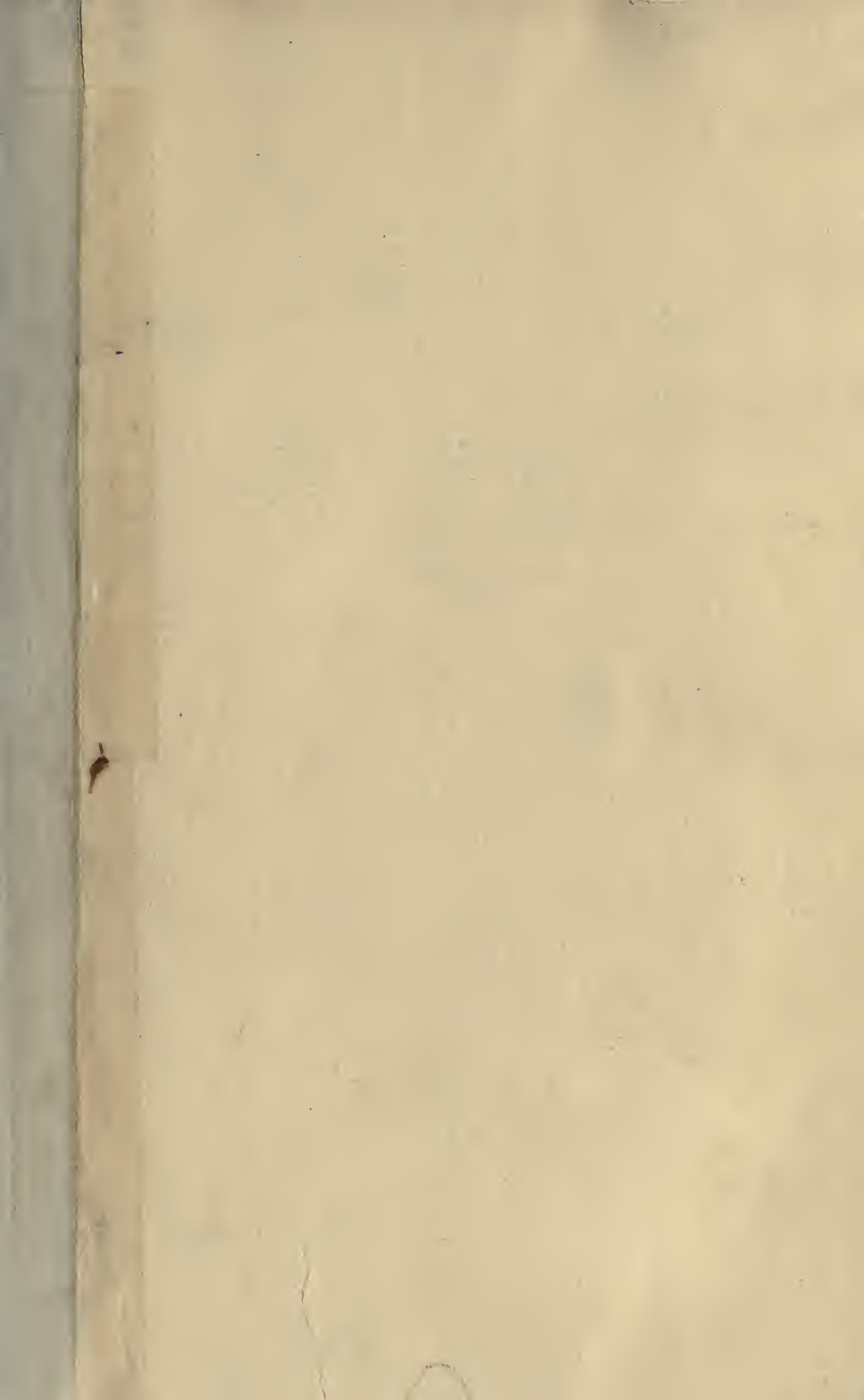




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**POLITICAL NATIVISM**

IN

**NEW YORK STATE**

BY

**LOUIS DOW SCISCO, Ph.D.**



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## PREFACE

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THIS work is intended to be a contribution to the history of partisan politics in the United States. Its primary purpose is to deal with the machinery and methods used by a certain great political organization which has played a part in American history. The issues upon which that movement based itself are also treated, but it has not been the purpose of the writer either to advocate, defend or condemn them. They are dealt with just to the extent that seems necessary to make intelligible the story of the organization that worked in their name.

The partisan system of the American people is the link between the people and the government which both rules and serves them. It is a mechanism that has grown up from the needs of the nation, altering from time to time as conditions change. Its duty is to respond to public sentiment on vital questions of the hour, to test the strength of such sentiment at the polls, and to enact the sentiment into law or administration if the people so express themselves. There have been times in American history when the partisan system failed to meet its duty squarely, and those are times of political confusion and re-arrangement. It was in one of these periods that the nativist movement came into state and national politics. Its experience is full of suggestion for those who like to trace the reasons of political changes. The story of the brief and stormy career of the Know-Nothing movement shows how an issue rejected by the regular parties can struggle into power despite them and to their hurt. It shows how public sentiment can cast aside an old political organization and build a new fabric when needs require. The issue of

nativism wrecked the older party structures and was itself wrecked in turn by a stronger issue.

In tracing the evolution and fate of this interesting political experiment there have been many difficulties resulting from the peculiar nature of the organizations which sprang up from time to time to voice the sentiment of nativism. One of the features which has been especially productive of confusion in the pages of writers on political history has been the fact that there have been two classes of political organizations in American politics. One class is that with which the public is most familiar to-day. It is an organization whose extent is national, and whose aims include that of securing control of the national government. An organization of this sort cultivates exclusiveness in the control of voters. It seeks to make itself distinct from other political organizations and to make the division clear-cut between its adherents and those of similar organizations. We call it a political party. The second class of organizations are less familiar to-day than they were fifty years ago. They are of the type which Mayor Harper of New York city, in 1844, called "a political organization distinct from party." Usually an organization of this sort has no national scheme of effort, but plays its part in state or local politics. The special characteristic of this class, however, is not the area which it covers but the nature of the allegiance which it demands from its members. It is not exclusive in its claims. It permits its members to belong to other political organizations and to act openly with them. This type of organization the writer has preferred to call a "movement" rather than a "party." It was these "movements," which sprang up to represent the issues which the organizations of the regular parties refused to assume, that caused the extraordinary confusion of American politics in the decade of the fifties. The rise of nativism, as well as many other phenomena in American history are best understood when the real nature of a "movement" is kept in mind.

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## CHAPTER I

### BEGINNINGS OF NATIVISM, 1807-1843

AMONG the many political issues which have at one time or another claimed the attention of the American people that of nativism has its place in history. It meant hostility to every non-American influence that could clash with the settled habits of the American community. In the field of national politics it first appeared in organized form in 1845 as the Native American Party, but it shortly disappeared after a brief exhibition of activity. In 1854 it suddenly came into the field again, this time upheld by the Know-Nothing Order, and again collapsed after a short life of three years, shattered by the impact of a rival issue. Since then nativism has been absent from national politics, but it has flashed up from time to time in the politics of the commonwealths, and there is no certainty that it may not again, sometime, astonish the nation by a new stride to the front. The Native American movement of 1845 was too weak and too unsuccessful to leave any real impress upon the political memories of the nation. The Know-Nothing Order, on the contrary, was strong for a time and startling in the changes that it wrought. It brought before the people new ideas and new methods. It roused earnest enthusiasm and bitter hatred that endured long years after the Order itself had passed away. But yet its career was too brief to permit it to be really understood then or since. It has remained a curious political memory, whose origin and aims and sources of strength are obscure topics in the annals of political change.

The doctrine set forth by these two national organizations

was practically the same in both cases. In the earlier movement it was often called "Native-Americanism," and in the later movement "Know-Nothingism," but the word "nativism" proved to be equally descriptive and far more convenient.

The basic idea of nativism was that a person whose primal sympathies or interest lay outside of the American body-politic could not be in real sympathy with the American system, and must, therefore, be a danger to that system. When the idea of nativism was applied more specifically, it took two chief forms. It declared, first, that any person of foreign birth was unfitted for citizenship until time had obliterated his active interest in the mother-land from whence he came, and, second, that any person in the Roman Catholic church was unfitted for citizenship, because obedient to an extra-territorial ruler. All through the struggle of nativism for recognition these twin sentiments went side by side as associates, backed by a single political propaganda and seldom clearly differentiated. Wherever the political movement raised itself it was founded upon these two ideas. The sincerity of their advocates was often doubtful, for in some states the nativist movement was a mere cloak for local issues or political intrigue, but whatever was the real fact, the movement everywhere affected a belief in the twin doctrines of nativism. In every state it was ostensibly hostile to aliens. In almost every state it was frankly anti-Catholic.

The study of nativism in the politics of New York is peculiarly interesting, because New York city was a great center of organized nativism. The sentiment of nativism was ever strongest, it may be said, in those cities of the sea-board and of the great West which were depots of immigration. It was in New York city that the impulse began which developed into the Native American Party of 1845. It was here, also, that the nativist system of secret politics was begun. It was here, too, that the Know-Nothing Order was founded and built up. It was in New York and Philadelphia that nativism

was most typical and genuine as a sentiment. The character of popular nativism was everywhere shaped by local conditions and local prejudices. In New York city and throughout New York state it was particularly directed against the Irish-Catholic element of the population. Nativism was not merely a political theory here. It was a feeling based upon deep-rooted antipathies of the past, upon glaring abuses of the present, and upon earnest anxieties for the future. How well founded these feelings were it is not necessary now to say. They existed, and political nativism drew its strength from them.

In tracing the antecedents of the nativist movement in New York state the mind naturally harks back to those occasional appearances of anti-Catholic feeling under the colonial establishment. In the eighteenth century men of English blood and English speech still vaguely feared the heavy hand of the Roman church. The new American commonwealth, which was born of the old province of New York in 1776, was largely English in blood, and much more largely English in thought. To its people there came as a heritage from their English past a fear and a hatred of Rome. In the State Convention of 1777 the debates over the proposed constitution showed this old inherited fear, and, though the constitution itself was spared the blemish of open anti-Catholicism, the official oaths then put in force were such as to bar conscientious Catholics from office.<sup>1</sup> At this time there was not a single Catholic congregation in the state to alarm the constitution-makers. Their hostility to the Roman church was based only on theory.

It was not long before the Catholic church made its appearance in the state. First a mission was established, and then in 1786 the first congregation came into existence by the consecration of St. Peter's church in New York city. The chief city of the state began to grow steadily as soon as it was released from the danger of war. The steady flow of trans-At-

<sup>1</sup> Shea, ii, p. 158.

lantic immigration set in, bringing over English and Irish people in greater numbers year by year. Many of the Irish were probably Protestants in faith, but the Catholic element was large, and much of it was gathered into the congregation of St. Peter's. The Irish population massed itself, too, on certain streets, making its separateness in the community more noticeable. Finally, in 1806, came the earliest notable exhibition of native hostility to this foreign element, growing out of the inherited feelings of the community. On Christmas Eve a crowd of non-Catholics gathered in front of St. Peter's church to interrupt the services, but were disappointed to find none in progress. The news of the incident spread. By Christmas night a crowd of Irishmen rallied to the scene and a street fight began. The city watchmen interfered, and one of them was killed by a knife-thrust from an Irishman. The non-Catholics now gathered in force, the Irish were put to flight, and except for the hurried arrival of Mayor Dewitt Clinton, their homes would have been sacked by the victors.<sup>1</sup> This isolated incident shows how early there existed antagonism directed against the Irish-Catholic population. Their separateness in life and habits invited it.

Probably the most important element in this antipathy was the pure contempt which men usually feel for those whose standards of life seem inferior. This feeling was felt toward all immigrants of the poorer class, irrespective of their race. To the mind of the average American the typical immigrant was a being uncleanly in habits, uncouth in speech, lax in the moralities, ignorant in mind and unskilled in labor. This attitude of mind is reflected in the gibes and comments of the press when it had occasion to refer to the new-come peoples. The immigrant bore a stamp of social inequality, not to be overlooked while it existed, and suggesting an impersonal sort of antipathy on the part of the native-born. In addition to this, so far as the Irish were concerned, there was the

<sup>1</sup> *American Register*, i, p. 14.



primal fact of racial difference between them and Americans. The English immigrant easily settled down among men of his own blood and tradition, was understood by them, and soon accepted as a fellow. The Irish immigrant, of another blood and another thought, stood somewhat apart in character. He was not so well understood, nor so easily accepted by men of English blood and American birth. The same was true of the other non-English nationalities, but being weaker in numbers, they were quickly absorbed, while the thousands of Irish held clannishly together, and prevented absorption. It may also be true that the traditional English dislike for the Irish people had a certain vague response in the American branch of the race.

At the time of the Christmas riot of 1806 the Irish population of New York City numbered several thousand souls, and was beginning to be a factor in local politics. The first appearance of political nativism followed closely upon the riot. In the spring of 1807, when assemblymen were to be chosen, some of the local Federalists put forward an "American ticket," and supported it by inveighing against the growing power of the foreign vote.<sup>1</sup> The ticket failed to enlist enough support to be successful, and from that time there seems to have been no important appearance of nativism in politics for many years. Year by year the Irish element continued to grow. In 1808 the congregation of St. Peter's was roughly reckoned at 14,000 souls, mostly Irish. In 1810 the Irish-American press began with *The Shamrock*.<sup>2</sup> Instead of being Americanized, the Irish element steadily maintained its own separateness as years passed. It had its own region of settlement, its own church and its own press. Its influence on elections also grew. In 1812, as an instance, the Democratic Party in the city appealed especially to the Irish for aid against the Federalists.<sup>3</sup> An estimate made by the Catholic bishop in 1815 reckoned 13,000 souls in his diocese, of whom 11,000, he

<sup>1</sup> Smith, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Kehoe, ii, p. 686.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, p. 10.

thought, were Irish.<sup>1</sup> A continuous stream of immigration flowed into the country through the port of New York after the war with England closed in 1815. The stream left a residuum in the city as it passed through to the interior. From this stream the Irish-Catholic community was constantly recruited. The digging of the Erie canal employed an army of Irish laborers in the interior counties, and small groups became permanent settlers at various points. By 1826 a new bishop was able to estimate the Catholic population at 25,000 in New York city alone, and 150,000 in the whole New York diocese.<sup>2</sup> New Catholic congregations came into existence in various parts of the state as a result of the work on the Erie canal. In 1829 there were eight churches in the interior and five in New York city and Brooklyn.<sup>3</sup>

During this growth of the Irish population the attention of native Americans was called to them in ways often unfavorable. A burden of pauperism and crime was laid upon the American public by the growth of foreign immigration, and the Irish attained an unenviable reputation for their own contribution to the burden. Since 1817 the city of New York had been obliged to give public aid to the foreign poor, and when alien population reached the interior a cry for relief was heard. In 1830 an effort to shift the burden of the counties upon New York city met a protest. The city complained that it was itself overburdened with expense, and that the cost of its almshouse, bridewell and penitentiary was more than half caused by the foreign element.<sup>4</sup> The lawlessness and pauperism of the Irish were the first real and definite grievances held against them by the natives of the soil. Their clannishness caused them to be looked upon as people who not only were strangers to American society, but were determined to remain so. Their social life and thought were centered around their church, and that church resolutely held itself

<sup>1</sup> Shea, ii, 196.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> N. Y. Assembly Docs., 1830, No. 260.

aloof from the ideas of the New World. It began to be felt by Americans, consciously or unconsciously, that a church which showed no inclination to put itself in touch with American ideas was one to be viewed with distrust. About 1829 the attention of Americans seems to have been drawn more closely to the Roman Catholic church as a consequence of the flurry in England over the subject of Catholic emancipation. The hostility to the Roman church which was awakened in English pulpit and press by the emancipation idea found an echo in the United States, and political anti-Catholicism came fairly upon the scene at last. The warning was raised by the religious press against danger from papal power. It met very little response indeed from the people, but it at least reinforced the distrust which had been growing against the Irish Catholics and the church to which they belonged. The idea was broached here and there that the presence of Catholics in an American community might be a political danger, on account of the obedience that they owed to the Pope. The essential features of nativism had been brought before the people of New York by 1830 as a natural result of the social conditions of the time. The Irish-Catholic element had become disliked because it exemplified the most objectionable features of alien manners and an alien church. The dislike only needed formulation and a theory to become open and active nativism.

The vague antagonism against the foreign Catholics which had gradually grown up in New York city out of existing conditions finally reached the point of organization in 1835. The impulse which brought this about was the publication by the *New York Observer*, early in 1834, of a series of twelve letters signed by "Brutus," under which pseudonym was concealed the personality of Samuel F. B. Morse, afterward famous as inventor of the telegraph. Morse wrote these letters immediately after a visit to Europe. While at Vienna he had learned of the existence of the Leopold Foundation, a Catholic organization intended to aid church expansion in

America. This society seemed to him designed to subvert American liberty, and when he returned to New York he embodied his knowledge and his views in the Brutus letters. His thesis was that the Holy Alliance and the Papacy had organized the Leopold Society to build up Catholic power in America; that the American Catholic hierarchy was to gain control of American politics and society, and to shape them as ordered by its absolutist masters; that the work had actually been begun and must be checked. He suggested as protective measures the denial of the electoral franchise to future immigrants and the demand by public opinion that the Catholic clergy make public its administrative work as the Protestant churches were accustomed to do.<sup>1</sup> These letters of Brutus formulated an anti-Catholic argument for Americans. They attracted a great deal of attention all over the country by their evident sincerity, and the directness of their accusations. The existence of an un-American foreign element was raised to the dignity of a national problem. In New York city, where Morse was known personally, the Brutus letters gave great impetus to the idea of taking definite measures against the very evident growth of foreign influence. Nativism could henceforth surround itself with the sanctity of patriotic professions.

During the year 1834 the seed sown by Morse was taking root. One of its results was the formation of the New York Protestant Association, whose object, according to an official statement, was "to spread the knowledge of gospel truth and to show wherein it is inconsistent with the tenets and dogmas of popery." It was not a political body, but it seems to have used political arguments against the Catholic church. The denunciations of Catholicism, which were uttered regularly at its meetings, exasperated the Catholic element, until finally the irritation broke forth into violence. On March 13, 1835, one of the association meetings was held at Broad-

<sup>1</sup> *Foreign Conspiracy*, a reprint of the Brutus letters.

way Hall to discuss the question "Is popery compatible with civil liberty?" In the midst of the proceedings a crowd of visitors were seen forcing their way through the audience and beginning a disturbance that straightway turned into a free fight. The presiding clergy hurriedly fled, and amid the crash of breaking lamps and benches, the discussion ended.<sup>1</sup> The intruders at this meeting were Irish-Catholics, and though the Catholic clergy hastened to disavow the act and to express regret, the mischief was done. In the presence of this object-lesson of Catholic aggressiveness the Brutus letters took on new meaning as a warning to Americans.

Just two weeks after the affair at Broadway Hall political nativism launched itself into local politics. On March 27, 1835, a caucus of American-born citizens of the Fourteenth Ward met to nominate a distinct ward ticket.<sup>2</sup> At least one other ward followed this example at once. The Democratic press gave the movement notice by denouncing it as a Whig device and implying insincerity in its effort.<sup>3</sup> On the latter point the press was probably wrong, but the reference to Whig approval was entirely correct. The Whig press encouraged nativism softly and Whig caucuses endorsed its nominees for office. It is owing to this latter fact that the identity of the movement was completely lost and that the poll of votes gives no hint of its strength except to show that Whigs and nativists together could not carry the wards in which nativists were organized. The nativist and Whig alliance which showed itself in the city election of 1835 is a fact to be noted. All through the quarter-century that nativism played a political part in New York there was close relation between the two. It had the appearance of a natural affinity, but it was due to the fact that Democratic leaders steadily refused to ally themselves to a movement which would lose them the confidence of the Irish-

<sup>1</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1835, March 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1835, April 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Post*, 1835, March 30.

Irish  
Protestants  
Catholics

inf

Catholic vote. Whig leaders, on the other hand, could do so readily, and did not hesitate to join hands with nativism when to their interest. The election of 1835 is also notable as showing American protest against foreign interference at the polls.<sup>1</sup> This was one of the grievances of nativism. From a very early period the loafer and bully had been features of election work in New York city, seizing every opportunity for violence and fraud that would favor the tickets for which they worked. This sort of thing was objectionable enough when carried on by natives of the soil, but it was unbearable when taken up by aliens. When ward leaders aggravated the abuse by organizing the despised foreign element into gangs to carry on the old work of assault and brow-beating there arose a note of protest. The social inequality between assaulters and assaulted was too apparent.

The nativist movement of 1835 was too weak at its beginning to create at once a general city organization, but after the spring election was past it was enabled to supply the need. In the Common Council which met after election there occurred the incident of a foreign-born member rising to move the dismissal of an office-holder who happened to have served in the Revolution.<sup>2</sup> It was a very convenient event for the nativist leaders, and they at once took advantage of it. A public meeting was called by them "to take into consideration means to counteract the undue influence which foreigners now possess over our elections, and also to consider the propriety of foreigners holding offices which can be filled by native citizens."<sup>3</sup> Here, nearly twenty years before the Know-Nothing movement, was the announcement of one of the ideas for which that movement stood, namely, the exclusion of foreigners from public office. It is to be noticed that although the nativist movement of 1835 had its start in suspicion of foreigners as

<sup>1</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1835, April 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1835, June 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Post*, 1835, June 9.

Catholics, yet it did not base itself on any religious issue. It placed itself before the people as an exponent of good citizenship only. It may properly be said here, as throwing light on all that comes after, that nativism in New York city from first to last was mainly an expression of antagonism toward the clannishness of Irishmen and Irish ways. Nativism at times worked on a theory of good citizenship, and attracted an element to whom that idea appealed. At other times it worked upon a theory of religious effort, and received support from people whose sympathies were enlisted on the side of religion. Whatever were its professions, however, nativism always drew its vitality from the half-instinctive feeling of racial antagonism between Anglo-American and Celtic blood. ] v/r

The public meeting that was called by the nativist leaders took place June 10, 1835. Its resolutions form one of the earliest documents of political nativism in New York. They eulogized the services of Revolutionary veterans, protested against their removal from office by foreigners, condemned the holding of office by aliens, and ordered a general organization of nativists in the city. The most important of them was this :

*Resolved*, That we as Americans will never consent to allow the government established by our Revolutionary forefathers to pass into the hands of foreigners, and that while we open the door to the oppressed of every nation and offer a home and an asylum, we reserve to ourselves the right of administering the government in conformity with the principles laid down by those who have committed it to our care.

The meeting of June 10th was a preliminary to general organization. James Watson Webb, editor of the *Courier and Enquirer*, took great interest in the movement and put his press at its service. In later years, he took to himself the credit of its existence.<sup>1</sup> On June 27th he began to urge citizens to organize as nativists for political action. The field of local politics was, of course, already occupied by the two great national

<sup>1</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1855, June 7.

parties at this time, but the new movement was not planned to be antagonistic to either. It was to be a local organization which voters might join without casting aside their regular party affiliations. A mass-convention, called for by the meeting of June 10th, seems to have taken place early in July and to have organized the new movement under the name of the Native American Democratic Association. An executive committee was appointed with power to issue a declaration of principles, that is to say, a platform. On July 10th, the declaration was issued<sup>1</sup> and the new movement was then fairly under way as a factor in the politics of the city at large. Its official organ was a little paper called the *Spirit of '76*. The official head of the movement was James O. Pond, chairman of the general executive committee.<sup>2</sup>

The principles of the movement, as declared in its platform, were opposition to office-holding by foreigners, opposition to pauper and criminal immigration and opposition to the Catholic church. Its opposition to the church was placed on the ground that the church was a political engine. The platform further declared that the movement was not a part of the Whig Party, but that it stood outside of party lines. Through the summer of 1835, the work of organizing different wards was pushed with some success, aided by the steady preaching of the nativist press. All the latent antipathy toward Irishmen found an outlet as the nativist movement got on its feet. Although the movement was professedly anti-foreign in a broad sense, yet the utterances of the time always singled out the Irish for denunciation. Specific causes of offense were eagerly sought for by the nativist press, although the real offense was not specific at all. An anonymous writer to the press touched on the truth when he complained of the Irish Catholics that "they are men who, having professed to

<sup>1</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1835, July 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1835, October 9.



become Americans by accepting our terms of naturalization, do yet, in direct contradiction to their professions, clan together as a separate interest and retain their foreign appellation." <sup>x</sup> No better statement of nativist complaint could have been made.

The managers of the new movement held their organization firmly to local politics, even repudiating their official organ because it declared its presidential preferences.<sup>2</sup> The policy was made necessary by the bi-partisan character of the organization. At the same time the undercurrents of politics were drawing the nativist organization into close touch with the local Whig Party. At this period political nominations were usually made by co-operation of committees and mass-meetings. It was customary to hold a mass-convention of voters to appoint a committee on nominations. This committee was expected to make out a ticket and present it before a second mass-convention for acceptance. It was a clumsy method and New York city was soon to outgrow it but by this system the first nativist local ticket<sup>3</sup> was made in October, 1835. It was headed with the name of James Monroe, nephew of the president of that name and a prominent citizen of the city. At the announcement of this ticket the local Whig leaders decided to throw their influence in its favor. This was done, not by formal endorsement but by mere omission to name any Whig nominees. This act left the local contest one between nativists and Democrats.

The rise of nativism in New York city with its suggestion of suppressing foreign influence had meanwhile touched a responsive chord in other places where the foreign element was known. In Kings county a nativist movement nominated an assemblyman and the local Whig organization stepped aside

<sup>1</sup> *Imminent Dangers*.

<sup>2</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1835, October 9.

<sup>3</sup> Congress, James Monroe. Assembly, Orlando Waller, James O. Pond, Anson Willis, Frederick A. Tallmadge, Adrastus Doolittle, Isaac P. Whitehead, John Monat, Charles Weeks, Jr., Clarkson Crolius, Jr., Robert B. Ruggles, Abel Decker.

to give it the field. In Albany county the Whigs engrafted nativism upon their local platform. Wherever the nativist movement showed itself the Whig leaders turned to it hopefully as an influence that was necessarily arrayed against the Democracy. The latter party took heed. In New York city the Democratic leaders temporarily put aside their foreign friends as a sop to the new sentiment and made their local ticket as purely American as the nativist ticket itself.<sup>1</sup> The extraordinary growth of the new movement was a surprise. At the November election it nevertheless failed of success. In Brooklyn it elected John Dikeman to the Assembly, but in New York, even with Whig support, it cast only forty per cent. of the total vote. At the same time it was a very encouraging thing for the nativist leaders to find so hearty a response as had been given to their doctrine. It indicated better success at future elections.

The nativist movement maintained its organization through the winter after the campaign of 1835. The ward associations of this period were in the nature of political clubs permanently organized. Nativism busied itself in circulating petitions asking for change of naturalization laws.<sup>2</sup> When presented to Congress in June following they formed a roll of 5000 names.

As the spring election of 1836 drew near, the nativist executive committee called the usual conventions and ward caucuses. On April 7th the name of Samuel F. B. Morse was accepted as a nativist nomination to the mayoralty.<sup>3</sup> No more typical and thorough nativist could have been chosen than the author of the Brutus letters, yet in one respect the selection was unfortunate. He was a Van Buren Democrat on national issues and on the eve of a presidential election the Whig leaders refused to lend support to a recognized Democrat.<sup>4</sup> The Whig Party in New York city was called together to make a

<sup>1</sup> *Courier Enquirer*, 1835, November 2.    <sup>2</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1836, March 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1836, April 8.    <sup>4</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1836, April 11.

separate nomination, and by this action Morse lost all chance of election. On ward tickets, however, the nativists and Whigs effected a fusion. There is little to say of the brief local campaign. The vote on mayor<sup>1</sup> stood as follows:

Democratic Party . . . . .	about 15,950 votes.
Whig Party . . . . .	about 6,130 votes.
Equal-Rights movement. <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	about 2,710 votes.
Nativist movement . . . . .	about 1,490 votes.

On the ward tickets the fusion vote won control of the Common Council and was able to dictate a distribution of city patronage on nativist principles. This was a gain of some importance for nativism. Nevertheless this did not conceal the inability of nativism to make political headway as an independent movement.

A presidential campaign followed the spring elections, and the attention of the public was turned away from the issues which the nativist movement sought to present. Still the organization persisted. In October another nativist ticket<sup>3</sup> was made up, and the Whig leaders again gave it their support, bringing it before a Whig mass-convention, and endorsing every nominee but one.<sup>4</sup> The political press of New York city was too busy with weightier matters to pay much heed to local politics in this campaign, and nativism received little notice. The movement still held to life in Brooklyn with much the same relations to the Whig Party that it had in New York. It was beginning to be viewed by the public as an annex to the Whig organization. From the vote of Novem-

<sup>1</sup> Valentine *Manual*, 1854.

<sup>2</sup> The Equal-Rights organization took its name from its opposition to the creation of monopolies.

<sup>3</sup> Congress, Edward Curtis, Ogden Hoffman, Ira B. Wheeler, James Monroe. Senator, Frederick A. Tallmadge. Register, James Gulick. Assemblymen, none.

<sup>4</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1836, November 1.

ber, 1836, the strength<sup>1</sup> of the political groups in New York city seems to have been as follows:<sup>2</sup>

Democratic Party . . . . .	about 15,520 votes.
Whig Party . . . . .	about 15,130 votes.
Nativist movement . . . . .	about 1,610 votes.
Equal-Rights movement . . . . .	about 960 votes.

Nativism had apparently gained slightly in political strength owing to the popularity of Colonel Monroe, who was again on its ticket this year.

Again political nativism appeared before the public in the spring of 1837, as the city election approached. On March 13th its convention nominated Aaron Clark for the mayoralty, and drew up an address<sup>3</sup> vigorously denouncing the Irish as an element which deliberately kept separate from the American people, and followed clerical dictation in matters political. As was expected, the Whigs endorsed the candidacy of Clark, and this time the fusion was successful in carrying the city. Clark was elected by 3300 plurality, with a common council of the same politics. In this campaign the nativist movement cannot be estimated apart from the Whig Party. The constant alliance of nativists with Whigs had brought about the practical absorption of the weaker organization. The fusion was complete. The daily press treated the election as a Whig victory solely, and neither in the struggle itself, nor in the political gossip that followed the struggle, was nativism referred to as a distinct element. The nativist

<sup>1</sup> In this work the strength of split tickets has been figured in the following way: First is figured the median vote of each political group, that is to say, that vote in each group which, when applied to the various combinations on split tickets, will give the least variation from the actual poll of the several nominees. Second, the poll of each nominee who represents more than one group is divided among those groups in proportion to the median vote of each group. Third, an average of the poll assigned to each group is made, and represents the strength of the ticket of that group.

<sup>2</sup> *Commercial Advertiser*, 1836, November 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Herald*, 1837, March 14.

movement, in fact, ended with this election, absorbed in its hour of triumph. When the new Common Council took control the leaders of nativism took office and were henceforth Whigs. It is possible that the Native American Association may have continued in life as a non-political body, but facts are obscure as to its fate.

It was four years before nativism in New York city again declared itself as an organized political movement, but chance references here and there show the existence of non-political societies during that interval whose work was more or less along nativist lines. Their presence bridges over a gap in which the old antagonisms, though existent, played a very insignificant part. One of these societies is revealed by a petition presented to the state Senate on March 5, 1838.<sup>1</sup> It was from a Native American Association in New York city, of which H. Hunt was president, with Abm. Tappen, J. P. Whitticar, Alexander Hamilton and John Bancker as vice-presidents.<sup>2</sup> It explains that "the vote of a native American, who has much at stake, with a better knowledge of our institutions; and a greater ability to decide upon the merits of candidates for office, is borne down and rendered nugatory by ignorant and lawless aliens, who, having little to gain and nothing to lose, are indifferent alike to the purity and permanence of our social and political institutions;" wherefore the association asks for a registry of voters. In April, 1838, a petition to Congress from citizens of New York city asked a change in naturalization laws, and in May following certain citizens of Kings county asked<sup>3</sup> specifically for a law requiring aliens to reside twenty-one years before naturalization. This idea of twenty-one years' residence was destined to play a prominent part later as an idea of the Know-Nothing movement. During 1839 organized nativism showed itself again under the title of the Native American Association of New York City, which may or may not be the same body as that which

<sup>1</sup> *Senate Journal*, 1838.

<sup>2</sup> Original in State Library.

<sup>3</sup> *Four. Congress.*

existed in 1838. In May, 1839, this association petitioned the state Senate<sup>1</sup> for a registry law to prevent election frauds in New York city. Despite the disappearance of political nativism, then, there remained nativist societies for at least two years longer, earnestly antagonistic to the foreign element. At the same time the anti-Catholic feeling aroused during the movement also persisted in the community, kept alive chiefly by the Protestant clergy.

Early in 1840 came the impulse which was to arouse nativism into new activity. Governor William H. Seward, being openly friendly toward the foreign element in New York state, saw fit to incorporate in his annual message<sup>2</sup> of January, 1840, a brief paragraph about education. In this paragraph he stated that children of foreigners were often without the advantages of public education in consequence of racial or religious prejudice against them, and therefore he would recommend "the establishment of schools in which they may be instructed by teachers speaking the same language with themselves and professing the same faith." In New York city at this time there was a Catholic population of about 70,000<sup>3</sup>, supporting several schools without public aid. The public schools of the city were under the management of a society decidedly Protestant in its membership and ideas. In immediate response to Governor Seward's suggestion, the Catholics of New York city demanded a share of the school moneys for their own schools<sup>4</sup> and were at once opposed in the demand by the officers of the Public School Society. Twice during 1840 the Catholic request came before a Democratic common council and twice the application was rejected, but only after long debate and active canvasses that aroused bitter antagonism. Nativism again asserted itself in connection with the question. Anti-foreign and anti-Catholic

<sup>1</sup> *Senate Journal*, 1838.

<sup>2</sup> *Senate Docs.*, 1840.

<sup>3</sup> Kehoe, ii, pp. 459, 685.

<sup>4</sup> *Proc. Bd. Assts.*, 1840, February 17.

sentiment rallied behind the Public School Society as representing American ideas of undenominational education. It was a logical outcome of the struggle that political nativism should take on organization anew.

Directly after the fall election of 1840 a new paper of nativist character appeared, copying the name of its predecessor, the *Spirit of '76*.<sup>1</sup> A meeting of native Americans also took place,<sup>2</sup> but whether or not they succeeded in getting themselves organized is not clear. The movement was a feeble one and the daily press barely noticed it. With the early months of 1841 the Catholics carried their cause before the legislature at Albany and their former antagonists continued the contest in this new field. The struggle was still in progress when the New York city election of April came round and nativists were encouraged to build up a new nativist movement as an expression of public sentiment. This effort of theirs is very obscure. It was embodied in a Democratic American Association which nominated Samuel F. B. Morse for the mayoralty.<sup>3</sup> In former years, when the New York city Whigs were a political minority, their leaders welcomed nativism as a force that would cripple the Democracy, but in 1841 the Whigs were strong and nativism was a menace to the local party. The dissension which sprang up in the new movement was said to have been fomented by Whig leaders.<sup>4</sup> One faction of nativists repudiated Morse's nomination as irregular, while another faction vigorously confirmed its regularity. On the morning of election day a forged letter of withdrawal with Morse's signature appeared in the newspapers and when the polls closed he had received only 77 votes. The trick had scattered his friends.<sup>5</sup> It seems hardly possible that the movement of 1841 could have been at all strong either in numbers or in organization.

<sup>1</sup> *New Yorker*, 1840, November 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1840, November 10.

<sup>3</sup> *American*, 1841, April 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Post*, 1841, April 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

Separately from the Democratic American Association, an entirely different organization was planned in the spring of 1841 and brought into existence after the city campaign was past. Its object, as it declared, was to unite all those who were "opposed to the perversion of the common school fund to sectarian purposes." The determined fight made by the Catholics seemed likely to continue for some time, although the legislature put aside their plea indefinitely in May. This new organization was intended to be the nucleus of opposition to Catholic plans. Organized on May 30, 1841, under the name of American Protestant Union,<sup>2</sup> it chose as its president that well-tried nativist, Samuel F. B. Morse. Although semi-religious in nature, the Union was yet a legitimate part of political nativism. Its formally-adopted principles evidence this in these words:

*Resolved*, That we form ourselves into a national defensive society, and call on Protestants of all and every denomination of Christians, together with the friends of our institutions generally, to aid, assist and confirm us in this confederation for our common welfare.

*Resolved*, That this association shall be styled and known by the name of the American Protestant Union, the object of which shall be to preserve for ourselves and secure to posterity the religious, civil and political principles of our country, according to the spirit of our ancestors, as embodied and set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the federal Constitution.

The work for which the Union was organized came to hand when the local political parties took steps to present tickets for the fall election. New York city would choose at the November election two state senators and thirteen assemblymen, and the fate of Catholic requests would in large measure rest with these men. The Union accordingly roused itself, and began in October to ascertain the views of candidates. A considerable nativist sentiment in both of the great parties was inclined to lend aid to the opponents of Catholic wishes. In the Democratic Party the nominating committee drew upon itself the denunciation of an Irish-Catholic mass-meeting by favoring

<sup>2</sup> *Observer*, 1841, June 12.



the friends of the Public School Society.<sup>1</sup> In the Whig Party the anti-Catholic feeling was strong enough to force a certain pro-Catholic aspirant off the ticket<sup>2</sup> and to place in the local platform a declaration against sectarian schools.<sup>3</sup> The trend of events was toward nullifying Irish-Catholic influence just at the moment when it was most desirous of asserting itself. In this emergency Bishop Hughes, as leader of the Irish-Catholic element, took an unexpected step by causing the nomination of a separate ticket by an Irish-Catholic mass-meeting.<sup>4</sup> This was the "Carroll Hall ticket," so often referred to in later years. Apparently the bishop's purpose was to rebuke the Democratic leaders by showing that the Catholics held the balance of power in the politics of New York city. This at least was the interpretation put upon his act. The sequel was the immediate announcement, on November 1st, of a "Union ticket," made up on the bi-partisan principle. This ticket<sup>5</sup> was selected by a committee of members of the Democratic American organization, acting under the auspices of the Protestant Union.<sup>6</sup> It was hoped to unite the anti-Catholic sentiment upon the Union ticket and balance the Carroll Hall ticket. The brief campaign that followed these nominations was spirited. The daily press, without exception, condemned the Catholic bishop for the action he had taken, but he held firmly to his course, protesting that he had not meddled with politics.<sup>7</sup> On election day the strength of the several tickets was as follows:<sup>8</sup>

Whig Party . . . . .	about 15,980 votes.
Democratic Party. . . . .	about 15,690 votes.
Catholic movement. . . . .	about 2,200 votes.
Anti-Catholic movement. . . . .	about 470 votes.
Anti-slavery movement . . . . .	about 120 votes.

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, 1841, October 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune*, 1841, October 25, 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Tribune*, 1841, October 30.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Senators: Isaac L. Varian, Morris Franklin. Assemblymen: Horace St. John, David D. Field, Joseph Tucker, Edward Sanford, Linus W. Stevens, George G. Glasier, William Jones, David F. R. Jones, Elbridge G. Baldwin, William B. Maclay, Charles M. Graham, Jr., Solomon Townsend, Nathaniel G. Bradford.

<sup>6</sup> *Four. Commerce*, 1841, November 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Kehoe*, i, 666,

<sup>8</sup> *Tribune*, 1841, November 12.

The vote seemed to prove that the Catholics held the Democratic organization at their mercy, for those nominees who had not received Catholic endorsement were defeated. The Union ticket received very inadequate support. Many nativists preferred to vote for the Whig nominees, who were known to favor the Public School Society.

The school question came up again before the next legislature and dragged along into the spring of 1842. The feeling against the Catholics still existed in New York city and showed itself in the political work and school-bill agitation that preceded the April election. No organized nativist movement showed itself, however, even when the Catholics again made a nomination of their own. The Protestant Union and Democratic American organizations were both invisible. Nativists looked for aid to the local Whig Party rather than to independent action, and they were not disappointed. On the very day that the Whig governor signed a new school bill, as asked by the Catholic leaders, the Whig general committees of New York city officially declared their opposition to its provisions.<sup>1</sup> The time had come, they said, to "manfully resist the misguided spirit of sectarian dictation which has sacrilegiously invaded our legislative halls." The local Whig organization became representative of nativism by this step. In the Democratic organization the leaders gave no recognition to nativist sentiment, but in several of the wards the Democracy split into two factions,<sup>2</sup> one dominated by Irish-Catholics and the other by native-born voters. The old antipathies became outspoken and bitter while these changes went on. The excitement of election aggravated the feeling. After the polls were closed on election night the city streets were filled with a mob which drove before it the hated Irish, and stoned the windows of the Catholic bishop.<sup>3</sup> Mayor Morris placed

<sup>1</sup> *Com. Advertiser*, 1842, April 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1842, April 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Comm. Advertiser*, 1842, April 13.

militiamen on duty to guard the Catholic churches from violence.

The riot of April, 1842, was a final ebullition. Governor Seward had permitted the defeat of the Public School Society, and however bitterly nativists might resent his act, the new school law must be accepted. Henceforth the public schools of New York city were to be controlled by an elective board chosen in each successive June. At the first elections held in June, 1842, the opponents of Catholic ideas generally united in each ward on union tickets, regardless of old party lines. Organized nativism in this form scored a victory by capturing the school board. Nativism was now, as a result of the school struggle, a fixed sentiment in the community. In the fall of 1842 the Whig managers appealed to it for aid and met a willing response that seriously affected the Democratic ticket on election day.<sup>1</sup> In the spring campaign of 1843, a published notice called upon all Americans to strike the names of foreigners from their ward tickets.<sup>2</sup> The same notice nominated Stephen Reed for mayor, but the official canvass of votes fails to mention him. The nativists were probably yet unorganized. The school board elections of June, 1843, showed a continued use of union tickets whereon Whigs and Democrats in single wards could co-operate against Catholic nominees.

The story of nativism in New York city has now been brought down to the summer of 1843, when a new political movement began, gaining strength from past experience and new conditions. It has been shown that nativism in New York was a complex sentiment based on underlying natural antipathies. Whenever this sentiment was affronted it rose into temporary self-assertion, but it found great difficulty in creating for its expression a political organization that could endure. Over and over again the movement was ab-

<sup>1</sup> *Argus*, 1842, November 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Sun*, 1843, April 11.



sorbed or checked by the timely interposition of the local leaders of the Whig Party. The constant effort of nativism to assert itself nevertheless developed the ideas for which it stood into definiteness, and taught Whig and Democratic voters to co-operate in their support. By its failures nativism had prepared the way for a real Native American party.

## CHAPTER II

### THE AMERICAN REPUBLICANS, 1843-1847

IN the summer of 1843 the voters of New York city saw the beginning of a petty movement of nativism which gave no greater promise of vitality than had its predecessors in the field, but which nevertheless was destined to rise within two short years to the dignity of a national political party. The movement originated in the general disgust over the use made of political patronage by the local Democratic Party. Political nativism was dead in the spring of 1843, and when a new Democratic common council took power after the April election it showed its gratitude for foreign support by unusual favors in the way of market licenses and petty offices. This move created discontent.<sup>1</sup> Heretofore the markets had been under American control. Now the American meat-sellers found themselves provided with Irish competitors and subject to oversight by Irish clerks, weighers and watchmen. Nativism at once sprang into new life in the markets.

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In June a political movement began. The first impulse toward it, so a later story<sup>2</sup> ran, was a chance meeting of men in a blacksmith-shop and a comparison of grievances that brought about an agreement to organize. The association of the Eleventh ward, organized June 13, 1843, was the first body to be formed under the new impulse, but it soon had companion associations in other wards of the city and on July 15th a new paper, the *American Citizen*, appeared<sup>3</sup> to voice the new designs. By August the several ward bodies had chosen del-

<sup>1</sup> *Four. Commerce*, 1843, October 23; *Tribune*, 1844, April 15, August 24.

<sup>2</sup> Carroll, p. 264.

<sup>3</sup> *Tribune*, 1843, July 17.

legates to create a central organization for the movement. This whole process of development is an interesting example of American political work. When the delegates convened<sup>1</sup> they adopted the name of American Republican Party and created a partisan machinery which was copied from that of the older parties. The control of the movement was vested in a general committee composed of delegates from the ward associations. The whole plan of party organization was embodied in a written constitution of nineteen articles.<sup>2</sup> Partisan constitutions of the written sort are rare in American politics. This particular one was probably formulated to secure proper powers to the general committee. On August 26th the movement announced itself by an address to the voters.

All this work of organization, carried on quietly as it was, attracted so little attention that the daily press gave it no notice. The movement at first had really little of promise. Its opportunity came, however, in October, when a faction of Democrats opposed to Van Buren's leadership lost control of their party conventions and became openly disaffected.<sup>3</sup> The nativist movement soon gained new members and experienced leaders. There began a rapid growth toward importance, marked interestingly by an increase of the nativist press. Meanwhile, the older parties looked on doubtfully, unable to judge from which of the greater organizations the new movement was drawing most heavily. As a rule the partisan press of the city preferred to say very little either in approval or disapproval of the movement until events made its nature clearer. The nativism of the American Republicans was frank and open. The party was very popular among the market-men. When it began to seek candidates it settled upon a pledge to be affirmed by each nominee who might be chosen. This pledge<sup>4</sup> bound the nominee to four lines of effort if elected to

<sup>1</sup> *Citizen*, 1844, February 23.

<sup>2</sup> Full text in *Amer. Republic.*, 1844, July 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Herald*, 1843, October 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Four. Commerce*, 1843, October 23.

office, namely: to secure a law requiring twenty-one years residence for voters, to repeal the New York city school law, to oppose selection of foreigners for office, to accept no nomination from any other party. The last pledge was evidently intended to guard the movement from absorption by its rivals. At this campaign the work of nativism was done with aid of public meetings and political processions. It is worth while, perhaps to reproduce one of the party's campaign documents. It is the report<sup>1</sup> of the committee on resolutions presented at a great mass-meeting in November, 1843. The doctrines expressed in it are substantially the same as those which afterward were put forth by the Know-Nothings.

Your Committee would respectfully report that the following are the principles and objects of the American Republican Party :

First. As to its organization, it is composed of members of both the political parties, irrespective of mere party considerations.

Second. That it is not intended, and will not be permitted, to discuss the merits of any of the candidates for the Presidency, and that with president-making, as a party, it has nothing to do. On the contrary, no person, by voting for the ticket offered by this party, is required or expected to go for any of the presidential candidates.

Third. That as a party it will discuss fearlessly the acts of all men and all parties that have in any way pursued such a system of policy as is deemed to be subversive of the fundamental principles of our government and destructive of public or private morality.

Fourth. That in the opinion of this party, based upon what appears to be very alarming fact, papal power is directly opposed in its end and aim to a republican form of government, inasmuch as the papist owes allegiance and fidelity to a power outside of our government—that is, to the Pope of Rome—and that power has been exercised in this city to such an extent that our common school system, by party subserviency, has been bartered away as a price for the votes of the organized followers of Bishop Hughes.

That through this school law there has been a pre-conceived determination, followed up by an actual attempt in the Fourth Ward, to put out of our schools the Protestant Bible, and to put down the whole Protestant religion as being sectarian.

That in addition to this the large majority of the offices in this city are in the hands and under the control of this dangerous influence, and consequently our city government in its detail is conducted by persons many of whom were but lately naturalized; all of which is contrary to every principle of justice and propriety,

<sup>1</sup> *Four. Commerce*, 1843, November 4.

and tends to the destruction of our schools, our religion, and our form of government.

That from the vast number of foreigners who are constantly coming to this country, it has become absolutely necessary to fix a longer period of residence before they shall be permitted to vote ; that it is not intended to prevent any adopted citizen from voting who is now entitled to vote. If such abuse their trusts, it is their crime and our misfortune. All such are citizens, and of course no modification of the naturalization laws can affect them. It is deemed just and right that those foreigners who shall come here at a future period shall be permitted in taking the oath of allegiance, etc., to hold and convey real estate, and, in short, be citizens in all respects, saving and excepting the right of voting, and for this they shall remain 21 years. In this it is supposed every correct-judging adopted citizen will cheerfully concur, as the only object proposed by it is that those who were not born in the United States, or who do not speak our language, or who do not read and cannot understand our laws and institutions, should not control by their votes the action of our government until they can vote understandingly. As it now is, those deluded men are, in a majority of cases, the mere instruments and dupes of designing politicians, who use them for their and our destruction.

In short, that in permitting the present connection between politics and religion, and the constant courting and buying the votes of these men to settle our elections, our city taxes have unnecessarily increased, until at the same time it is the fruitful source of many grades of crime. To bring about a reform in these enormous and constantly growing abuses is the sole object of this party. Therefore,

*Resolved,* That we cordially approve of the objects proposed, and that we will sustain the ticket nominated for this purpose, headed Mangle M. Quackenboss for Senator.

*Resolved,* That we are in favor of a repeal of the present school law, which was forced from our legislature under the dictation of papal influence. And that both the manner in which this law was passed and the objects intended to be gained by it, should meet with the united disapprobation of every good citizen.

*Resolved,* That we are in favor of a thorough and radical reform of the monstrous abuses that have obtained in our city government, and that we prefer to have our offices filled by American born citizens.

*Resolved,* That we are in favor of a modification of the present naturalization laws, so that 21 years residence shall be required of the future adopted citizens before giving them the right to vote.

*Resolved,* That in every particular, and throughout all time, we are in favor of an entire separation of religion and politics, and that we will put down the attempt that is making to unite them.

*Resolved,* That we call upon all good citizens to act as Americans, and to save themselves, their families and their country from impending destruction.

This report, besides declaring principles, gives a fairly good idea of the sort of organization which the nativists were trying



to create. It was to be local in aims, leaving its members to remain Whigs or Democrats on national issues. A feature not noted in the report was the fixed rule adopted by the new movement of distributing all nominations and appointments on the bi-partisan principle. In October, the movement took the *American Citizen* to be its official organ.<sup>1</sup> Daniel F. Tiemann, as chairman of the city committee, was official head of the organization.<sup>2</sup> Skillfully guided by experienced politicians, the movement met extraordinary success in organizing voters. The result was unexpected and startling to the managers of the older parties. Its ticket,<sup>3</sup> though largely made up of new men, polled a splendid vote. Said the *New York Tribune* some months later, "The election came on, and to our utter amazement, this new party, which we supposed limited to a few disappointed office-seekers and their personal friends, polled 8,500 votes out of a moderate aggregate poll."<sup>4</sup> The actual party averages<sup>5</sup> were as follows :

Democratic Party . . . . .	about 14,410 votes.
Whig Party . . . . .	about 14,000 votes.
Nativist movement . . . . .	about 8,690 votes.
Walsh Democrats . . . . .	about 320 votes.
Anti-slavery movement . . . . .	about 70 votes.

The movement did not, of course, elect any of its nominees, but the casting of such a large vote was a triumph in itself. The sudden rise of organized nativism was a general surprise. It was a phenomenal thing for a political movement to spring from nowhere and in five short months to build up party machinery that could organize voters by thousands. It was evi-

<sup>1</sup> *Four. Commerce*, 1843, November 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Senator, Mangle M. Quackenboss; Sheriff, Charles Henry Hall; Clerk, Horace Loofborrow; Coroner, James C. Forrester; Assemblymen, William Taylor, Charles B. Childs, John Culver, Thomas H. Oakley, Uzziah Wenman, Charles Alden, Richard Reed, Valentine Silcocks, Jesse C. Wood, Jacob L. Fenn, Philo L. Mills, John B. Haring, Andrew McGown.

<sup>4</sup> *Tribune*, 1844, August 24.

<sup>5</sup> *Four. Commerce*, 1843, November 22.

dent that its issues were viewed with responsive interest among the native voters of the city. In its personnel the movement was bi-partisan. It had apparently drawn upon the strength of the Democracy somewhat more heavily than upon that of the Whigs, but it left the relative positions of the two old parties the same as before its advent. A little more growth would give it control of the city. The Whig editor of the *Tribune* discussed the significance of the phenomenon. He was an uncompromising foe to anything that looked like political or social discrimination against the foreign element, but he admitted that there were real grievances to be redressed. As such he cited the naturalization frauds, the appeals to the Irish and German vote, the violence done by foreigners at the polls and the greediness of foreigners for office.<sup>1</sup> These had stirred nativism into life.

The managers of the new American Republican organization did not permit it to lapse into apathy after the fall election. They proposed to contest the city election of the following spring. The city committee was renewed, Alexander Copeland being made chairman and as such being official head of the movement. The ward associations were spurred into new activity and used to circulate petitions for naturalization reform. Stimulated by this enthusiasm the movement spread beyond the state. Before the close of 1843 it was established in New Jersey and, early in 1844, in Pennsylvania.<sup>2</sup> In preparation for the city election of 1844 a new issue was taken up. Reform was needed in the city administration at this particular time. Charges of extravagance, carelessness and inefficiency made against Democratic officials were generally believed true. It was a taking issue for the nativist leaders and lay ready to their hand. When the nativists began to nominate ward tickets they accordingly pledged their nominees to both of their issues.<sup>3</sup> Each nominee promised specifically to appoint

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1844, January 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Citizen*, 1844, February 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Tribune*, 1844, April 4.

no foreigner to office, to make city appointments on a bi-partisan plan, to reform the police system and to reduce city expenses. The cry for city reform was made very prominent. The leaders had difficulty in settling on a mayoralty candidate who would be acceptable to all the diverse elements of their movement, but the mayoralty convention held repeated sessions on the matter and finally made a fortunate choice. On March 11, 1844, James Harper was nominated. He was a well-known business man, resident in the city for over thirty years, American by birth and descent, and interested in popular reforms generally. Though nominally a Whig he had not been closely enough connected with party to be objectionable to Democratic nativists. A mass-convention promptly ratified the nomination. With this act the period of campaign preparation gave way to that of campaign work.

To those who guided their votes by the issues of the hour the prospect of nativism and reform in the city government gave promise of lighter taxes and better government. Harper's candidacy took well with such voters. Another source of strength was its pledge of bi-partisan appointments to office. Party workers on the Whig side could readily see a better prospect for themselves in the new party than in the old, and pressure was brought to bear upon Morris Franklin, the Whig nominee, to induce his withdrawal from the contest.<sup>1</sup> Against this was exerted the influence of Seward and other leaders of the Whig state organization. The politics of presidential ambitions touched here upon the local issues of New York city. Among the state leaders of the Whigs were those who favored the ambitions of Henry Clay and who realized that an openly shown weakness of the Whig organization in New York city would be used as an argument by those opposed to the nomination of Clay for president.<sup>2</sup> The situation was an interesting evidence of the solidarity of American politics. A compromise was eventually reached between the city politicians and those

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1844, April 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Argus*, 1844, April 10.

of the state that made a way out of the difficulty. The Whig nominee remained before the people with the Whig organization nominally at his back. Coincidentally the Whig press, either openly or tacitly, favored Harper's candidacy. This arrangement secured success for the nativist nominee. The opposition of the Democracy to Harper was vigorous. The need of city reform was candidly admitted by the party and promise of amendment made, but to nativism there was less concession. The foreign element was irritated by the enmity shown against it. Occasional petty street-fights took place between natives and Irish, and threats were made. Just before election the nativist city committee thought best to advise its voters to be unaggressive but yet "to maintain their legal rights at all hazards."<sup>2</sup> By good fortune, however, the day passed without riot. The following vote was polled:<sup>3</sup>

Nativist movement . . . . .	about 24,510 votes.
Democratic Party . . . . .	about 20,540 votes.
Whig Party . . . . .	about 5,300 votes.

The nativists elected their mayor and the greater part of each branch of the Common Council. For the coming year they would have entire control of the city government. Their victory could not be questioned. The sources of the vote for Harper were discussed by party men with interest. An estimate by one of the daily papers figured its components at 14,100 Whigs, 9,700 Democrats and 600 new voters.<sup>3</sup> The estimate was probably a fair one. A Democratic paper added the significant information that every Englishman and every Orangeman of the city voted the nativist ticket.<sup>4</sup>

Hardly had nativism in New York city reaped the fruits of its own good professions, when its prestige was rudely shaken by events in another state. The American Republican movement had taken root at Philadelphia and had grown on the

<sup>1</sup> *Citizen*, 1844, April 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Amer. Repub.*, 1844, April 26.

<sup>3</sup> *Jour. Commerce*, 1844, April 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Plebeian*, 1844, April.

usual racial antipathies. Early in May, 1844, the entire country was shocked by news from the latter city that Americans and Irish had come into conflict, that Americans had been murdered, and that a frenzied mob had hunted Irishmen by the light of burning homes and churches. A wave of excitement swept over New York city, where foreigners and natives eyed each other with open and intense distrust. Mutterings of riot voiced themselves. The conservative leaders hastily took the initiative in action. The nativist organization started a committee for Philadelphia, and called upon its voters to be calm until the truth were known. Bishop Hughes exerted his authority to quell the restless Irish. Mayor Harper arranged for suppression of riot at its first appearance. In a few days the crisis was past and the public settled down with evident relief. The Philadelphia riots nevertheless lost much sympathy to the cause of nativism and their occurrence was deeply regretted. So far as the repute of local nativism was concerned, its leaders had no cause for shame. The men whom the new movement carried into office were honest and sincere. The pledges of nativism were carried out, and foreigners disappeared from the city pay-rolls along with the politicians who had put them there.

The nativist movement had by this time extended itself into the rural counties near New York city, more especially those where the foreign element had found a lodgment. Aided by disaffected politicians and stimulated by nativist and anti-Catholic literature the movement was quite promising. By March, 1844, it existed in nearly all the south-eastern counties and at Albany as well. In Brooklyn the nativists nominated a mayor and polled twenty-six per cent. of the total vote. In Ulster county there was a nativist paper. It was all in natural sequence, then, when the general committee of New York city issued a call on June 21st for a state convention of nativist delegates.<sup>1</sup> The plans of the nativist leaders

<sup>1</sup> *Amer. Repub.*, 1844, June 26.

had now assumed a wider scope. They would create a state organization. The relation of their action to the presidential campaign is, unfortunately, not at all clear. The city committee at New York, once committed to the policy of a state party, made earnest efforts to carry it out. In August it sent out official organizers into the counties. There were protests made to it against nominations for Congress on the ground that nativist nominees could not preserve that neutrality on national issues which the organization had thus far maintained.<sup>1</sup> All arguments were overruled. The first nativist state convention met at Utica on September 10, 1844, in response to the committee's call.<sup>2</sup> The great question which filled the time of this body was that of naming an American Republican state ticket. The idea had its friends and its opponents, both eagerly interested. At the session of September 10th the question was deferred to a later convention at New York city on September 23d and on the latter date nominations were defeated.<sup>3</sup> Reports of the convention sessions say nothing of the appointment of a state committee. The effort in 1844 to expand political nativism into a state party was only a partial success. In Kings and Richmond counties there seem to have been nativist county organizations. In Ulster county there was one which absorbed the Whig Party entirely.<sup>4</sup> Yet, taken all in all, the expansion movement up to the November election had the aspect of a failure.

In New York city the political work of 1844 was more successful. Out in the state at large political nativism was a mirage, but in the metropolis it was a concrete fact. The effect of Harper's election in April, 1844, by a combination of nativists and Whigs, had been to resurrect the old alliance which had proven fatal to nativism in the movement of 1835. The affinity between the local nativist movement and the local

<sup>1</sup> *Amer. Repub.*, 1844, August 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Amer. Repub.*, 1844, September.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Tribune*, 1844, November 13.

Whig Party again stood revealed as the presidential campaign of 1844 began. The state leaders of the Whig Party had no approval for nativism. Seward vigorously denounced the movement by speech and letter. Despite all this, there was a drawing together of interests in the city. In September a new general committee took control of the American Republican movement and John Lloyd was chosen to succeed Copeland as official head of the party.<sup>1</sup> The regular conventions were duly held and nominations made.<sup>2</sup> Behind this routine of party work the secret work of political intrigue went on. The Whig organization also made its customary nominations, but its leaders joined in negotiations with the nativists, of which the end was an understanding that the Whig managers should throw Whig support to the nativist local ticket, while the nativist managers should aid the Clay presidential ticket.<sup>3</sup> The agreement was at once made apparent by the action of the Whig press. All the Whig papers, with one exception, lent friendly aid to the nativist canvass henceforth. The Democratic press was quick to make capital of the new alliance. In New York city the Democratic nativists were ceaselessly told that the American Republican movement was a Whig annex, from which all real Democrats should break loose. In the interior counties the foreign-born Whigs were assured that the Whig Party had adopted nativism and was secretly their enemy.<sup>4</sup> Those Whigs whose interests were linked with those of Seward and Weed, chafed under the infliction, but conditions could not be changed in New York city. The terms of alliance must be carried out. Nativism, in its part, went on its way happily. At mass-meeting and in party press the now

<sup>1</sup> *Amer. Repub.*, 1844, September 21.

<sup>2</sup> Senator, George Folsom; Assemblymen, Abraham G. Thompson, Jr., John Culver, James Jarvis, William S. Ross, Severn D. Moulton, Eli C. Blake, Harvey Hunt, Thomas H. Oakley, Jacob L. Fenn, David E. Wheeler, Frederick E. Mather, Roderick N. Morrison, John J. R. Depuy.

<sup>3</sup> *Tribune*, 1846, August 27.

<sup>4</sup> *Tribune*, 1844, November 11; 1846, October 10.

familiar anti-foreign and anti-Catholic arguments were urged upon the people with a careful avoidance of national issues.<sup>1</sup> The work of political nativism was becoming systematic. The movement was now conscious of holding strength.

The agreement between political leaders in regard to the presidential vote in the metropolis was carried out by the managers of nativism so far as they were able, but the movement was not wholly under their personal control. The Democratic wing of the organization had no friendship for Henry Clay. As election approached there were hints of action by the friends of Polk and hints were translated into actuality by a mass-meeting of Democratic nativists, on October 31st, to endorse Polk's candidacy against Clay.<sup>2</sup> Eventually the day of election came. The Whig city committee, faithful to its bargain, printed nativist ballots and distributed them to Whig voters through the regular party workers at the polls.<sup>3</sup> Everywhere in the city the Whig strength went to aid the American Republican nominees. Horace Greeley of the *Tribune*, though an avowed and steadfast enemy to nativism, cast a nativist ballot as evidence of his loyalty to party policy. The hopes of Whigs for Clay's success were blasted, however, when the returns from the state came in. New York state had gone Democratic. In New York city, where the Whig and nativist alliance had done its work, the votes of Whigs had carried the nativist local ticket to victory, but 2000 Democratic nativists had voted for Polk, and carried the city for him against the Clay ticket. The party averages on assembly ticket were as follows:<sup>4</sup>

Nativist movement . . . . .	about 27,440 votes.
Democratic Party . . . . .	about 26,230 votes.
Whig Party . . . . .	about 950 votes.
Agrarian movement <sup>5</sup> . . . . .	about 50 votes.
Anti-slavery movement . . . . .	about 70 votes.

<sup>1</sup> Official Address in *Amer. Re/pub.*, 1844, September 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Four. Commerce*, 1844, November 1. <sup>3</sup> *Tribune*, 1846, April 6, August 27.

<sup>4</sup> *Tribune*, 1844, November 25.



Nativism was gaining new force with each successive election. Its vote was greater at this occasion than it had ever been before. A state senator and fifteen assemblymen would represent nativism in the next state legislature, and four congressmen would present its issues before the next Congress, all as a result of the campaign of 1844. Usually in a presidential year it was the fate of lesser political organizations to be crushed between the two great national parties, but the American Republican movement had reaped only profit from adverse conditions.

If the result of the campaign was pleasant to nativist leaders it was the exact reverse to the Whig managers. In city and in state the campaign was a Whig disaster. In New York, Kings and Ulster counties the party had been absorbed by the organized movement of nativism. All over the state as soon as the pressure of presidential politics was removed there were evidences of Whig friendliness for nativism. Whig papers in Albany, Rochester and Buffalo commented with favor upon it. These hints of approval came more especially, perhaps, from that element of the party which opposed the political leadership of Seward and Weed.<sup>1</sup> Upon the surface of affairs it looked for a time as if the Whig Party in New York state would be weakened by a wholesale secession from its ranks toward the new American Republican Party.<sup>2</sup> The Seward wing of the party now made an onslaught against the hostile influence. The popularity of Henry Clay made his loss of New York state by a small margin a source of chagrin for the Whig masses, for the vote of New York would have been decisive. It was possible to ascribe this loss with equal plausibility either to the anti-slavery movement in the counties or to the nativist movement in the metropolis. The Seward men preferred to ascribe it to the latter, and the *New York Tribune* explained to its readers that the Whig Party had lost most se-

<sup>1</sup> *Argus*, 1844, December 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Argus*, 1844, November 30.

verely in those localities where the foreign element had gathered, and where foreign-born Whigs had been frightened away from Clay by the fear of nativism.<sup>1</sup> It was only grudgingly acknowledged that the Clay ticket gained heavily in New York city as a result of nativist aid.<sup>2</sup> When opportunity permitted, the attack upon nativism took another form. The Whig city committee at New York was usually renewed at the beginning of each year. In the primaries after the presidential election the Seward men secured control of the city committee, and the machinery of the party was, from that time on, used to crush out political nativism. The organization of the Whig committee for 1845 was the turning-point in the fortunes of the nativist party in New York state. On February 11, 1845, there was issued a declaration of policy by the Whig committee.<sup>3</sup> Of the fifteen resolutions, nearly half were more or less in condemnation of the policy of alliance which previous city committees had followed. The new committee declared emphatically that it recognized no distinctions between citizens on the score of religious faith or place of nativity. The committee's declaration was a formal notice to the public that the old alliance was broken, and that the erstwhile allies would henceforth go their separate ways.

The American Republican organization now faced a contest where it must rely upon itself alone. The elections of April, 1845, would be a test of its ability to control the city by unaided effort. The outlook was by no means discouraging. Nativism had made a record of honest city government. It had control of the city patronage, and it was backed by a vigorous anti-foreign sentiment. The local Whig Party was divided, and a goodly portion of it, which was nativist in sympathies, could be relied upon to support nativist nominees. The organ of the Whig city committee was the *Tribune*. In its columns Whigs were urged to rally round the party name,

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1844, November 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune*, 1846, October 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Tribune*, 1845, February 13.

regardless of the question of success at the polls. The local Whig organization took its position most frankly. It put aside for the time all expectations of carrying the election, in order to wage a desperate struggle for continued existence as a party. It was willing to put the Democracy in control rather than see the city patronage go to the nativists for another year.<sup>1</sup> In the party convention the anti-nativist managers had to struggle to maintain their policy, but they succeeded. The re-nomination of Harper for the mayoralty by the nativists on February 18th preceded the Whig city convention, and when the latter body met there was a strong feeling for the endorsement of Harper's candidacy.<sup>2</sup> Such action would, of course, have revived the old alliance which the Seward men had broken. The effort was foiled, and Dudley Selden was set up as the regular nominee of the party. The Whig organization went before the people with a nominee whom it could not elect, and with no motive except that of giving a death-blow to political nativism. The action was followed by open disaffection on the part of the minority faction.

The city campaign, as might be expected, was a warmly contested battle. Several of the Whig newspapers bolted the regular nominee and declared for Harper. It was not forgotten that Selden was very recently a professed Democrat, while Harper had been a life-long Whig. The columns of the *Tribune* went straight to the point of the real issue. All over the state, they said, the local leaders of the Whig Party were watching the fight, and the continuance of the party in the state would hinge on the result in New York city.<sup>3</sup> The Whig members of the legislature, it was said at another time, "deeply feel that the overthrow of the native party is essential to a renewal of the struggle for Whig ascendancy in our state with any hope of success."<sup>4</sup> A great deal was said during the city campaign in regard to the success of nativist

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1845, February 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Post*, 1845, February 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Tribune*, 1845, March 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Tribune*, 1845, March 31.

efforts at economy in city administration, but the real question of the day was the ability of political nativism to resist the crushing attack which was being made upon it by both of the older parties. The April election finally ended the contest. The vote stood as follows: <sup>1</sup>

Democratic Party . . . . .	about 24,210 votes.
Nativist movement . . . . .	about 17,480 votes.
Whig Party . . . . .	about 7,030 votes.
Agrarian movement . . . . .	about 120 votes.
Anti-slavery movement . . . . .	about 70 votes.

The Democracy elected the mayor and common council. The Whigs secured some seats in the common council. The nativists succeeded in electing, out of the whole array of city and ward nominations, only one man, a ward constable.<sup>2</sup> It was as complete an overthrow as the most bitter Whig could have hoped. At the same time the size of the nativist vote showed that its defeat was by no means conclusive. The movement had received a set-back, but it was not crushed.

While the nativist leaders in New York city had been carrying on their local campaign they were also connecting themselves with efforts to organize a national political party devoted to the nativist issue. The American Republican movement, after spreading into New Jersey and Pennsylvania, had assumed in those states the name of Native American Party. During 1844 the movement spread from New York into South Carolina,<sup>3</sup> Massachusetts<sup>4</sup> and Connecticut, while from Philadelphia it spread into Delaware, Maryland and some of the states farther west. By the end of 1844 an agitation had begun for a national convention and in time one was called to meet at Philadelphia on July 4, 1845. In April, 1845, the nativists estimated their own strength to include 48,000 in New York, 42,000 in Pennsylvania, 14,000 in Massa-

<sup>1</sup> Valentine *Manual*, 1845-46.

<sup>2</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1845, April 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Amer. Repub.*, 1844, June 7, July 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

chusetts, 3,000 in New Jersey, 1,000 in Delaware and 2,000 in other states, making a total of 110,000 votes.<sup>1</sup> Its strength in New York state was reckoned at 18,000 in the city and 30,000 outside the city. The American Republican associations of New York city viewed the new idea of national organization with approval, notwithstanding that it ran counter to their previous plan of avoiding national issues. In June, 1845, delegates were chosen to the national meeting at Philadelphia. The existence of the national Native American Party began with the convention of July 4, 1845. There were present 141 delegates, representing fourteen states.<sup>2</sup> One of the vice-presidents, Loring D. Chapin, and two of its secretaries, were taken from the New York delegation. It was the hope of the New York men to fix upon the new party the name of American Republican, under which the nativist movement still worked in New York state; but they were outvoted by those states where the name of Native American was in use.<sup>3</sup> Besides adopting a name for the new national party, the Philadelphia convention issued a platform and address. The question of a presidential ticket was also discussed at the session. Altogether the Philadelphia gathering evolved an ambitious programme for the new party. Though now very weak indeed as a party, yet only a span of two years lay between the gossip of the smithy, where the movement started, and the convention work of 1845. Two years more might bring an equal advance. The work of the convention was promptly ratified by the New York nativists at a mass-convention of July 18, 1845.<sup>4</sup> In giving its adhesion to the national party, the New York organization was obliged to assume the new party name, but some of the ward associations kept the old name of American Republicans.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from *Philadelphia Sun* by *Roch. Amer.*, 1845, April 26.

<sup>2</sup> Convention accounts in Orr, also Lee, also *Four. Commerce*, 1845, July 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Argus*, 1845, July 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Four. Commerce*, 1845, July 19.

It was in New York city alone that political nativism could really pose as a leading issue, and here, as the fall election of 1845 came on, its leaders again prepared to contest the field with the older parties. They had suffered a blow by the drawing away of Whig support, but their heavy vote at the spring election in the very face of that withdrawal was an evidence of endurance fit to base strong hopes upon. Late in September the nativists held their usual conventions to place nominees in the field. The new general committee chose William L. Prall as chairman. On the Whig side a harmonizing of the local factions brought all the Whig press back to the support of the regular ticket, restoring the apparent unity of the party. Then followed a quiet but active effort on both sides to secure for nativist nominees<sup>1</sup> the vacillating vote of Whigs who sympathized with nativism. Just before election a temperance ticket appeared, made up of Whig and nativist nominees. It was said to be a device to meet the needs of those whose sympathies were divided,<sup>2</sup> but if so it found little favor. In general, the line of separation between Whig and nativist forces was well-defined. Partisan Whigs turned back to the regular organization and left nativism to its own natural strength. The party averages on the assembly ticket were as follows:<sup>3</sup>

Democratic Party . . . . .	about 16,550 votes.
Whig Party . . . . .	about 11,280 votes.
Nativist movement . . . . .	about 8,750 votes.
Agrarian movement . . . . .	about 530 votes.
Temperance movement . . . . .	about 320 votes.
Anti-slavery movement . . . . .	about ? votes. <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Senator, Elias H. Ely; Register, Joseph Hufty; Assemblymen, William S. Ross, James Stokes, Abraham G. Thompson, Jr., Thomas H. Oakley, Harvey Hunt, Nehemiah Miller, William Marks, John A. King, Alonzo A. Alvord, Harris Wilson, Henry Meigs, Alfred S. Livingston, Peter Doig.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1845, November 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Tribune*, 1845, November 7.

<sup>4</sup> The anti-slavery men had a ticket before the people but their small vote was ignored by the press reports of election.

The election showed the important fact that the actual strength of nativism in the past two years had not been gaining. Its apparent gains had been caused by the aid of voters whose attachment to the Whig Party could not be made secondary. The election cast a shadow over the movement. From this time onward the nativist party in New York was recognized as on the wane.

In due time the spring campaign of 1846 came. The nativist mayoralty convention offered their nomination to Robert Taylor, who refused it.<sup>1</sup> Thereupon a small section of the party split off as a city-reform movement<sup>2</sup> and obtained an acceptance from Taylor. Behind this affair can be dimly seen the features of a scheme to combine again the issues of reform and nativism as had been done in 1844. Had the nativists followed with an endorsement of Taylor, the plan might have had a trial, but the nativist leaders negatived it by announcing a distinct ticket, with William B. Cozzens for mayor.<sup>3</sup> At the city convention this year the usual long party platform did not appear. The resolutions as adopted merely approved the idea of municipal reform and declared the motive of the nominations.<sup>4</sup> On this latter point the resolution was significant:

*Resolved*, That we are further impelled to place our candidates before the people by a desire to preserve our distinct political organization, conscious that we look in vain to the old parties for any effective aid in carrying out the great principles of the Native American Party. It becomes our duty to present ourselves at every election before the people, confident that in the frequent discussion of our principles, which are eternal as Truth itself, the truth will ultimately prevail.

This resolution was an acknowledgment that nativism was no longer a political power. Those who believed in its principles, nevertheless, voted its ticket at the regular election. The city-reform group which had split off from the party to nominate Taylor was absorbed by the Whig Party when the

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1846, April 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1846, March 23.

<sup>3</sup> Mayor, William B. Cozzens; Almshouse Comm'r, Abraham B. Rich.

<sup>4</sup> *Herald*, 1846, March 27.

Whig convention took Taylor as its nominee. The party vote on the mayoralty was as follows:

Democratic Party . . . . .	about 22,240 votes.
Whig Party . . . . .	about 15,260 votes.
Nativist movement . . . . .	about 8,370 votes.
Agrarian movement . . . . .	about 710 votes.

The next trial of nativism was at the election held in May, 1846, to choose delegates to a constitutional convention for the state. Each political organization of the day had its pet schemes of reform to be advanced, and the nativist organization with the rest. The Native Americans nominated a full ticket of delegates,<sup>1</sup> and four of its nominees were taken up by the Whigs. At the election a very light vote was cast, and the Democracy was able to carry the field. The only result of the election, for nativism, was a further exposure of its growing weakness. The averages on the various tickets were as follows:<sup>2</sup>

Democratic Party . . . . .	about 17,630 votes.
Whig Party . . . . .	about 8,610 votes.
Nativist movement . . . . .	about 4,600 votes.
Independent movement . . . . .	about 1,480 votes.
Agrarian movement . . . . .	about 700 votes.
Anti-slavery movement . . . . .	about ? votes.

The decline of the Native American Party in New York was probably retarded by the knowledge that the party was acquiring a strong position in Pennsylvania, where it had developed a state organization. Encouraged possibly by this, the nativists of New York also endeavored in 1846 to create a state organization. The city committee of New York led the work by calling a state convention,<sup>3</sup> and sending an organizer into

<sup>1</sup> Delegates: Ogden Edwards, Shepherd Knapp, Hiram Ketchum, Elias H. Ely, John Leveridge, Lora Nash, David E. Wheeler, Burtis Skidmore, Harris Wilson, William L. Prall, John Lloyd, Jacob Townsend, Nicholas Schureman, Minard Lefevre, William S. Ross, William Pratt.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune*, 1846, May 11.

<sup>3</sup> Poughkeepsie *Amer.*, 1846, February 14.



the counties. On August 19, 1846, delegates from a number of points in the state met at Utica to organize the convention.<sup>1</sup> This was the year for election of a governor. The convention accordingly nominated a state ticket and created a state committee. The head of their ticket was Edward C. Delevan, of Saratoga, who was widely known for his temperance views, but had not been identified with the nativist movement. Delevan declined the place,<sup>2</sup> and the nativist ticket remained headless until early in October, when the state committee filled the vacancy. In its final form the state ticket of 1846 was as follows:

Governor . . . . .	Ogden Edwards of Kings.
Lieut.-Governor . . . . .	George Folsom of New York.
Canal Commiss'r . . . . .	Robert C. Russell of Albany.
Canal Commiss'r . . . . .	James Silsbee of Steuben.

The executive work of the campaign fell into the control of the new state committee, composed as follows:<sup>3</sup> William L. Prall, Lora Nash, Minard Lefevre, Andrew Thompson, Calvin Pollard, all of New York; Robert H. Shannon and Daniel Talmage, of Kings; Jacob Y. Lansing and Robert C. Russell, of Albany; Henry I. Seaman, of Richmond; Edward Prime, of Westchester; Albert G. Travis, of Putnam; Augustus T. Cowman, of Dutchess; J. Young, of Ulster; Andrew Hanna, of Oneida. The effort of the Native Americans to pose as a state party was so futile that they received very little attention in the campaign. Their strength lay almost entirely in New York, Kings and Dutchess, and even here they could do little beyond announce themselves. The entire vote on the state ticket in the fall of 1846 was less than two per cent. of the state aggregate. It averaged 6170 votes.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Poughkeepsie *Amer.*, 1846, August 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune*, 1846, August 26.

<sup>3</sup> Poughkeepsie *Amer.*, 1846, September 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Tribune*, 1846, December 5.

In New York city the regular fall campaign for the Native American ticket<sup>1</sup> brought dissension and cross-purposes among the leaders. An arrangement was made to exchange support with the Whigs on certain offices, but an outcry against it upset the arrangement after it had been completed.<sup>2</sup> Even those who had so far remained faithful to the movement dropped away when charges of double-dealing became rife. The poll at the November election showed a serious loss of strength. Following were the averages:<sup>3</sup>

Democratic Party . . . . .	about 20,970 votes.
Whig Party . . . . .	about 18,270 votes.
Nativist movement . . . . .	about 4,210 votes.
Agrarian movement . . . . .	about 210 votes.
Anti-slavery movement . . . . .	about ? votes.

The nativist party was now near its end. As the spring election of 1847 drew near the party made its last stand. In March a city convention named a ticket.<sup>4</sup> In several wards there were also nativist nominees to the common council. The April election resulted in the success of the Whig city ticket by a narrow plurality, and it was claimed with apparent truth that the victory was owed partly to nativist votes.<sup>5</sup> Whig support of nativist ward tickets had been accepted in exchange for nativist support of the Whig city ticket. In actual numbers the Native Americans were still dwindling. The poll on the mayoralty in April, 1847, was as follows :

Whig Party . . . . .	about 21,310 votes.
Democratic Party . . . . .	about 19,680 votes.
Nativist movement . . . . .	about 2,080 votes.
Agrarian movement . . . . .	about 300 votes.

<sup>1</sup> Sheriff, Charles Devoe; Clerk, Willis Hall; Coroner, John B. Helme; Assemblymen: Uziah Wenman, Thomas H. Oakley, Joseph W. Kellogg, Edward Prince, William S. Ross, James B. Demarest, Thomas R. Whitney, Edward A. Frazer, Cornwell S. Roe, Philip Jordan, John D. Westlake, William R. Taylor, Charles E. Freeman, Joel Kelly, Benjamin Sherwood, Charles Roberts.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune*, 1846, November 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Tribune*, 1846, November 24.

<sup>4</sup> Mayor, Elias G. Drake; Almshouse Comm'r, John Lloyd.

<sup>5</sup> *Herald*, 1847, April 18.

After the election the organized nativist party went out of existence in New York. The general city committee existed as late as September 13, 1847, still headed by William L. Prall.<sup>1</sup> In the natural course of events a new committee would have been formed at this time, but probably none was named. The official organ of the movement announced its own death in September. Before the organization had passed away its leaders had opportunity to take part in the second national convention of political nativism. That body met first on May 4, 1847, at Pittsburgh and soon adjourned to a second session on September 10th at Philadelphia. Of the eleven state delegations which appeared the largest was that of New York with its thirty-nine members. The work of the convention consisted in making a platform and recommending names for the national offices. It so recommended Zachary Taylor for the presidency and Henry Dearborn for the vice-presidency, but its work ended there. It did not organize a separate national campaign.

In New York state the American Republican or Native American movement cannot be called at all successful.<sup>2</sup> Such triumphs as it won in the chief city were built on the votes of men who were not nativists in sympathy. Unimportant in itself as it is, the movement of 1843-47 is yet to be noticed as preparing the way for the rise of the nativist secret societies by diffusing nativist feeling through the community. It developed also a political precedent for the more successful movement of a few years later. Before political nativism reached its passing eclipse in 1847 the Order of United Americans, with 2000 members claimed, was on the scene as a social force with political leanings. It was the mission of this Order to shelter the upgrowth of the mysterious society of the Know-Nothings and to carry nativism in New York over the gap that lay between the eclipse of effort in 1847 and the revival of effort in 1852.

<sup>1</sup> *Gazette-Times*, 1847, September 13.

<sup>2</sup> General sketches of this movement are in *Herald*, 1854, May 29, June 20.

## CHAPTER III

### RISE OF THE SECRET SOCIETIES, 1844-1852

THE collapse of the Native American movement, in the fall of 1847, left open the field to the efforts of a new sort of organization, the nativist secret society, the first appearance of which had come in 1844. There were at this time a considerable number of secret societies of various natures existing in New York state. They were voluntary associations, whose members were bound together by oaths of secrecy and brotherhood and whose proceedings were dignified by formal set ceremonies. Earlier in the century, during the anti-masonic movement, public opinion had turned against secret associations and nearly crushed them out of existence, but as the years went by there was a gradual revival of their prestige. Oddfellowship and freemasonry regained importance and the tentative experiments toward new societies brought the Red Men and Good Fellows into existence. From England came also the Druids and the Foresters. These earlier secret societies were mainly benevolent associations, but in the decade of the forties, as the American genius for organization asserted itself on this new field, the social movements of the time began to model new secret societies after those already established and to use them for purposes of agitation. It had become recognized by this time that the charm of secrecy and the discipline of the lodge-room could lend new strength to any organization which might seek their aid. The temperance movement was the first to take up this idea, and there were founded several societies, using the familiar machinery of the older fraternities but devoted to the inculcation of hostility to liquor-

drinking. The nativist sentiment seems to have been second to seize upon secret society methods, and it, too, was shortly embodied in a number of organizations, separate in identity but with the common idea of hostility to foreign influence. After nativism, other social ideas took up the secret society model, bringing a swarm of new associations before the public eye. There was nothing abnormal, then, in the mere fact that secret societies came into existence with nativist principles at their basis. After a time, nevertheless, the nativist societies developed a feature which their older models had not ventured upon. They began to use their secret machinery to organize political effort. This might fairly be called an abnormal step. None of the other secret organizations had pretended to do more than agitate and mould public opinion, but nativist bodies advanced to the point of marshaling voters in support of the ideas for which the societies were working. This was not intended by the founders of that society which first developed the system, but the peculiar semi-political character of nativism itself brought about the change. Point by point the evolution of secret political work may be traced in the history of the two great secret organizations, which were types of political nativism in action. The earlier of the two was the Order of United Americans, which created the system of secret politics. The second was the so-called Know-Nothing Order, which took up and further developed the system into a great national organization. Not all the nativist societies were political in action, however. Several held themselves strictly to the mere inculcation of principles. The importance of these non-political bodies in relation to political nativism lies in the fact that they helped to shape that sentiment which turned to politics as a mode of making its ideas felt in the community. The lessons heard in the lodge-room were remembered at the polls. The growth of nativism, in the city of New York especially, during the rise of the Know-Nothing movement, cannot be properly understood without reference to the existence and workings of these secret bodies, political and non-political.

The Native Sons of America seems to have been the first of the nativist social societies in New York state, but it may not have been a secret one. It was organized in New York city, December 18, 1844, with James Webb as president.<sup>1</sup> There appears to be no further reference to it in the press and it was probably short-lived.

The American Brotherhood was organized<sup>2</sup> in New York city on December 21, 1844. Its founder was Russell C. Root. The annals of the society tell of an informal meeting for discussion on December 16th and of a formal one for organization on December 21st. Of the thirteen or fourteen men who did the work nearly all had taken some part in American Republican politics. The new society therefore took its impulse from the political nativism of 1844 and inherited some of its traditions. On December 28th, when officers were installed, John Harper became official head of the society. A week later the name of the society was changed to that of the Order of United Americans, and as such its growth went on. The character of the Brotherhood may be seen from its formal resolution of organization, worded as follows:<sup>3</sup>

*Resolved*, That this meeting form themselves into an association to be called the American Brotherhood, for the purpose of mutual aid and assistance, and to oppose foreign influence in our institutions or government in any shape in which it may be presented to us.

The United Daughters of America was a patriotic society of women which was organized in New York city on November 27, 1845.<sup>4</sup> Nominally it was independent of other societies, but in effect it was an auxiliary to the Order of United Americans. It could not, of course, be political, but it may be reckoned as one of the aids in the maintenance of nativist sentiment. At its best period it included about ten chapters

<sup>1</sup> *Amer. Repub.*, 1844, December 20.

<sup>2</sup> *O. U. A.*, 1848, November 18; also Whitney, p. 261; also Carroll, p. 252.

<sup>3</sup> Baldwin Coll.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

organized under the supervision of a grand-chancery. When the failure of the nativist political movement in 1857 brought a reaction against nativist societies this one suffered, but a nominal existence of its grand-chancery was kept as late as 1861.<sup>1</sup>

The Order of United American Mechanics originated in Pennsylvania and was at first a benefit society for workingmen. Introduced into New York state by the creation of a council in Brooklyn on July 8, 1848,<sup>2</sup> it slowly extended to other cities. The organization of a state-council followed and under its supervision the number of councils in the state rose to about thirty. Few of these were in the metropolis. The strength of the society lay chiefly in the towns of the Hudson valley where the nativist political movement had prepared the way for it. Membership was restricted to Americans-born and the conditions of the time brought it into the current of nativist feeling. It was never, perhaps, engaged in political effort, but its teachings lay in the direction of maintaining American traditions and its councils were accustomed to appear on public occasions in company with bodies of more pronounced nativist aims. With the downfall of the Know-Nothing movement the society lost its strength and its state-council disbanded. In later years it again secured a foothold and still exists.

The Order of the Star-Spangled Banner was founded<sup>3</sup> in New York city in the spring of 1850, but it may possibly not have borne this name in its earlier years. It seems also to

<sup>1</sup> N. Y. City Directory, 1861.

<sup>2</sup> Date supplied by State Secretary.

<sup>3</sup> On the origin of the society the best account seems to be in *N. Y. Herald*, 1854, December 20, p. 1; See also Whitney, p. 280. Various other accounts, unreliable as a whole, yet give additional facts, *e. g.*, *N. Y. Tribune*, 1855, May 29, p. 5. Allen is referred to as founder in *N. Y. Tribune*, 1854, November 27, p. 4, and in *N. Y. Times*, 1855, May 29, p. 1, October 18, p. 8. For scattered facts, see *N. Y. Times*, 1854, October 10, p. 2; *N. Y. Tribune*, 1855, June 4, p. 5; *N. Y. Herald*, 1855, July 29, p. 4; Carroll, p. 267.

have taken to itself the name of Order of the Sons of the Sires of '76. Its founder was Charles B. Allen, of whom, since he was not in politics, the contemporary press says little in personal reference. Drawing together a few friends he organized them under a pledge of secrecy into a nativist society. A journeyman printer, William L. Bradbury, was first president of the group, but died in office after a few months. The founder himself then became official head. In its aims the new organization was wholly political and in its principles strongly nativist. Its policy was to influence local politics by concerted action of its members in favor of such nominees as might be selected from the tickets of political parties, such nominees being Protestant and American-born. Along this line the little group acted at successive elections, but so small was its membership that its influence was unnoticeable. The business sessions of the society were held here and there at the homes of its members during this period. It seems to have lacked energetic management and its membership was almost stationary. For two years, nevertheless, it kept a feeble existence. In 1852 a few active spirits from the Order of United Americans found their way into the society. At the time of their advent it had only forty-three members all told, still meeting as a single body.<sup>1</sup> There seems now to have been a revolution within the society the details of which are unrecorded. The society was reorganized, the founder was displaced and new men took control.<sup>2</sup> The new president was an energetic nativist who had formerly been a Methodist preacher. This reorganization probably occurred April 4, 1852.<sup>3</sup> Under the new leaders the society began to expand. As its membership grew larger the meetings in private houses ceased and sessions were held in-

<sup>1</sup> Whitney, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup> These changes are very obscure. See *Herald*, 1854, December 20, p. 1; *Tribune*, 1855, May 29, p. 5, also *Carroll*, p. 269.

<sup>3</sup> Whitney, p. 284.



stead in various lodge-rooms hired for the purpose when needed. The society was divided up into several ward-councils or wigwams under the supervision of the eldest body, the president of which was ex-officio head of the whole society. There was disapproval, however, of the control of the men who had grasped power. Disaffection showed itself and culminated in a secession, either in 1852 or 1853, of a minority group led by Allen, the founder.<sup>1</sup> The malcontents formed a grand council of their own and made a new ritual of three degrees. The society thus broke into two parts each one claiming identity with the original unity. All this time its existence was unknown to the general public. During 1852 the society was rapidly recruited in membership. The politically-inclined element of the Order of United Americans was especially attracted to it. Its councils grew so large in some wards that meetings had to be held in large halls, but the element of deepest secrecy was carefully preserved. Its members did not speak of its existence to those not initiated. The society probably co-operated with the Order of United Americans in the political efforts of the fall of 1852. In the fall of 1853 it was able to make a still more decided stand in politics, and then for the first time its existence began to be generally known. In default of a better name it was dubbed the "Know-Nothing Order" by an interested public, and under that name the Order of the Star-Spangled Banner thenceforth pursued its career.

The Order of Sons of America was organized in Philadelphia late in 1844 and had a history in Pennsylvania much the same as that of the Order of United Americans in New York state. Several efforts were made to secure a union of the two orders. One of these went so far as to organize a camp of the Sons of America in New York city in 1852 under the auspices

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1854, December 20, p. 1; 1855, July 29, p. 4; also *Tribune*, 1855, May 29, p. 5, June 4, p. 5; also Carroll, p. 269.

of the United Americans.<sup>1</sup> This body was kept alive at least two years<sup>2</sup> but the contemplated union did not come about and the camp was allowed to die.

The Benevolent Order of Bereans, unlike the preceding societies, was made up largely of foreign-born citizens. Reference has been made to the antipathy that existed between Protestant and Catholic Irishmen. The former were usually called "Orangemen," although the Orange Institution was not then organized in America. The Berean Order drew its membership from this class.<sup>3</sup> It was organized in New York city in 1844 or 1845 in bodies called assemblies which were federated under a grand council. The anti-Catholic ideas of the order made its members earnest allies of nativism despite their foreign birth, and they became strong upholders of American ideas. In 1853 the order had at least eight assemblies,<sup>4</sup> but in 1854 it disappeared and was probably absorbed by the American Protestant Association.

The American Protestant Association was founded in Pennsylvania as a secret beneficial society, and became established in New York by 1850. Its membership was very largely Protestant Irish,<sup>5</sup> and they were enthusiastic supporters of nativism, although not using their secret machinery for political work. The society was secret, with ritual and grand lodge organization. The New York grand lodge was organized in 1853 by the nine lodges then existing.<sup>6</sup> In the fall of 1854, it claimed nineteen lodges with 2,800 members,<sup>7</sup> and by 1855, there were about thirty lodges, mostly in New York city and Brooklyn. The names of "Washington," "Jefferson," "Bunker Hill" and "Valley Forge" are typical names borne by the lodges and are significant of their attitude toward American ideas. Like other societies, the Association lost heavily after

<sup>1</sup> Baldwin Coll.

<sup>2</sup> N. Y. Directory, 1854.

<sup>3</sup> Baldwin Coll.

<sup>4</sup> N. Y. Directory, 1853.

<sup>5</sup> *Herald*, 1855, July 24, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Times*, 1853, May 31, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1854, November 2, p. 2.

1856 by the collapse of the nativist party, but it kept an existence in New York city for over thirty years before the last of its lodges died out.

The Order of United Americans, derived from the American Brotherhood, was in no respect later in date than those here listed, but its story is taken up last because it was the most important of the nativist societies until it was overshadowed by the still greater importance of the Know-Nothing Order. In many respects it was a model on which the Know-Nothing society was built up and the source from which the Know-Nothing society drew its best recruits. Its history is very different, however, from that of the latter organization. The United American society was not primarily political in character. It aimed more at social prestige and its political work was a side-issue forced upon the Order by the conditions which it met. The main features of the Order were not political. When the little society of the American Brotherhood first assumed its new name, on January 4, 1845, its members had an ambitious dream of a great secret federation. On January 27th they declared their little group to be Alpha Chapter No. 1, and also declared themselves to be the Arch-Chancery or governing body of the Order.<sup>1</sup> Their plan contemplated an evolution into a general system of organized groups. Each group was to be called a chapter and was to have its own constitution and self-chosen officers. The chapters in each state were to be federated under the supervision of a grand-body called Arch-Chancery, composed of delegates from the chapters. The several arch-chanceries were to be federated under one Grand-Arch-Chancery with a jurisdiction of national extent.<sup>2</sup> This dream began at once to take shape in reality. The leaders of the new society were in part nativist political workers who knew how to build up organizations. A second chapter was formed on March 31st, under the auspices of Arch-Chancery, and others followed until, on September 8th,

<sup>1</sup> *O. U. A.*, 1848, November 18.

there were five chapters, whose delegates met to organize Arch-Chancery in new form and do away with the temporary expedient of putting power in the hands of the members of the eldest chapter.<sup>1</sup> As re-organized, Arch-Chancery consisted of three delegates, called chancellors, from each chapter. This body elected its own officers, of which the chief one was the grand-sachem. This was a distinct land-mark in the growth of the society.

The organization was usually known from its initials as "the O. U. A.," conveniently abbreviating its somewhat clumsy name. It was a social and beneficial society devoted to American traditions, but with no pledges or program of political conduct.<sup>2</sup> Its constitution was an open one,<sup>3</sup> and there was no concealment of its aims or membership. Its secrecy covered only the signs and ceremonies connected with its work. It very closely resembled other secret societies of its day. The chapters worked under officers whose titles were borrowed from aboriginal Americans, the presiding officer of the chapter, for instance, being the sachem. There was a uniform ritual for all chapters, but there were no ritualistic degrees among the membership. The lighter side of chapter work was that of sociability. The business side of the work was the maintenance of a sick-benefit system, and the support of American ideas. On public occasions the chapters were accustomed to parade. The Order made its first public appearance in this way at the Washington-monument celebration in October, 1847, and its second one at the Adams funeral in March, 1848. These appearances were intended to advertise the Americanism of the society. Beginning on July 4, 1848, the O. U. A. also annually celebrated the recurring holidays of July 4th and February 22d. This was a custom formerly kept up by the nativist political clubs of the American Republican movement, but when that movement died out the O. U. A. constituted

<sup>1</sup> Baldwin Coll.

<sup>2</sup> *Gazette-Times*, 1846, December 1.    <sup>3</sup> *Republic*, 1852, August.

itself heir to its commemorative duties. The O. U. A. endeavored in every way to stamp itself with the mark of American ideas.

Expansion was steady. In June, 1846, a chapter was formed in Boston,<sup>1</sup> making the first step toward realizing the dream of nationality in extent. By the close of 1846, the Order had 2000 members,<sup>2</sup> and through 1847 and 1848 its growth went on. In New York city it grew rapidly, but the rural counties were slower to embrace it. It was a novelty in its way of uniting secrecy and patriotism. Finally, in 1848 a chapter was organized at Haverstraw, and then the conservative interior towns gradually took it up. The strength of the Order in New York state was never very great in the country districts, however. In the way of national expansion the Order found its way into New Jersey and Pennsylvania in 1848, giving it four states to its credit.

The changes of expansion brought a new constitution to the Order which was approved by the grand body of the state on November 13, 1848.<sup>3</sup> Under this instrument the age of admission to the Order was fixed at eighteen years. The grand body of the state was given the new name of Chancery and was to hold quarterly meetings. Its machinery was also elaborated by the recognition of an executive committee of which much will be said later. The title of Arch-Chancery was appropriated to the national governing body of the Order which was to be for a time identical in personnel with the Chancery of New York state. This new constitution was promptly put into effect. Chancery organized and assumed a seal with the suggestive emblem of a hand throttling a writhing serpent. Portions of its regular sessions were conducted under the forms of Arch-Chancery work.<sup>4</sup> The grand execu-

<sup>1</sup> *O. U. A.*, 1848, December 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Gazette-Times*, 1846, November 21.

<sup>3</sup> *O. U. A.*, 1848, November 18. Full text in *Republic*, 1852, August.

<sup>4</sup> *O. U. A.*, 1848, December 9.

tive committee also organized under the new constitution, and this body deserves careful notice. It consisted of nine members of Chancery and was to care for such matters as demanded prompt action or special secrecy. It was guardian of the executive fund, toward which each chapter paid quarterly dues for each member in good standing. In important matters the grand executive committee was empowered to call general or district conventions composed of the executive committees of chapters. This system of executive committees and conventions was only an expedient at its first inception, but it was destined to take upon itself new significance when politics began to be discussed by the Order and to play a considerable part in the work of political nativism.

Step by step the evolution of political work in the O. U. A. can be followed by reference to the proceedings of the grand executive committee.<sup>1</sup> It began its official record late in 1849 with the coming of a new Chancery. This was the period when the O. U. A. was hardly out of the experimental stage. Though successful thus far in its growth the Order was yet feeling its way into public favor with hesitation. The work of the executive committee did not at first touch upon politics in any way. Its members met occasionally and usually discussed plans for extending the Order into other states and for supporting an organ of the Order. During 1850, however, the committee twice took action which trenched upon politics in a tentative way. When the year opened the congressional struggle over the slavery issue had begun. On February 2d, Henry Clay wrote to his Whig friends in New York a suggestion for a "Union" mass-meeting,<sup>2</sup> and the idea was at once taken up by them. On February 14th the grand committee voted to lend its aid to the plan and its members accordingly helped personally to bring about the Castle Garden

<sup>1</sup> All references to official action of the grand executive committee or the Grand Executive Convention are taken from their minutes.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, 1855, November 28, p. 2.

meeting of February 23d. This incident was much magnified by nativist politicians a few years later in order to gain credit for the O. U. A.<sup>1</sup> The second quasi-political move of the grand committee was in May, 1850. A referendum had been ordered on the repeal of the school law and an unofficial convention for debate was to be held at Syracuse in July. The grand committee was inclined to oppose the repeal, but decided to consult the chapters. For this purpose the first of a long series of grand executive conventions met on May 17th, and in the course of several sessions voted to uphold the old law and to send two delegates to the Syracuse convention. In an entirely harmless and innocent way, therefore, the grand committee in 1850 began the making of precedents for secret political action. These precedents were soon followed by a remarkable evolution of executive organization. In February, 1851, the Grand Executive Convention adopted rules of procedure and a password. Practically it erected itself by this act into a new and un contemplated governing body standing over the whole Order side by side with Chancery itself. The O. U. A. executive work now began to differentiate from the social work carried on under the direction of Chancery and to touch hands with political nativism.

Putting aside for the moment the evolution of the O. U. A. executive system, due notice may be given to the steady growth of the Order, which though it drew its beginning from the political nativism of 1843-47 relied for its support upon its ability to preach patriotism in an effective and enticing manner to the community at large. The Order was not affected by the collapse of the political party in 1847. It went on to form chapter after chapter and to show each year an increasing roll of membership. Its internal history during the period from 1848 to 1852 is mainly a record of expansion. In 1852 its political work began to be recognized by the public and the Order attracted to itself more attention than ever before by the rumors

<sup>1</sup> *E. g.*, Whitney, p. 276.

to which its actions gave rise. In other states the Order was not as successful as in New York, but it found a foothold in one commonwealth after another. On January 16, 1854, a national Arch-Chancery was organized by delegates from several states and the New York Chancery ceased to be the head of the Order.<sup>2</sup> In 1854 the Know-Nothing society in New York state took a remarkable bound toward ubiquity and the parent society of the O. U. A. was perforce put somewhat into the background. It did not suffer by the fact, however, for the rise of political nativism was a piece of good fortune to be appreciated. The roll of membership kept on growing as the nativist political movement took further and further advances. By the end of 1855 the O. U. A. was at the height of its good fortune. The ambitious dream of its founders was at last realized. Its national Arch-Chancery exercised jurisdiction in sixteen states. In the state of New York a roll of ninety subordinate chapters with thousands of members attested the popularity of the Order.

With the year 1856 the decadence of the Order began as political nativism halted in its steady progress toward power. The steady loss of prestige and strength by the Know-Nothing movement brought a corresponding change in the conditions of the O. U. A. The membership fell off, slowly at first, but rapidly as the reaction of public opinion against nativism grew more apparent. The O. U. A. has left but slight record of this decay. In September, 1857, it was noted that not half the chapters of the Order had sent delegates to Chancery.<sup>1</sup> Year by year its membership melted away. The nativist political movement was drawing to its end, and so thoroughly had the executive system of the O. U. A. become interlinked with it, that the brotherhood was being dragged down with the dying nativist party. A mere shadow of its former strength, the Order lived to see political nativism end. In October, 1861, the grand sachem of the day advised a reorganization with the

<sup>1</sup> Gildersleeve Coll.



admission of loyal Protestant foreigners to membership,<sup>1</sup> but men's thoughts were fixed upon the great problems of war-time, and there was no chance for recuperation. By the month of January, 1863, the whole active membership in New York city was so small, that it could have met in one room.<sup>1</sup> Chapter after chapter went to pieces. Chancery maintained itself in life, but more and more feebly, until, early in 1866, its formal meetings closed.<sup>2</sup> The chapters also passed out of existence, but in 1877 some veteran members reorganized in a social club with the old name of Washington Chapter, O. U. A.

The enumeration of the various secret societies of New York which were agents in building up nativism, and the story of their rise and fall, is a prelude to the narrative of secret political nativism itself. Without due reference to the existence, constitution and growth of these organizations, petty as most of them were, it is impossible to understand the strength which nativism had in New York city during the period in which the Know-Nothing Order rose to importance. Every lodge or chapter of these societies was a center and source of agitation against the foreign element and the ideas peculiar to it. More than that, the agitation was organized, systematic and incessant, a fact which means very much, indeed. Nativism existed, as has been shown, continuously in New York city from the beginning of the century as a popular sentiment, but it had no means of systematic expression, except when some political association would force it for the moment into sudden action, followed by eclipse as the association suc-

<sup>1</sup> Gildersleeve Coll.

<sup>2</sup> List of grand-sachems of New York state: John Harper, 1845; Simeon Baldwin, 1845; Thomas R. Whitney, 1846; Daniel Talmage, 1847, 1848; Jesse Reed, 1849; John L. Vandewater, 1850; William W. Osborne, 1851; Edward B. Brush, 1852; Thomas R. Whitney, 1853; F. M. Butler, 1854; F. C. Wagner, 1855; Laban C. Stiles, 1856; William B. Lewis, 1857; Edwin R. Sproul, 1858; James A. Lucas, 1859; John R. Voorhis, 1860; William E. Blakeney, 1861; W. S. Skinner, 1862; Charles E. Gildersleeve, 1863, 1864, 1865,

cumbed to mightier rivals. The nativist secret societies acted as conservators of the sentiment, drawing it together, massing it and sending it forth again to find such expression as it could. They were not secure against revulsion of public feeling, as their history shows, but they were secure against the enmity of politicians. The political leaders had no weapons to use against social movements of the form in which nativism was embodied up to the time that it attempted to pose as a political party.

When the American Republican movement passed away, in 1847, there were still in the community the old feelings of racial antipathy whose strength and depth is not to be measured by the poll of any election. It was these feelings on which the new nativist societies relied for their earlier growth. In 1848 and the years succeeding the people of America were deeply interested in the European uprisings. American thought interpreted the events of the day as efforts toward a broader civil and religious liberty, and American opinion watched the struggle between absolutism and revolution with the keenest interest and sympathy. In that struggle the personality of Pope Pius IX. stood forth prominently as that of an arbiter whose word might make or mar the plan for which the revolutionists seemed striving. When, therefore, it was definitely seen that the Pope had gone over to reactionary ideas, the comments were such that Bishop Hughes felt impelled to use his pen in defense of papal acts.<sup>1</sup> Then arose the old nativist argument that Catholics could not at the same time approve papal absolutism in Europe, and be honestly faithful to republicanism in America. The coming of Kossuth in 1851 perpetuated the discussion, for the Catholic bishop caused more comment by refusing to join in the hero-worship of the hour. These events occurred in the years when the nativist societies were growing, and the public was not disposed to look unkindly upon the new exponents of American

<sup>1</sup> Kehoe, ii, p. 776.

ideas. Had the new societies made any pretence at open political expression, the popular feeling toward them might possibly have been different, but nothing of the sort was yet hinted. The O. U. A. was the typical society of the hour, and it did not talk politics.

The gradual evolution of the new political nativism had nevertheless begun. Even while Bishop Hughes was penning his defense of papal policy, the executive bodies of the O. U. A. were throwing their influence in support of the public school system, to which the bishop was opposed. It was in the fall of 1850 that O. U. A. men applied the principles of their Order to politics by voting against that repeal of the school law which Bishop Hughes desired.<sup>1</sup> As yet they had no political machinery to direct their vote, but that, too, was being planned by busy brains, and within a very few months would take up its work. The year 1850 was the one in which the new grand executive committee began to feel its way toward political action, which would depend for its success upon the machinery of a secret society. The fundamental law of the O. U. A. had nothing in it that would condemn common action by the membership in political matters, nor that would prevent them from using the regular machinery of the Order for that purpose if desired. The preamble of the constitution of 1848 had a paragraph on the relation of the Order to politics, but it did not discourage political action. It was as follows: <sup>2</sup>

We disclaim all association with party politics. We hold no connection with party men. But we avow distinctly our purpose of doing whatever may seem best to us for sustaining our national institutions, for upholding our national liberties, and for freeing them wholly from all foreign and deleterious influences whatever.

The meeting of the first Grand Executive Convention of the Order, on May 17, 1850, was the beginning of the work of organizing a new executive mechanism. At that session several of the chapters of the Order were not represented, and in consequence a committee was appointed to see that those chap-

<sup>1</sup> Whitney, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> *O. U. A.*, 1849, April 21.

ters should appoint executive committees in order to be represented in Convention. By the end of the year, accordingly, every chapter of the organization had its delegates. Then began a rapid evolution. On February 17, 1851, the Convention adopted rules of procedure and a pass-word system, which gave it secrecy in its workings. Later in the year it took up a plan for organizing the voters of the Order, and eventually completed its work, on December 16, 1851, by the adoption of a code of fifteen rules which mapped out a new and secret system of political work. Henceforth the political activity of the O. U. A. was to be managed by a mechanism which seemed remarkably well adapted to the purposes for which it existed. The new machine was not completed in time to be used in the fall campaign of 1851. At the November election there was, nevertheless, an evidence of O. U. A. activity. It happened that Henry Storms, one of the nominees on the Democratic state ticket, was a member of the O. U. A. That fact becoming known to the foreign element, he was roundly denounced by them and threats made of his defeat. As a matter of mere comradeship, the United Americans rallied to his support and were able to balance the effect of foreign hostility.<sup>1</sup>

Under the new executive system<sup>2</sup> all political matters fell under the control of the Executive Convention, composed of delegates from the chapters and acting under pledge of strict secrecy. The Convention shared power with a cabinet, namely, the grand executive committee. This cabinet was made up of nine men, of whom three retired annually. The members owed their appointment to Chancery, which was outside of the political mechanism. The committee was dependent on the Convention for moral support in all important moves, but at the same time its position was such that it could usually wield some influence over the larger body. This power on its part was due to three facts: first, the committee

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 1852, July.

<sup>2</sup> This description is drawn from the executive records.

held sole control of the executive fund; second, its tenure was not controlled by the Convention; third, the members of the committee were also members of the Convention. The committee and Convention were checks upon each other. The jurisdiction of the executive bodies extended over the whole state. Every chapter in the state was entitled to representation in Convention, although as a matter of fact, very few chapters outside of New York city really sent delegates. For matters that concerned only portions of the Order's membership, a system of subordinate conventions was created. In each county the chapters in that county could have executive conventions. The same was true of legislative districts. Over them all stood the Grand Executive Convention as supreme control. The manner in which the Convention was constituted favored its grasp at power. Had its individual members been merely delegates chosen by their chapters for no other purpose than to meet in Convention, their decisions might or might not have been accepted when reported back to the chapters from which the delegates came, but the Convention members were more than mere delegates. The Convention was really a mass meeting of the executive committees of the several chapters. Each member of it was an officer in his own chapter clothed with executive power and discretion. A mandate of the Convention could be carried out by the members of it and did not need to be reported back to the chapters for debate or approval. In practice an effort was made to keep political matters outside the sphere of chapter action. The old rule that no member of the Order should be in any way pledged as to his political conduct remained unaltered. A member of the Order was entitled to full independence as to his own vote. Over him the executive committee of his chapter had no power beyond mere suggestion. The Executive Convention therefore had this drawback, that its members must depend largely on their own personal influence in carrying out a political plan where the votes of the

Order were essential. The O. U. A. executive system is an interesting example of political organization. Unfortunately, it never had the opportunity for free and full development. It had hardly been put in working order when the rival society of the Know-Nothings, with its much simpler mechanism and more thorough-going policy, attracted political workers to its ranks.

The political action of the O. U. A. executive system was intended to be strictly on nativist lines. One of the provisions in the fifteen rules of December was to the effect that the chapter executives should not use their influence or their funds for party purposes, but only for the purpose of opposing foreign influence at the polls. Another rule ordered that executive work should be carried on with secrecy, and should not be in the name of the Order. The precise method of work was laid out in another rule as follows :

Rule Nine : Whenever it shall be deemed necessary for the Order to aid in the choice of men for public office through the suffrages of the people, it shall be the duty of each executive committee to call together the members of the Order in their district prior to the usual primary elections or nominations, and determine upon suitable candidates of each party or either, as they may determine. It will be the duty of the members to assemble at the times and places of holding the primary meetings of such party or parties, and there use their influence in obtaining the nomination of the candidates they have selected. If the nominations are secured and ratified our cause will triumph, whichever party may be successful. Should the members of the Order nominate or select candidates already in the field, nominated by one party only, it will be the duty of every brother to sustain that selection independent of any party consideration.

The formulation of Rule Nine by the Executive Convention was a most significant step. It is the first authentic landmark in the history of what came to be known a few years later as "dark-lantern politics." Popular thought has laid the responsibility for secret politics upon the Know-Nothing Order, but all evidence now extant seems to show that in December, 1851, when these rules were adopted by the O. U. A., the so-called Know-Nothing Order was a neglectable quantity. It may perhaps have had forty members, but it was utterly

powerless and petty. The responsibility of introducing secret methods into New York politics must rest upon the greater society of the United Americans, whose membership at this time was numbered by thousands.

The new executive system of the O. U. A. was ready in time for the campaign of 1852. It was presidential year, and the work of politics began with the primaries held to select delegates to the preliminary conventions. On May 8th, the Executive Convention took its first formal step in the actual use of its new system. Resolutions in regard to presidential aspirants were passed after much debate and opposition. The resolutions recommended the chapter executive committees to use their influence at the party primaries toward the nomination of Millard Fillmore by the Whigs and the nomination of General Cass by the Democrats. Unfortunately, neither of the O. U. A. favorites secured the prize, and the Executive Convention refused to endorse either one of the nominees actually chosen by the great parties. The Convention also refused to endorse the nomination of Daniel Webster by the Native American Convention held at Trenton, New Jersey, in July. The Convention seems not to have attempted to influence the selection of state tickets by the great parties.

In regard to local tickets in New York city, the O. U. A. was able to exercise more effective judgment. In relation to these, there was a loosely organized nativist movement which expressed itself partly through the secret system of the O. U. A. and partly through an open movement that based itself on the idea of city reform. The same men were behind both forms of effort. It is at this time that Thomas R. Whitney comes to the front as a nativist politician. He was one of those who brought to the work of the secret society experience gained in the old movement of the American Republicans. During the whole Know-Nothing period he was prominent, but was especially representative of the O. U. A. and might be called the leading man of that organization. Whitney was one of the group

of nativists who organized the City Reform League, in September, 1852, to take a part in the fall campaign.<sup>1</sup> The League did not announce any nativist principles. On October 11th, the Executive Convention of the secret order met to pass upon the local tickets. It did not adopt nominees for all the offices, but picked out eleven names, mostly those of Whig candidates.<sup>2</sup> Then, a little later, the Reform League also went through the work of nomination and supplemented the convention ticket by naming candidates for four offices which the Convention had passed over.<sup>3</sup> All this preparation for organizing the O. U. A. vote did not go on without some hint of it reaching the outer world. As early as July rumors were current of action by the Order, and later on some of the New York papers stigmatized the Reform League as an offspring of nativism.<sup>4</sup> In general, however, the daily press acted as if ignorant of the whole matter, and when the votes were counted they were justified for their silence by the weakness of the effort which had been made. The political groups stood as follows:

Democratic Party . . . . .	about 31,250 votes.
Whig Party . . . . .	about 23,800 votes.
City-reform movement . . . . .	about 1,480 votes.
Nativist movement . . . . .	about 1,480 votes.
Temperance movement . . . . .	about 1,260 votes.
Anti-slavery movement . . . . .	about 140 votes.

The importance of this campaign for nativism was merely that it had made a beginning. It was yet a very long way

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, 1852, October 5, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Judge Supreme Court, Charles P. Kirkland ; Judge Superior Court, John L. Mason ; Sheriff, John Orser ; Clerk, George W. Riblet ; Corp. Counsel, Ogden Hoffman ; Almshouse Gov'r, Washington Smith ; Street Comm'r, John J. Doane ; Coroners: Robert Gamble, Joseph Hilton, Charles Missing, Bern L. Budd.

<sup>3</sup> Mayor, Jacob A. Westervelt ; Comptroller, Azariah C. Flagg ; Inspector, John H. Griscom ; Repairs Comm'r, William Adams ; Almshouse Gov'r, Washington Smith.

<sup>4</sup> *Republic*, 1852, December.



from holding a balance of power. The Executive Convention had not met a very enthusiastic response from the Order in its effort to organize a vote. Probably the vote cast for the Convention's ticket represented about one-fifth of the voting strength of the Order. The newly-discovered organization of Charles B. Allen and his friends fell into the hands of members of the O. U. A. during the year 1852 and was growing. Probably it threw what little strength it possessed to the aid of the nativist ticket in this election of 1852, but there is no record of it. Before another campaign came round, however, the little organization had grown into a force that distracted public attention entirely from the executive work of the United Americans.

## CHAPTER IV

### RISE OF THE KNOW-NOTHING ORDER, 1853-54

✓ By the close of 1852 the nativist secret societies were represented in New York city and Brooklyn by some sixty different bodies. Under the circumstances a popular revival of nativism in some form was a logical sequence. It appeared first in the form of attacks upon the Catholic church early in the next year. The English press supplied the stimulus. The story came across the sea of the Madiari family in Tuscany, said to have been cruelly imprisoned for reading the Protestant Bible, and the American public expressed its horror suitably in public meetings, not forgetting to say many interesting and bitter things about the Roman church at the same time. Editorials and open letters on the subject came into print in large numbers, and their general tenor was that the Catholic church, judged by its own acts, was a foe to religious liberty. Another matter came before the public at the same time. The news dispatches from various American cities told how the Catholic bishops, with a curious similarity of effort, were attacking the American non-sectarian school system. The conviction spread, and was often expressed, that there was some sort of concerted plan on foot for the modification of the public school system to suit the wishes of the Roman church. This also disturbed a nervous public. While these things were being discussed there came to New York an Italian orator, ✓ Alessandro Gavazzi. He had been a priest and teacher in Italy, and had become revolutionary under the liberalism of Pius IX. When the revolution failed he fled to England and abjured Catholicism. His visit to America was for the pur-

pose of delivering addresses, and the time was opportune, both for him and for the nativist societies who gave him welcome. Gavazzi was viewed by the public in something the same light as the hero, Kossuth, only, of course, the Italian had played a more humble part in the drama of revolution. He was considered to be sincere at least, and his bitter denunciation of the Catholic church, continued week after week, made a deep impression upon the people. Nativism expanded visibly under the influence of his work. An evidence of its existence was the Ninth ward riot of July 4th, in which an Irish procession was broken up, and its members driven from the streets.

In midsummer nativism began to take political form in preparation for the fall campaign. The men who began the movement at this time seem to have acted wholly independently of nativist secret societies. Their plan was for an open organization opposed to foreign ideas, but tolerant of foreigners who embraced American views. The first meeting was held about the first of August.<sup>1</sup> The new movement was launched under the name of the American Party, and with a platform which touched upon most of the issues of the day.<sup>1</sup> Among other things the platform stood for a free non-sectarian school system, restricted naturalization, Bible-reading in public schools, and non-clerical control of all property held for church uses. These ideas were sufficient to stamp the new party as a nativist one. It began to organize in much the same way as the American Republicans had done in 1843, but its experience was different. For two or three weeks all went well. A provisional committee began the work of organizing the wards. On August 17 the Ninth ward, where the recent riot had occurred, was organized,<sup>2</sup> and others also shortly after. Hardly had the movement gotten under way

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1853, August 3, p. 4, August 18, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1853, August 18, p. 1.

when an element of extremists came in, which would be satisfied with nothing less than general proscription of all the foreign-born.<sup>1</sup> Their views clashed with those of the moderate men who had fathered the new party. A conflict of ideas resulted, and the expansion of the party ceased as disputes began. Early in October the movement broke down. Some of its leaders went into the city-reform movement of the year. Their party disappeared.

The time had now come for the advent of the secret Order of the Star-Spangled Banner in effective political work. This society had grown steadily during 1852 and the early months of 1853, but without coming into the notice of the general public. Its membership had been recruited until it reached into the thousands. That portion of the O. U. A. which was interested in politics joined the ranks of the newer order, attracted by its more thorough-going methods, and they were ready to use its machinery for the campaign work of 1853. The methods which were followed in the political work of this year were the same which had been formulated for the executive work of the O. U. A., and which had been used in the preceding campaign. They included a systematic effort to control, first, the party caucuses, then the party conventions, then the election itself. There is no record of the secret work of the Order of the Star-Spangled Banner in this campaign. The executive records of the O. U. A. seem to indicate that the organization of the nativist vote was practically left to the younger order. The existence of some sort of nativist influence began to be known when the Whig primaries met early in October, for there were tickets of nativist make-up put forward in several of the ward caucuses.<sup>2</sup> Very little notice was taken of this, however, for ward politics often showed petty phenomena of one sort or another, and the break-up of the abortive American Party was now going on, indicating the fu-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1853, August 31, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune*, 1853, October 12, p. 5.

tility of political nativism. Nativist influence attracted more attention when the Whig senatorial conventions met, for it put forward Thomas R. Whitney in one district, and forced him upon the convention despite a bitter opposition. Once more the nativist influence came into view at the City Reform mass-convention of October 31st, which had been called to ratify a Reform ticket. The presence of two Irish lawyers upon the proposed ticket made it objectionable to nativists. At the mass-convention, accordingly, the ticket was refused ratification, and had to be withdrawn. This action, which showed clearly that the nativists were well organized for concerted effort, was ascribed by the press to the O. U. A.<sup>1</sup> Thus far the existence of the Know-Nothing society seems not to have been known to the public. These outcroppings of nativist influence which the daily press noted were really mere hints of the systematic work which was being silently done by the secret orders. It was in the Whig Party that their influence was most apparent. All facts indicate that the most of the nativists at this time were Whigs. After the conventions of the older parties had been held the Order of the Star-Spangled Banner selected its own list of nominees from the tickets made by the conventions. It made for itself a state ticket, judiciary and city tickets,<sup>2</sup> together with a few legislative nominations. The Executive Convention of the O. U. A. made selections on November 2d, but its action was far less sweeping. It disapproved one nominee on the Whig state ticket, and endorsed seven judicial and legislative candidates, but this was all. So far as the Convention went, it concurred with the secret ticket of its sister order. It is very probable that the harmonious action of the two secret societies in this and other campaigns of the time was due to the fact that the same men had control of both machines.

<sup>1</sup> *Four. Commerce*, 1853, November 1, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Judge Supreme Court, Charles P. Kirkland; Justices Superior Court, John Duer, Murray Hoffman, Peter Y. Cutler; Judge Common Pleas, George P. Nelson; District Attorney, Chauncey Shaffer; Almshouse Gov'r, William S. Duke.

In the campaign of 1853 the work of the nativist politicians was in great measure unsuspected by the general public. Some hints of it must necessarily leak out, nevertheless, and those who were interested in politics became well aware that organized nativism was in the field. The work of the nativist element was most open in the contest for the place of district attorney. Blunt, the Whig incumbent of the office, was a candidate for re-election, but nativists disapproved of his lack of zeal in the cases arising out of the Ninth ward riot, and they supported against him a popular Democratic nominee. This hostility to Blunt attracted notice. Close upon election the information passed around that the new influence in local politics was a political secret society wholly distinct from the O. U. A. This was the first time that the existence of an unknown society had been recognized by the general public. As to the name, numbers and nature of the mysterious society no one as yet had information, but almost at once a name was supplied for it. It began to be called the "Know-Nothing" Order in popular speech, because, as the daily press explained, the members professed to know nothing about it when questioned. Sometimes, later on, the authorship of the phrase was ascribed to E. Z. C. Judson, otherwise "Ned Buntline," who was a conspicuous exponent of radical nativism at this time. Whatever its origin, the name was used by the *New York Tribune* on November 10th, and this was perhaps its first appearance in print. It became common phrase as soon as the press adopted it.

The Know-Nothing state ticket of 1853 was of little significance in the final results of election, for the success of the Whig Party in the state campaign was a foregone conclusion on account of a split in the state Democracy. The ticket was only a record of nativist strength. The personnel of the first Know-Nothing state ticket included six Whigs and four Democrats selected from the state tickets of the older parties. It was as follows :

Sec'y of State . . . . .	George W. Clinton of Erie.
Comptroller . . . . .	James W. Cook of Saratoga.
Treasurer . . . . .	Winslow C. Watson of Essex.
Attorney-General . . . . .	Ogden Hoffman of New York.
Engineer . . . . .	John T. Clark of Oneida.
Canal Commis'r . . . . .	Cornelius Gardinier of Montgomery.
Prison Inspector . . . . .	Miles W. Bennett of Onondaga.
Judge, C't of Appeals . . . . .	Hiram Denio of Oneida.
Judge, C't of Appeals . . . . .	George Wood of Kings.
Clerk, C't of Appeals . . . . .	Benjamin F. Harwood of Livingston.

In support of this the secret orders cast a vote that represented very fairly the strength of their movement so far as it had developed. Their vote was as yet confined mostly to the counties of New York and Kings. Although it made a very noticeable difference in the poll of the ticket locally, it yet was lost in the greater aggregate of the state canvass complete. The Whigs carried the state by 60,000 plurality. The averages of parties for the state at large was as follows :

Whig Party . . . . .	about 161,700 votes.
Soft Shell Democrats . . . . .	about 95,600 votes.
Hard-Shell Democrats . . . . .	about 94,800 votes.
Free Democrats . . . . .	about 14,600 votes.
Nativist movement <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	about 2,000 votes.

In the contest for city offices the nativist vote had much more importance. The break in the Democratic Party had made the Whig organization the strongest element in city politics, and even on the closely contested place of district attorney, the nativists were unable to overcome Whig strength, but they came fairly close to it. It was said that only the endorsement of Blunt at the last moment by one of the nativist societies saved him from defeat.<sup>2</sup> The poll of the local canvass gave the following averages :<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These figures underestimate the nativist vote in the state because the nativist split-ticket had too small a following in proportion to the total state vote to make it accurately distinctive in figuring averages.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1854, June 11, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Comm. Advertiser*, 1853, December 5.

Whig Party . . . . .	about 16,400 votes.
Hard-Shell Democrats . . . . .	about 13,110 votes.
Soft-Shell Democrats . . . . .	about 11,330 votes.
Nativist movement . . . . .	about 4,220 votes.
Temperance movement . . . . .	about 400 votes.

The election showed that the strength of political nativism had trebled during the twelve months since the campaign of 1852. This may be ascribed partly to the increase of nativist sentiment by the popular discussion of the year, partly also to the preaching of the secret societies, and partly to the confusion of the local politics of New York city consequent on the split in the Democracy. The nature of the new nativist phenomena was so little understood that it received very little attention from the local press. Some of the papers referred briefly to the existence of a secret mixed ticket. The *Tribune*, always unfriendly to nativism, described the secret nominations more fully. "This ticket," it said, "is the work of the managers of a secret organization growing out of the O. U. A., but ostensibly disconnected therewith. It is in fact a modified or rather a disguised form of Native Americanism aiming to control the elections of our city for the benefit of its leaders."<sup>1</sup> A few days after this the *Tribune* again touched upon the new movement. "In the present instance it is perfectly well understood that the Know-Nothing organization is but a new dodge of protean nativism. It is essentially anti-foreign, especially anti-Irish and anti-Catholic."<sup>2</sup> Before the close of November, as the result of its share in the campaign, the aims and existence of the secret order were well known, although its plan of organization was yet a mystery to all outside its ranks.

The secret society existed during 1853 in dual form. One branch was organized under a supervisory body called the State Wigwam and the other under a like body called the

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1853, November 10, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune*, 1853, November 16, p. 4.



Grand Council.<sup>1</sup> In each case these supervisory bodies were probably identical with the oldest wigwam or council of the respective branches.<sup>2</sup> The O. U. A. began its expansion under an arrangement of this kind. The date of December 7, 1853, given for the organization of the Grand Council by one authority,<sup>3</sup> possibly indicates the transition to a representative body like that which occurred in the O. U. A. in 1845. The Know-Nothing society was thus a divided body whose two branches were engaged in earnest rivalry, though not necessarily a hostile rivalry. In this dual form the society began very early to find establishment in neighboring states where nativist feeling existed. There was apparently no systematic attempt to extend the society outside of New York, for its aims were primarily local, but in one way or another there had been visitors from other states admitted into the Order and they had duplicated in their own cities the methods whose operations they had seen in New York.<sup>4</sup> In New Jersey, Maryland, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Ohio, there were more or less flourishing offshoots of the society in existence by the fall of 1853.<sup>5</sup> This expansion is said to have brought about an agreement between the two separated branches in regard to the growth of the society outside of New York. Under the compact the wigwam organization was to have the sole right of issuing new charters in the region north and east of New York city, while the council organization was to have the same right over the region to the south and west.<sup>6</sup> This arrangement, if it were really made, foreshadowed a national organization for the society, but as yet, and for some months to come, there was probably no real bond between the branches in the different states. There was no federal body to wield power. Whatever coherence there was must have rested solely on voluntary pledges between the scattered groups.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1854, December 20, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Whitney, p. 284.

<sup>4</sup> Carroll, p. 269.

<sup>5</sup> Whitney, p. 284; Carroll, p. 270.

<sup>6</sup> Carroll, p. 269.

Scarcely had the elections of 1853 passed by when events brought the new secret organization to the front in the engaging role of champion of free speech. Its opportunity for this came with the breaking out of trouble over the anti-Catholic street preachers. Gavazzi's harangues against the church had inspired less talented imitators in some of those cities which were storm-centers of nativism. In Baltimore and Louisville, notably, the nativist feeling had been stirred by the incendiary harangues of street preachers during the summer of 1853. In New York city the custom of street preaching was an old one, but hitherto harmless. Now the tendency to attack the Roman church excited the notice of the foreign element, and the street sermons gave rise to small conflicts between the rougher representatives of the opposing faiths. This called the attention of the police to the street preachers and plans were laid to maintain order. On Sunday, December 11th, the police accordingly interfered and arrested a preacher named Daniel Parsons who had been talking on successive Sundays at the shipyards and wharves of the east side. This act aroused a storm. The word passed around that Parsons' arrest had been made to placate the Catholics. Very soon an angry mob was surging round the mayor's house, demanding the man's release. One of the city judges averted danger by freeing the prisoner and then the mob dispersed.

On Wednesday following the arrest hand-bills scattered through the city called the people to a mass-meeting for upholding free speech. The call was unsigned, but it was plainly a nativist move. When evening came there were thousands of people massed in the moonlight at City Hall Park to answer the call. The meeting itself was carried through smoothly by those in charge. The presiding officer was a city merchant, James W. Barker, who had joined the Know-Nothings only a few months before,<sup>1</sup> but who was already

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1855, June 4, p. 5.

prominent in the secret organization. This was his first public appearance as a nativist leader. The speeches and resolutions of the meeting took as their theme the American right of free speech, and charged the city authorities with violating that right to please the Roman church. The effect of the meeting was to excite both the native and the foreign element, and for a few days there was a stirring that looked toward strife. Again, as in 1844, the mayor of the city and the Catholic bishop issued their respective proclamations to avert the danger of racial conflict. When Sunday came round again, the whole city nervously awaited results, fearing riot. Parsons preached that day to an audience of 10,000 persons. He was somewhat more mild in speech, and no champion of Catholicism appeared to interrupt, so the throng melted away peacefully when the talk was done. The right of free speech was vindicated and the crisis was past.

This series of incidents made a dramatic episode in the local history of nativism. In after years there lived a tradition that the Know-Nothing Order had its origin amid these events. At the time of its happening it forced upon the community a sudden realization that the mysterious Know-Nothing Order was a strong, energetic and watchful force. The growth of the nativist societies received a new impulse. New nativist journals announced themselves to the public eye. New speakers sprang out of obscurity to attack the Catholic church. On every hand there were patent signs of popular sympathy. The O. U. A. was the greatest of the nativist societies, and the visible symbol of nativism. On February 22, 1854, it made a formal display of its strength. An immense procession of its chapters, interspersed with nativist military companies, wound through the city streets with waving banners and patriotic devices. The procession was designedly an exhibit of organized nativism for the benefit of the foreign element, and it won prestige for the movement in the eyes of native and foreign-born alike. All through the earlier months

1853  
of 1854, and up to the opening of the fall campaign, the ideas of nativism persistently forced themselves to the front in the life of the city. The unpopularity of the Irish people grew more intense under the stimulus of the warfare which was being made upon them. The leaders of nativism did not countenance anything that leaned toward violence, but the younger and the rougher elements of the community rather welcomed a pretext for disturbance and conflict. Frequent petty collisions were reported by the daily press during the winter and spring months, and these grew in violence until, by June, they were seriously called riots. The street preachers were in part responsible for the disturbances.

Amid these scenes a new nativist secret society came to light, which was in time to become a factor in the political nativism of the city. At its inception, however, it was rather social than political. Some time during the spring of 1854 a young man named William W. Patten conceived the idea of founding a nativist secret society for the younger men who were ineligible to the Know-Nothing organization. He drew up a ritual with the aid of an anti-masonic book, and called his new society the Order of Free and Accepted Americans.<sup>1</sup> Around Patten there was quickly gathered a large company of the younger men. They did not use the real name of their order, but usually called it the Order of the American Star, from its emblem, a five-pointed star bearing in its center the figure 67. Initiates knew that this number referred to the age of Washington at his death. Sometimes the members were called the "United Brethren," but more often they were known as the "Wide-Awakes," from their rallying-cry. It was this society whose members were at the front in the street disturbances and

<sup>1</sup> The beginnings of this society were described in a pamphlet of 1855, and the ritual was given in full. Original copy in Gildersleeve Coll. Reprint in *Tribune*, 1855, September 5, p. 7. See also a distorted reference in *Tribune*, 1855, May 29, p. 5.

which gave to a certain style of hat the name of the "wide-awake," because favored by the members. By the middle of June the white felt "wide-awake" hats were everywhere deemed the insignia of nativism,<sup>1</sup> and exposed the wearers to attack from Irishmen at very short notice.

The Irish-Catholic population thoroughly realized by this time the extent of the antipathy which was directed against them. With the masses it aroused only a blind anger, but some of the better-educated leaders of the group acknowledged that the nativist feeling was not without basis, and counseled their fellow-countrymen to change their habits. An open letter from Editor Lynch of the *Irish-American* is an example of these utterances, and it gives also the following interesting summary of the complaints against the Irish-Catholic element:<sup>2</sup>

"Fellow countrymen and friends: I desire to point your special and emphatic attention to the approaching elections. You have at present opposed to you a bitter, inimical and powerful secret society called the Know-Nothings: opposed to you, to us Irishmen particularly, on the grounds that we are impudent and voracious cormorants of petty places under government; that we are ignorant, turbulent and brutal; that we are led by the nose and entirely controlled by our clergy; that we are willing subjects of a foreign prince, the Pope; that we are only lip-republicans; that we are not worthy of the franchise; that by the largeness of our vote and the clannishness of our habits and dispositions we rule or aspire to rule in America; that we are drunkards and criminals; that we fill the workhouses and prisons; that we heap up taxes on industrious and sober and thrifty citizens; and that for these and other reasons we should be deposed from our citizenship, and in fact rooted out of this American nation as a body by every fair and foul means: And I can tell you that outside the secret organization of the Know-Nothings, outside and beyond its influence and power, an anti-Irish and anti-Catholic sentiment prevails," etc., etc.

There was, in fact, a general assault all along the line upon the objectionable people during 1854. Not only were the secret societies, the Protestant clergy and the preachers of the streets attacking the foreign presence, but the attacks were

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1854, June 12, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, 1854, August 30, p. 2.

finding their way into print in all forms. There were a half-dozen periodicals devoted specially to nativism, and these were reinforced by printed pamphlets and nativist books. Popular fiction grew up to meet the new demand, and cheap novel-writers found new materials in the woes of captive nuns and the wiles of Jesuit brothers. The nativist sentiment entered into the homes and daily thoughts of the people as never before. The title of Know-Nothing took on a broad meaning under these conditions that made it practically synonymous with nativist without reference to membership in the mysterious society from whence the name came.

Public curiosity was all agog over the unknown organization of the Know-Nothings. Wild stories flew about, telling of thousands of armed men secretly banded for unknown purposes.<sup>1</sup> Neither the Irish leaders nor the local politicians liked the new movement, for both were apprehensive of its effects upon their plans. These two classes earnestly watched for real knowledge of the secret society. In January of 1854 a Catholic paper succeeded in getting and printing the constitution of the Guard of Liberty, an organization which was supposed for a time to be the unknown Know-Nothing Order.<sup>2</sup> Soon, however, it was learned that the Guard was only a nativist military society of some 300 members, which had a secret ritual.<sup>3</sup> It was not the much-sought order after all. The first real inklings of the nature of the Know-Nothing secret system came to the New York newspapers from New Orleans and Philadelphia papers, in which cities the secret order was also an object of curiosity. Certain papers in those cities learned the requirements for admission to the society, the number of its degrees and certain of its secret signs and words. These revelations were copied in March, 1854, by the *New York Tribune*, whose editor was always ready to attack nativism.<sup>4</sup> These uncorroborated accounts were not

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1853, December 23, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1854, January 30, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Herald*, 1854, February 23, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Tribune*, 1854, March 25, p. 6.

enough, however, and the public was still waiting when a curious case in the local courts promised light upon the inmost secrets of the unknown company. One John E. Elliott swore out a warrant against three respectable citizens charging them with burglary. The actual facts were that Elliott was grand-secretary of that branch of the Know-Nothings which adhered to the founder, Charles B. Allen, and as such he had custody of the secret ritual. Suspecting him of an attempt to sell the ritual a committee of three, one of whom was Allen, broke into his office and carried away the trunk containing the official papers.<sup>1</sup> These three were the men whom Elliott accused of burglary. Of all this the public knew nothing except that Elliott was an officer of the unknown order and might make interesting revelations. The interest in the burglary case was intense, but the case balked curiosity completely. At the second session Elliott failed to appear, and the charges were quietly dismissed.

Hidden behind its silence through all these months of questioning the Know-Nothing Order was ever growing. By May 1, 1854, there existed in New York state fifty-four scattered bodies,<sup>2</sup> most of which were located in New York city or in the counties lying adjacent, where nativist sentiment had been fostered by the O. U. A. and other nativist societies. The spring elections of 1854 gave opportunity for the rural bodies to use their power, but nowhere does their presence seem to have attracted notice except in New York and Westchester counties. It was at this time that the leaders of the secret order in New York united on a plan to weld together its scattered forces into a national secret political federation. Outside of New York state there were branches of the society located in twelve different commonwealths. Calls were issued for a convention of New York bodies to meet in May, and for a general convention to

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1854, May 18, p. 8; May 19, p. 5; May 20, pp. 5, 8; *Tribune*, 1855 May 29, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, 1855, March 8, p. 8, March 16, p. 3; May 22, p. 2.

meet at the same time. The plan to put aside old differences was successful. On May 11th the delegates of the state completed the work for which they had been called.<sup>1</sup> By their action the wigwam branch and the council branch were united under a single state body called the Grand Council of the State of New York. Only one body, the Seventeenth ward council, with 300 members, refused to acquiesce.<sup>2</sup> The officers of the new Grand Council were all residents of New York city: James W. Barker, president; Joseph E. Ebling, vice-president; Joseph S. Taylor, treasurer, and Henry Farrington, secretary.<sup>3</sup> The jurisdiction of the body covered the state. On May 14th the general convention met, with delegates present from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Maryland, Virginia, District of Columbia and Ohio.<sup>4</sup> It adjourned after making arrangements for a fuller gathering later. On June 14th another general convention was held by delegates from thirteen states, who gathered at New York city and organized themselves as a Grand Council of the United States. Of this body, too, James W. Barker was chosen president.<sup>5</sup> On June 17th the delegates completed the organization of the Order by adopting a constitution and a new ritual.<sup>6</sup> Under their hands the national Grand Council became a permanent body, holding jurisdiction wherever the Order spread and making unified action by the whole Order a possibility.

In New York state the re-organization was not intended to bring with it any alteration in the methods of the past. All the ultra-secret characteristics of the society were retained and the old idea of limited political action was kept. The following resolutions were passed by the Grand Council of New York on June 8th in regular session: <sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1855, March 8, p. 8. Also inaccurate account in *Herald*, 1856, June 3, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1854, December 20, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Times*, 1854, October 26, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Carroll, p. 270.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Herald*, 1854, September 25, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Times*, 1854, October 23, p. 1; *Herald*, 1854, November 4, p. 1.



*Resolved*, That the principles of our Order, as laid down in our obligations and private work, forbid that we should appear before the public in any respect as a distinct body or known organization, and that, therefore, it is the duty of each member of the Order to set his face against and to strongly oppose all and every effort to bring the members of this Order before the public as a distinct political body.

*Resolved*, That the proper constitutional and political theater of action of this Order as a body is only inside of our respective council rooms, and while our constitution and private work remain as they now are, it is the duty of this Council and each subordinate council to oppose all efforts to draw us as a body from our proper sphere, and thus to tempt us to commit a radical and vital wrong to the grand principles of secrecy upon which the whole superstructure of this organization is based.

The essential change which the Order underwent at this time was in the form of executive management. A number of executive powers were vested in the presidents of councils and in the president of the Grand Council. Under one of these powers Grand President Barker at once appointed deputies for counties and began to build up a systematic expansion of the society.<sup>1</sup> In New York city there was also organized a general executive committee with oversight over the affairs of the Order in the city.<sup>2</sup> Under this system the grand president of the Order was a strong executive, and Barker became the soul of the nativist movement. Under the stimulus of his executive genius the Order rapidly spread over the state. Between the dates of May 1st and June 1st, according to one authority, the number of councils increased from 54 to 91, and this increase, due largely to political causes, went on by leaps and bounds in the weeks following.<sup>3</sup> The Know-Nothing Order now became a body whose influence extended all through the state, and its leaders began to plan for higher flights of power than nativism had ever before been able to essay. At the same time the city of New York remained for a time the center and citadel of the secret order, where its in-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1855, March 8, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1854, October 30, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Times*, 1855, May 22, p. 2.

terests mainly lay. The maintenance of nativist sentiment there was a vital necessity to the cause of organized nativism.

Leaving the thread of narrative for a time, it is well to see what manner of society this was which sprang so suddenly out of vacancy and stirred so deeply the popular thought. The organization which was created by the Know-Nothing constitution of 1854 was a political machine which borrowed some features from the O. U. A., but which was far more centralized than the latter. The proper name of the society was that of The Supreme Order of the Star-Spangled Banner.<sup>1</sup> It was a secret, oath-bound brotherhood, whose aims were wholly political. It had no benefit system or social side in its scheme of effort. Only those could join who were Americans born, and who were unconnected, either personally or by family ties, with the Catholic system.<sup>2</sup> Its membership was a graded one of three ranks. The lowest rank included all members of the Order.<sup>3</sup> Admission thereto was gained by taking the obligation of the first degree. Next above in rank were those members who were deemed competent to hold office in the Order.<sup>3</sup> Admission was gained by taking the obligation of the second degree. No one could hold office in the Order until admitted to this degree. Still higher in rank stood those members of the Order who were deemed competent to hold public office in the community.<sup>3</sup> Admission to this class was won by taking the obligation of the third degree. Apparently, no member of the Order could be endorsed for public office unless he had been admitted to the third degree. The obligation in any one of these three ranks was conferred upon such persons as might be proposed by a brother of that degree and found acceptable by a ballot of the members who already held the degree.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1854, September 25, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune*, 1854, March 25, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Times*, 1855, May 29, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Times*, 1855, May 22, p. 2; 1856, March 3, p. 3.

The general membership of the Order was organized on the lodge system. Each separate group was called a council, and the councils in each state were federated under a supervisory body called a grand council. Over and above the grand councils stood the Grand Council of the United States, usually called the National Council. Each subordinate council included such members of the Order as resided in some specific political area. Each council was designated by a number, and existed by virtue of a charter granted under the authority of the Grand Council. It elected its own officers and enacted its own by-laws, subject always to the written constitutions of the Grand Council and the National Council. At ordinary sessions all members of the council sat together as a first-degree council. Such members as held the second degree might hold separate session for special business as a second-degree council.<sup>1</sup> Such sessions, in practice, were usually held after the adjournment of the first-degree body.<sup>2</sup> Probably there was also a third-degree council session.<sup>3</sup> The officers of a council bore the ordinary titles of president, vice-president, and so on. The president was the executive head of the body, and not merely a presiding officer. He had the custody of the charter,<sup>4</sup> and of the written ritual, and also had general oversight of political work in the district over which the council held authority.

The Grand Council was a representative body composed of three delegates from each council in the state. The term of office of each delegate was three years, and one new one was elected annually in each council.<sup>5</sup> In this respect the Grand Council was copied after the Chancery of the O. U. A. The Grand Council existed by virtue of a constitution which had been approved by vote in the subordinate councils, and which could be altered only after a referendum to the councils. Its

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1855, May 22, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, 1855, July 11, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Times*, 1855, August 3, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Times*, 1855, May 22, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Times*, 1854, October 23, p. 1; 1855, May 22, p. 2.

meetings were quarterly, with special sessions when required. In New York state the annual session, at which officers were elected, took place in February. The Grand Council elected its own officers and enacted legislation, subject always to its own constitution and that of the National Council. It enforced discipline, interpreted the laws, decided disputes. In general it directed and co-ordinated the work of the Order within the state. Its officers bore the same titles as those of subordinate councils. The president, who was properly styled grand-president, was presiding officer of the Grand Council and executive head of the Order. It was his duty to carry out the orders of the Grand Council, and to exercise general oversight over the state. The work of expansion came under his eye. In his hands lay the selection of district deputies, of whom one was appointed in each county.<sup>1</sup> The president also assumed to appoint traveling deputies. These deputies were, as their name implies, holders of power vested in the president, and delegated to them by him. Their special duty, in practice, was to recruit the Order by calling new councils into existence, and to maintain enthusiasm in those already established. They were personal representatives of the president, and through them the latter kept in touch with the remote sections.

The Grand Council of the United States, or National Council, existed by virtue of a written constitution adopted by general convention, and was the highest body in the Know-Nothing system. It was a representative body composed of delegates from each state where the Order was existent. It legislated on matters connected with the secret ritual and also discussed matters in which the interest of the Order touched national politics. It could propose amendments to its own constitution, but they must be ratified by the various grand councils before they could become effective.

In its methods of council procedure the Know-Nothing

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1855, May 22, p. 2.

society followed the usual ways of secret societies. The experience of those societies had evolved certain features as necessary to preserve secrecy in work. These features included the use of grips, pass-words, signs, phrases of recognition, signals of distress, test formulæ and rallying cries. All these naturally found a place in the Know-Nothing system. The experience of other societies had also evolved certain ceremonial forms. There were special formalities for opening and closing the session of a secret body, for entering or retiring from the meeting, for initiating new members and for installing officers. These, too, found a place in the system of the Know-Nothings. Besides these features there were some practices which were peculiar to the Know-Nothing society alone, as a result of its ultra-secret character. In other secret organizations the members were not supposed to conceal their connection, but the Know-Nothing system endeavored to aid its members in doing so. To this end the time and place of council sessions were not divulged, nor were public notices issued calling the members together. The custom was to scatter about small pieces of blank paper cut in shapes previously agreed upon, as a signal that a meeting was at hand.<sup>1</sup> To the same end the name of the secret order was not divulged to the initiate of the first degree. Even though public rumor did pass around the real name of the society, the first-degree member could truthfully claim to "know nothing" of any order of that name.

In its political work the Know-Nothing system was based on the idea that political policy should be decided in an orderly way by the general voice, but enforced by the unhampered act of single executives. This idea, as applied to local politics, was well carried out. The Know-Nothing council in its best days was, in point of fairness and decency, a vast improvement over the average party caucus of the time. Every voter in the council had free expression, and the ulti-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1855, March 17, p. 4; *Tribune*, 1854, March 25, p. 6.

mate decision was executed by proper officers with energy and system. The idea was not so well wrought out, however, in the hastily evolved machinery of the state campaign of 1854. The Know-Nothing system on this side was weaker than that used by the regular parties of the day. At the basis of the political system of the Order was the council, which was intended to control some small political area. In New York city there was one council for each ward. In smaller cities a single council might cover several wards. In rural towns a council might cover as many election districts as expediency suggested. Such matters as concerned only the voters in the small area thus covered would be brought up in first-degree council, debated and decided by vote of those present. Where there were several councils in one city, there was usually a general executive committee, chosen annually and composed of delegates from each council. Local matters pertaining to the whole city would be in this case debated and decided provisionally in general committee and then referred back to the various councils for approval or disapproval. In New York city the general committee was composed of sixty-six members, being three from each ward council.<sup>1</sup> For counties and legislative districts a convention system was devised. For the handling of political matters for the state at large the Order had no adequate system. The Grand Council took upon itself the function of a convention, but the three-year tenure of its members and the lack of any complete or proportionate representation made its acts, very properly, open to bitter criticism.

The execution of such decisions as were formulated by the councils or the representative bodies of the Order was entrusted to specially chosen officials. In New York city these officials formed an executive hierarchy acting under an order issued by the general executive committee on July 17, 1854.<sup>2</sup> Under this order the Know-Nothing voters in each ward were subdivided

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1854, October 30, p. 1; *Times*, 1855, July 19, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1854, October 30, p. 1.

by election districts, and these groups again subdivided into groups of ten. Over the whole ward stood the president of the ward council as executive officer, with the corresponding secretary of the council as his executive assistant. Over each election district was a "superintendent," appointed by and responsible to the president, who could remove him at will. Over each group of ten voters was an "assistant," appointed by and responsible to the "superintendent" of the district. Through these officers a registry of voters was formed and kept by the corresponding secretary, and by them the Know-Nothing voters were marshaled to caucus or election. In the rural districts the supervision of voters was probably less complete, but data are lacking.

In the management of the voters the officials of the Order seem to have depended chiefly on the influence of the pledge which members of the Order had taken. Great care was taken, also, to keep before the members, by means of literature and nativist speeches, the ideas for which the Order was supposed to stand and for whose success the members' votes were demanded. No formal platform was put forth, but a formal address was issued having something of the same character. The pledge taken by the members of the first degree was probably somewhat indefinite as to the use of the franchise. The pledge of the second degree contained an assent to the promise "that you will vote in all political matters and for all political offices for second-degree members of the Order, providing it shall be necessary for the American interest."<sup>1</sup> This left to the taker a certain latitude of judgment, which the Grand Council of October, 1854, tried to narrow by a declaration that the pledge meant to require the support of all Know-Nothing nominees.<sup>2</sup> This action by the Grand Council was the beginning of a system of party discipline. After this interpretation it was possible to expel any bolter from the Order on the ground that he had violated his obligation. In No-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1854, October 23, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

vember, 1854, the Grand Council elaborated the discipline by creating "the test." This feature consisted in calling up any member of a council or of the Grand Council in a regular session and requiring of him a statement as to how he had cast his vote at some particular election.<sup>1</sup> Expulsion might follow an admission of disloyalty to the regular ticket.

This description of the secret machinery of the Know-Nothings applies to the Order as it existed during the fall and winter of 1854, when it first began to pose as a political state organization. The same description will not fit the Order accurately at any other time of its career, for its machinery was continually in evolution. The exigencies of political struggle were continually bringing out points in the secret machinery where it was hampered in its political efforts. The tendency, therefore, was always in the direction of assimilating its structure to that of the regular political parties of the day. The secret system in its most typical form was that here given. As a machine it was far better adapted to local than to state political work. Its purpose was to secure unity and vigor in the control of votes, and under shrewd management it had tremendous capabilities in this direction. It was weak, however, as a state society, because it had no equitable method of deciding matters of state politics. The Grand Council was not properly constituted for nominating tickets. Probably the greatest source of danger in the whole system was the power that fell to the grand-president. His appointment of district deputies enabled him during the period of expansion to manipulate the county delegations and exercise undue influence over the Grand Council. The degree system of the Order does not seem to have been a danger, although it would seem naturally to foster cliques. There certainly were cliques in the Order, but their existence seems to have depended on personal influence and never on the artificial distinction of a de-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1854, December 4, p. 1; 1855, March 8, p. 8; *Tribune*, 1855, October 6, p. 5.



gree. In this machine, too, the rights of the individual were safeguarded, and this is strongly in its favor. The individual voter in the secret order had probably more real influence upon politics than the average individual in the parties outside the Order.

## CHAPTER V

### THE STATE CAMPAIGN OF 1854

THE entry of nativism into the field of state politics in New York was at a time when the old parties were disintegrating. Its phenomenal success in winning voters to its service was due to the weakness of those older party systems which nativism tried to displace. Its history as a factor in state affairs is for a time inextricably mingled with that of the factional divisions in the older parties. When the year 1854 opened, nativism had no place in state politics. The field was occupied almost exclusively by the two great national parties, already, however, weakened and divided by the rivalries among their leaders. For the time there were no great issues insistently pressing for notice and holding together the uncongenial elements in either party. The unity of party management was already broken when leaders in the same party stood at open enmity. The voting strength of each side, it was true, showed no great change as yet, but in the absence of any unifying principles the voters were attached to their respective parties only by the weak tie of fealty to names and traditions. On the Democratic side a faction fight had disrupted the party in 1853. Two separate divisions, called in popular phrase Hard-Shells and Soft-Shells, now duplicated the party organization and maintained their respective claims to the party name. This division represented nothing more than the opposition of certain leaders to each other. On the Whig side there was no open break in the unity of the organization, but there existed two bitterly antagonistic factions. One of these, headed by William H. Seward, bore in political

slang the name of Woolly-Heads. The other, headed by Millard Fillmore, bore the nick-name of Silver-Grays. Here again there was no real principle at issue between the two. The division stood only for a rivalry of leaders. With the two old parties in this weakened and divided condition, it was to be expected that on the appearance of any new and living issue in politics it would be seized upon by one or another of the struggling elements as an aid to success over the opposition. The political history of New York during 1854 deals with the appearance of three living issues in state politics, and with their peculiar effects upon the old party organizations.

The temperance issue in state politics began to take definite form in 1853. For a number of years previous there had existed several voluntary societies, both secret and non-secret, extending over the whole state. Under their shelter there had grown up an agitation in favor of the restriction of liquor-selling. At first this movement was non-political, but after a time it began in various localities to express itself at the elections of local and legislative tickets. Then a state organization was formed, which assumed to encourage political action of this sort. Thus a loosely organized political movement came into being. It did not seek to become a separate political party, but it drew to itself members of both parties without disturbing old affiliations. The legislature which met at the beginning of 1854 had several members who were under pledges to this movement as a result of its political efforts. Upon their initiative and with the approval of Senator Seward, the Whigs of the legislature joined in framing a prohibitory liquor law. The law itself was killed by the Democratic governor, but the Whig leaders had won the favor of the organized temperance vote by their action and had paved the way for the absorption of the temperance issue by the Whig organization should it be deemed desirable. Encouraged by their experience, the leaders of the temperance movement were preparing in the summer of 1854 to nominate a state ticket for the fall elec-

tion. The issue of temperance, thus brought fairly into state politics by the Whigs, tended to cut across party lines. There were thousands of voters whose fealty to party names would be broken by their liking or dislike for a prohibitory law. This issue had therefore a tendency to break down old lines.

The anti-slavery issue had found expression in state politics long before 1854, but events had so relegated it to the background that it was, at the beginning of 1854, hardly to be regarded as a great issue. In its abolition phase it was the tenet of the little group which called itself the Liberty Party, and in its free-soil phase it was the chief theory of the larger group of the Free Democrats, but in its anti-expansion phase it had been out of politics since the compromise of 1850. Early in 1854 the congressional contest over the Nebraska Bill revived the issue of opposition to slavery expansion. In various portions of New York state public meetings were held to arouse sentiment. Senator Seward was a vigorous opponent of the Nebraska Bill, and very early it was noticeable that his political friends in New York were aiding to make anti-slavery an issue in politics.<sup>1</sup> By the summer of 1854 the anti-Nebraska general committee of New York city was engaged in organizing local committees in the interior counties, and the work was taking definite form as an organized political movement, drawing strength from both the older parties, but directed very largely by the Seward Whigs. This issue cut across old party lines far more strongly than the temperance issue was doing.<sup>2</sup> Among politicians of the Whig Party the Seward men were anti-slavery, while the Silver-Grays tended toward views more friendly to the South. Among Democratic politicians the Soft-Shells, who held federal patronage, followed the lead of President Pierce in favoring the South, while the Hard-Shells stood uncertainly aloof in contrast. Among the voters the issue found supporters and opponents in every faction. The more earnest ones inclined to ally

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1854, April 13, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Post*, 1854, June 26, p. 2.

themselves with the so-called anti-Nebraska movement, and under the influence of this issue party fealties gave way.

The cohesion of the old parties was already being undermined by the temperance and anti-slavery issues when nativism came into the field. The re-organization of the Know-Nothing society in May, 1854, and the accession of James W. Barker to power were the conditions that brought the nativist issue to the front. In the earlier months of 1854 there had been branches of the secret order established in some of the Hudson River towns, but their purpose seems to have been local effort only. After the accession of Barker he appointed his district deputies for each county and systematically organized the expansion of the society. Councils at once began to multiply with extraordinary rapidity. On June 1st there were 91 councils in the state. By July 12th there were 152. By August 1st there were 201.<sup>1</sup> The secret of this success lay in the fact that the new movement received the hearty aid of the Silver-Gray politicians,<sup>2</sup> who saw in it a chance to fight Seward. Nativism looked with most unfriendly eye upon the great Whig leader. He was an open friend of the Irish element and of its ecclesiastical leaders. He had fought the nativist idea during the old American Republican movement of 1843-47, and had maintained consistently the same attitude toward it ever after. It was a certain fact that political nativism would be repudiated and crushed wherever the friends of Seward had the power. The factional opponents of Seward were right in their approval of the new movement as one likely to aid their ends. The Democratic Party in the interior counties was also affected by the secret movement, but far less than was the Whig Party. The Soft-Shell managers condemned nativism early in the summer,<sup>3</sup> before the Order had fairly begun its marvellous expansion, but were less outspoken later. The Hard-Shell managers were guardedly friendly, hoping to

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1855, May 22, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1854, August 30, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Post*, 1854, May 12, p. 3, September 20, p. 2; *Herald*, 1854, July 4, p. 2.

profit by the new movement. Politicians on all sides thus regulated their attitude toward nativism according to the way in which it seemed likely to help or hinder their factional interests. Like temperance and anti-slavery, it was an issue which worked against the coherence of the old parties.

Among the masses of the voters other considerations helped the Know-Nothing expansion.<sup>1</sup> Taking the interior counties as a whole there was no natural basis for a widespread nativist sentiment. Except in the towns along the line of the Erie canal, the foreign-born element was very small and not especially objectionable. In the canal towns the Irish element was more or less unpopular, and here there might be a genuine feeling of nativism, but in general the spread of the secret movement was not due to actual dislikes. It was the peculiar secret character of the Know-Nothing Order which proved a magnet to the country voters. The idea of secret politics was a novelty, and human nature was responsive to novelty. The mysterious manner of the Order's workings, the dramatic successes that it won, the patriotic professions that surrounded its efforts all combined to throw about the organization an irresistible attraction. The doctrine of nativism, too, was one about which there could be no great differences of opinion among native-born Protestants. There might be differences of opinion as to the expediency of forcing that doctrine to the front, but the abstract idea of protecting American institutions against "the insidious wiles of foreign influence" was beyond criticism. In this respect the nativist issue had an advantage over the issues of temperance and anti-slavery, both of which were open to opposing views as to their merits. There were also some less serious aspects of the nativist movement which appealed to voters. The American idea of humor was pleased by the chagrin which the secret order brought to the practiced politicians of the older parties. For years the average

<sup>1</sup> An editorial in *Times*, 1854, December 6, p. 4, is one of the fairest of the contemporary comments upon nativism and the causes of its expansion.

country voter had been subject to the management of local cliques or leaders, and had been forced to bear the restraints of party discipline. Now, silently, the bonds were broken. Before the mysterious potency of council caucus the plans of the old managers were shattered. As time went on the local elections throughout the state gave opportunity for the councils to use their influence. To the average voter there was a delightful humor in the situation when the local managers, after days of patient work in caucus and convention, found all their plans frustrated by the sudden appearance of some ticket which had not been heard of until the morning of election day. To many the Know-Nothing movement was a huge joke upon the community, harmless because thoroughly American, and useful because it broke up old cliques and promised the voter greater share in making nominations. With the aid of men who opposed the Seward leadership the Know-Nothing Order easily found a footing in many of the counties. Its councils easily picked officers from among men who had been drilled in secret work by the presence of other secret societies in the smaller towns. Under competent directors the secret assemblies, sitting mysteriously in secluded halls or lodge rooms, in stores, offices, barns or wherever else secrecy required, gathered the voters by thousands into secret conclaves. The growth of the movement went forward without fluctuation or reverse.

In the first weeks of the campaign of 1854 the situation in state politics was confused. The fact that old parties were divided and weakened, the fact that new movements were organized for aggressive work, the fact that the fate of party tickets must depend upon concessions and combinations, all tended to obscure the future course of politics. On every hand the political workers and the party press waited with guarded utterance to see how events would shape themselves. Each party and each movement had declared for state conventions. At these conventions, presumably, the combinations would

gradually reveal themselves. On July 12th the first one of this series of conventions, that of the Hard-Shell Democracy, was held, but its managers adopted a non-committal policy that did not clarify the political situation. As to temperance and nativism the platform was silent.<sup>1</sup> As to anti-slavery, it was evasive. The state ticket named by the convention was one whose members were not committed in favor of or in opposition to the new issues that had come up. The convention left the Hard-Shell organization as devoid of official principles after as before it met. The half-party was playing a waiting game. Its nominees were practically free to adopt any principles which later expediency might suggest. On August 16th the anti-slavery movement was represented by the Anti-Nebraska convention, which met, debated and adjourned to a later date without naming a ticket. The proceedings of this session partially revealed the policy of the movement. The leaders contemplated naming a ticket upon which the anti-expansion and free-soil phases of anti-slavery could be united.<sup>2</sup> The movement was intended to draw support from both the national parties, and to disregard old party lines, but the prominence of Seward Whigs in the convention made it reasonably certain that the movement would eventually aid the political plans of Senator Seward. On September 7th the convention of the Soft-Shell Democracy followed. It stood definitely and plainly in opposition to the three issues.<sup>3</sup> By its disapproval of the temperance issue the half-party assured the favor of all who opposed restrictive legislation. By its disapproval of nativism it reassured the Irish vote. By its pro-slavery attitude it expressed faithfulness to President Pierce.

All eyes now turned to the Whig convention, which was to meet on September 20th. The adoption of nativism by the Silver-Gray faction was recognized, and it was understood that

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1854, July 13, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune*, 1854, August 17, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Tribune*, 1854, September 8, p. 5.



if the Know-Nothings could capture the Whig convention they would deal a blow to Seward's plans. The antipathy between Seward and the nativists was well known. Seward had on July 12th taken pains to denounce nativism in remarks made by him in the United States Senate. On the other side, the nativist leaders frankly denounced Seward as a demagogue who truckled to foreign influence for his own ends. "If there is anything dear to the hearts of the Know-Nothings," said one paper, after discussing the Seward clique, "it is to write the political epitaphs of the noted political leaders to whom we have alluded." The Whig state convention was to be the pivotal point of the campaign. If the Know-Nothings and their allies could control the convention, then Seward must accept defeat or else make a new party based on his anti-slavery movement. If the Know-Nothings should lose the convention then they must accept defeat or else seek new combinations. This latter emergency was supposed to be the one for which the Hard-Shell Democracy was waiting, and for which its leaders had held themselves non-committal on nativism.<sup>1</sup> The press discussed a possible coalition of Know-Nothings, Hard-Shell Democrats, and Silver-Gray Whigs to defeat Seward. The very suggestion of such a union showed strikingly how the old ideas of party fealty had broken down. It was a time of transition, in which parties were re arranging themselves. In the fore part of September the party delegates to the coming convention were elected throughout the state. Many of them were Know-Nothings, but at this point it became known that the rapid growth of the secret order had carried into its councils a considerable element of Seward Whigs who were not disposed to array themselves against that leader. When the returns came in from the district conventions it was found that although many Know-Nothings were among the delegates yet the convention would stand two to one in favor of Seward's

<sup>1</sup> *Buffalo Commercial*, quoted in *Tribune*, 1854, August 31, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, 1854, August 26, p. 4; *Tribune*, 1854, August 19, p. 5.

plans. It was probably in the short interval between the election of delegates and the meeting of the convention that the Know-Nothing managers in New York city decided to run a state ticket independent of all other parties. The Whig convention met at Syracuse on September 20th. The Know-Nothing forces went there unorganized. There seems, in fact, to have been no intention of making any serious opposition to the Seward interest. On the evening before the session began a caucus was held by the out-and-out Know-Nothings.<sup>1</sup> There were only twenty-three of them, all from New York and adjacent counties. They failed to agree upon a nominee, and adjourned with the understanding that after the first ballot they should unite upon whatever member of the Order should have received the highest vote on the first ballot. Next day the convention organized and proceeded to vote on a nomination for governor. The Seward managers put forward Myron H. Clark, of Ontario, a member of the state senate, a supporter of Seward, a member of the Know-Nothing Order, an advocate of temperance and a friend of anti-slavery. Clark's candidacy met general favor. On the first formal ballot his name led the list, whereupon the nativist delegates fell into the current of the hour and helped his nomination. For lieutenant-governor the convention nominated Henry J. Raymond, of the *New York Times*, whose paper had steadily favored nativism in New York city. The platform omitted all reference either to nativism or to temperance.<sup>2</sup> The Whig convention adjourned after a most peaceful session. The political combination of Silver-Grays and Barker Know-Nothings had lost every point. At the same time the platform by mere silence made distinct concessions to nativist sentiment. It looked as if the unexpected might take place, as if the Seward clique and the Barker clique might find themselves working side by side to make Clark's election sure. It was certainly no more marvelous for the Know-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1854, September 20, p. 1; 1855, May 22, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune*, 1854, September 21, p. 1.

Nothing Order to support a Seward man than for the Seward men to support a Know-Nothing.

The effect of Seward's concessions to nativist sentiment was to keep on his side those Know-Nothings who had been friendly to him before, but not to change appreciably the attitude of his old opponents, the Silver-Grays, now become Know-Nothings. The machinery of the secret order was in control of the anti-Seward element, and not long after the Whig convention the call went out for a special session of the Grand Council at New York city on October 4th. Under the directions of Grand President Barker the district deputies of the Order were very busy during the month of September. Up to August 18th there had been 201 councils established. During the following weeks the efforts of the deputies raised the total, until by October 4th there had been no less than 563 bodies organized.<sup>1</sup> Many of the new councils had naturally very few members. Nine men were sufficient under the law of the Order to constitute a council. Each one, whatever its membership, was entitled to its three representatives in Grand Council, and could cast as large a vote there as the older bodies with their hundreds of members. There is a possibility that this rapid growth of the Order was a natural one, but the opponents of the Barker clique ever afterward insisted that it was a device to pack the Grand Council for certain purposes. They pointed out that Barker selected the district deputies of the Order; that the district deputies selected the nine men who made up each new council; that five black-balls could defeat the admission of any who were against Barker, and that the council so nicely packed could send three delegates to the Grand Council to aid Barker's plans. These facts were all true, but the inference was unproven. There were certainly plans on foot before the Grand Council met, however, which contemplated a departure from the usual custom of endorsing nominees of the regular parties and proposed instead a sepa-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1855, May 22, p. 2.

rate nativist state ticket. Of this the proof is a report made in the Executive Convention of the O. U. A. on October 2d, which stated that a committee had been working for that purpose.<sup>1</sup> It may be mentioned that Barker, Ullman and others of the nativist leaders in New York city were members of Washington Chapter, No. 2, the largest, wealthiest and most influential of the O. U. A. bodies. To the general public this plan was not known. Men looked to see the Grand Council endorse for governor either Clark, the Whig nominee, or Bronson, the Hard-Shell nominee. Thus far the plans of Seward were most successful. The nomination of Clark by the Whig state convention had been seconded by the Temperance state convention, by the Anti-Nebraska state convention and by the Free Democratic state convention. Clark was the head of a coalition made up of the Whig Party and of two organized movements, and he was also a Know-Nothing himself, yet his election was doubtful if the secret order declared against him. Bronson, the nominee of the Hard-Shell Democracy, was credited with a desire for Know-Nothing support, which would put him into office, and with a willingness to pledge himself to secure that support. So, to the public, it looked like a choice between Clark and Bronson.

The Grand Council met on October 4th at Odd Fellows' Hall, in New York city. The first day and part of the second were taken up by the usual routine of organizing the grand body of a secret order. Credentials were received and doubtful claims decided. It was at this time that the existence of illegal councils began to be noticed. As a rule, they seem to have owed their existence to secessions from regular councils, or to informalities in their erection. The most notable case of this sort was the council at Canandaigua, in which Myron H. Clark held membership. This council was declared illegal, on the ground that its members had received the secrets of the Order from persons not authorized to give them, and that it de-

<sup>1</sup> Executive Records of O. U. A.

sired recognition merely in order to advance the ends of political demagogues.<sup>1</sup> The declaration against the local council at Canandaigua had its real significance in the fact that it did away with all claims that Clark, as a member of the Order, was entitled to its support. After the roll was purged there were found to be 515 legitimate living councils. Had the Grand Council membership been full there would have been 1545 delegates. The actual attendance was 953 delegates, representing 469 councils. From the reports made by the members the strength of the Order at date was officially estimated at 73,860 men. As soon as the roll of delegates had been completed a committee was appointed to draft an address. Then the Council passed to matters political. First a resolution was offered to take no action on the matter of a state ticket. The suggestion was promptly voted down. Then came a resolution to form a separate state ticket, and this started a tumult which turned the Grand Council into pandemonium. Those who had expected the Grand Council calmly to assume the position of arbiter in state politics now saw that the leaders of the Order had determined upon quite a different course and were supported in their policy by a powerful element. An acrimonious and excited debate followed. Those who opposed a separate ticket were the Seward Whigs, who hoped for an endorsement of Clark; the Hard-Shell Democrats, who hoped for an endorsement of Bronson; and the conservative nativists of all factions, who did not wish the Order to develop into an independent party. Those who desired a separate ticket were the Soft-Shell Democrats and the Silver-Gray Whigs, both of whom feared the bias of the Council in favor of Clark. The vote of the Council carried the resolution in favor of a separate ticket, whereupon nearly one-half of the delegates refused to take further share in the Council business and withdrew. After their departure matters went

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1854, September 27, p. 1; October 27, p. 1; *Courier-Enquirer*, 1854, October 21, p. 2.

on more smoothly. A vote was at once taken on the nomination for governor, and Daniel Ullman, having received 256 votes out of 514 and having a plurality, was declared the choice of the Order. Ullman was present and promptly accepted the nomination. This closed the second day's session. On the third day the Grand Council named three other nominees for the state ticket and then adjourned.<sup>1</sup> At some time during the three 'days' session a resolution was passed, evidently suggested by the fact of opposition to the new ticket and intended to counteract that opposition :

*Resolved*, That the clause contained in the second-degree obligation, which reads as follows, "And that you will vote in all political matters for all political offices for second-degree members of the Order, providing it shall be necessary for the American interest," requires every member of this Order to vote for candidates for charter and all other offices endorsed or put in nomination by the council of the ward or district for which such officers are to be elected, and every person violating this resolution shall be expelled from the Order.

This resolution<sup>2</sup> was the first of the disciplinary laws which were enacted from time to time to stifle opposition to the central power. In a secret society the most effective way of disciplining a member is upon charges alleging a violation of the solemn pledge that the member has made to his brethren. Under the second-degree oath the member did not give up the right of private judgment as to the use of his vote, but this resolution interpreted that right away from him. The resolution was framed to permit the exercise of discipline over bolters. Its adoption shows interestingly how the Barker clique was grasping at power.

The ticket nominated by the Grand Council was a thoroughly respectable one, neither weak nor strong. The names which received a place on it were as follows :

<sup>1</sup> For details of Council session in addition to daily news reports : *Herald*, 1854, October 31, p. 1 ; *Times*, 1854, October 10, p. 2 ; October 23, p. 1 ; November 2, p. 4 ; 1855, May 22, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Text in *Times*, 1854, October 23, p. 4.



Governor . . . . . Daniel Ullman of New York.  
Lieut.-Governor . . . . . Gustavus A. Scroggs of Erie.  
Canal Commis'r . . . . . Josiah B. Williams of Tompkins.  
Prison Inspector . . . . . James P. Saunders of Westchester.

These nominees were selected to represent each one of the four factions of the older parties. Daniel Ullman was the best known man of the four. He was a New York attorney and a leader among the Silver-Gray Whigs. He had never held any important office, but had been high in party councils and had once been the Whig nominee for attorney-general. Of his capabilities for the chief place in the state government no denial was made by his opponents. Gustavus A. Scroggs was a Buffalo man and a Hard-Shell Democrat. Though scarcely known outside of his own county he was at home very popular as a local politician and as an officer in the state militia. His selection was made as a recognition of the western counties, where much of the Know-Nothing strength lay. Josiah B. Williams, nominee for the canal office, was a local capitalist of Ithaca and a state senator. He was a well-known Seward Whig, with a wide acquaintance in the southern tier of counties, but he had never posed as a representative of nativism. Williams held his nomination under advisement for some time, and then declined it about two weeks before election.<sup>1</sup> The Know-Nothing managers then put in his place the name of Clark Burnham, of Sherburne, the regular nominee of the Hard-Shell Democracy. The insufficient time given did not permit the change to be widely known, however, and at the polls the Know-Nothing vote was divided between Williams and Burnham. The fourth man on the ticket, James P. Saunders, of Peekskill, was a nativist leader in the southeastern counties, but without a state reputation. He had many friends in the secret orders, and was put on the ticket for the additional reason that he represented the Soft-Shell Democracy. Political state conventions in forming tickets usually framed platforms on which

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1854, October 30, p. 5.

the tickets were to run. The Grand Council was not a convention in form and it made no platform, but it accomplished much the same thing in the adoption of an address to be read in the subordinate councils. This address<sup>1</sup> was drawn up by a special committee and submitted to the Grand Council for approval much as a political platform might have been. It was a wordy piece of rhetoric, embellished with fragments of patriotic verse and containing in its whole length one issue only. This was the old issue of nativism, namely, opposition to the power of Romanism, which, according to the address, was seeking to divide the American people by encouraging party strife, in order that, having divided them, it might destroy their cherished institutions. Nothing was said about opposition to foreigners on the mere score of foreign birth.

With the adjournment of the Grand Council the managers of the nativist campaign took up the work of the hour. It would seem that there must have been some sort of executive committee of the Order, but contemporary accounts have no reference to one. On October 11th the Executive Convention of the O. U. A. endorsed the Know-Nothing ticket and the executive committee of the O. U. A. extended its aid to the movement. The first great problem of the campaign was that of quelling the disaffection which had followed the action of the Grand Council. The delegates who had left the Council, angry at the nomination of Ullman, spread over the state stories of unfair action by the grand officers, of illegality and conspiracy in connection with the nominations. Here and there in the state letters came out in the press describing the Council session and scoring the alleged conspiracy of the Barker clique. This was the beginning of the break-down of the secrecy which had hitherto surrounded the work of the Order. Within a few days after the October Grand Council a meeting of disaffected Know-Nothings took place at Utica. A committee was there appointed to correspond with discon-

<sup>1</sup> Text in *Herald*, 1854, October 31, p. 1.



tented councils and to organize a secession movement, with the object of forming a new Grand Council with the Barker clique left out.<sup>1</sup> The committee began work at once and met encouragement. To meet the accusations made against them the grand officers now issued a formal circular<sup>2</sup> on October 17th, in which they officially denied all charges of unfairness or illegality in connection with the nominations. To these denials were added an appeal for campaign funds and a confirmation of Ullman's native birth. This official circular went to all councils, and, backed by the efforts of the friends of the ticket, did much to allay the discontent. The reference in the circular to Ullman's birth was called out by an attack on the ticket, charging that Ullman was not American-born. The story originated in Jefferson county, and swiftly spread over the state.<sup>3</sup> It related that Ullman was the child of German Jewish parents and was born in Calcutta; that as a school-boy in Jefferson county he could speak English only brokenly, and that as a student at Harvard he was accustomed to pose as a native of India. The intent of the story was to show that the Know-Nothings had made themselves supremely ridiculous by choosing a foreign-born person as their representative. Ullman's own answer to the tale was a denial and the production of affidavits showing that he was a native of Delaware. In spite of all denials, the story and the gibe went the rounds all through the campaign, and the political nickname of Hindoos was fastened upon that branch of the Order which adhered to the Barker clique and its ticket. On October 26th the efforts of the Utica secessionists culminated in a convention of the discontented elements at Utica, which organized itself as a rival Grand Council.<sup>4</sup> It passed resolutions declaring its op-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1854, October 10, p. 1.      <sup>2</sup> Text in *Tribune*, 1854, October 25, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Tribune*, 1854, October 13, p. 4; *Times*, 1854, October 17, p. 4; October 19, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Official report of meeting in *Herald*, 1854, November 4, p. 1. Full text of its new constitution and ritual in *Herald*, 1855, January 10, p. 2.

position to persons of foreign birth or Catholic faith. It elected grand officers, framed a new constitution, issued a formal address of justification and adjourned to another session in January. The leaders of the split declared themselves opposed to the making of separate nativist tickets, but thoroughly in favor of the nativist ideas. The following officers of the Grand Council were to hold until the annual meeting in January: State President, Alfred Cobb, of Syracuse; State Vice-President, Alexander Coburn, of Utica; State Treasurer, John F. Severance, of Walworth; State Secretary, Benjamin F. Romaine, of Albany. There were probably not over thirty councils engaged in this movement,<sup>1</sup> and little notice was given it except by the Seward Whig press.

The great mass of the secret order upheld the regular organization, and the work of recruiting members went on ceaselessly. The Know-Nothing political work differed strikingly from the usual party methods in its disregard of newspaper aid. The secret movement had no organs authorized to represent it. There were perhaps a dozen papers in the state which favored the Ullman ticket for political reasons, but the Order relied for success upon its own efforts, that is to say, upon the literature that it printed and distributed, upon the speakers that it sent over the state and upon the ceaseless energy of the second-degree members. The Order spared no efforts to diminish the popularity of Senator Seward, for if it was to meet defeat it would be by the Seward forces. The most bitter enemies of nativism, therefore, were the Seward Whig newspapers, which eloquently denounced the wickedness of secrecy and proscription as features of political effort. The Democratic press of the state was far more courteous, recognizing in nativism a force that might aid Democratic ends by the overthrow of the Whig leader. At last, the coming of November brought the campaign to an end. When the results were

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1854, December 20, p. 1.

finally known by the official canvass it was found that the strength of the tickets was as follows:<sup>1</sup>

Clark-Raymond ticket:

Whig Party (Woolly-Heads) . . . . .	} 155,200 votes.
Temperance movement (Temperance men) . . . . .	
Anti-slavery movement (Anti-Nebraska men) . . . . .	
Agrarian movement (Anti-Renters) . . . . .	

Seymour-Ludlow ticket:

Democratic Party (Soft-Shells) . . . . .	133,800 votes.
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Ullman-Scroggs ticket:

Nativist movement (Know-Nothings) . . . . .	} 122,000 votes.
Unorganized Whigs (Silver.Grays) . . . . .	

Bronson-Ford ticket:

Democratic Party (Hard-Shells) . . . . .	44,000 votes.
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Clark-Wood ticket:

Anti-slavery movement (Free Democrats) . . . . .	} 8,300 votes.
Anti-slavery movement (Republicans) . . . . .	

Goodel-Ward ticket:

Anti-slavery movement (Liberty Party) . . . . .	300 votes.
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The vote cast for the Ullman ticket did not represent exactly the membership of the Order. A percentage of the members refused to be bound by the action of the Grand Council and voted the regular Whig ticket. At the same time the Ullman ticket received a heavy vote from outside its ranks. In New York city the Protestant Irish supported it. In Albany the colored voters cast nativist ballots. When the polls closed on election night the excitement throughout the state was intense. So chaotic was the situation that none could guess how the result would stand. The earliest returns came from the cities and villages, and favored the nativist ticket so much that for two or three days it was believed that Ullman's election was accomplished. Then the returns from the rural sections began to arrive. Here the temperance issue had swayed voters more than nativism, and the votes for Clark and Seymour mounted. In the eastern part of the state Seymour had a decided lead, and as Ullman's prestige faded the success

<sup>1</sup> Official canvass in *Times*, 1854, December 21, p. 6.

of Seymour was applauded. Finally, eleven days after election, the vote of the western counties came in, and it was seen that Clark had an apparent plurality so small that nothing would be certain till the state canvassers did their work. When the state board finally passed on the returns, it declared the election of Clark by a plurality of only 309 votes. The Know-Nothing attempt to defeat Seward's nominee had failed. In spite of this failure the remarkable success that had increased the political strength of the nativist movement from 4,000 votes in 1853 to 122,000 in 1854 gave it new prestige, and the loss of the state did not check the rise of the secret order. The returns of the state showed that one-third of the Know-Nothing vote lay in the counties of the southeast, where nativist sentiment was real, and another third in the westernmost counties, where the Fillmore influence had been thrown in its favor. The remainder was scattered. Following is the Ullman vote by counties, with his percentage of the total vote on governor:

	Per cent.	Vote.		Per cent.	Vote.
Albany . . . . .	32 . . .	4,775	Herkimer . . . . .	9 . . .	571
Alleghany . . . . .	37 . . .	2,620	Jefferson . . . . .	18 . . .	1,796
Broome . . . . .	20 . . .	1,170	Kings . . . . .	31 . . .	6,993
Cattaraugus . . . . .	51 . . .	3,243	Lewis . . . . .	4 . . .	151
Cayuga . . . . .	28 . . .	2,459	Livingston . . . . .	43 . . .	2,672
Chautauqua . . . . .	50 . . .	4,519	Madison . . . . .	4 . . .	277
Chemung . . . . .	38 . . .	1,613	Monroe . . . . .	30 . . .	3,516
Chenango . . . . .	11 . . .	801	Montgomery . . . . .	9 . . .	475
Clinton . . . . .	14 . . .	597	New York . . . . .	27 . . .	16,588
Columbia . . . . .	21 . . .	1,582	Niagara . . . . .	32 . . .	1,882
Cortland . . . . .	2 . . .	88	Oneida . . . . .	6 . . .	1,068
Delaware . . . . .	9 . . .	558	Onondaga . . . . .	24 . . .	3,064
Dutchess . . . . .	20 . . .	1,849	Ontario . . . . .	43 . . .	3,148
Erie . . . . .	50 . . .	7,712	Orange . . . . .	22 . . .	1,790
Essex . . . . .	12 . . .	493	Orleans . . . . .	45 . . .	1,985
Franklin . . . . .	5 . . .	179	Oswego . . . . .	13 . . .	1,335
Fulton-Hamilton . . . . .	10 . . .	442	Otsego . . . . .	7 . . .	652
Genesee . . . . .	46 . . .	2,360	Putnam . . . . .	34 . . .	638
Greene . . . . .	34 . . .	1,760	Queens . . . . .	27 . . .	1,294

Rensselaer . . . . .	28 . . .	3,077	Sullivan . . . . .	23 . . .	866
Richmond . . . . .	27 . . .	566	Tioga . . . . .	23 . . .	1,019
Rockland . . . . .	36 . . .	789	Tompkins . . . . .	25 . . .	1,406
St. Lawrence . . . . .	11 . . .	947	Ulster . . . . .	29 . . .	2,472
Saratoga . . . . .	21 . . .	1,733	Warren . . . . .	46 . . .	1,408
Schenectady . . . . .	17 . . .	525	Washington . . . . .	29 . . .	2,025
Schoharie . . . . .	18 . . .	1,138	Wayne . . . . .	21 . . .	1,516
Schuyler . . . . .	12 . . .	401	Westchester . . . . .	37 . . .	3,413
Seneca . . . . .	37 . . .	1,493	Wyoming . . . . .	20 . . .	981
Steuben . . . . .	50 . . .	5,001	Yates . . . . .	19 . . .	711
Suffolk . . . . .	41 . . .	2,080			

During the campaign little was said about the legislative seats which were to be filled by the election, but both the Seward men and the nativists worked over the field with some care. Both sides had a special interest in the next legislature because Seward would come before it as a candidate for reelection as United States Senator. The election returns showed that the greater part of the members would be Whigs, but as to how many would favor Seward no one could tell. When the Know-Nothing Grand Council met in New York city in its regular quarterly session on November 14th, its business was partly to organize Seward's defeat in the legislature, as well as to improve the political machinery of the Order as applicable to the work of a state campaign.<sup>1</sup> The outcry made against the Barker clique just before the state election had served one purpose in showing the objectionable features of too thoroughly centralized power in election work. There had been no use of the representative system in the executive work of the state campaign. To obviate that objection the Grand Council now created a state committee, consisting of four members from each one of the eight judicial districts of the state. This is interesting as the first step of an evolution which would ultimately reduce the Order to a likeness with the customary forms of political parties. In its time

<sup>1</sup> Official report of session in *Times*, 1854, December 4, p. 1; *Herald*, 1854, December 6, p. 1.

this first step was clearly a concession to the feeling that had grown up against centralized power. The members of the new state committee were as follows:

Joseph S. Taylor, Chauncey Schaffer, William Stokely and Joseph Souder, all of New York, Samuel H. Townsend of Suffolk, Luther Colwell of Rockland, William Taylor of Westchester, William B. Cozzens of Orange, H. Q. Lansing of Albany, H. M. Wetherbee of Columbia, J. T. Hendricks of Ulster, S. W. Brittan of Rensselaer, Stephen Sammons of Montgomery, Martin Myers of Schenectady, William A. Russell of Washington, E. K. Husted of Saratoga, Randolph Barnes of Jefferson, J. Ostrander of Herkimer, J. D. Miller of Oswego, William S. Palmer of Onondaga, W. T. Huntington of Tompkins, James Wright of Tioga, T. C. Grannis of Chenango, John Palen of Delaware, Samuel J. Crook of Livingston, H. F. Hatch of Monroe, J. R. Stearns of Cayuga, Stephen V. R. Mallory of Ontario, Erasmus D. Rodman of Erie, Philip S. Cottle of Chautauqua, Alexis Ward of Orleans, A. Stearns of Genesee.

Another piece of legislation by the Grand Council was the creation of "the test" which elaborated the discipline of the secret system. This was a formal and summary proceeding to discover and punish political treason. It consisted in calling any person before the body in which he held membership and requiring him to reply with uplifted hand to such questions as might be put to him regarding his vote. Its general object was to purge the Order of malcontents and uncertain voters, for the answers given under the test were suitable basis for a vote of expulsion. With the resolutions which created the test were others which prescribed its use. The officers of the Grand Council were to test each delegate and the Council was to expel such members as did not rightly answer. This would purify the governing body of the Order. The tested delegates were then to return to their several councils and make inquiry as to whether the district-deputies had worked

for the Ullman ticket. Such deputies as had not done so were to be reported to the grand-president, who was at once to remove them and make new appointments. Each district-deputy was then to visit the several councils in his care and to make inquiry as to how each council had acted, reporting all objectionable ones to the grand-president, who would at once revoke their charters and dissolve them. This would purge the executive system. In each council in the state any member might be expelled if self-convicted by the test. This sweeping inquest, which reached into every council and touched every member of the secret order, is an interesting hint of the perfection to which the machinery of such a society could be brought. The test was at once put into effect upon the delegates in the Grand Council. Then the delegates went home to continue the work. Soon there were outbreaks of wrath and expostulation from councils which feared the operations of this new discipline. Know-Nothings in Brooklyn met to denounce the test formally and to spread broadcast the text of their protest.<sup>1</sup> The work was done, however, despite objections, and the Order gained strength by it. The nativist system was never more unified in discipline and control than now, when its managers prepared to throw their strength into the legislative contest over the choice of a United States senator.

The state legislature convened on January 3rd. By this time it was known that there were some forty-five members of the legislature who were members of either the Know-Nothing Order or the O. U. A. Could they be organized, the number was sufficient to defeat the hopes of Seward. With the opening of the legislative session, accordingly, Albany became the center of political intrigue and pressure in reference to the senatorship. The managers of the Know-Nothings relied much on the pledges which members had made to the secret orders. Instructions from Know-Nothing

<sup>1</sup> Text in *Tribune*, 1854, December 7, p. 7.

councils and O. U. A. chapters, all leveled against Seward, poured in upon those legislators who held secret affiliations.<sup>1</sup> There was also a lobby against Seward. The November session of the Grand Council had recommended that the councils in each assembly district should unite in sending an agent to Albany. The duties of such agent were not defined by the Council, but it was understood that he was to organize all possible pressure upon the assemblyman over whom he watched. Probably such an elaborate lobby never existed before or since in New York state. Moral suasion also had its place in the Know-Nothing schemes. Under the title of "*Stanhope Burleigh*," a novel had been written by C. Edwards Lester<sup>2</sup> under the pseudonym of Helen Dhu. Among its characters were recognizable the personalities of Seward, Weed, Greeley, Hughes and other enemies of nativism. Intermingled with the love story of the heroine the novel told under its fictitious names how the ambitious Whig leaders had bartered their loyalty to American institutions for Catholic votes, and how the Catholic conquest of America was to follow. A copy of this novel was sent to each legislator to influence his vote.<sup>3</sup> In addition to these influences there was the preaching of the *Albany State Register*, which had been adopted as the new state organ of the secret order, by the new state committee on December 30th.<sup>4</sup>

On the part of the Seward men there was no lack of effort. Rumor declared Thurlow Weed to be the master-mind of the Seward forces. If the Know-Nothings had aroused comment by their unusual methods, their opponents were not less interesting, for one of the factors brought in by them to aid the election of Seward was the secret nativist order of the

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1855, February 7, p. 5; February 9, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune*, 1855, March 3, p. 4; June 18, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Herald*, 1855, January 29, p. 4; February 5, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Tribune*, 1855, January 20, p. 4.



Utica Know-Nothings. The Utica secessionists who had revolted against the Barker clique had abated not a jot from the anti-foreign and anti-Catholic principles of the mother-order. Yet in January, 1855, the delegates to the secessionist Grand Council were found in Albany as lobbyist friends of the anti-nativist and pro-Catholic Whig leader. The Grand Council had been called to meet on January 10th at Schenectady, a place selected, many thought, because of its nearness to the state capital. There were about 125 delegates on hand, representing some fifty councils. The grand body passed a series of resolutions declaring for temperance, nativism and anti-slavery, and then adjourned, while its members hastened to Albany.<sup>1</sup> The Seward men nursed this branch of nativism in order, apparently, to make prominent the fact that not all Know-Nothings were opposed to Seward. Another factor in the senatorial contest was the temperance question. The fate of a prohibitory law lay in the hands of the Seward clique, and although the Know-Nothings strove for the favor of the temperance legislators the Whig clique had the advantage.

All through the month of January the work of intrigue went on. During the weeks of waiting the skill of Seward's friends detached one after another from the mass of opposition. Finally, by a fusion of Seward men, Silver-Grays, Democrats and nativists they had a clean majority in joint session. Then the contest was precipitated. In the legislative caucus held to nominate, so large a vote was cast for Seward that the nativist opposition gave up the fight at once. On February 6th the formal election took place. Seward received eighty-five votes, four more than a clear majority. The Know-Nothings had been out-generaled. Seward's success was a bitter experience for the nativists, the more so because there had been some premature boasting over his expected over-

<sup>1</sup> For this session: *Herald*, 1855, January 10, pp. 2, 4; *Times*, 1855, January 11, p. 8, January 30, p. 1.

throw. The anger of defeat blazed up a little here and there and then died down, biding its time. Twelve Know-Nothings had voted for Seward in the legislature and thirty-seven of his supporters were said to have been under nativist pledges.<sup>1</sup> Some of these were expelled from the secret bodies to which they belonged and others were merely made uncomfortable. But whatever vengeance might be wreaked upon his friends, Seward was safe for six years more.

<sup>1</sup> Names given in *Herald*, 1855, February 6, p. 4.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE INTRUSION OF THE SLAVERY ISSUE, 1854-1855

WHILE the Know-Nothing Order in New York state was battling with Seward for supremacy, a new and alluring prospect was opening to the ambitions of the Order. All over the nation the new nativist movement had been greedily seized upon by political leaders whose purposes seemed likely to be subserved by it, and all over the nation, too, the voters had been charmed by the patriotism and the mystery of the society. From Maine to California, north, east, south and west, the federated secret councils were grasping power and looking forward to greater conquests. Already boasts were heard that the votes of the Order would make a president in 1856. The national leaders of the older parties stood aghast at the rising tide which threatened to sweep away both them and the old issues that they represented. Another national political issue, however, was also struggling for position. Anti-slavery feeling, inflamed by the Nebraska struggle of 1854 and aggravated by the border troubles in Kansas, was also being seized upon by practiced politicians and moulded for political purposes. In the North a bitter and aggressive anti-slavery movement based itself on moral sentiment and sectional jealousy. In the South a bitter and aggressive pro-slavery sentiment based itself on the Southern fear of social and industrial revolution. Both north and south a large conservative element sought for escape from this issue. Until the fall of 1854 anti-slavery and nativism had been neither friendly nor antagonistic. In some states, as in New York, circumstances might put anti-slavery leaders and nativist

leaders in opposing camps, but in others, as in Massachusetts, the reverse might be true. The two issues were so distinct in character that they naturally stood unrelated.

Such was their actual position when the National Council of the secret order met on November 15, 1854, at Cincinnati, to legislate for the society. The business of the session was the revision of the secret ritual, but at the same time politics were to be informally prominent.<sup>1</sup> It was plain that the older parties were now breaking into fragments and that the nativist movement was heir-apparent to their power. Presidential possibilities were asking for recognition thus early, and foresighted leaders in the Order were bent on paving the way for its control of the national government. If the plans of the leaders were to succeed the Order must wield influence in both North and South. This was the source of nativist hostility toward anti-slavery, for the latter issue was above all things sectional and disruptive. If the nativist policy were tainted with anti-slavery the Order could not hope to carry a single Southern state nor to control the Union. Of the inside history of the Cincinnati Council session very little news came to the outer world. It was learned in a general way that the Council carried out a revision of the secret ritual, including the oaths of the three degrees. It was reported that the delegates devoted some of their time to talking over the merits of presidential possibilities. It was rumored that the Southern members demanded some action that would secure the Order from the control of the anti-slavery men and that they were gratified. Much more than this was learned, however, after the Council had adjourned and its work had been reported to the state councils for referendum vote. The facts came out in a bitter wail from the anti-slavery element, protesting against the new oath of the third degree. The new oath, in form, merely affected to condemn a disruption of the nation, and to this idea no good

<sup>1</sup> On this session see *Herald*, 1854, November 16, p. 1; November 25, p. 7; December 20, p. 1; December 28, p. 1.

American could object. The sting of it lay in the fact that it gave the conservative element and the pro-slavery men a means of suppressing the anti-slavery idea by using the discipline of the Order against its advocates. It is worth the while, at this point, to give the Know-Nothing oaths in full. Several versions of oaths, purporting to be those of the secret order, were published by the hostile press during the period of Know-Nothing activity, but the only ones which seem clearly authentic are those which date from the Cincinnati revision.<sup>1</sup> The oath of the first degree, taken by all members of the Order, was administered as follows :

In the presence of Almighty God and these witnesses you do solemnly promise and swear that you will never betray any of the secrets of this society, nor communicate them even to proper candidates, except within a lawful council of the Order; that you will never permit any of the secrets of this society to be written, or in any other manner to be made legible except for the purpose of official instruction; that you will not vote nor give your influence for any man for any office in the gift of the People, unless he be an American-born citizen, in favor of Americans ruling America, nor if he be a Roman Catholic; that you will in all political matters, so far as this Order is concerned, comply with the will of the majority, though it may conflict with your personal preference, so long as it does not conflict with the Constitution of the United States of America or that of the state in which you reside; that you will not, under any circumstances whatever, knowingly recommend an unworthy person for initiation, nor suffer it to be done if in your power to prevent it; that you will not under any circumstances expose the name of any member of this Order, nor reveal the existence of such an association; that you will answer an imperative notice issued by the proper authority, obey the command of the state-council president or his deputy while assembled by such notice, and respond to the claim of a sign or a cry of the Order, unless it be physically impossible; and that you will acknowledge the State Council of . . . . as the legislative head, the ruling authority and the supreme tribunal of the Order in the state of . . . acting under the jurisdiction of the National Council of the United

<sup>1</sup> A set of oaths said to have been used in Virginia in 1854 may possibly be those actually used by the Order before the Cincinnati ritual. They are given in *Tribune*, 1854, August 10, p. 6, and *Herald*, 1854, August 12, p. 3. The Cincinnati oaths as used in Pennsylvania are given in *Times*, 1855, April 30, p. 2. Those of the 1st and 2d degrees are also reported from Warsaw, N. Y., in *Tribune*, 1855, April 17, p. 5. That of the 3rd degree is also reported from Ohio in *Times*, 1855, June 9.

States of North America, binding yourself in the penalty of excommunication from the Order, the forfeiture of all intercourse with its members, and being denounced in all the societies of the same as a willful traitor to your God and to your country.

The assent to the obligation of the first degree was made in these words: "All this I voluntarily and sincerely promise, with a full understanding of the solemn sanctions and penalties." The first-degree oath was designed merely to control the voting citizen. The second-degree oath went further and bound the taker as to his policy if advanced to public office. It was administered as follows :

You and each of you of your own free will and accord, in the presence of Almighty God and these witnesses, your left hand resting on your right breast and your right hand extended to the flag of your country, do solemnly and sincerely swear that you will not under any circumstances disclose in any manner, nor suffer it to be done by others if in your power to prevent it, the name, signs, pass-words or other secrets of this degree, except in open council for the purpose of instruction; that you will in all things conform to all the rules and regulations of this Order, and to the constitution and by-laws of this or any other council to which you may be attached, so long as they do not conflict with the Constitution of the United States, nor that of the state in which you reside ; that you will under all circumstances, if in your power so to do, attend to all regular signs or summons that may be thrown or sent to you by a brother of this or any other degree of this Order; that you will support in all political matters, for all political offices, members of this Order in preference to other persons ; that if it may be done legally you will, when elected or appointed to any official station conferring on you the power to do so, remove all foreigners, aliens or Roman Catholics from office or place, and that you will in no case appoint such to any office or place in your gift. You do also promise and swear that this and all other obligations which you have previously taken in this Order shall ever be kept through life sacred and inviolate. All this you promise and declare as Americans to sustain and abide by, without any hesitation or mental reservation whatever. So help you God and keep you steadfast.

The third degree, after the Cincinnati Council, was often called the Union degree on account of the clauses added to it having reference to the Union. These were the innovations against which the anti-slavery men protested so vigorously. The oath was administered in the following words :

You and each of you, of your own free will and accord, in the presence of Almighty God and these witnesses, with your hands joined in token of that fraternal affection which should ever bind together the states of this Union--forming a ring in token of your determination that, so far as your efforts can avail, this Union

shall have no end—do solemnly and sincerely swear that you will not under any circumstances disclose in any manner, nor suffer it to be done by others if in your power to prevent it, the name, signs, pass-words or other secrets of this degree, except to those whom you may prove on trial to be brothers of the same degree, or in open council for the purpose of instruction; that you do hereby solemnly declare your devotion to the Union of these states; that in the discharge of your duties as American citizens, you will uphold, maintain and defend it; that you will discourage and denounce any and every attempt coming from any and every quarter which you believe to be designed or calculated to destroy or subvert it or to weaken its bonds, and that you will use your influence, as far as in your power, in endeavoring to procure an amicable and equitable adjustment of all political discontents or differences which may threaten its injury or overthrow. You do further promise and swear that you will not vote for any one to fill any office of honor or profit or trust of a political character, whom you know or believe to be in favor of a dissolution of the Union of these states, or who is endeavoring to produce that result; that you will vote for and support for all political offices Third or Union degree members of this Order in preference to all others; that if it may be done consistently with the constitution and laws of the land, you will when elected or appointed to any official station which may confer on you the power to do so, remove from office or place all persons whom you know or believe to be in favor of a dissolution of the Union, or who are endeavoring to produce that result; and that you will in no case appoint such persons to any political office or place whatever. All this you promise and swear upon your honor as American citizens and friends of the American Union, to sustain and abide by without any hesitation or mental reservation whatever. You also promise and swear that this and all other obligations which you have previously taken in this Order shall ever be kept sacred and inviolate. To all this you pledge your lives, your fortunes and your sacred honors. So help you God and keep you steadfast.

The action of the Order in throwing down the gauntlet to the anti-slavery men did not, at the moment, seem impolitic. Both north and south there were thousands of thinking men who saw danger in the slavery agitation and who would gladly have seen it buried under the weight of some less dangerous issue. It was this element that was eagerly and hopefully turning to nativism as an escape from an impending dilemma. The action of the National Council at Cincinnati was a bid for the support of the conservative element of the nation. In New York state the new oaths were very acceptable to the nativist managers because they added a point in the contest with Seward. The old-time nativist argument that Seward

should be defeated because he favored foreigners and Catholics was now reinforced by the new doctrine that he should be defeated as an enemy to the Union. Among the rank and file and lesser leaders there were some defections as a result of the action at Cincinnati, but not sufficient to be serious. Many who left the Order at this time in New York city attached themselves to kindred societies of nativism, more especially to the "Allen branch" of the Order and the American Star Order. The "Allen branch" was that portion of the Order which dated back to the split of 1852. When the dual order was consolidated in May, 1854, one of the ward councils in New York city refused to coalesce. It remained independent, organized itself as a Grand Council, and took up anew the work of expansion. Increased by new members and by withdrawals from the main society, the "Allen branch" in December, 1854, possessed 153 councils in New York and 30 in New Jersey.<sup>1</sup> The main branch of the Order always recognized a kinship with the smaller body, but it was the special boast of the latter that it maintained the original principles and methods of the organization. The American Star Order was the society of the "Wide-Awakes" founded by William Patten and prominent in the street-fights of New York city. Originally composed mainly of minors, it received an older element into its ranks during the latter part of 1854. The growth of these two societies in the metropolis was another sign of that disaffection toward the policy of the ruling clique which had already brought the Utica branch of the society into existence in the interior. The problem of managing political nativism was complicated by these secessions. The Cincinnati ritual, which was one of the causes of the changes, was nevertheless accepted and ratified by the Grand Council of the main body at a special session held in New York city in January.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1855, March 18, p. 2; *Herald*, 1854, December 20, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune*, 1855, January 11, p. 4.



The New York managers now faced the work of placing the Order in New York state upon the new political platform without further impairing its strength. At this particular time the senatorial contest was in full swing. Until February 6, 1855, the energies of the Order in New York were all directed toward the defeat of Seward, and the feeling which was aroused against the great exponent of anti-nativism and anti-slavery made it easy to consolidate the sentiment of the Order in favor of the policy embodied in the third degree. In spite of the numbers in New York city who went over to the lesser societies, the accessions of new members continued to increase the strength of the main body of the Know-Nothing organization. It is impossible to say whether or not this was due in any large measure to the influence of the Cincinnati ritual as a bid for the conservative support. Probably the splendid executive machinery of the Order is more entitled to the credit of the expansion. As the spring election of 1855 drew near the local Whig and Democratic leaders through the state tried to hold the usual party caucuses, but, if held at all, they proved in many cases to be the veriest farces. The organized nativists of the smaller towns manipulated the regular party caucuses to accommodate the plans of the secret Know-Nothing councils. Bitter feuds grew up within the local parties as a result of secret politics. Then, from the latter part of January onward, the interior cities and villages showed the phenomenon of local abandonment of the old Whig and Democratic systems. Voters ranged themselves in the local elections as Know-Nothings or Anti-Know-Nothings, and fought out the issue of secret politics at the polls. The results, reported in the daily press, showed the honors of success to be about equally divided. This rapid gain of strength in the interior of the state went on far into the spring months, but it was hardly matched by a corresponding increase in New York city, where the results of the recruiting system had about reached their limit by the spring months of 1855. But

in New York city, too, the Barker clique planned to increase Know-Nothing strength by capturing the American Star Order and using it as an adjunct to the greater organization.

Everything was favorable to nativism in New York state when the Grand Council met in annual session at Syracuse on February 13, 1855. The Order now included 960 councils and about 142,000 members. About 2,000 delegates, representing 910 councils, appeared at the Syracuse session.<sup>1</sup> On the first day the Council organized itself and imposed the test on certain of its members. Seward's election had taken place only a week before, and there was much soreness over the event. One unlucky delegate who, as assemblyman, had helped to elect Seward, was mobbed and driven from the council hall.<sup>2</sup> On the second day the Council listened to the president's annual address. Barker commented hopefully on the growth of the Order, spoke of the test and its good effects in ridding the society of the unfaithful, endorsed the neutral policy of the Cincinnati session and recommended the adoption of a new state constitution by the Council. The annual election followed the address. President Barker was again chosen to office, as were also Secretary Farrington and Treasurer Taylor. In the vice-presidency Ambrose Stevens, of Genesee, superseded Ebling. On the third day the Council debated on a new constitution. The secret order in New York state was at this time working under the constitution adopted at the consolidation of the society in May, 1854, but the extraordinary growth of the organization had made that instrument open to criticism. Not only was it inadequate for the political work of a state campaign, but its centralizing provisions had begun to irritate the interior counties. At the special session of the Grand Council in January, 1855, the adoption of a new

<sup>1</sup> For this session see *Herald*, 1855, February 18, p. 3, February 19, p. 1; *Times*, 1855, February 27, p. 4. Text of Barker's address in *Herald*, 1855, March 7, p. 8; *Times*, 1855, March 8, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1855, February 18, p. 3; *Courier-Enquirer*, 1855, February 23, p. 2.

constitution had been recommended, and a committee selected to draft it.<sup>1</sup> The report of this committee was now ready for discussion by the Grand Council at its annual session, and it was subjected to lengthy debate. The Council voted to open the membership of the Order to native-born Protestants of foreign parentage. It voted to limit the president's power by placing the selection of district deputies of each county in the hands of the delegates of the county assembled for that purpose. It voted also to reduce the membership of the Grand Council to one delegate from each subordinate council. Eventually, however, after voting the reforms, the proposed constitution was laid over to the next quarterly session. After electing delegates to the National Council the Grand Council adjourned on the 15th. The press reports of the session do not indicate that the slavery question played any part in its proceedings.

After the annual meeting the Barker clique, secured in power for another year, turned to the conquest of the Order of the American Star. Of its success in this effort the details may be told as part of the history of the state campaign. All the organizing work of the Order was, of course, done as secretly as was possible. Its open work consisted only of continued agitation in all parts of the state against the influence of the foreign-born Catholic element. The latter was for a time cowed by the strength of the nativist movement, and endured quietly the opprobrium cast upon it. Efforts were made by the nativist movement, also, to secure legislation, but with little success. The proposal to disband all foreign-born militiamen<sup>2</sup> was put aside by the legislature, as was also the proposal to require twenty-one years of residence for naturalization. The bill to deport foreign paupers and criminals was lost. The one successful piece of legislation was

<sup>1</sup> See Barker's address.

<sup>2</sup> Text of petition in *Herald*, 1855, February 15, p. 8.

the bill on church tenures, which gave lay trustees a voice in the control of church property, and which was contrary to the Catholic custom of episcopal control. It was in reference to this bill that Erastus Brooks and Archbishop Hughes had their famous controversy over the amount of church property held in the archbishop's name.<sup>1</sup> The argument went on through a long series of letters in the daily press. It was very pointed, sometimes even violent, and closed with the friends of both sides claiming victory. These letters placed Senator Brooks before the public as one of the great champions of nativism, and made him later a leader of the movement for which he had worked. On the whole, the secret organization of the Know-Nothings did not attract attention during the spring of 1855 except when it showed its work in the local elections or when the press chronicled the sessions of the Grand Council.

On May 8, 1855, came the regular quarterly session of the Grand Council, held at Syracuse and lasting three days.<sup>2</sup> President Barker reported 1060 councils with about 178,000 members, and this, he admitted, was close to high-water mark. The work of expansion was now practically done. It could not be expected that many new councils would be added in the future, and the treasury of the Order must be filled by some means other than the fees which had filled it in the past. The new constitution must also be completed, he said. The former methods of making local nominations by convention were open to objection, and it would be well to adopt some system that could bring the voters into closer touch with the selection of candidates. The reform in the selection of district deputies had been begun by him. In some counties he had appointed a deputy for each assembly district and all deputies were now appointed on recommenda-

<sup>1</sup> *Controversy between Senator Brooks and † John.*

<sup>2</sup> For session see *Times*, 1855, May 9, 10, 11, 12; *Herald*, 1855, May 13. Text of Barker's address in *Herald*, 1855, May 16, p. 4.

tion of those over whom they were to exercise authority. Also, he recommended a declaration of principles which would show where the Order in New York state stood. He phrased his ideas as follows:<sup>1</sup>

First, Americans shall rule America.

Second, The Union of the States.

Third, No North, no South, no East, no West.

Fourth, The United States of America, as they are, one and inseparable.

Fifth, No sectarian influence in our legislation or the administration of American laws.

Sixth, Hostility to the assumptions of the Pope, through the bishops, priests and prelates of the Roman Catholic church, here in a Republic sanctified by Protestant blood.

Seventh, Thorough reform in the naturalization laws.

Eighth, Free and liberal educational institutions for all sects and classes with the Bible, God's Holy Word, as a universal text-book.

President Barker's suggestions were generally followed by the Council. The new constitution received final form. It was voted that each county should make nominations in such manner as it might choose. The declaration of principles was formally endorsed. This declaration embodied the neutral policy set forth at Cincinnati in the new third-degree oath. The act of the New York Grand Council in adopting it marks the complete success of Barker in harmonizing the state organization with the national policy of the Order. The work was easy in New York because the anti-slavery element, weighted down by its friendship for Seward, had been practically eliminated from the Order by the agency of the test before the new policy came up for consideration.

In other states of the Union the secret order was less happily conditioned. In several of the northern states the anti-slavery element in the Order was strong and ill-disposed to stand neutral on the great slavery issue. In Massachusetts the anti-slavery men controlled their Grand Council and refused to ratify the Cincinnati ritual. In several other grand

<sup>1</sup> See Barker's address.

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Native  
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anti-slavery*

councils the slavery question was dragged into debate and provoked factional divisions. As the June session of the National Council drew near, it was clearly seen that several northern states would send to it delegates more or less violently anti-slavery in opinion, while the southern states would send representatives no less violently in favor of pro-slavery ideas. Under these circumstances a conflict in the national body was certain unless good management could avert it. On June 5, 1855, the National Council met at Philadelphia, with President Barker in the chair and every state in the Union represented by delegates.<sup>1</sup> For New York appeared James W. Barker, of New York, Thomas J. Lyons, of Orange, L. Sprague Parsons, of Albany, Stephen Sammons, of Montgomery, Selah Squires, of Chenango, Stephen V. R. Mallory, of Ontario, and Horatio Seymour, Jr., of Erie. In the work of organizing the Council the suspicious attitude of the South showed itself, and the delegation of the District of Columbia was admitted to the floor in order to placate the South by balancing the free-state and slave-state representation. President Barker's annual address referred disapprovingly to the anti-slavery issue. On June 8th the election of officers made E. B. Bartlett, of Kentucky, the National President of the Order. Barker was a candidate for re-election, but was set aside in favor of a man more closely linked with Southern interests. In these earlier days of the Council, then, the Southern members showed their intention of dominating its action to guard their interests. All looked anxiously forward to the report of the committee on platform, which would precipitate a conflict, if conflict there were to be. All through the earlier days of the session there was active political discussion among the delegates, and by the time the matter of principles came up for formal action the conservative delegates had mostly been swept out of neutrality into one

<sup>1</sup> This account is made from *Herald* and *Tribune* reports. Text of Barker's address in *Herald*, 1855, July 2, p. 3.

or the other of the aggressive factions. Unfortunately there was no master-mind or guiding clique to quell the storm. On June 11th, instead of a report on platform, the Council received reports from the committee on resolutions, which brought the crucial question before it. There were two reports. The majority report, drawn up by Burwell of Virginia, embodied the pro-slavery ideas, while the minority report was distinctly in opposition. Then the contest began. The debate which began on the 11th lasted all through the 12th and 13th. The North and South were fairly pitted against each other. Secrecy as to the contest was impossible, and the daily press of the nation chronicled day by day its progress. The small conservative element in the Council tried to turn aside the trouble by a compromise, but the resolution which Raynor, of North Carolina, introduced for that purpose was promptly killed. Late on the 13th the Council rejected the minority report and accepted the majority report. This act decided that the national policy of the Order, so far as the National Council could declare it, was to be pro-slavery in character. The text of the Burwell resolutions was as follows :<sup>1</sup>

*Resolved*, That the American Party, having risen upon the ruins and in spite of the opposition of the Whig and Democratic Parties, cannot be held in any manner responsible for the obnoxious acts and violated pledges of either; that the systematic agitation of the slavery question by those parties has elevated sectional hostility into a positive element of political power, and brought our institutions into peril: It has therefore become the imperative duty of the American Party to interpose for the purpose of giving peace to the country and perpetuity to the Union; That as experience has shown it is impossible to reconcile opinions so extreme as those which separate the disputants, and as there can be no dishonor in submitting to the laws, the National Council has deemed it the best guarantee of common justice and future peace to abide by and maintain the existing laws upon the subject of slavery as a final and conclusive settlement of that subject in spirit and in substance.

*Resolved*, That, regarding it as the highest duty to avow these opinions upon a subject so important in distinct and unequivocal terms, it is hereby declared as the sense of the National Council that Congress possesses no power under the Constitution to legislate upon the subject of slavery in the states or to exclude any state

<sup>1</sup> Text in *Tribune*, 1855, June 15, p. 5.

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from admission into the Union because its constitution does or does not recognize the institution of slavery as a part of her social system; and expressly premitting any expression of opinion upon the power of Congress to establish or prohibit slavery in the territories, it is the sense of this National Council that Congress ought not to legislate on the subject of slavery within the territories of the United States, and that any interference by Congress with slavery as it exists in the District of Columbia would be a violation of the spirit and intention of the compact by which the State of Maryland ceded the District to the United States, and a breach of the national faith.

On the morning of the 14th came the sequel to the victory of the pro-slavery men. Led by the Massachusetts delegation the Northern members met in caucus, every free state except New York being represented. One of the most outspoken anti-slavery delegates, Henry Wilson, of Massachusetts, was made chairman. Under his leadership the caucus formulated an "Appeal to the People," which declared the principles of its signers to be nativism and anti-slavery.<sup>1</sup> Many of the anti-slavery men then abandoned the Council session and left the city. This action of the minority was hailed at the time as the first revolt of the North against Southern dictation.\* The anti-Southern newspapers delightedly described the incident as a split in the secret order. In this they were hardly correct, for no delegate to the National Council could, by his individual act, bind the Grand Council which he represented, and a secession of members merely left certain states unrepresented. It did not sever such unrepresented states from the Order. Not all the Northern members left the session, indeed, after the caucus of the 14th. Many remained in their seats and the Council went on with its work. The formal platform of the Order was now adopted. It was a long document in which the text of the Burwell resolutions was incorporated as the twelfth section.<sup>2</sup> It was under the phrase of "the twelfth section" that they were afterward mentioned in discussions.

<sup>1</sup>Text of Appeal in *Tribune*, 1855, June 15, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>*Times*, 1855, June 15, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Text of platform in *Herald* and *Tribune* of 1855, June 16.



The Council ordered a session on July 4, 1856, to nominate a presidential ticket, and provided a basis of representation for it. Adjournment finally took place on June 15th. This session was the turning-point in the fortunes of the secret order as a national power. The pro-slavery men, by their insistence, had written the doom of the movement and thrust aside a golden opportunity to avert the calamities of the future. Henceforth the slavery issue dominated national politics unchecked.

The course followed by the New York delegation in the Philadelphia session had been throughout friendly to the South. The explanation of this lies in the fact that New York had two aspirants for the presidential nomination of 1856. Millard Fillmore, of Buffalo, ex-president of the United States and former head of the Silver-Gray faction of Whigs had in 1852 been the favorite of the New York nativists for the presidency, and had in 1854 helped the secret order to its splendid growth in New York state by throwing his influence in its favor. Early in 1855, having previously remained outside of the secret order, he became a nominal member<sup>1</sup> and a candidate for nomination as president. George Law, of New York city, was a wealthy contractor, new to politics, but popular, ambitious, liberal and likely to take well with the voters if lucky enough to get a nomination.<sup>2</sup> He began his canvass in February, 1855, and was sedulously "boomed" by several newspapers of the state. With presidential ambitions to be promoted, the course of the New York managers was plain. They must court the favor of the South or nativism could not carry a presidential election. The Know-Nothing Order had made great progress in the Southern states, welcomed as an organization which was thoroughly opposed to sectional ideas. The attitude taken in the North by its anti-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1856, March 3, p. 3. August 5, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Biography, three columns, in *Herald*, 1855, June 2, p. 1.

slavery members and the fact that the Order had been non-committal on the slavery issue had of late, however, caused the movement to be viewed by the South with distrust. It was on account of this distrust, apparently, that the Know-Nothings lost the Virginia election of May, 1855, just before the Philadelphia session.<sup>1</sup> It certainly seemed best at the moment to side with the element which demanded assurances favorable to slavery, and New York did so. In a presidential election the thirty-five electors of New York, backed by the 120 votes of the slave states, could seat their candidate. Of course the Order could not be sure of all the Southern states, but since the North was divided on the slavery question that side of the controversy was to be favored which seemed least sectional. When the anti-slavery men of the National Council drew apart in caucus the New York delegation held aloof and voted for the pro-slavery platform. It must nevertheless have been offensive to some of them. The close of the Council session brought Barker and his friends back to New York with a new problem on their hands. They had before this crushed out anti-slavery in the Order and had successfully put the society organization on a platform of neutrality as to the slavery issue. Now they must go still further and make the Order in New York state plainly pro-slavery to agree with the national platform.

No time was lost in beginning the work. On June 18th, in response to a call signed by the seven delegates of the National Council, an immense mass-meeting was held at New York in City Hall Park.<sup>2</sup> This action committed the secret order in New York city to the new platform. Of the steps taken to swing the interior counties into line no record remains. The Order was by no means unanimous in favor of the pro-slavery platform. Here and there were heard expres-

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1855, May 27, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Full reports in *Herald* and *Tribune*.

sions of dissent. A few councils surrendered their charters and disbanded. Others protested but remained faithful. In general the Order remained quietly waiting developments. It was noticeable that in New York state there was no special Grand Council session called to consider a ratification of the action taken at Philadelphia. In other states where the grand councils met for this purpose there was a general breaking away from the established principles of the secret system. Massachusetts openly seceded.<sup>1</sup> Other states began to alter their secret systems at their own discretion without any regard to the national unity of the Order.<sup>2</sup> The Philadelphia session was, as the *New York Tribune* gleefully said, "the beginning of the end" of the secret national nativist movement. In Ohio some seceders from the Know-Nothing Order organized a rival order, and under the name "Know-Somethings" strove for national expansion,<sup>3</sup> but their movement failed to attain strength although it secured a foothold in several states. On August 21st the committee of correspondence which had been created at the bolters' caucus during the Philadelphia session issued a call for a gathering of anti-slavery Know-Nothings at Cincinnati on November 21st, the object being a re-organization of the secret movement on an anti-slavery basis.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, amid all these reports of changes and disintegration, the New York organization was held quiescent, looking forward to the regular quarterly session of the Grand Council in August, when the matter of politics must necessarily be discussed. During the weeks that intervened between the Philadelphia session and the August Council the sentiment of the Order had time to shape itself, guided, of course, by the local leaders. It was in this time that there began in New

<sup>1</sup> Text of address in *Herald*, 1855, June 30, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune*, 1855, August 11, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Tribune*, 1855, January 17, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Text of call in *Tribune*, 1855, August 31, p. 6.

York city an earnest and determined opposition to the power of the clique headed by James W. Barker. The slavery issue mingled itself with this movement of dissatisfaction and aided in weakening Barker's influence in the Order. A factional division thus developed itself quietly, having on one side the Barker clique and the southeastern counties, while in opposition stood the old leaders of the Silver-Grays, supported by the interior districts.<sup>1</sup> The Barker clique stood for ratification of the Philadelphia platform, while the opposition element favored frank concessions to the growing anti-slavery sentiment in the state.

The Grand Council eventually met August 28, 1855, at Binghamton, with a small attendance of delegates.<sup>2</sup> On the first day, after organizing, it selected places for the next Council session and for a state nominating convention. On the second day the matter of the platform came up. In the morning a report was received from the delegates who had represented the Grand Council at Philadelphia and the subject was then referred to a special committee on platform. At the evening session this committee brought in its report. Almost unanimously the committee turned its back on the pro-slavery program of the Philadelphia session, and held the order in New York state to the old policy of neutrality. The two resolutions in which its position was specially declared were phrased, one in a way to please the anti-slavery men and the other in a way to please the opposite group. This platform as reported by committee was at once accepted by vote of the Council. On the third day of the session the Council created a new state committee, composed of one member from each senatorial district, and then adjourned. The significance of the Council's action on the platform was a little vague in most ways. It was a skillful effort to satisfy

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1855, August 29, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> This account is from *Tribune* reports.

both sides of the slavery controversy. The fact was evident, however, that the refusal to accept the Philadelphia platform meant a defeat for the Barker clique, a severance of open alliance with the South, and practically, though not in so many words, a repudiation of the pro-slavery position of the National Council. The platform as adopted by the Binghamton Council was modeled upon that previously adopted at the May Council, but was more explicit on the slavery question.<sup>1</sup> It follows :

First, Americans to rule America.

Second, The maintenance of the Union and the compromises of the Constitution faithfully fulfilled.

Third, The absolute exclusion from the creed of the American Party of all sectional doctrines that are against the sense of any portion of the American Union, and the disuse of the name, influence or organization of the American Party to advance any measure against the constitutional rights of the states, or the intention or effect of which shall be to endanger the perpetuity of the Union.

Fourth, No sectional<sup>2</sup> interference in our legislature, and no proscription of persons on account of religious opinions.

Fifth, Hostility to the assumptions of the papal power through the bishops, prelates, priests, or ministers of the Roman Catholic church as anti-republican in principle and dangerous to the liberties of the people.

Sixth, Thorough reform in the naturalization laws of the federal government.

Seventh, The enactment of the laws for the protection of the purity of the ballot box by the state.

Eighth, Free and reliable institutions for the education of all classes of the people, with the Bible as a text-book in our common schools.

*Resolved*, That the national administration, by its general course of official conduct, together with an attempt to destroy the repose, harmony and fraternal relation of the country in the repeal of the Missouri compromise, and the encouragement of aggression upon the government of the territorial inhabitants of Kansas, deserves and should receive the united condemnation of the American people, and that the institution of slavery should derive no extension from such repeal.

*Resolved*, That in the organization of the American Order the institution of involuntary servitude was and now is regarded as local and not national in its character, a subject for the toleration of a difference of opinion by the citizens of the northern and southern states, and as such has no rightful place in the platform of the national American Party.

<sup>1</sup> Text of platform in *Tribune*, 1855, August 30, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Query: Sectarian ?

This platform did not show any new developments in the policy of the secret order, but rather a maintenance of its old endeavor to keep nativism to the fore as its one real basis of effort. The Order stood for compromise and peace on the slavery issue. The real significance of the Binghamton platform in the history of the Order was its recognition of the fact that the organization must not go too far in defiance of anti-Southern sentiment. In other words the nativist movement, with all its splendid machinery, was not strong enough to disregard the anti-slavery movement. Heretofore, the two issues had been rivals in New York politics, with nativism foremost. Now the tide was turning and anti-slavery was taking the lead.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE STATE CAMPAIGN OF 1855

THE break-down of the old Whig and Democratic Parties in New York state which began in 1854 was continued through the state campaign of 1855. Before the aggressive action of new issues embodied in specially organized movements the old partisan fabrics exhibited such disruption and weakness as seemed to foretell their utter extinction. The Know-Nothing organization stood out above all forces in the early months of 1855 as a force destructive of old methods in politics. Its vitality was astounding. It had at its service an enthusiasm such as few political parties could hope to meet in their own. It was sleepless, ubiquitous, cunning and aggressive. In the fall elections of 1854 it rivaled the older parties in its strength. In the local spring elections of 1855 it overtopped them all and forced its opponents to unite in sheer self-defense, regardless of party names. It stood, in the spring of 1855, easily the most powerful single political body in the state. Next to it in strength stood the Democratic Party. The dual organizations of the Soft-Shells or administration men and the Hard-Shells or anti-administration men still faced each other in the spring of 1855 with unaltered stubbornness, each claiming to be the true representative of the old party. The dismembered party was losing voters to the organized movements continually, but yet it had a vitality and hopefulness that made it a strong factor in state politics. There was just a possibility of a re-union of the factions for campaign work, and in such event the Democracy, despite its losses, might be stronger than organized nativism.

Outside of the Know-Nothing Order and the disorganized Democracy there was no one strong aggressive force in the field in the early spring of 1855, but political prophets were not deceived by appearances. Men knew that out of the less powerful organizations of the day the skillful leaders of the old Whig Party would build up a coalition of some sort that would be strong enough to make at least an effort toward control of the state. The material for such a coalition was to be found in the organized temperance movement, the Whig Party system and the chaotic anti-slavery movement. The temperance movement was bound to the Seward clique by its obligation to repay the favor of a prohibitory liquor law enacted in April, 1855. The Whig Party was bound to the Seward clique by the fact that the latter held control of its machinery. The anti-slavery movement was bound to the same clique by the lack of any other leaders on whom it could rely for success. Of these forces which stood ready to Seward's hand probably the strongest in the spring of 1855 was the organized temperance movement. Encouraged by the winning of a prohibitory law and militant against a threatened repeal, the organization was capable of showing important results in a state campaign. Its strength lay, of course, largely in the smaller villages and towns. Next to the temperance movement as a political force was the Whig organization, which was now only a remnant of the old party. Of the two factions which existed in 1854 one was absorbed into the nativist movement and the other was rapidly dwindling into nothingness. The party as it stood was a weak affair, but its name was a valuable asset and carried with it the control of some thousands of votes. The anti-slavery movement was not strong in organization in the spring of 1855, though anti-slavery sentiment was widespread in the community. The two organizations of the Anti-Nebraska men and the Free Democrats which had shared in the campaign of 1854 still retained in 1855 a vague form of embodiment but their platforms needed alteration to fit the



more recent phases of the slavery question. Such as they were, however, the two groups were natural allies of the Seward interest.

The state offices to be filled at the election of 1855 were not of unusual importance, since neither the governorship nor the senatorships of the state would depend upon the result of the election. The significance of the campaign lay, therefore, not so much in the offices at stake as in the prophecy which it would hold of the coming events of 1856, the presidential year. The disruption of parties which had been taking place in New York state was no local phenomenon. The same change was going on all over the Union. Everywhere the party systems were going to wreck in consequence of faction fights and the inroads of new issues. Organized nativism intended to put a presidential ticket in the field in 1856 and seemed destined to success. The Democratic Party undoubtedly would survive its trials and also have its regular national ticket in the field. Less fortunate, the Whig Party could not hope to cope with either of its rivals unless a miracle could turn back the tide of disruption and unite its membership upon a real issue. The Nebraska matter and the Kansas struggle kept the slavery issue before the nation during 1854 and 1855. All through the North there was a strong anti-slavery feeling. Before the winter of 1854-55 was over men were beginning to talk of a great anti-Southern political movement. In New York state it was sometimes said that Senator Seward would look to such a movement for a presidential nomination in 1856. Under these circumstances the vote cast by the respective groups in the state of New York in 1855 would be an important hint of what that pivotal state might be expected to do in the presidential contest of the following year. It might have been foretold, therefore, that the state campaign of 1855 would be a struggle in which the chief figures would be organized nativism pitted against a Seward coalition.

Within the first six months of 1855 the political leaders began to marshal their respective forces into line. The nativist movement was represented chiefly by the Know-Nothing Order, but there were some thousands of nativist voters outside of the Order. The secret Order of United Americans had possibly 30,000 members scattered all over the state, but most numerous in the south-eastern counties. The secret Order of the American Star had probably not over 5,000 voters, almost wholly in New York and Kings counties. The secret society of the "Allen Know-Nothings" had an unknown number of voters in New York city. The secret American Protestant Association and kindred societies also had their members. Barker and his friends were able to exercise influence in nearly all these groups. The American Star was re-organized wholly. When Patten, the founder of the society, left the city, the leadership of it fell to Jacob B. Bacon, an ally of Barker. Then a plan was carried out in which the society was re-formed on the Know-Nothing model.<sup>1</sup> It became a federation of "temples," governed by a grand temple. Its political work was directed by a board composed of the five chief officers of the grand temple. Its declared mission was in part to "act politically with the great national American Party, aiding to elect its candidates and working to carry out its principles." In April, 1855, the society had eighty-four temples and 10,000 members, not all of whom were voters.<sup>2</sup> About the same time that the American Star was re-organized a plan was set on foot in the O. U. A. to re-organize its executive system into a form similar to that of the Know-Nothings. There seems no direct evidence that the Barker clique were the movers in this plan, but it coincided curiously well with their policy. The proposed innovation contemplated a fed-

<sup>1</sup> Pamphlet in Gildersleeve Coll., and reprint of same in *Tribune*, 1855, September 5, p. 7, gives ritual complete. *Times*, 1855, September 5, p. 1, September 6, p. 2, also gives ritual. *Times*, 1855, October 20, p. 2, gives constitution.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, 1855, October 20, p. 2.

erated group of "executive associations" controlled by certain persons who would possess an "executive degree." The executive associations were to be composed of voters recruited from the ranks of the Order. The plan was an elaboration of the previously used O. U. A. machinery. On April 24th, the grand executive committee recommended the new scheme to Arch-Chancery, and in May the Executive Convention took like action.<sup>1</sup> Arch-Chancery, in August, permitted the new system to be tried. While the three chief secret societies of the nativist movement were thus approaching a common model, their forces were also being welded together into harmony in political action. During May and June there were sessions in New York city of delegates from all the nativist societies, and their work culminated on July 13th in a convention which marked the local beginning of an American Party separate and distinct from any one secret organization. On August 28th, when the Grand Council put into effect a new feature of organized nativism by ordering a state nominating convention, its action similarly showed a tendency to break away from the old secret system and create an open party system which could enlist the votes of those nativists who might not approve the secret system. As yet, however, there was no suggestion that the Know-Nothing Order itself give up its secrecy.

The Seward coalition was also built up during the early months of 1855 with anti-slavery sentiment as its source of strength. On May 30th the former anti-Nebraska movement was revived under the name of "Republican." This name of "Republican" was in frequent use all through the North during the growth of anti-Southern feeling. The name was used at various times, in various states, by various sorts of organizations, whose various principles agreed generally in the one particular of opposition to Southern interests. In New York state the name was formally assumed in September, 1854, by

<sup>1</sup> Executive records of O. U. A.

a group in the anti-Nebraska convention who wished to make the movement plainly bi-partisan in character. Their wishes were disregarded, and they seceded, creating a Republican organization, and then merging with the Free Democracy. At the same time the name was also assumed by the anti-Nebraska convention in a motion hastily carried during the excitement of its closing hours,<sup>1</sup> and scarcely referred to during the campaign that followed the convention. It was by virtue of that motion that the committee appointed by the convention of 1854 made its bow in May, 1855, as representative of the new Republican movement devoted to the Seward interest. The transformation and revival of the former anti-Southern organization made no stir whatever, nor was there any surprise when, on July 18th, the Republican state committee and the Whig state committee met together and called conventions to meet on the same day in September. All this had been foreseen. It was merely the drawing together of the Seward forces. Close following the coalition of Whigs and Republicans came other steps in the Seward program. On July 25th the state committee of the temperance movement met and issued a convention call to take effect on the day following the Whig and Republican conventions. This meant an endorsement by the temperance movement of Seward's nominees. Next, on July 31st, the representatives of two secret political societies met at Rochester and arranged for action in support of the new Republican movement. Finally, on August 16th, the Free Democratic state committee called upon its followers to join their efforts in aid of the Republican organization. This completed the structure on which the Seward interest would base its hopes.

The part taken by secret societies in this work of fusion is not at all important, but it had its interesting features. The two societies concerned were the so-called "Choctaws" and

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1854, September 28, p. 6.

the "Know-Somethings." The Choctaws<sup>1</sup> were those Know-Nothings who seceded from the main order in October, 1854, and duplicated the secret system. They did not claim over 150 councils in 1855, and probably had much less. Their principles included opposition to slavery, and they were supporters of Seward. The Know-Somethings were members of a secret society started in Ohio in January, 1855, by Know-Nothing seceders.<sup>2</sup> In principles it was mildly nativist and emphatically anti-slavery. In organization it followed very closely the Know-Nothing model, except that it had but one degree, and substituted a pledge in place of an oath. The Know-Something Order won a foothold in New York state, probably in June, 1855, and was fostered by Seward men as a bait to draw off members from the Know-Nothing society. It had a grand lodge, of which William C. Parsons was chief officer with the title of grand president. The Order failed, however, to make any headway against the overwhelming strength of the Know-Nothing system. As a nativist organization it was a sham, for its real interest lay in anti-Southern agitation. On July 31st, in response to official calls, the Grand Council of the Choctaws and the Grand Lodge of the Know-Somethings met at Rochester, agreed together on a platform and voted to unite at a future session into one society.<sup>3</sup> Together they called a convention of delegates from their subordinate bodies to meet at the same time and place as the Republican convention. These allied societies voted at their Rochester session to eliminate from their rituals all hostility to foreigners. The only nativist principle which they retained was that of hostility to clerical influence in civil affairs. Practically they abandoned nativism at Rochester when they revised their principles.

<sup>1</sup> Name appears in *Tribune*, 1855, March 16, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> On its origin see *Tribune*, 1855, January 17, p. 5, March 7, p. 6, March 24, p. 6; *Herald*, 1855, January 20, p. 3, January 29, p. 8, March 10, p. 2, June 14, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Herald*, 1855, July 25, p. 4, July 28, p. 1, September 22, p. 2.

The plans of the Seward clique were fairly well revealed by the end of July, and the public turned with interest to the two Democratic state conventions which were to take place in August. There had been some hints of schemes to draw the separated Democratic factions into union, and no one was sure that the schemes had failed. In case the faction leaders agreed upon alliance the Democracy might yet control the state. At the same time there was a possible coalition of Hard-Shells and Know-Nothings to be looked for. Rumor was persistent in referring to this possibility.<sup>1</sup> It was clear enough that if the Hard-Shells held aloof from other factors in the state campaign they could not hope to win any of the state offices, whereas if they could reach an agreement with the nativists they might gain a share of the spoils without losing their factional identity. There were no principles to stand in the way. Nevertheless when the Hard-Shell convention met on August 23d, it was found that the organization had decided to hold its own course in the state campaign, making concessions to nobody. In the platform there was incorporated a paragraph that in mild terms condemned nativism. A few days later the Soft-Shell state convention also declared against nativism. This was expected, since the Soft-Shells were dependent on the foreign vote. Both of the dual bodies of the Democracy thus kept clear of the taint of nativism in their platforms, but the coming election was to show that the Hard-Shell voters took a different attitude. The August Grand Council of the Know-Nothings added to their platform a resolution condemning so heartily the policy of President Pierce that it could not but enlist Hard-Shell sympathy. It was claimed several months later, but without good proof, that the Hard-Shell managers, while condemning nativism openly, at the same time supported it quietly in the state campaign.

The month of September brought about the successful launching of the new Republican movement. The Seward

<sup>1</sup> *E. g.*, *Times*, 1855, August 14, p. 4.

men all over the state generally abandoned the use of the old worn-out Whig organization as soon as the word was passed to place the new Republican movement on its feet, and in this work they were aided by Democrats of anti-Southern feelings. This ready co-operation of former antagonists was due to the work wrought by organized movements in teaching men how to belong to a party and yet act with organizations outside of party lines. The Republican movement was not at first a real party. It was a bi-partisan organization created primarily to voice anti-Southern feeling, and secondarily to crush organized nativism. Men might join the new movement without feeling that they thereby lost membership in the older parties. During September the work of organization went on under the direction of the state committee. Local mass meetings created local committees and chose delegates to the coming state convention. A Republican press appeared and aided the work of recruiting by its vigorous efforts to build up anti-Southern sentiment. Thanks to the energy of the press the desired sentiment grew rapidly. The attention of the voting masses was now drawn to the slavery issue more closely than it had ever been before.

If it be possible to set any definite time as the point where the nativist movement in New York state reached its height and began to decline, that time must be fixed in the month of September, 1855. A claim was made for it about this time that it possessed in the Know-Nothing Order alone at least 185,000 votes.<sup>1</sup> This claim, though entirely unofficial, was yet probably very close to actual fact, for the Order had reported 178,000 members in the previous May. Nevertheless despite its enormous membership, nativism had reached the turning place. Henceforth the movement was to lose strength steadily year by year until its end. The cause of its changing fortune lay partly in itself and partly in the character of its antagonists. Organized nativism in New York state had risen

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1855, July 29, p. 4.

to strength at a time when there was no organized issue of like vitality which could dispute its growth. In 1854 neither temperance nor anti-slavery had the ability to win men as nativism did, nor could the broken party organizations oppose it successfully. In 1855 the situation changed. The anti-slavery issue, re-organized and aggressive, again appealed to the voters, and this time won the recognition that it demanded. The re-organization of the anti-slavery movement was the turning point for organized nativism. But it was partly in the nativist movement itself that the cause of its decline lay. Its success had been an element in its own undoing. The knowledge of the power that lay within its secret mechanism brought into its membership a horde of petty leaders more intent upon personal success than upon the unity of the society. Intrigue, rivalry and wrangling developed in the councils, and petty spite or open-voiced disgust were here and there tearing aside the veil of secrecy that had heretofore concealed the Order's inner workings. The mechanism, membership, teaching and aims of the great Know-Nothing society could, in the campaign of 1855, be easily learned by any anxious inquirer. The nominal principles of the movement were losing their influence, too. The old cry of Catholic conspiracy against the nation was beginning to lose its effect, for it was seen that the enemy—if he really were an enemy—was in a great minority in the nation. Besides, the Catholic bishops had officially declared in May, 1855, that Catholics owed no obedience to the Pope in civil affairs. Finally, the mystery of the thing was beginning to vanish. In 1854 the Order was really clothed in secrecy, and could work out startling political changes at the polls, but by the fall of 1855 outsiders could in most towns guess closely at the strength and plans of the secret councils.

The Know-Nothing state ticket of 1855 was placed in the field in a manner less open to objection than that of 1854. The resentment aroused by the nomination of the Ullman ticket bore home its lesson to the managers of the Order, and



by the fall of 1855 they had prepared the nominating machinery of a state convention. The first convention met at Auburn on September 25th. It was composed of delegates elected for the single duty of making nominations, and it was governed by officers chosen by itself. This convention is another instance of the way in which the secret order continually adopted party methods in its political work, abandoning the peculiar methods by which it had hitherto secured its best results. According to the press reports there were about 320 delegates in attendance on the Auburn convention.<sup>1</sup> They were called to order by Grand President Barker as temporary chairman, and thereupon began the work of self-organization. Erastus Brooks was chosen as permanent president, supported by eight vice-presidents, representing the judicial districts of the state. The work of nomination immediately followed. This convention was not a Grand Council session. It was a temporary political body with a special work to do. Press reports give little detailed convention news. There were many aspirants for place, but one by one the list was sifted, and the convention broke up in the early morning hours of the 26th. This Auburn convention, with its commonplace political procedure, comes just at the turning point of the fortunes of political nativism. It is of special interest because it marks a certain change in the conception of the nativist movement in the state. Up to this time the Know-Nothing Order had been the one acknowledged force of political nativism. The Auburn convention did not, however, regard itself as merely a Know-Nothing gathering. It affected to represent political nativism as a whole. The phrase of "American Party" had been occasionally used in nativist politics before the date of the Auburn convention. After that date it is almost exclusively the official name of the nativist movement. The ticket selected by the convention was as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Convention account from *Times and Tribune*.

Secretary of State . . . . .	Joel T. Headley, of Orange.
Comptroller . . . . .	Lorenzo Burrows, of Orleans.
Treasurer . . . . .	Stephen Clark, of Albany.
Attorney-General . . . . .	Stephen B. Cushing, of Tompkins.
Engineer . . . . .	Silas Seymour, of Rockland.
Canal Commissioner . . . . .	Samuel S. Whallon, of Chautauqua.
Prison Inspector . . . . .	William A. Russell, of Washington.
Judge, Court of Appeals . . . . .	William W. Campbell, of New York.
Judge, Court of Appeals . . . . .	George F. Comstock, of Onondaga.

This ticket was so chosen as to represent all portions of the state and to be bi-partisan. Five of its members had been Whigs and four had been Democrats. Against the personal character of its members the opposition press had nothing to say. Joel T. Headley, of Newburgh, the head of the ticket, was one of those nativist legislators who fought valiantly against the election of Seward as senator. In earlier life he had been a clergyman, but left that occupation to travel and to earn his living with his pen. Up to the time of his election as assemblyman he was best known as a writer. His legislative career then secured him notice in politics. Lorenzo Burrows, whose office was perhaps the most important on the state ticket, was a business man of Albion, credited with wealth and ability. He had served one term in Congress. Cushing, Whallon, Campbell and Comstock were lawyers of local reputation. Seymour and Clark were civil engineers of considerable experience.

On the day following the nativist state convention the delegates of the Seward coalition met at Syracuse. Three separate conventions were held at once, namely, those of Whigs, Republicans and Know-Somethings. The proceedings of these bodies went on smoothly. The Whig and Republican joint-committee reported a mixed ticket made up of Whigs and Democrats, and all three conventions promptly ratified the selections. Excellent as this arrangement was for the Seward clique there was nevertheless a patent incongruity in asking Whigs to vote as Whigs for men chosen from the party

which the Whig organization had fought so bitterly during the past twenty years. There was something of a stir of dissatisfaction when the mixed ticket was declared. The Republican movement, it must be again said, was not yet a real party. The men who composed it were still Whigs and Democrats, and the fact that some Democratic politician might feel willing to side with anti-slavery did not make him palatable to straight-out Whigs even when served to them upon the official ticket of the Whig Party. Nativism took advantage of this anomaly in party work to stir up dissatisfaction with the Seward ticket. In New York, Kings and Richmond counties the nativist element was strong enough to use the Whig Party machinery at this juncture. The Whig county committees repudiated the Republican ticket, and on October 4th an immense mass-meeting in New York city called for a new state convention of Old-line Whigs. The Seward-Whig newspapers viewed this threatened revolt with wrath and fear, but their fear was needless, for it was an impossible task to re-create the machinery of the old party in time for election. On October 23d, when the state convention of Old-line Whigs met, it merely made its protest against the Syracuse mixed ticket and did not attempt to make a rival ticket or re-organize the state. The old Whig Party in New York was in fact a political corpse. Such Whigs as would not join with Seward now drifted into nativism, though for a year or two longer the pretence of an Old-line Whig state committee was kept up.

The nativist campaign work in 1855 followed very largely the former policy of secrecy in the interior counties. Voters were gathered into the Know-Nothing councils and instructed as to the necessity of upholding the political plans of nativism. In New York city the more open methods of mass meetings, campaign clubs and processions were used. In the arguments of the time, nativism still used the old bugbear of Catholic conspiracy, and with excellent effect. The twin bugbear of foreign influence, independent of church matters, was tacitly

dropped. Nativism had come to recognize the value of foreign-born voters by this time, and there was little said of the old idea of twenty one years' residence for naturalization. Nativism was growing liberal. Its platform of August made no explicit reference to the foreign-born, but contented itself with a vague hint of some sort of reform in naturalization laws. The main arguments of the campaign were those upon the slavery issue. Nativism could not now go so far as to declare that the South was right, but it could and did maintain that Seward was wrong. Senator Seward, according to the nativist view, was a mischief-maker, heedless of results so long as his own ambitions were served, plotting for the presidency, and not caring if his course might imperil the unity of the nation. In the nativist demonology, Seward the Friend of the Pope was superseded by Seward the Enemy of his Country. The slavery issue really was the dominant note of the state campaign. On the Republican side of the contest the leaders used the long-tried methods of political work, drawing together the machinery of a new state organization, but keeping fast hold on the old Whig system as well. In argument they scored the nativist idea. Hostility to voters of foreign birth, they said, was an insult, and hostility to the Catholic system was an absurdity. As to the slavery issue, they said that the nativists were friends of the South and of domestic servitude. The nativist leaders were bamboozling their followers and blinding them with fanciful mummeries to suit their own ambitions and to deliver the national government into the hands of the slave-holding aristocracy. Sometimes there were reproaches against the iniquities of "dark-lantern politics;" but this came with bad grace from the Seward side where the secret Know-Something Order, after swallowing up the Choctaws,<sup>1</sup> kept the field as a Seward auxiliary of the same dark-lantern type.

Election day in 1855 came on November 6th. The first re-

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1855, September 22, p. 2; *Times*, 1855, October 12, p. 5.

turns showed that organized nativism had won a victory. The Republican movement polled a remarkably good vote, but it fell short of success. Nativism carried the state. The victors elected seven administrative officers, one judge of appeals, and five judges of the Supreme Court. The land office and the canal board, with the patronage therewith connected, would be theirs in the coming year. In the legislature the nativist success was not so apparent. Neither branch of that body would be dominated by the movement. There were only eleven nativist senators and about forty-four nativist assemblymen. The state canvass showed that the political groups of the campaign had polled an averaged strength about as follows:<sup>1</sup>

Headley-Burrows ticket:

Nativist movement (Americans) . . . . .	} 147,200 votes.
Whig Party (Old-line Whigs) . . . . .	

King-Cook ticket:

Anti-slavery movement (Republicans) . . . . .	} 135,700 votes.
Anti-slavery movement (Know-Somethings) . . . . .	
Whig Party (Seward Whigs) . . . . .	
Temperance movement (Temperance men) . . . . .	

Hatch-Stetson ticket:

Democratic Party (Soft-Shells) . . . . .	90,900 votes.
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Ward-Mitchell ticket:

Democratic Party (Hard-Shells) . . . . .	45,600 votes.
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Ward-Stetson ticket:

Democratic Party (Half-Shells) . . . . .	} 12,700 votes.
Anti-temperance movement (Constitutionalists) . . . . .	
Anti-temperance movement (Liquor Dealers) . . . . .	

The returns for this election showed that the nativist movement had gained considerably since the fall of 1854. A heavy vote was cast for its ticket in some of the staunch Democratic counties. Curiously, however, the counties of the west, where Fillmore's influence extended, did not vote as heavily for nativism in 1855 as in the preceding year. The secret order had invaded the northern counties since 1854, and its gains

<sup>1</sup> Official canvass in *Times*, 1856, January 2, p. 1. The Liberty Party, whose state poll was about 140 votes, is omitted.

there and elsewhere more than balanced all losses. In five counties the nativist ticket had an actual majority of the total vote. The vote for Headley was distributed as follows :

	<i>Per cent.</i>	<i>Vote.</i>		<i>Per cent.</i>	<i>Vote.</i>
Albany . . . . .	41 . .	6,136	Onondaga . . . . .	31 . .	3,479
Alleghany . . . . .	23 . .	1,429	Ontario . . . . .	43 . .	2,744
Broome . . . . .	18 . .	929	Orange . . . . .	24 . .	1,806
Cattaraugus . . . . .	34 . .	2,012	Orleans . . . . .	44 . .	1,831
Cayuga . . . . .	37 . .	3,076	Oswego . . . . .	29 . .	2,413
Chautauqua . . . . .	44 . .	3,564	Otsego . . . . .	25 . .	1,958
Chemung . . . . .	29 . .	1,092	Putnam . . . . .	37 . .	671
Chenango . . . . .	33 . .	2,276	Queens . . . . .	32 . .	1,461
Clinton . . . . .	37 . .	1,576	Rensselaer . . . . .	49 . .	5,350
Columbia . . . . .	32 . .	2,173	Richmond . . . . .	35 . .	782
Cortland . . . . .	35 . .	1,541	Rockland . . . . .	48 . .	982
Delaware . . . . .	35 . .	2,102	St. Lawrence . . . . .	25 . .	2,167
Dutchess . . . . .	23 . .	2,098	Saratoga . . . . .	35 . .	2,671
Erie . . . . .	35 . .	5,433	Schenectady . . . . .	52 . .	1,534
Essex . . . . .	52 . .	1,928	Schoharie . . . . .	29 . .	1,606
Franklin . . . . .	54 . .	1,831	Schuyler . . . . .	27 . .	780
Fulton-Hamilton . . . . .	29 . .	1,089	Seneca . . . . .	36 . .	1,285
Genesee . . . . .	36 . .	1,570	Steuben . . . . .	40 . .	3,400
Greene . . . . .	45 . .	2,167	Suffolk . . . . .	29 . .	1,128
Herkimer . . . . .	32 . .	2,024	Sullivan . . . . .	49 . .	2,223
Jefferson . . . . .	12 . .	1,090	Tioga . . . . .	10 . .	440
Kings . . . . .	34 . .	7,113	Tompkins . . . . .	45 . .	2,163
Lewis . . . . .	9 . .	318	Ulster . . . . .	56 . .	5,096
Livingston . . . . .	47 . .	2,704	Warren . . . . .	48 . .	1,513
Madison . . . . .	24 . .	1,575	Washington . . . . .	53 . .	3,715
Monroe . . . . .	31 . .	3,522	Wayne . . . . .	32 . .	2,388
Montgomery . . . . .	39 . .	2,058	Westchester . . . . .	39 . .	3,264
New York . . . . .	36 . .	20,367	Wyoming . . . . .	18 . .	868
Niagara . . . . .	38 . .	2,247	Yates . . . . .	7 . .	254
Oneida . . . . .	11 . .	1,555			

The success in the state election was encouraging to the Know-Nothing Order, and yet the total vote cast was 30,000 less than the membership which had been claimed for the Order in the spring months. The election gave evidence that organized nativism was really menaced by the rise of the Republican movement. Its power was beginning to shrink as

that of organized anti-slavery grew. The latter was taking on strength with a rapidity almost equaling that which nativism itself had shown at its first expansion. In the coming winter it would be represented in the legislative bodies of the nation, and would demand recognition as a factor in national politics.

All eyes now turned expectantly to the meeting of Congress. In New York state an almost equal interest was directed toward the meeting of the new state legislature. The attitude of the Know-Nothing Order of New York state toward the anti-Southern movement was now changing very rapidly. The Barker clique with its friendship for the South was losing influence. A new element was forcing itself to the front in the Order with friendly feelings for anti-slavery. The two elements were in balance, and while they remained so, New York stayed faithful to the old secret system and kept itself coherent and united. The Order in New York lent no countenance to the schismatic national convention which met at Cincinnati in November, 1855, composed of anti-Southern men, but held itself to old ways. The first evidence of the change worked in New York by the anti-Southern movement revealed itself when Congress met on December 3d and began to ballot for a speaker. It was then seen that although at least half of the New York congressmen had been elected in 1854 by Know-Nothing votes, yet only a half dozen were now inclined to act with the Order in the speakership contest. The whole Know-Nothing element in Congress soon showed an utter lack of coherence and power. At the first ballot on the speakership it mustered about fifty votes, but they were divided between the Southern Marshall and the Northern Fuller. The Americans, as they now called themselves, could not unite. On the 28th ballot Marshall withdrew. Efforts were made then to get the Know-Nothings together in support of Fuller. Slowly his following increased through the weeks of repeated balloting that extended themselves into the winter months, but the incessant fight upon the slavery

issue continually weakened the nativist phalanx. The situation at Washington, consequently, was not at all encouraging to the New York portion of the Order when the new year of 1856 came in. The Know-Nothing members from New York were reflecting no luster whatever upon the organization which placed them in their seats, and the whole Know-Nothing group in the House was showing itself utterly incapable of harmony.

On January 1, 1856, the New York legislature came together. Here, as at Washington, there was an aggressive group of Republicans prepared to struggle for political status. Their movement was yet new and had not shaken itself entirely loose from the older parties, but they meant to assert themselves in the organization of the legislature. There were at Albany, as at Washington, several political groups which overlapped one another in personnel and whose respective strengths could not on that account be accurately reckoned. In a rough way only could it be said that the new Assembly of 120 members was fairly evenly divided among Democrats, Americans and Republicans. On the last day of the old year the members held their caucuses. The Americans selected Lyman Odell, of Livingston, as their candidate for speaker of the lower house. Then on the New Year the balloting began. In the contest at Albany, unlike that at Washington, the bitterness wrought by the slavery issue had no place. The problem at Albany for each of the three chief groups was to get the speakership if possible, but first and above all things, to show no weakness in its coherence. For nativism in New York, a fiasco like that at Washington would be a most evil omen. For two weeks, with dogged persistence, the rival groups faced one another at Albany. Then, on the 49th ballot, the Democrats and Republicans, without merging their identity in the least, united to outvote the Americans and divide the offices between themselves. This defeat, brought about by coalition, lost no prestige to



the Know-Nothings, who had proven their ability to hold together. Meantime, at Washington, efforts were being made to create a coalition of Democrats and Americans to outvote the Republican group, but the Americans would not unite upon this final hope. Then came the break. Southern Know-Nothings passed over to the Democracy and only a corporal's guard remained to vote for Fuller till the end.

The utter weakness of the Know-Nothing contingent at the national capital was but a reflection of the actual condition of the national organization. Nearly every state had altered the old Know-Nothing secret system to suit its own taste since the fatal session of the Philadelphia National Council in June, 1855. There was no longer a national secret society. Instead there was a congeries of state organizations, some in the form of societies and others in the form of political parties. Men talked less of "the Order" now, and more of "the party." The old Know-Nothing Order was in fact, in a transition stage. It was changing itself into a real political party. Many were dropping away from it during the change, yet it still had probably over a million voters and could make a fight for the presidency. Its leaders were planning for the latter event, and the National Council which had been called to meet on February 18th, would try to rehabilitate the organization and set it in the field in fighting form. What part the slavery issue would play in this work of restoration no one could prophesy. Anti-slavery sentiment in the organization was much stronger than it was eight months before, when the former National Council was held, and in the new Council it would probably be more strongly assertive than before. The anti-Southern men would have an advantage, too, in the fact that each congressional district would have a delegate and there could be no careful balancing of state delegations as in the former Council. The Know-Nothings of New York looked forward to this Council with peculiar interest because of the two aspirants for the presidency. All through the year 1855 the friends of

Fillmore and of Law respectively were pushing their canvass for delegates. Fillmore himself was in Europe, but the men who had come over to the Know-Nothing Order from the old Silver-Gray Whig faction rallied to his name. Law, on the contrary, found his support among the men who were more closely interested in real nativism. Barker was a supporter of Law. At the American Party National Convention which was to follow immediately after the National Council session the fate of the New York aspirants would be decided. The Know-Nothings of New York were therefore anxious for a successful unification of the disorganized American Party as a necessary prelude to a successful presidential campaign.

On February 18, 1856, the National Council came together at Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup> At once the old fight over the slavery issue began, for the pro-slavery southerners refused to submit to the excision of the famous "twelfth section" of the platform adopted in June, 1855. On the third day of the debate the vote was called on the motion to strike out, and the result wiped the hated twelfth section from the platform. In this test of policy the New York delegation divided its vote impartially on either side. But now an entirely new platform was demanded to replace the mutilated old one. The Southern men wanted assurances of neutrality from the new party, while the anti-slavery men wanted assurances of hostility to slavery. While debate went on a platform was offered which took compromise ground. It was acceptable to the South but not to the anti-slavery group, which was now in a mood to push its advantage. The Council was at a crisis. If the platform were rejected the Southern men would bolt. The vote on the new platform was such that New York could turn the scale, and now again in 1856, as it had done in 1855, the delegation went with the South to keep the national organization unbroken. The National Council therefore closed its labors

<sup>1</sup> Account is from *Herald* and *Times* reports.

on the 21st, having come back to a stand of neutrality that meant non-interference with slavery.

On February 22nd, the National Convention organized. This body was made necessary by the fact that the National Council had no power to nominate a presidential ticket under the constitution of the secret order. In reality the Convention only continued the work begun by the National Council. Its membership corresponded to that of the presidential electors of the states. At its first day's session the Convention organized. Among its officers was Erastus Brooks, of New York, as vice-president. Then, as soon as organization was completed and debate opened, the never-ending slavery question filled the air again. By this time, apparently, the more violent anti-slavery men had determined upon a line of conduct. On the second day they moved the adoption of a new platform on the ground that a party convention could not be bound by the action of the National Council. The suggestion failed. On the third day the anti-slavery men moved an anti-slavery amendment to the platform, and on a test vote they were defeated 151 to 51. Then they left the convention, a small body of about two dozen. They had sympathizers who deferred a bolt until the party ticket should be selected. On the evening of February 25th, the ballot was taken on nominees. Millard Fillmore was the favorite of the South and was easily nominated. George Law stood next, but far behind Fillmore. The New York delegation on the first formal ballot stood twenty for Law, ten for Fillmore, four for Houston, and one absent. The Convention voted the vice-presidency to Andrew J. Donelson, of Tennessee, and then adjourned. Through the difficulties of the eight-days' struggle the course of the New York delegation had been skillfully taken, and the state organization could now face a presidential campaign for the election of a New York man. Only one or two of the New York delegates had joined that group of anti-slavery bolters who sought to disrupt the re-united party. After this convention it is

proper to give the nativist organization the name of "party" in a technical sense, for its nominations made the break distinct between the national organizations of the nativists and those of the Whigs and Democrats. After this convention a voter could hardly be an adherent of the entire nativist ticket, and yet profess any allegiance to the national Democratic or Whig Party. Up to this time a voter might have been both nativist and Democrat, or nativist and Whig.

Within the platform adopted by the National Council was a piece of legislation which needs notice as bearing on the changing constitution of the Know-Nothing system. It has been noted how, after the Philadelphia Council of June, 1855, the various grand councils of different states played havoc with the secret system of the Order. To undo this work was impossible, and it was condoned and legalized instead. Article XV. of the new platform declared: <sup>1</sup>

That each State Council shall have authority to annul their several constitutions so as to abolish the several degrees, and substitute a pledge of honor instead of other obligations, for fellowship and admission into the party.

This legislation did not abolish the secret system either in the National Council or in any state where it had been retained. It merely permitted grand councils to act at their own discretion. The article was in no way mandatory. The Know-Nothing Order in New York state was unaffected and went on as before, a secret society working under the supervision of its Grand Council. As a fitting incident of this period of change into which the Know-Nothing Order was now passing came the retirement of James W. Barker from official leadership of the organization in New York. He and his friends were no longer an influence controlling the secret order. When the Grand Council met in annual session in February, 1856, his official term as grand president closed. In the previous December he had declared himself not a candidate for

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1856, February 22, p. 1.

re-election.<sup>1</sup> The Grand Council quietly replaced the old officers with new men.

The personality of James W. Barker dominated the Know-Nothing movement in New York state during its rise to power. The extraordinary expansion of the secret organization was made possible by his administrative genius, and during that expansion he was the great representative of the system which he controlled. Barker was an excellent type of the American citizen, with his interest in public movements, his abiding faith in American nationality and his energy of character. He was broad-minded and conservative at the same time, never a fanatic or an incendiary. As a nativist his sincerity was admitted by even his opponents. The life of Barker was like that of many other business men of the great city.<sup>2</sup> Born at White Plains, Westchester county, December 5, 1815, he grew up there in the country life until he became old enough to look for better fortune elsewhere. He came to New York city and secured a place as salesman in a dry-goods house, from whence he soon passed into a modest business of his own. He was engaged in the dry-goods trade until he retired in 1851 and opened an office for real-estate work. It was during his extended service in mercantile life that he formed a wide acquaintance and obtained an enviable reputation as a business man. It was in this time, too, that he became interested in church matters and in temperance work. It was probably in the secret orders of temperance that he first reached that acquaintance with the machinery of the lodge-room that served him in such good stead later. The rise of political nativism found him an earnest worker. He belonged to all the prominent societies of the nativist movement. His energy, sincerity and strength of purpose brought him very quickly to the front as a political

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1855, December 14, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> For biographical notes see *Herald*, 1869, June 27, p. 7. Also, Smith's *Pillars of the Temple*.

eader of nativism, and this position he never entirely lost, even after he lost personal control of the nativist organization. During the decadence of the American Party, Barker occasionally appeared in connection with the party work and he remained an upholder of the party till its end. In 1859 he left New York city and went to Pittsburgh to re-embark in the dry-goods business. Here he built up a successful interest which he kept until his death. In 1867 illness forced him to retire from active business effort for a time, but in 1868 he accepted the presidency of an insurance company in New York and kept in touch with business life. He died suddenly at Rahway, New Jersey, on June 26, 1869. He was, at the time of his death, the head of a small organization which sought to revive the old Know-Nothing system under a new name.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CAMPAIGN OF 1856 IN NEW YORK

THE annual session of the Know-Nothing Grand Council, at which the Barker control was finally thrown off, convened on February 26, 1856, at Canandaigua.<sup>1</sup> In the absence of the grand president, then engaged in president-making at Philadelphia, a temporary chairman called the session to order. The principal work of the first day was the reception of credentials. When organization was completed the Council voted a ratification of the new Fillmore and Donelson ticket. On the 27th the Council adopted the new national platform and then passed to debate on a proposal to abandon the secret system in New York. The suggestion was put aside. Next came the annual election of officers. The grand president's place was first voted to Lyman Odell, of Livingston, the unsuccessful nominee for speaker of the Assembly, but Odell declined it, whereupon it was voted to Stephen Sammons of Montgomery, one of the long-tried workers of the secret movement. The place of grand vice-president seems to have gone to George Denniston, of Steuben. For grand secretary, J. Stanley Smith, of Cayuga, was chosen. This election probably closed the work of the session.

The Know-Nothings now faced a new campaign and one which would thoroughly test the strength of the organization. The presidency of the nation and the governorship of the state were the prizes for which the New York branch of the party would work. National and state considerations were therefore mingled in the plans of the year. In the national contest:

<sup>1</sup> Account from *Herald* reports.

the Whig Party was practically defunct and its place would be taken in years to come by either the American or the Republican Party. The campaign of 1856 would do much to decide which of the two was to be the party of the future. In the state campaign the same problem of the permanence of party was to be worked out in a somewhat narrower field. Looking forward to the national contest from the month of February, 1856, the advantage appeared to be on the side of the nativist party; for while the Democracy was divided on the issues of the day and the new Republican movement was not yet organized for effective national work, the Americans were in the field with their issues plainly stated, their national organization re-formed and the anti-slavery element of the party held in check. Looking forward to the state contest from the same standpoint, the outlook was a little less favorable on account of the energy and aggressiveness of the Seward coalition in New York. Political leaders realized by this time that the slavery issue was all-pervasive. It was thrusting itself forward in every political organization of the day and was the great disturbing factor in all calculations. It was to the popular interest in this issue that the Republican leaders addressed themselves and their political future would depend upon the strength of the popular response to their efforts. The proper course of the Know-Nothings, who had nothing to gain and much to lose by anti-slavery feeling, was to minimize the Republican influence and keep the ideas of nativism in the popular mind until the force of anti-Southern feeling could spend itself. The actual fact that the Know-Nothing Order was losing ground in New York state was not plainly apparent in the spring of 1856. The exodus from its secret councils was not yet great enough to attract attention, and although the flimsy veil of mystery was rent, yet the secret machinery of the Order ground on unchecked and uncomplaining. Unlike other states, New York had remained faithful to its secret system in politics, and in the local spring



elections of 1856 it won victories on all sides. This in itself was an evidence of real strength.

The latent weakness of the Know-Nothing organization was the existence of a strong anti-slavery feeling among its own membership. This feeling was a constant source of danger, and in the campaign of the year it was roused to action as a result of the ambitions of George Law, the rich contractor. The presidential aspirations of Law were promoted by a shrewd newspaper man named Scoville, who, after the failure of the Law canvass in the regular national convention, placed himself in touch with the dissatisfied minority and planned anew for a nomination for his patron.<sup>1</sup> The New York organization had practically held aloof from the bolt made by the anti-slavery element in the Philadelphia Convention of February, 1856, and its adhesion to the Fillmore ticket was undisturbed until the supporters of Law began their work. Without the efforts of Scoville there would certainly have been individual repudiations of the Fillmore ticket, like that of Col. Seymour, the Know-Nothing state engineer, but the scheme of the Law clique was to organize the anti-slavery element of the Order behind a new presidential ticket. The signs of this movement appeared in March.<sup>2</sup> It soon found ample support, because the Fillmore nomination was really distasteful to those persons who sympathized closely with the anti-Southern idea. As president Fillmore had signed the Fugitive Slave Act and as candidate in 1856 he was believed to be a Southern hope. Law was not especially desired as a candidate. In fact he probably never had the remotest chance of a presidential nomination. He was a convenient figure-head and possibly a source of supplies for the mischief-makers of the Order. The faction that used Law's name were properly styled at the time "Anti-

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1856, November 25, p. 4. This story of Law's canvass bears plain marks of editorial spite, but it seems reliable.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1856, March 22, p. 8.

Fillmore men." Sometimes also they were called North Americans and their opponents South Americans, to indicate their supposed sectional sympathies. On April 10th the Anti-Fillmore men were gratified by a call for a new American national convention, issued by the bolters of the Philadelphia Convention.<sup>1</sup> This was their opportunity. In various portions of the state the anti-slavery element now gathered itself together at a hint from the leaders and chose delegates to a state convention of May 29th. It does not appear that this distinctly schismatic movement was opposed by the new grand officers of the secret order. The Anti-Fillmore men went on unhindered. Their convention at Albany on May 29th organized itself under the presidency of D. N. Wright, of Westchester.<sup>2</sup> An anti-slavery platform was adopted, a state committee created and a delegation of thirty-five members named to represent the state in the schismatic national convention called to meet at New York city on June 12th. This state convention was the formal organization of the Anti-Fillmore element as a separate political group in the state. Its members were not, however, seceders from the Know-Nothing Order. Their convention did not purport to be a grand council or to legislate for the secret order. The proposal of one of its members to organize a rival grand council met such expression of dissent that it was withdrawn. The convention was only a medium through which to formulate the views of the anti-slavery Know-Nothings.

The New York Know-Nothings were falling into organized factions when the regular annual session of the National Council came in June. The proceedings of that meeting did not, however, add any features to the political situation. It was a business session largely.<sup>3</sup> The Council met at New York

<sup>1</sup> Text of call in *Herald*, 1856, May 1, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Account from *Herald* and *Times*.

<sup>3</sup> Account from *Herald*.

city on June 3d, and after organization passed into debate upon the merits of secrecy. It finally decided to abolish the secrecy of its own sessions. Then it formally ratified the Fillmore and Donelson ticket, and passed on to the election of new officers for the following year. On the third day of the session the Council appointed a national executive committee and an advisory committee, and adjourned. In the election of national officers, E. B. Bartlett, of Kentucky, was re-elected to be National President. Erastus Brooks, of New York, was made National Vice-President. The election of the latter was a compliment to his prominence in the New York organization. After the overthrow of the Barker clique, Brooks had come to the front as leader of the conservative nativist element in the Know-Nothing movement. His interest in the *New York Express*, which was now the leading mouthpiece of the American Party, and his reputation as champion of nativism, made him looked to as a proper representative of the movement. For the next few years Brooks was the acknowledged head of the state party. The act of the National Council in abolishing its own secrecy needs notice also. In the preceding February the Council had legalized the disuse of secrecy by the grand councils. In the present event it legalized its own disuse of it. At the same time it did not attempt to interfere with the state councils in the matter, and no state was affected by the new law. Its text was as follows:<sup>1</sup>

*Resolved*, That we present the American Party to the country, not as an Order, not as a Society, but as a broad, comprehensive, conservative national party, standing, like other political parties, openly before the country, inviting to its fellowship all who adopt its sentiments and participate in its convictions. But nothing herein shall be construed as to interfere with any organs which the party in any state, for its government, may have adopted or choose to adopt.

In the politics of New York state the chief event of June was not the National Council, but rather the Anti-Fillmore national convention of June 12th at New York city.<sup>2</sup> It was

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1856, June 5, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Account from *Herald*.

for this gathering that the anti-slavery element had prepared itself, and before which the adherents of George Law would urge, with more or less sincerity, his nomination to the presidency. The convention would represent a rift in the unity of the great nativist party, and might bring about a disruption of the national organization. On this latter account it was watched by the whole country. The convention organized on June 12th with a full New York delegation, from which the convention chose Jerome B. Bailey to be a vice-president and Robert Frazier to be a secretary of the session. On the second day an appeal was made to the police for protection against the mob of Fillmore men who gathered about the convention hall to show their resentment. This was the day on which a friendly letter from the Republican national committee was read before the delegates, revealing a relation between the Anti-Fillmore movement and the Republican. On the third day, when the convention proceeded to the nomination of a presidential ticket, it became clear that the convention managers were planning to annex the Anti-Fillmore movement to the Republican Party, for Law was set aside entirely, and the contest lay between N. P. Banks and J. C. Fremont, both typical Republicans. Most of the New York delegates supported Banks. On the fourth day the New Jersey men led a bolt in protest against the Republican aspect of the convention. A small group of delegates left the hall, but the regular work of the convention went on until the ticket was completed. Banks and Johnston were the nominees. The convention then adjourned for a few days with the hope that its ticket would be endorsed by the Republican national convention at Philadelphia. That hope failed, and the convention re-assembled on the 20th to substitute Fremont for Banks on the Anti-Fillmore ticket. The events of June 16th closed Fillmore's path to the White House. They destroyed even the nominal unity of the American Party, and declared that Fillmore must not receive the support of anti-slavery voters. The power of the

national nativist party broke at this point. In the state of New York the anti slavery element of the secret order was committed to the new nominees by its share in the Anti-Fillmore convention, but some of its members turned back from the Fremont ticket. One or two of the delegates of the convention re-pledged themselves to Fillmore. One or two others joined in nominating the short-lived Stockton and Raynor ticket.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the action of the New York convention had the effect of facing many Know-Nothings toward the Republican Party in New York state. The cleavage line in the secret order showed distinctly after this between Fillmore Know-Nothings and Fremont Know-Nothings. George Law was expelled from the Order by vote of the council to which he belonged.<sup>2</sup> It was the penalty for his ambition.

The anti-slavery issue moved steadily to the front during the summer of 1856. As the existing organizations of party had broken down before nativism in previous years, so now they broke again at the impact of organized anti-slavery. The phenomenon of the anti-slavery revolt in the Know-Nothing organization was duplicated by a similar movement in the Democracy. In July a state convention of Radical Democrats met at Syracuse, and while earnestly insisting on their own Democracy, endorsed the Republican national ticket.<sup>3</sup> The Fremont ticket by the end of July was assured of support from professed Know-Nothings and from professed Democrats. Republicanism was now strong in New York state. The nativists could no longer feel confident of success in November, in view of these additions to the Republican forces. Political lines were being re-drawn, with slavery as the test of position, and the secret movement was losing by the changes. The campaign accordingly became a desperate

<sup>1</sup> Nominated by bolters from the Anti-Fillmore convention.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, 1856, July 14, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Herald*, 1856, July 25, p. 1.

struggle in which nativism tried to retard and Republicanism tried to encourage the current which was setting toward the newer movement. This accounts for the form which the campaign arguments took in New York state. Instead of discussing the issues of the day upon their merits, the political press conducted a series of assaults upon the respective party nominees. The Know-Nothing papers ceaselessly rang the changes upon the charge that Fremont was a Roman Catholic in his religious relations, and if elected, would aid papal influence. This story was used to deter nativists from leaving the fold. The Republican papers, on their side, urged that Fillmore was not a real Know-Nothing, having never attended a council session in his life, that he had been nominated by convention intrigue rather than by popular voice, and that he was forced upon the Order by pro-slavery men. These arguments were intended to justify secessions from the Fillmore organization.

Notwithstanding the divisions that had grown up among the Know-Nothings of New York, the Order was still a single society governed by a single Grand Council. But the restiveness of the anti-slavery element under the official leadership of Fillmore men indicated danger. The official endorsement of Fillmore by the February Grand Council could hardly go unattacked. It became evident that a clash of factional strife would diversify the August session of the grand body. Many councils chose delegates to this Council who were known to be opposed to the Fillmore ticket. On August 26th, when the Council came together at Syracuse, the grand-president met the problem by taking measures to avert trouble.<sup>1</sup> He secured the admission of Fillmore delegates to the Council, but upon some pretext rejected the credentials of those delegates who were known to be against Fillmore. In this way he secured unanimity in the council-hall, but at the same time he created an angry minority on the outside. It was this outside group which organized as a state convention on the 27th

<sup>1</sup> Council account from *Times* reports.

and solemnly declared itself to be the real head of the nativist party in the state. It repudiated the regular State Council because "its unconstitutional and illegal action has freed Americans from all obligation and allegiance to it or its decrees." The seceders' convention did not attempt to constitute itself a grand council, but apparently abandoned secrecy. Such action as it took all tended toward drawing off nativists to the Republican movement rather than holding them in touch with the old secret organization. For instance, the convention repudiated Fillmore and voted an endorsement of Fremont. Then it called a state convention of Americans to meet in Syracuse on the same date in September on which the Republican state convention was to be held there. All this showed in advance the finality of the secession. Meanwhile the regular Grand Council held a two-days session. On August 26th it organized, listened to reports and formed committees. Next day it endorsed Fillmore and Donelson, appointed a new state committee and issued the usual call for a state nominating convention. The new state committee of ten members included Elam R. Jewett, of Erie; L. Sprague Parsons, of Albany; James M. Miller, of New York; John Gray, of Orange; Orson Root, of Schoharie; J. A. Smith, of Washington; Amos H. Prescott, of Herkimer; Abram Lawrence, of Schuyler; Lyman Odell, of Livingston, and O. C. Wright, of Niagara. These men would manage the state campaign. The Grand Council adjourned, having accomplished as its greatest work the splitting off of that disaffected element which could not be depended upon to support the nominees of the Order.

The next act in this drama of successive conventions was the session of the North Americans on September 17th, as called by the anti-slavery element which Grand President Sammons had forced out of the August Grand Council. The attempt of the seceders to organize a split in the Order seems to have been a failure: at least the Republican press does not exult over any

effects of it. The seceders had grandly declared their convention to be the real head of the American organization, but it was a head without a body. A delegate elected by a Know-Nothing council had no power to violate the constitution of the state society nor to bind his own council to an unlawful act. Although the seceders of August had the sympathy of a certain dissatisfied element, it does not appear that they were supported in their extreme acts. Their convention met, nevertheless, at Syracuse on September 17th,<sup>1</sup> while the Republican state convention was in session there. It organized with William W. Campbell, of Otsego, as presiding officer. Col. Silas Seymour, the Know-Nothing state engineer, then offered a resolution that the convention accept and support the Republican state ticket. This brought violent debate in which the fact developed that not all the convention were ready to be merged into Republicanism, despite their leanings that way. The majority ruled, however. Seymour's motion was carried. Then came that almost inevitable feature of political conventions in this memorable year of 1856. The minority bolted and called a new convention. The gyrations of "the popular will" at this period are not without a certain amusing side in their revelations of wavering and uncertainty among men. At the same time the long list of conventions, counter-conventions, bolts and secessions shows interestingly how swiftly changing was the political structure and how the members of it were re-arranging themselves in obedience to new forces. It was a confusion out of which a new order of things was to come.

The whole story of the conventions of 1856, so far as it concerns political nativism, may be condensed in two statements. First, the slavery issue entered the national organization of the Know-Nothing Order and destroyed its unity. Second, the slavery issue entered the New York state organization of the Order and weakened it without destroying its unity. In every convention the fact was shown that the anti-Southern movement was gaining at the expense of nativism.

<sup>1</sup> Convention account from *Herald*.



On September 23d came the final convention of the list. The regular American state convention met at Rochester, and at the same time there also met the convention called by the bolters of September 17th. Thanks to the events of the August Grand Council the anti-slavery element was practically absent from both bodies. The repentant bolters from the Syracuse gathering made overtures to the regular body and were welcomed back on their tacit confession of error. Under the presidency of F. W. Walker, of Queens, the 121 delegates of the erring minority held their session open until the regular state ticket was chosen. Then they voted to support it and went home. The regular state convention had several hundred delegates present. It organized under the presidency of James W. Barker and passed to the nomination of a state ticket for the fall election. For the governorship the delegates were of one mind and the choice was made by viva voce vote. On other offices ballots were taken. The completed ticket was as follows :

Governor . . . . .	Erastus Brooks, of New York.
Lieut.-Governor . . . . .	Lyman Odell, of Livingston.
Canal Commissioner . . . . .	Amos H. Prescott, of Herkimer
Prison Inspector . . . . .	James P. Sanders, of Westchester.
Clerk, Court of Appeals . . . . .	Alexander Mann, of Monroe.

All of these were men who had become known for their work in aid of the Know-Nothing cause. Brooks was editor of the leading Know-Nothing newspaper of the state, and had for a year been looked upon as the logical nominee of his party for the governorship.<sup>1</sup> Odell was the nominee of the nativist legislators in the recent speakership contest at Albany. Sanders was the unsuccessful candidate in 1854 for the same office to which he was now nominated. Prescott and Mann were local leaders. Prescott had served in the legislature and was on the state committee of his party. The nominees were

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1855, November 7, p. 4.

all good representative men. Besides the state ticket, the convention also formed an electoral ticket to represent the Fillmore and Donelson forces. The members follow :

Daniel Ullman,	Silvester Gilbert,
Jesse C. Dann,	Charles B. Freeman,
William H. Vanderbilt,	William Greenman,
Roswell Graves,	Theodore S. Faxton,
Joseph H. Toone,	Alexander McDowell,
Benedict Lewis, Jr.,	Samuel J. Holly,
Gilbert C. Deane,	Henry H. Babcock,
Henry Grinnell,	B. Davis Noxon,
Alexander M. C. Smith,	John Knowles, Jr.,
Richard S. Gray,	Barzillai Slosson,
Abram Hatfield,	Lewis H. Culver.
Andrew Conger,	Truman Warner,
Rufus W. Watson,	Jonathan Child,
Charles Whiting,	Abel Webster,
Orsamus Eaton,	John T. Bush,
Leonard G. Ten Eyck,	Nelson Randall,
Daniel A. Bullard,	James G. Johnson.
Henry N. Brush.	

After the Rochester convention the state campaign began. The national campaign was already in full swing at this time, and up to election day it completely overshadowed the state contest. There was no new issue in the state administration to be decided and nothing important to draw away attention from the great national issue of the relations between the North and South. The latter was the real point of the whole struggle. The work of the anti-Southern leaders had been successful in forcing their issue to the front and practically excluding nativism from the popular interest. Nativism might yet, perhaps, be a potent issue in some of the country districts where the Know-Nothing organization was a recent invader, but in the older regions of nativist work the doctrines of the movement had lost their hold to a great extent. Thousands of the voters who supported nativism in 1855 were turned into the Republican column. Many of the newspapers

which had fought against the Seward coalition in the former campaign now joined the current of the hour and worked for the Fremont ticket or else for the Democracy. The Whig Party was gone, leaving a remembrance of itself in the group of Old-line Whigs, whose state convention of August 14th endorsed Fillmore.<sup>1</sup> But this remnant of the Whig Party was only a shadow. The Republican organization was making good its claim to the place that the Americans had sought to reach, that of permanent antagonist to the Democracy in place of the old Whig Party. The movement was showing itself to be a real party. Fillmore's candidacy had been hopeful of success before the anti-Fillmore convention of June. After that event the futility of his prospects became manifest as the campaign went on. The presidential question settled down to the choice between Fremont and Buchanan. The nativist vote was appealed to for help by both Republicans and Democrats, each side trying to profit by the nativist antipathy for its rival. While Democrats worked upon the nativist hatred of Seward and sectionalism, the Republican press worked upon the nativist dislike of the Democracy. There seems to have been some slight effect of these efforts, for the nativist presidential ticket ran 5,000 votes lower than the state ticket. The averages on state tickets were as follows:<sup>2</sup>

## King-Selden ticket:

Republican Party . . . . .	} 266,300 votes.
Radical Democrats . . . . .	
Anti-Fillmore men. . . . .	

## Parker-Vanderbilt ticket:

Democratic Party . . . . .	197,200 votes.
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## Brooks Odell ticket:

Nativist party. . . . .	} 129,700 votes.
Whig Party . . . . .	

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1856, August 15, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> From official canvass broadside. Liberty Party omitted, having cast about 160 votes in the state.

This election showed conclusively that the nativist political movement was on the wane. In 1855 it had been strong enough to cast 34 per cent. of the total vote of the state, while now it cast only 22 per cent. Such a loss was appalling to those who had hoped for the future success of the American organization. It showed that organized nativism could not withstand the steady pressure of the slavery issue. It showed that the backing of popular favor was being withdrawn from under the fabric of the Know-Nothing Order. The loss to the nativist party in New York was not in any one section, but was distributed all over the state. In a few counties there was a slight increase of the nativist vote over that of 1855, but it was not significant. The election was a Republican victory. On the state ticket the Know-Nothings were weaker than either of their rivals. They elected only eight assemblymen to the legislature and only two members of Congress. In the coming year the nativist organization would have no influence whatever either in state administration or in public legislation. They had failed to harvest any results from the power won by them in the campaign of 1855. The state canvass showed the following poll and percentages for governor in the counties of the state:

	<i>Per cent.</i>	<i>Vote.</i>		<i>Per cent.</i>	<i>Vote.</i>
Albany . . . . .	31 . .	5,655	Essex . . . . .	20 . .	1,011
Alleghany . . . . .	11 . .	987	Franklin . . . . .	30 . .	1,260
Broome . . . . .	11 . .	833	Fulton-Hamilton . . . . .	21 . .	1,178
Cattaraugus . . . . .	14 . .	1,064	Genesee . . . . .	20 . .	1,216
Cayuga . . . . .	19 . .	2,091	Greene . . . . .	26 . .	1,555
Chautauqua . . . . .	19 . .	2,142	Herkimer . . . . .	17 . .	1,355
Chemung . . . . .	15 . .	796	Jefferson . . . . .	9 . .	1,090
Chenango . . . . .	13 . .	1,205	Kings . . . . .	29 . .	8,777
Clinton . . . . .	23 . .	1,388	Lewis . . . . .	11 . .	495
Columbia . . . . .	23 . .	2,005	Livingston . . . . .	29 . .	2,132
Cortland . . . . .	12 . .	658	Madison . . . . .	11 . .	958
Delaware . . . . .	23 . .	1,981	Monroe . . . . .	21 . .	3,197
Dutchess . . . . .	18 . .	2,023	Montgomery . . . . .	28 . .	1,744
Erie . . . . .	28 . .	5,552	New York . . . . .	28 . .	21,423

Niagara . . . . .	26 . . 2,025	Schoharie . . . . .	25 . . 1,700
Oneida . . . . .	9 . . 1,746	Schuyler . . . . .	16 . . 641
Onondaga . . . . .	12 . . 1,994	Seneca . . . . .	26 . . 1,311
Ontario . . . . .	27 . . 2,283	Steuben . . . . .	17 . . 2,116
Orange . . . . .	21 . . 2,209	Suffolk . . . . .	31 . . 1,951
Orleans . . . . .	27 . . 1,502	Sullivan . . . . .	39 . . 2,068
Oswego . . . . .	11 . . 1,391	Tioga . . . . .	8 . . 464
Otsego . . . . .	12 . . 1,310	Tompkins . . . . .	21 . . 1,470
Putnam . . . . .	19 . . 477	Ulster . . . . .	40 . . 4,739
Queens . . . . .	34 . . 2,304	Warren . . . . .	21 . . 818
Rensselaer . . . . .	35 . . 4,913	Washington . . . . .	24 . . 2,059
Richmond . . . . .	29 . . 957	Wayne . . . . .	17 . . 1,568
Rockland . . . . .	30 . . 937	Westchester . . . . .	29 . . 3,750
St. Lawrence . . . . .	11 . . 1,422	Wyoming . . . . .	10 . . 642
Saratoga . . . . .	28 . . 2,685	Yates . . . . .	9 . . 389
Schenectady . . . . .	34 . . 1,258		

The lesson of the canvass of 1856 was easily read by the leaders of political nativism. It told them that their movement was dying as a national party and as a state organization. It told them emphatically that the new Republican Party was in the ascendant, and that Know-Nothing voters were deserting nativism to join the new favorite. Their fight to restrain the exodus from the secret councils had been only partially successful. If political nativism in New York hoped to hold itself in place as a factor in state politics it must find some new source of strength, either in principles or organization. Some voices were raised to ask the abolition of the secret system, while others asked a new platform, and still others advised a return to the old method of endorsing nominees of other parties. The work of change, if any there was to be, would fall upon the Grand Council of February, 1857.

The Grand Council met at Troy on February 24th and after organization turned first to the election of officers for the ensuing year. Friends of James W. Barker proposed to put him again at the head of the secret order, but the Council chose Jesse C. Dann, of Erie, as president. For vice-president the choice of Henry B. Northrup, of Washington,

and for secretary that of C. D. Brigham, of Albany, were made. That element which desired to reform the Order and improve its political prospects by an alteration or destruction of the secret system soon found voice in the Council proceedings. At the second day's session a delegate from Brooklyn opened an attack on the secret system, but the debate which began was interrupted by the report of the committee on platform which had been laboring to satisfy the demands for improvement in the American Party principles. Ever since the adoption of the "Binghamton platform" in August, 1855, that document had been the formula of American principles in New York. But now nativism needed to declare itself again as to its position on the slavery issue. The committee accordingly brought in a new platform which re-stated the old neutral position of the Order as to slavery and closed with a savage criticism of the Republican leaders who represented that issue. The Grand Council voted to adopt the platform as reported. Then the debate swung back again to the subject of the secret ritual. Delegate Parsons, of Albany, offered a resolution abolishing all oaths, obligations and degrees in the party. This resolution seems to have passed, but not for immediate effect. Instead, a committee of five headed by Parsons was given the duty of reporting a revised and simplified ritual to the next Grand Council. With this action the Council left the subject. Next came the election of two delegates to the National Council. Then after a resolution denouncing Senator Seward for certain compliments to the foreign element, the body adjourned. The demand for changes in the Know-Nothing system had been juggled at this session instead of approved. The Grand Council made no change whatever in the secret system. By seeming acquiescence in the demands for changes, these demands had really been put off to another day, while the secret system remained as before. The new platform of the party was as follows:

*Resolved*, That we emphatically affirm the Binghamton Platform, consisting of eight sections.

[Here follow those sections in full.]

*Resolved*, That while the American Party in the State of New York tolerates free discussion and free expression of individual opinions on the various political questions of the day, yet under every political complication the pure question of Americanism shall take precedence of all others.

*Resolved*, That we are now, as we ever have been, unalterably opposed to the extension of slavery into territory from which, by the Missouri Compromise, it had been excluded forever.

*Resolved*, That we are opposed to the use of the power of the general government to extend the institution of slavery, and are willing that the natural laws which govern emigration shall decide that great question without the least interference of federal authority.

*Resolved*, That the recent exposure of corruption at Washington, the gross venality of political leaders and the present effort of the State Senate to strip the American Canal Board of its power, are in direct violation of the spirit of the Constitution and reveal the objects and character of those who profess to be apostles of humanity and freedom, and should open the ears of every honest man to his true position while aiding to elevate them to places of trust and power.

The National Council for which the New York Grand Council elected delegates met at Louisville in June, 1857.<sup>1</sup> Among its members were Erastus Brooks as National Vice-President, with James W. Barker and Stephen B. Cushing as regular delegates from New York. The defeat of Fillmore had ended the political usefulness of the National Council, and since its value as an administrative head of a secret society was gone long before, the members now decided to close it forever. The national officers were elected for another year and a national committee was provided for with power to reconvene the Council if there seemed need of it in the near future. On June 3d the National Council adjourned *sine die* and with this act ended finally the national organization of the Know-Nothings, after a meteoric career of only three years. The Council never met again. In July, 1857, the National President appointed a national committee of thirteen members as the Council had provided.<sup>2</sup> New York was represented in it by

<sup>1</sup> *Herald* and *Times* reports.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1857, July 19, p. 4.

Erastus Brooks and James W. Barker, but it is not on record that the committee ever took any official action.

The final disbandment of the National Council was fresh in the minds of the New York Know-Nothings when the Grand Council met again for its semi-annual session in August at Brooklyn. There seem to be no available statistics as to the strength of the secret order at this time. In the earlier life of the Order the grand-president was accustomed to report the increase of membership from time to time, but during its decadence there was a reticence as to such facts that can be easily understood. The regular August session of 1857 began on the 25th. After organization the president delivered the annual address. Among other suggestions he advised that the whole system of council organization be dissolved, and that the Order become in form as well as in name a political party, governed only by committees and conventions. At the conclusion of his address the proposal came before the Council for consideration. The debate soon showed two ideas of change. Some desired with the grand-president to abolish the council system and with it the secret ritual, while others wished to keep the council system, but without the secret ritual. A delegate from Onondaga finally brought about a vote on the question of organization, and the council system was saved. This left the fate of the ritual yet undecided. The Parsons committee now reported on the simplified ritual which the preceding Council had empowered it to make. Since the February session the committee had formulated, printed and distributed to subordinate councils a new ritual. This new form was not wholly satisfactory and failed of adoption, and at the close of discussion the secret procedure of the Order was wholly abolished by formal vote. An order was also passed that in future the Grand Council should meet only once a year, in each successive August. Following is the text of the resolution that ended the secret system :<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1857, August 26, p. 1.



*Resolved*, That the oaths, obligations and degrees of this Order be dispensed with, and that hereafter members be admitted by signing the platform and resolutions passed by the State Council, and assenting to the following pledge: You do hereby promise upon the honor of an American to be true and faithful to the principles of the American Party.

This abolition of degrees and oaths took away all the ties of pledged brotherhood that had made the Know-Nothing Order a real fraternity of American citizens. The members of the American organization would not in future have any special duties toward their fellow-members, and since the existence of such duties is the essential feature of a brotherhood, the American organization would be henceforth only a non-secret society of the simplest type. After August 25, 1857, it is no longer proper to refer to the Know-Nothing Order as existent in New York. At the same time the vague term "Know-Nothing" as a synonym for "nativist" was very commonly used so long as any American organization existed. The abolition of the secret ritual received very little notice at the time it occurred, because its mystery had long since been stripped away by hostile critics. Nevertheless, the formal change made by the Council was an important landmark in the story of political nativism.

The peculiar system of secret political work which thus found its ending after seven years of energetic activity stands out in the history of the nation as an abnormal feature of American politics. It has been, during its life and since its death, subjected to bitter criticism, reproach and ridicule. Yet it is not to be dismissed with a gibe and a fling merely because it has passed away. The same influences that created it then still exist to-day. Within recent years the politics of New York state, and possibly also those of the nation, have felt the effects of a similar secret system. The influence of secret societies in American politics has, in fact, been almost continuous, though none other ever reached the gigantic growth attained by the great Know-Nothing society. The

latter stands out in such bold relief in the nation's history on account of the national character of its effort. Usually the secret organizations of the American people have been local in their efforts.

The end of the Know-Nothing secrecy in New York state is an appropriate point at which to review the nature of this system, whose success was so brilliant and so brief. It is well, by way of preface, to note that there was no necessary connection between the secret system in politics and the principles of nativism. Organized secrecy has been used to forward other than nativist doctrines, and nativist principles have been often promoted without the aid of secrecy.

What was the origin of the secret system? It was an effort to offset clannishness of one sort with a clannishness of another kind. There existed in the American community a minority group of persons who differed in race, thought, life and religion from the mass of their fellow-citizens, and who yet gained distinct advantages for themselves by acting together. The American-born population as a whole was not by nature clannish nor jealous of the foreign-born minority, but in a considerable portion of the natives both these feelings existed. The jealous element sought a medium of expression. Already there existed in the community a form of association called the secret society, which was essentially an artificial clan, founded on an artificial sense of brotherhood. The secret society system naturally offered itself and was accepted as an offset to the racial group. There was no proscriptive feature of the Know-Nothing clan which was not duplicated by the racial group to which it was opposed. The difference was that in the one case it was a matter of written rule, while in the other it was a matter of instinct.

Why did the system expand? In New York city it expanded because it furnished an easy remedy for the more objectionable forms of race-clannishness. In economic effort natives were at liberty to traffic with the foreign people or not as they

pleased, and could easily avoid contact when desirable. In social effort the native-born were equally free to seek or avoid social intercourse with the foreign element as preference might dictate. But in political effort the contact was unavoidable. If aliens were insolent in office and bullies at the polls, if they packed party primaries and made conventions farcical, the remedy was less easy to find. Some nativists believed in the remedy of meeting force with force, and from this plan, when carried out, came the riots of the great cities. More conservative men preferred a peaceable way of checking evils, and saw the means in the use of secret politics. Had the anti-foreign movement been an open one, it probably could never have attained strength; for every member would have been a marked man, denounced by his party, attacked at the polls and injured in his business. In the secret system the minority could act without exposing individuals. These facts explain local expansion, but they apply less to the state at large. In 1854, by a sudden leap, the secret system spread far beyond the bounds of local effort. It took a gigantic stride toward power as a state and national organization. This expansion requires a different explanation. The whole nativist movement in state and national affairs was a politicians' movement rather than a popular one. The leaders in politics welcomed the issue of nativism as an escape from the chaos that was growing in party conditions. They accepted with it the secret system because the two had necessarily at first to be taken together. The hold of the secret system on state and national politics was nevertheless insecure. In most cases the secret system was shaken off as soon as circumstances would permit. There is a double answer, then, to the question why the Know-Nothing Order spread. In the politics of the great cities the secret system expanded because it furnished a convenient medium for desired reform. In the politics of the nation and the states it expanded with the growing issues which it represented because at first it could not be separated from them.

Was the secret system a public danger? The Know-Nothing Order was a well-hated institution while it lived. Unsparring criticisms were launched against it by those whose plans it frustrated. Yet, in general, the critics were not specific in their charges. The personal respectability of the Order in New York state was unquestioned. It was never charged against the secret system that it was a refuge for the disorderly, the disreputable or the corrupt. In fact, the peculiar machinery of the Know-Nothing Order could hardly have been worked successfully except by intelligent, well-meaning and law-abiding men. The use of the ritual and the maintenance of discipline were conditioned upon these qualities. It is doubtful whether a society of this sort could ever have been a public danger by reason of its personnel. Commonly the attacks on the Know-Nothing Order were directed against its secrecy of action. Occasionally the secrecy of membership was touched upon, but little stress was laid on this latter feature, since it was largely a matter of individual taste whether or not a person should avow his connection. As to secrecy of action, the critics declared in general phrases that it was dangerous to the common weal for large bodies of men to act in secret on political matters. At the same time this dictum was not supported by specific references to abuses arising from secret action. The complaint originated chiefly among those politicians whose schemes were upset by Know-Nothing secrecy, and who appealed in self-defence to the jealousy of American voters. The apologists of secrecy answered pertinently that political party committees were secret in action and no one expected them to be otherwise; that a Know-Nothing council was a political committee sworn to uphold American institutions, and that it used secrecy for a certain good and unconcealed reason. This reason, they explained, was the necessity of fighting the secret machinations of the Roman church with like subtlety. Inadequate to the real facts as this reason was, it passed as an

excuse. Logical attacks on secrecy were made difficult, also, from the obvious fact that secrecy was seemingly justified when it secured a plurality of votes. Viewed from the standpoint of later years, it can be seen that the real danger of sustained secrecy in politics lies partly in the fact that issues and men may be withheld by it from the public scrutiny, and be put in power without due debate, and partly, also, in the fact that organized secrecy gives undue influence to minorities. Yet even these objections hardly hold against an organization in state politics, for a sustained secrecy of men and measures in a political contest extending over a wide area is practically impossible. They hold good as to local politics. It is right that any issue which seeks recognition should let its character and support be known, so that the opposition may array itself for a fair fight. The system of political secrecy, then, would seem to be a real public danger, though practically limited by the inability to sustain secrecy with a popular large support.

Did the secret system enslave the voter? It is a favorite charge against secret societies of all sorts that they take away the free-will of their members. The Know-Nothing Order was criticised on this ground, and its oaths and higher degrees were cited as evidence. The general charge of limiting the free-will of individuals is one to which nearly every organization, secret or non-secret, must plead guilty. Else there were little virtue in organization. In its general form, therefore, the charge is misleading when used as a reproach. When the attack upon societies is made upon the specific point of using oaths, then it can be considered more closely. In practice, all secret societies are voluntary societies whose members may withdraw and lay aside both the active duties imposed upon them by the terms of their membership, and the advantages connected with that membership. Secret society oaths seldom refer to this right of withdrawal, but are usually phrased upon the tacit assumption that no withdrawal will occur. Wherever an oath of association attempts, therefore,

to regulate the action of members while outside of active membership, it is contradictory to practice. The Know-Nothing oath of the first degree was not so phrased as to be perpetually binding. This was the oath taken by the ordinary voter who came into the society. He was in no way bound, therefore, to limit his own free-will, except so long as he might choose to do so by keeping his membership. With regard to those Know-Nothings who progressed to the second or third degrees, the case was somewhat different. Here the member bound himself to keep the oath "through life." By theory, the taker of these degrees lost his free-will for the rest of his life, whereas, by practice, he threw off his limitations by simple withdrawal from the organization. The charge against the higher degrees was that they gathered to themselves the real control of the society, and left the general membership only the power to follow the self-elected leaders. The actual fact in the Know-Nothing Order was that the first-degree men were the ones who decided all definite political action. The higher-degree men had no power to coerce the general membership in any way, and among all the complaints that were voiced against the Know-Nothing system in New York at various times by dissatisfied members of the Order, there is nowhere an allegation that the higher degrees were possessed of undue power. There was one slight element of truth in the charge against the higher-degree men. It was this, that in the Know-Nothing Order, as in all societies, there were cliques of leaders, and that these cliques usually held the upper degrees. This condition of affairs was precisely what the Know-Nothing system desired. It was intended that the real leaders of the Order should be tagged and labeled, so to speak, that they might be recognized and treated as such.

What were the results of the secret system? Since the machinery of political effort was only a medium, it was to be expected that the results produced would follow very closely the character of the group who used the machinery. The

leaders of the Know-Nothing society during its rise to power were earnest and sincere. Their machinery gave the well-intentioned voter more power than he received from the great political parties. The secret Order brought new men to the front and did something in the way of purifying politics. It made its mistakes, as was natural, but on the whole its influence upon politics was good. At the height of its power it fell more into the hands of professional politicians, some of them being men of its own creation. It was then that intrigue and unfairness destroyed the virtues of the secret system. Yet, from first to last, with all its errors and weaknesses, the record made by the secret system in New York state was not unfavorable to it. It did not encourage lawlessness, corrupt the franchise or stifle public opinion, and all these offenses were chargeable against the open political organizations of the day.

Can a secret movement be successful? There seems to be nothing to prevent a repetition in American politics of the phenomena of a secret political movement. Under favoring conditions some well-organized society might meet as startling a growth and sudden success as did the secret order of the Know-Nothings. There are several conditions, however, which make it very doubtful whether such a system could be other than transitory. The preservation of strict secrecy by a large organization is difficult if its enemies are active. It would be practically impossible for any political society to keep its character or aims secret for more than one campaign. The most that it could do would be to keep secret its methods of work. More important for its success than aught else would be its ability to hold the confidence of the public. It is safe to say that no secret movement in the political field could avoid the chill of jealous suspicion from the moment that it made its demand for recognition. By patriotic professions that suspicion might be held in check, but it would be a burden which would have to be borne. The inevitable tendency of such movement would be, as it was in the Know-Nothing

Order, ultimately to sacrifice the element of secrecy in some moment of need, in order to appease criticism and gain support. This has been the experience of the secret societies which have endeavored to organize voters. The instinct of the American people may be said to be in the main opposed to secret organization for political effort. In the constant warfare of politics every voter is a combatant, and no man likes an opponent whose strength or whose motives he cannot gauge.



## CHAPTER IX

### LOCAL NATIVISM IN NEW YORK CITY, 1854-1860

THE local history of the nativist movement in New York city possesses a special interest not attached to its existence in any other part of the state. It was here that it had its origin and its greatest real strength. Probably there was no other place in the state where the movement was so largely based upon actual antipathy for the foreign element which it desired to limit. In New York city, too, lay the strength of the earlier governing cliques of the Know-Nothings and kindred orders. Their personal influence in the secret associations to which they belonged kept them in their place. In the local columns of the New York press can be read more clearly than anywhere else, the evolution of the secret movement and the causes of its decay.

The story of nativism as a local force in New York city may be taken up again in the summer of 1854, when it was differentiated from the wider interests of the secret order by the entry of the latter into the field of state politics under the direction of President Barker. The managers of nativism at this time were not the less attentive to New York city on account of having the whole state to engage their attention. On the contrary, their personal interest lay more in city politics than in state affairs. The situation in the local politics of New York city at the opening of the campaign of 1854 was very similar to that in the state at large. There were two old parties broken up into factional groups, and three organized movements, striving to gain recognition for their respective issues. Anti-slavery had no organization devoted to it in

local politics. The three local issues were nativism, temperance and municipal reform. Each one of these was organized and insistent. Of this trio, nativism was undoubtedly the strongest when the campaign began. The nativist secret societies in the city were now in their time of growth. Their members were enthusiastic and sincere. Bound to the doctrine of political action by the strong tie of an oath, the organized nativists were an important element within the lines of every other political organization. They dominated the Whig and temperance organizations. They were strong in the Hard-Shell Democracy and in the city-reform movement. Even in the Soft-Shell Democracy, with its predilection for the foreign vote, the nativist influence made itself heeded by the party managers. Not merely in numbers, but in organization as well was nativism strong. In July, 1854, the Know-Nothing managers created the machinery of the city committee with its descending hierarchy of executive workers. Over each ward was a council-president, over each election district was a superintendent, and over each ten voters was an assistant pledged to muster his men at the polls.<sup>1</sup> This system was calculated to poll every vote that was at the service of the Order. In this effort the Order was supported by the O. U. A., whose leaders desired their executive system to work in harmony with that of the Know-Nothings. The Executive Convention of the O. U. A. on August 14th also parceled out the executive members into ward groups for more effective action than before.<sup>2</sup>

Under the inspiration of expected success a new step in the evolution of secret politics developed. Hitherto it had been the idea of both the secret orders to await quietly the action of the older parties in local politics, and then, after the party action had made tickets, to endorse or condemn the various nominees. The original plan of organized nativism was to act

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1854, October 30, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Executive records of O. U. A.

as a monitor of the old parties by using the balance of power. Now, finding themselves possessed of unaccustomed strength, the leaders of nativism took up a new plan. They contemplated taking the initiative themselves. They would make their nominations in the secret societies, and then use the machinery of the older parties to bring these nominations before the world. By the close of August the daily press had learned that Barker and other leaders of the Know-Nothings were working to secure secret nominations, which were to be ratified by the Whig city convention, packed with Know-Nothings for that special purpose.<sup>1</sup> Barker desired the mayoralty. The nativist vote was in August estimated at 8,000 to 10,000,\* sufficient under the circumstances to elect whichever party nominee it might choose to endorse.<sup>3</sup> If, therefore, a Know-Nothing nominee could be foisted upon any of the evenly-balanced party groups, he was certain of election. The matter was complicated, too, with state politics, for there was a scheme on foot by which the nativists and Silver-Gray Whigs were to capture the Whig state convention, and to that end the nativists in New York city must control the Whig primaries. To meet this danger of nativist domination the older party managers bestirred themselves. At the Democratic primaries, which came first, the Know-Nothing influence was noticeable, but not threatening. At the Whig primaries of September 12th the Know-Nothings, aided by the O. U. A., triumphantly selected delegates to their liking. So confident had the nativist movement become that the O. U. A. Executive Convention of September 6th directed its members to work to give Thomas R. Whitney the Whig nomination for governor. When, after the Whig primaries, it was learned that nativism had failed of success in the interior of the state, the Whitney boom at once collapsed. Closely following the contest at the primaries

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1854, August 29, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Argus*, 1854, September 2, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Tribune*, 1854, September 1, p. 4.

came the nativist fiasco in the Whig state convention, and then the nomination of a Know-Nothing state ticket by the October Grand Council. The effect of these events was again to advance the nativists a step in evolution. It was now felt that the orders in New York city need not even struggle to secure control of the mechanism of the older parties, but might more easily take responsibility and put forth nominees independently. This was an entire abandonment of the earlier policy of nativism.

In October came the nominations of local tickets by the various parties and movements in city politics. The plans of the opponents of nativism now began to show themselves. On every hand the strength of nativist sentiment was recognized, and concessions were made to it. At the same time the managers of the older parties showed no intention of adopting alliance with the ambitious clique at whose head stood the Know-Nothing grand-president. The two factions of the divided Democracy united locally. It was clear enough that unless a fusion were made the party would lose the city patronage, and so the fusion took place. On October 9th the two factions united on a mayoralty candidate in the person of Fernando Wood, member of the Know-Nothing Order and one of its city committee. The Democracy thus paid tribute to the nativist idea. On October 10th the Whig city convention was held, and resulted in the nomination of another member of the secret order, John J. Herrick. The Whig Party also paid its tribute to the newer movement by this act. The nativist idea was now triumphant in New York city. Both of the older parties bowed low before it. There was a difference, however, between the nativist idea and the nativist organization, and, while the former had won its fight, the latter still had before it a battle for supremacy. The nominations of Wood and Herrick were of no advantage to the Barker clique, who controlled the Know-Nothing Order, and their plans were not abandoned. The temperance convention, manipulated by

nativists,<sup>1</sup> met on October 13th, and brought James W. Barker before the public as its nominee. The Executive Convention of the O. U. A. followed, on October 16th, with a secret ticket headed by Barker's name. Then, on October 19th, the executive committee of the Know-Nothings completed the work by also selecting a secret ticket with Barker as chief member.<sup>2</sup> The contest for the mayoralty now lay between the Know-Nothings and the united Democracy. In the short campaign that followed the nominations the ties that bound men together as Whigs or Democrats dissolved under the pressure of new issues. Each nominee on the tickets of the older parties found it to his interest to seek support from the adherents of one or more of the organized movements. The result was a marvelous criss-cross of influences, which divided the former compactness of the older groups into subdivisions on new lines of cleavage. Party tickets lost all unity of meaning or purpose. They were mere lists of office-seekers, each one of whom represented certain issues or certain cliques. State politics also intruded into the local canvass with suggestions as to the advantages of this or that choice.

In this scramble for advantage the nativist ticket, like the others, lost much of its identity. Three nominees, Barker, Ebling and Taylor, were grand officers of the Know-Nothing Order, and were looked upon as really representative of nativism, but the other five nominees were more closely attached to the older party systems. The chief fight was over Barker's name. All the bitterness of the city campaign was over the mayoralty. Despite the splendid service which Barker had rendered to the nativist movement, he had his opponents even in the ranks of the Order which he led. One ward council re-

<sup>1</sup> *Post*, 1854, October 31, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Mayor, James W. Barker; Recorder, John H. White; Judge, Sidney H. Stuart; Surrogate (Alfred McIntyre withdrawn), Alexander W. Bradford; Register, John J. Doane; District Attorney, Chauncey Schaffer; Street Commissioner, Joseph E. Ebling; Almshouse Governor, Joseph S. Taylor.

refused to endorse his nomination. This was the council to which belonged Herrick, the Whig nominee.<sup>1</sup> In other councils the opponents of the Barker clique took an attitude of hostility somewhat less pronounced. Barker nevertheless had the great mass of the organized nativists behind him in his claim for office. It was hoped that he might, by combining the nativist and temperance vote, win success. Barker had been identified with the temperance movement before he became prominent in nativism, but his devotion to the latter issue had weakened his hold upon the former. His friends had managed to keep control of the Temperance City Alliance, and to use it to bring him out as a candidate, but they could not keep all the temperance men in line, and a considerable secession of Temperance Independents took place, who refused to support the Alliance ticket. The following estimate of Barker's strength, made just before election by a friendly journal, shows upon what elements Barker based his hopes.\* The estimate figured his following to consist of 11,000 members of the Know-Nothing Order, 3,000 members of the O. U. A., who were not Know-Nothings, 2,800 Protestant Irish members of the A. P. A., who were not Know-Nothings, 2,500 temperance men, not Know-Nothings, making a total of 19,300 votes. Barker actually polled 18,547 votes, and the foregoing estimate was probably not far wrong. The effort of the Whigs to injure Barker's chances by nominating the Know-Nothing Herrick was soon proven a failure, and the Whig ticket fell into the background. The municipal-reform movement drew most of the anti-nativist Whigs to its support, and the reform ticket threatened serious rivalry. The real danger to Barker, however, was from the united Democracy, now desperately struggling to keep its grasp upon the city patronage.

The campaign work of the nativist managers was done

<sup>1</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1854, November 2, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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quietly under the cloak of council secrecy. There were no parades, no press arguments, no ostentatious efforts at vote winning. The existence of a nativist ticket could not be kept secret, and no effort to that end was made. For two weeks before election the Know-Nothing nominees were regularly advertised in the local press under the caption of "People's Ticket."<sup>1</sup> Beyond this, however, the open work did not go to any extent. The support of Barker by the Protestant Irish is an interesting feature of the time.<sup>2</sup> It is another instance of the fact that nativism, though nominally opposed to all foreigners, was nevertheless tolerant of Protestant foreigners, and received continued aid from them. Barker himself was a member of an A. P. A. lodge.

Election day came on November 7th. The nativists went to the polls quietly, but mustered their forces with the preciseness of developed discipline, thanks to the newly created machinery of the Know-Nothing city committee. Such was the complexity of local tickets at this election, that no very certain figures as to political groups can be made, but the official canvass indicates the following approximate strength of the various elements in the contest:<sup>3</sup>

Nativist movement . . . . .	about 13,520 votes.
City-reform movement . . . . .	about 11,430 votes.
Soft-Shell Democrats . . . . .	about 12,160 votes.
Hard-Shell Democrats . . . . .	about 9,380 votes.
Whig Party . . . . .	about 7,300 votes.
Agrarian movement . . . . .	about 3,020 votes.
Temperance (Alliance) movement . . . . .	about 1,920 votes.
Temperance (Independent) movement . . . . .	about 1,380 votes.

The knowledge that a heavy vote was being polled for Barker made the nativists very sanguine of success by election night. The first returns seemed to show his election, and the

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1854, October 27, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1854, November 4, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Official city canvass in *Times*, 1854, December 5.

rejoicings over that event mingled with the popular joy over the supposed success of the Know-Nothing state ticket. Later returns, however, told a different tale. Wood appeared to be elected by a very narrow plurality. The election of four of the nativist nominees did not appease the wrath of the Knowings over the result on the mayoralty. At once the word was passed around that Barker had been counted out by fraud, and on the evening of November 9th an immense indignation meeting took place at City Hall Park. A committee was here appointed to investigate the matter. Five days later a second mass-meeting heard a report of progress from the committee. Then, while the county canvass slowly dragged along, the nativist committee appeared before the canvassing board and presented evidence of alleged fraud against Barker's vote; but their mission was vain. The board refused to go behind the returns, and the law was such that there was no alternative but submission. Wood, therefore, took his seat with full legal title, but the fairness of the count which made him mayor remained a matter upon which opinions differed.

With the final decision in favor of Wood the local campaign of 1854 was ended and popular politics were laid aside until the spring should bring round the beginning of new contests. In the interval nativism stirred itself in the city government with efforts to secure the discharge of foreign-born employees of the almshouse and police service, but this plan failed. Outside of civic affairs nativism had little to do except attend the regular meetings of its secret lodges and swell the annual parade on February 22d. The warfare over, street-sermons had ceased. The Irish element had yielded to the inevitable and accepted the existence of nativist sentiment as a fact. Just once during the winter of 1854-55 was there a hint of racial conflict again. A feud among the cliques of the rougher element resulted in the killing of the pugilist Poole early in March. Because some Irish roughs were concerned in the affair, the friends of Poole took opportunity to rouse

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race-feeling on the subject and there were threats of retaliation.<sup>1</sup> On St. Patrick's day, which came a few days after the murder, the city authorities thought it advisable to keep the militia at their armories ready for service.<sup>2</sup> The day passed without riot and in a little time the feeling died away again. The incident showed that the force of nativist antipathies was not yet spent.

With the spring of 1855 came the usual preparations for the fall elections. Organized nativism was still growing and the Barker clique still directed its political fortunes. During the latter part of the winter the clique had been reaching out for more power and had won it. In the fall of 1854 there had been only two effective political societies in New York, the Know-Nothing Order and the O. U. A., but during the winter the accessions to nativism raised into importance the hitherto petty societies of the American Star Order and the Allen-branch Know-Nothings. It was useless for the Barker clique to seek power in the Allen branch, for that was outspokenly antagonistic. In the American Star they were more fortunate. The election of Jacob B. Bacon to be grand-president of that society brought about a re-organization of it in March, 1855, into a form which placed it in control of the Barker clique. Its members now began to be known as "Templars." About the same time a similar change was agitated in the political system of the O. U. A. and finally accomplished. Coincidentally there appear in the O. U. A. two factions respectively friendly and hostile to the Barker clique. The inference seems fair that the Barker clique was seeking to capture the O. U. A. executive system also. Up to this time the local nativist movement was united in sentiment and action. From the beginning of 1855 there had begun to appear a faint line of cleavage on the slavery issue, but in the spring of 1855 the cleavage was not distinct enough to threaten the unity of the

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1855, March 11, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, 1855, March 19, p. 4.

movement. The issue was forced upon the Know-Nothing Order by the adoption of the Cincinnati ritual in November, 1854, with its new third-degree oath. The acceptance of that ritual in New York in January was followed by some withdrawals of members,<sup>1</sup> but in spite of this the Know-Nothing managers kept their forces well in hand so that the rift was not apparent. In May, with practically a united sentiment behind them, they began to draw the nativist secret societies of New York city into a formal confederation for unity of political action. The scheme contemplated a representative city convention composed of delegates from each one of the nativist societies. The convention was to act by approval of local tickets and to co-ordinate all the societies in support of such nominees as might be so approved. The adoption of this plan would, of course, be a step toward creating a distinct American Party, including all the nativist societies, but not superseding any of them. A temporary convention held this project under advisement at repeated sessions in May, and finally on June 1st it appointed a committee headed by James W. Barker, to carry out the plan by organizing a new convention of the secret orders on June 13th.<sup>2</sup>

At this time organized nativism was really the only political force in the local field which was both strong in numbers and united in feeling. The older parties were both divided. The Democracy, after successfully placing Fernando Wood in the mayor's chair, had relapsed into its former duality and now sullenly watched with unfriendly eye the vigor of nativism. The local Whig Party, after long preserving outward unity despite its internal dissensions, finally, in May, also split in two parts, respectively for and against Seward.<sup>3</sup> The Know-Nothing Order secretly aided this division.<sup>4</sup> The prospects

<sup>1</sup> *Courier-Enquirer*, 1855, March 18, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1855, June 2, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Herald*, 1855, May 25, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Times*, 1855, May 31, p. 4; June 11, p. 1.

of the new nativist political confederation were therefore of the best. On June 13th the convention of delegates met with power to act as a central body. The Know-Nothing Order, as the dominant group in nativism, seems to have led in carrying out this new effort. The O. U. A. probably sent delegates also,<sup>1</sup> but there was some opposition in the Order to cooperation with the Know-Nothings. Grand Sachem Butler declared officially, but ambiguously, that "while secrecy in council is just and commendable, mystery is ever to be condemned," and advised that the O. U. A. should not "hold confederate action with any mysterious body."<sup>2</sup> On July 2d the Executive Convention endorsed this advice, but after a running fight through several sessions between the friends and opponents of confederation, the friends seem to have prevailed. The executive minutes do not give the reasons for this opposition. While this struggle was going on the American convention did its work and launched the American Party. The new party was not coherent or centralized. Practically the organized nativist movement had merely taken a new name without changing itself in any essential point. This convention was only a symbol of harmony of action and singleness of purpose on the part of the societies.

Coincidentally with the apparent unifying of the local nativist movement an element of disunion at this time appeared in the shape of the slavery issue. During the preceding winter the followers of nativism had become aware that an unrelated issue was being forced upon them. This came about when the National Council adopted the Cincinnati ritual. At that time, however, the interest in the slavery question seems to have been so small that nativism felt no effects from the intrusion. During the spring of 1855 public interest began to turn more closely to the new issue, and when, in June, the news came of the new pro-slavery platform imposed upon the Know-Nothing Order by the Council at Philadelphia, it became plain that na-

<sup>1</sup> Executive records, O. U. A.

<sup>2</sup> Gildersleeve Coll.

tivists would not all accept it willingly. Although a great mass-meeting, on June 18th, in City Hall Park, ratified the new platform, its action did not bind the sentiment of individuals nor close discussion. Anti-slavery men outside the Order stigmatized Barker as a pro-slavery man and tool of the South. The slavery issue, thus stimulated, intruded itself into the Know-Nothing councils and joined itself with the growing opposition to the Barker clique. Soon there were two factions in New York city, one headed by James W. Barker and the other by Daniel Ullman.<sup>1</sup> The shelving of the Philadelphia platform by the Grand Council of the state, in August, 1855, was the first important set-back received by the Barker clique during its control of the Order, and the Ullman faction was instrumental in bringing it about.

Before its defeat in the August Grand Council the ruling clique had brought about the nomination of a local ticket. The nativists still exercised influence in the Whig Party in the summer of 1855, and the *New York Tribune*, which, in the middle of August, still considered itself a Whig organ, ventured to guess that they would try to use the Whig conventions to make nominations. The nativists used their own machinery instead. On August 20th a group of nine distinct conventions met on the same day to consider different offices and select nominees. The multiple number of these bodies was arranged to allow each council full expression for the different places involved. The completed ticket included eleven Whigs and six Democrats.<sup>2</sup> While these nominees do not seem to have been personally objectionable, their selection was

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1855, June 20, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Justices Superior Court, Murray Hoffman, Lewis B. Woodruff; Judge Common Pleas, Alexander Spalding; Judge Marine Court, Arba K. Maynard; Sheriff, Joseph H. Toone; Clerk, Robert Beatty, Jr.; Comptroller, John S. Giles; Corp'n Counsel, Louis N. Glover; Almshouse-Governor, Isaac J. Oliver; Street Commis'r, Joseph S. Taylor; Repairs Commis'r, Joseph Southworth; Inspector, George W. Morton; Coroners, Frederick W. Perry, Samuel A. Hills, Cyrus Ramsay, John Witherell.

the signal for revolt. The overthrow of the Barker policy at the August session of the Grand Council probably aided the change. An anonymous pamphlet now appeared, whose object was to attack the ruling clique as a sort of secret conspiracy. In a curious way, however, the writer of the pamphlet awkwardly confounded the personal clique which he attacked with the whole society of the "Templars," to which the clique belonged. Forthwith the unlucky Order of the American Star, whose members were the so-called "Templars," became an object of attack. The *Tribune* reprinted the hostile pamphlet in full,<sup>1</sup> and the *Times* aided the work by an exposition of the American Star ritual.<sup>2</sup> Editorial articles were written to show that the Know-Nothing Order was the victim of a hitherto unknown higher degree. The "Templars" were represented as a group of secret conspirators, whose sole object was to control the Know-Nothing Order. These attacks, in themselves, were absurdities, but they were patent signs of revolt against Barker and his friends. From words the enemies of the clique now passed to deeds. In Washington Chapter, O. U. A., to which both Barker and Bacon belonged, there were charges laid against them for the purpose of securing their expulsion.<sup>3</sup> In the O. U. A. Executive Convention vigorous attacks were made on the local ticket on the ground of clique dictation, but the friends of the ticket, after a contest, forced the endorsement of it. As a sequel to their success came repudiations of the ticket from several O. U. A. chapters. It was about this time, too, that the hostile element in Barker's own Know-Nothing council moved to expel his friends from membership.<sup>4</sup> The position of Barker as a nativist leader grew more and more precarious as the campaign went on.

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1855, September 5, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, 1855, September 5, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Times*, 1855, September 22, p. 1; October 15, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Times*, 1855, September 20, p. 8; October 17, p. 1.

In spite of internal troubles the work of the nativist campaign went on energetically. In 1855 the Know-Nothings affected far less of secrecy than ever before. In actual fact the secret order was rapidly losing its secret character by the work of unfaithful tongues among its membership. Many of the inner details of Know-Nothing politics were printed in the daily press. The *New York Times* for many successive weeks regularly reported the secret sessions of one of the ward councils, to show the flimsiness of the mystery which overhung the doings of the society.<sup>1</sup> When it is considered that some of the ward councils had over a thousand members, it is perhaps astonishing that there could be even a pretense of secrecy in New York city. There were changes going on in the secret organization. There was a new current setting away from old methods, old leaders, and even from old principles. The ward politicians who now crowded into the secret councils carried on there the same sort of work that they were accustomed to do at party primaries. The managers of the nativist campaign adopted the regular system of the older party campaigns. The secret society was turning into an open political party. In the city campaign of 1855 no attempt was made to keep either the nativist nominations or nativist membership a secret. One of the features of campaign work was a system of political clubs in every ward of the city, guided by a central body called the National Club.<sup>2</sup> For the first time in New York state the secret movement used public speeches and torch-light processions to further its work. To this point had the ultra-secret Know-Nothings come.<sup>3</sup>

The cohesion of parties in New York city reached its lowest point in the fall of 1855. At least sixteen local tickets,

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1855, May 24, 31, June 6, 11, 19, 26, July 11, 19, August 1, 3, 9, 10, 15, 29, September 12, 20, 26, October 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1855, October 6, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The Allen-branch Know Nothings kept to old methods. Their ticket is in *Tribune*, 1855, October 10, p. 5.

representing various parties and issues, were in the field, and, as in 1854, there was a scramble of office-seekers for multiple nominations. Very few of the sixty-two aspirants who were seeking the sixteen local offices were contented with being named on a single ticket, and the result was a marvelous confusion. In this chaos neither the Whig nor the Republican organization was strong enough to make a real contest. The strongest combination in the field was that made by certain candidates who secured the backing of both of the Democratic factions. Next to them came those men who were backed by the nativist and the temperance movements together. When election day came the Democratic combination won place for those whom it favored, but the nativist combination was strong enough to elect half of the American ticket. As usual the Protestant Irish and German vote was cast in support of the American ticket at this election.<sup>2</sup> Evidently the nativist movement was still gaining strength as a local force in New York city. For this election it is difficult to estimate at all closely, even from the official canvass, the real strength of the various political groups that were in the field. Out of the sixteen local tickets, only ten seem to have been clearly distinct as factors in the result. Their approximate strength was as follows:<sup>2</sup>

Nativist movement . . . . .	about 18,770 votes.
Soft-Shell Democrats . . . . .	about 12,880 votes.
Hard-Shell Democrats . . . . .	about 11,280 votes.
Whig Party . . . . .	about 4,300 votes.
Republican movement . . . . .	about 3,140 votes.
City-reform movement . . . . .	about 3,010 votes.
German Democrats . . . . .	about 1,910 votes.
Half-Shell Democrats . . . . .	about 1,390 votes.
Temperance movement . . . . .	about 900 votes.
High-License movement . . . . .	about 670 votes.

The intrigues of presidential aspirants succeeded imme-

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1855, November 17, p. 5; *Times*, 1855, November 9, pp. 2, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Official canvass in *Times*, 1855, December 6, p. 6.

diately upon the intrigues of local nominees and took up the attention of the Know-Nothing councils. George Law, the contractor, familiarly known as "Live-Oak George," was now in the field as a presidential possibility. An intense rivalry between the partisans of Law and those of Fillmore soon showed itself. James W. Barker appeared as a supporter of Law, and, having declined in advance a re-election as grand-president, he began to regain something of his old popularity in the city councils. His own council, nevertheless, refused to send him again as a delegate to Grand Council.<sup>1</sup> The work of Law's men brought good results in the city. The Live-Oak clubs, devoted to Law's interest, became crowded with the younger element, and at the district conventions held to elect delegates to the National Convention the Law men easily carried the city. All their work, however, was resultless. The ambitions of Law were checked by the nomination of Fillmore on February 25, 1856. When the news came of the action of the Convention the Americans of New York city promptly accepted the new ticket and swung out their campaign banners. An immense mass-meeting on the 29th gave enthusiastic welcome to Donelson, the vice-presidential nominee.

This harmony was not to be lasting, for under the surface of events the opponents of Fillmore at once began their work. Beginning in March <sup>2</sup> the managers of Law's canvass re-gathered some of their supporters and in May the Law men and anti-slavery men worked together in the ward councils to elect delegates to appear for them in the anti-Fillmore conventions that had been called.<sup>3</sup> As a consequence of this work new dissensions sprang into being in the Know-Nothing Order. The growth of the anti-Fillmore movement steadily developed ill-feeling and antagonism. On June 12th, when the anti-

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1856, January 23, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1856, March 22, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Herald*, 1856, May 11, p. 1.



Fillmore national convention met at New York the delegates found themselves attended by an angry crowd of their Know-Nothing brethren. The latter were massed about the convention hall and their derisive yells punctuated from time to time the proceedings of the session. The new dividing line within the Order grew more distinct than ever before when the anti-Fillmore national ticket was made with Fremont's name upon it. The Fremont men captured the National Club, on which the local party depended for campaign work, but at another session the Fillmore men drove the club president into the street and regained control.<sup>1</sup> The ward council to which George Law belonged expelled him from the Order.<sup>2</sup> These incidents were symptoms of the new alignment that was going on. The effect of it was to weed out the anti-slavery and other disaffected members, and the absorption of these by the Republican movement left the nativist organization composed of faithful Fillmore men. The O. U. A. joined with the Know-Nothings in support of Fillmore.<sup>3</sup> The secession of the North Americans from the Order at the August Grand Council received no support from New York city. The ward councils kept their allegiance to the regular grand body.

In September, 1856, the city campaign opened. Fernando Wood, by shrewd management, succeeded in getting a re-nomination from the regular committees of the united Democracy, but he was unpalatable to some of the local leaders and his selection created a new schism in his party. An irregular faction of anti-Wood Democrats set up an opposition candidate for the mayoralty. This split gave the Americans some hope of electing a mayor. On October 6th, when the local conventions were held, Isaac O. Barker, president of the board of aldermen and cousin of James W. Barker, received a mayoralty nomination from a convention over which the latter

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1856, June 22, p. 1; *Times*, 1856, June 25, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, 1856, July 14, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Times*, 1856, August 2, p. 2.

presided, and headed the city ticket.<sup>1</sup> At this campaign there were fewer political groups in the city than in the preceding year. The city contest turned upon the question of Wood's fitness for office. As mayor of the city and as a party man Wood had shown himself ambitious, clever and audacious. He had set himself the task of controlling the local Democratic organization and had done his work with enough success to create some bitter enemies. Barker, the American nominee, was experienced, popular and respectable, and he attracted support to the nativist ticket by his character. Unfortunately for those who opposed Wood, the opposition elements could not be brought to unite upon one candidate. Each political group stubbornly held to its own man. In consequence, Wood easily carried the masses with him and won the mayoralty again. Nativism in this campaign made little pretence at secrecy. It had almost reached a likeness to the every-day form of political party. It had its clubs, its banners, its processions and its mass-meetings, and this adoption of new ways seemed to be justified by the poll of a larger vote than it had ever before mustered in New York city. In the state at large the decline of the nativist movement had begun some time before the election of 1856, but in the metropolis the climax was at the election of that year. Until that time nativism splendidly held its own in the city. The averages for the local contest follow:<sup>2</sup>

Democratic Party . . . . .	about 32,480 votes.
Nativist party . . . . .	about 23,470 votes.
Republican Party . . . . .	about 13,400 votes.
Anti-Wood Democrats . . . . .	about 5,850 votes.
City-reform movement . . . . .	about 3,640 votes.

After the excitement of the presidential campaign came a

<sup>1</sup> Mayor, Isaac O. Barker; Judge, John H. White; Almshouse-Governor, Benjamin F. Pinckney; Corp'n Counsel, Louis N. Glover.

<sup>2</sup> Official canvass in *Tribune*, 1856, December 5, p. 3. In this election there was evidently great use of split tickets, but apparently without organized support.

decline of popular interest in politics. The winter of 1856-57 was devoid of political features. The decline of the Know-Nothing Order was by this time generally recognized as a fact and politicians began to turn away from it. By the summer of 1857 the nativist secret societies of New York city were going to pieces rapidly. Those members whose interest in the ideas of nativism was only superficial began to drop away from the movement as soon as the tide of success turned. The secret societies lost heavily when once the change became apparent. In August, 1857, the Know-Nothing Order lost its secret system by the action of the Grand Council, and though the ward councils kept their organization in the face of the change, yet about half their membership fell away. The O. U. A. chapters suffered equally by the desertions from their ranks. The lesser societies of the "Templars" and Allen-branch Know-Nothings disappear from public notice. The fate of these latter societies is not clear. An organization of this sort dies obscurely as a rule. First there comes a loss of membership, followed by retrenchment of expenses and removal to cheap quarters. Then the society meetings pass out of public notice and are held irregularly. Finally a knot of faithful ones yield to the inevitable and decree their own dissolution. It is uncertain how long the "Templars" and Allen Know-Nothings kept their societies alive, but it is clear that they lost all political importance in 1857.

Amid this crash of organized nativism the political leaders of the movement turned toward the local Republican Party with friendly mien. The old bitterness between the two movements was now passing away. The masses of organized nativism had by this time become tinged by anti-slavery ideas and at the same time the attitude of the Republican Party had been affected by the influx of recruits from nativism. After the losses met by the nativist movement in New York city, its only hope of success in local elections was

to exchange support with Republicanism, and if possible, to overpower the Democracy by united forces. Late in September this plan of operation was advocated by a mass-meeting of nativists in one of the city wards and seemed to meet general approval.<sup>1</sup> The practical working out of the idea was slow. During October the city conventions of the two organizations held frequent sessions, accompanied by negotiations between those interested. Eventually, by a series of mutual accommodations, a union ticket was perfected bearing the names of eight nominees, of whom each party furnished four.<sup>2</sup> Similar fusion of forces took place in the legislative districts of the city. This began the merging of the American and Republican movements in New York city. Never again after 1856 did the nativists enter the field with a full local ticket and depend on their own strength alone. Their power was gone. In 1857 and after, their leaders sought advantage only by combination. The fusion of 1857 was not as fortunate in results as its makers had hoped. Its whole strength proved to be only 21,700 votes, far less than the vote of the Democracy. The fusion failed to elect a single nominee. The vote of the nativists on the local ticket this year cannot be separated from that of its allies, but the local vote on the several state tickets gives a clue to the relative strength of parties. The averages are as follows: <sup>3</sup>

Democratic Party . . . . .	about 37,680 votes.
Republican Party . . . . .	about 13,560 votes.
Nativist party . . . . .	about 8,480 votes.

The weakness of organized nativism was now apparent to all. In 1857 a new city charter went into effect in New York which separated the elections of city officers from those of

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1857, September 28, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Judge Superior Court, Benjamin W. Bonney; Judge Marine Court, William H. Browne; Recorder, Alexander Spaulding; District Attorney, Daniel Ullman.

<sup>3</sup> Official county canvass in *Times*, 1857, November 26, p. 7.

county officers. The latter continued to be chosen in November, while city officers were elected a month later. After the November election of 1857 the local parties at once turned to the mayoralty contest. The Americans on November 9th nominated James E. Cooley for the office with the evident intention of forcing his nomination upon their new political allies. This plan was frustrated by the appearance of a strong independent movement which put forward Daniel F. Tiemann as nominee. Tiemann had been one of the leaders in the early nativist movement of 1843-47. When the Republicans joined the adherents of Tiemann the nativist nominee, Cooley, withdrew from the race. The nativist vote was thrown for Tiemann and aided his election on a small plurality.

The break-down of organized nativism went on steadily into the year 1858. The Know-Nothing Order had now passed away. The ward councils remained, but they were non-secret political clubs exercising the powers of party primaries. The O. U. A. tried to stem the tide of dissolution by an attempted re-organization of its executive system, but the effort was a vain one.<sup>1</sup> The chapters of the Order were now breaking up. On October 11th the Grand Executive Convention met for the last time. All political work then centered in the grand executive committee. Other nativist secret societies in New York were also feeling the strain of reverses caused by wholesale withdrawals. The whole fabric of organized nativism was giving way. In the local elections of 1858 the coalition of Americans and Republicans was brought about easily. The two party conventions delegated powers to a joint committee which divided the offices of the local ticket between the parties. Each convention then nominated men for the places at its disposal. The Americans had four offices for themselves.<sup>2</sup> This year the fusion ticket gained a support of 29,450

<sup>1</sup>Gildersleeve Coll.

<sup>2</sup>Clerk, W. F. Davidson; District Attorney, Rufus F. Andrews; Coroners, Samuel Hall, J. S. Schofield.

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voters, but still it fell short of the Democratic strength and failed to put its men into office. On the state ticket the voters of the city divided as follows :<sup>1</sup>

Democratic Party . . . . .	about 40,850 votes.
Republican Party . . . . .	about 21,590 votes.
Nativist party . . . . .	about 7,120 votes.
Temperance movement . . . . .	about 50 votes.

In the city elections of December the Republican and American fusion fell apart on one office and the American nominee secured a personal vote of 12,290, composed of various elements.<sup>2</sup> At this election, owing to a split in the Democracy, the Republicans were for the first time able to carry an election in New York city.

The story of local nativism grows more and more brief. In due time the campaign of 1859 came on and again a local fusion of Americans and Republicans was arranged, which was continued in the city election of December. In both elections the identity of the nativist forces was merged, but the canvass on state ticket showed the following local poll for the November contest :<sup>3</sup>

Democratic Party . . . . .	about 34,300 votes.
Republican Party . . . . .	about 18,200 votes.
Nativist party . . . . .	about 4,110 votes.

Finally, in 1860 came the memorable presidential contest with its re-arrangement of parties. The local leaders of the American movement cast in their lot with one or the other of the great national organizations. True to the traditions of the American movement, many of them joined the new Union movement with Bell and Everett as their national ticket. This was mostly true of the element led by Erastus Brooks.

<sup>1</sup> County canvass in *Tribune*, 1858, December 3, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Almshouse-governor, Frank C. Wagner.

<sup>3</sup> Official county canvass in *Tribune*, 1859, November 26, p. 3.

Some others gravitated to the Republican Party. It was noted by the daily press among its minor political items of the campaign that an American county convention met on October 9th, and adjourned without making nominations.<sup>1</sup> In a very few cases there seem to have been American nominations in assembly districts. Practically, however, the American Party was blotted out in the excitement of the national campaign.

This was the end of the American Party in New York city, but it was not the end of organized nativism. The remnants of the O. U. A. kept a feeble hold on life during the stress of war time, but ended finally in 1866, having had no political influence since 1859. Then, about 1866, a new nativist organization began in New York city. It was a secret society modeled after the Know-Nothing Order, and headed by James W. Barker, the former Know-Nothing leader. At first called the Order of the American Shield, it soon took the name of the Order of the American Union.<sup>2</sup> This society planned for political action, but was never effective in effort. It lived a number of years, but failed to meet popular favor, although it is said to have found foothold in sixteen states. It died out about 1880. Then the new American Patriotic League essayed to revive nativism and failed. It gave place to the more recent American Protective Association.

<sup>1</sup> *Tribune*, 1860, October 11, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Information from former members.

## CHAPTER X

### THE LATER STATE CAMPAIGNS, 1857-1860

THE campaign of 1856 left the American movement in New York state exhausted, but the leaders of its state organization were not yet ready to acknowledge the futility of further effort. In the summer of 1857 it began to be seen that the year would be a "quiet" one, politically. In the field of state politics there was a reaction against the forced sentiment of anti-slavery and also the usual apathy following a presidential contest. The re-arrangement of parties which had kept the political world in a ferment for four years past seemed to be now about completed also. The leaders of political nativism viewed these new and unusual conditions with hopefulness. It was thought that the reaction against anti-slavery might bring former Know-Nothings back to the fold from which they had strayed, while lack of interest in politics might keep from the polls the unorganized voters of the opposition forces. Sanguine nativists dreamed of re-claiming the membership that the movement had lost and of again making a grasp at the control of the state. Less sanguine and more practical leaders saw that much could be gained in any event by a large poll of their party in November, even though the state were not carried. There was consequently no real opposition to the plan of setting up an American ticket for the fall election. The matter was thoroughly talked over by the delegates at the August Grand Council.

In obedience to the call of the Grand Council a state convention met at Syracuse on September 15, 1857.<sup>1</sup> The grow-

<sup>1</sup> Account from *Herald* and *Times* reports.



ing weakness of the party was made apparent by the absence of delegates. A full convention would have had one delegate from each assembly district, but eighty-eight districts were unrepresented. The convention organized with Henry B. Northrup, of Washington, as president, and passed at once to the nomination of a ticket. Seven state offices and one judgeship were to be filled by the people at the coming election. The American convention named candidates for each of these offices, dividing the honors evenly between former Democrats and former Whigs. The completed ticket stood as follows :

Sec'y of State . . . . .	James O. Putnam, of Erie.
Comptroller . . . . .	Nathaniel S. Benton, of Herkimer.
Treasurer . . . . .	Lyman Odell, of Livingston.
Attorney-General . . . . .	Henry H. Ross, of Essex.
Engineer . . . . .	Roswell Graves, of Kings.
Canal Commis'r . . . . .	Goldsmith Dennison, of Steuben.
Prison Inspector . . . . .	John M. Stevens, of Westchester.
Judge, C't of Appeals . . . . .	Hiram Ketchum, of New York.

After the selection of a ticket came the adoption of resolutions as to the political ideas of the American organization. These resolves were in effect a regular campaign platform, and this marked yet another step in the tendency of the Americans to approach the common party model, for heretofore the making of platforms had been part of the work of the Grand Council. The present convention formulated the following document :<sup>1</sup>

Returning our devout and humble acknowledgement to Almighty God for His protecting care and fostering mercies in the past, we invoke His continued assistance to enable us to act the part of good citizens and patriots by a watchful oversight of our free institutions and a zealous maintenance of our civil and religious rights, so that this glorious Union, bequeathed by heroes and martyrs, shall forever remain an altar to Liberty and an asylum for the oppressed.

*Resolved*, That the American Party of the state of New York is a component part of the great family of American freemen who believe in the right of native-born citizens to shape the policy, administer the government and make the laws of their own country; who furthermore, cherish the Union as a sacred legacy of the past, to be maintained at any sacrifice; and who, finally, in the spirit of their

<sup>1</sup>Text in *Times*, 1857, September 16, p. 1.

revolutionary sires, are prepared to swear upon the altar of Liberty eternal hostility to every form of oppression.

*Resolved*, That the American Party of the state of New York demand the enactment of a registry law for the protection of legal voters and the purification of the elective franchise from foreign influence controlled by unscrupulous politicians.

*Resolved*, That the American Party of the state of New York believe that the Bible should be read by all men and that, therefore, it is a proper text-book in our public and common schools, not to be discarded by wise men who would inculcate the sentiment of religious freedom in the youthful mind.

*Resolved*, That the experience of the past five years has conclusively shown that the exemption of railroads from the payment of tolls by the legislature of 1852 was unwise and impolitic, and that while the people of the state are suffering from oppressive taxation, sound policy requires the re-imposition of the tolls on such of those great monopolies as come in competition with the public works of the state.

*Resolved*, That we condemn the system of free passes, as furnished by our railroad managers to our legislative and judicial officers, and we recommend to the next legislature the passage of a law making it a penal offense for railroad corporations to offer, or for state officers to receive, such free passes.

*Resolved*, That we express our entire confidence in that greatest of state improvements, the Erie canal, believing it fully competent, if properly and economically managed, to pay for its own enlargement and discharge any debt incurred for its benefit without resorting to direct taxation; and we declare ourselves in favor of its speedy and immediate enlargement, and our firm determination to resist to all time its sale or any other disposition of it whereby it will pass out of the control of the state.

*Resolved*, That the unwise, unjust and infamous legislation of last winter, as shown in the passage of laws for the benefit of monied monopolies in opposition to the direct interests of the people; as shown in nearly exempting the railroads of the state from taxation and heaping this burden upon the people; as shown by way of enormous appropriations of money for the benefit of party favorites, whereby the taxes of the state are increased more than 125 per cent., the treasury empty and the state bankrupt; as shown in the control which an avaricious and unscrupulous lobby, headed by Republican politicians, exercised over the legislature; as shown in sacrificing the canal interests and canal revenues of the state to the all-powerful interests of railroad corporations; as shown in not passing a registry law as the people desired, the so-called Republican Party, under the management of an Albany Central Regency, has forfeited the respect of honest men of all parties and deserves that it should receive the entire condemnation of the people.

*Resolved*, That the mis-called Democracy of the day, by its truckling to the powers of popery and foreignism and its combination with Republicanism to defeat Americans, and thereby subvert the wishes of the people, as witnessed in the combination in the Assembly of 1856 in the election of the speaker and in the more recent act by which their leaders struck hands with a renegade American to strip

the Canal Board of the state of the power vested in them by the people, deserves and should receive the condemnation of all men.

*Resolved*, That we, the Americans of the state of New York, fully persuaded of the justness of our cause and the correctness of our principles, will firmly adhere in every emergency and under all circumstances to the great and distinctive doctrines of the American Party, as laid down in the Binghamton and Troy platforms, repudiating all alliances and combinations which involve any sacrifices of principles or abandonment of those demands which we believe so vitally important to the welfare of the state and of the whole country.

The foregoing platform was adopted by vote of the American state convention, and then, after appointing a new state committee, the delegates adjourned. The new committee was composed of Zopher Mills, of New York; Samuel J. Wilkin, of Orange; Henry Q. Lansing and L. Sprague Parsons, of Albany; John N. Wilder, of Saratoga; N. B. Milliman, of Washington; Richard F. Stevens, of Onondaga; J. N. Starin, of Cayuga; Addison M. Smith, of Otsego, and Lorenzo Burrows, of Orleans. The action of the Syracuse convention placed the American Party in an attitude of emphatic independence. The denunciations of rival parties in its platform and the thoroughly nativist personnel of its ticket made clear the fact that its spirit was not broken by its recent losses. The American state ticket was a very strong one personally. Nearly every nominee had previously held public office with distinct success. Putnam, of Erie, had served as state senator. Benton, of Herkimer, had been secretary of state. All the others on the ticket were well-known men. The opponents of the party had no fling to make against the nominees that it set up. With this ticket the American organization entered the contest of 1857.

The campaign of this year was singularly lifeless. Each party that was in the field affected to have issues, but the voters did not respond to those which were offered. The Republicans tried to use the slavery issue, but with indifferent success. The Democrats raised the cry of mismanagement and corruption at Albany, but failed to excite universal horror

threat. The Americans pointed out to the voters the shortcomings of both their rivals. The campaign was not a battle of issues, whatever the party managers might claim.<sup>1</sup> It was rather a battle of organizations. As the campaign progressed it became evident that there were changes going on among the voters. Many Democrats who had supported Fremont and other Republican nominees in 1856 came back to their old party in 1857. The similar movement from the Republican ranks back to the American Party, for which the nativists had looked, did not take place. Instead of it a movement went on away from organized nativism. In October there came reports from various points in the state of local alliances between the American and Republican forces. In New York and Kings counties, the strongholds of nativist activity, a fusion of this sort took place. It indicated a drawing together of the parties, and was significant. It showed that the people could no longer be greatly swayed by the old arguments of nativism. While these changes were quietly going on, the public as a whole showed little real interest in politics. It was still so when election day came around. Everywhere there was apathy and indifference. More than a hundred thousand voters stayed away from the polls altogether. The party averages footed up as follows:<sup>2</sup>

Democratic Party . . . . .	about 195,300 votes.
Republican Party . . . . .	about 177,600 votes.
Nativist party . . . . .	about 66,300 votes.

The indifference of the people had worked a great change in the political situation by this showing. While the Democracy gained enough votes to keep its average equal to that of 1856, the Republican vote shrunk one-third and the American Party, still more unfortunate, lost one-half of its poll. In 1856 the nativist movement cast 22 per cent. of the total vote,

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 1857, September 25, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Official figures in *Times*, 1857, November 25, p. 3.

but in 1857 it cast only 15 per cent. Its actual weakness could not be concealed after this showing. In the light of the November canvass its whole campaign looked like a mere piece of bravado. It no longer had innate strength. Its ultimate absorption by its great rivals was a certainty. The only question was as to the length of time which the process of absorption would occupy.

After the futile campaign of 1857 the nativist party sank out of public notice until the steady round of time roused politicians for the recurring annual struggle. In the summer of 1858 the politics of New York began to feel the first faint hints of the next presidential contest. It was the year for election of the governor, and the governorship was prized by party managers as an aid to party strength. More than that, the election would be, in the eyes of the nation, a test of Republican strength in New York. The gossips of the political world still viewed Senator Seward as a presidential possibility, but the election of 1857 did not augur well for Republicanism in New York, and if the election of 1858 did no better, the prospects of Seward would indeed be clouded.<sup>1</sup> Organized nativism received due notice in connection with this situation. The fusion of Americans and Republicans on local tickets in several counties during the campaign of 1857 had established a vague sort of kinship between the parties. No one dreamed now of the American Party carrying a state election by its own efforts. People were only interested to know whether the Americans would join the Republican Party in the present campaign or whether they would hold back for another year. The implacable hostility that nativism had exhibited toward Senator Seward still existed to a very considerable extent. If that hostility could be overcome the fusion of the two parties would almost certainly carry the state. If it could not be overcome then the success of Republicanism would be in doubt.

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1858, October 18, p. 4.



The annual session of the American Grand Council was held this year at Albany.<sup>1</sup> It convened August 24th, with fifty-seven counties represented. After the president's address the election of officers made Henry B. Northrup, of Washington, president, Goldsmith Dennison, of Steuben, vice-president, James W. Husted, of Westchester, secretary, and Richard F. Stevens, of Onondaga, treasurer of the state organization. After this election the matter of calling the annual state convention came before the Council. This was the point around which the interest of politicians centered. The state convention of the Republican Party had already been called. It was to be held on September 8th at Syracuse. A delegate in the Grand Council moved that the American state convention be held at Syracuse on September 8th. The purpose of the motion, plainly enough, was to pave the way for an alliance of Americans and Republicans in the state campaign. The debate upon the proposition showed the existence of two very earnest but opposing groups in the Grand Council. On one side there was a friendliness for Republicanism that looked with satisfaction upon the prospect of a close political alliance. On the other side was an equally strong dislike for the party whose leaders had so long been the outspoken foes of nativism. The debate was vigorous. When the vote was taken the friends of the Republican alliance were victorious by 163 ayes to 63 noes. This ended the work of the council session.

In accordance with the call of the Grand Council the convention met at Syracuse on September 8th.<sup>2</sup> It organized with Daniel Ullman as presiding officer, and its first business was formally to receive a committee sent to it by the Republican convention. The Republicans desired a conference for the purpose of agreeing upon a common platform. It was the first step toward merging the weaker party into the stronger. Before the day's session closed, the American convention had

<sup>1</sup> Account from *Tribune* report.

<sup>2</sup> Account from *Herald* report.

appointed a conference committee and the committee had begun its work. In the American convention, as in the Grand Council of August, there were two factions respectively favoring and opposing the new alliance. In the Republican convention the general opinion seems to have favored the union of the parties. But while the assembled delegates were thus friendly to a fusion, some of the Republican political leaders were not so. Their objections can only be guessed at, for no one stood forth to fight the plan openly. On the morning of September 9th, when the two conventions again took up their work, each body received a report from its conference committee giving the results of the committees' session. The conference had drawn up a platform in which were embodied the anti-slavery ideas of Republicanism, together with a slight hint of nativism. In deference to the American Party the anti-slavery doctrines had been softened in expression. The nativist portion was a demand that one year should intervene between naturalization and voting. When this new platform was presented to the American convention the delegates promptly ratified it and awaited results. In the Republican convention the new platform was juggled out of existence by the skill of some hidden wire-puller. Instead of being placed before the convention it was sent to committee and returned in a revised form for approval. Then, being sent to the American convention in its new form, it was greeted with an indignant burst of anger because of the changes which had been made. It was now too late to go back over the ground and correct the blunder. Both conventions proceeded at once to the nomination of state tickets. The Americans put in nomination some of their best known leaders, and so effectually ended all chance of coalition. The ticket follows :

Governor . . . . .	Lorenzo Burrows, of Orleans.
Lieut.-Governor . . . . .	Nathaniel S. Benton, of Herkimer.
Canal Commis'r . . . . .	James R. Thompson, of Genesee.
Prison Inspector . . . . .	William A. Russell, of Washington.

There was no struggle in the convention for these places because there was no hope whatever of election to office. The tender of a nomination at this time was only a compliment. As usual, a new state committee was created before adjournment. Its members were George Briggs, of New York, William B. Lewis, of Kings, John C. Feltman, of Albany, Orville Page, of St. Lawrence, N. R. Ford, of ———, M. T. B. Fisher, of ———, Jacob B. Faurot, of Ontario, and Gustavus A. Scroggs, of Erie.

There is almost nothing to say of the campaign of 1858 so far as the nativist movement is concerned. The American ticket was only a device to keep the party from going to pieces. There was no effort to gain new adherents for the movement, because it was understood that such effort would be vain. The most that could be hoped was that the maintenance of the American Party would prevent Republican success. The pride of the nativist leaders was much hurt by the slight put upon them by the Republican convention in September. They wished Democratic success now, rather than Republican. Their work toward this end showed, when election day came, that the American vote could still be held together and the process of disintegration checked, if not overcome. There was still too much vitality in the party to permit the utter disappearance which its opponents had prophesied. It was still to be considered as a factor in state politics, in spite of its weakness. In actual poll the Americans showed very slight change from 1857. At this election the voters of the state who had stayed at home in the fall of 1857 showed a revival of interest in politics. Both of the greater parties profited by the revival, but the Republicans were the most favored and were able to carry the state. Following were the averages on the state canvass:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Official footings in *Tribune*, 1858, November 20, p. 5.



Republican Party . . . . .	about 249,800 votes.
Democratic Party . . . . .	about 230,100 votes.
Nativist party . . . . .	about 61,800 votes.
Temperance movement . . . . .	about 2,500 votes.

One effect of this campaign upon the American Party was to make plainer the dividing line between those who approved and those who disliked Republicanism. The side which leaned toward the Republicans was headed by Gustavus A. Scroggs, of Buffalo, while the more staunch adherents of nativism looked to Erastus Brooks for leadership. The slight put upon the Americans at Syracuse set back the friendship for Republicanism, but as the months passed on that sentiment seemed to recover itself somewhat. When the regular annual session of the Grand Council came again, both elements of the party were on the ground. The Council of 1859 met at Geneva on August 23d.<sup>1</sup> The press reported 140 delegates at the sitting, but very little detail of the Council session came to the public. New officers were elected and a state convention called. Also, two delegates, Erastus Brooks and Lorenzo Burrows, were chosen to attend an American national convention, if one were held. The new state officers were: President, Gustavus A. Scroggs, of Erie; vice-president, Amos H. Prescott, of Herkimer, and secretary, James W. Husted, of Westchester. There seems to have been no clash of opposing ideas at the session.

The American Party had its last campaign in 1859. On September 21st its last state convention met at Utica.<sup>2</sup> Under the presidency of Erastus Brooks it adopted an address and platform. The selection of a state ticket was sent to committee for recommendations. The state organization had given up the idea of an independent state ticket a year previous, but circumstances had forced it to break its plans at that time. This year there were no obstacles whatever to the adoption of

<sup>1</sup> Account from *Herald* report.

<sup>2</sup> Account from *Herald* reports.

a new policy. In its weakness the nativist organization now proposed to go back to the old system used in the infancy of the nativist movement. It would set up a ticket composed of names selected from the tickets of the greater parties, and as a "balance-of-power party" it would hold its huge rivals at its mercy. The committee on state ticket did its work on this plan. It reported back to the convention a list of nine nominees for state offices, five of whom were on the Republican ticket and four on the Democratic. None of them were known to have shown any special favor to nativism in the past. The ticket did not, in fact, represent the issues of the American movement, nor did the committee present it as such. Like the state ticket of 1858 it was a device to hold together the nativist vote and win such prestige for the organization as it might. It was made up as follows:

Sec'y of State . . . . .	David R. Floyd-Jones, of Queens.
Comptroller . . . . .	Robert Denniston, of Orange.
Treasurer . . . . .	Philip Dorsheimer, of Erie.
Attorney-General . . . . .	Charles G. Myers, of St. Lawrence.
Engineer . . . . .	Van Rensselaer Richmond, of Wayne.
Canal Commis'r . . . . .	William L. Skinner, of Herkimer.
Prison Inspector . . . . .	Noble S. Elderkin, of St. Lawrence.
Judge, C't of Appeals . . . .	Henry E. Davies, of New York.
Clerk, C't of Appeals . . . .	Charles Hughes, of Washington.

When presented to the convention there was a vigorous objection to the name of Dorsheimer, who was German by birth. Although the American Party had abandoned before this its wholesale condemnation of all persons of foreign birth, still it was rather a novel step for it to present an alien as its preference for a state office. Nevertheless after some debate the committee ticket was adopted by the convention. Scroggs brought this about by his championship of the cause of his fellow-townsmen. After the ticket the convention appointed the usual state committee and adjourned. The new committee was composed of Erastus Brooks, Joseph W. Savage and

Frank C. Wagner of New York, L. Sprague Parsons, Henry Lansing and G. Y. Johnson of Albany, N. B. Lord of Jefferson, William A. Russel of Washington, Harvey Smith of Rensselaer, J. Matteson of Oswego, Orville Page of St. Lawrence, Richard F. Stevens of Onondaga, M. Strong of Monroe, Lorenzo Burrows of Orleans, Elam R. Jewett of Erie, and E. S. Sweet of Tioga.

In the campaign that followed, the American Party took no considerable part. Its wholly artificial character was so apparent that it lost heavily among those who had till now held themselves faithful to its fortunes. Some of its leaders, among whom was the state secretary, made a formal protest against the mixed ticket and circulated the protest in the party.<sup>1</sup> In the O. U. A. there was an earnest outcry against the nomination of Dorsheimer. In response to this revolt the American state committee issued a circular defending the ticket.<sup>2</sup> Five reasons were alleged for the nominations: first, the wish to return to the old idea of holding a balance of power between the greater parties; second, the wish to secure good men for office; third, the idea of punishing the Republicans for efforts to weaken the Canal Board when it was under American control; fourth, the hope of allaying the anti-slavery agitation; fifth, and most important of all, the frankly avowed desire to break down the calculations of the greater parties in order to demonstrate that the American Party was not a nonentity in politics. The circular, between the lines, was an acknowledgment that the sole issue of the American organization was that of its own existence. Its break-up during the coming presidential campaign was almost certain, but its leaders wished to maintain their hold upon it until that time and to keep it apart from either one of the two great parties. The party continued to lose heavily in the

<sup>1</sup> *Herald*, 1859, September 29, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Text in *Tribune*, 1859, October 5, p. 5.

campaign of 1859, but it polled a vote of unusual significance at the November election. The two great parties happened to rival each other closely enough in their vote so that the dwindling American organization, despite its losses, actually held the balance of power. With one exception its nominees were elected by reason of its endorsement of their names. Thus in its last effort at a state campaign the party scored a success. The party averages follow:<sup>1</sup>

Republican Party . . . . .	about 251,300 votes.
Democratic Party . . . . .	about 227,600 votes.
Nativist party . . . . .	about 23,800 votes.

The politics of the national campaign of 1860 began very early in the year to shape themselves around the central debate on the great sectional issues. The leaders of the American Party in New York unhesitatingly took sides when occasion required. The nomination of Bell and Everett by a national convention on a "Constitutional Union" ticket enlisted the prompt support of some of the best known nativists. When, in July, 1860, a state convention of the Union movement was held at Utica, the list of those present included Brooks, Scroggs, Burrows, Prescott and several other well-known Americans.<sup>2</sup> At that convention it became evident that the portion of the party which accepted the leadership of Brooks would support the new movement. Scroggs, the up-state leader, also had his following in the party, and though he appeared at the Utica convention in July, it was yet generally understood that his sympathies were with Republicanism. The annual Grand Council session was accordingly looked forward to by the politicians of the state with the liveliest interest. It was felt that the nativist party would be manipulated by its leaders so as to aid either the Bell national ticket or the Lincoln national ticket, and that the process of manipu-

<sup>1</sup> From vote as given in *Tribune Almanac*.

<sup>2</sup> *Herald*, 1860, July 13, p. 4.

lation would not be without interesting features for the world outside.

In the matter of interest the anticipations of party men were not disappointed. When the Grand Council came together on August 28th at Schenectady there were two factions keenly looking for advantage.<sup>1</sup> President Scroggs and Secretary Husted favored the Lincoln ticket, while Vice-President Prescott favored the Bell ticket. The Republicans thus had the official machinery of the session in their hands although they were outnumbered on the floor of the Council. At first President Scroggs refused to announce the place of meeting but a squad of Bell men were set to watch his every motion, lest the Lincoln men should quietly open the Council with their fellow-delegates absent. Under this scrutiny the president yielded and the Council was formally opened with both factions present. The next step was the critical one. Scroggs attempted to appoint the usual committee on credentials. Since this committee would have power to bar out delegates from the session its make-up was important. The Bell men were determined that Scroggs should not name the committee, and his efforts to do so were howled down. When he persisted in his effort he found himself surrounded by an excited mass of delegates who forced him to yield the gavel to Vice-President Prescott, known to be a Bell man. Scroggs and his friends then left the Council. Under Prescott's leadership the remainder of the council session was peaceful. There were 168 delegates at this last session of the Grand Council. They elected officers for the ensuing year in the customary way, choosing Amos H. Prescott, of Herkimer, for president, Jesse C. Dann, of Erie, for vice-president and William D. Murphy, of Albany, for secretary. Then came the work of delivering the votes of the organization, so far as official action could do it, to the new Union movement to which the American Party leaders had given their allegiance. A resolution was passed

<sup>1</sup> Account of Council session from *Herald* and *Tribune* reports.

by the Council endorsing the action of the Union movement in naming a state ticket of presidential electors, and this was followed by another resolution formally pledging the support of the Council to Bell and Everett. This officially merged the nativist movement into a different political group. But while these things were being done by the regular Grand Council the bolters, led by Scroggs, had no mind to be ignored without protest. They gathered together in another place and organized themselves into a rival Grand Council, following the regular procedure of the party. They elected officers for the ensuing year: Gustavus A. Scroggs, of Erie, to be president, A. J. H. Duganne, of New York, to be vice-president and James W. Husted, of Westchester, to be secretary. They passed a resolution declaring that since there was no American ticket in the field, either state or national, the members of the party should be free "to vote as their judgment and consciences may dictate." Then they named a new state committee and adjourned.

Both of these groups of delegates realized thoroughly that the organization which they represented was at its end. Many people thought that for the past three years it had been kept alive for this emergency. Neither one of the rival grand councils provided for a state convention to follow, though both bodies appointed state committees as had been the custom. The regular Grand Council gave to this new committee power to call a session of the Council at such future time as it might fix. The committee was composed of Erastus Brooks, L. W. Parks, Frank C. Wagner and George Briggs, all of New York, L. Sprague Parsons, S. H. Calhoun and C. H. Adams, all of Albany, Harvey Smith, of Rensselaer, Abel Smith, of Schenectady, N. B. Lord, of Jefferson, Richard F. Stevens, of Onondaga, M. Strong, of Monroe, Lorenzo Burrows, of Orleans, Jesse C. Dann, of Erie, Harlow Hakes, of Steuben, and E. B. Sweet, of Tioga. The naming of a new committee was at the same time largely a pretence. The adjournment of the two

grand councils was the final end of the old Know-Nothing organization in New York state. By the usual custom the Grand Council should have met again one year afterward in August, but when the next August came round the nation was absorbed in war and there was no room in popular thought for political nativism. The nativist party in New York state politics ended on August 28, 1860. >

## CHAPTER XI

### ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL NATIVISM

IN final comment upon that political nativism which struggled for recognition during the quarter century from 1835 to 1860 it is as unfair to speak with entire harshness as it is difficult to speak with complete sympathy. As an issue that failed of success and as a doctrine from which the American democracy turned away, it stands condemned by its own failure. Yet, even as a rejected political issue it has an importance in history as one of the great forces which have aided in rounding out the ideals of the nation. In looking back upon nativism and its efforts, a curiously contradictory feature suggests itself. From the modern standpoint its aims seem to have been narrow, proscriptive and un-American, while in their day thousands of earnest men deemed them to be most thoroughly patriotic and truly American in character. The explanation of this contradiction gives a reason for the study of rejected issues. The real work of nativism was to force public opinion to a judgment upon certain propositions, and in so doing to secure a decision as to whether or not the ideas which it represented were entitled to be considered as "American" in character. Political nativism was a curiously blundering effort to shape public opinion. It put forth views which were neither soundly logical nor consonant with the liberal tendencies of American society. For this reason, largely, they did not succeed. There can be no question as to the sincerity and patriotism of the men who forced nativism into the field as a political issue. They believed most fervently that the influences they opposed were undermining the



whole structure of American life. If these men were narrow and proscriptive they were at least honestly so. If they were un-American, it was because the public consciousness had not revealed itself enough to teach them where they stood. It was the judgment of the people upon their work which eventually decided that nativist ideas were not wholly to be accepted as really American. The movement of nativism had its brief hour of strength ; it stirred men's minds profoundly for a time and then it passed away, having accomplished little of what it had tried to do. Yet, as it disappeared, it left behind it a deeper insight into the theory of American life and a firmer faith in American institutions, both resulting from its agitation. It left behind it, too, more definite ideas and broader sympathies to solve the problems connected with the coming of foreign peoples to American shores.

Nativism was antagonistic to the Roman Catholic church. This antagonism was its most cherished feature. The Catholic church in the United States had then a membership very largely of foreign birth, and was in the position of a foreign institution transplanted to American soil. In some states it was dominated by the American element, but in New York it was the symbol and strength of foreign influence. There it held itself aloof from too close contact with American life, and it steadily opposed the adoption of American methods in its work. It organized its people into a distinct community and it encouraged clannishness based upon religion. This aloofness was the real grievance against the church and caused it to be denounced as an un-American organization. Had the nativist movement placed its arguments clearly on this basis it could have more easily defended its policy, but it preferred to adopt the theory of papal hostility toward America. This latter idea came from the Brutus letters of 1834, whose theories tinged anti-Catholic teachings through the whole period of nativist effort. From the hints given them by Brutus the nativist agitators learned to picture the Pope as an

ambitious despot longing to overthrow republican institutions. They learned to portray the Roman church as an engine of terrible power, directed by a crafty and unscrupulous priesthood which desired the subjection of a free people to its malevolent sway. All this could hardly be else than the exaggeration of enmity, but still it was used by nativism because it proved effective in agitation. At the time when nativism flourished, the American people were not yet fully convinced of the permanency of the structure they had raised. The public mind was distrustful of European governments and was easily played upon by suggestions of foreign conspiracy. This made the cry of papal hostility a useful one. There was no good evidence to be adduced as proof of the statements made against the papacy. Search was made for proof, but it was not found. The best argument on that line was one which started with evidence that Catholics owed obedience to the papal throne, then proved that the papal curia was an enemy of republicanism in Europe, and finally drew inference that the papacy must be an enemy of republicanism in America also. The obedience owed by American Catholics to the papacy was a matter of suspicion. The public did not yet fully understand the dual nature of the papacy as a civil and a spiritual power, and thought it only natural that a sovereign Pope should mix in politics wherever he had spiritual subjects. This agitation of nativism on the basis of papal enmity was a false issue covering up the real one, for the actual offence of the Catholic church was its non-conformity to American methods of church administration and popular education. These were the points upon which nativism attacked the church specifically. Keeping always at the front the idea of papal enmity, the theory of nativist attack was that of crippling the power that was inimical to America. It was argued that if church property could be wrested from priestly control, if religious and secular education could be entirely separated and if Catholic influence in politics could be broken down, then the power of

the Catholic priesthood would be less dangerous. It was the intention to force American methods upon the church system, making it conform to familiar models. The nativist attacks on the Roman church are most intelligible when interpreted as efforts to enforce conformity on points where church work is likely to touch politics.

In the matter of church administration the nativists wished to force lay trustees upon the church. The American idea of popular control of public institutions had been carried into the workings of American religious bodies. In the earlier days of the American Catholic church the idea of lay trustees was voluntarily adopted, but later the clergy threw its influence against the idea and favored the episcopal control of church property. The effort of the nativists was to re-instate the lay trustees in power. Of course the theory of attack was that of limiting the power of the papacy in America, but the attack was really an effort to enforce conformity. Nativism did not fail in its effort entirely. Whether it was right or wrong in demanding the change as it did, is perhaps still open to debate. The question as to lay trustees still reappears occasionally as a problem in church administration. It is certain that the change demanded by nativism was not undesirable from an American standpoint. The only question is as to the propriety of insisting upon it.

In the matter of popular education the nativists steadily opposed the grant of public money to aid Catholic schools, and they opposed also the elimination of the Bible from public school exercises. The school controversy of 1840-42 in New York city brought a minute discussion of these problems in public education, but after all had been said, the question remained beclouded by the fact that neither side could agree with the other on the proper relationship of religious and secular education. The fact was that the Protestant American people had distanced the Catholics in evolution of education. By developing the Sunday-school system they were able to

separate secular from religious education without harming the latter. Catholics, meanwhile, were dependent upon the old parish-school system with its mingling of the religious and the secular. When, therefore, the Catholics demanded school moneys they were stopped by the reminder that only non-sectarian schools could profit by public aid. The nativist opposition to the Catholic views of school matters did not fail to plead as excuse the aggressiveness of the papacy. Nevertheless the whole question of school-money turned on conformity to American customs in education. Time has approved the nativist position on this point. The matter of Bible reading in the public schools became a feature of the school controversy when cited by Catholics as evidence that the public schools were not as wholly unsectarian as their friends claimed. Protestant churchmen denied that any use of the Bible could be sectarian, and on this contention nativism took the Protestant side. This question, too, has outlived political nativism and shows itself yet from time to time. It would seem now, viewing the matter broadly, that nativism was wrong on this point. It is logical that separation of religious and secular work, if made at all, should be complete. In connection with school matters political nativism in New York never called for the abolition of church schools. Several Protestant denominations had their own schools, and no one questioned the right of Catholic schools to exist. It was only held that Catholic church schools, like the Protestant schools, should be self-supporting.

In the matter of political influence the nativists attacked the Catholic church by efforts to keep Catholics out of public office. Viewed as partisan policy this idea would have been proper enough, for a political movement must necessarily block the acquirement of office by its opponents wherever possible. Not satisfied with this reason, however, the nativists based their proscription upon the unproven charge of Catholic hostility toward American ideas, and here they placed them-

selves in the wrong. American opinion has never sincerely approved the application of religious tests for public office. It was right to vote down a Catholic candidate because he might favor objectionable issues, but it was wrong to vote him down for no reason except his religious affiliation. The nativist theory of this attack upon the church was again that of limiting the power of the papacy. Unlike other attacks, however, this was hardly an effort to secure conformity. It was more of a proscriptive measure which hid the feeling of race-antagonism that underlaid it. It was an excuse for discriminating at the polls against Irish office-seekers.

Altogether the nativist efforts against the Catholic church were very well calculated to diminish ecclesiastical power. Leaving out of the question the identity of the church against which the attacks were directed, this idea cannot be called un-American. Before the period of nativism there was a diminution of ecclesiastical power in the Protestant churches by influences within their lines. The nativists tried to effect the same end in the Catholic church by efforts from without. American opinion then and since has been persistent in viewing clerical bodies as unsafe guardians of the people's privileges. The trend of practice has been away from clerical control of church property, of popular education or of political work. The nativist desire to enforce conformity with American practice in this respect is not to be wholly condemned. The warfare of political nativism against the church was waged solely at those points where Catholic methods were opposed to the American social and political ideas. On purely religious matters political nativism never trespassed, although the fulminations of religious preachers and writers usually accompanied its activity. Catholic doctrines in religion were viewed with indifference by nativists at the same time that they gave closest attention to the church as a social organization. The line was, of course, indefinite between the church as a religious organization and the church as a social organiza-

tion. Catholic writers, as a rule, seem not to have been able to discriminate between the two conceptions, and they complained bitterly of the American inconsistency which talked of religious liberty, and yet warred against a church. In later years the same charge of inconsistency has been made in answer to attacks upon the Mormon church as a social organization controlling social customs. Nevertheless, despite all protests, American opinion discriminates between church organization as a means of grace and the same organization as a director of social law. The position has been practically held that minorities may not plead conscience as valid excuse for breaking with settled conditions of society. The war of nativism upon the Catholic organization was not after all inconsistent with the American understanding of religious liberty.

Nativism was opposed to the possession of political power by the foreign element without regard to the church affiliations of that element. In the larger cities of the country where the foreign-born population was considerable, the Irish and German people formed distinct social groups. Although they were hardly in touch with American ideas, were possessed of few responsibilities as citizens, and were the cause of unusual public expense, yet they were insistent upon political privileges. In most cities there were districts where the foreign element was in full control. In some cities the foreign vote could be so marshalled as to hold the balance of power between the parties. Under these circumstances the leaders of the foreign element received recognition by the political managers, and became party workers or office-holders, American-born citizens did not like the presence of foreign representatives in office. It was felt that these men would act according to the ideas and wishes of their foreign kindred, rather than according to those of the American community. Nativism, therefore, attacked the foreign element in its possession of political influence. As cause for its attack nativism alleged the danger that American customs would be crowded out by foreign ones if

foreigners secured control of the political machinery of the community. More especially it was declared that the un-American Catholic church would secure undue advantages from the rise of the foreign element in politics. This whole claim of danger to American ideas pre-supposed that the foreigners against whom the warning was uttered were persons unassimilated to American life. At the same time, however, nativism nominally arrayed itself against all the foreign-born, whatever might be their social position. In theory it recognized no differences among foreign persons. Nativist theory in this respect was illogical, and nativism in action did not live up to its theory. Its grievances and its arguments on the question of foreign birth took their full meaning only when applied to the clannish foreign element. In political work, also, nativism easily joined hands with Americanized foreigners and viewed them with hearty friendship. It made no secret of the fact that its professed enmity for foreign birth was not wholly real. The real object of attack was the foreigner who sought to exercise political power over an American community with whose ideas he was not in sympathy. In its warfare against this class of the foreign-born, nativism endeavored to strip away such conditions as favored the encroachment of foreign ideas upon American custom. It sought to reduce the foreign political influence to less dangerous proportions. This effort was directed upon three points, the decrease of the foreign vote, the reform of election abuses, and the barring of foreigners from office. Nativism set up the idea of a homogeneous body-politic as its end.

In the matter of decreasing the foreign vote the nativists advocated restriction of naturalization so far as voting was concerned. They were willing to concede civil rights to the foreign immigrant at an early date, but not the elective franchise. The reduction of the foreign vote was urged on the ground that foreign-born voters used the ballot without a knowledge of its effect and at the behest of leaders whose leadership was

in itself to be deplored. This reference to leaders was directed partly toward the mercenary politicians of the foreign quarters, but more largely toward the Catholic clergy, whose supposed connection with politics was always distasteful to Americans. The specific mode proposed for reducing the foreign vote was to require of foreigners twenty-one years of residence before voting. It was argued that this would correspond to the period of preparation for citizenship that was required of the native-born, but the argument was fallacious and weak. The nativist idea of reducing the foreign vote has not been endorsed by American opinion of later years. The nation has refused to believe that the foreign-born as a class are dangerous to national well-being, and it has condemned the test of birth to prove character of citizenship. The refusal of the franchise to all foreigners is deemed now to be an unfair mode of striking at clannishness, since it punishes the innocent with the guilty. Nevertheless, it is well to note that the principle of the thing is not unrelated to that of certain more recent legislation directed against Chinese and African blood to protect the dominant race.

In the matter of reforming election abuses, the nativists sought to secure order at the polls and to eliminate fraudulent votes. These reforms were urged on the ground that the foreign element profited by fraudulent increase of its voting power, that foreign bullies terrorized the native vote and that unnaturalized aliens took part in elections. It was proposed that the election bully be suppressed, and that illegal votes be barred out by an official registry of legal voters. In reality this attack on election abuses was impartial in its aims. It struck at fraud without inquiring as to the birth-place of the offenders. In point of fact, a considerable portion of the offenses against the franchise in the days of nativism were committed by native-born citizens, and the reforms asked by nativism were measures of good order and decency that applied to all. Public opinion has since approved the wishes of nativism in this direction.



In the matter of barring foreigners from office, the nativists pleaded the danger of giving power to men who would use it to aid the advance of foreign ideas. They took the ground that holders of public office must be thoroughly conversant with the wishes of the community over which they exercise authority. Here again the nativist complaint presupposed that the objectionable foreigners were unassimilated, and its error lay in the broadness of the dictum that all the foreign-born should be refused office. The nativist plan was to educate public opinion to vote down foreign-born candidates. Nativism did not advocate exclusion by statute, but only by popular action. The weakness of the plan was the evident unfairness of making nativity a test of privilege and punishing Americanized foreigners for the offences of the clannish element. It was proper, perhaps, to declare against office-holding by persons not in sympathy with American ways, but it was certainly wrong to insist that foreign birth was conclusive evidence of such lack of sympathy. Later years have not endorsed the nativist plan of refusing office on the score of foreign birth alone.

In one other way nativism sought to express opposition to the foreign element. It desired to prevent the immigration of paupers and criminals from Europe. On this point it was working more for social and economic than for political reform. The migration of the refuse of European society to America brought increased taxes and lower standards of social action. Nativism suggested a correction of the evil and its suggestion has in later years been fully approved.

The real character of American nativism is hardly to be estimated from the theories that it formulated as explanation of its efforts. Without a better key to its real nature it is difficult indeed to understand how this movement could take so tremendous a sweep of action as it did and yet possess as a basis so fallacious a set of arguments to justify it. It is possible, however, to understand it better than by a test

of its theories. Nativism in the great cities was primarily and above all things a phenomenon of racial antagonism. This is the explanation of its inconsistent combination of strong action and weak excuse. Sometimes critics detected the real motive of the movement, but the platforms and official utterances of the nativists never cared to specify the feeling. It was because of this element of racial hostility that nativism could announce a sweeping program of exclusion of foreigners and Catholics from office and that it could obtain support for it, not only from Americans-born but from foreign-born citizens as well. It was because of its embodiment of racial hostility that nativism could concentrate upon the Catholic church, as a visible symbol of foreign clannishness, the enmity and hatred of a public which boasted of its religious tolerance. It was for the same reason that the offences of foreigners against the franchise were met by an indignation which had never been called forth against native-born offenders. Such was the real character of nativism in the great cities where the foreign element was large. Outside of the cities its character was somewhat different. In the rural districts there were no masses of foreign population clannishly asserting themselves in defiance of American ways. The nativist political movement in national and state affairs was a sham and a pretext. The nation as a whole was never nativist in feeling. Probably no one state, as a whole, was ever genuinely worried over the existence of the foreign element. In state and national campaigns nativism was a politicians' movement rather than a popular one. Its issues were convenient for use at some particular crisis and for a time were accepted and advocated on that account. In the country districts, however, nativism had no enduring basis in general public sentiment. These facts explain the marvelous rise and the no less marvelous collapse of nativism in its national organization. It was a mere device of politics.

Was nativism justifiable? It was a truth that the foreign people who were crossing the Atlantic by thousands were

bringing with them and perpetuating ideas and conditions that were inharmonious with those evolved by two centuries of American society. Foreign conditions of lawlessness, poverty and immorality were apparent. Foreign ideas of the relation of the individual to society, of the relation of church and state, of the use of public office and political opportunity, of the proper sphere of clerical influence, were seen to be different from those of Americans. Foreign lawlessness and poverty were temporary and would probably yield to the pressure of better environment, but foreign ideas as to church, state and society seemed persistent and even aggressive. Therefore nativism took its stand in opposition. It demanded that the new people should take up the ideas of American society. It asked of them good conduct in politics, submissiveness to law, separation of church from politics, adoption of unsectarian education, rejection of clerical control and abandonment of foreign customs and sympathies. In short, nativism demanded that the new people lose their social identity and aid their own absorption into American society. Whether or not these demands were extreme must be a matter of opinion. Popular instinct seems, however, to favor the idea of a homogeneous society. Nativism strove to create a homogeneous electorate with the idea that a homogeneous society would follow. Its attack upon the Catholic church was an effort to weaken the support of foreign society. The Catholic church itself was not untouched by nativism, though a hint of the fact at one time by a Catholic writer brought down a storm upon him.<sup>1</sup> In the main the church was foreign in personnel, ideas and methods, and its attitude invited attack. Whether or not nativism was justified depends, therefore, on the right of immigrants to bring new ways to American society. The American argument supposed that republican America was more advanced in its social structure than Europe, and that the adoption of European ideas meant social retrogression. Americans had no protest

<sup>1</sup> *Brownson's Review*, 1854.

to make against European culture and experience, but only against European ideas of the position of the individual in society. If the American faith in itself was wrong, then perhaps the whole attitude of nativism was also wrong.

What results had nativist effort? As barren of success as the work of nativism seems when it is looked back upon, it yet was not resultless. It brought about a thorough discussion of the attitude to be taken by the American people toward the immigrants from foreign lands. In the earlier years of the Republic the nation took the position of indiscriminating welcome to all, preaching that individual liberty was a right of residence. It was the abuse of that liberty and the opposition of the foreign-born to American ideas that brought a re-examination of old theories and an attempted re-shaping of policy. It is rash, perhaps, to try to formulate the "views" of a great nation, but so far as American opinion can be judged it seems to have decided this,—that foreign ideas may be followed by foreigners resident in America, but those ideas must not attempt any career of conquest in American society. Social clannishness, ecclesiastical domination and race combinations in politics exist by sufferance, but they are emphatically non-American ideas to be reprobated on broad grounds of public policy. This opinion is the contribution of nativism to the evolution of American democratic ideals.

## SOURCES

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In the American political system the political party is an organization almost entirely extra-legal in character. It is seldom recognized by the public records of the community. In the study of a partisan movement, therefore, the ordinary sources for political history very largely fail. The story must be made up from the records of the organization itself, if any exist, from the private papers of men who directed its work and from the newspaper files which chronicled its various moves in the never-ending game of politics. The nativist political organizations had records of their own in their day of activity. There were, presumably, minutes of the sessions of its state committees and state conventions, of its local executive committees and party conventions in the localities where it existed. There were certainly, during a part of the nativist period, records of the secret bodies of one sort or another in which the voters and adherents of the movement were organized. Of these two sorts of records very little seems to be now extant. The writer has found no manuscript record whatever of committee or convention, and but small material for the secret system. The great Know-Nothing Order has left hardly a trace of itself in the way of records. Many of its official documents were re-printed by the daily press at the time they were issued, and these have been valuable aids in work, but as to manuscript material the writer has found nothing. The records of the Know-Nothing Grand Council are presumed to have passed from one grand secretary to another till the Grand Council ended ; but the late Hon. James W. Husted, who was the last regular secretary of the state organi-

zation, left no material of the sort among his private papers at the time of his death, and the real fate of the Grand Council records can only be guessed. The records of the State Chancery of the Order of United Americans are known to have been burned by the last grand secretary after the Order had gone to pieces. The records of the Executive Convention and grand executive committee of the United Americans were more fortunate in their fate, and fell into the hands of the last grand sachem of the Order, Mr. Charles E. Gildersleeve, now of New York city, in whose possession they yet remain. The same gentleman has the records of two of the subordinate chapters of the Order.

The paucity of actual records of executive work on the part of the nativists has been partly relieved by the existence of collections of documents bearing indirectly upon the subject. The writer has had access to the collection of Mr. Gildersleeve, which includes, besides the records above-named, a mass of miscellaneous material bearing upon the history of the United Americans. He has also been favored by access to the collection of Mr. Henry Baldwin, of New Haven, Conn., in which there is considerable material relating to the early American Republican movement, as well as matter relating to the United Americans. The private papers of James W. Barker, the Know-Nothing leader, were in private hands at Louisville, Ky., some years ago and were known to include documents relating to the Know-Nothing movement, but their present location is uncertain. The private papers of Hon. Erastus Brooks, the later leader of the American Party, are in the hands of the family in New York city. Inquiry as to these elicits the fact that they contain no material which cannot be obtained from the newspaper files of the time.

The use of public records in this work has been small. The printed journals of Congress and of the New York legislature have been useful aids in following the course of nativist attempts at law-making. The same is true of the

printed proceedings of the common council of New York city. Within the pages of these records can also be traced the appearance of those petitions which usually mark the rise of popular interest in any particular topic. Another class of public records which are of especial importance in the study of parties is that of official canvasses of votes, for it is by the popular support of its tickets that the strength of any political organization must be judged. The local canvasses of New York city previous to 1854 are not known to be extant as public records and their figures have to be supplied from the daily press. In 1854 and afterward the official canvasses were usually published in full by the city, and can be readily found in newspaper files. The figures of the official canvasses are also given by Valentine's manuals of the corporation of the city of New York, but these are not always reliable. The official canvasses of the state in 1854 and after were usually published by the New York press in full text.

So far as secondary authorities are concerned there is little information to be gathered on the subject of nativist political effort, although there is a wealth of printed material on the principles and grievances of nativism. The earlier nativist movement of 1843-47 did not become strong enough to call out any extended history of its work, while the later movements of the Know-Nothing period remained almost unchronicled because of its secret character, which forbade publication of details. Only two works, those of Whitney and of Carroll, make any useful reference to the Know-Nothing society. The following books have been used in the preparation of this work :

"An American." *Imminent Dangers to the Free Institutions of the United States through Foreign Immigration*. New York, 1835. N. Y. Hist. Soc. Library.

Carroll, Anna Ella. *The Great American Battle, or the Contest between Christianity and Political Romanism*. New York, Auburn, 1856. Columbia University Library.

Kehoe, Lawrence, editor. *Complete Works of the Most Rev. John Hughes*

*D. D., Archbishop of New York.* 2 vols. New York, 1866. N. Y. Public Library, Astor Branch.

Lee, John Hancock. *The Origin and Progress of the American Party in Politics.* Philadelphia, 1855. Columbia University Library.

Morse, Samuel F. B. *Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States.* Seventh edition. New York, 1852. Columbia University Library.

Orr, Hector. *The Native American, a Gift for the People.* Philadelphia, 1845. Columbia University Library.

Shea, John Gilmary. *History of the Catholic Church in the United States.* New York, 1888, 1890. Columbia University Library.

Smith, Thomas E. V. *Political Parties and Their Places of Meeting in New York City.* New York, 1893. N. Y. Hist. Soc. Library.

Smith, William C. *Pillars in the Temple, or Sketches of Deceased Laymen of the Methodist Episcopal Church.* New York, 1872. Private copy.

Tisdale, W. S., compiler. *The Controversy Between Senator Brooks and "John," Archbishop of New York.* New York [1855]. N. Y. Public Library Astor Branch.

Whitney, Thomas R. *A Defense of the American Policy as Opposed to the Encroachments of Foreign Influence.* New York [1856]. Columbia University Library.

By far the greater part of the material here used has been gleaned from the newspaper files of the period in which nativism essayed its political role. In this line of research, also, there have been difficulties. In the earlier period of nativism, when it was an open movement, the daily press was not accustomed to chronicle political news with any fullness. In the later period of nativism, when it was a secret movement, the daily press was disposed to say much, but had not the facts to tell. In every period when nativism was active there were newspapers devoted to its service with varying degrees of heartiness, but those which were most typically and completely nativist in sentiment were usually short-lived, disappearing with the movement on which they were founded. Of those papers and magazines of New York state which were friendly to nativism, and which might be styled the mouth-pieces of the movement, few are known to exist in files to-day. The lack of such files is not a serious matter, however, for the



columns of those which fought nativism are fully as useful for purposes of research, providing that proper allowance be made for the natural bias of the papers. In the preparation of this work the following files have been used :

*The Albany Argus*, 1842-45, 1854. Cornell University Library.

*The American* (Poughkeepsie), 1845-46. Baldwin Collection, New Haven, Conn.

*Evening Gazette*, 1845-46, continued as *Gazette and Times*, 1846-47. N. Y. Hist. Soc. Library.

*Evening Mirror*, 1847, 1853. N. Y. Hist. Soc. Library.

*Morning Courier and New York Enquirer*, 1835-36, 1844-45, 1854-55. N. Y. Public Library, Astor Branch. N. Y. Hist. Soc. Library.

*New York American*, 1835-37, 1841. N. Y. Hist. Soc. Library.

*New York Citizen and American Republican*, 1844, continued as *New York American Republican*, 1844. N. Y. Hist. Soc. Library.

*New York Commercial Advertiser*, 1836-37, 1841-42, 1853. N. Y. Hist. Soc. Library.

*New Yorker*, 1837-40. N. Y. Public Library, Astor Branch.

*New York Evening Post*, 1835-36, 1841, 1845, 1852-54. N. Y. Public Library, Astor Branch.

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