

The Prelate and the Politicians:

ARCHBISHOP JOHN HUGHES, WILLIAM HENRY SEWARD,
AND THURLOW WEED

1861-1862

By BRUCE STEINER*

" . . . I consider that the citizen should not be forgotten in the title of archbishop."

—Archbishop John Hughes, 1861

In the hundred and sixty odd years which have elapsed since the consecration of the first Catholic bishop for the United States, the instances of strong bonds of friendship and interest uniting American Catholic prelates and American politicians and statesmen could probably be counted on the fingers of one hand. Ordinarily the harassed ruler of an American diocese—eternally plagued by the problems of providing churches and schools, priests and nuns for his alien and comparatively poor flock—has had little time (if, indeed, he has had the inclination) to cultivate the society of the political magnates of the land. The history of the Catholic Church in the United States has been, and, to a large extent, still is a history of the immigrant and his problems; in solving those problems political activity on the part of members of the American hierarchy has played but a very minor role. Consequently the occasions on which prelate and politician would have met have been few, and their relationship has been, generally speaking, only that of nodding acquaintances.

There have been, to be sure, a few notable exceptions to this general lack of close politico-episcopal relationships. The fast friendship of Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul with William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and William Howard Taft provided one;¹ the friendly relations of James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore with many leading political figures of his day was another—if less spectacular—example;² and the close association of Archbishop

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John Hughes of New York with William Henry Seward and Thurlow Weed was still a third example—the earliest, and with the possible exception of the Ireland—Roosevelt friendship, the most interesting.

The friendship of Hughes with Seward and Weed dated from the New York education controversy of the early 1840's when the three had been in daily consultation and had joined with Horace Greeley to frame the public school bill which finally passed the state legislature.³ The two politicians, who always cultivated the Irish vote⁴ and who were aware of the unbounded admiration of the Irish for their fighting prelate, knew that it would do them no harm at the polls if the O'Learys and Donovans considered them the Archbishop's friends. They also enjoyed the stimulating company of the brilliant prelate, and for reasons compounded of portions—probably unequal—of interest and personal attraction, they had, therefore, cultivated his society. For his part, Archbishop Hughes was grateful for Seward's defense of his immigrant flock against the powerful nativist elements⁵ and for Weed's denunciations in the *Albany Evening Journal* of the malignant falsehoods that were broadcast concerning him.⁶ He had vindicated himself of the charge that he was organizing the Catholics of New York as a political party to force concessions from Whigs and Democrats,⁷ but in order to preserve unspotted his episcopal character, he saw no reason why he had to forego an evening of good political discussion with his politician friends.⁸ The alliance, or, more correctly, the close friendship between the prelate and the politicians of Auburn and Albany had thus endured for twenty years before the Civil War, and as a result of this friendship Archbishop Hughes, despite many difficulties, undertook a quasi-diplomatic mission to Europe in 1861-1862 in an effort to further the Union cause. The story of that mission, of the personal difficulties Hughes surmounted to accept it, and of his deep interest in the success of the North in the months prior to his departure for Europe forms the subject matter of this paper.

On October 15, 1861, John Hughes, Archbishop of New York, celebrated the thirty-fifth anniversary of his ordination as a Catholic priest.⁹ That morning as the aging prelate entered upon the work of the day following the celebration of a special jubilee mass, he doubtless thought over the crowded events of his long ecclesiastical career. As a poor immigrant lad forty years before, he had toiled with pick and shovel in the rock quarries of Chambersburg,

Pennsylvania—the brogue of County Tyrone in his speech and scarcely a dollar in his pockets. Now, in 1861, he headed the greatest archdiocese in the country, and by the sheer force of his personality and abilities he had acquired an influence and prestige which far surpassed that of his fellow bishops. His position as spiritual leader of hordes of Irish Catholic immigrants, his building of a hundred churches, his foundation of Fordham University and numerous other schools and charitable institutions had advanced his reputation, but it was not the quiet round of pastoral duties which had given him his unique position among the American hierarchy. Tranquillity had never suited John Hughes. A fondness for controversy, a sublimated form of the Irishman's love of a good brawl, had been his life's-blood, and opportunities for indulging his propensity had never been lacking. As a parish priest in Philadelphia and as Bishop¹⁰ of New York, he had battled successfully a form of trusteeism which threatened to destroy the fabric of Catholic church government. In 1840-1842 he had spearheaded a drive which ousted the Protestant Public School Society from its control of the common schools of New York City. In the decade preceding the Civil War he had defended the temporal power of the Papacy against the forces in the United States which were applauding the cause of Italian unification. An eloquent and forceful speaker and a master of polemical writing, he usually fought his battles from the pulpit and lecture platform and in the public press although he could on occasion resort to more direct tactics. In the summer of 1844, when nativist rioters in Philadelphia had burned two Catholic churches, a rectory, and a convent and similar outrages had been threatened in New York, Hughes had stationed armed forces of one or two thousand men—determined to give their lives in defense of their property and to slay all who should try to destroy it—in each of his churches; had pointly informed the city authorities that he could do nothing to restrain his people and had warned that “if a single Catholic church were burned in New York, the city would become a second Moscow.”¹¹

But battles—physical or intellectual—had little attraction for Archbishop Hughes as he surveyed the tempestuous course of his priestly career in October of 1861. No longer could he hurl himself into them with his old zeal and vigor. For a quarter-century he had ruled the New York archdiocese much in the manner of a general commanding a vast army. He had demanded an exacting obedience from his clergy; he had brooked no opposition to episcopal authority. With unbounded confidence in his own powers, with the

ability to arrive at decisions promptly and to carry them into action against formidable odds and with a sort of bull-dog tenacity, he had forged constantly ahead, and, in most instances, he had carried the day before him. But now a series of ills was besetting the archepiscopal commander.¹² For years he had driven himself to accomplish an exhausting daily routine of diocesan business: disregarding any rules of health, taking almost no exercise, snatching his meals at odd hours, and forcing his tired brain to focus upon an impossible amount of work. By 1848 symptoms of ill-health were alarmingly apparent. By the middle of the 1850's he had, in the words of his nineteenth-century biographer, "entirely destroyed his constitution."¹³ Already in 1861 he was suffering from the intestinal disease which finally caused his death; attacks of rheumatism were making writing a torture and exercise impossible; and his generally poor state of health sometimes rendered any mental activity impossible. The Archbishop realized that he was no longer fit for his high command, but Rome had refused his resignation, claiming that even in his weakened condition he was the man best qualified to fill his difficult post. His request for a coadjutor had likewise been refused; he had been left to struggle on alone. So when now—old, sick, and tired—he recalled his past battles and triumphs on the thirty-fifth anniversary of his ordination, it must have been with the thought that such extraordinary exertions were, for him, a thing of the past. What little strength he still possessed would have to be conserved and expended in the ordinary episcopal duties which he could yet perform.

But if Archbishop Hughes could no longer marshal his forces for the attack, he nevertheless retained his interest in conflict and controversy, especially in the mighty conflict then engulfing the nation. On this same October day, he penned the last in a long series of letters to his old friend William Henry Seward, now Secretary of State. The friendship of twenty years had not been severed by Seward's removal to Washington, and when the war came on, a steady stream of letters addressed to "My Dear Governor"¹⁴ issued forth from the episcopal residence to the Secretary's home in the national capital. Some of the Archbishop's brethren would probably have been mildly shocked had they perused this correspondence, for the appointment of chaplains and the spiritual condition of the soldiers went unmentioned in the prelate's letters.¹⁵ Hughes undertook to keep Seward informed of the state of public feeling in New York City, at one time urging that Colonel Michael Corcoran, leader of a disaffected New York regiment, be made a brigadier-

general in order to conciliate the Irish, which appointment was promptly made by Lincoln.¹⁶ Abolition programs were unpopular among the New York Irish, and Archbishop Hughes warned the government that while the Catholics "are willing to fight to the death for the support of the constitution, the Government, and the laws of the country," if they should understand "they are to fight for the abolition of slavery, then, indeed, they will turn away in disgust from the discharge of what would otherwise be a patriotic duty."¹⁷

Besides forwarding these reports of public sentiment, the Archbishop also made suggestions in his letters as to the conduct of the war. Immediately after the fall of Fort Sumter, he urged through Seward that a force of at least one hundred thousand men should be concentrated at Washington; the expense would be great, but it would be more economical to incur it at once "in order to save greater in the feeble drag of a contest wherein the parties are entirely or nearly balanced."¹⁸ Cairo at the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi—"the great point of strategy on our Western waters"—he thought should be strengthened;¹⁹ the Confederate privateers—"essentially pirates"—should be sunk whenever possible.²⁰ All talk of emancipation should be hushed up so as not to cast "any new firebrands of division into that portion of the country which is loyal and still united."²¹

These letters arrived in Washington every two or three days during the first six months of the war,²² but they ceased abruptly with the letter of October 15, 1861. Possibly in reviewing his past career and present state of weakness, Archbishop Hughes realized that even the roles of an armchair Bishop-General Polk and taker of the public pulse were too much for him. At any rate, on the anniversary of his ordination, he wrote a final lengthy letter to Seward in which he praised the conduct of Lincoln and the cabinet, rejoiced at the success of the blockade, urged once more the importance of Cairo, and cautioned the Secretary that in its "efforts to bring back the Southern States to their condition before the war, . . . the federal government should be as patient and as considerate towards the State authorities of this so-called Confederacy as possible. Conquest is not altogether by the sword." Concluding his letter, he wrote:

I think it unlikely that I shall venture to encroach on your precious time by any further communications on this great national crisis. I am getting old, and it is time for me to begin to gather myself up for a transition from this world to another, and I hope,

a better. I know that this world would have gone on just as well as it has done if I had never lived. At the same time, as I mentioned in my first letter, I have not been able to sever my thoughts and feelings from what has occurred, almost under my own eyes, in the only country which I call mine, and to which I am devoted by every prompting of my understanding, and every loyal sentiment of my heart."²³

Archbishop Hughes may have intended these last sentences as a valedictory to any further participation in political affairs, but if so, his retirement was destined to be of very brief duration. The President read over this last letter to Seward and liked it so well that he requested a copy for himself.²⁴ On October 21 he wrote to the Archbishop about the appointment of hospital chaplains and expressed his "[m]any thanks for your kind and judicious letters to Gov. Seward. . . which he regularly allows me the pleasure and profit of perusing."²⁵ That same day Seward invited the Archbishop to confer with him in Washington on public affairs of the greatest importance.

The Secretary of State was definitely dissatisfied with the foreign situation at this time. Confederate propagandists had been swarming over Europe, giving out their own interpretation of the war and its causes. On October 15 the successful running of the blockade by the Southern commissions, Mason and Slidell, had been reported.²⁶ The fate of the Union cause abroad indeed appeared bleak, and Seward wrote to his wife that "[t]he pressure of interests and ambitions in Europe, which disunionists have procured to operate on the Cabinets of London and Paris, have made it doubtful whether we can escape the yet deeper and darker abyss of foreign war."²⁷ It was imperative that the efforts of the Southerners abroad be counteracted. The American ministers, especially those in Paris and London, might accomplish this work, but Seward decided that unofficial envoys, who would be free to work outside the rigid framework of diplomatic etiquette, might better handle the task. They could mingle freely in society, create a climate of public opinion favorable to the United States, and refute the Confederate claims,²⁸ exercising everywhere, as one of them noted, "a quiet, natural, conversational influence, *unforced*—taking advantage of opportunities apparently unsought & easily arising."²⁹ For this mission an imposing array of political and ecclesiastical talent was selected: John Pendleton Kennedy, sometime Attorney General of the United States; Edward Everett, former Minister to Great Britain, Charles Pettit McIlvaine, Protestant Episcopal Bishop of

Ohio—a Chase man; and Seward's nominee, Archbishop John Hughes.³⁰

The Archbishop left for Washington as soon as he received Seward's invitation. There at a dinner party on an evening in late October, the Secretary of State outlined the proposed European venture to Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase, McIlvaine, and Hughes.³¹ The Episcopal bishop accepted the Secretary's proposal and agreed to labor in England, but the Archbishop refused to consider it. His letters to Weed and Seward of October 29 indicate that he may have had serious doubts as to the effectiveness of Seward's plan, and possibly he gave these as his reason for declining. Probably he also pleaded the cares of his populous diocese and his very poor health as reasons which rendered a trip abroad impossible for him.

Chase and Bishop McIlvaine departed, and Seward, deeply disappointed at his friend's refusal, repeatedly urged him to change his mind as they sat talking in the parlor, awaiting the arrival of Thurlow Weed. At nine o'clock when Weed arrived the Archbishop was still adamant. Seward continued to press for his acceptance, but his efforts were suddenly interrupted by the arrival of the Prussian minister, Baron von Gerolt. While the Secretary was conversing with the Baron, Weed seized upon the opportunity to try his hand at persuading the Archbishop. Later, in language stilted and embellished, he recalled the conversation thus:

The Secretary seated himself with the baron upon a sofa in the anteroom, and I took advantage of the interruption to urge the Archbishop with great earnestness to withdraw his declination. He reiterated his reasons for declining. I told him I had already listened attentively to all he had said, and that while I knew he always had good and sufficient reasons for whatever he did or declined to do, he had not yet chosen to state them; and that while I did not seek to know more than he thought proper to avow, I must again appeal to him as a loyal citizen, devoted to the Union, and capable of rendering great service at a crisis of imminent danger, not to persist in his refusal unless his reasons for doing so were insurmountable. After a long pause he placed his hand upon my shoulder, and, in his impressive manner and clear, distinct voice, said "Will you go with me?" I replied, "I have once enjoyed the great happiness of a voyage to Europe in your company, and of a tour through Ireland, England, and France under your protection. It was a privilege and a pleasure which I shall never forget. I would cheerfully go with you as your secretary or your valet, if that would give to the government the benefit of your services." And here the conversation rested until Baron von Gerolt took his leave. When Governor Seward returned the Archbishop rose and

said, "Governor, I have changed my mind, and will accept the appointment with this condition, that he, "placing his hand again upon my shoulder, "goes with me as a colleague. And as you want us to sail next Wednesday, I shall leave for New York by the first tram in the morning. I lodge at the convent at Georgetown, and I will now take my leave. So good-night and good-by."³²

An evening's conversation with his two old friends had convinced Hughes that it was his patriotic duty to accept the European mission, despite his feeble health and many cares, and had shattered his resolution (scarcely a week old) to withdraw from all further participation in political affairs. The episcopal commander had rallied his ebbing strength. Now, with colors bravely flying, he was prepared to battle the Confederate propagandists abroad.

Doubtless Weed and Seward made such strenuous efforts to persuade Hughes to accept this quasi-diplomatic appointment because they realized that he was just the person for such a post: a man conversant with political affairs and personalities, who possessed the conversational ability—whether he spoke in English, French, or Spanish³³—to impress upon his hearers something of his own ardent conviction in the rectitude of the Union cause; a cleric whose undoubted integrity and high ecclesiastical position would prevent him from being taken for a mere parrot of government propaganda, whose position would likewise give him added influence with European Catholics, and whose friendship for the South and benevolent view of Southern slavery³⁴ would further disarm those inclined to receive his words as those of a Northern partisan. Seward probably recalled that at the beginning of the Mexican War President Polk had asked the Archbishop to undertake a similar mission to Mexico (which mission Hughes had had to decline),³⁵ and he must also have known that the prelate's extensive tours of Europe in 1839-40, 1843, 1845-46, 1850-51, and 1854-55 had acquainted him with leading lay and ecclesiastical figures in France, Italy, Ireland, and Austria.³⁶ These splendid qualifications outweighed the minor drawback resulting from the Archbishop's insistence that he be allowed to accomplish his mission in his own way. Such freedom of action was hardly the diplomatic ideal from Seward's viewpoint, but the crusty old prelate was unused to the role of a subordinate, and as the mission was one which required few specific instructions on the Secretary's part, he readily agreed to this demand. To Cardinal Barnabo the Archbishop wrote:

I made known to the ministers in Washington that I could accept no official appointment from them; that it was not in their power to bestow any distinction upon me equal to that which the Church

had already conferred; that I could not undertake to fulfill any written instructions; but that if I came I should be left to my own discretion, to say and do what would be most likely to accomplish good, or at elast to prevent evil. Then they said that I should go with a *carte blanche*—do and say for the interests of the country, prevention of war, and interests of humanity, any thing that I should think proper.³⁷

He would, he informed the Cardinal, spend a month or two in Paris and had not, at that time, any intention of visiting outside France, except that on his way home, he might have to spend some time in London after Parliament had convened.³⁸

Following the Archbishop's return to New York, preparations were pushed for his departure for Europe aboard the *Africa* on November 6. A letter to Albany playfully assured Weed that although "I cannot 'condescend' to appoint you to any of the offices which you so humbly solicited in a whisper the other evening in Washington, . . . I do hereby appoint you, with or without the consent of the Senate, to be my friend (as you always have been), and my companion in our brief visit to Europe."³⁹ Diocesan affairs were put in order as the bishop prepared for an absence of several months. Letters to both Weed and Seward indicated that while Hughes may still have had his doubts about the effectiveness of the unofficial European envoys, he was warming up to the idea and believed that even if the mission were unsuccessful it was "a measure of large and, in our actual circumstances, exceedingly wise statesmanship."⁴⁰

In looking through his correspondence and papers, the Archbishop came across a manuscript which, he realized, Seward might consider a strange occupant of the archdiocesan archives, but he forwarded it with the following notation to the Secretary as possible ammunition for the Union cause:

. . . I stumbled on a manuscript which, if put in print, would make four or five hundred pages octavo. The first eight pages are wanting. By whom it was written—or how it came into my keeping is now a perfect mystery to me. But it will be sufficient to annihilate the influence of a certain late Senator [i.e. James M. Mason], who is now said to be on his way to Europe for purposes of discord and disunion.⁴¹

When this opening shot at the Confederacy's European representatives was fired, Hughes had about completed arrangements for his departure. On Monday, November 4, two days before the sailing of the *Africa*, Seward received the Archbishop at the Astor

House in New York and read to him certain instructions.⁴² The copy of them which he handed Hughes apparently is not preserved among the prelate's papers,⁴³ but doubtless he warmly urged him to make every effort to better Franco-American relations. Thurlow Weed and the New York politicians, Richard M. Blatchford and R. M. Minturn, were also present at this conference. Seward had not wanted Weed to accompany the Archbishop, for he feared that the radical anti-slavery men, who strongly opposed the Albany editor for his favoring of compromise the previous winter, would bitterly criticize his appointment to the mission.⁴⁴ The prelate, however, had steadfastly refused to go abroad without him. When Minturn now attempted to congratulate Weed on his supposed appointment, Seward quickly replied that he was going as a "Volunteer" and would pay his own expenses.⁴⁵ The Albany editor chaffed at this nebulous commission; he did eventually succeed in getting a letter of introduction from Seward.⁴⁶

The purpose of the Archbishop's visit to Europe was known publicly even before he had embarked. Possibly Weed indiscretely allowed the news to leak out, for on the day following the Astor House meeting, the *New York Times* printed the letter of an Albany correspondent who informed its readers that

Thurlow Weed and Archbishop Hughes are about to sail for Europe, probably by the steamer *Africa*, which sails on Wednesday, to endeavor to counteract the operations of the Southern Commissioners, and prevent the recognition of the Southern Confederacy by France or England. Gen. Scott, it is understood, goes in the same steamer.⁴⁷

Although Weed and Winfield Scott finally decided to sail aboard a later ship, Archbishop Hughes, true to the *Times's* prediction, embarked aboard the *Africa* at Jersey City and steamed out of that harbor on November 6 with a miscellaneous group of Americans, Scots, Irish- and Englishmen as his fellow passenger.⁴⁸ A valet-amanuensis and his private secretary and chaplain, Reverend Francis McNeirny, accompanied him.⁴⁹ The old prelate had always found that a sea voyage greatly improved his spirits, and now he was able to mix daily in the society of the ship's inmates—listening to their talk, he informed Seward, as they settled "the questions of your cabinet and of the war about once a day."⁵⁰ The company was all very agreeable: though among the Englishmen the Archbishop noted that "the sympathetic needle points to the South," nevertheless "they generally came round to the acknowledgement that the South has had no real ground for its hasty and

unwise measures."⁵¹ Friendly conversation provided opportunities for Hughes to suggest that it would be much better both for Britain and the United States if the English people "with or without the approval of the Government, will stand by their good feelings, as exhibited during the last fifty years," "that America is as proud of her rights as Britain can be of hers, and as able, as well as willing, to defend them at every hazard; that even friendly interference, provided it should be a real interference, on their part, would be very damaging to the interests of both countries."⁵²

Several nights before the *Africa* docked at Liverpool, Archbishop Hughes elaborated these general remarks in a vigorous attack upon the Queen's neutrality proclamation and the word "belligerents" as applied to the Confederates by Lord John Russell, the British Foreign Secretary.⁵³ Conceiving of the war in terms of a mere insurrection and regarding the Confederate government as a knot of conspiring rebels,⁵⁴ Hughes requested the chief defender of the English position to recall any instance in which any government had "raised rebellion within the limits of a friendly State to an equality with the legitimate government which they attempted to overthrow."

I quoted the instance of Ireland in 1798: America could have called the rebels "belligerents" against England, but they did not. The French, indeed, sympathized with them, but France was engaged in a war with England at the time, and did not pretend to have any sympathies except with England's enemies. I quoted the Scotch rebellion of 1706, and again of 1715; did any power at peace with England proclaim the Scotch "belligerents"?

Other "relevant" examples were put forward, and the poor Englishman, who apparently did not distinguish between a haphazard rebellion and a responsible government commanding the allegiance of its citizens and controlling its territories, went down to defeat before the rhetorical questioning of the Archbishop. Hughes triumphantly declared that no government spokesman "in the history of modern nations" had ever used an expression equivalent to Russell's use of "belligerents," asserting that the British minister "would pass in history as the first public man who inaugurated a word calculated to upset the peace and government of the world." He maintained that

The proper language for Lord John Russell to have employed would have been, "that the United States were unhappily disturbed by one of those domestic strifes with which few great nations are unacquainted within their own borders, and that it was the pur-

pose and policy of the British people not to interfere either morally or physically."

At this point in the discussion, the English champions fell silent, and as the company in general had wearied of the matter, the conversation ceased. While Hughes had urged his arguments with considerable warmth, no ill feeling had been engendered. Following the final dinner aboard ship, he was scarcely able, he wrote Seward, to distinguish "which side exceeded the other in expressions of mutual good will, and a desire and hope that the present troubles may come to an amicable and early termination."

At Liverpool the Archbishop found that local journals were copying the speculations of the New York papers regarding the purpose of his European visit.⁵⁵ He remained only a short while in that city and then hurried on to London, where he held a brief conversation, eight minutes to be exact, with the American minister Charles Francis Adams before proceeding to Paris by way of Boulogne. Paris was entered in a blinding rainstorm which drenched the prelate's clothes and sent him to bed with a serious cold, but by November 2 medicine and a doctor had assuaged his many ills. Comfortably lodged in the Hotel l'Empire, in apartments next to those of Thurlow Weed, he was ready to begin a two-month round of activity as a good-will ambassador for the Union cause.⁵⁶

For the most part, his work was accomplished in informal discussions. The staterooms of the *Africa* had been the proving ground where he had tried out his arguments and other conversational weapons. Now, with armaments tested and strategy mapped out, he plunged into the battle of wits and words. As the leading member of the American hierarchy, he found a ready entrée to the best society of the French capital. At almost daily dinner parties he conversed in a forceful, albeit tactful and casual manner on the causes of the Civil War, presenting the Northern view to ecclesiastics, senators, and other government dignitaries, "perfectly satisfied that whatever I said would reach the ears of one or another of the ministers within twenty-four hours after its utterance."⁵⁷ Bishops from districts suffering on account of the blockade's interruption of trade were coming to the capital to lay the case of their poor people before the Emperor. On the day preceding their audiences, most of them called upon Hughes, who seized the opportunity to acquaint them with a despatch of Seward's in which the Secretary of State urged that the news be broadcast that Union successes were such that it was quite certain the blockade could soon be discontinued. If necessary, the impression was to be created that it could

be gradually modified, if not done away with altogether. The Archbishop had no way of knowing whether or not the prelates reported his conversation to Louis Napoleon, but he hoped good might come of his efforts.⁵⁸

The leading French ecclesiastics were especially warm in their reception of the American prelate. By invitation of the Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris Hughes dined with the cardinals of the Empire, who, as *ex-officio* senators, had assembled in Paris for the opening of the national legislature.⁵⁹ On December 30 he was a guest of honor at a dinner given by the Irish College, sitting down to table in the cosmopolitan company of the Archbishops of Abyssinia and Peiping.⁶⁰ That evening he attended a reception at the home of the American consul, John Bigelow, where arrayed in full ecclesiastical regalia, "he received great attention from a large and brilliant company."⁶¹

While the Archbishop may have been gratified by the courtesies paid him at this last assemblage, he was very dissatisfied with the conduct toward himself of Bigelow and the American minister, William L. Dayton.⁶² Thurlow Weed, after a few days in Paris, had crossed over to London, and was there working hand-in-glove with Charles Francis Adams to better Anglo-American relations.⁶³ But the American officials at Paris, perhaps resenting the appointment of an unofficial envoy as a slur on their ability and diligence, received Hughes frigidly. At their first meeting Dayton informed the Archbishop somewhat awkwardly that "he did not feel disposed" to introduce him to Thouvenel, the French Foreign Minister. Hughes replied that he understood perfectly the delicacy of Dayton's position with regard to himself and told him that if he should have any occasion to call upon Thouvenel, he could find out ways to contact him. Soon afterwards Dayton discovered to his surprise that the French minister was perfectly familiar with Hughes's movements and purpose in coming to Paris and was interested in finding out more about him. He consequently dropped his reserve and sought the Archbishop's friendship.⁶⁴ But amicable relations did not long continue between the official and unofficial envoys. Dayton did not hinder Hughes, but neither did he help him in any way. The touchy question of whether the Archbishop should act in a subordinate role to Dayton, or whether he had independent authority and might operate free of any control apparently came up; and while the minister did not wish, practically speaking, to exercise any authority over Hughes, the prelate was

offended by his subtle assertion that he had the theoretical right to do so. In his letter to Seward of December 18, he complained:

It has been signified to me by our minister, in kindly phrase, that whether in Paris or out of it I shall have the privilege of acting on my own discretion. I claim this indulgence from a higher source. I shall do so; and I cherish no hope of sympathy on this side from any official of the United States Government whether in this country or elsewhere in Europe. After I shall leave Paris, but even before, I shall act and speak as an independent and quasi representative of the United States.⁶⁵

With or without ministerial approbation, Archbishop Hughes continued to express his opinions in the salons of Parisian society, but even his conversational powers must have been taxed to the utmost when it came to defending the actions of the Lincoln administration in the matter of the Trent affair. Not that the prelate had any doubts as to the correctness of the Union position. In his letter to Seward of November 28, he applauded the "seasonable capture of some representatives of what is called the Southern Confederacy" as "a measure of wisdom and necessity" and mentioned that he had explained that action as an exercise of the right of search, which when employed by Britain had brought on the War of 1812, which right Britain had never formally renounced, and which she could hardly condemn another country for utilizing.⁶⁶ While his grounding in international law might indeed be shaky, his faith in the power of the Union was unflagging. The bellicose prelate was ready to take on all comers and stoutly informed his audiences

. . . that the United States, if assailed by Great Britain, will not hesitate to employ every means that God and Nature shall have put within her reach to defend herself against foreign and unjust assailants, whether they be England, France, or both combined; and that even now, if England should adopt the course so much at variance with the interests of commerce, of communities, and of nations that have no real ground for mutual hostilities, the Government at Washington will not be taken by surprise, nor will it shrink in the least from the ordeal through which it will have to pass.⁶⁷

He was not at all doubtful, he wrote Seward, of the outcome of a war with England: the Union would triumph and "that calamity, not of our seeking, . . . will ultimately be the occasion of elevating the U States into the condition of primary ascendancy among the nations of the earth."⁶⁸ At the same time, he viewed with horror the prospect of such a conflict, and on December 5 he penned a long letter to Seward in which he proposed possible solutions to

the crisis. The English press was insisting that war would ensue if the United States should refuse to surrender Mason and Slidell, while the Archbishop was certain the American people would "never comply with this condition, especially dictated by a rival power that has played us false since the beginning of our domestic struggle. . . ."69 As an escape from this dilemma, Hughes seized at the possibility of mediation by a third power, which plan had possibly been suggested to him by Thurlow Weed.70 He wrote:

Two modes—or at least two efforts—present themselves to my mind. The one is, that the Emperor of the French should act as arbiter in the dispute, before the effusion of blood between the two nations shall have occurred, provided they would agree, on the one side and on the other, to submit the controversy to his friendly decision. This I shall propose to his Majesty, acting, as you know on my own responsibility. He will unquestionably be reserved on the subject, but at all events I shall write you my interpretation of the result.71

As for his second plan, Hughes wrote:

The other alternative would be, that whilst John Bull is getting on his seal-cap and military boots, the prisoners should be tried according to the laws of the land. They would be, no doubt, condemned to death; but I presume that it would be competent for the President, in the exercise of his constitutional privileges, to commute the sentence of the culprits, and allow them, under that commutation, to go on board any neutral vessel, and forsake the United States forever, except at the peril of their lives, or by virtue of an Act of Congress permitting them to return to the country they have left nothing done to betray.72

Although the Archbishop sincerely hoped one of these alternatives might provide a solution, he had no great faith in either plan.73 He was not even certain that the mediator he had suggested was friendly to the United States, and the portents of war were so ominous he warned Seward in his next letter: "Prepare for the worst."74 The military machine of the country, he urged, should be strengthened at all points; perhaps England could be frightened off.75 The news Weed was sending him from London was far from encouraging.76 On December 11, the situation appeared so fearful that General Scott was making for Le Harvre and a ship home, having told Hughes' informant that war was inevitable.77 On the following day the prelate admitted in his letter to Seward that he had only lingering hopes that a war with England could be avoided, "or at least procrastinated long enough to enable me to return peaceably to New York."78

But although an Anglo-American war seemed unavoidable, the Archbishop did not relax his efforts to do what he could to stave off that catastrophe. The American minister would give him no help in obtaining an audience with the Emperor,⁷⁹ but the determined prelate had no intention of foregoing an interview with Louis Napoleon. The plan he hit upon was simplicity itself. In a letter to Seward he explained that he merely "wrote to him, as one man would write to another in a polite and brief note to the effect: 'Sir, I wish to have the honor of a conversation with you.'" ⁸⁰ The Emperor, no doubt amused at the quaint informality of the American ecclesiastic, replied in a courteous note, as did the Empress also, and an audience was arranged for the Tuesday preceding Christmas.⁸¹

Hughes also made abortive plans for writing and circulating a Union propaganda pamphlet. Despite the belligerent attitude of the London press at this time, all Englishmen were not crying for war with the United States. At Rochdale on December 4, the reformer John Bright made a stirring speech in which he denounced Lord Russell, castigated the bellicose *Times*, declared that Southern secession and the American Revolution were not analagous, and asserted that Southern slavery—nothing else—had brought on the war. The *Trent* incident was irritating, Bright agreed, "but let us wait calmly and see if it is not disavowed."⁸² Using this speech as a pretext, Hughes planned an open letter in answer to Bright, in which he would suggest "in a moderate tone, views with regard to these whole complicated questions."⁸³ Two thousand copies of this letter would be printed in English at Paris and then broadcast throughout England and Ireland, and the prelate imagined the work would subsequently be translated into French.⁸⁴ By December 12 he could inform Seward that the letter had been "sketched out and partly written," but he later decided to withhold publication.⁸⁵ Thurlow Weed must have been relieved. He had confided in Seward that while the Archbishop thought the letter "right for *him*," he had both disliked its tone and feared its effects,⁸⁶ and when he learned that Hughes had laid the work aside, he wrote him from London:

I do not regret that you concluded to withhold your Letter for the present. Your words would be rigidly weighed and savagely twisted here. That, for yourself, you do not care for. But you would be regarded as speaking semi-officially, and for Mr. Seward, who, unconscious man, is staggering under a heavy load of obloquy already. Every idle word he spoke here, in society, is treasured up and a bad meaning given to it.⁸⁷

Plans for a campaign⁸⁸ of written Union propaganda thus came to nought, but as the date of the Archbishop's audience with the Emperor approached, the prelate perhaps thought the prospects of his mediation proposal were somewhat improved. By December 20 he was "thoroughly persuaded" that France would not ally herself with England in a war against America,⁸⁹ and as he mounted the staircases of the Tuileries on the day of his interview, he may cautiously have hoped that Louis Napoleon would indeed consent to mediate the *Trent* dispute. If so, his hopes were doomed to disappointment. Seward was informed that the result of the interview "was entirely satisfactory and encouraging . . ." The Emperor and Empress had received the American prelate most graciously:⁹⁰ Eugenie had presented the Prince Imperial and sought and received Hughes's hearty episcopal blessing for her adored child. At the conclusion of the hour-long conversation, the royal pair had condescended to accompany the Archbishop to the door of the salon—"an attention and honour," he noted in a letter to Weed, "which Louis Phillip[e] & his Queen did not observe in the same room 21 years ago."⁹¹ The interview strengthened his conviction that France would not unite with England in an assault upon the United States and convinced him that the Emperor would not intervene in American affairs in an effort to end the war. Louis Napoleon, however, had refused to accept the role of mediator of the *Trent* affair. Wrote Hughes to Seward:

I took it upon myself to implore the Emperor to use his good offices in preventing a rupture between England and America, by the interposition of his kind and potent offices as a mediator. To this he replied in a way which I had not thought of. He expressed his good wishes, but mentioned that in this matter he "could not act as arbitrator, because, whilst it would be competent for him, if invited by the parties, to assume that office on questions of a material kind, such as deciding upon disputed boundaries, yet as things now stand, it is not a question of boundaries or the like, but it would be determining a *point of honor*, arbitration on which between two such nations would not be perhaps satisfactory to either."⁹²

Although the Archbishop was disappointed at this refusal, he must have consoled himself with the thought that France had no hostile designs against the United States. With a relieved mind he now awaited the Secretary of State's reply to a plan of action he had outlined in his letter of December 18. France had originally been designated as his particular field of labor, but in this letter Hughes had suggested that the stage of his activities should be vastly

enlarged. His health still was not good;⁹³ however, if Seward thought that his efforts could "be of the slightest consequence or influence" in favor of the Union cause, he was willing to prolong his absence from his diocese by eight or ten months. If the Secretary of State should approve, he would

go to Rome with as little delay, after having seen the Emperor here, as possible. I have ascertained by private letters that Rome is now swarming with English anti-American visitors, and with a large number of Southern secessionists. Ward, late commissioner to China, is reported to be exuberantly furious in favor of the South. If I shall go to Rome my stay will not be longer than ten days. I shall not court the company of Ward or anybody else. But if he or others should come in my way I shall tell them the truth with my own commentaries. Returning from Rome, and finding myself at Marseilles, I should take the steamer to Algeria. It has been reported to me, but not officially that the Emperor would be very much pleased with such a visit by me who lives in the "land of cotton."⁹⁴ From there by railway, the time would be short to Madrid. I do not think the good feeling and the increasing power of Spain ought to be altogether overlooked at a moment like this. And certain documents in my hands, authentic but not official, would enable me to instruct the Government of Spain in regard to the origin of the present strife between the North and South of the United States. If I should succeed in that matter I should then take my railway ticket from Madrid to Barcelona; and then march by slow degrees along the Southwestern boundaries of France back to this capital. In Bordeaux itself I have several invitations of hospitality. (On the way to Marseilles I shall have occasion to stop at Lyons, which is now suffering, to see the Cardinal Archbishop and to learn something of the actual distress which is prevailing in that city.) But, supposing myself back here again, my own idea would be, if the season should permit, as it will, to go by rail to Vienna—where I am not unknown. From Vienna, as railway facilities shall permit, to Prague—Warsaw—Moscow and St. Petersburg. From St. Petersburg, by the most easy & convenient route of water, along the southern shores of the Baltic, to the nearest landing for reaching Berlin. From Berlin I might reach some of the higher but little Principalities in Northern Germany, and still again back to this place by Holland and Belgium.⁹⁵

Should Seward allow the ailing ecclesiastic to undertake this exhausting good-will march through the Continental capitals, the Archbishop would require of him only a provisional supply of funds and a written commission.⁹⁶ Ten thousand dollars, the possible cost of the tour, might well have been expended in any of a hundred places in the debt-ridden archdiocese of New York; Hughes, nevertheless, informed the Secretary that he could pay his own way. But the indifference of the American officials at Paris had

embittered him. Without a general letter of introduction to the "civilty and courtesy" of the ministers at the various capitals, he would not undertake the trouble and expense of the journey. These gentlemen could—"without the delicacy which encumbers our Ministers in this capital"—present him to the sovereigns to which they were accredited.

Seward penned his answer to "My Dear Archbishop" on January 9, 1862. He had, he informed Hughes, laid his "interesting and luminous" letter before the President, who had directed him to say that "while highly appreciating the services which you have already rendered, and reposing entire confidence in your zeal, discretion, and loyalty, he thinks that, as at present advised, the public interests do not require that your suggestion be compiled with." In order to let the Archbishop down gently, Seward assured him that if events should change Lincoln's opinion as to the expediency of the proposed tour, he would be "duly apprized thereof."⁹⁷

Doubtless expense had been a big factor in the shelving of the Archbishop's plan. Hughes's efforts as a good-will ambassador and propagandist might be valuable. At the same time they were probably not worth \$10,000 when Seward was finding it difficult to scrape up funds to pay the expenses of his quasi-official representatives.⁹⁸ For although the prelate might talk of laying out his own money, the Secretary must have realized that the government could scarcely allow him to do so. Nor were Hughes's spending habits at all reassuring. Bishop McIlvaine, the economy-minded Weed reported, had been the guest of his numerous English friends, and his expenses had been almost nothing.⁹⁹ But Hughes had had to maintain his position as a good-will ambassador while operating out of a Parisian hostelry, and living in the French capital had been expensive.¹⁰⁰ By February of 1862 his expenses had doubled those of the Episcopal prelate.¹⁰¹

Other reasons for declining Hughes's offer probably occurred to Seward. The Archbishop had certainly not gotten on well with Minister Dayton; it was equally possible that he might get on no better with the American envoys in other capitals, especially since he expected them to present him to the rulers in their respective countries. Exercising a quiet, conversational influence in society was quite all right, but *tete-a-tetes* with European monarchs were something very different. The American representatives might well feel that their offices were being encroached upon. Seward could scarcely afford to alienate his entire diplomatic corps! And even if Hughes merely mingled in society, the effectiveness of any Catho-

lic prelate in promoting friendship for the Union cause in Russia, Prussia, and the "Little Principalities in Northern Germany" was probably not very great. So Hughes was politely told that he need not undertake his good-will tour.

As 1861 merged with 1862 the Archbishop cautiously advanced the opinion that there would be no war with England.¹⁰² Fearing, however, that his hopes and wishes might have misled him, he continued to be apprehensive.¹⁰³ Once again he resumed his role of armchair tactician, outlining in his letter to Seward of January 3 a plan for the defense of the Canadian frontier involving thirty or fifty thousand men.¹⁰⁴ Even when the news reached Paris that Mason and Slidell had been released and that consequently there was no immediate danger of war with England, he was not convinced that hostilities had been permanently averted. "The war," he wrote Weed, "is deferred—but only deferred. It will come later—let John Bull use the interval to prepare himself for its advent."¹⁰⁵

In the middle of January, Weed crossed the Channel for a brief visit to Paris. Glad as Hughes was to see his old friend, he was dismayed at the news he brought. The Archbishop had been quite certain that the Emperor would not interfere in the American conflict, but now Weed was insisting that he had renewed his suggestion to England that they should jointly break the blockade.¹⁰⁶ When, however, at the opening of the Chamber of Deputies on January 27, Louis Napoleon made no hostile references to the blockade in his speech to the legislators, the fears Weed had aroused in the Archbishop's mind were allayed. He regarded the address, he wrote Seward, "as a proclamation of peace on the part of France."¹⁰⁷ Satisfied that his continued presence in Paris would accomplish little more for the Union cause, he handed Bigelow a document relating to the forcible acquisition of Cuba, which he thought might be used effectively against Slidell,¹⁰⁸ and then departed almost immediately on a visit to Rome—travelling to Lyons, then to Marseilles, and then by ship to the Papal harbor of Civita Vecchia, which he entered on February 11, 1862.¹⁰⁹

At Rome he lodged at the North American College, where a steady concourse of cardinals, marquises, dukes, and princes called to honor the prominent American prelate.¹¹⁰ He was also received with marked attention by Pope Pius IX and by the Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Antonelli.¹¹¹ Rome at this time was thronged by distinguished foreign visitors, and Hughes lost no opportunity to present them with the Northern interpretation of the war.¹¹² Here where his ecclesiastical status gave him a special importance, where

his defense of the Holy See in its territorial difficulties had brought him added recognition and admiration,¹¹³ his value as a minister of good-will and Union propagandist was probably greater than in Paris. To the Spanish minister and two newly-created Spanish cardinals he explained at great length "that any recognition of the would-be Southern republic in the United States could not but jeopard the interests of Her Catholic Majesty's colonies in the West Indies."¹¹⁴ The Archbishop wrote Seward that the minister believed his government "would be much obliged if I would make known to them personally, and by documents in my possession, the real situation of affairs as regards Spanish interests in the Antilles" and informed the Secretary that he was tempted, even though he lacked instructions, to pay a hurried visit to Madrid.¹¹⁵ Nothing, however, ever came of this proposed Hispanic mission.

In his conversation with Cardinal Antonelli, Archbishop Hughes tried to impress upon the mind of that astute statesman the conviction that it would be to the advantage of the Papal government not to accord diplomatic recognition to the Confederacy. Although the political entity known as the States of the Church was hardly a major European power and could not be expected to furnish the South with any substantial aid, Seward was anxious that the Confederacy should not receive the moral support and the prestige which recognition would bring.¹¹⁶ The American prelate could not frighten the Cardinal with predictions of lost colonies, but he could casually hold out the promise of such aid as the American government was able to grant the Cardinal-Secretary in his fight to prevent the Papal territories from being incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy. Hughes summarized his efforts in his despatch of March 29:

In my only conversation with Cardinal Antonelli, who understands the American system perfectly well, I spoke of your kind dispositions and words of good will toward the Pontifical Government. I mentioned an observation which you had made to me in Washington, viz., that in the course of events resulting from the contest at home, it might be in the power of the American Government to be of service to the cause of the Holy See. He expressed himself much satisfied with your kindness, but remarked that he did not see how it would be possible. I said, in reply, that the only way in which it could be useful would be in directing our representatives abroad to be cautious of uttering speeches in favor of crude efforts at revolution in Europe. By the by, your predecessors in office I think encouraged the opposite system more than was expedient either for Europe or America.¹¹⁷

As he moved about in the society of high Papal officials, the

Archbishop discovered a certain regret that no American minister was then at Rome.¹¹⁸ A representative had been maintained at the Holy See since 1848, but Lincoln's appointee, former-Governor Alexander H. Randall of Wisconsin, waited—much to Seward's disgust—until he got the Wisconsin forces into the field, and only arrived at his post on May 21, 1862.¹¹⁹ A letter of March 8 also informed the Secretary that the question of a diplomatic representative of the Papal government at Washington would, Hughes believed, be acted upon in the near future.¹²⁰ A month later he was assuring Seward that while the Holy See would, no doubt, be prepared to send a minister, yet Rome understood "very clearly that in the purely secular relations between the two countries a mere Minister would have nothing to do in America and having nothing to do, he might interfere with matters not coming under his official position."¹²¹ No Papal envoy was ever appointed, and, in 1868, the American legation at Rome was discontinued.¹²²

The Archbishop's efforts at Rome in behalf of the Union cause extended over a period of five months. Originally he had planned a much shorter stay in the Eternal City; Pius IX, however, invited the bishops of the world to attend a prominent canonization on the Feast of Pentecost in early June, and rather than go home to New York and then return within so short a time, Hughes decided to remain.¹²³ Besides spreading goodwill for the Northern government, he continued to send advice and reports on the state of public feeling and European affairs to Seward.¹²⁴ But his health continued so poor that he kept mostly to his room except for a daily airing in his carriage. He was impatient to return home.¹²⁵ After the canonization ceremony had been concluded, he left Rome for Dublin.

Travelling by way of Aix-les-Bains in Savoy, the Archbishop eased his aching limbs in the waters of that famed health resort, and arrived in his native land fit once more to do battle for his adopted country.¹²⁶ In Dublin he delivered on July 20 a splendid discourse at the laying of the cornerstone of the Catholic University, but it was not this religious oration but his impassioned pro-Union, anti-British speeches which aroused the ire of the British government.¹²⁷ At a meeting in the Dublin Rotundo, he gave a sharp twist to the Lion's tail, declaring that if peace were restored at once the American people would not rest until they had avenged themselves for Britain's attack on them "in the moment of their trial and of their difficulty. . . ."¹²⁸ This statement was wildly cheered, and when the shrewd old prelate—building on the sincere anti-British pre-

judices of himself and his audiences—assumed the role of an ecclesiastical recruiting sergeant, his words were received “with extraordinary manifestations of delight.”¹²⁹

There is [he declared] another thing. The Irish, besides discharging what they consider their duty to their own legitimate government—and they are ever loyal, if you give them the opportunity—besides that, the Irish have, in many instances, as I have the strongest reasons for knowing, entered into this war partly to make themselves apprentices, students as it were, finishing their education in this, the first opportunity afforded them of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the tools of war.¹³⁰

Probably Seward (who had hinted that it would be desirable for Hughes to visit Ireland on his way home)—had calculated that the sons of Erin would receive him enthusiastically and could be induced to demonstrate their sympathy for the North, thus raising in English minds the prospect of trouble in the Emerald Isle in the event of an Anglo-American war.¹³¹ The Archbishop's efforts may not have aroused such fears, but when he sailed from Queens-town about August 1, he had certainly accomplished his stated purpose of strengthening “the sympathies of [the Irish bishops and] people in our just cause.”¹³²

After an absence from his diocese of more than ten months, Hughes arrived home in New York aboard the *Asia* on August 12. Congratulatory addresses were presented to the prelate by the city fathers; his return was hailed with rejoicing by New Yorkers of all religious affiliations.¹³³ In a few days he went on to Washington, where he made a brief report to Seward and was honored at a Friday dinner at which his fellow guests, including generals and cabinet officers, were forced to dine upon fish because the Secretary of State, wishing to pay a sincere if somewhat odd tribute to the prelate, had ordered that no meat should appear on his table.¹³⁴ With this lugubrious compliment, the European mission of the Archbishop was concluded.

While Hughes had labored zealously in the Union cause, his strenuous efforts brought him no personal reward. From Rome he had written Seward that the Holy See, far from censuring his conduct in accepting the quasi-diplomatic appointment, instead “showed a disposition to confer additional honors.”¹³⁵ Probably with this thought in mind Minister Randall, in his first audience with Pope Pius IX, when descanting upon the loyalty and patriotism of the American Catholic clergy, singled out for special praise “one who has, by months of anxious labor, performed important

services abroad, a man, sagacious and distinguished, John, Archbishop of New York" and declared that it was "a source of regret, to thousands of good men, that the Government of the United States cannot, in any appropriate way, testify its appreciation of such services."¹³⁶ To this the Pontiff replied:

[W]hen we reflect. . . that the government of the United States, at a most critical moment, has singled out John Archbishop of New York to be entrusted with a most important mission, and as one in whom the government has thought proper to place its frank, its full, its unreserved confidence; of this selection we may feel justly proud. . . .¹³⁷

But nothing more substantial than this friendly gesture ensued from the clumsy effort of the American envoy. Rome was not in the habit of handing out red hats as rewards for episcopal political efforts. Furthermore, any such obviously partisan honor would have been resented by the Archbishops of Baltimore and New Orleans, the Confederate bishops and clergy, and the Catholic laity of the South. Even without the added odium of a cardinalate obtained as a result of pro-Union activities, Hughes's southern friends had reason enough to turn against him when his efforts in behalf of the Northern cause became generally known and his last months were saddened by their defection.¹³⁸ He lived little more than a year after his return from Europe. "His exertions during that journey, in behalf of his adopted and dearly-beloved country, were," his contemporary biographer concluded, "the final rally of his declining strength. As soon as the excitement of travel had passed away, he sank into a kind of mental and bodily languor, and never arose from it."¹³⁹ He died in his sixty-seventh year in New York City on the evening of January 3, 1864.¹⁴⁰

In the ten months of his European sojourn, Archbishop Hughes had accomplished results which were neither unique nor of great importance.¹⁴¹ In any diplomatic history of the Civil War, the story of his mission would be adequately related in a paragraph. He had endeavored—with some success in Paris, probably with greater effect in Rome—to create a climate of public opinion favorable to the Union cause and to dispel the assertions of Confederate propagandists. He had sent many a letter to Seward informing him of European affairs and European public opinion of the American conflict. In Rome he was credited with channelling the course of the Papal government in a direction uniformly favorable to the North.¹⁴² One would be hard put to it to unearth other concrete achievements, and when discovered they would doubtless prove to

be distinctly minor ones. Archbishop Hughes did not play a major role in the diplomacy of 1861-1865, but he did rally his ebbing strength for one last glorious battle when he felt that the interests of his country demanded it. Conquering advancing age and feeble health, vigorously attacking the representations of Confederate agents, and marshalling his conversational arguments in behalf of the Union cause, he demonstrated his patriotism, his great love for his adopted country, and his willingness to labor actively for her welfare. His epitaph might well be his remark to Thurlow Weed: "I consider that the citizen should not be forgotten in the title of archbishop."¹⁴³

1. Ireland's association with these political figures is discussed in James H. Moynihan, *The Life of Archbishop John Ireland* (New York, 1953), *passim*.
2. Cardinal Gibbons's friendly relations with American statesmen are recounted in John Tracy Ellis, *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, 1834-1921* (2 vols., Milwaukee, 1952), *passim*.
3. John R. Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes, D. D., First Archbishop of New York. With Extracts from His Private Correspondence* (New York, 1866), 241, 249; (cited hereafter as Hassard, *Hughes*). For discussions of this controversy and of Hughes's association with Weed and Seward during the course of it, see Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *Thurlow Weed, Wizard of the Lobby* (Boston, 1947), 117 (cited hereafter as Van Deusen, *Weed*); Frederick Bancroft, *The Life of William H. Seward* (New York, 1900), I, 96-101 (cited hereafter as Bancroft, *Seward*); Hassard, *Hughes*, 223-251.
4. Van Deusen, *Weed*, 91-92, 131-132; Bancroft, *Seward*, I, 137-139, 323-326.
5. Bancroft, *Seward*, I, 135-139.
6. Van Deusen, *Weed*, 43.
7. Hassard, *Hughes*, 241, 249.
8. John R. G. Hassard writes: "The bishop was on terms of intimacy with many prominent statesman. He seemed perfectly at ease in political circles. Although he was no politician himself, never voted but once [for Henry Clay in the presidential election of 1832], and never influenced the vote of any man except on the occasion during the school controversy already mentioned, he was fond of discussing public affairs in conversations with his friends, and often showed remarkable acuteness and foresight in his comments upon political movements." Hassard, *Hughes*, 287.
9. Hughes was ordained a priest by Bishop Henry Conwell in St. Joseph's Church in Philadelphia, October 15, 1826 (Hassard, *Hughes*, 49). My brief biographical sketch of Hughes is based upon Hassard's work.
10. Hughes was consecrated titular Bishop of Basileopolis in *partibus infidelium* and coadjutor to the ailing Bishop John Dubois of New York, January 7, 1838; in 1839 he became administrator of the New York diocese, and, in 1842, Bishop of New York upon the death of Bishop Dubois. He was made an archbishop in 1850 when New York was given metropolitan dignity. Hassard, *Hughes*, 183, 184, 199-200 and *n.*, 337.
11. *Ibid.*, 276.
12. The story of Hughes's declining health is related in *Ibid.*, 331-332, 381-382, 400, 422.
13. *Ibid.*, 382.
14. *Ibid.*, 440.
15. At least such subjects were not mentioned in the extracts of Hughes's letters printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 440-441, 442-445, 445-447, nor in the brief summary of the letters, *Ibid.*, 440.
16. John Hughes to William H. Seward, August 13, 1861, printed in *Ibid.*, 443; Roy P. Basler, editor, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1953), IV, 419*n.* During the course of the war, Lincoln also fulfilled other requests of Archbishop Hughes.

On February 4, 1863, Hughes asked that a son of Mrs. Emily Duke of Washington be commissioned a lieutenant in the marines; on March 26, 1863, Lincoln wrote Secretary Welles that if there was a vacancy, "I really wish the appointment . . . to be made." *Ibid.*, VI, 154 and *n.*

On April 23, 1863, Hughes headed a list of prominent persons (Speaker of the House Grow, Generals Cameron, Heintzelman, Sumner, and Taylor, Chase, Stanton, Senator Foote, and "Mrs. Blair") who were recommending persons for West Point. Hughes's nominee, William A. Cunningham, may not have been appointed; he did not enter the Academy in 1863. *Ibid.*, VI, 185.

On June 29, 1863, Lincoln ordered the discharge of M. C. Byrnes (imprisoned for using disloyal language), which discharge Hughes had requested. *Ibid.*, VI, 309*n.*

- On July 8, 1863, Hay, writing for Lincoln, requested James E. Hardie to furnish him with Hughes's letter recommending Eugene P. Murphy for appointment to West Point. *Ibid.*, VIII, 517-518.
17. John Hughes to Simon Cameron, October, 1861; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 437.
 18. John Hughes to William H. Seward, April, 1861; quoted in *Ibid.*, 440.
 19. John Hughes to William H. Seward, June 18, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 441.
 20. Hassard, *Hughes*, 441. It is not clear from the context whether or not this statement appeared in a letter to Seward.
 21. John Hughes to William H. Seward, October 10, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 437.
 22. Hassard, *Hughes*, 440.
 23. John Hughes to William H. Seward, October 15, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 445-447.
 24. Hassard, *Hughes*, 447.
 25. Abraham Lincoln to John Hughes, October 21, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 445.
 26. Bancroft, *Seward*, II, 213.
 27. William H. Seward to Frances Seward, October 31, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 219n.
 28. Harriet A. Weed, editor, *Autobiography of Thurlow Weed* (Boston, 1884), 634 (cited hereafter as *Weed, Autobiography*); Hassard, *Hughes*, 448.
 29. Charles Pettit McIlvaine to William H. Seward, November 8, 1861, *Mission Abroad, 1861-1862* (cited hereafter as *Mission Abroad*). See the Bibliography for a description of this microcord publication.
 30. Everett and Kennedy both declined the mission—Everett, because he did not feel free to accept an unofficial appointment after having been Minister to Great Britain, and Kennedy, because he could not afford to leave his work and labor in England without compensation. Weed suggested to Seward the names of Robert Winthrop of Boston and Thomas Ewing of Ohio as replacements. Winthrop declined, and if Seward offered an appointment to Ewing, he must also have done so. Weed, *Autobiography*, 634-636; Bancroft, *Seward*, II, 221. J. G. Randall (*The Civil War and Reconstruction*, Boston, 1953; p. 636) errs in listing Winthrop among those first intended for the mission.
 31. Seward's dinner party is described in Weed, *Autobiography*, 635-637.
 32. Weed, *Autobiography*, 635-636.
 33. Hassard, *Hughes*, 164, writes that the Archbishop studied Spanish for six months at the time of a proposed visit to Mexico in 1835 and learned to speak the language fluently; in a letter to Seward, October 12, 1861, Hughes mentioned that he had conversed in French with the creole sister of a Confederate general. *Ibid.*, 444.
 34. *Ibid.*, 435; John Hughes to Cardinal Barnabo, undated but written c. December, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 449-451.
 35. *Ibid.*, 286-287. See also Polk's diary entry of May 19, 1846, in Milo Milton Quaife, editor, *The Diary of James K. Polk During His Presidency, 1845 to 1849* (Chicago, 1910), I, 408-410.
 36. These European tours are described in Hassard, *Hughes*, 206-222, 267-271, 281-285, 337-341, 370-374.
 37. John Hughes to Cardinal Barnabo, undated but c. December, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 449-451.
 38. John Hughes to Cardinal Barnabo, undated but c. November 20, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 449.
 39. John Hughes to Thurlow Weed, October 29, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 451.
 40. *Ibid.*, and John Hughes to William H. Seward, October 29, 1861, *Mission Abroad*. The quoted phrase is from the letter to Seward.
 41. John Hughes to William H. Seward, November 2, 1861, *Mission Abroad*. This intriguing manuscript was not mentioned in subsequent Hughes-Seward correspondence.
 42. This conference is described in Weed, *Autobiography*, 637-638.
 43. It was not included in *Mission Abroad*.
 44. Bancroft, *Seward*, II, 221.
 45. Weed, *Autobiography*, 637-638.
 46. Thurlow Weed to William H. Seward, November 6, 1861 November 6, 1861 (two letters), *Mission Abroad*.
 47. *New York Times*, November 5, 1861.
 48. John Hughes to William H. Seward, October 29, 1861, *Mission Abroad*. John Hughes to William H. Seward, November 13, 1861; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 452.
 49. Hassard, *Hughes*, 451.
 50. John Hughes to William H. Seward, November 13, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 452.
 51. John Hughes to William H. Seward, November 13, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 452.
 52. *Ibid.*
 53. John Hughes to William H. Seward, November 20, 1861; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 453-455.
 54. On October 15, 1861, Hughes had written to Seward: "A great conspiracy, of which he [Lincoln] knew nothing, was in existence when he was elected. It burst forth almost immediately after his inauguration." Hassard, *Hughes*, 445-446.
 55. John Hughes to William H. Seward, November 20, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 453-455.
 56. John Hughes to William H. Seward, November 28, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 455-458.
 57. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 5, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 458-460. John Hughes to William H. Seward, February 1, 1862 [the correct date of the letter is January 29, 1862, *Mission Abroad*]; printed in *Ibid.*, 470-471.

58. John Hughes to William H. Seward [January 29, 1862]; printed in *Ibid.*, 470-471. Hughes merely says that he acquainted the prelates with the contents of Seward's despatch without saying what those contents were, but it appears quite certain that this despatch was the one of January 2, 1862, which is described in Bancroft, *Seward*, II, 284.
59. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 12, 1861; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 462-463.
60. Hassard, *Hughes*, 472.
61. *Ibid.*
62. See Hughes to William H. Seward, December 18, 1861; quoted *infra*,¹⁴ January 29, 1862, Hughes wrote the Secretary: "I have had no encouragement from our officials. But, independently of their patronage, I have had, as you may suppose, the entree to the best society in Paris, as an American bishop." Hassard, *Hughes*, 470.
63. Van Deusen, *Weed*, 279-280.
64. John Hughes to William H. Seward, November 28, 1861; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 455-458.
65. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 18, 1861, *Mission Abroad*.
66. John Hughes to William H. Seward, November 28, 1861; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 455-458.
67. *Ibid.* Hughes may have been naive in believing the United States could prosecute successfully, at the same time, both a domestic and a European war, but Seward was of the same opinion. On January 22, 1862 he wrote to Thurlow Weed:
 "But I do know that whatever nation makes war against us or forces itself into a war, will find out that we can and shall suppress the rebellion and defeat the invaders themselves. The courage and determination of the American people are ripened already for any needful effort and necessary sacrifice.
 Now, my dear Weed, you have wrung out of me what you yourself will regard as too sanguine expressions of my confidence, in the success of our cause, and you will undervalue them, though I shall not give them up. But you must not insist on my writing in such a crisis my full thoughts . . ."
Mission Abroad.
68. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 20, 1861, *Mission Abroad*.
69. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 5, 1861; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 458-460.
70. On the previous day Weed had written Seward from Paris: "Again, if other things fail, is not this [the *Trent* affair], ultimately, a fit question for referral to a Friendly power?" Thurlow Weed to William H. Seward, December 4, 1861, *Mission Abroad*.
71. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 5, 1861; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 458-460.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Hughes in his frequent despatches to Seward never again mentioned the second plan he had proposed in his letter of December 5, and in that letter, when referring to the proposed mediation of Napoleon III, he speaks of it as "this possible, if not probable, interpretation [of the international law of the case by] a third Sovereign party." *Mission Abroad*.
74. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 6, 1861, *Mission Abroad*.
75. *Ibid.*
76. Thurlow Weed to John Hughes, December 7, 1861, *Mission Abroad*.
77. John Hughes to Thurlow Weed, December 10, 1861 [the correct date of the letter is December 11, 1861, *Mission Abroad*]; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 461-462.
78. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 12, 1861, *Mission Abroad*.
79. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 27, 1861; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 463-464.
80. *Ibid.*
81. *Ibid.*; John Hughes to Margaret (Hughes) Rodrigue, December 27, 1861; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 468.
82. Jay Monaghan, *Diplomat in Carpet Slippers: Abraham Lincoln Deals with Foreign Affairs* (New York, 1945), 177.
83. John Hughes to Thurlow Weed, December 11, 1861; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 461-462. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 12, 1861, *Mission Abroad*.
84. *Ibid.*
85. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 12, 1861, *Mission Abroad* Hassard, *Hughes*, 462n. Thurlow Weed to John Hughes, December 22, 1861, *Mission Abroad*.
86. Thurlow Weed to William H. Seward, December 16, 1861, *Mission Abroad*.
87. Thurlow Weed to John Hughes, December 22, 1861, *Ibid.*
88. Archbishop Hughes also thought of publishing another Union propaganda pamphlet, but apparently nothing came of the matter. To Seward he wrote: "Among these gentlemen [gentlemen to whom he explained "our whole situation of affairs"] were senators and secretaries of the Government. They seemed anxious to understand better than I could explain. I mentioned the admirable discourse of Mr. Everett, delivered in New York last Fourth of July. One of them suggested to me that it would be well received in this country if translated into French, and published. This I am more than half inclined to have done. . . . Mr. Everett's discourse is at once so accurate in its statements, so lucid in its argument, and so eloquent withal, that

- published in classical French, it will be much sought after, and very generally read by the people of France, but especially by the Parisians." John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 27, 1861; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 463-464.
89. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 20, 1861, *Mission Abroad*.
90. Hughes's audience with Napoleon III and Eugenie is recounted in his letter to Seward of December 27, 1861; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 463-464. Hughes prepared a careful memorandum of the conversation, which is printed (with omissions) in *Ibid.*, 465-468. This memorandum was not included in *Mission Abroad*.
91. John Hughes to Thurlow Weed, December 24, 1861, *Mission Abroad*.
92. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 27, 1861; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 463-464.
93. In a letter to his sister, Hughes wrote that sulphur baths had improved his health. His rheumatism was diminishing, but he does not appear to have been a well man. John Hughes to Margaret (Hughes) Rodrigue, December 27, 1861; printed in *Ibid.*, 468.
94. Louis Napoleon, however, did not seem very enthusiastic about Hughes's proposed Algerian visit when the prelate brought up the subject at his audience.
Archbishop.— . . . By the by, I have an idea of visiting Algeria, for the purpose of seeing how the new industry of raising cotton is carried on.
Emperor.—Oh, you will not see much in Algeria. Whatever may be the advantages of the climate, we have not the practical science among the cultivators which success would require.
Archbishop.—Still, Sire, the beginning of its cultivation in America was small, and for a time discouraging, as the tariff of protection would seem to indicate. And I think that, for the benefit of the world and for the peace of America, it would be well if both England and France should encourage the growth of cotton in their respective colonies, and contrive to blend it, for manufacturing purposes, with the superior samples of cotton grown in the United States." Quoted from Hughes's memorandum of his audience, which is printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 465-468.
95. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 18, 1861, *Mission Abroad*.
96. *Ibid.*
97. William H. Seward to John Hughes, January 9, 1862, *Mission Abroad*.
98. William H. Seward to Thurlow Weed, February 18, 1862, *Mission Abroad*.
99. Thurlow Weed to William H. Seward, February 28, 1862, *Mission Abroad*.
100. John Hughes to William H. Seward, December 12, 1861, *Mission Abroad*. Thurlow Weed to William H. Seward, January 26, 1862, *Ibid.*
101. William H. Seward to Thurlow Weed, February 18, 1862, *Ibid.*
102. John Hughes to William H. Seward, January 3, 1862, *Ibid.*
103. *Ibid.*
104. *Ibid.*
105. John Hughes to Thurlow Weed, January 11, 1862, *Mission Abroad*.
106. Thurlow Weed to William H. Seward, January 6, 8, 11, 16, 1862, *Ibid.*
107. John Hughes to Thurlow Weed, January 29, 1862, *Ibid.* John Hughes to William H. Seward, January 29, 1862, *Ibid.*
108. John Hughes to William H. Seward, January 11, 1862; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 469-470.
109. John Hughes to William H. Seward, February 6, 1862, *Mission Abroad*. John Hughes to William H. Seward, February 11, 1862; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 472.
110. Hassard, *Hughes*, 475. John Hughes to Margaret (Hughes) Rodrigue, April 4, 1862; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 477.
111. John Hughes to William H. Seward, February 21, 1862; printed in *Ibid.*, 473-474. John Hughes to William H. Seward, March 1, 1862; printed in *Ibid.*, 474.
112. John Hughes to William H. Seward, June 12, 1862; printed in *Ibid.*, 479-480.
113. Hassard, *Hughes*, 418-421, 428.
114. John Hughes to William H. Seward, February, 1862; printed in *Ibid.*, 472. John Hughes to William H. Seward, June 12, 1862; printed in *Ibid.*, 479-480.
115. John Hughes to William H. Seward, June 12, 1862; printed in *Ibid.*, 479-480.
116. Seward also wished to ward off any possible intervention by the Papal government in the American conflict. At the beginning of the war he had written to the American minister to the Papal States:

Assure the Government of His Holiness that the President and the people of the United States desire to cultivate with it the most cordial and friendly relations; that we will not violate the friendship already so happily existing by an intervention in the domestic affairs of the States of the Church. Assure His Holiness that it is the settled habit of this government to leave to all other countries the unquestioned regulation of their own internal concerns, being convinced that intrusion by a foreign nation anywhere tends only to embarrass rather than aid the best designs of the friends of freedom, religion and humanity, by impairing the unity of the State exclusively interested.

What ought Rome to do in regard to the United States? Just what I have thus said they will do in regard to Rome. We could not ask or consent to receive more, and the Government of His Holiness will not propose to do less, for he is a friend to peace, to good order, and to the cause of human nature, which is now, as it always has been, our cause. William H. Seward to Rufus King,

- April 29, 1861; printed in Leo Francis Stock, editor, *United States Ministers to the Papal States: Instructions and Despatches, 1848-1868* (Washington, 1933), 238-239 (cited hereafter as Stock, *Ministers*).
117. John Hughes to William H. Seward, March 29, 1829; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 474-475.
 118. John Hughes to William H. Seward, April 4, 1862, *Mission Abroad*.
 119. Stock, *Ministers*, 240n., 243.
 120. John Hughes to William H. Seward, March 8, 1862, *Mission Abroad*.
 121. John Hughes to William H. Seward, April 4, 1862, *Ibid.*
 122. Rufus King, the last American minister to the States of the Church, resigned on January 1, 1868, since Congress had refused, at its last session, to appropriate any money for an American mission at Rome. Stock, *Ministers*, 434.
 123. John Hughes to William H. Seward, February 21, 1862; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 473-474.
 124. See, for example, his letters to Seward of February 21, March 1, 8, 1862, *Mission Abroad*.
 125. John Hughes to Sisiter Angela (Ellen Hughes), May 16, 1862; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 478. John Hughes to William H. Seward, June 12, 1862; printed in *Ibid.*, 479-480. John Hughes to William H. Seward, March 15, 1862, *Mission Abroad*.
 126. John Hughes to Margaret (Hughes) Rodrigue, June 25, 1862; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 480.
 127. Hassard, *Hughes*, 480-482.
 128. *Ibid.*, 481.
 129. *Ibid.*
 130. *Ibid.*, 481-482.
 131. Hassard believed that this thought was probably the reason for the Secretary's hint that Hughes should pass through Ireland. *Ibid.*, 471-472.
 132. John Hughes to William H. Seward, June 12, 1862; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 479-480.
 133. *Hassard, Hughes*, 485.
 134. *Ibid.*
 135. John Hughes to William H. Seward, March 1, 1862; printed in *Ibid.*, 474.
 136. Stock, *Ministers*, 251-252.
 137. *Ibid.*, 252.
 138. Hassard, *Hughes*, 488-489.
 139. *Ibid.*, 497.
 140. *Ibid.*, 502.
 141. Indirectly, Hughes conferred a great benefit on his country by his insistence that Thurlow Weed accompany him. Weed's work in England and France was important, and ministers Dayton and Adams were glad to avail themselves of his help. Van Deusen, *Weed*, 277-278, 279-280.
 142. Such was the opinion of the Reverend Bernard Smith, a priest who resided in Rome and was conversant with public affairs, as expressed to J. C. Hooker, acting Secretary of the American legation at Rome. Stock, *Ministers*, 280.
 143. John Hughes to Thurlow Weed [December 11, 1861]; printed in Hassard, *Hughes*, 461-462.

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In writing this biography, Hassard "tried to use the archbishop's own language as I have found it in his private letters, whenever it could be made to tell his story or illustrate his character." Consequently he incorporated into his work almost two hundred letters or extract from letters written by Hughes. The chapter relating to the Archbishop's Civil War mission consists almost wholly of letters, and the other information in it was probably obtained by Hassard when he interviewed the Reverend Francis McNeirny, Hughes's chaplain and secretary, who accompanied the prelate during his mission to Europe. For the purposes of this paper, therefore, Hassard's biography may be considered a primary source.

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This publication of the University of Rochester Press Micropublications Service reproduces on microcard letters of William H. Seward, Thurlow Weed, Archbishop Hughes, and Bishop McIlvaine written during this European mission. The letters Hughes wrote to Weed and Seward, which appear in Hassard's biography, are reproduced in this collection, but I have cited them from Hassard's work, since they are more easily consulted there. The letters of Bishop McIlvaine are in the library of Kenyon College; the letters of Weed and Seward to Hughes are in the Archives of the Archdiocese of New York; the other letters are among the Weed and Seward papers in the library of the University of Rochester.

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