

"AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM."

THE ONLY JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE INTEREST OF ENGLISH SPEAKING CATHOLICS WEST OF TORONTO.

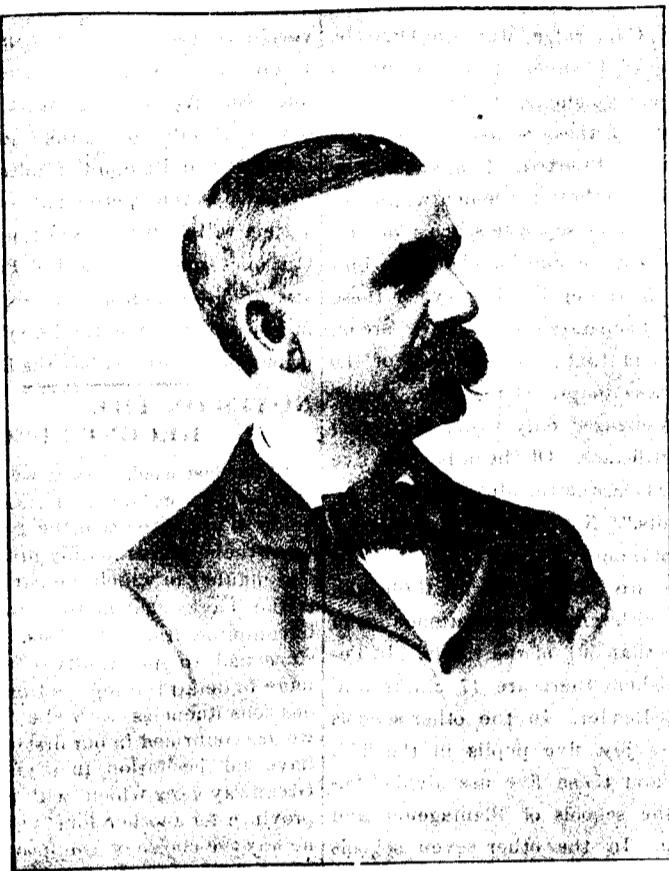
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A CANADIAN POET AND LITTERATEUR.

SKETCH OF HIS LIFE AND CAREER.



THOMAS O'HAGAN, M. A., Ph. D.

When reading an article of high literary merit, in a recent number of the *Catholic World Magazine*, on "Canadian Poets and Poetry," by Dr. O'Hagan, we felt that that article was incomplete owing to the omission of the author's own name from among that goodly company. Having had a somewhat extended acquaintance with the learned Doctor, in years gone by, and a consequent admiration for the indomitable pluck and rare skill which have marked all his literary achievements, we are happy to give our readers what must, of necessity, be a short review of his life and labors. We do this with the more delight because Dr. O'Hagan is not only a Canadian, but a Catholic, who has devoted much time and energy to developing and defending Catholic education in the province of Ontario. We will remember the inestimable services which he rendered to the cause of Catholic education during an agitation for a reform in the Separate School laws and regulations in the years 1878-79-80. Dr. O'Hagan, in conjunction with the late lamented Cornelius Donovan, M. A., and a few other distinguished Catholic educationists, sacrificed much of his time and ability to better the Separate Schools of Ontario, and, even to this day, there is no truer friend and champion of Catholic Schools among the laymen of the Province of Ontario than the subject of this sketch. Ever since the Greenway Government abolished the Catholic Schools in this province, Dr. O'Hagan has evinced a most lively interest in our struggles and, on every possible occasion, has, both by voice and pen, defended our cause and demanded justice from our persecutors. As far back as 1889, King's College Record says of him: "Thomas O'Hagan, M. A., is one of the rising LITTERATEURS of Canada, and bids fair to take high rank amongst those who have reflected credit by their intellectual achievements on their Irish extraction." That prediction of six years ago has been amply verified by the success since achieved by Dr. O'Hagan in the world of letters. He was born in 1855, near Toronto. In his childhood his parents removed to the County of Bruce, which was then newly settled and was still for the most part a wilderness. His early education was obtained in the public school at a time when schools of its class, in a new settlement, were far from efficient. He made there such rapid progress that, at the age of fifteen, he was able to qualify as a second class teacher.

From 1870 to 1874 he attended St. Michael's College, in Toronto, a Catholic college in affiliation with Toronto University, many of whose pupils have filled and are, to-day, filling, high and responsible positions in Church and state and all the learned professions in the province of Ontario. In this college Mr. O'Hagan was noted for his devotion to study, and especially for his fondness for languages and literature. Latin, French and German were his favorites among foreign languages, but he never neglected that most potent of all instruments of culture, the English tongue and its noble literature. During his academic course he was a frequent prize winner in Latin and English, and even at that time he displayed a fondness for and a proficiency in composition which augured well for future literary fame.

In 1874 Dr. O'Hagan entered the teaching profession, and during the succeeding nine years he held the Principalship of some of the leading Roman Catholic separate schools of his native Province. During a considerable part of that time there was carried on an agitation for certain amendments to the Act which authorized the establishment and maintenance of separate schools, the object being to enable the supporters of these schools to avail themselves more fully of the advantages the law was intended to confer upon them. In this agitation Dr. O'Hagan took an active part, and he acted in 1878 as President of the first Convention ever held by the separate school teachers of Ontario. The desired amendments to the Act were conceded by the Legislature a few years later, and the successful issue of the agitation was largely due to the work done in its earlier stages by Dr. O'Hagan.

From 1883 to 1888 Dr. O'Hagan held Classical and Modern Language Masterhips in several of the leading High Schools of Ontario, and the students of his classes, many of whom are now attending Toronto University, will long remember his clear, bright and happy methods of instruction.

While engaged in teaching he read the work prescribed for the Arts course in Ottawa University, which conferred on him, in 1882 and 1885, the degrees of B. A. and M. A. respectively. On the former of these occasions he took honors in English, Latin, French and German, and was selected to write the Graduation Poem. His "Profecturi Salutamus," which was composed for this occasion, was afterwards warmly praised by the poet Whittier. His Master's thesis had for subject the poet Longfellow, and it merited and received high praise alike for literary excellence and sound criticism.

Dr. O'Hagan's literary activity has been incessant. His volume of poems, entitled "A Gate of Flowers," has won for him an honored place among Canadian poets on the universal testimony

of veterans of the literary art like J. G. Whittier, Charles Dudley Warner, Oliver Wendell Holmes, J. M. LeMoine, Sir Daniel Wilson, J. G. Bourinot, G. M. Grant, Lord Dufferin, C. G. D. Roberts, Louis Frechette, W. Kirby, Charles Mair, George Stewart and Alexander MacLachlan. He has been a voluminous contributor to the periodical press, the following Journals, with others, being included in the list of those for which he has written:—The Canadian Illustrated News, Canadian Monthly, Educational Monthly, Educational weekly, Ave Maria, Catholic Reading Circle Review, Catholic World, Boston Pilot, Catholic Record, Toronto Globe, and Donohoe's Magazine. His first volume of Poems, "A Gate of Flowers," has been translated into French in Paris. During the years 1888 and 1889, Dr. O'Hagan read the Post Graduate work in the English department of Syracuse University and obtained the degree of Doctor in Philosophy. In 1893-94, he attended Post-Graduate lectures at Cornell University in the departments of history, the Romance languages and English literature under the eminent Shakespeare and Browning scholar, Dr. Corson. He is recognized as an authority in Canadian literary matters, and his article of a few months ago, to which we alluded in the opening sentences of this sketch, on "Canadian Poets and Poetry," contributed to the *Catholic World*, the foremost Catholic magazine of the United States, was conceded by the Canadian press to be one of the ablest studies of Canadian Poetry that has yet appeared from a Canadian pen.

While teaching, Dr. O'Hagan was instrumental in founding many literary societies in towns in different parts of the Province and always infused some of his own literary enthusiasm into the young people whom he gathered around him. To his other accomplishments he adds that of being a graceful elocutionist. He was trained in the Philadelphia and Chautauqua schools and his services as an exponent of the humorous and pathetic in literature are in wide demand. He is also much sought as a lecturer on literary subjects.

Personally Dr. O'Hagan is a true genial and warm-hearted friend, whose urbanity and rare gifts of conversation make him a favorite in social circles. Despite his poetic fervor, that celestial rapture, which Emerson says falleth down from heaven, has not led him to wander from the paths of single blessedness. Needless to say, especially to readers of his poems, that while the learned Doctor is thoroughly Canadian, he dearly loves the land of his fathers. Few are better acquainted with her blood-and-tear-stained history, and fewer still have for the Irish cause that profound sympathy of which only the poetical temperament is capable. One who has achieved so much in the world of letters at the age of forty, and whose works have reached such a well-merited place in the literature of his country, has before him a wider and yet more distinguished career, in which his progress will be watched with kindly interest by his fellow countrymen. We regret that space does not allow us, in this sketch, to give our readers a review of his poems; but we hope, on some other occasion, to do so.

SOME WORK FOR COMMISSIONS.

To the Editor of the Northwest Review.

SIR,—It is the opinion of many men of sound judgment that the Dominion Government made a mistake in refusing to appoint a commission to settle the Manitoba School question. The Lords of the Privy Council, before giving their decision, were furnished with the facts bearing on the case, and it seems but fair that the Greenway Government, in order to reverse that decision, should be allowed to investigate or to manufacture facts which have no bearing on the case, and which, besides, would be interesting to the public. The most important of these "facts" is that the Catholic schools of Manitoba prior to 1890 and the schools of all Catholic countries in Europe and America are inefficient owing to the state's exercising too little control over them, and the conclusion to be drawn from this "fact" is that the cause of education is greatly advanced by the state's surrendering all control over Catholic

schools, as was done in Manitoba five years ago. All this would have been brought out by an investigation. Then, when investigating became a habit, and the foreign countries had been disposed of to the satisfaction of the fanatics of all the provinces, it might occur to some of them, that it is not fair to ignore the public schools of our own country. If these can be shown to work such wonders in the domain of secular instruction as the credulous are made to believe, it will be some consolation to Catholics who are deprived of religious liberty in order that their non-Catholic neighbors may enjoy the blessings resulting from "efficient" schools. As it is, there is some reason for doubts on this point. The Canadian Public school system is represented as a grand scheme for educating the masses; yet we find that its most enthusiastic admirers are perfectly satisfied with the results produced by it in countries in which, through inability to use it, a large percentage of the young population have to be educated in voluntary schools. Again, it is the constant boast of the champions of "national" schools that a state system of education is a failure when applied to schools in which a majority, or even a considerable number of the pupils are Catholics, unless the atmosphere is disinfected by Bible reading, or some religious reading sanctioned by Protestant usage. For, on no other theory could we explain the so-called fact that state schools attended exclusively by Catholics are every where utterly inefficient, while Protestant separate schools are a decided success.

The public school system having been imported from a country in which self-laudation is looked upon as the greatest of virtues, it was natural that Canadian imitators would shout themselves hoarse in praise of it. This they have done so persistently that a great many people have come to regard it as a divine institution. But apart from empty declamation there is not a particle of evidence before the public to show that it accomplishes the purpose for which it is said to have been invented. There is abundant proof that the cost of the system is enormous, and, as we are all taxed for it, we have a right to know what the country receives in return. For this purpose a commission might be appointed to examine some of the public schools in the different provinces and ascertain what percentage of the non-Catholic children attending them are educated, and whether the education they receive is a fair return for what it costs the country. Let the examiners begin with those schools in which the results, good or otherwise, can be credited to the system as such, and not to causes independent of the system. If they do so I venture to predict they will find much that will surprise them.

They will find many a school of which the following would be a true report: "Eighty per cent. of the pupils are unable to write, but each, guided by instinct, has invented for himself some hieroglyphic scrawl which only an expert can understand."

"In composition very few of the pupils could write correctly three consecutive sentences on a given subject, however easy, even if the rules of syntax were suspended."

"In arithmetic the great majority fail completely in the solution of problems that would be extremely easy for children of the same age who had been trained to think; some of them, however, can manipulate large numbers mechanically. Their training in this subject is evidently intended to develop the muscles and not the intellectual faculties."

"In the case of ninety per cent. of the pupils it would be almost correct to say that reading and spelling are the only subjects taught; yet the majority of these children are unable to spell some common monosyllables which they use a hundred times every day in speaking. In reading, too, there are children in the lower classes who cannot read one word out of three in a paragraph of a book they are supposed to have mastered."

"Most of the pupils in the grammar classes can parse quite fluently—as a parrot might be supposed to do. The first word in a passage is generally a noun, the second an adjective, the third a verb, the fourth again a noun and so on in rotation. To complete the parsing,

they sing after each word the following: "Singly number, nonity case, dikity mood, present tense."

"The pupils have devoured a great many text-books in studying other subjects such as history, geography, geometry etc., but their combined knowledge of all these subjects might be valued at zero, though they can repeat a good deal of verbiage, which at a public examination might be taken as evidence of great learning."

I know from personal observation that the above would be true of some public schools in different parts of Canada where average results might be expected and where Catholics can be no obstacle. I have no doubt that several such schools could be found wherever a commission might happen to investigate. Of course the commissioners would find in many public schools in which good work is being done and every child receiving his due share of attention. But they would also find that the greater efficiency of these schools is due to the voluntary efforts of individuals or to other circumstances entirely independent of the system, or at least of those features of it which are thought to constitute its chief merit.

I think it would be a good thing for all classes of the community if the true state of the public schools were more generally known. Catholics would not then be inclined to overestimate the educational advantages they forego when they establish Catholic schools. Honest Protestants too would find it more difficult to convince themselves that the want of public school enlightenment is a greater evil, when Catholics are concerned, than to be deprived of religious liberty, a blessing we all prize so highly. Even the enemies of religion, with whom secular education is the chief good, might be led to see that the education of the whole population is too great an undertaking for any corporation (even the state) that knows no form of government but despotism. Seeing what voluntary efforts and local enterprise are doing in many places to save the reputation of the public schools, they could not reasonably object to giving the voluntary principle wider scope. Scores of communities could be found quite capable of managing their own educational affairs, thus enabling the state to make more vigorous efforts to educate the thousands now doomed, through its fault, to intellectual starvation. The Catholics of North America, at least, have given ample proof of their ability to unite in so good a cause and to maintain schools at little more than half the cost of those nursed by the state. Through ignorance of the facts (let us hope) other denominations, instead of following so good an example unite to impose an additional tax on those who have relieved them of so much of the national burden.

Your obedient servant,
ESQUIRE.

Regina, Jan. 14, 1896.

THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE.

From the N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

A correspondent sends us the following clipping from a lecture published in the *Cleveland Catholic Universe*, and asks if the statements contained in it are "true Catholic doctrine":

"Christianity rests on the New Testament; the New upon the Old. With the Bible Christianity stands or falls. Consequently the Scriptures have always been the chief object of attack by the enemies of revelation."

1. It is not true that Christianity rests on the New Testament, and therefore, the assertion that it does is not a Catholic doctrine. The very contrary is true; the New Testament rests for its validity, authority, and inspiration on Christianity. It is a historical fact that Christianity, or the Christian Church, was founded—built on a rock—by our Divine Lord, and existed in complete working order about three generations before the New Testament was completed, and some years before any part of it was written. Now, as the Church of Christ existed, teaching and administering means of grace and salvation long before the New Testament came into existence, it follows that it must have rested on something else than that book. That founda-

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