

**THE REV. PRINCIPAL MACVICAR,  
D.D., LL.D.**

In the interesting series of papers on "Prominent Canadians" now appearing in *The Week*, the following sketch of Principal MacVicar, from the pen of Knoxonian, is given in last issue:—

Any list worth examining of the strong men of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, would contain the name of the Rev. Dr. MacVicar, Principal of the Presbyterian College, Montreal. Well read in Theology, in Psychology, in Mathematics and in Natural Science; equally at home in the professor's chair, in the pulpit, on the platform and in the Church courts; equally ready and effective with voice and pen, Principal MacVicar, may be described as an all round man. He has his specialties in work and study, but he is one of the favoured few who can do many kinds of work and do them all well. To his capacity for various kinds of work, as well as to his courage, energy and perseverance, he owes the prominent and influential place that he has held in his Church for nearly thirty years.

Principal MacVicar was born near Campbelltown, Cantyre, Scotland, on the 29th November, 1831. He inherited the force of character for which he has always been noted. His father, Mr. John MacVicar, was a farmer in Dungloss, and was noted for his great physical and intellectual force, as well as for his sterling character and moral worth. His mother Janet MacTavish, was a woman of superior ability and marked strength of character. She was the mother of twelve children, and died a few years ago at the ripe age of ninety-one. With the undoubted positive advantages derived from such a parentage, Principal MacVicar, enjoyed the apocryphal one of being the seventh son.

While the future Principal was a young lad, Mr. John MacVicar emigrated to Canada, and began to make a home for his family in the neighbourhood of Chatham, Ontario. Like the sons of many Scotchmen the youthful MacVicar desired to have a good education, and the next place we find Donald is in the Toronto Academy, an institution at which some of Ontario's most distinguished men got their start in life. Having decided to study for the ministry, he entered Toronto University and Knox College, and proved a laborious and successful student. Under the instruction and guidance of Professor George Paxton Young, now of University College, he became an enthusiast in Psychology, and gave special attention to that subject. He was one of the founders of the Metaphysical Society of Knox College, and was for two years its president. Many were the battles fought in those days over the relations of the Ego and the Non-Ego, but though these relations were never fully adjusted, the effort to adjust helped to equip one man at least for the great battle of life. If there was but one, that one was Mr. D. H. MacVicar, the ablest debater in the old Society.

In 1859, Mr. MacVicar was licensed to preach, and soon after received calls from Collingwood, Erin, Bradford, Toronto West and Knox Church, Guelph. The call to Guelph was accepted, and the new pastor entered upon his work with that energy which has marked his course all through life. The work soon told, as real work always does tell, in a live, growing community such as Guelph then was. But this pastorate was not to last long. A call came from Côté Street Church, Montreal, asking the young pastor to take charge of the historic church which had been made vacant by the removal of Dr. Donald Fraser, now of London, to Inverness. The call was accepted, and he was inducted into his new charge on the 30th of January, 1861. In this enlarged and prominent sphere of labour, Mr. MacVicar,—he was then plain Mr.—continued for nearly eight years, working with his usual zeal and energy. The congregation grew until the membership reached 589, a membership considered large in those days, even for an influential city congregation. The new pastor was a born teacher, and, as a result, his Bible class numbered over two hundred. Several district Sabbath Schools were started during his pastorate, two of which have since grown into self-supporting congregations.

In 1868, the Presbyterian College of Montreal was founded. There was considerable difference

of opinion in the Church as to whether an additional college was needed. Funds for the support of theological education were not any two plentiful, and many were of the opinion that it would be better to endow and fully equip Knox College, before starting an additional Theological Hall. However, the Supreme Court, after some consideration, put the new college on paper, and appointed the pastor of Côté Street to put it any where else that he could. It was the day of small things, or more strictly speaking, the day of nothing at all. There was no college building, no library, and no endowment. When the first session opened in the basement of Erskine Church the institution consisted of the Charter, the Principal and half a dozen students. For four years no additional professor was appointed, the whole work being done by Principal MacVicar, aided by occasional lecturers.

If success can justify the founding of any institution, the Church did a wise thing when it founded the Presbyterian College of Montreal. The staff of one has grown, in twenty years, to a staff of four professors and four lecturers. The basement of Erskine Church has been exchanged for the splendid pile that now adorns the side of Montreal mountain. The assets of the institution amount to something over three hundred thousand dollars. The library contains works of great value, such as "The Complutensian Polyglott," "The Codex Sinaiticus" and other rare books that money could not procure. The institution has graduated over one hundred ministers, and is now attended by between seventy and eighty students. Facts such as these do the commenting themselves.

Principal MacVicar's services to his Church have not been confined to the pulpit and lecture-room. He originated what is known as the French Evangelization Scheme, and has always taken an active and deep interest in that work. In 1881 he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly, and had the good fortune to preside over one of the most pleasant meetings of the Supreme Court ever held. Though sufficiently firm, he was courteous and genial in the chair, and so scrupulously fair that the humblest member of the Court felt that the parity of presbyters is not always fiction. He has been a member of the Supreme Court of his church for twenty-seven consecutive years, and was absent for the first time a few weeks ago, when he resigned his seat in the Halifax Assembly in order that he might attend the meeting of the Pan-Presbyterian Council in London. He was appointed a delegate by the General Assembly to each of the four Presbyterian Councils which met in Edinburgh in 1877, in Philadelphia in 1880, in Belfast in 1884, and in London a few days ago. In this meeting he is to read a paper on "The Duty of the Church with reference to Social and other tendencies bearing on Faith and Life." He was a member of the Evangelical Alliance which met in Copenhagen in 1884, and presented a paper which appears in the volume of proceedings, on "Modern Scepticism, its Causes and Remedy." In the Philadelphia meeting of the Presbyterian Council he read a paper on "The Catholicity of Presbyterianism," and at the Belfast meeting he was chairman of one of the most important committees. Nor have the Principal's services been confined exclusively to his Church or to matters strictly ecclesiastical. He was Honorary President of the Celtic Society of Montreal in 1886, and takes an active interest in its affairs. He has served for many years on the Protestant Board of School Commissioners in Montreal, and is, at the present time, Chairman of that body. It goes unsaid that in this department of civic duty his services are of the highest value. He delivered two courses of lectures on Logic, and one on Ethics, before the Ladies' Educational Society of Montreal, and was, for one session, Lecturer on Logic in McGill University.

Though few men in this country need academic honours less than Principal MacVicar, few have received more distinctions of that kind. In 1870 he received the degree of LL.D. from McGill University, of which he is also a Fellow. Some years ago he was made a member of the Atheneé Oriental of Paris. Knox College has conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Principal MacVicar's interest in the old congre-

gation of Côté Street did not cease with his pastorate. He was Moderator of Session during the vacancy of four years, which took place before the settlement of the present pastor. During these years the congregation built the splendid edifice in which they now worship, moved into it, and called a new pastor without any loss of membership. Any one of these things is almost certain to produce friction enough of itself. Perhaps Côté Street is the only congregation in Canada that ever did the three at once. For the successful manner in which the difficult and delicate work was done much credit is due to Principal MacVicar. Nor was the work in vain. Soon afterwards, from that old congregation in its new church came the endowment of "The Joseph Mackay Chair," "The Edward Mackay Chair," "The John Redpath Chair," and last, but by no means least, Morice Hall.

Principal MacVicar has now arrived at that age and maturity in study when his friends naturally expect something permanent from his pen. He has written several able Review articles and is the author of two standard works on Arithmetic. More permanent and important work would, no doubt, soon be forthcoming, if his college and other duties were not so pressing. Learning and leisure are both needed in the production of good books. Principal MacVicar has quite enough of learning and ability to produce standard works on more than one subject, but like all other working Presbyterian ministers he has little leisure.

As a writer Dr. MacVicar's chief qualities are clearness and strength. His style resembles not a little that of George Brown. He does not use the dash with the inimitable skill of the late Senator, nor is his style so sinewy and lively as Mr. Brown's, but it equals the deceased Senator's in clearness and strength. He has the power of statement in a marked degree. He knows how to arrange facts as well as how to draw conclusions; and, in his best efforts, often marshals his facts as to compel his hearers or so readers to draw the desired conclusions for themselves.

As a speaker Principal MacVicar is always clear, forcible and brief. Few speakers know so well how to eliminate irrelevant matter and present relevant matter in a condensed form. He always takes his condenser with him and uses it freely, especially in the Church courts. His sermons are models of logical order and always contain a large amount of good matter well illustrated and sometimes powerfully driven home. Like all good preachers, Principal MacVicar likes the pulpit, though nothing pleases him more than to sit down with a clerical friend and divide a few texts. He has opened over forty new churches; and Presbyterian people, especially those of the "solid" variety, greatly enjoy his sermons. Those who expect a College Principal and Doctor in Divinity to deal largely in the incomprehensible are disappointed and wonder at his plainness, but hearers who have minds to think and want something to think about are always pleased and edified.

THERE will be comparatively little advance in missionary work abroad among adults. Life is too short for any immediate and rapid progress. It will come only when the Gospel has leavened the whole mass. The best prospect will be among the children, and in order to the greatest success in this direction they must be taken away from their homes and put under Christian influence through the formative period of their lives. Day schools do good in a general way, but the results are limited and not always visible. The heathenism of home is the natural condition, and fortified by example will undo most of the efforts of a few hours in school. The most hopeful results can be obtained in orphanages, or schools where full possession can be gained over the pupils for years. The orphanage is the best form of benevolence, for if the children were born young tigers a few years of entire control and Christian culture would tame them. Then their natures are plastic, and their improved conditions within their homes would keep them steadfast. The advantage at the start would be such that they would appreciate the benefits of a religion that exists not only for the betterment of the soul, but of life in all its needs and relations.—*Philadelphia Presbyterian*.