

And again, in one of his religious poems, he writes:

Man's true empire is his deathless soul,—

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Will man never know

To rule the empire in himself contained,
Its hosts of passions, tastes, affections, hopes;
Each one a priceless blessing to its lord,
If subject to religion's holy law?

From 1850 till 1857 Mr. McGee edited the *American Celt*, first in Boston, afterwards in Buffalo, and also delivered many lectures on varying subjects, chiefly historical and religious. The welfare of his race was his dearest object, and he used all his powers of eloquence and his literary skill for this end. Some of his lectures were given in Canadian cities, and he made many warm friends and admirers on the northern side of the border. He was urged to make Canada his home, and in 1857 he removed, with his family, to Montreal, and began to publish the *New Era*. In this journal, which had but a short existence, he strongly advocated a union of the provinces. He identified himself thoroughly with the interests of his adopted country, and supported the connection with the mother-land in a way which would now earn for him the name of imperialist. In less than a year after he came to Canada, he was elected to parliament, and very soon became an important figure in Canadian politics. In 1862 he became President of the Council (whence his title of Honourable), and was one of the commissioners sent by the Canadian government to the Paris Exposition of 1867. He had continued his advocacy of provincial union, and in 1864 was one of the delegates to the Quebec convention, his office then being that of Minister of Agriculture. In his practice of those principles of loyalty which he taught, he had earned the bitter enmity of the Fenian party by his outspoken opposition to their plans for invading Canada. He saw in the movement only grievous injustice to Canada, and no prospect of good to Ireland; and his fearless denunciation of the scheme cost him, in the end, his life. On the night of the 7th of April, 1868, as he was returning from his duties in parliament, he was shot and instantly killed. He was buried with all the honours that the country could give, and a provision was made for his family by the parliament of which he had been such a notable figure. The assassin, who was a member of a secret society, was executed at Ottawa in 1869.

Mr. McGee's earliest poems are mainly on one theme—Ireland, and his love for his native land inspired some of his sweetest songs. He was genuinely fond of the New World, but his homesickness shows itself in lines like these:

Where'er I turned, some emblem still
Roused consciousness upon my track;
Some hill was like an Irish hill,
Some wild bird's whistle called me back.
A sea-bound ship bore off my peace
Between its white, cold wings of woe;
Oh, if I had but wings like these,
Where my peace went, I too would go.

And writing on the banks of the Hudson in 1848, he says:

For me, I still turn to the isle of desolations,
Where the joys I felt outcounted all the cares.
'Tis summer in the woods where we together
Have gathered joy and garlands long ago—
The berry's on the briar, the blossom's on the heather,
The Wicklow streams are singing as they go.

He has drawn largely on the history and legend of Ireland for his narrative poems, as in "A Legend of St. Patrick," "King Brian's Ambition," and many others. In his lyrics, also, Ireland is constantly his theme; in them he expresses his aspirations for her future, his encouragement to her patriots, and his laments for her dead. In some early lines, addressed to the Harp of Ireland, he writes:

I have no hope to gather bays, on high
Beneath the snows of ages where they bloom,
As many votaries of thine desired,
And the great favoured few have haply done;
But if an emblem o'er my dust should rise,
Let it be this—our Harp within a wreath
Of shamrocks twining round it lovingly,
That so, O Harp! our love shall know no death.

In later life, he turned to Canadian history for some of his subjects, as in "Jacques Cartier," "The Death of Henry Hudson," and "Our Lady of the Snow." The latter poem tells the story of how a "noble Breton cavalier," who for many years had made his home in French Canada, was journeying, as his custom was, to the Christmas mass at *Ville Marie*:

The city of the mount, which north
Of the great river looketh forth,
Across its sylvan sea.

To him, as he was lost in the snow, and "deeming that hour to be his last, yet mindful of his faith," appeared the Blessed Virgin "in robes that spirits wear." She rescued and guided him to the spot on