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IN MEMORIAM

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James Muredach Walsh





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## IN MEMORIAM

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### JAMES MUREDACH WALSH BORN

In Quebec, Canada, 13th August, 1865, James Muredach Walsh, son of Matthew F. Walsh, of Ottawa, Canada, and of Catherine Connolly, who died when he was 20 months old, and brother of Walter D. Walsh, Kt.C., now of Los Angeles, California. His second name was given in baptism in honor of St. Muredach, the first Bishop of his father's native diocese of Killala, County Mayo, Ireland, in the 5th century, whose Feast is celebrated on the 12th August. When about twelve years old he was Confirmed in the chapel of the Archbishop's Palace in Quebec, by the Most Rev'd George Conroy, Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, in Ireland, who was the first Apostolic Delegate to Canada. Enquiry has satisfied that it was the only occasion on which His Excellency conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation during his sojourn on this continent, and that James enjoyed the unique honor. He had made his First Communion the previous year in the parish of Inverness, in Megantic County, Que., under the direction of the then Pastor, Rev'd John Connolly, now of Ingersoll, Ont.

### DIED.

At Cananea, Sonora, Mexico, on September 13th, 1907, Friday, 3 p.m., James M. Walsh, fortified by all the Sacraments.

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Such notices as the foregoing appear so often in the daily newspapers that unless we are interested in the individual we pay little or no attention to them, but of what transpired between the publication of the above two announcements volumes might be written and read with profit to their soul by many. James Walsh's life was a model one and an example to all.

At a very early age he showed a gentle, kind disposition as well as a generous heart, which won him many friends amongst his playmates, and this was his leading trait until the hour of his death. At all times manly yet modest and unassuming to a degree, forever doing kindness to others, but always without ostentation, at all times having a pleasant greeting and a cheery word of encouragement for his fellow man in trouble or distress, but without any display of assumption.

He early displayed a marked intelligence, and devoting a great deal of his spare time to profitable reading he was soon respected for his store of knowledge on almost any subject worth discussing. When he was thirteen years of age, the Spanish Consul-General at Quebec, Conde Premio-Real, offered valuable prizes for answers to fifteen questions in early Canadian history, which were pronounced extremely difficult. The competition was open to the world for a year, as it involved a great deal of research, at the end of which time the 1st prize was awarded to a physician 40 years of age, and the 2nd prize to little Jimmie Walsh, the boy of 14, and this altogether without extraneous aid from anyone. In early manhood he was extremely popular and for years was Secretary of St. Patrick's Literary Institute of Quebec, yet he found time for manly athletic sport, being for a long time Treasurer of the Quebec Lacrosse Club and Hockey Club, and he also captured the gold medal for first prize highest average for one winter in bowling ten pins. He was also a champion billiard player. Canadian born, the land of his ancestors was ever dear to his heart. While residing in his native city he was a member of the Irish organizations there, including the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and was, the writer understands, a Charter member of the Quebec Division. He was not a total abstainer, but, as in everything, was temperate in his habits. He would take a social drink, and perhaps a second one, but the man who would try to induce him to take a third would have a fight on his hands. He was short in stature but feared no man, for "thrice armed is he whose cause is just." He was the very opposite of quarrelsome, but allowed no one to impose on him. He did not know what fear was, as the writer learned while

in his company during the awful cyclone in St. Louis in 1890, and when the terrible riots raged in Cananea, Mexico, in June, 1906, and men sat up nights fearing attacks from dynamite, he went to bed and slept.

He went to live in Butte, Montana, in 1897, and soon after was elected President of that Branch of the Young Men's Institute. In 1901 he was initiated as a Charter member of Butte Council of Knights of Columbus, and was elected Financial Secretary, which office he held till he left there in May, 1903, removing to Cananea, Mexico; and after remaining in the employ of the C.C.C.Co. a couple of years, on formation of a new Bank in that town he was offered the Assistant Cashiership, which he held at the time of his death.

Soon after reaching that town of 25,000 people he spoke to the writer of the deplorable accommodations for the Catholic population in the form of a church which was nothing but a "shack" with holes in the roof and a mud floor, and remarked "I will get the Knights of Columbus in here and we will build a church." He applied for a charter to the Supreme Knight for a Council at Bisbee, Arizona, the nearest available point in the United States, and secured the applications of the cream of the Catholic population both of Bisbee and Cananea as Charter Members. In March, 1904, Bisbee Council was installed and inside of six months a handsome wooden church was finished and dedicated in Cananea, and before a year expired it was clear of debt. They then proceeded to erect a substantial brick church which when finished will cost \$50,000 U.S. money.

On August 13th, his 42nd birthday, he was taken sick, and one month later September 13th, the eve of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, on Friday at 3 o'clock (sacred hour) he died. One hour before he died a small wooden cross was put up on the top of the front wall of the new church to indicate that the last brick was laid; his work was done! He had accomplished much in a short space.

After knowing him more intimately probably than any living person, the writer can truthfully say that he never knew him to

profane the sacred name of God, to curse or swear; and he not only never told or repeated a vulgar story, but he would not allow anyone to tell one in his presence.

His funeral, on Sunday September 15th, was an event in the history of Cananea. Father Russell said an extra Mass for the Mexicans in order to have the church free for the Americans, including some fifty or sixty from Bisbee, and at noon when his funeral Mass commenced the church was too small to hold the congregation, which was composed of his friends—Catholic and non-Catholic. At the Offertory a non-Catholic friend sang "Lead, Kindly Light," and after the Communion another non-Catholic sang "My Homeland." The large choir included all the musical talent in Cananea. After the Mass, his friend, the Parish Priest, Father Russell, paid him a tribute from his heart. He said in part:

"I have been a Priest for twelve years and have had a cosmopolitan experience. I have seen service and done duty in Asia, Africa, the Philippines, and the Isthmus of Panama. I have seen death in every shape, on the battlefield, in the hospitals, and in the monasteries, but never have I felt as I did on Friday last when I bid our friend James 'Go forth, O Immortal Soul, in the name of the Father who created thee—in the name of Jesus Christ who redeemed thee—and of the Holy Ghost who sanctified thee,' and never did I say these words with the same assurance that this prayer would be heard at once by Almighty God.

"'Jim' Walsh was a good Elk, and I know he was a good Knight of Columbus, because he was a good Catholic, but I will not call him a good fellow. If a 'good fellow' is one who will stand for anything, listen to anything, and go to the limit, then he was not a good fellow. But if a good fellow is one who stood for a principle, and who would not stand for anything that he thought was wrong, who would always extend the hand of good-fellowship to those who needed it, regardless of their creed or their conditions in life, who always had a cheering word and a helping for them, then he was a Good Fellow.

"I have no hesitation in saying that I have lost my best friend in Cananea, and you owe this church to his untiring energy and zeal for the Glory of God."

Then came a scene which none who witnessed it will forget. The aisle being too narrow to carry the coffin by the handles, six of his friends, pall-bearers, bore it aloft, and as they came down the aisle the vast congregation rose and sang, "Nearer my God, to Thee," hundreds of copies of which had been distributed among them by the Reverend Pastor.

These few lines were written originally for "The Columbiad," the official organ of the Knights of Columbus by one who knew him well, as a slight tribute to his sterling worth, not believing that human praise can avail him any, but with the hope that the story of his life and death may be an encouragement to others, particularly as an answer to those who are weak enough to claim that a man cannot, in this material age and generation, live in this world without being "of the world." There will be Saints in all generations as long as God reigns. James Walsh's motto was "Ad ma jorem Dei gloriam." He is survived by his father—who had not seen for over eleven years—and by a brother, Walter, Kt.C., of Los Angeles, Cal.

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"I spoke of thy testimonies. . . . and I was not ashamed."  
—Psalm 118: 46.

"He hath opened his hand to the needy and stretched out his hand to the poor."—Prov. 31: 20.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. . . . for their Works follow them." Apoc. 14: 13.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. Amen!

The afflicted father and brother were the recipients of many expressions of sympathy and efforts at consolation; amongst them was the annexed letter which, in the hope that it may in turn afford comfort to many others similarly afflicted, is here given:

My Dear Friend—

I was very sorry indeed to learn from the paper you sent me of the death of your son in the prime of life. I can imagine what a hard blow it was to you, and if there be any balm in human



sympathy I tender you mine from the bottom of my heart. God's ways are not our ways, and although we may not be able to understand why He leaves the old oak to stand and roots up the saplings, we know that He does all things for the best. You and I have travelled down the valley long enough to put a proper estimate on the value of this world and all it contains. The mold of the graveyard is in the young bride's orange wreath; it stains the richest crown of human ambition, and it is the last reward of human avarice. My dear friend, you and I have more friends, relatives and acquaintances under the green sod than we can count among the living today. And what are they—the dead?—phantoms of memory; and the living, mere passing shadows on the wall. There is no reality this side of the grave. Beyond is substance, permanency, unchangeableness and eternity. The only wisdom in the present life is that which prepares us for our entry into the life of eternity. If we are well prepared for eternity, what matters it when or how we part with time? It must then be a great consolation to you to know that your son entered upon his last journey fortified by all those holy rites which the All-wise and All-loving God has instituted to strengthen the Christian soul in its departure for the eternal shores. You, still beset by the troubles and trials of life, still bearing the brunt of mortality's never-ending fight, can rejoice that one whom you so loved has gone before you to his eternal home, bearing in his hands the victor's palm. My friend, how many are there whose last hours were embittered by the thought that they were leaving behind them sons and daughters whom they loved, but whom they mourned as dead to God and the life to come! Faith illumines all things, even our sorrows. In a few brief years a little mound in God's acre will be our earthly estate, and we, too, shall be joined with the great majority. With God's help, we may hope that that reunion will be one of never-ending joys.

In the meantime nature is nature, and I condole with you in your affliction. May God assist you in your trial, and give eternal rest to your son.

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

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I do not ask my Lord to tell  
Me all the "reason why."

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But can this be the "reason why"  
He calls our own best-loved ones to Him?  
They leave the door ajar that we  
May get a glimpse of joy within.