

**The Very Reverend J. R. Teefy, C.S.B.,
LL.D.**

BY
THE VERY REV. HENRY CARR, C.S.B.

Father Teefy died on June 10th, 1911. Had I been reading a paper on him at that time it would have been quite different from the paper which I am presenting to you today. This is a very interesting fact. Many of the considerations which would have come to mind at that time just naturally fall away when we look at the subject of our study through the retrospect of thirty years. An Historical Association such as this is interested in a man's place in the history of Canada. For some years before his death, Father Teefy lived in the quiet and seclusion of our Novitiate. He was a spiritual man and lived there a life of prayer. It may well be that one of those years, indeed one month of those years, was worth more than all the achievements that merit for him a place in the history of Canada and even of the history of the Church in Canada. One silent prayer in the secret of the heart is carried by angels before the Face of God and remains and will remain for all the ages. The greatest achievements of men, whether it be in buildings, in inventions or in the highest creations of the human spirit, are as nothing compared with the things of eternity and the good deeds of man are eternal, although they have no place in history. So the things that I might have said at the time of his death and shall not say today may far transcend in importance the great work of a great man as judged by human history.

Nor do I mean at all to minimize the importance of history and profane history. It is for this chiefly that St. Thomas Aquinas is such a priceless treasure for the Church, for God, and for civilization, in that he shows how all created things are good and have their place. The things of time are insignificant in comparison with the things of eternity but they have their place, nevertheless, and they have their value. Father Teefy's work is important, from the purely secular point of view, to civilization, culture and prosperity in Canada. But it is of the Church, too, since his work was the work of education and of Catholic education. But even Catholic education belongs to the external and is expressed in the material and belongs to the things of this world. Men can be pious and fired with the love of God without limit, whether they are equipped with the best that civilization can bestow upon them in the way of education and culture or are poor and ignorant, absolutely illiterate. That is what I mean when I say that education, and even Catholic education, belongs to the things of this world. God does not judge

the souls of men by the state of their culture. All the same, God wants man to develop the best that is in him while he is living here on earth. God wants men to grow and harvest in their lives here on earth the great fruits of the human spirit.

There is a tradition in the science of history and it is this conception of history that I have in mind when I speak as I am speaking now. If I am permitted to do so, I would make bold to say that history will always be incomplete as long as it leaves out of consideration the deeds and actions that touch the life of God in men. History will only be complete when it is looked at from the viewpoint of the saints.

I can hardly tear myself away from the thought which comes to my mind at this point. When I look over the centuries that lie behind us and see the figures that still stand out visible, where nearly everyone else has been buried in an ocean of oblivion, I see the calendar of the saints, the Divine hierarchy of the missal and the breviary. A little maid like Agnes, a nameless girl like Philomena, lives on after two thousand years, and "lives" is the proper word. The faithful talk of them and speak to their God through their intercession now as in the days when they lived and walked and talked to their friends and acquaintances. There are all sorts of differences among them, too – great saints and saints not so great – saints little known and saints known and prayed to everywhere.

It is well for me that it is not my task to fix the place of Father Teefy, looked at from this point of view. There are many things in this connection which I could say but looking back across these years I have undertaken to ask myself, what is the lasting place of Father Teefy in the history of Ontario and of Canada – the work which he did for Church and State which is worth-while and which endures and will endure. I will endeavour to give you my answer.

John Reed Teefy was born at Richmond Hill on August 21st, 1848. He was the second child born to Matthew Teefy and Betsy Faran Clarkson. He was educated at the Richmond Hill Grammar School and entered the University of Toronto in 1867. For two years he studied both Classics and Mathematics but in his last two years devoted his time entirely to Mathematics. He received his B.A. degree in 1871. He taught in high schools at Port Rowan and Beamsville, and in Hamilton Collegiate Institute. While at Hamilton Collegiate Institute he heard a sermon on vocations which led him to resign his position and enter the Grand Seminary on September 11th, 1874. Toward the end of his third year theology he learned that his vocation was to a religious teaching community and he entered the Basilian Novitiate at Sandwich, Ontario. Upon the completion of his novitiate he was ordained by Bishop Walsh on June 24th, 1878. From 1878-79 to 1885-86 he was at St. Michael's College, 1886-87 to 1887-88 at the College of Mary Immaculate, Plymouth. In 1888-89 he returned to St. Michael's College,

where he was Superior from 1889-90 to 1903.

As Superior he was a member of the University Senate. In 1892 he edited the Jubilee volume of the Archdiocese of Toronto. In 1893 he became first editor of the newly established Catholic Register. He received his M. A. degree in 1894. In 1896 the degree of LL.D. was conferred on him by the University of Toronto. In 1902 he published "The Worship of God, a Course of Lenten Sermons," and built the High School wing of St. Michael's College. In 1903 he was named pastor of Holy Rosary Church, Toronto. In 1904 he became chief editorial writer for the Catholic Record. In 1906 he was appointed a member of the Board of Governors of the University of Toronto. In 1910 he was elected Assistant Superior General of the Basilian Fathers. He died on June 10th, 1911. It is a many-sided life. There is so much that I must pass by of all his abilities and qualities. I will only mention his great-heartedness and the wonderful note that his voice sounded in oratory. Among all the greatest orators of the world in the last two generations he would find a place near the top.

The University of Toronto as it stands today is one of the great universities of the world. It has grown with age like a tree, like an oak tree, and verily from an acorn – and that within the memory of a living man, if you take Sir William Mulock. It is constituted of a federation of colleges in a way that is peculiarly its own. Canadian universities born afterwards have profited by the experience and success of the federation of the University of Toronto, each one in its own way and according to its own needs and conditions. But the federation of colleges of the University of Toronto has served as a model for the builders of the University of Western Ontario, the University of Manitoba, the University of Alberta, the University of Saskatchewan. For many years university men from all over the world have heard of Toronto and its federation system and have come here to study it. It does not seem possible that in the conditions of the times the University of Toronto could have become a great university except in the way it did become great, namely, through the federation of colleges and universities.

I am sure tha' I do not need to tell you that the story of the University of Toronto is intimately bound up with the whole range of Catholic education – primary, secondary and university – in Ontario, and, as I have said, through its influence, in other provinces, too, and, I can add, in the United States.

Father Teefy played a part in the birth and growth of the University of Toronto which it would be difficult to over-emphasize. Once before, in the early 1850s, men of vision had tried to bring about some unity among the competing and opposing denominational colleges throughout Ontario and had failed miserably. It was about twenty-five years later when Sir William Mulock, as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Toronto, and Father Teefy, as representing St. Michael's, came upon the scene.

It is simply impossible for us, who have come later, to realize the

condition of the University of Toronto in the '80s. Every denominational college and university in the Province claimed recognition and its share of any governmental aid that was to be given for university education. Moreover, the dominant position of the University of Toronto in the last two generations makes it difficult, if not impossible, for us to realize that whether on the financial side or in the matter of student body and professoriate, the University of Toronto did not stand out above other institutions in the Province. The Government dared not come to its assistance and treat it as a Provincial University. The story of a banquet that was given in the Allan Gardens in 1884 may serve to illustrate and confirm this matter. The University made a great effort to elicit public support for the University of Toronto and arranged a banquet that was intended to inspire the Government with the importance of the support that could be counted on for the University. The Honorable Edward Blake was the Chancellor of the University at the time and in opening his address at the banquet he said: "I don't know if any of you have taken the trouble to count the names on this toast list. I have; there are one and thirty. Allowing each speaker ten minutes, we are to have five hours of solid oratory." Those who were present recall it as the greatest banquet at which they were present in all their lives. Distinguished men from all over the Province were asked to come and speak. The University made a tremendous effort to impress the Government. Neither the Prime Minister nor the leader of the opposition dared be present. The representative of the Government was the Honorable G. W. Ross, Minister of Education, and all he could say in his speech was the following: "I trust the Provincial Government will not fall short of its duty, however much it may fall short of your expectations." This was the best that the University could do. It simply did not have the support of the Province of Ontario. To gain that support it had to win over the different divisions of the Province which had voting power.

It was here where the importance of St. Michael's for the University came in. That the Catholics of the Province were looked on as ultraconservative in the matter of education, I need not tell you, – and if the University of Toronto could win over the support of the Catholics, who constituted one-seventh of the population of the Province, the effect would be, on account of this conservatism, far beyond their actual voting influence. Other men, both on the side of the University and on the side of St. Michael's, saw this and rendered their support, but there is no doubt that the two men who were responsible for enlisting the support of the Catholics of the Province were Sir William Mulock and Father Teefy.

It is true, and very interesting, that as early as 1855 Father Soulerin, who was at that time Superior of the College, applied to the University for affiliation for St. Michael's and was refused very nicely on the ground that everything which St. Michael's could acquire by affiliation was already available to them without affiliation.

I am going to read you a most interesting letter written by the Most Reverend John Joseph Lynch, Archbishop of Toronto, to the Very Reverend C. Vincent, President of St. Michael's College, on June 23rd, 1881.

“ Very Reverend Sir

I laid before the Bishops of our Province your letter stating your reasons for your affiliation to the University of Toronto. Their lordships have found them satisfactory and desire me to express the same to you and to encourage you in the project. I have reason to believe that there will be no difficulty in obtaining what is very desirable from the Senate of the University, that the certificate of St. Michael's College will suffice as to proficiency in History and Metaphysics, so as to obtain degrees in these departments. You will, of course, have lectures and a class book on religion and the evidence of Christianity, and particularly of Catholicism, so necessary in our days of infidelity.”

I give you this letter as it was quoted in an editorial in the Catholic Register in the year 1916. I think I will tell you, by way of digression, a little story about that letter. The original of that letter is lost. It is not lost beyond recall. I am sure that it will turn up, but for the present it is lost. Now in the letter, as I read it to you, Archbishop Lynch speaks of History and Metaphysics being the subjects in St. Michael's College. The letter is written in longhand and there is no doubt whatever that that is what he intended to write. I am probably the only man living who can testify that in the original letter he did not write "History and Metaphysics" but "History and Mathematics.”

I think you all will agree that this support of the Bishops of the Province of Ontario to the affiliation of St. Michael's College with the University of Toronto, given and written in 1881, is a very remarkable letter. Father Teefy was a graduate of the University of Toronto. Indeed, what he did would have been impossible for anyone who was not a graduate of the University. The Basilians at that time were largely composed of French priests from France. They supported the proposal to affiliate St. Michael's with the University and knowing the conservatism of the priests of France that too is remarkable. Father Teefy himself, of course, could never have carried through the affiliation, he and Sir William Mulock, without the support of the Basilians. I think the support of the French priests could be traced to the kinship between the system in vogue in France with the University of London, England. As Dr. Strachan, the first President of the University, tells us, the University of Toronto was founded on the constitutions of the University of London, rather than on the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. As such, in the early days and for many years, and in spirit right down through the

years, the University of Toronto was an examining board and not a teaching body. It prescribed the courses, set the papers, examined the papers, and was not concerned with who did the teaching, or how the students acquired their knowledge. Up to 1877 candidates could present themselves for examination in any year of the course and all that was required was that they were sufficiently competent to obtain a passing mark. Indeed, during the last years of that time a candidate could present himself for the final B.A. examination without ever having passed any previous examination in the University or anywhere else. The only condition was that he was required to pass on any subjects in the course which were not covered by the final examination and in addition it was required that he be somewhat older. The old idea of a purely examining board still remains in the Ontario Matriculation, Normal Entrance, and Upper School, although it is disappearing even from these. The Basilian priests from France were familiar with a system like that. In the colleges in France they prepared the students for the Baccalaureate examinations, which were set and examined by the University of Paris. I am inclined to the view that the University of London took over from France the idea of a university as a purely examining body. I have not made any attempt to clear up that point.

Sir William Mulock and Father Teefy could now say that St. Michael's College and the Catholics of the Province were ready to join up with the University of Toronto. You must not think for a moment that everything went so smoothly and quickly as it sounds in the reading. But after many conferences and a great deal of work, St. Michael's was ready for affiliation, and made formal application for the same. I am quite sure that when Father Teefy and Sir William Mulock began their work they looked upon its final achievement as something to be dreamed of and hoped for but almost impossible.

From the side of the University of Toronto it was not at all as clear to all concerned as it was to the guiding genius of Sir William Mulock. Looking back over it now and seeing it then as Sir William Mulock saw it, the backing of St. Michael's College and the Catholics of Ontario was vital before there could be any chance of support from the Government. But to see that at that time required vision. The Senate of the University of Toronto was composed of able men but they were born of Protestant antecedents. The world had not yet moved on to what subsequent years brought about and there was still in the minds of men a suspicion and fear of the "Romish" church. When the formal application of St. Michael's College for affiliation came before the Senate of the University for final approbation, quoting Sir William Mulock,

"The meeting of the Senate was called but well in advance that report was communicated to every member in order that when they came to the

meeting they should know the nature of the subject and having given ample thought to it would be able to bring to bear upon it their best judgment. The meeting began in the early part of the day. Father Teefy and his associates, the representatives of St. Michael's College, were most anxious for the decision of the Senate, and attended at the University building, trusting that in case of difficulties arising they might be able to remove them. As I say, the meeting began early in the day and it continued on into the evening. The Senate fully realized the gravity of the situation, the importance of the question, the far-reaching consequences of their decision, whether for or against the adoption of the proposition and therefore gave to it the most anxious consideration that men could give to such a sacred question. As the discussion proceeded, fair, just and judicious, it became manifest that the scheme was a wise one. It commended itself to the sense of fairness and justice of every member of the Senate and at last we realized that everyone was in favour of it.

No decision at that moment was taken but it being known that Father Teefy and his associates, Dr. Cassidy and D. A. O'Sullivan, were in attendance, it was thought wise to invite them into the meeting in order that they might have the satisfaction of being present when the formal decision was rendered and so they entered the Senate Chamber. On invitation to speak, Father Teefy, not yet knowing the views of the Senate, addressed an eloquent convincing argument in favour of the scheme. When he sat down the question was put and every member of the Senate voted in favour of it... Thus it came about that St. Michael's College, in 1881, became affiliated with the University of Toronto."

From this account you can see that the importance of St. Michael's affiliation was not as clear to the members of the Senate as it was to the Vice-chancellor, Sir William Mulock. St. Michael's was affiliated in 1881, the first of the colleges to become part of the University. Knox and Wycliffe came in in 1885, Victoria University in 1890, and Trinity in 1903.

This is the story of the great work of Father Teefy in laying the foundations for St. Michael's College and for the University of Toronto. The plan was good, the foundations were well laid. Good plans and a firm foundation alone are not sufficient. It requires as much genius to carry out the plans over years and to build the building on the foundations, and that brings us to the development of the work.

The University of Toronto owed much to the accession of St. Michael's College. Although it did take a whole day for the Senate of the University to come to a decision, St. Michael's is glad to acknowledge with heartfelt gratitude that in all the years that have passed since, the men of the University have never once failed in their warm regard and thoughtful consideration and

generous assistance wherever St. Michael's College was concerned. The story of the University of Toronto will never be found in documents because the essence of it is in the living spirit of men. The University men of the early days were warmly attached to St. Michael's College. The few who survive have never lost that warmth of feeling. Those who are gone retained it to the end, and before they died they passed it on to newcomers into the University and the spirit is still there. The University of Toronto had reason to be grateful in the early '80s for the help that St. Michael's College gave to it. St. Michael's College is grateful ever since for the fairness and the friendship and the love and the generous assistance of the University of Toronto and also of the other colleges as they came into federation one after another.

St. Michael's College is one of the four arts colleges of the University. That is something that was never contemplated by the founders of federation, not even by Father Teefy himself. Keeping in mind the position of the University as an examining body, St. Michael's College in 1881 and later in the University Act of 1887 had the right to teach History and Metaphysics. It did not have the right to set papers or examine them. The University appointed examiners. Guarantees of fairness were given to St. Michael's on the nature of the questions. When it was put into practice in Metaphysics the students of University College and St. Michael's College wrote on the same papers. One year the papers were set by non-Catholics and another year they were set by Catholics. You will be interested to know that it was the Protestant students of University College who objected to the examinations set, as a matter of fact, by the late Father Dowdell, in a particular year and petitioned that University College have its own papers and St. Michael's have their own papers. From that time on this practice has been followed.

Outside of Metaphysics and the right to teach History, St. Michael's was in the same position as Knox College and Wycliffe College are in today. Nothing different from this was ever contemplated.

St. Michael's was slow getting under way. At the time of affiliation in 1881 and in the first years that followed, there was a burst of interest and enthusiasm. Quite a number of St. Michael's students entered The University and took their courses towards degrees. It did not last. It was not long before interest flagged and almost died out. By the close of the century, St. Michael's could not be said to be participating in the life of the University. It still possessed its position of rights but that was all.

A change came at the turn of the century. There were a number of Catholic students at University College, without any connection with St. Michael's College and one of them, later to become Senator the Hon. W. H. McGuire,* learned the relation of St. Michael's to the University and saw its

* Now President-General of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association.
[Ed.]

possibilities. Through his efforts nearly every Catholic student in Arts took his philosophy at St. Michael's. In 1901-02, Father Dumouchel was Director of Studies at St. Michael's under Father Teefy and a flash of genius struck the College. It was a flash and did not last. But it did point the way to what came afterwards. Father Dumouchel conceived the idea of taking full advantage of St. Michael's part in the University. It was his idea that the last four years of St. Michael's seven-year course of five years' Classics and two years' Philosophy should become part and parcel of the University course in Arts, that these four years should be fitted into the four years of the Arts course and every St. Michael's student graduating at the end of Philosophy would receive his B. A. degree from the University of Toronto. He took the general course of the Arts Faculty of the University of Toronto and incorporated it into St. Michael's College calendar for the year 1902-03. The idea was a mark of genius but it did not get any farther at that time. It was not carried out.

A new life came during the year 1904-05, the life that was to continue up to the present time. At this time it was Father Cushing who was Superior of the College. In Father Dumouchel's plan the old traditional course of the college for the first three years of the Classical Course had been left untouched. A vital move now was to change the old Classical Course and transform it into the regular high school course of the Ontario System, culminating in Matriculation. All the students of St. Michael's in these three years would be proceeding towards Matriculation into the University. This was a radical change. Hitherto the Classical Course had nothing whatever to do with the high school course of Ontario or with the University. Any students of St. Michael's who wished to go to the University and take their degrees were placed in a separate class called the "Varsity" class, which prepared for Matriculation.

In 1904-05 this change was effected. In 1906, the first regular class of St. Michael's High School matriculated. This matriculation class of 1906 was to proceed into Senior Matriculation work, which was the equivalent of first year Arts. As a vestige of the original idea of the University as an examining board, first year Arts could be taken as Senior Matriculation without attendance and this was what was planned.

But what would become of this class which matriculated in 1906 and passed its first year examination in 1907 in the next year? It was during the course of the year 1905-06 that those in charge were faced with this problem. It had been taken for granted that any students of St. Michael's could proceed to a degree. It had further been taken for granted that St. Michael's could teach any subject in the Arts course and all the student had to do was to try the University examinations. In the early days of the University as an examining board this would have been possible. It would have been easy before the entrance of Victoria College as the second Arts college. Then Trinity had

come in as a third Arts college in 1903 and this further complicated it. To graduate in Arts in the University of Toronto a student had to register in the University and he had to enrol in one of the Arts colleges.

At the time when this difficulty arose a Royal Commission was sitting and examining into the whole question of the University of Toronto, preparing the University Act of 1906. Father Cushing and Father M. V. Kelly had been called before the Commission to present the case of St. Michael's College. It was after this and right at the end of the sitting of the Commission that it dawned on St. Michael's what an awkward and even impossible situation it found itself in. Father Cushing and Father Kelly went back to the Royal Commission and frankly put the case before the Commission. Here, as always before and as always ever since, those representing the University were most anxious to do whatever they could to help St. Michael's. The act was all ready to be presented to Parliament. The Commission added to the end of the clauses of the Act a very interesting, as well as strange clause...

“No. 145. If and when a college now or hereafter federated with the University shall establish a faculty of Arts in which instruction in the subjects of the course of study in Arts not being University subjects shall be provided and a statute of the Board shall be passed declaring that it has so done, such college, so long as it maintains such faculty to the satisfaction of the Board, shall be known as and may be called a college of the University, and the teaching staff in such faculty shall have the same representation in the Council of the Faculty of Arts as is by section 74 of this Act given to the teaching staffs of the federated universities, and the regular matriculated students of such college who are enrolled therein and enter their names with the Registrar of the University shall be entitled to the privileges which are by section 132 conferred upon the students mentioned therein.”

A little study shows that this clause reads like an Irish bull. When a college is doing all the work of the University in Arts it may be admitted as an Arts college but it cannot do the work of the University in Arts until it is an Arts College. The intent of the Commission is quite plain and nobody ever questioned the wording. In fact, as far as I know, this is the first time attention has been called to the peculiar wording of the clause. The Commission actually said to the representatives of St. Michael's, “Let St. Michael's go ahead and do as she intended to do. Let her teach, the Arts subjects first year and then second year and then first, second and third years, and then all four years. In the meantime, let her students enrol in University College. We will not bother about technicalities, about her right to teach this or that subject. When she is teaching the four years, let her come to the Senate of the University and ask for the status of an Arts College.”

This is what was done. In the years 1906-10 students of St. Michael's College in Arts were enrolled in University College. The first graduating class of 1910 graduated as graduates of University College. In the course of the following year St. Michael's asked to be admitted as an Arts College of the University. It is hardly necessary for me to point out that St. Michael's even then was not doing *all* the work of an Arts College. The University showed its spirit of generosity in brushing aside all technicalities and formally admitting St. Michael's as an Arts College of the University. The University Act was amended in 1913 to add the name of St. Michael's to those of University College, Victoria College and Trinity College as an Arts College of the University. In the meantime the question of Catholic women students was raised and settled along with the erection of St. Michael's into an Arts College of the University. Very shortly after St. Michael's began to take on the form of an Arts College the teaching sisters of Toronto at St. Joseph's and Loretto took steps to secure the same provision for women as for men. Loretto Abbey College and St. Joseph's College were united with St. Michael's College and through St. Michael's with the University of Toronto.

It is fitting that a paper on Father Teefy should be read this year of all years because it was in the past year that the Institute of Mediaeval Studies was constituted by the Holy See a Pontifical Institute. It looks like the perfect crown of the work planned and founded by Dr. John R. Teefy. It surely is a worthy and outstanding and everlasting testimony of the great achievement of a great man.