

Speech Delivered by
The Honourable Charles Murphy,

Secretary of State of Canada,

at the presentation of the

Albert Medal of the First Class

TO

Conductor Thomas Reynolds

on St. Patrick's Day, 1910

AT

Massey Hall, Toronto



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Mr. Chairman, Your Honour, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Each recurring anniversary of the birth of Ireland's patron saint brings with it a flood of memories—some joyful, some sad, but all woven as inextricably around the Irish heart as the network of arteries through which it draws its blood, and the delicate machinery of nerves by which it receives and communicates its impulses.

Before alluding to any of the subjects that crowd upon the Irish mind on the 17th of March, let me return thanks to my friends of the Ancient Order of Hibernians for their kindness in inviting me to deliver an address at this inspiring celebration of St. Patrick's Day. Sir, this is not by any means the first time that I have experienced kindness at the hands of the members of your Order. Not to go farther back than the month of August last, allow me to again express my gratitude for the honour you then did me by affording me an opportunity of taking part in the historic ceremonies that marked the unveiling of the monument erected by your Order to the memory of the Irish fever-victims who perished at Grosse Isle. It may not be out of place to recall that, when speaking on the occasion to which I have just referred, I suggested that, in addition to the monument which was then unveiled, another monument should be erected to the memory of the clergy—both Protestant

and Catholic—who sacrificed their own lives while ministering to the fever-stricken exiles from Ireland. That suggestion, I am happy to say, was speedily acted upon; and among the first to show practical interest in the matter was Lord Strathcona, who sent me a most cordial letter approving the project, and inclosing his cheque for \$250. Other subscriptions also have been received, and at an early day I intend to confer with the subscribers and with the National officers of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, so that we may determine the form of the monument and the place of its erection.

Apart from what may be called personal reasons, there are other grounds upon which I, in common with the Irishmen of this continent, feel indebted to the members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Mr. Chairman, I recall with pride that the members of your Order provided the funds for the endowment of the Chair of Gaelic Literature at the Catholic University of Washington. That act alone raised your Order to a foremost place in the ranks of the great benefactors of education. It was a tribute alike to your generosity, and to that yearning for knowledge which centuries of oppression and the savagery of the Penal laws have failed to destroy in the Irish race. And then, Sir, your Order rendered a notable public service when, by united effort, you succeeded in putting an end to the career of that vulgar and offensive caricature known as the stage Irishman. But your efforts in that direction have not yet been completed. You have still to drive out of circulation that equally vulgar and offensive caricature known as the St. Patrick's Day Post Card. In this effort

you will have my hearty co-operation, and I am pleased to be able to make the announcement to-night that, as the result of representations made to him, my colleague, the Postmaster General will take action to debar these vile post cards from the Canadian mails.

The part that you have assigned me in your programme makes it unnecessary for me to deal with the religious associations of the day we celebrate. Now, Sir, it has often occurred to me that a very useful purpose might be served if we made St. Patrick's Day the occasion for our national stock-taking; and a further thought in which I have quite as frequently indulged is that, if, in striking our national balance sheet, we employed a little introspection as well as the inevitable retrospection, the result, while it might not, at first sight, appear to be as flattering to our self-esteem as the indiscriminate and insincere praise to which we are too often treated, yet it would, I am convinced, in the long run prove to be a more correct estimate of the national character and a safer standard by which we ought to be content to be judged by our fellow-citizens of other nationalities. To-night the absence of fulsome eulogy enables us to view Ireland's past in its true perspective and for that reason our task should be all the easier in ascertaining what really does stand to Ireland's credit.

As a first step towards appraising our national assets let us consider what is the state of the account between Ireland and the other countries of the world. There are many nations whose arms, and arts and prosperity stand indebted to the Irish race. There is not one that owes us a grudge for a deed of wanton

offence or aggression. In this connection it is well to remember that even the centuries-old quarrel with England is bounded by English rule within the shores of Ireland. And thus it is that by reason of these immemorial happy relations with other countries, the people of so many lands and of such widely different nationalities join with their Irish friends in doing honour to St. Patrick's Day. To-night celebrations such as this are being held from the poles to the tropics; and although at each of these countless gatherings her sons will sing the glories of mother Ireland, at not one of them will there be heard a single note of exultation at the expense of any other race on the face of the globe. In that respect, Mr. Chairman, Ireland and her children occupy a position that is absolutely unique.

No less unique is their position if we pass even in brief review the history of the race itself.

"If," says a distinguished author, "we confine our judgment of Ireland to those centuries from the coming of St. Patrick to the Danish invasions—centuries during which the other nations of Europe were simply shifting camps of savages—we shall find Ireland the sanctuary and the only uncontaminated fountain of civilization, and a civilization all the more marvelous that it was not derived from Rome or Greece, but grew up of its own native vigour, like a violet in some unvisited dell."

Having paid a tribute to the vitality of the Irish race after ten centuries of unceasing battle for the bare life, the same author proceeds:—

"There is here no taint of intellectual or physical degeneracy . . . The same passion for valour,

beauty, spirituality, learning, hospitality, and all that is adventurous abroad and affectionate at home is still the badge and cognisance of the Celtic race. They are the same passionate, stormy-souled, kindly-hearted, fighting, worshipping, colonizing and lightning-witted race of Ireland's golden prime, with this substantial difference, that instead of being a million of people in scattered pastoral clans, buried in one small Island, they are now twenty-five millions doing the work and the soldiering and the statesmanship and the sacred-shepherding of three continents, and, whether in the Australian mines or in the Canadian woods, bound to that small island by stronger links than if Ireland were a despot that could stretch out a world-wide sceptre to enforce their allegiance. The Celtic race to-day is, in fact, as conspicuous a factor in human society as the Teutonic. It is little less in numbers; it is as distinct in type; it has as rich a range of capacities, sympathies, and ideals of its own; its fine susceptibilities and aerial genius are capable of exerting a potent and saving influence upon an age which seems only too ready to accept this world as a gross feeding-trough at which happiness consists in greedy gorging."

With that graphic picture before our minds, of what is to the credit of the race considered by itself as a world-factor, I think, Sir, we may fittingly pass on to a consideration of what the Irish race has done in Canada.

In those stirring events of early colonial days from which the course and destiny of the Dominion may be traced, the Sons of the Gael bore a conspicuous part.

In Quebec the records of the 17th and 18th centuries furnish proof that men of Irish blood were identified in large numbers with the historical changes that it is now the custom to refer to as the sign-posts of Canadian history. It may not be generally known that the famous Irish Brigade—the heroes of Fontenoy and other European battlefields—were in Canada in the service of France from 1755 to 1760. When peace was proclaimed many of the Irish soldiers settled in Quebec and their names and the names of their descendants are still to be found in the parochial church registers. The work of identifying these names has been rendered difficult by a Gallicised form of spelling that in the course of time crept into the records; but the student who is able to identify in the Sylvains of to-day the O'Sullivans of a former century, will find a veritable Hibernian treasure-house in these old registers.

Entering into the 19th century, we observe that the sphere of Irish influence in Canada has become widened and its imprint on the national life more pronounced. Active in the struggles for Responsible Government in 1837, it was inevitable that Irishmen would be prominent among the leaders of the movement of 1867 that culminated in the federation of the Provinces and the founding of the Canadian Dominion. In point of fact, Sir, the adhesion of large bodies of the people to the new form of Government was directly attributable to the efforts put forth by Irishmen then prominent in Church and State. "Confederation at all hazards and at all reasonable sacrifices," said Archbishop Connolly of Halifax, addressing his fellow-countrymen in the Province of

Nova Scotia. Speaking to the larger audience of all the Provinces in support of Confederation, D'Arcy McGee used these words:—

“We go to the Imperial Government . . . to ask for our fundamental Charter. We hope, by having that Charter that can only be amended by the authority that made it, that we will lay the basis of permanency for our future government . . . The principle itself seems to me to be capable of being so adapted as to promote internal peace and external security, and to call into action a genuine, enduring and heroic patriotism . . . It is a principle capable of inspiring a noble ambition and a most salutary emulation . . . When I can hear our young men say as proudly ‘Our Federation,’ or ‘Our Country’ or ‘Our Kingdom,’ as the young men of other countries do, speaking of their own, then I shall have less apprehension for the result of whatever trials the future may have in store for us.”

The Irishmen whose utterances I have just quoted were but two of a group of our fellow-countrymen who laboured long and zealously in behalf of Confederation. Enjoying as we do the fruits of their work, we may safely anticipate the judgment of history and say that to their courage and foresight, quite as much as to any other cause, is due the wonderful development of this young Dominion.

Since Confederation the measure of our people's progress is the sum of their contribution to the warp and woof of Canadian citizenship. In every walk of life they have assisted in building up the national fabric. The learned professions, the Arts and Applied Sciences, Literature, Journalism, Commerce,

Finance, Politics, Education—all have been adorned by Irishmen and the Sons of Irishmen. The noblest traditions of the Bench have been nobly upheld by men of our race. To the pulpit we have given many of its most brilliant orators, and the churches of all the leading denominations have numbered among their pastors men of Irish birth or descent.

Now, Sir, while it is true that about the time of Confederation and for a few years afterwards, we furnished the bulk of the labour that dug the canals and built the railroads, it is equally true that when the canals and railroads were completed, we had ready a force of superintendents and managers to oversee and operate them. And, Mr. Chairman, let us not forget that when the Canadian Pacific Railway, the first of our great transcontinental railroads, was finished, the Irish race supplied the man under whose guidance the operations of the C.P.R. Company have been so extended on land and water that to-day it is unquestionably the greatest transportation system in the world.

The story of our progress in the older parts of Canada is also the story of our progress in the new Provinces of the West. Last summer it was my good fortune to visit, for the second time, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, and everywhere I found the Celt in evidence. In Manitoba the most extensive wheat-dealer is a millionaire Irishman who began life as a poor boy in Carleton Place. Among the pioneers of Saskatchewan, whose broad acres run into miles of prairie, is a nephew of Thomas Davis, the Irish poet. The most progressive town in Saskatchewan, if not in the whole Canadian

West, is the town of Saskatoon. In that town I was the guest of The Irish Association—a society composed of Irishmen of all creeds and stations in life, and by long odds, the most influential body in the community. Nothing could exceed the good-fellowship that prevailed at the gathering at which I was present; and when I saw not only laymen, but clergymen of several denominations, mingling in the intimacy of brotherly intercourse I reflected that if the Irish poet's appeal for unity had fallen on deaf ears in some parts of Eastern Canada, the Irishmen of Saskatoon had evidently adopted his sentiments as their rule of life just as truly as if each said to the other:

“What matter that at different shrines
We pray unto one God?
What matter that at different times
Our fathers won the sod?
In fortune and in name we're bound
By stronger links than steel;
And neither can be safe nor sound
But in the other's weal.”

If we had more societies like The Irish Association of Saskatoon, Canada would be the stronger and happier for their presence.

But I must not detain you by narrating too many experiences of my western trip. However, I may mention that the most progressive citizen in the Province of Alberta is an Irishman who formerly lived near Oshawa, and who, by his own unaided efforts, has become the leader of the Canadian cattle and meat trade. Then, in one of the richest gold and silver mines of British Columbia, I found the opera-

tions under the management of a gentleman who gained his first mining experience in the County of Cork, and in the city of Vancouver there was pointed out to me the largest wholesale grocery in Canada, owned and conducted by an Irishman who hails from the county which I have the honour to represent in Parliament.

And having thus permeated and vivified every artery of Canada's national life, how shall we maintain our position as a vital force in this Dominion? Rather should I ask, how shall we improve that position, because we must not be content with merely moving forward, as the mass moves, but we must move upwards as well.

Sir, there are many ways in which that can be done, but I know of no means that will so surely enable you to attain the desired end as the means afforded by the schools, the colleges, and the universities of the land. Sacrifice whatever else you will, but do not sacrifice the advantages of education. In this land of equal rights and equal opportunities, see to it that your children acquire the education so cruelly denied their forefathers. Neglect that duty, and you place a handicap on the young from which they will never recover. When I speak of education I do not mean book-learning only, but I mean also the possession of those qualities that go to make up a man. The farmers of the Penal Code deliberately planned to destroy the manliness and self-reliance of the Irish people, and to this day there may occasionally be seen traces of their work in the national character. Because of this, let us be assiduous in cultivating these very qualities of manliness and self-

reliance, for here in Canada, as nowhere else on earth, have we the opportunity to do so. Let us not claim place or office on the score of race or creed alone; but, always insisting that ability must be the essential qualification, let us resist any attempt to make our race or creed a bar to public or private preferment. Let us never make the mistake of standing aloof from the life around us, but rather let us enter into generous rivalry with our neighbours in every movement designed to advance the public good. Let us at all times be of the community as well as in the community. By so acting, we will not merely discharge the duty we owe to Canada, but, in the result, our progress and influence in the Dominion will afford our kinsmen in the dear little island beyond the sea the strongest argument that they can advance in support of their claim for the same measure of self-government as we enjoy. God grant that British statesmanship may solve the vexed problem with which it is now faced, and that before the dawn of another St. Patrick's Day, Ireland may no longer be regarded as alien to England, but, like Canada, may have become England's ally and equal in the globe-encircling partnership of the British Empire.

Mr. Chairman, having done that which your Committee invited me to do, let me deal briefly with a feature of this evening's celebration which you have been kind enough to include in your programme at my request.

As you are all aware, a dreadful railway accident occurred on the 21st of January last, when a C.P.R. train was wrecked at the Spanish River bridge near Webbwood, in this Province. You also recall that

the horrors of the accident were relieved by the glowing reports of the heroism displayed by Conductor Thomas Reynolds on that occasion. When the accident happened, Conductor Reynolds was in the dining-car which plunged down an embankment of 38 feet into the Spanish River. At that moment there were 23 people in the car. All were instantly submerged in 10 feet of water. Freeing himself from the wreckage by which he was pinned down, Conductor Reynolds rose to the top of the water and swam to different parts of the car, assisting the passengers to suspend themselves from hat-racks, chandeliers and other projections. Then diving down in the ice-chilled waters he made his escape through a window which he managed to break with his feet and was fortunate enough to come to the surface of the river in the narrow opening between the top of the car and the edge of the broken ice. It required an absolutely unselfish man with the courage of a lion to take such a desperate chance. Pulling himself upon the car roof, he tore out a ventilator, and through that aperture and another opening that he made in the top of the car, he rescued 18 passengers who, but for his bravery and presence of mind, would have been numbered with the dead. And all this he did while bleeding from his wounds and with the temperature close to 10 degrees below zero! His conduct on that occasion stamped Mr. Reynolds as one of the world's heroes; and when the facts became known to me, I determined to secure for him the highest honour awarded for such deeds of bravery in the British Empire. Application was accordingly made for the Albert Medal of the First Class, and through the

exceptional kindness of His Majesty the King, of Lord Strathcona, of the Right Honourable Winston Churchill, and later, of His Excellency the Governor-General, the medal has arrived in time for this evening's celebration, and will be presented by His Honour Lieutenant-Governor Gibson. As a decoration, it corresponds to the Victoria Cross which, as you know, is bestowed for bravery on the field of battle.

Now, it may be asked why should the medal be presented here? The answer is very simple. Mr. Reynolds is an Irishman; he is of the same creed as Robert Emmett, Thomas Davis, John Mitchell, Isaac Butt, Joe Biggar, Charles Stewart Parnell and Edward Blake, and his Catholic fellow-countrymen felt that they would be discharging some small part of the debt they owe his Irish co-religionists by having Mr. Reynolds as their guest this evening, and by doing him honour in such numbers as it would not be possible to get together in any other hall or place in this Province.

All through the ages deeds of bravery have been an inspiring theme for poets, orators and historians. What school-boy has not felt his blood tingle and his cheek glow as he read of Leonidas and his little band of 300 at the Pass of Thermopylæ; or of 'the dauntless three' who defended the bridge and saved Rome; or of the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava? The bravery of these heroes was evoked by the shock of battle, and their feats were performed amid the sound of trumpet, the roll of drum and the encouraging cries of their fellows-in-arms. Not so with Conductor Reynolds. His heroism was prompted solely by a sense of duty; no encouragement came to him

from the imprisoned and terror-stricken passengers; and his only assistants were the stout heart and the lightning brain that he inherited from his Irish forefathers in far-away County Cavan. I have said that his deed was heroic; but what grateful memories survive it! The heroes of war are vaunted for the destruction they wrought, for the death-roll to their credit. Again, not so with Conductor Reynolds. To his credit there stand the lives of 18 persons who will bless and honour him to their latest breath. In full sympathy with their gratitude, and sharing their admiration, I have now much pleasure in calling upon His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor to make the presentation to Conductor Reynolds.

PRESS REPORT.

At the conclusion of Mr. Murphy's address Lieutenant-Governor Gibson spoke briefly. He expressed his great pleasure at being present, and, after referring in terms of warm praise to Conductor Reynolds, he read the following letter from Earl Crewe:—

Colonial Office,
Downing Street,
March 2, 1910.

Dear Sir,—

I have had much pleasure in forwarding to the Governor-General for presentation to you the Albert Medal of the first-class, which the King has been pleased to confer upon you in recognition of your conspicuous gallantry on the occasion of the disaster on the Canadian Pacific Railway on the 21st of

January. In congratulating you upon being the recipient of such a high distinction, I should like to add an expression of my personal admiration of the bravery and perseverance which you displayed under such terrible circumstances.

I am, yours faithfully,

(Signed) CREWE.

MR. THOMAS REYNOLDS,
North Bay, Ontario.

The reading of the Colonial Secretary's letter was followed by the formal presentation of the Albert Medal by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, with a few appropriate words.

The Royal Canadian Humane Association also awarded a medal to Conductor Reynolds, accompanied by a letter officially notifying him of the award, and these, at the request of Mr. H. P. Dwight, Chairman of the Investigating Committee of the Association, were presented to Conductor Reynolds by the Honourable Charles Murphy. On the humane Association's Medal there was engraved the following inscription: "Awarded to Thomas Reynolds "for presence of mind and heroism in saving many "lives at the Spanish River railway Accident, on the "21st of January, 1910."

On behalf of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Mr. Andrew T. Hennon next presented Conductor Reynolds with a beautiful sterling silver tea service.

In a brief and modest speech, Conductor Reynolds returned thanks for all the tributes paid him, and remarking that he would rather go beneath the ice

once again than face an audience, he called upon Mr. D. M. Brodie, Police Magistrate of Sudbury, and one of the rescued passengers, to do the speaking for him. This Mr. Brodie did, in a most eloquent address.

