The Widows of Famous Canadians

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By MADGE MacBETH

A good many people may be astonished to review even a partial list of names of the women who have survived their famous husbands. Yet, there are widows living to-day who form a link with an almost forgotten past—a past which is too far removed from the present to be part of it, and yet one which is not covered with sufficient dust of Time to have absorbed the glamor of antiquity. With the death of their husbands, these women voluntarily faded from the limelight, from the glare of publicity, and many are hardly more than echoes to the present, madly-progressive generation.

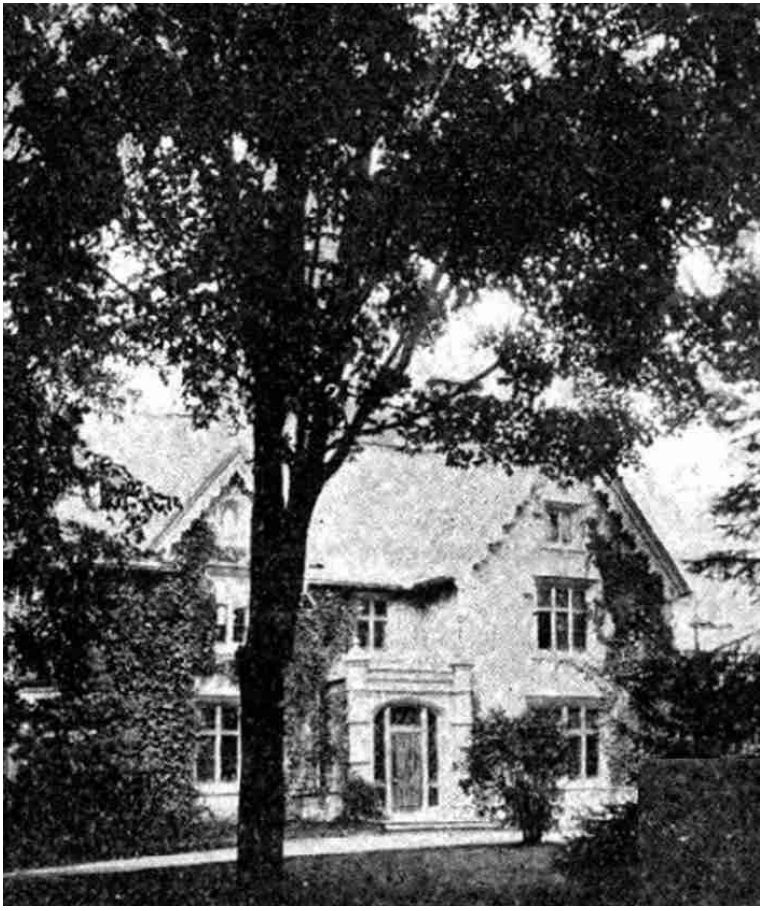
Across the water, Frau Wagner guards her husband's work with loving jealousy. If Carlotta, wife of the ill-fated Maximilian, is no longer living, her death only occurred recently. Pathetic Eugenie is a link between us and what seems to be a far-away past. She can be seen any morning—a shrunken figure in black—amid the roses of her garden, almost as much a memory to the casual passer-by, as the fragrance of her roses; and often, she is not even recognized as the one-time idol of a great nation, the mistress of a brilliant court and the most beautiful woman in Europe.

A quaint old photograph of the Baroness Macdonald.

Canada can add a long list of illustrious names to the foregoing. The Baroness Macdonald has survived her famous husband nearly a quarter of a century. Much to the regret of a host of Canadian friends, she now lives in England, her Ottawa home and the picturesque background of her title, having passed into the hands of one of her intimate friends, Mrs. C. A. E. Harriss. The Baroness still exercises her forceful and vigorous personality upon all who come in contact with her; she could not do otherwise and be herself. Quoting from Parkin: “All that Lady Beaconsfield was to the Conservative Premier of England, Lady Macdonald was to the Conservative Premier of Canada, who, strangely enough, bore a strong resemblance to Disraeli.” (And a fact still more striking is that Lady Macdonald is said to have borne a strong resemblance to

her own husband!) “She enjoyed his fullest confidence. If any one on earth knew what was in his mind, she was that one!”

Lady Macdonald was quite a traveler. Born in Jamaica, living her childhood in England, her girlhood in Canada, she found it no hardship to accompany Sir John on his various missions. She went with him to Washington during the time of the consideration of the Joint High Commission which resulted in the Treaty of Washington, 1871; she went with him on his trip to British Columbia when, for the first time, he passed over the C.P.R., the building of which had been one of his great interests. Lady Macdonald wrote an interesting account of this journey called, “By Car and Cow-Catcher,” which by no means exhausted her literary efforts. She has contributed to many periodicals both in the United States and in England.



“Earnscliffe,” the picturesque home of the Baroness Macdonald while in Ottawa, and now the home of one of

her friends Mrs. C. A. E. Harriss, still another of the charming daughters of Dr. Beatty.

The Baroness always called her famous husband “John A.”, as did many others who knew and loved him. She was a leader in her way just as much as he was, in his. She, naturally, set the pace for the social life of the Capital and never has it been more brilliant than in her day. Her “Drawing Rooms” resembled those highly intellectual gatherings of the early nineteenth century in England and France, before the gentle art of conversation gave way, and her dislike of the present form of entertainment is proven by the following conversation which took place last year between the Baroness and one of her most intimate Ottawa friends.

A splendid photograph of the widow of Sir John A. Macdonald.

“Do you mean to say,” she demanded, “that *you* are a party to the practice

of giving functions which exclude the husbands of the ladies invited? Would you give a luncheon and invite women without their husbands?"

"I am afraid I have to," confessed the friend.

"Well, *I* did not—when I was in Ottawa."

"No," protested the friend, "but in your day there were no Golf Clubs, Country Clubs and Hunt Clubs. These, unfortunately, seem to provide more amusement to the masculine taste than a mere luncheon—with wives."

The Baroness gave an impatient toss of her head. "If I made up my mind to have them," she seemed to say, "they would come!"

There is not the slightest doubt of it!

THE BEAUTIFUL LADY THOMPSON.

Lady Thompson survived her husband twenty years. The Premier died on Dec. 12th, 1894, in England, and his widow succumbed only last year to an operation in a Toronto hospital. Her death came as a great shock, for neither she nor her friends supposed that her illness had in it anything of a serious nature.

The glamor of romance surrounds the meeting and courtship of Sir John and Lady Thompson. They both lived in Halifax and both were struggling for a living. Almost as soon as they were married, however, Fortune began to smile upon them. The young barrister rose rapidly to the front ranks, and his country offered him the highest honor it had the power to give.

So great was the love and esteem for the widow of their Prime Minister (Sir John Thompson), that they raised a fund for her.

Lady Thompson was a beautiful woman. “I remember her driving, of an afternoon, to her husband’s office,” says an old resident of Halifax, “sitting erect, her head well up, and showing to great advantage as beautiful a face and head of blonde hair as I ever hope to see. John Thompson—as he was then—could hardly wait to put away his papers, so anxious was he to take his place by the side of the wife he adored.”

To the day of his death, he carried a miniature of Lady Thompson on his person. She was to him God’s finest gift to man—a friend. It may be going too far to say that Lady Thompson made his career; at least, one can say without exaggeration, she helped him make it. She was his ever-ready “Critic on the Hearth.” Her criticism was valuable and unbiased. She believed in him, which in itself is a wonderful spur toward achievement; and she never allowed her admiration for his great ability to grow less visible to him.

Lady Thompson was humanly erratic. This showed particularly in her carelessness as to dress.

"Although she had magnificent costumes," says a friend and neighbor, "the very times when she should have worn them—times when, as wife of the Premier something out of the ordinary would be expected of her, Lady Thompson would appear smiling and gracious in an old gray homespun or a plain blouse and skirt. I well remember one night at Government House. We were all waiting for her arrival to go in to dinner. She was late—as usual. And finally when the bells of a hard-driven sleigh announced that she was on hand, she limped serenely into the drawing room without her slipper! She casually announced that she had lost it somehow in the fur robes of the cab and, being already late, did not take time to make a careful search!"

So great was the love and esteem of Canadians for the widow of their Prime Minister, that they raised a fund for her. Not only that but the education of her sons was undertaken by the then Governor-General, Lord Aberdeen. Lady Thompson had always been an enthusiastic co-operator with Lady Aberdeen in her charitable work—helping her organize that body of world-wide repute, the National Council of Women, whose president she was, for a time.

Another of her charities was the support she gave to the Victorian Order of Nurses.

GENTLE MRS. BLAKE.

The widow of the Hon. Edward Blake still lives quietly in Toronto. Born in London, Ont., in 1835, Miss Margaret Cronyn, eldest daughter of the Rt. Rev. Lord Bishop of Huron, was educated in her home and then in Toronto. Mr. Blake lived at that time in Toronto, but it is possible he met his future wife in London, as he also had relatives there. They were married in London, in 1858, and went to Toronto to live. Rather a coincidence is the fact that two daughters of his Lordship Bishop Cronyn married two Blake brothers, and that Miss Blake married Mr. Cronyn.

Mrs. Blake was the ideal complement to her decisive and vigorous husband. She was gentleness personified. One who was an intimate friend of the family for many years, describes her as "an angel with beautiful silver hair."

Although living so quietly in Toronto, Mrs. Blake's sympathy is as ready

as it ever was. She is devoted to educational and charitable work and her left hand knows nothing of what her right hand does. It may be of interest to some to know that the house Mr. and Mrs. Blake occupied in Ottawa was torn down a few years ago, and the Westminster Apartments were erected on the site. In this house, too, Dr. and Mrs. Schultz made their Ottawa home.

LADY TILLEY A BRILLIANT LEADER.

Few women have enjoyed a more worthily distinguished career than Lady Tilley. Born in St. Stephen, N.B., Miss Alice Starr Chipman early developed literary and artistic proclivities. She went to school in St. John and later traveled abroad. She married on October 27th, 1867, as his second wife, the Hon. Samuel L. Tilley, C.B., then Minister of Customs. This brilliant statesman was largely instrumental in securing the political union of British North America. He died in 1896 shortly after accepting the position of Lieutenant-Governor for New Brunswick.

While in Ottawa, where she was the beloved and intimate associate of the Baroness Macdonald, Lady Tilley was one of the most popular women in the Capital. “She was prominent in a brilliant social coterie of women led by the baroness,” says one who knew them both. She was prominent in functions given during the visit of our present royal Governor-General and his sister the Princess Louise. She was presented to her late Majesty Queen Victoria, indeed, by Princess Louise and had the distinguished honor of visiting “the little Queen.”

Few women have enjoyed a more worthily distinguished career than Lady Tilley.

After taking possession of Government House, Fredericton, for the second time, in 1885, Lady Tilley gave herself up almost entirely to benevolent work and it is in connection with her many charities even more than her social prominence that her name is known to us. She was instrumental in giving her native province several institutions, chief among which are the Victoria Cottage Hospital, Fredericton; the Industrial School for Boys, the Nurses' Home, and the Seaman's Mission, St. John; the Chipman Memorial Hospital, developed from the Chipman estate and donated by the heirs—Lady Tilley, J. D. Chipman, Esq., Mrs. Toller, and Mrs. W. H. Howland—for this purpose.

Her principles are of the highest and she lives consistently up to them. In

the thirteen years of her holding first place in New Brunswick, no wines or intoxicants of any kind were used on her table.

And it requires some courage for the wife of a lieutenant-governor to take such a stand!

A DISTINGUISHED TRAVELER.

Lady Chapleau is a flat denial of the statement that, to have enthusiastic friends, one must have enemies. Those who know her but slightly speak of her in terms of deep regard; those who have been fortunate enough to live in her company for months, can find no words in which to express their love and affection.

Since the death of her husband, Lady Chapleau has lived as much out of range of the public eye as was possible. She divides her time between Montreal and Europe. To be inconspicuous is her hobby. Sometimes at foreign hotels she will have her meals sent for days to her room rather than face the curious though friendly inspection of the traveling hordes. She loves Italy and knows it well. She can describe the works of any of the masters with an artist's knowledge and appreciation; she ferrets out sights which the casual tourist never dreams about. In other words, without "doing the Continent," with a guide book, a lunch basket and a kodak, Lady Chapleau gets all there is out of traveling in her quiet, inconspicuous way.

"In appearance Lady Chapleau is still a beautiful woman."

In appearance she is still a beautiful woman. Literally her crowning glory is her hair, which falls to the ground and is a wonderful bronze tint, very slightly gray. Her skin is fair and fine, very white and delicately pink. When she was first married, she was frequently mistaken for Sir Adolphe's daughter.

Most of us have read Mr. Kirby's interesting book, "The Golden Dog." Lady Chapleau was the inspiration for one of the chapters in it. Do you remember the princess with the beautiful hair—Louise Roi? It is quite easy to connect the fictitious princess with Lady Chapleau, whose maiden name was Louise King. She and a school friend, both of whom had known Mr. Kirby, jokingly suggested that he give them a place in his book. And that was the

result.

Her intense dislike for publicity has sometimes led to the erroneous impression that she is not particularly charitable. It would hardly be possible to conceive of a single individual performing more acts of charity than those undertaken by Lady Chapleau. But she insists upon remaining incognito, herself. Her name never appears in connection with her numerous gifts.

There was a wide gap between the political convictions of Lieutenant-Governor King and Sir Adolphe Chapleau. Once, upon being asked her opinion on a very leading question, Lady Chapleau laughingly replied:

"Well, as the daughter of my father, I think one thing; as the wife of my husband, I think another!"

THE STORMY EXPERIENCES OF LADY SCHULTZ.

Lady Schultz has survived her husband many years. She has probably seen as much actual warfare as merely political difference. She lived through the trying time of the first North-West Rebellion, when her husband, waiting for the Hon. William Macdougall and Government assistance, was forced to flee from the wrath of the rebels and hide in the cellar of Alexander Murray, retired chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company. She was forced to wait for tidings of him, when tidings were exceedingly hard to get, and she was not sure that he had escaped to Port Arthur and safety until her nerves must have been pretty tautly strung. Lady Schultz saw a period of extreme leanness in the West when the scoffers east of Manitoba cried, "I told you so," to John Schultz and others for having put their faith in the Canadian North-West. It looked as though they had sowed on barren ground. But the day came when the pioneers could fling back the doubts of the Easterners in their teeth. The means enjoyed by Lady Schultz to-day prove that statement.

Her particular hobby, one might say, is interest in the Dynevor Hospital, built on the site of the old St. Peter's Indian Reserve. The hospital was designed originally for the benefit of the Indians on the reserve, but its activities have broadened since the removal of the red men and other patients are now admitted. The house itself was the one-time residence of Archdeacon Cowley, who did pioneer missionary work amongst the Indians, following in the footsteps of Bishop Anderson—founder of that particular mission. The Cowleys and Dr. and Mrs. Schultz were old friends, the latter having been entertained many times in the gray stone house (built by Old Country workmen) of the archdeacon in the days when that same house looked a

veritable palace.

Lady Schultz—“a dear little gentle-voiced woman.”

At their home on the banks of the Red River, Dr. and Mrs. Schultz made a weekly fete for the girls of St. Johns. One of those girls, now the proud mother of a grown daughter, says:

“I remember getting dressed for the afternoon’s party, in my best clothes and, while putting them on, trying to put on my best manners. Mrs. Schultz was so thoroughly charming that she inspired us all to behave as well as possible. We would usually go for a drive first, then come back to tea, and caraway cakes! Our hostess—a dear little gentle-voiced woman—generally wore a black silk gown and a cap ornamented for the occasion with black rosettes. The dress was probably trimmed with narrow black velvet, although I

can't be certain of that! She was always interested in our coughs and colds and would insist upon administering any doses we were supposed to take, while we were with her. For that reason we did not always consider the afternoon a perfect holiday!"

When they gave up their house at Point Douglas, the doctor and his wife moved into the last house ever erected in Manitoba (or elsewhere) for the North-West Trading Company. This was in Winnipeg, facing on Main street, about halfway between the C.P.R. Station and St. John's. It was something of a landmark, having "North-West Trading Company" painted in huge letters on the roof!

From that historic dwelling, Mrs. Schultz saw many changes; not the least of which was her own removal to Government House. Never a believer in pomp, yet she made hosts of friends as the Lieutenant-Governor's gracious wife. The last years of Sir John's life were painful, he becoming almost a helpless invalid. Lady Schultz cared for him with all the devotion of a devoted wife, and was further burdened by the desperate illness of a friend—a physician who really came to take care of Sir John. He was stricken fatally ill while in their house, and survived, under very distressing circumstances, I am told, his patient.

Mrs. Arthur Wellington Ross is the widow of one of the firmest believers in the West. As a pioneer in all sorts of business ventures, the Hon. A. W. Ross had no equal. He is well remembered too for the political services he rendered to his country.

Mrs. Ross was born in Glengarry. She was a Miss MacLean and delightfully Scotch. Of her generosity and many charities, pages could be written; of her popularity it is unnecessary to speak. That is too well known. One can easily imagine how enthusiastically she was received in Winnipeg—what an addition to the social circle she was, and what a charming mistress of that princely mansion at Fort Rouge, which her husband built in the early 80's, during the days of the boom. (This is the only boom, by the way, that Winnipeg residents will ever acknowledge; all others were legitimate land expansions!) This house was built, so rumor has it, with bricks at so much apiece. They came from St. Louis and by the time they landed in Winnipeg were about worth their weight in gold.

After many months of retirement, following the tragedy of the Titanic, when Mr. Hugo Ross, one of the most popular young men between Halifax and Vancouver, was lost, Mrs. Ross has bravely taken up the burden of her social activities again and is the centre of a brilliant circle.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Some photographs have been digitally enhanced for improved image quality.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

A cover was created for this ebook which is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *The Widows of Famous Canadians* by Madge Macbeth]