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CHRONICLES OF AN OLD-TIMER

Conclusion of the Theller Memoirs—Execution of Lount and Matthews—Petition to the Queen—Theller Receives a Respite—Mrs. Theller Arrives from Detroit and is Cheered by the People and Soldiers—Mr. Theller is Tried in an American Court for Breach of the Neutrality Laws and Acquitted—Once More an American Freeman—His Career Ends in California.

Chicago, June 24, 1904.
Editor Catholic Register:

General Theller describes how he witnessed the execution of Lount and Matthews. He says Mrs. Theller the day before the execution appeared before the Governor to present a petition of thirty-five thousand inhabitants of the province against his execution, but was spurned from the executive presence and dragged from the executive chamber in a hysterical condition. He was given to believe that he would himself be the next victim. The arms of the prisoners were pinioned, white caps were drawn over their heads, and they were accompanied to the scaffold by Sheriff Jarvis in his official robes and his deputy, Mr. Beard. Also two clergymen of the Church of England and a guard. One of the clergymen, a Rev. Mr. Richardson, made a prayer, and the signal was given by the sheriff to the hangman, and those two heroic souls were launched into eternity. Samuel Lount was a native of Pennsylvania. He had the reputation of a good and benevolent man and died a martyr for his country. He had often, with Mr. McKenzie, Dr. Rolph, and other leading Reformers, worked diligently to have properly represented to the home government their grievances, which had now become so burdensome that the people would no longer calmly submit to them.

Peter Matthews was a wealthy farmer. He was an influential man among his neighbors, many of whom under his leadership took up arms and marched to Montgomery's. The rising having proved a failure from mismanagement, he was soon arrested. He was a large, fleshy man, and had much of the soldier in his composition. Gen. Theller speaks of the kindness of Sheriff Jarvis, who was moved even into tears in his sympathy, and was given in his charge, a "relief," he remarks, "from the annoyance of the chancellor, Mr. Jamieson, who was ever particular in the exercise of his little brief authority." Some few days having elapsed since their removal, Sheriff Jarvis and James E. Small, Esq., advised Theller to write a petition to the Queen, and to enclose it to Sir George Arthur for transmission to the home government, and to respite his sentence until such time as an answer could be obtained. This he did. Sheriff Jarvis kindly volunteered to take the letter and petition to the Governor, Sir George Arthur, and delivered it in person, with some remarks, communicating the general feeling on the subject as manifested, particularly among the Irish residents of the province, who were in fact the most effective and the most numerous of their armed force. For three or four days there was no answer that could be considered as definite, but that the counsel was in session discussing the matter. One of their number, Mr. Draper, was absent in the London district, and four were present; two were in favor of granting the petition and two against. "One of them," remarks the general, "Billy Allan, as he was called a blood-thirsty old Scotchman" was decidedly for hanging and quartering, and could not be persuaded otherwise. The Governor under those circumstances had the casting vote, but for some days he did not exercise it. Sheriff Jarvis gave him no hope for a favorable decision. The general then began to think of some desperate measures. "It was determined," he remarked, "that they should never have the satisfaction of gloating over my corpse, suspended by the neck. If all else failed I knew that the guard around

the scaffold would be my native countrymen, and from the scaffold I should have, as is customary, the liberty of addressing them. I would there have told them that it was for an attempt to aid them in obtaining the liberty of their country that they saw me on the scaffold; that it was for that liberty I had fought and for that liberty I would die. Then springing into the midst of them, I told them they might bayonet or kill me as a man, but that they should never hang me like a dog. "However, I had no occasion to try my last resort. Another fate awaited me. On Saturday the civic officers of the city were sent as a deputation by the citizens to wait on his excellency and to beg of him as a favor to them, that to gratify the feelings of the Irish, he should respite my sentence. The Governor received them kindly, and as one of their number, Dr. John King, an alderman and an Irishman too, informed me how graciously he condescended to hear all their remarks, thanked them individually and collectively for their loyalty and their zeal, remarking that nothing could afford him more pleasure than to afford them a gratification if in his power, but his duty to his sovereign forbade him to interfere with the due course of law." Dr. King, he says, took him kindly by the hand, squeezing it affectionately, and declared that anything he could do for him would be done after his execution, that he might depend upon his friendship, that no insult should be offered to his remains; he would have him interred in his own family burial place in the Catholic burying-ground. He asked him, as he was one of the surgeons to whom his body was to be given for dissection, if he could not give it to his friends? Here the doctor gravely shook his head, remarking that he was confident it would not be allowed, as his excellency would imagine it might occasion an excitement in the United States; but assured him he would have him dressed and laid in a decent coffin, and see him quietly and decently interred by his countrymen. "For all which," the general said, "I, of course, was most thankful; but not wishing to trespass upon his time and his politeness, I expressed to him my gratitude and requested him not to trouble himself; that when hanged his just and humane government might bury me or not, as they saw fit, for it would then be a matter of perfect indifference to me."

"Another Alderman," the general observes, "whose name was Dickson, I think a saddler, and master of one of the Orange lodges, came and begged my forgiveness for the insult he had offered me the day I entered the prison. He was the person who had expressed the wish that I might never come out until the morning when I should be executed. He said he felt sorry for what he had said, and that he had done all that he could to atone for it by making intercessions for me; that he would still try to aid me, and leave nothing undone that might aid him in accomplishing his object. This man was true to his word. I afterwards learned that he was indefatigable in his exertions, and, Orangeman as he was, I can say with gratitude to him and others, advocates of that, to me loathsome system, that they forgot every difference, political and religious, and stood upon me only as their countrymen, and with such feelings they joined their Catholic countrymen to save my life. Would to God it could ever be thus, that there could be union of sentiment and interest, and that they would be no longer the dupes of designing knaves, who keep them at variance, that they may rule and ride over their necks with cars and chariot wheels of their own creation." "However," there was here and there a glimmer of sunshine, and occasionally on educated, liberal-minded, noble-souled fellow, who could bid me be cheerful, indulge in the better feelings of our nature and be satisfied that sufficient for the day is the evil thereof; let to-morrow take care of itself." Amongst this latter class I remember the frank, open-hearted countryman of a young barrister, by the name of McCullough, who was a Tory and an Orangeman. How, with his liberal nature and rich intellect, he could be either, puzzled me; and who could boldly rebuke the canting knaves and chicken-hearted friends, swearing that "while there was life there was hope!" And in my case he had witnessed nearly all and every movement since my removal to Toronto; was convinced that there was no downright and positive necessity for resorting to utter and hopeless despair, but on the contrary something was being done, and he lending a helping hand; that he would do so for any man who thus braved his fate and refused to disgrace his name by covering his oppressors, or exhibiting the weakness of a child by being frightened at that which must sooner or later overtake us and put a period to our mortal career. "A friend had given me the names of a number of influential Irishmen and I got him to invite them to see me under various pretenses. As they were esteemed loyal, and as many of them were then doing duty and under arms at the time, and some of them of our own guard, I had no difficulty of frequently conversing with them and aiding them with my suggestions as to the proper course to be pursued. Their names should be public property, but, as I have remarked in another chapter, so long as they are under the ban of tyranny, so long must they live in my memory alone. I have said they were thought loyal, but they were not, nor did I meet during my stay in Canada but two Roman Catholic Irishmen who were loyal or wished well to the British Government. "Four gentlemen, who were influential with their countrymen, were hard at work and on the Sunday after mass, in the chapel yard, had an understanding with all those present; and they became resolved to make one more effort, and to use

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their own meaning and significant language. "Give, Sir George a chance! But, if he failed to grant the respite, 'bad luck to us if we will stand by and see him hanged for the crime of being our countryman. If his excellency will not listen to reason we know what we can and what we will do.' And they did know what they could and would do. Every one admitted that the Irish had saved the province; and they said a sad return they were receiving for their services, if the long-legged humbug, Sutherland, was to be pardoned, who was, according to their version, much more guilty and my superior officer. If such things were they could see no reason why I should be hanged, and what was better, they would be dead if I should be. When they found themselves sufficiently strong, knowing they could repose confidence in each other, such language as this was talked openly in the streets and in the guard-rooms, and a letter addressed to Sir George Arthur, signed "An Old Soldier," was printed, distributed, and posted around the town, pointing to the illegality of the sentence passed on such a course would have upon the people of the United States and the discontented of the people of Canada, as well as their people generally, who were tired of blood. A copy of this handbill was to be found in the hands of every Irish soldier with a spare one for a comrade. Who was the author I never knew. But I remember I thought it was written by a master hand, and could not well see how Sir George could evade acting upon it.

"With me, in the prison, things remained in the same state, until a little after one o'clock on Monday, when the sheriff, accompanied by some officers and citizens, entered my apartment, and with a melancholy shake of his head, handed me a letter from the Governor to him, as sheriff of the home district. It was in fact what they termed there a death-warrant, but was only an official letter saying that his excellency and council having taken into consideration the prayer of the prisoner's petition, could see no good reason why he should interfere with the due course of the law, and concluded by saying, 'You are, therefore, commanded to have the sentence of the law carried into effect on the body of the prisoner to-morrow morning at 7 o'clock.' "He means that I should take it coolly, anyhow," I remarked; "it is rather early, but I will try the better. I can take it fresh and fasting!" but observing that my levity shocked one of the hypocritical, canting humbugs belonging to the church dominant, who had entered with the sheriff as a minister, I said no more; but shaking hands with one or two I had known, I requested the sheriff to let me have pen and paper, that I might write to my family and make some little arrangement of my property, and that as my time was short, they would excuse me for wishing them good bye."

"Alarms of invasion had been current the whole winter. Every day had brought its tales of wonders, and although the soldiery had been called out night after night and had each morning been deceived by their ridiculous fears, still the next night would bring its reports, and meet with the same credence as its predecessor. Some one on the look-out spied some object on the lake which looked like a vessel, would

give the alarm; the drums would beat, the alarm-bell ring, the soldiers scamper to their posts, all creating a din that would have awakened the seven sleepers, had they been in Toronto. The ladies of that city had certainly that winter become used to "war's stern alarm," for not a boat of the smallest size nor ever a canoe could appear but the garrison would be frightened into fits. One night, I remember, early in the spring, and when the ice began to move, an alarm was given; and as the fancied vessel still kept gliding into the bay, and those on board refused to answer to the challenges, a tremendous firing was commenced and gallantly sustained by the supposed craft without a man falling, until the morning light presented the harbourn and insolent foe to full view of the gazing warriors and dismayed inhabitants. It was a tree that had been uprooted from the banks of the lake and came floating down on the ice, the branches and bushes about it being the accompanying boats she was towing in, loaded to the water's edge with brigands. "But, at this period, rumors new and of threatening aspect had been sent over by the paid spies of the government, who were placed along the frontier towns of the United States, that during that very week a formidable attempt would be made on Toronto, as well for the purpose of getting the metropolis into their hands, as for our rescue; and now, in open day, a steamboat of the large class ploughing her way into the bay, with the American flag floating at her topmast, appeared to them indicative of the reality and that assuredly their hour of battle was at hand; and the troops were roused from their merriment, their grog and bacchanalian song, to meet their invaders.

"It was St. George's Day, and the soldiers on pretence of keeping that day, took a little more grog than usual, so that when the alarm became general they were in rather a more boisterous situation than is commonly allowed among a soldiery who were able to be called out on a moment of emergency. The shouts, the wild hurrah, succeeded the discharge of cannon, and after an hour or two passed in conjecturing what all this could amount to, or what it meant, my door was opened, and my friend, James E. Small, Esq., came in, and whose agitation seemed to me to omen something disastrous.

"Out with it man; what is it; what means this outcry?" I demanded. "Nothing, nothing—at least nothing yet—but it may be turned to advantage; an American vessel is arrived, and in her is your wife, whose reception by the troops has been enthusiastic, and I have brought her here to see you. "He knocked—the door was opened—and the object of my most intense anxiety, my wife, was in my arms! "I was not a little shocked at her appearance. Four months of anxiety had made sad ravages upon her health, and she presented herself before me all but the wreck of her former self. To her I appeared equally broken in health, yet not in spirit, for although aware of what I had to expect from my enemies, never repining, and whistling that grief through the crevices of bolts and bars, which Falstaff said "blew a man up," yet the confined air and dampness of my prison had wrought a pale and sickly appearance. I had striven to retain my strength of body for the last efforts that I might be called to make for my freedom; but the weighty chains I wore, the want of exercise, and the breathing pestilence about me had made me bloated, and although I was allowed by the government but a pound of bread and a pint of miserable soup per day, I confess that I had all the appearance charged by the Tory press of being "fattened for the fallows."

"The account which my wife gave me of my family and friends, particularly of the kind attentions of the latter to herself, and their heartfelt sympathies for my situation, was soothing to my agitated mind; and I was most grateful to them for the means they were pursuing to compel

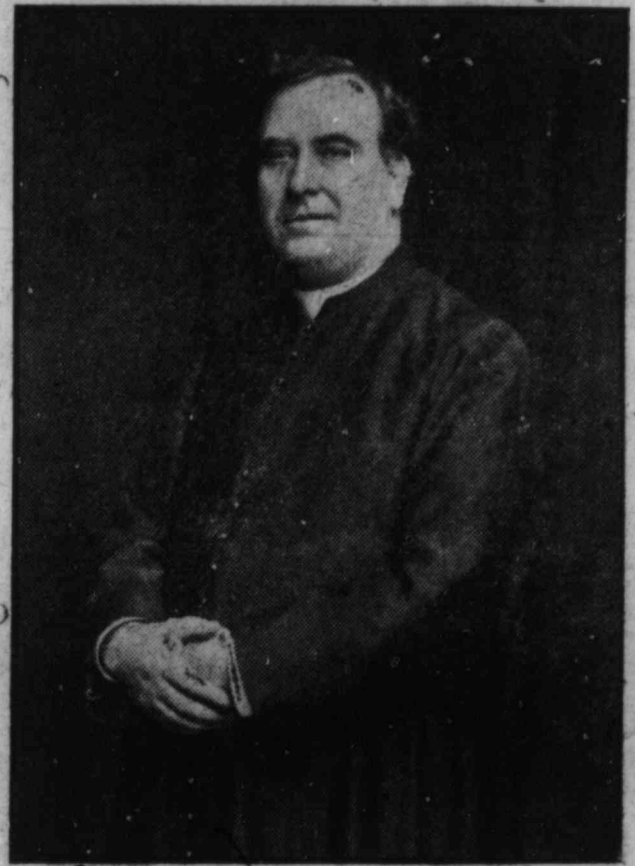
REV. CHARLES E. MCGEE

Parish Priest of St. Joseph's, Stratford—Curate Under Dean Kilroy.

The picture given herewith will be recognized by many readers as that of Rev. Charles E. McGee, P.P., recently stationed at Stratford, where he has charge of the large congregation of St. Joseph's, a congregation of such magnitude that a site has already been secured and plans prepared for a fine new church in the east end, to be used in addition to the present handsome edifice. Father McGee has already made a host of friends in Stratford. In popularity with people of all denominations, he promises to follow in the footsteps of the late Dean Kilroy, who was beloved by people of all creeds, and honored and respected even by the most bitter opponents of his beliefs. Without for a moment losing the dignity of his high office, Father McGee exhibits a friendliness towards Stratford people and a kind-

As the first portrait, admirably shows, Father McGee lends to his office the benign influence of a fine personality. A man in the prime of life, and strong in the abundant health of careful living and happiness of heart, he is, in any place, a figure towards which the eye of a stranger will involuntarily turn in trust and admiration. But when, on closer acquaintance, the pure and kindly heart shines out through the eyes of sympathy which he is ever ready to turn upon those who come to him in trouble, the first impression is more than confirmed and the involuntary attraction turned to well-grounded love.

As a scholar and at the same time a clear speaker, the new parish priest of St. Joseph's has made a profound impression in Stratford. Attracted somewhat by friendliness, somewhat by the curiosity which always exists in the case of a newcomer, and somewhat by the loving commendations of people in other places, many who are not of the Faith have gathered to hear the good



REV. CHARLES E. MCGEE.

ly interest in the city which citizens will not be slow to recognize. In the Classic City the St. Joseph's congregation occupies an enviable place. It includes not only men of wide public experience and high literary attainment, men identified with the growth and progress of the business portion, but also a sturdy and faithful rank and file, respected as good neighbors, honest citizens and true followers of the Mother Church. It was a peculiarly fitting tribute to the sterling worth of Father McGee that he should be appointed to the charge of such a people. As curate under Dean Kilroy in 1884-6 he had demonstrated his ability to win friends in Stratford. His loving ministrations at Coruna, in Lambton County, St. Augustine, in Huron County, and Maidstone, in Essex County, proved him a servant of the Cross eminently fitted for the work of the Church in a larger field, and his promotion from the last-named place to the parish of St. Joseph's was but a fitting tribute to the zeal and self-sacrifice which he had shown in these and other places.

the United States Government to interfere in my behalf, although even if successful that interference might come too late. It appeared that they had been depending upon the representations of John Prince and others, that nothing would be done with us or the other American prisoners, further than detaining us until the troubles on the frontier should cease, when we would all be liberated. On this account, and in fact with the solemn pledges of the Tories high in office to that effect, our friends ceased hostilities, laid down their arms, dispersed and exerted their influence to restore quiet amongst the enraged inhabitants of the frontier, who appeared resolved on "carrying the war into Africa." One corps of iron-nerved men, some five hundred strong, of the brigade of my friend, E. J. Roberts, Esq., well armed, equipped and provisioned for

father, and if any came to scoff, they have remained to pray. They have found eloquence founded on earnestness, a great heart yearning for the well-being of people of all conditions and classes, a sympathy and love drawn from the Divine sympathy and love which he has ever held up before his people. To follow with honor a man such as the late Dean Kilroy is a task not lightly to be undertaken, and Father McGee is one of the few men fitted for its performance. Kindly in disposition, genial in manner, a whole-souled exponent of the Faith, he will undoubtedly grow in the trust and estimation of Stratford people of all creeds and classes. Beloved as a man and as a priest, he will wield an ever-increasing influence in the Classic City, where his own people have already welcomed him in a tangible way with gifts and addresses, and with the loving service and respect which speaks louder than word of mouth and is more precious than material offerings to the hearts of such men as the Rev. Father McGee.

(Continued on page 4.)

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