning of an 'almost interminable list' of issues on which Irish opinion had been ignored by the British parliament. Concessions made to 'objectionable sabbatarianism' were certainly not going to weaken the enthusiasm of the Freeman's Journal for the home rule cause.³

The Irish vintners were naturally even more troubled. The growing liberal party support for Irish Sunday closing, plus the surprisingly high home rule vote, were great sources

¹ I.T.L.J., xv, no. 7 (July 1876), p. 118.

² F.J., 15 May 1876.

³ Ibid., 16 May 1876; see also I.T., 13, 15 and 16 May 1876.

of concern. Special meetings were held in Dublin on 16 and 18 May and plans were drawn up to raise a £1,000 defence fund, £200 of this being subscribed immediately. At the second meeting Michael Dwyer attempted to explain to members why this 'very unexpected and serious defeat' had occurred. He claimed that the liberals were using the Irish Sunday closing issue to embarrass the tory government. A liberal whip had been out for the division, though the vintners had not know^h this till the morning of the debate. As for the home rulers, he claimed that Lord Francis Conyngham, home rule M.P. for County Clare, was largely responsible for persuading so many of them to vote with the liberals. The 'bait' held out being the claim that the passing of the resolution would be a victory for home rule and would mean 'practically home rule as far as the liquor traffic is concerned'. The vintners, having already failed to win liberal support, appeared to have lost the Irish nationalists as well. Their only champions were the English conservatives. 'It was strange, indeed, [remarked Dwyer] to find that it was to the British government that the people of Ireland were to look for protection against the national members.'¹

With the success of the resolution, Smyth hoped that the government would introduce its own bill along the lines of his. However, when Disraeli made clear that the government had no intention of doing anything, Smyth reintroduced his original bill.² The second reading debate took place on 12 July. Hicks Beech announced that the government had decided

¹ F.J., 17 and 19 May 1876.

² Hansard 3, ccxxix, 920-21, 1275; Report of the I.S.C.A for 1875-6, p. 13.

to regard the vote in favour of the resolution as equivalent to a vote on the second reading. But, at the same time, he warned the bill's sponsors that the government did not intend the bill to become law during the current session, nor in its present form. If the bill proceeded any further he would introduce amendments, though he declined to say what these would be.¹ Gladstone advised Smyth to be prepared to accept such amendments, 'which might have the effect of softening and regulating what was undoubtedly an important transition', and warned him against 'any attachment to the absolute rigour of a doctrine'.² Obviously, the bill would only continue to receive liberal support, if its sponsors were prepared to compromise with the government. The debate dragged on for four hours as Wheelhouse, Murphy, O'Gorman and Callan denounced the measure at great length, showing that its opposition, though small, was still very vigorous. But, with government support, the second reading was agreed to without a division.

After this, however, the government took up its more usual hostile stance and refused to give time for committee debate. Here Isaac Butt came to the rescue and agreed to surrender time allotted to him on 2 August for debate on the Sunday closing bill. This forced the government to table its amendments. These proposed that public houses should be closed on Sundays, except in towns with a population of over 10,000. There the hours would be reduced to between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Also, the act was to be limited to three years. The I.S.C.A. calculated that the exemptions would

¹ Hansard 3, ccxxx, 1335-6.

² Ibid., 1341-2; I.T.L.J., xv, no. 8 (Aug. 1876), p. 121-3.

include seventeen cities and towns, with a population of around 760,000. The executive committee of the association met and rejected the proposed amendments as they compromised the principle of Sunday closing.¹ But, the bill had already been lost for the year. On 2 August ten home rulers, assisted by several English M.P.s, united to talk out the time allotted for debate.² The next day the Freeman's Journal, while criticising the tactics used to kill the bill, nevertheless welcomed the time thus afforded for further consideration of the whole question.³ Sir Wilfrid Lawson, however, made another effort to raise the matter on 3 August. In moving the adjournment debate, he appealed to Disraeli to allow the Irish Sunday closing bill to pass. If Disraeli refused this 'almost unanimous, this earnest, this constitutional demand from the Irish people', said Lawson, then 'he is the greatest upholder of home rule that is to be found, and he will perpetuate Irish dissatisfaction and discontent'.⁴ Disraeli replied by stating that the bill had failed to get through simply because its promoters had refused to accept the government's proposed amendments. As for it being unanimously demanded by Ireland, he pointed out that in the debate on the previous day ten Irish M.P.s had spoken and all were opposed to the bill.⁵ Smyth was quick to explain that this occurred because the bill's supporters, who did not wish to waste time, had deliberately refrained

¹ Report of the I.S.C.A. for 1875-6, pp 14-17.

² Hansard 3, ccxxxi, 330-65.

³ F.J., 3 Aug. 1876; I.T., 3 Aug. 1876.

⁴ Hansard 3, ccxxxi, 429.

⁵ Ibid., 430-31.

from speaking. But he gave no indication of a willingness to accept the amendments.¹ The Irish temperance press was totally opposed to any compromise. 'The whole bill, and nothing but the bill, will alone satisfy the nation', the I.T.L.J. announced in August.²

The 1877 session, despite several lengthy debates and a select committee on Sunday closing, saw only a continuation of this deadlock. The government would only drop its opposition if the major towns were exempted and a time limit placed on the operation of the measure. The temperance movement insisted on Sunday closing for the whole country, arguing that it was most needed in the large towns, where Sunday drunkenness was a major problem. There was, however, one important new element introduced. Parnell and Biggar began their campaign of systematic obstruction during this session and the opponents of Sunday closing were quick to adopt this new and highly effective tactic.³ During the second reading debate, early in February, Hicks Beach acknowledged that public expressions in favour of the bill had been far more numerous than those against it and thus, he said, that he was prepared to take 'as settled the adoption of the principle of total Sunday closing'. But he insisted that the five major Irish towns, Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Waterford and Limerick, be exempted. In this, he said, he was following the advice of police and magistrates in these towns. If Sunday closing was attempted in these areas, he thought one of two things

¹ Hansard 3, ccxxxi, 433.

² I.T.L.J., xv, no. 8 (Aug. 1876), p. 123.

³ For a discussion of obstruction in 1877, see F.S.L. Lyons, Charles Stewart Parnell (London, 1977), pp 58-65.

would occur: 'either there would be great and widespread evasion of the law, than which I can conceive nothing more detrimental to the cause of law and order in Ireland, or else, if the law were thoroughly enforced, there would be no little danger of riotous proceedings, which I am sure we should all deplore'.¹ Hicks Beach felt that this was particularly true in Dublin and certainly the D.M.P., in the person of Commissioner Lake, consistently advised the chief secretary against introducing Sunday closing in Dublin.² Doubtless also, the pressure brought to bear on the government by the urban-based drink industry, especially that in Dublin, was an element in influencing Hicks Beach's view. As early as May the previous year, he had written to Disraeli saying:

Even if the question could be looked at apart from English opinion, I could not advise the government to support total Sunday closing all over Ireland. I don't think the classes who would be most affected are in the least prepared for it; and I am convinced that in the large towns, it would either be largely evaded by drinking at unlicensed houses, or an immediate agitation would arise for its repeal. Neither result would strengthen respect for parliament and the law in Ireland. But I should be very glad, so far as Ireland is concerned, if it could be either partially or gradually introduced.³

Hicks Beach announced in February 1877 that the government was prepared to support the second reading of the bill, if it was then submitted to a select committee. The committee would examine, not the whole issue, but the 'applicability of the measure to the five towns'.⁴ The bill's promoters, though somewhat dissatisfied with the restricted terms of reference,

¹ Hansard 3, ccxxxii, 194-5.

² Lake to Burke, 31 May 1875 (S.P.O., R.P., 1876/6443).

³ Quoted in Hicks Beach, Life of Sir Michael Hicks Beach, i, 50.

⁴ Hansard 3, ccxxxii, 195-6.

nevertheless, accepted the proposal. The second reading was passed by 194 votes to 23 and the bill referred to a select committee.

Hicks Beach chaired the committee which had sixteen members, the majority of them being supporters of the bill. It heard evidence from thirty-seven witnesses, between 23 February and 27 April. On 4 May, during discussion of the report, Hicks Beach moved his amendment exempting the five towns, but it was rejected by nine votes to seven. Those against were Richard Smyth, William Johnston, Charles Lewis, A.M. Sullivan, home rule M.P. for County Louth, Charles Meldon, home rule M.P. for County Kildare, Hugh Law, liberal M.P. for County Londonderry, Ion Trant Hamilton, conservative M.P. for County Dublin, Colonel Cole, conservative M.P. for Fermanagh and Charles Cameron, liberal M.P. for Glasgow. Those in favour of the government's amendment were Maurice Brooks, N.D. Murphy, Lord Charles Beresford, Henry Bruen, conservative M.P. for County Carlow, Marquis of Hamilton, conservative M.P. for County Donegal, Richard O'Shaughnessy, home rule M.P. for Limerick city and Alfred Marten, conservative M.P. for Cambridge.¹ Here was another embarrassing defeat for the government over Sunday closing, with four conservative M.P.s, three of them from Ulster, voting against their own party. The majority, moreover, went on to make several additions to the original bill, giving police additional powers to supervise refreshment houses and increasing penalties for unlicensed

¹ I.T.L.J., xvi, no. 6 (June 1877), p. 99; Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, p. x, H.C. 1877 (198), xvi, 10.

selling.¹ On 16 May Hicks Beach was presented with a letter, signed by all the 29 Ulster M.P.s, urging the government to pass the bill.²

However, by exerting their power so vigorously, the supporters of Sunday closing had only further alienated the government and strengthened their opposition. The I.S.C.A. defended the rejection of the government's amendment, but admitted that 'many friends of the Sunday closing movement think it would have been wiser had the committee arrived at a conclusion that would have sanctioned the exemption of the five cities and towns, and so ensured, as they suppose, the passing of the bill'.³ The bill's opponents were quick to point out that the committee, in tightening-up policing of licences, had exceeded its terms of reference. The government, on the advice of the speaker, agreed and ordered the bill recommitted so that the offending sections could be removed.⁴ In the circumstances, Smyth had little alternative but to agree. The government in turn, under strong pressure from Gladstone, Bright and Hartington, agreed to provide a day for further debate. The liberals provided further assistance when Lawson offered a day set aside for the permissive bill to the supporters of Sunday closing.⁵

The committee stages of the bill occupied two sittings on 27 June and 3 July, but in both cases half a dozen Irish

¹ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1877, pp xi-xiii/11-13.

² I.T.L.J., xvi, no. 6 (June 1877), pp 99-100.

³ Report of the I.S.C.A. for 1876-7, p.10.

⁴ Hansard 3, ccxxxiv, 1949.

⁵ Ibid., 1769-77.

M.P.s, with assistance from several English members, managed to talk out the time available and no progress whatsoever was made.¹ Smyth protested strongly against such tactics.

I perceive [he said] that there is a determination that minorities shall dictate to this house, and that the will alike of the country and of this house shall be thwarted and defied by a combination of members, who, worsted in argument and in division, betake themselves to the tactics of despair, and pursue a course which, if persevered in much longer, will reduce parliamentary government to an absurdity.²

The majority of the opponents were home rulers and A.M.

Sullivan, a fellow home ruler, accused them angrily of trying 'to choke upon the floor of that house the voice of their own country'.³ On 12 July he went further and moved an adjournment motion in order to express his disgust with the government. Sullivan said that:

He feared the treasury bench rejoiced and were glad that they had these thirteen members to save them from the odious work of strangling the bill, and that the thirteen had been playing the game of the government by rescuing them from a most embarrassing position, having men sitting behind them whose consciences revolted from pursuing such a course.⁴

Sir Wilfred Lawson also felt that the government was in sympathy with the bill's opponents and he accused the chancellor of the exchequer of being the 'patron of obstruction'.⁵

However, although the Sunday closing bill did not become law in 1877, opposition to it was in fact weakening. Stephen Moore, conservative M.P. for County Tipperary, and Richard O'Shaughnessy, home rule M.P. for Limerick city, who had

¹ Hansard 3, ccxxxv, 322-82, 689-732.

² Ibid., 690.

³ Ibid., 709.

⁴ Ibid., 1184.

⁵ Ibid., 1193.

opposed the bill, both said in the committee debates that they were planning to withdraw their opposition. Both had been impressed by the public expressions of support for the bill.¹ The I.S.C.A. and the I.T.L. had continued petitioning parliament, collecting over 200,000 signatures in 1876-7 and over 300,000 in the following year. In December 1877 Hicks Beach was presented with a petition signed by 9,664 magistrates, clergy, town commissioners, poor law guardians, doctors and merchants.² The publicans were not able to match the temperance movement in the 'battle of the petitions' and, as the cases of Moore and O'Shaughnessy demonstrate, M.P.s were susceptible to this kind of pressure. With regard to the government, it probably did rejoice, as Sullivan claimed, over the failure of the 1877 bill, for this was Smyth's unamended bill. The government remained strongly opposed to total Sunday closing, but it had made clear that it was prepared to accept partial Sunday closing. In May and June 1877 Dublin Castle undertook extensive enquiries regarding the impact such a measure would have. Sub-inspectors and resident magistrates were sent a two-page confidential circular containing various questions on clauses of the bill. Some expressed concern as to how the bill would operate with regard to travellers, while many felt that justices were too unreliable to be trusted to handle the question of exemptions.³

¹ Hansard 3, ccxxxv, 703-6.

² Report of the I.S.C.A. for 1877-8, p. 9.

³ Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill: circular to magistrates and sub-inspectors, June 1877 (S.P.O., R.P. 1877/9953). For reports especially critical of the bill, see those of the R.M.s of Armagh, Dungarvan, New Ross and Mallow and the sub-inspectors of Youghal, Limerick, Lisburn and Sligo.

The problems raised and doubts expressed in these replies must have made Hicks Beach acutely conscious of the difficulties that even partial Sunday closing posed. But the actions of the Castle suggest that, by the middle of 1877, some form of Sunday closing in Ireland was probably inevitable. The parliamentary opponents of the measure, given their increasingly small numbers, could only stop it by obstructive tactics, but by 1878 such tactics had become counter-productive. For, in opposing Parnell's use of obstruction, the government had to be consistent and oppose its use by the opponents of Sunday closing as well.

In the 1878 session the bill was taken charge of by the O'Connor Don, who had sat for County Roscommon as a liberal from 1860 to 1874, when he had been re-elected as a home ruler. Smyth had relinquished his leadership due to illness, attributed by the I.S.C.A. to his great exertions on behalf of the Sunday closing bill.¹ The bill was read a second time on 21 January,² but, during the committee stage debate, the chancellor made it clear that the government would oppose the bill unless its sponsors accepted the amendments proposed.³ During the course of this debate, Parnell added his voice to the growing numbers of those urging the bill's supporters to agree to the government's demand. He explained that Meath, like nearly all the Irish counties, was in favour of the bill and thus he, despite considerable

¹ Report of the I.S.C.A. for 1877-8, p. 10. For the O'Connor Don's career see 'Obituary - Rt Hon. Charles Owen O'Connor Don' in Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, xxxvii, pt 1 (1907), p. 102.

² Hansard 3, ccxxxvii, 277-302.

³ Ibid., 1692-1721.

personal doubts about the principle of the measure, was prepared to support it. The government had indicated that it would give facilities for the bill if its amendments were accepted. As these amendments related to the towns and not to the counties, Parnell felt himself 'absolved from any opposition' to them. He threatened to walk out of the house if the bill's promoters did not cooperate with the government.¹ But both sides remained adamant and so the deadlock continued. The O'Connor Don insisted that the bill be taken without amendment, its opponents used the rules of the house to stop progress, while the government would neither support the bill nor kill it. As a result, the measure made no progress at all in committee during February and March.

The opponents of Sunday closing were undoubtedly given heart at this time by the appointment of James Lowther to replace Hicks Beach as chief secretary. Lowther gave every indication of being far more hostile to the measure than his predecessor had been. On 2 March, for instance, he received in London a powerful delegation from the Irish drink industry. It included the Dublin distillers, William Jameson and W. Talbot Power, the Cork brewer, Jerome Murphy, and representatives from the Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Killarney licensed vintners societies. Lowther informed them that he had always strongly opposed the Irish Sunday closing bill, believing that 'it partook of the most objectionable features of the two measures which he had always opposed, viz. - the permissive bill and the establishment of home rule'. He explained, however, that the acceptance by the house in 1876 of a

¹ Hansard 3, ccxxxvii, 1695-6.

resolution in favour of Sunday closing had forced a change in government policy on the issue. That policy was now to allow the bill to reach its committee stages and, if the government's amendments were accepted, not to oppose the bill's progress. But if the amendments were not accepted, Lowther warned, somewhat vaguely, that the government reserved to itself freedom of action. This policy Lowther described as 'conditional neutrality'.¹ To the bill's supporters, who were in fact poised to accept the government's terms, this statement seemed to suggest that, even if they compromised, the government was still not going to adopt the bill and ensure that it was passed.² On 28 March, before a pro-Sunday closing deputation from Belfast, Lowther denied that there was any difference between his policy and Hicks Beach's, but he then turned the discussion by demanding to know if the amendments were accepted and the bill passed, would the agitation for Sunday closing cease. It was a very telling question and the M.P.s accompanying the delegation, led by Charles Lewis, were unable to answer it.³

In the house matters came to a head on 1 April. Consideration of the bill began at 5 p.m. and, after five and a half hours had been consumed in speeches by Murphy, W.H. O'Sullivan and Denzil Onslow, the conservative member for Guildford, the O'Connor Don rose to announce that 'there was no other course open to the supporters of the bill' but to accept the government's amendments, 'reserving to themselves the right of trying to modify them in some details'. He

¹ F.J., 4 Mar. 1878; I.T., 4 Mar. 1878.

² Hansard 3, ccxxxviii, 756-7; F.J., 5 Mar. 1878.

³ Ibid., 29 Mar. 1878.

asked the obstructors to desist as now the cities in which they were so interested would not be affected by the bill's provisions.¹ The opposition ignored this concession and another four hours were taken up with alternate motions to report progress and for the chairman to leave the chair. Gladstone rose at 2 a.m. to declare that, though far from the youngest member of the house, he was prepared to sit on and support the O'Connor Don till at least some progress was made.² At 3 a.m. Lowther announced that it was now too late to move the amendments and he left the house.³ W.E. Forster accused him of having departed in a 'childish pet', while Gladstone rose again to deplore the fact that a handful of Irish members should defy the majority of their fellows in such an extraordinary manner.⁴ The O'Connor Don said that the government was taking a leaf out of the book of the obstructionists, Parnell, O'Connor Power and O'Donnell.⁵ In defence Parnell rose to say that if he had behaved with regard to other bills in the way that the English and Irish opponents of Sunday closing were behaving, 'he would have been handed over by the chancellor of the exchequer into the custody of the serjeant-at-arms'. And he went on to accuse the government of behaving 'almost shabbily'. 'After promising facilities for passing the bill, which was desired by the majority of the Irish people, they had run away out of the house', he said.⁶ It is rather ironic that the main

¹ Hansard 3, ccxxxix, 339.

² *Ibid.*, 369-71.

³ *Ibid.*, 377.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 380-81.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 382.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 384.

practitioners of obstruction, Biggar, Parnell, F.H. O'Donnell and John O'Connor Power, all supported the Sunday closing bill, while its opponents were mainly anti-Parnellite home rulers and English conservative M.P.s. Parnell doubtless enjoyed turning the tables on the government and accusing it of conniving at obstruction.¹ The O'Connor Don, with liberal support, followed Gladstone's advice and refused to give up till some progress had been made. Finally at 5.30 a.m. Sir Joseph McKenna, the home rule member for Youghal, who was among the bill's opponents suggested a compromise. This was that the minor amendments preceding those of the chief secretary be agreed to. Edward Gibson, the Irish attorney-general, the only member of the government left in the house, agreed and, with Major O'Gorman still protesting furiously, this compromise was accepted and the house adjourned after more than twelve hours of continuous debate.²

The press was appalled by the debate. The Freeman's Journal, despite its reservations regarding Sunday closing, roundly condemned the actions of the bill's opponents and was especially anxious to differentiate between the obstruction that the Sunday closing bill was experiencing and that practised by Parnell and his supporters.

There is [the paper said] a vital difference between a number of members who, though a minority of the whole house, are or represent a majority of the representatives of a country, opposing in the name of the people of that country legislation to which that people object, and a minority of the members of a particular country opposing not merely the opinion of the house but of the majority of the members from their own country.

The paper accused the ten or fifteen Irish opponents of the bill of trying to defeat the 'constitutionally expressed will

¹ I.T., 15 May 1878,

² Hansard 3, ccxxxix, 392.

of the Irish people by the aid of English votes'.¹ So even the Freeman's Journal had at last been convinced by the activities of the temperance movement that Sunday closing was desired by most Irish people. The fact that Dublin and the other main centres of the drink industry would not now be affected by the measure undoubtedly helped the paper to change its mind. The Times worried about the effect of successful obstruction on the future conduct of the house.

If we were concerned with the fate of this particular measure only, [it said] we might view the issue with equanimity; but the spirit of the house of commons is in danger of demoralisation, if it be not already demoralised. The knowledge of the power of stopping a bill easily spreads, and the shyness of members to use the power easily disappears.²

Clearly The Times feared that the obstruction of the Sunday closing bill was a sign that the tactics of Parnell and Biggar were going to be taken up by other members. It joined in the widespread criticism of Lowther for leaving the house before the debate was concluded and generally condemned the government for equivocating in its attitude to the bill and thus allowing free reign to the obstructionists.

On 4 April the government's amendments were moved and the O'Conor Don agreed to accept them, because he knew the bill would never pass otherwise.³ W.H. O'Sullivan and Major O'Gorman, the bill's most intransigent opponents, continued to obstruct, but this brought down upon them a severe rebuke from the chancellor. In the light of such criticism as The Times's, the government seemed anxious to make clear its total opposition to obstruction. However, if the promoters of the

¹ F.J., 3 Apr. 1878.

² The Times, 3 Apr. 1878.

³ Hansard 3, ccxxxix, 623-4.

bill now thought they were assured of vigorous government support, they were quickly disabused of this notion by Lowther. He said that the government 'had never undertaken to take charge of the bill in any way nor to support it'. The government would 'give facilities - and by facilities they, of course, meant time and nothing more' and how much time the bill received would depend on the state of government business.¹ Given that government business was being disrupted by Parnellite obstruction, Lowther's 'facilities' must have seemed very paltry to the Sunday closers. Moreover, acceptance of the government's amendments resulted in more criticism, from friend and foe alike. Opponents of the original bill derided the compromise. Sir Patrick O'Brien said that the amended bill would be like Hamlet, without the main character.² More seriously, some supporters now turned against the measure. F.H. O'Donnell protested against, what he called, this 'most immoral compromise'. He said that, from the beginning of the agitation, the condition of the large towns in Ireland had been the main subject of complaint; and yet he now found that those who had advocated this measure readily granted to the government licence to continue all the evils of the present system, in order that those gentlemen might have the name of passing a bill.³ This was certainly a valid criticism. Several supporters went so far as to vote against acceptance of the amendments. They included Sir Wilfrid Lawson, leader of the permissive bill campaign, and one of the Irish temperance movement's staunchest English friends.⁴ The I.S.C.A., in its report for the year,

¹ Hansard 3, ccxxxix, 643.

² Ibid., 638.

³ Ibid., 645.

⁴ F.J., 6 Apr. 1878.

said that it had agreed reluctantly to accept the amendments on the advice of its parliamentary leaders that otherwise no bill at all would pass. But it regarded the measure as incomplete and was determined 'to secure the blessings of Sunday closing for the cities now exempted'.¹ Yet the criticism of supporters like O'Donnell remained valid. Most temperance advocates agreed that drinking in the cities on Saturday night was the biggest problem in Ireland. But, by April 1878, they were being asked to campaign for a bill to stop drinking in rural areas on Sunday and then only temporarily. The chances of such legislation being effective were therefore very slight.

Debate on the committee stage was resumed at 2 a.m. on 14 May, after Parnell and his friends had spent the time since 4 p.m. obstructing the estimates for the Queen's Colleges. The opponents of the Sunday closing bill continued the obstruction, while the chief secretary and the chancellor denied that the government was under any obligation to rescue the bill. Having sat continuously for ten hours, members' tempers were naturally somewhat frayed. English M.P.s fretted about the damage being done to the dignity of the house and about where the policy of obstruction would lead, if, as in this case, the government did not resist it.² The home ruler, O'Connor Power, joined with the conservative, Charles Lewis, to condemn the government's equivocal behaviour.³ Lewis, who liked to consider himself the leader of the Irish conservatives, was, according to the Freeman's Journal, 'in disgrace' with

¹ Report of the I.S.C.A. for 1877-8, p. 16.

² Hansard 3, ccxxxix, 1823, 1829.

³ Ibid., 1819-22.

the government because of his strong support for the Sunday closing bill.¹ Parnell, obviously delighting in the government's embarrassment, rose to accuse Lowther of being an obstructionist and to demand that either the government take up the bill itself or at least provide time for a full discussion of it.² Debate continued for over seven hours, till 9.30 a.m., with thirteen fruitless divisions. Finally the O'Connor Don agreed to D.N. Murphy's proposal that a full debate on the amendment to exclude the five towns should take place and the government agreed to find time for such a debate.³

The Freeman's Journal clearly reflected the irritation, frustration and growing boredom, which was increasingly characterising attitudes to the Sunday closing bill among those not directly involved. Its Westminster correspondent wrote of 'weary divisions, and more wearisome speeches, repeated over and over, and with damnable iteration'.

According to him:

The one noticeable feature was the indirect support which throughout Mr Lowther gave the opposition. He went so far as to announce his personal hostility to the measure, and the self-restraint he had to exercise in not voting with its opponents. Under such circumstances progress was, of course, hopeless.

Lowther's hostility to Sunday closing in any form, coming after Hicks Beach's willingness to accept partial Sunday closing, created great confusion regarding the government's intentions. The Freeman's Journal correspondent saw the house 'fast sinking into demoralisation and public contempt'

¹ F.J., 20 May 1878.

² Hansard 3, ccxxxix, 1842.

³ Ibid., 1853.

and he criticised the government for not providing strong enough leadership. The paper said that it was 'difficult to draw the line between Mr James Lowther and his caterwauling confreres and the Irish members whom he and they continue to render formidable'. And it speculated as to whether the government's failure to support the bill, after its amendments had been accepted, was motivated by 'pure spite', to get back at the Irish members who were obstructing government bills.¹ The Irish Times, which opposed Sunday closing, also condemned the use of obstruction against the bill. However, it saw the home rulers, rather than the government, as largely responsible for the situation which had arisen.

Among those who exclaimed most loudly against the obstruction offered to the Sunday closing bill were gentlemen who offered an equally annoying obstruction to the votes to supply [the paper said]. If Mr O'Sullivan, Mr Downing and Major O'Gorman maintained a vexacious opposition to the majority, most decidedly Mr Sullivan, Mr Biggar and Mr O'Connor Power did the same; so that as regards the mere blame of worrying parliament there is little to choose between the Sunday closers and their opponents.²

When the debate was resumed on 16 May, however, the opposition collapsed quickly and the amendments being discussed were passed.³ The Irish Times claimed that the 'Sunday closers ... seem to have completely cowed the treasury benches'.⁴ In fact, opposition to the bill was weakening and supporters and opponents of the measure were beginning to cooperate. The Freeman's Journal noted that a 'more amicable disposition seems to have grown between the two hostile camps of Sunday and anti-Sunday closers'.⁵ O'Gorman

¹ F.J., 15 May 1878.

² I.T., 15 May 1878.

³ Hansard 3, ccx1, 95-122; F.J., 17 May 1878.

⁴ I.T., 17 May 1878.

⁵ F.J., 22 May 1878.

and, to a lesser extent, O'Sullivan continued to obstruct in a fairly outrageous manner, but the other opponents of the bill had changed their tactics. McKenna, Murphy and M'Carthy Downing began to move amendments which would have made the bill unacceptable to the house or ineffectual in its operation. McKenna and O'Sullivan, for instance, attempted to introduce an element of local option by proposing that householders should be able to determine the hours of opening.¹ This obviously aimed to stir up the opponents of the permissive principle against Sunday closing and so divide the bill's supporters. But such amendments were highly unlikely to be passed. Once the bill's opponents had been driven by the public outcry to drop obstruction, they had little chance of stopping the measure. Unwavering opposition was left to the eccentric O'Gorman, who told the house that the bill was 'an absolute abortion'.² But his verbal excesses probably only succeeded in discrediting further opposition.

When the government provided 11 July for final consideration of amendments, there were only forty members in the house. But then the bill had been debated for forty-three hours during the session and, as the Freeman's Journal had suggested, most members were heartily fed up with it. The opponents continued to introduce amendments, though arguing as much with each other as with the bill's supporters. O'Gorman in frustration threatened to resign and had to be dissuaded by his colleagues. However, Lowther, while stating that 'there was probably no member of the house who disliked

¹ Hansard 3, ccx1, 821-2, 1024.

² Ibid., 1025.

this bill more than he did', admitted that a majority of the house was determined to proceed with it and so the government wished progress to be made as rapidly as possible.¹ The government's more cooperative attitude was probably largely the result of a desire not to waste any more time on the bill. Government business had already fallen well behind and, with the Congress of Berlin just ending, time was needed for foreign policy debates. The London correspondent of the Freeman's Journal vividly captured the atmosphere of this debate and his report is worth quoting at length.

It is a sore trial to the patience of the government and many members of the house of commons that another night should be devoted at this period of the session to a struggle of endurance on the question of Sunday closing in Ireland. All kinds of measures are being abandoned for want of time to discuss them, and yet the time that would save some of them has to be sacrificed on account of the opposition to this bill ... Mr O'Sullivan ... spoke during the greater part of dinner time to a house of five or six members. Twice while he was speaking attention was called to the empty benches, and twice did members come trooping in in such numbers that counting was almost a formality.

Members kept coming in, looking round, smiling at the transparent farce, exchanging a laugh with other members, a joke with the serjeant-at-arms, and then going out again to talk in the lobby about the burlesque to be witnessed in the first parliamentary assembly in the world.

The members who were present at a quarter to eleven o'clock enjoyed a little merriment at the expense of two occupants of the treasury bench - Mr Lowther and Sir Selwin Ibbetson - who were soundly asleep. Sir Selwin Ibbetson sat with his head resting on the top of the seat back, but Mr Lowther's head was considerably lower, and he seemed in danger of falling upon the seat towards the English attorney-general.²

The debate consumed ten hours and not till 3 a.m. was the second reading finally passed. Even the I.S.C.A. admitted that the debate had been 'altogether unnecessary', with the 'old speeches redelivered, and the old tactics resorted to'.³

¹ Hansard 3, ccx1, 1309.

² F.J., 12 July 1878.

³ Report of the I.S.C.A. for 1877-8, p. 14.

The English press also showed its irritation. The Daily Telegraph used the debate as an excuse to air its anti-Irish views. Calling the bill merely a matter for the 'parish police', the paper said it was 'scandalous' that twelve sittings had been devoted to it since January and the third reading had not yet been reached. If the Irish were convinced that they could not be trusted to drink on Sunday 'without prejudice to public decency and order', the paper went on, then it was not for the English to object to the measure by which they sought to 'correct their failing'.¹

But, in fact, the long struggle for Sunday closing was nearly over, for the government, despite Lowther's hostility, had at last determined to dispose of the issue. On 8 August the chancellor told the house that, as the bill had been discussed and divided upon at every possible occasion and carried by large majorities, 'it would be unbusiness-like to allow all the time so expended to be entirely thrown away; and perhaps, to make the house appear to stultify itself'. The government, in consultation with the bill's promoters, had therefore decided to provide facilities for the bill to be read a third time and sent to the house of lords before the end of the session.² Thus, after a short debate on 10 August, the bill was passed by 63 votes to 22.³ Introduced into the house of lords on 12 August, it proceeded almost without discussion, was passed on 15 August and received the royal assent on 16 August.⁴

¹ Daily Telegraph, 15 July 1878.

² Hansard 3, ccxlii, 1618.

³ Ibid., 1721-48.

⁴ For the introduction of the act in Ireland and the problems associated with this see S.P.O., R.P. 1878/16836; 1878/19478; 1879/2550; 1879/6618; 1879/1803.

Temperance and the liberal government, 1880-85

The long parliamentary battle required to achieve even a limited and temporary Sunday closing act in Ireland did not augur well for the future of temperance legislation and in fact no significant Irish licensing legislation was passed before the end of the century. Little could be expected of the conservatives, but even the liberal governments of 1880-85, 1885-6 and 1892-5 produced nothing but promises as far as the Irish temperance movement was concerned. Temperance bills, particularly in the 1880s, were squeezed out of parliament by the preoccupation of government with the Irish land question and home rule.

However, at the end of 1878 the Irish temperance movement was supremely confident. At a meeting in Dublin on 5 November the I.S.C.A. and the I.P.B.A. were formally united as the Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance.¹ The new association's president was Thomas Pim, jun., its secretary, T.W. Russell, and one of its honorary secretaries, Henry Wigham. It reflected much more the outlook of the I.S.C.A. than that of the I.P.B.A., which had tended to go into decline in the late 1870s due to the temperance movement's preoccupation with Sunday closing. Thus, in the association's list of its seven main aims, the extension of the Sunday closing act came first, while the introduction of local option was relegated to sixth place. The second aim of the I.A.P.I. was to limit trading hours, especially on Saturdays, and this was the first issue that it took up.² Doubtless it

¹ The work of the I.A.P.I. can be traced in its reports, nos 1-38, 1879-1916, which are in the National Library of Ireland.

² First annual report of the I.A.P.I. for the year 1878-9 (Dublin, 1879), pp 3-4; The Times, 25 and 28 Jan. 1879.

was prompted in this by pressure from the catholic hierarchy, who regarded Saturday drinking as the biggest problem and suspected the Sunday closers of sabbatarianism. A.M. Sullivan introduced a bill proposing Saturday closing at 6 p.m. in towns and 8 p.m. elsewhere, which had its second reading debate on 30 April 1879. Even the I.A.P.I. was not particularly optimistic about the chances of this measure, coming on top of the long Sunday closing debates, and in fact it was quickly talked out.¹ Moreover, meetings supporting the measure were regularly attacked and broken up. After a riot at a meeting in the Ancient Concert Rooms, two spirit grocers and a grocer's assistant were prosecuted. Riots followed meetings in Limerick as well, where the publicans were described as 'bitter'.² Sunday closing meetings had been attacked in the past, but not as frequently nor as violently as in 1879. Having failed to stop temperance in parliament in 1878, the drink trade presumably decided on more forceful methods. However, they were not really necessary.

One problem facing the temperance movement at this time, which was to become increasingly serious, was the question of finance. Electioneering and parliamentary lobbying were extremely expensive activities. In 1877-8, for instance, the I.S.C.A. had spent over £2,800.³ Voluntary subscribers from the Dublin and Belfast business communities were generous, while the U.K. Alliance provided an annual grant of between £100 and £200 to both the I.T.L. and the

¹ Hansard 3, ccxlv, 1434-79.

² The Times, 4 and 23 Apr. 1879.

³ Report of the I.S.C.A. for 1877-8, p. 17.

I.A.P.I., but expenditure almost constantly exceeded income. The I.A.P.I. had taken over the liabilities of the I.S.C.A. and the I.P.B.A., which amounted together to nearly £200. The association had hoped to raise £2,000 in 1879, but due to the trade depression it was only able to raise a little over £1,200. Yet, its expenditure for the year was £1,300.¹ In 1880 its income was £1,330, but due to the election expenditure rose to over £1,600.² In 1881 for the first time the association managed to stay in the black, but it had not been a particularly busy year.³ Later, in the 1880s, as subscriptions declined, the association would have no alternative but to curtail its activities.⁴ The I.T.L. faced similar problems, which became particularly acute with the two elections in 1885 and 1886.⁵ But the league's successful cafés and coffee stands were very profitable and helped considerably to ease its financial problems.⁶

The temperance movement and the drink lobby were extremely active during the election of 1880 in Ireland, as well as in England, though in Ireland the depression, the land question and the issue of home rule were more urgent problems as far as most people were concerned. The I.T.L., the U.K. Alliance, the I.A.P.I. and the temperance committee of the presbyterian church all issued electoral manifestoes. Describing drinking as 'one of the greatest hindrances to

¹ First report of the I.A.P.I. for 1878-9, p. 19.

² Second report of the I.A.P.I. for 1879-80, pp 17-18.

³ Third report of the I.A.P.I. for 1880-81, p. 12.

⁴ Ninth report of the I.A.P.I. for 1886-7, p. 18.

⁵ I.T.L. executive committee minute book, 5 Mar. 1886.

⁶ For a list of coffee-stand profits see *ibid.*, 28 Oct. 1892.

the spread of morality, religion, education, commercial prosperity, and social progress', and acknowledging that the 'efforts of philanthropists have failed to materially, if at all, diminish intemperance', the league urged voters to return a 'parliament that will either suppress, or allow the people in their respective districts to suppress, the God-dishonouring, man-destroying traffic in intoxicating liquors'. Voters were instructed only to support those who, at the 'very least', promised to vote for local option.¹ The U.K. Alliance manifesto was less concerned with reiterating arguments against drink and more with giving detailed instructions to voters. It, too, urged them to support those committed to local option, but recognised that the situation would not always be straightforward. Where a candidate was sympathetic to temperance reform, but not an advocate of the permissive bill, it advised temperance electors to confer and decide whether to endorse the candidate or not. Whatever was decided, it was most important that there should be a 'solid phalanx asserting the paramount importance of temperance legislation'.² The I.A.P.I. was more concerned about attitudes to Sunday closing. It began by reminding voters that the Sunday closing act would expire on 31 December 1882 and thus that those being presently elected would probably be the ones to decide whether the act was to become permanent and be extended to the five exempted cities. It also referred to the need to limit Saturday hours and the desirability of introducing local option. It

¹ I.T.L.J., xvii, no. 4 (Apr. 1880), p. 37.

² Ibid., p. 38; for a discussion of the U.K. Alliance's electoral strategy see Hamer, The politics of electoral pressure, pp 224-5.

advised voters to support candidates sympathetic to temperance legislation and it instructed the 'friends of the movement at once [to] meet and make arrangements individually and collectively to press the subject upon the attention of candidates'.¹ The temperance committee of the general assembly of the presbyterian church issued a circular to presbyterian voters. Interestingly it followed the I.A.P.I. in listing the main temperance issues as Sunday closing, shorter Saturday trading hours and finally local option.² Presumably it thought the first two more likely to win support than the third. Given that the permissive bill had never secured a majority in the house and had been defeated again as recently as March 1880, this seemed like a reasonable surmise. These electoral manifestoes clearly illustrate the differing priorities of the main Irish temperance organisations.

The electoral lobbying of the temperance movement in 1880 can be traced in some detail in the records of the I.T.L., which are far fuller than those of the I.A.P.I. This of course restricts analysis to Ulster, though temperance as an electoral issue was undoubtedly most important here. Land reform and Disraeli's foreign policy were probably the two main issues in the province, with temperance and jury reform coming next.³ In the boroughs of Belfast and Carrickfergus and in the counties of Down, Armagh and Londonderry candidates referred specifically to the temperance question in their electoral addresses. Some were quite

¹ I.T.L.J., xvii, no. 4 (Apr. 1880), p. 39.

² Ibid., p. 38.

³ Walker, Parliamentary representation in Ulster, p. 319.

precise, like Viscount Castlereagh, the conservative member for Down, who had been returned at a by-election in 1878 with strong support from the I.T.L.¹ He said that he had supported the Sunday closing bill and would also support the permissive bill or a local option resolution.² But most were considerably more vague, obviously not wishing to restrict their freedom of choice too narrowly. For instance, Thomas Greer, the conservative candidate in Carrickfergus, who was to defeat Dalway, said: 'I will be an advocate for such alterations in the existing laws as may afford a reasonable prospect of abating this national calamity'. Greer, like many other candidates, felt it wise to show sympathy for the temperance cause, but without pledging himself necessarily to vote for any particular piece of legislation. But the I.T.L. did work hard in order to gain specific pledges from candidates, as the minute book of the executive committee clearly illustrates. The committee met nearly every day, sometimes twice a day, throughout March and April. On 12 March the manifesto, already referred to, was approved, as were three questions to be put to each candidate. There were:

1 Will you, if elected, vote for a measure according power to the people to restrain the issue or renewal of licences for the sale of intoxicating liquors in their respective districts?

2 Will you vote for the renewal of the Irish Sunday closing bill, and its extension to the towns now exempted?

3 Will you vote for the early closing of public houses on Saturday evening?³

¹ Walker, Parliamentary representation in Ulster, p. 305; I.T.L. executive committee minute book, 10 May 1878.

² I.T.L.J., xvii, no. 4 (Apr. 1880), p. 40.

³ Ibid., p. 39.

On 15 March the executive committee organised delegations to visit each of the candidates in Ulster. In Belfast on 18 March the committee held a special meeting at which J.P. Corry and W.M. Ewart, the conservative members for the borough, were present. Ewart, a linen merchant, had replaced Johnston after he had resigned in 1878. Both M.P.s thought 6 p.m. was too early for Saturday night closing and Corry, while endorsing the principle of local option, was not prepared to commit himself to unqualified support for the permissive bill.¹ This must have disappointed the league as Corry had been its president from 1862 to 1866. J.S. Brown, the liberal candidate, received a league delegation and agreed to the three questions. But the other conservative candidate, Dr Robert Seeds, Q.C., refused to reply to the league's invitation to a meeting and was endorsed by the vintners in a letter to the Northern Whig. The league decided to work actively for Seeds's defeat. On 26 March the committee ordered 2,000 handbills directed against him to be issued, though, on the following day, the number was raised to 10,000. It was also decided to produce posters advertising Seeds's views on temperance, the cost if possible to be covered by the other candidates.² The easy return of Corry and Ewart must have pleased the league.

However, there were more serious problems in other constituencies. In County Monaghan there was a close contest between the conservative members, Sir John Leslie and S.E. Shirley, and the liberals, John Givan and William Findlater. On 25 March the committee received reports that neither

¹ I.T.L. executive committee minute book, 18 Mar. 1880.

² Ibid., 23 and 27 Mar. 1880.

Shirley nor Findlater would endorse local option. The secretary was instructed to write to leading liberals and conservatives, who were friends of temperance, including John Givan, and ask them to talk to the two candidates. This apparently had no effect because on 27 March the league issued, what it termed, a 'whip' supporting the conservative, Leslie, and the liberal, Givan.¹ In a close vote the two liberals were returned, with Givan topping the poll. Problems also presented themselves in Dungannon, where there was another close contest. The league received reports that the liberal member, T.A. Dickson, and his conservative opponent, Colonel Knox, were both offering concessions to the publicans and bidding for their support. John Pyper was dispatched immediately to see the candidates. He reported the following day that Knox had said he supported Sunday closing, but was opposed to both local option and early Saturday closing. On the other hand, Dickson said he supported local option and Sunday closing, but was against early Saturday closing except for towns with a population exceeding 10,000.² Although there is no indication in the committee's minutes which candidate they endorsed, one can only assume that it would have been Dickson, who was prepared to vote for the permissive bill. Dickson did win in a very close vote, but was subsequently unseated on petition.

The vintners, after their defeat over the Sunday closing bill, mounted a vigorous campaign to ensure the election of sympathetic candidates. The Dublin vintners had established a Licensed Grocers and Vintners Protection Society and it

¹ I.T.L. executive committee minute book, 25 and 26 Mar. 1880.

² Ibid.

issued a circular on 10 March warning traders that the real aim of the temperance movement was 'to harass you with penal enactments, and, if possible, to crush you out of business'.

They have struck a blow [it went on] at one of the few branches of home manufacture still permitted to survive in Ireland, and in doing so they have injured not only the manufacturer and those whom he employs, but the farmer, who in these disastrous years, has found his barley crop a drug on the market. Thus Irish trade, Irish manufacture, and Irish agriculture have been insidiously struck at by the same hostile hand.¹

The argument that temperance was economically injurious to Irish industry and agriculture was likely to have a strong appeal, given the existing depressed conditions and it was especially calculated to appeal to home rule candidates. The society said that it was its 'duty to keep clear of party politics', but emphasised that this was a 'broad national question', affecting the 'social rights' of the Irish people as well as their economic interests. This was obviously directed at home rulers and in fact the vintners were to find important allies in the emerging Parnellite party. The trade was active in Ulster, as well as in the south. In County Cavan, for instance, trade representatives saw the two home rule members, Biggar and Fay, and asked them to pledge themselves to vote against the early Saturday closing bill. Biggar, who was a leading champion of temperance legislation, refused, but Fay agreed and subsequently kept his promise.² In Newry Henry Thomson, a wine merchant, recaptured the seat for the conservatives, defeating P.G.H. Carvill, a catholic barrister, in a close contest. The

¹ I.T.L.J., xvii, no. 4 (Apr. 1880), p. 40.

² Walker, Parliamentary representation in Ulster, p. 321.

Northern Whig felt that Carvill's defeat was due to the fact that the town's catholic publicans had withdrawn their support because of the liberal party's connections with the temperance movement.¹

The re-election of a liberal government and the fall of the 'publicans' parliament' was heartily welcomed by the Irish temperance movement and great confidence was expressed in the future. But, in fact, the results in Ireland were decidedly mixed. There were important successes certainly, for instance, the election of J.H. Richardson as liberal member for County Armagh, the replacement of Lord Charles Beresford in County Waterford by the home ruler, J.A. Blake, and Benjamin Whitworth's re-election in Drogheda. But there were also important losses. The O'Connor Don lost in Roscommon to a Parnellite; W.H. O'Shea replaced Lord Francis Conyngham in County Clare; Major O'Gorman was defeated in Waterford city, but was replaced by the Parnellite, Edmund Leamy, who was hostile to temperance legislation; similarly in Cork city, D.N. Murphy, although supported by the drink trade, was defeated by Parnell himself and John Daly, but neither were advocates of temperance.² But perhaps A.M. Sullivan had the most unpleasant experience as a result of the election. He was re-elected in County Louth only to find his fellow member to be Philip Callan, who had been one of the most vocal and volatile opponents of Sunday closing. Sullivan declined to sit and was replaced by A.H. Bellingham, another opponent of temperance. However, he found a seat in Meath, vacated by

¹ Walker, Parliamentary representation in Ulster, p. 343; Northern Whig, 5 Apr. 1880.

² See below, p. 448.

Parnell who had decided to sit for Cork.¹ The defeat of many members of Butt's old home rule party in 1880 saw the removal from parliament of some of the leading protagonists in the Sunday closing struggle of the 1870s. On the whole, however, they were replaced by opponents of temperance, or at least by those with little interest in the issue. This was particularly true of the twenty-seven Parnellites elected: some were openly hostile to temperance, regarding it as a conservative, middle-class, protestant movement, while others simply thought that the land and national questions were infinitely more important for Ireland. So, although the election of a liberal government seemed a victory for temperance, the appearance of a more radical home rule party was a definite set-back in Ireland at least.

The parliament returned in 1880 was clearly more sympathetic to the temperance cause than the preceding one had been. This was demonstrated speedily and graphically with regard to the permissive bill. On 5 March the bill had been rejected in the old parliament by 280 votes to 166, but on 18 June a resolution in favour of the measure was carried in the new parliament by 229 votes to 203. At the first division the Irish vote had been:

	For	Against	Total
Liberals	8	2	10
Conservatives	7	5	12
Home Rulers	7	7	14
Total	<u>22</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>36</u> ²

¹ For the full results of the 1880 election in Ireland, see Walker, Parliamentary election results in Ireland, pp 122-7.

² I.T.L.J., xvii, no. 4 (Apr. 1880), p. 42.

But in June there was a significant increase in the Irish vote.

	For	Against	Total
Liberals	8	1	9
Conservatives	10	7	17
Home Rulers	18	12	30
Total	<u>36</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>56</u> ¹

The I.T.L. was pleased with the Ulster vote, which in March had been 15 for and 3 against and which in June had risen to 17 for and 4 against.² But the executive committee decided to write to members who had been absent or who had voted against seeking an explanation.³ The increase in the home rule vote, from 7 for in March to 18 in June, also seemed especially encouraging. However, the most striking change had occurred among English liberals, who voted in favour of the resolution by 133 to 35. Eighteen members of the government voted with the majority, including Harcourt, Chamberlain and Bright, and although Gladstone was not among them, he announced that he had accepted the principle of the measure and promised government action as soon as the pressure of business would permit.⁴

In the light of these events great hopes were held by both the Irish and English temperance movements. However, as the 1880-85 government became enmeshed in the Irish land problem, in fights between whigs and radicals, and in a

¹ I.T.L.J., xvii, no. 6 (July 1880), p. 84.

² For the Ulster voting figures since 1864 see *ibid.*

³ I.T.L. executive committee minute book, 25 June 1880.

⁴ Hamer, The politics of electoral pressure, pp 223-4.

disastrous foreign policy in Egypt and the Sudan, the hopes of the temperance movement were severely dashed. As early as the middle of 1881, Lawson began to sense that temperance legislation was slipping down the government's list of priorities. He warned Gladstone against paying too much attention to the problems of five million Irish, while neglecting the thirty-five million people 'of this island'.¹ But, in fact, the problem of 'arrears of legislation' was only to become worse.² If the English temperance movement did not receive the attention that it demanded from the government, this was even more so of the Irish. The government was being accused of neglecting issues like temperance to concentrate on Ireland; in such a situation the Irish temperance movement fell between the two stools. In 1881 Charles Meldon had taken over the early Saturday closing bill from Sullivan and reintroduced it. But it was opposed by the government and defeated. W.E. Forster, the chief secretary, argued that there was no widespread demand in Ireland for the measure and moreover, that the Sunday closing act should be allowed to operate for a longer period before being supplemented with further legislation. Forster appealed to Meldon not to divide the house, but he insisted and the bill was lost by 49 votes to 33. The Irish members voted for, but only by a majority of 3. The most interesting feature of the Irish vote, however, was the fact that the home rulers voted against the bill by 14 to 8, the Parnellites being 6 to 2 against.³

¹ Hansard 3, cclxvii, 524-5.

² For a discussion of the government's problems, see Hamer, Liberal politics in the age of Gladstone and Rosebery, pp 88-92.

³ Third report of the I.A.P.I. for 1880-81, p. 8-9.

With the Sunday closing act due to expire on 31 December 1882, the Irish temperance movement began another substantial campaign, this time to convince the government to make the act permanent and extend it to the five exempted cities. A deputation from the I.A.P.I. saw Forster after their annual meeting in November 1881, but he would only commit the government to ensuring that the act did not lapse.¹ The association then decided to launch another massive canvas of the five cities, even larger than the one undertaken in 1876. Householders and registered voters were polled in person or by mail in order to ascertain public opinion on the issue and hopefully pressurise the government into extending the act. Over 90,000 householders in the cities were asked: 'Are you in favour of the entire closing of public houses, beer shops, taverns and spirit groceries on Sunday?'. To this question 76,817 answered yes and 13,702 answered no.² A declaration in support of the act was also drawn up and signed by 1,769 clergy, magistrates, doctors, town commissioners and poor law guardians in the five cities. It is interesting to note, with regard to this declaration, that, while the numbers of protestant clergy signing had only increased from 310 to 320 since the last such declaration in 1878, the numbers of catholic clergy signing had risen from 73 to 130. This increase occurred even though the catholic clergy in Belfast were not polled.³ The fact that Cardinal McCabe had changed his mind and spoken in favour of extending Sunday closing probably encouraged priests to sign.⁴

¹ Fourth report of the I.A.P.I. for 1881-2, pp 5-7.

² Ibid., p. 8.

³ Ibid., pp 9-10.

⁴ F.J., 30 Dec. 1881; The Times, 30 Dec. 1881.

But Forster remained apparently unimpressed by these expressions of public opinion. On 28 April he told a deputation, including Corry, Richardson, Ewart, Dickson, Blake, Dean Dickenson of the Chapel Royal, Henry Wigham and T.W. Russell, that the government was too pressed for time at present to introduce an Irish Sunday closing bill of its own. However, he suggested that if a private member introduced such a bill the government would give it all possible support. After 'considerable hesitation', the I.A.P.I. decided to take this course and J.N. Richardson, one of the few remaining Irish liberal M.P.s, introduced a bill that was read for the first time on 2 May. But 'the exigencies of Irish business blocked all further progress'.¹ The new chief secretary, G.O. Trevelyan, however, seemed more genuinely sympathetic to temperance legislation than Forster had been. He assured an Irish delegation on 18 June that he would speak to Gladstone about the bill. But this only produced a statement in the house by Gladstone on 20 June which reiterated Forster's remarks: that the government could not commit itself at present to legislate, but that the Irish Sunday closing act would not be allowed to lapse.² Richardson continued to try and secure time for a second reading debate. He finally succeeded at nearly midnight on Saturday 22 July, after a special sitting of the house to deal with the Scottish education bill. The government continued unhelpful, trying to adjourn debate in the face of protests from J.A. Blake and Maurice Healy. But the matter was settled when, at the instigation of Philip Callan, the house was counted out.³

¹ Fourth report of the I.A.P.I. for 1881-2, pp 12-13.

² Ibid., pp 13-14.

³ Hansard 3, cclxxii, 1483.

The I.A.P.I. refused to be unduly pessimistic, noting that during the course of the session a Welsh Sunday closing bill had been passed and that similar bills were being promoted for English counties, including Durham, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Cornwall. Moreover the association was convinced that the liberal government was truly sympathetic to its cause. The only thing, concluded the report for the year, that 'stood in the way of a complete measure being carried, was the pressure of public business on the government and the house of commons'.¹

In 1883 three bills were introduced to deal with the hours of liquor trading in Ireland. Meldon, Whitworth and Blake introduced one, aimed at closing public houses on Saturday at 8 p.m. in towns and 9 p.m. elsewhere. But this bill did not proceed beyond its first reading. A private member's bill to extend and make permanent the Sunday closing act was also introduced, endorsed by Richardson, Corry, Blake, Lord Arthur Hill, Thomas Dickson, Meldon, Lewis, Ewart, Arthur O'Connor and John Redmond. But this bill was not proceeded with because a government bill was introduced in the house of lords by Lord Carlingford, the former Chichester Fortesque. The government had changed its policy of the previous year and decided to introduce its own bill. On 29 January Dublin Castle had sent a letter to R.M.s requesting information about the operation of the Sunday closing act. Out of the seventy-one who replied, sixty-eight agreed that the act promoted peace in the country and sobriety among the people.² Arrests for drunkenness on

¹ Fourth report of the I.A.P.I. for 1881-2, p. 15.

² The three who disagreed were stationed in Longford, Bantry, County Cork, and Swinford, County Mayo; see Reports of resident magistrates on the Sunday closing act, Jan.-Mar. 1883 (S.P.O.. R.P. 1885/20644).

Sunday had decreased some 60% in rural areas since 1878 and some 33% in the five exempted cities, where trading had been reduced by two hours. In drawing attention to these figures during the second reading debate on 15 March, Carlingford said that the Irish government was satisfied that the act had the support of the Irish people, including that of the working class. As for the exempted cities, Carlingford considered that their exemption had been 'admitted for the sake of peace, and as a matter of precaution and prudence, and to secure the passing of the bill'. However, the recent canvas by the Sunday closing movement had convinced the government that they too now desired Sunday closing.¹ With only halfhearted opposition from the earl of Milltown, representing a great Irish family of brewers, the earl of Limerick and the marquess of Lansdowne, the bill proceeded swiftly through its stages and was sent to the commons on 19 March.

The measure received strong support from both Lord Spencer and Trevelyan. When Callan on 19 March pointed out in parliament that cases of drunkenness heard before the spring assizes that year were much more numerous than in the previous year and used this to question the government's claims that the Sunday closing act had reduced drunkenness, Trevelyan sent a circular to town and county inspectors demanding information as soon as possible. Twenty-four out of the thirty-five who replied agreed that drunkenness cases had increased, but many ascribed this to the fact that in 1882 the R.I.C. was too preoccupied with the land struggle

¹ Hansard 3, cclxxvii, 520-22.

to concern itself with arresting drunks.¹ On 27 April Trevelyan saw a delegation in London consisting of representatives of the I.A.P.I. and the I.T.L., plus thirty M.P.s. Trevelyan described the bill as the 'first of their social bills' affecting Ireland and promised that the 'Irish government would not be satisfied without either passing this bill or being defeated over it'. These remarks 'completely reassured' the delegation.² On the very day that Trevelyan said this, another event occurred which could only further reassure the temperance movement as to the government's attitude. A resolution in favour of local option was again carried by a substantial majority, with Gladstone for the first time voting for the measure.³ Yet, these events were all to prove false omens.

On 11 June, in response to a question from Richardson, Gladstone said that the government did want the Irish Sunday closing bill passed, but he added the significant rider that the bill would have to compete with many others for the limited amount of time available.⁴ Then on 9 July, in a speech dealing with the business of the house, Gladstone announced that eight bills would have to be dropped due to lack of time. Expressing his regret, he named the Irish Sunday closing bill as one of them.⁵ King Harman, Richardson, Corry and Sir Wilfrid Lawson immediately protested, Richardson in especially bitter terms.

¹ Reports of R.I.C. inspectors on drunkenness, Mar., Apr., 1883 (S.P.O., R.P. 1885/20644).

² Fifth report of the I.A.P.I. for 1882-3, pp 10-12.

³ Hansard 3, cclxxviii, 1280-1379.

⁴ Ibid., cclxxx, 228.

⁵ Ibid., cclxxxii, 810.

Why [he said] the government had placed the supporters of this measure in the position of the historical donkeys which were coaxed over their journey by carrots being judiciously held to their noses... The conduct of the government was a direct breach of faith with the supporters of the bill.¹

Richardson was careful to clear Trevelyan of any responsibility for the government's action. As early as 27 June Trevelyan had written to Richardson in apologetic terms regarding the failure to advance the bill. An 'unfortunate affair' he termed it and he urged Richardson not 'to apportion the responsibility'.² But in his speech on 9 July Richardson ignored this request and accused the government of giving way to pressure from the bill's opponents. Three days later Spencer was confronted with a large and angry delegation, including representatives of the Irish temperance movement and twenty-six M.P.s. He denied the charge that the government had, as he put it, 'knocked under to a clamorous minority' and claimed that Trevelyan's pledge in April was given 'subject to the time of parliament, over which he of course had not entire control'. It was felt, he explained, that the bill 'would take more time that could be given to it at the period of the session'.³ Indirectly, however, this was an admission that opposition to the bill was strong and that getting it through would be a time-consuming process. Privately Spencer wrote to Richardson on 15 July expressing his 'deep disappointment at what had occurred' and assuring Richardson that pressure of business was the only reason for the government's decision.⁴

¹ Hansard 3, cclxxxi, 826.

² Trevelyan to Richardson, 27 June 1883 (P.R.O.N.I., Richardson papers, D1006/3/1/17).

³ Fifth report of the I.A.P.I. for 1882-3, p. 14.

⁴ Spencer to Richardson, 15 July 1883 (P.R.O.N.I., Richardson papers, D1006/3/1/19).

There seems little doubt that the Irish government genuinely desired the extension of the Sunday closing act and that Spencer and Trevelyan were both disappointed by the events of 1883. They were being inundated with petitions and resolutions in favour of the measure, while police and magistrates on the whole supported extension, believing that the closing of public houses contributed to the peace of the country during especially troubled times.¹ Consumption of liquor in Ireland had declined during the operation of the act and though it is doubtful that the act caused this, economic and political conditions being more likely, the temperance movement was certainly convinced that it had. Also, although arrests for drunkenness had increased in 1882 and 1883, they were still significantly lower than they had been immediately before the passing of the act.² The Irish government had reason therefore to look upon Sunday closing as a 'peace preservation' measure.

Despite Spencer's explanation, the temperance movement was disappointed that the government did not give greater importance to anti-drink legislation. This disappointment deepened in 1884. Another government-sponsored Irish Sunday closing bill was announced in the queen's speech and on 15 February it was introduced by Trevelyan, now chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster. But due to the precedence given to the Representation of the People Bill and the long debates over the government's Egyptian policy, no progress was made

¹ See, for example, the report of Captain Stokes, R.M., Blarney, County Cork, 1 Feb. 1883 (S.P.O., R.P. 1885/20644).

² Arrests in 1882 were 87,497 and in 1883 89,527, but in 1877 they had been 110,903; see T.W. Russell, A social experiment; or, five years before and after Sunday closing in Ireland (Dublin, 1884), p. 4 and I.A.P.I., Sunday closing in Ireland: what are the facts? (Dublin, 1884), pp 4-5.

till 20 June. On that day a long debate occurred, in which Gladstone supported the bill, saying that he had been convinced twelve or fourteen years before that the Irish people wanted Sunday closing. But the bill's opponents, in particular M.J. Kenny, the home rule member for Ennis, and C.N. Warton, the conservative member for Bridport, managed to talk out the time allotted for debate.¹ When the debate was resumed on 27 June, Edmund Leamy, the home rule member for Waterford city, and Dr Lyons, the liberal member for Dublin city, performed a similar task.² The I.A.P.I. did not hesitate to blame the government for the bill's fate. Both 20 and 27 June were days on which, under standing orders, all debate had to cease at 6.50 p.m. In putting the Sunday closing bill down for debate on these particular days, the government was making the task of the bill's opponents comparatively easy.³ Nor could the association have been very pleased with the remark by L.H. Courtney, representing the government, on 26 June. Agreeing with Tim Healy and W.A. Redmond that there were much more important Irish issues to consider than Sunday closing, he commented: 'We want to get rid of this bill - it is an obstacle that blocks the way'.⁴ It was obvious, from the government's actions, that 'getting rid' of the bill meant allowing it to be defeated, rather than getting it passed.

¹ Hansard 3, cclxxxix, 1039-41.

² Ibid., 1583-1604.

³ Sixth report of the I.A.P.I. for 1884-5, pp 5-6.

⁴ Hansard 3, cclxxxix, 1513-14.

Temperance and the home rule party

The debate on 20 June, though futile, was an interesting one, mainly in that it illustrated divisions within the home rule party on the subject of temperance. Tim Healy began by condemning the government for consulting temperance lobbyists, like T.W. Russell, while ignoring the views of the Irish parliamentary party on the issue. He urged the government to bring forward 'non-contentious' measures, like the land purchase scheme, the education bill and the endowed schools bill.¹ That temperance legislation was indeed a contentious issue within home rule ranks was amply demonstrated in the debate which followed Healy's remarks. Four leading home rulers were among those who rose to speak: two, John Redmond and J.G. Biggar, were in favour of Sunday closing, while the other two, Timothy Harrington and William O'Brien, were opposed. Even Healy's own brother, Maurice, differed from him in generally supporting temperance legislation.

William O'Brien opposed the extension of the Sunday closing act on the grounds that

the one great effect of it would be to divide the publicans into two classes - policemen's friends and policemen's enemies - and would result in this, that all the attention of the police would be devoted to watching the nationalist publican, while those publicans who in any way had commended themselves to the favour of the police would be allowed by them to carry on any amount of Sunday trading without interference.²

Healy claimed that nationalist publicans who displayed green flags on national festivals or who closed their businesses to protest against Parnell's arrest in 1881, found that

¹ Hansard 3, cclxxxix, 1021-2.

² Ibid., 1031.

renewal of their licences was opposed by the police.¹ Doubtless there is truth in this. Many publicans were supporters of the Land League and they were vastly over-represented among those arrested under the Protection of Person and Property Act of 1881. Of 845 arrested, 68 or 8.1% were innkeepers or publicans, though, according to the 1881 census, this group only composed 0.4% of the labour force. Public houses were commonly used for Land League meetings and for the posting of league placards. Thus over 40% of publicans arrested were accused of holding illegal meetings or displaying threatening notices.² The publicans had become important leaders of the national movement at the local level.³ In such circumstances many home rulers felt obliged to defend their interests in parliament against the temperance movement, which was hardly noted for its nationalist sympathies.

To many home rule nationalists, temperance advocates were, to quote O'Brien again, a 'sect of puritans, who wished to impose their own opinions forcibly on the Irish people, and who really desired to treat the Irish people as though they were dipsomaniacs, and needed to be put under restraint'.⁴ They aimed to restrict legitimate recreation, which the vast majority of Irishmen indulged in moderately. Moreover their

¹ Hansard 3, cclxxxix, 1021.

² Sam Clark, 'The social composition of the Land League' in Irish Historical Studies, xvii, no. 68 (Sept. 1971), pp 455, 467.

³ For a discussion of the role of the publicans during the land war, see Samuel Clark, 'The political mobilization of Irish farmers' in Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 12 no. 4: pt 2 (1975), pp 483-99. For an interesting account of their significance in County Clare at a rather later date, see David Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish life, 1913-21: provincial experience of war and revolution (Dublin, 1977), pp 88, 106, 145.

⁴ Hansard 3, cclxxxix, 1032.

proposed restrictions would fall most heavily upon the working classes, who did not have access to private cellars and clubs. O'Brien argued that the

lives of the Irish people were sufficiently joyless already; and he thought the legislators of that house would be far better employed in doing something which would substantially improve the condition of the Irish people than by assisting in debarring them of one of the few enjoyments they had.

O'Brien rejected the temperance argument that drunkenness created poverty and said he believed instead misery and poverty drove people into the public house. He also repeated the publicans' view that temperance legislation would seriously damage one of the very few successful industries in Ireland.¹

That the 1878 act had been administered discriminately against nationalist publicans and that positive action should be taken to improve socio-economic conditions in Ireland, rather than negative measures like Sunday closing, were the two main arguments used by home rule M.P.s against the bill. Some also thought that issues like temperance distracted and divided the party which should have been devoting its attention solely to gaining home rule. Perhaps the clearest expression of this view came from T.P. O'Connor who told the annual convention of the Irish National League in September 1890 that nationalism must take precedence over teetotalism and that an Irish nationalist teetotaller must vote for Gladstonian candidates at all elections. The temperance policy of voting for candidates who pledged themselves to support temperance legislation, irrespective of their party affiliations, was of course quite contrary to home rule policy. O'Connor went on:

¹ Hansard 3, cclxxxix, 1032.

The settlement of the Irish question is the first and most necessary preliminary to a real advance of teetotal or labour principles ... the great cause of intemperance in Ireland, as the great and fundamental cause of every other evil in Ireland, is the absence of self-government among the Irish people, and until we have given to the Irish nation the dignity and self-respect of a self-governed people we shall not lay the real foundations of temperance principles.¹

But there were strong feelings on both sides in the party. Home rulers, like J.A. Blake, Maurice Healy, John Redmond, Arthur O'Connor, J.G. Biggar and, after the 1885 and 1886 elections, Jeremiah Jordan of Clare, Pierce Mahony of Meath and Alexander Blaine of Armagh, all sponsored Irish temperance bills in the 1880s. Thus, Parnell, who in the 1870s had at times supported and voted for the Sunday closing bill, attempted in the 1880s to tread a more neutral path.

In 1886, for instance, he informed the mover of a bill dealing with the sale of liquor to children, that a majority of his colleagues wanted Ireland excluded from the scope of the measure, because they were not able to reach agreement as a party whether to support it or not. And he went on to inform the house that he 'had always attempted to keep clear of these temperance questions' and 'had never voted on any of them', because he believed that the 'question of temperance and of the control of the liquor trade is one which, of all others, could most suitably and properly be left to an Irish legislature to deal with'.² This claim, that he had never voted on temperance questions, was of course not true.³ But the argument, that the drink question should be left to an Irish legislature, was common currency

¹ F.J., 29 Sept. 1890.

² Hansard 3, ccciv, 694.

³ See above, p. 385.

in the home rule party, particularly during the latter part of the 1880s when it was given added impetus by the prospect of the establishment of local government authorities in Ireland in the foreseeable future. Parnell supported plans to give councils licensing powers and argued strongly in 1886 for control of excise to be included among the powers of the proposed home rule parliament.¹ It was left to Maurice Healy however, to point out the glaring inconsistency in arguing that the drink question be left to Irish local or national governing bodies, while demanding that the parliament at Westminster legislate on 'all kinds of topics, social and political, covering the whole field of social life'.² But Healy, although he personally supported temperance legislation, said that he could see one strong reason for deferring it. This was that the

question of closing public houses was of so angering and embittering a nature that it was inexpedient to raise it at the present time because of the effect it would have on the party... destroying amongst them the union which then existed.³

He told the house that he understood that this was Parnell's own view. Certainly it is consistent with Parnell's statement in 1886, when in effect he admitted that his party was so divided over the question of licensing legislation that he preferred to have Ireland excluded from the proposed act and so avoid a damaging intra-party confrontation.

In 1888, in a debate on early Saturday closing for Ireland, Parnell made his most extended statement to date on the subject of temperance legislation. He said that he had watched, with the 'utmost interest', the parliamentary struggle

¹ I.T.L.J., xxv, no. 4 (Apr. 1888), p. 78; Lyons, Parnell, pp 343-4.

² Hansard 3,cccxxv, 1772.

³ Ibid., 1773.

over Irish Sunday closing for ten or twelve years. Originally he had supported the measure, but, since 1878, he had come to the conclusion that it was not likely to serve the true interests of temperance, that in fact 'it was attended with greater evils than those which it sought to cure'.

Parnell proclaimed himself a supporter of temperance.

I am [he said], with perhaps a single exception, the largest employer of labour among the Irish members of all parties, and it has been brought constantly to my notice that the question of intemperance is undoubtedly a very great impediment to the progress of the industries of Ireland, and to the success of manufacturing and other operations, as well as to the welfare and well-being of the people.¹

But, at the same time, he was 'firmly convinced' that measures proceeding from Westminster for the promotion of temperance would 'not have any chance of fair play in Ireland'. The 'backs of the people would be put up against them in advance', while there would be 'defects in administration', which would increase public hostility and 'largely nullify the good intention of the legislature in passing such measures'. Parnell felt the Irish would regard such legislation, coming from the British parliament, as coercive and particularly so if it was administered in a discriminatory fashion, as the Sunday closing act had been. He therefore advised delay, 'postponement, but not abandonment', and looked to the proposed local government bill, supporting moves to vest licensing powers in the new local authorities.

I believe [he concluded] that Irishmen acting at home, discussing this question amongst themselves, free from your interference, will decide this question much more advantageously and much more suitably and justly than you can ever hope to decide it here, and their decision will be attended with much better and happier results for the people.²

¹ Hansard 3, cccxxv, 1786.

² Ibid., 1787.

While declaring himself in favour of temperance, Parnell, as a nationalist, was careful to introduce a disclaimer as to the seriousness of the drink problem in Ireland. He could not admit, he said, for a 'single moment' that the Irish were a less temperate people than the English or the Scots and, though remarking upon the odiousness of comparisons, he went on to observe that 'certainly the balance is not against us, and may be in our favour'.¹ Like other home rule nationalists, Parnell did not like to see liberal and conservative Irish M.P.s portraying the Irish people, before the British parliament, as peculiarly disposed towards drunkenness.

Basically it would seem that Parnell was not greatly interested in the issue of temperance for its own sake, beyond a general desire to prevent drunkenness from seriously damaging the economic life of the country. But some members of his party were passionately committed, both for and against. He also doubtless had to consider the influence of the drink trade. Publicans were important supporters of his party, as had been demonstrated by the numbers arrested during the land war. In rural areas they acted as local leaders, while in the cities they formed a powerful element in many corporations.² Moreover, they had contributed generously to the Parnell tribute.³ Like the catholic church, the drink industry was an important element

¹ Hansard 3, cccxxv, 1786.

² Report from the select committee on Sunday closing acts (Ireland), p. 418, H.C. 1888 (255), xix, 418.

³ Alan O'Day, The English face of Irish nationalism: Parnellite involvement in British politics, 1880-86 (Toronto and Dublin, 1977), pp 143-4.

in Irish political and social life, an element that Parnell could not afford to alienate. Home rule support for temperance legislation would certainly have alienated the publicans, just as liberal support for such measures had driven them in the early 1870s into the arms of the conservative party.

Parnell's attitude to temperance is further illustrated by a remark he made in 1888 to Elizabeth Mathew, a descendant of Fr Mathew's, who was later to marry John Dillon. In her diary for 11 May of that year she recorded Parnell as having wished that there would be another apostle of temperance, since a crusade against whiskey 'would put the government in a difficulty, besides being good for the people, by diminishing an enormous source of revenue'.¹ This remark clearly reflects Parnell's pragmatic approach to the issue. Temperance was a matter to be exploited or ignored, depending on the political advantages to be gained, and throughout the 1880s the balance was generally in favour of ignoring it.

Temperance in decline from 1885

In the 1880s and 1890s the campaign for Irish temperance legislation, all in all, faced a rather bleak outlook. Its strongest parliamentary support came from Ulster conservatives and liberal unionists, but Salisbury's government showed itself consistently unsympathetic to the demand for legislation. On the other hand, the liberals, though increasingly attached to the temperance movement in England, found their Irish home rule allies divided on the issue, though with the most influential members of the party opposed to legislation emanating from Westminster. This frustration, however, was

¹ Quoted in Lyons, Parnell, pp 385-6.

was not alone felt by the Irish temperance movement. The liberals' failure to introduce major temperance legislation caused severe discontent within the party and among English temperance advocates.¹ Many felt that Gladstone's obsession with justice for Ireland was preventing social reform in England, which should have been the party's main preoccupation. Members of his governments, notably John Morley and Sir William Harcourt, urged upon him, repeatedly though unsuccessfully, the wisdom of substituting temperance reform for home rule as the party's main political banner. But Gladstone was never able to summon up much enthusiasm for the temperance cause, while some feared that it might prove even more divisive within the party than home rule.²

Disillusionment with the liberals was evident in the Irish temperance movement's response to the 1885 and 1886 general elections. On 29 May 1885 the executive committee of the I.T.L. passed a resolution approving the proposed increases in taxes on spirits and beer, which were contained in the budget. But, at the same time, the league noted that the government had not been prompted in its action by considerations of temperance.³ The government was defeated on this point on 9 June, when some 41 home rule M.P.s voted with the conservatives and many liberals abstained. Of the 15 Irish liberals, 7 voted for the government and 1, William

¹ See for example Sir Wilfrid Lawson's speech in Dublin reported in F.J., 14 Oct. 1890.

² For discussions of attitudes to temperance in the liberal party in the 1880s and 1890s, see Barker, Gladstone and radicalism, pp 208-11 and Hamer, Liberal politics in the age of Gladstone and Rosebery, pp 131-2, 170-71, 204-7.

³ I.T.L. executive committee minute book, 29 May 1885.

Findlater of County Monaghan, against, while the rest abstained. Among the abstainers was J.N. Richardson, who had been so disappointed with the government's failure to pass the Irish Sunday closing bill in 1883. In the debate preceding the division W.H. O'Sullivan, or 'Whiskey' O'Sullivan, as he was called for his devotion to the drink cause, referred to the frequent attempts made during the previous thirty years by the liberal party to destroy the Irish drink trade, which, with linen manufacturing, was Ireland's most vital industry.¹ Even Arthur O'Connor, one of the most consistent supporters of temperance legislation among the home rulers, attacked the proposed increases on economic grounds. He claimed that they would not only damage Irish industry and increase foreign imports, but that they would also adversely affect Irish agriculture, because Irish farmers produced substantial amounts of grain for distilling.² However, the defeat of the government was not essentially due to its policies with regard to the drink industry, nor was the issue a prominent one in the campaigns of 1885 and 1886.

The I.T.L. was considerably less active in 1885 than it had been in 1880. The home rule issue predominated and moreover the league was experiencing financial problems, which curtailed its activities.³ However, a manifesto was again issued and some 5,000 posters and 300,000 handbills were circulated.⁴ Candidates were canvassed and asked two questions:

¹ Hansard 3, ccxcviii, 1450-51.

² Ibid., 1470-78.

³ I.T.L. executive committee minute book, 11 Dec. 1885.

⁴ Ibid., 24 July 1885; I.T.L.J., xxii, no. 8 (Aug. 1885), p. 182.

1 Will you, if elected to parliament, vote for, and use all reasonable efforts to obtain, a measure giving rate-payers a direct veto over the issue and renewal of licences for the common sale of intoxicating liquors in their respective districts?

2 Will you, if elected to parliament, vote for, and use all reasonable efforts to obtain, an immediate extension of the provisions of the Irish Sunday closing act to the whole of Ireland? ¹

Throughout the campaign the Journal condemned the liberal government. In August for instance it wrote:

The subject of local option [has] been kept dangling before the temperance party for the last five years, and all they have got from a parliament which they did so much to elect has been empty promises, hopes deferred, hollow excuses, vain regrets, and downright trifling.²

This only begged the question of what the temperance movement could do to ensure that the new parliament would take the issue more seriously. At an executive committee meeting on 14 August it was suggested that the league should find a constituency and provide its own candidate to stand on a temperance platform.³ This suggestion was not proceeded with, but it reflects the temperance movement's frustration with the existing parties. Mainly the Journal counselled a 'more determined spirit' on the part of temperance advocates, though it failed to spell out how this determination could be translated into political advantage.⁴

In Dublin the I.A.P.I. responded to temperance's failures at the national level by turning its attention to municipal politics and the courts. While disavowing 'any desire to interfere in political matters as such', the association said

¹ I.T.L. executive committee minute book, 27 Nov. 1885.

² I.T.L.J., xxii, no. 8 (Aug. 1885), p. 180.

³ I.T.L. executive committee minute book, 14 Aug. 1885.

⁴ I.T.L.J., xxii, no. 2 (Feb. 1885), p. 23.

that it 'felt that if the large number of persons engaged in the liquor trade and cognate interests then seeking admission to the corporation were successful, the result would not be creditable or beneficial to the city'. Thus, in 1883, T.W. Russell, the association's secretary, stood in the Royal Exchange ward as a temperance candidate against Edward O'Leary, a publican. But Russell was defeated by 14 votes and the association report regretted that the 'result of the election, as a whole, was to largely increase the already powerful influence of the drink trade in the corporation'.¹ However, the campaign experience was doubtless of use to Russell, who stood unsuccessfully as a liberal in Preston in 1885 and then beat William O'Brien in South Tyrone in 1886 standing as a liberal unionist. For Russell this was the beginning of a political career which would last for thirty years and would take him away from the temperance movement.

If the association's venture into local politics had failed, its legal activities were to be even more disastrous. In 1885 it was involved in an extremely expensive legal action aimed at upsetting the decision in the case of the recorder of Dublin v Clitheroe. This decision made in 1878 allowed a licence, once granted, to be transferred in perpetuity and only suppressed due to misconduct on the part of the licensee.² Not only did the association lose the case but its legal expenses amounted to £190 and it finished the year £100 in the red.³ This doubtless is why it informed its members, with regard to the election, that it had 'not deemed it necessary to do more

¹ Sixth report of the I.A.P.I. for 1883-4, p. 12.

² See above, p. 41.

³ Seventh report of the I.A.P.I. for 1884-5, pp 6-8.

than keep a watchful attitude upon the progress of political affairs'.¹ But the I.A.P.I. was as outspoken as the I.T.L. in its condemnation of the liberal government. It too felt that the liberals had largely been elected by temperance votes and that therefore the temperance movement had 'just reason to feel aggrieved'. If the members of the government 'had been as much in earnest when in power as they were when in opposition in the year 1877 and '78' said the association, then Sunday closing in Ireland 'would have been long since accomplished'.² Like the league, the association looked to individual enthusiasts, rather than parties, to further the cause. It noted approvingly that Michael Davitt 'one of the most representative public men in Ireland', 'is in thorough sympathy with our aims and objects'. What was really needed in the next parliament, it said, was the 'presence of a few uncompromising temperance reformers who will insist that the question shall no longer be pushed aside'.³

The election in Ireland, however, failed to produce even these few. The Irish liberals, who had generally supported temperance legislation, were totally wiped out, while the conservatives were reduced to 18: 16 in Ulster and 2 for Dublin University. Friends of temperance, like the liberals T.A. Dickson, Thomas Lea, J.S. Brown and M.R. Dalway,⁴ and the conservatives Sir J.P. Corry, I.T. Hamilton and Sir John Leslie, were all defeated. Nationalists elected in Ulster included well-known opponents of temperance legislation,

¹ Seventh report of the I.A.P.I. for 1884-5, p. 16.

² Ibid., p. 13.

³ Ibid., p. 16.

⁴ Dalway, who had previously held Carrickfergus from 1868 to 1880 as a conservative, stood as a liberal in 1885.

like T.M. Healy and M.J. Kenny. Perhaps the only consolation for the temperance movement was the defeat of Philip Callan in County Louth. W.H. O'Sullivan had not stood, but in Peter McDonald, the new member for Sligo north, the drink industry was to find another important champion at Westminster.¹

Neither the I.A.P.I. nor the I.T.L. appears to have been very active in the 1886 election. The minute book of the I.T.L. does not even mention it. In August the Journal described the election as 'singularly disappointing'.

The issue, [it said] the one formal issue, before the country was home rule or no home rule, and upon this issue the contest was nearly everywhere carried on. In many constituencies something like civil war went on, and the temperance organisations hardly found it possible to take any very prominent part in the proceedings.²

C.E. Lewis was unseated on petition in Londonderry, but Corry was elected in mid Armagh and T.W. Russell in south Tyrone. The league said that it looked to Russell and William Johnston in Belfast, for 'a decided temperance policy'.³ Johnston, earlier in the year, had introduced a local option bill for Ulster. The bill made no progress, but it reflected the growing desperation of the I.T.L. The chances of winning local option for England or the south of Ireland seemed slight in the face of tory and nationalist opposition and liberal equivocation. Thus, the league was forced to look to its own stronghold, hoping that the small band of Ulster conservatives could persuade the government to grant local option to Ulster.⁴ Johnston's bill, however, was blocked by

¹ For the full election results see Walker, Parliamentary election results in Ireland, pp 130-36.

² I.T.L.J., xxiii, no. 8 (Aug. 1886), p. 169.

³ Ibid.

⁴ I.T.L.J., xxiii, no. 3 (Mar. 1886), p. 49.

southern nationalists, who saw it merely as the thin end of the wedge.

The conservative government, elected in 1886, proved predictably hostile to temperance legislation. Hicks Beach as chief secretary refused even to receive an I.A.P.I. delegation in November, though he subsequently informed the association by letter that the government had no intention of introducing temperance legislation in the coming session.¹ But Ireland's two liberal unionist M.P.s, T.W. Russell and Sir Thomas Lea of south County Londonderry, introduced bills, on behalf of the I.A.P.I., to extend Sunday closing and also to curtail Saturday trading hours. No progress was made in 1887, but in 1888 the government acquiesced in the second readings of both bills on the understanding that they be submitted to a select committee. The I.A.P.I. was not very happy about the committee as the suggestion had originated with Thomas Sexton, home rule M.P. for Belfast west, one of the bills' opponents.² The committee when selected consisted of fourteen members, plus, as chairman, D.H. Madden, the Irish solicitor-general. Only seven of the members were Irish M.P.s and only four home rulers. In fact the majority were pro-temperance. John O'Connor, home rule M.P. for south Tipperary, and Peter McDonald of Sligo, who were both on the committee, opposed the addition of Russell, whom they considered 'biased' and of William Johnston, regarded by O'Connor as a 'fanatic'.³ When this failed, they tried to have Sexton and Harrington added as well, but were

¹ Ninth report of the I.A.P.I. for 1886-7, pp 5-7.

² Hansard 3, cccxxi, 173-5.

³ Ibid., cccxxiii, 1702-9.

successfully opposed by Biggar, who said that the publicans were exerting excessive pressure to get their nominees onto the committee.¹ Madden was also relatively sympathetic to the bills and in his draft report recommended that the Sunday closing act be made perpetual, that the bona fide traveller limit be extended to six miles and that Saturday closing be set at 9 p.m. He, however, rejected total Sunday closing for the five exempted cities, recommending that in them trading hours be reduced to between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.² This seemed a reasonable compromise. It would have ended the need to continue the Sunday closing act from year to year, made abuse of the act by pseudo-travellers less easy and struck a blow at the real problem of Saturday night drinking. At the same time, the powerful urban drink trade would have been permitted to continue operating on Sundays, though during reduced hours. On the whole, Madden's report seemed to offer more to the temperance movement than to the drink trade. But what happened was largely a repeat of what had occurred with regard to the 1877 select committee. The pro-temperance majority on the committee accepted the chairman's report, but substituted total Sunday closing for shorter hours in the five cities.³ Again, as in 1877, by refusing to compromise, the temperance movement only succeeded in alienating the government, which refused to take up the bill produced by the select committee. Thus it made no progress. In 1890, in commenting on the failure of another Sunday closing bill, the I.T.L.J. said, 'so the lifeless thing stands, a monument to the apathy

¹ Hansard 3, cccxxiv, 911-15.

² Report from the select committee on Sunday closing acts (Ireland), 1888, pp xii-xiii.

³ Ibid., pp xv-xxiii.

of some, the hostility of others, and the impotence of others still'.¹ Perhaps it should have added, and to the refusal of yet others to compromise.

At the same time opinions within the home rule party were hardening against temperance legislation. Doubtless the uncompromising stance of the temperance movement contributed to this development, though it was to be strengthened by the split in 1890-91. This hardening can be seen in the votes cast by home rulers in divisions on temperance legislation. In 1888, for instance, when the second reading of Russell's early Saturday closing bill was passed by 178 votes to 102, the Irish M.P.s voted against by 23 to 18. All the 23 opposed to the bill were home rulers.² In 1890 a local option bill for Ireland, again sponsored by Russell, was defeated by 131 votes to 124. The Irish voted in favour, but the turnout was very poor, the vote being 16 to 9. But 8 of the 9 against the bill were home rulers.³

Parnell, who had voted for temperance legislation in the 1870s and tried in the 1880s not to commit himself to either side, was by 1891 definitely opposed. In a speech opposing the second reading of the Intoxicating Liquors (Ireland) Bill, which combined both the Sunday and Saturday closing bills, he asserted that Sunday closing had 'not in the slightest degree' diminished intemperance or the consumption of alcohol in Ireland, and that in fact it had increased drunkenness. But he failed to provide any evidence to support these contentions. Instead, he went on to claim that neither the people of Ireland

¹ I.T.L.J., xxvii, no. 8 (Aug. 1890), p. 178.

² Hansard 3,cccxxv, 1794-5.

³ I.T.L.J., xxvii, no. 5 (May 1890), pp 104-5.

nor their representatives had sought this measure. Rather was it the result of liberal hypocrisy.

No one [he said] would dare to propose such a measure as this for any English city, and surely English liberals and radicals, who have pledged themselves to the principle of home rule, and who denounce all English legislation for Ireland on the ground that it comes in a foreign garb, might have waited for some cases to be set up of exceptional intemperance before they support this coercion bill, for it is one... No attempt has ever been made to show in the case of these Irish towns that there is any exceptional drunkenness or crime arising out of intemperance.¹

The bill would come to Ireland, he said, 'as a patronising attempt on the part of the majority of English members in the house of commons to make the Irish people sober'. But Irishmen declined to 'believe in our excessive drunkenness in comparison with our kind English friends'.² Again, as he had done in 1888, though in even stronger terms, Parnell argued that the issue of licensing should be left to an Irish parliament and he spurned English 'meddlesome interference and bungling attempts to legislate in reference to the wants of people whom they cannot possibly understand'.³ The second reading was carried by 250 votes to 96, with the Irish voting 27 to 21 in favour. The 2 liberal unionists and 12 conservatives voted for the bill, as did 13 anti-Parnellite nationalists. Those against were all home rulers, 15 being anti-Parnellites and 6 Parnellites.⁴ The Parnellites were especially hostile to the bill and of the ten Irish M.P.s who spoke against it in the debate, half were Parnellites.⁵ It is

¹ Hansard 3, ccclii, 632.

² Ibid., 634.

³ Ibid., 635.

⁴ I.T.L.J., xxviii, no. 5 (May 1891), pp 72-3.

⁵ Hansard 3, ccclii, 585-640.

obvious from Parnell's speech that his hostility to the measure reflected his personal anger at the liberals for their part in the home rule split. The liberals were identified with temperance and so it provided a handy stick with which to beat them. But as well, he was attempting, as the I.T.L.J. put it, to reassure 'the publicans that he was their friend'.¹ In the scramble to win support in Ireland in 1891 both wings of the party sought to woo the publicans. This was particularly true of the Parnellites. One temperance advocate later remarked that they had 'bodily gone over to the licensed vintners. Money is scarce, and there is no body in Ireland gets the money so easily, and of course to get votes they are prepared to subscribe to party funds.'² Parnell received most support from cities like Dublin, Waterford, Kilkenny and Cork, which had important drink industries. The bishop of Cork thought that his main supporters in the city were either fenians or publicans.³ In such circumstances opposition to the introduction of Sunday closing in these cities was calculated to increase Parnell's popularity among the drink trade.

For the temperance movement only the return of a liberal government seemed to hold out any hope of success in parliament. Although the liberals had failed conspicuously

¹ I.T.L.J., xxviii, no. 5 (May 1891), p. 72.

² See the evidence of William Wilkinson, secretary of the I.T.L., in Royal commission on liquor licensing laws, p. 297 [C-8980], H.C. 1898, xxxviii, 831.

³ Quoted in Lyons, Parnell, p. 576. This was a change from 1880 when Parnell, in campaigning against N.D. Murphy, the publicans' champion, for the Cork seats, was actively opposed by the city's drink trade; see Report from the select committee on Sunday closing acts (Ireland), 1888, p. 423 and Padraig O Maidin's article on the election in Cork Examiner, 5 Apr. 1972.

in 1880-85 to pass temperance legislation, since being in opposition, they had moved even closer to the English temperance movement. In 1891, for instance, they had incorporated local option into their Newcastle programme.¹ In 1893 the new liberal government did indeed introduce an Irish Sunday closing bill. As in 1883, the bill was first introduced into the house of lords. It was moved by Lord O'Neill and strongly supported by Spencer, who was then first lord of the admiralty.² But the opposition to the bill in the lords proved much stronger than it had been ten years before. Lords Rockwood and Wemyss argued that there was no demand in the five exempted cities for Sunday closing and moved that the hours of trading instead be reduced to between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. O'Neill in reply moved that total Sunday closing be at least applied to Belfast, where he argued there was a real demand for it. But his amendment was defeated and Rockwood's accepted.³ The earl of Meath, supported by Archbishop Plunket of Dublin, then sought to have the boundary of Dublin defined as the municipal boundary rather than the metropolitan police district boundary. This would have brought the six townships of Rathmines, Pembroke, Blackrock, Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire), Dalkey and Killiney under total Sunday closing. Spencer, for the government, supported this proposal, saying that majorities in the townships were in favour of Sunday closing. The amendment was accepted and on 30 June the amended bill was passed and sent to the commons.⁴

¹ Hamer, The politics of electoral pressure, p. 239; Barker, Gladstone and radicalism, pp 258-9.

² Hansard 4, xii, 177-89; Morley, the chief secretary, was also strongly in favour, see The Times, 16 Dec. 1892.

³ Hansard 4, xiii, 741-52.

⁴ Ibid., 303-9, 536.

* but he was not in H. of L. as Archbishop of Dublin

The bill of course was now no longer acceptable to the temperance movement,¹ and moreover the commons was totally absorbed in debating the Government of Ireland Bill, Gladstone's second home rule bill. The Sunday closing bill therefore made no further progress. The bill was unsuccessful in the ballot in 1894 and did not reach a second reading, while in 1895, although the second reading was passed by 170 to 71, the dissolution of parliament prevented further progress.² So the slim hope that a liberal government would see to the passing of further Irish temperance legislation was proved false again. And again Gladstone's preoccupation with home rule was the major cause. The anger with which the Irish temperance movement viewed the blocking of temperance legislation by home rule was perhaps most clearly expressed by the I.T.L.J. in May 1891 after Parnell had vigorously opposed the second reading of the Sunday and Saturday closing bill. The Irish people, it said

are well nigh sick of the 'Irish question'... and disgusted with the 'Irish leaders'; and they are resolving, whatever either Mr Gladstone or Lord Salisbury may say, that Ireland shall no longer be allowed to 'block the way' to urgently-needed reform or be made the pretext for the indefinite postponement of social legislation. It is one of the most disgraceful scandals of the time (and that is saying much!) that the people have been compelled to groan and sweat under greedy taskmasters, to starve while 'making many rich', to pine and die in helpless sight of luxury, to drink and be damned for national revenue, and to have to wait for relief from all their cruel wrongs until it suit the convenience and pleasures of a man like C.S. Parnell! It is a dishonour to the country of Cromwell that eighty-six men, or three times that number, should be able to reduce its legislature to ignominious impotence.³

¹ Fifteenth report of the I.A.P.I. for 1892-3, pp 3-5.

² Seventeenth report of the I.A.P.I. for 1894-5, pp 3-5.

³ I.T.L.J., xxviii, no. 5 (May 1891), p. 72.

The unionist sympathies of the temperance movement,¹ plus the protestant disgust with Parnell over the O'Shea divorce revelations, are also evident in this extract.

In the latter part of the 1890s the Irish temperance movement continued to sponsor bills to make Sunday closing permanent, to extend it to the five exempted cities, to curtail the hours of Saturday trading, to establish local option and to place a limit on the numbers of licences issued. But the conservative government was not very sympathetic to such measures, while the two wings of the Irish party continued to vie with each other for the support of the publicans. In these circumstances even John Redmond, who had sponsored the Sunday closing bill for ten years, found himself unable to vote for it.² Local option was never obtained for Ireland, but finally, in 1906 after twenty-eight years, the Sunday closing act was made permanent. But it was not extended to the five exempted cities. There hours were merely shortened on both Sunday and Saturday, as the conservative government had recommended in 1888, while the bona fide traveller limit was raised from three to five miles. The second reading of the bill was carried in May by 244 votes to 50. But the Irish vote was much closer, being 37 to 32 in favour. Of the 32 voting against, all were nationalists, and they included John Redmond.³ The main supporter of this compromise was,

¹ It is interesting to note that in 1884 the I.T.L. decided to stop taking the Freeman's Journal for the Lombard cafe, but to continue with conservative papers, like the Belfast News-Letter, the Irish Times and the Daily Telegraph. See I.T.L. executive committee minute book, 22 Aug. and 5 Sept. 1884.

² I.T.L.J., xxxiv, no. 6 (June 1897), p. 87.

³ Hansard 4, clvii, 1622-3; Irish Independent, 28 June 1906.

ironically, T.W. Russell and not only did he attract opposition from the home rule party, but from the Irish temperance movement as well. The I.A.P.I. endorsed the compromise, but the I.T.L. refused to do so. It was represented in parliament by T.H. Sloan, Johnston's successor in south Belfast, who fought to have the bona fide traveller limit set at seven rather than five miles.¹ In answer to these attacks, Russell observed, somewhat world-wearily perhaps, none who had spent twenty years in this house could fail to learn one lesson, namely, that he could not get everything that he liked. It was one of the finest places for smashing or destroying ideals to be found in the whole world.²

This comment could probably stand as an epitaph for the whole legislative campaign, from O'Reilly's first Sunday closing bill in 1867 up until the act making partial Sunday closing permanent nearly forty years later. With regard to the frustration of the I.T.L., which was a good deal stronger and more extreme than similar organisations in the south, it is perhaps interesting to note that in 1920 temperance advocates were among the first to support the idea of an Ulster parliament, hoping 'that their special interests might receive a friendlier hearing in a Belfast parliament than at Westminster'.³ As we have seen, they had very good grounds for expecting little from Westminster and, despite the fact that James Craig came from a well-known family of distillers,

¹ Twenty-eighth report of the I.A.P.I. for 1906, pp 4-7; for Sloan's relations with the temperance movement, see John Boyle, 'The Belfast Protestant Association and the Independent Orange Order, 1901-10' in Irish Historical Studies, xiii, no. 50 (Sept. 1962), pp 121-2, 150-51.

² Hansard 4, clxii, 594.

³ David Miller, Queen's rebels: Ulster loyalism in historical perspective (Dublin and New York, 1978), p. 124.

Stormont did prove more amenable to temperance lobbying.¹

The long struggle by the Irish temperance movement, which had commenced in the 1860s and continued beyond the turn of the century, for coercive legislation against the drink industry is essentially a story of disappointed hopes, smashed ideals and ultimate frustration. As already remarked, the hostility of important sections of the home rule party and of conservative governments generally, and the preoccupation of all parties with more pressing Irish issues, like the land question and home rule, left little room in the political arena for temperance. Nor did the Irish movement derive any great benefit from the championship of temperance by many English liberals. The liberals' involvement in other Irish issues and later their alliance with the Irish parliamentary party largely neutralised their sympathetic attitude. In these circumstances the unwillingness to compromise demonstrated by the Irish temperance movement, and particularly by the Ulster section of it, meant that most of the few opportunities that arose for getting legislation through were lost. The Sunday closing act of 1878 was the main exception to this. But the act was passed before Butt's conservative home rulers had been replaced by Parnell's more demanding militants and its passage was only ensured after the temperance movement in an uncharacteristic gesture, agreed to compromise with the government. The fact that the temperance campaign for legislation was strongest among Ulster protestants and unionists also had the effect of giving it an increasingly sectional character as time passed.

¹ The Northern Ireland parliament passed two major licensing acts in 1923 and 1927, which, among other things, extended Sunday closing to Belfast and abolished the bona fide traveller concept; see Wilson, Alcohol and the nation, pp 125-6.

Nationalist and catholic clergy were very suspicious of its motives, even though they may have personally sympathised with its aims. As well, despite its efforts to prove to government that it had the support of the working classes, the legislative campaign remained essentially a middle-class movement. The land question and home rule, although the I.T.L. considered these 'minor' issues, were far more successful in stirring the enthusiasm of the rural and urban masses. Put beside the chance of self-government or of a better deal from the landlords and later even ownership of the land, temperance legislation must have seemed to offer but little to the ordinary Irish man or woman. As the 1880s progressed the temperance movement therefore became increasingly isolated from the mainstream of Irish social and political life.

Another factor militating against political action to promote temperance was that the trend of drink consumption in Ireland was going in directions which the government largely approved. Spirit drinking had, on the whole, been declining since the 1850s, while beer drinking was on the increase. Both industries had prosperous export trades, which afforded the government substantial tax revenue. Illicit distillation had been brought under control and the 1872 and 1874 licensing acts cleared up many of the problems associated with the issuing and regulation of retail licences.¹ Given this state of affairs, government felt no great pressure to embark on a scheme of major change. The timing of the 1878 act is interesting in this context, for the mid 1870s were years of unusually high alcohol consumption in Ireland. A decline set

¹ See chapter I.

in in 1879, caused, not by the Sunday closing act as temperance advocates claimed, but by the depression which affected Ireland in that year. This decline, with some variations, generally continued to the end of the century.¹ The demand for local option and Sunday closing under these circumstances must have seemed, as it largely was, the demand of a relatively small number of religious enthusiasts. While the conservative party did not wish to alienate its Ulster supporters nor the liberal party its English pro-temperance members, neither felt that this entailed conceding the demands of the Irish temperance movement. As a result, well before the turn of the century, the initiative in temperance affairs had passed out of the hands of groups like the I.T.L. and the I.A.P.I. and into very different hands indeed.

¹ See appendix I.

CHAPTER FIVE

TEMPERANCE AND THE CHURCHES AFTER 1870

As you love your race, as you love your country and its freedom, as you would restore again its ancient glories and bring back again its long-lost wealth, persevere in the path you have chosen. You will not have long to wait... We are the proudly free. There is but one thing needed to make our proud freedom perfect. That one thing I ask you tonight to help in supplying. It is the emancipation of our grand and historic race from the degrading slavery of drink. Then, and only then, shall we be the perfectly and proudly free.

Fr John O'Mahony to St. Finbarr's branch of the League of the Cross, Cork, quoted in Irish Catholic, 5 May 1888.

But in truth there is a great deal too much of the world and the spirit of the world in some of those temperance organisations, as they are called, that we see around us; too much of the world and its views, and too little of God and His holy law; too much of men and of mere human motive, and too little thought of the great model of every virtue, our Blessed Lord and His Holy Mother, and His angels and saints.

Archbishop William Walsh, sermon at St Michan's, Dublin, quoted in Freeman's Journal, 11 November 1889.

While the Irish Temperance League and the Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance concentrated on the campaign for temperance legislation in the last quarter of the century, the Irish churches, both protestant and catholic, were also grappling with the issue. Some church-sponsored societies were active in the legislative campaign, but to many churchmen temperance seemed a religious, rather than a political, matter: a question to be determined by the clergy or by the individual's conscience, rather than by the state.

Temperance and the protestant churches

We have already noted that the presbyterian church in Ulster was particularly active in the Irish temperance movement. Many of the leaders of the anti-spirits movement in the early 1830s were presbyterian clergy, most notably Dr John Edgar, its founder. On 4 July 1850, in the wake of the decline of Fr Mathew's crusade, some fifteen presbyterian clergy attended a meeting in the Mary Street church school, at which a committee was appointed to organise a temperance society in connection with the presbyterian church. In February 1851 the society was formally established with the adherence of twenty-two ministers.¹ This was a total abstinence society and its membership was restricted to clergy. Among those at the meeting in 1850 was I.N. Harkness of Stewartstown, who became secretary of the society in 1856 and continued in that capacity till just before his death in 1885.²

¹ Dawson Burns, Temperance history (London, [1889]), i, 341; Dawson Burns, Temperance in the Victorian age (London, 1897), p. 104; I.N. Harkness, 'Temperance in the Presbyterian Church of Ireland' in Frederick Sherlock (ed.), Fifty years ago: or, Erin's temperance jubilee (Belfast, 1879), p. 62.

² I.T.L.J., xxii, no. 12 (Dec. 1885), p. 276.

In 1854 the question of temperance was raised in the general assembly. On the suggestion of the synod of Belfast a temperance committee was appointed. But this committee was not pledged to total abstinence and was composed of both abstainers and non-abstainers. In 1855 it issued an address signed by Dr Edgar, as moderator of the assembly, and Rev. William Johnston, as convenor of the committee. According to Dawson Burns:

That it was the production of Dr Edgar none could doubt, and it was worthy of his best days; and though the phrase, 'distilled spirits', frequently occurred, no limitation of the appeal to one class of alcoholic liquors was suggested, and the whole drift of sentiment was in favour of total abstinence from all intoxicating beverages.¹

However, while Edgar lived and was a powerful figure in the church, the acceptance of total abstinence could never be complete. But he died in 1866 and in 1870 Harkness, a committed total abstainer, became convenor of the assembly's temperance committee, succeeding the ailing J.L. Rentoul of Ballymoney.² These two events, plus the growing support for the I.T.L. among presbyterians, marked important steps towards the general acceptance of total abstinence within the presbyterian church. On the suggestion of the assembly's temperance committee, various measures were taken by the church to promote temperance. An annual sermon on temperance was instituted, to be preached on the first Sunday in December; bands of hope were established in association with many congregations and considerable emphasis was placed on teaching children the evils of drink; the assembly, through its temperance committee, also spoke out on many occasions

¹ Dawson Burns, Temperance history, i, 386.

² I.T.L.J., xxii, no. 12 (Dec. 1885), p. 276.

in support of the permissive bill and Sunday closing movements. By 1880, as we have seen, the committee was issuing electoral addresses urging presbyterian voters only to support candidates who were prepared to pledge themselves to these measures.¹

In the early 1870s, however, temperance enthusiasts were distinctly unsatisfied with the progress of total abstinence within the church. In 1874 an anonymous correspondent wrote in the I.T.L.J.:

Look at the presbyterian church... Her ministers are, many of them, zealous workers in the total abstinence cause. In her roll of church membership are found the names of some of the most active members of the varied temperance organisations; but, as a church, what is her position in this respect?... She is not altogether silent, it is true, but her utterances are measured and temporising. She is not entirely out of the field, but she is far from leading the van, far from taking the position which would rightfully be hers, were she consistent with her principles and faithful to her duty.²

The temperance movement wanted the presbyterian church, as a church, to speak out in favour of total abstinence. The I.T.L.J. correspondent felt she was inhibited in this regard by the numbers of drink-sellers who sat on church committees and by the financial support she received from the drink industry. The church reasoned, he said, that 'the trade is bad, no doubt, ... but - the money! Oh, the money builds churches, aids the "sustentation fund"'. Certainly distillers, like Alexander Findlater, and brewers, like the Guinness family, did make substantial donations to the presbyterian church.³ The temperance movement sought, what the I.T.L.J. termed, the 'absolute separation of the church from the

¹ I.T.L.J., xvii, no. 7 (July 1880), p. 85; see also above, pp 412-13.

² Ibid., xiii, no. 1 (Jan. 1874), p. 7.

³ J.A. Rentoul, Stray thoughts and memories (Dublin, 1921), pp 248-9.

liquor traffic'.¹ In 1875, with drinking and drunkenness obviously on the increase, the church finally faced up to the issue of total abstinence. Referring to this increase and fearing 'that this state of matters will continue as long as drinking customs are encouraged and patronised', the assembly declared it 'incumbent upon our ministers and people seriously to consider what may be their duty in regard to the use of intoxicating liquors as beverages'.² Presbyteries were instructed to consider the issue and report to the temperance committee before April 1876. Of the thirty-six presbyteries in the church, twenty-one reported in favour of total abstinence. Thus, in 1876, the general assembly passed the following resolution:

That as the assembly has already given instruction to train up the young in the habit of abstaining from intoxicating drinks, by enrolling them in bands of hope, we cannot but commend the action of those who would lead them to continue in after-life in the practice in which they have been trained: and as no less than twenty-one presbyteries have declared in favour of abstinence from drinking customs, or from intoxicating drinks as ordinary beverages, we feel constrained to commend such abstinence to the consideration and adoption of our people.³

The temperance movement rightly saw this as an important victory. Here was the presbyterian church, as a church, recommending total abstinence to its members. The acceptance of total abstinence by the church, within ten years of Dr Edgar's death, was undoubtedly speeded by the work of the society of abstaining clergy. Since being established in 1851, it had grown steadily, working to convert ministers through the circulation of tracts and pamphlets. By 1879,

¹ I.T.L.J., xxvi, no. 7 (July 1889), p. 150.

² Quoted in Harkness, 'Temperance in the Presbyterian Church of Ireland', p. 63.

³ Ibid.

of 644 Irish presbyterian ministers, 260 were members, though Harkness claimed that the great majority, perhaps two-thirds, of the clergy were in practice abstainers.¹

As in Dr Edgar's time, however, the temperance cause continued to generate fierce scriptural debate within the presbyterian church. Whereas the issue of the 1830s and 1840s had been the biblical basis for total abstinence,² by the latter part of the century the controversy centred on the question of the nature of the wine referred to in the Bible. Many presbyterian temperance advocates, led by John Pyper, the former agent of the I.T.L., insisted that the wine used by the Jews and by Christ at the Last Supper was unfermented. It followed therefore that the communion wine should also be unfermented. The year that saw the total abstinence issue before the general assembly, 1875, also saw the Bible wine question debated at length. But, whereas the temperance movement was to emerge victorious with regard to total abstinence, on the Bible wine question it suffered a defeat. The assembly voted by 301 to 20 in favour of the use of fermented wine, recommending a 'mild, natural wine' rather than the 'fiery brandied mixture called "port", hitherto in general use'. The I.T.L.J. thought that the vote reflected a desire by the anti-teetotal faction in the assembly 'to strike a deadly blow against the cause of total abstinence ... through the subject of sacramental wine'.³ If so, they failed, though logically the consumption of wine at the communion table was inconsistent with rigid adherence to total abstinence.

¹ Irish Templar, iii, no. 5 (July 1879), pp 69-70.

² For this debate, see above pp 188-201.

³ I.T.L.J., xiv, no. 7 (July 1875), p. 107.

Pyper was not deterred by the assembly vote and in the same year he formed an Irish Sacramental Wine Association, later called the Bible Temperance Association. The association's declared object was 'the promotion of the divine glory, through the removal of the intoxicating cup from the table of the Lord and the entire separation of the church from the liquor traffic'. Pyper told the inaugural meeting of the association:

We deplore the prevalence and fatal results of the false doctrine, that the holy book contains divine sanction for the use of the body-and-soul destroying drink. It is the prevalence of this doctrine which makes Christian nations the most drunken nations the world over.¹

In their zeal the total abstainers were anxious to purify, not only the church, but also the Bible, from any association with alcohol. Dr Edgar had perhaps been right to fear the excesses to which this perfectionistic doctrine would lead.

The Bible wine issue was to prove divisive and not only in the presbyterian church. The Church of Ireland stood out against the trend to introduce unfermented wine into the communion service. In 1888 the Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette said:

We desire to raise our voice against a practice which has begun, and may probably grow, in the Church of Ireland, of using a concoction which is not 'the fruit of the vine', in the administration of the Lord's Supper. We have no hesitation in saying that these artificial 'wines' destroy the truth of the sacrament, which might as well be administered in milk or water as in a non-fermented ingredient compounded probably in a chemist's or apothecary's establishment.²

¹ Bible Temperance Educator, i, no. 1 (Jan. 1881), pp 28-36; I.T.L.J., xiv, no. 7 (July 1875), p. 120.

² Quoted in A.J. Megahey, *Irish protestant churches and social and political issues, 1870-1914* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 1969), p. 133.

The Church of Ireland resisted the extremist trend, arguing that the drinking of wine was lawful according to the scriptures, as was abstinence, but that 'to say that a thing is lawful is not to say that it ought to be done'.¹ But the Bible wine campaign achieved a considerable degree of success among presbyterians and non-conformists. By 1888 the general assembly had come round to ruling that the use of unfermented grape juice should be optional in churches.²

The fierceness of the controversy in the presbyterian church is seen in the case of St Enoch's, Hugh Hanna's church. The issue was first raised in 1876 and reached a crisis twenty years later. According to the church's historian:

Those who desired the use of 'unfermented' wine, finding it impossible to get the whole congregation to agree, asked the session that they should be allowed to have a second 'table', at which unfermented wine would be used, and to which any who wished might come instead of going to the first table, at which fermented wine was used. Many solutions were put forward and rejected; but in the end, by the narrowest of majorities, the compromise of the two 'tables' was carried through... the first table being taken before and the second after the sermon. This solution, while it had neither historical nor liturgical justification and was theologically indefensible, was adopted as a compromise in the interests of peace.³

The opponents of the compromise appealed to the presbytery of Belfast and, when defeated there, to the assembly. But their appeal was dismissed and the congregation urged to end its disputes. Finally, in 1905, the assembly's 1875 decision, rejecting the use of unfermented wine, was repealed. Probably by the mid 1890s the majority of presbyterian and non-conformist churches were using non-alcoholic wine for their

¹ Canon R. Travers Smith, 'The teachings of scripture and of conscience' in C.I.T.S. temperance facts: twelve chapters on temperance (Dublin, 1884), p. 7.

² Megahey, Irish protestant churches, p. 133.

³ J.M. Barkley, St Enoch's congregation, 1872-1972 (Belfast, 1972), pp 84-5; I.T.L.J., xxxiii, no. 7 (July 1896), p. 100.

communion services.¹

That the Bible wine controversy could generate such protracted and bitter debate within the presbyterian church is a measure of the importance of the issue of temperance within the church. The I.T.L., the largest and most active of the Irish temperance societies from the 1850s to 1900, drew much of its support from the northern presbyterian community. Similarly, many of the staunchest supporters of temperance legislation in parliament from the 1860s were presbyterians representing Ulster constituencies. Richard Smyth, Charles Lewis and J.P. Corry are three examples. Thomas McClure and, at a later date, T.H. Sloan, suffered electorally when they compromised their temperance principles, while T.W. Russell and J.B. Biggar, who both entered parliament as presbyterians, remained firmly committed to temperance, even when their religious affiliations changed.²

In the mid 1870s, with drink consumption increasing and temperance legislation figuring prominently in parliament, there was an upsurge of interest within the Irish churches. The presbyterians, as we have seen, debated the Bible wine question in 1875 and in 1876 endorsed total abstinence. In the latter year the Church of Ireland Temperance Society was established.³ The methodist church was also influenced by this trend. Wesley himself had condemned drunkenness and recognised the virtues of total abstinence. He criticised spirit drinking and forbade methodists to buy, sell or drink spirits. But, like many at the time, he believed in the

¹ Dawson Burns, Temperance in the Victorian age, p. 106.

² See above, pp 235, 367-8, 451-2.

³ See below, p. 477.

health-giving properties of beer. Thus, while he counselled total abstinence with regard to spirits, he advised **moderation** for beer and wine drinkers.¹ Some of the more fundamentalist methodist sects, like the primitive methodists, were quick to adopt total abstinence, but the wesleyans remained hostile to it. However, in England in 1873 the wesleyan conference established a committee to investigate intemperance. This led the church in 1875 to endorse the band of hope movement, in other words, total abstinence for children. In 1877 adult societies, containing both total abstainers and non-abstainers, were recommended, though not till 1892 were pure total abstinence societies permitted in the church.² The Irish church followed this general development. In 1877 the Irish wesleyan conference, 'feeling that there was a necessity for some further connexional action to promote the spread of true temperance principles, and to influence the cause of imperial legislation affecting the liquor traffic', sanctioned the establishment of a connexional temperance association. The association aimed to suppress intemperance and to promote five major objects: the establishment of refreshment and reading rooms; the discouragement of drinking on social occasions, at funerals and during commercial transactions; the removal of working mens' benefit societies from public houses and the discontinuence of the payment of wages in public houses; the reclamation of the drunkard; and the training of the young in total abstinence.³ Total abstinence was only imposed upon

¹ E.C. Unwin, Methodism and sobriety: the story of a great transformation (London, 1943), pp 19-20.

² Ibid., p. 42.

³ Andrew Armstrong, 'The methodist church and temperance' in Sherlock (ed.), Fifty years ago, pp 66-7.

the young and the church embarked on the vigorous promotion of bands of hope; membership jumped from 8,000 in 1877 to over 17,000 in 1879.¹ But the step from juvenile to adult total abstinence was a logical one and the Irish church followed the English in this regard. At a meeting of Wesleyan total abstiners in connection with the 1875 conference in Belfast, one speaker said:

The founder of methodism did not object to the use of wine in moderation; and those rules, as observed by the societies, he was sorry to say had been a failure in effecting the putting down of the use of intoxicating drinks, and the putting down of drunkenness. They were required now, such are the drinking customs of the country and the usages of the country, to go further than these rules. They must go the length of entire abstinence from the use of intoxicating drinks.²

That Wesley's rules had been formulated under different circumstances and that the present problem required more extreme measures, was to prove a persuasive argument. The methodists had also to face up to the Bible wine issue. In 1875 some churches asked the conference for permission to replace the port wine they had been using with grape juice. The conference refused, saying that it could not condemn what God had not condemned. But the methodists changed their minds far more quickly than the presbyterians. Whereas the presbyterians did not permit the use of both fermented and unfermented grape juice till 1888, the methodist conference sanctioned this compromise in 1878.³

Perhaps the most consistently active supporter of the temperance cause in Ireland, among religious groups, was the

¹ Andrew Armstrong, 'The Irish methodist church and temperance', p. 68.

² I.T.L.J., xiv, no. 7 (July 1875), p. 119.

³ R.L. Cole, History of methodism in Ireland: one methodist church (Belfast, 1960), iv, 35-6.

Society of Friends. As early as 1815 and 1818, the quakers' Dublin Tract Association had published two pamphlets advocating temperance.¹ This involvement was to continue at a relatively high level till the end of the century. The I.T.L., the I.S.C.A. and later the I.A.P.I., all received substantial financial support from the quaker business community. For instance, Richard Allen, the Dublin draper, made contributions of between £50 and £100 per annum to the I.S.C.A. and then to the I.A.P.I. till his death in 1886. J.G. Richardson, the Bessbrook linen merchant, till his death in 1890 made similar annual contributions to both the I.T.L., of which he was president in the 1880s, and to the I.A.P.I. Pim Brothers and J. Edmundson and Co., both Dublin quaker firms, also contributed to the I.S.C.A. and the I.A.P.I. Edmundsons went a step further in their support for the temperance cause and refused to do any work for publicans, brewers and distillers.² Large subscribers to these organisations sometimes expected material benefits in return. Thus, in 1886 J.N. Richardson reduced his subscription to the I.T.L. to a mere eleven guineas, complaining that the league was not buying his butter for its Belfast cafés, as it had promised.³ However, with or without strings attached, quaker financial support was vital to the major Irish temperance societies. The Friends were also active on the committees of many temperance groups. As mentioned, J.G. Richardson was president of the I.T.L. in the 1880s, Henry J. Allen was

¹ See above, pp 138-9.

² See Henry Wigham's evidence in Report from the select committee on Sunday closing acts (Ireland), p. 296, H.C. 1888 (255), xix, 296.

³ I.T.L. executive committee minute book, 20 Aug. 1886.

chairman of the I.A.P.I. in the 1880s and 1890s, while various members of the Webb, Wigham, Pim and Shackleton families were on the committees of both and of other smaller societies.

A good example of a quaker temperance enthusiast is provided by Henry Wigham (1822-97). Born in Edinburgh, Wigham, while still in his twenties, had been active in the anti-slavery and peace movements. He came to Dublin in 1856 and worked for forty years with Edmundson and Co., the electrical engineers. On his arrival he became involved almost immediately in the temperance work of Haughton, Spratt, Richard Allen and R.D. Webb. He was president of the Dublin Total Abstinence Society, honorary secretary of the I.S.C.A. throughout its existence and continued in that capacity with the I.A.P.I., from its inception in 1878 till his death twenty years later. He was president of the Hibernian Band of Hope Union, founded in Dublin in 1873 to unite the juvenile temperance work of the various protestant churches,¹ and of the Dublin United Temperance Council, established in 1889 to co-ordinate the activities of the city's main temperance societies.² At his death in 1897, the Alliance News commented that he 'was connected in one way or another with almost every temperance association in Ireland'.³ A resolution passed at a special meeting of the I.A.P.I. described him as 'the leader of the movement in Ireland'.⁴ He was a tireless lobbyist on

¹ William Skinner, 'The Hibernian Band of Hope Union' in Sherlock (ed.), Fifty years ago, pp 84-6.

² Eleventh report of the I.A.P.I. for 1888-9, pp 11-12.

³ Alliance News, 26 Nov. 1897.

⁴ Obituaries and notices marking Wigham's death are in an album belonging to W.R. Wigham (Quaker Library, Dublin, R.4, Sh. LD, p. 9, no. 87).

behalf of Irish temperance legislation and the I.T.L.J. said that, 'no one was so well-known as he in the lobby of the house of commons'.¹ Perhaps only Haughton, Pyper and Russell could match Wigham in terms of his commitment to the temperance cause. He was less articulate and less of a striking personality than these others. He did not use his pen to the extent that they did, nor take such an active political role, but he epitomises the convinced, hard-working temperance advocate of the period.

Some of the most interesting comments on quaker temperance work, especially in Dublin, come from the unpublished biography of Alfred Webb, home rule M.P. for Waterford west from 1890 to 1895 and treasurer of the party. Webb, born in 1834, was the son of R.D. Webb, the Dublin printer, who printed most of the early tracts of the Dublin and Hibernian Temperance Societies. Like his friend James Haughton, R.D. Webb was active in many of the reformist movements of the day, most notably abolition. He wrote a life of John Brown and contributed regularly to both American and British abolitionist periodicals. 'He was better known in America than here', his son said of him.² But R.D. Webb also threw himself 'with ardour' into the temperance movement, from its beginnings in Dublin. 'Fr Mathew was often at our house', Alfred remembered and he also recalled seeing the Capuchin administer the pledge from the steps of the Customs House. The movement won strong support from the Dublin quaker community generally. 'In our quaker circle, with the exception of a very few of the elder generation, the use of

¹ I.T.L.J., xxxiv, no. 12 (Dec. 1897), p. 17. Unlike many of his fellow temperance advocates, Wigham was a home ruler.

² Notes on R.D. Webb by his son, Alfred, c. 1900 (Quaker Library, Dublin, R.4, P. 5B/6 and 7).

intoxicants gradually died out.' But R.D. Webb was among those who strongly disapproved of Fr Mathew's behaviour in the United States. 'My father lost respect for him in consequence of his pandering to the slave power', wrote Alfred and he conceded that James Haughton, 'clung more hopefully to the temperance cause than did my father'.¹ Hannah Maria Wigham in her life of Richard Allen, published in 1886, quoted Alfred Webb describing the Dublin group of quaker philanthropists in the 1830s and 1840s.

From about 1834 [he said] until the Irish famine of 1845, and the political events that followed, my father, Richard Allen, James Haughton, uncles James and Thomas Webb, and others in Dublin were the centre of a general movement for reform, and the amelioration of the ills of humanity in every direction... Slavery, temperance, British India, anti-opium, anti-capital publishment, anti-corn law, mesmerism, cold-water cure - everything was taken up. I remember they were called by a jocose newspaper editor, 'anti-everythingarians'. But temperance and slavery were the central interests. At one time Richard Allen gave up so much of his time to these reforms that his business was almost going to ruin. I suppose it was about 1844 that he 'eased off' in his attention to them, and devoted himself more to the development of his business ... I remember in those times we children playing with our dolls, and saying: 'Now thee's going to a slavery meeting; now thee's going to a temperance meeting'.²

But these 'anti-everythingarians' were the group which in 1846 formed a quaker committee which did such valuable relief work during the famine.³

Alfred Webb, however, noted, with regret, that as the Friends prospered in their business enterprises, they were inclined to move out of the city centre to the more prosperous suburban townships. Recalling the 1840s, he wrote:

¹ Unpublished autobiography of Alfred Webb, 1904-5, i, 58-9, 70 (Quaker Library, Dublin, R.4, Sh.P.33/Q).

² Quoted in Hannah Maria Wigham, A christian philanthropist of Dublin: a memoir of Richard Allen (London, 1886), pp 13-14.

³ Webb autobiography, i, 166; G.J. Calder, Jonatham Pim, 1806-85 (unpublished MS, 1971, Quaker Library, R.4, F.J, B.3).

Friends were our principal society. None of them lived out of town. They lived over or by their places of business, and most of our circle then kept shops in which they themselves served behind the counter. Friends thus lived in Thomas Street, Meath Street and the contiguous streets, in Townsend Street and on the quays. Scores of houses at present foul as tenement lodgings let in rooms, where pale and ragged children play at battered doorways or look out of the broken windows, were then pure, sweet and well-ordered. Friends have 'risen' out of the station in society they then occupied, and they were then much above their position in education and feeling and enlightenment. Our class have gained in many ways by suburban residence. The poor, amongst whom we formerly lived, have lost. The children of our class lose in many respects. It was an advantage to live near the shop or workrooms in which the parent made his money, and it was a pleasure to him to be near his family.¹

It is interesting to note here that James Haughton, despite his prosperity, never moved out into the suburbs. He lived for some forty years in Eccles Street. Richard Allen did make the move described by Webb, but regretted it. From High Street, Allen moved to De Vesce Lodge in Monkstown in 1836, and then in 1847 to Brooklawn in Blackrock, which remained his home till his death. But in 1854, after visiting the poor during a severe winter, he wrote:

Surely, if we went more amongst the poor it would be good for us; we would learn to sympathise with them, yes, and to respect them... True, they are low and clamorous many of them, and imprudent and drunken; but while we blame surely we ought to make allowance. What do we know of their temptations, pressed as they are by want and often by hunger itself; and should we wonder, if, wet, cold, and weary, they run into the public house and avail themselves of the temporary stimulus which strong drink affords?²

From their comfortable suburban villas, however, the quakers were prone to adopt a much more censorious attitude towards the poor, or to sink into indifference.

As well as financing and working for temperance societies, the Friends at their institute in Eustace Street, and from 1861 in Molesworth Street, provided reading rooms and lectures for

¹ Webb, autobiography, i, 27.

² Quoted in Wigham, A christian philanthropist, pp 94-5.

the working classes. But, their most successful enterprise in the campaign to provide counter-attractions to the public house, was the café. Alfred Webb wrote that in the 1870s, when he and his father had their printing works in Abbey Street, they were forced to dine in public houses, though they were both teetotallers, because there was no other suitable eating place.¹ The Irish temperance movement was fully alive to the fact that it was often easier and less expensive for the working classes to eat and drink in public houses. Restaurants were few and expensive, refreshment houses served wine with meals and even many railway stations had their own bars for the convenience of travellers. Non-alcoholic drinks could be difficult to obtain. Concern about the lack of public drinking fountains had long been voiced and in 1874 the I.T.L. embarked on a concerted campaign to establish both drinking fountains and coffee stands. By 1892 the league had fifteen coffee stands in Belfast, which, in the six months ending on 27 August, made a gross profit of over £1,500. The stands were mainly to the north of the city centre and to the east, in the area of the docks and shipyards.² In his testimony before the royal commission on liquor licensing laws in 1898, William Wilkinson, the secretary of the I.T.L., said that the venture was begun as a philanthropic one, but that the league had 'found it was a very good commercial thing'. By that date there were twenty stands, accommodating 140 people, selling, as well as tea and coffee, cocoa, lemonade, milk, cold meat and ham, and in a few cases hot meals.³

¹ Webb autobiography, i, 185.

² I.T.L. executive committee minute book, 28 Oct. 1892.

³ Royal commission on the liquor licensing laws, p. 287 [C-8980], H.C. 1898, xxxviii, 821.

Initially the ground for the stands had been rented from the harbour commissioners or the corporation for a nominal sum, generally one shilling a year. However, this state of affairs was strongly criticised by the vintners, who appealed to the town council. As a result the rent was raised to £4 per annum.¹ But, even so, the coffee stands made a handsome profit for the league, as did the café at its headquarters in Lombard Street. The I.A.P.I. attempted to follow the league's example, though with less success. It campaigned for the establishment of drinking fountains at railway stations and for the introduction of non-alcoholic refreshment houses.² In 1901 the association opened the Shamrock dining rooms in Great Britain Street, but they proved a financial disaster and had to be sold in 1906, with an overall loss of around £1,000.³ By that time Dublin was much better provided with cafés, than it had been in the 1870s. The best-known was that run by the Bewleys, another Dublin quaker family. The Dublin Total Abstinence Society had also entered the business, establishing a café in its Townsend Street headquarters in 1875 and opening cabmen's shelters where coffee was sold, at various points around the city centre.⁴ By the end of the century both the I.T.L. and the D.T.A.S. had become incorporated companies.

¹ Royal commission on the liquor licensing laws, 1898, p 299/833.

² Thirteenth report of the I.A.P.I. for 1890-91, p. 3.

³ Twenty-second report of the I.A.P.I. for 1900, p. 12; Twenty-eighth report of the I.A.P.I. for 1906, p. 9.

⁴ E. MacDowel Cosgrave, Incorporated Dublin Total Abstinence Society, diamond jubilee celebration: brief history of the society (Dublin 1897), pp 9-10; see also Leopold Bloom's comments on the society's coffee stands, in James Joyce, Ulysses (New York, 1934), pp 618-19, 738; for complaints about the quality of the food served, see F.J., 17 Mar. 1880.

The deaths of many of the leaders of the quaker temperance movement, combined with the frustration of the parliamentary campaign to which most of them were committed, produced, towards the end of the century, a decline in temperance activity among the quaker community. Perhaps also, as Alfred Webb and Richard Allen indicated, the growing affluence of the Friends was tending to cut them off from direct contact with the social problems of Dublin, and thus produce a certain amount of apathy. James Haughton and R.D. Webb both died in 1872, Jonathan Pim in 1885, Richard Allen in 1886, J.G. Richardson in 1890 and Henry Wigham in 1897. Haughton's brother, William, and his daughters continued to contribute money to the temperance cause, though without taking an active role. Thomas Pim, jun., the brother of Jonathan, worked for various Dublin temperance societies in the 1870s and 1880s. Thomas Webb, the brother of R.D. Webb, and J.R. Wigham, the brother of Henry Wigham, were both energetic committee members of the I.A.P.I. The Shackletons, another prominent quaker family, also contributed a number of workers to the temperance cause, most notably, Abraham Shackleton, Richard Allen's son-in-law, who was treasurer of the I.A.P.I. in the 1890s.

But the children of the Allens, Haughtons, Wighams, Webbs and Pims, who had grown up in the second half of the century, generally did not take up the temperance cause with the same enthusiasm that their parents had displayed. Many did not take it up at all. Richard Allen's son, Henry J. Allen, was an exception, being chairman of the I.A.P.I. in the 1890s. More typical were Alfred Webb and J.N. Richardson, the son of J.G. Richardson. Though both were teetotallers and

supporters of temperance legislation, both were more involved in the issues of land and home rule, which dominated Irish politics in the 1880s and 1890s. Alfred, in his autobiography, sought to explain the reasons for his failure to follow in his father's footsteps with regard to the cause of temperance.

Drink though perhaps the worst of all evils in these countries never roused my enthusiasm against it in proportion to its enormity. For this reason. That its use is deliberately held to by those fully informed and who are free agents. They have a right to drink if they wish. Even the Irish people if they really desired could scotch the traffic in Ireland. I can feel no enthusiasm in trying to persuade people to do their duty by themselves.¹

What really roused his enthusiasm, wrote Webb, were 'people oppressed who could not help themselves', like slaves, women denied the vote, Indians without a say in their government and Chinese forced to accept the trade in opium.² An aversion to coercive legislation was obviously a factor in Alfred's thinking, and certainly it was hard to reconcile support for coercive temperance legislation with opposition to other coercive measures passed at Westminster. Also, with illicit distillation well under control and drink consumption in Ireland generally falling from the mid 1870s, temperance must have seemed a less pressing issue to Alfred in the 1880s and 1890s, than it had seemed to his father in the 1830s and 1840s. The children of other leaders of the Dublin movement were even less enthusiastic than Webb. Of Samuel Haughton, James's only son, who wrote a useful biography of his father, Alfred Webb commented: 'He had not much belief in any cause or any movement - the direct antithesis of his father'.³

¹ Webb autobiography, ii, 395.

² Ibid., 394.

³ Ibid., 375.

After making a substantial amount of money with his father in the corn trade, Samuel abandoned business altogether and spent the rest of his life wandering around Europe, occasionally turning up in Dublin, where 'he spent much of his time in reading rooms always ready for a gossip'. As we have seen, James's daughters continued to contribute financially to the temperance cause, but when one bequeathed £1,000 to the home rule movement, the rest of the family contested the will. This move may have been inspired by Samuel, who was no friend of home rule. The family succeeded, but only at considerable financial cost.¹ One cannot doubt that James Haughton would have been bitterly disappointed by his son's neglect of both his temperance and nationalist principles.

The Church of Ireland had been slow to take up the temperance cause, as had the established church in England. Both had been alarmed by some of the excesses of total abstinence and especially its identification with radical political movements in the 1840s: chartism in England² and repeal in Ireland.³ But in 1862 both churches established total abstinence societies. Evangelicals within the churches had been impressed by the links between teetotalism and religious recruitment evident during the Ulster revival.⁴ In Ireland the evangelicals gained greater influence, along with the laity, after disestablishment and found in temperance a

¹ Webb, autobiography, ii, 375.

² See Brian Harrison, 'Teetotal chartism' in History, 58, no. 193 (June 1973), pp 193-217.

³ See above, pp 209-11.

⁴ Brian Harrison, Drink and the Victorians (London, 1971), p. 182.

congenial cause.¹ In its report for 1871-2, the Church of Ireland Total Abstinence Association explained that, prior to its establishment, churchmen as a rule 'kept aloof from the movement, and spoke of it as fanatical and absurd'. But the association attributed the absurdities, which it conceded had arisen, to the fact that 'men of sense and education for the most part refused to join'.² In the 'past few years', however, the urgency of the problem had been brought home to churchmen. The growing interest of other churches in temperance in fact acted as a spur to the anglicans. The report continued:

Of this we may be certain that sooner or later the evils of intemperance must be vigorously grappled with, and it will not be to the credit of the Church of Ireland, foremost as she is in social influence and purity of doctrine, if she holds back in this crisis, and is content to see the work done by Roman Catholics and non-conformists... while so many held back, your society stood forward as the exponent of moderate views, avoiding all absurd and vexatious arguments, and content to rest their cause, and to advocate temperance on this one great principle, which they maintain has never yet been answered - the necessity of Christian expediency.³

The Church of Ireland clearly wished to avoid the scriptural controversies that had arisen, particularly in the presbyterian and catholic churches, over total abstinence and the pledge, and thus it based its advocacy on expediency rather than on doctrinal grounds. Flexibility was to be the key note.

The church's total abstinence society was not a success in the 1860s. By 1873 it had only twenty-two affiliated

¹ D.H. Akenson, The Church of Ireland: ecclesiastical reform and revolution, 1800-85 (New Haven and London, 1971), p. 302; R.B. McDowell, The Church of Ireland, 1869-1969 (London and Boston, 1975), p. 58.

² Tenth annual report of the Church of Ireland Total Abstinence Association, for the year 1871-2 (Dublin, 1872), p. 7.

³ Ibid., p. 8.

societies, most being in Dublin city, County Wicklow and Ulster, all centres of anglican strength in Ireland.¹ Its income in the same year was only £32.² In 1872 the Church of England Total Abstinence Association had reformed itself into the Church of England Temperance Society, established on a 'dual basis', combining in one society both abstainers and non-abstainers.³ Here was an example of expediency and the Church of Ireland followed suit. The general synod in 1875 appointed a committee to examine and consider 'what measures ought to be taken to repress intemperance'. After consultation with various diocesan committees and councils, the committee reported recommending the establishment of a Church of Ireland temperance society, on 'nearly the same lines' as the C.E.T.S. The already-existing total abstinence association indicated that it was willing to merge with a 'wider society', which it hoped would 'draw into membership very many persons who have not joined the abstinence association'.⁴ Most churches, as we have seen, started off with mixed societies and only later accepted pure total abstinence societies. The Church of Ireland was peculiar in having gone in the opposite direction. Total abstinence obviously had greater appeal among presbyterians and non-conformists than it had among anglicans.

The objectives of the new society were the 'reformation of the intemperate' and the 'promotion of habits of temperance',

¹ Eleventh annual report of the C.I.T.A.A. for 1872-3, p. 12; McDowell, The Church of Ireland, p. 13.

² Eleventh annual report of the C.I.T.A.A. for 1872-3, p.13.

³ Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, pp 183-4.

⁴ Journal of the session of the general synod of the Church of Ireland (Dublin, 1876), iii, 151-2.

and its modus operandi was 'union and cooperation between abstainers and non-abstainers, on the broad principle of Christian liberty, for the promotion of the above objects, by moral, social and legislative means'.¹ The C.I.T.S. cast its net widely. Total abstinence was essentially envisaged as being necessary to achieve the first objective: to reclaim the drunkard. But those who had never indulged in alcohol to excess were merely urged to continue their moderation and recommend it to others. Writing in the society's journal the Temperance Visitor, in March 1889, an anonymous correspondent advised:

The teetotallers ought not to judge the man who feels it needful for his health to take a little wine. The man who is not a total abstainer must not abuse total abstainers as despising God's gifts. Both are agreed about the awful evil; both wish to check it.²

But it was not at all easy to maintain equal and harmonious relations between the two groups. Many of the leading and most active members of the society were total abstainers, who were likely to be sceptical of the value of temperance. While urging cooperation, the correspondent quoted above also remarked that the 'C.I.T.S. is a temperance, not a total abstinence society, though the most important and ordinary means it employs is total abstinence'. And he went on:

The practical working of the section of our society called the temperance section is a more difficult matter; in country places it seldom succeeds. The promise is too indefinite to be of any use as a help to a man who is tempted. He cannot resist a treat, or two or three treats, in a fair. A total abstainer is a safer man.³

This rather tortuous reasoning, concerning the merits of total

¹ Second annual report of the C.I.T.S. presented to the general synod for 1879 (Dublin, 1880), p. 3.

² Temperance Visitor, xi, no. 3 (Mar. 1889), p. 38.

³ Ibid.

abstinence as opposed to temperance, illustrates some of the problems faced by the Church of Ireland in its efforts to provide as wide a basis as possible for its temperance work. In practice what tended to happen was that the society advocated total abstinence for the drunkard and the working classes, while reserving temperance for the middle classes. Drunkenness was regarded as a much more widespread and serious problem among the poor. It was a drastic problem, requiring a drastic solution. An article in the C.I.T.S. journal in July 1889, warned that if the working classes 'choose to become a class of sots they must inevitably succumb to the law of the survival of the fittest. They will disappear, and their place will be taken by automata and machinery'.¹ These remarks suggested little understanding of the relationship between drink and poverty, and even less sympathy. The views of the C.I.T.S. in many ways resembled those of the anti-spirits movement of the 1830s.

The report to the general synod in 1876, which had led to the establishment of the C.I.T.S., had, however, stressed the importance of social reform and the need for counter-attractions. Mention was made of improvements in housing and sanitary conditions and the provision of 'healthful and attractive substitutes for the allurements of the public house'.² But this kind of work remained low on the society's list of priorities. When, in 1891, the journal published a list of the principal means employed by the C.I.T.S., the provision of counter-attractions came second last, after

¹ T.V., xi, no. 7 (July 1889), p. 141.

² Journal of the session of the general synod of the Church of Ireland, (1876), iii, 153.

prayer, teaching and publicity, the formation of new branches, legislation and memorials to local and national authorities. As its last method, the C.I.T.S. committed itself to reforming social and commercial customs that necessitated drinking, such as wakes, fairs, harvest festivals and apprenticeship rituals.¹ The C.I.T.S., like most Irish temperance organisations, drew its main support from the middle class. Its attitude to the working class was at best paternalistic. At worst, as we have seen, it could calmly contemplate their disappearance. The society believed that the middle class could be convinced by argument and reason to drink moderately. But the working class was not generally amenable to reason and thus more extreme measures were needed; total abstinence in the case of the individual and legislative coercion in the case of the group.

However, the C.I.T.S. really 'existed in name only' until the appointment of a permanent secretary. In August 1878 William Jones, who had worked for the U.K. Alliance for fifteen years, was invited by the Dublin diocesan committee of the society to take up this job.² He agreed and immediately issued 500 circulars to parishes announcing that he was ready to visit them and form branches of the society. But only five or six favourable replies were received. This did not deter Jones. In February 1879 he began the publication of the Temperance Visitor. A thousand copies of the first issue were printed, but by the end of the year circulation had jumped to 2,000.³ In March a council was organised, composed of twenty

¹ T.V., xiii, no. 8 (Aug. 1891), p. 120.

² Ibid., xi, no. 8 (Aug. 1889), p. 113.

³ Second annual report of the C.I.T.S. for 1879, p. 9.

clergymen and seventeen lay delegates. There were already diocesan committees in Dublin, Glendalough and Kildare and in Down, Connor and Dromore, representing about 130 branches and 16,000 members. At the general synod in April the constitution of the society was amended so as to make it compulsory for each diocese or united diocese to appoint a diocesan temperance committee annually.¹ Thus did Jones seek to extend and strengthen the organisation of the C.I.T.S. By the end of the year the society had 293 branches and 37,000 members. Doubtless Jones's endeavours were assisted by the recent success of the Irish Sunday closing movement in parliament and the promise of further such progress. Growth continued to be rapid; by the end of 1880 there were 373 branches and 48,610 members. Of these branches, 160 were in Ulster, 111 in Leinster, but only 55 in Munster and 47 in Connacht.² This expansion was achieved at the cost of considerable financial difficulties. In 1879, after only three years of operation, the society had a deficit of £230, which had to be cleared by the establishment of a special fund. The Dublin, Glendalough and Kildare committee had raised most of the money for the organisation. Jones estimated that at least £450 per annum was needed to finance their operations and he recommended that every diocesan committee should collect five shillings per annum from every branch.³ In January 1880 it was decided to institute a special temperance sermon to be preached on the first Sunday of Lent, with the offertory, or

¹ Journal of the session of the general synod of the Church of Ireland, (1879), iii, 23.

² T.V., xi, no. 8 (Aug. 1889), p. 113; Third annual report of the C.I.T.S. for 1880, p. 3.

³ Second annual report of the C.I.T.S. for 1879, pp 10-11.

at least part of it, going to the C.I.T.S. In the first year some 200 parishes cooperated and £137 was raised.¹ By 1889 300 parishes were involved and the society was chiefly dependent on the money thus raised to finance its operations.²

In 1882 Lord Spencer, a supporter of the Irish Sunday closing act,³ agreed to become patron of the society. But, although laity were well represented on the general council, the clergy effectively dominated the organisation. Aside from Jones, who resigned to take up a curacy in Armagh in 1892, the most active members were Dean Dickinson of the Chapel Royal, Dean Chadwick of Armagh and Gilbert Mahaffy, rector of St Paul's, Dublin. Dickinson had been a stalwart of the society from its inception and his services to the temperance cause were recognised in 1896 when he was appointed to the royal commission investigating the liquor licensing laws. Mahaffy was especially concerned about the effects of drink on the Dublin poor and made great efforts to publicise the problem.⁴ Dickinson's membership of the 1896 royal commission and the participation of the archbishop of Dublin, who was one of the C.I.T.S.'s presidents, in debates dealing with the Irish Sunday closing bill in the house of lords,⁵ reflect the society's involvement in the campaign for restrictive legislation. It worked in close cooperation with the I.A.P.I., especially in support of the Sunday closing bill. The Temperance Visitor contained regular

¹ Third annual report of the C.I.T.S. for 1880, p. 4.

² T.V., xi, no. 2 (Feb. 1889), p. 17.

³ For Spencer's views see above, pp 425-8.

⁴ T.V., xi, no. 1 (Jan. 1889), p. 4; see also above, p. 121.

⁵ See above, p. 449.

and detailed reports of the progress of Irish temperance bills and members of the organisation frequently joined deputations to the chief secretary on the subject. In February 1889, for instance, the archbishop of Dublin, at such a meeting, told the chief secretary that all the Church of Ireland bishops supported the Sunday closing bill then before parliament.¹ William Johnston, M.P. for south Belfast, and a frequent sponsor of temperance legislation, was a member of the C.I.T.S. council and doubtless kept his fellow members in close touch with developments in the house of commons. Like Johnston, the leaders of the society were generally conservative in their political affiliations. The Temperance Visitor's comments on the conservative government's failure to introduce temperance legislation in the 1880s and 1890s were far from harsh. The lack of progress of the Sunday closing bill in 1889, for instance, was blamed on the 'waste of time, caused by factious opposition'. 'The government', said the journal, 'were obliged to drop a number of their own cherished measures, surely they ought to be believed when they say that for the same reason they were unable to pass the Sunday closing bill'.² In January 1891, while addressing a Dublin public meeting sponsored by the C.I.T.S., Dean Chadwick, in the wake of the home rule split, left no doubt in his listeners' minds as to where he thought the responsibility for the failure of Irish temperance legislation lay.

When I reckon up the misdeeds of the party which professes to monopolise [the] affection [of Ireland], when I ask is it possible, even in the face of the witness which its leaders have recently borne to one another's merits, that they may have some real, though misguided, affection for our common

¹ T.V., xi, no. 3 (Mar. 1889), pp 36-7.

² Ibid., xi, no. 10 (Oct. 1889), pp 145-6.

country, my heart grows hard towards them again as I remember our increasing drink bill with our dwindling population, and the stubborn resistance by which the great majority of the patriots have obstructed every effort to purify this pollution at least one day in seven. Be it ours to show a nobler patriotism.¹

As well as playing an active part in the political campaign, the C.I.T.S. was also involved in the legal side of temperance work. The Dublin diocesan committee had a licensing laws sub-committee, which cooperated with the I.A.P.I. in employing solicitors to oppose applications for licences before the magistrates' courts. Justifying its participation, the society explained in 1891:

For many generations the granting of licences has been the special privilege of the magistrates, and not a few of them seem to have grown into the belief that when an application is made it ought, in the absence of any opposition to be granted. And who can blame them? If the inhabitants of a parish are so indifferent as not to take the trouble to oppose, why should not their silence be taken to mean consent? When pressure is put on the magistrates on one side without a counter-balancing pressure on the other, what is to be expected?²

The society thus saw itself as providing a necessary counter-balance to the power of the publicans, who dominated so much of Dublin economic and political life. Though restrained in its criticism of magistrates, perhaps because such people were among its members, the C.I.T.S. was far more severe in its censorship of the police.

What then are we to think of the police [asked the Temperance Visitor in September 1889] except that they are absolutely afraid of the publicans or have been bribed to inaction?... Every night that passes the members of G division lounge about the city placidly smoking cigars. We shall, as convenient, keep this disgraceful state of things before the public. Neither threats nor foolish names can frighten us. We consider the publicans as enemies of civilization, and the besotted hirelings of the public house organs are, if anything, a more degraded class.³

¹ T.V., xiii, no. 2 (Feb. 1891), p. 22.

² Ibid., xiii, no. 3 (Mar. 1891), p.34; for a far more strongly worded criticism of the magistrates, see Sir Andrew Reed's remarks in Royal commission on the liquor licensing laws, 1898, p. 32/566.

³ T.V., xi, no. 9 (Sept. 1889), p. 141.

The society's language frequently belied the moderation which it upheld. For example, in commenting upon the dirt and decay of Killarney, despite its tourist revenue, the Temperance Visitor observed that the only thriving buildings were those of the priest and the publican. 'And of these two preponderating influences', it said, 'either the one will not exert himself to raise the people from dirt, dissipation and idleness, or the other, as seems highly probable, will not let him.'¹ Such sectarian remarks were unusual for the temperance literature of the period. Generally the various churches refrained, in public at least, from criticism of each other's temperance work. If mention was made of another denomination by protestant temperance men, it was usually to suggest cooperation. Fairly typical were the remarks of the bishop of Cork at the C.I.T.S.'s annual general meeting in April 1889. He spoke of his profound admiration for the work of the League of the Cross in Cork,² and urged cooperation between different religious and political groups in the struggle against intemperance.³ In fact, cooperation between the churches during this period was minimal. Anglicans, presbyterians and non-conformists differed in their attitudes to total abstinence, the pledge, the Bible wine controversy and the effectiveness of legislation. The catholics, as we shall soon see, were striving principally to create an exclusively catholic temperance movement. One of the major criticisms levelled at Fr Mathew by catholic writers on temperance was that he had encouraged protestants to join his

¹ T.V., xi, no. 9 (Sept. 1889), p. 130.

² See below, pp 505-7.

³ T.V., xi, no. 6 (June 1889), p. 81.

crusade. The catholic temperance organisations of the 1880s and 1890s were determined not to make the same mistake.

By 1889 the C.I.T.S. had nearly 800 branches and over 100,000 members, though a chronic shortage of funds continued to be a major problem.¹ However, in the 1890s the failure to secure further temperance legislation began to produce discouragement within the society. In 1892, the Dublin, Glendalough and Kildare branch, which had long been the most active, issued a circular urging the establishment of branches in all parishes and noting that interest in some already-existing branches needed rekindling. The committee ventured to remind these branches that 'incomplete success is not failure, whether in temperance work or in the work of the church at large'. The circular recognised that discouragement was inevitable, to some extent, for the 'charm of novelty' had gone, and the

enthusiasm of those who from childhood have been members of the society (and these form a large proportion nowadays in many branches) is not so warm or so constantly aggressive as the enthusiasm of those who have joined its ranks against opposition from within or without.²

This succinctly describes the problem that the quaker temperance movement was also facing at the time.³ To combat this waning enthusiasm, the circular advised that more attention be given to the education of members. 'Our members young and old, need to be supplied with reasons for their membership, if they are to be faithful to their promise and useful as workers.' To ease financial difficulties, cooperation between neighbouring branches in organising

¹ T.V., xi, no. 4 (Apr. 1889), p. 49.

² Ibid., xiv, no. 3 (Mar. 1892), p. 44.

³ See above, pp 473-5.

meetings and supplying speakers was suggested. Local branches were also encouraged to try to keep down the numbers of public houses in their districts by opposing applications for new licences.¹ But the minute book of the C.I.T.S. general council shows that lack of money and declining enthusiasm continued to be problems up until the end of the century and beyond.²

In all the main Irish protestant churches there was an upsurge in temperance work dating from the mid 1870s. The increasing consumption of drink and the publicity given to temperance legislation in parliament, both doubtless contributed to this trend, as did the renewed interest among the sister churches in England. But the organisation of church-based temperance societies posed many problems. Finance was frequently a limiting factor, particularly if a society wished to undertake expensive parliamentary lobbying in support of temperance legislation or legal action to stop the issuing of new licences. The scriptural basis of total abstinence and the practical effectiveness of temperance continued, as they had done since the 1830s, to cause dispute and division. On the whole the presbyterian and non-conformist churches tended to come down in favour of total abstinence, while the Church of Ireland tried, albeit with difficulty, to encompass both equally. However, once the total abstainers were in the ascendancy, they usually sought to eliminate any connection whatsoever between their church and drink. The acceptance of money from the drink industry for church and school building

¹ T.V., xiv, no. 3 (Mar. 1892), p. 45.

² This is attested to by numerous entries in C.I.T.S. general council minute book, 1896-1904, which is held by the Representative Church Body Library, Braemor Park, Rathgar, Dublin.

was condemned and efforts were made to root out drink dealers from church bodies. The most dramatic manifestation of this drive was the replacement in many protestant churches of the communion wine by fruit juice. The Church of Ireland seemed to remain relatively immune from this obsession to purify the churches. It never gave itself up wholly to total abstinence, regarding this as something for zealots and for those most in danger of abusing drink. Its two Dublin cathedrals were renovated and maintained with money largely provided by drink manufacturers; the Rowe distillery contributing to Christchurch and Guinness's brewery to St Patrick's.¹ Nor was the church willing to abandon wine in its communion service. By the turn of the century, however, much of the initial enthusiasm with which the churches had embarked on temperance work had been dissipated. We have seen that among quakers and anglicans the converts of the early years proved far more zealous than their children. The failure of temperance in parliament and the emergence of more pressing political issues discouraged and distracted the church organisations as well as the secular temperance societies. Even in Ulster, which had largely dominated the Irish temperance movement since the 1830s, decline was evident. In an effort to rectify this situation, a new temperance revival was proclaimed in 1909 by the Rev. Robert Patterson of Armagh in the form of the Catch-my-pal Protestant Total Abstinence Union. But its work lies outside the scope of this study.² It is sufficient to note the decline of both

¹ Rentoul, Stray thoughts and memories, pp 247-8.

² Thomas M. Johnstone, The vintage of memory (Belfast, 1942), pp 156-66, 210-24. Johnstone, who was convenor of the presbyterian church's temperance committee in the 1920s, was a strong supporter of the Catch-my-pal movement. See also the pamphlets issued by the movement in the Wigham papers (Quaker Library, Dublin, uncatalogued).

secular and protestant temperance societies in the 1890s.

Temperance and the catholic church

After the death of Fr Mathew, as we have seen, the catholic church remained ambivalent in its attitude to the temperance cause.¹ Some individual bishops were enthusiastic and instituted regulations within their own dioceses to promote temperance. Also many lent their names to established temperance societies and to the campaign for restrictive legislation. However, not till the late 1860s is a resurgence of largely catholic temperance societies evident. This trend, appearing almost simultaneously in England and the United States, culminated in 1872 with the establishment of both the English League of the Cross and the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America.² In 1867 Cardinal Manning had appeared on the platform at the annual meeting of the U.K. Alliance, marking a notable departure in catholic policy towards the temperance movement. Manning was anxious to improve the image of catholicism in England and to promote greater catholic participation in public life. As some eighty per cent of catholics in England were Irish, feared and hated by many Englishmen, Manning came to concentrate particularly on promoting sobriety, thrift, a respect for order and better education among his Irish flock. He feared the revolutionary potential latent in such an alienated section of society and saw temperance as part of a campaign to integrate Irish

¹ See chapter III.

² Sister Joan Bland, Hibernian crusade: the story of the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America (Washington, 1951); J.C. Gibbs, History of the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America (Philadelphia, 1907); The League of the Cross and crusade against intemperance: official report of the conventions of 1875 and 1876 (Manchester, n.d.).

catholics into English society.¹ Drink, wrote Manning, is the cause of

crime, of madness, of poverty; of ruined reputations, of strife, of murder; it empties churches, keeps souls from the sacraments; it leads to immorality, loss of faith, apostacy; it ruins homes, desolates families, brings scandal upon the church; it makes bad husbands, bad wives, immoral children. Drink ruins body and soul. It is the stumbling block of the laity, the source of grief and care to the priest.²

The problem, he thought, was most severe among the working and poorer classes, where catholics were disproportionately numerous. While opposing prohibition, Manning told the U.K. Alliance in 1868 that he fully supported Sunday closing and the permissive bill.³ But as well as legislative measures to curb the drink trade, Manning also saw the need for an exclusively catholic temperance society. He wanted both to prevent the catholic faith being undermined in non-catholic organisations and to avoid Fr Mathew's mistake by establishing structures that would ensure the continuation of the work after his own departure from the scene. He aimed, he said, to create an organisation 'as strictly catholic as is the church from which it springs'.⁴ Thus the rules of the League of the Cross, drawn up by Manning, stipulated that only catholics could be members, that all members after they had joined the league must 'live as good practical catholics' and that only a 'practical catholic' could hold any office in the league. The aim of the league, according to its constitution,

¹ For a more detailed discussion of Manning's views, see A.E. Dingle and B.H. Harrison, 'Cardinal Manning as temperance reformer' in Historical Journal, xii, no. 3 (1969), pp 485-510. For the catholics in England see K.S. Inglis, Churches and the working class in Victorian England (London and Toronto, 1963), chap. 3.

² For private circulation: the League of the Cross (Market Weighton, Yorks., 1890), pp 39-40.

³ Alliance News, 17 Oct. 1868.

⁴ Quoted in Dingle and Harrison, op. cit., p. 495; Catholic Times, 18 Sept. 1885.

was to unite catholics, both clergy and laity, in a 'holy war against intemperance' and thereby to raise the 'religious, social and domestic stature of our catholic people, especially the working classes'.¹

As well as being intensely catholic, the movement initiated by Manning was also inclined to be sympathetic to Irish nationalist aspirations. The link between catholic temperance and Irish nationalism had been forged in the 1840s when many of Fr Mathew's teetotallers joined the repeal movement. It was renewed in the 1860s among the Irish in Liverpool. John Denvir, a fenian agent in Liverpool and later the first general secretary of the Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain, as a boy of nine had taken the pledge three times from Fr Mathew, inspired by his mother's superstitious faith in the Capuchin's miraculous powers. But, unlike many others, Denvir maintained his total abstinence from drink and also his faith in the temperance cause beyond the 1840s. He worked closely with Fr James Nugent, a nationalist priest, who ran the Liverpool Catholic Times and various catholic temperance and charitable societies in the city.² When Manning founded the League of the Cross, Nugent amalgamated his existing organisations with it. As his memoirs demonstrate, Denvir's nationalism ran in broad channels, taking in an appreciation of Irish language and culture, as well as a deep concern for the plight of Irish slum-dwellers in British cities. Thus, early in the 1860s, Denvir was secretary of the boys' refuge in

¹ Catholic Total Abstinence League of the Cross, Constitution and rules (London, 1888); James Halpin, 'The League of the Cross' in I.E.R., 3rd ser., ix, no. 12 (Dec. 1888), pp 1113-22.

² John Denvir, The Irish in Britain from the earliest times to the fall and death of Parnell (London, 1892), pp 250-51; for an account of his work by Nugent himself see F.J., 14 Oct. 1890.

Liverpool, while at the same time smuggling arms to Ireland for the fenians. A few years later, with other young Liverpool Irishmen, he formed the 'Emerald Minstrels' to perform songs, drama and poetry with nationalist themes for audiences in Dublin.¹ In 1870 Denvir established a printing and publishing business in Liverpool and 'commenced to realise what I had long projected as a useful work for Ireland'. This was the issuing of an Irish library of histories, biographies, stories and songs, which ultimately sold over a million copies.² In Denvir's combination of revolutionary nationalism with literary endeavour and a social conscience, we can see a forerunner of the cultural nationalism which was to flower in Ireland from the 1890s. It is not surprising therefore to find Denvir, at this later period, while working in London as an organiser for the Irish National League and later the United Irish League, as an active supporter of the Gaelic League and the Irish Literary Society, with a special interest in the new Irish drama.³ Denvir's involvement in Liverpool during the 1860s and 1870s with Nugent and Manning's explicitly catholic temperance movement went hand in hand with his efforts in other fields to educate the Irish, particularly along nationalist lines, and to elevate their moral character.⁴

If the link between Irish nationalism and the catholic temperance movement could be seen in England, in people like Denvir and Nugent, it was even more apparent in America. In

¹ John Denvir, The life story of an old rebel (reprint, with intro. by Leon Ó Broin, Shannon, 1972, of orig. ed., Dublin, 1910), pp 117-18.

² Ibid., pp vii, 137.

³ Ibid., pp 256-67.

⁴ Catholic Times, 20 Mar. 1889.

1882 Bishop John Ireland of St Paul, Minnesota, told the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America that:

The time is propitious; it is an era of Irish patriotism. The virtues and the sufferings of the Irish people have awakened universal interest. The day in the designs of providence is manifestly dawning, when the tears of centuries shall be dried, and their hearts throb at last under the influence of unalloyed joy. To hasten their deliverance, friends and patriots are on hand in numbers, each with his remedy for the ills of the Irish people. I HAVE MY REMEDY, AND I WILL PUBLISH IT TO THE WORLD - TOTAL ABSTINENCE.¹

Bishop Ireland argued that, though the Irish did not drink more alcohol than the English or the Scots, alcohol did more harm among the Irish people 'because the warm nature of the Irish people yields more readily to its flames, and, in the wreck which follows, they have more virtues to sacrifice'. And he went on to dwell upon these virtues.

The picture of their virtues entrances. They are the most liberty-loving people on the earth. Eight hundred years of oppression have left no mark in their freemen hearts. Generous - the will is ever beyond the means; selfishness melts and vanishes beneath their soft skies. Brave and spirited - battle-fields tell their valour, as the counsels of nations speak their wisdom. Pure in morals - the gem of purity nothing can snatch away from the coronet of the isle of virgins and martyrs. Such are the children of Erin. But in an evil hour, hell - whoever may have been its agents - distilled alcohol through their plains and over their mountains, and, despite their grand qualities, a sad story of misery has to be told... This has been Ireland's curse, and he who still loves alcohol joins hands with Ireland's most bitter foe.²

If nationalists in the past had found it difficult to accept the seriousness of the Irish drink problem, as this would have offended their nationalist principles, Bishop Ireland's solution was to attribute the problem to satan himself, he being the only agent powerful enough to overcome this virtuous people. One could hardly wish for a clearer expression of

¹ How fare the Irish people? An address delivered by the Right Rev. Bishop Ireland, in the Roman Catholic cathedral of St Paul, Minnesota, U.S., August 2nd, 1882 (Dublin, 1882), p. 7.

² Ibid., pp 7-8.

temperance nationalism. For Bishop Ireland the Irish people were superior to other nations, and, though corrupted by drink and oppressed by British rule, he was confident that their liberation from both forms of oppression was near at hand. Their liberators were to be the home rule party and the catholic total abstinence movement.

While temperance organisations with a strong Irish and catholic identity were appearing in England and in the United States in the 1870s, a similar trend was apparent in Ireland itself, though temperance continued to create problems within the Irish church. We have seen that Bishop Furlong and Archbishop Leahy championed the cause in the 1860s and their successors, Bishop Warren and Archbishop Croke, followed in this course. So that, by the 1880s, temperance was finding more widespread support among the clergy. To some extent this was a result of the developments in England and America. While Manning was encouraged to join the movement by clerical efforts in Ferns and Cashel to enforce Sunday closing,¹ the League of the Cross in turn extended its work to Ireland. Under the name of St Patrick's League of the Cross, it made Cork the centre of its operations.² Similarly Bishop Ireland and other leaders of the American movement visited the home country in the 1880s, seeking to promote the catholic temperance cause.³ Of considerable importance in this regard was

¹ Dingle and Harrison, 'Cardinal Manning as temperance reformer', p. 488.

² The League of the Cross: a year's work in Cork, &c., &c. (Cork, 1886); Halpin, 'The League of the Cross', p. 1114.

³ An address to the Father Mathew, O.S.F.C., Total Abstinence League of the Sacred Thirst in connection with the Church of Our Lady of Angels, Church Street, Dublin, delivered by the Rev. Thomas J. Conaty, S.S., (of Worcester, Mass., U.S.A.) president of the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America (Liverpool, 1889).

a letter sent to Bishop Ireland by the pope in 1887, in which he endorsed the controversial total abstinence pledge as the 'proper and the truly efficacious remedy for this very great evil', and generally gave papal blessing to the new movement.¹ But, despite these developments, in the 1880s and 1890s the Irish church remained deeply divided in its attitude to the anti-drink movement.

Temperance was endorsed by the church as one of the basic Christian virtues, but total abstinence was a different matter. It continued to be identified with protestantism, an identification which was doubtless reinforced by the support given by Ulster protestants to measures like Sunday closing and the permissive bill. Writing in 1888 in the influential Irish Ecclesiastical Record, Fr James Halpin sought to explain this connection.

[In] modern protestantism ... there must be some substitute for any fixed or certain body of doctrine, which we know is becoming gradually less and less. The substitute is generally something like the temperance rage; a social panacea or high project of philanthropy. Dogma yields its place to moral teaching; then the supernatural will soon have to disappear before the national or rational; and the end is reached with, what we find to be practically the sum total of the teaching of some of our modern so-called Christian sects, some new phase of deism or merely natural religion.²

This was exactly the basis on which J.H. Newman criticised Manning's temperance work: that it was substituting social welfare for Christian doctrine.³ Total abstinence also continued to evoke fears of manichaeism. In 1875 Manning endeavoured to clear himself of this charge by saying:

¹ For private circulation: the League of the Cross, pp 40-42.

² Halpin, 'The League of the Cross', p. 1118.

³ V.A. McClelland, Cardinal Manning: his public life and influence, 1865-92 (London, 1962), p. 22.

I will go to my grave without tasting intoxicating drinks; but I repeat distinctly that any man that would say that the use of wine or any like thing is sinful, when it does not lead to drunkenness, that man is a heretic condemned by the church. With that man I will never work.¹

But this was not an easy distinction to maintain. By endorsing the total abstinence pledge as 'efficacious', the pope had ended a controversy that had raged since Fr Mathew's time. However, the pledge was to be regarded only as a solemn promise, it was not an oath or a vow and did not bind under the pain of mortal sin.

If the religious basis of the total abstinence pledge was clarified in the late 1880s, its practicality nevertheless remained in question. We have seen that drink and the public house played a vital role in Irish society, especially in rural areas.² Priests, who were both products of this society and its natural leaders, were understandably loath to create dissension by insisting on total abstinence for all. The publican was also an important figure in rural Ireland, often the most important after the priest.³ Frequently a shopkeeper, as well as a drink seller, he was a vital source of credit for farmers, and his house afforded an essential meeting and socialising centre. Moreover, the publican was usually a supporter of the home rule party, providing money, facilities and valuable local knowledge and influence, especially during elections. Given these considerations, the reluctance of the church to attack the publicans is

¹ Quoted in Halpin, 'The League of the Cross', p.1118; John Oldcastle (ed.), Letters on subjects of the day, by the cardinal archbishop of Westminster (London, 1891), p. 44-5.

² See above, pp 84-99.

³ For an extremely hostile account of the relationship between the priest and the publican see Frank Hugh O'Donnell, Political priests and Irish ruin: Paraguay on Shannon up to date (London, 1910).

understandable. Also the Irish catholic church did not have the pressing need felt by immigrant churches to prove catholic sobriety and respectability in a largely protestant community.¹ Thus, the Irish church was slower than the churches in England and America to take up the total abstinence banner, and in fact it never took this up wholeheartedly. However, in this period two important factors emerged which helped create, among some clergy at least, a more sympathetic attitude to total abstinence. The first was the growth of new devotional practices and the emphasis on piety and asceticism that went with them.² Total abstinence in this context could be seen as a sacrifice made by the especially devout on behalf of their less zealous brethren. The second factor was the appearance, after the death of Parnell, of new nationalist organisations. These movements, unlike home rule, put considerable emphasis on the personal habits and behaviour of the individual. Like Thomas Davis, they saw individual moral reform as a necessary forerunner of political reform.³ In the 1890s both wings of the home rule party were closely identified with the drink trade, but the new nationalism of the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Gaelic League proved much more amenable to total abstinence.

The issue of total abstinence was debated at length in the Irish church during the years 1889-91. The centenary of

¹ For the problem of Irish immigrants and drink see Carl Wittke, The Irish in America (Baton Rouge, La., 1956), pp 48-51; G.W. Potter, To the golden door (Boston, 1960), pp 517-27; James E. Handley, The Irish in modern Scotland (Cork, 1947), pp 157-63.

² Emmet Larkin, 'The devotional revolution in Ireland, 1850-75' in American Historical Review, lxxvii, no. 3 (June 1972), pp 644-5.

³ See above, pp 213-15.

Fr Mathew's birth was celebrated in 1890 and many of the bishops were moved to use the occasion to establish temperance societies. But this brought them face to face with the problem of whether such societies should only cater for total abstainers, and if for moderationists as well, then how were they to be organised? It was the same problem that had faced many protestant churches in the 1870s. Disagreements on this issue occurred, not only within the Irish church, but between the Irish and English churches. Criticism of total abstainers was frequently severe. In 1889, for instance, Fr John S. Vaughan, an Irish priest working in London, regretted the 'rhapsodies of certain self-righteous water-nymphs, whose speeches seem to presuppose and imply something intrinsically evil in the very nature of spirits, wine, and beer'. Such an implication was of course heretical.

Some excellently good men [Vaughan went on] may be found who speak and act just as though a bottle of Guinness's stout were the very incarnation of evil; and who look upon a glass of whiskey and water as suspiciously as though it held a dozen mortal sins in solution. If, indeed, the devil himself were to appear in propria persona from out of the mystic wreath of encircling vapour arising from the mimic caldron to hurry off the drinker's soul to perdition, I don't think it would add much to their present horror and consternation.¹

But, while he chose to ridicule the extreme teetotallers, Vaughan did not deny the seriousness of the drink problem. He rejected the defence 'set up by certain rubicund worshippers of wine and wassail' that all things created by God are good. Anyone,

unless his brain be of the texture of brown paper and sawdust,... will see that the truth of the premises can give no countenance to such a conclusion. Of course everything is good... Prussic acid is good, and so are

¹ Rev. J.S. Vaughan, 'Drunkenness v teetotalism' in I.E.R., 3rd ser., x, no. 10 (Oct. 1889), p. 870.

salts of lemon, yes, very good, for destroying rats; but because they are good, is that any reason why we should make our dinner of them? ¹

While drink was not intrinsically evil, Vaughan acknowledged that it did frequently lead to evil. He was prepared to accept moderation; 'so long as a man does not exceed the due bounds, he is acting entirely within his own rights'. He thought that total abstainers often acted as a 'mutual admiration society', replacing the sin of gluttony by that of pride. But he was ready to recommend total abstinence in two instances: for the drunkard, who could not control his drinking, and interestingly for the priest. The pastor, he thought, 'cannot influence his people to sign the pledge half as easily if he be not an abstainer himself'.²

Vaughan represented the views of a significant group of priests, including many members of the hierarchy. The total abstainers realised that their opponents were numerous. In the same volume of the I.E.R. in which Vaughan's article appeared, there was another by Fr Walter J.P. O'Brien, a staunch teetotaler. But O'Brien recognised that many priests did not share his views and referred specifically to their laxity in enforcing the church's ban on drinking at funerals.³ This particular issue of drinking at funerals, and the more general question of priests interfering with local customs by opposing drinking, is illustrated vividly by Canon Sheehan in his novel Luke Delmege, published in 1901.

¹ Vaughan, 'Drunkenness v teetotalism', pp 870-71.

² Ibid., pp 869, 871, 873.

³ Rev. W.J.P. O'Brien, 'The League of the Cross' in I.E.R., 3rd ser., x, no. 8 (Aug. 1889), pp 710-21.

Sheehan personally supported the temperance movement, but in his novel he explores the problems of a young priest who has worked in England and returns to impose the practices he has learnt there upon his Irish flock. When his kindly old parish priest offers Luke a tumbler of whiskey punch after dinner, 'following a time-honoured custom of thirty years', Luke abruptly refuses it and demands coffee instead. When the offer is renewed on another occasion Luke is offended and throws the drink out the window.¹ But worse is to come when Luke refuses to conduct a funeral because he finds that the mourners have been drinking. In this he is adhering to church statutes, but at the same time grossly offending community feelings. The old priest warns him: 'You'll have a nice row over this, young man. They may forgive all your abuse of the country, and your comparisons with England; but they'll never forgive you for turning your back on the dead. And Myles McLoughlin was the decentest man in the parish'. In retaliation the people refuse to attend church when Luke is officiating and the bishop is forced to transfer him to another parish. According to Sheehan, Luke 'knew well that, although he had maintained a great principle, it had left a stain on his character forever'.² Sheehan fully appreciated that a rigorous enforcement of anti-drink regulations, such as teetotallers desired, was simply unrealistic in rural Ireland and would probably do more harm than good. We have seen

¹ Canon P.A. Sheehan, Luke Delmege (London, [1901]), pp 341-2. For an interesting discussion of this novel see Oliver MacDonagh, The nineteenth-century novel and Irish social history (Cork, 1970), pp 11-14.

² Sheehan, op. cit., pp 355-6. For another account of the problems associated with introducing total abstinence in rural Ireland see Peter O'Leary, My story (Cork, 1970), pp 95-9.

that, although traditional festivals declined during the nineteenth century, drink still remained a vital element at weddings, wakes and fairs and was crucial in the socialisation of bachelor farmers.¹ Thus many priests opposed total abstinence societies and prohibitionist legislation, believing that they would cause great disruption and hardship in rural Ireland.

In 1890 Fr Geoghegan, writing in the I.E.R., acknowledged that,

the inducements to break the pledge in the country, while not as frequent as in the towns, are in many cases far more dangerous and deep-rooted... the greatest danger of all - and that which is the most general - when friends meet at fair or market, race or pattern; and when the treat of friendship is offered and accepted.²

Unlike the teetotallers, Geoghegan recommended a pragmatic approach to the problem.

Do not those act more comprehensively [he asked] who go to work not subjectively but objectively. Not subjectively, i.e., not setting to work with a preconceived plan in their minds, to which all would be called on to comply, no matter what their own inclinations or wants might be; but objectively, i.e. working according to the material to be found in the parish.³

In each parish, Geoghegan felt, there would be a certain number who could not drink without getting drunk and clearly these needed to be induced to take a total abstinence pledge. But there would be others who were moderate in their drinking and simply did not need to become total abstainers; 'to go on urging them to become such would be for the priest a task of much labour and little fruit'. For children and the young,

¹ See above, pp 91-9.

² Fr M. Geoghegan, 'The pledge in practice - the difficulties that beset it - the helps to keep it' in I.E.R., 3rd ser., xi, no. 3 (Mar. 1890), p. 214.

³ Ibid.

who had not tasted alcohol, again total abstinence would be feasible. Geoghegan therefore advocated the establishment of both total abstinence and temperance societies. 'Each association to have its own banners and guilds quite distinct, but their meetings to be held together in the church, to save the overworked priest the labour of separate addresses.'¹ Geoghegan was in general agreement with Vaughan and their flexible view was embodied in the 1890 pastoral on temperance.²

Divisions over the church's attitude to total abstinence were apparent in the hierarchy, as well as among the lower clergy. Thus, when Archbishop Walsh decided to inaugurate a temperance crusade to mark the Fr Mathew centenary in 1890, he found himself under attack from within the church. In 1889, in order to publicise the issue, Walsh preached a series of sermons on intemperance and the best methods to deal with it. Speaking at the blessing of a new bell at St Michan's in North Anne Street on 10 November, he criticised total abstinence, reiterating the old argument that it partook of manichaeism. He said that the total abstinence pledge, approved by the pope, was in some cases the only way in which drinking could be curbed, but he did not consider it by any means the only method.

I desire [he concluded] to promote total abstinence in every way I can. I will encourage all societies of total abstainers. But the moment I see men not charitable, attempting to trample down those who do not belong to the total abstainers, from that moment I will cease to work with those men.³

¹ Geoghegan, 'The pledge in practice', p. 214.

² See above, pp 251-8.

³ Freeman's Journal, 11 Nov. 1889.

This statement brought down upon Walsh the criticism of the Catholic Times, Fr Nugent's Liverpool newspaper, which was committed to total abstinence. The paper quoted Manning in favour of teetotalism and the impossibility of abstainers and non-abstainers working together. 'We cannot conceive [it said] how any organisation other than a total abstinence society pure and simple could be considered a suitable memorial to the apostle of temperance.' It had little faith it concluded in the 'mixed method of working'.¹ Walsh replied with an angry letter accusing the paper of inaccurately reporting Irish ecclesiastical affairs. And he made his displeasure public in Ireland by informing a meeting at Dolphin's Barn that the Catholic Times opposed his temperance work. 'No Irish catholic newspaper would criticise an English catholic bishop [he said], so why should any English paper do the reverse. The Catholic Times is a bit too independent and the bishop of Liverpool has little control over it.'² The Catholic Times in turn expressed itself 'amazed' at the vehemence of Walsh's reaction, saying that it had no desire whatsoever to obstruct his work. Moreover, the leader writer objected to Walsh's inference that English catholics should not involve themselves in Irish affairs.

The blood that flows in the veins of the writer of the articles to which Archbishop Walsh directs attention is, he is proud to confess, as Irish as his grace's and is he to be told as a journalist that he is not to take an interest in the land where his mother bore him and where her bones are laid, or to give an opinion to his fellow countrymen, because, forsooth, his lot happens to be cast in Liverpool instead of in Dublin or some other part of Ireland? And are the hundreds of thousands of Irishmen scattered throughout England and Scotland to have no voice in public questions affecting the destinies of their race and of the land they love so well.³

¹ Catholic Times, 22 Nov. 1889.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

It was hardly an auspicious start to Walsh's temperance crusade to become involved in a bitter exchange with one of the leading organs of the English catholic temperance movement. Both sides had quoted Manning's views, though to opposite effect: Walsh against fanatical teetotalism and the Catholic Times leader writer against moderation. Walsh had sought Manning's advice on the issue and on 12 November Manning wrote, saying that he thought a 'dual system' was 'inevitable' at first. 'There are many [he said] who have never been drunk in the days of their life, but have often not been sober - that is they have been in a state, in which they ought not to say their prayers, in which they would be sorry to die.' Manning thought that there were many such 'free livers', who would claim to be moderationists and a dual system would probably attract them.¹ Walsh hoped to combine the two groups into one society and also to introduce a class of probationers, who would be preparing themselves to take the total abstinence pledge. Manning objected to these plans, particularly as Walsh wanted to draw St Patrick's League of the Cross into his scheme. On 14 March 1890 Manning informed Walsh that he considered it 'morally impossible' to combine 'baptismal temperance' with the 'counsel of total abstinence. He was, he said, afraid of two things, 'the one a divergence and friction; the other a relaxation, and undermining of total abstinence'. He advised Walsh to treat moderate drinkers and total abstainers separately. 'Let St Patrick's League of the Cross work unchanged and independently as it is. The addition of a

¹ Cardinal Manning to Archbishop Walsh, 12 Nov. 1889 (Dublin diocesan archives, Walsh papers, 404/2/12A).

temperance organisation with the wise and useful rules you have already printed, will do an immeasurable good. All are bound to temperance: none to total abstinence. Let each follow his own liberty.'¹ On 17 March he wrote again opposing Walsh's plans for a probationary group. 'I am afraid of anything which touches the simplicity and solidity of the League of the Cross. It is well and I would let well alone.'²

Manning was anxious that the League of the Cross should not be tampered with and particularly that its commitment to total abstinence should not be compromised. Yet, Walsh's desire to reform it was understandable in that the organisation had not been a great success in Ireland. It had been introduced in Cork in 1885 but made little headway outside that city.³ Fr Walter O'Brien thought this was because it was 'parochially speaking ... a one-man movement', depending on individual enthusiasm and not properly integrated into the organisation of the church.⁴ Fr Michael Kelly agreed, calling it a 'false start' and characterising its conventions in Ireland as 'unhappy failures'.⁵ Kelly elaborated on his views in a letter written to a fellow priest in November 1889, which was passed on to Walsh. He criticised the English organisation and found it inappropriate to Irish circumstances. Of English

¹ Manning to Walsh, 14 Mar. 1890 (Dublin diocesan archives, Walsh papers, 404/4/40A).

² Manning to Walsh, 17 Mar. 1890, *ibid.*, 404/4/44A.

³ The League of the Cross: a year's work in Cork; Halpin, 'The League of the Cross', p. 1114; Vaughan, 'Drunkenness v teetotalism', p. 871.

⁴ O'Brien, 'The League of the Cross', p. 719.

⁵ Fr Michael Kelly, 'The suppression of intemperance III' in I.E.R., 3rd ser., x, no. 12 (Dec. 1889), p. 1114 and 'The catholic temperance movement: the surest way to its success II' in I.E.R., 3rd ser., xii, no. 3 (Mar. 1891), pp 259-60.

catholics, Kelly wrote:

Their people are mostly labourers and tradesmen with their families; they have no pretence to anything like general reform, and nothing short of total abstinence will save the few whom they seek to save. The very Sundays are unsanctified by very many, and the sacraments are neglected by the majority. As to sermons, there is no mind for them at all. So halls and lay-speakers etc. cannot be dispensed with beyond the channel in the support of temperance.¹

The Irish situation, according to Kelly, was the reverse of this. 'Parochial organisation effectively worked by the parish priest and his clergy is what catholic Ireland wants. Our halls must be the churches, and our speakers must be our preachers.' Kelly spoke approvingly of Manning's championship of total abstinence, but condemned the independent nature of the League of the Cross and its use of lay agencies. In Ireland, however, even the organisation's commitment to total abstinence was to be compromised. At the Thurles convention in 1889 Nugent and his supporters had asked Archbishop Croke to become president of the Irish branch. Croke was a strong supporter of the temperance movement, but was not personally an advocate of total abstinence.²

Admitting that total abstinence was 'disliked and sometimes unfairly contradicted in many clerical circles', Kelly in his letter went on to claim that the 'actions of the managers of the Thurles convention' had had the effect of discrediting total abstinence further.

Irish total abstainers were required to acquiesce in the unjustified pre-arrangements of Fr Nugent and, amongst other things, accept as head of their body one not of uniform mind and practice with its members. Their alternative was to act uncivilly towards their revered and more than kind host...

¹ Fr Kelly to Fr Pettit, 26 Nov. 1889 (Dublin diocesan archives, Walsh papers, 404/2/15).

² Croke to Walsh, 17 July 1889, *ibid.*, 404/2/16; Mark Tierney, Croke of Cashel: the life of Archbishop Thomas William Croke, 1832-1902 (Dublin, 1976), p. 189.

It would have been all right to ask Dr Croke to become patron of the Irish branch of the League of the Cross, but it was suicidal to ask and petition him to be its president.¹

Convinced total abstainers like Kelly considered it absurd that Archbishop Croke, as president of a total abstinence society, should still establish and support temperance societies, which is exactly what happened. In a circular to his clergy in February 1890, Croke ordered that at confirmation all children should be enrolled in the League of the Cross till the age of twenty-one, but his instructions as regards adults were that 'a temperance society, or, better still, a branch of St Patrick's League of the Cross, or both if deemed advisable, be established in every parish in the archdiocese of Cashel and Emlly'. Croke, like Walsh, remained committed to the dual approach. The League of the Cross thus failed to satisfy the extreme teetotallers, like Kelly, on the one hand, while at the same time it did not win the wholehearted support of moderates, like Archbishop Walsh, on the other. In these circumstances, it had little, if any, hope of success. In 1890 the Freeman's Journal noted that of 150 delegates attending the league's annual convention, the majority were English and the Irish contingent was 'remarkably small'. Yet this convention was in Cork, the league's Irish headquarters.³

The controversies between moderationists and teetotallers, between supporters of the League of the Cross and those of an indigenous organisation, were very discouraging for Walsh. In February 1890 he laid the foundation stone of the Fr Mathew

¹ Kelly to Petit, 26 Nov. 1889.

² Archbishop Croke to Walsh, 11 Mar. 1890 (Dublin diocesan archives, Walsh papers, 404/4/35); F.J., 17 Feb. 1890.

³ Ibid., 9 Oct. 1890.

hall in Church Street, which was to be used by total abstinence societies associated with the Capuchins. In his speech he sounded very dispirited.

It would, indeed, be anything but honest of me [he said] if I were to conceal from you that I am by no means as hopeful in this matter as I was some few months ago... I have come to learn - and learned it with amazement as well as with sorrow - how widespread is the feeling of indifference that exists as to the success or failure of the project of a national movement for the rooting out of the vice of drunkenness from Ireland. I must not shrink from saying that, as the result of this, the conclusion has been all but forced upon me that the hopes which recently were raised to so high a pitch of sanguine expectations are doomed to end in a deplorable, if not disastrous disappointment.¹

Croke wrote immediately expressing sorrow at Walsh's remarks and hoping that he was not intending to 'throw up the sponge'.² Walsh, however, was probably right in identifying apathy as the major barrier to a successful temperance crusade, more important even than divisions within temperance ranks. The parliamentary campaign and the protestant temperance societies were facing the same problem. Walsh had also suffered a public rebuff from the Dublin corporation over the centenary, which could only have contributed to his gloom. He opposed the corporation's plans to erect a statue of Fr Mathew. He preferred 'some vigorous effort to perpetuate his work' and and felt that 'until this has been done, ... a statue of Fr Mathew erected in any public place in Dublin would serve only as a standing public record of reproach to us all'. But the publican-dominated corporation decided that a statue would be a 'suitable mode' of spreading the principles of Fr Mathew and thus it rejected the archbishop's objection.³ The celebrations

¹ Irish Catholic, 2 Feb. 1890.

² Croke to Walsh, 3 Feb. 1890 (Dublin diocesan archives, Walsh papers, 404/4/1).

³ The Times, 11 Oct. 1889.

were marred by other clashes between the supporters of temperance and the upholders of the drink interest. At a public meeting to mark the centenary, the lord mayor of Dublin attacked T.W. Russell as a hypocrite, who preached morality but who 'would shoot and hang the people'.¹ In Cork a priest, Dr Kearne, in a centenary sermon created a stir by condemning the home rule party for its championing of the drink interest.² The Freeman's Journal felt that such things 'had much better be left unsaid'.³ But at the same time it recognised the hollowness of the celebrations, for it asked: 'how can it be said that [ceremonials and processions] are not a pretence and a dishonest mockery so long as the principles of him in whose honour it is all done are generally ignored?'⁴ Walsh's pessimism may also have arisen from other non-related issues. The O'Shea divorce petition had been filed in December 1889 and by February Walsh was receiving very bleak reports about the possible outcome.⁵ The fall and death of Parnell in 1890-91 were certainly to put temperance out of most people's minds.

However, a year later, in his speech opening the Fr Mathew hall, Walsh was rather more optimistic, though no less moderate. Admitting that there had been 'a sort of disappointment at the start' and that 'no sooner had the project of organisation begun to take shape, when difficulties arose, difficulties that I could not but feel were of the very gravest character', he nevertheless thought that things now

¹ F.J., 11 Oct. 1890.

² The Times, 10 and 11 Oct. 1890.

³ F.J., 10 Oct. 1890.

⁴ Ibid., 9 Oct. 1890.

⁵ Lyons, Parnell, pp 465, 468-9.

looked rather brighter. The diocese had 62,000 members of temperance societies and 61,000 total abstainers, 38,000 of the latter being children. Despite pressure from the teetotallers, Walsh was pursuing his moderate approach. He hoped that an effort would be made to induce the licensing authorities to reduce the numbers of public houses in Dublin. But he was quick to add: 'Mind I am not disclaiming against the existence of public houses'. He was, he said, 'no advocate of sensational extreme measures in this or any other branch of temperance work'.

I say nothing of the Maine liquor law, or of local option or even of Sunday closing. There are aspects of this question as to which I candidly confess myself unable to form a judgment with anything like the confidence that would enable¹ me to feel justified in giving public utterance to my views.

The efforts of Walsh and Croke to mark the Mathew centenary with a renewed temperance crusade, organised by the hierarchy from within the church, had shown that the church was still divided on the issue of total abstinence, as it had been in Fr Mathew's day. Despite the support given teetotalism by Manning and American leaders like Ireland, many Irish bishops and clergy considered it at best impractical and at worst heretical. In rural society especially drink formed too basic a part of the socio-economic system to be condemned outright, without the church incurring grave risks to its authority and status. But there were zealous advocates of total abstinence among the Irish clergy who were by no means satisfied with the hierarchy's essentially moderate position. The problem they faced in the 1880s and 1890s was how to promote total abstinence from within the church, but without at the same time alienating their superiors.

¹ F.J., 26 Jan. 1891.

Fr James Cullen and the pioneers

The diocese of Ferns in the south-east part of Ireland was an important stronghold of the temperance movement from the 1850s into the 1880s, under bishops Furlong and Warren. It provided a training ground for several of the leaders of the catholic temperance movement, most notably Fr Michael Kelly and Fr James Cullen, who both spent many years at the House of Missions in Enniscorthy. We have already examined some of Kelly's writings on the subject of catholic temperance.¹ Now it is time to look closely at his fellow temperance priest, James Cullen, whose establishment of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart marks the climax of the temperance movement in nineteenth-century Ireland. Cullen was the antithesis of Fr Mathew in many respects. An extremely devout, but rather gloomy man, he was a born organiser, who worked with great energy over many years to perfect the institutions he had created.² Unlike Fr Mathew, Fr Cullen was not converted dramatically to the temperance cause, but developed his views over a long period. Thus the formation of the pioneer association was preceded by nearly thirty years' experience of temperance work. Nor did Cullen allow his own personality to become the focus of his movement. He certainly dominated the organisation till his death in 1921, but the association was far more widely known than he and was structured so as to be self perpetuating. His death therefore by no means spelt the end of it. Even today

¹ See chapter II.

² Rev. Dr Patrick Coffey, 'A modern apostle: Fr James Cullen, S.J. (1841-1921)' in I.E.R., 5th ser., xxiv, no. 3 (Sept. 1924), pp 233-42.

Fr Mathew's name is far better known in Ireland and there are many who assume that he established the pioneer association. That Cullen deliberately courted obscurity is shown by his response to a request for biographical information from the editors of the massive American Standard encyclopedia of the alcohol problem. In their short entry on Cullen, the editors remarked:

Father Cullen was one of the most modest of men: he absolutely declined to furnish any biographical data for the Standard encyclopedia, on the ground that only his work, and not his life was worthy of record.¹

We are fortunate in having a substantial biography of Cullen, written shortly after his death by his fellow Jesuit, Fr Lambert McKenna. McKenna had access to personal diaries and letters which appear no longer to survive.² Of these he made good use. While fulfilling the role of hagiographer and devoting a large section of the book to the spiritual life of his subject, he also fulfilled the role of historian, devoting some two-thirds of the work to a detailed account of Cullen's life and work. An examination of Cullen's life provides a valuable insight into both the development of his own thinking on the subject of temperance and into the growth of the more extreme sections of the catholic temperance movement in the last quarter of the century.

Cullen was born in New Ross in 1841 into the family of a prosperous catholic merchant. The family was pious, especially

¹ E.H. Cherrington, Albert Porter, W.E. Johnson and C.F. Stoddard (ed.), Standard encyclopedia of the alcohol problem (Westerville, Ohio, 1926), ii, 742.

² Fr Fergal McGrath, the Jesuit archivist in Ireland, has made extensive enquiries, at the request of the author, in an effort to locate these diaries and letters. But they have not been found and Fr McGrath has concluded that they have been destroyed.

his mother, whose own family had provided many priests. His father's politics appear to have been nationalist, though more in line with O'Connell's than the young Irelanders'. James, however, was certainly a nationalist. McKenna tells us that his initial aversion to the Jesuits was partially due to their conservative political views, which he had experienced as a student at Clongowes Wood College.¹ Cullen doubtless when still young became familiar with stories of the uprising in Wexford in 1798. Later in life he was to express sympathy and support for the rebels, largely attributing their failure to drunkenness.² After four years with the Christian Brothers, Cullen was sent to Clongowes in 1856, as his parents had been impressed by Jesuit missions in New Ross. According to McKenna, even at this young age, Cullen exhibited a strong missionary impulse, establishing confraternities in the school.³ After Clongowes came three years at Carlow College, from 1861 to 1864, where Cullen gained a reputation for being 'very exact and pious', characteristics which he never lost. He was ordained in Carlow Cathedral in October 1864 and took up a curacy in Wexford town. In his two years at Wexford he developed something of a reputation as a preacher. Though not naturally eloquent, Cullen prepared his sermons carefully and McKenna thought that his 'power came from his intense earnestness, his absolute singleness of purpose'. He also introduced new devotional practices and organisations in Wexford, especially sodalities for women and children.⁴ So, right from

¹ Rev. Lambert McKenna, Life and work of Rev. James Aloysius Cullen, S.J. (London, 1924), p. 21.

² Father Mathew Record, vi, no. 7 (July 1911), pp 178-9.

³ McKenna, op. cit., pp 19-20.

⁴ Ibid., p. 36.

the commencement of his priestly career, Cullen used devotional rituals as a means of strengthening piety among the more enthusiastic of his flock. While in Wexford however, he showed no particular interest in the temperance cause. McKenna aptly sums up the church's attitude to teetotalism at this time.

For a considerable time before Fr Mathew's death, and for many years after it, the general body of the clergy disapproved of total abstinence except as a desperate remedy for confirmed drunkards. The few priests here and there who adopted it as a practice were generally considered either to be faddists or to be guided by mistaken zeal.¹

One of Ireland's first temperance societies had been established in New Ross in 1829 by the Rev. G.W. Carr and Fr Mathew had visited the town in 1840, but all signs of total abstinence had apparently disappeared rather quickly. When the Redemptorists held a major mission in 1854, which Cullen attended, there was no reference to pledge renewal or even to pledge taking.

McKenna says that Cullen, while at home on holidays from Carlow in 1862, was shocked by a visit from a drunken priest. This experience inspired him to take a pledge against drinking whiskey punch, but he continued to drink wine with his meals.²

As a curate in Wexford, he administered pledges against drunkenness, but not total abstinence pledges. Similarly, McKenna found in Cullen's diaries notes for sermons against drunkenness, he had delivered in the late 1860s, but they contained no commitment to total abstinence. What brought the seriousness of the drink problem home to him was probably his work among the boatmen of Enniscorthy.

In the 1850s the Jesuits and Redemptorists had begun conducting parish missions in Ireland. At the same time

¹ McKenna, Cullen, p. 308.

² Ibid., pp 309-310.

Cardinal Wiseman was encouraging similar missions among the Irish in London.¹ One of the leading priests involved in England was the convert, George Spencer, who as Fr Ignatius Spencer, a Passionist, conducted numerous missions in Ireland in the 1850s. Spencer called on the Irish to contribute both money and prayer for the conversion of England. As well he preached the benefits of total abstinence; his so-called 'little missions' of three to four days in each parish, usually involved the administering of the total abstinence pledge to children.² Bishop Furlong was very impressed by this work and decided that every parish in his diocese should have a regular mission. However, the great obstacle was the lack of trained priests to undertake the work. Furlong decided therefore to establish a mission institute in his diocese, like those found on the Continent. In 1866 his House of Missions was set up in Enniscorthy, staffed initially by four of his younger and more active priests. These were Fr Warren, subsequently Furlong's successor, Fr Brownrigg, later bishop of Ossory, Fr Cloney and Fr James Cullen. Cullen, who had already shown an inclination for mission work, was an ideal choice for the new venture. The priests, after instruction from the Jesuits in Dublin, held their first mission at Rathnure in May 1867. This was the beginning of an almost continuous series of missions. In the 1870s, for instance, Cullen held retreats in all the towns and most of the villages of County Wexford.³

¹ Brian Fothergill, Nicholas Wiseman (London, 1963), pp 133-4; Sheridan Gilley, 'Catholic faith of the Irish slums: London, 1840-70' in H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff (ed.), The Victorian city: images and reality (London and Boston, 1973), ii, 837-53.

² Padraig O Murchadha, 'Fr Ignatius Spencer and Ireland' in Catholic Bulletin, v, no. 9 (Sept. 1915), pp 677-88.

³ McKenna, Cullen, pp 50-52.

The mission house was on the east bank of the Slaney, in a district called the Shannon, at the foot of Vinegar Hill. Surrounding it were the homes of the river boatmen and the many public houses which catered to them. The boatmen, who were relatively well-paid for transporting crops and merchandise along the river between Enniscorthy and Wexford town, were notorious for their drunkenness. Cullen took the lead in organising a temperance mission for this group. He was at first not particularly impressed with the effectiveness of the pledge, whether temporary or life-long, in changing the habits of the Slaney boatmen. Instead he felt that their religious life needed to be revitalised and that alternative forms of recreation needed to be supplied. He thus established a sodality of the Sacred Heart for them and a similar organisation for their wives, believing that 'by their tippling they were directly responsible, not merely for their own sins, but for those of their husbands as well.'¹ He also formed a brass band, found a teacher, instruments and uniforms, and tried to promote music as an alternative activity to drinking. Presumably Fr Mathew's temperance bands acted as the model here. The emphasis on devotional organisation, the influence of women and alternative activities were all features that are found throughout Cullen's temperance work. He was also conscious of the social problems that often lay behind heavy drinking. McKenna described his attitude thus:

There is a minimum of comfort without which the observance of the Christian precepts becomes normally impossible. The ordinary man, therefore, will fail in his duties as a Christian if he is placed in circumstances of extraordinary difficulty... Slumdom means not merely suffering, but sin. A zealous priest, even if his heart be untouched by the sight of misery, cannot view it with indifference when it threatens

¹ McKenna, Cullen, p. 58.

to render fruitless all his zeal. Fr Cullen was always alive to this truth. He was never tired of insisting, in season and out of season, that the spiritual evils, and especially drink, which were working havoc among the people, could never be exorcised by merely spiritual influences as long as men had not houses capable of becoming decent homes.¹

This belief led Cullen to begin a cooperative building society, supported financially by Furlong and businessmen of the town, with the aim of rebuilding the slum districts of Enniscorthy.²

This work seems to have influenced Cullen in the direction of the total abstinence pledge. Presumably, like many priests, he found that partial and temporary pledges were not very effective. Not till October 1874, however, while on a mission at Glynn, did he himself take the full pledge. Later he wrote: 'At this time, this step was very unusual. I knew its prudence would be challenged, and its utility denied'.³ Thus did he acknowledge the considerable opposition to total abstinence which existed in the catholic church.

This important step initially produced no noticeable results as far as Cullen was concerned. McKenna notes that he did not establish his first total abstinence society till 1876 and attributes this to Furlong's opposition to teetotalism. With Furlong's death in 1875 and his replacement by Warren early in 1876, the whole situation as regards the temperance campaign in the diocese was transformed. In February 1876, four months after Furlong's death, Cullen established a total abstinence society for the staff and students of St Peter's

¹ McKenna, Cullen, p. 64; McKenna himself wrote on the social policies of the catholic church; see for example Rev. Lambert McKenna, The church and labour: a series of six tracts (Dublin, n.d.).

² McKenna, Cullen, pp 64-5.

³ Ibid., p. 311.

College, Wexford, and in March another among the students of the Christian Brothers in the town.¹ Moreover, Bishop Warren, his former fellow priest from Enniscorthy, proved an enthusiastic temperance advocate. In November 1876, some six months after his consecration, Warren publicly took the total abstinence pledge in Enniscorthy Cathedral and announced the establishment of a diocesan total abstinence society. The society, the Catholic Total Abstinence Society of the Sacred Thirst and Agony and the Compassionate Heart of Mary, was, as its title proclaims, a catholic devotional society.² It aimed to unite 'all catholics in a warfare against the drinking habits of society', to prevent intemperance in the young and to reform those already addicted. The pledge taken by a member required him to 'abstain during my life from all intoxicating liquors, and to discountenance their use by others as far as possible'. Alcohol, however, could be taken by a member under doctor's orders. Attendance at meetings of the society, membership of confraternities, prayer and frequent participation in the sacraments were the members' main obligations. Cullen was made secretary of the society and was in fact its chief organiser. Thus, perhaps we can detect his rigorous hand in the procedure established to police members. The diocese was to be divided into districts, over each of which were to be two superintendants. 'These, being supplied with pocket-registers containing the names and addresses of members', were to 'exercise a supervision over them, and report to the rev. president any deviation from the rules'.³ Such a policing procedure was an innovation in

¹ McKenna, Cullen, p. 314.

² Ibid., p. 315.

³ Ibid., p. 317; F.J., 5 Aug. 1878.

temperance organisation and certainly underlines the determination of Warren and Cullen to make their society a success. By 1879 it had seventeen clerical members and 25,000 lay members. Cullen, characteristically, worked hard to establish the organisation. He set up many branches personally and organised large temperance processions in order to rouse enthusiasm. McKenna, however, speculates that his drive may partly have been the result of sublimation. McKenna's study of Cullen's diaries showed that from at least 1870 he had been contemplating entry into the Society of Jesus. In 1873 he definitely decided to seek entry. But Warren, when he became bishop, apparently opposed Cullen's wish because he wanted him to establish the diocesan total abstinence society. Not till late in 1881, when the society was firmly established, did Warren withdraw his veto.¹

So after five years of intensive temperance work under the guidance of Bishop Warren, Cullen withdrew completely from the movement. He spent two years in Belgium, at Arlon and Louvain, undergoing what, for a man of forty, would have been a very demanding period of instruction. He returned to Ireland late in 1883 to work at Milltown Park in Dublin. His superiors in the order, recognising his ability and experience in mission work, set him to conduct missions and retreats in schools, colleges and religious houses. As part of this work, Cullen regularly administered the total abstinence pledge and encouraged the establishment of total abstinence societies. He organised such societies at All Hallows' College, at Belvedere, to where he was transferred in 1884, at Thurles College, at Carlow College, at St Finbar's in Cork and at

¹ McKenna, Cullen, pp 79-81, 320.

Belfast College, to name only some. But these 'catholic total abstinence societies', as he called them, were quite independent of each other and cannot be regarded as one organisation.¹

In November 1887 Cullen's career took an important turn when he was appointed director of the Apostleship of Prayer in Ireland. This was a devotional movement, begun in France in 1844, which emphasised prayer and was particularly associated with veneration of the Sacred Heart. Under its aegis Cullen could find plenty of scope to promote his many pious causes, including total abstinence. Writing in 1892, Cullen likened the organisation to the 'huge primary wheel in a factory, to which any number of bands may be attached, and which turns them all with equal facility'.² In 1861 the apostleship had established its own journal, the Messenger of the Sacred Heart. Cullen, who said that 'in our century no cause is fully equipped that has not a special organ', immediately began an Irish Messenger of the Sacred Heart and from 1889 he used the periodical to promote the teetotal cause.³ His exploitation of his new position in favour of special causes did not, however, proceed without criticism. McKenna remarks that:

A full year elapsed before he began - as from the beginning he had secretly intended - to use the Messenger for the furthering of his temperance campaign. He had to go warily. His critics - and they were many - were to have no opportunity of saying that the journal was merely a temperance magazine

¹ McKenna, Cullen, p. 100.

² Fr James Cullen, 'The Apostleship of Prayer: various works included under the Apostleship of Prayer' in I.E.R., 3rd ser., xiii, no. 2 (Feb. 1892), p. 131.

³ Fr James Cullen, 'The Apostleship of Prayer: its origins, progress and organisation' in I.E.R., 3rd ser., xii, no. 10 (Oct. 1891), p. 932.

camouflaged as a Messenger. Besides, his whole conception of temperance as a positive thing, an act of love - and not a negative thing, an act of fear and flight - dictated the necessity of first establishing firmly among the people devotion to the Sacred Heart before calling on them to practice temperance as a part of that devotion.¹

Cullen had come to regard total abstinence as an essential part of the devotions of a pious catholic.

In 1889 another important development occurred in his thinking with regard to the tactics of the teetotal movement. Doubtless the opportunities that his new position had opened up made him devote more thought to the question of how best the cause of total abstinence could be pursued. He, like other priests, had administered total abstinence pledges, both life-long and for shorter periods, to whole congregations at once. The temperance societies he had established were, as we have seen, independent of each other and they were composed of both temporary and life-long abstainers. Pledges, though based on religious motives, were not expressly connected with particular forms of devotion. By March 1889 Cullen was extremely unhappy with this whole system. To quote McKenna again:

This dissatisfaction became so acute, that when on March 17, 1889, he was asked by the parish priest of St Peter's Church, in Belfast, where he was conducting a temperance mission, to give the collective pledge, he refused to do so. He said he was willing to give a total abstinence pledge, but only to those men and women who had proved themselves already temperate, and who, for the sake of the Sacred Heart and, by way of example to others, were ready to make a promise of total abstinence for life. This determination to concentrate on the forming of an elite, who would make an 'heroic offering' for love of the Sacred Heart and from a desire of giving good example, never was departed from by him during the rest of his life.²

Typically Cullen immediately sought to institutionalise this innovation. He established the Total Abstinence League

¹ McKenna, Cullen, p. 101.

² Ibid., p. 103.

of the Sacred Heart as a branch of the Apostleship of Prayer in June 1889. He divided the members into three classes: firstly, those who, having been strictly temperate for a long period, made the 'heroic offering', or who, after a lifetime of intemperance, resolved to abstain altogether from drink, with a view to making the 'heroic offering' when they felt confident of their abstinence; secondly, those who had taken a temporary pledge in honour of the Sacred Heart; and thirdly, those who, without abstaining from drink, offered their prayers and alms for the suppression of intemperance. Cullen may have thought it unwise at this stage to attempt to impose a pure total abstinence society on the apostleship. The first two groups, however, grew rapidly and by July 1891 there were 10,103 'heroic offerings' and 261,890 temporary total abstinence pledges.¹ But Cullen's keenness for organisation did not stop there. For those who made the 'heroic offering', which was the group he was essentially interested in, he set up an organisation similar to the Apostleship of Prayer. Members were divided into what Cullen called pioneer bands of thirty-three. Each band included a promoter, whose duties were, firstly to procure members for the band, taking care that these, had they ever been intemperate, should put in a probationary period of three years' total abstinence; secondly, to see that the members of the band were faithful to their promise; and thirdly, to enlist the more enthusiastic of them in the work of organising other similar bands. Tiny pieces of green ribbon were worn by those who had made the 'heroic offering'.² The League of the Cross had used a

¹ McKenna, Cullen, p. 324.

² Ibid., pp 324-5.

similar means to identify its members in Ireland.¹

With this total abstinence league and its disciplined bands of pioneers, Cullen was well on the way to establishing a permanent organisation for his elite of devout catholics. In 1892 he published his very successful Temperance catechism, which sold 60,000 copies in twelve months.² But temperance was by no means the only cause to which Cullen directed his considerable organisational abilities. His pioneers were expected to demonstrate their piety and asceticism in many areas and in each Cullen provided the necessary structures, all geared to the great wheel of the Apostleship of Prayer. In 1890 he established an Apostleship of Cleanliness and Home Comfort. The emphasis was on 'domestic cleanliness' for, according to Cullen: 'A dirty home, a dirty wife and dirty children, are direct incentives to excessive drinking'.³ In 1892 he began an Apostleship of Study for children. It again was characterised by complex grades and devotions.⁴ Later came leagues against gambling and against 'immodesty in dress'.⁵ The sodalities and confraternities of the Sacred Heart, Blessed Sacrament and Blessed Virgin Mary that Cullen established, are far too numerous even to attempt to list them. Yet other groups he set up to encourage daily mass, frequent communion, early communion and the nine first Fridays devotion. A survey of his many societies leaves one with the feeling

¹ The League of the Cross Magazine, ii, no. 2 (Feb. 1885), p. 143.

² J.A. Cullen, S.J., Temperance catechism and total abstinence manual for the use of colleges, schools, and educational establishments (Dublin, 1891); McKenna, Cullen, p. 325.

³ McKenna, op. cit., p. 364.

⁴ Ibid., pp 371-2.

⁵ Ibid., pp 373-6.

that Fr Cullen was almost a one-man 'devotional revolution'. Cullen remained anxious, as he had been in Enniscorthy in the 1860s, to provide healthy and morally uplifting recreation for the working classes. McKenna says that

warmly embracing the idea of the Gaelic League, he would argue that the degenerate tastes and mental stagnation of the people came, not merely from their oppression in penal times, but from their having been deprived of their Gaelic culture and habits of life.¹

The movements to restore the Irish language and sports thus found a staunch supporter in Cullen. Later at St Francis Xavier Hall, which he erected in Gardiner Street in 1908, Cullen would organise classes in Irish and in Gaelic games.²

Perhaps if Cullen had continued to work intensively in the total abstinence cause, he would have established a new national organisation in the early 1890s. However, his mind and his person were distracted from temperance work by the call of foreign missions, just as they had been distracted from the Wexford temperance crusade in 1881 by the call of the Jesuits. He had long hoped to work as an overseas missionary and thus was glad to accept an invitation in 1892 to undertake a mission in the Cape Colony. Cullen was anxious as to how his new total abstinence league would fare during his six months' absence, but he was determined to create an organisation that could function without him and therefore perhaps he regarded his trip as a useful test. In the five years that followed his return from southern Africa in 1893 he took no new initiatives in the field of teetotalism but was mainly engaged in spreading the Apostleship of Prayer and its associated societies throughout the country. But, given

¹ McKenna, Cullen, p. 356.

² Ibid., p. 360.

Cullen's tendency towards what McKenna calls 'ruthless self-examination', it was perhaps predictable that he would soon become dissatisfied with his total abstinence league and seek to improve its structure. Cullen himself said: 'I felt instinctively that the last word had not been spoken, nor the last blow struck'.¹

The league was spreading, but Cullen was distressed by the number of lapses which were occurring, both among those who had taken the temporary pledge and those who had taken the 'heroic offering'. The membership needed to be purged and a more committed and tightly-knit organisation created. He aimed, says McKenna, to weld those who had taken the 'heroic offering' into

a compact corps d'elite on whose perseverance he could confidently rely. They would be known everywhere as people who had not needed to take any pledge, but who had taken it for the love of the Sacred Heart and to give a good example. The old-time stigma of the pledge would thus be destroyed; little by little, abstinence from drink would come to be considered a virtue, because an act of sacrifice for God's sake.²

He decided therefore to keep the system of bands and promoters, but to insist on stricter conditions of admission, stricter regulation of members and, above all, on the obligation of members to wear the external token of their 'heroic offering'. Only those who were truly genuine in their commitment, Cullen reasoned, would be prepared to exhibit it in such a public manner. Initially he decided that this new society would be restricted to women only. Explaining the reasoning behind this, Cullen said:

¹ Fr James Cullen, 'Total Abstinence League of the Sacred Heart' in I.E.R., 4th ser., ix, no. 6 (June 1901), p. 500.

² McKenna, Cullen, p. 123.

On the wives, mothers, and daughters of a nation, all confess, a nation's weal or woe largely depends. As the mother moulds the children, so as a rule will the children grow up. All men agree, that, it is worse than folly to attempt any great social reform, or furnish a remedy for any great social evil, without counting on female energetic cooperation as the most important element of success.¹

Thus, on 27 December 1898, Cullen met four women who were zealous promoters of pioneer bands in the parlour of the presbytery of St Francis Xavier Church in Upper Gardiner Street. They agreed to form a new organisation, to be called the Total Abstinence League of the Sacred Heart for Females Exclusively. Only those who had made the 'heroic offering' were to be admitted and a brooch signifying membership was to be worn at all times. Perhaps because of its ungainly title, the society was simply known as the Brooch League. Its business affairs were put into the hands of the Sisters of Charity in North William Street and the committee began immediately to establish branches in parishes, schools and convents. It is worth quoting the instructions that Cullen gave to his four-woman committee.

Band together in death-grip unity of purpose, through the length and breadth of Ireland, souls capable of heroic self-sacrifice and good example for the sake of weaker brethren. Then, bind them by a voluntary promise of total abstinence for life. Next, give them some external emblem by which they may recognise each other when they meet, and thus gather strength from sympathy of purpose and numbers. Thus united, prepare them to face fearlessly for God's cause, the idiotic banter, sneers, ridicule, coaxing, importunities, threats, or apprehensions held out by those who believe in the omnipotence of alcohol for food, medicine or sociability, and the enterprise would be in great measure effected. Finally, let their motto be, deeds rather than words; precept, but precept backed up by example.²

Cullen at this stage obviously envisaged his pioneers as a small, fanatical band operating in a largely hostile environment.

¹ Cullen, 'Total Abstinence League', pp 502-3.

² Ibid., p. 502.

Just before he left for another year at the Cape, early in 1899 Cullen was conducting a mission in Cork. There a number of young male teetotallers asked to join his Brooch League. As a result he sanctioned the formation of the first male branch in Cork.¹ When he returned from Africa in 1900, he also began to give thought to the establishment of a juvenile section. Cullen strongly approved the practice, which Bishop Furlong had initiated, of giving the total abstinence pledge to children at confirmation. But, here too he thought there should be an organisation to give support and prevent lapses. 'The impression made on the children's minds, at a time of religious fervour, [he wrote] speedily evaporated in presence of the rooted belief and universal custom they had to encounter on their return to their homes.'² Early in 1901 he therefore began a juvenile section. Child members were obliged to wear a badge acknowledging their total abstinence, to repeat the pledge each morning and evening, to promise not to enter a public house nor to associate with drinkers.³ In September 1901 Cullen began referring to his Brooch League as the pioneer branch of the Total Abstinence League of the Sacred Heart. The pioneers were of course the vanguard of of the old total abstinence league that he had established in association with the Apostleship of Prayer in 1889. He retained the concept in his new organisation, which was also based on bands of thirty-three supervised by promoters. But he purged the organisation of ex-drunkards, temporary

¹ McKenna gives February 1901 as the date of the admission of men to the league, but his dating is unreliable and so I have chosen to follow Cullen's own chronology; see McKenna, Cullen, p. 333 and Cullen, 'Total Abstinence League', p. 503.

² Cullen, *op. cit.*, p. 505.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 509.

abstainers and moderationists. All members now had to make the 'heroic offering' for life and to repeat it each morning and evening. The very first rule of the league made it clear that it did 'not aim directly at the reclamation of victims of excessive drinking'.¹ The pioneers were primarily a catholic devotional society. McKenna repeatedly uses the word 'elite' to describe Cullen's view of them. He did not expect the league to attract vast numbers of members the way Fr Mathew's mass crusade had done. On one occasion he described them as a 'special regiment in the great temperance army... Necessarily they will be few, for the conditions of their enlistment are strenuous, almost drastic'.² Thus, one of his constant themes in later years was the need to keep the organisation pure, free of 'wobblers', as he called those whose commitment did not satisfy him. 'For chronic drunkards and periodic boozers, jovial tipplers, "weary wobblers", or even moderate drinkers, we keep no ordinary or reserved seats. They must travel by other trains - ours is a special.'³ This implied that the work of the league would be slow and its growth not particularly spectacular. Cullen was perfectly willing to accept this implication. He told the pioneers that the demoralisation of Ireland has been brought about slowly, but with deadly certainty, and its cure must be, at least comparatively, slow if it is to make Ireland permanently sober and Ireland permanently free! Rome was not built in a day, and a thoroughly sober Ireland will take some years to construct. There is a question of putting brick after brick in the walls we build... We want no jerry-building in our work! It must be lasting.⁴

¹ Cullen, 'Total Abstinence League, p. 507.

² Irish Catholic, 31 Jan. 1914.

³ Ibid., 9 Dec. 1905.

⁴ Ibid., 7 Feb. 1914.

Perhaps what distinguishes Cullen most from his predecessors in the Irish temperance movement is not just his obsession with organisation and commitment, but his patience. He certainly built slowly and with a view to producing a lasting monument.

In October 1901 the first annual general meeting of the pioneer league was held at the Ignatian Chapel in Gardiner Street with some 900 people in attendance.¹ As this substantial turn-out suggests, membership was growing rapidly, more rapidly than Cullen had anticipated. By 1909 there were 150,000 members and by 1914 the figure was 270,000.³ Membership had been boosted by the introduction in 1904 by Cullen of a probationary period of two years.⁴ Probationers, in preparing themselves to take the 'heroic offering', would take a total abstinence pledge for two years. Cullen directed that probationers were to be carefully policed and any who broke the pledge had to begin the probationary period over again. The movement, however, was not without its setbacks. In 1904 Cullen lost control of the Messenger and was moved from Belvedere to Gardiner Street. His use of the journal as an organ for his total abstinence movement had caused discontent and McKenna notes that after his departure the amount of temperance propaganda published in the Messenger declined.⁵ But Cullen, ever conscious of the need for a public organ,

¹ McKenna, Cullen, p. 334.

² Irish Catholic, 4 Dec. 1909.

³ Ibid., 7 Feb. 1914.

⁴ McKenna gives 1902 as the date in this case, but again I have followed Cullen; see McKenna, Cullen, p. 334 and Irish Catholic, 10 Dec. 1904.

⁵ McKenna, op. cit., p. 127.

persuaded the editor of the Irish Catholic to give him a weekly column in that paper. From February 1912 till October 1921, just five weeks before his death, Cullen produced the column, with 'barely a single omission'.¹ Despite this evidence of hostility from within the church, Cullen devoted much effort to recruiting priests for his pioneer league. He established branches in theological colleges and won over an important supporter in the person of Dr Daniel Mannix, the president of Maynooth.² In 1909 Cullen told the annual general meeting that one-third of the priests in Ireland were either pioneers or total abstainers.³ Cullen saw priests and children as two groups that would ensure the transmission of total abstinence principles. Priests, who were members of the pioneer league, would encourage their congregations to join and, as for children, he said:

If 'the child is father to the man', then what the child learns, assimilates and believes will constitute the motive power of the man, when he is called to take his place in the battle against evil, especially against drink... Given a generation or two of children thoroughly instructed in the unvarying effects of alcohol... there will soon arise a generation of men who will not only be personal abstainers, but men who will use every legitimate influence to have the temptation to drink and opportunities for indulgence in alcoholic beverages curtailed, and finally completely abolished.⁴

Like the protestants with their bands of hope, Cullen saw that children raised on total abstinence principles would ultimately lead to the triumph of the movement. So, while he saw his adult pioneers as an elite, in his child pioneers he saw the foundations of whole generations of total abstainers.

¹ McKenna, Cullen, p. 129.

² Irish Catholic, 24 Nov. 1906.

³ Ibid., 4 Dec. 1909.

⁴ Ibid., 14 Feb. 1914.

We have already remarked upon Cullen's nationalism. He followed Drennan and Davis in detecting a deliberate attempt on the part of the English to keep Ireland submissive through drink.

A drunken Ireland, England knew, could never be a free Ireland - then or now! [he said, referring to the 1840s] And let us say it, during the last fifty years, since Father Mathew's time, England could never have withheld self-government from Ireland if, by her shameful licensing opportunities and laws, she had not first stupefied, paralysed, degraded and disgraced the people she feared and hated. The rebellion of '98, with its terrible disasters, brought about by drink at Ross, Vinegar Hill and Arklow, disclosed the fatal secret of success to the English commanders. Let the wild Irish drink, they thought, and, despite all their military skill and valour, we shall easily conquer them - let the Irish drink and their slavery is secured - make Ireland and keep Ireland a nation of drunkards - then hold its people up to the scorn of the world and our object is gained!¹

For Cullen temperance was an essential element in the nationalist struggle. His pioneer league, he said, would grow and prosper side by side 'with the vigorous life of Irish Ireland in the coming parliament of our own legislative and domestic independence'.² While he talked of home rule, Cullen clearly had little time for the home rule politicians and their drink trade allies. He looked more to the new cultural movements. He urged pioneers to throw themselves 'heart and soul' into the Irish language movement: 'into the music, the songs, the games and dances of Irish Ireland, and into all the approved associations for the betterment of our country'. He acknowledged that members of the Gaelic League were frequently the most active and committed pioneers. And, echoing Sinn Fein, he urged in 1905 that pioneers should

¹ Irish Catholic, 10 Jan. 1913; for accounts of drunkenness among the 1798 rebels see W.H. Maxwell, History of the Irish rebellion of 1798 (reprint, London, 1903), pp 316-17 and Thomas Pakenham, The year of liberty (London, 1969), pp 213, 221, 242, 244.

² Irish Catholic, 9 Dec. 1905.

give preference to goods manufactured in Ireland as a means of promoting Irish industry and ending emigration.¹ Gaelic organisations regularly participated in temperance processions and in 1906 the Irish Independent described the Dublin catholic temperance societies as 'acting as propagandists for the Gaelic League'.²

The new nationalism in turn found much to admire in the temperance cause. The Gaelic Athletic Association, at the urging of Archbishop Croke, was quick to exclude drink from its meetings and to refuse sponsorship by publicans.³ Arthur Griffith in The resurrection of Hungary showed how the Austrians foisted a reputation for drunkenness upon the Hungarians in an effort to discredit them as a nation and implied that the English had done the same to the Irish.⁴ Moreover, Sinn Fein found itself battling the drink interests, the so-called 'whiskey ring', which had dominated the Dublin corporation for many years.⁵ Jim Larkin, a life-long teetotaler, was anxious to encourage his union members to take the pledge, telling them on one occasion that it was 'the duty of everyone who had at heart the welfare of Ireland to call upon the national representatives to put in the forefront of their programme legislation to crush the curse of intemperance'.⁶ In the north, Bulmer Hobson and

¹ Irish Catholic, 9 Dec. 1905.

² Irish Independent, 20 Oct. 1906.

³ T.F. O'Sullivan, Story of the G.A.A. (Dublin, 1916), pp 63, 78, 87.

⁴ Arthur Griffith, The resurrection of Hungary: a parallel for Ireland (Dublin, 1904), pp 79-80.

⁵ Richard Davis, Arthur Griffith and non-violent Sinn Fein (Dublin, 1974), p. 51.

⁶ Emmet Larkin, James Larkin: Irish labour leader, 1876-1947 (London, 1968), pp 6, 48-9, 126-7.

Denis McCullough reformed the Belfast Irish Republican Brotherhood and decided in future only to accept members who did not drink.¹ But perhaps the most striking combination of nationalism and teetotalism is to be found in the person of Patrick Pearse. Pearse was a dedicated non-drinker from a very early age. 'He abhorred pubs', says his most recent biographer. In the prospectus for St Enda's, produced in 1908, he vowed to teach his students, among other virtues, temperance.² He certainly envisaged his new Gaelic warriors as total abstainers.

The establishment of the pioneer league in 1898-1901 marked the beginning of the most successful catholic temperance crusade in Ireland since Fr Mathew's work in the 1840s. Like Fr Mathew's movement, the pioneer league was based on total abstinence and was allied with the more extreme nationalists of the day. Unlike Fr Mathew, however, Cullen did not resist this alliance, rather he encouraged it. Like Fr Mathew's crusade also, the pioneer league was by no means accepted by the whole church. Yet Cullen was far more successful than Fr Mathew in dealing with clerical opposition. He worked from within the church, repeatedly emphasising that his pioneers were a small band of dedicated catholics who took the total abstinence pledge as a sacrifice and a sign of their piety. It was hard for critics of teetotalism to fault such devotion. No one could accuse Cullen of flouting the authority of his superiors or of allying himself with protestants, as Fr Mathew had done. Yet, the very name,

¹ Bulmer Hobson, Ireland yesterday and tomorrow (Tralee, 1968), pp 35, 98.

² Ruth Dudley Edwards, Patrick Pearse: the triumph of failure (London, 1977), pp 24, 116, 129; Irish Independent, 13 Oct. 1906.

pioneer, while it implied a small group, also implied that such a group was preparing the way for much larger numbers in the future. So Cullen saw it. Unlike Fr Mathew, he expected the conversion of Ireland to teetotalism to be a slow process which would take generations to accomplish. What was needed therefore was a strong, self-perpetuating organisation, an organisation which would not be dependent for its strength on any individual. Cullen wished to avoid creating a personality cult of the sort that had been associated with Fr Mathew. In this he was remarkably successful. Even today, Fr Mathew's name is far better known than his own in Ireland. Yet fifty years after Cullen's death the pioneers survive, while Fr Mathew's crusade was over even before his own death. Cullen's success undoubtedly came largely from his ability to harness two powerful forces, which we have already noted. These were the new militant and ascetic catholicism, which was expressed in various rigorous devotional exercises and secondly, the new nationalism which appeared after 1890 and which was devoted to restoring Ireland's Gaelic heritage. Gaelic revivalists and pioneers were agreed in seeing Irish drunkenness as a product of the English conquest, as in fact something fostered by the English in order to facilitate the conquest.

At the same time, with his emphasis on the creation of an elite, Cullen avoided a direct confrontation with the drink industry and with deeply entrenched drinking habits. The English and American churches could preach total abstinence more easily than the Irish. They were essentially urban churches and drink was nowhere near as significant a social and economic factor in English and American cities, as it was

in rural Ireland. Also, both the English and American hierarchies were anxious to convince their predominantly protestant societies that catholics, especially Irish catholics, were sober, law-abiding and respectable. The Irish church, however, lacked this incentive. It was more concerned with ensuring stability and a continuation of its authority in rural Ireland. These could only be jeopardised by an insistence on total abstinence. Cullen thus did not seek to impose total abstinence on every Irishman. His movement was, like he himself, an essentially urban phenomenon, especially strong among the young, among the middle and upper working classes and among cultural nationalists. Cullen learned well the mistakes of Fr Mathew, He did not repeat them. His temperance movement did not have the widespread appeal of the Capuchin's, it did not convert the Irish people in vast, enthusiastic numbers, but it survived.

This study has sought to chart the course of the Irish
temperance movement in the century of the nineteenth
century. The history of intemperance was marked by a variety

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Ireland sober is Ireland free

Motto of the Irish Association for the Prevention of Intemperance, 1878-

This study has sought to chart the course of the Irish temperance movement in the second half of the nineteenth century. The banner of intemperance was carried by a variety of groups, from middle-class, protestant loyalists to working-class, catholic nationalists. Some sought to convert Ireland by reasoned argument, some by coercive legislation, some by an appeal to religious fanaticism. But ultimately the question arises: how successful was this movement, in whatever form and with whatever means? Did drink consumption and drunkenness decline during this period and, if so, was the temperance movement in any way responsible for the change?

In chapter I we discussed drink consumption and the problems associated with the statistics purporting to measure it. But, even acknowledging the unsatisfactory nature of the data at our disposal, general trends are discernable. The consumption of spirits declined significantly from the late 1850s, while beer consumption rose, though only slowly. The question of the role of the temperance movement is a complex one. The consumption of spirits appears to have been highly sensitive to economic fluctuations and to changes in the levels of duty. Thus the late 1850s and early 1860s, which saw increases in duty and economic decline, and the late 1870s and most of the 1880s, which also saw serious economic difficulties, were periods of declining consumption. Increases occurred during periods of relative prosperity, like the late 1860s and early 1870s. This would seem logical. Yet it has been common to portray heavy drinking as something people are driven to by despair and as a means of escape from intolerable socio-economic circumstances.

Thomas Davis, for instance, expressed this view.¹ However the pattern of spirit consumption in Ireland in the second half of the nineteenth century would seem to contradict this interpretation. On the contrary, it would suggest that people drank more during times of relative prosperity. This conclusion is in line with recent studies of England and France during the same period, in which a positive correlation between wages and drink consumption was noted.² With this in mind, one is perhaps wiser to see drinking as a natural leisure activity, rather than viewing it as a sign of socio-economic decline, which the temperance movement tended to do.

We have already noted a list of possible reasons for the decline in spirit consumption suggested by E.B. McGuire in his important study of Irish distilling.³ He singles out the temperance movement, restrictive legislation, rising educational standards, the popularity of athletics and a switch to beer consumption as the most significant factors. The decline in the illicit industry from the 1830s and the imposition of effective legislative restrictions on retailing, which culminated in the 1872 and 1874 licensing acts, certainly helped bring the Irish spirits industry under government control. But the temperance movement tended to claim rather too much for such legislation. For instance, it maintained that the beerhouse act of 1877 and the Sunday

¹ See above, pp 213-15. A forceful presentation of this view is also to be found in Keith Thomas, Religion and the decline of magic (London, 1971), pp 20-24.

² A.E. Dingle, 'Drink and working-class living standards in Britain, 1870-1914' in Economic History Review, 2nd ser., xxv, no. 4 (Nov. 1972), pp 608-22; Michael Marrus, 'Social drinking in the "Belle Epoque"' in Journal of Social History, xii, no. 2 (Dec. 1974), pp 115-41.

³ See above, p. 20.

closing act of 1878 caused, or at least subsequently contributed to, the decline in consumption and arrests for drunkenness which occurred in the late 1870s and early 1880s. But this is highly unlikely. The decline in consumption and arrests began in 1877, before either act was in operation. As for arrest statistics, they were very much a function of the attitude of the police.¹ Arrests for drunkenness fell most dramatically in 1879, 1880 and 1881, the years in which the R.I.C. was too occupied with the land war to worry greatly about breaches of the licensing laws. Arrests began to rise again in 1882 as the land crisis abated, though they were still far below their earlier levels.² A similar pattern is discernible in the 1860s: from the mid 1860s arrests for drunkenness fell dramatically. But even leaders of the temperance movement conceded that this was largely due to the authorities' preoccupation with fenianism, for consumption was in fact on the rise at the time.³ However, from the 1850s in both Ireland and England the temperance movement lobbied parliament intensively for restrictive legislation. Many of the specific measures demanded, like prohibition and local option, were never conceded. But other, more modest, measures were. Partial Sunday closing was introduced in Ireland, trading hours on week days were shortened and the

¹ For a discussion of the inadequacy of criminal statistics, see J.J. Tobias, Crime and industrial society in the nineteenth century (London, 1967), pp 14-21, 256-67.

² For a graph of arrests for drunkenness in Ireland between 1876 and 1905 see Twenty-eighth annual report of the I.A.P.I. for the year 1906 (Dublin, 1907), p. 36.

³ See Henry Wigham's evidence in Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, p. 3, H.C. 1867-8 (280), xiv, 561.

procedures for granting, renewing and transferring retail licences were tightened up. Acts were also passed to encourage the consumption of liquors other than spirits. The Irish temperance movement by the end of the century was disappointed and frustrated with regard to the legislative campaign. Its more extreme goals had not been achieved, but, nevertheless, significant advances had occurred since the middle of the century in regulating liquor retailing and these were generally calculated to diminish the consumption of spirits. The movement's disenchantment with parliament would thus seem rather excessive.

McGuire suggests also that spirit consumption declined due to the growth of alternative attractions. In support of this contention he refers to the evidence of a police witness before the 1898 royal commission on liquor licensing laws. The witness was in fact Sir Andrew Reed, inspector-general of the R.I.C., who was the leading police authority on the drink question. He thought that the popularity of cycling and athletics among young people had contributed to a decline in drinking.¹ He was contradicted by other witnesses who pointed out that athletic and race meetings were frequently got up by publicans in order to increase their business.² However, Reed was undoubtedly correct in identifying changing recreational patterns as a significant factor so far as drink consumption was concerned. We saw in chapter I that the famine, coming on top of Fr Mathew's crusade, had a profound effect on rural drinking and recreational patterns. This was

¹ Royal commission on liquor licensing laws, p. 29 [C-8980], H.C. 1898, xxxviii, 563.

² *Ibid.*, p. 247/781.

generally in the direction of less drinking and the drinking that did occur being limited to a clearly defined group. Traditional festivals were criticised for their drunkenness and immorality and the attack on them was led by temperance advocates and the clergy.¹ But the Irish temperance movement, like its English counterpart, was very aware of the need to provide wholesome and uplifting recreation for the working classes. Thus, while condemning patterns and wakes, the temperance movement sought to encourage and establish alternative attractions. Local temperance societies acted as social clubs, substitutes for the social life which had been lost with the rejection of the public house. Newspapers and temperance periodicals are full of accounts of 'soirees', musical evenings and excursions, as well as the more serious meetings and lectures, organised by temperance societies. Even lectures frequently ended with 'the ladies' providing supper or musical entertainment. Temperance reading rooms, bands and processions, so prominent in Fr Mathew's crusade, continued to be a feature of temperance activities throughout the century. We saw that Fr Cullen also encouraged bands and promoted Gaelic music, dancing and games. In this his nationalism went hand in hand with his desire for drink-free recreation.

So the temperance movement had to provide not only instruction for its members, but recreation as well. But it went well beyond this in seeking to develop alternatives to the public house for the working class generally. In the towns especially alternative beverages were encouraged. We

¹ For the attack on popular festivals and recreations in England, see R.W. Malcolmson, Popular recreations in English society, 1700-1850 (Cambridge, 1973), ch. 7.

have noted temperance societies establishing drinking fountains, coffee stands, cafés and temperance hotels. In Belfast, Dublin and Cork this became a very profitable business and contributed substantially to the usually precarious finances of the movement. In this temperance men were aided by the increasing availability and cheapness of non-alcoholic drinks. There was a substantial rise in tea consumption in the 1870s and 1880s, particularly in the west and north west, and by the late 1870s per capita tea consumption in Ireland had nearly reached English levels.¹ By the end of the century most towns had a firm engaged in the manufacture of mineral waters and in both Dublin and Belfast these were large businesses with substantial export trades.² Generally in the second half of the century there was an increase in the opportunities for recreation, especially in urban areas. Parks, museums and galleries were opened to the public, frequently with the encouragement of the temperance movement. In 1854 James Haughton said that he 'would throw open all places of innocent recreation and amusement as much as possible'.³ Like Mathew and Cullen he felt that music should be encouraged as a recreation, but he was especially concerned that there should be more recreation available on Sunday. Here, however, the temperance movement was divided. As we have seen, sabbatarianism was widespread

¹ L.M. Cullen, An economic history of Ireland since 1660 (London, 1972), pp 138, 151.

² Ibid., p. 162. Cantrell and Cochrane, one of the biggest manufacturers, made use of temperance propaganda in their advertising, especially that directed at Gaelic athletic enthusiasts; see Cantrell and Cochrane advertisement card, 1890s (N.L.I., Bourke papers, MS 10,731 (17)).

³ Report from the select committee on public houses, p. 142, H.C. 1854 (367), xiv, 406.

in the north. Temperance facilities, like the I.T.L.'s coffee stands and cafés, were closed on Sundays. Temperance groups in the south were less prone to sabbatarianism and therefore their facilities tended to stay open. The D.T.A.S.'s Townsend Street coffee palace and the York Street workingmen's club both operated on Sunday.

The first railway line was opened in Ireland in 1834 and between the mid 1840s and the mid 1860s railway construction was carried on intensively.¹ Not only did railways enable temperance societies and their agents to operate more widely, but they also increased recreational opportunities. Accounts of Sunday recreation in the 1860s and 1870s show that in Dublin and Belfast the working classes took advantage of these opportunities. In Dublin workers tended to go to Kingstown or even Bray, often walking part of the way and taking a train the rest. Phoenix Park was also extremely popular for Sunday excursions.² In Belfast sabbatarianism certainly curtailed recreational opportunities,³ but people from the surrounding area converged on the city by train on Sundays.⁴ Drinking continued, however, to play a part in Sunday recreation. The public houses of Kingstown and Phoenix Park were heavily patronised by excursionists, while many railway stations had their own bars for the convenience of passengers.⁵ The 'travelling drinker' became even more common

¹ Cullen, An economic history of Ireland since 1660, pp 142-3.

² Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 30/588.

³ For Sunday in Belfast see above, pp 123-5.

⁴ Report ... 1867-8, op. cit., p. 42/600.

⁵ Report from the select committee on Sunday closing acts (Ireland), p. 284, H.C. 1888 (255), xix, 284.

with the introduction of Sunday closing in 1878. The bona fide traveller qualification of three miles was no deterrent to a determined drinker. The temperance movement considered it totally inadequate and campaigned to have it at least doubled. In some instances it in fact increased the opportunities for Sunday drinking. Commissioner Harrel of the D.M.P. reported in 1888 that men would walk out three miles from the city in order to be able to get a drink on Sunday morning and then return in the afternoon when the public houses opened.¹

In the 1860s and 1870s, before the advent of the G.A.A., observers remarked on the lack of interest shown by the Irish in sports. In 1877, for instance, the recorder of Dublin said:

I wish to see young men going out into the suburbs and playing cricket, as they do in the suburbs of English towns. Our young men do not know anything about cricket, as a general rule, and even in the public houses they have not the amusements that the French have, of dominoes and backgammon. They are the most ignorant people in respect to the comforts of home and to the way of amusing themselves... that exist in the civilised world.²

Similar comments were made with regard to rural Ireland. In 1868 a Tipperary magistrate said that men just walked about, read newspapers and tried to organise dances when the public houses were not open; 'at the doors of their own houses, you may see three or four young men with the Nation... one reading aloud to the others'.³ In this context it is easy to understand why fenianism was an important social, as well as political, force.⁴ Similarly, the popularity of Gaelic games and cultural

¹ Report from the select committee on Sunday closing acts (Ireland), 1888, p. 28.

² Report from the select committee on Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, p. 69, H.C. 1877 (198), xvi, 85.

³ Report from the select committee on the Sale of Liquors on Sunday (Ireland) Bill, 1867-8, p. 8/566.

⁴ See above, pp 263-4.

activities in the 1880s and 1890s says as much about the social needs of the young, as it does about their nationalist fervour.

In rural Ireland the decline in popular festivals during the first half of the century and the growing interest in Gaelic games from the 1880s onwards led to a significant reduction in opportunities for heavy drinking. Meanwhile, in the towns, employers were encouraged to reduce drinking opportunities during and after work. Temperance men in the cities aimed particularly to destroy the week-end drinking pattern of the working classes. They supported moves to introduce a Saturday half holiday as a means of diminishing Saturday night drinking. Sunday closing and early Saturday closing were two of the major legislative changes sought by the movement from the 1860s. In this campaign temperance men had important successes. By the 1880s payment of workers on Saturday morning was becoming widespread; in 1878 rural Sunday closing was introduced for a trial period, along with shorter Sunday trading hours in the cities; in 1906 rural Sunday closing was made permanent and Saturday trading hours were shortened. With regard to medicine the temperance movement also had considerable success in persuading doctors to refrain from recommending alcohol to their patients, though it continued to be popular in folk medicine.¹ In Britain sobriety came increasingly to be identified with respectability, with material success and with social

¹ For the declining use of alcohol in nineteenth-century medicine see F.N.L. Poynter (ed.), Chemistry in the service of medicine (London, 1963), p. 80 and G.E. Trease, Pharmacy in history (London, 1964), pp 166, 230-31, 249.

mobility.¹ The same tended to occur in Ireland. If 'gentlemen after dinner had ceased to be disgusting in the drawing-room', as the Halls reported in the 1840s,² by the 1860s the middle class and workers with middle-class aspirations had also generally banished drunkenness from their homes. But in Ireland by the end of the century temperance was not only identified with respectability, but with piety and patriotism as well. Devout catholics and protestants were generally teetotallers, while total abstinence was spreading rapidly among Gaelic revivalists. So, although the Irish temperance movement did not achieve its main legislative goals and remained a controversial issue in some churches, it did have a significant impact on recreational habits; and among some sections of the Irish population total abstinence was adopted enthusiastically. With this in mind we would have to conclude that the temperance movement did indeed play a part in the declining consumption of spirits in Ireland from the 1850s.

How influential the temperance movement was in terms of membership is impossible to say with any accuracy, as few societies provided membership figures. Total abstinence seems to have become widespread in Ulster from the 1870s, as it was endorsed by most of the province's protestant churches. But in the south the picture is less clear. One wonders, for instance, how many of Fr Mathew's followers adhered to their total abstinence pledges. It is usual to portray his movement

¹ For temperance and class in Victorian England see John Foster, Class struggle and the industrial revolution (London, 1974), p. 221 and T.R. Tholfsen, Working class radicalism in mid-Victorian England (New York, 1977), pp 229-40.

² See above, p. 77.

as having disappeared rapidly, leaving hardly a trace. Yet, in the 1860s among nationalists and politicians, one finds examples of men who had maintained their abstinence. A.M. Sullivan, John Denvir and Charles Kickham are three examples we have met with in this study. The catholic church certainly frowned on total abstinence and we have seen how careful Fr Cullen had to be in order not to offend his superiors. But Fr Mathew's crusade and the confirmation pledge, first introduced by Bishop Furlong, must have familiarised many catholics with the concept of total abstinence. In this regard Canon Sheehan, in Luke Delmege, is perhaps not altogether accurate in portraying total abstinence as an imported English novelty. At various times total abstinence won far more popular support in Ireland than it ever did in England.

Perhaps here we could look at the present day situation in Ireland for information. We noted in chapter I that students of the drink question in Ireland in recent times have found that different studies have produced contradictory results. Some have shown very high admission rates to hospitals for alcoholism in the Republic and an unusually large expenditure on alcohol. Yet others have found that per capita alcohol consumption in Ireland is low by world standards.¹ This inconsistency is resolved by what we termed polarisation. Ireland has a remarkably large group of total abstainers, which tends to distort per capita measures. A study reported in 1976 of adult males in County Monaghan found both high levels of alcoholism and of teetotalism. Of the sample studied, 9.4% were rated as alcoholics and 25.5% as total abstainers. Among

¹ See above, p. 98.

protestants 6% were alcoholics and 31% were total abstainers, while for catholics the figures were 10% and 25% respectively.¹ We know that teetotalism appeared among protestants in the 1830s and became widespread from the 1870s, and these figures would suggest that it is still a substantial force today. Among catholics it is somewhat less popular, but still remarkably widespread. One is compelled to ask, when did this substantial group of catholic teetotallers first appear? Are they the product of Cullen's pioneer movement after 1900, or was there a significant number of catholic teetotallers in nineteenth-century Ireland, originating in Fr Mathew's crusade of the 1840s? We saw that the heavy-drinking group of bachelor farmers appeared after the famine, but did the teetotal group appear at the same time? Unfortunately, the present state of research does not permit an answer to this interesting question.

But this is only one of many aspects of the drink question which requires further study. In all areas - social, economic, political and religious - there are many unanswered questions. There is nothing approaching a satisfactory study of either Fr Mathew's crusade or of Fr Cullen's pioneers, though both men have been the subject of pious biographies.²

¹ J.M. Owens, J.T. Quinn, Joan Graham and J.M. Rao, 'Drinking patterns in an Irish county' in Irish Medical Journal, lxi, no. 6 (Mar. 1976), p. 137; see also Joyce O'Connor, The young drinkers (London, 1978), p. 148.

² Work is in fact being done on both Mathew and Cullen, though nothing is yet in print. Both Professor Hugh Kearney of the University of Pittsburgh and Mr David Johanson of La Trobe University, Melbourne, have been studying Fr Mathew. At University College, Cork, Mr Michael Howley has been examining the drink question in the 1920s, under the supervision of Professor J.J. Lee.

The nature of Fr Mathew's appeal, the exact numbers joining his movement, its relation to repeal, the reasons for its decline and its lasting impact are all matters worthy of serious study.¹ We have attempted here to sketch Fr Cullen's evolution as a temperance advocate, but much more could be done in analysing the growth of the pioneers after 1900 and particularly their relations with the church and the nationalist movement. The role of drink in the social life of both rural and urban Ireland needs more study, as does the issue of leisure generally. Here the books by Robert Malcolmson and Peter Bailey on changing patterns of recreation in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could serve as useful models.² In chapters IV and V we examined drink as both a political and religious issue between 1870 and 1900, but here again there is much scope for further research. No satisfactory study of the role of the publican exists. His function in the nationalist movement, especially at election times, remains largely obscure.³ The economic and political importance of the drink industry in cities like Dublin and Cork has been commented upon, but could be pursued much

¹ The temperance movement has already been examined in the light of millennialism and it might prove productive to apply this concept to Fr Mathew's crusade; see W.M. Walker, 'The Scottish prohibition party and the millennium' in International Review of Social History, xviii, pt 3 (1973), pp 353-79 and Patrick O'Farrell, 'Millennialism, messianism and utopianism in Irish history' in Anglo-Irish Studies, ii (1976), pp 45-68.

² Malcolmson, Popular recreations in English society; Peter Bailey, Leisure and class in Victorian England (London and Toronto, 1978).

³ The political allegiances and voting patterns of publicans in England have been briefly looked at in Foster, Class struggle and the industrial revolution, p. 218 and J.R. Vincent, Pollbooks: how Victorians voted (Cambridge, 1967), pp 18, 65-6.

further. As for the churches, a study of the relationship between the priest and the publican, particularly in rural Ireland, could be very enlightening. It is hoped that the present work will provide a starting point for such research.

APPENDICES

- I - SPIRITS AND DRINK CONSUMPTION IN 19TH CENTURY IRELAND
- II - IRISH LIQUOR LICENSING
- III - LIQUOR RETAILING, 1820-1840
- IV - HOUSEHOLD CONSUMPTION PATTERNS, 1820-1840
 - 1. BASED IN DUBLIN
 - 2. BASED IN BELFAST
 - 3. BASED IN GALWAY

APPENDICES

I SPIRIT AND BEER CONSUMPTION IN 19TH CENTURY IRELAND

II IRISH LIQUOR LICENCES

III LIQUOR RETAILERS, 1820-1900

IV MAJOR IRISH TEMPERANCE SOCIETIES, 1829-1901

1 BASED IN DUBLIN

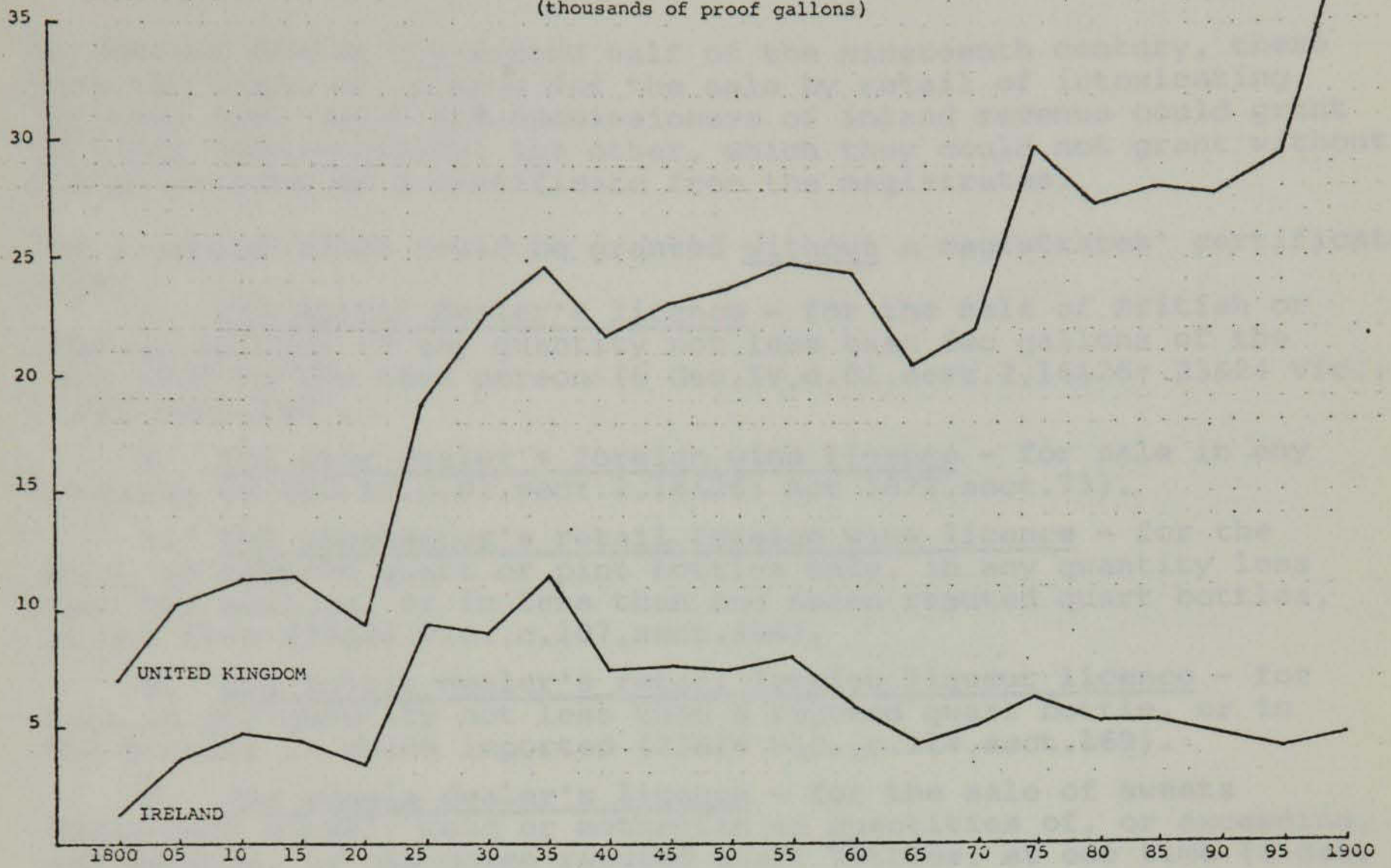
2 BASED IN BELFAST

3 BASED ELSEWHERE

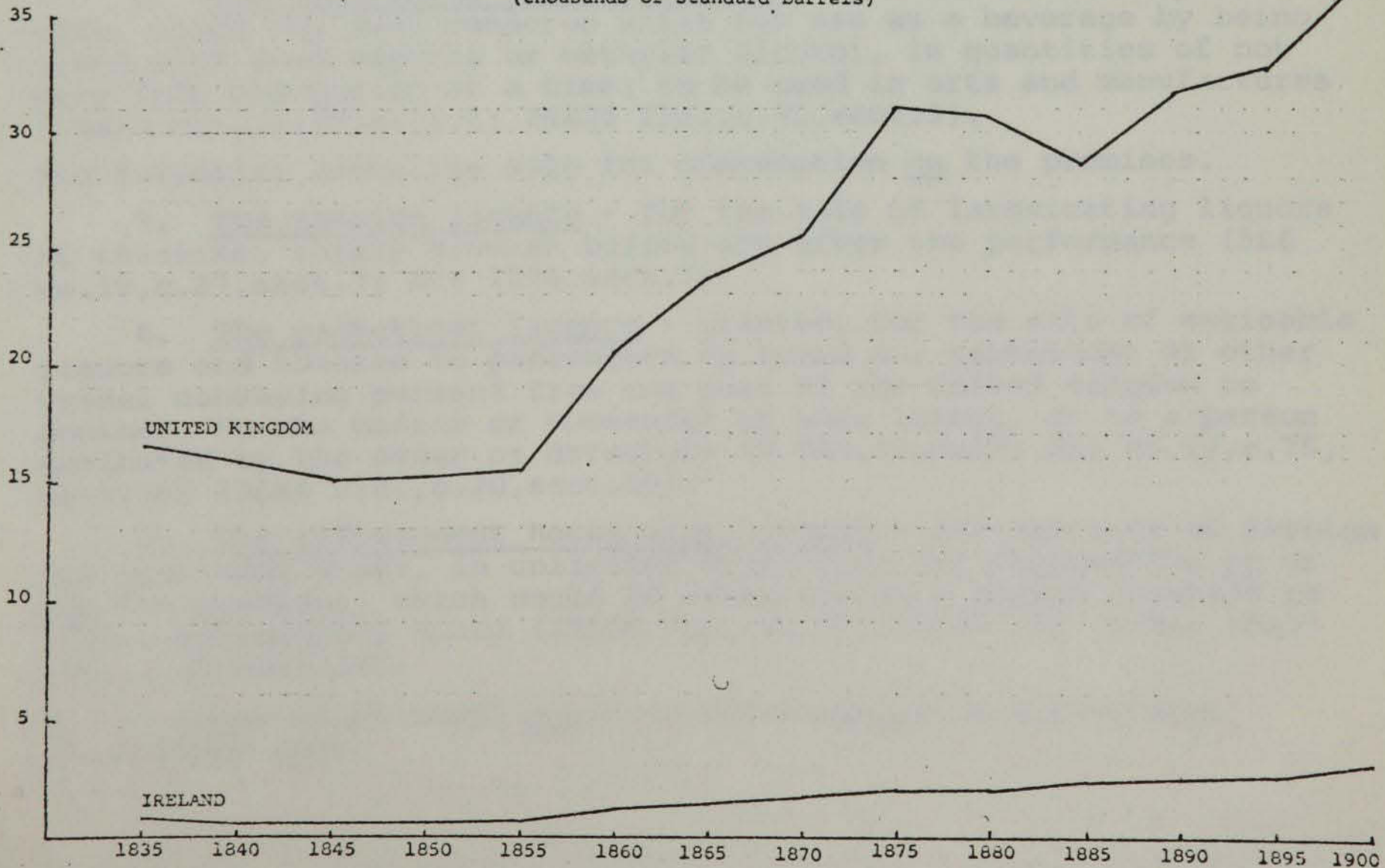
APPENDIX I

SPIRIT AND BEER CONSUMPTION IN 19TH CENTURY IRELAND

SPIRITS CHARGED FOR CONSUMPTION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM & IRELAND, 1800-1900
(thousands of proof gallons)



BEER PRODUCTION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM & IRELAND, 1835-1900
(thousands of standard barrels)



APPENDIX II

IRISH LIQUOR LICENCES

In Ireland during the second half of the nineteenth century, there were two kinds of licence for the sale by retail of intoxicating liquors: one, which the commissioners of inland revenue could grant of their own authority; the other, which they could not grant without the production of a certificate from the magistrates.

The licences which could be granted without a magistrates' certificate were:

1. The spirit dealer's licence - for the sale of British or foreign spirits in any quantity not less than two gallons of the same kind to the same person (6 Geo.IV,c.81,sect.2,16&26; 23&24 Vic.,c.114,sect.168).
2. The wine dealer's foreign wine licence - for sale in any quantity (6 Geo.IV,c.81,sect.2,16&26; Act 1872,sect.73).
3. The shopkeeper's retail foreign wine licence - for the sale, in reputed quart or pint bottles only, in any quantity less than two gallons, or in less than one dozen reputed quart bottles, at one time (23&24 Vic.,c.107,sect.3&4).
4. The spirit dealer's retail foreign liqueur licence - for sale in any quantity not less than a reputed quart bottle, or in the bottles in which imported (23&24 Vic.,c.114,sect.169).
5. The sweets dealer's licence - for the sale of sweets (home-made wines), mead or metheglin in quantities of, or exceeding, two gallons, or one dozen reputed quart bottles, at one time (6 Geo.IV,c.81,sect.2; 23&24 Vic.,c.113).

All the foregoing authorise sale for consumption off the premises only.

6. The methylated spirits licence - for the sale of spirits of wine, which has been rendered unfit for use as a beverage by being mixed with wood naphtha or methylic alcohol, in quantities of not more than one gallon at a time; to be used in arts and manufactures (18&19 Vic.,c.38,sect.1; 24&25 Vic.,c.91,sect.3).

The following authorise sale for consumption on the premises.

7. The theatre licence - for the sale of intoxicating liquors at theatres, thirty minutes before and after the performance (5&6 Wm.IV,c.37,sect.7; Act 1874,sect.7).
8. The packetboat licence - granted, for the sale of excisable liquors and tobacco to passengers on board any packetboat or other vessel conveying persons from one part of the United Kingdom to another, to the master or commander of such vessel, or to a person nominated by the owner or directors (9 Geo.IV,c.47; 4&5 Wm.IV,c.75,sect.10; 43&44 Vic.,c.20,sect.45).
9. The refreshment house wine licence - for the sale of foreign and home-made wines, in unlimited quantities for consumption on or off the premises, which could be taken out by a person licensed to keep a refreshment house (23&24 Vic.,c.107; 24&25 Vic.,c.81; 26&27 Vic.,c.35,sect.18).

The licences which could not be granted without a magistrates' certificate were:

10. The public house licence (whether seven-day, six-day, early closing, or six-day early closing) - for the sale in unlimited quantities of beer and other intoxicating liquors included in the licence, for consumption on or off the premises (3&4 Wm.IV,c.68; Act 1872,sect.49; Act 1874, sect.2&3).

11. The occasional licence - for sale elsewhere than on the licensed premises, granted to publicans or to keepers of refreshment houses holding a wine licence (25&26 Vic.,c.22,sect.13; 26&27 Vic.,c.33; 27 Vic.,c.18,sect.5; Act 1874,sect.4).

The following authorise sale for consumption off the premises.

12. The spirit grocer's licence - granted to traders selling tea, cocoa-nuts, chocolate or pepper, for the sale of spirits in any quantity not exceeding two quarts at one time (6 Geo.IV,c.81, sect.4; 8&9 Vic.,c.64, sect.2; Act 1872,sect.81&82).

13. The beer retailer's licence - for the sale of beer (which includes ale and porter), in any quantity less than four and a half gallons, or two dozen reputed quart bottles, at one time (27&28 Vic.,c.35).

14. The wholesale beer dealer's licence - for the sale of beer in casks containing not less than four and a half gallons, or two dozen reputed quart bottles (Act 1874,sect.8).

From: Andrew Reed, The liquor licensing laws of Ireland
(Dublin, 1889), pp 33-6.

APPENDIX III

LIQUOR RETAILERS, 1820-1900

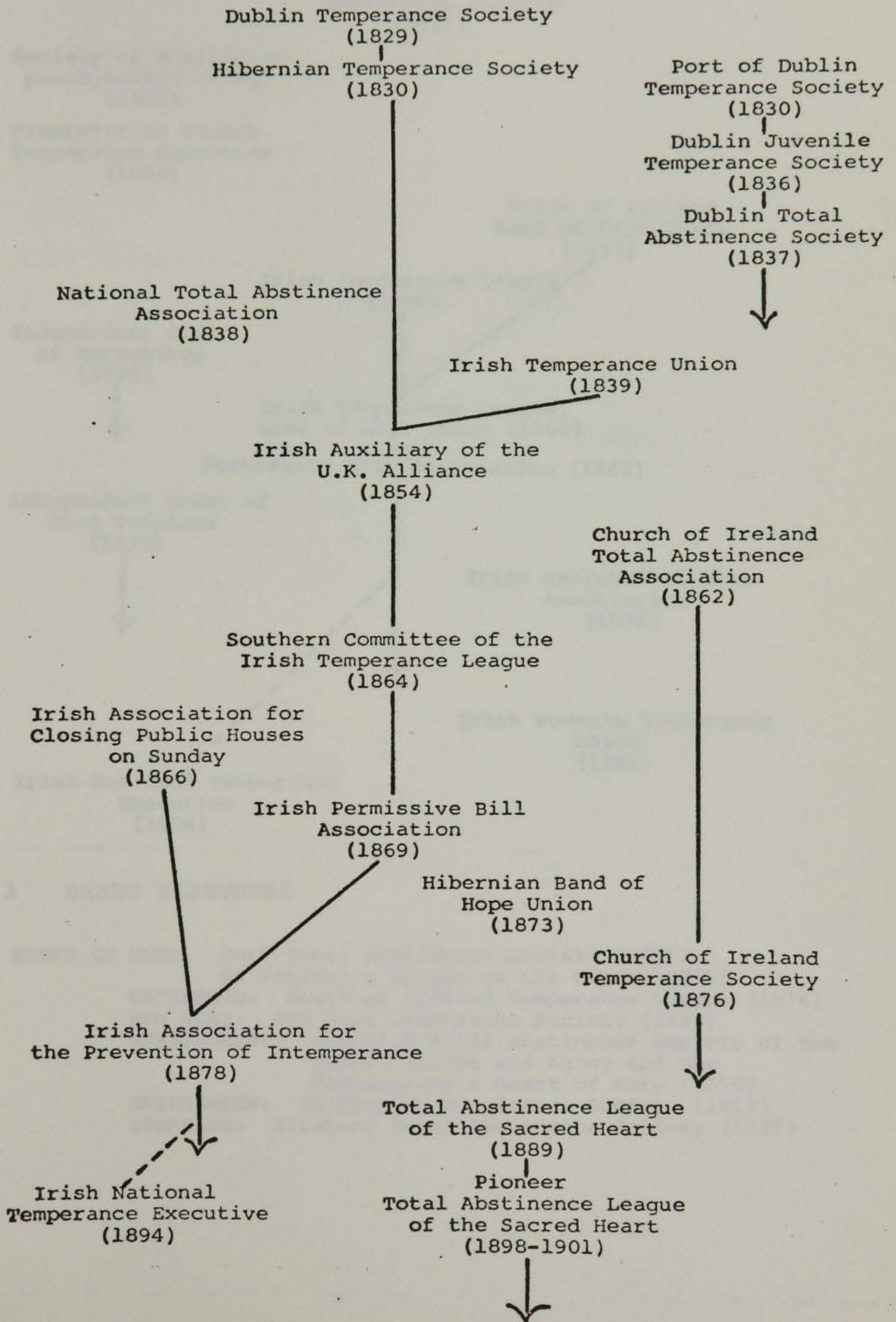
YEAR	PUBLICANS	SPIRIT GROCERS	BEER RETAILERS
1820	10,261	Included with publicans	-
1825	13,794	314	-
1830	18,349	134	-
1835	19,649	204	-
1840	16,199	533	-
1845	14,801	542	-
1850	14,409	136	-
1855	15,788	242	-
1860	17,115	199	-
1865	15,404	270	457
1870	16,105	482	1,044
1875	16,794	713	795
1880	16,668	516	484
1885	16,681	499	399
1890	17,018	578	118
1895	17,106	740	106
1900	17,596	1,228	107

Adapted from: G.B. Wilson, Alcohol and the nation
(London, 1940), pp 403-5.

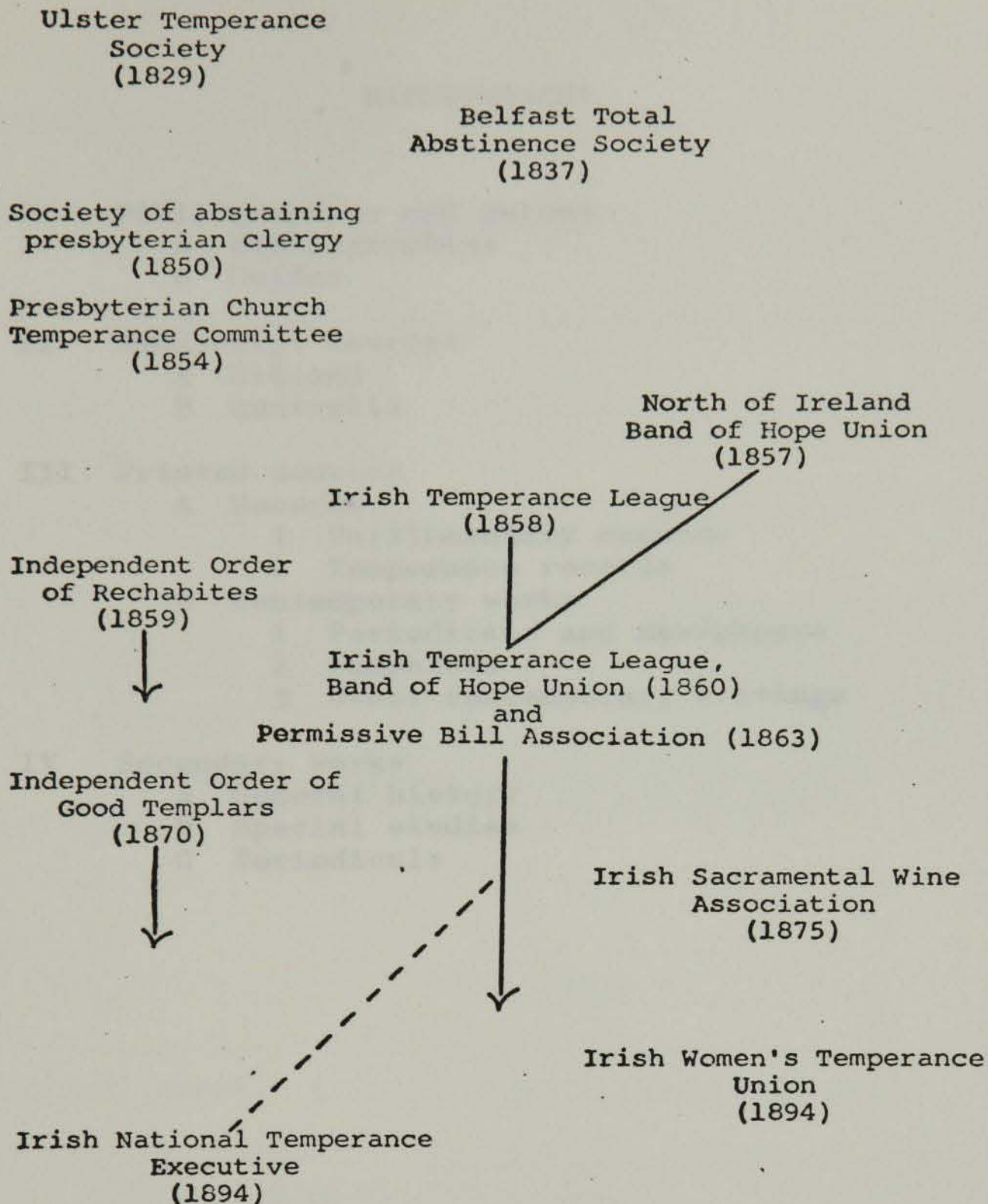
APPENDIX IV

MAJOR IRISH TEMPERANCE SOCIETIES, 1829-1901

1 BASED IN DUBLIN



2 BASED IN BELFAST



3 BASED ELSEWHERE

- BASED IN CORK: Cork Total Abstinence Society (1837)
St Patrick's League of the Cross (1885)
- WATERFORD: South of Ireland Temperance League (1876)
- NEW ROSS: New Ross Temperance Society (1829)
- ENNISCORTHY: Catholic Total Abstinence Society of the Sacred Thirst and Agony and the Compassionate Heart of Mary (1876)
- SKIBBEREEN: Skibbereen Abstinence Society (1817)
- STRABANE: Strabane Total Abstinence Society (1835)

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- I Bibliographies and guides
 - A Bibliographies
 - B Guides

- II Manuscript sources
 - A Ireland
 - B Australia

- III Printed sources
 - A Records
 - 1 Parliamentary records
 - 2 Temperance records
 - B Contemporary works
 - 1 Periodicals and newspapers
 - 2 Pamphlets
 - 3 Other contemporary writings

- IV Secondary works
 - A General history
 - B Special studies
 - C Periodicals

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