

Logie Macdonnell

**An
Appreciation**

“ This they all with a joyful mind
Bear through life like a torch in flame,
And falling cling to the host behind—
‘ Play up! play up! and play the game!’ ”

“ Thanks be to God which giveth us the
victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”



REV. LOGIE MILNES MACDONNELL, M.A.

Logie Macdonnell

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The Rev. Logie Milnes Macdonnell died at Fergus, Ontario, on Tuesday, the 7th September, 1915.

He died young. In these days that makes little impression. We are constantly hearing of many of our Canadian boys that have been singled out for sharing that honour with the Master of us all—with Him who fell some two thousand years ago at an earlier stage of the very same eternal battle in which these, too, have fallen by His side. How gladly would Logie Macdonnell have sold his life dear by fighting and falling there! But though he died in his bed and not in the trenches, he was none the less a fellow-cross-bearer with his Lord. He, too, though he never once carried a musket on his shoulder, was of the company of warrior-saints

“ who row on row,
Burn upwards each to his point of bliss.”

It was a bitter and slow cross he was given to bear. Five weary years and five months ago he was stricken and laid upon the shelf in his noontide by the terrible malady which slowly and in the last stages very painfully consumed him down to the socket. He was then in the full flush of his young strength and enthusiasm for the work he believed to be the noblest and happiest a man can find to do in this world, the preaching of Christ's Gospel.

It is a work whose rewards do not lie in money. He who consecrates himself to it need take no vow

of poverty. Poverty, at least relative, is sure enough to be his portion unless in the unlikely case of his ministering to one of the very few rich city congregations. That as a rule he need not fear celibacy in addition speaks volumes for the courage and unselfishness of our Canadian young women. Compare the Law, for instance. Not long ago a young lawyer with some leanings toward the contemplative life confided to me a remarkable evidence of his strong sense of its charms that if he could only make sure of a steady little minimum of income—a trifle of some \$5,000 a year was, I found to my admiration, his modest estimate of that—why then, he would be able to retire from his practice into a life of studious leisure. He did not strike one either as a youth of any immoderate powers. If his genius had been transferred to the church I do not think that the most inflammable of wooden pulpits in which it would have burned would have been in the least danger of a conflagration. I do not suppose Logie Macdonnell, certainly not his inferior in any respect whatever, ever made more than \$1,500 a year. He would have made no figure in the American magazines which devote themselves, for the stimulation and heartening of aspiring youth, to the chronicling and analysis of success. A grocer's apron would have been a likelier wedding garment for that high banquet-hall than his Geneva gown and bands. Likelier, too, for our Continental Hall of Fame, where "money talks" so loud, often concerning the things it can least reasonably be expected to know much about. In a country where the dominant ideal of manhood is the millionaire, the Church is not only a poverty-stricken but also an obscure and inglorious profession as the world counts glory. The prize ring is a much shorter cut to a much wider popular renown.

And yet there is nothing so urgent for Canada,

nothing that lies quite so much at the root of all its dignity and happiness—nay, in the long run, of its material prosperity,—as the contribution which its servants of all denominations in this Profession are doing their best to render. The one thing above all necessary for Canada is that that work should be well done. Without vision the people perish. It is not enough that we should know the Multiplication Table and the Parallelogram of Forces, or that we should make the most skilful and brilliantly successful of these great charts of life, quite cardinal as they are. Still less, if possible, can we do without the Bible and all the Bible stands for, the ideals and exemplars of justice and mercy, the lamps and guides without whose light upon our path we are doomed to the deepest and most ruinous darkness of all. It will avail us little to be rich and powerful if we cannot make a decent and generous use of our power and riches, which in that sad case must soon shrivel up like fairy gold into a mere heap of withered leaves and vanish altogether in the end. And if this indispensable treasure is to be brought to bear upon the nourishment of our people, who otherwise must starve, we must have men that really know it, who have indeed seized and assimilated it with their own minds and hearts, and can rightly divide and minister its words of truth to others. But there is scarcely any task a man can set himself more difficult than that. Really to know the Bible! Only those who have tried very hard indeed to get some approximation to an intelligent and living hold upon it have any idea of the difficulty. It needs great and rare gifts to begin with, and then hard study and elaborate training to cultivate and develop them.

Fortunately for us the noblest work has inward attractions, so great that there are people who if they

are born poor will do it for the barest livelihood, and if they were born rich would not only do it for nothing but would pay to be allowed to do it. High pay is not the only thing that draws recruits. Our English soldiers will get joyously shot down in the trenches for sixteen pence a day, while their own brothers and cousins in the coal-mines are grumbling over fifteen shillings a day and indignantly demanding more. Man is so made after all that nothing is more alluring, sweeter, or more solidly satisfying to him than self-sacrifice. Thank Heaven there are still young men in Canada who do not serve for hire and are much more interested in the vines of the Lord's Garden than in His pence.

Logie Macdonnell was of that company. He had the native gift and taste for the work. In part doubtless by levitical inheritance. His great grandfather and both his grandfathers had been ministers. His father, the Rev. D. J. Macdonnell, of St. Andrew's Church, Toronto, was one of the most able, devoted, enlightened and illustrious ministers that have shed a glory on the Canadian Presbyterian Church. The young scholar was most faithful and diligent in preparing himself for his vocation. Having in 1897 entered Queen's College (an Institution in which he never ceased to believe with a superabundant measure of that fanaticism of gratitude which it is its peculiar grace and testimonial to inspire in all that have ever had any connection with it) he graduated from that University in Arts in 1901 and in Theology in 1905. These eight years, the long seed-time for a harvest of little more than four years fruition in active work—but also for Eternity!—were fruitful for him both in light and impulse. Among other men who helped him there to clear his mind of cant and inspired him to go forward valiantly by ways that led to the clear

solid heights, the chief no doubt was Principal Grant who—his own father being by that time dead and gone—was a father to him in almost every sense of the word. Logie lived in the Principal's house during most of his college course and drank in there at least quite as much of the spiritual stuff that made him as he did in the class-rooms.

He had no sooner graduated than he married Miss Ursilla Macalister, a scion of the Manse like himself, and like himself a student of the University. She took her place by the side of his self-sacrifice and suffering, to share with him, too, that cup of joy, not known to the surfeited and selfish, which cannot be bought more cheaply than with these.

After a year's work as assistant to Dr. Lyle in Hamilton and six months of happy study and travel with his bride in England and Scotland, he was inducted in the late fall of 1906 as minister of St. Andrew's Church, Vernon, B.C. It was the claim of the West upon the East—intensely felt by him then as one that no Canadian graduate in Theology could ignore without treason, though in later life he was almost as much seized of the needs of the East—that drew him there, the old cry from Macedonia for help. The son of D. J. Macdonnell would have been worldly wise to remain at home with his young wife, but he was incapable of that brand of wisdom. They had their reward. The ministry in Vernon was in every respect a great and shining success. Logie was a born preacher. He could feel and see and make others feel and see. He had that incalculable and mysterious power which comes of character and conviction, and the lucidity which is painfully born of honest thought, study and labour, and does not alas, always go even with mere character and conviction. His unfeigned love of men and interest in them did not

express itself in sermons only. It toiled, to the blessing of many a young man, to exert a wise and beneficent influence upon the problems and temptations of immortal souls in daily life, cruder and fiercer as these are in the West than in our own better fenced environment. The parson's home, too, was what it should be, a sign amid the waste of our prevailing rich vulgarity. It proved to all that had eyes in their heads that brains and good-will can make a fireside well worth visiting on astonishingly little a year.

But it was all of sadly short duration. Logie, in every other way at his happiest, was reaching his top-notch of power and clarity in preaching when all of a sudden he broke down. Even that scant and rocky lot, as most of us would think it, from which he extracted wealth and joy—the springing chamois that he was!—was snatched away from him. A harder cross was laid upon him. Well for him that he had love to lighten it still, his Master's and his wife's. His hand dropped from the plough that was his pride. Death mocked him from the furrow, very close to his side at first, then from a greater distance, which seemed for a while even to recede. But all the while the black shadow still stood there, vast, inexorable, and at last came daily closer in ever more unmistakable advance. Yet while his body died visibly every day, his spirit never ceased to live and even to radiate to the end.

The lingering mortal illness was drawn out from the May of 1910 to September, 1915. At first it seemed as if he must go down-hill rapidly, but he soon improved for the time under careful treatment in the familiar air of Fergus, where he was taken to his aunt's, Miss Smellie's, house. It was the old Manse where his maternal grandfather had lived, and he loved the place with its fine garden and fragrant pine

grove, medicinal if aught could be, cool and dark in the noon of the hottest summer day. Except for short visits to other places—California among them—which did not suit him nearly so well, he remained here hopelessly cut off from the work he loved, and as he used to say, with a touch of grim humour, concentrating all his powers on the problem of merely living on. And yet never till it became desperately hard work to breathe—and that was only a month or two before the end—did his mind or feelings even diminish in power of reacting vigorously and clearly on all manner of interests. He was of that noble type of whom it may truly be said that "the Lord hath set the world in their heart." He continued his studies, read every kind of book, theology, literature, novels, philosophy, persisted in working away unceasingly upon the improvement of his mind, and kept in touch with his friends by correspondence—controversial by choice and very lively in reproof and exhortation, as this writer badly in need thereof, his old teacher and now he hopes his humble scholar, has the most grateful cause to know. He wrote letters to the newspapers when his quick indignation against rascality and wrong, or torpor in the face of national duty, especially as regards the war, was stirred; he wrote articles even in the **Queen's Quarterly** and the **Presbyterian**. But it was his chief delight to have his friends visit him—a delight which the talks with him, the inspiration that breathed from the indomitable and combative vitality of that eloquent face, scarcely changed at all, and the no less eloquent pathos of the incredibly wasted wrists and form reflected back with usury indeed upon the visitor. Perhaps Logie's most effective pulpit was the couch in his open-air tent, where one had to sit at times with a greatcoat on. Strength made perfect in weakness, the unquenchable freedom of the spirit ris-

ing triumphant over the ruins of the flesh, St. Paul's old text, the immortal, death-defying, nay death-assimilating life of man upon the cross of Jesus Christ was preached there and "placarded up," as Paul says, before all eyes that could open.

But I think the crowning and complete revelation of what was in this splendid and perfervid spirit was made only a few months before his death, which it may have hastened somewhat, and after all just where he would have had it made, in his own beloved pulpit which was his throne. He had the bliss of exhaustively expressing himself in one imperishable appearance, and so could chant his "nunc dimittis" without one lingering look behind. It happened as late in his day as last December—a riot of sunset splendour which none that saw it can ever forget.

Fergus like most country towns and districts in Canada—no wonder, remember Nazareth! and reflect, too, that if twenty-one miles of blue water have drugged England almost to this hour, it is hardly strange that three thousand miles of it and a good deal of fat Boeotian soil besides, should have dulled Fergus—Fergus was very slow to waken to its duty and its privileges in this great war between the powers of light and darkness. Many Canadians at first were content to lie down and sleep comfortably like first-class passengers in the boat which others were breaking their backs and shedding drops of agony and bloody sweat to drive through the wild crimson breakers. That is a wide-spread conception of Christianity on this continent often curiously blended with a feeling of amazingly comfortable superiority to the rude burden-bearers who are only dying for us. But that was not Logie's conception of Christianity. He had learned from Jesus and St. Paul to regard it more in the light of a sort of "religion of valour," as the

Germans falsely call their cult of Moloch. His idea of it was in fact that of the old Presbyterians who were never "too proud to fight" for civil and religious liberty, and indeed were prone to a somewhat in-temperate zeal for the hewing of Agag in pieces before the Lord. It was in short this; wherever the immemorial battle of Christ's kingdom is going on and in whatever form its pangs of travail shake the earth, to be where Jesus was, in the van, among the foremost fighters where the bravest bear the brunt of war and look death in the face. So as he could not carry a rifle and had but very little breath left, he blew what there was of it—it was likely enough to be his last—into a trumpet. First he wrote a burning letter to the local paper. Then by his own vitalizing power he succeeded in setting afoot a canvass for patriotic purposes. And then, before the canvass was actually begun, he would speak to the people on Sunday one last time from his grandfather's pulpit, not, as he modestly explained, that he supposed his eloquence could accomplish anything, but he hoped that the mere fact of his running mortal risk might fire men's souls. When the time came he was there, sure enough, in the good true old Presbyterian gown and bands that have been from ancient days no strangers to "the thunders of the captains and the shouting." He spoke clearly, firmly, with restrained and perfect power, so that no one word was lost, though everyone knew he had taken his life in his hands, and every well-articulated breath he blew on them might be his last. A deed for the Victoria Cross. There were not many dry eyes in the church. "It was as if a man had risen from the dead," they said. They were the dead. He was all alive.

What a sign not to Fergus only but to all Canada, to all the Empire! Surely it is an unconquerable race

that can breed one such man, and surely where one such goes before hundreds of thousands will follow him.

"I hae but ae son, my gallant young Donald,
But if I had ten they should follow Glengarry.
Here's to Macdonnell and valiant Clan-Ronald,
For these are the lads that would die for their
Charlie."

It was his last message to us but it will suffice. The whole of him was in it and lives for ever in it. None can forget. Such burning spirits are no doubt apt to burn out soon, but they burn upwards to the quiet stars and swell their light, and leave an undying fire behind them in men's quickened hearts.

JOHN MACNAUGHTON.

McGill University, Montreal.



SELECTIONS FROM HIS VOICE AND PEN.

"There is one-half line of Stevenson's that we all should be able to endorse just now:

'Glad did I live.'

In a congregation of this kind, in any gathering of human beings of this size, there are always some people, generally more than we think, who feel that life has not been what they expected, that it is blighted and broken, that the music and sunshine have gone out altogether for long periods. But no matter what any of us have come through, is it not worth while to have lived, are we not glad to have lived to see our best and bravest go forth in the old British spirit? Does some one object that to talk about the old British spirit is no fit thing in the Church of Christ? Then I have a reply to that objection. When a man gives up home, or wife, or child, or friends, or the chance of a career, and goes forth at the call of duty to die for his country, then he is showing not only the old British spirit, whatever that may be, he is showing the spirit of Calvary, and that is a fit subject for the Church of Christ."—From an address delivered by Rev. Logie Macdonnell in Melville Church, Fergus, December, 1914.

"What am I going to advocate by way of raising the life of the whole Church and indeed the whole country? Some new theory or modern method? So far from that, what I have to suggest may sound at first painfully old-fashioned and inept. It is this. We must put a new emphasis on the work of the parish minister. In case there are contending impressions as

to what constitutes the parish minister, he had better be described. The parish minister, then, must be a man with a fine conscience. He must be so characterized by plain living and high thinking as to leave no room for suspicion that he is a worldling or a lover of ease. He must be if possible a recognized student, or at least must be known to spend long hours in conscientious work with his books, must form the habit of giving faithful preparation to his sermons and of enriching his mind every week by serious study of all that is best in literature, theological and otherwise. He must be interested, or endeavour to become interested in all that is human; whenever he feels that the needs of old men or of little children or of crude and uneducated workmen are a bore he must recognize that he is failing. He must be a man that cares about the spiritual life of the individual in his congregation, cares intensely that every soul among them should know the best that life can give. If he has no sense of humour he will be much handicapped. He must believe so firmly in the effectiveness of Christian service that he will not require the plaudits of multitudes or the prospect of prominence or applause to keep him faithfully at work."—From an article on the Place and Work of the Minister.

"War is hell. Quite true, and if we were living in suffering Belgium just now we might be utterly unable to see anything but the hellish aspect. The crucifixion was hell, but it was other things besides. And so is this war. The flower of Canadian manhood has gone, or is preparing to go, from our shores, and may never return, the kind of men to whom the country must look for salvation from political corruption and sordid

materialism. How, then, will our national ideals be preserved, much less purified? 'The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.' From the bloody fields of Europe will rise a new spirit which will leave none of us as we were. And those of us Canadian-born Imperialists who have sent our best and bravest away, who see mothers and wives showing the stuff of women that make a country worth living for and dying for, feel that the days of princes and heroes are not past, that it is easier to believe in God and Immortality than it was six months ago, and that for many a long day yet we want to be known not only as Canadian-born, but as sons of the Empire."—From an article in Queen's Quarterly for January, 1915.