

THE HON. DAVID MacKEEN.

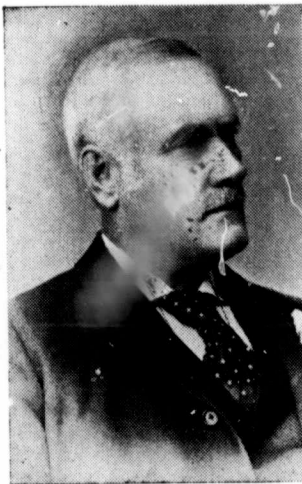
A man who is one of the wealthiest in Nova Scotia and a strong personality, and who has paved the way to his own fortune, is well worthy of an appreciative sketch. One who reads and profits by the examples of successful men ought to find in the life of Hon. David MacKeen a great deal of inspiration. Perhaps the predominating characteristic of this man is just what many young men in Nova Scotia who are looking out on life to-day require that they may make a name for themselves. It is worth while knowing in any case how he rose up by degrees to the position he occupies to-day, a man of wealth and a senator of the people.

The BLUENOSE asked a gentleman who had lived very near Mr. MacKeen when a boy, who has known him more or less all his life and has latterly had occasion to become more intimate with him—the BLUENOSE asked this gentleman to what characteristic he thought, more than any other, Mr. MacKeen owed his success. His reply is incorporated in what follows.

The history of Mr. MacKeen is very simple. He was born on a Cape Breton farm say half a century ago—perhaps a little more. When quite a young man he was appointed a deputy crownland surveyor, in which capacity he visited Glace Bay. At that time the Caledonia mine was not in a very prosperous condition, but an opportunity presented itself and in order to fit himself for the position of assistant manager he went to Boston and took a special course at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He then entered the employ of the company. This was his first step towards the goal of wealth. It didn't appeal to him that way, perhaps, and at that time; it may not have seemed more than a better monetary advantage than he had had previously. Presently we shall see why he went ahead, for out of thousands who have as good an outlook on life there are very few who really advance. Mr. MacKeen did. His employers liked the way in which he did his work and when the position of manager became vacant at last he was found to be the man most capable of filling it as previously he had been found to be the right man for another position of trust in the gift of the company.

This then brings us the close of one period of his life. Hitherto he had been advancing, but had not been in a position to make money. He had saved, no doubt, but his savings must have been necessarily small. Now, however, in the position of manager he enjoyed a large salary out of which he could devote a considerable sum to investment. He made what nearly everyone else would have considered

an exceedingly foolish move. At that time there was coal to spare. The coal business was accordingly not in good condition and as far as most people could see would not likely be better. Caledonia stock in those days was not valuable and all the care in management possible could not make it much better. As a result people were ready to sell their stock. When Mr. MacKeen bought it, every seller naturally commended his generosity, but condemned his judgment. Time was to tell. A number of years later, after a period during which his investment was not returning him anything, things began to look up a little, the coal trade grew better, profits



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became larger and about ten years ago Mr. MacKeen was the possessor of the controlling interest in the Caledonia and the Caledonia was making money. This is where his good judgment began to bear fruit—his good judgment that had been considered had not long before. Away in the future he had seen the prosperity that others could not, and like a wise man he had taken advantage of the opportunities that lay to his hand.

There are one or two points in this fact worth taking note of. In the first place he had abundance of confidence in the future of the country. If only more Nova Scotians were like him in this respect we would rapidly grow more prosperous. We are glad that his confidence was so well reposed. In the second place when he had an opportunity he had the sense to take advantage of it. Hundreds of people, probably, were as well placed as he. They had as many opportunities. But his sense of the real value of a thing, which belongs to a man that looks below the surface, was in his favor; hence he succeeded where others either failed or went no farther ahead.

But the chief characteristic of the man that accounts for his success does not belong to

the period when he had money to invest. If he hadn't been the kind of a man that gets ahead he would never have got into the position where he could have money to invest. If when in a subordinate position he had been the kind of man that does as little as possible for the greatest amount of pay, would he ever have risen to the point of having money to spare; which is the same thing as having money to make more money with? It was because he had a quiet determination to master every detail of his work that Mr. MacKeen progressed. The principal that he worked on was to do as much and to do it as well as he could. That's why he went onward and upward. And the thing to note here particularly is that this is a quality that isn't natural in the genus human. Man's natural inclinations lead him rather to shirk work and seek ease. The quiet determination that makes a man conquer difficulties is a thing that is acquired.

When Mr. MacKeen first commenced work at the Caledonia it is just possible that he may have had in mind his ultimate ownership of the property. But probably if you were to ask him, he would say that he had no other idea than to make a living and as much more as possible. But the principal that, when a young man, he laid down for himself as being the safest upon which to work, proved the very germ of prosperity. It was because he was faithful in little things that he had at last an opportunity to be faithful in great things. And when opportunities came with his growing responsibilities, they were his to take advantage of; and he did.

What might be considered another trait in his character but in reality is the result of his determination, is a marvelous keenness and a faculty of keeping ahead of his work. When it is known that his company never had to pay demurrage during his incumbency of the managership, it is not necessary to say that he was always in a state of readiness. When a steamer came to get loaded, he was ready to give her her cargo. And so in every detail of the work—he had it finished at the right time, a thoroughness that made him a very valuable manager not only for his company, but afterwards for the Dominion Coal Co.

We don't know how Mr. MacKeen employed his spare hours when a young man but we could hazard a guess. For one thing he is an excellent speaker. For another, he is a reader. If you were to visit his handsome home, Maplewood, some evening, and take a peep into his library, you would find him comfortably seated among a very select company of friends who represent the best thought of all ages. Now, these things mean a fine taste that is only acquired by good association. A man in latter life cannot readily cultivate the book habit. If he had not in his younger days dabbled in books, he would not now have the command of language that makes him a good speaker, nor the taste that makes him read good books in his spare hours. The most important results of reading as a young man do not tell up in his speaking or taste however, but in the development of

(Continued on page 22.)