

Fanatic Heart: A Life of John Boyle O'Reilly 1844 - 1890

A.G. Evans

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Poet, journalist, and Irish patriot John Boyle O'Reilly (1844-1890) led a life as adventurous and dangerous as any fictional hero. This vivid and meticulously researched biography traces O'Reilly's colorful story from his youth in Ireland, through his imprisonment in Australia, to his years in Boston. Found guilty of seditious acts against the crown for his Fenian activities in Ireland, O'Reilly was transported on a convict ship to Fremantle, Australia, in 1867. Against daunting odds, he made a daring escape from the penal colony, boarded an American whaler, and eventually reached Boston, where he became a successful newspaper editor at the Boston Pilot and revered champion for Irish immigrants and racial minorities. An important leader in Boston's civic and cultural affairs, O'Reilly also played a key role in planning the now legendary escape of six other Fenians from Fremantle Prison. In addition to recounting O'Reilly's extraordinary and sometimes near-disastrous adventures, A. G. Evans thoroughly examines the influences that formed the headstrong patriotism of his youth and marked his progress toward maturity. He also shows how O'Reilly's poetry and fictional work-some of which have only recently been discovered-reflect his complex life story and illuminate his fascinating character.



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