

Thomas D'Arcy McGee

McGee were elected and McGee led the poll; there was great excitement during the two days of the election.

McGee continued to represent the constituency of Montreal West until his assassination in 1868. He ran four more elections in Montreal; in 1862 he was opposed by John Young and in 1867 was opposed by Mr. Barney Devlin. McGee won both these elections. Canada West and Canada East, now known as Ontario and Quebec, made up what was called Canada from about 1841 to Confederation in 1867.

McGee took his seat in parliament for the first time in the first session of the sixth provincial parliament at its opening in Toronto on February 25th, 1853, one hundred years ago this coming February—the attorney general of Canada West, John A. Macdonald, and the attorney general of Canada East, Georges Etienne Cartier, were the two leaders of the government. Cartier in the 1857 election was defeated in Montreal but elected in Vercheres. McGee and Dorion were in opposition. The opposition party was called Reformers. Later McGee became a member of John A. Macdonald's government, but not for a year or more. McGee had an interesting time in Toronto. On St. Patrick's day of the year 1858 while his friends escorted him to his hotel, a section of the True Blue orangemen showered stones on his carriage.

The time now is too brief to enter into all the details of McGee's public life. He became an anti-slavery defender in the United States in 1861; he was made president of the council in the Sandfield-Macdonald-Sicotte ministry in 1862; chairman of the intercolonial conference at Quebec in 1862. In 1862 McGee announced his independence in parliament and was elected in Montreal West; his opponent was John Young; in 1863 he joined the Liberal-Conservative political party and toured the country with John A. Macdonald; in 1864 he became minister of agriculture, immigration and statistics in the Taché-Macdonald ministry.

In 1864 he was a member of the Charlottetown conference that met in August and in October of the Quebec conference, where most of the clauses of the British North America Act were decided upon.

In 1867 in the contest for Montreal West with Mr. Bernard Devlin, he won his last election by a majority of 250 votes.

The following are some of his better known books:

"O'Connell and His Friends" in 1845.

"Irish Writers of the Seventeenth Century" in 1846.

"Life and Conquests of Art MacMurrough" in 1847.

"Memoir of Charles Gavin Duffy" in 1848.

"A History of the Irish Settlers in North America" in 1850.

"The Catholic History of North America" in 1853.

"The Attempts to Establish the Reformation in Ireland" in 1855.

"The Life of Bishop Maginn" in 1857.

"History of Ireland" in 1863.

"Federal Governments, Past and Present", published in 1865.

"Campaign against Fenianism" in 1865.

"The Irish Position in British and in Republican North America" in 1866.

In the month of November 1869, about three hundred and fifty of Thomas D'Arcy McGee's poems were published by Mrs. James Sadler of Montreal and New York; explanatory notes were printed in the book, as was a splendid biographical sketch of McGee.

Mrs. Sadler wrote in her sketch:

It was in June 1842 when our young Irish poet McGee arrived on a visit to Boston from Providence, R.I.

When the 4th of July came around, the roar of artillery and the gladsome shouts of the multitude, the waving of flags and the general jubilation of a people who had freed themselves, fired his youthful imagination. It seemed to him that which he saw that day was but the fore-shadowing of similar scenes in his own beloved land.

Thomas D'Arcy McGee, at the time seventeen years old, addressed the people that day and the eloquence of the boy-orator enchanted the multitude who heard him there as the more finished speeches of his later years were wont to do.

And oh it were a glorious deed
To show before mankind
How every race and every creed
Might be by love combined;
Might be combined yet still would show
The sources whence they rose
As filled with many a rivulet
The lordly Shannon flows.

It was close to two a.m. on the morning of April 7th, 1868, when the House of Commons in Ottawa adjourned; the house had heard one of McGee's speeches defending Canadian confederation. With the music of McGee's oratory in their ears the members of parliament sought their ways homeward. McGee was bending down to open the street door of his Sparks street boarding house when he was shot in the back of his head and died almost instantly.

The government of Canada took charge of the funeral arrangements, arranged a pension for McGee's widow and the two surviving children and provided a tomb in Côte des Neiges cemetery for McGee's body.