

Personalities and Problems

No. 22.—William Findlay Maclean

Newspaper Man, Farmer, Politician, and in Some Respects the Most Remarkable William in Canada

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

"All the near Irishmen in Canada who want to settle Home Rule in Ireland—"

"All desiring to civilize the Yahoos of Borioboola Gha—"

"All Canadian experts on the German menace—"

"All in this country who make the cause of the Balkan allies their own—"

"All who would teach the United States how to self-govern a Filipino—"

"All who would upset theories of civilization based upon three cents instead of two—"

"All who would make civil servants of the telephone girls—"

"All who believe in bucking corporations that tax the public without making every citizen a potential director—"

"All who believe that Canada, being a cosmopolitan country, should have a finger in every international pie—"

"All who are sorry for being parochial or provincial—"

"All who truly repent of the great sin of mental indifference—"

"Hold Up Your Hands."

"Now, children, you are all invited to read the Toronto 'World' and to go with the teacher on a picnic to Everybody's grove."

(Extracts from a popular prescription for running things in general most everywhere at once—by W. F. Maclean, M.P.)

WILLIAM FINDLAY MACLEAN is our national prize puzzle. He is the only editor in Canada whose autobiography is contained in the fyles of one newspaper; the only farmer in Canada who runs a metropolitan newspaper; the only M.P. that since ever he went into the House has regularly bucked everything he had a mind to whether government or opposition; the only farmer in Ontario with 1,200 acres to be subdivided into suburban lots; the only university graduate that ever took up a combination of newspaperism, politics and farming; the only editor that ever made an out-and-out platform for the government of Canada, which he did in 1900; the only newspaper proprietor who was ever unable to pay all salaries regularly and publish a paper and remain popular; the only able M.P. who stays away from Ottawa most of the time that he may be able to blow a trombone when he gets back; the only and original "Billy" Maclean, who believes he was always right, and the first editor to spend seven days a week thinking as differently as possible from every other editor.

But he's not quite the only remarkable William in the world. Canada has at least another; the United States another; and Germany another. Up till the time W. T. Stead died, England had another. And in those days the three Williams, Stead, Hearst and Maclean, were by all odds the most brilliant unconventional alliance of untrammelled newspaper intellects ever known in the world's history. The sum total of what these three Williams could teach the world was at least equal to what the greatest living William, the Kaiser, knows about everything in general. Up till a year ago there was another original William in the *World* office—yclept Greenwood. Among the many brilliant ideas put forward by W. H. not long after he came on the *World* was—that W. F. Maclean should go on a tour, after the manner of William T. Stead, interviewing all the crowned heads of Europe. I have often wondered what might have happened if W. F. and Wilhelm ever got into the same room—alone. Stead admitted when he was in Canada last that the Kaiser had refused to grant him an interview. I don't think that would have been a sufficient preventive to W. F. Maclean, who has more newspaper instinct to the cubic inch than any other editor in Canada. It was only last summer that Maclean attended an Old Boys' Reunion of the Clan Maclean in Duart, Scotland. That may have been historically interesting. But it would be much more spectacular in the eyes of the whole world if Maclean would arrange a joint conference of remarkable Williams.

The picture on this page is a casual snapshot on Parliament Hill. Minus the overcoat and the don't-care-a-continental hat, it might resemble Tommie Burns at the thirteenth round and still ready for more. Behind him is the blur of Parliament House, where some days ago he shot a few holes in the

Government Bank Act and threw out his ideas about the German scare and the Borden navy.

Maclean has spent thirty years of his life denouncing monopolies, tyrannies and oligarchies. And for thirty-two years he has aimed to make the *World* a monopoly. When other editors printed anything that seemed to be original, he could turn the fyles of the *World* and show that he had it in print years ago.

He was born in Hamilton; son of John Maclean, journalistic father of the National Policy. He attended Toronto University; an uncommonly restless youth and a puzzle to the faculty. In those days economics was not seriously on the curriculum or he would have eaten it alive. After he left college he was for a while a reporter on the *Globe*. He needed the money. I think the city editor then is dead now, or he would have weird tales of William on assignments. At the age of 26 Maclean



A High Wind on Parliament Hill.

started the Toronto *World* on King St. East, near the corner of Yonge. When he was 38 he entered Parliament as an Ind. Con. member for South York. The *World* has twice moved since 1880; once round the corner to Yonge St.; four years ago to a new building on Richmond St., next to Simpson's store.

W. F. is a prize cattle-raiser. He knows how many pounds of butter per annum should be the output of a diligent Jersey, how many barrels of apples on a good tree of Baldwins, how to prevent cholera in hogs and the difference between 1,200 acres next door to a big city and the same acreage fifty miles out. Most of his life he has been a sort of prophet. Years ago on the front page of the *World* every Monday morning was a long report of the sermon by Dr. Wild, another prophet, who also lived on a farm.

And it was living on the land, which he began to get by here a little and there a little after his first election, that helped to keep W. F. Maclean both poor and original. Riding down from his farm, Donlands, every morning, on a monopolistic street-car, he was able to notice how the city was growing—most of the time westward. Some day it might decide to grow north and climb the hill. The *World* had grown from a four-page to an eight and a twelve and sometimes more. Toronto was growing along with it. He expected it would. When he entered Parliament in 1892 Toronto was beginning to wish it had never grown westward in the boom. When Laurier became Premier, in 1896, the editor of the *World* might have been expected to agree that it was time for a change. But at that time he was running for a second time in South York as a Conservative—which made some difference.

WHEN the motor-car era began it's quite likely Maclean knew it was high time. But at that time he hadn't the price. Later on he got a car, which for a while was not seen much in the vicinity of the *World* office.

In an age of money-making materialism W. F. Maclean has spent very little of his time scheming how to make money. For a good part of his career he squeezed along without much. Once he was regarded by his admiring but somewhat unpaid staff as a needy adventurer because he suddenly bought a coonskin coat. But he needed the coat. Donlands was out in the drifts. The world and the *World* needed Maclean. Mere economics had little to do with the case. The editor was too busy making history to have much time for making money. Any-way money has a way of making itself.

"Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait."

Poetry is often useful to illustrate the lives of men. I have sometimes fancied a subject for Sam Hunter, the *World* cartoonist; W. F. Maclean up at Donlands, doing his best to keep a space-hungry town from climbing the hill to get hooks on his beloved Shore Acres; writing editorials to convince people that there were no town lots for sale anywhere near Donlands; sticking up signs on his fences—"Subdivisionists keep out."

To estimate W. F. Maclean is a good deal harder than trying to measure the wealth of the 23 men said to be at the basis of Canadian finance. It's worse than trying to measure the value of a chunk of gold quartz with a foot-rule. Gold varies. Sometimes it isn't all gold. Sometimes it's iron pyrites.

However, long before gold and silver were discovered in Northern Ontario the *World* was started as the first one-cent morning paper in Canada. It began with four pages of seven columns each—shortly after New Year's, 1880. It was a very sedate-looking sheet. Most of the type was small; no scare headlines. On the editorial page of the early issues was a sketch of a telegraph pole. The first issues dealt with a live variety of topics, and dealt with them so well that in 1912 the proprietor advised his news editor to look up the old fyles that he might behold what an almighty good sheet he himself got out in the early '80's.

THE young editor carried a good-sized axe right at the beginning of the trail. In 1882 land sharks were operating in Winnipeg with Ontario money. Maclean went after them front-page and editorial. He raised the dickens with the C. P. R. monopoly in the West and gave the *Globe* fits because it was bucking the N. P. He lambasted partyism. He administered Hail Columbia to a New York paper because it patronized Lord Lorne and accused Canada of flirting with annexation. He came out hard for manhood suffrage. He shouted for lower postage—advocating a two-cent rate and giving all the modern reasons for the same. He ridiculed the holy show of opening the Ontario Legislature, concerning which he said:

"This aide-de-camp, cocked-hat, cannon-firing, gold-lace, body-guard business merits nothing but laughter and contempt."

It was shortly afterwards that Frank Oliver did the same thing at Regina—but not for publication.

At that time there was a movement on foot to enlarge Toronto by adding the suburb north of