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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Son Of The Highlands Tells Of Trip 'Home'

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HOW IS a son of the Highlands, several generations removed, received when he goes back to visit the land of his fathers? I asked the question of my friend Rev. Donald Nicholson, St. John's Presbyterian Church, Belfast, when he returned from a recent trip to Scotland and the Isles where his grandparents and mine came from.

The reply, of course, was that the welcome is as warm as we who trace our ancestry back to that old land would expect.

Mr. Nicholson and a friend, Hugh Lowery, who is pastor of the Marshfield charge, made the trip to the old land. For Mr. Lowery it was a return to the land he left a comparatively short time ago – Northern Ireland. For him it was a visit to members of the family and many friends and former neighbours; for Mr. Nicholson it was a return to a land of which he had often thought about, but up to this year had never seen.

Trip Highlight Is Explained

I WAS interested in his remembered trip highlight. It was the moment when he "stepped from the plane at Prestwick and set foot on Scottish soil for the first time".

"It was the first time", he observed, "that my feet had ever trod on soil that had been moistened by the blood of those who had died for their belief in God, for the right to worship according to the dictates of their own conscience."

Later he showed slides of a cemetery where 18 Covenanters are buried who had died in the fight for that freedom. One of the more gripping facts was that two of the stones bore the names of young brothers, one of them 22 and the other 26. It requires a jolt like that to remind us that some of the most valuable portions of our rich heritage were won only by such sacrifices, though we who are descendants of those people often take those privileges for granted.

The reference was to the Scots, but there are others also who came to this land to escape religious persecution.

Recently I was one of those who filled the old church at Hartsville to capacity, to look at slides of Mr. Nicholson's visit and listen as he painted fascinating word pictures of much more of Scottish life and history than any slide could possibly produce.

Questions That Come To Mind

DO THEY still speak the Gaelic in the Highlands? What of the old dishes we remember from our boyhood days? There were, for example, the "Stapag" and the "Marags".

I believe that's the correct spelling of these two delicious Scottish dishes, for they were given to me by my friend Charles S. MacDonald, whom I visited a few days ago on

his 99th birthday anniversary at his present residence in Murray Harbor; and I hope I've remembered the spelling correctly.

The younger people at Hartsville probably didn't even know what Mr. Nicholson was talking about when he mentioned those dishes. But many of the older ones knew and tasted them again in memory, as he told of being served Stapag – it's pronounced something like "Stapachk" – on his trip. It's made of thick cream and oatmeal and many's the bowl of it I've enjoyed.

I have never been in an audience where the speaker was followed with such rapt attention. For myself I was thrilled with a peek or two at Raasay where my father's people came from, and at Skye where my McLure mother's people originated.

But there were other Isles, and other shots of Scotland – there were some of Ireland as well – and everyone listened to Mr. Nicholson and the most effective job of painting word pictures of the land of his fathers.

Services Lasted Two Hours

I'VE TALKED at times in this column about long sermons and long services. Mr. Nicholson attended two one Sunday in a town in Scotland. Incidentally both preachers were namesakes.

Rev. Kenneth Nicholson preached the Gaelic in the church in the morning, and Rev. Donald Nicholson – a namesake even to the christened name – preached in the hall nearby, where English was spoken.

Our Rev. Donald attended the Gaelic service in the morning and it lasted for two hours. The minister preached for one hour and one-quarter. At night the same man spoke in English. He apologized a bit for he explained that he found "some difficulty thinking and expressing himself in the English". But he still was able to think and express himself for the same hour and one-quarter.

By Island standards even the sermons about which some people complain for "excessive length" are modestly brief by comparison, it was suggested.

Double Tragedy At Shamrock

FOR THE most part I do not talk in this column about deaths but I cannot forget the tragedy which occurred since my column last Thursday morning in the modest Shamrock home, less than one-half mile from the place of my birth.

To the parents and other relatives of the murdered Mr. and Mrs. Everett MacDonald, I want to say merely that my thoughts have been with you many times in the past few days. I have not the privilege of knowing the late Mrs. MacDonald's people.

Liberals Postpone Convention

MY FRIEND Addie MacDonald told me yesterday that the Queens County Liberal association – Addie is president – has decided to postpone their federal nominating convention they did have slated for next Monday.

One of the most interesting features of this convention story is that Dr. Frank MacKinnon, Charlottetown is prominently regarded among many top Liberals as being a definite candidate.

Another story suggests that some of the Liberals here were considering the advisability of asking Mark McGuigan of Toronto to be a candidate for the nomination. Mr. McGuigan is a son of Mr. Justice Mark R. McGuigan and Mrs. McGuigan of Charlottetown.

I WANT to direct your attention to an unusual story I had the pleasure of writing this week on Elmer Ferguson, prominent Montreal sport columnist who was born in this province. The story appears on page 2 of this edition.