

Rev. Davidson Macdonald, M.A.



By
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Toronto



The home of Dr. Macdonald's father at Picton, Ontario.



The home of Dr. Macdonald, Tokyo, Japan.

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THE REVEREND DAVIDSON MACDONALD, M.D.

By

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IN the winter of 1858, in a schoolhouse near the Carrying Place in the County of Prince Edward, in an oldtime revival service, there was born into the Kingdom of God a young man from the neighboring village named Davidson Macdonald. He was then in the twenty-first year of his age, born of Scottish parents, a young man of excellent character and promising ability. His early education had been solid and thorough, first in the public school and then in the Grammar School of the town of Picton, not far from his home, where he was prepared for the examinations required for his future studies in Theology and in Arts and Medicine in the University. The minister conducting the service was the Rev. Arthur Browning, an ardent revivalist, and later one of the missionary founders of Methodism on the Pacific coast. The foundations of a Christian experience and life had been well and truly laid by the young man's early religious training, and at that time the workers in revival services were never satisfied until they had led the awakened souls out to a definite assurance of sins forgiven.

The young man's consecration to the Christian life was complete, his experience of salvation clear, and his first prayer was that God would give him work to do. Within a year and a half he had passed through the preliminary stages of exhorter and local preacher, and at the Conference of 1859 was received on probation for the ministry of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. His five years of probation were spent at Brewer's Mills, Frankford, Trenton and Napanee, and thence, for the last two, at Victoria College. He was thus thoroughly prepared for his work. High School education, business training under James L. Biggar, M.P., one of the most intelligent and capable merchants of the country, practical work in the ministry in a part of the province where strong spiritual life and strict adherence to old Methodist ways held sway, and then two years of successful work in College gave him at once a diversified and thorough preparation for the work which, by God's providence, lay before him. He was ordained to the work of the ministry in 1864, the class to which the writer also belonged. We were thirty-six in number and were rarely privileged in the Ordination Services of that year under the presidency of the saintly W. L. Thornton. His charge on Friday night moved all our hearts and sent us to our homes for a day of fasting, consecration and prayer, and brought us to the sanctuary on Sabbath morning with expectant faith again to listen to words of exhortation delivered with the unction of the Holy Spirit. And while the hands of Thorn-

ton, Ryerson, Wood and others of the fathers were laid upon our heads and the ancient prayer uttered, "The Lord pour upon thee the Holy Ghost for the work of the ministry now committed to thee by the imposition of our hands," it seemed indeed a renewal of Pentecost to all our souls.

The next two years he spent on the Newburg Circuit as colleague of the Rev. George McRitchie, in the very heart of the primitive type of Canadian Methodism. He was here associated not only with an able, consecrated and most thorough superintendent, but also with laymen like Mitchell Neville, Cephas Miller, John Rook, James Eakins, and many other men who, for years, were strong helpers and a spiritual uplift to the preachers on that old circuit. Here, too, he found the companion of his life, Miss Clark, a daughter of two of the U.E. Loyalists' families, the Clarks and the Warners, whose names are inseparably linked with the early history of Canadian Methodism. By her gifts, her education, and her piety, she was unusually well-fitted to be the helpmeet of the great work which lay before him. When he was called to the Mission field, she entered with all her heart into the work and took, with ability and success, her full share of all parts of the work which naturally fell to a woman, and so laid the foundations that to this day, Shizuoka, their first mission station, is conspicuous for the extent, variety and success of its work for women and children. Then followed three years in Gananoque, and a year near his old home

in Bloomfield. Then it would seem there came to him the call which changed the course of his life, and at the end of one year, at his own request, he stepped out of a comfortable, first-class country circuit to take a very poor, little, suburban appointment just outside the City of Toronto. The only recommendation was that it was near the Medical School of Victoria College, on the corner of Gerrard and Sackville Streets. His object was to pursue the study of medicine.

Perhaps no one now knows what that change meant to him at the time. But now we can clearly see in it the hand of God leading him almost unconsciously to an end that he knew not. Here, by three years of scientific and professional training, he was to be fully qualified for the work to which God had destined him, and here the authorities of the Church were to find the man they needed as the companion of Dr. Cochran in the work of founding our Mission in Japan. At the end of the first year he was moved from Leslieville to Davenport, the home of Dr. Wood, the Superintendent of Missions, and so again was brought in touch with the department of his future life work.

For the work which was thus providentially opening before him he had not only this course of preparation, but also natural gifts. He was a man of sympathy, of keen intuition and of clear inductive judgment, gifts which fitted him at once to be a great physician and a great missionary. Now he devoted himself most earnestly to the pursuit of his medical studies,

and after a most creditable course received the degree of M.D. from Victoria University at the convocation of 1873. He was now a man of first-class education, of thorough business training, of experience in dealing with men and affairs, and of deep and matured experience in spiritual things, and thirty-five years of age.

And already the decision had been made by the Church and accepted by himself, and at the Conference of 1873 he was stationed at the as yet non-existent mission at Yokohama, Japan. Never was such a decision more signally crowned with God's approval and blessing.

A little later the two missionary founders crossed the Pacific, and in the beautiful autumn months found themselves in the then restless but attractive Sunrise land. Japan was still in transition. Foreigners were admitted to the country only by passport, and were restricted as to residence to what were known as the foreign concessions. Yokohama was one, and a small section of Tokyo, Tsukiji was another. If permitted to pass beyond these limits, it could only be under the control and responsibility of a Japanese citizen. But the immediate task before the missionaries was the acquisition of the language, and to this they devoted themselves, awaiting the opening of Providence to direct their future course. Before many months that opening was presented in the offer by a Japanese gentleman from Shizuoka, of a position as teacher of English in the Normal School of that city and province. This gentleman was Hitomi-San, a man of rank above that

of Samurai, and of influence in the community, which accounts for his commission to select a teacher of English for the school. It was his duty to see that the foreigner whom he had taken into his employ was a safe person, obedient to the laws of the country, and also to be responsible for his safe-keeping while outside the jurisdiction of his own consul. Hence he must conduct him to his new residence and find him an abode there under his own supervision. The journey from Tokyo to Shizuoka was not without its dangers, and Hitomi San made provision accordingly. Mrs. Macdonald was carried by four bearers, accompanied by a guard carrying a naked sword. The conveyance was a Norimono or Japanese palanquin, in which she was securely screened from the gaze of the passers, but obliged to sit Japanese fashion on her feet for the journey of over a hundred miles, occupying two days. Needless to say, the beauty of Fuji and the Hakoni ridge were lost on her. The gentlemen fared better, riding in jinrikshas. Thus the first Canadian Methodist missionary and his wife found their way over the Hakoni ridge or barrier into the beautiful vale in which lies Shizuoka, at the foot of its mountain scenery.

For residence, Hitomi San took them into his own home, a large Japanese house, enclosed by a high wall concentrating the summer heat and excluding the breezes. There resided also Prince Tokugama, who became one of Dr. Macdonald's pupils. Hitomi San proved a kind landlord and supervisor, and did not a little to

facilitate the work of Dr. Macdonald, especially in his medical practice. Shizuoka at this time was a stronghold of Buddhism, and the ancient impediments to the incoming of foreigners and the introduction of a foreign religion were still in force. Only, the first step to the entrance of the missionary had been gained. He had found a Japanese patron who had employed him as the teacher of English in the Normal School. But neither in the school nor in any other public place could he preach or teach Christianity. His patron could furnish him a place to live in, but it could not be known otherwise than as his dwelling. Besides his knowledge of the language was still too imperfect to be used for missionary work. Then came into exercise his professional ability. His patron could introduce him, not as a religious teacher, but as a physician, as well as a teacher of English. And thus he quickly formed a programme of daily work. For five hours of the morning he taught English in the Normal School. In the afternoon he received patients in his rooms or visited them at their homes.

In the evening he devoted himself assiduously to the mastery of the language. In each of these lines of work he achieved decided success. His mental ability, his accurate literary as well as scientific scholarship, his genial and polished manners, and his earnest and sympathetic spirit contributed to decided success as a teacher. He made a reputation such, that nearly forty years later, when I visited Shizuoka, I found the Methodist Missionary another

graduate of Victoria still teaching English in the same Normal School, and on the invitation of the governor of the province, I was permitted to address the body of teachers in the city and surrounding country on the subject of moral education. The first teacher there, and the first foreigner to occupy that position in that city, had so commanded the respect and confidence of a still jealous people that for long years to come his successors were able to hold the place and do the work.

In his afternoon work, as a physician, he was equally successful. If he was a born teacher, still more was he a born physician. His ability, his manner and his spirit all contributed to success. And to this was to be added a thorough training and mastery of his profession, such that even on his way to Japan he was offered ten thousand dollars to abandon his purpose and settle in a rising mining city as physician and surgeon to a wealthy mining enterprise. Now, in Shizuoka his success as a physician soon brought him into prominence at a time when Japan was still dependent on her primitive physic, and years must still elapse before the University of Tokyo would produce physicians and surgeons equal to the best of European training. Rapidly his medical practice extended, not to foreigners alone, of whom at first he was almost the only representative, but to all classes of the Japanese, from the exiled Shogun in the castle to the humblest and poorest of the people, for he was practising medicine, not for wealth or fame, but in the

loving spirit of Christ and the service of humanity. At the midnight hour he was known to respond to the call of distress from the poorest of the poor in a hovel where there was not a candle to light his way, and with Japanese politeness, leaving his shoes at the door, creep in through the dark and by the light of a match examine the sufferer and administer relief and creep out through the dark again and home from his errand of mercy.

All this opened a great and effectual door to the missionary. Two years is the ordinary time in which even a young man, employing his whole time, will gain such use of the language as will entitle him to preach even with hesitancy. When he landed in Japan, he was in the thirty-sixth year of his age, an age at which no missionary, unacquainted with the language, would be accepted for the foreign field to-day. Dr. Meacham speaks of hearing him preach when he arrived in Japan in 1876; considering his other labors, this certainly was a remarkable attainment. This we certainly know, that before he left Shizuoka, in 1878, for his first visit home, his success in planting a Christian church in that city was quite as remarkable as his success as a teacher or a physician. He had then gathered a church of one hundred and eighteen members, a church which so great an authority as Dr. Gulick speaks of as the strongest and best founded of any Christian church in Japan. He preached and organized a Sunday School in his own limited rooms. Mrs. Macdonald entered into the work with the

women and children, taking charge of the Sunday school. Such was his success that the Church at home begrudged the time and strength given to what they considered outside work, and suggested that his whole time should be given to the evangelistic work in which he was so successful. But when yielding for a little to this suggestion, a poor man came to him, with tears in his eyes, saying, "My child died because you did not go to save it," his heart told him, as it could not tell those at home, how essentially his evangelistic work was linked in with his loving work as a physician, opening to him the hearts of all the people so that he was soon to be "the most beloved missionary in all Japan." Henceforth he would refuse to answer no call for healing help from rich or poor, under the noonday sun or at the midnight hour. One morning a friend met him looking worn and exhausted at an early hour, but waiting to begin the work of the day. He said, "I am worn out. Last night I travelled fifty miles by train and then walked through the mud three or four more to visit a poor, sick man. I then walked back to catch the train and have just arrived home for my day's work." That was the self-sacrificing character of the man. When he returned home, in 1878, he needed the furlough for physical recuperation, and he wished for it to continue his medical studies to keep abreast of the times and to follow special lines which he had found to be much needed in Japan. He did all that was possible to secure this last, but the Church was a hard

taskmaster. He was already marked out as a man of unusual ability, tireless industry, and unstinted self-sacrifice; an evangelist, a physician, a teacher, a church founder and organizer, a man of business ability, and a man of increasing influence with all classes of the people, native and foreign. Thus it came to pass that he was sent to Tokyo. Pressure was still brought to bear upon him to devote himself entirely to evangelistic work, as Dr. Cochran was now being called to the establishment of educational institutions and to work of translation. But Providence was stronger than the opinions of missionary authorities. The reputation which he had won in Shizuoka followed him to Tokyo, and the people, high and low, in need of healing, called for his help. He was appointed physician to the American Legation. The British Embassy often called for his services. He was consulted by the French, Spanish and Austrian Legations. Even the Chinese came to him for medical help. All the missionaries of all denominations looked to him under the pressure of sickness, and none expressed their gratitude more heartily than Roman Catholic priests. The income which came to him by voluntary return for these services was all spent in furthering the mission work, and he lived as simply as any of his brethren. At the same time, he never forgot the poor or ceased to respond to their calls, and, as at Shizuoka, so here, God gave him through his medical work the hearts of all the people, rich and poor, high and low, and es-

pecially among the masses of the natives he was ever winning souls for Christ. No public ministrations, apart from this opening of the hearts, could have accomplished the work which was done in Tokyo during the first fifteen years of the mission. It was a preparation of good soil for the reception of the seed sown, not alone by his own work and words, but also by all his brethren who assisted in the work, and churches were founded in Tsukiji, Azabu, Shitaya, Ushigome and Hongo, and young men were raised up among the natives to become the successful pastors of the future.

It was just ten years after their first landing in Japan, and six after Dr. Macdonald's transfer to Tokyo, that the Toyo Eiwa Gakko was founded for the education of young Japanese. As a literary institution, Dr. Cochran and Messrs. Large and Whittington were the staff, Dr. Macdonald teaching one class in theology. The Toyo Eiwa Jo Gakko, under Miss Cartmell, preceded this by two years. And these schools became nurseries in which the young fruits of mission work in the homes were gathered and trained to build the church of the future. It is easy to understand how largely Dr. Macdonald's personal influence in the homes of the people would contribute to the success and growth of both these efforts.

In ten years after Dr. Macdonald's return to Japan, the mission had attained the stature of a full-grown church. Hitherto the mission had been administered as a missionary district of the Toronto Conference, first under Dr. Coch-

ran, as chairman, from 1874-1878, and under Dr. Macdonald from 1879 on. It was just at this point that native missionaries appear on the station list, Hiraiwa and Sugiyama. In 1878 he had left a membership of 118 in Shizuoka. On his return he had found a membership of 100 in the Tokyo district, which included Tokyo and Numadzu, where Dr. Meacham was laboring. Up to this point the ground had been preparing, and we have seen how much the quiet labors of Dr. Macdonald had contributed to that preparation. In 1879 he was appointed chairman of the Tokyo Missionary District, and entered upon the new phase of his work, that of administration, which we shall now briefly review.

He began his administration by removing from the roll of church membership a number whose lives were inconsistent, and who, though they had been baptized, no longer maintained their connection with the church. He then began with 180 church members in the entire missionary district. The next year the number rose to 200. There were thirteen preaching stations and four Sunday schools, of which Mrs. Macdonald had charge of one. He continued to occupy the chair of the district from 1879 to 1889. At the end of those ten years, the years of the great expansion of the mission, there were seventeen stations and twenty-three missionaries and evangelists, fifteen of them natives. A Woman's College had been established under Miss Cartmell, and a College for young men and the training of a native ministry under

Dr. Cochran, with Whittington, Large and C. I. D. Moore as teachers in literature and science, and there were one thousand seven hundred and sixteen church members organized in classes with a large number of leaders. When the missionary district, in 1889, became a Mission Conference, there were twenty-five stations, forty-five missionaries, including native preachers and assistants, two thousand six hundred and thirty-six church members, and the Conference was already considering the next forward step of a united Methodist Church for Japan. Eight years were destined to elapse before this could be accomplished, and before that day Dr. Macdonald's work was ended.

When the District became a Conference, Dr. Macdonald was elected the first president, and with the exception of the year 1892, when Dr. Cochran was placed in the chair during his final year in Japan, he was continuously re-elected from 1889 to 1899 when, with failing health, he retired, and in 1902 was superannuated. In 1905, the year of his death, there were seventy-one preaching places, fifty-two ministers and preachers, nine women missionaries, ninety-six class leaders, two thousand nine hundred and sixty-five church members, forty-nine Sunday schools and three thousand two hundred and twenty-two scholars.

A most important feature of these statistics appears in the large number of class-leaders. From the beginning of his administration, Dr. Macdonald had organized his church membership along the lines of the Discipline and the

Methodist system in which he had received his early training. He discarded the common missionary practice of keeping on his roll of membership all who had once been baptized, regardless of their subsequent religious or irreligious life. The class meeting was the means of maintaining a pure and spiritual church membership, and those who have visited the mission field in Japan can bear testimony as to how efficient that instrument has been in maintaining a remarkably high standard and tone of spiritual life among the native membership.

For twenty years Dr. Macdonald was, with one brief intermission, the administrative head of the mission and stood, especially before the native mind, as its representative. It will be seen from the statistics which we have given that his administration naturally divides itself into two periods of equal length, that of the District and that of the Conference. The first of these was the period of wonderful growth, the membership of the church thoroughly organized along spiritual methods; the five great missionary centres planted, which constitute now Districts of the Eastern Conference of Japanese Methodism; important educational institutions founded in Tokyo; and a native ministry becoming a strong feature of the work. Hindrances had disappeared; the native mind was responsive and receptive, and it had seemed as if Christianity were soon to become the national religion of Japan. It would be a great injustice to Dr. Macdonald even to suggest that he arrogated to himself the success of this period. No

man was more generously appreciative of his colleagues than he, and his colleagues were men deserving of appreciation. The native ministry grew up with the educational work to which Dr. Cochran so largely and successfully devoted himself. The personal and evangelistic work of men like Meacham and Eby was bearing its rich fruits, and the Woman's Missionary Society was making its important influences felt. But behind and underneath it all, and co-operating with it all, was the silent but mighty influence of a man whose life and character held up before the nation the ideal of goodness and whom God had, in his providence, so led out into the forefront that the whole nation from the highest classes to the most humble felt and respected his influence. This influence prepared the way for the important advance movements of his administration and he was fortunate in, rather God furnished him with, colleagues each fitted to lead in such movements, Cochran and the College to build a native ministry, Meacham and Eby to reach young men like Ebara, Ando, Nemato, Nakamura, and others who became pillars in the Church. Eby to devise means of reaching the whole land, by sowing the seed at the centre of University life, through the tabernacle to be carried far and wide by the returning student life, and the Woman's Missionary Society to lay the foundations of a new woman's home life for the women of Japan. The greatness of the man who stood at the head, the influence of his life and character, were felt in all this advance, and gave

it strength to meet the day of trial which was now near at hand.

Just about the first year of the next period the anti-foreign reaction began. Large was assassinated, and the Chinese war stimulated the seriousness of the situation. Opposing influences, intellectual and religious, were also making themselves felt. Buddhism began to struggle to recover the influence with the masses which she felt to be slipping from her, and allied with Shinto to establish herself as the truly national teacher of morality and patriotism. Positivism and agnosticism were extending their influence on philosophical minds and seeking to construct a philosophy which should serve as the background of a national religion, and all the objections to Christianity from a scientific and philosophical point of view were becoming familiar to the Japanese mind. Through these and other more local and internal difficulties, the remaining years of Dr. Macdonald's administration were a time of severe trial. Then it was that the true strength of the work of the preceding ten years was manifest. Those of us who visited Japan later will remember how strongly we were impressed by the fact that the religion of the Japanese was not coldly intellectual or baldly formal; it had penetrated deeply into their hearts and was part of their very life; and no human influence had contributed as much to this as the living, active, self-sacrificing type of religion exhibited to all the people in the life and work of Dr. Macdonald. It had reached their hearts, it had come to their

help in their sorest need. In the midst of raging cholera and pestilential heat, day and night, when all who were able were seeking refuge in the mountains, he was standing at his post, and a neighbor testifies that at any hour of the night he might hear his footsteps coming from or going to the help of the victims of the pestilence. It was such life work as this which carried religion into the hearts of the people, which convinced philosophic minds that here was to be found the most perfect type of moral conduct and laid the foundations of a faith in the hearts of men which no current of popular opinion could shake, which was stronger in its hold than all cavils of speculative objection; and which stood the tests of time and change. And this influence he continued to exert until the remnant of his strength was exhausted and life itself was given in full measure to his work. When strength finally failed he retired for a little and then God suddenly called him to rest January 4th, 1905.

FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

The following report, forwarded by Miss M. A. Veazey, Japan, for information, without any thought of publication, seems such a fitting closing for the foregoing life-sketch, that it is deemed worthy of incorporation in this booklet.

OUR school girls from the two upper classes, the fourth and fifth years, who comprise the church choir, were asked to sing at a unique service held at the church on Sunday afternoon, February 11th. Memorial services and services of appreciation are often held when word is received of the passing of any worker, whether missionary or Japanese, and occasionally the first and even third anniversary are fittingly observed; but to be invited to a *fortieth anniversary* of a baptismal service in order that the noble name of the missionary at whose hands the baptism had been received, might be freshly recalled and honored, is indeed a rare and touching tribute to the worth of a man's life.

The name so honored was that of our beloved pioneer missionary in Shizuoka—the Rev. Davidson Macdonald.

A few weeks ago a beautiful photograph of Dr. Macdonald, enlarged to life size and fittingly framed, was presented to the Shizuoka Church, to be hung in the Japanese parlor at the rear of the church, used as a Y.M.C.A. and

prayer-meeting room. The donors were four of the church members who had been baptized by Dr. Macdonald forty years ago, and it was through their invitation that the church members gathered last Sunday for the simple service. The date was considered a fitting one, as it was "Kigen-setsu" or memorial day in honor of the founding of the Japanese Empire by Jenimu Tenno in the days of the prophet Jeremiah.

The pastor of the church acted as chairman—the speeches were made by the "hosts" of the day, recalling many incidents of the days when Dr. and Mrs. Macdonald were in residence here, and paying tribute to their daily lives as well as the Doctor's work in church and city.

One of the four, who very seldom misses a Sunday service, was unable to be present on account of illness. The other three were Mr. Iwai, a faithful old Christian now in his seventies, Mr. Anzai, still young and vigorous, now acting as manager for the "Shizuoka Home," the General Board Orphanage, and the Rev. Mr. Youeyama who, after many years of faithful work in the itinerancy, has come back to the church where he received baptism "to end his days among old friends," as he said. Though retired from active service, he is by no means idle, preaching not infrequently, giving addresses at the various meetings of the church when invited, as well as doing most effective Bible teaching and visiting in certain non-Christian homes where his culture and kindly manners procure him a welcome admittance. His wife, a frail, delicate little body, has

recently become totally blind, but bears her affliction so cheerfully that her life, like that of her husband, is a benediction to many.

At the close of the exercises, a little bag of cake was served to each one present, accompanied by a post card prepared for the occasion, with a picture of the church and a copy of Dr. Macdonald's photograph, under which are a few words of appreciation of his life, using such words as "broad-minded," "noble," "pure in heart," "kind and impartial," and "missed by everybody" when he left the city. During his three years here he is said to have led 120 people to Christ.

Truly he being dead yet speaks through these and other lives that were privileged to touch his during his many years of loving service in this land.