



# BOOKS

By JOSEPH MACQUEEN



The Life of Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, by Maxine Wilson. Two volumes, \$10 each. Illustrated. Houghton-Mifflin Co., Boston.

That this book, written amidst the distractions of war, in the shadow of the army, to the sound of marching men, as my country drilled and made her sons to the greatest conflict in history, should relate the long life of one whose concern was wholly and markedly with peace, may seem an irony of circumstances. But, in truth, the appearance is far from inopportune. Had his "Lord Strathcona's" particular genius not been so great and strong and resolute for the day which is to decide the fate of the British Empire? To him, more than any other, is due her material prosperity and much of her political temper. The way was prepared and he died on the very eve of the world war.

Such is a part of the introduction to these two handsome-looking and ably written volumes, an introduction written at Windsor, Nova Scotia, Canada, August 4, 1915; two volumes describing the life and work of the Duke of Connaught, Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, one of the big empire-building sons of Canada. Strathcona was also painter, railroad builder, industrial magnate, politician, statesman, financier, public benefactor and, in his day, the real "unruffled king of Canada." He was one of the personal friends of James J. Hill and indeed among Strathcona's list of friends and admirers, one can include multitudes of people in Canada, United States and Great Britain. Strathcona died only recently—he was born at Quebec, Marquette, Scotland, August 4, 1850—and his passing was the world's last one of the greatest men of our day and generation.

Mr. Wilson's literary achievement is one of a decade. His volumes are distinguished for their wealth of information and industry and patience, as well as for the narration and presentation of so much information, and the fairness exhibited in the presentation of Strathcona's character.

At the same time, it can be noticed that our author worked in haste. For instance, it is not possible in these volumes (the information is, of course, the general statement) to discover exactly the years in which Lord and Lady Strathcona died. On page 448, volume 2, it is stated that Lady Strathcona "died on the evening of the 12th, in her 85th year. Thus terminated a union lasting through six decades." Nor even is mentioned in the same paragraph, and on page 451, a letter dated January 17, 1914, is printed. On page 450-51 is a letter written by Strathcona to Sir Charles Tupper, a letter dated London, England, November 17, 1912, in which Strathcona speaks of the sorrow he experienced in the death of his wife. On page 452 it is stated that "she died on the 12th, in her 85th year, very peacefully at 5 minutes to 2 on the morning of the 21st of January."

Most of the books consists of letters, communications, etc.

In a new edition these points indicated ought to be made clear.

Donald Alexander Smith, afterward Lord Strathcona, was the son of a middle-class, respectable, but not aristocratic or rich Highland-Scotch family, which latter was probably of Lowland-Scotch origin, primarily. At first Smith, when he reached years of discretion, planned to be a Scotch lawyer, but through the influence of his uncle—John Stuart, one of the magnates of Hudson's Bay Company—Smith secured a clerkship in that company, sailing from London, England, in Queen's, May, 1832. His voyage across the Atlantic Ocean occupied between 40 and 50 days, and he succeeded as a clerk, under Governor Simpson of Hudson's Bay Company, at a salary of \$100 per year, and all found.

"You will begin at once," said the Governor, "to familiarize yourself with your future duties." Can do.

A clerk of this name was summoned and entered the room, bowing and scraping in the prescribed manner.

"Mr. MacEachan, have this goodness to take Mr. Donald Smith to the parson, and instruct him in the art of虔诚.

Such was the first job in Canada offered to him, and the business start of the future multi-millionaire. When he tackled mounting the rat skins Smith's delicate hands suffered, and the skin off his hands peeled off and became raw and painful from contact with the rough sides of the mink-skins or muskrat-skins. Learning.

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George Simpson, the Governor, was a man of enormous wealth. He was a profound admirer of Napoleon the Great, and was as bold and determined and severe as was imagined the Little Corporal was. "There was a listing of the stores, and perpetual inventories down to a paper of needles, or a trac-tion of a pound of sugar. His (Simpson's) word was as he himself boasted, the ablest ascertainer in the country, and what he said he was not only in the cash box and fur-room, but in the ledger of every one of the 175 posts of the company, from Ungava to Vancouver Island, and from the Arctic Circle to Red River."

The postmen Smith counted rats along Lake Superior. Noticing that some of the trade in skins was conducted by French "courreurs de bois" who spoke French, Smith learned that language. At this time Smith "was a little above middle height, with a fresh complexion, light sandy hair and gray-blue eyes, and his manners were cast in a large mould, and his good expression, that of alertness and resolution, combined with amability."

One morning in March, 1842, Smith was informed that the Governor wished to see him.

"You are appointed to Tadoussac," said the Governor, sharply. "It is now March 1st, and you must be there by the 15th next week."

Smith's fellow clerks concluded with him, and they passed out that these King's posts, of which Tadoussac was the chief, were henceforward to be regarded as preliminary to Labrador and Newfoundland. It was perceptible to Winters and where the hardy voyageur went that no constitution but an iron skeleton could endure it, and even those died off like plague-stricken sheep."

Smith thought as his uncle had been the great Col. Sir John Sturt, that he would be sent to the Hudson's Bay Company.

Smith, however, was a success in buying furs and exchanging goods with the Indians, and the French.

In 1844 Smith's eyes, which had suffered from snow blindness, gave him great pain and anxiety, and an old Indian assured the young Scot that he would soon be blind. Three months later he was given a receipt for his eyesight, and the affair called for surgery. He took passage on the schooner Martin for Montreal. In his stevedore master Mr. George demanded to know what right Smith had to leave his post without permission. Smith explained.

"I was born with blindness," Preen, growled Sir George. "However, we will look into this." Turning to the

"Be careful that you do not commend yourself. It is a sign that your reputation is small and sinking, if your own tongue must praise you."

Selected



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Author of  
"The Most Interesting  
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