

## **The Irish Famine, Newspapers and Relief Efforts: 1840-1860**

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### **Introduction**

Newspapers played an important role in reflecting and shaping the public's attitudes toward the Irish Famine immigrants in 1845 and the struggle for Irish independence. The Great Hunger and its aftermath gave the press a new sense of purpose and some newspapers became essential in the new environment. The central claim of this article is to highlight the valuable role that Irish-American journalism played in aiding the Irish Great Famine immigrants, their national cause in America and at home, as well as shedding light on other issues such as poverty, crime, famine, immigration and patriotism. Newspapers reported the misery of the Famine experience and its degrading consequences and supported the call of Ireland's struggle for independence from the oppression of English colonization. The potato blight first appeared in Ireland September 1845 but the alarming news was not promptly reported in American and English papers at that time. The mass starvation on the shores of Ireland triggered an exodus of the Irish and the majority of the immigrants chose America as a refuge. The majority of American press glorified the endeavours to bring relief to Ireland. Similarly, the American press gave expression to the insecurities and aspirations of Irish immigrants and played a critical role in transforming their national crisis into a global concern. John Killen wrote that "the potato failure is working a mighty revolution," and "driven the very flower of the Celtic race across the Atlantic" and "This mighty emigration pays for itself. It seeks no aid from the public purse, but ... establishes itself in regions that owe no fealty to the Crown of England." (Killen, 1995: 257) and the New York Irish-American was an important newspaper that pointed out the intention of the English press to hide the plight of Ireland from its sympathizers in America and Europe.

The paper editorialized that the English press sought to "throw the old cloak of calumny over Erin and make her appear a wanton, vicious, seditious good –for-nothing" (The Irish World, January 17, 1870) and in November 1871, the paper encouraged the Associated Press to "remove, from a position he abuses, the liar who telegraphs to America ...nothing relating to Irish affairs but downright lies and the wildest exaggerations." (Irish World, March 10, 1877) In its editorial columns, The Irish American warned that "Few readers of the Cable dispatches given in the American papers are aware how scandalously they are manipulated by the English scribes through whose hands they pass." (Irish American, January 17, 1880)

The influence of the pre-Famine newspapers was marginal but mass immigration changed that by providing newspapers with a readership and a cause. Cian McMahon asserted that the newspaper business was related to the famine. McMahon's article 'Ireland and the Birth of the Irish-American Press 1842-61' claims that the initial defining age for Irish-American journalism is found in the second half of the nineteenth century and post-Famine era:

Two factors sparked the advent of Irish-American press. First, the Great Famine sent thousands of Irish into American town and cities.... The second important factor and the focus of this article, was the arrival of the republicans from Ireland who brought with them years of experience in press back home. These were the Young Irelanders who were forced to flee Ireland following the failure of their rebellion in 1840s and 1850s. (McMahon, 2009, 5)

Nineteenth-century was the age of 'personal journalism' in Ireland and newspapers editors exercised enormous control over their readerships. There were famous editors including: Patrick Donahoe who published the Pilot; Patrick Lynch, the editor of the New York Irish-American who managed to make the paper reach the top nationalist publications until his death in 1857 and James McMaster who edited the New York Freeman's Journal. The American press in general played a significant role in helping the Irish during the Famine and saved many lives. The papers reported stories of American charity work which constantly referred to the Irish people as 'unhappy,' 'starving,' 'suffering,' 'oppressed,' 'dependent,' and 'famishing.' The Pilot attacked the landlord system that forced many immigrants out of their home. There were many images produced during the late 1840s-1850s that audiences would have been familiar with as registering the Famine in Ireland. These images were revealing a universal image of Famine and that is of innocent and poor victims worthy of charity and donation and ultimately served as an indicator of the Irish identity.

The personal connections of the editors and their reading public with their homeland played an important role in the development of the Irish-American press in 1840s and 50s. The presentation of Irish immigrants as exiles forced out of their homeland by the Famine and British oppression was a central feature in the American press. The papers focused on American democracy and how Great Britain was undermining it. The Boston Pilot ridiculed the efforts "of the pro-English press, led by the New York Herald to prejudice Irish nationalism" and the Irish-American advocated "a truculent scurrility and brazen falsehood emancipated from some hireling of the British Government working in the American press." (The Irish World, December 31, 1870) The Irish-World castigated the lies about the Irish in America and Ireland by the "Anglo-American press and its paid quill-drivers who hate everything Irish and Catholic." (The Irish World, December 31, 1870) It commented on how the American newspapers and editors were using the degrading caricatures to ridicule the Irish Catholic immigrants and pointed out that such practices were labelled as one "of the grossest pests in our modern journalism." (The Irish World, December 31, 1870) The Boston Pilot attacked "the outrageous cartoons that were used by the New York Harper when referring to the Irish or the Roman Catholic religion. Similarly, the Irish-American stated that the Irish Catholics being signalled by the domestic press and denounced "the malignant bigotry of Harper's uncivilized journal for misrepresenting or caricaturing the hierarchy, clergy, and members of the oldest and most numerous Christian denomination in the world." (The Irish American, November 20, 1875) When a protestant periodical announced that the Harper's caricatures were going too far, there was a general cheer and the Irish-American editorialized that "the Harper had finally overleaped itself and provoked, at last, the expressed disgust of a portion of the community to whose prejudices it sought to pander." (The Irish World, November 20, 1875) Irish American editors were annoyed when their fellow Irish Catholics employed caricatures against American editors. The Boston Pilot rebuked the New York Irish Democrat for publishing insulting woodcut engraving that represented the Irish peasantry as ragged and ignorant mired in poverty and other cartoons such as "The British Empire in Allegory" which was published in the Irish World portrayed England as an inhuman malefactor imposing its will on all nations. Such misrepresentation

was expected from Harper's Weekly that "rancorous delineator of Irish character." (The Boston Pilot, May 4, 1871)

Leading Irish American editors on both sides of the ocean were working to disseminate lies about Ireland and the Irish people. Irish Americans were keen to portray the Irish struggle for freedom from British oppression as one that was universal and affected all races. The Boston Pilot stated that "with South Africa, Afghanistan, and Ireland, England seems to have quite enough for her soldiers to do just now," (The Boston Pilot, January 11, 1881) and the New York Irish American agreed that "In all climes and in all ages, the characteristics of English warfare have been savage and merciless." (The New York Irish American, August 9, 1879) Several of the Irish World cartoons made comparisons between famine in Ireland and famine in India and showed how both were contrived by the British government. The portrait entitled "How Oppressed Labor Is Robbed to Feed Voracious Royal Maws," showed Queen Victoria and her family eating and drinking to excess, while Irish peasants in Ireland and India were evicted from homes and left to starvation. The Irish World exhorted that "the people of these United States –offshoots of many races-gathered together from many climes- have grown into nationhood by the natural law of their condition. Not so the British Empire. Yes, extent is there; but unity is wanting." (The Irish World, September 21, 1874) Some Irish Americans declared that Thomas Jefferson and George Washington expressed their gratitude for the roles the Irish had played when Washington declared his intention to become an Irishman by adoption and such declaration was based on the explicit connections between Irish people and American democracy. Similarly, Washington testified to his "appreciation of the patriotic services rendered to our cause by so many men of Irish blood, as well as the sympathetic feeling that exists between Ireland and America." (The Irish World, March 29, 1873)

The Irish World played a crucial role during the period of the Famine with a circulation of 35,000 copies. It was the only means of learning about local Irish nationalist issues in Ireland following the suppression of the Irish press by the British government. British imperial oppression for them was an international phenomenon that exceeded all borders. Consequently, Irish nationalists drew parallels between themselves and other nations in Asia and Africa. There was a sense of shared suffering with the outbreak of drought in India between 1876-and 1878. As a consequence, Irish nationalism benefited substantially from the sense of loss felt by those who had left Ireland. The Irish World was not only a disseminator of Irish nationalism, but also served as a form of capital that collected the donations received from its readership all over America. It exhorted its readers to seek solidarity with other oppressed minorities as a means of advancing the status of the Irish.

American Newspapers agreed on the Irish people's right to self-government. The Nation became the most widely read and disseminated weekly paper featuring stories, editorials, poems and short stories, all of which either celebrated Irish culture or promoted Irish nationalism. The Nation's motto was "to create and foster public opinion in Ireland and make it racy of the soil." (Joyce, 1976: 54) The Nation helped to preserve the cultural identity of the Irish people and their Irish roots among Irish immigrants in America. It glorified the Irish traditional music, literature, history and even vernacular language. It established an exchange list with other newspapers at home and swapped free copies of its own copies with other newspapers. Patrick Donahoe's endeavour was to publish a paper that was Irish-American rather than an American-Catholic one. He founded a weekly periodical entitled the Irish Exile and Freedom's Advocate. Donahoe underlined the crucial role newspapers from home play in the realization of Irish freedom. He published more Irish news and established contacts with newspapers in Ireland. The Bostonians were annoyed that the Dublin

Freeman's Journal was the only Irish paper they received regularly. This was a great opportunity to which the Pilot embarked "to furnish our readers with the fullest possible intelligence from that country." (Boston Pilot, December 3, 1842, 7) The Pilot encouraged the free exchange between Irish and Irish-American newspapers and declared their trust that a "more liberal and Irish spirit will in the future govern the Irish press in their intercourse with the Repeal Press of America, especially at a time when the United States holds the relation it now does, to the popular movement in Ireland" and consequently the mutual advantages of exchange "should never be lost sight of in any selfish desire for pay." (Boston Pilot, 3 December, 1842, 7)

Moreover, Patrick Lynch, the founder and editor of the Irish American of New York declared that the mission of his paper was "to defend the Famine Irish from the vulgar and impertinent abuse of 'pretended friends' and the prejudice and hatred of open enemies." (The Irish American, 12 August 1849, 1) The Pilot insisted that its purpose was "the elevation of the Irish character...the independence of Ireland and the overthrow of sectarian violence." (Boston Pilot, 14 February 1846, 6) The Irish World used the Famine experience to support Ireland's struggle for independence, "the Famine-slain and the exiled millions of the Irish race, whose bones are now bleaching on the fields of both hemispheres, whose children, are broken and scattered... cry out for vengeance." (The Irish World, 10 March, 1877, 1) and it blamed the English for the Irish deficiencies, "...all, or nearly all, the crime, ignorance, and poverty which attain to the Irish are attributable to the subjugation to, and contact with... the English ... whose historians and newspaper writers now incessantly misrepresent or race to the world." (The Irish World, 15 March, 1873) The Pilot suggested that immigration was of benefit to those who left and those who stayed in Ireland, "The Famine which drove these millions of Irish people to the grave and to all parts of the world... also opened to the expatriated Irish a great destiny ... at a single step, the emigrating Irish found that liberty and equality before the law which they had vainly struggled to secure in their own land". (Boston Pilot, 10 February 1877, 5)

Irish-American Press revolted against England. According to the Chicago Citizen, the consequences of British colonial policies provoked "a legitimate anger which shall never be calmed until our common enemy shall have made reparations for the sufferings, the extinction and massacre of the unoffending children of the Gael." (Chicago Citizen, September 1868) The Leader questioned the possibility of forgiveness but the answer provided by the New York American Celt was "The exiles who were driven out everywhere on the lone highways of the world have everywhere risen up like armed avengers to demand an accounting." (American Celt, 31 August, 1850) The New York Irish World stated that "an appalling picture springs up from memory...ghosts walk the land...great giant figures reduced to skeletons by hunger, shake in their clothes...those who have managed to escape this dread visitation are flying panic-stricken to the seaports...to famine ships and fever." (Irish World, 22 November, 1876, 9)

The close ties with the periodicals on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean gave Irish-American newspapers its social force and cultural authenticity. Irish nationalism was extending its national cause abroad and looking for strength among the Irish-American. Both Irish and Irish-American newspapers transmitted to each other reliable "Irish version of stories and events" (Boston Pilot, 3 December, 1842, 7) that would not be subject to the prejudice of the English press, particularly London Times. Emerging Ireland recognized the importance of "having an Irish view of the world that excludes the general tendency to look at all the rest of the world through "the spectacles of Anglican prejudice." (Nation, 15 October, 1842, 8)

There were differences between the British and American periodicals in reporting the food crisis in Ireland. The American journals relied heavily on the British and Irish periodicals which were brought on steamers loaded with passengers and European newspapers. Occasionally, due to the fact that the reports of potato blight were taken from European press, there were contradictory reports concerning the Famine and it was believed that the Irish were exaggerating the extent of the damage. The Daily National Intelligencer reported that the potato crop was injured seriously in Europe and Britain. The New York Herald noted that “the Dublin Evening Mail contends and quotes respectable proofs for potato crop has been greatly and wilfully exaggerated.” (Sarbraugh, 1980: 13) To ensure that American readers were reading updated news items, American newspapers had correspondents who were delivering firsthand accounts of the Famine. There were correspondents who accompanied Irish newcomers and provided reports on their perspective of the Famine. Similarly, the stories of the Famine were disseminated through letters to the editors and were sent to the Irish people or people who visited Ireland at that time.

The New London Morning wrote in January 1874, “Immense numbers of poor half-starved creatures find their way across the channel, and beg and exist as best they can, by appeals to the feelings of the inhabitants in the great towns of England. The number of these poor creatures in Liverpool, Manchester, and the manufacturing districts, natives of the sister country, who have fled from the wretchedness of their homes, is adding seriously to the local taxation of the places named.” (The New London Morning, 1874: 15) Similarly, the Emancipator reported that:

“Fever, introduced by the Irish emigrants, is said to be prevailing extensively in the English towns near the Irish coast. Liverpool is suffering severely from the effects of this emigration; 20,000 Irish are reported to have landed in that city within the past year, filling the city with paupers, the hospitals and temporary sheds erected for the purpose, with, with the diseased and dying, and burdening the city with heavy taxation.” (Emancipator, 9 June, 1847)

In the Irish case, Irish-American press helped shape public opinions and the formation of political, social and cultural perspectives. The suffering of Irish people was acknowledged by the American papers and the American press took pride in charity towards Ireland to show people around the world that Americans were generous and concerned about the suffering of other people. Most American newspapers were not covering the Irish Famine but rather reporting the American charitable efforts to relieve the Irish people. George Potter asserted that the American aid to the Irish during the Famine was “the first great nationwide free-will extension of American generosity and benevolence to other people bowed down under a natural catastrophe.” (Potter, 1960: 123) Other papers urged Americans to continue in their charitable efforts. The Baltimore Sun stated that “With the increase of destitution and the rigor of privation, active sympathy should keep pace, and effort be enlarged. The United States is an immense field of action, and more favourable than any other land for the successful exertions of benevolent enterprise. Here, domestic charity has received countless monuments of its steady perseverance.” (Baltimore Sun, 11 May, 1857) Likewise, the Barre Patriot stated that in the newspaper’s business “lies the power to diminish, to a great extent, the suffering which pervades the length and breadth of that land. Then arise! With all your boasted honour, virtue and goodness, ye sons and daughters of New England, and extended to them now, for now is the day, and now is the hour, the hand of mercy and benevolence, as hundreds and thousands are dying hourly and daily.” (Barre Patriot, 26 September, 1845)

The American press reported the imminent catastrophe and contemplated the human coast of the pending Famine and sought to encourage charity towards Ireland. The Baltimore Sun wrote that “Starvation and death is entering the homely dwellings of the poor of the “Green Isle, and it is only by the immediate and efficient aid of those whom a kind Providence has blessed with plenty that the monster famine can be expelled from their firesides.” (Baltimore Sun, 11 May, 1857) The Baltimore Sun called for charitable efforts after the fall of the potato crop in November 1845 and wrote that “The Blight that has fallen upon the potato crop has taken their only food out of the mouth of millions, leaving them no alternative but death by starvation, should relief from without not be extended to them.” (Baltimore Sun, 11 May, 1857) Such American generosity confirmed the common image of Americans themselves as a blessed and Christian nation, in contrast to Ireland, a land abandoned by God and plagued by disease and famine. Although the American charitable efforts were not sustainable, the American papers in general exhibited a great sympathy towards the Irish misery in their misery. The American papers stressed the Irish suffering and praised the efforts to donate to the relief for Ireland and in this regard the American press gave more than any other country to the famine-stricken Ireland.

The misery of the Irish immigrants won the hearts and the sympathy of the American people on a scale that was unparalleled in history. The Daily National Intelligencer stated:

“Whatever in our country, may be the occasional faults of our General or State Governments, or the errors or excess of party, the Heart of this People is in its right place, and throbs in unison with that of suffering humanity, whenever and wherever (as in the case of Ireland) that suffering is intelligibly communicated to it. ...We rejoice in all this, not merely as adding to our already unfeigned respect and affection for our countrymen, but because we are proud of the answer which affords to those persons in foreign lands whose habit it is to represent Brother Jonathan (as they style us) as a sordid and mercenary personage.” (The Famine in Ireland, Daily National Intelligencer, 8 May 1846)

The American journals emphasized the gratitude of the Irish recipients which was “warmly expressed with all the exuberance of the Irish heart” (Tribute of Gratitude from Ireland, Daily National Intelligencer, 30 October, 1847) The Daily National Intelligencer reprinted a letter from Albany Evening Journal by Father Theobald Mathew in which he underscored “the magnificent humanity evinced by our beloved brethren in the States for the suffering Irish has inspired every heart in this Island with ardent gratitude. We shall ever regard America as our deliverer in the hour of bitter calamity.” (“A Letter from Father Mathew.” Daily National Intelligencer 26 April. 1847: 2 Gale.com 3)

By contrast, the British press highlighted the ingratitude of the Irish people and eventually the English sympathy towards the Irish ordeal was short-lived. The London Times in an editorial published in August 1848 stressed that Ireland would seek help from England and “all England is likely to get in return is railing, curses, and ingratitude.” (The Times, 29 August, 1848) However by the end of 1847, the American newspapers ceased publishing accounts of American relief contributions and some American donors were content with their relief efforts and the New York Herald stated that “America has done her share, for which she has received only hard words, threats and curses, from the British press and ministry.” (New York Herald, 22 March, 1847, Herald Foreign Correspondence 1) Thus, the British government proclaimed that the Famine was over by 1847, though the crisis continued until 1850s. In February 1848, the New York Herald noted that the conditions in Ireland had not improved at any scale and indeed the suffering was getting dimmer and dimmer. As the American papers continued informing their readers about the blight of the Irish, it was very

likely that the cessation of charity efforts in America was due to the fact that Americans were used to the accounts of suffering and misery of the Irish. A report published in the New York Herald noted that “from Ireland, we have the usual quantity of misery and crime, but there is something of special importance.” (New York Herald, February 1848)

Ireland was late in producing a newspaper of its own and it was until the beginning of the eighteenth-century that newspaper became a feature of Dublin daily life. Ireland appeared in the British media prior to the Great Famine and there were massive reports on Irish misery and the progress of O’Connell’s Repeal Movement. The most powerful newspaper of the day was The Times with a circulation that was exceeding all its rivals at that period. J.T. Delane, the editor of this paper stated that “The Times represented the sovereign opinion of the educated ‘ruling classes’ and Sir Robert Peel said that this paper was “the barometer of public opinion.” (Grey, 1997, 78) The Times played a significant role in the government’s response to the crisis as the paper was not only reporting but also interpreting events and eventually shaping the attitudes of their readership. Thomas Campell Foster, the commissioner of The Times observed that:

“The general topic of conversation everywhere now is the failure of the potato crop. ... I am firmly convinced ... such is the general apathy, want of exertion and feeling of fatality amongst the people... that unless the government step forward to enforce those or similar plans for the national welfare, not only one of them will be generally adopted and nothing will be done.... The Government, however, have been warned-let them act promptly, decisively, and not depend on people helping themselves; for, such is the character of the people, that they will do nothing until starvation faces them.” (The Times, 28 November 1845)

Consequently, there was a call for action in the Cork Examiner published 10 November that stated “A large and influential meeting of the inhabitants of Skibbereen and the gentry and landed proprietaries of the vicinity was held on Monday, in the Courthouse of that town, for the purpose of considering the state of the potato crop in the district, and of petitioning government to adopt the best measures to alleviate the distress.” (Cork Examiner, 10 December 1845.)

Newspapers were disseminated and circulated in Dublin and the rest of the country was backward in newspaper industry. By 1760, Dublin witnessed numerous attempts to establish newspapers that concentrated on Protestant land-owning class and made little effort to expand outside. Such newspaper was hardly in real sense Irish or to engage in any political controversy but by the end of this period newspapers were becoming engaged in political controversy and actively engaged in Irish affairs. The Illustrated London News, an influential publication selling roughly 67,000 copies weekly covered the famine in Skibbereen to its mostly upper and middle readers. The same newspaper in 1847 published a front page drawing of a famine funeral in Skibbereen and calling for government action. It followed this up with series of reports and drawings from the same area and such iconic illustrations were among the most few images of the Great Famine and eventually moved people to make contributions towards relief efforts. Newspapers intermingled with reports regarding the suffering of the Irish and the horrors and hardships that the people in Ireland had to endure. Nicolas Cummins narrated entering the cabins of the Famine victims in Skibbereen where:

“such no tongue or pen can convey the slightest idea of. In the first, six famished and ghastly skeletons, to all, appearance dead, were huddled in a corner on some filthy straw,

their sole covering that seemed a ragged horse cloth, their wretched legs hanging about naked above the knees. I approached with horror, and found by a low moaning they were alive. They were in fever, four children, a woman, and what had been once a man.” (London Times, 17 December, 1846)

Cummins continued to say that “It is impossible to go through the details, suffice to say, that in a few minutes I was surrounded by at least 200 of such phantoms, such frightful spectres as no words can describe. By far the greater number were delirious, either from famine or fever. Their demonic yells are still yelling in my ears, and their horrible images are fixed upon my brain. My heart sickens at the recital, but I must go on.” (London Times, 17 December, 1846) Dan Donovan, the first medical doctor of Skibbereen Workhouse helped to raise awareness in Dublin Medical Press by claiming that “At this period, the letters that emanated from his facile and graceful pen, written to the Cork Daily Reporter and London Newspapers, exposed ... the melancholy suffering and privation the poor people in the south of Ireland, especially about Skibbereen, were undergoing at the time.” (Pat Cleary & Philip O'Regan, *Dear Old Skibbereen, Skibbereen Printers, Skibbereen*, 1995p. 27)

Skibbereen became synonymous with the Great Famine and it received a massive amount of coverage from journalists and writers. By early October, 1845, the first stories about the famine appeared in the American columns. The Ohio Statesman reported that “the disease among the potato crop seems to be universal and in Ireland it forms the chief food of the people. While some districts had escaped the ravages of the disease, the injury is too wide spread not to cause alarm.” (Tri-Weekly Ohio Statesman, 8 October 1845) and Pittsfield Sun stated “Famine, gaunt, horrible, destroying famine seems impending. Fears have seized the public mind. In Ireland matters look appalling- in England gloomy.” (Pittsfield Sun, 27 November, 1845) According the Southern Patriot, “There is no part of the country that is not visited by the plight” and “even allowing much for exaggerated alarm.” (Southern Patriot, 25 November, 1845) In Ireland the vast majority of the peasant population relied on potato as the primary food source led editors and correspondents to conclude that the potato blight meant widespread death and starvation. Fear was the emotional response to the imminent danger. Consequently, the Irish people were presented in newspapers as a helpless population in danger. Baltimore Sun wrote “it seems to be an impending reality which may not be averted” (Baltimore Sun, 8 December 1845) and Emancipator claimed “there was an appalling prospect of a horrible famine in Ireland.” (Emancipator, 7 January, 1846) A considerable number of the American newspapers covering the Irish Famine were concerned about the charitable efforts to ease Irish suffering and to report the progress of relief efforts. The Southern Patriot reported a relief meeting in Boston “to devise means of extending aid to Ireland, now threatened by a famine, in consequence of the failure of her potato crop.” (Southern Patriot, 18 December, 1845) Stories about the charitable American response to the Famine gave Americans a sense of satisfaction that they were assisting in the relief of the Irish misery. One narration in the Trenton State Gazette underlined the American generosity:

This evening the meeting called by the Mayor, for the purpose of raising money for the relief of the starving Irish, is to be held. We propose that this morning and throughout the day, our readers should endeavour to realize the condition of the wretched sufferers. Information enough has been published and re-published, to put it out of the power of any to doubt, that all the charities we can send, will do good, and contribute to feed those who are dying for want of food. (Trenton State Gazette, 1 March, 1847)

Other American newspapers personified the Famine as a destroying angel and as an instrument of God's justice. The Boston Transcript wrote “Famine, with its numerous and



dreadful train of diseases, knocks at the doors of the great majority of [Ireland's] brave and hardy population. Already the cry has become universal 'give us food, that we perish not'." (Boston Transcript, 3 October, 1846) Albion observed that "nor does famine march alone; the pestilence, in its most loathsome form, follows close in train." (Albion, 20 February, 1847) Generally speaking, American newspapers used such personifications to emphasize the Irish misery and certainty, "Famine and death, grim messengers of despair, stalk boldly forth with lion front, in their most hideous form, crushing all beneath the massive wheels of their mighty juggernaut car." (Boston Bee, 17 April, 1847) Even though the Irish did not receive adequate support from the British government, the famine ordeal was alleviated by private charity. The British press was against relief efforts and underlined the responsibility of the Irish landlords for the crisis. The London Times tried to convince its readers that the Irish were taking advantage of the English benevolence and stated in one of its editorials that "the Irish find it pleasanter to live on alms than on labour." (The Times, 26 March, 1847:4) When the situation in Ireland was deplorable in 1849, the Times presented the charitable efforts to raise funds to the Irish as an attempt to deceive the English, "the begging-box will soon have to be sent round the country to abate the mortality and famine of Ireland. ... The ears of women are to be stimulated by the most touching appeals to mercy, charity, and religion. Scenes of horror are to be conned by rote, and then dressed up according to the tact of orators and the taste of audiences; and a handsome return is calculated on." (The Times, 15 May, 1849:5)

The New York Herald blamed Britain for the disaster and its handling and stressed that saving the life of the Irish should be the top priority. The journal stated that "the Irish must eat. They cannot wait for the end of the discussion. Six million of people cannot be allowed to perish while a committee of doctors of political economy arrive at a conclusion that the laws, which deprive them of food, ought to be suspended. Feed them first, and discuss afterwards." (The Crisis in Affairs on the Other Side of the Atlantic. The New Yorker Herald 2 Dec. 1845:1. Gale.Com.

The American newspapers including The National Intelligencer, the New York Herald and the Liberator encouraged their readership to assist in efforts to relief and help Ireland. The Daily National Intelligencer declared the hope that "those who have the means will also have the disposition to contribute to the relief of a people whose sufferings are so appalling and whose wants are so urgent and universal." (City News, 23 November, 1846) The Daily National Intelligencer noted that "the movements are being made in various sections of the Union with a view to administer relief to the starving population of Ireland." (Relief for Ireland 4) In 11 January, 1874, the same newspaper published "Praiseworthy" text that was published in the New York Courier and Enquirer that "has ascertained that the immigrant Irish population have remitted during the year 1846 eight hundred and eight thousand dollars! Of this sum \$175,000 have been remitted within the last two months. A prouder testimonial of the intensity and permanency of home affections could not be raised on behalf of any people in the world." (Praiseworthy, Daily National Intelligencer, 30 October, 1847)

Moreover, the Boston Pilot began in the early 1847 giving increasing attention to reports of food riots and deaths by starvation. It warned that "An incubus is now weighing heavily upon Ireland." (Boston Pilot, 20 March 1847, 6) The Famine was seen as a culmination of the English colonizing policies in Ireland, "a crime that cries to high heaven for vengeance." (Boston Pilot, 27 March 1847, 6) Some American newspapers held the English Government responsible for the Famine as it failed to avert the impending threat. The New Hampshire Sentinel wrote that:

“Seven million of people, or at least, the great majority, the whole of the lower classes, live habitually in scarcity- in what would elsewhere be thought famine, and are threatened with absolute want and starvation, while enormous duties are permitted to remain upon all kinds of grain; and the only suggestion in their behalf is an appeal to charity! How is it, the paper wanted to know, that the government can do nothing, although there is a duty on wheat of eighteen shillings per quarter, and on other grain in proportion, standing directly in the way of the poor man’s bread.” (New Hampshire, 30 December, 1845)

The American press offered a valuable insight into the Irish Famine and a different perspective on the Famine tragedy. The Pilot complained that food was being shipped out of Ireland and consequently attacked Sir Charles Trevelyan, the English official in charge of famine relief for declaring that assistance to the starving Irish would “thwart the providence of God.” (Boston Pilot, 11 December 1847, 6) The Pilot documented the coffin ships on the death of 158 passengers on Sir Henry Pottinger, a ship that landed in Canada:

This brutal misgovernment of England- who thrust Ireland out like a diseased leper and bids her help herself in her misery and refuses her the assistance she may claim from the taxes she pays...this brutal policy is producing its natural results. Distresses, evictions, emigrations. The peasantry are crawling to the workhouses, and the farmers are hurrying to the coast- their faces turned to Australia, Canada or the United States of America. (Boston Pilot, 25 November 1848, 7)

The Pilot criticized the mainstream press for failing to denounce British policies regarding Ireland, “We hardly know whether greater desolations fall upon the people of Ireland on their own soil or follow them over the ocean, in their exile.”(Boston Pilot, 17 March 1849, 5) It urged the Irish to develop their own institutions and it was calling the latest wave of Famine refugees to head west, “They should not for a moment think of settling down in these places where want of work, poverty crime, disease, and death lie in wait to destroy them, as they have already destroyed tens of thousands of their miserable countrymen.” (Boston Pilot, 17 March 1849, 5) However, most immigrants lacked the means to move on, “The Famine and the trauma of its American aftermath would become part of the collective memory of Irish America as articulated by press.” (Gribben, 1999: 76)

To conclude, Irish-American newspapers had been closely involved in the political and national battles that have shaped and continued to shape independent Ireland not only as an observer but as an active participant. Events in Ireland played a critical role in newspapers industry. Newspapers served as information vehicle for Irish immigrants in many places within and outside America. Newspapers served as a virtual repository for the collective memory of the exiled Irish. They reinforced a sense of common identity by depicting the Irish in America as a nation of exile who were forced to flee Ireland because of British oppression and famine. Eventually, victimized Irish emerged from being victims of oppression, hostility and poverty to the enforcers of national identity at home and abroad.

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