

PEOPLE WE MEET

AGNES MAULE MACHAR.

ONE hardly knows by which name she is most familiar to the Canadian reading public, whether as "Fidelis," the writer of thoughtful articles on national and industrial topics and stirring patriotic verse, or as Agnes Maule Machar, the author.

Yet, while her busy pen has made her mental attitude well known to us, she, with the conservatism and reserve so truly hers by birthright, has kept her personality in the background, so that few have been privileged to come in touch with this one of Canada's foremost women thinkers.

That is why we are going on a journey to the old Limestone City,—quieter now than even its wont, in its winter-enfolding of white-piled snow,—to seek the author of "Roland Graeme, Knight."

We find her in her library,—a little, plainly gowned, slender figure, with silvery hair parted in the center and drawn simply back from a broad, low brow; eyes hazel or blue, according to the lighting; a face indicative of strength, yet varying in expression from severity to gentle humor. Miss Machar suggests instantly one of our old-time Englishwoman novelists or poets;—she brings to mind Charlotte Brontë, Jane Austen, Mrs. Gaskell or Eliza Cook, as we have seen them pictured or imagined them to be. She seems, not so much a part of the bustling modern world of thought and writing, as of that of half a century ago, when gentle women of the pen were looked upon as those set apart or born out of time, whose simple dress and bearing testified to the fact. Yet this slight little form holds within it the brain and heart of a modern-day reformer. In intellectual activity, in firm grasp of social and economic problems, and in persistent advocacy of remedial measures, Miss Machar stands in the front rank of Canadian women of to-day. Indeed, one might almost say that she is herself knight-errant—a womanly Roland Graeme, doing battle against the industrial evils that beset her sex.

Miss Machar was born in Kingston, and most of her life has been associated with this quiet, staunch, proud little city on the St. Lawrence, whose people are a type of the reserve strength and loyalty of Ontario Province.

Her father was the second president of Queen's University,—the grey stone pile from whose halls so many splendid men have been sent forth to do scholarly and spiritual service, not only for Canada, but for Christendom at large.

During her early years, therefore, the young girl breathed the atmosphere of books; while also meeting with the men of learning who came as guests to her father's home.

"I have always written," she says. "I think my first work was produced at the mature age of seven years. My writing has

been nearly always with a purpose. If there is something to be said for the right, a wrong to be redressed, or a warning word uttered, I think we should be always ready with our pen."

* * *

Miss Machar asserts that she is literary rather than executive.

"I am not a woman of societies," she protests. Yet in the short hours of a winter day's chat we discovered how many calls are made upon her time for philanthropic purposes. Secretary of a Poor Relief Association, vice-president of a Humane Society, a member of the Executive Committee of the National Council, these and other offices claim her work and sympathy. And although she asserts that she is only fulfilling the duties appertaining thereto until "someone else can be found," yet it is easy to see that Kingston has long since recognized the fact that "Fidelis" expresses in truth the qualities of the lady whose *nom de plume* it is, and will not willingly search for one to take her place.



Fidelity and persistence are inherent qualities in this daughter of the heather;—once undertaking anything, she perseveres with it in simpleness and directness to the end.

* * *

During the winter months Miss Machar makes her home with her brother, who is Master-in-Chancery in Kingston City. It is a cosy, quiet home life, associated with the past by many treasures of portraits and books.

Her father's library of great leather-bound volumes overflows the shelves, while modern literature and magazines press irreverently upon the latter.

And here, in a sunny west window-nook, Miss Machar sits inquiring into social or economic questions of interest to women wage-earners, striving by pen and voice to arouse public interest in the subject of shorter hours for factory girls, the housing of women criminals, the servant question, and other topics of modern reform.

Miss Machar's devotion to her beliefs carries her beyond mere words to direct action. She is a knight-errant whose quest is the righting of wrong wherever she may find it. From staying a cruel driver or a boy with a snowball to the greater protest of pen or public platform, this slender little woman is always instant and "faithful."

Among Miss Machar's treasures is an autograph letter from Tennyson, an autographed volume and many letters from the poet Whittier, and Oliver Wendell Holmes; and she tells in quiet yet appreciative words of her "visitings" in the homes of these famous men.

Of her own books, "Roland Graeme, Knight," which deals skilfully and attractively with the labor problem as shown in the factory question, is perhaps the best known; while "The Heir of Fairmount Grange" is her latest.

Among others are several children's books,—"For King and Country," "Stories of New France," "Marjorie's Canadian Winter," her own favorite, and "Katie Johnston's Cross." All of these should be in every Canadian library for young people.

Miss Machar is preparing a book of poems, which will soon be issued.

* * *

With the earliest glimpse of our Canadian summer, Miss Machar takes up her residence in her summer home at Gananoque, one of the prettiest places on the St. Lawrence river.

"Fern Cliff" is situated on a point jutting out into the very heart of the "Thousand Isles," and glimpsing between the green in lovely views up and down the river.

In this delightful spot Miss Machar spends her long summer days, remaining all through the autumn beauty, and only returning to Kingston with the first snow.

It is during these six months of woodland and water and fair skies that she does most of her graver writing and reading; for here she is free from outer calls upon her time, and here all is conducive to reposeful thought.

* * *

There is yet one trait unreferred to in the strong yet gentle character of this well-known writer, and that is her deep national sentiment.

She is not a jingoist; yet her pulse beats full to the imperial sentiment, and none are more ready than she to speak the stirring patriotic word—be it of praise or blame—that quickens the national impulse of the people to instant response.

* * *

Grave and sober is this lady, as befits her nationality;—keen of thought, didactic in dogma, as becometh a theologian's daughter; yet, over it all plays a quiet humor,—the bonnie Scotch seasoning which gives pungency and preservation to the strong life within.

Agnes Maule Machar

Hypocrites weep, and you cannot tell their tears from those of saints; but no bad man ever laughed sweetly yet.



DEAFNESS AND HEAD NOISES

overcome by Wilson's Common Sense Ear-Drums, the greatest invention of the age. Simple, comfortable, safe and invisible. No wire or string attachments.

WRITE FOR CIRCULARS (SENT FREE) TO

C. B. MILLER,

Freehold Building, 60 Victoria Street, Toronto, Ont.

SOLE AGENT FOR CANADA.