

HOME MAGAZINE

Life, Literature and Education.

Arthur John Lockhart.

Is there some mysterious power in the breath of Old Ocean? Does life beside the restless sea arouse the poetic nature and then give that nature power to express itself? As far as Canada is concerned it would seem so, for of all those who have sung the glories of our fair Dominion, or have given us beauty and truth in the garb of poesy, nearly forty have, or had at some time, their homes in the Maritime Provinces. One of these, of whom we know less than his talent deserves, is Rev. Arthur John Lockhart, who was born at Lockhartville, Nova Scotia, May 5th, 1850, and who is perhaps better known as "Pastor Felix."

As a youth he learned to be a printer, but after some years in this business he left it to enter the ministry. His spare time he has devoted to literature, contributing both prose and verse to American and Canadian periodicals. He and his brother, Rev. Burton Wellesley Lockhart, collected some of their poems into one volume, under the title, "A Masque of Minstrels." This was published in 1887, while in 1895 "Beside the Narraguagus, and Other Poems," was published by the subject of this sketch.

Though his labors subsequently took him away from Nova Scotia into Maine, U. S., he never forgot or ceased to love the land of his birth, and in one of his poems, "Acadie," he tells of his longing for his native land:

"O thou beloved Acadie,
Sweet is thy charmed world to me!
Dull are these skies 'neath which I range,
And all the summer hills are strange.

"And oft my heart will leap aflame
To deem I hear thee call my name,
To see thy face with gladness shine,
And find the joy that once was mine."

"The Waters of Carr" shows the daintiness and delicate touch of the true poet, but we have space for but one stanza:

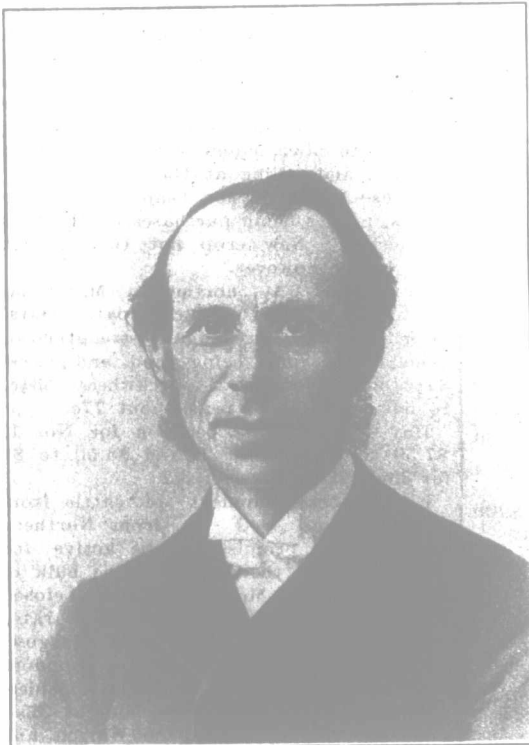
"They feed her with the amber dew and noney,
They bathe her in the crystal spring,
They set her down in open spaces sunny,
And weave her an enchanted ring;
They will not let her beauty die,
Her innocence and purity;
They sweeten her fair brow with kisses many,
And ever round her dance and sing."

In appearance, his refined, earnest face, strong and yet spiritual, reminds one of Charles Kingsley, and if one may judge from his writings, in his idea of the nobility of devoting the highest powers to the service of humanity, he was very like that great English author-preacher. This sonnet, called "Service," gives us a glimpse of the man's mind:

"They were not born in vain who live to bless
And solace others; who, while some may strive

Out of the spoils of men to grow and thrive,
Abjure the meed of wrong and selfishness.
Nor doth he live in vain who maketh less
The sum of human sorrow; who inspires
Hope in man's breast, and kindles love's
sweet fires;

Whose charity relieves a friend's distress.
Long may he live! to whom is ever dear

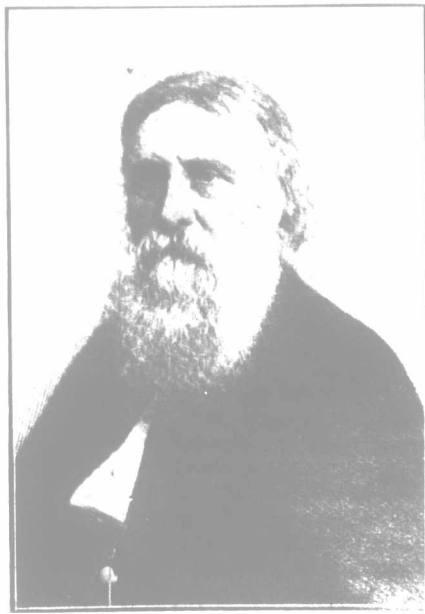


Arthur John Lockhart.

A brother's fame; whose eye can recognize,
Whose pen proclaim, the merit that he sees;
Who with his books and friends holds gentle cheer;
And whom a poet's song, or maxim wise,
Can never fail to interest and please."

George Macdonald.

The Reverend George Macdonald, whose death at the ripe age of eighty-one has just been chronicled,



George Macdonald.

was born in Huntly, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, in 1824. He studied in Aberdeen College until he was sixteen, with a view to devoting his life to the science of chemistry. But his ideas concerning a career underwent a change, and he entered the ministry, and had charge of congregations in Arundel and Manchester.

Physically, he was delicately constituted, and ill-health interfered much with his pastoral labors, and finally drove him to Algiers and literature. When he left Algiers, somewhat restored in health, he settled in London, and, although he still delivered impressive sermons and lectures occasionally, the greater portion of his time was devoted to writing. His best known books, and these are not as well known as they should be, are: "Robert Falconer," "Alec Forbes of How Glen," "Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood," "There and Back," "Thomas Wingfold, Curate," "At the Back of the North Wind," "Malcolm," "The Marquis of Lossie," and "What's Mine's Mine."

In his novels, to the essential story-telling and dramatic gift he adds a genial humor, a tolerant and kindly sympathy with life in most of its phases, and he is especially skilled in describing humble Scottish life and feeling. It is said of him that his genius "loves to dwell on the borderland between poetry and prose, between this world and the realm of romance."

But he was more than a novelist, or rather he was what every novelist should be—a man with a message. He brought to the British Christianity of that day a new thought of God. He declared a God who was loving, tender, patient—not the severe maker of harsh decrees. With the warped and distorted form into which the doctrine of Calvinism had been twisted he had no sympathy, and feeling its oppressiveness himself, and seeing the lives of those around him made gloomy by it, he set himself with all the energy and decision of which a strong mind is capable to present the majesty of God in the light of love, and the dignity of true humanity as akin to God. "It is the noble, not the failure from the noble," he said, "that is the true human, and if I must show the failure, let it ever be with an eye to the final possible, yea, imperative success."

His poetry is simple, instinct with a fresh and delicate fancy and a tender insight into nature, particularly the human variety, and though marked by simplicity, his poems speak forth spiritual strength and tenderness. The well-known poem "Phantasies," a "Fairy Story," perhaps best illustrates the simplicity, natural and winning qualities of his verse:

"Alas, how easily things go wrong!
How fast a knock or a kiss too long!

And there follows a wind and a weeping rain,
And life is never the same again.

"Alas, how hardly things go right!
'Tis hard to watch in a summer night,
For the sigh will come, and the kiss will stay,

And the summer night is a winter day.

"But things can never go very far wrong
If the heart be true and the love be strong;
And the mist, if it comes, and the weeping rain,
Will be changed by love into sunshine again."

Are Children's Study Hours Too Long?

Now that our village and country schools have reopened, it is time to ask if it is in the child's interest to have him required to put in any considerable time in study at home. Of late years the school programme has been so extended that the school hours seem too short to cover all its demands. The result has been a growing increase in the number of hours required of a pupil for application to books. Now, is it in the best interest of the community that boys and girls should be asked to pore over their school work, to the exclusion of their joining naturally in the joyous life of the home? Parents believe that there is something wrong. They appreciate the importance of the recent additions to the school programme, but resent most keenly the claim made upon the child, not only for the six hours of his day, but for all the hours of his evening as well. Surely there is a mistake somewhere when a child of twelve is asked to pore over his school work till ten o'clock at night. The educational system that nourished Blake and Macdonald permitted a pupil, when the school day was over, to push dull school care into his desk along with his books and to leave it there till nine o'clock the next morning. In the meantime his brain was resting and he was learning, by participation, to take his part in the home and in the neighborhood. When bedtime came he went to bed to sleep as a child should sleep. In these days, however, the school demands are so great that a conscientious child feels himself compelled either to study till ten o'clock or later, or to retire to dream of unfinished work and of a morrow of fearful reckoning.

Would it not be better to have a shorter school programme? Should not matters be adjusted for the child in view of his life, both present and future, in the home and in the democracy? Better an elementary knowledge of the three R's well taught and well learned, and health and good citizenship therewith, than a smattering of everything at the price of nervous breakdown and general unfitness for life's practical concerns. Parents and teachers should co-operate with the Government in this matter of supreme importance to our country. It is time that things were being done. Of what use are long study hours if ill-health is the result? What is the value of all the knowledge in the world if the acquirement of it means