

THOMAS D'ARCY MCGEE

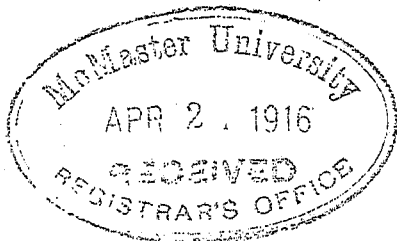
A MAKER OF CANADA

- by -

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MA History



The story goes that when the inhabitants of 'Island McGee' on the North Coast of Ireland were almost annihilated by a force of Covenanters, three McGees escaped with their lives and little else of value. From one of these three, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, Irish-Canadian poet, orator and statesman, claimed direct descent.

In his veins no Royal blood coursed; of titled ancestry he was unable to boast, but a worthier heritage than these was his -- the memory and influence and inspiration of honest, industrious and godly parents.

Thomas D'Arcy McGee was born at Carlingford, County Louth, Ireland, on the 13th of April 1825. He was the fifth child and second son of James McGee and Dorcas Catharine Morgan. The baby boy was christened in honor of his godfather, Thomas D'Arcy, Esq., a family friend who resided in the vicinity of Carlingford. James McGee, whose father had taken part in the ill-advised revolution of 1798 under Lord Edward Fitzgerald, was at the time of D'Arcy's birth an official in the coast-guard service. His wife, Catharine Morgan was the accomplished daughter of a Dublin bookseller, whose connection with the United Irishmen and the troubles of '98 had brought upon him imprisonment and financial ruin.

Bred in the traditions of revolution and reared in an anti-British atmosphere as McGee had been, it is not surprising to find him later on a prominent member of the 'repeal' party in Ireland. Brought up in the Roman Catholic faith, the religion of his ancestors, he was throughout life a consistent advocate and defender of that faith.

McGee always referred to his father as an honest, upright and religious man, and to his mother as a woman of more than ordinary charm and ability. His father's influence was a strong factor in the moulding of his character, yet the impressions that persisted from his tender years were due largely to the influence of his gifted mother. Endowed with a highly aesthetic and affectionate nature she was the type of woman who in all ages has been the progenitor of great men. She taught her children to lisp their infant prayers, instructed them in the rudiments of knowledge and sang to them the thrilling old ballads of Ireland and Scotland. McGee's imaginative Celtic nature drew strong re-enforcements from the poetic environment of his childhood, and without doubt the fires of his later revealed poetic genius were kindled by a coal from off the family altar.

In 1833, the father, James McGee received an appointment in the customs-house at Wexford and the family removed to that historic town where in 1169 at Selskar Abbey the first treaty was signed with the English when the town surrendered to Fitz-Stephen. Here for the first time Thomas D'Arcy attended day school. It was during the first year of his residence at Wexford that he experienced the first and greatest sorrow of his life in the death of his mother. This sad event, occurring when the lad was eight years old, had a lasting effect upon his impressionable mind. Amid the vicissitudes and perplexities of later years the memory of his mother was always an inspiration to his life and an anchor to his soul. Through his poetry and prose there breathes a filial affection almost divine.

Of her he wrote:

"My Mother! at that holy name,
 Within my bosom there's a gush
 Of feeling which no time can tame
 A feeling which for years of fame
 I would not, could not crush!"

This early bereavement and his consequent struggle through childhood against so heavy a handicap had not a little to do with many of the mistakes of his earlier

political career, and much to do with the development of the many robust qualities that characterized him.

During the school days at Wexford he became an active member of a juvenile temperance society established by Father Mathew the famous Irish apostle of Temperance. Here was an opportunity of developing his embryonic talents for oratory and the lad was not slow in availing himself of it. He was the proudest boy in the county when at the age of thirteen, after delivering a speech before a large temperance gathering in Wexford, his preceptor took him by the hand and congratulated him on the success of his first public efforts. As a student, McGee revealed many of those qualities that made him a leader of men later in life. He was industrious and precocious. He read eagerly and with wise discrimination; he made himself familiar with the poetry of his native land, and was a careful student of history -- particularly that of Ireland and America. Even at so early a date as this, he had a very definite idea of the conditions of his fellow-countrymen in the Western world. Possessing a retentive memory and having the ability to assimilate and coordinate what he had learned, he left Wexford with an intellectual equipment that raised him above the average level of his contemporaries.

True, he received only a common school education, but those were days when university doors were not open to everyone. The only institution of higher learning into which he might have entered was Maynooth, a college devoted almost exclusively to the preparation of those entering the priesthood. After some nine years at Wexford he faced the world and the task of making a livelihood.

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Filled with ambition and seeing little opportunity at home for material success, he determined to seek his fortune across the sea. Accompanied by one of his sisters, and followed by a sorrowing father's blessing, he set sail for America on the 8th of April 1842.

"It is a strange coincidence in the life of Mr. McGee" writes Mr. H.J.O'C. Clarke "that although he left Ireland for the United States, he passed through Canada on his way thither, and often in conversation with the writer has he described the deep impression made on his mind by the magnificence and grandeur of the scenery of the River St Lawrence as he sailed up to Quebec, his astonishment on visiting the fortifications of the

Canadian Gibraltar, how favourably he was impressed with the appearance and prosperity of the city of Montreal, how often has he not laughed at the deep regret he felt that so splendid a country should be subject to the hated power of Great Britain, and its population crushed under the 'Iron Heel' of the oppressor of his race -- the boy was dreaming^u. Have any of us sighted for the first time a foreign shore, be it East or West, without finding our first impression one of surprise that there too the earth was beautiful as at home and that the general features of the new land were after all not as strange as we had pictured them in imagination.

From Montreal, McGee and his sister proceeded to Providence, Rhode Island, where the welcome of their mother's only sister was awaiting them. After a brief visit with his aunt, McGee set out to seek his fortune and chose Boston as the most promising city wherein he might succeed. Just at that time the movement for a repeal of the Irish union with England was uppermost in the minds of the Irish-Americans in Boston and it received not a little encouragement and support from the leading public men of the day. It was the latter part of June 1842, a few days before the annual Fourth of July celebration, that McGee arrived in Boston.

"The glorious Fourth, in Boston, burst on the mind of the young enthusiast with all its grandeur of music, firing of guns, and noisy display, and as he stood and heard the 'orator' of the day deliver his fixed speech, after the reading of the Declaration of Independence before the assembled multitude gathered in front of Faneuil Hall, he was so carried away by the glowing descriptions of the freedom and equality secured to the down-trodden of the world by the constitution of the United States that after the speaker had concluded, the boy orator mounted on the front seat of a cart and poured forth such a stream of fervid oratory and honeyed eloquence as produced a marked effect on the great multitude. For over half an hour the sea of upturned faces listened to the youth and drank in the soul-stirring words as they fell from his lips; the applause which greeted him was most enthusiastic, and he who stood in that vast multitude a short time before, a total stranger, unknown and friendless, at the close of his first effort on American soil found himself surrounded by ten thousand friends. 'Who is he?' was the question asked from one to another, but none could tell. 'Oh!' said one in the crowd, 'he is a little curly headed Paddy!'. 'I wish to God then' replied another, 'that such little

curly headed Paddies as that would come to us by whole ship loads; any country may feel proud of that youth'". The man who last spoke was General B. Butler, and he himself related the circumstances above mentioned to the brother of that little curly headed Paddy, Col. James McGee, when they met later, on the field, during the American Civil War. When we remember that the boy was but seventeen years of age and that he was addressing a crowd composed chiefly of emotional young Irishmen we may safely conclude that the speech made up in its appeal to the emotion what it lacked in finish of phrase and depth of thought. To what extent his oration served the purposes of the celebration is an open question, but there is no doubt that it served the purposes of the orator in making friends for him and lifting him from obscurity to prominence.

A day or two later when he casually entered the bookshop of the Boston PILOT, he was recognized by the proprietor, Mr. Patrick Donohoe, as the young orator of Independence Day, and after a short conversation was offered a position on the staff of the PILOT. What could have been more to McGee's taste than employment on the PILOT, which was then and for many years afterwards the chief exponent of Irish Roman Catholic opinion in New England.

He readily accepted the offer and during the succeeding two years he contributed to its columns numerous articles and poems, chiefly on the subject nearest his heart -- Irish liberty. So efficiently did McGee perform the tasks committed to him that at the end of two years he became editor-in-chief of the paper.

The great famine of 1847 in Ireland was the beginning of that migration of the Irish people to the North American Continent, which during succeeding years assumed such alarming proportions as to cause many misgivings on the part of statesmen in the Western world, particularly so in the United States.

The newcomers were largely the ignorant superstitious class who became the hewers of wood and drawers of water in their new found home. They were welcome because they furnished the country with cheap labor; they were unwelcome because they brought in their train new social problems. They herded together in the squalid districts of the larger cities. They were preyed upon by their unscrupulous leaders whose blatant energy more than their merit gave them authority. These turbulent people, trained in conspiracy and rebellion, contributed much to the degradation of American politics and were a serious menace to American institutions.

Following the year 1800, when the union between England and Ireland was established, one of the outstanding public questions among the Irish people was that commonly known as the Repeal Movement. The union denied to Ireland that freedom she required for her national development. It placed heavy restrictions upon her trade, and laid irksome disabilities upon her religious life. In McGee's day, the resentment and opposition felt by this unfortunate people, assumed concrete form and gathered strength under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell. It is not at all strange that when many of the members of the repeal party became citizens of the United States, they should endeavour to carry on their agitation in their new home. Thus a purely Irish domestic problem forced itself upon the attention of the American public. The situation was one that could not safely be ignored and there was organized amongst the native born Americans, a movement to resist the pretensions and ambitions of their Irish fellow citizens. It was a secret order whose members when questioned by outsiders as to their principles and methods answered 'we know nothing illegal or disloyal'. This was the so called Know-nothing Movement, prominent in American politics at that time.

If these times were critical in the history of America they were doubly so in the history of the Irish race there. McGee was one of the few defenders the Irish had in the country. In the columns of the 'pilot' and on the public platform he launched a most effective campaign denouncing in scathing terms the know-nothing party and advocating very forcefully the repeal movement. With such conspicuous ability did he defend and uphold the rights of his own people both in America and in Ireland, that he attracted the attention of the great Liberator, O'Connell himself, who referred to McGee's editorials as "the inspired writings of a young exiled Irish boy in America".

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As a result of the prominence thus attained and the enviable reputation as a journalist which he possessed, McGee was offered the editorship of the Dublin FREEMAN'S JOURNAL, that widely-circulated organ of O'Connell's party of moderation, known as the National Party or Old Ireland. At the age of twenty, after a sojourn of three years in the United States, McGee returned to his native land. There seems, however,

to have been some misunderstanding in regard to his editorial appointment on the FREEMAN'S JOURNAL and we find him filling the office of parliamentary correspondent in London for that paper. The editorial policy prescribed by the management was, however, altogether too moderate for one so radical as McGee. The slogan of the Old Ireland party, of which O'Connell was the guiding spirit with the JOURNAL as his mouthpiece, was 'moral force'.

The impetuous nature of McGee unfortunately led him to cast in his lot with the Young Ireland party, whose slogan was 'physical force' and whose official organ was the Dublin NATION. He soon found his position with the FREEMAN'S JOURNAL anomalous, and associated himself unreservedly with the NATION.

He was but a youth of twenty and found kindred spirits among the leaders of the party composed chiefly, as one writer says, "of briefless but brilliant young barristers, fiery journalists and hot headed students". Their numbers included Charles Gavin Duffy, Thomas Davis, John Dillon, Thomas Francis Meagher and Smith O'Brien. Through the columns of the NATION McGee wrote, as did the others, without restraint on the repeal question, and the paper became nothing more nor less than a

disseminator of sedition. Throughout McGee's entire career one characteristic stood out prominently -- the thoroughness with which he carried through anything he undertook. His entrance into the ranks of Young Ireland was no exception to this rule. During the intrigue and conflict of '48 no member of the party was more deeply involved than he.

In 1847, at the age of twenty two, McGee was married to Mary Theresa Caffry, a warm hearted Irish lass of whom he was tenderly fond. Throughout the succeeding years, despite their turbulence, sorrow and anxiety, his home life provided for him the peace and content and love that the world so often denied him, and it is a question whether he could have endured the one if he had not enjoyed the other.

The activities of the NATION and its galaxy of brilliant writers and poets emboldened Young Ireland to leave O'Connell's National Party. The revolution in France and the general overthrow of Continental monarchs in 1848 spurred on Young Ireland to the point of recklessness. At one of their meetings they passed a resolution of felicitation to the provisional French Government. As part of their plan for Irish freedom, McGee was sent

on a secret mission to Scotland. His instructions were, to stir up the Irish of Glasgow and incite them to seize two or three Clyde steamers for use on the coast of Sligo. The errand proved abortive, and the ill-starred mission known as the 'Dumbarton Affair', was for years afterwards a two-edged sword in the hands of McGee's bitter and unscrupulous enemies, who charged him with having betrayed his trust. The Right Hon. Sir Charles Gavin Duffy, in his history entitled "Young Ireland", writes thus of McGee:

"To forty political prisoners in Newgate, when the world seemed shut out to me forever, I esteemed him as I do to-day. I said, 'if we were about to begin our work anew, I would rather have his help than any man's of all our Confederates'. I said, 'he could do more things like a master than the best amongst us; that he had been sent at the last hour, on a perilous mission, and performed it not only with unflinching courage, but with a success which had no parallel in that era; and above all that he has been systematically blackened by the Jacobins to an extent that would have blackened a saint of God. Since he has been in America, I have watched his career, and one thing it has never wanted -- a fixed devotion to Irish interests'".

Also Thomas Francis Meagher bears testimony to the courage, enthusiasm, tact and energy of McGee. There is not a scintilla of evidence to show that he was in any respect a traitor to his cause. However great and numerous were his failings, treachery and unfaithfulness are not numbered among them.

While McGee was in Scotland, on motion of Thomas Francis Meagher at one of the Confederate meetings, war was declared and the fiasco known as the insurrection of Smith O'Brien broke out. A perilous time it was for Britain, but in her characteristic way she did not seem to realize it! She hurried to the front several policemen and the formidable Confederacy was defeated in a cabbage garden near Ballingarry! A few heads were battered. The rebellion was quelled. Smith O'Brien was arrested, tried on a charge of high treason, convicted and sentenced to death. Other leaders of the Confederacy were arrested and imprisoned and along with O'Brien, whose sentence had been commuted, were transported to Australia. None of these prisoners, however, served long terms, it being the desire of the Government simply to make an example of them. As soon as this end was served they were granted their liberty.

Meanwhile word reached McGee in Glasgow that the insurrection which had broken out in Ireland had signally failed; that some of the leaders had been arrested and a reward for the apprehension of himself and others had been offered. In various disguises he evaded the police and after a little delay, crossed over to the north of Ireland and found shelter in the home of Dr. Maginn, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Derry. He realized that it would be impossible for him to remain in the British Isles without arrest, so decided to sail for the 'Land of Liberty'. It was a time of grave anxiety for McGee, for his devoted wife awaited his return to their quiet home in a suburb of Dublin. He could not leave for America without bidding her farewell nor could he accomplish this object without endangering his liberty. He contrived to send her word of his plans and arranged for her to visit him in his place of concealment. It was a sad parting, made all the more so by the fact that the young wife was soon to become a mother. The unspeakable heart-ache of such a parting is known only to those who have been called upon to pass through it. God alone knows if the parting kiss shall be the last one, and God only can comfort the almost widowed heart.

Yet with true and patriotic devotion she bade him God-speed and he set sail for America in the guise of a priest.

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He arrived in Philadelphia on the 10th of October 1848, and proceeded to New York, where he set himself to the task of providing for life's necessities. Naturally he turned to journalism. Sixteen days after his arrival he had organized and commenced the publication of the New York NATION. McGee was no stranger to the Irish in America. He was well remembered as the forceful editor of the Boston PILOT and favourably known as one of the late editors of the Dublin NATION. In addition to the personal prestige which he enjoyed, his paper supplied a real want amongst the Irish-American constituency, and from the outset it met with an enthusiastic reception. Had McGee's better judgment triumphed over his impetuous nature, the New York NATION might have steered successfully around many a rock and shoal. Chagrin over the ignominious defeat of Young Ireland rankled in his breast, and in his bitter editorials in the NATION he threw the blame for failure

upon the Roman Catholic clergy. It is undoubtedly true that the clergy systematically opposed the movement for they realized from the beginning that it was doomed to failure.

McGee's denunciation of the hierarchy was so persistent that the venerable Archbishop Hughes of New York took up the defense and a bitter controversy ensued.

His Lordship presented the facts of the case with such merciless logic that McGee's contentions were shown to be ~~without~~ ground, and his qualifications for leadership began to be questioned by the Irish-American public. Had he at the time humbly acknowledged defeat and tendered through the Archbishop an apology to those he had maligned, the whole incident would doubtless have been forgotten. But McGee, always sure of himself and confident in his own judgment and in the integrity of his conclusions, did neither. This attitude cost him dearly -- his prestige, his influence and ultimately his paper, for the circulation of the NATION dwindled until he was forced to abandon the property.

Later on, both in private and in public, McGee frankly acknowledged his error in this controversy and expressed the keenest regret that he had allowed his proximity to the rebellion to distort his vision.

In the meantime McGee had been joined by his wife and infant daughter Mary. The outlook ahead of them was anything but bright. But difficulties could not daunt his ardent spirit, and he set himself to the task of providing for his loved ones. In Boston, in 1850 at the earnest solicitation of some of his former friends, he launched a new publication, the AMERICAN CELT. He still regarded himself as a leader in the revolutionary party, and for the first two years of its career the columns of the CELT were dominated by practically the same anti-British tone as those of the NATION had been. But the foundations of his mental attitude were undergoing reconstruction. They had been rudely shaken through the controversy with Bishop Hughes and he came to look upon Irish questions with a more mature judgment. In writing of Mr. McGee and the CELT at this time, Mrs. Sadlier says: "There came a time when the great strong mind and far-seeing intellect of its editor began to soar above the clouds of passion and prejudice into the region of eternal truth. The cant of faction, the fiery denunciation that after all amounted to nothing, he began to see in their true colours; and with his whole heart he then and ever after aspired to elevate the Irish people, not by impracticable Utopian schemes

of revolution, but by teaching them to make the best of the hard fate, that made them the subjects of a foreign power differing from them in race and religion; to cultivate among them the arts of peace, and to raise themselves by ways of peaceful industry and increasing enlightenment to the level even of the more prosperous sister island".

McGee was a conspicuous figure on the lecture platform. He numbered amongst his intimate acquaintances many of the cultured and intellectual men of the day.

It would be strange indeed if a nature so impressionable as his should not respond to an atmosphere so congenial and so wholesome as that which surrounded him.

And he did. The impetuous youth,-- with his instinctive love of right and of liberty and his singular disregard for the methods by which either could be secured,--

this young man began to look at life through other eyes.

He gained a new sense of proportion, and was able to view the facts of life in a more correct perspective.

He found that there were people born outside the Emerald Isle who were just, and wise and good; that the troubles of his native land, which had practically absorbed all his attention up to this time, were not as important to others as to himself. Thus by a process partly

unconscious and partly purposed, he became adjusted to the new relations in which he found himself, and equipped for the great tasks to which later he would be called to lay his hand. In the development of the mental life, stages such as this come. It is the mark of a great mind that it recognizes the changes, welcomes them and prepares for all the other adjustments that follow in its train. The evidence of such a mental change in McGee is found in a letter addressed to his friend, Thomas Francis Meagher, and published in the CELT in August 1852, in which he frankly unfolds the process by which the change in his attitude towards revolution had been wrought. After exhorting his friend at some length to judge Ireland's troubles according to the standards of Christianity, he goes on to say: "Permit me as one who has been over the ground of this enquiry, to tell you what discoveries I made upon it. This I will do as candidly and plainly as if I were dictating a last will and testament, for in this case all plainness is demanded. I discovered at the very outset of the enquiry, my own ignorance. This I discovered in a way which, I trust in God, you will never have to travel -- by controversy and bitterness, and sorrow for lost time and wasted

opportunities. Had we studied principles in Ireland as devoutly as we did an ideal nationality, I might not now be labouring double tides to recover a confidence which my own fault forfeited. But I will say it, for it is necessary to be said, that in Ireland the study of principles is at the lowest ebb. Our literature has been English, that is, Protestant; our politics have been French, or implicit following of O'Connell; and under all this rubbish, the half-forgotten catechism was the only Christian element in our mental constitution. Since Burke died, politics ceased to be a science in our island and in England. The cruel political economy of Adam Smith never had disciples among us; the eloquence of Shiel is not bottomed upon any principle; the ipse dixit of O'Connell could be no substitute to ardent and awakened intellect, for the satisfying fullness of a Balme or a Brownson.....

Having discovered by close self-examination that the reading chiefly of modern books, English and French, gave very superficial and false views of political science, I cheerfully said to myself, 'My friend, you are on the wrong track. You think you know something of human affairs, but you do not. You are ignorant of the primary principles that govern and must govern the

world. You can put sentences together but what does that avail you, when perhaps those sentences are but the husks and pods of poisonous seeds? Beware! Look to it! You have a soul! What will all the fame of talents avail you if you lose that?' Thus I reasoned with myself, and then setting my cherished opinions before me one by one, I tried, judged, and capitally executed every one save and except those which I found to be compatible with the following doctrines:

1. That there is a Christendom.
2. That this Christendom exists by and for the Catholic church.
3. That there is, in our own age, one of the most dangerous and general conspiracies against Christendom that this world has yet seen.
4. That this conspiracy is aided, abetted, and tolerated by many because of its stolen watchword -- liberty.
5. That it is the highest duty of a Catholic man to go over cheerfully, heartily and at once, to the side of Christendom -- to the Catholic side, and to resist, with all his might, the conspirators who, under the stolen name of liberty, make war upon all Christian institutions".

For some years McGee continued to publish the AMERICAN CELT in Boston. It was during this time that he won for himself

a high place among the eminent journalists of his day. Later, at the urgent request of Bishop Timon of that city, Buffalo became the headquarters of the paper. After a brief stay there it was removed to New York, where for five years it held the first place in the Irish-American press. During the period between 1852 and 1857, the AMERICAN CELT was regarded by friend and foe as the great champion and advocate of the Irish race in America, and was considered the foremost authority on all matters affecting Irish interests.

While he was engaged in literary work in New York, Mr. McGee made the acquaintance of many Canadians. His paper had a considerable circulation in Canada and his compatriots there were doubtless attracted by the forceful personality behind it. It became his habit to spend some of his holidays in Canada. One vacation was spent on the shores of lake Huron, another in the solitudes of the Ottawa, and another among Arcadian scenes of the maritime provinces. These visits served a greater purpose than merely affording his weary body a rest; they enabled him to acquire at first hand a definite knowledge of Canada, her people and her institutions. The information thus received had a far-reaching effect on McGee. He found that

true freedom could exist under the British crown, and instead of being 'crushed under the iron heel of the oppressor of his race', ^{the Canadian} enjoyed privileges to an extent not known even to his cousin and neighbour in the great land of liberty to the south. He discovered a fact of even greater moment from his standpoint -- he had revealed to him a true solution of Ireland's political troubles.

Toward the American political questions of the day the CELT was strictly independent and the Irish-American citizens were cautioned not to trust too implicitly in either political party. While its steadfast adherence to principle, its lofty disregard of party interests and party intrigue won for it a large place in, and enabled it to wield a tremendous influence throughout the Irish-American constituency; it did not secure for it the material support it required. And its already over-burdened editor had not a little difficulty in providing for its maintainance. A party organ has its periods of both feasting and fasting -- as the party is 'in' or 'out', the products or promise of the former sustaining it during the latter mentioned period. The independent journal experiences usually a continuous fast, with no prospects of better days to brighten

its dark ones. The CELT was no exception to this rule.

Through the columns of the CELT McGee had strongly and consistently advocated a policy of colonization on the part of the Irish-Americans rather than their segregation in the larger cities of the east. To further this end he organized the 'Buffalo Convention', a meeting of One Hundred prominent Irishmen, lay and clerical, drawn from both the United States and Canada.

The convention accomplished in some measure its object, but of far greater moment to McGee was the fact that it marked a turning point in his career. It was at the Buffalo Convention that he was urged by some of his Canadian friends to take up his abode in Montreal, where the Irish-Catholic community were sorely in need of a leader. His friends' contention that in Canada his ability and talents would find greater scope and be more appreciated than in New York, appealed strongly to him. In 1857 he sold out his interest in the AMERICAN CELT, moved to Montreal, and as his custom was on entering a new city, he established a newspaper called the NEW ERA. Within a year from the inception of this enterprise, McGee, after a keen contest, became member of the Canadian parliament for Montreal West. His election was due to the united efforts of the Irish-Catholics of Montreal.

The man and the occasion met. McGee's day had dawned. His entrance into Canadian political life synchronized with the beginnings of that movement that resulted in the Canadian Confederation. It was to be a day of terrible struggle and high achievement. But the place he holds in Canadian history is due to the splendid abilities he brought to the tasks assigned to him and to the magnificence of his performance of them.

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The political situation in Canada during the decade preceeding McGee's advent into the country must be understood if his life work receives the appreciation that it merits. The two provinces now known as Ontario and Quebec, but then designated Upper and Lower Canada, respectively, comprised the Canada of that day. To this portion of her North American domains Britain had granted a measure of responsible government in 1842. Prior to 1858 its parliament had no fixed place of abode but was held in Kingston, Montreal, Quebec and Toronto, as changing circumstances appeared to direct. Finally Ottawa was chosen as the capital. The powers granted the colony were limited. The mother country had not

learned how far she could trust her children when they sought new homes in the lands beyond the seas, and she was not disposed to take too great chances with them. Between those few hard won rights that the Canadians of '42 possessed, and those full orbed powers that now are their glory after seventy five years, is a long process of development.

Lower Canada was French and Roman Catholic, Upper Canada British and Protestant. The inevitable racial and religious differences that existed rendered the task of government by no means an easy one. Their parliament dealt almost exclusively with local problems as it had no jurisdiction over affairs national or international. Each province was split up into different parties. Upper Canada had its liberals, conservatives, Tories and radicals, while Lower Canada had liberals, conservatives and rouge or radicals. Nominally the party in power was either liberal or conservative, but no administration could carry on the affairs of government without the cooperation of the representatives of these other parties. Not seldom the liberal interests in Upper Canada were different from the liberal interests in the sister province, with the result that the administration had to surrender the reins of power.

Not until later on when John A. Macdonald organized 'all those who desired to be counted progressive Conservatives' into the Liberal-Conservative party, was this very serious nuisance, occasioned by the existence of so many political parties, in a measure abated. Meantime strife and misunderstanding and jealousy and perhaps hate were being begotten in the hearts of the peoples of the two provinces.

The problems of the day were many and vexatious but four stood out very prominently. One question much in evidence was that of indemnifying those whose property had been destroyed during the Rebellion of 1837. None had suffered more than the rebels themselves yet the government could scarcely justify its action if it treated those who had rebelled against the Crown in the same manner as it did those who remained loyal to it. Finally a Commission was charged with the duty of adjusting these losses and they performed their task in a manner that ultimately led to the settlement of the problem, although at the time it resulted in rioting and the burning of the Parliament buildings in Montreal. The demand was being made for the secularization of those lands, known as the Clergy Reserves, that had been set aside for religious purposes by the Crown.

Successive administrations dealt with the question only to shelve it. After years of agitation these lands were taken over by the Government and the revenues derived from them devoted to the establishment and aid of common schools in both Provinces.

In Lower Canada Seigniorial Tenure, or the Feudalism of France, had long existed to the detriment of the Province. Not until 1859 was it finally abolished and the people given the freedom to own lands that in a new country they had a right to expect.

From the beginning of the Union, and as a condition of it, each Province sent the same number of representatives to Parliament. As the population in Upper Canada increased until it greatly exceeded that in Lower Canada, this condition was felt to be an injustice. George Brown was the leading advocate of representation by population as a true solution of the difficulty, but his proposals were rejected on the ground that their acceptance would constitute a breach of contract between the two Provinces.

The fiscal affairs of the country remained, as has been indicated, in the hands of the Home Government. It was not to be expected that the Colonial Secretary at London, even when he acted on the advice of the Governor-General,

an exterior of ice, were the two outstanding personalities of the period. Though for a short time they served in the same administration they were all the while bitter enemies. Their hostility was not the product of party zeal, but of the possession of mutually antagonistic views of fundamentals. The contribution these men made to the Canada-to-be, was very great. During the time that the annexation agitation was on, Macdonald offset the cry by organizing the British American League, the object of which was the federation of the British North American Provinces under the British flag.

Canada was coming to her own. Her people had but a dim consciousness of the great destiny that was hers. They found themselves faced by great problems some of them affecting their material and moral well being. As they sought for the solution of these problems, they found them enwrapped with the problems of Canada herself. They could meet their private needs only as their country prospered. They set themselves to secure that prosperity. Down one path, to the exclusion of all others open before them, lay Canada's destiny. They tried each path, and by a process of elimination arrived at the true one. That path led not to independence,

and not to annexation but to a Confederation of the British Provinces under the British Crown.

Following the retirement from public life of Col. Tache, John A. Macdonald became premier of Canada on the 26th of November 1857, the year in which McGee settled in Canada. McGee, the representative of the Irish-Catholics of Quebec entered Parliament at the same election as Oliver Mowat, the representative of the Ultra-Protestantism of Ontario. The main issues of the election of 1857 were Representation by Population and Separate Schools, with the result that the Government support was weakened in Upper Canada and strengthened in Lower Canada. True to the traditions of his race, McGee was in opposition to the ascendent party and it was not unnatural that he should identify himself with the Rouge party or Lower Canadian Radicals in opposition to the newly formed Cartier-Macdonald administration, although as he soon found, he had little really in common with the Rouge party. During the first session he kept in the background but he studied Canadian affairs carefully and was heard in debate sufficiently often to bring himself into prominence.

His grasp of the one vital problem of the day is well shown in the concluding paragraph of a broadsheet

addressed by him to the Catholic Public -- more especially the Irish-Catholics of Western Canada, dated, Toronto June 12th, 1858. It reads: "Our politics resemble a good deal what surgeons call a compound fracture.

The bones of a great State were set in 1841 but are not yet well knit. Some soreness and swelling remains, and the most patriotic vigilance must be exercised to prevent mortification setting in. I do not believe a dissolution of the Union to be the real remedy.

And I do not believe that under our system, and on the American Continent numbers can be steadily ignored, as the prime basis of representation. A revision of our whole constitutional system cannot be far off and while I would resist and have already voted against an unequal representation under the present Union Act, I am quite ready to admit that in any new arrangement the representation, in the popular branch at all events, must be proportioned to population. Abundant constitutional safeguards for the rights of Lower Canada -- securing if need be under a federal pact the autonomy of Lower Canada -- can be found; and my humble adhesion to any such arrangement, would mainly depend on the condition of its being sanctioned by the majority of the people of Lower Canada. A change I believe must come, and I do not anticipate from it, those frightful

consequences which fill the imagination of certain political prophets. I would rather expect that by rendering the French and Irish more necessary to each other and the British more just to both, it would on the contrary, tend to hasten the advent of a genuine Canadian Nationality, co-extensive with the country and enduring as its hills".

His activities in the House, however, while he was in opposition were not always characterized by this statesmanlike tone. Referring to this period, Mr. Fennings Taylor writes: "It was observed that he was a relentless quiz, an adroit master of satire and the most active of partisan sharpshooters. Many severe, some ridiculous and not a few savage things were said by him. Thus from his affluent treasure of caustic and bitter irony he contributed not a little to the personal and parliamentary embarrassment of those times. Many of the speeches of that period we would rather forget than remember. Some were not complimentary to the body to which they were addressed and some were not creditable to the person by whom they were delivered. It is true that such speeches secured crowded galleries for they were sure to be either breezy or ticklish, gusty with rage or grinning with jests. They were

therefore the raw materials out of which mirth is manufactured and consequently they ruffled tempers that were remarkable for placidity and provoked irrepressible laughter in men who were regarded as too grave to be jocose. Of course, they were little calculated to elicit truth or promote order, or attract respect to the speaker. Mr. McGee appeared chiefly to occupy himself in saying unpleasant and severe things; in irritating the smoothest natures and in brushing everybody's hair the wrong way." His lack of sympathy with many of the plans of his party may account in some measure for his seeming lack of seriousness during the first session or two of his parliamentary career. But McGee was not a buffoon. His immaturity gave place to a graver spirit and he gradually learned a proper regard for the amenities that govern so important an assembly as was the Canadian Parliament. As his knowledge of Canadian problems and needs increased, he brought to their consideration a quality of mind that was more in accord with their importance. He showed that when a great occasion arose he could rise to its level.

During this time McGee was writing his 'History of Ireland' published in two volumes in New York, in 1861. Writing to

the late Senator O'Donohoe on January 10th, 1859, he says: "I arrest my pen in the midst of the 9th Century, when our ancestors were dealing with the Danes, to descend into things present, and acknowledge what pleasure your note of Saturday gave me. Though very busy to get a certain bulk of MSS. in store, before returning to Toronto, I watched your local politics with eagerness and hail the result with sincere satisfaction". At the same time he was studying law, and in 1861 was called to the bar of Lower Canada, although he never seriously devoted himself to the practice of the legal profession. We can gather, however, from these activities, some idea of the untiring energy and industry of the man.

In a speech delivered at the Reform dinner given for the Hon. Michael H. Foley, at Stratford, on the evening of August 8th, 1861, Mr. McGee paid the following tribute to the Hon. George Brown: "I cannot tell you how deeply I have been personally shocked by the state of public feeling, by the exercise of public judgment or whim or prejudice or any other influence which could prefer a Crawford to a Brown, and a Cartier to a Dorion. Now that he is, I trust, but temporarily retired from the arena, I will say of Mr. Brown that I never knew a

harder worker in the public service -- that I never knew a speculator or a speculator to whom his name was not a terror -- that by his stern guardianship of the public expenditure, if on no other grounds, he is entitled to the eternal gratitude of the whole people of Canada, out of whom the means to liquidate that expenditure must come by the process of taxation.

I am told that in the region of Toronto and Kingston I have estranged some who might have been my friends by my constant and unvarying testimony on this point; But I say to you gentlemen, that what I did, doing it from a sense of public duty, I can never wish undone, and that, rather than abandon my own honestly and not hastily formed convictions, I cheerfully bow to the penalty which it seems must attend a truly independent course of conduct at least when it has not the gift of patronage to atone for the stubbornness of self-reliance."

McGee continued his opposition to the Cartier-Macdonald Ministry until the downfall of that Government in May, 1862. Amid the conflicting interests and opinions of Catholic and Protestant, Upper and Lower Canadian, French and English, Scotch and Irish, confusion worse confounded reigned. Neither Government or Opposition could speak with one voice or adopt any set principles

to govern their political conduct. The French-Canadian majority alone made it possible for the Cartier-Macdonald administration to continue in power.

When in 1862, owing to a possibility of war with the United States over the Trent Affair, the Government brought in a bill to provide for the strengthening of the militia, it was defeated through the defection of the French-Canadian supporters of the Ministry, and the Government resigned.

Hon. Michael H. Foley was at the time leader of the Opposition but Lord Monck the new Governor-General called upon John Sandfield Macdonald to form a Ministry. This was no easy task as Sandfield Macdonald could scarcely be said to fairly represent the Upper Canadian sentiment, he being a strong opponent of representation by population. He accomplished the task, however, through the help of the French-Canadian Radicals under the leadership of Mr. Louis Sicotte. On the 24th of May, 1862, the Macdonald-Sicotte administration was sworn in as follows:

The Hon. J.S. Macdonald, Attorney General, Upper Canada.

Prime Minister.

The Hon. Louis V. Sicotte, Attorney General, Lower Canada.

The Hon. James Morris, Receiver General.

The Hon. A.A.Dorion, Provincial Secretary.
The Hon. M.H.Foley, Postmaster General.
The Hon. W. McDougall, Commissioner of Crown Lands.
The Hon. W.P.Howland, Minister of Finance.
The Hon. J.V.Tessier, Commissioner of Public Works.
The Hon. T.D.McGee, President of the Executive Council.
The Hon. F.Evanturel, Minister of Agriculture.
The Hon. A.Wilson, Solicitor General, Upper Canada.
The Hon. J.J.C.Abbott, Solicitor General, Lower Canada.
In this administration McGee held the office of President of the Executive Council until the re-arrangement of the Cabinet in May 1863. Upon the resignation of the Hon. A.A.Dorion, Mr. McGee also filled the office of Provincial Secretary for a short time.

This Government was not popular with the Upper Canadian Reformers and was strongly opposed by George Brown. On May 8th 1863, a want of confidence motion carried by a majority of five. Largely to meet the wishes of Upper Canada, Sandfield Macdonald found it necessary to re-arrange his Cabinet. McGee, the leading representative of the Irish-Catholics, should in all justice have been retained as a member of the Reform Cabinet. In the revision of the Cabinet, however, which took place on May 12th, 1863, his name was left off the list, to the

great surprise of everyone. The following extract from a letter written on this subject to one of his most intimate friends, the late Senator O'Donohoe, shows the situation in a clearer light from McGee's standpoint.

Montreal, May 16th, 1863.

My Dear John:

After a year's self-denial in office, where I had the name without the reality of power, I find myself personally relieved by quitting a false position -- into which I had fallen for want of accurate knowledge of some of my confreres -- and from which there was no escape but resignation. But the way in which the thing was brought about and the situation which has followed are equally extraordinary.

If you have seen Foley on his way home, he has probably given you a brief of the whole transaction. Even so, I shall repeat in substance the story.

Sandfield elated beyond bounds at what he called 'his Upper Canada majority' on the 6th day of May treated his own section of the Cabinet with a high hand, and ours with the most offensive disrespect. We, (the L. Canadians), were in a minority; we had not the confidence of our section; he had of his; he was Premier; he was not bound to give us -- from Sicotte down --

any explanations of his out of door negotiations.

If he wanted us he would keep us, if not, not.

I, being one of those in our section, and Foley in his, who resisted and resented this dour dogmatism -- we were specially sacrificed to make an example; and the details of the mode in which this was done, was still more offensive than the spirit -- if that were possible.

What gave me additional offence was, that my old colleagues Derion and Holton, were parties to this sort of outer cabinet arrangement, which existed in Quebec from Thursday to Thursday, and was often held under the same roof where I was, without ever once letting me know, their position or agency in the intrigue.

Just at the last moment, eve yesterday, they called on me, as I was packing up, with a view to soothe my wounded sense of fairness and fellowship, but I told them, frankly, that 'we were quits' -- so here I am, an 'independent candidate'.

I had almost forgotten to add that 'any office' I might name was hinted at -- but I instantly clapped the extinguisher on such an overture in such circumstances....."

Sandfield Macdonald's action in ignoring McGee's claim to a place in the Cabinet is commonly regarded as the

cause of his defection. It was in reality the occasion. No doubt he regarded this as a personal affront of so serious a nature as to warrant drastic action on his part. The casual reader of the history of the time is not unlikely to feel that he forfeited in that act his right to be held in highest esteem. We care little for the man whose actions are the result of personal pique and chagrin, and less for him who is renegade to his party affiliations. So deeply impregnated have we become with the doctrine of "my party, right or wrong! my party!" that one who defers that doctrine and dares to act upon his independent judgment is always the object of suspicion and is made to feel that his motives are being questioned. His former friends cherish none but bitter feelings toward him, while his new found ones are somewhat chary about giving him their fullest confidence. McGee's letter to O'Donohoe reveals clearly the fact that the loss of position affected him infinitely less than the manner of its loss. His was the attitude of the man who has lost a little money at the hands of a confidence man; he regrets the loss, but his real feeling is one of self contempt to think that anyone should consider him so easy a victim.

McGee was not at home with the Rouge party, nor had he ever been. His union with it had not been the result of

deliberate choice. He came to Canada unacquainted with the intimacies of Canadian politics. His knowledge of the broad principles upon which the party divisions rested was not sufficient to enable him to identify himself with those to whom he at heart belonged. He had stood at the parting of the ways -- each way being attractive. There was, so far as he could see, no particular reason why he should choose one in preference to the other. A man in such a position is usually susceptible to influences that at other times would not weigh with him. It has been shown that McGee was by instinct an oppositionist. The long years of his conflict with constituted authority in Ireland, coupled with the fact that as an Irishman he dearly loved to fight, were some of the influences at work; but in a private letter to Senator O'Donohoe, a letter which up to this date has never been made public, shows that one other influence was at work.

Following is the letter:

Private.

Montreal, Oct. 15th, '57.

My Dear Sir:

Through Mr. Sadlier and our Montreal friend, the true-hearted Thomas Devine, I learn with sincere gratification of your effort in Toronto, to forward the Montreal Testimonial. You will probably like to

know what has been done and what is intended here, and I shall very briefly relate all I know on both heads.

The Testimonial here was originally subscribed as a gift to the NEW ERA. It amounts to about \$1200 cash -- all received in the city, with the exception of, say \$100. The total is to be presented at the Franklin, at a supper, on Tuesday night next. No reporters will be present, and nothing but a short written address and reply, will be made public. The amount will materially strengthen the NEW ERA in these tight times, and whatever helps the paper, helps me.

But the real object of my friends is to keep my name before the city constituency, with a view to the next election. They think they can, by good management, seat me as one of the three representatives of Montreal. So far they are unusually unanimous, and I believe, if they continue so, they can do what they promise.

A few words from you dictated to the Secretary or Chairman, for Tuesday night, conveying any intelligence of future co-operation you might have to communicate, would be timely and encouraging. But of this you are to judge -- I only throw it out, on the spur of the moment.

I see I have an enthusiastic advocate in Cunningham of Cobourg. He is a warm-hearted fellow, and one I should like to know better.

Accept my best thanks, and believe me,

Very truly yours,

Thos. D'Arcy McGee.

Ald. O'Donohoe, Toronto.

McGee was by nature and in principle a Tory. In days when he had not had the opportunity of maturing his judgments he had taken the other side. They had responded by assisting him in a financial way.

Through five years he had given a worthy service to their cause. But now the occasion came for him to act upon his convictions and he did so, even in the face of his former friends' kindness, and the offer of preferment outside the Cabinet at the hands of the Government he left. A careful consideration acquits McGee of the charge of having acted on any but the highest motives in changing his party affiliations.

In the general election of 1863 the Reform Government still had a slight majority of the whole house but it was in the nature of a deadlock. A few seats were gained by the Reform party in Upper Canada, giving them a large majority there, but others were lost in Lower Canada, leaving the Conservatives supreme there, so that not only the two parties but the two Provinces were pitted against each other. It was impossible to carry

out the principle of a double majority and the path ahead of the Ministry was indeed a slippery one. An amendment to the address from the throne was lost by a majority of only three. Another motion, condemning the appointment of Mr. Louis Sicotte as Judge, was defeated by a bare majority of two votes. Thus things went from bad to worse until in December the newly appointed Solicitor General for Upper Canada failed to secure his re-election, which rendered the fall of the Ministry inevitable. In March 1864, without waiting for a formal vote of want of confidence, the Ministry resigned, and Sir Etienne Tache was charged with the task of forming a Ministry. On March 30th 1864, in the newly formed Tache-Macdonald administration, McGee was appointed Minister of Agriculture, which office he held until Confederation.

A spirit of provincialism and jealousy seems to have taken possession of the people's representatives to such an extent that no administration was able to obtain a safe working majority. The Tache-Macdonald Government was no exception for on June 14th, after being less than three months in power, it was defeated, but on the very day of its defeat a temporary solution of the trouble was found in the Macdonald-Brown coalition.

Ministry, who were pledged to carry Confederation. The following is a confidential memorandum of the agreement under which this coalition plan was adopted: "The Government are prepared to pledge themselves to bring in a measure next session for the purpose of removing existing difficulties by introducing the federal principle into Canada, coupled with such provisions as will permit the Maritime Provinces and the North-West Territory to be incorporated into the same system of Government. And the Government will seek by sending representatives to the Lower Provinces and to England, to secure the consent of those interests which are beyond the control of our own legislation to such a measure as may enable all British North America to be united under a general legislature based upon the federal principle".

The impasse to which governmental affairs had come proved a blessing in disguise and is often called the 'father of Confederation'. Canada was not lacking in statesmen of the first order but they had not had sufficient scope to prove their abilities. "The human mind naturally adapts itself to the position it occupies. It requires a great country and great circumstances to develop great men". A united British North America

was the great country and many a great man she brought forth from comparative obscurity during the formative period of the Confederation. One of the most brilliant and consistent advocates of the federal union of all British North America was Thomas D'Arcy McGee. In season and out of season, whether East or West, the subject was uppermost in his mind.

For years it had been apparent to the most casual observer of Canadian affairs that the Government as constituted under the Act of Union was far from satisfactory and that a change was inevitable. In the very nature of Colonial institutions frequent change is necessary to meet the varying conditions of progress, but it was now apparent to every Canadian statesman that a radical constitutional change must be made, and made quickly. The question was as to the nature of that change. Should the Union be dissolved and each Province again go its own way, or should an advance step be taken, and a great federal experiment be tried embracing all of British North America? The condition of affairs as they had existed for some time prior to Confederation is epitomized in a circular calling a Convention of Upper Canadian Reformers. It declared in part that "the position of Upper Canada at this moment

is truly anomolous and alarming. With a population much more numerous than that of Lower Canada, and contributing to the general revenue a much larger share of taxation than the sister Province, Upper Canada finds herself without power in the administration of the affairs of the Union. With a constitution professedly based on the principle that the will of the majority should prevail, a minority of the people of Upper Canada by combination with the Lower Canadian majority are enabled to rule the Upper Province in direct hostility to the popular will. Extravagant expenditures and hurtful legislative measures are forced on us in defiance of the protests of large majorities of the representatives of the people; the most needful reforms are denied, and offices of honour and emolument are conferred on persons destitute of popular sympathy, and without qualification beyond that of unhesitating subserviency to the men who misgovern the country". While this circular was issued by the Reformers of Upper Canada, it might with equal force have been issued by either party of either Province. It reveals the fatal weakness of the Act of Union, and shows wherein it became unworkable.

.....

Brown and Macdonald had been, as we have before observed, almost from their first acquaintance, bitter personal enemies; but true to their statesmanlike vision and their pledge, they laid aside personal feud and applied themselves without reserve to the problem of federation. By a happy coincidence of far-reaching importance, the Maritime Provinces were at the same time seriously discussing the problem of a Maritime Union. To formulate some definite plan, delegates from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island met in convention at Charlottetown on September 1st, 1864. The Canadian Government asked permission to send delegates also and proposed that the deliberations cover the problem of a wider union. The request was readily granted and the Canadian delegates were received with open arms. The list from the Canadas comprised, the Hon. J.A. Macdonald, the Hon. George Brown, the Hon. Alexander T. Galt, the Hon. George E. Cartier, the Hon. Thos. D'Arcy McGee, the Hon. William MacDougall and the Hon. Hector L. Langevin. There was a frank and open discussion of the subject and such progress was made that after a ten-days conference the convention adjourned to meet in Quebec in October to draw up a basis of Union. Here they were joined by delegates from Newfoundland and from October 10th to 28th the assembly met in secret conclave.

Seventy Two resolutions were passed and these were the basis of all future discussions. At the first opportunity they were submitted by the delegates to their respective legislatures and met with varying receptions. On July 1st 1867, the new Dominion came into being. "Ontario was jubilant, Quebec doubtful and expectant, New Brunswick sullen, Nova Scotia rebellious. Many of the newspapers in the Maritime Provinces came out that day with their columns draped in black. Confederation had been carried, but the problem remained of holding it together". It would, however, require a whole volume and be quite beyond the purpose of the present work to trace step by step the events leading directly to Canadian Confederation. Our aim is rather to show, mainly by extracts from his speeches and writings, the part played by Thomas D'Arcy McGee in the accomplishment of that epoch-making event, and to endeavour to place his work in a true perspective.

Sir Charles Tupper says McGee was easily the greatest orator of his day and that he greatly aided the cause of Confederation by his many eloquent speeches throughout the various Provinces. It is impossible, however, to name any one man to whom is due the honour of being the Father of Confederation. In his speech on Confederation

McGee gives credit to Mr. Uniacke, to Chief Justice Sewell, to Sir John Beverley Robinson, to Lord Durham, to Mr. P.S. Hamilton and to Mr. Alexander Morris.

"But" he continues "whatever the private writer in his closet may have conceived, whatever even the individual statesman may have designed, so long as the public mind was uninterested in the adoption, even in the discussion of a change in our position so momentous as this, the union of these separate Provinces, the individual laboured in vain -- perhaps, not wholly in vain, for although his work may not have borne fruit then, it was kindling a fire that would ultimately light up the whole political horizon and herald the dawn of a better day for our country and our people. Events stronger than advocacy, events stronger than men have come in at last like the fire behind the invisible writing, to bring out the truth of these writings and to impress them upon the mind of every thoughtful man who has considered the position and probable future of these scattered Provinces".

With his advent into Canadian public life, McGee showed that he had a grasp of the federal idea and of its possible application to both Canada and the Maritime Provinces. Undoubtedly a careful study of the workings of the constitution of the United States furnished him

with a basis of a larger British North America, and he early conceived the idea of a New Canadian Nationality. None saw more clearly than he the strong and weak places in the American Constitution. As early as 1858 in his address to the Catholic Public, a federal union was foreshadowed as a solution of Canada's problem, and as tending to hasten the advent of a genuine Canadian Nationality. In an article contributed to the British American Magazine of August 1863, entitled "A plea for British-American Nationality" McGee shows a grasp of the situation and a breadth of vision surpassed by no other statesman of his day. He says: "We may safely assume that the adoption of any public policy which would make British America greatly auxiliary to British commerce; which would make it the favourite destination of the British emigrant; which would draw into it large additional investments of British capital; which would give to our legislation something of the authority and stability of the British; which would enable us to contribute our fair quota not only to colonial but to imperial defenses: -- that these additions to our existing relations would produce the so desirable identity in feeling and interest between Canada and England; without which as it seems

to us, we cannot continue long secure from foreign aggression, either in the present or prospective state of things on this continent. Is there any line of public policy which would produce these results within a given time? We believe such a policy exists, and has found warm advocates in all the great centres of British-American population. It is, in a word, the policy of the connection of the Provinces, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, under the Vice-Royalty of one of the sons of Her Majesty, advised by a legislature, of which at least the upper chamber shall be constituted so as to act as a true conservator of our transcript or adaptation of the British Constitution. It is a policy of union which is strength; of a new commercial route from England to the East; of the elevation of the symbol and reality of authority on this soil; a policy attractive, expansive and progressive as the most earnest advocates of progress can desire".

It is undoubtedly true that the Civil War in the United States furnished to the Fathers of Confederation a convincing argument in favour of the centralization of governmental authority. The feeling prevailed amongst Canadian statesmen that had Congress been sovereign over the states of the Union, the struggle

might have been averted and the Slavery question settled in a more peaceful way. It must be remembered that the genius of the American Constitution provides for the sovereignty of the individual states, and that the Federal Government possesses only such powers as have been delegated to it by the states. It remained for the Civil War to emphasize the inherent weakness of this idea. Further in the article above referred to, McGee pointed out the radical defect in this alternative proposal. He said: "It is in no spirit of presumption, from no irreverent disregard of those great men and their motives, that, reasoning after the fact, we conclude their experiment to have failed, and recommend the avoidance of a similar error to our own Colonial statesmen. It failed in that which the banished Kent saw and desired to serve in the face of the disrowned king -- authority. It failed in the authority of the President over his Cabinet; in the authority of the Supreme Court over the country; in the authority of the Congress over the states; in the authority of the Commander in Chief over the forces, naval and military, supposed to be under his orders". In all justice be it said, that the American people, who have an almost superstitious aversion to amending

their Constitution, have modified or overcome many of its inherent weakness by their method of interpreting it.

In advocating a limited monarchy as the most desirable form of government for a united Canada and the one most adapted to her needs, ^{McClellan} he says: "If all ancient and all modern experiences cry aloud to us with this voice, why do we close our ears against them? Are we too new, too few, or too busy with better work to think betimes of our future Constitution? We are, between the Gulf Stream and the Rocky Mountains -- British subjects -- professing monarchists almost to a man -- four millions. Are these too few to form a decision on their political future?"

In the same magazine of October, 1863, under the heading of 'A Further Plea for British-American Nationality', he continues: "In pleading again the cause of British-American Nationality, we do so on this, among other grounds, that the bare idea is capable of exciting in our breasts that force which only patriotic enthusiasm can give. It is an idea which begets a whole progeny kindred to itself -- such as ideas of extension, construction, permanence, grandeur and historical renown. It expands as we observe it, opening up long, gleaming perspectives into both time and space. It comprehends the erection of a new North American Nation

inheriting among other advantages the law of nations for its shield and guidance.....

All these changes which we advocate, internal and external, we may be told tend to one result -- separation from the Empire. We would be altogether misunderstood if any reader was left under that impression. That which we advocate we do most sincerely believe to be the only means to perpetuate a future connection between Great Britain and the trans-oceanic Provinces of the Empire, which connection is the interest of these Provinces; and of civilization itself we hold to be beyond all price desirable. What we advocate is to substitute for the present provincial connection of dissociated provinces belonging to rather than being of the Empire, a new explicit relation, more suited to our actual wants, dangers and dimensions, in other words, a modification of the federal principle, reduced to the condition of a compact equally intelligible to the central and outlying administrations".

One of the leading factors deterring the Confederation project was the fear, by the English speaking minority of Quebec, of domination by the French. Sir E.P.Tache and Hon. George E.Cartier spoke strongly against any such possibility. McGee, who himself belonged to this

Lower Canadian minority, had no such misgivings, and no one did more than he to remove these apprehensions. Speaking in the Legislative Assembly on February 9th, 1865, he said: "Whose words are these -- 'God hath made of one blood all the Nations that dwell on the face of the earth'? Is not that the true theory of race? For my part I am not afraid of the French Canadian majority, in the future local government doing injustice except accidentally; not because I am of the same religion as themselves; for origin and language are barriers stronger to divide men in this world than is religion to unite them. Neither do I believe that my Protestant compatriots need have any such fear. The French-Canadians have never been an intolerant people; It is not in their temper, unless they have been persecuted, perhaps, and then it might have been as it has been with other races of all religions. Perhaps on this subject the House will allow me to read a very striking illustration of the tolerance of French-Canadian character from a book I hold in my hand, the Digest of the Synod minutes of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, by my worthy friend the Rev. Mr. Kemp of the Free Church of Montreal; the passage on page seven of the introduction:- 'About the year 1790, the Presbyterians of Montreal of

all denominations, both British and American, organized themselves into a church, and in the following year secured the services of Rev. John Young. At this time they met in the Recollet Roman Catholic church. But in the year following they erected the edifice which is now known as the St Gabriel Street Church -- the oldest Protestant church in the Province. In their early minutes we find them, in acknowledgement of the kindness of the Recollet Fathers, presenting them with one box of candles, 56 pounds, at 8d., and one hogshead of Spanish wine at £6 5s.'"

From McGee's speech in moving the Confederation resolutions, we extract the following passage as exhibiting in some measure the breadth of his vision: "But it is necessary there should be respect for the law, a high central authority, the virtue of civil obedience, obeying the law for the law's sake; for even when a man's private conscience may convince him sufficiently that the law in some cases may be wrong, he is not to set up his individual will against the will of the country, expressed through its recognized constitutional organs. We need in these Provinces and we can bear, a large infusion of authority.

I am not at all afraid this Constitution errs on the

side of too great conservatism. If it be found too conservative now, the downward tendency in political ideas which characterizes this democratic age is a sufficient guarantee for amendment. Its conservatism is the principle on which this instrument is strong and worthy of the support of every colonist, and through which it will secure the warm approbation of the Imperial Authorities. We have here no traditions and venerable institutions; here there are no aristocratic elements, hallowed by time and bright deeds; here everyone is the first settler of the land, or removed from the first settler one or two generations at the farthest; here we have no architectural monuments calling up old associations; here we have none of those old popular legends and stories which in other countries have exercised a powerful share in the Government; here every man is the son of his own works. We have none of those influences about us, which elsewhere, have their effect upon Government just as much as the invisible atmosphere itself tends to influence life and animal and vegetable existence. This is a new land -- a land of young pretensions because it is new; because classes and systems have not had that time to grow here naturally. We have no aristocracy but of virtue and

talent, which is the best aristocracy, and is the old and true meaning of the word."

.....

During the year 1865, McGee's friends presented him with a comfortable, well appointed house, in StCatharine Street in Montreal, in which during the remaining years of his life he made his abode. This very thoughtful act did much to alleviate the pecuniary cares which so frequently beset him, and enabled him to address himself to his cherished projects with comparative freedom from anxiety. Later in the year he visited his boyhood home in Wexford, Ireland, after an interval of ten years. A speech he made while there was destined to become one of the most important, and effective deliverances of his whole career. It was forgotten by neither friends nor foes in the Irish party in the United States and Canada. Addressing himself to the statesmen of Britain he presented to them the claims of Ireland. He pleaded for consideration on their part of the country's feelings and prejudices, and urged them to study her history and her rights, suggesting that their treatment of her should be

actuated by the Golden Rule. He promised that such treatment would produce amongst the Irish in Ireland the same loyalty and devotion to the Crown that it had in Canada, when it had been put to a test. Turning his attention to Irish problems in the United States he went to the length of stating that a larger proportion of his fellow-countrymen had become degraded and demoralized in that country than in Canada. In most scathing terms he denounced the proposals of adventurers -- the Fenians -- to wreak their vengeance upon Great Britain by attempted invasions of Canada. He declared that he could not 'stand and see our peaceful, unoffending Canada invaded and deluged in blood, in the abused and unauthorized name of Ireland'. The effect of the speech was to give deep offence to the Fenians who denounced him as a renegade to his principles. From that day he was Anathema Maranatha. The Fenians vowed to destroy him. They fulfilled their vow.

As a member of the Executive Council he visited London, in company with some of his colleagues in the Canadian Cabinet to lay before the Imperial Government the plan of the proposed Union of the British Provinces. In these important deliberations he took a leading part as was his right. In 1867 he again went abroad and

visited the Exposition at Paris, being one of the Commissioners for Canada sent by the Government for that purpose. He also went to Rome to interview the Vatican in respect to some parish problems affecting St. Patrick's congregation in Montreal. During this time a series of articles from his pen appeared in the New York TABLET, entitled 'Irish Episodes of Foreign Travel'.

McGee returned to Canada a short time before the formalities incident to the implementing of the British North America Act were to be attended to. A Government representing all the Provinces had to be established, and to Sir John A. Macdonald was committed this task by Lord Monck. It was at this juncture that the efforts of years nearly proved abortive owing to the selfish demands of the Provincial party leaders. Quebec demanded five members in the Cabinet. Ontario, with a larger population, demanded a larger representation than the sister Province. In addition to this the other parts of Canada had to be taken care of. Had the demands of Ontario and Quebec been acceded to, the Cabinet resulting would have been very much larger than the agreement called for. On the other hand there were men who, by reason of the distinguished service they had rendered to the cause, had claims to a place in the ministry that could not rightfully be ignored. Among these

Thomas D'Arcy McGee ranked with the foremost. Macdonald found his task one of insuperable difficulty. Master strategist that he was, he could find no way of satisfying all the Provinces and all the men who aspired to ministerial rank. On the eve of announcing his decision to abandon the task, and in the moment when the whole Confederation scheme was in jeopardy of being aborted through the selfishness of a few politicians, to their undying credit be it said, two men arose whose voluntary sacrifice saved the situation. One of these men represented Nova Scotia, in the person of Sir Charles Tupper, the other the Irish-Catholics of Quebec, in the person of D'Arcy McGee. Tupper proposed to McGee that they surrender their claims to preferment. McGee met this suggestion by giving a whole-hearted consent, and both of these men were returned to Parliament as private members in the election that followed. Sir Edward Kenny of Halifax entered the Administration as representative of the Irish Catholics, which position would otherwise have been filled by McGee. In thus responding to the needs of the situation McGee again manifested that personal disinterestedness in behalf of the principles for which he stood, which characterized him at all stages of his career in public life.

Keen interest was taken everywhere in the election of 1867 to the new Federal Parliament. No constituency in that election, and perhaps no constituency in all Canadian history, has been so fiercely and bitterly contested as was McGee's riding, Montreal West. Through his change in politics in 1863, and his strong denunciation of the Fenian movement during his visit to Ireland in 1867, McGee had made himself unpopular with the baser element in his constituency while gaining greatly in popularity with the better thinking section. There was a clear-cut split in the ranks of his old supporters. On the hustings in Montreal, McGee is reported to have said, "Be gone from me, ye unwashed of Griffintown! I have sufficient evidence in my pocket to hang every one of you!" -- a remark which touched the match to the fuse of Fenian maliciousness that led directly to the assassin's powder. His opponents brought forward as a candidate, Mr. Devlin, a prominent member of the Lower Canadian bar, and the means resorted to in the attempt to defeat McGee, would do no discredit to the sponsors of German frightfulness in the present war. Since his denunciation of Fenianism, McGee had been in receipt of frequent anonymous letters in which he was excoriated as a traitor

and warned to prepare for death. Some of these were from Ireland, some from Montreal, but they came chiefly from the United States. For months he felt that there was on foot a plot to get rid of him, and on one occasion in Montreal the presence of his brother in the house with him undoubtedly averted an attempt on his life.

The various stages in the evolution of McGee's mental life are very clearly marked and easily traced. In the critical periods of his career his powers were always commensurate with the responsibilities they compelled him to assume. But in the higher realms of his being a similar process must have taken place. His spirit came to its own. Earlier in life he had been a convivial soul, threatened, as is every man of his temperment, with subjugation. A few years before his death, he, of his own volition and initiative, became a total abstainer. This radical change of habit was the result and accompaniment of a more serious view of life than he had ever before possessed. We find him, about six months prior to his death, laid aside from his active duties, by his first serious illness. Years of worry and overwork had made terrible inroads on his constitution, and the bitter experience of the

election through which he had just passed was the proverbial 'last straw'. For weeks he was in retirement. And they were dreary days for him. He had time to reflect on man's base ingratitude, on the emptiness of fame, while the fear of death held him in bondage. Perhaps the impending tragedy of his passing was already casting its cold shadow across his path. But in those grey days he came to possess a truer estimate of life and its meaning. He returned as a little child to life's simplicities and fundamentals. Faith, hope and love were no longer empty names, but splendid realities. And this great man, this half genius, half child, did what countless others have done, he left the care of his weak body and worn spirit to his Eternal Father, whose love reaches to all His Children. He returned from his enforced retirement much restored in health, and entered upon the duties of the new Parliament. But he was a changed man. His irrepressible gaiety had given place to gravity; his buoyant optimism to melancholy; his radiant cheerfulness to solemnity. He was as one who walks alone along a new path in a dark valley. Grimly, steadfastly, determinedly he journeyed. The fear that clutched at his heart could not daunt his spirit nor change

his purposes, even though he was never free from its menace. He had been warned that his life was in danger. He had made enemies of unscrupulous men. Like every other man in such circumstances he had to face the terrible issues of his life alone.

McGee's last speech was made in the House of Commons on the night of the 6th of April 1868, in which he defended his colleague, Sir Charles Tupper, who had been charged with certain delinquencies in connection with the performance of his Commission in England; and in which he also strongly exhorted the people of Nova Scotia to support the Union, and let the balm of time heal any soreness that had arisen through their misunderstanding of the methods by which the British North America Act was passed. Because of its statesmanlike tenor and because it was his last, we quote the speech in full:

"I took objection Sir this afternoon, to the motion which has stood for some days in the name of the Honourable member for Wellington Centre, and which has now been introduced as an amendment, being taken up out of order. I did so, as I stated then, believing that such a discussion as it was likely to occasion

would not be conducive to the peaceful interests of the country, and the objection which I raised has been sustained. That objection was made as much in the interest of the honourable member himself as of any other of this country. And had he but availed himself of the interval which had thus been offered him for the exercise of reflection and decided not to throw himself, as he has now done, into this Nova Scotia quarrel, I believe, Sir, that in after years, he would not have failed to acknowledge the service which I had rendered him. I believe that the honourable member, although he had spent some time previously in opposing Confederation, came from the hustings as a 'fair trial man' -- one of those pledged at his election to give the new system a fair trial -- and how is he fulfilling that pledge? He is seeking for subjects of irritation and not finding it advisable openly to oppose the principles of Union here, loses no opportunity to strike below the belt -- to deal a stab in the dark -- and it is time now that the mask should be torn from his face. In the honourable profession to which he belongs there are certain applications in use, known to the faculty as emollients. If, in the exercise of the duties of that honourable profession, he makes such liberal emollient

use of vinegar and gall as he here employs towards Confederation, all I can say is that his unlucky patients are sincerely to be pitied. The honourable gentleman had affected to be a convert to Confederation. If he had really been a convert, he would be prepared even at the eleventh hour -- even at the eleventh hour and the fifty ninth minute -- to give the new system a fair trial. If he had been earnest in his professions of desire for the success of Confederation he might have said, "I do not think Dr. Tupper was the best choice for this mission, but since he has gone, I wish him all success for the sake of the welfare of the Union". If he thinks it necessary at all to go into the matter of the appointment of a gentleman to watch the interests of the Dominion in this matter of repeal, he might be expected to do so in some such spirit, and to discuss it in some such tone. He knows well that no good can possibly result from such a motion at such a time; he knows well that the motion must certainly miscarry; and he knows well that, if it were possible for it to be adopted, the recall of Dr. Tupper would have no appreciable effect in the conciliation of Nova Scotia. Why, Sir, it would be only the abstraction of a thimbleful from the bucket of her discontentment.

The dissatisfaction with the Union which unhappily prevails among a considerable portion of the people there is founded on other grounds than Dr. Tupper's appointment, and had existed long previously.

It is a family matter which it is right to leave within the family; and it is for this reason that none other than a Nova Scotian could have been judiciously chosen for the mission. There are not many in this House not Nova Scotians, who know much about Nova Scotia, and why not leave Nova Scotians to meet Nova Scotians on their own ground? Dr. Tupper's character has been assailed, and he himself personally maligned, and it is due to him that he should be placed in a position to justify his conduct with regard to the part he had taken towards obtaining the Imperial Act of legislation by which the Union had been established. It has been charged against him that he has lost the confidence of his own people. Sir, I hope that in this House mere temporary or local popularity will never be made the test by which to measure the worth or efficiency of a public servant. (Hear, hear). He, Sir, who builds upon popularity builds upon a shifting sand. He who rests simply upon popularity and who will risk the right in hunting after popularity will soon find the object he

pursues slip away from him. It is, Sir, in my humble opinion, the leader of a forlorn hope who is ready to meet and stem the tide of temporary unpopularity, who is prepared, if need be, to sacrifice himself in defence of the principles which he has adopted as those of truth -- who shows us that he is ready not only to triumph with his principles, but even to suffer for his principles -- who has proved himself above all others worthy of peculiar honour. (Applause). It would show but a base spirit to sacrifice the man who had sacrificed himself for the Union. Nothing in this appointment has so greatly pleased me as the chivalry of spirit by which it has been dictated and in which the honourable and learned Knight at the head of the Government has defended the honourable member for Cumberland in his absence. (Hear,hear) I think, Sir, that it is a pity that our Nova Scotia friends have not yet been able to make up their minds to give the scheme of Union a fair trial -- that they have not consented to allow it to work untrammelled -- that they have not been contented to watch its natural revolution in its appointed orbit, unchecked by any stumbling block of their placing. For their own sakes -- for the sakes of the ancient and renowned loyalty of their Province -- I regret the course they have chosen. The Repeal address,

which the popular branch of their Legislature has adopted and a copy of which is asked for in the motion now before us, is too school-boy a performance to prove creditable to Nova Scotia, on the journals of this House, if it is to be entered there. It is unworthy of that Province which has produced so illustrious an array of men of eminence -- men whom we respect not only as lawyers of excellence, but also as acknowledged masters of English composition. It is a document at once ill-considered and fallacious -- the production of empiric politicians -- and, while we admit the discredit which its publication will attach to Nova Scotia, we must remember that any shortcoming on her part will reflect some portion of its discredit upon ourselves also, recollecting that whatever reputation is achieved by British Americans abroad, will be made applicable to every section of the whole Dominion. The propositions which the address enunciates are of two classes: firstly, statements of opinions or conclusions of argument which I, Sir, for one, maintain to be unsound; and secondly, allegations of fact, which, in many instances, I know to be incorrect. And I say that it is not creditable to the author of that address to hear the tone in which he speaks of the Administration of our institutions, and

and stigmatizes the Lieutenant-Governors who rule these Provinces as the mere tools of the Canadian Government, while he brands the Senators of his own Province as hirelings purchased to carry out the Union. It is not creditable that such a charge should have been brought by Nova Scotians against Nova Scotians. The address complains generally of injuries supposed to have been inflicted upon Nova Scotia by the old Province of Canada, and charges our statesmen with having juggled Nova Scotia out of her liberties. Such allegations or any allegations of the existence of any quarrel between Nova Scotia and Canada are totally groundless. The address totally mis-states the question. The quarrel, if any quarrel there be, rests between Nova Scotia and the British Empire, from whose power the Act of Union alone derives its authority. And I think, Sir, without any disrespect to that Province, that in any controversy with the British Empire, even the most patriotic Nova Scotian will admit himself overmatched in his attempt to limit the power of British influence. The Nova Scotian complaints divide themselves under two heads. A portion of them may be within the power of this House to remedy, and a portion of them are not so, but rest entirely with the Imperial Parliament.

With the latter we have no concern, but as regards our own share, I am sure that this House has no disposition to act in any spirit of unfairness. (Hear, hear).

It may be that there are some grounds of complaint with regard to some of the legislations of the early part of the session, and that in such minor matters as the newspaper postage and certain tariff impositions, Nova Scotia may have some grounds for remonstrance, but so long as these points admit of modification or adjustment there will be no danger of its denial here. Whenever, Sir, the Nova Scotian case on these issues is presented calmly and fairly, it will find an amount of support here which will leave none of its advocates ground for complaint that the voice of Nova Scotia demanding justice is not fairly listened to within these walls. Then as now, and in that case as in every case, the representatives of Nova Scotia will find all parties in the House united in the desire of doing justice to their Province. And, Sir, I am sure that not one of them will deny to-day that the same justice has been meted out to themselves as to all other portions of the Dominion, or that fear, favour or affection for any individual localities has been evinced in the Government of the Confederation. But Nova Scotia

must only ask us to consider these subjects from a broad national point of view, and to deal with herself, not with exceptional partiality, but in the same spirit of even-handed fairness which we extend equally to Quebec, Ontario or New Brunswick. And here, Sir, I cannot withhold my acknowledgement of respect of the moderate and largeminded and truly national spirit in which the honourable member for Lambton, the leader of the largest section of the Opposition, has approached and has dealt with all these great questions affecting the carrying out and the maintenance and the welfare of the Union. All that can be justly required on the part of Nova Scotia, is that the opinions of her representatives expressed in this Legislature here, shall carry with them their duly proportionate weight, and I have only to regret that gentlemen opposite should have taken their stand upon a platform so ultramontane as to forbid approach by any well wisher of the Union. If there is to be any satisfactory cooperation upon the subjects in which they are most deeply interested they must endeavour to modify the extremeness of their views -- not necessarily to compel to a coincidence with ours, but at least to present them, where alone argument or comparison can be possible in the same plane.

In the attitude they have taken, the first advances towards mutual political amity must come from them, and these advances will be, I shall venture to assert for all on our side, frankly and fairly responded to. I hold, Sir, in my hand, a little volume, a pamphlet which has been recently issued, but which I shall take the liberty of recommending to every member of this House, as well worthy of his attentive perusal. It is entitled 'Intercolonial Trade -- Our only safeguard against disunion'. Its author is Mr. Haliburton whose happy manner of treating his important subject displays the great ability hereditary in his name. Mr. Haliburton is not, I believe, actively mixed up with politics, and undoubtedly handles his topic in no merely party style. From this reason alone the conclusions from his disinterested, impartial and impassioned point of view, adopted and published in the interests of the permanent prosperity of the country, must be regarded of greater weight and of greater soundness than those of the framers of this address, which can work but a temporary mischief. And this pamphlet shows conclusively beyond doubt or cavil, what ought indeed to be sufficiently obvious to all -- that the Union is not to be consolidated by any

temporary conciliating concessions to evanescent popular prejudice -- not by any momentary humoring, in this direction or that, or some particular local or sectional phase of public opinion -- but by our constant, earnest and unremitting care of the commercial welfare and progress of the Province. And besides this attention and practical consideration, we need, above everything else, the healing influence of time. I have, Sir, great reliance on the mellowing effects of time. It is not only the lime, and the sand, and the hair, and the mortar, but the time which has been taken to temper it. And if time be so necessary an element in so rudimentary a process as the mixing of mortar, of how much greater importance must it be in the working of consolidating the Confederation of these Provinces. Time, Sir, will heal all existing irritations; time will mellow and refine all points of contrast, that seem so harsh to-day; time will come to the aid of the pervading principles of impartial justice which happily permeates the whole land. By and by time will show us the Constitution of this Dominion as much cherished in the hearts of the people of all its Provinces, not excepting Nova Scotia, as is the British Constitution itself. And I do not despair, with the assistance of time,

of seeing by and by the honourable member for Lunenburg himself converted into the heartiest supporter of Union within these walls, willing and anxious to perpetuate the system which he will find to work so advantageously for his own Province, and adopting the position of the honourable member for Guysboro' as that of the true and patriotic statesman. I will not, Sir, believe that such anticipations are ill-founded, for I can find their precedent even in the history of Nova Scotia herself. When Cape Breton was annexed to Nova Scotia -- annexed not by any Act of Parliament but simply by an Order of the King in Council -- the people were so strongly opposed to the Union that they almost threatened rebellion. Well, Sir, this took place as lately as 1820, and already time has brought with it its certain healing operations, and there is no question raised now of the advantages which the Union has conferred. There is no such question, because there has been no consequent injustice. The incorporated people have found that there is no desire to rob them of their liberties, and no disposition to treat them with unfairness. They see what time shows them that the Union was effected for their advantage, as well as that of their neighbours, and they are satisfied because they

find it working for both. And, Sir, I have every confidence that we will similarly wear out Nova Scotian hostility by the unfailing exercise and exhibition of a high minded spirit of fair play. It has been said that the interests of Canada are diametrically opposed to the interests of Nova Scotia, but I ask which of the parties to the partnership has most interest in its successful conduct, or has most to fear from the failure which the misfortunes or the losses of any of its members must occasion. Would it not be we who have embarked the largest share of the capital of Confederation. Our friends, Sir, need have no fear but that that Confederation will ever be administered with serene and even justice. To its whole history, from its earliest inception to its final triumphant consumation, no stigma can be attached, no stain attributed. Its single aim from the beginning has been to consolidate the extent of British North America with the utmost regard to the independent powers and privileges of each Province, and I, Sir, who have been, and am still, its warm and earnest advocate speak here, not as the representative of any race or of any Province, but as thoroughly and emphatically a Canadian, ready and bound to recognize the claims, if any, of my Canadian.

fellow-subjects, from the farthest east to the farthest west, equally as those of my nearest neighbor, or of the friend who proposed me on the hustings". (Great applause).

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But the statesmanlike words had scarce died on the air when a pistol shot rang out clear on the frosty air and the assassins bullet ushered into the presence of his maker the soul of Thomas D'Arcy McGee. He had left the House accompanied by Mr. Robert MacFarlane, a prominent member of the Upper Canada bar. At the corner of Metcalfe Street Mr. MacFarlane left him in the bright moonlight which made the night almost as light as day. Mr. McGee turned up Sparks Street until he reached his lodgings in the hotel kept by Mrs. Trotter. He was in the act of inserting his latch key when the assassin who had stealthily crept up behind him shot him through the back of the neck, the ball passing out through his mouth and carrying away some of his teeth.

When morning dawned the nation stood aghast and stunned, for the awful intelligence had been flashed east, west and south, and had been cabled to England. As the House assembled that afternoon every thought save that of

their slain colleague was crowded from the minds of the members. Several able addresses, expressing horror at the atrocious crime were delivered in the House, and no other business was transacted for a week. We give in full the speech of Sir John A. Macdonald, which was representative of the sentiments of the whole House.

House of Commons,

Ottawa, Tuesday, April 7, 1868.

The Speaker took the chair at ten minutes past three.

The galleries were densely crowded. Sir John A. Macdonald rose amid the breathless silence of the House and manifesting feelings of the most profound emotion, which for some time almost stopped his utterance, said:

"Mr. Speaker, it is with pain amounting to anguish that I rise to address you. He who last night, nay this morning, was with us and of us, whose voice is still ringing in our ears, who charmed us with his marvellous eloquence, elevated us by his large statesmanship, and instructed us by his wisdom and his patriotism, is no more -- is foully murdered. If ever a soldier who fell on the field of battle in the front of the fight, deserved well of his country, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, deserved well of Canada and its people. The blow which

has just fallen is too recent, the shock is too great, for us yet to realize its atrocity and the extent of this irreparable loss. I feel, Sir, that our sorrow, our genuine and unaffected sorrow, prevents us from giving adequate expression to our feelings just now, but by and by, and at length, this House will have a melancholy pleasure in considering the character and position of my late friend and colleague. To all the loss is great, to me, I may say, inexpressibly so; as the loss is not only of a warm political friend, who has acted with me for some years, but of one with whom I enjoyed the intercommunion of his rich and varied mind. The blow has been overwhelming. I feel altogether incapable of addressing myself to the subject just now. Our departed friend was a man of the kindest and most generous impulse, a man whose hand was open to every one, whose heart was made for friendship and whose enmities were written in water; a man who had no gall, no guile; 'in wit a man, in simplicity a child'. He might have lived a long and respected life had he chosen the easy path of popularity rather than the stern one of duty. He has lived a short life, respected and beloved, and died a heroic death; a martyr to the cause of his country. How easy it would have been for him, had he

chosen to have sailed along the full tide of popularity, with thousands and hundreds of thousands following him, without the loss of a single plaudit, but he has been slain, and I fear slain because he preferred the path of duty. I cannot but quote from his speech of last night, 'Sir', said Mr. McGee 'I hope that in this House mere temporary or local popularity will never be made the test by which to measure the worth or efficiency of a public servant. He, Sir, who builds upon popularity builds upon a shifting sand. He who rests simply upon popularity and who will risk the right in hunting after popularity, will soon find the object he pursues slip away from him. It is, Sir, in my humble opinion, the leader of a forlorn hope, who is ready to meet and stem the tide of temporary unpopularity, who is prepared, if needs be, to sacrifice himself in defence of the principles which he has adopted as those of truth -- who shows us that he is ready, not only to triumph with his principles but even to suffer for his principles -- who has proved himself, above all others, worthy of peculiar honor'. (Applause). He has gone from us, and it will be long ere we find such a happy mixture of eloquence and wisdom, wit and earnestness. (Hear, hear). His was no artificial or meretricious eloquence, every word of his

was as he believed, and every belief, every thought of his, was in the direction of what was good and true. Well may I say now, on behalf of the Government and the Country, that, if he has fallen, he has fallen in our cause, leaving behind him a greatful recollection which will ever live in the hearts and minds of his countrymen. We must remember too, that the blow which has fallen so severely on this House and the Country will fall more severely on his widowed partner and his bereaved children. Of their sorrows I will not venture now to speak -- but I would remind the House that he was too good, too generous to be rich. He has left us, the Government, the people, and the representatives of the people, a sacred legacy, and we would be wanting in our duty to this Country and to the feeling which will agitate the Country from one end to the other, if we do not accept that legacy as a sacred trust, and look upon his widow and children as now belonging to the State. (Hear, hear).

I now move that the House adjourn and that it stand adjourned until Tuesday next at half past seven".

Writing from England, April 9th 1868, to Sir John A. Macdonald, Hon. Charles Tupper says: "Day before yesterday I received your cable telegram respecting the fishing licenses and giving me the awful intelligence of the

assassination of poor McGee. It was announced in the morning papers, but I hoped against hope until your telegram came. I cannot tell you how inexpressibly it has shocked me, and the very painful sensation it has created everywhere here. I enclose notice of his death in the TELEGRAPH, which expresses the universal sentiment felt towards his memory, in this Country." In a later letter, April 25th, to Sir John Macdonald Dr. Tupper said: "I had the melancholy pleasure of receiving a letter from poor McGee, written a few hours before his untimely end. He asked me to sell a novel 'Cyrus O'Neill' to Hurst & Blackett. If Mrs. McGee would send me the MSS. I think I could do something. I hope Parliament will provide handsomely for his family".

The Capital City felt humiliated and chagrined at having her streets desecrated with placards offering a reward for the apprehension of a murderer. Ten Thousand Dollars was voted for this purpose by the Dominion Government, Five Thousand by the City of Ottawa and Four Thousand by the City of Montreal. The Canadian Parliament voted later on, a substantial annuity toward the support of the bereaved widow and children.

The body of McGee was removed to his home in Montreal where for three days it lay in State while thousands

of mourners paid their last respects to their departed friend. A magnificent State funeral was arranged for Easter Monday, April 13th, which was, by a pathetic coincidence, the 43rd anniversary of McGee's birth. A service was held in St. Patrick's church and the funeral sermon was preached by McGee's personal friend and pastor, Rev. Mr. O'Farrell. This was followed by an elaborate French service in Notre Dame, where the coffin was solemnly placed in the centre isle, as the great organ with majestic rhythm sounded the Dead March in Saul. The sermon was preached by the Right Rev. Monseigneur Bourget the Roman Catholic Bishop of Montreal. As the service ended the long procession formed and slowly threaded its stately course through the sordid streets and wound its way up the beautiful slopes of Mount Royal, and the body was laid to its final rest on the peaceful summit of Cote des Neiges.

We hesitate to mention the name of the assassin in the same breath with that of his victim. The outraged law was satisfied when one, Wheelan, paid the extreme penalty under the following sentence: "The sentence of this Court is that you, Patrick James Wheelan, having been accused and found guilty of the murder of Thomas D'Arcy McGee, be taken from this place to the place

from whence you came, and be thence removed on Thursday the tenth day of December, between the hours of nine in the morning and four in the afternoon, to the place of execution, and there be hanged by the neck until your body be dead, and may God have mercy on your soul".

No truer words were ever spoken than the prophetic words of McGee, in his Montreal speech on the death of Abraham Lincoln, when he said "Never yet did the assassin's knife reach the core of a cause or the heart of a principle".

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No sketch of his career would be complete if it did not include a reference to McGee's poetic talent. Several hundred poems survive him. These were ably edited by Mrs. J. Sadlier, and published in New York in 1869. Prodigal nature had endowed him with this crowning gift, the possession of which occasions the greater surprise in view of the meagre education he received at school, and of the utterly unpoetic atmosphere in which he was reared. For he grew to young manhood amidst the plots and counter plots of a rebellious and somewhat sullen people. But the

possession of this gift is less amazing than his development of it. That a mind ~~that was~~ devoted so intensely to political problems, should soar into the realms of poesy, and that a heart so burdened with financial and other cares should respond to the beautiful and tender things of life, speaks volumes for the inherent worth of the man. He made the fullest use of the talents which were his. His would never be the confession to his Master, 'I hid Thy talent in the Earth'. He did not aspire to be a great poet. In another realm his life work was to be achieved. Poetry was his recreation; his retreat. When he was weary with the sordidness and monotony and struggle incident to his public life, he found rest and refreshing by cultivating the muse. This legislator, leader, propogandist, fighter, was a sweet singer. His poetry breathed a charm over the dreary detail of a nearly joyless life. Its ministry to his own soul was as important as that which it performed to others. His love of Ireland inspired many of his best and tend^erest poems. His ambition did not soar beyond a desire to reach the heart of his own race.

"I'd rather turn one simple verse
True to the Gaelic ear,
Than classic odes I might rehearse
With Senates list'ning near".

he sang. The limits thus set by his ambition no doubt account in a large measure for the fact that he did not become a great poet. Beyond question, however, his work deserves a greater place in Canadian literature than it now holds. And when some one shall arise to gather the songs of Canadian singers, McGee's will occupy no inconspicuous place.

McGee was not a political genius. He did not, during the period of his ministerial life, reveal exceptional gifts for administration. There were a number of men of his day who had capacity for public life in excess of that possessed by him. Yet he was a useful man in a Cabinet. He was able to maintain his influence over the people he represented, and never lost his sovereignty there. His was a forceful pen. It is unfortunate, perhaps, that he always expended his energies on a press that was parochial rather than national in its appeal. Had his journalistic talents been engaged by a paper of country-wide importance, it is questionable if any writer would have been more forceful

than he. The influence of McGee was limited because he devoted as much attention to the place of the Irish Catholics in Canadian politics as he did to the furthering of Canadian policies. His was the case of a divided affection and its consequent weakness. There were many who did not hear or heed him, because they were strangers to his ideals. As an orator he was without a peer in his day. He held his audiences entranced by his flow of words and by the ideas to which he gave such felicitous utterance.

In furthering the scheme of things, men of McGee's talents have a large place. The great movements that become epochal originate not with mediocrities, but are given being by genius, and carried to a successful issue, by men of more than average abilities. The Cabinet 'of all the talents' belongs to Utopia. Genius does its work alone. It is no disparagement to say of a man that he was a necessary supplement of genius. For he must have gifts of outstanding worth who can appreciate and measure up to the conditions demanded, in the outworking of great ideas. McGee, to do him justice, must be regarded as a man who was not destined to be a National leader, but who had the qualities that the real leader needed to carry his end.

It has become a habit to speculate upon what ^{a man} might have achieved had he not been cut off so early in his life. Such speculations lead nowhere. In his day, McGee served his generation -- and was gathered to his fathers. What did he accomplish? He gave voice to truths he felt and understood, he united his energies with those of his colleagues to bring into being the Dominion of Canada. No one whose mind is finite can say by what margin of energy and strength this great idea was carried to maturity. But in contributing to that margin, none gave more liberally than McGee. We think of him as one who seized every opportunity that came to him to work for others, and who performed every duty with a conscientious devotion and disinterestedness that in itself gives him a rightful place in the history of Canada.

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