

## CANADIAN PULPIT.

No. 60.

## Jubilee Sermon.

By REV. WM. MACLAREN, D.D.

*Preached in Knox Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, March 14.*

TEXT:—"Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen,



REV. PROFESSOR MACLAREN.

and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life, but teach them thy sons and thy sons' sons."—Deut. iv. 9.

These words suggest thoughts which seem specially appropriate to this Jubilee season. They speak to us of the duty of keeping fresh in our own hearts, and handing down to our children the memory of God's goodness to us in the past.

It is quite possible to observe such a celebration as this with very diverse aims. We may hold it to magnify ourselves or to glorify God. We may recall the memories of the past, either to enhance our own importance, or to trace the Hand of God in the way in which He has led us, and in the work He has

enabled us to do. But surely when we reflect how little we have done in comparison with our opportunities, it should not be difficult for us to give God the glory for the good accomplished.

The children of Israel had certainly ample reason to remember God's dealings with them. He had brought them out of the house of bondage with an high hand and an outstretched arm. The Red Sea, He had divided before them, and had led them over it dry shod, and had buried the pursuing Egyptians in the depths of the returning waters. He had given them His law from Sinai on the tables of stone. By a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, He had guided them in all their wanderings through the wilderness. He had fed them with bread from heaven and had given them water from the smitten rock. He had crowned their arms with victory over all the enemies who assailed them, and now at the end of forty years, they are on the borders of the land of promise, ready to pass over Jordan, and possess the goodly land, sworn to their fathers.

They certainly had reason to remember God's loving kindness and hand down the memory of it to the generations following.

Their record is unique. You can claim nothing parallel to it in your history. But when you look back over these fifty years of your career as a congregation, you can see enough of what God has done for you and enabled you by His grace to do for others, to fill your hearts with joy and lead you to hand down the memory of the past to your children and children's children.

Our text suggests the thought that the best way to perpetuate the memory of God's goodness, is to have our hearts so filled with a sense of it, that we cannot refrain from speaking of it to others. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will then speak. If we keep our souls diligently so that we do not forget what our eyes have seen; if the thoughts of them do not depart out of our heart, it will be easy for us to teach them to our children.

Let me remind you of a few things which at this season you do well to recall to memory.

1. This congregation owes its origin in 1844, (for I speak not of the earlier history of one section of it) to a great religious movement to which Canada and the world are largely indebted. The great struggle in Scotland which issued in the disruption of the National Church, and the formation of the Free Church in 1843, exerted a very wide and beneficent influence, and deserves to be reckoned as a true revival of religion. While the struggle had reference to the Headship of Christ over the Church, the liberties of the Christian people and the right of the Church to govern herself in all spiritual matters by the law of Christ, and not by the behests of the civil power, there can be no question that it was the reviving spiritual life of the church, which had so sadly decayed during the dreary reign of Moderatism, which nerved the Church of Scotland to contend so earnestly for the truth, during "the ten years conflict," and to make such heroic sacrifices at the shrine of conscience, when the Disruption came.

The men who in these days contended for the crown rights of Christ and the liberties of the Christian people, were almost uniformly those who preached the gospel of the grace of God with evangelical simplicity and power, and threw themselves earnestly into aggressive work and missionary enterprise. It was the quickened religious life associated with this movement, which made it so largely a blessing wherever its influence was felt.

The Disruption which in 1843 rent the Church of Scotland, extended a year later to nearly all the important colonies of Britain. It would be out of place now when the divisions of Presbyterianism are happily healed, to discuss at length the necessity for a disruption in Canada. I agree with those who think that had wisdom guided the Canadian Church in 1844, there need have been no disruption in Canada, but at the same time, I believe that the noble band of twenty-two ministers and their associated elders, who came out and organized what was popularly known as the Free Church, were compelled by the course adopted by the majority, to take the step they did. Had the church assumed that independent position which its former testimonies called for, and shaken itself free from compromising alliances, there need certainly have been no disruption in Canada.

But I cannot help feeling that it was of the Lord that it fell out as it did. Presbyterianism needed a new impulse and increased freedom for aggressive work, and both came with this ecclesiastical upheaval. Doubtless human infirmity mingled with the movement both here and in Scotland, but nevertheless an immense impulse was given to religion, and in our own land the Presbyterian Church holds a place to-day, which it never could have held, but for the struggle with which your early history is associated. A congregation, springing into existence under the influences which surrounded Knox church at its birth, could scarcely fail to enter on a course of earnest, Christian activity.

2. True to its origin, this congregation has from the first, taken an active and important share in the aggressive work of the Church. For a considerable time it was the sole congregation of the denomination, in the chief city of the province, and its members naturally felt themselves called upon to lead, and right loyally and vigorously did they do their part. In the earlier stages of your history, church building and Home Missions rightfully held the first place in your esteem, and made the largest demands on your liberality, and there are multitudes of churches in the newer portions of our country which have received substantial aid and encouragement from your liberal members. At a later stage, Foreign Mission work came to the front, and has always found in this congregation faithful and liberal friends. And I cannot forget that on the 21st March, 1876, in was my privilege, along with your late pastor, Dr. Topp, to organize in the lecture room of this church, the W.F.M.S. (W.D.) which has since attained such dimensions, and has done so much to encourage of those who are laboring for the evangelization of the heathen.

3. Another characteristic which we may safely ascribe to the pastors and people of this church, has been a cordial attachment to the great central verities of the gospel. Although I did not see Toronto until 1846, when I came here to study for the ministry, it has been my privilege to know personally all the pastors who have ministered to this congregation both before and after the union of 1844, when the name of Knox church was assumed, and I can confidently testify that they have all been distinctly evangelical in their teaching, and faithful in preaching salvation through blood and the Spirit of Christ.

Rev. James Harris, though not a brilliant preacher, was an earnest, God fearing man who gloried in the cross of Christ, and adorned with a Christian life, the doctrine which he preached.

Dr. Robert Burns was a man of apostolic zeal and missionary activity. He not only preached the gospel with clearness and power to his own people, but he gave an impulse to vital religion all over the land by his unwearied labors.

Dr. Alexander Topp was not less marked for his clear and decisive preaching of the gospel. As a pastor he commended the truth which he preached to the hearts of his flock by his unwearied care and personal kindness, while his singularly sound judgment made him a trusted guide in the affairs of the denomination. Of your present pastor, I cannot speak in his presence, as I otherwise might, but you need no one to tell you that he is in the Apostolic succession, holding forth the Word of Life, and worthily carrying forward the work of those who have gone before. It is something to make us profoundly thankful to know that among those who, for seventy-five years, have preached here, the Gospel of the grace of God has been proclaimed with no uncertain sound.

And during all these years, this gospel has proved the power of God unto salvation. It has brought peace, strength and comfort to those who have rallied around its preachers. It has sustained them in the battle of life, it has cheered them in the dark valley, and lighted up the grave with the hope of heaven. Teach this to your sons and your sons' sons.

4. During these fifty years, God has given to His Church in Canada, wonderfully enlarged opportunities for Christian work. At the very time He was baptizing His Church with zeal and power for Christian service, He was preparing to open a wide door for its activity and expansion.

In 1844, our Church life was in a manner confined to Ontario and Quebec. Since that time, not only has the population of these provinces greatly increased, but confederation has been brought about, and our country now extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and has a territory of vast natural resources, capable of sustaining a hundred millions of inhabitants. Toronto was then scarcely more than one-tenth of its present size, and its three Presbyterian congregations could have found ample accommodation within the walls of the edifice in which we are met to-night. We have now in this city twenty-five congregations, connected with our Church which enjoy the services of a stated minister, and ten or twelve smaller churches where religious services are regularly sustained.

During these fifty years, God has been throwing wide open the door for the evangelization of the world. Half a century ago, large sections of the earth were entirely inaccessible to evangel-