

John Carroll, Archbp. of Baltimore.

By GEORGE J. SAVAGE.

[The writer of the following essay was the successful candidate in the competition for the valuable silver medal awarded by His Lordship, Bishop Dowling, of Hamilton, to the student of St. Michael's College, Toronto, presenting the best paper on some subject in American Church History. In January the name of John Carroll, first Bishop in the United States, was announced as the subject chosen for this year. Three of the best writers of the College entered the contest, and the result was three excellent essays of which that of Mr. Savage was considered the best. The winner of the medal is an American student, belonging to Ogdensburg, Wisconsin—a brilliant and energetic young man, having completed a very successful course in Toronto, where he has also made many friends. We wish the young gentleman success in his future life, which, so long as he will merit in letters, or in the social sphere; and we think he will be well fitted to uphold the honor and dignity of the priesthood in the land of the star-spangled banner.]

The name at the head of this paper recalls to our mind the memory of a man of a warm, generous heart that was in unison with his time and with his country; the memory of a man that laid the foundation of the Catholic Church in the United States on a firm and unimpeachable basis; the memory of a man of liberality, of diplomacy, of action, prayer, whose every thought and not was for the improvement of mankind and the greater honor and glory of God. These are a few of the pictures that flash upon the imagination when the words Archbishop Carroll greet the eye or fall upon the attentive ear. To narrate hastily the biography, and to sketch in the briefest manner the character of John Carroll is all that I aim at in this essay.

The name of John Carroll indicates the noble race from which he sprung, as well as the creed bequeathed him by his fathers. Born from a family in whose veins coursed the blood of royalty, he was himself a man of royal nobleness; but the place and surroundings of his birth were far removed from the scenes of regal pomp. In a distant province among the wilds of the American forest the child destined in after years to add new lustre to the Catholic Church was born in 1735. His parents were wealthy and of liberal education; nevertheless at the first dawn of reason young Carroll perceived that he was of a race and creed that was hated and reviled by those that dwell about him. His earliest recollections were those of continually and contempt for his religion showered upon him by the companions of his childhood. These contemptuous and jeering remarks to his childish heart but weakened not his faith; nay, rather they endeavored him to more fervent exercises of piety in reparation for the insults offered by the deriders of his faith to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

At this time the Catholics of Maryland were ostracized from the society of the state and the schools were closed against their children. The Catholic parent must either seek schools elsewhere for his children or rear them in ignorance—the latter an alternative open repugnant to the feelings of a Catholic father. Therefore, as a consequence of Protestant persecution, John Carroll, at an early age, was torn from all the comforts and tender care of his home, and sent to the Jesuit College of St. Omers in France.

It would be both interesting and profitable could we follow his career, step by step, from the day he entered St. Omers' down to the last day, when, in the fulness of years, with the peace and consolation of the Church he had served well, he closed his eyes upon the world forever and commended his soul to God. In his life at college we would be able to read lessons of faithfulness to duty, obedience to rule, and devotion to prayer. At St. Omers' we would see him filling with ability and distinction the chair of moral philosophy. We would find him inculcating lessons of morality and virtue, moulding the characters and filling with zeal the hearts of young men soon to go forth to break the bread of life to poor, famishing souls, some in the crowded streets of populous cities, others in the desert wilds of barbaric countries. We would see him giving up parents, home and country, and exchanging the land of his birth and all the honors of the world for the black robe of the Jesuit. A little later, in 1778, when it had pleased the Holy Father to suppress the Society of Jesus, we would see him bearing up with more than Christian fortitude under the greatest and cheerful obedience to the See of Peter. All these would furnish profitable subjects for discussion; but as it is within the work, character and policy of John Carroll in connection with the American Church that Catholics of this continent are most deeply interested, his European life in an essay of this character will be more wisely passed over and our attention directed to his labors and achievements in America.

The year 1774 marks the beginning of that long contest between England and her American colonies which resulted in the birth of the United States as a free and independent nation. The first alarm and war aroused all the patriotic feelings of Carroll's noble heart and he recalled to the feet of the patriot leaders all the resources of his versatile mind, his powerful pen, his persuasive eloquence, and his sound diplomacy.

Side by side with his patriotic cousin, Charles Carroll, of Baltimore, he worked with all the intense earnestness of his noble soul for the success of his country's cause and the greater glory of God's church. For he saw with almost prophetic vision the success of the one carried with it the glory of the other. He looked into the future and saw in a

land of liberty and equality the church, unaided and unimpeded by state aid or interference, strong in the Gospel of Truth, marching on to greater and nobler conquests. It need not be enumerated the manifold services rendered to his country during the war for Independence. Suffice it to say that they were of the greatest value to the patriotic cause, and were so recognized by Washington, who honored him as the most capable of appreciating true merit.

At length, when victory had crowned the sufferings and sacrifices of the sturdy patriots, Father Carroll contended all his zeal and talent in the task of building up and organizing the church in the young Republic. He had been appointed Superior of the clergy in 1784, at a time when the interests of the church were in the worst possible condition. The few priests that were in the country yielded obedience to no one. Each considered as much territory, or as little, as he liked in his missionary field; made his visits to his people when and as he pleased. There was no system, no order, in the work, no uniformity. No valiant, however, righteous could succeed under such conditions, and no man knew this better than Father Carroll. Still, in his present position, he was powerless to improve the efficiency of the Church.

He gave ground to the government for ecclesiastical supervision and government refused to yield obedience to a man no higher in church authority than them selves. Without a firm, broad-minded, diplomatic bishop, a bishop who could touch with the highest and with the people, little or nothing could be done towards the organization and improvement of Church affairs. At last the Holy Father, ever watchful for the interests of his children, called all that was needed for the complete triumph and future prosperity of the Catholic Church in the United States by appointing John Carroll Bishop of Baltimore with ecclesiastical authority extending over the entire country.

Bishop Carroll now raised to the full power of the apostles, and clothed with all necessary authority, entered upon a grand constructive policy. The task before him was great and his policy was clear. He would not utilize his power for an emergency or for a time; a policy which, followed to its logical conclusion, has made the Catholic Church in the United States what it is to-day—the most vigorous and the most flourishing institution in the present world. His first made a visit to all the Catholic towns of the country and noted the interests and needs of each community. Next he summoned the priests to the first Catholic Council in America. In this Council laws for the government of the diocese and the guidance of the priests were enacted. To each priest a definite territory was assigned as the field of his pastoral labors. Then, dismissing his priests with words of encouragement and advice, he turned his attention to matters of education.

There were no Catholic schools, colleges or seminaries in the country. These were absolutely necessary for the well-being of the Church and the Bishop set about to provide them. In 1791 Georgetown opened its halls to Catholic students, and the year following St. Mary's, of Baltimore, was ready for occupancy. The bright, talented American youth in numbers here to those halls of learning. The way was now opened for the training of native clergy, and the zealous Bishop felt confident of ultimate success.

The Sisters of Mercy, founded by Mrs. Seton, also opened schools for the education of young ladies, built hospitals and erected asylums for the care of the aged and the protection of the fatherless. Schools, seminaries, hospitals and asylums, all the appliances necessary for the success of the Church, were now provided. In every quarter the Church was prosperous, advancing, conquering. The priests rallied round their Bishop and the laity round their priests. All were united, zealous, progressive.

Amidst all this prosperity Bishop Carroll laid the corner stone of the present Cathedral of Baltimore in 1806, and in the evening of his life had the great pleasure and satisfaction of dedicating the first cathedral in the United States to the service of God forever. During the next twenty years of Bishop Carroll's administration the Catholics of the country had increased ten fold in population and wealth. The work of governing the whole Church had become too great for the declining years of the venerable Bishop. Accordingly, in 1848, the Pope raised Baltimore to the dignity of a Metropolitan See with four suffragan dioceses in the ecclesiastical province.

For ten years Archbishop Carroll remained the head of the ornament and the glory of the hierarchy of the United States. The closing years of his life were like a beautiful sunset; they were peaceful, shedding a flood of glorious, mellow light over the entire Church. All Americans venerated him, all Catholics loved him. But the evening was rapidly drawing to its close. A life for after years to study and to initiate, as a life that left behind it a footprint on the sands of time, a life that is both a model and an inspiration to all students aspiring to the holy priesthood was the life of John Carroll.

At an early age, under the firm rule of the Jesuits, he had learned to conquer himself. This first great victory, gained when but a boy, paved the way for all his subsequent victories, and placed him among the leaders of mankind. His judgment was sound, his heart was large, his charity great; his piety, his fervor and his zeal intense. Would you have proof of all these qualities look to his accounts with the Holy See, there you may find them in letters of living light. But his life is now at an end, his labors over, his reward at hand. In his quiet home in Baltimore, surrounded by his sorrowing priests, and a select evening in 1865, he called the father of the Catholic Church in the United States, paid the debt of nature, and stood before the judgment seat of God. There to hear the judgment, "well done, there to hear the words, "I commend thee to thy father," which in brief is the life and works of John Carroll, patriot, priest and bishop.

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