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The George MacDonald Society Newsletter No. 34, December 1994

MACDONALD AND HASTINGS—A SOCIETY VISIT

Some members of the Society enjoyed a sunny afternoon in Hastings on the 24th. September, viewing the places where MacDonald lived and one or two associated with him and his family. If the numbers were few, that made it easier for Edward Preston of the Dickens Fellowship to guide us and even read extracts from relevant material without holding up the passers-by. Mr Preston had worked hard getting his information together and checking doubtful assumptions by previous writers, (which tend to be repeated indefinitely if not corrected). His kindly guidance was much appreciated.

GEORGE MACDONALD IN A SCOTTISH MAGAZINE

Vivienne Forrest has a good general survey of MacDonald in the October issue of '*Scottish Field*' with a couple of revealing illustrations. She tells his story without distortion and finds room for the comment of the writer's formidable grandmother: "*George cam o' a godly femly an' it's awfu' that he should hae taen to writin' novels.*"

IMPLICATIONS OF THE C.S. LEWIS INDUSTRY

(Our member, Hugh P. O'Connor, has sent us a very interesting letter on this subject, which we are glad to include. His appeal for a Letters Column in 'Orts' follows under a heading of its own—plus further reflections on this important topic.)

Mr O'Connor wrote: "I was very angry that our members were not told there was to be a C.S. Lewis Summer Institute at Cambridge in 1994, with a two week seminar on MacDonald; but I learn that the Society itself was never informed! Why? Well, C.S. Lewis has been big business for a long time now—long before the play and film *Shadowlands*—and when big business moves into a particular field it takes over what can be easily taken over, and marginalizes the rest. Then it gives the public what it wants, which in this case is a picture of Lewis and his ideas which is so simplified and distorted as to be a mere caricature. Those who have sold out to mammon always insist that the complex reality can coexist alongside the travesty, but it cannot, because it is continually being denied at almost every point.

Big business is always likely to be attracted into an evangelical, (small letters), field since the potential customers are a group who, (because they do not repress the universal human need for

consolation), are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. And the experts in the field tend to snatch at any offer to help 'Spread the Light'—even though some may be less prone than experts in



other fields to be seduced by prospects of wealth and prestige. However, it is not easy to cajole evangelical literary critics into working together. They are even more committed to conflict with each other than their secular counterparts, because each knows he has God on his side. The C.S. Lewis Summer Institute, in attracting some 400 participants, and including some 20 two-week specialist seminars, was a very successful initial exercise in bringing together as many experts as possible and marginalizing the rest.

The aspects of Lewis' theology which appeal to the widest audience are not present in the writings of his fellow 'Inklings', so their works may be safe from incorporation into the Lewis industry. Much of MacDonald's writing, however, does have the same sort of appeal as Lewis's Christian apologetics, and the consequent threat to any wide appreciation of the profundity of MacDonald's Christianity from the Lewis industry should not be underestimated."

LETTER FROM A MEMBER

"Why can't we have a LETTERS column in 'Orts'? It is traditional that a society's newsletter should be hard-hitting, publishing material, which would not be acceptable in the Journal of the society. A letters column also permits members who cannot attend meetings to contribute in a lively way to the work of a society.

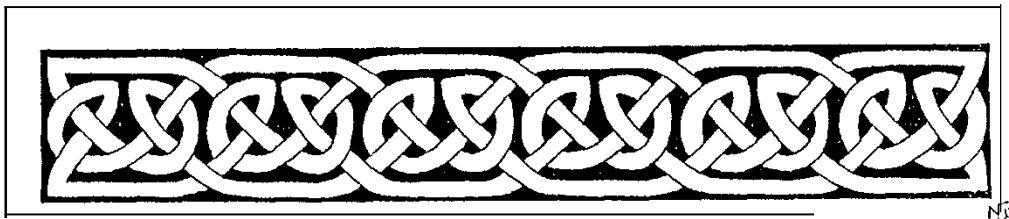


A few years ago there was an attempt to generate discussion within the Society with a provocative question about the status of MacDonald's poetry, but this was too technical a theme to stimulate discussion. What about considering the threat posed by the C.S. Lewis industry?"

Hugh P. O'Connor.

We have seen a lavish prospectus of the past Summer Institute at Cambridge this year which was entitled, 'Cosmos and Creation, Chance or Dance?' The price would seem very high to most of us, but £1250 for two weeks did include board, (and I know the conference catering at the college involved is of excellent quality). The names of the speakers are mostly unfamiliar, but no doubt they are competent in their different fields and received adequate payment for their services—which is not always the case with speakers on relatively difficult subjects.

This publicity material is in stark contrast to that of the 1985 Summer School on C.S. Lewis at St. Deiniol's library near Chester, (charges unknown to me at the moment), which was a purely informative single sheet of basic programme details. The former prospectus may seem to have sinister undertones, but MacDonald himself knew there was hard work involved in arranging lectures and so on, almost as much as in giving them, and the attempt to see Lewis in context with the whole



universe shows imaginative thinking at least. One might start reflecting with Wordsworth, '*The world is too much with us*', and especially, '*Plain living and high thinking are no more*', but to assume it is all Mammon-worship seems premature. Surely C.S. Lewis's message should safely survive all the treatment now labeled 'hype'; his work remains available to remind us of that message. I hope the developing 'MacDonald industry' will be no more dangerous, even if it has a tendency to distort as it popularises.

The whole issue is a theme for debate and we should be glad to have other opinions and discussion by members. If serious dangers are involved, can any definite action be taken?



JOHNNESSEN REPRINTS OF MACDONALD FICTION

Johannesens, the California publishers who bring out the most substantially produced of all MacDonald reprints, have already announced six titles for October 1994. The following cost £14 each:

Phantastes

Adela Cathcart (reprint of the first edition)

The Portent and other stories

Lilith (a duplex: the first draft 'A' together with the 1896 edition)

Other titles which were listed are £12.50 inclusive of post and packing. The price reduction is due to increased sales to booksellers, but we cannot promise to keep this lower rate for very long.

There is a 25% discount for MacDonald Society members and for libraries and booksellers; 33 1/3% discount on orders of three or more copies of one title:

£14 less 25%.....£10.50

£12.5 less 25%.....£9.38

£14 less 33 1/3%.....£9.33

£12.5 less 33 1/3 %£8.33

NEWS OF THE 'INKLINGS' GROUP

The Sayers Society announce in their bulletin that the Inklings Library and Gisbert Kranz Archives have been formally presented to the University of Eichstatt, a German town situated between Nuremberg and Munich, and are now housed in the university library. This is the largest collection in Europe of primary and secondary material relating to the Inklings, and has a particularly extensive George MacDonald section.

PHOTOGRAPHS

There are a number of photographs available of *Louisa MacDonald*. These are copies taken from an original in the Chris MacDonald collection. The price is **£1.20. incl. p.& p.** Please write to the Chairman, *Philip Streeter*, 66, Clydesdale Road, Hornchurch, Essex. RM11. 1AQ. (Tel: 0708 706178).

A new play about Dorothy L. Sayers will have its premiere in Oxford at the beginning of next year: 'Dorothy L.—a Matter of Life and Death.' It will be performed at the Old Fire Station

Theatre, George Street. (Tel. 0865 794494).

The American writer Kathryn Lindskoog, who is said to know more about C.S. Lewis than anyone else in that country, has produced a book, *Light in the Shadowlands*, which should clear up many mysteries, falsifications and actual or alleged forgeries which have puzzled readers since his death in 1963.

ADELA

The Therapeutic Use of Fairy Tales

George MacDonald's 1864 'novel', *Adela Cathcart*, now republished by Johannesens, sets out to show the enormous therapeutic value of story telling, and he dedicates it to his friend Rutherford Russell, the leading homeopathic doctor of the day. However, most of the ideas in the story were far ahead of their time, and the publisher's insistence upon a conventional title for the book, instead of the explanatory one which MacDonald had requested, did not help matters. The traditional fairy tales—and MacDonald's own splendid tales—continued to help subconsciously in healing wounds of the psyche in those who took them into their being, but there was little overt interest in the therapeutic value of fairy tales until the publication in 1975 of Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment*. Since then there has been an explosion of interest in the telling of fairy tales, and the techniques for using the stories therapeutically are at last being explored again—see in particular Nancy Mellon's book, *Story Telling and the Art of the Imagination*, Element Books 1993.

ADELA has been established within the MacDonald Society for the practical development of the therapeutic techniques described in *Adela Cathcart* and elsewhere in MacDonald's writings. As Nancy Mellon emphasises in her book, a treasure trove of imaginative powers lies within us all.

The stories created by the group of friends in *Adela Cathcart* range from the sophisticated to the very simple, but since all are created out of love, all contribute to the healing of the sick young woman, Adela.

ADELA workshops will encourage participants to create their own 'stories for life', drawing particularly upon the techniques used by MacDonald and by his two close friends, Lewis Carroll and John Ruskin, who eagerly took up his ideas. Their stories endeavour to provide readers, whether children or adults, with a golden key to unlock the true psyche, and begin to make contact with the Sophia. *ADELA* workshops will seek to recognise the key in its different manifestations and take the first step towards using it.

THERE WILL BE A WORKSHOP ON 'GEORGE MACDONALD AND THERAPEUTIC STORY TELLING' IN THE BOSTON AREA IN THE LATE SPRING OF 1995 AND POSSIBLY ANOTHER IN THE CHICAGO AREA DURING THE SAME PERIOD.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THESE TWO WORKSHOPS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM
NANCY MELLON, 416, EAST STREET, CARLISLE, MA. 01741.**

ADELA also hopes to co-operate with, and contribute to, the work of other groups. "This may become the 'all' only together with others; only together with others can an individual realise his or her absolute significance—become an inseparable and irreplaceable part of the universal whole, an independent living and original organ of absolute life."

Vladimir Solovyov.



*Nelly's escape from the kelpie.
Illustration by Arthur Hughes to Ranald
Bannerman's Boyhood (1871).*

AN URGENT APPEAL

In the last issue of 'Orts' we appealed for someone who is well informed on fund-raising, contacting firms and individuals who make grants for activities such as ours. The matter is **urgent** and we are in great need of assistance. Please contact the Hon. Secretary if you can help or need further information.

REMINDER TO MEMBERS

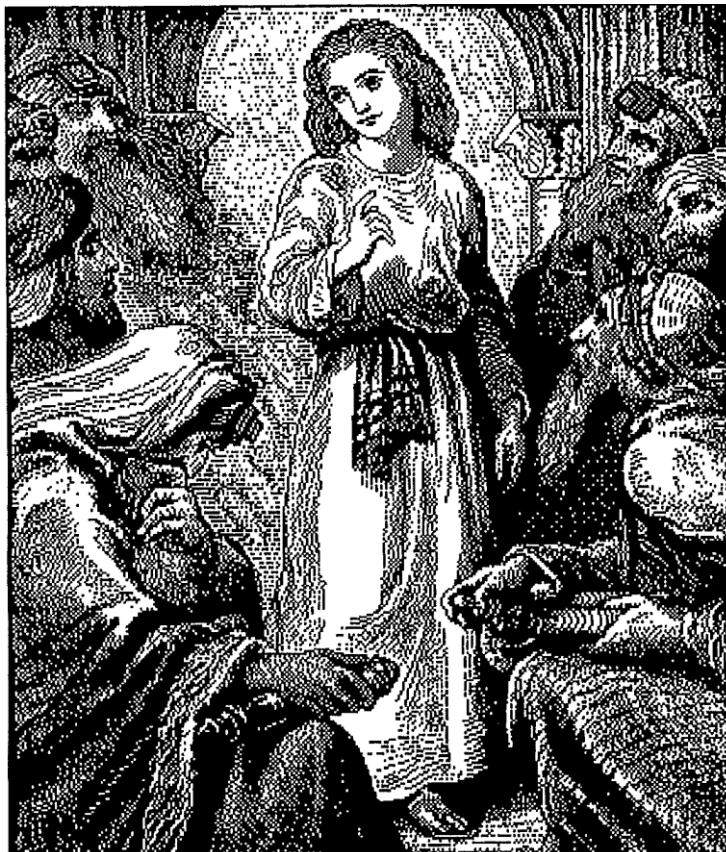
Members are asked to renew their subscriptions punctually please, so that reminder notices need not be sent. This will save unnecessary work for our Membership Secretary and Treasurer, ***Rachel Johnson, 61, Longdales Road, Lincoln. LN2. 2JS. (Tel.0522 532967)***

Please note that any queries, questions, or information required in relation to the Society, should be directed to the Hon. Secretary.

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George MacDonald