

PANEGYRIC

Upon Most Rev. Dr. Power by Most Rev. Dr. Macdonald.

To the Editor of THE TRUE WITNESS: DEAR SIR,—I have been requested by several Newfoundlanders, resident in the United States, to send them the full text of the sermon preached by the Bishop of Harbor Grace, Nfld., on the occasion of the Month's Mind of our late beloved prelate, His Lordship the Most Rev. Thomas Joseph Power, D.D. We have no Catholic paper in this country, and of the foreign Catholic papers that come hither THE TRUE WITNESS has by far the largest circulation. I therefore seek your columns and solicit of you the favor of publishing therein the accompanying panegyric. By acceding to my request you will oblige very many Newfoundlanders.

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St. John's, Nfld., June 26, 1894.

[From the Harbor Grace Standard]

RIGHT REV. BISHOP, REV. CLERGY, DEAR BRETHREN:

"They mourned for him many days, and said, how is the mighty man fallen, who saved the people of Israel."—Mac. ix 20.

A great sorrow is come on the Church of St. John's. It is a far-reaching and deep sorrow. Its lowering shadow overcasts every hamlet and home in the land. It has made all hearts sad. A great man and good has passed away from our midst. The kindly Bishop who ruled this Diocese for upwards of twenty-three years so gently and so wisely, has laid aside for ever the crook of authority. The buckler and spear have fallen from the hand of the valiant one in Israel, and a universal wail is gone up from his spiritual children, as for the slain Machabean chieftain from the tribes of Benjamin and Judah. "And all the people of Israel bewailed him with great lamentation, and mourned for him many days, and said: How is the mighty man fallen who saved the people of Israel."

A great man he was in the sense too that worldlings reckon greatness—a prince in the hierarchy which rules the Christian world—a sage in the commonwealth of science and letters—a prominent figure in the panorama that outlines the history of our colony—and yet, not as such does he come before us at this moment. Our grief twines round dearer memories. Our tears fall for the familiar, kind-hearted Bishop, whose friendship we were wont to enjoy. Our hearts go out to him in affectionate sorrow, as to a father who sought us in his last anxious look, and blessed us in his dying words. "The gentle, kind-hearted Bishop," are words which come unbidden to our lips at the mention of his name. Yet I feel to-day—and there is a pathos in the reflection—that even those who knew him best and appreciated him the highest, failed to do justice to his rare kindness of heart. "Charity is patient, is kind. Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things." In this sense the late Bishop was charitable and kind-hearted to a degree. In his character, which was otherwise uniform, charity was the most conspicuous feature. It intensified his other virtues: it shaped the tenor of his actions: it regulated his every intercourse with his priests and people: it imparted a mellowed coloring to the exercise of his sacred ministry: it is the secret of the deep hold he always had of the popular affection. In a heart full fraught with Christian benevolence, he consulted his joys in the joys, and his sorrows in the sorrows of those around him, irrespective of creed or country. The very grief which is manifested everywhere, but feeds on the memory of the large kind-heartedness of the deceased prelate. We loved him because he was gentle and sympathetic. Our love is the measure of our sorrow. "Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure sound the deepest notes of woe." It is in the light which his gentle, benignant charity throws around it, that his life must be interpreted. For thus alone it may best be understood. We discern in it, from the beginning to the end, a oneness of aim—a generous and pliant nature ever ready to obey the behests of the Divine Master.

On matters of merely personal history I shall be brief. The Most Rev. Thomas Joseph Power was born on the 15th December, 1830, in the ancient city of Ross, Co. Wexford. He was the child of respectable and very worthy parents. Shielded as he was from the knowledge of evil by the pure atmosphere of his earliest surroundings, reared in a family where the old faith was hereditary, and where had been perpetuated beautiful traditions of heroic constancy in its practice, he yielded—and need we wonder—to the lofty and chivalrous ambition of devoting his youth and the energies of his manhood to the cause of the religion which had so long been to his people the most valued portion of their inheritance. Called early, as Samuel was, he early honored the vocation. "I will go to the altar of God, to God who maketh my youth joyful." In the heyday of his youth, we find him in Carlow College a diligent and an ardent student. It was here, "like the tree that is planted near the running water, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season," that he treasured up the rich stores of varied learning, and acquired the finished style, the graceful manner, which in after life made his discourses the admiration, if not the despair, of public speakers. In 1853 he went from Carlow to Rome to perfect his studies for the sacred ministry. Often he conversed with me for hours together on the incidents of those tranquil and happy years he passed in the Irish College, under its saintly rector, the present Archbishop of Ephesus. Rome, the city of the soul, exerts—it cannot fail to exert—an influence and a power on most minds. On the cultured and finely sensitive mind of the future Bishop the influence was phenomenal. In everything he admired the great and the beautiful. In Rome religion appealed to his senses under its more august and majestic forms. Day after day, for years his eyes rested on the monuments which the Christian genius of every age had consecrated to Christian faith. He admired their peerless beauty. His heart was filled, and it expanded, with the images of their grandeur. When the one ambition—I had well nigh said the enthusiasm—of his life took form and direction, it was a love for the beauty of the Church of God and its solemn impressive functions. "I have loved, O Lord,

the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth."

At the end of a successful and brilliant course of studies, he returned to Ireland. His subsequent life is the story of two cities, Dublin and St. John's, the successive scenes of his labours. In the former, thirty years back, the name of Canon Power was a household word. He was the ideal priest, an eloquent and popular preacher, and an efficient President of Holy Cross, Clonliffe. Consecrated Bishop in Rome, on Trinity Sunday, 1870, by the great and good Cardinal Cullen, he arrived here on the 9th day of the following September. The reception he received, to quote the good Bishop's own words, oft repeated, "could not be surpassed by any city in the world." Those of you who saw him then—he was in the full vigor of manhood—need no words of mine to enable you to recall the influence and magnetism of his presence. His was truly a majestic figure, a courtly bearing, a noble face, which wore habitually a benevolent expression, with a certain austere integrity. His whole character seemed to burst upon you with a flood of instantaneous light, and you felt as if you had known him for a life-time. Noble natures have a power to communicate to others a sense of their innate inutilitarian greatness. One of the great joys of all his after years among you was to recall the bright, happy day of his arrival. He had come to a strange country, but not to a strange people. Their faith, their love for the ministers of their religion, their deep reverence for his own sacred office, at once identified them in his mind with the people from whom he had parted in the fair and sainted Isle beyond the seas. He rejoiced to witness that here, as elsewhere the world over, the essentials of divine faith and the love and enthusiasm which faith inspires, were irradicable in the children of the Irish race, in whatever clime they may be born. He found himself at once surrounded by a faithful people and a devoted priesthood, who cheerfully accorded him in advance an instalment of the most generous confidence. The sequel proved it had not been misplaced. Sustained by the assurance of continued support and sympathy, he took in hand the work of his extensive diocese with the full ardor of one who feels himself enter on the true mission of his life. He visited the most distant parts of the coast again and again, to give confirmation, to preach, to place priests, or to encourage those already placed. Here in St. John's, the churches, the schools, the convents and orphanages claimed his time and attention, and the good Bishop was found in every place that needed his consoling presence. Scarcely a night in the year, from the day of his arrival to the edifying close of his life, could he be missed from his confessional. The gentleness of his manner made him a very angel of the sacred tribunal. Men of busy lives and rugged natures were attracted to him. Spring and fall, when crafts from the distant outports crowded into your harbor, the hardy toilers of the sea sought their favorite confessor. And seldom were they disappointed. They came in the confidence of their faith; they knew with what loving kindness he obeyed the mandate:

"To thy tongue shall seraph words be given, And power on earth to plead the cause of heaven,"

On throbbing anguish pour relief And teach impassioned souls the joy of grief, True as circling spheres to Nature's plan: Man the brother lives the friend of man."

The sermons which he preached from this pulpit will long be remembered. They were good sermons and are not forgotten. His oratory was of a high order. Bold and free, it rose above conventional rules, busied itself with living thoughts alone, and these he communicated with the vividness of intuition. He chained the attention by the earnestness of his manner and the aptitude of his diction, and his words sunk deep into the memory by the weight of intrinsic matter. His, again, was so clear, so direct and so cogent a method of expounding the rich thoughts which teemed in his busy mind, that the most abstruse truths became evident the moment they passed through the crucible of his intellect.

But the crowning work of his busy and fruitful life was the founding in his Diocese of the schools of the Christian Brothers. This project, by which we set much store, will be forever associated with the name of Dr. Power. If we would make a just estimate of the success of his episcopate, we are not to lose sight of the fact that the late Bishop was the sixth in the line of glorious pontiffs, whose great learning and virtues shed lustre on their exalted position. To our humble seeming, each was in his time chosen by God, because of his special fitness for the special work which God assigned him. Each was providential, for each was true to his time, its wants, and its promises. And by this rule alone are we to measure the success of their respective lives. The different circumstances in which their lots were cast, the widely altered conditions of the colony, the dissimilar means at their disposal, gave, of necessity, a variety to the character and extent of their labors. It was the presence of the earlier Bishops which discerned and selected the agencies by which the future of Catholicity in the colony is assured for ever. They "brought the vineyard out of Egypt and planted it." They protected and nurtured its growth until "the shadow of it covered the hills and the branches thereof the cedars of God." In other words, they watched over the infant Church, which in the beginning was a mere aggregate of sparse congregations, united by faith it is true, but divided by physical barriers, weakened by isolation, languishing often from lack of material means, and composed of a people who were yet helots in the land of their adoption. They guided their people through the desert, as Moses guided the children of Jacob. Like Moses, they fed them with manna from heaven; they went to Mount



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Horeb to pray in their behalf, and to Mount Sinai to receive the law. They came to their people as the accredited ambassadors of God. In the exceptional condition of the country their authority was like that of the Hebrew law-giver in a manner immediate, and their office dispensed with the more formal exercises of ecclesiastical government. Dr. Power, on the other hand, succeeded to an heritage which preparatory toil had made fair and fruitful. Like Simon, the son of Onias, he found himself in the permanent home of his people; the priesthood of Aaron had already been established in the land, the offering and the daily sacrifice were made, and the law was read on the Sabbath according to legal usage. And like Simon, too, "he in his life-time propped up the house and fortified the temple." "And the singers lifted up their voices and in the great house the sound of sweet melody was increased. . . . the worship of the Lord was perfected." (Ec. L.) Like the Ideal High Priest of the old law he brought to every function of public worship the dignity of outward personal grace, as well as the beauty of personal sanctity. "When he went up to the holy altar he honored the vesture of Holiness and when he took the portions out of the hands of the priest, himself stood by the altar, and about him was the ring of the brethren, and as the cedar planted on Mount Lebanon, and as the branches of the palm trees, they stood round about him, and all the sons of Aaron in their glory." (ib.) Again, in any enterprise which he took in hand for religion, education, or charity, the late Bishop was not alone. He stood well in the foreground in the group of priests and people, of religious communities and benevolent societies, whose willing co-operation outwardly perfected the work of his hands, and realized the designs matured in his ardent soul. To his gentle nature it was congenial to sue success by those more pliant means which are often the most effective. In everything he did succeed, and the success was not less the result of his kind and winning manner, than of his skilful combination of the manifold means at his disposal. His earlier predecessors belonged to a different tableau. Each in his turn stood alone on the heath—a solitary figure on the landscape—lending dignity to the horizon, and creating all that was of grandeur in the scene. They were leaders without the appointments, which, in ordinary circumstances, make leadership effective. But there were giants in those days. They were men of stern mold, resolute of will, of untiring exertion. They were fitted for every emergency, and early colonial life is a succession of emergencies which must be availed of at the proper moment or lost forever. They could not afford to wait to forecast discouraging circumstances, or to count results. Their enterprises were of the boldest character and their execution of them equally bold. They pushed their ends with persevering energy and by the most direct means. They were, like the torrent from the cataract, rapid, but perennial, which shapes its course through rocks overturned and precipices overleaped, gathering strength as it runs, limpid as crystal, certain as destiny, unerring as fate. Dr. Power was the smoother stream, which through smiling meadows flows more placidly on to the great ocean of eternity. Each was a great bishop in his own time and place. Each was appointed to do God's work, and each performed faithfully and well the allotted task. All labored with the same high motive and for the same end. God accepted His praises from their lips and set the seal of His approbation on the work of their lives. "Wisdom hath conducted the just man in the right ways, made him honorable in his labour and accomplished his work." The result—I should say the success—of their varied labours is still present with us. For to use the words of St. Maximus on an occasion similar to the present: "Whatever power of virtue and grace there is in this faithful people, from them it has come as the sparkling rivulet flows from its pure fountain." Our duty is to love and admire—to cherish their memories—to emulate their virtues—to preserve the rich legacy of Divine Faith and holy example, which they have bequeathed to us. In the retrospect which we make to-day the life of the late Bishop of St. John's seems all the brighter jewel for its rich golden setting. In itself it was a beautiful life, nobly begun and nobly ended. From the beginning to the close it went to realize the highest aims of human desire and the kindest affections of the human heart. The name of Thomas Joseph Power will go down to history an honored and stainless name—stainless in its youth—stainless in its manhood—stainless in the rich mellow autumn of its years—blessed in the tears and affections, and laden with the benedictions of those whom he loved so well and served so faithfully. His pure soul has appeared at the judgment-seat of God, followed by the prayers of a sorrowing and grateful people—followed, too, by the prayers of the pious sisterhoods and religious communities, to whom he was a kind father—followed by the supplications of the priests of God at the altar offering the adorable sacrifice in his behalf, and from hands which himself had consecrated, pouring out the mysterious blood which "speaketh better things than that of Abel." His sacred remains are laid to rest under the altar on which he so often offered up the sacrifice for the living and the dead. There he shall sleep the silent, peaceful sleep of the just, and await the brighter morn that knows no end. "And we will not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those that are asleep, that you may not be sorrowful even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so will God bring with Him them who have slept through Jesus."—[I Th. iv]

Farewell now, gentle, kind-hearted Bishop. Farewell, but not forever, brother dear, Be brave and patient on thy bed of sorrow, Soon will pass thy night of trial here, CELESTIAL will come and wake thee on the morrow."

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