

vocate, an early union of all the colonies of British North America. Thus he actually became the pioneer in the movement which culminated in the British North America Act of 1867.

Mr McGee immediately found a place in the hearts of his fellow-countrymen in the Canadian metropolis, and in 1858 he began his career in Canadian politics, a member for Montreal West. With that eminent Irish characteristic he at once declared himself "agin the Government"; and a powerful opponent the Government found him. For four years he maintained his assault with all that brilliancy of wit, and eloquence of scorn and satire which he possessed in such a marked degree.

It was during this period (1859) that Mr. R. W. Scott, the member for Ottawa, introduced a Bill to amend the Separate School Act in Upper Canada, so that the number of Roman Catholics, required for the establishment of a separate school might be reduced. In view of the present political situation, Mr. McGee's remarks on this important subject may not be amiss. He said:

"The Catholics—the petitioners—assert in the most solemn manner that they cannot in conscience divorce religious from secular instruction in schools which they support. Are you to be judges for them as to what their consciences ought to determine in the matter? Are they to be guided by your consciences or by their own. No one can show me any enduring national character that ever was moulded without a strong infusion of a dogmatic religion of some sort. Some have spoken of this demand for separate schools in Upper Canada as a priests' question. Nothing could be further from the fact. I assert, of my own knowledge, in the name of tens of thousands of parents whose petitions are on your table, that this is a fathers' and mothers' Bill much more than a priests' Bill. I think that there is danger that in these our realms, so bare of all tradition, gross materialism may spread into excessive dimensions—that the sceptre of the fireside may be broken, and the moral magistracy of the parent overthrown." Turning to his friends he said: "I must say, if this debate shall satisfy me, that the religious liberties of the Roman Catholic minority of the people of the people of Upper Canada are more safe in the hands of the Reform party in this House, however painful it may be to me personally, I shall not, for any party or other other earthly consideration, hesitate to make my choice in