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Address by J. K. Foran

Delivered in the Russell Theatre, Ottawa, on the 17th March, 1908

In the Russell Theatre, Ottawa, on St. Patrick's night, the largest and most representative audience that had assembled for some time, listened to the following address by the well-known writer and lecturer, J. K. Foran.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen: The Irish race holds jubilee to-day! From this, the capital of our fair Dominion, to the ends of the habitable globe, wheresoever an Irish heart beats, its pulsings are filled with happiness to-night. By the Hudson, that flows on to the Empire City where so many of the race have carved their way to prosperity and happiness; by the Mississippi, whose waters lave the green slopes along which rest so many of the American Irish Brigade; by the Missouri, whose yellow waves chant an eternal requiem for the immortal Meagher, across the furrowed face of the Atlantic, in Paris, the City of Light, where gather to-night the descendants of Limerick's heroes; by the rapid rolling Rhine and over the Alpine passes; in Italy the beautiful, in Austria the proud, in Spain the chivalric; in Rome, dear old, antiquated Rome, made dearer still by the treasured graves of Irish Chiefs upon her Janiculum—in Rome, that contains the heart of O'Connell; in all lands, in all climes, under all suns the children of Erin rejoice to-night.

But in Ireland, there is rapture, and joy, and pride. In Ireland of the fern-clad hills and the verdant vales, where the streams are a rhythm and the rivers a song, where the yielding carpet of earth is clad with a myriad of flowers and the cliffs, while defending the coast, are entwined with the gayest of garlands; in the grand old land of Patrick's glory, Bridget's grace and Columbkille's heroism, there is exultation to-day.

"And why," will you ask me, "is it thus? Why is it that Ireland, so long the Niobe of the Isles, has cast off the garments of sorrow and has assumed the vestments of joy? How comes it that the scattered Gael are rejoicing? that the smile has removed the tear? that the shadows, although they are not wholly vanished, are golden, like the flush of the dawn on the eastern hills? and that the wail of sorrow is replaced by the chant of Hope?"

Harken to me for a few brief moments—my remarks will not be long—and I will strive to tell you the cause of so much expectation, happiness and bright anticipation to-day.

There is a lovely poem, written by Martin McDermott, in which he describes a child seated on the knee of an old woman and listening to her sing the songs of the land; then the old woman dies and the boy asks his mother to allow him to go to the grave of the dear old nurse, to pluck a flower or drop a tear; the mother instead of feeling aggrieved, says, "Go, my child, for fond of the old woman you must have a great love for me."

This glorious Dominion is a good mother to us; she is the land of our future; to her we are bound to consecrate all the gifts, energies and talents that God gave us. But, out of 365 days of a year, dedicated to the advancement, glory and prosperity of Canada, it is but just that we should take one day to lay aside the troubles and cares of life, to retrace the wilderness of Atlantic's waves, and to go and kneel at the grave of the old mother Erin. And Canada, instead of being jealous, will say: "Fond of the Old Land, they must be true to the New; devoted to the old mother, I must find in them loyal and loving citizens."

It is in this spirit that I ask you to come with me, for a moment, to the grave of Granade, that I may answer my question.

In the vast mountain range of history, extending from the day of creative miracle down to the present, the peaks of Ireland's story tower grandly aloft. They were radiant in the sunlight of fame, while away down the declivities of the years the mists hovered thickly around the mountain's breast; and the valleys below were dark, for the few stray beams from above, that pierced the rifts in the clouds, were dimmed by distance, broken and feeble.

In the ages long gone, when the full floods of learning and freedom flashed upon the hill-tops of learning and freedom flashed upon the hill-

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there is an awakening interest in the claims of the country and a recognition of all that Ireland has done, in statesmanship, in literature, in art, in heroism on the field, to build up and to cement that very Empire.

Hence it is that I say to-night, that the Irish race has good cause to rejoice on this occasion and that the blackness of the dawn is becoming the twilight of the present, the precursor of a dawn that will herald the sunburst of the future.

We are now in the season of Lent, a period of fast and penance preparatory for Easter. Just as surely as Lent shall pass away as certainly will it be followed by Easter. So is it with Ireland. The Lenten season of her seven hundred years of sorrow and misery, of fasting and waiting is almost at an end. She has reached the stage of Saturday—between the gloom of Friday and the glories of Sunday. And just as certainly as that long period of sackcloth has existed and is going by, so surely will it be followed by a national Easter—an Easter morning when the Angel of Constitutional Freedom will come down, roll away the stone from the sepulchre and command her to arise to a glorious resurrection. And in the Te Deum of gratitude and rejoicing that will then ascend no voice will be louder, none stronger, none more harmonious, none more sincere, than that of Canada. Canada, the home of so many Irish exiles, the noble land of their adoption; Canada whose national cradle was rocked by the hand of one of the brightest lights that ever flashed from Erin across the Atlantic—the poet, historian, orator and statesman, Thomas D'Arcy McGee; Canada whose voice, through her representatives in Parliament, and time and again waited resolutions over the ocean, asking for Ireland the same boon of legislative autonomy that we enjoy in its plenitude under the safe-guards of our matchless constitution; Canada with its mixed population of creeds and races all working out the magnificent destinies of our fair Dominion.

Yes, on that day will be heard the voice of Canada and in the chorus we will easily distinguish each special tone and note. They will arise from all sides. From the sturdy, "fair play," loving British element, with its faith in the constitution, its pride in its achievements and its desire to see its beneficent results in every quarter of the Empire. From the sterling Scottish element; men from the Lowland moors and the Highland glens, from all parts of Old Scotia.

Fras Maideankirk to Johnny Croates; men with the memories of Wallace and of Bruce, the recollections of Bannockburn and even Culloden; men who rise in range of Canadian prosperity even as do Mount Sir Donald and Mount Stephen tower so sublimely above the Rockies. From the French-Canadian element. Here I pause!

What a vista opens out before the eye of the imagination, through the mists of years what a panorama unfolds itself to my vision! On every side I see the men of the famous Irish Brigade, marching over the fields of Europe "From Dunkirk to Belgrade"; I lean my ear against the air of the past and I hear their combined cheers as Saxe flashes his sabre and Lord Clare leads on his dragoons, in headlong charge between the woods of De Barry and the immortal hamlet of Fontenoy. Again the picture changes; it is Ireland in the vortex of a fated struggle, and the soldiers of France, inspired by Wolfe Tone, coming to her rescue.

And still again, it is on this side of the Atlantic. On every lip today is the praise due to Lord Grey for his patriotic project of nationalizing the battle-fields around Quebec. There, where the statue of Pelonna looks down on the valley of the St. Charles—there where De Levis took his last, but victorious, stand—there, do I see one hundred and nine of the Irish Brigade (that had been drafted into the Bearn and Carrignan regiments) doing deeds of heroism for the glory of the Lilly Flag. Again, one full year after the capitulation of Montreal, I find deVaudouin informing the King of France that Captain McArthur still holds out in the Fort de Chartres, in Illinois. And he only surrendered the fort at the express command of the King. Thus the last defender of French strongholds in America was an Irishman, and the last cannon discharged for French honor on this continent was fired by Commandant McArthur of the old Brigade.

A century later the French-Canadian National Poet, Cremazie, touched his harp into vibration, sang the sorrows of Ireland, the praises of O'Connell, and the sympathies of his people for the exiles of Erin. Nor did he sing in vain.

In 1847, when the exile ships darkened the face of the ocean, when the scarlet bird of fever hovered above them and dripped death from his crimson wings; when the hundreds of Ireland's children were flung dying upon the banks of the St. Lawrence,

Isaia's, to fill his bosom with inspirations like unto those that thrilled in the breast of the Royal Prophet, to give him the imagery of Ossian, the vigor of Mangas and Davis, the harmonic culture and melody of Moore, that, while he is praising the Giver of all good gifts, he may worthily chant the deathless anthem of Ireland's rejuvenated nationality.

Let me tell you one incident in my own life and in that of the French-Canadian poet, James Donnelly. It will illustrate my thought and will be an act of justice to the dead bard. One day I asked Donnelly how it came that he, who was such a splendid English scholar, did not write poetry in that language. His reply was characteristic. "Gratitude, my boy, gratitude!" he said. "All that I possess I have received from the French-Canadians; my livelihood, my education, my very future, and I have made up my mind that if, with whatever gifts God has given me, I ever left anything of worth behind me I would leave it to swell the volume of French-Canadian literature."

Yes, gratitude; and out of that sentiment should spring union; two such races should flow on side by side till they blend, as do the Ottawa and the St. Lawrence above Montreal, forming in the end one magnificent stream that should flow into the great ocean of our Canadian nationhood.

And for the Irish people themselves in Canada; we should bury deep in the Atlantic the animosities, the prejudices, the divisions of the Old World; we should cut down forever the tree of antagonism that, like the Opus of Java, spreads its branches to the sky, but withers and withers the soil that gave it birth. By the memory of Grattan, of Curran, of Emmett, of Lord Edward; by the memory of Davy, of Tone, of Mitchel, of Martin, of Smith who joined hands with their Catholic fellow countrymen in the struggles of fully a century, let us slay the hydra of bigotry and disunion and combine with other races in the noble task of building up this glorious Dominion.

And, if one in my humble position may be allowed, without presumption, to address the Power above—the Power that reaches from end to end, that wields the sword of Justice and guides the prophet's pen—I would ask Him to look down on this land, to lead her rulers and statesmen in the ways of wisdom that they may be enabled to raise her to the position of a Queen on this American continent, make her a home of good principles, and the polished buckle in the belt of Empire that engirdles the world. I would also ask Him to raise up a harper, a mighty bard, to cleanse his lips with fire, as He did those of

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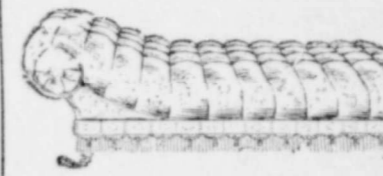
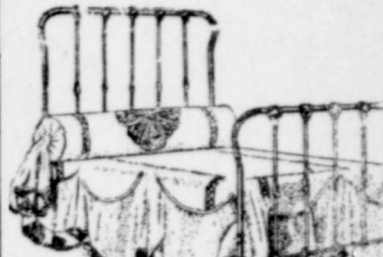
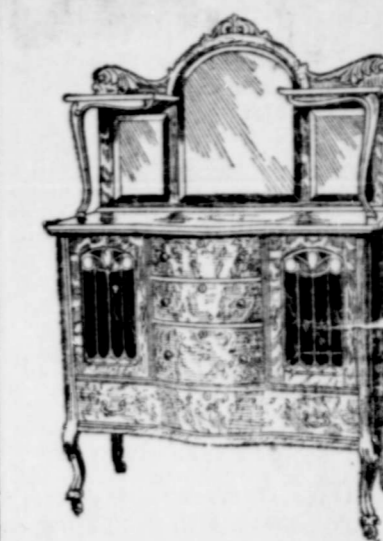
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names of those who were admitted to profession are: Miss Alice Dertinger, La Salette, in religion Sr. M. Anastasia; Miss M. Hayes, Raleigh, in religion Sr. M. Gabriel; Miss M. Leech, London, in religion Sr. M. Celestine; Miss E. Tompkins, Ridgeway, in religion Sr. M. Francis Xavier. Those who received the white veil are: Miss F. Fallon, London, in religion Sr. Mary Victorine; Miss E. Widrig, Newport, Ky., in religion Sr. Mary Lourdes; Miss M. Laporte, Drysdale, in religion Sr. Mary Loretto.

The altars and the chapel were beautifully decorated and a large concourse of relatives and guests were present to witness the happy event. After the ceremony His Lordship, the visiting clergy and the guests were invited to the Auditorium, where a short entertainment was given in honor of His Lordship, it being the feast day of his patron saint. A complimentary address was read and presented by Miss Marion A. Peck, and Miss Laura A. MacDonal sang very sweetly the beautiful old Irish melody, "Come Back to Erin." A few other vocal and instrumental selections completed the programme. The address was handsomely illuminated and bound in green crushed velvet with gold ornamentations. At the conclusion of the programme, His Lordship addressed the students and guests in his usual graceful and happy manner.

In the afternoon His Lordship, with several of the clergy, visited St. Joseph's Separate School, where he was most warmly welcomed by the trustees, the staff of Ursuline religious and the children. He was greeted with a joyous feast day chorus by the children and several other songs were well rendered in his honor. His visit was made further memorable by the delightful little address which he made to the pupils, expressing his high esteem of their school and the excellent work being done there.

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