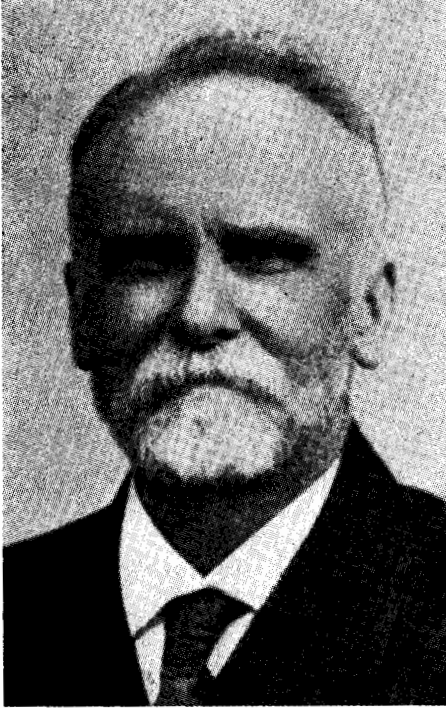


Alexander Marshall-Another Pioneer

That Alexander Marshall was a born evangelist and one sent of God with the Message few who ever heard him or knew him would deny. Probably no man had more converts in most parts of the world than Alexander Marshall and many of these converts became themselves soul-winners. Be-



sides, no man wrote so many tracts and Gospel messages. They flowed from his pen, and dealt with matters of the moment and things which happened ages ago, yet all was used to hang the application of the three R's thereon. Certainly no man was the means of putting so many into circulation by writing, by paying for issue, by assisting others in circulation, and, by no means least, by personal distribution.

His pockets were ever full of Gospel ammunition, and an opportunity was seldom missed of firing a Gospel bullet, which usually hit the mark.

The blessing which alone has followed his one tract, "God's Way of Salvation," which might aptly be termed "the essence of A. M.'s preaching," was worth living a whole lifetime for.

As a preacher he was unique. After hearing him preach one would wonder how any unsaved sinner, with any thought concerning eternal realities, could leave the meeting without the knowledge of salvation. His methods were neither spectacular, demonstrative, nor emotional he used no undue pressure, no body-motion to gain converts yet numbers were saved during the preaching, waited for the after-meetings, found peace at home, or turned up weeks afterward glorifying God for His salvation.

Alexander Marshall was born December 13th, 1846, in the picturesque town of Stranraer, Scotland. He was the son of godly parents, his father, John Wallace Marshall, a tailor and outfitter as to business, but like William Carey, his calling in life was to preach Christ. He was called "Holy Marshall," on account of the stand he took for the Lord. His wife was a true helpmeet, and in her own domain and in a quiet way showed the same devotion to the Lord.

Educational opportunities were not so plentiful then as now, but Alexander was given the best his parents could afford, and his schooling completed, he entered the office of David Guthrie, solicitor, Stranraer, where he remained until he was eighteen years of age. Then the lure of the city, the desire to push his way in the world, and his anxiety to taste the pleasures

of the time, made him discontented with Stranraer. With a mother's benediction and followed by a father's prayers, he set out for Glasgow, to be apprenticed to the drapery trade. For two years he sought what satisfaction he could find in the gaiety and pleasure of the city. Again and again he was deeply impressed with the importance of becoming a Christian. His convictions were deepened by hearing this striking text quoted: "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. 29:1). Awakened to anxiety, he feared to venture, because he thought he could never hold on. It was in this frame of mind he entered a Circus in Ingram Street, Glasgow where Gordon Forlong, a converted Deist was preaching. This preacher had the habit of repeating again and again striking statements regarding the truths of the Gospel.

To quote Mr. Marshall, "I thought he was a most extraordinary preacher. frequently repeating the words: 'Its the Blood that saves. It's the Blood that saves.' In showing that all that was necessary for the sinner's deliverance was completed by Christ on the Cross, he exclaimed: 'It's finished; it's finished; it's finished.' In thinking about salvation, my mind had been occupied with 'believing' instead of with the object of faith—Christ and His finished work. I imagined I believed, but not in the right way. The words, 'It is finished,' were carried home by the Holy Spirit to my heart and conscience. I had always supposed that I must feel some great change before I could be sure I was saved, and was continually looking into my heart to find peace. The preacher seemed to understand my difficulties, and explained that one must first believe on Jesus—and the feelings would follow, and clinched

the truth by repeating again and again the following statement: 'Believing is the root, feeling is the fruit.' The light from Calvary shone in upon my soul. I saw that Jesus had died in my stead and received sin's penalty, and that through believing the 'good news' made known to me in the Word I was saved and had everlasting life."

Those who enjoyed the friendship of Mr. Marshall know that there were never any half-measures with him, and this was characteristic of his Christian life. Confession of Christ followed conversion. His fellow-employees, including his master's son, afterwards Lord Glenarthur, heard from the young convert's lips of the dear Savior he had found. His old companions were warned to flee from the wrath to come, and soon he was known by the names he formerly feared.

It was a bitter disappointment to Mr. Marshall's friends that he steadfastly refused to enter the Theological Hall of the Evangelical Union Church and prepare for the ministry, but other influences were leading him into the path of service in which the greater part of his life was spent. John R. Caldwell, a young man of nearly his own age, was also led to a knowledge of the truth through the ministry of Gordon Forlong. As a result of deep spiritual exercise, Mr. Caldwell's father and some others were led to meet on the simple lines indicated in the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. They practised the baptism of believers, they met on the first day of the week to break bread, and when they did so they waited in humble dependence on the risen Head of the Church for guidance and for ministry. Singularly. Mr. Marshall, by the study of the New Testament, was finding himself being guided in a similar way, and as their paths lay together, Mr. Marshall joined himself to the little

company of disciples meeting then in a hall in West Campbell Street, Glasgow. This step did not mean a narrowing of his sympathies, for in the early simplicity of those days, the subtle distinctions which lead to the setting up of sectarian barriers were unknown, and men were loved and welcomed because they belonged to Christ.

Having for his associates John R. Caldwell, Alexander Stewart and many other honored servants of Christ, Alexander Marshall gave himself up to the work of the gospel. A pulpit could always be got at a street corner and Mr. Marshall's style of preaching being eminently suited for the open air, he seldom failed to attract an audience. But his activities were not confined to the open air. Music Halls and Public Halls were hired. Many were the trophies of grace won in those far-off days. However, such strenuous activity began to have its effect and a threatened break-down in health caused Mr. Marshall to reconsider the whole position. The demands made upon his time and energy, the open doors for the Gospel message and the insistent urge of the love of Christ were such that it was impossible to continue in business and at the same time fulfil what the Spirit of God was clearly indicating as his vocation. The choice was made and he was led of God to relinquish a business career and give himself wholly to the work of the gospel. Companies of Christians meeting in New Testament simplicity were few in number, and mostly scattered over wide areas. The saints making up the local assemblies were neither wealthy nor influential, and nothing was being done to secure outward unity. Thus it happened that Alexander Marshall stepped out in the service of the Lord, without any visible means of support, without committee or organization to look after his interests and

with no guarantee save that which God gives to all His people. "My God shall supply all your need." (Phil. 4, 19).

Never in all the long years which followed did Alexander Marshall utter one word of regret regarding the choice he had made. Never was he heard to complain regarding the support he received, never did he boast of what he might have been, or speak of having made any sacrifice for the Lord. His constant theme was the love and un-failing goodness of God, and if at any time he spoke of himself it was to extol the Lord's mercy to him, His unworthy servant.

The young evangelist set one principle before him which he never let go. He determined if God was leading him out, that he would wait until God opened the doors. To him dependence upon God not only entailed waiting upon Him for supplies, but also waiting upon Him for service. There was no established circle of meetings to which a preacher could go in rotation, but doors were opened nevertheless. The fact is, that in those days the sphere of the evangelist was recognized to be the world, that wherever there was a sinner it was the business of the evangelist to carry to him the Gospel message, and wherever people would lend an ear to that message and afford an opportunity for its proclamation, Alexander Marshall and those early brethren went.

In the course of this itinerary, Mr. Marshall met and served in the Gospel with many loved and honoured servants of God long since called to their rest—Donald Ross, Rice T. Hopkins, Henry Moorhouse, John Morley, Richard and Cecil Hoyle, John Smith, Donald Munroe, Wm. Lincoln, R. C. Chapman and others. These labours extended from Shetland to Cornwall. Very few towns and districts in Great Britain but were touched at that time.

Theatres and places of entertainment were hired for the Sunday evenings and large audiences were brought together, when remarkable scenes were witnessed.

News began to reach Scotland of the conditions existing among the settlers in the Canadian provinces and of the need of Gospel work among them. Pictures of the rough shacks of fifty years ago convey some idea of the primitive provision those hardy settlers made for shelter from the severities of the Canadian climate. Provision for the Spiritual needs was on the same scanty footing. A few Gospel pioneers such as Donald Munro, John Smith, and later Donald Ross, had gone from Scotland to spread the good news and information sent home by them stirred Alexander Marshall to action. Believing he had the call of God, he sailed from Liverpool for New York on December 24th, 1879. He was received into the house of R. W. Owens, New York, and enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Owens for a short time. Early in January he went north to Hamilton, Ontario, and was warmly welcomed by that band of pioneers, which included Donald Ross, Donald Munro, John Smith, James Campbell and J. M. Carnie. Those devoted men welcomed another worker who was prepared to "break up prairie and be content with bed, board and washing (a phrase often used by Donald Ross) as material compensation. From necessity as well as from choice the preachers were pioneers. Assemblies were few and far between, and if souls were to be won new ground must be broken up. They lived among the people, they lived with the people, shared their hardships, and fared as they fared. Fellowship in the Gospel, and with the worker was on apostolic lines, and gifts were more frequently in kind than in

coin. The scanty shelter from the rigours of winter meant enduring of much hardship, hair and beard being sometimes frozen when they awoke in the morning, but they were full of the joy of the Lord and these things were made light of, provided they could carry the message of salvation to the needy, and be the means of pointing some sinner to the Saviour. The new arrival threw himself into the work with all the vigour his ardent nature was capable of. In the city of Toronto he found a vast field for service for the first year of his stay in Canada. Interest in the Gospel was manifest, and the simplicity which marked preaching and practice enabled these pioneers to enter open doors. The good news was carried by them wherever a sinner was open to receive it.

A great work was done in Hamilton and Orillia and vicinity. Many were born again and built up in their faith by helpful Bible readings. The result was the formation of four companies of believers during one year, the chief aggressive force in this work being Mr. Marshall. It was all pioneer work as at that time there was no assembly north of Toronto.

In the year 1882, Mr. Marshall was married to Miss Amy Florence Tate, who proved to be a real helpmeet to her husband in his work as an evangelist. After a short visit to the Homeland they returned to Toronto and made their home in that city. A period of great activity in the Gospel followed. There was a real awakening of spiritual interest; sinners were seeking their way to the Saviour, and saints were seeking to know the will of God more fully. Mr. and Mrs. Marshall found their hands full. Their home was open for the Lord's servants, their afternoons were given to visiting the anxious and their evenings to the

preaching of the Gospel. Then in company with Richard Irving began meetings in Belleville and Guelph, where there was great blessing and then later in Rugby, Ont. In order that suitable literature could be placed in the hands of the new converts Mr. Marshall set apart a room in his house as a book-room and imported books and tracts from Great Britain, in order that workers and inquirers might be supplied. Tent work in the province of Ontario led them to remove their home to Orillia, which soon became a strategic center from which to reach the villages and settlements on Lake Ontario. Many were brought to the Lord at that time who in turn took up the Gospel story and have been spared to labour for many years for the Lord. Among them were S. W. Benner, G. Benner, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Orton. Mr. Marshall's sojourn in the province of Ontario extended to seven years. During the larger portion of that time the district of Orillia was his parish. It was there that two things by which he will be most remembered took shape. The bookroom which he opened when in Toronto was enlarged when he removed to Orillia, its usefulness extended and from it supplies of useful Gospel literature began to circulate across the continent. Mr. Marshall's pen also began to be requisitioned for the supply of Gospel articles, and the Gospel arrow feathered by a striking story and pictorial illustration flowed steadily from the press. A monthly magazine, THE GOSPEL HERALD, with articles brief and bright, yet full of the Gospel, was established. The magazine attained a considerable circulation and with the Book Store continued to function for many years.

From there Mr. Marshall felt the Lord called him to move out to the pacific seaboard. He visited Winnipeg, Vancouver, Cagary, Selkirk, and then

with Mr. Goodfellow held meetings in San Francisco and Santa Cruz, Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle, and in each of these places fruit remains from the seed sown at that time. In 1890 Mr. and Mrs. Marshall again set sail for the Homeland and after preaching for a few years there, had a breakdown in health which necessitated a visit to New Zealand, and from there a trip to Scotland, where he tried to live for a time away from all excitement. From this time onward he was not able to stand the strain of prolonged campaigns but for twenty-three years he continued active in the public ministry of the Gospel. Indeed some of the most steadfast work he accomplished was undertaken in the latter part of his life. His missions were shortened, but his sympathies and activities increased. His tiring energy demanded constant employment in the service of the King.

Two things combined to keep him constantly on the move for many years. His quest for health and the continual urge of the gospeller's spirit within him... He bemoaned the fact that so few young men had the desire to reach out into needy districts at home and abroad, and he did all he could, not only to stir up interest, but also to supply the lack. He crossed the Atlantic Ocean on visits to Canada and the United States no less than 36 times and there were few phases of evangelistic effort on the American continent with which he was not in touch.

In addition to his American tours, he travelled widely in other lands. In 1897, accompanied by two brethren, R. L. Lundin-Brown, Glasgow and David Robertson, Galston, he spent fully a month in Iceland, scattering the good seed by means of the printed page as well as by word of mouth. He also visited Egypt, Palestine, Central America, Mexico and New Zealand. In a letter describing ports of

call between Auckland and San Francisco, and telling of the ramifications of American heresies in these parts he closes with the following: "Surely we have much to learn from others! Perhaps God has a controversy with us as He had with Israel. Maybe one of the reasons why we see comparatively few conversions of late is because we are not honoring God with our substance. It would do us good to ponder God's message to Israel in Malachi's day: 'Bring ye all the tithes, into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.' (Mal. 3, 7-10).

He also visited the West Indies and British Guiana in 1909 and 1910 went to Russia where he found open doors to speak to the nobility and also to visit the prisons. Again he returned to Canada and made a tour through some of the provinces and also the United States. Blessing followed his visits and no doubt many were saved who have been used to take the gospel to others.

In spite of his advanced years, the call of the first great World War stirred Mr. Marshall to greater endeavour on behalf of the young manhood. From the first his great desire was to get to France and as near the firing line as possible. Military regulations are hard to overcome, and it was not until 1918 that he was granted the necessary permission to go to the theatre of war under the auspices of the Soldier's Christian Association. Meanwhile he had been busy doing a good work among the troops near his home, in the hospitals visiting the wounded and preaching Christ to them. In 1915 he went to Holland and spent some time in the interment camps in that country among the British soldiers and marines who were interned after

the capture of Brussels by Germany. On June 30, 1918, Mr. Marshall left London for France and spent four of the darkest months of the war almost within sound of the noise of battle, and never free from danger and anxiety, but withal a period of fruitfulness in the service of the Lord. He returned to Scotland and spent the remaining months of 1918 there telling of the work among the soldiers in France and preaching the gospel with his old-time power. During another visit to America in 1920 he was able to stir up action among the Christians to send food, clothing and money to the suffering saints in Russia. In 1925 after returning to Scotland his medical advisers informed him that hardening of the arteries near the heart had taken place, and that from thenceforth the pace must be slowed and all exertion avoided. In his comparative retirement, his services were turned into other channels. No longer able himself to carry the printed message to the needy, he saw to it that those who would do so were kept supplied. The goal in his writings was circulation and he was his own best agent in securing this. Carefully selected assortments of tracts were made up and parcelled with his own hands, then dispatched with unfailing regularity to isolated or needy workers in Britain, Canada and the United States, to be carried by them to croft, hamlet or shack or to be placed in the hands of sufferers in hospitals and workhouses.

Mr. Marshall's Home-call took place August 9, 1928 after a few hours of restlessness and discomfort, a short spasm of pain and then the earthly course was ended.

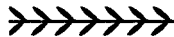
Thus ended a life lived in the fear of God and in the faith of His Son Jesus Christ; a life of which it could be truly said, it was "life abundant." His was a life peculiarly blessed, in

which God fulfilled His promise, "Them that honor Me I will honor". He knew in a way few men have ever learned the blessedness of giving. He was abundantly provided for, and he ended his life in harness as he would have wished to do. Surely an abundant entrance. Self-advertisement and self-aggrandisement made no appeal to his nature. His greatest pleasure in life was to give. No one who performed the smallest service for him was forgotten, and wherever he could, he gave of that with which God had entrusted him without thought of recompense or reward.

Frequently friends heard him speak of the Lord's account, but few if any knew what that meant. From the day of his conversion he honored the Lord with his substance, and gave systematically as the Lord had prospered him. In early life he commenced to give a twelfth to the Lord of all he received, and this was gradually increased until for years before his death he set aside an eighth of his total income to be used in the Lord's service. Universally loved and trusted, he was the steward of no inconsiderable sum, but his diaries show that this was faithfully recorded and conscientiously

dealt with as before God. Few works of faith and labours of love known to him were overlooked. Lonely workers in the homeland and Canada can tell that Mr. Marshall's letter of cheer also brought with it a token of practical fellowship. In this way he must have been a succourer of many. It is not given to all as he gave. Indeed, but for a great measure of self-denial on the part of husband and wife, it would not have been possible for Mr. Marshall to distribute as freely as he did, but his simplicity and devotedness in this as in other matters should be a rebuke to the pride and worldliness to which most of us must plead guilty. His example and abundant entrance should encourage others to follow his faith.

A simple stone marks the hallowed spot where, facing the sunrise, the Lord's "redeemed one" lies, and underneath the modest particulars of his name and age, there is inscribed thereon in indestructible letters his favourite text: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3, 16).



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