

**JAMES M'NAB.**



MR J. M'NAB.

**CHAUTAUQUA TEACHER  
AND LINGUIST.**

## XLII.

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CHAUTAUQUA TEACHER AND

LINGUIST.

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One of the most pressing questions with ministers just now is the training of Sabbath school teachers. It has been up at some of the Presbyteries more than once, and is bound to claim more and more attention as time passes, and the present haphazard system—or, want of system—has been superseded. The qualifications and status of day-school teachers have been greatly improved of recent years, while those of their fellow-workers on Sundays are practically what they were 25 years ago. The cry, “Educate!” has, however, been heard so persistently in the land, it looks as if their turn had at length arrived, although the ministers seem to be at a loss as to the best method of attaining their object. In Canada they settled the matter nearly 30 years ago with the inauguration of the great “Chautauqua movement,” with which the subject of the present sketch has been intimately associated all that time, through the various grades of student, teacher, lecturer, and diploma-holder, and some particulars of his career and of that institution should be of interest to every one concerned in the moral education of our young people. Mr M'Nab is a

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native of Alyth, where he was born in 1830, his father being a hardware and general merchant there. The family came to Blairgowrie in 1833, however, and our friend's

### EARLIEST RECOLLECTIONS

are all of the Blairgowrie district. He received his start in education at one of those "dames' schools" which were common at the time, this one being taught by a Miss Robertson, whose "seminary" was up a pend just about where Mr Adamson, ironmonger, has his premises now, in the High Street. Afterwards Mr Campbell and Mr Low, in the Gas Brae; Mr Wilkie, assistant to Mr Soutar, in the Parish School; and Mr Johnstone, John Street School, had each in turn a shy at the business of producing a scholar of James. Wilkie is remembered as "a terror," and the late Dr Culross, President of Bristol Congregational College, and who was an assistant at one of the above schools, as a man of quite the opposite type of character. Among his fellow scholars of those days were the late Dr James Anderson, Forteviot; the late Dr Davie—and it is with deep regret the writer has to connote the fact—the late Mr Davie, Dunkeld; and Mr William Bissett, Glasgow. After the Disruption, which our friend recalls with lively interest, he attended the first F.C. School, which was at the corner of Jessie Street and Perth Street, where Councillor P. S. Robertson's premises are. The first teacher was James M'Donald, a capital classical scholar and a bit of a poet; understood also to have been associated with Motherwell in the production of "The Laird of Logan." In the Sabbath school he can never forget the services of the late Rev. Robert M'Donald, first F.C. minister of Blairgowrie,

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and one of that band of devoted ministers which included M'Cheyne, Horatius and Andrew Bonar, W. C. Burns, John Milne, and others, whose fervid ministry led to the stirring revivals at Kilsyth and Collace, as well as elsewhere over the country. Under Johnstone and James M'Donald our friend got a good start in Latin and Greek in preparation for Edinburgh University, which he entered in 1845 with the intention of reaching the ministry. The late Rev. James Robertson, Cray, was one of his fellow-students, and during his time Edinburgh was famous by the presence of such men as Chalmers, Cunningham, Duncan, Fleming, and Fraser, of the New College; and Dunbar, Pillans, Kelland, Hamilton, and Wilson, of the University, to study under whom young men came from all quarters of the globe. The death of his father in 1849 caused the young student's return to his native place, and circumstances led to his abandonment of all idea of a ministerial career in favour of his father's business. After about four years in the shop now occupied by Mr Davidson, chemist, and Miss Panton, Wellmeadow, Mr M'Nab thought to

### TRY HIS FORTUNES ABROAD,

and left for Canada, got a situation in Toronto in a big hardware store, and kept close to business, notwithstanding the many other exacting calls upon his time and energy which grew with the years, till 1886, when he retired. In 1864 he was induced to resume the study of the classics, and these led to Biblical studies; and, becoming interested at a later stage in the great Chautauqua College and its work and methods, he gradually acquired a working acquaintance with no less than 14 languages beside his own—namely, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, Italian,

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German, Spanish, Portuguese, Irish, Welsh, Gaelic, Dutch, Danish, and Swedish. That is his linguistic attainments meantime, but, being decidedly a young old man of only 72, capable and alert, there's no saying where he may stop. It is a far cry to 1860, but he recalls with a smile his experience as a member of the Queen's Own Volunteers, Toronto, when he acted as one of the bodyguard to the Prince of Wales (the present King), who visited Queenston Height to lay the foundation-stone of a monument to the memory of the "United Empire Loyalists," who had held to their allegiance to the mother country during the rebellion of 1812. Our friend was on guard near the Prince, and, happening to make some *sotto voce* remark to a fellow volunteer, got a dig in the back which caused him to turn round sharply, only to meet the stern eyes and sterner reproof of the Premier, Sir Francis Bond Head, who told him that "soldiers should never speak in the ranks!" In 1872 religious matters took a great hold upon him, and when Chautauqua was inaugurated in 1874 he was there, became a student, and came out among the first graduates of the session. This great movement sprang out of some "camp meetings" which used to be held near Lake Chautauqua a beautiful sheet of water some 22 miles long by 3 to 5 broad, situated in the western part of New York State, about 1200 feet above sea-level. It was the outcome of that very desire to do something for the Sabbath School teacher which has found voice in some of our Presbyteries recently. It began with the Methodist-Episcopalians, but on a broad, Catholic basis, including all denominations, and with the ultimate aim of embracing the teaching of every subject calculated to be of the least benefit

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to the teachers. The germ-idea of the whole movement was the recognition of the necessity for a scientific as well as theological training; for general culture as well as special Bible knowledge—in a word, to increase the “week-day power” in connection with Sunday School work. It was held that the teacher there should be in a position to make free and illuminative use of the material supplied by history, literature, art, and science, and thus apply lessons of spiritual truth with freshness, variety, and effectiveness. From that fortnight’s term in August 1874, under the joint control of Mr Lewis Miller, Akron, Ontario, and the Rev. John H. Vincent, New York, the course now extends the whole summer through, and includes

### LECTURES AND PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS

by Professors “on holiday” from all parts of America, on all sorts of subjects, to all sorts and conditions of men, women, and children. The grounds are very extensive and attractive, and sometimes as many as 12,000 people attend the Assembly, every individual of whom is bent upon making the most of his strenuous “vacation.”

The subjects taught range from cookery at the one end to Hebrew at the other, with no questions asked as to which may be regarded the more important of the two. In the great Rotunda, which is like nothing so much as an immense umbrella, being open all round, lectures are given to audiences of 2000 at times, while throughout the grounds and on the lake every agency which the quick American mind can think out for the combination of recreation with instruction is wrought for all it is worth. Some idea of the growth of the movement may be found from the number of departments now

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under the Chautauqua University—all the outcome of that meeting in 1874:—"The Normal Union," for the training of officers and teachers; the "Teachers' Retreat," for the benefit of secular teachers; the "Teachers' Reading Union," which provides a course of helpful reading and study for secular teachers; the "Summer School of Language," ancient and modern (our friend has reaped much advantage from this department); the "Literary and Scientific Circle," for the promotion of reading habits amongst all classes of people, at their own homes and throughout the entire year—a department which has done incalculable good; the "University Institute;" the "College of Liberal Arts," for the assistance of earnest and non-resident students who are ambitious to win College honours on merit; the "Chautauqua School of Theology," for the education of ministers who wish a training equal to that given by any theological seminary; the "Book-a-Month Reading Circle;" the "Town and Country Club," for the training of people, young and old, in the habits of observation, and recording the phenomena of the physical world, with a view to practical experience in agriculture; the "Society of Fine Arts," the "Young Folks' Reading Union," the "Boys' and Girls' Class for Bible Knowledge;" the "Temperance Classmates," for instruction in the philosophy and ethics of the temperance reform; the "Society of Christian Ethics," the "Look-Up Legion," the "Chautauqua Cadets," similar to our own Boys' Brigades, which are the offshoot; the "Chautauqua Calisthenic Corps," for girls; the "Chautauqua Musical Reading Circle," the "Intermediate Class of Bible Knowledge," the "American Church School of Church Work,"

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for the training of ministers and laymen in a broad and comprehensive system of practical theology; the "Chautauqua Press," which embraces a large number of publications, periodical and permanent, in connection with the movement, besides many other ramifications. One of the latter is the "I.B.R.A."—"International Bible-Reading Association"—which has

### BRANCHES ALL OVER THE WORLD,

the same Bible lessons being published in over 30 different languages—a development which Mr M'Nab had much to do in originating, and in which he takes special interest, having been Secretary for the whole of Canada from 1887 till 1897, when the membership had risen from a few hundreds to over 11,000. As already stated, he was one of the first to take his diploma at Chautauqua, and has attended nearly every annual assembly since the start, lecturing, conducting classes in practical teaching, &c. He was on the Committee which drew up the "Chautauqua Normal Lessons," was a member of the Central Examination Committee for a number of years, and as such taught at various institutes, conventions, &c.; was a delegate from Canada to the World's Sabbath School Convention in London one year, and in 1894 was assistant Normal Secretary and Examiner. The year following he was appointed one of five to prepare the questions for the normal papers, to conduct the examination, and to appraise the papers afterwards; was eight years member of the Sunday School Committee to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and frequently Secretary; presiding examiner to the annual examination of scholars in Toronto Presbyterian Sunday Schools on the syllabus of

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higher religious instruction, acted as elder in five congregations, was three years Secretary of Toronto Presbyterian S.S. Union, &c. A longing to revisit the scenes of his boyhood brought him over to this country in August 1901, but spring will in all probability see him back again in Canada. His heart is still in his beloved work, and his regret is keen that the value of the Chautauqua methods has not yet been freely recognised in this country. He feels certain of their efficiency to attain the results so many are anxious to see but are looking for in other directions in vain. There are now some 120 similar institutions—branch “Chautauqua’s”—throughout America, and 40 to 50 in other lands. In Britain the movement is little more than a name.