

Hugh Fraser Mackintosh

BY
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An invitation by the Secretary of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association to contribute a paper on Hugh Fraser Mackintosh was, to me, a command. For about four years after his home was broken up in 1903 by the death of his first wife, we had rooms together. Thus I came to know this Catholic layman whose chief concern, pride and joy was the Church, the beauty of which had not been known to him until his conversion to the faith in early manhood; and whose appreciation of the Church took the shape of searching for, gathering, noting and preserving all available data connected with those to whom the Catholics of Ontario owe gratitude for work for the Church. This sketch is but a feeble attempt to do for him what he spent his life doing for others.

Hugh Fraser Mackintosh was an editor of Catholic newspapers and it was, I suppose, chiefly because of his avocation and his writings in the press and his contributions to various histories that a story of him was desired. But to try to write a life sketch of an editor without making it merely a condensation of his writings is difficult. An author's books may have in them the spark that makes them last; a poet's verse may have that magic which makes it a timeless everlasting song; but the editor's work is of different type. In its essence it is merely adding to "the map of busy life, its fluctuations and its vast concerns"; it is hidden under the blanket of anonymity; and the value of the writer is so submerged in the news he writes, that few think of, and still fewer know who the writer happens to be.

Despite these limitations the editor's personality persists and shows itself as well in his choice of subjects, as in the point of view expressed and the manner of writing; and it happens that during the last nineteen years of his life (April, 1910 to September, 1928) Mackintosh was chiefly engaged in a class of writing which eminently suited his personality, as editor of the "Notes and Comments" in the *Catholic Record* of London. Much of the success of that Column was due to the brilliantly educated, widely read, authoritative and always interesting editor. His choice of subjects and his manner of presentation were naturally the result of his personality, and so it should be interesting to see what manner of man he was and how he had come to be so. The fact that he was a convert to the Catholic faith from rigid Presbyterianism is unusual enough to justify that enquiry.

Hugh Fraser Mackintosh was of the Mackintoshes of Delnies and Ardesier, lands lying adjacent to Inverness; a branch of the Moy family, hereditary chiefs of the Clan Chattan. The family fortunes were wrecked in the Jacobite Rising of 1745. Several of his direct ancestors participated in that epoch-making event and took part in the Battle of Culloden, where “as the cairns erected on the field eloquently testify, their blood was shed copiously in defence of the expiring spark of Scottish nationality and of the Stuart cause.”

His mother Elizabeth Fraser-Barron, born at Inverness, daughter of Hugh Fraser-Barron, was descended from the Frasers of Lovat, hereditary chiefs of the Clan Fraser.

Coming to Canada in 1852, Hugh's father Donald Mackintosh (but usually called Daniel Mackintosh) lived a few years in Hamilton, where Hugh was born on the 11th day of May, 1862; then moved to Guelph where he was Manager for the wholesale grocery firm of James Massie Company until 1878, when he established the wholesale grocery business of Hill, Mackintosh and Innes on Front Street, Toronto. The mother died in 1903, the father in 1908.

Although of Jacobite traditions the Mackintosh family were rigid Presbyterians; Presbyterians of the high integrity, strict morals, and unbending adherence to their Church which marked so many of them in Canada in the Sixties.

Mackintosh's father was a man of great faith and piety, well versed in the Scriptures and had a firm grasp of the tenets and theology of Calvinism which he very earnestly imparted to his children. Attendance at Church and at Sunday School, where he was taught to believe that Catholics adored images and put the Blessed Virgin before Christ, and the Church before the Bible, was an integral part in the home life, and the books read by the family were not of the type to tone down the normal antagonism to the Catholic faith. The reverence at the Communion Service was, however, real and made a deep impression on the young man; and the position of his father as a ruling elder in the Church was a matter of honour and pride to them. Incidentally, Daniel Mackintosh died suddenly during service in Chalmers Presbyterian Church, Toronto, in which he had been an elder for many years.

While Mackintosh's formal education was received in the public schools, more was learned from the books in his father's library at home. From the tales and stories, of the loyalty, heroism and glory of Scotland of old, the works of Sir Walter Scott, Jane Porter and the others who made of dull history, inspiring romances, he absorbed a Scottish ideal, which filled him with wonder as to how a chivalrous and imaginative people like the Highland Scots could have fallen under the sway of so dour, so cheerless, so unpatriotic and altogether so unlovely a crew as history showed the establishers of Calvinism to be. In his own account of Mackintosh's conversion in Georgina Pell Curtis' "Some Roads to Rome in America" (B. Herder, 1909), he stated

that it was borne in upon him that in breaking with her past Scotland had committed national suicide and given the lie to all that was most inspiring in her history, and says:

“The Catholic party stood for the national life of Scotland, while the Reformers played into the hands of Elizabeth and Cecil. So far then as Scotland was concerned the Reformation was her undoing. With Queen Mary, Cardinal Beaton and those other heroic souls upon whose destruction the success of the new order depended, I had always had the deepest sympathy, and the more I pondered upon the infamous slanders that have been heaped upon them the greater became my contempt for their miserable traducers, and more remote any possibility of my own permanent identification with the cause which the Calvinists represented. On the one I contrasted the known purity of Mary’s early years, her courageous adherence to her faith in troublous times, her absolute selflessness in her relations with her friends and dependents, and, crowning all, her heroic death. On the other hand was the seething mass of corruption in which her lot was cast in the Calvinistic Scotland of the sixteenth century. Was ever a helpless and defenceless woman encompassed by so cruel, so cunning, so unprincipled a set of knaves? There is, apart from Mary’s own personality and the unselfish devotion of her humbler retainers, “scarcely a bright spot to relieve the dark background of the picture. And towering overall is the grim figure of John Knox, than whom history records few more despicable characters.”

The turning point in Mackintosh’s conversion came in a manner entirely unlooked for. This was in 1882 when he picked up a magazine containing an article on Newman by C. Kegan Paul. The writer was, then, an unbeliever who dealt with reverence and rather sympathized with the Cardinal’s intellectual point of view. The “Apologia Pro Vita Sua” was repeatedly referred to in Mr. Paul’s Essay and Mackintosh lost no time in purchasing the book and reading Doctor Newman’s account of his change of faith. His own words are, “I read it with all the interest of a novice and when I finished it I had ceased to be a passive onlooker and had become an earnest enquirer.” The way was opened, and under the guidance of Archbishop Lynch, whose simple apostolic life greatly impressed him, and under the instruction of a young scholastic, himself a convert, the barriers were soon removed and on October 23rd, 1883, in the Archbishop’s private chapel at St. John’s Grove, he was received into the church by Archbishop Lynch.

This conversion was immeasurably the most important event in Macintosh’s life. He regarded it as a favour, a grace and a benefit which could not be excelled by anything else. He deeply realized that the debt which he owed for this was owed to Cardinal Newman; an indebtedness continually increasing, for in as far as was in his power, he read everything which could

be procured that was ever written by Newman or about him, or had to do with the Oxford Movement and with its personalities.

In Miss Curtis' later volume, "Beyond the Road to Rome" (B. Herder, 1913) he again expressed the debt he owed to Newman as follows:

"I do not mean I have had nothing to try me, or that I have found Catholics less human than those I had left behind. Human nature is the same the world over and Catholics are no more exempt than others from its frailties...In the matter of Catholic practices all I have to say is that when I came into the Church I did so with the idea that, as Newman had so well expressed it, it is not for the convert to pick and choose. I came rather with the deep sense of God's mercy in bestowing on me the gift of faith and was satisfied to go to school again and so far as the human element was concerned, to take things as I found them."

Always a reader he continued with special interest in what might be called "Newmania". He commenced a collection of books and articles, beginning with the "Tracts for the Times", which capable scholars, who had the privilege of becoming acquainted with it, state, was probably not surpassed in America. Copies of all Newman's works (many first editions), weighed his shelves. It is doubtful if any individual on this side of the Atlantic knew more about the life of the persons who were associated with Newman and his life and work. His scrap books were filled with interesting little references. And his conversation sparkled with little incidents showing the characters of the "Men of Newman", and this included practically every person who was either named in Newman's correspondence or by any of the immense throng who participated in the correspondence of Newman or his friends. Every picture of Newman, every catalogue of any sale of Newman's works was preserved, the place of honour being given to a letter from the Cardinal himself to Mackintosh.

It was natural for a student of Newman to be a writer. In an introductory pamphlet of the Catholic Truth Society Mackintosh used the following quotation from Newman:

"Obligement to know you; persuade them, importune them into knowing you. Make it so clear what you are, that they can not affect not to see you, nor refuse to justify you...Wherever Catholicism is known it is respected, or at least endured by the people. A religion which comes from God approves itself to the conscience of the people wherever it is really known.

I want you to rouse yourselves to understand where you are; to know yourselves...It is a moral force, not a material which will vindicate your profession and will secure your triumph...What I desire of Catholics is the bringing out what their religion is."

His writing followed his natural vogue, history, and commenced a life of preparation never ended in the study of the history of the Church, in Scotland first, and then in Canada, and from then on his life work was the gathering of everything that came his way, that showed the Catholics' part in the making of his country. As far back as 1888, this four year old convert read at the Philadelphia Meeting of the American Catholic Historical Society, a paper on Father Louis de la Vagna, a Capuchian friar who had been pastor of St. Mary's Church in Toronto and whose saintly and remarkable life contained many stories that would otherwise have been lost.

In 1888 he, with some associates, discussed the formation in Toronto of the Catholic Truth Society on the lines of the one so successful in England and which had done so much to spread the writings of Cardinal Newman; and on its preliminary organization in 1889 became its first Secretary. The story of this Society is a "must" for a future meeting of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association. Therefore I will not anticipate the writer, whoever he may be, except to speak of its first officers who were: – Honorary Presidents: W. J. Macdonell, K.H.S. and Reverend L. Brennan, C.S.G.; President: D. A. O'Sullivan, D.C.L.; Vice President: E. F. Wheaton; Honorary Secretary: H. F. Mackintosh; Honorary Treasurer: C. F. Larkin; Council: Rev. P. O'Donohue, C.S.B., J. J. Murphy, J. C. Walsh, W. McBrady, B.A.; and to state that its next succeeding presidents in order of date were: A. J. McDonagh, L.D.S., H. F. Mackintosh, W. E. Blake, James D. Warde, and James P. Murray. Mackintosh's writings preserve many references to Chevalier Macdonell whose collection of data of the early Catholics in Toronto provided much material for its historians. The Chevalier had so wonderful a knowledge of and affection for the Liturgy of the Church, that he had the unique distinction of being Master of Ceremonies at some of her outstanding functions at the Cathedral. To Mackintosh every thing suggested or recalled Newman, and the mention of the Chevalier almost invariably brought up a story about Newman's great follower, William George Ward, a layman who had taught theology at St. Edmund's College for six or seven years, and on receipt of many telegrams on the birth of a son remarked that he was being congratulated on what might naturally happen to any man, but had never been congratulated on being a layman, teaching theology to students for the priesthood, something which had happened seldom, if ever, to any other man.

Many of the other names, were those of that group of Catholic men which Father Brennan had gathered around him in the St. Vincent de Paul Society of St. Basil's Church and later gave their time and talents so freely and well in the Catholic Union of Toronto. Mackintosh was one of four young men who collaborated with Father Brennan in 1889 in the preparing of St. Basil's Hymnal, a collection of the music of the hymns and offices of the Church and of some masses, which had been promised in the Preface to St. Basil's Hymn

Book. Through his work under Father Brennan's direction he became an admirer and friend of the scholarly John R. Teefy, C.S.B., LL.D., and the result was his collaboration with Dr. Teefy as an editor of the *Catholic Weekly Review*. The story of the Review also must remain for another writer and another meeting of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association. Its files contain matters of great interest, which the Association, we hope, will help to preserve, while its literary style compares favourably with any Catholic publication; and its contents (as stated in the *Catholic Register*, June, 1941), were "as sound and serious as any Catholic review or newspaper published in North America today."

He was, at least from 1887, a not infrequent contributor to the Catholic Press, first on historical subjects, and later on contemporary matters demanding the exposition of the Catholic view. In later years his contributions were confined mostly to the *Catholic Record* of London, of which he became assistant editor and for which from April, 1910, until his death in September, 1928, he wrote his "Notes and Comments".

It is difficult to fix the commencement of his historical writings or to give a chronological list. Knowing of Mackintosh's invaluable scrap books of historical data, and expecting to find in them reviews or copies of his articles, the writer anticipated that the writing of this article would be an easy task. Only later did he find that after Mackintosh's death, at the request of Archbishop O'Donnell of Halifax, who, fearing their loss, had agreed to have them kept in the Halifax Archives, the family had turned them over to his care, with the exception of one containing more personal family data. But his work was practically always historical, the earliest I have seen being the commencement in 1887 of a series of historical articles for the *Catholic Weekly Review*, the first of which was on Bishop Gillis, Bishop of Edinburgh, who had done a wonderful work in the restoration of the Church there, and who was a Canadian by accident of birth.

His best known work was the "History of the Catholic Church under Bishop Macdonell and from 1819 to 1849". This was one section of the *Jubilee History of the Diocese of Toronto* edited (and in part written), by Father Teefy, who was assisted by other thoroughly competent, accurate and painstaking writers, published in 1892 at the request of Archbishop Walsh. A lesser known, much condensed but exceedingly interesting work is his "History of the Catholic Church in Toronto," contained in a volume called *The Municipality of Toronto* edited by J. E. Middleton, and published in 1923. This was a compendium of articles, each by specialists, of the factors that entered into the making of Toronto.

In 1890, when he married Maria Josephine Hazelton of Guelph, his attention became more and more attracted by things connected with Guelph, the home of his wife and himself. His wife's father, James Hazelton, was a descendant of a soldier who was present at Queenston Heights, Lundy's Lane

and the taking of Niagara. Her mother was Mary Harris, mother of Father Benjamin Hazelton, S.J., and daughter of John Harris, one of Guelph's earliest Catholic settlers, who brought from Niagara the first paint used on a building in Guelph (and that was the Catholic Church). They boasted of a long line of Catholic ancestors who in England kept the faith during two centuries of persecution.

Guelph's Catholic history is full of interest. John Galt, its founder, was an intimate friend of Bishop Macdonell, had laid out Macdonell Street in his honour, and donated the magnificent site for the Catholic Church, which from Guelph's first day has never been used for any other than Catholic purposes, including Loretto Convent, of which another of the Harris family, Mother Regis Harris, was for long superior. Bishop Macdonell had intended it as the site for a coadjutor Bishop, and had secured the British Government's approval of the appointment of Thomas Weld of Lulworth Castle as the new Coadjutor, a plan which could not be carried out owing to the Holy See recognizing the value of Bishop Weld and keeping him at Rome, where he later became Cardinal Weld. Guelph had been the centre of Western Ontario Missions of the Jesuits and up to a few years ago was their head house in Ontario. The priests' residence was intended to be the location of St. Ignatius College and harboured in its time almost all of the English-speaking Jesuits who had so great a part in the Church's history.

The Harris family came to Guelph from Niagara, and this had its effect in the extensive searches made by Mackintosh in the records of the Niagara Historical Society and their sources of information as to early Catholics who had worked, lived or visited there.

In 1893 his wife died, leaving a son and daughter, Newman and Marie. The son's name, Philip Newman, commemorated not only the Cardinal but his patron saint, St. Philip Neri.

In 1898 he married Ellen Mary Harris of Baltimore, daughter of Benjamin Griggs Harris (of the same family as his first wife) and of Eleanor N. Neale, his wife. The Neale family was of a well known Maryland family, descendants of Captain James Neale who came from England as one of Lord Baltimore's councillors. The Neale family numbered among its members no less than seven members of the Society of Jesus during the eighteenth century, one of whom was the second Archbishop of Baltimore and another President of Georgetown College.

In 1916 he was again bereaved by the death of his second wife, leaving her surviving one daughter Eleanor (Mrs. Alex McAlpine).

From a worldly point of view it might be said that Hugh Mackintosh was not a success, if money means success. For years he was accountant with a knitting machine company, and after that firm terminated business his source of income was derived from his business as a commission merchant for articles made by some American firms. His literary work was his real work,

and the demands on his time by the reading of the books he read and reviewed and his correspondence in search of historical data, led to an occupation in which he could, when he desired, take time for his real work, the business work being merely the bread-and-butter job. As many others have found out, the appreciation for the work he did for the Church was far from being commensurate with the time he had spent in preparation. In his scrap book I found an article he wrote in 1913 for the *Catholic Record* on Father John Fraser's mission in China, and a clipping of a letter from Archbishop McNeil to the *Record* sending in the first subscription for the Father Fraser Missionary Fund. Attached is his own note that it was "one great consolation to have been the humble instrument of initiating this great work".

He did often feel, as I fear many others have felt, frustrated and unappreciated, and finally, when in 1919 Archbishop McNeil offered him the editorship of the *Catholic Register* of Toronto, this feeling was confirmed, for attached to the copy in the scrap book, of his letter to the Archbishop declining the offer, is his statement that he had found himself unable to work in harmony with Father O'Donnell, then in charge of Extension (and later Archbishop of Halifax) and that he felt his chances for happiness and contentment in such an association were negligible. He said that in addition he felt that "in the then disturbed state of affairs in Ireland and the conduct of the Irish in Canada throughout the War and subsequently, he could not edit the *Register* to the satisfaction of that element" which would have a harmful if not fatal effect on the paper. Here also the human element entered. No writer was more sympathetic to Ireland's claims for religious and political freedom. In the *Record* of April 10th, 1926, he said "when it comes to a question of aggression it is well to bear in mind that one of the most flagrant examples in all history is that of the driving out of the Native Irish from the Northern province of their country and putting in their place a Calvinist colony from the Scottish Lowlands, which in its new environment developed into one of the most narrow and most intolerable of peoples."

But his son Newman Mackintosh had enlisted and was one of the gallant Canadians who had lined the trenches and had given to Canada the glory of having taken Vimy Ridge. At the time of the Archbishop's offer Newman Mackintosh was in a field hospital and to his father there could be no excuse for any section of the community in refusing to do its full part in the War when once War had come.

It would, doubtless, have been much more interesting to have given much more space to Mackintosh's writings and less to the personal details. I can only say that the distinguishing feature of his "Notes and Comments" column was the skilful way in which he used the news of the day as a peg on which to hang either answers to attacks on the Church, or sparkling reminders of what Canadian history owed to it, and for that matter of the many debts which civilization, culture, and all that was good in life owed to the Church.

As almost every paragraph was an illustration of this skill, it would be necessary to copy in full what could not be condensed, therefore the column was really in fullest measure and in truest sense “Notes in the News of the Day.”

It can be said truly, that, from his conversion to the Catholic faith, whatever ability and talents he had, Hugh Mackintosh gave without reserve to the service of the Church. To him, this could be done best by writing, and to make his writing worthwhile he had to be accurate always, which meant a lifetime of study, and this too he gave. He made himself fit for his life work, he spared no care or pains; he gave not only his evenings and his leisure time, but sacrificed as well much of what others might have considered should, or at least could, have been given to attaining worldly success. He gave his all, and it was words; he did his best and it was good. The very facility and ease with which he appeared to write, tended to cause the writer to be overlooked, but his devotion to the ideal of spreading the truth should be, and I hope will be, an incentive to more writers to follow the path he trod and emulate the work that Hugh Fraser Mackintosh did so well.