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**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”**

**The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945**

**Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension**

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**File No. 422**

**1931 March 17**

**New York City, NY - Friendly Sons of St. Patrick**

ADDRESS OF GOVERNOR FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT  
FRIENDLY SONS OF ST. PATRICK  
TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 1931

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We hear people say that today civilization is going through the most severe test to which it ever has been put. In our own country we are told that changing conditions and changing needs have brought us face to face with the necessity of changing some of our methods of government; and that representative government in the American form is incapable of dealing with the new burden placed upon economics, law, order, and social relations. Pessimists demand dictatorships or communism or the usurpation of constitutional functions by public servants or by would-be public servants.

(2)

Today on the 1499th anniversary of a great Christian and a great public servant, - St. Patrick, - it is well for us to remember that many times before in the history of nations and in the history of the United States in particular, other great crises have been met and conquered. In a large sense the first crisis of civilized America came to the British colonies 250 years ago. For several generations the colonies, from Massachusetts Bay to the Chesapeake, had been establishing themselves on the seaboard pushing back the Indians and the wilderness and growing greatly in population. A very large percentage of the inhabitants of these colonies

in the year 1681 had come to our shores to escape religious or governmental intolerance, an intolerance which followed them in their voluntary exile, for the strong hand of an incredibly stupid English ministry stretched out across the sea to hold firmly in its grasp all authority, all regulation, all legislation, no matter how local in its character. In the making of what were strictly local laws these early colonists had no part or voice. During the 70's of that first century of colonial existence, constant demands were made for the setting up of some form of representative legislative body to be elected by the free men themselves, and this was true to a greater or lesser degree in every one of the colonies.

(4)

It was reserved, however, for one man more than any other to become what may well be called the founder of representative government in the new world. His name is known to but few people, even in this New York, which was the particular field of his work. Thomas Dongan, a native of the County of Kildare in Ireland, had served his King, Charles II in many climes and his friendship for the Stuarts brought about his appointment as Governor of New York by its Catholic proprietor James, Duke of York. In August 1683 he arrived at his new post and it is a matter of record that in sympathetic response to the demands of the colonists one of his first acts was to issue writs of election for the choice of members of an Assembly. The body thus chosen met for the first time on October 17, 1683 and its first statute outlining the organization and the powers of our first legislative assembly will always go down in the history of our State as our "Charter of Liberties".

In a very large sense this Catholic Governor of the Colony of New York was one of the greatest of our Governors. He devoted himself to strengthening the defenses of the colony, defining its boundaries and making alliances with the Indian tribes on the north in order to erect a barrier against the French who were constantly pushing southward from Canada. His administration was marked by a broad tolerance in religious matters and he has been referred to by the most competent authorities as "one of the very best of all the colonial Governors".

(6)

During the five years of his administration New York maintained a liberal, clean and aggressive stand in all that affected the budding young Colony. Above all Thomas Dongan will live throughout our history as the man to whom should be credited more than to any other the first recognition of popular representative government through a legislative body and as the man who made possible the New York "Charter of Liberties".

I feel happy that in my neighboring city of Poughkeepsie, a statue has been erected to the memory of Thomas Dongan. So far as I know, this is the only memorial to him in the whole of the State of New York, and I hope that the day will come when this great city will erect an appropriate monument to the man who met and solved the first great crisis in the history of New York.

While New York has had many Governors with Irish blood in their veins, it has had but three who have come of direct Irish parentage. Over two centuries elapsed between the Governorship of Thomas Dongan and that of Martin H. Glynn, a man whom I was proud to call my friend. Since going to Albany I have been reading the Public Papers of those who have been Governor during the past half century and I do not hesitate to say that for literary quality and for charm, the speeches and messages of Governor Glynn rank easily in the first place. Martin Glynn was essentially a scholar and he applied the teachings of history to all his official acts.



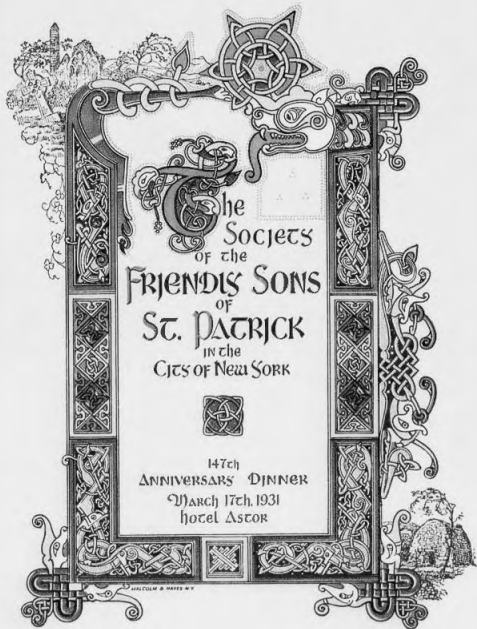
The third of this great trio I need hardly name, - the man who has reorganized the government of our State in these latter years, the man who was responsible more than any other for initiating the great program of social reform in which we are still engaged, a man who is with us tonight and will be with the Friendly Sons on many St. Patrick's days in the years to come, - Alfred E. Smith.

Ireland, mother country of so many millions of Americans draws closer to us as each year goes by. Two days ago we had the opportunity of listening to the voice of the President of the Irish Free State . From him we have the cheering message that in all of the economic depression which today affects the world as a whole the Irish Free State stands out almost alone as a government with a balanced budget, as a country which is increasing its trade, as a people suffering but little from unemployment and hardship.

(10)

It is but a short decade ago that the wiseacres were shaking their heads over the possible ability of Ireland to rule herself. These ten years have refuted the doubters, these ten years have shown that the hope and the confidence that the overwhelming majority of Irishmen in every part of the world held to through centuries of struggle has not been misplaced. The years to come will give greater justification to that faith.

(end)





*Apostle of the Gael*



*Apostle of the Gael*

## M E N U

FRUIT COCKTAIL

¢40

PETITE MARMITE

¢40

CELERY

SALTED NUTS

OLIVES

¢40

TERRAPIN BALTIMORE

¢40

SHERBET, EMERALD

¢40

BOILED IRISH BACON

GREEN KALE

IRISH POTATOES

¢40

BROILED SPRING CHICKEN

GREEN SALAD

¢40

ICE CREAM

CAKES

COFFEE

Grace

His Excellency, Bishop JOHN J. DUNN

## TOASTS

*The President's Address*  
Honorable JAMES A. FOLEY

☪

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

*The Star Spangled Banner*  
Soloist—Miss HALLIE STILES

☪

*The Day We Celebrate*  
Reverend FULTON J. SHEEN, Ph. D.  
*The Catholic University of America*

☪

*The United States*  
Senator JOE T. ROBINSON  
*of Arkansas*

☪

*The State of New York*  
Honorable FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT  
*Governor of New York*

☪

*The Irish in America*  
Honorable ALFRED E. SMITH  
*New York*

☪

Broadcast through courtesy of WOR

## MUSIC

1. March The Hail of the Friendly Sons.....Herbert
2. Overture Ruy Blas .....Mendelssohn
3. Intermezzo Al Fresco.....Herbert
4. (a) New Ireland.....Herbert  
(b) Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms  
Moore  
GLEE CLUB OF THE FRIENDLY SONS
5. Characteristic Old Irish Airs.....Langey
6. Selection La Boheme.....Puccini
7. (a) Eileen Allena.....Traditional Air  
(b) When Irish Eyes are Smiling.....Ball  
GLEE CLUB OF THE FRIENDLY SONS
8. Excerpts Viennese Nights.....Romberg
9. Medley Operatic Gems.....Herbert
10. (a) Come Back to Erin.....Claribel  
(b) Little Town in the Old County Down.....Sanders  
GLEE CLUB OF THE FRIENDLY SONS
11. Selection Reminiscences of Ireland.....Godfrey
12. Melodies The New Yorkers.....Porter
13. Finale Soldiers of Erin.....Kearney



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MICHAEL W. RAYENS.....	<i>Almoner</i>



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NICHOLAS F. WALSH

## JOIN IN THE SINGING

Printed below are the words of two of the songs  
included in the Glee Club's program.

### *My Wild Irish Rose.*

My wild Irish Rose,  
The sweetest flow'r that grows;  
You may search everywhere, but none can compare,  
With my wild Irish Rose.  
My wild Irish Rose,  
The dearest flow'r that grows;  
And some day for my sake, she may let me take,  
The bloom for my wild Irish Rose.

### *When Irish Eyes are Smiling.*

When Irish Eyes are smiling,  
Sure it's like a morn in spring,  
In the lilt of Irish laughter,  
You can hear the Angels sing.  
When Irish Hearts are happy,  
All the world seems bright and gay,  
And When Irish Eyes are smiling,  
Sure they steal your heart away.

### *Come Back to Erin.*

Come back to Erin, Mavourneen, Mavourneen,  
Come back aroon to the land of thy birth,  
Come with the shamrocks and springtime, Mavourneen,  
And its Killarney shall ring with our mirth.  
Sure, when we lent ye to beautiful England,  
Little we thought of the lone winter days,  
Little we thought of the hush of the star shine,  
Over the mountains the bluffs and the brays.  
Comb back to Erin, Mavourneen, Mavourneen,  
Come back again to the land of thy birth,  
Come back to Erin, Mavourneen, Mavourneen,  
And its Killarney shall ring with our mirth.

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*Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt*

At Dinner of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, Hotel Astor,  
New York City, March 17, 1931

*Irish Governors and Their Contribution to the Government of the State  
President Foley, your Excellencies, members of the Friendly Sons and guests:*

I was in Brooklyn tonight. As I came back across the bridge, I could not help but think of the fact that tonight, on the 17th of March, not just in this great city of ours, not just in every great city of our State and throughout the length and breadth of the land, but in every clime, north and south or east and west, men, descendants of Irish blood, are meeting as you are here tonight. These meetings, I think, are different from most gatherings of the patriotic societies on historical occasions, because there is a quality about the festival of St. Patrick that has been so well described by Father Sheen, a some-

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thing ephemeral, a something of the spirit, a something that lifts us a little above mundane things, above mere dates of history, above mere facts of every day life. And so that same spirit, in our own history, shows itself in every decade ever since our country was founded. It shows itself in a certain joyousness, a certain readiness, that is based not on mere facts, not on mere duty, but on that same quality of the spirit that has given to every crisis in American history its splendid share of supporters of Irish blood.

Today there are many pessimists in our midst, people who say that our civilization is going through the most severe test that it has ever been put to. In our own country we are told that changing conditions and changing needs have brought us face to face with the necessity of changing some of our very methods of government. We are told that representative government in the American form is no longer capable of dealing with the new burdens that have been placed upon it through economics and through social changes that have been taking place in these latter years. And pessimists have demanded dictatorships in various parts of the world, or Communism, or the usurpation of constitutional functions by public servants or by would-be public servants.

So today, on the 147th Anniversary of a great Christian and a great public servant, St. Patrick, it is well for us to remember that many times before in the history of nations and in the history of our nation in particular, other great crises have been met and been conquered. In a large sense the very first crisis of civilized America came to what was then the Colony of New York, two hundred and fifty years ago. For a number of generations these colonies along the seaboard had been establishing themselves, pushing back the Indians, pushing back the wilderness, and growing greatly in population. Yet a very large percentage of the inhabitants of these colonies in that year 1683 had come to our shores to escape religious or governmental intolerance, an intolerance which, however, in many cases followed them into their voluntary exile. The hand of an incredibly stupid English ministry stretched out across the sea three thousand miles to hold firmly in its grasp all authority, all regulation, all legislation, no matter how local its character. In the making of what were purely local laws these early colonists had no part or voice.

To be sure, under a somewhat enlightened Dutch rule, when my original progenitor came here, there was a certain amount of what you and I would call personal liberty. The Dutch loved it and lived it. But as soon as English rule came to this town, it was taken away as it had been in the other colonies. And so all through the seventies of that first century of our civilization, constant demands were made for the setting up of some form of representative legislative bodies to be elected by the free men themselves. This was true in every part of the seaboard, but it was reserved for one man more than any other to become what well may be called the founder of representative government in America. His name is not known as it should be in the State of New York. Thomas Dongan, a native of the County of Kildare in Ireland, had served his King, Charles the Second, in many climes, and his friendship for the Sturats brought him the governorship of the Province of New York from its proprietor, James, Duke of York.

I like to think of that scene when he came into our harbor in August, 1683, to be met at the Battery by the citizens of the town of New York with a petition. That petition asked the new Royal Governor to do something that no Royal Governor had dared to do before: to grant to the people of the Colony a legislative assembly elected by the people themselves. Within two months that petition had been granted, and the first general election had been held in the Colony of New York, and in October, 1683, a Legislative Assembly met for the first time. You and I know it as the Legislative Assembly that passed what is known in our history as the Charter of Liberties, the legislative body, which was the direct ancestor of that legislature in which many of us here have served. Jim Foley and Governor Smith and Jim Hoey and many others—I could go round this room and pick them out by the dozens. If you will read that charter of 1683, you will find in it, word for word, phrases which are today in the Constitution of the State of New York. More than that, from that original charter you will find phrase after

phrase and word after word found in the Declaration of Independence itself.

Thomas Dongan, the first Irish Governor of New York was the author in a large sense of the civil liberties that we enjoy today. During the five years of his administration, New York maintained a liberal attitude and an aggressive freedom in all that affected the young colony. Above all, Thomas Dongan will live throughout our history as one who should be credited more than any other of our early rulers with the establishment of popular representative government. I am happy that in my neighboring city of Poughkeepsie on the Hudson river a statue has been erected to his memory, so far as I know the only memorial to this great Governor that exists within our State. I hope that the day will come soon when this great city will erect an appropriate memorial to the man who met and solved the first great crisis in the history of the State of New York.

While it is true that New York has had many Governors with some Irish blood in their veins, it is also true that we have only had three who have come of direct Irish descent. Over two centuries elapsed between the governorship of Thomas Dongan and that of my old friend, that splendid citizen, Martin H. Glynn.

Up in Albany I inherited from my illustrious predecessor, among other things, a library, and in that library I found a set of books—a set of books that are not often read except by Governors when they go to Albany, a set of books that look pretty dry, entitled, The Public Papers of the Governors of the State. And I, as I know my predecessors did, looked through many of those old Governors' papers, and I found much meat in them; and in all those papers that I have read, going back a half century, I do not hesitate to say that for literary quality and for charm, the speeches and messages of Governor Glynn rank easily in the first place.

An the third of this great trio, I need hardly name—the man who has reorganized the government of our State in these latter years; the man who was responsible, more than any other, for initiating the great program of social reform in which we are still engaged; the man who is with us tonight and who will be with the Friendly Sons of many St. Patrick's Days in the years to come—Alfred E. Smith.

The day before yesterday I heard for a few minutes on the radio the voice of the President of the Irish Free State three thousand miles away. Yes, the mother of so many millions of Americans, draws closer to us as each year goes by. From that fine President, we had the cheering message that, in all of the economic depression which today affects the world, the Irish Free State stands out almost alone as a government with a balanced budget, as a country with an increasing trade, as a people suffering but little from unemployment and from hardship. And it is but a short time ago that the wisecracks in many parts of the world were shaking their heads over the possible ability of Ireland to rule herself. These ten years have dissolved these doubts. These ten years have shown that the hope and the confidence that the overwhelming majority of Irishmen in every part of the world held through centuries of struggle have not been misplaced. The years to come will give an even greater justification of that faith.

And, my friends, today is not just your day. It is not just your party. In a very particular and a personal sense, it is my day too. Twenty-six years ago, on the 17th of March, I entered into the blessed state of wedlock, and if any of you young gentlemen are considering the 17th of March as a wedding day, let me give warning: On that particular 17th of March a Roosevelt family wedding broke up the St. Patrick's Day parade on Fifth avenue, and if you want a wedding in which you and the bride will be the hero and the heroine, do not invite the President of the United States to the result of the coming of the President of the United States to give the bride away resulted not only in completely throwing the parade into confusion, but resulted also in the total eclipse of the bride and groom.

Nevertheless, in spite of the hardships of being married on St. Patrick's Day, if I had to do it all over again, I would choose the 17th of March, and I would choose the same girl.

And so, with your permission, in order that, before I take the midnight

train back to Albany, I can go back and see that same girl, I am going to bid you an affectionate good night, and I am wishing for the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick here and in every clime, in all the years to come, all the happiness, all the health and wealth and prosperity and all the keeping of that spiritual value that makes you today what you are, that makes you a contribution to the great cause of human liberty and of mankind.

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