

CANADA'S GREATEST CHAPLAIN

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During an international war such as the present one, when our patriotism must be of a higher, purer, more self-sacrificing nature than usual, the study of Canadian history becomes a special duty. Among the many heroic characters in the history of our country, the figure of Canada's greatest chaplain—Alexander Macdonell, First Bishop of Upper Canada—looms out of the cloud of the past to challenge and inspire the men of this generation. In the whole history of Canada there cannot be found anyone who was more passionately patriotic than he. It was his fortune to have lived during the one war in the world's history which, for extent of territory engaged, and importance of principles at stake, can alone be compared to the present war—namely the War which began with the French Revolution and ended only some twenty-five years later, after two continents had been deluged with blood.

Twice a founder of a regiment, twice in the midst of national rebellions, on two continents a military chaplain on the firing line—his life is a singularly romantic and inspiring one. Only the barest outlines of his career as a military chaplain and statesman will be traced in this paper, his work as a churchman being outside of our scope.

MAIGHSTIR ALASTAIR

Alexander Macdonell was born on 17th of July in the year 1762 (and not in 1760 as is sometimes stated), at Inchlaggan in Glengarry, Scotland. He belonged to the Macdonell clan of Glengarry. The first thirty years of his life were much the same as that of other Scottish priests of the time. His primary education he received in Gaelic and English in a school held in a cousin's house near his home. As, owing to the penal laws, a priest could not be educated in Scotland, young Macdonell was sent for his classical, philosophical and theological studies first to the Scots College in Paris and then to the Scots College in Valladolid, Spain, where he was ordained priest in 1787, in the twenty-fifth year of his age. He returned to Scotland and was placed as missionary priest on the borders of the Counties of Inverness and Perth, the highest inhabited parts of the Highlands of Scotland. He remained there five years. It was a transition period in Scotland. The clan system had begun to collapse after Culloden, and the land passed from the clans to individual proprietors. Under the changed economic conditions—resulting partly from Glasgow becoming a great industrial centre,—the landlords found it more profitable to raise sheep than men. They began a policy of wholesale eviction. Not allowed by the rapacity of landlords to live at home, the Highlanders were prevented by the British Government from emigrating, as it was feared they would go to the United States. The Admiralty had given orders to "press" all able-bodied Highlanders found on emigrant ships. It was at this juncture in the year 1792 that Father Macdonell, or as he was then called, Mr. Macdonell, or, more familiarly in Gaelic, Maighstir Alastair, quit the secluded life of a country priest and entered into a wider field.

He went to Glasgow and obtained for his evicted parishioners, as well as for some shipwrecked Highland emigrants whom he had harboured, employ-