

English-Speaking Priests who Evangelized The Eastern Townships

BY
GLADYS MULLINS

A hundred years in the history of a country or in that of the Catholic Church is but as a moment; – still as one turns back the pages of the history of the Eastern Townships, little more than a century old, one finds evidences aplenty of unbounded zeal, heroic adventures and truly marvelous accomplishments on the part of the pioneer missionaries who evangelized this section of the Province of Quebec.

When one gazes at and admires the beauty of the landscape which surrounds us in this garden of the Province, it is indeed difficult to visualize the wild and rugged country through which those intrepid missionaries travelled to bring the word of God to Catholic families scattered over a vast region.

Deep forests to penetrate, wide and tortuous rivers to cross, the rigors of winter and the merciless heat of summer deterred them not. Their zeal knew no bounds. – This was the corner of the vineyard the Master had appointed to them, and here they labored valiantly.

My paper can be but a brief sketch of the lives of the early missionaries, mostly Irish and English-speaking, who evangelized the Eastern Townships and of some of their most notable successors.

It has been quite definitely established, I think, after much laborious research on the part of local historians, that the first Mass in Sherbrooke was said by the Rev. Jean Raimbault, in 1816, at the home of Mr. W. B. Felton, Belvedere, whose wife was a Catholic.

In 1817, Bishop Plessis, at that time the only Catholic Bishop in Canada, gave Rev. Father Kelly, Parish Priest of Sorel, jurisdiction over the Catholics of these Townships. Father Kelly visited this mission twice a year until 1823. In 1822 he built the first chapel in Drummondville, which is claimed to be the oldest in these parts.

FATHER HOLMES

In 1823, the Catholic population of the Eastern Townships had so increased that Bishop Plessis saw the necessity of appointing a resident priest-missionary with headquarters at Drummondville. Rev. John Holmes was the man of his choice,

eminently fitted by qualities of mind and heart for the arduous task which awaited him.

The life of John Holmes reads as a most interesting story and a living exemplification of the ways of God in choosing His servants.

John Holmes was born in Windsor, Vt., of parents of British origin who had emigrated to America in search of liberty of conscience. From early childhood, he felt a strong inclination towards a religious life, which became intensified while a student at Dartmouth College, to the extent that he seriously considered studying for the Wesleyan ministry. The young man's father did not look on this idea with favor, and, in fact, on this account, withdrew him from College. Mr. Holmes, Sr., disposed of his properties in Windsor, Vt., and purchased a large farm in the vicinity of Colebrook, N.H., which he proposed to cultivate with the help of his son.

Young John, to all appearances, fell in with his father's wishes, but he was most discontented and unhappy. He could not put his heart into the work expected of him in tilling the land. Always some inner voice seemed to be calling him elsewhere. One day, in desperation, he threw himself on his knees in the field where he was working and begged of God to show him a ray of light.

Arising, the thought of Canada immediately entered his mind, with the vividness of an inspiration, as being the place where he should go and where he could continue his studies. Then and there, without taking leave of his parents or weighing the results of such a hasty decision, he fled to the country which was to become his by adoption. Pursuing his way through New Hampshire, weary and travel stained, he enters a Catholic Church to rest. Looking around, he observes pictures and statues representing the Blessed Virgin and the Saints. Still laboring under the errors of Puritanism he sees in these evidences of idolatry. Shocked and scandalized, he vows that if God give him strength he will devote his life to the uprooting of papism.

How little did he know the designs of Providence and how little did he realize that the day would dawn when that hated religion would find in him a zealous exponent, and one of its most brilliant prelates!

John Holmes arrived in Sherbrooke in 1815. He was then but sixteen years of age and without resources. His first thought must be to obtain work. He found employment as a common laborer with a tanner by the name of Willard, whose place of business was somewhere at the rear of what is now the Precious Blood Monastery. Here he remained until the spring of 1816 when a certain Stephen Burroughs, a school teacher in Three Rivers, and a man of many parts, whose adventurous career was well known in the Eastern States, was passing through Sherbrooke. He met young Holmes, was at once struck by his unusual intelligence and obtained Willard's consent that the young man accompany him back to Three Rivers. Together they departed on their journey, and thus was another link forged in the Providential chain of circumstances leading John Holmes into the fold of the

Catholic Church.

Shortly after, young Holmes attracted the attention of the Rev. Father Ecuyer, Parish Priest of Three Rivers, when the latter was acting as examiner for Mr. Burroughs' pupils. He also was impressed by the superior talents of this young man. He took him under his care, brought him to his own home and there continued his education.

Under the beneficent influence of this saintly man the young student's mind was opened to the light of faith and he was baptized in the Parish Church of Yamachiche in 1817. — After two years philosophy at the Seminary of Montreal, John Holmes returned to Nicolet Seminary, where he was professor for some time. He was ordained priest on the fifth of August, 1823. That his ecclesiastical superiors almost immediately gave him the responsibility of so large a mission as the Eastern Townships was a tribute to his ability and his outstanding qualities. Thus on Dec. 12, 1823, we find Father John Holmes facing this arduous task.

His mission field covered an immense territory, that of Sherbrooke alone being seventy miles from North to South and forty-two miles from East to West. To his care were confided the townships of Grantham, Wickham, Durham, Melbourne, Brompton, Ascot, Compton, Hatley, Stanstead, Wendover, Simpson, Kingsey, Shipton, Tingwick, Windsor and others.

Nothing short of apostolic zeal, courage and perseverance were required of a missionary who undertook this gigantic task; but these virtues were found in Father Holmes, together with a spirit of enthusiasm which was part of his ardent nature.

Families who had settled in these parts ten or twelve years previously had never since been visited by a priest, so that now the missionary on his necessarily infrequent visits performed marriages, regularized others, baptized children, taught catechism and brought the consolation of religion to these valiant pioneers.

Difficulties of every description he had to encounter, extreme poverty, ignorance and fanaticism, but nothing daunted the zeal and determination of this brave missionary.

The beautiful churches which crown the hilltops throughout the Eastern Townships are monuments to the foresight and good judgment of Father Holmes, who realized even then that in obtaining possession of these sites and erecting tiny chapels or wayside crosses the future was being guaranteed for something more noble. It was he who bought the site for the future churches of Sherbrooke, Shipton (Richmond) and Brant's Hill.

But the exigencies of this large mission were merciless and in the exercise of his divine ministry Father Holmes exhausted his strength. The climax was reached when, one cold night in the autumn of the year he was called to a sick bed. Although a violent storm was raging and the roads leading to his destination were practically impassable, Father Holmes started on his errand of mercy. Weary, exhausted, stumbling along in the dark, he fell into a brook swollen by torrential

rains, but continued on his journey. By the time he finally returned to his home he had already contracted the disease from which he suffered for the thirty remaining years of his life.

The missionary labors of Father Holmes thus came to an end, but not his years of usefulness.

Recalled by his ecclesiastical superiors, he offered his services to the Seminary of Quebec. These were gladly accepted. However, he never forgot the field of his first missionary labors and was always keenly interested in the problems of the Eastern Townships.

Even at that early date, Father Holmes foresaw the need of colonization for the spread of Catholicism in the Eastern Townships and, with this in mind, encouraged the French Canadians to emigrate to this part of the Province.

At the Quebec Seminary Father Holmes was not idle and his versatile talents found many an outlet. As a professor, at different times he taught History, Latin, Greek and Hebrew languages, philosophy, physics and chemistry, mathematics, astronomy, geography, etc. But geography was his favorite subject and his well known "Modern Geography" was soon adopted as the standard textbook, was translated into several languages, and passed through seven editions. He had the faculty of making the driest subjects interesting and was, of course, a great favorite with the pupils. Among his most brilliant students were a young man named Taschereau, later to become Cardinal Archbishop of Quebec, and Antoine Racine, first bishop of Sherbrooke.

At the time Father Holmes was teaching in the Quebec Seminary public instruction had made but little headway in the province. The country places had no schools or teachers, and, owing to a system prevailing in the beginning of the century whereby the Government attempted to force French Canadians to attend schools where their religion and their language would be jeopardized, the population had become prejudiced against all education. Foreseeing the danger of this mentality, Father Holmes inaugurated a system destined to transform Education in Lower Canada. In 1836 he visited Europe and spent several months there in the interest of his scheme. He returned with books, equipment and professors and established a normal school in Quebec where teachers would be trained for the future. As a matter of fact, mainly through his efforts, a charter was granted to these schools by the Legislature of Lower Canada, in 1836.

Another of his cherished projects and one which eventually became a reality was the establishment of a Catholic University. Father Holmes was one of the founders of Laval University.

This man of wonderful vision dreamt of the union of the provinces of Canada, the realization of which, in 1867, he did not live to see.

The activity of his mind was prodigious and it seemed that the more his body became weakened and wasted by disease the more did his soul take on new vigor and energy. Truly the talents and qualities of this extraordinary man appear to have

had no limit. We have seen him as priest, as citizen, as professor, – and as an orator he had no peer. He was compared to Lacordaire and other great orators of the day, who, in the troublous times of 1848-49, were occupying the pulpit at Notre Dame de Paris. Father Holmes was chosen to deliver a similar series of conferences at Notre Dame de Québec. So popular did these become that hours before the appointed time every seat in the cathedral would be filled. As much at home in the pulpit as in the classroom, Father Holmes captivated his hearers by his magnetic personality.

In Europe, the papacy was threatened and irreligion was rife. “Jesus Christ yesterday, today and the same forever” was the theme of these lectures and the speaker sought to impress on his hearers the probable reaction of these false doctrines, even in Canada, and enjoined his hearers to prayer and penance, reminding them that yesterday, today and for all time is God our only hope and salvation. How strangely like to the exhortations of our own day! Commenting on these conferences a contemporary says they were masterpieces of eloquence, erudition and spirituality.

In 1852 Father Holmes was forced to retire on account of his rapidly failing strength. An appearance in the pulpit of Notre Dame de Québec gave rise to hopes that he would be able to resume his conferences. God deemed otherwise and saw his servant ripe for eternity. It was at Lorette, near Quebec, whither he had retired for the longed for peace and quietness, that he passed away suddenly on June 18, 1852, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Thus was ended a beautiful life, at the comparatively early age of fifty-three, but a life full of noble deeds and marvelous accomplishments. A priest of God in every sense of the word – the Eastern Townships owes a debt of gratitude and should honor the memory of the genius who was one of its most devoted missionaries.

FATHER POWER

On the 27th of August, 1827, to Father Michael Power was confided the mission of Drummondville which still embraced the same limits as in the time of Father Holmes, with, however, an increase in population. During Father Holmes' last year in the mission, forty-seven baptisms and five marriages were performed, and the first year Father Power was in charge, sixty-two baptisms and ten marriages. Born in Ireland, he must have come to this country at an early age. He was renowned as a man of great piety as well as a learned man.

It was in his time that the French Canadians began immigrating to the Eastern Townships from the banks of the St. Lawrence. That all the parish records were signed by M. Power, priest-missionary of the Southern Counties, would prove that he was the only missionary working at that time in these parts.

In 1829 he blessed the chapel of St. Bibiane de Shipton (now Richmond) and

in 1830 that of Sherbrooke, dedicated to St. Columban. In 1831, Father Power was named parish priest at La Petite Nation and then at Laprairie.

The Catholic population of Upper Canada had in the meantime so increased that it was found necessary to divide the Diocese of Kingston, and in 1841 the Diocese of Toronto came into being. It was on Father Power, with his unusual gifts and ability, that the choice fell as the first Bishop of Toronto. He proved an able administrator and all his talents were needed in the creation of the new diocese.

With practically no resources, he built St. Michael's Cathedral, a recognized masterpiece of architecture. Having no Seminary and no clergy, he brought the Jesuit order to Toronto where they displayed great zeal in their work among the Catholic population and also among the Indians of Walpole and Manitoulin Islands.

Father Power's apostolic zeal was blessed by Heaven and all his enterprises met with success.

Hastening to the aid of his stricken fellow countrymen in 1847, he fell a victim to typhus, which claimed his life that same year.

FATHER PAISLEY

Father Power was succeeded by Father Hugh Paisley, who, although he remained but one year in these parts, was a worthy successor to his illustrious predecessors and displayed the same devotion and zeal. Hugh Paisley was born in Scotland and came to Canada with a regiment. Mgr. Plessis, Bishop of Quebec, whose discerning eye was quick to detect talent and merit, soon recognized these qualities in young Paisley, whom he took under his care and for whose education he provided. He studied at the Seminary in Montreal and also at Nicolet. In the year he acted as missionary in the Eastern Townships, he performed 122 baptisms and 19 marriages. He caused the church of St. Pierre de Wickham, which had been begun by his predecessor, to be completed, and blessed it on the 25th of December, 1831.

Father Paisley was also one of the martyrs of the typhus scourge and, while ministering to those poor victims, died in 1847.

FATHER ROBSON

One of the most popular and widely known missionaries of the Eastern Townships was the Rev. Hubert Robson, who came to these parts on November 4, 1832, with headquarters at Drummondville, and remained a longer time than any of his predecessors.

Hubert Robson was born in Quebec on May 4, 1808, of the marriage of Tom Robson and Helen Boyde. In devoting his life to missionary work he was

fulfilling a vow made when as a young ecclesiastic he was crossing the ice-bridge from Levis to Quebec. Suddenly a violent snowstorm arose and, blinded by the drifting snow, numb with cold, he was in danger of losing his way, and indeed his life. In desperation he made a solemn vow that if he were spared he would devote his life to the missions – a promise he faithfully and zealously lived up to.

At the time of Father Robson's coming to the Eastern Townships the population had trebled and the missionary had to be continually on the road to meet the spiritual needs of a Catholic population scattered over a territory of about a hundred miles in circumference. Many are the tales of almost superhuman labors and endurance of this apostle of the missions, of his absolute trust in Divine Providence, by which he virtually worked miracles; and if some of these have a legendary touch, there is no doubt that they are based on truth; – and what more touching tribute can be paid to a loved character than the legend woven around his name, told and retold by the fireside? And so it was that Father Robson was one of those kindly priests, beloved of his flock.

At the mission of St. Felix de Kingsey, Father Robson undertook the erection of a stone church, the first of its kind in this region and a project very dear to his heart. He spared neither labor nor energy in vain efforts to bring it to completion, but it was too ambitious an undertaking with the slim resources at his command and was not completed until some thirty years later. This venture was the cause of much anxiety and annoyance to Father Robson and the ultimate reason of his recall from St. Felix de Kingsey in 1844.

Father Robson took a very special interest in the poor Indians scattered through his mission who until now had received but little attention.

In 1838 the Drummondville mission was divided in two. To Father Robson were confided the townships of Grantham, Wickham, Durham, Kingsey, Simpson and Wendover. Father McMahon, with headquarters at Sherbrooke, had charge of the District of St. Francis. However, Father Robson still had the responsibility of three hundred and ninety-seven families, dispersed over the townships above mentioned, so had the population increased in the last few years.

On October 20th, 1842, Father Robson was transferred to the mission of St. Felix de Kingsey; from there he went as parish priest to St. Raymond; then to St. Thomas de Montmagny; and finally as missionary to Grosse Isle.

With all the resolution of his fearless and unselfish nature he devoted himself body and soul to the corporal and spiritual relief of the poor afflicted victims of typhus. The usual time allotted to a missionary on this plague-stricken island was one week. Father Robson asked for and obtained permission to remain there longer, but even his strong and robust constitution succumbed to the ravages of the dread disease. On June 25th, 1847 he was taken to the Hôtel Dieu in Quebec, where he died on July 1st at the early age of thirty-five years.

He was buried under the altar in the Hôtel Dieu, Quebec, in the presence of Bishop Turgeon, coadjutor-bishop, and a number of prelates. So great was the

regard in which this noble priest was held that the chaplain of the Hôtel Dieu, in a note addressed to the Mother Superior, enjoined her to faithfully preserve some relics of this martyr to charity.

FATHER JOHN B. McMAHON

The first resident priest-missionary to have charge of the newly formed mission of Sherbrooke was the Rev. John Baptist McMahon, who arrived here on June 16, 1834. His territory took in the whole of the District of St. Francis and covered an area of twenty leagues in length by thirteen in breadth.

It has been noted that the first Mass in Sherbrooke was said by Father Jean Raimbault, in 1816. The years elapsing had witnessed a steady growth in population and this mission now counted two hundred and eighty Catholic families, one thousand one hundred and twenty-four souls, three quarters of which were Irish and the remainder French Canadian, scattered over the entire mission.

A chapel had been built during Father Holmes' time, which stood on the actual site of the East wing of St. Charles Seminary, facing the St. Francis River (practically on the very spot on which we actually stand). But there was no presbytery and the missionary had to lodge at some distance from his chapel, which was a great inconvenience.

In correspondence with Mgr. Seignay, coadjutor Bishop of Quebec, Father McMahon tells of efforts to buy land on which to build a presbytery, but that so far he has been unsuccessful, as all desirable lands have been purchased by the Land Company which does not encourage Catholic immigration to the Eastern Townships.

At the same time Father McMahon was experiencing much difficulty in dislodging a certain Cotter, who, apparently, without any right, had built a house and barn on the land adjoining the chapel.

This affair hung fire for several years and caused endless trouble and anxiety to Father McMahon. It was finally settled in 1839, when Cotter accepted a price set by a board of arbitrators. However, a presbytery was not built for many years.

The task facing Father McMahon at this time was a rather discouraging one. Extreme poverty, a certain indifference on the part of the few Catholics, which was not surprising considering the lack of facilities for the practice of their religion since they had settled in these parts, and bigotry on the part of others, created a real problem.

Actual figures taken from the records of the day show the receipts of this mission for the years 1834-35 to be £35 - 19s. - 4½d., and plate collections on a Sunday averaging 2 s. are proof of the state of penury existing at that time.

In September, 1834, Father McMahon paid a visit to the mission of Barnet, Vt., which he terms "The most painful mission ever visited." He speaks of unbelievable bigotry and ignorance among Non-Catholics and again of extreme

poverty. During that visit he performed 23 baptisms and took advantage of the occasion to explain the doctrines and practices of the Church. Father McMahon says that many Protestants were present at the service and appeared to be favorably impressed. On the same trip he visited Compton, Hatley and Stanstead. At the latter place there were about thirty Catholic families and it was the first time they had ever received the visit of a Catholic priest. He proposes to write a small book of religious instruction of the most elementary nature for the benefit of his flock.

It is almost impossible to credit the hardships experienced in these townships by the early missionaries.

Allow me to give but one example cited by Father McMahon in one of his letters to Bishop Seignay, which will, I think, assure us that their life was not one of unalloyed bliss.

It was on a Saturday evening and evidently this good priest had not had too difficult a day. He tells of performing his many duties about his house and the church in preparation for the morrow. Thanking God for the peace and quietness of this day, he reads a chapter from the *Imitation of Christ* and is just about to extinguish his light, when let us have Father McMahon's own words:

“I heard a thundering rap at the door, there was a young man on horseback, who traveled forty miles for me, to visit a woman dangerously ill, it was then ten thirty p.m. I departed in fifteen minutes leaving the young man behind and after travelling all night and until ten o'clock next day, I arrived at destined place, Tenwick. I returned the same day as far as Mulvaney's at the river of Shipton. I put up my poor horse, which was quite fatigued, because it is forty-two miles from Sherbrooke to Tenwick then eighteen miles back to Mulvaney's.

Then after supper there came a boy post haste, who followed me to Tenwick, missed me on the road and returned to Mulvaney's to bring me to Kingsey to one of my own penitents who removed there from Sherbrooke and was at the point of death also – the boy's horse was fatigued, so was mine, Mulvaney's horses were not at home, there was no time to be lost, the distance was fourteen miles – we walked it and arrived at twelve o'clock the same night, administered the sacraments to the sick woman, took a cup of tea and a bit of bread and butter and returned to Mulvaney's where we arrived at six o'clock next morning – slept three hours and returned to Sherbrooke.”

We have seen Father McMahon's jurisdiction extended to Shipton (Richmond) and Tenwick (Tingwick). He reports that Tenwick is one of the best parts of the mission and the Catholics in this vicinity diligent and faithful in attending church. He speaks of the possibility of changing the location of the

Shipton church to Melbourne, but this appears never to have been accomplished.

The Eastern Townships did not escape the revolutionary troubles of 1837. Father McMahon describes the state of the country as being in an uproar, bridges guarded and every one in terror. He also fears for the loyalty of some of his people. But, in spite of all the difficulties, with wonderful vision he foresees Sherbrooke as a place of much importance, "being so near to the United States and a central place of communication." He finds the present chapel inadequate to the needs of the population in the near future and advises buying more ground, the present location being "the proper one" for a church and school.

Father McMahon says he had placed "this wild mission" under the protection of the Blessed Virgin and looks forward to a day when there may, on this hill, be a convent, which he would name Mount St. Mary. His hopes were realized some years later with the establishment of a convent by the Congregation of Notre Dame called "Mont Notre Dame."

Eventually the hardships and labors of this exacting mission began to tell on the health of the brave missionary, who, at his own request, was recalled.

Living as we now do, in the lap of religious luxury, with churches and chapels dotting the hills of our fair city, how little do we realize what a debt of gratitude we owe to Father McMahon and his contemporaries who strove and fought and suffered to ensure for us the liberty of practising our holy religion.

Father McMahon's immediate successor was the Rev. Peter Harkin, who encountered most of the same difficulties as did Father McMahon, in this mission which was still far from prosperous.

The Rev. Bernard O'Reilly came to the Sherbrooke mission in 1846.

Bernard O'Reilly was born in Ireland in 1817. He was ordained priest in Quebec on Sept. 12, 1842. He was a protégé of Father Hubert Robson's and it is said that, had Father Robson done nothing else than provide for the education of Bernard O'Reilly, he would have earned the gratitude of the Eastern Townships people, as Father O'Reilly was one of his most capable successors, in this mission field.

It was Father O'Reilly who initiated that era of colonization which up to then had not received the serious consideration of the Catholic Clergy of this province. He was ably seconded in his efforts by Father Antoine Racine, then missionary priest at Stanfold, P. Q., and subsequently first Bishop of Sherbrooke.

A serious setback to the work of these two able men was experienced for a period, owing to certain government grants made to parties called "leaders" on conditions which were never fulfilled, working to the detriment of the poor colonist. This obstacle was finally removed, mainly through the efforts of the Rev. Antoine Racine, and thereafter the Catholic population in the Eastern Townships augmented at a surprising rate. The growth of Catholicity in these parts is in a great measure due to the Rev. Bernard O'Reilly, who was known as the apostle of

colonization.

In 1848, the Rev. D. McGauran was appointed to this mission and remained there until 1853. He was possessed of all the qualities and ability required for the administration of this still difficult charge.

On Sept. 15, 1853, the Rev. Alfred Elie Dufesne became parish priest of Sherbrooke, and this was the beginning of a new era.

Although the French population in the Eastern Townships was probably in the majority, notable Irish priests were still laboring in many parts, witness, the Rev. Michael McAuley, in turn parish priest at Granby, Stanstead and Coaticook; Father George Browne at Compton; the Rev. P. Dignan, for many years at Windsor; the Rev. Patrick Quinn at Richmond; and the Rev. Thomas Quinn at Drummondville.

One of the most remarkable of these worthy priests was Rev. Michael McAuley, who was born in Ireland in 1834. He came to this country with his parents at an early age. The father and mother contracted the dread typhus and died at Grosse Isle. The poor, desolate orphans were taken into French Canadian homes where they were reared with the greatest kindness. Young Michael McAuley was educated at the Seminary of St. Hyacinthe, studied for the priesthood and was ordained on Aug. 21, 1859. After serving as Parish Priest of Granby and Shefford for some years, he was named to Stanstead in 1868. His talents as an able administrator were well known and the mission of Stanstead was then greatly in need of just such a man. When he arrived, that mission was burdened with a debt of \$1400 which, thanks to Father McAuley's financial ability, was entirely liquidated in a few years.

He then undertook the construction of a new church at a cost of \$13,000. This devoted priest travelled far and wide, made himself a beggar to collect this sum, and was successful. In 1874, at his invitation, the religious of the Congregation of Notre Dame founded a convent in Stanstead which was destroyed by fire in 1877. It was not rebuilt, but some years later, the Ursulines from Quebec opened a house of education there.

Father McAuley came to Coaticook as Parish Priest in 1883, and there displayed the same zeal and administrative genius as in his previous pastorates. He built a new church, established schools, and saw the parish grow to such proportions that shortly after his retirement it was divided.

His outstanding qualities were recognized when Bishop Larocque named him Vicar General of the Diocese in 1893.

This brief outline gives but the faintest idea of the personality that was Father McAuley.

His affable and kindly manner attracted all to him, his friends were legion, and he numbered as many among Protestants as among his own. Father McAuley had also a great reputation as a wit, and even today merely to mention his name immediately recalls a story about him or one he told. He also cherished the most

grateful remembrance of the French Canadians who succoured the Irish immigrants, of whom he was one, in their need and desolation and lost no opportunity publicly or privately to speak of it.

However, on one occasion in particular, he allowed his irrepressible wit to come to the fore, in spite of the circumstances.

The feast of St. John the Baptist, patron of French Canadians, was being celebrated, in Coaticook, with great pomp and circumstance. Father McAuley was the orator for the occasion, and, as was his wont, sung the praises of his French-speaking parishioners, and their ancestors, reiterated his gratitude and indeed almost convinced his hearers he at last was one of them, but not quite—he closed by saying, with a hearty laugh—“I am still glad I was born an Irishman.”

The Rev. Michael McAuley died in retirement at his brother's home in Coaticook, in 1904, leaving a memory of kindness and goodwill.

And thus the mustard seed of the Catholic faith, planted by these apostolic missionaries in the Eastern Townships and nourished by their successors, has grown into a tree of great proportions, which casts its shadow over the land where they labored and prayed and suffered. On us who are privileged to bask in its shade falls the responsibility of keeping its roots watered by our faith and good works.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Jos. Chas. St. Amant: *Un Coin des Cantons de l'Est.*

P. J. O. Chauveau: *L'abbé Jean Holmes et ses Conférences.*

L. M. Darveau: *Nos Hommes de Lettres.*

A. D. Decelles: *L'abbé John Holmes.*

M. l'abbé Auguste Gosselin: “*L'abbé Holmes et l'Instruction Publique,*” paper presented at a meeting of Royal Society of Canada, 1907.

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following who have been of great assistance in the preparation of this paper: The Rev. Maurice O' Bready, St. Charles Seminary, Sherbrooke; the Rev. E. Noel, at the Archives, Bishop's Palace, Sherbrooke; Mr. Redmond Hayes, Richmond; Mr. Antonio Drolet, Librarian, Université Laval; Miss Margaret Doherty, Sherbrooke.