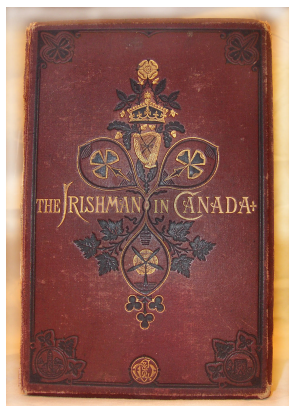


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## **The Irishman in Canada** by **Nicholas Flood Davin** , published 1877

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THE  
IRISHMAN IN CANADA.

BY  
NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN.



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## PREFACE.

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AN old friend of mine, Mr. Joseph Hatton, writing in *Tinsley's Magazine* says :—" Still at the bottom of all thought and speculation as to the future, there is a strong layer of old English sentiment outside the Province of Quebec. The great pioneers of Canada, the English and the Scotch look across the broad waters of the Atlantic, and think of home. They feel proud of the flag which is not only to them a national symbol, but a link between the far-off settlement and the churchyard where their forefathers sleep beyond the sea." Scarcely anybody in England knows anything of Canadian history, and Mr. Hatton cannot be blamed for not being aware that the majority of people in Ontario, as compared with other nationalities, are Irish. The population of Ontario is 1,620,831 : of these 559,442 are Irish, 328,889 Scotch, 439,429 English ; and in the four Provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, the Irish number 846,414, as compared with 706,369 English, and 549,946 Scotch. The Irishman was here as early as others ; he fought against the wilderness as well as others ; his arm was raised against the invading foe as well as that of others ; and when a man who was not Irish lifted the standard of revolt, and another who was not Irish betrayed his country and his flag, who more faithful,

who more heroic, than the countrymen of Baldwin and Fitzgibbon in putting down that rebellion? That a literary man like Mr. Hatton should wholly ignore the Irish, therefore, shows that there was need of such a book as the present. Who to-day are more truly attached to British connexion than the great majority of Irishmen all over the Dominion? Amongst ourselves also, the Irish have been too much ignored; chiefly because the follies and absurdities of a few make hundreds averse from an assertion which would be only the reasonable expression of self-respect. There is a great dissimilarity in culture between the Irish cottier and the Irish gentleman, between the Irish labourer and the Irish professional man, but not more than there is between the Scotch laird and the Scotch gillie, or between the English squire and the English peasant. Why then is it that Irishmen of the more cultivated class are sometimes found to run down the less cultivated class of Irish, so that, as somebody has said, whenever an Irishman is to be roasted, another is always at hand to turn the spit? "My grandmother," says the Earl of Beaconsfield, "the beautiful daughter of a family who had suffered much from persecution, had imbibed that dislike for her race which the vain are apt to adopt when they find they are born to public contempt. The indignant feeling which should be reserved for the persecutor, in the mortification of their disturbed sensibility, is too often visited on the victim." Something like this process has taken place in the minds of Irishmen of a certain class. But let any Irishman who reads these lines ponder what I say:—You can never lose your own respect and keep

the respect of others; you can never be happy and dress yourself solely in the glass of other men's approval; you may as well seek to fly from your shadow as to escape from your nationality. If you find any men mistaken, or low down in type, or in popular esteem, it is your duty to raise them, especially if they have on you national or family claims.

I had not intended to write a preface, and I have said enough in the opening chapter to indicate the objects I have kept before me. The history of Canada cannot be written without the history of the Scotchman, the Englishman, and the German in Canada; the Frenchman in Canada has found his historian. "The Scotchman in Canada" is in the hands of a writer capable of doing justice to a great theme and an extraordinary race, whose deeds here as elsewhere are illustrious with such episodes as the Red River settlement, planted under the guidance of Lord Selkirk, by men with a determined bravery comparable to that of the German troops at Gravelotte, again and again attempting the hill, studded with rifle pits, which guarded the French left. Even the Mennonite settlements will come within the purview of the historian, and he will have to deal with a later American immigration than the U. E. Loyalist—an immigration composed mainly of men who entered Canada intending to settle in Michigan, but, who, when they saw the splendid stretches of oak near London and the neighbouring counties, settled here. Among these settlers were the Shaws, the Dunbars, and the Goodhues. There was an eastern settlement of the same class, in which we find the Burnhams, the Horners, the Keelers, the Smiths, the

Perrys. Some of these were led to come to Canada by inducements held out by the Government of the day to construct roads and build mills. Hence in many instances we find American immigrants the great patentees where they settled.

In the index I do not give every name, but only the leading names.

I have in the notes thanked Mr. Charles Lindsey and the Hon. Christopher Fraser for their assistance in placing books at my disposal. I have to thank Chief Justice Harrison for the loan of books, and Mr. Justice Gwynne for the loan of books and old files of newspapers. To Mr. Allan McLean Howard my thanks are also due for books which could not well have been procured elsewhere. To Dr. McCaul for books and hints respecting the university, I must likewise express my obligation. My thanks are due to my friends throughout the country who sent information, and to the agents employed by my publishers. Particularly are my thanks due to Mr. Sproule, of Ottawa, who, though an Orangeman, has visited a large number of Roman Catholic prelates and clergymen, in regard to this book, and got me more Roman Catholic information than has come from all other sources whatsoever. In a special manner, my thanks are due to Sir Francis Hincks, who, both by word and letter, helped me to understand the great period of which he could truly say—*pars magna fui*. For estimating the character and genius of Sullivan, he gave me invaluable data. From Mr. Thomas Maclear, and Mr. Thomas A. Maclear, I have received much assistance in collecting information for the settler chapters,

and in revising the proofs. Last though not least, Dr. Hodgins, Deputy Minister of Education, claims my thanks for books and pamphlets connected with his department.

I have in places departed from rules usually observed in books. For instance, in some cases, I have not "spelled out" figures because I thought the use of arithmetical symbols more suitable to the subject treated at the moment.

The Irishman has played so large a part in Canada that his history could not be written without, to some extent, writing the history of Canada, and the following pages may, in the present stage of Canadian historical literature, be found useful to the student and the politician.

TORONTO, September 22nd, 1877.

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In Mexico, Irishmen and Irish names are as numerous as the Irishman, in a famous bull, said absentees were in Ireland.\* One of Scott's most efficient colonels was Riley. But neither to his achievements nor to those of minor note—of the Pattersons, the Lees, the Magruders, the Neals, the McReynolds—can justice be done here. Born in the same village as Major McReynolds,† James Shields won a record which might call for extended notice. On his return to the United States he was greeted with ovations, and Illinois elected him to the Senate. In the Session, 1850-51, he reported as one of Committee on Military Affairs, in favour of conferring the rank of Lieut.-General on his old Commander and comrade, Scott.

But why go into further particulars? If arithmetic goes for anything, Irish blood is the main-tide of the great country below the line. In 1848, the Irish immigration exceeded that from all other sources. In that year, 98,061 persons of Irish birth passed into the Union; in 1849, 112,561; in 1850, 117,038; as against in the same years respectively, 51,973; 55,705; 45,535 from Germany; 23,062; 28,321; 28,163 from England; and 6,415; 8,840; 6,772 from Scotland; and approximate proportions have continued. And what sort of stuff was this sent by Ireland? I have seen them on the quays of Queenstown, many of them young farmers and farmers' daughters, all of them as fine specimens of the human race, as ever pressed the earth. Within a century, the Irish in America have contributed to the ranks of war and statesmanship in the Union, distinction and efficiency, in as large proportion as they have strength and endurance to the equally noble field of labour. The Republic owes much to the Presidents Vice-Presidents the generals and commanders, the representatives and orators, the lawyers and scholars of Irish blood; she owes still more to the pure mothers of healthy instincts and faultless mould, which the green valleys and pure traditions of Ireland have given her, and to the unequalled hosts, wielding no sword and shouldering no gun, but armed with pick and axe and spade, who fought and fight

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\* The reader will have read the story. "And are there so many absentees?" asked an incredulous stranger of an Irishman, who had been inveighing against those renegades to duty. "Be gor the country is swarming with them," was the answer.

† Dungannon, County Tyrone.

Brave peasants whom the Father, God,  
Sent to reclaim the stubborn sod ;  
Well they perform'd their task and won  
Altar and hearth for the woodman's son."

The settler who clears the country is its true father. He makes all possible. Without his axe, his log cabin, his solitude, his endurance, his misery, we could not have the abundant appliances of civilization, the stately temple, the private mansion, the palaces of law and legislation, the theatre, the enjoyment of social intercourse, refinement, all, in a word, he forewent. A hard lot even when the settler, owing to some peculiar advantages, was able to take with him into the wilderness some of the conveniences of civilized life. Under the happiest circumstances there were hardships and difficulties. The exclusion, was drear enough during the later spring and summer and autumn, when activity was possible ; but indescribable, not to be realized, when barred on all sides by the snows of a Canadian winter, and the atmosphere at times freezing the mercury, so that it could be used as a bullet. Where they were near a town or something capable of being held, by a stretch of fancy, in that light, the sleigh or cariole with its charming bells would bear them over the snow to the social centre. But for those far withdrawn into the heart of the forest, in miserable huts, what a life ! Field labour suspended, no employment outside or inside, none of the comforts of a home, hundreds of miles from a doctor\*, far removed from the church-going bell, without

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\* "It was a melancholy season, one of severe mental and bodily suffering. Those who have drawn such agreeable pictures of a residence in the backwoods never dwell upon the periods of sickness when far from medical advice, and often, as in my case, deprived of the assistance of friends by adverse circumstances, you are left to languish, unattended, upon the couch of pain. The day that my husband was free of the fit, he did what he could for me and his poor sick babes ; but, ill as he was, he was obliged to sow the wheat to enable the man to proceed with the drag, and was, therefore necessarily absent in the field the greater part of the day. I was very ill, yet, for hours at a time I had no friendly voice to cheer me, to proffer me a drink of cold water, or to attend to the poor babe ; and worse, still worse, there was no one to help that pale, marble child, who lay so cold and still, with 'half-closed violet eyes,' as if death had already chilled his young heart in his iron grasp. There was not a breath of air in our close burning bed-closet ; and the weather was sultry beyond all that I have since experienced. \* \* \* I had asked of Heaven a son, and there he lay helpless by the side of his almost helpless mother, who could not lift him up in her arms or still his cries. \* \* \* Often did I weep myself to sleep and wake to weep again with renewed anguish. Roughing it in the Bush, such and greater suffering was the fate of thousands."—*Mrs. Moodie.*

in London, great manufactories, and a dockyard which covers fourteen acres. Over the splendid harbour alive with shipping, frown eleven different fortifications. It is the chief naval station of Canada. Two regiments of the line, besides artillery and engineers are always stationed here. Opposite the city stands the Town of Dartmouth, one of the prettiest in the world. The scenery is beautiful, and the natural beauty is enhanced by pretty villas along the shore. An extensive steam communication connects Halifax with various parts of Continental Canada, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, the United States, the West Indies and Great Britain. From east and west run admirable lines of railway. It has a population of some thirty-three thousand, and the value of its assessed property cannot be much less than \$20,000,000. The aggregate of its imports and exports is not at present much below \$18,000,000. Of the four thousand veterans, who thus early laid the foundation of the Liverpool of the Atlantic coast, a considerable number were undoubtedly Irish. The foundation of the City of Halifax was laid in 1749. Ten years after this, it was described in a contemporary account as divided into "Halifax proper, Irishtown, or the Southern, and Dutchtown or the northern suburbs." At this period the inhabitants numbered three thousand, one-third of whom were Irish. The President of the Irish Charitable Society was in 1755 appointed one of His Majesty's Council for the Province of Nova Scotia.

If we examine the old books we shall find the fact that Nova Scotia was largely settled by Irishmen made clear. A book called "Nova Scotia Archives," gives a long list of the first settlers and among the names we find Neil, O'Neil, Fitzgibbon, Flynn, Cavanagh, Casey, Ryan, Fitzgerald, Whelan, Blake, Mooney, Connor, Owen, Magrath, Moore, Donahoe, Doyle, Sullivan, Kennedy, Farrell, Plunkett, Connolly and many others, undoubtedly Irish. Murdoch in his "History of Nova Scotia," gives many Irish names some of them belonging to men who played a prominent part in the government of that Province. Amongst the Justices of Peace and Agents to assign lands to settlers at Shelburne, appear the names of James McEwan, Peter Lynch, William C. White, Patrick Wall and Michael Langan; amongst the Privy Council for 1789



There was one Roman Catholic Church and one Presbyterian and one English—all very small. John Baldwin, brother to Dr. Baldwin, kept a store in King Street. When Mr. Beaty came here, in 1817, there was only one brick house in the town. Five thousand Indians and their squaws used to meet where Adelaide Street runs.

In 1824 with the view of encouraging immigration, and giving some idea of Canada, Edward Allen Talbot, a relative of Colonel Talbot, published a book in two volumes in which he gave his impressions of the country. He was very ready to condemn whatever displeased him. His testimony when it was favourable was therefore all the more convincing. Great changes must have taken place since he visited Canada fifty-four years ago. For instance he says Canadian women of that time, though possessed of the finest black eyes, could boast of very few of those irresistible charms which captivate the heart. The immigration of the following years composed in part of English and Scotch, but mainly of Irish, must in half a century have wrought a wonderful change. The women had one hideous defect peculiarly offensive. There was hardly one of them over twenty years of age whose teeth were not entirely destroyed. They were also subject to goitre.

Talbot found in Upper Canada, two classes of society: The first class composed of professional men, merchants, civil and military officers, and the members of the Provincial Parliament; the second of farmers, mechanics and labourers, who associated together on all occasions "without any distinction." The first class dressed exactly in the same way as people in the old country, but the men were much less intelligent and the women not so refined in their manners. They were fond of public assemblies but had no taste for small social parties, a criticism as true to-day as in 1823. In the winter subscription balls were common, and every tavern in the country however destitute in other accommodation, was provided with an extensive ball-room. There was no introduction, admission being a matter of course on producing a ticket. The gentlemen sat on one side of the room, the ladies on the other. 'A line of demarcation appears to be drawn between them over which one would suppose it was high treason to pass, or to throw even a sentiment. Both parties maintain an obstinate silence and

Come, let us in this far-off land,  
 From Erin's sea-girt shore  
 One blood, one race, in union stand  
 Round memories of yore.  
 To-day we'll gently level down  
 The barriers that divide ;  
 And close together hand-in-hand,  
 Stand brothers side by side.

We ask not what may be your name,  
 Come to us whence you may ;  
 We ask not by what path you came,  
 Or where you kneel to pray.  
 Your common birthright of the land  
 Is all we seek to scan,  
 To-day we offer friendship's hand  
 To every Irishman !

To the knowledge without which our schemes of development would be like rudderless, compassless ships, Irishmen have given a stimulus which has borne practical fruit. John McMullin, now residing at Eganville, deserves a place among those who have made us acquainted with the geological character of a country which is rich in scientific suggestion. Born at Newry, in 1817, he came with his parents to Canada in 1820. The family resided for some years in Quebec. While quite young John McMullin engaged in the lumber trade on the Ottawa. Having a great desire for the acquisition of knowledge, his inquisitive mind busied itself with geology. He attracted the attention of the late Sir William Logan, in whose Department at Montreal he was engaged for two years. While there he discovered the Dawn of Life. The late Dr. Beaubien frequently quoted him in his lectures.

If I were to attempt to write the history of all who live in Montreal and deserve a place in this book, I should have to write a whole volume about that noble city, and call it the "Irishmen in Montreal." There are, however, a certain number who, for one reason or another, are so prominent that there is no difficulty in selection, for public rumour has already made the selection for me.

The name of Mr. Thomas White—or "Tom White," as he is familiarly called—has become a house-hold word in Canada. Born at Montreal in 1830, his father came from Westmeath, while his mother was of Scotch descent. When young White was growing up, the principal school in Montreal was Mr. Workman's. Thither Thomas White was sent. When the High School was opened he

He dissolved the House, and put before the country, not the issue as to the responsibility of the Executive, but that of the existence of British connexion. "Sir F. Head," says Lord Durham's report, "who appears to have thought that the maintenance of the connexion with Great Britain depended upon his triumph over the majority of the Assembly, embarked in the contest with a determination to use every influence in his power in order to bring it to a successful issue. He succeeded, in fact, in putting the issue in such a light before the Province, that a great portion of the people really imagined that they were called upon to decide the question of separation by their votes."

A most exciting general election took place, at which Baldwin was not a candidate, which resulted in the return of a House of Assembly opposed to the introduction of responsible government. Mr. Sullivan, shortly after his acceptance of office as an Executive Councillor, was created a Legislative Councillor and Commissioner of Crown Lands, which latter office he continued to hold until the Union.

The general election of 1836 was followed by a commercial crisis, one incident of which was the suspension of specie payment by nearly all the Canadian Banks. This involved an extra session of the Legislature, which was speedily followed by the rebellion.

We have already seen how Irishmen of every creed turned out in defence of the British Canadian flag. "The great mass of the emigrants," says Sir Richard Bonnycastle writing in 1846, "may however be said to come from Ireland, and to consist of mechanics of the most inferior class, and of labourers. If they be Orangemen, they defy the Pope and the devil as heartily in Canada, as in Londonderry, and are loyal to the backbone. If they are Repealers, they come here sure of immediate wealth, to kick up a deuce of a row, for two shillings and six pence is paid for a day's labour, which two shillings and sixpence was a hopeless week's fortune in Ireland; yet the Catholic Irish who have been long settled in the country are by no means the worst subjects in this Transatlantic realm, as I can personally testify, having had the command of large bodies of them during the border troubles of 1837-8. They are all loyal and true. In the event of a war, the Catholic

three hundred men who composed that remarkable body, the one who quickest commanded attention is said to be Dr. Stuart Robinson, of Louisville, Kentucky. Whenever he rose to speak, you could hear a pin fall; then presently there was such an ebullition of applause or such a roar of laughter that you could hardly hear what the speaker said. Dr. Hall, Dr. Adams, and Dr. Paxton of New York had their admirers, who pronounced them the most eloquent men living. But the professors and teachers, whether Scotch or American were rather inclined to admire the passionate eloquence of the French, and the finest impression was made by Dr. Godet, of Neuchatel, long known for his commentaries on St. Luke and St. John." Now Dr. Stuart Robinson is not an American, but an Irishman, from Strabane, County Tyrone. He is well known in Toronto, for he was among the refugees in Canada during the American war. He preached at Knox Church, but some of his remarks were interpreted as advocating slavery, and the *Globe* attacked him. For some months he was silent in consequence. Ultimately, a room in the Mechanics' Institute was taken for him, and there he preached until he, at the close of the war, returned to his old charge at Louisville. He held on to his property, and is now a wealthy man, the minister of the largest and most influential church in the South.

We have already seen what Ireland has done in supplying priests to the Catholic Church. In fact, all the energy of that church in Upper Canada is due to Irishmen of a type already given, and many more examples of which might be supplied.

In Ontario the most prominent Roman Catholic Divine is Archbishop Lynch, who was born near Clones, County Monaghan, in the Diocese of Clogher. Having been educated for the Church and ordained, he manifested a predilection for missionary labour, and having worked in Texas among Spaniards, Germans, and Irishmen living in a semi-civilized condition, having visited Paris and Rome on special missions, having, moreover, founded a House of his Order in Niagara, he, in 1859, was appointed Bishop in partibus and coadjutor to Monseigneur de Charbonel, Bishop of Toronto, whom he succeeded in the following year. In 1862 he again visited Rome to be present at the Canonization of the Martyrs. He now became "Prelate Assistant of the Pontifical Throne." He assisted

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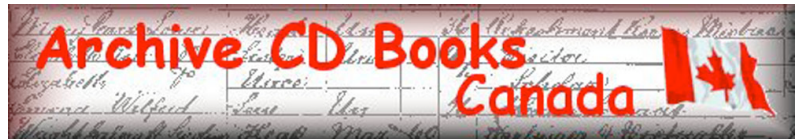
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