

MEMORIAL

OF

JAMES MADISON MACDONALD, D.D.,

A DISCOURSE DELIVERED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF
PRINCETON, N. J., ON SABBATH EVENING, MAY, 14, 1876.

BY LYMAN H. ATWATER.

PREACHED BY REQUEST OF THE SESSION, AND PUBLISHED BY REQUEST
OF THE CONGREGATION.

PRINCETON :
THE PRESS PRINTING OFFICE.
1876.

PRINCETON, June 5, 1876.

REV. DR. ATWATER,

DEAR SIR :

The undersigned were appointed a Committee a few days since, by the First Church congregation, to request from you for publication, a copy of your sermon commemorative of the life and services of their late Pastor. Please consider favorably this request.

Yours, &c.,

H. C. CAMERON,
P. HENDRICKSON,
GEO. SHELDON,
GEO. M. MACLEAN,
J. R. VAN DOREN,
J. S. SCHANCK,
EDW'D HOWE.

PRINCETON, June 6, 1876.

To Prof. H. C. CAMERON AND OTHERS, of the Committee of the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church in Princeton :

DEAR BRETHREN :

It gives me pleasure to comply with the request of the congregation conveyed to me through you, and to place the Memorial Discourse in your hands for publication.

Yours truly,

LYMAN H. ATWATER.

(RECAP)
5503
"6065-
13

APR 27 1906

204262

Digitized by Google



DISCOURSE.

GOSPEL BY ST. JOHN, V. 35: HE WAS A BURNING AND SHINING LIGHT.

THE tribute here given by our Lord to John the Baptist is, that "he was a burning and shining light," light being used in the sense of a candle or lamp, one of those artificial illuminators which shines only as it burns, and burns only as it is fed by proper fuel within. This tribute is bestowed upon him with reference to his official service as the appointed forerunner and herald of Christ. It is the highest eulogium that can be bestowed upon any Christian preacher, or teacher. "He was a burning and shining light"—luminous as an exemplar and teacher of the religion of which he is a minister, and all the more so because he was burning with love to God, Christ, souls, and with zeal to promote the cause of truth, righteousness and salvation.

It accords with the chief purpose of this Memorial Discourse, and will tend to throw light upon its principal subject, if we look for a little at the mutual relation and interdependence of these two great elements of power in the pastor and preacher. To some extent indeed they interwork in every truly christian life. For while it is true, that it becomes

ministers eminently to be burning and shining lights, in order to the due fulfilment of their office, yet it is as truly incumbent in all christians to “shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life,” yea, so to let their “light shine before men that they seeing their good works may glorify their Father which is in heaven.” Nor can they do this except as they glow with the fires of christian love, earnestness and devotion. It is only thus that they emit the light of christian affection, feeling, character—as these shine out in a life all instinct and aglow with them. On the other hand, these fires of affection can be excited only by the knowledge of the objects and truths which are fitted to enkindle them. It is only as we know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent—the truth as it is in Jesus—that the fires of holy affection towards them can be made to burn. And this is so of all christian truth and duty. As the Psalmist “mused the fire burned”. So the disciples to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection said one to another, “did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures.” So true is it that the light and warmth of christianity are mutually auxiliary. To grow in grace, we must grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As Coleridge has in substance said, the religion of the Bible is not like the moon, light without heat,

nor, like a stove, heat without light, but like the sun whose rays give light and heat, life and joy.

But what is true of this mutual dependence of truth and love, knowledge and feeling, light and warmth in christians as such, is emphatically and manifoldly true of christian ministers. who are the spiritual guides of man. They are officially called to give to their hearers the light both of true teaching and a holy example. They must be "examples to believers," no less than "apt to teach." But so far as their example is concerned, their warmth of christian love, zeal, compassion, sympathy, tenderness ; their love of all that is good and detestation of all evil, are what make it a light, an inspiration, a magnetic power to the people. A frigid minister, however clear and profound his knowledge and teachings, is without kindling and inspiring power among men. If clear but cold as ice, he will like that chill and repel.

But warmth must permeate his teachings, persuasions and inculcations, public and private, if they are to reach and move the souls of his people. Coldness is deadness and impotence in the public addresses and private instructions of the ministry. If we may suppose it to give light to the understanding it cannot touch, penetrate and stir the conscience, the heart, the affections, or the will. It cannot rouse the stupid from their torpor, the callous from their obduracy,

melt the heart of stone to the tenderness and sensitiveness of the heart of flesh, or medicate the broken heart, or assuage the pangs of the wounded spirit with the balm of divine consolation. In short, indifference can only foster indifference.

But there is another aspect in which this fervid christian love and zeal increase the light possessed and emitted by the christian preacher. They quicken his love for christian truth, his interest in it, his desire to possess, to acquire and to communicate it. His mind kindles and glows over it. He searches for it as for hid treasure. He is urged as by a very fire in his bones to impart it to others, and to make them possessors of "the like precious faith." So inflamed with love of the truth, and zeal to acquire and teach and preach it, he will "study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." So does God solemnly charge his ministers. This is the divinely prescribed method for the preacher to save his preaching from degenerating into staleness, dullness, and tiresome monotony ending in all impotence. "Meditate upon these things, 'give thyself wholly to them that thy profiting may appear to all.'" So may he become a burning and shining light.

The application of all this to the ministerial life of our late pastor is obvious. It forms a natural

introduction to the survey of his character and career on which we now enter.

The REV. DR. JAMES MADISON MACDONALD, over whom such a throng of devout men recently made lamentation as they bore his honored remains from this seat of his chiefest earthly ministry, was born, as most of you have already learned, in Limerick, Maine, also the birth place and residence of his father, May 22, 1812, being the ninth of eleven children, and the third of five sons, of Major General John and Lydia (Wiley) Macdonald. General Macdonald, the father, was descended in the third generation from John Macdonald, who emigrated from the North of Ireland, as is supposed after a previous emigration thither from Scotland, which was probably his native land. He came to York, Maine, about the year 1745. On the male side, therefore, Dr. MACDONALD descended from that famous Scotch and Scotch-Irish stock which has been so admirable an element in the population of this country, and so pre-eminent in the founding, moulding, and composition of the American Presbyterian church in its various branches. At about the middle of the last century a considerable drift of this class of emigrants set towards New Hampshire and adjacent parts of Maine, as well as the Middle and Southern States. They planted in the midst of New England Congregationalism the Presbytery of Londonderry, which still continues in

vigorous life. In the Macdonald family, intermarriage with the old New England element had reinforced the strong Scotch blood with the iron of Puritanism—a union which forms a capital basis for the highest style of manhood.

General Macdonald, the father of our lamented Pastor, was a man of high mark and commanding influence in Church and State. He was a merchant who even then made voyages to England to procure the goods required by his business. He was Major General of military forces of Maine, and in active service as commander of troops for the defence of the coast of that State in the war of 1812. He was deacon of the Congregational Church, the highest lay officer recognized by that form of church-polity. He was also member of the Legislature, and was solicited to run for Congress by the political party then dominant in Maine; and at the time of his death was candidate for Governor of the State, with every prospect of election. Although without the advantage of a liberal education, he was noted for that superior good sense and judgment, joined to that integrity and firmness of character, which attract the confidence of men, and make their possessors easily the leaders and commanders of the people. Tradition confirms the high estimate which the funeral sermon preached on the occasion of his death, put upon his christian character and graces, his varied gifts and

commanding influence. His fervid patriotism inherited from his father, a soldier of the Revolution, descended to his sons, and was especially rekindled in our Pastor by the advent of the Centennial year.

Self-made men, like General Macdonald, beyond all others, are apt to appreciate the advantages of the liberal education of which they themselves have been deprived, and are very likely to seek it for their sons. He was no exception. Three of his five sons were educated at college, of whom two were trained for the bar, and achieved distinction in civil life. Another attained distinction in the military service of his country.

Dr. JAMES M. MACDONALD was left an orphan, by the death of his father and mother, in the spring of the year 1826, just before he had completed his fourteenth year. From this time he was virtually his own master, and followed his own bent as to his future career, alike with respect to the choice of his profession, and the ways and means of educating himself for it. The result is conclusive proof of his sterling native traits, and the admirable christian training he had received from his parents. Few youth left to their own unbridled caprice, would have passed like him through the perils incident to boyhood and opening manhood, not only without a wound or a stain, but with all their powers developed and improved to their fullest capacity ; entering upon

life strong in all manly virtues, and bright with all christian graces ; a noble specimen of disciplined and cultured, robust and symmetrical manhood.

His father, on his death-bed, called JAMES to his side, and told him that it was his desire that he should be a minister of the gospel. He appears never to have lost sight of this dying charge, and very soon set himself in earnest to fulfil it. He had enjoyed the advantages of an excellent academy in his native town. But, owing to the sad changes in his home, he soon left to enter the famous Phillips Academy of Andover, then presided over by that prince of classical teachers, John Adams, LL.D., father of Rev. Dr. William Adams, now President of Union Theological Seminary, in New York City. While there, in 1827, the year after his father's death, he made an open profession of his faith, by joining the Congregational church in that place. In 1828 he entered the Freshman class of Bowdoin College, in Maine, his native State. At the end of two years he left, and entered the Junior Class in Union College, Schenectady—being attracted there by the fame of its President, Dr. Eliphalet Nott, in respect to pulpit oratory and college administration. He graduated there with high honor in 1832. He immediately entered the Theological Seminary at Bangor, in his native State. After passing a year there, he left to enter the Yale Theological Seminary, from which he graduated in

1835. I was a member of the same class with him, and then my acquaintance with him began. More than forty years have since fled. It seems but as yesterday—and the period meanwhile has sped its way like the archer's arrow or the weaver's shuttle. His form and mien as he then appeared, are now vividly photographed in memory. To a frame of robust vigor and symmetrical proportions, was added the sparkling eye, the roseate hues on the face showing more of the bloom of youth than the bronze of manhood; this too, with an aspect of ingenuousness, sincerity, decision, firmness and benignity—all making up a rare specimen of manly beauty. All this truly represented the inner man. He was diligent and faithful in his studies, not only in the prescribed course, then of necessity, with but two active professors, very narrow, but in various reading and general literary culture. His profiting appeared to all. Conscientious and devout as a christian, genial and affable as a companion, true in friendship, fixed in principle, and resolute of purpose, the tokens of his noble future then brightly dawned upon us.

He was licensed to preach August 6, 1834. He was ordained and installed pastor of the 3d Congregational Church of Berlin, Conn., known as the parish of Worthington, April 1, 1835, Dr. Noah Porter, father of the present President of Yale College, pre-

siding. He was yet less than twenty-three years old. His excellent qualities in the pulpit and pastorate soon gave him name and fame. He remained in this rural charge only about two and a half years. He likewise very recently took part in the centenary celebration of the foundation of this church of his first pastorate. He was then called to the recently formed Second Congregational Church in New London, one of the old cities of Connecticut. After a successful pastorate of more than three years he was called to the old historic and influential Presbyterian church of Jamaica, on Long Island, whose eastern end stretches up into close proximity to New London. This may in part account for his having been brought to the attention of that church. Here he remained about nine years, exercising his ministry with remarkable power and success. Its leading details and characteristics, with its salient points, were graphically depicted here on the day of his funeral by Dr. Duryea, then a youth in his congregation. To that I must refer you for sufficient and authentic particulars. But it came to my personal knowledge at that time, in various ways, that few ministers in the church were more rapidly rising in favor and influence, or making a more decided impression upon the congregations and communities in which their lot was cast, than Dr. MACDONALD. He became conspicuously and favorably known in

the great adjacent cities of New York and Brooklyn, to the former of which he was at length transferred. But I was personally informed by members of the sessions of two leading churches in Brooklyn, which soon afterward became vacant, that had he not already gone to New York he would certainly have been called to them. While at Jamaica he was invited to become Professor of Moral Philosophy and Belles Lettres at Hamilton College, but declined.

His field in New York proving unpropitious owing to the location of the church edifice, and the imperfect control over it possessed by the congregation, he continued there but a little more than three years, when he accepted a call to the First Church in Princeton, and was duly installed as its Pastor, November 1, 1853. He continued here till death terminated his earthly ministry, April 19, 1876—a period of between twenty-two and twenty-three years. During his ministry here and elsewhere, he received various calls to other churches besides those already mentioned, which he declined. Soon after coming here he delivered the annual address before the Literary Societies of his Alma Mater, and received from her the honorary degree of D.D. This was not only the last and much the longest, but all in all, quite the most important and fruitful of his pastorates. It is a field of peculiar difficulty, which no mediocre man can long hold. The congregation is made up of all

varieties of people, lofty and lowly, learned and unlearned, including large numbers of clergymen, men of culture—the very foremost in science, philosophy and theology. Its assemblies are often largely made up of students, academic and theologic. It comprises not only the critical, but the hypercritical, in their estimates of preaching : some who too often little consider the moderation and charity which they may themselves yet need and crave in judgments of their own pulpit services. Not only so, but strangers of distinction are often drawn in various ways to our Sabbath assemblies. Withal, the greatest preachers in the country are frequently brought here for various reasons to preach their greatest sermons—the highest products of the American pulpit. With these of necessity, the people learn to compare, if not to contrast, the pastor's preaching. All these peculiarities of the situation put his powers and gifts to the fullest test, and the severest strain. Beyond all this, the great diversity of people in the congregation requires great resources of wisdom, versatility and tact, for the successful discharge of pastoral and social duty among them. With Paul, his motto must be, "I give none offense, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God ; even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved." 1 Cor., x. 32-33.

How well Dr. MACDONALD was fitted to stand this ordeal is no longer problematical. It is a matter of history. No pastor retains his unabated hold of any congregation for a score of years, without some very sterling qualities; much less of such a charge as this. Yet Dr. MACDONALD retained his hold for a longer time than that, with every prospect of another decade of unflagging, useful and acceptable service as pastor of this flock. He was never stronger in his hold of the affections and confidence of his people than on the very day when he was smitten, as in a twinkling, by one of those mysterious shafts, which pierce unseen, but not unfelt. He was never more honored nor influential in this congregation and community, than on the day of his death, as was abundantly evinced by the unexampled concourse and tokens of love and affection at his funeral—unexampled, to the best of my knowledge and belief, on any similar occasion thus far in Princeton. He was taken from us in the fulness of his strength, fame, influence and usefulness; at the very zenith of his honored career. He had just returned to this temple, where he had so long ministered, enlarged and beautified; realizing for the moment, in fruition, his prayer and long cherished desire that his facilities and means of successful service might thus be greatly amplified. What was far nearer his heart, was the simultaneous increase and beautifying of the spiritual temple, through that great

awakening of the past season, into which he threw his whole soul, and his utmost endeavors. This great quickening of the religious pulse of his people, and addition to our communicants, rejoiced his soul, even as "he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless return again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him." It is a remarkable fact that the Sabbath on which the principal ingathering to his church, as the result of this spiritual harvest, occurred, and to which he was looking forward with unwonted rejoicing of hope, was the first on which his fatal illness detained him from this sanctuary and pulpit and communion-table, never to return to them again. He had scarcely been absent from any previous communion since he came here.

The whole number added to this church during his pastorate was, by letter 407; by profession 356; in all 763, or an average of about 37 each year. Nearly one-half of the former were students of the College and Seminary, who mostly are dismissed to other churches after graduation.

If I may be pardoned for a personal allusion, it seems to me noteworthy that, graduating from a theological seminary in the same class with Dr. MACDONALD, and somewhat his junior, I was, four months after his first settlement in Connecticut, also made pastor of a church in the same—my native, State; and that in about a year after he was brought to this

pulpit, I was brought here also, to enjoy the benefit of his preaching and guidance, during nearly the whole of his Princeton pastorate.

The secret of Dr. MACDONALD'S great efficiency and success in his several pastorates, and pre-eminently here, has been partly intimated in the brief history already given, and in the traits and endowments, natural and acquired, already signalized. But justice requires that a more explicit analysis of some chief sources of his strength be given.

And here, the necessary Divine assistance and endowments being always presupposed, looking at his natural gifts, the emotional and volitional, the affections and the will, so interblend with intellectual qualities, that it matters little with which we begin, for they act and react upon each other. He was "a burning and a shining light." He burned as he shone. He shone because he burned with holy desire and aspiration—and the fuel on which these affections fed, was the truth of God seen and accepted by his well-balanced and vigorous intellect. There is, however, one common standard by which the true tone of every man's spirit in all its parts and faculties may be measured—a common centre towards which the apprehensions, judgments, feelings, desires and purposes of every genuine man converge as by a magnetic attraction. I mean THE TRUTH. This is the touchstone which we shall now apply. It will form

the one thread of association for the thoughts which follow.

If I were to present in a clause the underlying granite stratum, the immovable foundation of his excellence as a man, a christian, and a minister, it would be his unswerving love of truth, with a correspondent power to know and propagate it, and this power stimulated to the utmost by this love of it. Such love of the truth includes that transcendent estimation of it, which sets it above all that can come into competition with it ; which will buy it at any price and sell it for no consideration ; no, not for all the kingdoms and glory of this world. It will never sacrifice or betray it for any honor or emolument, or fail to witness for it at whatever cost. This was pre-eminently Dr. MACDONALD'S character. He was faithful to the truth, as he understood it, through all extremities.

Not only so ; he was valiant for the truth. He was faithful to his convictions, and brave to sustain them in the face of all dangers—even the loss of all things.

Hence he was earnest to seek, obtain and understand the truth, and to use all the means within his reach, to learn and master it. He was an incessant student, and had the spirit of the true scholar, which is simply that of the love of the truth in any sphere with which it has to do. It is hardly necessary to

add, what appeared in the outworking and outshining of his whole life, that if he was earnest to know, he was no less earnest to make others know it by every form of teaching and inculcation in his power, alike through the pulpit, press, in the deliberative body, and in social intercourse. He sought in all these ways, "by manifestation of the truth to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." He had "no greater joy than to hear that his children walked in the truth."

Candor, or openness to light and evidence, is essential to the genuine love of the truth. Perhaps there is no severer test by which fealty to truth can be tried. And perhaps there is nothing in which it is more difficult to draw the line between genuine and spurious virtue, than between that readiness to weigh justly new light and evidence, no matter from what quarter it may come, or what havoc it may make with our cherished opinions and pride of consistency on the one hand ; and, on the other, that fickleness and volatility of judgment which destroy all consistency and stability, and therefore, all weight of character ; all title to self-respect or the respect of others. "Unstable as water thou shall not excel," is equally the dictate of human and divine wisdom. No man indeed can afford to be Pope. And while all should endeavor to form their opinions with such care, and on such proofs, that they will be slow to change them,

or to think there can be reason to change them ; yet they should never degenerate to that grade of creatures who are blind only to daylight ; the first article of whose creed is their own infallibility and supremacy ; who, in short, cherish that morbid pride of consistency which is inconsistent with the supreme love of the truth. We all know that Dr. MACDONALD was somewhat remarkable for the firmness and tenacity of his judgments, and that this contributed much to his strength of character and weight of influence. Yet he did not hesitate to amend and modify his views in conformity to new light, whether from experience or other sources. This was especially illustrated in the history of his theological opinions, which came in due time to differ emphatically in some material points from the schools of theology in which he had been trained. As he advanced in the ministry, he came to see that in the light of Scripture, as interpreted to him by fuller study and experience, the evidence was in favor of the Westminster standards, on the chief issues between them and the supposed improvements upon them taught in the schools. In this conviction he remained unmoved and immovable through life. The same is true of his coming to prefer the Presbyterian to the Congregational polity of his nativity and nurture. But his ultimate standard and test of truth, was ever the word of God. He knew no commission, as minister, but to preach the Word—to preach the Gospel.

Closely connected with these elements in his love of the truth, was that freedom from bigotry, which arises from a truly scriptural and discriminating charity. Nothing is more essential to a truth-loving spirit than a comprehensive view of truth in its different parts, with the mutual relations and comparative importance of each ; and especially a capacity to distinguish between the essential and non-essential, according to that great maxim of Augustine: "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things, charity." The bigot is so engrossed with some little angle or side which he takes for true, that he dares not look around and take in the length and breadth and depth of truth, lest it should weaken or belittle the pittance he does hold. His asperity toward those of broader perspective and deeper insight, is in precise proportion to his own narrowness.

Yet while the lover of truth is not bigoted but charitable, his charity is not indiscriminating. It is not to be confounded with indifference to truth and error. It "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." It puts the best possible construction upon what appear to be the faults and errors of others, and readily distinguishes between errors trivial and fundamental—a peccadillo and a crime. It always seeks to save the sinner, while denouncing and resisting his sin. It hopes the best with respect to all. Yea, it "beareth all things, hopeth all things,

believeth all things, endureth all things," in respect to those farthest gone in error. Such was Dr. MACDONALD as he was known and read of all men amongst us. He was at an equal remove from the blindness of that bigotry which mistakes a mote for a mountain, or a candle for the sun ; and of that broad-churchism, which, by avowing a capacity to accept all creeds, does thereby, most intensely declare that it accepts none.

In unfolding his love of truth and its effects, I have of necessity, brought to view many of the intellectual qualities which disposed and prepared him rightly to apprehend and rightly divide the word of truth, as a minister of the gospel. Nor is it needful to detain you much longer on this subject.

I have already adverted to that judicial quality of mind which enabled him to apprehend different truths according to their proportions and relative importance. The same quality enabled him to judge aright as to the times, proportions, and modes of presentation of the truth of God to his people, so that he could divide to each a portion in due season. The efficacy of all teaching and preaching, under God, depends largely on the seasonableness of its exhibition, and aptness of its application. Here Dr. MACDONALD greatly excelled. He had that negative merit so often wanting, of seldom, if ever, compromising his influence in the pulpit or out of it, by crude and

imprudent outbursts of ungoverned feeling, or passion, or unbalanced judgment. President Dwight said, that the great majority of the cases of enforced separation of pastors from their flocks, within his knowledge, had arisen from acts of imprudence arising from temper indulged, but not controlled. "He that ruleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city," and contrariwise, he that rules not his own spirit cannot long rule others wisely and well. Dr. MACDONALD had this high requisite for leadership that he ruled himself, with another closely related and no less important, that of strong common-sense, without which no one is ever so helpless and hopeless, as a pastor in his public and private ministrations. An eminent minister in a discourse at a theological seminary, summing up the lessons of a quarter of a century's experience, said in substance, that "congregations will forgive many faults in a minister. But there is one they will not forgive—the want of common-sense."*

This excellent judgment, along with other traits pointed out in this sketch, rendered Dr. MACDONALD a man of great weight and influence in deliberative bodies, church courts and boards, of which he was often a member. During most of his pastorate in Princeton, he was Vice President of the Board of Trustees of Princeton Theological Seminary, in which

* Rev. Dr. Bouton, of Concord, N. H.

office, owing to the ill health of the President, Chancellor Green, he became for the most part acting President. In this capacity he was of great service to the institution.

In furnishing himself for his pulpit discourses, Dr. MACDONALD avoided alike the Scylla and Charybdis, by one or the other of which so many have been wrecked. He extended his studies, researches and religious productions, quite beyond the immediate preparation of some particular discourse. He was a careful student of Scripture, and in his early prime published a Commentary on the Book of Revelation, also another on Ecclesiastes, which have received strong endorsement from eminent Biblical scholars. Another upon the Life and Character of John the Apostle, is now going through the press in England, with annotations by that distinguished Biblical scholar—DEAN HOWSON. He had on hand two other carefully prepared volumes of expositions in manuscript, which he highly valued, but had not seen fit as yet to commit to the press. His first published volume on "Credulity in its different forms," excited deserved attention. Another book entitled "My Father's House," devotional and consolatory in its graphic delineations of heavenly glory, has had a wide circulation, and still commands purchasers, though first published twenty years ago. The substance of it was first delivered to large and rapt audiences here,

on a series of Sabbath evenings in the autumn and winter of 1854-5. They were the first sermons which it was my privilege to hear from his lips, and fully justified in my esteem the high fame which he had attained as a preacher. This breadth of study and culture enriched his mind, and saved him from that poverty and monotonous sameness of discourse towards which they tend, who read nothing, study nothing, and care for nothing which will not directly aid them in working up some particular discourse.

But, while avoiding this extreme, he did not fall into the opposite and equally dangerous one of consuming his time with outside or general study and culture, relying on the general wealth and overflowing resources thus acquired, for satisfactory pulpit discourses, without any special laborious preparation of them. This snare has been fatal to more than one whom God endowed to be the foremost of pulpit orators, but who, made giddy with their success in captivating audiences in some few extemporaneous discourses, come at length to tire their hearers with rambling and empty off-hand platitudes, which have to be endured the live-long hour as the price which must be paid for an occasional jet or flash of living truth.

Dr. MACDONALD's method was clear of both dangers. With a breadth of study and culture quite beyond the mere preparation of sermons, which

served to lift his preaching above all stereotyped monotony and repetition, he was ordinarily careful to make that special and thorough preparation of each discourse which saves it from undue diffuseness and prolixity ; from vague and aimless, if not senseless talk ; gives it concentration, connection, point, and constant movement toward some definite end—some positive impression sought to be made upon the conscience, mind, and heart of the hearer.

Just here I must call to remembrance one gift in which Dr. MACDONALD was pre-eminent—I mean descriptive preaching, which afforded such fine scope for the interplay of his imagination with his reasoning powers, and often enabled him to brighten his treatment of didactic themes with something more than the dry light of abstract propositions, even with some of those flashes of poetic imagery which come of

“ The vision and the faculty divine.”

Those who recall that wonderful sermon on the Prodigal Son, which has been a charm and inspiration to so many thousands who have heard it; another on the conversion of Paul ; all that eloquent series of sermons which make up the substance of the volume, entitled “ My Father’s House,” will understand my meaning.

This element was wont to pervade his more systematic doctrinal and practical discourses, like a

golden thread inwoven into, and gilding their very warp and woof. He loved to present the truths of Scripture more in the concrete than the abstract; more in the flesh and blood hues of living reality, than as a mere skeleton frame-work, dead and sepulchral. He knew, too, with an instinct of uncommon keenness, when he had dwelt long enough upon a subject of discourse, or upon each of the successive heads of a discourse. It was seldom that he did not pass from point to point of his sermon, and onward to its conclusion, before the interest of his hearers had begun to flag. In conformity to this principle, his sermons varied in length with the subject and occasion, in addition to their other elements of variety.

With all this, he knew how to clothe his thoughts in pure, clear, idiomatic English—intelligible to the humblest hearer, and never grating on the most cultivated and refined taste. So his preaching was not for any one class specially, but for all alike, as the best preaching ever is. The Gospel is for every creature. The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the Maker of them all. Full effect was given to all discourses thus constructed, by a voice and delivery of uncommon compass and distinctness, so that no word was lost by his hearers—a very essential requisite to success in the pulpit. For whatever merits a sermon may have, if unheard, it is pow-

erless. For "faith cometh by hearing," and "how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard?"

I will just advert more distinctly to an emotional element of tenderness and pathos, which often melted to tears the sturdy strength of his nature; which was often interspersed with happiest effect through his prayers and sermons; which made him so often a very angel of love and sympathy in houses of affliction and bereavement; which has bound him by indissoluble ties of affection to so many stricken hearts, and has led so many of the calmest and coolest to exclaim from their inmost hearts, "We never truly knew what Dr. MACDONALD was till he came to us when death invaded and darkened our households."

It would be an easy and delightful labor of love to trace manifold and minute threads of power which gave Dr. MACDONALD an enduring and unwasting influence in this church and community for nearly a quarter of a century; still at its highest on the day of his death, at the age nearly midway between three-score and three-score and ten; his bow still abiding in its strength, his eye not dimmed, nor his natural force abated. But time forbids.

I cannot forbear, however, in conclusion to refer, not only to the unfailing depth, steadfastness, and fervor of his piety, but to the increasing ripeness, mellowness, and heavenliness of his spirit, which

became so conspicuous to all in contact with him during the last months of his life. More than ever he became strong in the faith, ardent in love, eager to save souls, perfect the saints, edify the body of Christ; to do good unto all men as he had opportunity, especially unto the household of saints; all of every name who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. No frame of mind could be better attuned for one

“Quite on the verge of heaven,”

though he knew it not. While this makes his loss the greater and more irreparable to us and to his smitten household, we cannot but count it as his special gain, his peculiar felicity, that he was spared any long period of sensible decline, of wearily but patiently waiting all the days of his appointed time till his change come. As was well said at his funeral, he was taken up at a bound from the heights of his earthly, to the heights of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The day before he was attacked, he compared notes with me in my study, as to continued health and strength, and was evidently happy in the conviction that his capacity for serving his Master was unabated, equal to the carrying out of enlarged plans of ministerial usefulness in which he rejoiced. But how little the strongest of us can know what a day or an hour may bring forth. Before the next day had fled, he had gone from this pulpit in which he

had preached his last sermon with unusual animation, to be smitten instantaneously with that stroke which laid him upon the bed of death, as the victorious warrior is sometimes struck down in a twinkling, even in the midst of the victory to which he is leading his host. But such die with their armor on, only to live a nobler, an immortal, a heavenly life. He is best prepared for death who is best prepared for life; who is ever at the post of duty, ready for every good word and work. Such are ready too to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Whether life or death, all things are theirs, and they are Christ's, and Christ is God. If as ministers, they have been wise to save souls, and turn many to righteousness, it is their peculiar glory not only to be burning and shining lights on earth, but to "shine as the stars forever and ever," in heaven.

Let it be our concern then, to follow those who through faith and patience inherit the promises; to follow our lamented Pastor in so far as he followed Christ in faith, love, hope and obedience; so that, whether we live, we may live unto the Lord, and whether we die we may die unto the Lord; that living or dying we may be the Lord's. "REMEMBER THEM THAT HAVE THE RULE OVER YOU, WHO HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU THE WORD OF GOD: WHOSE FAITH FOLLOW, CONSIDERING THE END OF THEIR CONVERSATION, JESUS CHRIST THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TO-DAY, AND FOREVER." Heb. xiii. 7-8.