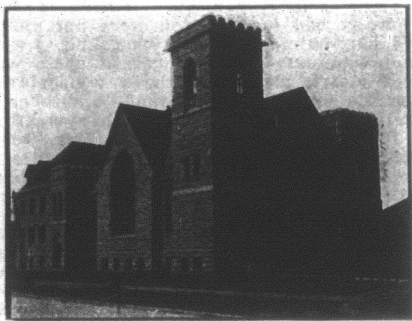


RALPH CONNOR: THE MAN AND HIS WORK

By Cherrington Brown.

Interest has ever clung to the homes of the celebrated. I remembered with what veneration those occupied by Dickens, Carlyle and many of the world's famous ones were regarded by their admiring readers. Awe and veneration were the sentiments uppermost in my mind as I was ushered into the drawing-room of the famous



St. Stephen's Church, Winnipeg.

author-preacher. The house appeared to be peopled with the children of his prolific brain. I half expected, as I waited, to hear the subdued, plaintive, yet authoritative voice of "Gwen" issue some slight command; and as for the celebrated "Shock," I was sure I could hear the heavy tread of his big and burly form in an adjoining room, as he buckled on his harness for "the football match" which was to be his last before "going west." There were footsteps above my head, but they were those of Ralph Connor. Even in this my fancy kept working, for I imagined those rapid footsteps to be keeping pace with a brain in the birth throes of another "Sky Pilot."

Conspicuous, upon a table, were a copy of the Sacred Scriptures and the author's latest book, "The Prospector." Here was the man unconsciously revealing himself. The Bible and the novel are the weapons of his warfare, and by their aid he has become renowned not only as a writer of pure and wholesome fiction, but as a religious teacher and preacher.

Rev. C. W. Gordon is about five feet eleven inches in height, slender, lithe and spirituelle. One feels instinctively that he is a man's man. There is a frank ingenuousness about him, an indescribable winsomeness that is at once the secret of his popularity and the source of his strength. Chas. Wagner and Chas. Gordon breathe the same moral atmosphere and move in the same altitudes of thought. They have an ardent passion for the "simple life," and their simplicity is their strength.

How He Came to Write His Books.

"How did you come to write your famous books?" I asked.

"Oh, the story is very unromantic I'm afraid. You see, the great Northwest, with its fine possibilities for the work got on my brain. I slept with it—dreamed about it. To me it was not a vast unpopulated country, but a delectable land—a new Canaan to be conquered for God. In those days immigration was slow, but as I listened I heard the tramp of coming millions, and my heart was sad at the meagre equipment of the church to meet their moral and religious needs. I was sent by Dr. Robertson, Superintendent of Western Missions, to see what could be done to interest the churches there in the work of the West, and to arouse their sympathetic interest. I failed largely. The East had its own problems to solve. I told the story of my failure to Rev. J. A. Macdonald, who said he, 'The columns of the West was then editor of The Westminster, and now editor of the Toronto Globe-minister are opened to you; put your case before the people in the form of a story.' I then wrote my first sketch, which since has become the first chapter of 'Black Rock.'"

How He Became Ralph Connor.

"This is very interesting, Mr. Gordon, and is not generally known, but how did you become Ralph Connor?"

Mr. Gordon smiled. "There is a good joke attached to the name," he said. "I had looked about for a pseudonym, for the signing of my real name at that time might have provoked criticism. At the last moment I sent a telegram to Mr. Macdonald, saying 'Sign Connor.' But he didn't understand it. He thought the operator had made a mistake, and that 'Connor' and not 'Cannon' was to be the name. So 'Connor' it was. To Mr. Macdonald I am also indebted for the rhythmic name of Ralph. My thought in selecting Connor was, that it would combine the first syllables of the land I love, Canadian North-west, hence 'Can-nor.'"

This was Mr. Gordon's beginning as a writer.

The projected story for The Westminster developed into "Tales from the Selkirk," afterwards published as "Black Rock." When the sketches were gathered into book form, Mr. Gordon

wholesome enjoyment of life, which is characteristic of the author, enters into his books and makes them irresistible."

The Mother of Ralph Connor.

Ralph Connor has given to the world a good mother. In "The Man from Glengarry" and "Glengarry School Days" he has portrayed with vivid pen the possibilities of motherhood amid prosaic surroundings. Mrs. Murray has touched thousands of hearts outside the narrow confines of Glengarry. Knowing how deeply interested the public were in the personality of his mother, I said:

"Mr. Gordon, will you tell the readers of 'The Western Home Monthly' something about your mother?"

Mr. Gordon became reserved at once as he said:

"One does not like to publish the inner life of one's mother, but I can willingly give you the historic facts of her early life."

"Her name was Mary Robertson. She was the daughter of a Scotch minister who came to America and was settled as pastor of a Congregational Church in New England. He afterwards moved to Sherbrooke, Quebec. He was of the same family as the late Professor Robertson Smith, and was related to Rev. Andrew Murray of South Africa. One of his daughters, Margaret Robertson, won a deserved

her intellectual alertness, her fathomless faith in God—these things have been commemorated in that noble monument which her son has raised to his mother's memory in the character of Mrs. Murray in 'The Man from Glengarry' and 'Glengarry School Days.'"

The Future of the Novel.

I asked Mr. Gordon whether the novel with a purpose, such as his are, could be truly artistic.

"Well," he said, "whether the novel with a purpose can be truly artistic may be a moot question, but that the novelist with a purpose can be truly artistic has long since been established. Some of the greatest novelists in our language, and in other languages, have been moved to write by intense conviction, and earnest purpose. The stock examples that occur to one's mind are Reade's 'Never too Late to Mend,' Dickens' 'Oliver Twist,' and Harriet Beecher Stowe's 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' In each of these the novelist has been conscious of purpose and has deliberately set forth to accomplish this purpose; but I question whether any great novel has ever been written that does not consciously or unconsciously, embody and convey the intense convictions and emotions of the writer."

One thing is certain, that the novel can hardly be excelled as a teaching medium. The schoolmaster announces his lesson and proceeds to overcome the inattention or stupidity of his



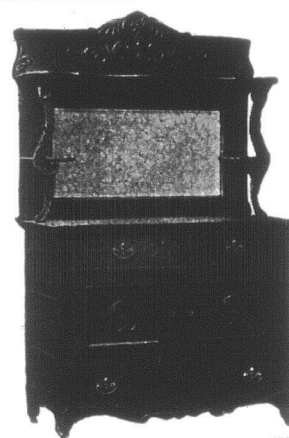
Rev. C. W. Gordon (Ralph Connor).

experienced the same difficulty in getting a publisher, as has been the lot of many famous writers. He was told the book would not sell, being too full of religion and temperance. How the public devoured it is a matter of history. One edition followed another, until the sale of "Black Rock" in Great Britain, the United States and Canada has now risen to the neighborhood of a million copies. Nor has his success as a writer waned. "The Sky Pilot," "The Man from Glengarry," "The Glengarry School Days," have had a like popularity, while the sales of "The Prospector" are still soaring.

"The success is well deserved," says a critic. "Sweetness, light and strength pervade Ralph Connor's work from beginning to end. The combination of genuine goodness with a sane and

reputation as a writer of religious fiction. 'Christie Redfern's Troubles' is perhaps the best known of her tales. My mother was a graduate of Mount Holyoke, and while still a girl taught philosophy in the well-known institute."

These certainly are bare and bald facts of a remarkable woman. They do not begin to tell the story of her holy influence. She might have filled any place in society or in the learned world, but love and duty called her to the toil of and limitations of a backwoods parish. She took up the work of a pioneer minister's wife with a shining face and a brave heart that never left her till the close of life. Says one who knew her, "No one could know Mrs. Gordon without feeling her charm. It is not necessary to speak of her piety, her sweetness,



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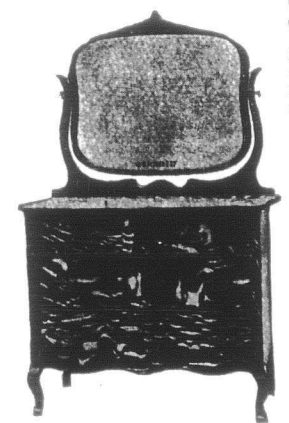
will buy this elegant sideboard and give your dining-room that artistic "home-tone" so much coveted by every woman of refinement. The sideboard is built entirely of solid quarter-sawn oak, finished golden, all handsomely flaked and is rubbed and polished to a piano lustre. The British

bevelled mirror 18x36 ins. is set in a handsome top adorned with dainty raised carving. The case is composed of two top cutlery drawers, each with full swell front, a large roomy cupboard and linen drawer below, all fitted with cast brass handles. Top of case is 23x48 inches. In construction and finish, this board shows that great care has been given to details. Positively it is the greatest value ever offered in high-grade sideboards.

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