

# DONALD MUNRO--ANOTHER PIONEER

Donald Munro was born in 1839 near the town of Wick, in the far north of Scotland. His parents were pious, God-fearing Highland people, who believed that conversion was a necessity, the new birth a work of the Spirit in the soul and the Gospel the means used to effect.

He was brought to Christ as a youth of nineteen, about the beginning of the years of the great revival which spread throughout Scotland during



the last half of the nineteenth century, and giving birth to what had hitherto been all but unknown in the religious life of Scotland, namely, recognition of those who at that time were named "laymen," in the preaching of the Gospel.

Shortly after his conversion, Mr. Munro became a member of the Con-

gregational Church, which was possibly the most evangelical at that time. With this denomination he remained in nominal membership until, enlightened by the Word of the Lord, he came out from all sects and sectarian associations to assemble with fellow-believers, as such, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, according to Matthew 18:20.

At that time there was in existence a group of earnest evangelists known as the North East Coast Mission, whose sole object was to carry the gospel to the seafaring communities in the villages along the northeast coast of Scotland. Donald Ross was superintendent and secretary of the Mission and he and his band of godly men of true evangelistic spirit were greatly blessed of God. Many were brought to Christ through their labors. Among this band of earnest workers was a godly man, named James Dewar, with whom Donald Munro was brought into contact shortly after his conversion. Dewar's prayerful spirit and godly life exercised an abiding influence for good upon the young believer. The secret of his success was evidently not because of any brilliancy of gifts or ability in argument, but by his close acquaintance with God and his continual recourse to the throne of grace. It was at his encouragement Mr. Munro first spoke a word of public testimony.

Some seven years after his conversion, at the suggestion of Mr. Donald Ross, Mr. Munro became associated with the North East Coast Mission and was a sharer in the remarkable scenes of awakening in some of the

coast villages. At Footdee the power of God was so manifest that for many weeks no fishing boats went to sea. Meetings were continued day and night. Into this work Mr. Munro threw his whole energy. His message was remarkable, chiefly in its awakening power. Whole congregations were often made to tremble under the power of the Word, as sin, death, judgment, eternity were brought home to the conscience, and the empty religious professor stripped of his fair raiment by the truth of God. His exposure of sham-religion, profession without life, church officialism—apart from being born again—were terrific, and such as no empty professor could long endure. To the convicted and seeking soul he had the tender heart and the skilled hand of a true soul winner and was used in leading many into the peace and liberty of God's salvation. There was great opposition to this work from the clergy who were roused by the plain preaching that ministers and church members needed God's salvation as well as out-and-out ungodly sinners.

In 1870 Mr. Ross severed his connection with the North East Coast Mission and formed the Northern Evangelistic Society" the object of which was to carry the gospel to the inland parishes and villages, and to carry on the work on more Scriptural lines than heretofore. Mr. Munro was one of the first evangelists to join Mr. Ross in this new movement. It was altogether a new thing in these times for men to go forth preaching the Word, without any visible means of support, taking no collections, making no appeals for money and receiving no stated salaries.

Mr. Munro, although somewhat ex-

ercised about his path, was not at this time separated fully from the world's religious systems, nor had he seen the truths of believer's baptism and gatherings in the Lord's Name. At this stage, he was satisfied to see the people saved, and left to others the work of helping them on in their spiritual life. The Lord richly blessed his preaching, however, to the awakening and conversion of many in the inland villages and among the mining villages in the west of Scotland.

Writing of the work in these parts at this time, he says, "The gracious presence of God is becoming more and more felt by His people, and the spirit of prayer increases among them. Almost daily, we are hearing of some entering the kingdom. On Saturday night we had a meeting for prayer, and God was with us. We not only had liberty in prayer, but we could rest assured of blessing. Yes, we praised the Lord for what He was to do, for already we saw it by faith." In these glowing words, we discern the secret springs of that mighty work of God's grace.

In the fall of 1871, Mr. Munro took a voyage to Canada. In Parkhill, Ontario, where his two brothers lived, he rented a hall and began to preach the Word. Many church members attended and were saved, some of them his own relatives.

While Mr. Munro was in Canada, stirring times were being experienced in the homeland. The work in the north of Scotland continued to spread and there was exercise among some about baptism and separation to His Name. Mr. Ross was baptized and many others followed, finally gathering together in His Name alone.

Then what they saw from the Word of God, they passed on to others and other similar companies sprang up all over the north of Scotland and England. Mr. Munro was exercised about these truths at the same time and when he returned from Canada, he was baptized by Mr. Ross in Aberdeen. The following year he returned to Canada and later was joined by others, John Smith, James Campbell, John Carnie and later Alex Marshall.

In 1874 he met Mr. John Ironside, then a bank clerk in Berlin, Ontario, who was greatly helped in spiritual life by sharing some Bible readings, conducted by Mr. Munro on "The Epistle to the Galatians." He was led into soul liberty and out from denominationalism to own Christ as Lord in assembly and in personal life. Shortly after, removing to the city of Toronto, he became the first link toward bringing Mr. Munro to that city, in which for the last 22 years of his life he had his home and where he labored much. In Hamilton, Ont., Mr. Munro, and Mr. Smith had gospel meetings where many were saved, among them several young men who themselves became active in spreading the gospel, among them T. D. W. Muir and W. L. Faulknor.

Mr. Munro continued active in tent work and Bible readings in Canada and the United States until the end of his life, in 1907. One of the last remarks he made, in the light of that eternity which he was so soon to enter, and upon which his eyes were set, was, "We have not been distinct enough in our preaching of the truth of separation from the religious world. Now others are arising who would seek to drag the saints back to its bondage."

Few had given so full and clear a testimony in preaching and in practice, as he had done, on all this line of things, yet as he lay in view of soon entering the presence of the Lord, his conviction was that even more definite instruction from the Word is needed if God's people are to be kept apart from the ever-increasing corruption and apostasy of the world's religion as it exists around them.

May we, who are left to watch and work and war, be kept cleaving to the Lord, "holding fast the faithful Word," and ever "holding forth the Word of Life" to those in whose midst we are for a season left as the Lord's representatives and witnesses.

