

BIG RORY'S CONVERSION.

By Rev. A. K. MacLennan.

On the first Friday of July, in the year 18—, very early in the morning, two young men, then in their teens, harnessed one of the farm horses and started on a journey of some 30 miles from their home. In the Centre church, of which they were members, the announcement was made on the Sabbath before that there would be no service in the church on the following Sabbath, as the Lord's Supper was to be dispensed at the Big Ridge on that day.

The two young men were full of zeal and enthusiasm, and to them the distance was nothing, for had they not looked forward with great longing to this "sacrament" ever since they came back from the university in May, after spending their first six months in preparation for the gospel ministry? It was the one event in their quiet country home which occupied the thoughts of father and mother, and about which little Elsie and Jim talked for the past two months.

The morning was charming—the atmosphere was laden with the sweet fragrance of the wild rose and the scraggy juniper which lined the highway from the Upper Centre river to the Big Farm, a distance of ten miles or more. They as they began to climb the big mountain their way led through tall maple and straggling pines, which seemed to offer a soothing balm to the plastic minds of these two young students as they drove wearily toward the Ridge.

The elder of the two, Donald Matheson, had been teaching in the Upper Centre section for a year before entering that university, and he was now paying a prolonged visit to old friends; naturally enough he sought the companionship of his fellow-student, Alexander Finlayson, who was now seated beside him on this beautiful morning.

The conversation drifted along different lines until almost unconsciously to themselves they were in sight of the Big Ridge church, whose old-fashioned spire shot up from the midst of a clump of red spruce trees, which offered shade in summer and a shelter during the stormy winters. Already a number of horses were standing in Watson's grove, although it was only 10 o'clock. Tying their horse to one of the young maples on the eastern side of the tent, they wended their way to a quiet little knoll where a group of men, women and children had gathered, and seemed to be much interested in the subject discussed by one of the men. The two young students pressed their way through the crowd until they stood in front of a tall, lithe, athletic looking man, who seemed to be all nerves, and perhaps about fifty-five years of age. His keen blue eyes were sparkling with the joy which thrills the heart of the man who is conscious that he has a message from God. He was relating the story of his conversion, and urging the unsaved to surrender to God, which at this period was rather unusual among the sturdy conservative Highlanders. His whole body seemed to be agitated as he spoke in rapid tones of the miracles of divine grace, and the unspeakable love of his risen Lord. Seeing the two young students before him, and suspecting that they contemplated entering the ministry, he turned his remarks to them, and for a little dropped his native tongue and spoke in English.

"You will be wondering why a poor babbler like me is speaking to these people, but you will not be knowing how much I am indebted my dear Lord for saving me from the horrible pit and the miry clay. I was fifty years in hell. I am only a child yet, just five years old. Will you not be thinking I cannot help speaking of Him who saved me from death, when I tell you that I was out among the awful breakers of Smoky (a dangerous coast on the northern shore of Cape Breton, the scene of many a shipwreck in former years), in an open boat, with no oar or helm or compass.

the waves rising mountain high, the sky was black as ink, the lightnings flashed and the thunders roared in the heavens: the awful floods were likely to swallow me up, the storms of wrath were fiercely howling about my head. I knew not where to turn. The pains of hell got hold on me. Then in my despair I cried, 'Lord, save me; I perish.' Just then the blessed Pilot came on board my frail barque and brought me safely into the quiet Port of the Gospel, and turning to me he said, with a heavenly smile on his face, 'Rory, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands.' &c. I then cried out in the joy of my soul so loudly that the mountains re-echoed my words, 'My dear Lord, and my God.'"

At this stage many were in tears, and Big Rory's countenance seemed to shine with a light which was truly beautiful, because it was heavenly. He said, "Young men, do you wonder that I should speak of that love? I will be speaking about it while I live, and it will be my theme throughout the eternities."

Then, in his quaint way he turned to his native tongue and addressed the crowd, but intended his remarks for the young men who aspired to the pulpit: There are some men who get fine tools from Edinburgh and Glasgow and Princeton and Auburn and Pine Hill (seminaries), and they can build very fine sleighs with them, but I can make one as strong with a broadaxe and other ordinary tools."

By this he evidently meant that God uses ordinary means in conversion, and that the most finished discourses are empty focuses without the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. The parables of our Lord, he passionately loved, and his own active mind seemed to travel along similar lines. In every flower of the field, every blade of grass, every shrub by the wayside, he saw a symbol of the true and false professor of religion. He was merciless in his denunciation of the formalist, never calling him but a whitened sepulchre, full of rottenness and dead men's bones.

One of these young men had many opportunities of knowing Big Rory intimately a few years later, being assistant pastor to Dr. MacRae, and catechist student in the congregation of which he is still an aged member.

Often the quaint remarks of Big Rory in speech, on the question, (ceist), and in prayer, convulsed Mr. Finlayson in laughter, while at other times he was moved to tears. On one occasion, while praying, he seemed to have an overpowering sense of the greatness and riches of divine grace, and he exclaimed, "It is thyself, Lord, that has the big storehouse. Yes, Lord, it is a thousand times larger than the big house at the mines." A few days before he paid a visit to one of the coal mines and was taken through the large machine shop and the company's store.

Sann agad fein a Thighhearna, a tha nigh mor seha ne tigh mor na meinn.

But a dark day came to Big Rory. When walking in the field a little distance from his home he fell into one of the deep pits, known in Cape Breton as plaster holes. He was brought home in an unconscious state and the doctor pronounced his case hopeless. On regaining consciousness he asked, "Doctor, can I live?" The doctor replied, "I am afraid you cannot, Mr. McLeod."

"Well, well, thank God; I am going home. I shall look into the face of my dear Lord and see Him as He is."

Then his thoughts seemed to take the form of a prayer, and after silent meditation for a few minutes he exclaimed, "I thank thee, my Jesus, that thou canst not be in heaven without me! I never doubted my salvation since that day long ago when He said to me, 'Rory, reach hither thy hand!'"

But at the end of ten days he called his wife to the bedside and said:

"Margaret, I'm not going to die yet."

"How have you found that out?" said Margaret.

"Ah, the big hounds are on my track again," referring to bad thoughts, which to his pure soul was a great sorrow and an evidence that he was not yet fit for heaven. To Mr. Finlayson he said on one of his visits:

"Ah, minister, the Lord is good to me. He gave me draughts of heaven on this bed." (Bolgam do na faitheanas.)

"How is that?" inquired Mr. Finlayson.

"Well, sir, you see God sent me seven glorious virgins from heaven with messages of comfort to my soul. I was simply living in the atmosphere of heaven." (Oiteagan do na faitheanas.) By the virgins he meant the promises of God, which were always yea and amen to Big Rory. On the men's day (La na ceist) the visiting minister often stood in the tent, eager to catch every word which fell from Big Rory's lips. He was original in his general make-up, full of wit and humor, and no man could possibly imitate him. He was unique in his manner, matter and personality. Often when Mr. Finlayson spoke on Christ's love, as seen on Calvary, Big Rory would speak out in the hearing of eight or nine hundred people, "Ah, that's sweet, minister. Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

He grew to manhood absolutely indifferent to the claims of Christ. He was known as the best dancer and sailor in the Glen. He had a beautiful, sweet voice, and he could entertain for a whole night with Gaelic songs of his own composition, for he was a poet of no mean order. But to crown all he had a great love for the bane of many of his fellow-countrymen—Scotch whiskey. One day the notice of a prayer meeting in the cove school house was given in the Glen church, to be conducted by the Godly Donald Matheson, one of the remarkable lay preachers of his day. Louie had a massive head of keen intellect, a logical mind, a marvellous grasp of truth, a countenance full of kindness and love. He was of the Alexandrian type of expositors, a born theologian. Among others who went to hear him that evening was Big Rory. Donald preached on Jacob and Laban, and in his marvellous appeal for decision Big Rory trembled as if in convulsions. The little school house shook, and with a piercing cry Big Rory said, "I'm lost, I'm lost!"

Donald, who knew that the law was a schoolmaster leading to Calvary, did not hesitate to speak of the desert of sin and its defiling and damning nature. Poor Rory left the house in despair. For days he was in deep soul agony, but after some weeks of distress, during which he prayed and wept and suffered, he heard the sweet voice of Jesus saying to him, as was noted elsewhere, "Reach hither thy finger!"

From that day to the present Big Rory lived a humble, consistent, active, Christian life, loved by old and young because of his charming personality and his peculiar manner of presenting the gospel of salvation to others. His gift of song was turned to good account ever after. At every Sabbath service, and at all the communions for miles around, his clear, sweet voice was heard with great delight by thousands of men and women who gathered at these sacred resorts.—United Presbyterian.

From a deep artesian well at Villamartin, in the south of Spain, a great stream of petroleum is flowing.

Advices have been received that the priests have declared a religious war against France.

Despite increased expenses, Belgium had a profit of over \$15,000,000 on her state railways last year.

On cigarettes to the value of \$31,250,000 smoked in Spain last year, the government made a profit of \$12,500,000.

Wireless telegraphic plant can be erected in Germany only with the consent of the government, according to a bill introduced in the Reichstag.