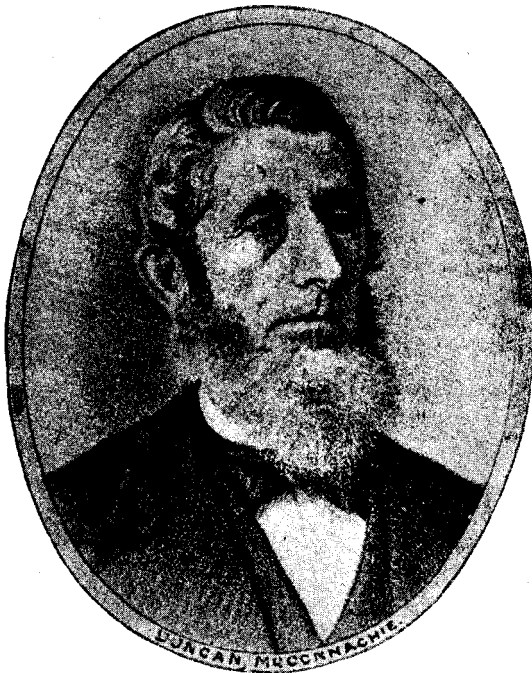


A NONOGENARIAN SETTLER.



DUNCAN MACCONNACHIE.

Lot No. 30, Con. 5. Settled in 1836, still living.

A fine example of the successful settler, and of longevity also, is Mr. Duncan Maconnachie, the esteemed veteran of Bowmanville. As the name implies, Mr. Maconnachie is of Highland Scottish descent, and ninety-two years ago he was born in the parish of Killean, Cantyre, Argyllshire, Scotland. His father, a native of the same parish, was Mr. Peter Maconnachie, and his mother's name was Mary MacNiven. The name is a variant of MacDhonnachaidh, or Robertson, and is one of the most ancient in the Scottish catalogue. The Argyllshire Maconnachies appreciated their ancient lineage, and the family reputation was that they did their utmost to sustain its best traditions. Peter Maconnachie was a large farmer in Argyllshire, a noted breeder of pure stock for those early days, and was successful with Clydesdales, cattle and sheep, finding the local markets of

Tarbert, Campbeltown, and Lochgilphead good business centres, while Greenock and Glasgow were not beyond reach of the more important sales and purchases. Thus prosperity was wooed and won, but the family, now numbering four sons and five daughters, must be provided for, and the news from Canada, or from America, as all the country beyond the Atlantic was then, as now, generally spoken of, promised glittering fortunes to all comers. So Duncan Maconnachie left the shores of Cantyre for those of Canada, and in 1835 followed in the wake of fellow-countrymen who had settled on the Georgian Bay. There is not much to be said of the voyage. It was like most of the other voyages at that time—a stout ship and a five to six weeks' sail; accommodation fair, victuals eatable, courage high, and hope triumphant. Yet, looking back on that voyage, it was emblematic of much that has passed over the stage of life in the many years since the good ship buffeted the waves and sailed safely to port. But on these moods and memories this is not the place to dilate. The mind turns to them in old age and loves to linger over them:—

“Time but the impression deeper makes
As streams their channels deeper wear.”

The forms do not grow shadowy, nor the figures dim, and in his ninety-third year Duncan Maconnachie's vision of the scenes of childhood is as clear as it was fifty years ago, and they are more impressive now than then. There was the sacred family circle, the eident, diligent father, the tender, thrifty mother; the Highland hospitality shared by friend and neighbour;

the school at the clachan, the venerable minister of the Auld Kirk, with echoes of MacLeod, McBride, and other great divines of those days. And the parish church ! one of the oldest in the land, storied with tradition, romantic as to situation and surroundings—who could come under its spell in youth and forget it in old age ? The friends of childhood dead in the body live in the memory, and the feelings are refreshed by thoughts of them and their associations. But there is another chapter in the veteran's life which is read and re-read again. In contrast to the Old Land there is the New ; and who that has wielded the pioneer's axe and laid the Lords of the Forest low, can forget the part he bore in rescuing a homestead from the wilds and reducing nature to the great subjection of man ? So with our subject. No time in his life yielded more genuine happiness to him than when acre after acre was being added to his farm and the peace of a good conscience rested upon his arduous labours.

At the Georgian Bay settlement Mr. Maconnachie remained during 1835, and then settled in 1836 in the Township of Clarke, Durham County. He purchased 400 acres of land, and resided on lot 30, concession 5, naming his farm "Glenelg." That was sixty-nine years ago, when the country had to be opened up. The building of the dwelling-house, the clearing of the land, the statute labour, the grinding of the wheat into flour, the domestic duties, the marketing, etc., may be passed over ; they were much the same as those which made up the average experience. Duncan Maconnachie was a strong man, and strength was required for the work of the day. He was an enterprising man, and pioneer ingenuity and resource were necessary. Cattle had to be cared for, wolves to be guarded against, roads to be constructed, and hard work to be endured ; but it was all in the day's darg, and was encountered cheerfully and overcome successfully. He helped to open all the roads from Tricky's Corners to north of Orono. In 1836, when he took up his land, he had only one neighbour in Orono, but it was not long after when settlers streamed in, and a flourishing neighbourhood was established. In 1837 he met with a severe affliction in the death of his brother Archibald, who was killed by a falling tree in the process of the clearing. As the land was cleared, Mr. Maconnachie widened the scope of his labours, and went in for the breeding of thoroughbred horses, especially the Clydesdale blood, and became a leading exhibitor at the Fairs without a break for thirty years. It is an interesting fact that he exhibited at the first Provincial Fair held in Ontario. At these Expositions he was very fairly successful in winning honours.

Twice was he married ; first, to Christina Wilkinson, in 1851, with issue three children ; second, to Mary Macneil, in 1861, who is still living, issue five children ; in all five sons and three daughters.

Duncan Maconnachie, as might have been expected from one brought up under the shadow of Killean, is a devoted Presbyterian of the old school, and still holds by the principle of the Established Church of Scotland as a State Church. He has not taken warmly to voluntarism, but his own kindly disposition and broad-mindedness have saved him from the narrowness of sectarianism, and he finds the better, not the worse, element in systems whose foundations he cannot personally accept.

A Scot of the old school also is he ; keen in his appreciation of the Gospel, the history, the songs, and the customs of the land in which he was born, he has derived pleasure from them and revived his mind at their fountain. He is the grand old man of Clarke township. Long may his bow abide in its strength.

J. S. M.