

HIS EARLY LIFE.

John Hugh Mackerras, M.A., late Professor of Classics in Queen's University Kingston, was born at Nairn, in Scotland, on the 5th of June, 1832. His father, John Mackerras, born on May 7th, 1800, was a native of Forres, a small town about eleven miles from Nairn, rendered classical by Shakespeare in his tragedy of Macbeth. He removed in early life to Edinburgh, where, in 1823, he was married to Rose Grant, a native of the parish of Croy, near the town of Nairn. Two daughters were born to them in Edinburgh. In 1832 they removed to Nairn, where the subject of this memoir was born soon after their arrival.

John Mackerras, the father, came to Canada in 1837, and was followed by his family in 1838. He had friends at Cornwall by whom he was advised, in the then unsettled state of the country, to accept the offer of a school at Gray's Creek in that neighbourhood. In the fall of 1839 he removed to the public school at Williamstown, where he remained about three years and a half. In the spring of 1843 he returned to Cornwall to take charge of one of the public schools there, and to act at the same time as catechist to his kind and esteemed friend, Dr. Urquhart. Hitherto the education of his son, John Hugh, had been conducted entirely by himself both in the school-house and at home. The boy, who was now about 11 years of age, was already well advanced in the English branches, and had even acquired under his father's instruction a considerable knowledge of the rudiments of the Latin language. With a view to his further advancement in the Classics and in other branches, he was now sent by his father to the celebrated school at Cornwall, then known as the Eastern District School, at which so many of our most eminent men have been educated. This school was then under the charge of Mr. Kay, well known as an excellent classical scholar. Here he made rapid progress and continued, as he had done at Williamstown, to take the lead in almost every branch of study. Often for months together he carried the silver medals, which indicated the rank of dux in the school. His proficiency was the result not of any sudden or impulsive effort, but of the same steady perseverance which distinguished him in all that he undertook. He was scrupulously conscientious in the preparation of his lessons, from which he would allow nothing to detain him. He regularly wrote down in manuscript every line of his Latin and Greek translations—a work which necessarily occupied much time, but which tended in no small degree to form the habit of extreme accuracy which distinguished him in after life.

During the years which he spent at Williamstown and Cornwall, the amount of reading—especially of a religious character—which the young student accomplished, was something perfectly wonderful. In connection with St. John's Presbyterian Church, Cornwall, of which Dr. Urquhart was so long the minister, there existed an excellent congregational library which had been purchased in

Glasgow, and which contained almost all the standard religious works—controversial, historical and biographical. These works young Mackerras spent all his spare time in devouring. His appetite for such reading was insatiable. Every moment of his Sundays, when not in church or attending Sunday-school, was devoted to the eager perusal of books of a religious tendency, and his memory possessed a wonderful tenacity in retaining whatever he read.

In the fall of 1846, when not more than fourteen years of age, his standing and attainments in the different classes were such as would have fully justified him being sent to college, but his father, considering his comparative youth, and justly judging that another year would not be ill spent in further preparatory studies—especially in the mathematical branches—continued to send him to the Eastern District school until the fall of the year 1847 when he accompanied him to Kingston. There he had the pleasure of seeing his son pass with ease the Matriculation Examination, and—confiding him to the fatherly care of the Rev. Dr. Machar and Professor Williamson—he left him to pursue his studies in this new sphere and returned to his own duties at Cornwall.

With reference to his successful career at college it is unnecessary to add anything to what was so well stated by Dr. Williamson in addressing the large audience which assembled at St. Andrew's church to perform the last honor to his remains.

The summer of 1848, which was his first college vacation, he spent in further prosecuting his classical studies with Mr. Kay, and assisting him in the duties of the school. The next summer he spent as tutor in the family of the Hon. John Hamilton, and in the third he acted as assistant in the Preparatory School at Kingston. In the period between his taking the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1850 and graduating as Master of Arts in 1852 he conducted with great success the Grammar School at Gananoque, receiving at the close of his engagement as Master of that institution a very flattering testimonial.

His father having now removed with his family to Brockville—which was then included within the Bathurst Presbytery—it became his duty, in 1853, being then in the 21st year of his age, to apply to that Presbytery for license. This body on that occasion met at Perth, and after passing with credit the ordinary examinations, and receiving his license in due form, the young minister preached his first sermon in the pulpit of his old friend and fellow-townsmen, the Rev. Dr. Bain, of Perth. Little did he know while preaching that sermon, that one who held a still nearer relation to him was present as a hearer. It was not until the service was brought to a close, and he was descending the pulpit stair, that he recognized the presence of his father, who had quietly slipped out from Brockville by stage during the preceding night and had taken a position in the church where he could not be seen by the preacher.

The intensity of the father's feelings on this occasion may be the better understood when we state that even from