

## Catholic Canadian Celebrities.

HON. THOS. D'ARCY MCGEE.

## Conclusion

He became President of the Council under Sandfield Macdonald-Sicotte government, and also Provincial Secretary. But upon the reconstruction of Parliament through some political wire-pulling McGee was not offered a portfolio. This action on the part of the Reform cabinet determined McGee, whether wisely or not, to cross and vote with the Conservative Party. It occasioned some bitter talk at the time among his former colleagues, as they pictured him standing in the lobby of the House, offering his wares to the highest bidder.

Under the new government, Tache-Macdonald, Mr. McGee became Minister of Agriculture and immigration. The latter title being added to allow him greater scope for his known interest in foreigners. And it was this generous interest that brought forth a sneer from one of the members of the Opposition as to McGee being but an immigrant himself, "I am of to-day, you are of yesterday, and the man who sneers at immigrants spits upon the graves of his fore-fathers," was his reply and when they accused him of being a rebel in '48 he answered "Yes, he was a rebel in '48 against England's misgovernment of Ireland, he was a rebel against the Church establishment in Ireland, but as to the other extreme measures he favored at that time, what man of forty need blush for the errors of twenty unless he continues in them."

It was during his early lecturing tour through Canada that he laid the grand plan of uniting the provinces in Confederation. And when it was finally brought about in 1867, in answer to the many counter cries he replied "we will conquer them by kindness." It was previous to this, in the year 1865 that Hon. T. D. McGee the hunted fugitive from Ireland was sent as a representative from Canada to confer with the Imperial Authorities upon the question of Confederation. He crossed over to Wexford and there delivered a speech, the tenets of which, afterwards sealed his death warrant. But now when the fire of fanatic passion had died away, his words "that the young men and women of Ireland become lost to all honour and shame upon their landing in the United States" have their somewhat justifiable meaning. Mr. McGee did not mean it literally, for none knew better than he, that the virtue and honour of the men and women of Ireland are 'above fear and reproach.' It was the time when the Federal Army agents laid like death hounds around the docks ready to take the life of the young immigrant by luring him into the United States service under the guise of making him ready for the visionary army that was to set Ireland free. And thus McGee endeavored to turn the stream of immigration towards Canada. His enemies, and the enemies of law and order, seized upon any plea to lessen the influence of the popular Irish-Canadian statesman. He was styled a renegade and a traitor to his principle, a man with his price, and so the match was applied to the fagots dried during the famine of '48.

After Confederation we find Mr. McGee with an uncommon disregard of position stepping out of his office to make way for Nova Scotia, in the person of Mr. Kenny.

Many great and able statesmen have stood before the Canadian House of Assembly and displayed abilities that might cope with any living senate, but to Thomas D'Arcy McGee alone is awarded the palm of being the greatest of them all. When he stood in the Reform ranks and poured forth the might of his rich celtic oratory at the peroration, while the thrilling climax still held the galleries spell-bound Sir John A. Macdonald crossed the House and amidst the deafening plaudits of both sides shook the gifted speaker by the hand. And afterwards upon the occasion of McGee's melancholy death Sir George Cartier wishes he had the magic tongue of the dead to do justice to his illustrious memory.

Another says, "If you can imagine night without stars or moon, day without sun, you can then form an idea of the House of Commons without the presence of Thomas D'Arcy McGee." Still another phrase do we get of McGee in the House, "It was observed that he was a restless quizz, an adroit master of satire and the most active of partisan sharpshooters. That Mr. McGee always seemed to be, in spite of himself, either mischievous or playful, and regardless alike of the place or the occasion, he appeared to be seized with an irresistible impulse to scatter about him an uncomfortable kind of melo-dramatic spray, which occasionally drifted and thickened into a rain of searching, infectious, comic banter which as a matter of course, amidst roars of laughter would drown reason, logic and speech in a flood of exuberant fun."

As a writer McGee ranks among the foremost litterateurs of the day. His prose works, including under this head all the productions as an essayist and editor, a correspondent and a historian, are admirable in their clearness, impressive in their style, and acceptable in their utility of purpose. "The Catholic History of America," "The Irish Reformation" and "The Jesuits" are among the first, but his "History of Ireland" is his *Chef d'oeuvre*. It is admitted to be the most reliable of Irish histories in our libraries, which probably is owing to the author being absent from the scene of personal strife, therefore able to write an unbiased account of that country's many colored history.

But the love for the beautiful existing in every human breast, makes us listen with greater sympathy to the soul of D'Arcy McGee singing the sweet, true songs of his heart in the poetry that though other tender thoughts cling around them, breathes but two—his church and his country,

"The land of faith, the land of grace  
The land of Erin's ancient race."

Mr McGee's personal appearance is familiar to all; the heavy dark face almost African in type, and loosely built figure of medium height. The head so grand in its proportions, that after his death the scientifically curious proved it outweighed the brain of other men that in life were accounted of more than ordinary ability. But that face lost all its heaviness at the first words of the owner's singularly sweet, flexible voice.

He was named after his god-father, Mr. Thomas D'Arcy, and there is an amusing incident related of Mr. McGee being on his way from Toronto to Hamilton after delivering a great lecture, when the train door flew open and a newsboy's cheery voice called out, "Daily Leader, great speech by Darcy McGee." All the way up the car he shouted "the great speech by Darcy McGee" and when passing the end seat Mr. McGee quietly murmured, "Soften it boy, soften it."

There is one stain on McGee's memory that his friends would fain forget, and that is his callousness the time of the Alwyard trial, and when an unnatural death closed his own life, there were those who said "He had followed swiftly on his track, the Alwyards were revenged."

In consequence of Mr. McGee's outspoken condemnation of the Fenian Invasion of Canada the net was drawing tighter and tighter around him. He had seen Ireland destroyed by secret societies, and now saw in the wily Yankee organizer a scheme to turn the money of the poor working girl into their own pocket. He saw the Irish in Canada protected by the very laws that these men would have them put at defiance, and he determined to do all in his power to right his misguided countrymen. But though he was one of the cabinet that had the Fenians' death sentence commuted to imprisonment for life, it did not turn aside the murderer's hand.

In 1867, after one of the most hotly contested elections of the time, Mr. McGee was elected in Montreal East in opposition to Mr. Develin, an Irish Catholic.

He took his seat in the first parliament held after confederation, and though his body was weakened by illness and his mind disturbed by the repeated threats of the Fenian faction directed by the political boddler, he continued in the discharge of his duties. But it seemed as if he knew that sooner or later he must pay the penalty of doing right, for his later writings and speeches are prophetic of his coming doom, and our eyes become dim as we hear the great heart of the man sadly asking,

"When cometh the long night, starless and endless  
The bed without dreaming, the cell without gyre."

The Sunday previous to his death with his accustomed piety he received Holy communion, the Viaticum it proved, and the last acts of his life was for Ireland, his family, and his adopted country.

He wrote a powerful letter to Lord Mayo, to remedy the ills of Ireland, and Gladstone pays tribute to it by speaking "Of a prophetic voice from the dead coming from beyond the Atlantic." Then a letter to his beloved daughter,

"If wishes were power, if words were spells  
I'd be this hour where my own love dwells,"

And the last speech before the House, where, by his brilliant gifts of mind and tongue, he had taught the Canadian people to rightly estimate the qualities of the Irish race, is full of peace and brotherly love to the young confederation, especially the maritime provinces.

But before the Irishman's letter to the English Peer had reached its destination, before the tender father's message of love had reached his child, before the Canadian statesman's eloquent words had been set in type for the morning paper, the cowardly assassin had done his work.

After parting from his friend Mr. McFarlane, D'Arcy McGee turned up Sparks St., Ottawa, where his boarding house, kept by a Mrs. Trotter, stood. As his foot was on the first step he was fatally shot by Patrick William Whalen, believed to be an emissary of the Fenians.

Hon. Thomas D'Arcy McGee was tendered a state funeral, and amidst all honours he was buried in Mount Royal cemetery, Montreal. We close this sketch by his own deeply meaning words.

"With Villa Maria's faithful dead  
Among the just he made his bed  
The cross he loved to shield his head  
Miserere, Domine.

Right solemnly the mass was said  
While burned the tapers round the dead  
And manly tears like rain were shed  
Miserere, Domine.

Well may they grieve who laid him there  
Where shall they find his equal?—where?  
Nought can avail him now but prayer."  
Miserere, Domine.

L. A. HENRY.