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## Triumphant failure: the return of the Irish Papal Brigade to Cork, November 1860

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*'It was said our brothers would steal back, ashamed, in silence and unnoticed.'*  
*The Nation*, 10 November 1860.

In early 1860, Italian unification was gaining momentum and Pope Pius IX, the temporal ruler of large parts of central Italy, feared an invasion of his extensive territories by the troops of Victor Emanuel of Piedmont Sardinia. The Pope therefore appealed for aid and protection from the wider Catholic world in the hope of forming an army of volunteers to protect the Papal States. The Irish responded to this call to arms, and in the early summer of 1860 about 1,300 men went to Italy to join the Papal Armies. They were eventually formed into the Irish Papal Brigade (The Battalion of St. Patrick) and when fighting broke out in the autumn, they were involved in the defence of the Italian towns of Perugia, Spoleto, Ancona and Castelfidardo. Massively outnumbered, the defence put up by Papal Forces was limited and after an almost bloodless battle, most of the Papal States were surrendered in September 1860.<sup>1</sup> Following their surrender, the Irish were ~~arrested~~imprisoned following arrest, brought to Genoa, shipped to Marseille, transported through France before eventually boarding a ship in Le Havre for Cork.

When the troops arrived in Cork a huge reception was organized and the soldiers were hailed and ~~fêted~~ before being transported back to their homes throughout Ireland. One might well ask the question why, given the abject military defeat of the Irish Brigade, were they so welcomed on their return to Ireland? The answer to that question lies in the background to the participation of Irish troops on Italian soil. The enterprise had been contentious from the very outset as it was bitterly opposed by the British and heartily championed by the Irish Catholic Church and the branch of Irish nationalism which was so influenced by religion. The presence of Irish soldiers in Italy fighting Italian nationalists created a situation rife with contradictions and controversy.

As a result, the return of the troops to Cork and the reception given to them in the city provides an ~~very~~ interesting insight into the relationship between nationalism and religion in 1860 and also the tense relationship with Britain which followed the Irish intervention in Italian affairs. By examining some of the many contemporary accounts, we can recognise the emotion and propaganda which surrounded the event. ~~Take f~~For example, two reports of the Cork event, one from the Irish paper *The Nation* and the other from the ~~English-London~~ *Times*:

I can state with truth that I never witnessed such a scene; never saw such an ovation. It would have moved a heart of marble. Let Emperors, Kings and Queens get up 'receptions' or have them got up for them by hireling labour, and self-calculating flunkeyism; never did monarch receive such a reception as this for fervour, spontaneity and sincerely affectionate enthusiasm.<sup>2</sup>

We seek in vain for parallels in history for such an orgie in commemoration of the most signal defeat and the foulest disgrace.<sup>3</sup>

The return of the troops to Cork marked a very important public relations opportunity for the Irish nationalist press and the supporters of the Brigade. Although the soldiers had been defeated, the committee charged with organising the Cork event wished to ~~show~~ assert to the world that the troops were not cowards and that their country was proud of them. They also wished to show that the Irish were capable of looking after and organising these troops on their homeward journey. Finally, and most importantly, they wanted to demonstrate to those watching that Irish valour, ability and pride in their flag were alive and well.

Much of the English press had spent the duration of the Irish Brigade's existence mocking and undermining their participation in Italy. Chief instigator of these negative reports was *The Times* which ~~lost~~ lost no opportunity in giving high profile coverage to any Irish misdemeanour or failing in Italy. England had supported the unification of Italy and was ~~disgusted~~ appalled that Irish subjects would enlist by Irish enlistment in a foreign army fighting on the other side of the fence. The British press consequently sought to

represent the Irish soldiers as mercenaries, ruffians and adventurers;<sup>4</sup> and hoped that the ~~Irishy~~ would disgrace themselves and thus prove to the continent what a difficult and trying task the English had in governing them.<sup>5</sup> The barbs and accusations sent back and forth between the two countries formed part of a particularly heated and emotional exchange and looking back on the period, the editor of *The Nation* said that although often bitter and passionate words had passed between the English and Irish press, he doubted if ever the language of taunt and contumely on the one hand, of hatred and defiance on the other, proceeded to greater lengths than on this occasion.<sup>6</sup>

The arrival of the troops on Irish soil on 3 November 1860 was therefore an event which came on the back of months of accusations, propaganda, denigration and indignation. The organizing committee in Cork, mindful of how any lapses would be pounced upon by the British press, prepared the people of Cork for the arrival of the troops. They placed notices in the papers saying that on the outbound journey, too much drink had been offered to the soldiers thus resulting in ‘much irregularity’; they warned that the enemies of the Brigade would attempt to ruin their name by plying them with intoxicating liquors and so,

The committee declare that no true friend of the Irish Brigade will, after this notice, offer intoxicating drink to the members of the Brigade.<sup>7</sup>

From the Irish point of view, it was of the utmost importance that the event should pass off without any incident and that the celebrations should give no cause for mockery from the opposite side. Although ~~a party revelry~~ had initially been planned, this idea was discarded, allegedly because there would be too many soldiers to cater for. The committee only found out at the last moment that there would be almost ~~one thousand~~ 1,000 soldiers arriving in Cork (they had been expecting about ~~four hundred~~ 400). With this number of men to look after, the organisers wanted the public to be on their best behaviour and so appealed to the people of Cork to ‘to discountenance strenuously everything calculated to break in upon the arrangements made for transmitting the men to their homes with order, regularity, promptitude and satisfaction.’<sup>8</sup>

The local committee in Cork was headed by John Francis Maguire, M.P. (founder of *The Cork Examiner*) and he was aided by A.M. Sullivan, editor of *The Nation* and member of the central Brigade Committee.<sup>9</sup> The committee was made up of many

influential Corkonians who all worked strenuously to secure a ‘*cead mille failthe*’ for the troops.<sup>10</sup> National appeals for financial contributions were made and money was collected throughout the country for the men. It was decided to feed and clothe the Brigade before arranging for their onward travel. One thousand suits therefore had to be made in a short time by all the available tailors in Cork and this preparatory event shows how very different account of events were presented in newspapers with divergent political leanings. For example, while the nationalist press praised the efforts of the tailors of Cork in getting the suits ready in time, the *Constitution* reported that:

The tailors did not give way to any excess of national feeling on the occasion or consider themselves much honoured by working for the Pope’s heroes for they combined and refused to work for less than twelve shillings for the night and the emergency being so great they had to get it.<sup>11</sup>

*The Cork Examiner*, on the other hand, said, with pride, that although the city was not one of very great resources, in an average of a day and a half, ~~one thousand~~ 1,000 suits of decent and substantial clothing had been provided and ~~one thousand~~ 1,000 men were clad from ‘top to toe, from cap to shoe’.<sup>12</sup>

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The committee thus busied themselves with the practical preparations but these were not their only preoccupations, they also had a point to prove to the watching British as A.M. Sullivan subsequently wrote of the special nature of the proceedings:

The occasion was memorable; the emergency and its difficulties were peculiar and extraordinary; the interest in these proceedings was national; and as failure or incompetency would have been turned by enemies into national reproach, [...] We are accustomed to hearing it said in a neighbouring country that Irishmen do not possess ‘business capacity’ that they lack ‘commercial aptitude and energy’ that they are devoid of ‘administrative abilities’ [...] the opportunity which presented itself at Cork the other day was the only one in which the independent intellect of Irishmen – their ‘business capacity’, ‘commercial aptitude’ and ‘administrative abilities’ were ever tested in such a manner.<sup>13</sup>

A strong desire was consequently manifested to give the Brigade a warm and hearty reception, a welcome which would ~~allegedly~~ underline the satisfaction and the pride inspired by the conduct of the Brigade.<sup>14</sup> The manner in which the troops would be

received would affirm the sympathy of Catholic Ireland for the cause for which they had fought.<sup>15</sup> ~~and so~~ there was understandably much nervousness and expectation as the ship bearing the troops drew close to Ireland.

The soldiers of the Irish Brigade, on board the *Dee*, finally arrived in Cork on 3 November 1860. The ship passed by Queenstown (Cobh) before proceeding to the city landing at Custom House Quay. Sullivan and Maguire had stayed in Cobh the previous night in order to ~~directly~~ intercept directly the ship on its arrival. They boarded the *Dee* in the early morning and addressed the soldiers, Maguire said:

You are welcome back to your native land! Catholic Ireland hails you as the champions of a cause dear to her heart. She receives you with pride as well as gratitude ~~f...f~~<sup>16</sup>

Given the recommendations made to the people of Cork to avoid putting any temptations the way of the Brigade, it is not surprising that the Brigade themselves were similarly warned by Maguire to be on their best behaviour. He told the soldiers that the enemies of their cause were still on the watch, still at their vile work, and they should take care lest the slightest act of indiscretion would afford an excuse for renewed calumny or misrepresentation.<sup>17</sup>

~~We are lucky to have~~ It is fortunate that the an account survives of one of the soldiers on the ship, Joseph McCorry, ~~and he who~~ gives an idea of the reaction of the Brigade to the speeches made in their presence, reporting that after the reading of the address the soldiers gave Mr. Maguire first, then the committee, several lusty cheers – ‘real Irish cheers, such as only Irish men could give – loud, clear, long.’<sup>18</sup> Two Franco-Belgian soldiers also on board the ship later said that they were surprised by the emotion which overcame them on the initial welcome by the organising committee and following Maguire’s speech one of them commented that he had never seen such emotion:

A single man who speaks to a thousand men, who carries on a dialogue with them, who throws at their heads the words ‘hearth-country-faith-honour-persecution’ this is indeed a fine sight!<sup>19</sup>

Although it was the early hours of the morning, bells reportedly pealed forth and steamers, boats and crafts of all sorts and sizes, made their way toward the *Dee*. The men were provided with hot tea and coffee, bread, ham, and beef, and, according to the French

‘The Brigade ate like Ogres – all honour to the appetite of the sons of Erin! In an hour’s time the Brigade had swallowed rivers and mountains.’<sup>20</sup>

With speeches over and the men fed and clothed, the *Dee* proceeded up Cork harbour surrounded by boats and crafts. Once again McCorry tells us:

Cork was all astir, its citizens dressed in holiday attire, work suspended, flags, streamers, and bannerets floating from poles, housetops, windows, aye, and the masts and spars of the ships and boats in the harbour. Queenstown and Spike Island also demonstrated; indeed, the city, town, island, and harbour presented a gay and lively appearance as the ‘Dee’ cast anchor in the latter.<sup>21</sup>

These personal recollections are echoed in the papers which describe the cliffs and the hills by Queenstown thickly dotted with groups of men, women and children whose lusty cheers, were accompanied with the waving of handkerchiefs and hats, re-echoing far and wide over the harbour.<sup>22</sup> Monkstown and Passage were similarly crowded with people, and at the balcony of the Victoria Baths Hotel, ladies and gentlemen are reported to have hoisted a green flag. *The Nation* reported that it was one continued ovation for six miles, while the French soldiers remarked at the crowds and the ‘storm of acclamations’ saying that it was an enthusiasm which must ‘unpleasantly tickle the sensitive chord of the Messieurs of *The Times*.’<sup>23</sup>

And indeed it did. Reports from the British and conservative Irish press paint a very different picture of events. For example, *The Constitution* reported that a good many people were assembled on the quays but,

[...] they were not so many or of such a class as under the circumstances might have been expected. They were for the most part women and of the lower orders. These of course shouted to the full extent of their lungs, and invoked blessings of the defenders of the Holy Father, but beyond this the enthusiasm was of the smallest, and but a poor response to all the exaggerated writing up of the Brigade and its deeds which appeared in the Papal press for the last couple of weeks.<sup>24</sup>

*The Times* cast a very sceptical view on events in Cork claiming that the returning soldiers were discontented mercenaries, unhappy with the treatment that they had received in the Papal States. The paper in its editorial said that the committee eagerly rushed to the returning boat in order to catch the soldiers before they had time to

communicate any of their woes. All the food and clothing that was provided was, in the eyes of *The Times*, a bribe to buy the men's silence. The paper also claimed that the committee was trying to make the best of a very bad business by carrying off the whole affair in a blaze of popular enthusiasm, and then getting rid of the Brigade as speedily as possible. On the Irish accounts of the celebrations, *The Times* said that columns of no paper on earth could contain 'the torrent of balderdash poured forth on the occasion' of the return to Cork.<sup>25</sup> The *Irish Times* similarly downplayed events in Cork claiming that the people of the city did not wish to welcome home the Brigade and were uncommonly anxious to send them on their way as quickly as possible.<sup>26</sup>

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Whatever the ~~motivations~~ motives of the organizers, the evidence seems to point to large and enthusiastic celebrations, particularly when the ship eventually arrived in the city at Custom House Quay.<sup>27</sup> As Joseph McCorry recounts, when the soldiers arrived in Cork they were met by vast crowds of men, women and children, so many that disembarkation was delayed slightly. After a little while, however, a passage was cleared, and the soldiers landed amid repeated enthusiastic cheers, with the crowd surging to get a glimpse of the men and their uniforms. The Irish Brigade marched up Lapps Quay and the South Mall, along the Grand Parade, to the Young Men's Society's Rooms in Castle Street and then through Patrick Street to the terminus of the Great Southern and Western Railway where special trains had been ordered to convey them home.

Several soldiers remained in Cork for the night and kept Castle Street filled up to a late hour with a crowd who listened to the accounts of their deeds and adventures. Not leaving anything to chance, the organising committee had arranged for the soldiers to be assigned to members of the Young Men's Society in Cork to 'protect against irregularity'.<sup>28</sup> These effective chaperones were positioned to ensure that no negative publicity would stem from the Brigade's time in Cork. The officers of the Brigade were invited as ~~household~~ guests to the houses of Catholic merchants and gentry of Cork. The city was reportedly full of fun and jollity as people flocked to talk of the war, of Rome, and of Italy. The ladies both young and old apparently distinguished themselves by the warmth of their welcome, and, in the eyes of the reporter from the *Freeman's Journal* furnished new proof, that the 'brave are always certain to have the sympathy and admiration of the fair.'<sup>29</sup>



Particular attention was paid to the soldiers' appearance: it was reported that people admired their martial and even veteran-like appearance. The Irish troops had never received a proper set of uniforms in Italy and were instead clad in various uniforms from different elements of the Papal Army. This extraordinary variety of costume which the soldiers wore gave them a wild and picturesque aspect.<sup>30</sup> They were further described as physically well and none the worse after their brief campaign; undoubtedly the material of good soldiers. Finally it was said that the greater part of them seemed to belong to classes much above those from which the British army is generally recruited and that several of the privates had received a university education.<sup>31</sup> These comments were not purely descriptive, ~~they also served~~ but they were intended to prove Irish military ability and the general physical prowess of the race. Irish commentators had been baffled at how the British press had mocked the soldiers of the Irish Brigade accusing them of cowardice, insubordination and incessant appetite and yet at the same time, the British had no trouble accepting soldiers from Ireland into the British Army especially during campaigns such as the recent battles in the Crimea.<sup>32</sup> The descriptions of the soldiers were thus laden with meaning; while the Irish papers used the appearance of the soldiers to say what fine men they were, *The Times* used the good health of the men to claim that these soldiers surrendered without a scratch to the Italian armies. In fact, the *Irish Times* went to great lengths to highlight this point, tongue in cheek, by calling the soldiers 'resuscitated heroes' and 'Phoenixmen' who despite all their ordeals came home with neither scars nor wounds.<sup>33</sup>

As with all aspects of the homecoming, there was never a strictly neutral account of events, something which is very clear in reports of an incident involving the *Dee* and two British naval ships. As the *Dee* proceeded up Cork Harbour, it was reported in a press telegram issued from Queenstown that both *H.M.S. Sanspareil* and *H.M.S. Hawk* lowered the Royal Standard as the Brigade passed. The nationalist press took this as a mark of respect for the soldiers.<sup>34</sup> *The Constitution*, however, took the matter up saying that the report was untrue as those ships could not fly the rRoyal sStandard because Her Majesty was not on board and consequently could not lower it in compliment to 'her loving subjects who hastened to crush out liberty in the States of the Church'. The real explanation it claimed was that when the *Dee* was passing the men-of-war she dipped her

**Comment [ML1]:** A press telegram or an Admiralty one?

flag and the war ships acknowledged the courtesy by doing the same.<sup>35</sup> A letter to *The Irish Times* from ‘An Englishman, Carickmacross’ went further:

‘What Royal standard was it – Pio Nono’s or Brian Boroihme’s, or whose bunting may it have been? It was certainly not the Queen’s. Possibly the Dee carried the red ensign of the merchant service and on passing the guard ships ‘dipped’ it, as she was bound to do, in compliment to her Majesty’s ships and the compliment may have been acknowledged by the dipping of their ensigns in return, as would have been done whether the Dee contained a batch of Lamoriciere’s ‘Irish army of martyrs’ or a cargo of coals. This ordinary proceeding seems to have been magnified into a special compliment to a set of howling ragamuffins who are likely to occasion more grief to their friends at home than they did to the Sardinians at Spoleto.’<sup>36</sup>

Once again, it can be seen in this incident that opinions on the events in Cork were very much tempered by the political inclinations of the commentators.

The Brigade had arrived on a Saturday in Cork and on the next day the soldiers remaining in Cork were sent to different churches, where again they were serenaded, questioned, and greeted. After this, the final remnants of the Brigade were dispersed but religious ceremonies continued to play an important role in what we might term the propaganda of the Brigade. Across the county of Cork and throughout Ireland masses were organized to commemorate the soldiers who had died.<sup>37</sup> For example a few days after the return of the soldiers, a ‘Requiem for the Irish Brigade’ was held at the Cathedral in Fermoy. Windows and pillars of church were shrouded in mourning, the altar was stripped of its ornament, in the centre of the choir a catafalque, bearing a coffin covered with black cloth, was erected and two tiers of candles ranged on each side. A sermon delivered by Rev T.W. Croke, President of St Colman’s, reminded people of the sacrifices that the soldiers had made and the honour that they had achieved. On the same day a solemn office and High Mass were offered for the same object in the different deaneries of Midleton, Coachford, Kanturk and Buttevant, and likewise in parts of the dioceses of Kerry and Ross<sup>38</sup>. The paraphernalia-rituals of the Church and its extensive influence was used to ensure that the Brigade did not sneak home as a defeated army but instead that their actions were heralded and celebrated in their native land. As Archbishop

Paul Cullen of Dublin, who was instrumental in sending the Brigade in the first place, later remarked at a sermon in Dublin:

Success does not always attend the good or the just; it sometimes is allowed in this world to those who are the enemies of God and religion; but God and his holy church always triumph in the end – triumph by the sufferings of the just – triumph by the sufferings of those who are faithful to the cause of God and religion.<sup>39</sup>

In such a manner the return of the Brigade can be seen as a triumphant failure, Ireland celebrated in having sent the soldiers and having had a wholly Irish Battalion fighting in Italy. The outcome, though unfavourable, was not in Irish eyes completely negative, it was felt that the men had done their duty and, though they had returned without victory, they would, in a ‘fair field’, have proved themselves worthy of the laurel.<sup>40</sup>

For although the Irish Brigade were indeed defeated and only spent a few weeks in combat, the importance of their contribution to Irish nationalism went far beyond the Italian battlefields. In this it is very interesting to note the vocabulary used to describe the homecoming of the Brigade: the events were hailed as extraordinary and memorable, producing scenes that Ireland had not witnessed for a generation.<sup>41</sup> Most importantly though, when describing the homecoming and the gathering of people, reporters invoked memories of the mass meetings of O’Connell’s time, claiming that this was the first ~~time~~ occasion since then that such large-scale and emotional events had taken place. When the members of the Brigade returned to Dublin, Clonmel and Killarney similar comparisons were made thus linking the two events in the public mind.<sup>42</sup> A.M. Sullivan for example said that,

[...] such a demonstration of popular rejoicing was not witnessed in Cork since 1843; no such ovation was ever beheld in this kingdom for centuries, if we except those which hailed so often the great Catholic Emancipator of Ireland.<sup>43</sup>

These direct comparisons with the national gatherings which were so effective in O’Connell’s time give an indication of how important the participants felt the homecomings were. They linked the events of 1860 to a time when the Irish had seemed united behind a cause and they were hopeful that similar momentum would gather in the aftermath of the Irish participation in Italy. One direct result of the Irish involvement in Italy was the creation of a National Petition which pointed out the contradiction of Britain

supporting self determination in Italy while denying it in Ireland. This National Petition which was forwarded to the Queen made reference to the Italian situation asking for similar ballots in Ireland to decide on its future government.<sup>44</sup> During the summer of 1860 the Petition gathered momentum and led to meetings and discussions throughout Ireland and in the Irish community in Britain. More than 30,000 people are claimed to have signed the petition.<sup>45</sup> It can be seen that this galvanising of public opinion and the rallying of the Irish people around a nationalist cause was the direct result of the situation in Italy, of England's obvious celebration of Italian nationalism and of Irish involvement in Italian events. After the return of the Papal troops, A.M. Sullivan said that the Brigade gave 'a force to the patriotism of their people which will, in the good time of Providence, lead to the accomplishment of grand results for the happiness and prosperity of their native land.'<sup>46</sup>

It can therefore be clearly seen that the Irish Brigade, though formed with a religious cause in mind, most certainly also had a patriotic dimension. A small indication of this aspect of the venture is to be observed in the music used to celebrate the return of the soldiers to Cork. One of the boats which went out into Cork Harbour to meet the *Dee* contained a band and members of the Brigade requested that 'Patrick's Day' be played; all the Brigade, it was reported, seemed anxious for this national air'.<sup>47</sup> The band then escorted the ship playing similar national airs and when the troops later marched through the streets of the city, they were preceded by Cork City Brass Band playing 'Let Erin Remember the Days of Old', 'St Patrick's Day' and 'Garryowen'. These were certainly not neutral airs!<sup>48</sup> The soldiers had represented their country abroad, had been denigrated and defeated, they joined a long line of thwarted Irish heroes. They represented the current face of Irish nationalism, religious and engaged, defeated and defiant. *The Nation* remarked that the cheer that went up from the soldiers and the locals at the return of the Brigade 'burst from their very souls for they felt in that instant the pride of belonging to a race and a nation amongst which the ties of faith, kindred, and nationality are the holiest and strongest on earth.'<sup>49</sup> The Irish Brigade was felt to have strengthened these ties and brought into focus the close relationship between nationalism and religion in these years. As A.M. Sullivan said in his assessment of the Brigade:

In their loyalty and in their courage we have recognised the virtues of our country; and another claim for her national independence in the great fact that, antagonistic in principle and impulse from all Saxon feeling, we are still ‘aliens in blood, language and religion’ to the nation with which we are bound by an anomalous legislative injustice.<sup>50</sup>

As a result of the role played by Cork in the homecoming of the Papal Brigade, the city was praised by the organizing committee, both local and national, by the soldiers and by the nationalist press. The soldier Joseph McCorry said that the people of Cork would have the eternal gratitude of the soldiers for the manner in which they received them, treated them, and praised them. But then, he added, ‘they are a noble, manly, chivalrous and sympathetic people, none more so, neither in nor outside Ireland.’<sup>51</sup> *The Cork Examiner* reported that all the soldiers said they should never forget Cork as long as they lived but should ever bear the city and its inhabitants in grateful remembrance.<sup>52</sup>

*The Freeman’s Journal* in an editorial said that,

The Brigade have returned and found a reception worthy of the Irish people. Cork needed no appeal. It is instinctively generous and hospitable. On every occasion involving the national character, Cork has acted a conspicuous part. Never before did the citizens exhibit so many of the qualities which more or less characterise all our countrymen. The citizens of Cork did nothing by halves. They did everything right royally.<sup>53</sup>

The Central Committee (of the Irish Brigade) passed a motion to thank the local committee in Cork for their ‘zealous, efficient and successful labours in receiving the Irish Brigade’<sup>54</sup> while the local committee in turn announced,

The citizens of Cork have entitled themselves to the gratitude of Ireland for so faithfully manifesting the national feeling and discharging the national duty on this occasion.

As can be seen from these comments the efforts of the people of Cork in welcoming home the Irish Brigade were not merely logistical matters. The events had repercussions on a national stage and was keenly felt to be an event of national interest and importance. That everything went off without a hitch, leaving the attendant British press with little

ammunition was felt to be a triumph, a triumph that diminished the impact of the defeat on the battlefields of Italy.

## **Conclusion:**

As with the start of this article I wish to finish with two divergent opinions on the events in Cork. Firstly we have the assessment of *The Times*:

The real Celt is of a temperament too imaginative and too poetical to require much assistance from the object of his enthusiasm. Nothing is easier to him than to invest vice with the attributes of virtue, to find sublimity in what is commonplace or ludicrous, and the elements of immortal glory where people of a less exaggerated turn of mind can detect nothing but what is shameful or contemptible. Never was this power of moral alchemy more triumphantly exerted, never did sentiment triumph so completely over sense, and fanaticism over fact as in the recent ovation accorded to the captives of the Irish Brigade, whom Erin sent forth to conquer and receives with honours which few conquerors have obtained and then – forgets.<sup>55</sup>

In contrast we have the words of A.M. Sullivan in *The Nation*:

How much their country loves them [the soldiers], prizes and appreciates them, that country itself has told. There is no language of ours required to supplement it. The eager crowds who rushed to greet those true-hearted and calumniated soldiers, the thrilling grasp of every Irish hand that sought theirs, claiming a kindred of race, enthusiasm and feeling; the voices that cheered and blessed them – all told that outburst of gratitude and pride of the nation towards the gallant fellows who were the evidence of Irish national sentiment and Irish religious feeling to the peoples of Europe.<sup>56</sup>

It is impossible at this distance to know objectively and exactly how many people were present at the homecoming, how vociferous the celebrations were, how well dressed the soldiers were and so forth. It is more important, I believe, to note the difference in reporting on events, to observe the propaganda at work and to examine the impetus that the event gave to Irish nationalism. It is clear that the nationalist and Catholic side went

to great lengths in what today would be termed a public relations exercise. Nevertheless, they still could not avoid the withering judgment of *The Times* and this negativity confirmed some deep-seated prejudices and the distance between Ireland and England in this debate. The negative depictions by the British did however have an effect confirming people in their positions and further uniting Irish nationalism and Catholicism.<sup>57</sup> The efforts of the Irish Papal Brigade brought church and country together in an unusually international patriotic enterprise and their return to Cork was a local venture of national importance. The welcome might indeed have been ‘hollow mockery’<sup>58</sup>, the grand plans envisioned for the Brigade after their return never came to fruition and many of the men subsequently left for America where they fought in the American Civil War.<sup>59</sup> This nineteenth-century crusade petered out and yet it ~~remains was~~ a flashpoint of Irish history where the forces of Irish nationalism and Catholicism clashed with Italian nationalism and British Protestantism, debates and conflicts which were played out on the fields of Italy, in the columns of the press and on the shores of Cork Harbour.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed account of the Irish Papal Brigade see: G.F.H. Berkeley; *The Irish Battalion in the Papal Army of 1860*; (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1929); Ciarán O’Carroll; ‘The Papal Brigade of St. Patrick’ in *The Irish College, Rome and its world*, (eds. Dáire Keogh and Albert McDonnell) (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), pp-167-187; Mary Cryan Pancani; ‘New Light on the Background to the Irish participation in the Papal Army of 1860’-in *The Irish Sword*, XVI, no. 64; (1986), no-64, pp-155-164; Carlo Paganini; ‘L’anno italiano degl’Irlandesi: 1860. Annotazioni storiche da ricerche negli archivi d’Irlanda e Inghilterra’-in *Archivio storico lombardo*’ (1976), pp-311-344.

<sup>2</sup> *The Nation*, 10 November 1860.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 7 November 1860.

<sup>4</sup> ‘But what would be the objectives of an Irish Brigade in an Italian war? Not mere employment, for there is plenty of that at home; for the assertion of a patriotic principle, for that principle would be on the other side, neither could they be promoting Catholic interests, for all their success must be obtained at the expense of Catholics. One thing only would they be doing – they would be helping to establish in tyrannical strength a Government against which its own subjects had risen as utterly intolerable, and that, in our humble opinion, it is not exactly a work in which it is desirable to assist.’ *The Times*, 19 May 1860.

<sup>5</sup> ‘The Irish seem to have been a ‘costly mistake’. People had read about their misery and oppression till they believed it, and were surprised to find the ill-used natives of the Isle of Saints much too well-fed to stomach Papal rations, and much too free in their ideas and habits to endure Papal discipline.’ *The Times*, 8 September 1860. Similar sentiment can be seen on the pages of *Punch* in 1860.

<sup>6</sup> A.M. Sullivan, *New Ireland*, p. 216. Sullivan’s paper *The Nation* took particular offence at what it termed: the ‘Ponderous columns of *The Times*, insolent invective of *The Press*, silly whinings of *The Herald*, puny attempts at blasphemous witticisms of *The Globe*.’ 14 January 1860.

<sup>7</sup> *The Freeman’s Journal*, 3 November 1860.

<sup>8</sup> *The Nation*, 10 November 1860.

<sup>9</sup> J.F. Maguire published a defence of the Pope's temporal power *Rome, its rulers, and its institutions* in 1856 (second edition<sup>2nd ed.</sup> 1859). A.M. Sullivan had been responsible for much of the initial recruiting of the troops in the spring, for the fundraising and for the propaganda which surrounded the mission.

<sup>10</sup> *The Freeman's Journal*, 3 November 1860. The Cork committee (as reported in *The Cork Examiner*, 7 November 1860 and *The Nation*, 10 November 1860, 24 November 1860) was made up of: Canon Foley, Rev. Denis McSwiney, Rev. J. Parker, Rev. Mahony, Alderman-Ald. Charles McCarthy, Thomas Lyons, John Harding, Rev. Cullinan, James Hegarty, William Hegarty, Patrick Hegarty of Mulgrave Road, Mark O'Brien, Michael Murphy, James Hayes, R.C.P. Walsh, James Dwyer, John O'Sullivan of Sunday's Well, John Hegarty, Wm. Power, John Maguire of Douglas Street, John Rearden, Martin Millerick, Laurence O'Sullivan, David Curtin and Denis Hickey.

<sup>11</sup> *The Constitution*, 2 November 1860.

<sup>12</sup> *The Cork Examiner*, 7 November 1860. Cardinal Paul Cullen later estimated that it cost £10,000 to bring the troops back to Ireland and given that the expedition had cost £70-80,000, he vowed that he would never again support military ventures. See Desmond Bowen, *Paul Cardinal Cullen and the shaping of modern Catholicism* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983), p.202.

<sup>13</sup> *The Nation*, 24 November 1860. *The Freeman's Journal* was probably more realistic in its expectations and declared that 'The reception at Cork will not be, nor is it intended to be in the nature of a triumph. The object is different – to welcome the sons of the soil, many of whom sacrificed brilliant prospects in life to uphold the prerogatives of the Pope.' 2 November 1860.

<sup>14</sup> Ciarán O'Carroll said that 'Large crowds gathered on the quay at Cork to welcome the men, as vanquished but not disgraced.' in 'The Papal Brigade of St. Patrick', p. 185.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, *The Cork Examiner*, 7 November 1860.

<sup>16</sup> Speech transcribed in *The Nation*, 10 November 1860.

<sup>17</sup> *The Cork Examiner*, 5 November 1860.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph McCorry, *The History of the Irish Papal Brigades* (Manchester: J.J. Sale, 1885), p.99.

<sup>19</sup> *Le Monde* published letters from Émile Mouttet and Charles Escalle who had accompanied the Irish Brigade on the passage from Le Havre. These letters were translated and reprinted in *The Times*, 17 November 1860.

<sup>20</sup> *The Times*, 17 November 1860.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph McCorry, *The History of the Irish Papal Brigade*, p.98.

<sup>22</sup> *The Cork Examiner*, 7 November 1860. See also *The Nation*: 'We were now passing the town of Cove, and there terrace over terrace, to the crest of the hill at foot of which it spreads, the people spread in lines along which waved a bright fringe of kerchiefs, sashes and scarfs of very colour. Nor was this all. From every window commanding a view of the scene, fair hands waved welcomes and faces beamed with the glow of excitement and enthusiasm. Along the shore for miles you would hear the shouts and cheers rolling like the fire of platoons, mingled with the joyous peals of the church bells chime, while the Brigade on board the Dee kept up incessant response.' 10 November 1860.

<sup>23</sup> *The Times*, 17 November 1860.

<sup>24</sup> 5 November 1860. Similarly at a reception for the Brigade in Dublin, it was said that the soldiers 'were met by a considerable mob of persons composed of the lower orders.' *The Irish Times*, 5 November 1860.

<sup>25</sup> *The Times*, 7 November 1860.

<sup>26</sup> *The Irish Times*, 5 November 1860.

<sup>27</sup> Even *The Irish Times* reported (5 November 1860) that people 'cheered vociferously' and the men 'heartily returned the cheers'. Cardinal Paul Cullen wrote in a private letter to Tobias Kirby, the Rector of the Irish College in Rome, saying that 'The reception of the Brigade is enthusiastic to madness here in Cork.' quoted in E.H. Larkin, *The Consolidation of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, 1860-1870*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), p.38.

<sup>28</sup> A.M. Sullivan stated that the 'extraordinary resorts used to disparage the character of our volunteers during their outward-bound journey' was too well known to me from the documentary proofs placed in my hands not to suggest steps to secure the defeat or rather the utter prevention of any such machinations on this occasion. I knew moreover, how amenable to disorder men were likely to be after the demoralising influences of a Piedmontese prison – its privations, its filth, and its horrors – supplemented by everything that Sardinian and British ingenuity could devise, calculated to destroy the spirit of discipline, order, sobriety, or contentment amongst our men.' *The Nation*, 24 November 1860.

<sup>29</sup> *The Freeman's Journal*, 5 November 1860.

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<sup>30</sup> *The Freeman's Journal*, 5 November 1860.

<sup>31</sup> *The Cork Examiner*, 5 November 1860.

<sup>32</sup> In Killarney, during the ceremony to welcome home the brigade, a priest denounced the British press for its 'calumnies' saying that a time might come when the men of the Brigade would yet be wanted by the English to fight the battles of England as their progenitors did in former days. *The Freeman's Journal*, 7 November 1860.

<sup>33</sup> *The Irish Times*, 5 November 1860. *The Times* later called the soldiers 'make-believe warriors', 7 November 1860.

<sup>34</sup> 'When the *Dee* came abreast H.M.S. *Hawke*, there was a rush to the side of the latter, and a cheer loud and long rung from stern to stern, while down from the mast-head dipped the British colours in honour of the men virtually declared by Palmerston 'aliens in blood, in language and religion!' You may guess that the salute from H.M.S. *Hawke* was answered [...] the incident occasioned much remark.' *The Nation*, 10 November 1860.

<sup>35</sup> *The Constitution*, 5 November 1860.

<sup>36</sup> *The Irish Times*, 6 November 1860. See also a similar letter in *The Irish Times*, 7 November 1860.

<sup>37</sup> There were surprisingly few casualties in Italy, for more details see G.F.H. Berkeley, *The Irish Battalion in the Papal Army of 1860*, Dublin: Talbot Press, 1929.

<sup>38</sup> *The Cork Examiner*, 7 November 1860.

<sup>39</sup> *The Freeman's Journal*, 5 November 1860.

<sup>40</sup> *The Freeman's Journal*, 8 November 1860.

<sup>41</sup> *The Nation*, 10 November 1860.

<sup>42</sup> 'The streets of Cork city have not heard, probably, since the days of O'Connell, so many 'vivas'.' (*The Nation*, 10 November 1860); 'The Clonmel contingent of the Brigade arrived here by train at 4pm and got a reception the like of which has not been witnessed here since the days of O'Connell' (*The Cork Examiner*, 7 November 1860); 'Not since the occasion of O'Connell's funeral has so dense a crowd been assembled in front of the portico [of Dublin's Cathedral]' (*The Freeman's Journal*, 5 November 1860); ' [...] the spectacle then presented [in Clonmel] brought forcibly to mind the old days of the monster meetings, when a people in their might obeyed the summons of their chief and assembled in thousands to demand the rights appertaining to the citizens of a free state. (*The Freeman's Journal*, 8 November 1860); 'Such a demonstration has not been witnessed in Clare since the days of the Repeal agitation.' (*The Cork Examiner*, 7 November 1860.)

<sup>43</sup> *The Nation*, 24 November 1860.

<sup>44</sup> *The Nation*, 2 June 1860.

<sup>45</sup> See *The Nation* throughout the summer of 1860 where meetings reported speeches in which it was asked, 'If Italy is to be for the Italians, why not Ireland for the Irish?' 11 August 1860.

<sup>46</sup> *The Nation*, 10 November 1860. E.H. Larkin claims that events in Italy, 'cumulatively resulted in the deepening of an Irish national consciousness.' in *The Consolidation of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, 1860-1870*; (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), p. 50.

<sup>47</sup> *The Freeman's Journal*, 5 November 1860.

<sup>48</sup> *The Constitution* reports that in preparation for the arrival of the troops, 'musical instruments that had long ceased to sound have been drawn from their hiding places to honour the Pope's Own and that for the past week the appropriate air 'See the Conquering Hero comes' can be heard at almost every turn and on every description of instrument.' The paper further said that the families of some of the more respectable of the Brigade 'do not altogether like this idea of their military relatives being thus exhibited and they have written to them to part company with the battalion and remain in England for a while.' 2 November 1860.

<sup>49</sup> *The Nation*, 10 November 1860.

<sup>50</sup> *The Nation*, 10 November 1860. Ciarán O'Carroll has said that 'This mixture of religious and nationalistic sentiments was to be a recurring theme throughout the papal campaign' in 'The Papal Brigade of St. Patrick' p. 168. See also his discussions on p. 176.

<sup>51</sup> Joseph McCorry, *The History of the Irish Papal Brigade*, Manchester: J.J. Sale, 1885, p. 100.

<sup>52</sup> *The Cork Examiner*, 7 November 1860.

<sup>53</sup> *The Freeman's Journal*, 5 November 1860.

<sup>54</sup> *The Nation*, 24 November 1860. A.M. Sullivan said in this report, 'I have not words to do justice to the fervent and generous feelings which the people of Queenstown, Passage and Cork displayed toward the

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soldiers of the Irish Brigade; and my grateful sense of the courtesy which I myself had the honour to receive on all hands.’ This report was also printed in *The Cork Examiner*, 19 November 1860.

<sup>55</sup> *The Times*, 7 November 1860.

<sup>56</sup> *The Nation*, 10 November 1860.

<sup>57</sup> *The Cork Examiner*, 7 Nov 1860, reports of a circular to all chapels in the diocese of Cloyne which stated that ‘The insults and calumnies dictated by a hatred of everything Irish, will only stimulate the people to honour with deeper feeling and greater solemnity the memory of the dead.’ In his speech to the returning soldiers, Maguire said that the efforts of enemies ‘have had but one effect on your countrymen – that of rendering them more zealous in your vindication’. Ciarán O’Carroll observes that ‘The English response to the Papal Brigade was destined to drive the forces of Catholicism and Irish nationalism towards a closer alliance.’ in ‘The Papal Brigade of St. Patrick’, p. 187.

<sup>58</sup> *The Irish Times*, 5 November 1860.

<sup>59</sup> See G.F.H. Berkeley; *The Irish Battalion in the Papal Army of 1860* for more details on the subsequent careers of the members of the Brigade. Cardinal Paul Cullen later commented, ‘I was afraid at the beginning that great mischief would be done by the men returning to Ireland. They appear to be all satisfied – so we will not have to complain that religion has been impaired. All however speak with the greatest contempt of the Italians. They people will always return that feeling towards their southern brethren.’ Quoted in Desmond Bowen; *Paul Cardinal Cullen and the shaping of modern Catholicism*; (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983), p. 202.