

# The True Witness

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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## THIS WEEK'S ISSUE.

It is only once in many years that a paper changes abode; the year 1895 has found THE TRUE WITNESS in the midst of all the confusion and turmoil incident to a general moving. Consequently we trust that our readers will excuse both the lateness of this week's issue and the unsatisfactory shape in which we are obliged, by circumstances, to present our paper. The chaos created by the taking down and putting up of machinery and presses, and all the other difficulties that are unavoidable under the circumstances must constitute our excuse, and as it will be a long day before we move again, so will it be a long time until we shall have to again crave the indulgence of our friends for the delay and make-up of THE TRUE WITNESS.

## A PROPHET'S WORDS.

Addressing O-sian, in his powerful poem, "The Celt," M. Gee thus sang:

"Oh, inspired giant! shall we e'er behold,  
In our own time  
One fit to speak your spirit on the world,  
Or seize your rhyme?  
One pupil of the past, as mighty should  
As in the prime,  
Were the fond, fair, and beautiful and bold—  
They, of your song sublime!"

Surely if ever another "inspired giant" arise, one able to breathe forth his prophetic words in rhyme, or grand poetic prose, one seized with the spirit of the past and almost prescient of the future, that being was surely Thomas D'Arcy M. Gee. In moments of poetic fervor he could conjure up, at will, the past, and make it live again on his glittering page; in moments of wonderful meditation he could look down the avenues of the future, and what was totally hidden from the eyes of common men, arose before his vision in all the details of reality. He foresaw the scenes enacted upon the stage of Irish politics during the past fifteen years, and he foretold them exactly as they have taken place. He shaped his course, and would have fashioned that of his race, to meet the coming events. But unfortunately one prophet in a generation is as much as can be expected, and men of less lofty mould are prone to misunderstand and to ridicule the wisdom of a seer.

But apart from M. Gee's exceptional powers of penetration, when it concerned the interests and future of his native land, he has left ample proof that his keen conception of the coming changes in the world was alive to the possibilities, the probabilities—and to him the certainties—of Canada's mutations. A man, standing upon a hill top and, with a good field-glass, may see the movements, the actions, and perhaps guess the intentions, of persons a mile or so down the road, while the foot-traveller, moving along the highway towards them, has no idea of their existence. It would seem that McGee, standing upon

an intellectual eminence, at the commencement of our Confederation, and using the field-glass of his natural gift, beheld, as exactly as if he were translated body and soul to the year 1895, the events that are at present transpiring in Canada. This is no exaggeration; his own words prove the truth of what we advance.

In a recent issue the Gazette quoted a couple of passages from a lecture delivered in 1866, in London, Ont., by Hon. Wm. M. Gee: these quotations are from his address on "The Future of British America." We could not convey in a better manner the idea of the great statesman's prophetic powers than by reproducing those words concerning the future of our Canadian Confederation. McGee was a firm believer in the Federal system, which owes no insignificant part of its present perfection to his opinions and suggestions. He was aware that, in a land where so many different elements must naturally blend, there would arise questions of right, and of justice, regarding the minorities. It was thus, in 1866, almost thirty years ago, that he cast the horoscope of the future:

"When United British America will start on its race with 4,000,000 of a free people, in religion they will be about 55 per cent. Protestants to 45 per cent. Catholics; in some localities the religious minority may be small and may apprehend local oppressions, but the two great masses will be too nearly balanced to suffer any oppression to be long inflated on the co-religionists of either. Our near equality will be the best guarantee of our mutual tolerance. With one half the constituent power against him, it is evident that no fanatic, no bigot, no troubler of other men's consciences, no insulter of other men's creeds, can ever rise to the dimensions of a statesman in British America."

Is it possible that McGee foresaw such men as the leaders of that bitter crusade now going on against the Catholic minority in Manitoba? Was he then aware of the efforts that Mr. Dalton McCarthy would make to destroy, in the name of "Equal Rights," that real equality the best guarantees of our mutual tolerance? Could it be that he intended to refer to this exact period, when he said that no "bigot . . . can ever rise to the dimensions of a statesman in his British America?" Is it possible that vision was sufficiently keen to detect, through the vista of years, the events that have taken place this spring in Haldimand? Were he alive at this hour; were he in his seat on the floor of the House of Commons; were his voice to still awaken the echoes of the Legislative halls with matchless eloquence, could he not repeat those words, spoken thirty years ago, in proof of his correctness of forecast? Before the American conflict he predicted the end of the struggle and its effects upon the Union. When the war was over, he could point to his prediction and to its striking verification. The same might again be repeated were he to the fore in this year of conflicting interests.

Read his concluding words, spoken on the same occasion, in 1866:

"The minorities East and West have really nothing to fear beyond what already existed—local irritations produced by ill disposed individuals. The strong arm and the long arm of the confederate power will be extended over them all, and woe be to the wretch on whom that arm shall have to descend in anger for any violation of the federal compact!"

It is the new Ossian—the "inspired giant" of the nineteenth century—that speaks. Words from the dead past that carry their mighty import adown the vestibule of the future. We would not like to be "the wretch on whom that arm shall have to descend in anger for violation of the federal compact." Just

as certainly as that the prophetic words of the departed have pointed to exactness the circumstances of to-day, so surely will it fare ill with any man, or any body of men, who may attempt to unduly infringe upon the sacred rights of even the most insignificant minority.

Proud of our constitution and feeling an unbounded confidence in its stability, we can look forward with calmness to the ultimate results of the present distressing agitation. Divested of all minor considerations, and freed from all the side issues that are purposely raised by politicians and special pleaders, the just claims of the Manitoba minority, which by the accident of circumstances happens to be Catholic, will have to be recognized by the legislators of the land. It is not by fanatical appeals to long-standing and deep-rooted prejudices, nor by wild and illogical stump speeches that any permanent solution of the question can be reached. The men who are most blinded by this dust of bigotry will fall into their natural places, the laws of gravitation will oblige them to come down to their own level, while the spirit of the constitution will control the destinies of all. Duffy once wrote that "great men are naturally few, but good men and honest men are to be found in numbers moving in the bosom of society." Prophetic statesmen, like McGee, are the exception; but the world is full of sincere and honorable men, whose abilities are consecrated to the good of the human race. In Canada we have our share of these latter; and as long as the thoughtless, unreflecting, hot-headed fanatics are so conspicuous, in contrast with the solid, sincere and ever powerful men, there is every reason to feel confident that the good, common sense of the practical legislators will prevail and that the Federal power, which is the lawful guardian of the weaker sections of the community, will be faithful to its trust and fulfill the duties imposed upon it by the constitution that gave it birth.

It is not, as far as we can see, a question that belongs to the political arena; nor do we understand how it can be considered, in the proper sense, a question of religious or denominational interest. What would have been just, had the minority been Protestant, must be equally just when that minority is Catholic, and would again be just, were the Catholics to become the majority in the future. It is a constitutional question; and let the man who dares attempt to interfere with the sacred rights of minorities, reflect upon the prophetic words of M. Gee.

## ARCHBISHOP IRELAND.

Certainly one of the most important figures on this continent to-day is the Right Reverend John Ireland, Archbishop of St. Paul. From Rome, the centre of Christian unity, to the very outside verge of Catholic civilization, particularly wheresoever the English language is spoken, the name of Archbishop Ireland is known and his strong individuality is recognized. Perhaps, in the length and breadth of America, there is no man whose time is so entirely occupied and whose works are so varied and far reaching. Certainly, after Cardinal Gibbons, he is the most influential prelate the Church possesses in the United States.

Last week His Grace of St. Paul paid a very hurried visit to our city. He came neither on ecclesiastical, political, social, or in any way public affairs; his presence was of a strictly private nature, and as a consequence the distinguished Churchman, who under other circumstances would have liked to have seen our institutions and met the principal people of

Montreal, deemed it necessary to come and to depart as quietly as possible. This explains the fact that no interviews were published and no action taken by the thousands who would have been glad of the occasion to do him honor, in the direction of a reception. Perhaps, however, at some date, in the not distant future, the Archbishop of St. Paul may find leisure to return to Montreal; and we only hope that our citizens may have the pleasure and benefit of hearing him, on some of those burning topics which he so thoroughly masters and so ably illuminates.

We do not think that we are guilty of any breach of faith in stating the simple fact that we had the honor and privilege of a friendly conversation with His Grace, and while we consider ourselves not at liberty to make use, for the public, of what was spoken in the intimacy, not of an interview, but of a private chat, still we feel entirely justified in giving our readers a general idea of the man whose words, actions and teachings have such a great weight in matters ecclesiastical, educational and social in the world of Catholic thought, and particularly in the Catholic, and even non-Catholic, circles of America.

Slightly above the medium height, strongly, but yet finely built, with a large head over-mounting a pair of evidently powerful shoulders; hair on which the snows of many years have fallen lightly, yet fallen to remain; a broad and lofty forehead; firm-set lips and chin, indicative of much strength of character and determination; eyes large, and yet duly proportionate to the other features, quick and penetrating, yet mild and exceedingly sympathetic; clad in a civilian travelling suit, yet in movement, appearance and general manner unmistakably a man in a thousand, one born to govern, to command, to lead; a voice soft and wonderfully modulated, calculated to inspire either awe or confidence, respect or love. Such the exterior of Archbishop Ireland, as, in rough lines, we attempt to draw the impressions that his magnetic presence left upon us. At first sight we might suppose the Archbishop's years to be anything from fifty five to sixty-five; but in conversation, when his features light up with that glow peculiar to the highly intellectual, when his eyes become what we might well call the mirrors of the soul, and when it is evident that his mind is calculating the value of each expression, which otherwise seems to flow spontaneously from his lips, he appears younger by several years than he really is. There is also about him a something that words cannot describe exactly, but which makes one feel perfectly at home and certainly very happy in his presence. We can well imagine the effects that such a man's oratory must produce upon an audience, particularly when he is dealing with some of those grand subjects he loves so much to treat.

There is another faculty that he possesses, and which becomes apparent even under the most ordinary circumstances,—it is that of saying, in very few words, what other men would require a great many phrases to express. He seems to anticipate, as it were, the subject of conversation, to take in at a glance all the details of the questions, to analyze the matter with lightning rapidity, and then to convey in a short and most striking manner, the very essence of the arguments. Each phrase might seem as a text whereon to base a whole essay. It is this gift which we found the most pronounced in the manner and method of conveying his views upon any subject of importance.

It would not be exact were we to leave