CHAPTER XXI.

FRANCHISE REFORM.

1833

Political *v.* ecclesiastical franchise

PARLIAMENTARY reform was the first public question which engaged Mr. M^cLaren's attention at the threshold of his career. At the beginning of the present century it engrossed the public mind. To earnest-minded young men, more particularly among the class with whom Mr. M^cLaren was associated, it represented the cause of human freedom. It spoke of the rights of man—rights withheld, but which must be asserted if patriotism were to be preserved and religious faith vindicated and maintained; for it appealed not only to the love of freedom innate in the Scottish character, but likewise to the sense of responsibility to God. It was an outcome of the Reformation—a development of the Protestantism which had established in Scotland a democratic, self-governing Church. It was a political manifestation of the Scottish Presbyterianism, which in its purer and intenser aspects had secured the ecclesiastical franchise for the members of Christ's Church, without respect of social status or of sex.

To this early adopted faith Mr. M^cLaren proved true to the end of his life. He laboured to secure the parliamentary franchise for every member of the commonwealth—for every man and woman householder, as a right as well as a trust, just as the ecclesiastical franchise was

1833

regarded as part and parcel of the membership of his church.

In his private memoranda, written in the spring of 1886, he thus described his introduction to political work:—

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"I had never been an active working politician up to 1833. I was too obscure a man to be thought of in this connection. But I was in heart an earnest Reformer, and had attended all the great Reform meetings held in Edinburgh since the agitation commenced, both those in halls and the great meetings in the Queen's Park, Grassmarket, and other places. I had also attended the first purely political meeting ever held in Scotland. It was held in the Pantheon Circus on 16th December 1820. All open-air meetings were then illegal under one of Lord Castlereagh's Acts, and all the public halls in the city were withheld through the influence of the local Tory aristocracy, who then ruled Scotland with a rod of iron. Through the kindness of my employer I was allowed to attend this great meeting. The building was filled to overflowing, and large numbers were shut out. Mr. James Moncreiff, advocate (father of the present Lord Moncreiff), was in the chair. Francis Jeffrey was the leading speaker. But all the Liberal lawyers who afterwards arrived at such great celebrity were present, and most of them took part in the proceedings. Resolutions were passed praying the King to dismiss his Ministers, and 17,000 names were affixed to the petition, while only 1700 names were got to the Tory opposition petition. On this day Edinburgh took up its position as a Liberal city, and has never returned a Tory to Parliament. The effect of this meeting was to imbue my whole heart and mind with Liberal principles, so indelibly fixed that no change has ever occurred except in an onward direction."

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nquet.

At the great public dinner given to Earl Grey on 15th September 1834, with the Duke of Hamilton in the chair, the Earl of Rosebery as croupier, and attended by nearly every Scottish nobleman and county gentleman who then belonged to the Reform party, Mr. McLaren was one of the

acting stewards. After the Reform Bill was passed, and the first flush of victory was over, while the bulk of the party was disposed to "rest and be thankful," his energetic spirit perceived that this feeling of languor was fatal to effective organisation for further reforms. He endeavoured to rouse his friends to a recognition of their duties and to hasten them to the new fields waiting to be conquered. Even in the midst of his onerous municipal labours, he actively engaged in political work; and in 1839 he was the chief promoter of the "Reform Union," an association based on the principles adopted by the modern Caucus—"open to every Liberal voter on the parliamentary roll, without regard to his peculiar views on any of the questions about which Reformers are at present divided." But though the Liberal party continued in the ascendant in the city and generally throughout Scotland, its reforming zeal was not active. It was disinclined for anything like heroic legislation; and Mr. M^cLaren found it necessary to turn from the leaders and wire-pullers to the people to find the enthusiasm needed for the inspiration of the party.

1834

The first Caucus.

One of these pioneer reform agitations was what was described as the Scottish Freehold Movement. Mr. M^cLaren was associated in this work with the Rev. Dr. Begg. In the desire to elevate the working-classes and to strengthen the national spirit of independence through the possession, by prudent householders, of a property qualification for the franchise, as well as in the endeavour to widen the bounds of freedom as these were defined by the Act of 1832, the two men, though differing widely on many ecclesiastical questions, found a common platform, and for several years they carried on the work together with equal enthusiasm and energy. Dr. Begg approached the question chiefly from the point of

The Freehold movement.

1839 view of the social reformer. He wished the working-classes in their aspirations after self-advancement to associate independence with manhood; and the first and most necessary step towards the acquisition of this independence was the possession of a house as an absolute property. The spirit embodied in the old song—

> "I'll hae a hoose o' my ain—
> I'll tak dunts frae naebody,"

animated the social and political economy he taught to working-men. Mr. McLaren ardently sympathised with this teaching, and frequently in his speeches and writings he cited one of the objects of the movement in these words: "To promote the elevation of the working-classes in the social scale by encouraging amongst them habits of industry and economy for the purpose of thereby acquiring freehold dwellings for themselves." But in his advocacy of this reform he devoted his arguments and illustrations mainly to the political aspects of the question. This department of the subject he discussed with his accustomed thoroughness and lucidity. He surveyed the whole field of political representation in England and Scotland from the beginning of the fifteenth century, in order to show that the forty-shilling freehold was part and parcel of the British Constitution, and by elaborate illustrations of the inequalities in representation in respect of population and of contributions to the imperial revenue, from which Scotland, and especially the Scottish burghs, suffered under the first Reform Act settlement. He further enforced his contention that injustice had been done to Scotland by the discontinuance of a franchise preserved in England. He stated these views in detail at a meeting held in Queen Street Hall, Edinburgh, 25th December 1856, at which Dr. Begg and he were the

Co-operation with Dr. Begg.

chief speakers, and which the two city Members, Mr. Charles Cowan and Mr. Adam Black, attended. Dr. Begg and he afterwards received pressing invitations from "men in earnest" to address meetings in all parts of the country; and it is interesting here to note that when, amongst other places, they visited Ayr in May 1857, Mr. McLaren was then regarded as an old man. Colonel Shaw had doubtless in his mind the long period during which Mr. McLaren had already occupied a prominent place in the public life of his country, and must have had little idea that nearly thirty years' good, or rather better work, remained before him. After a complimentary reference to Dr. Begg, he proceeded :— 1856

"The meeting had also before it a venerable gentleman, who, after having performed with distinction the civic duties of the capital city of his native land, could not yet rest from labours of love towards his fellow-men. His great and loving heart still sought to elevate his countrymen in their social, moral, and political capacities; and for these great and glorious objects he had come here to-night." [1]

The movement, though decidedly popular, was opposed by Liberals as well as by Tories—by some on the opportunist plea that it was fitted to hinder a general measure for the extension of the refranchise, which many eager Reformers had been vainly expecting for years; by others on the ground

[1] "Mr. McLaren wound up the proceedings with a series of statistics which will be found unanswerable on two points. First, that the whole tendency of recent legislation for Scotland has been, by joining burghs together, to cut out their population from county constituencies; and, secondly, that these burghs by themselves have nothing like the representation, as compared with English burghs, which they ought to have, either in regard to the numbers of their electors or representatives. One fact may here suffice: 60 English burghs, with a gross population of 392,278, have 22,548 voters and 94 members, while 69 Scotch burghs, with a population of 392,343, have only 14,907 voters, and only 14 members!"—*Ayr Advertiser, May* 7, 1857.

1857 that the franchise established under the forty-shilling freehold qualification would be dangerously low; and by others again under the fear that the burgh forty-shilling freeholders with their county votes would swamp the ordinary county electors, forgetting that the existing county constituencies swamped the proper electorate, and would have been reinforced by forty-shilling freeholders from the counties as well as from the burghs. Mr. M^cLaren sturdily combated these and many other objections. He was particularly resolute in his refusal to limit to the counties the reform he advocated.

Encouraged by the result of this meeting, Mr. M^cLaren framed a bill, the precise object of which, as well as of the Freehold movement, is clearly explained in the subjoined letter to his partner in the agitation:—

EDINBURGH, *January* 22, 1857.

A bill drafted. MY DEAR DR. BEGG,—I have now the pleasure to enclose the draft of a bill, which you requested me to prepare, and which, if passed into law, would carry the forty-shilling freehold franchise, which you have so ably supported, into practical effect. . . .

The first enacting clause, you will perceive, is, except as regards the amount of the franchise, taken in substance from the Scotch Reform Act (as I stated at the public meeting on Saturday it ought to be), but with certain modifications and additions, which appeared to me to be necessary to make our forty-shilling property franchise the same in substance and in spirit as the English forty-shilling freehold franchise; and to prevent the creation of fictitious votes in Scotland, which, judging from past experience as regards the £10 franchise, might be accomplished on a great scale, if proper safeguards were not provided, by requiring, as the clause does, the actual possession of a *bona fide* interest of not less than forty shillings yearly in perpetuity, secured by infeftment over the lands on which the claim of enrolment shall be made.

The English Reform Act recognises "rent-charges" and "annuities" secured on freehold land in perpetuity as forming proper freehold qualifications when of the value of forty shillings yearly; and although it might be argued that the word "feu-duties" in the Scotch Reform Act would give substantially the same right, and be sufficient for our purposes, I have thought it advisable to include in the clause the words of the English Act also, which may apply in cases where the other words would not be sufficient. 1857

My object has been, as you will perceive, to make the clause clearly describe *the thing wanted in Scotland under the name of the forty-shilling property franchise;* and if we shall obtain this under any other form of words which our legal friends shall think better adapted to accomplish the purpose, I shall be quite satisfied, as I am sure you, and all the friends who act with us, will be. Meantime, I have thought it right to print the bill as it stands, on my own responsibility, without waiting for any legal revision.—I am, my dear Dr. Begg, yours very truly,

D. M'Laren.

At another public meeting held in Queen Street Hall in January 1857 he remarked:—

"That if they extended the franchise to the forty-shilling freeholders in counties, so many of whom were in a dependent position and liable to be influenced by the landlord and farmer to a very great extent, without including the town element, he had very great doubts whether the present state of subserviency to the great landed proprietors would not hereafter be increased to a greater extent and in a more intense degree than under the present law. So strongly did he feel that view of the matter, that, if it were in his power, with the present information he possessed, to obtain the forty-shilling freehold franchise for the counties alone, excluding the element of town representation, he would not accept it as a blessing at all."

A somewhat unexpected rebuff was received from the Convention of Royal Burghs, which, at its meeting in Discouragements.

1857 1857, refused by twenty-two votes against thirteen to adopt Mr. McLaren's motion for a petition to Parliament for an "assimilation of the law of Scotland to that of England as regards the right of forty-shilling freeholders to vote in the election of representatives for shires in Parliament."

The temper of Parliament, too, was apathetic. But Mr. McLaren refused to be turned aside from his purpose; and if he encountered disappointments, he likewise received encouragements. His public meetings in Edinburgh or in the larger prominent towns of Scotland were all remarkably successful, and testified to the popular interest felt in the agitation. His political friends in England likewise gave him hearty support, and more and more, as in the Anti-Corn-Law days, he found himself entering into co-operation with them. As soon as the English Radicals began to move, Mr. McLaren put himself in line with them. He did not abandon the forty-shilling freehold scheme, but with his advocacy of this particular measure he associated the general question of reform for the United Kingdom and Ireland. At a public meeting in Perth, held in December 1858, under the presidency of Mr. Lawrence Pullar, he thus described the platform of the Reform party, then headed by Mr. Bright:—

The Reform platform.

"A vote to all owners of property in counties whose properties are worth any sum above £2 a year: a vote to all occupants of dwelling-houses in counties of the yearly rent of £10 and upwards: the Ballot to protect those who are in circumstances of dependence: that Parliament be elected for the ancient constitutional period of three years: that, in regard to burghs, the privilege of voting, instead of being restricted to occupants of premises of £10 rental, should be given to every man who pays his share of the rates for the support of the poor throughout this country."

1858

Meeting at Perth.

In his Perth speech, Mr. M^cLaren gave special prominence to the subject of the redistribution of seats. He foresaw that no bill could pass which did not disfranchise many "rotten boroughs," and he counselled his countrymen to claim a share of the representation in proportion to their numbers and contributions to the imperial revenues.

The Perth Reformers passed a resolution heartily supporting the platform recommended by Mr. Bright and Mr. M^cLaren; and, in response to these and many other calls, the Member for Birmingham framed his bill, conferring the franchise on all burgh householders rated for relief of the poor; reducing the county franchise to £10 rental; establishing a £10 lodger franchise; discontinuing the creation of freemen; placing the expenses of returning officers as a charge on the rates; introducing vote by ballot; disfranchising the smaller boroughs, and distributing the seats thus liberated among the larger towns and county constituencies in proportion to their population. This measure, in the framing of which Mr. Bright was materially aided by Mr. M^cLaren, was defended by the great popular leader in a series of speeches delivered in the English manufacturing towns and in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Rival bills

The share which Mr. M^cLaren had in the preparation of this bill may be inferred from the following among many letters written to him by Mr. Bright:—

LLANDUDNO, *November* 15, 1858.

MY DEAR M^cLAREN,—The Manchester banquet is fixed for December 10, nearly a month hence. We propose to go home on the 24th, which will give me sixteen days between my arrival at home and the banquet. I proposed to come down to Edinburgh for a week, or for as much of it as might be needful, and you wished me to make a speech there. I don't know how all this can be arranged. I am disposed to speak at two or three

1858 places between this and the meeting of Parliament, but nothing is fixed. What is your aim about Edinburgh? Would a speech there help Scotland to rouse itself, or would it be fire thrown away? or would Glasgow answer better? Let me know what you are thinking of. I have got Locke King's return as to the £10 occupiers in counties, and will bring it down with me; also the complete Suffrage Bill proposed by Sharman Crawford some years ago in the House of Commons, which may help us. The Whig papers are not very friendly to us, but I hope there will be sufficient expression of public opinion to keep the press right. The *Times* will go with us the moment it sees any real life in the question—this I know. I see your Lords are angry, the Duke of —— and Lord —— especially; "small pot, soon hot," as the proverb says. I have written a long letter to Cobden giving him my notions of a bill, and asking him for advice on any point. I hope you are giving your mind to the question, so that with your *head* and my *tongue* we may make something of it, as we are in the strife.—Your affectionate brother,

JOHN BRIGHT.

ROCHDALE, *December* 5, 1858.

MY DEAR McLAREN,—I do not think the Manchester meeting will be a good occasion to go into the particulars of the bill, as there will be other speakers, and I shall not have much time. I may, however, indicate something of what we propose, so as in part to meet your views. After the Manchester meeting I shall have Edinburgh and Glasgow, and I hear they are making some move at Bradford for a West Riding meeting, and with the intention of asking me specially to attend it. I do not wish to state any particulars till I have gone through all the figures and material points carefully with you. To-morrow week or Tuesday week I hope to be with you. When we have settled the large points of the bill, I wish to consult certain persons before they are laid before the public. I think I am bound to do this to avoid any appearance of egotism, and to secure unanimity and support. Reserve the *notes* for my speech in Edinburgh, for I shall be in a mess with it so soon after

speaking in Manchester. Perhaps we may have the bill ready for the West Riding meeting, if an explanation be then thought desirable. So far as I see of the result of your labours, they will be very important in any attempt to frame a bill. I see, however, so many points of doubt and difficulty, that I am in no degree ready to go into any explanation of details till I have talked them fully over with you. I shall be glad any time to see you here, but there is no need for you to come now. There will be plenty of time to tell everything we have to tell after we have had a cabinet council at Newington House. If we could get the support of the active and leading men in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle, Bradford, Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, and London, we should be able to raise an expression of opinion that would make it very difficult to carry a worse bill than ours.—Yours very sincerely, JOHN BRIGHT. 1858

The draft bill here referred to was explained in detail at the Bradford meeting, as suggested, and formed the basis for future agitation on the Reform question. A few months later Mr. Bright again wrote :—

ROCHDALE, *May* 27, 1859.

MY DEAR M^cLAREN,—I agree with you entirely. I have a letter from Mr. Gibson some days ago, telling me what was doing, and one from Lord John yesterday, wishing me to go up on Tuesday to have some talk with him on the present and the future. I have written to say that I have to be in Birmingham on Tuesday, but expect to be in town on Wednesday, and will see him on Thursday. I have told him that I think it desirable to impart confidence to the more advanced section of the Liberal party by some very distinct assurance on the question of Reform, and on a strict neutrality as to the war now begun ; and that without these I don't see much use in a change of Government, and that these are views which are held by a considerable number of members on our side of the House.

I have written at greater length to Gibson to the same effect, and have urged him to let it be well known that we are not to be

1859 the cat's-paws for the old concern, and that we will be no party to a change of Government except on conditions that promise good from the change.

With regard to the £6 rental, in all our great towns I believe the Liberals would be well satisfied with it as a great gain, and in all our manufacturing towns of the size of Rochdale it would be a very substantial improvement. In Scotland, and no doubt in Ireland also, it would be much less important; and I agree with you that either something lower should be fixed upon, or that a difference should be made with regard to Scotland and Ireland, or with regard to all towns in the United Kingdom under a certain population. I don't think there will be any insuperable difficulty in this, but I will not forget it. I wish any business, or some business, would bring you to London in the week the labour of the House begins. I am not very well off for advisers, and I think to discuss what may happen with you might be of great use to me. Perhaps the fine weather may tempt you to come up for a few days.—Ever yours sincerely,

JOHN BRIGHT.

Mr. Disraeli's first bill, introduced in February 1859, with its "fancy franchises," was regarded by the Reform party generally with strong dislike and distrust. Mr. McLaren was one of those who did not consider the measure as an honest attempt to settle the question; and after consultation with his English friends, now organised as the London Parliamentary Reform Committee, he prepared an elaborate statistical return, or rather a series of returns, which he entitled "Information for Reformers respecting the Cities and Boroughs of the United Kingdom, classified according to the Schedules of the Reform Bill proposed by John Bright, Esq., M.P.; and also showing the Results of the Government Bill."[1] The object of this paper was to

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[1] London, Effingham Wilson; Edinburgh, W. Oliphant & Co.

illustrate the merits of Mr. Bright's and the demerits of Mr. Disraeli's plans, alike as regards redistribution of seats and enfranchisement of new voters. 1860

Revival F form plan

"It must be obvious," remarked the *Morning Star*, after a careful analysis of Mr. M°Laren's parallels and contrasts, "that Mr. Bright's plan for the distribution of seats, instead of being too favourable to the large boroughs, as has been asserted by his opponents, is far below their fair claims, whether these be based on population, wealth, taxation, number of voters, or any other possible principle on which a fair distribution of Members could be professedly founded."

And again, as to the enfranchisement side of the question, the same authority observed, in sympathy with the author's efforts to reassure the timid political Ready-to-Halts :—

"One remarkable fact is clearly proved by these tables—the gross exaggerations of the opponents of Mr. Bright, who declare that his rating franchise would 'swamp the boroughs,' and would increase the number of voters three, four, and five-fold. These exaggerations were, of course, devised and circulated in order to alarm the present voters, and to induce them to oppose the bill of the honourable Member for Birmingham. It now appears that the ratepaying franchise adopted by that gentleman does little more than double the number of voters, on an average, in all the boroughs of the United Kingdom."

Mr. M°Laren's masterly compilation was conclusive of the fate of Mr. Disraeli's bill and its fancy franchises. The Reformers treated the Government measure as a trap and a snare, and it was rejected by a majority of 39—a vote which not only killed the bill, but led to a dissolution of Parliament and a change of Government. The hopes of the Reformers, however, were doomed to disappointment. The restoration of Liberals to office did not inaugurate a

1865

period of legislative activity. Lord Palmerston was master of the situation; and, as in former years the Crimean War, and afterwards the Indian Mutiny, directed public attention from home questions, so Lord Palmerston made use of the interest excited by his foreign policy enterprises and his personal popularity still further to stave off urgent domestic legislation, and to baulk the Reformers of their expected triumph. The popular agitation, however, recommenced in 1864 with redoubled energy; the general election of 1865 was fought on the franchise question; and the Reformers won—Mr. McLaren enjoying a great personal triumph by his return as Member for Edinburgh. Lord Palmerston died before the new Parliament met; and Lord Russell, who was popularly and rightly supposed to be a more advanced Liberal than the talented and daring Minister for Foreign Affairs, succeeded to the Premiership.

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es of 1865.

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ectations.

Notwithstanding all his experience of the obstructive power of the Whigs, Mr. McLaren was one of the most sanguine Reformers who entered the new House of Commons in 1866. Himself victorious over the Whigs in Edinburgh, he concluded that the aristocratic section of the Liberal party had not only sustained a general defeat throughout the country, but that their political ascendancy in the councils and policy of the Liberal party was broken. He believed that a majority of genuine Reformers had been returned to Parliament, and that the chiefs of the party, Lord Russell and Mr. Gladstone, were in thorough accord with the aspirations of their followers and supporters. In his view the time had come and the men. "When," he said, speaking at a great Reform meeting held in Edinburgh in the middle of January 1866, "when we have a new Government and a new Parliament, and two such men as Earl Russell and Mr. Gladstone at the head of affairs, I think this must be

the right time." He repeated this expression of confident expectation at another and greater demonstration held ten days afterwards at Glasgow, where he was welcomed with an enthusiasm and an affection which told him that his victory in Edinburgh was regarded as a triumph for Advanced and Independent Liberalism everywhere. Proceeding to Paisley, where he was received with, if possible, still greater cordiality, and where, as the home of a sympathetic Radicalism, he found himself still more at ease, he again declared his faith in the triumph of the cause and the loyalty of its leaders. "We have," he said, "just got a new Parliament elected, and many staunch thoroughgoing Reformers have been returned to that Parliament. Then we have Lord Russell, who is a Reformer of the very first water, and who has done more in that cause than most living men. And although his Lordship, unfortunately, as I think, has now gone to the House of Peers, yet we have as leader of the House of Commons Mr. Gladstone, who is certainly next to him in power, and not inferior to him or to any man in talent." 1866

Still more had he faith in the classes to be enfranchised. Though personally prepared to welcome household suffrage, he was unwilling to claim a larger measure of Reform than the general conviction of the Liberal party would concede or sustain. He therefore advocated a £6 franchise, as the highest franchise likely to be acceptable to the country, and the lowest which the Liberal party was likely to be able to carry. He at the same time sought to remove honest but prejudiced and not very intelligent opposition to such an extension of the franchise, by contending that it would prove a really Conservative measure, by including in the ranks of full-fledged citizenship the industrious and thrifty members of the working-classes. Government Reform Bill.

1866

Faith in working-classes.

Probably, of all sections of the community, he placed the greatest confidence in the industrial classes. He believed them fully prepared for, as well as entitled to, the trust about to be placed in their hands. In his Paisley speech he said: "A generation has passed since the last Reform Bill. During that period, education has increased to an extent which it would be difficult to calculate or to define; the wealth and influence of the working-classes themselves, as measured by their weekly wages, have enormously increased all over the country, in almost all branches of business; and the establishment of the free press and the penny newspaper has diffused an amount of information on political and economical questions which makes the working-man of the year 1866 a more intelligent man on every question relating to legislation than was the £10 householder of the year 1832." Himself a man in earnest and a Reformer, he recognised political kinship with the working-classes. After having, at the Edinburgh demonstration, exposed the hollowness of the cry that extension of the franchise would prove the prelude to revolution and anarchy, and inaugurate a reign of political ignorance, he continued:—"I believe a great many of those who object to votes being given to the working-classes do so not because they believe in their hearts that the working-classes have not enough of intelligence, but because they believe that they have too much. They know quite well that they would not answer the whip at mere party calls; that it would not be enough if a candidate called himself a Whig or a Tory or a Radical, but that they would weigh him, measure him, scrutinise his motives as far as they could for getting into Parliament; they would consider his character and his trustworthiness, and they would vote for the best man, not caring a fig whether the candidates were sent

down by the Carlton or some other club in London, or by some little coterie at home. It is because of that measure of intelligence joined to independence which the working-classes possess that so many men are afraid of giving votes to them." 1866

The Government themselves were less sanguine than Mr. McLaren. They did not believe they could carry even Mr. McLaren's suggested minimum of a £6 franchise for boroughs and a £10 franchise for counties. Their bill proposed £7 franchise for boroughs and a £14 franchise for counties. Mr. McLaren, though somewhat disappointed, recognised the measure as an honest attempt at Reform, and resolved to give it his hearty support, clearing the way as far as he could by withdrawing the Forty-shilling Freehold Bill, which he had prepared eight years previously, and which he had introduced as his first legislative proposal after entering Parliament. In one of the letters to their eldest son, John McLaren, then at Algiers, from which quotation has formerly been made, Mrs. McLaren thus described the first speech on Reform delivered by her husband in the House of Commons :—

Devotion to parliamentary duties.

"Your father's efforts in connection with parliamentary reform have won him considerable approbation from the press both in England and Scotland. The *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Telegraph* say he quite or more than came up to what was looked for from him. I can't remember all the papers which praised him. The Members on the Treasury bench listened to his first speech very attentively, and he quite gained the ear of the House. I daresay they were also a little arrested by his Scotch, which I think is the nicest Scotch I ever heard; his voice softens and enriches what in so many seems hard and dissonant. And he spoke quite on the spur of the moment, not having heard any of the speech he followed except for about four minutes, having only just entered the House, so that

1866 he must have seemed wonderfully at home with his figures. They happened to be what he had prepared for his speech at Glasgow."

Passing on in this letter to describe her own experiences and observations, Mrs. McLaren presents an interesting glimpse of the House as it appeared to her in the spring of 1866, and tells of her interview with her brother, Mr. John Bright, after his speech against the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act on 17th February, proposed by the Russell-Gladstone Government in answer to the Fenian conspiracy:—

"I have only been once in the House since coming, and it was to go with David McLaren's daughter and my niece Anne Frances Ashworth. It was not an interesting night—all about Hunt's bill for the cattle-plague. I was astonished to see how men have changed since I saw them eighteen years ago. Disraeli sat unmoved as a statue, yet gave one the impression that he had wonderful faculties which might be unfolded for the good of his country, and wariness—'biding his time'—ready to do the unexpected whenever occasion should arise. My brother (John Bright) looked like one ennobled by constant fight in every good cause. I daresay you read his magnificent speech on the passing of the Habeas Corpus Act. I was not in the House, but Charles and Walter were, though they could not see their uncle, they were so far back. Every one said it was the finest speech he had ever made. His voice was splendid, and his bearing like a prophet of old. I shall never forget his coming in here on the evening after he had made that speech. It did not require a sister's eye to be struck with the more than usual nobility of his head. I write reverently when I say he looked almost inspired as he told us, in a subdued voice, how he had lain awake the night before full of solemn thought about what they were going to do, and the reasons why they had to do a work so serious and unpalatable. 'But,' he said, 'there are times when one lies awake in the stillness of the night, in the flickering light of the lamp, when the imagination and memory become exalted, as it were, and things

—thoughts come into the mind, you hardly know how or whence —a sort of inspiration. It was so with me last night, and in the morning I endeavoured to jot a few of these together.' The result was that beautiful thrilling speech Gladstone was so struck with, but pronounced inconvenient. Ireland might seem to have been placed among the nations to be a perpetual demonstration of the fallibility of man's judgment in the art of governing. Light may yet be given to do justice to that beautiful island." 1866

Mr. McLaren's vote.

The second reading of the Government Reform Bill was carried only by a majority of five, and Mr. McLaren afterwards reflected with satisfaction that his vote, or rather his choice by the electors of Edinburgh in preference to an anti-reformer, saved the Government from the necessity for immediate resignation. Speaking to his constituents in October he said: "If by your favour I had not been returned, the second reading would have been carried only by a majority of three. . . . I think no one will doubt that if the majority had only been three, the Government would have resigned. That was the first way in which my election interfered with the question of Reform, and I think you will say it was not in the way of hindering it." But his timely vote secured only a short respite for the Ministry. The discontented Whigs formed themselves into a parliamentary group—pungently satirised by Mr. Bright under the name of the Cave of Adullam—and quickly succeeded in their hostile combinations against the Reforming Ministers and their bill. The Government were ousted and the Tories under Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli took their place.

Change of Government.

Having, as a financier and reformer, long regarded the Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer with trust and admiration, Mr. McLaren on this occasion undertook his defence against some of his party allies, who had attributed the Ministerial defeat to bad management. No accusation

1866

Defence of Mr. Gladstone.

such as that of bad management and want of tact brought against the party leader by his critics could, as he said, be more unjust. "Mr. Gladstone," he said, "sat there from the first hour to the last, a perfect monument of patience. I was often amazed to see how, when pelted by foes from the opposite side, and by those who called him their right honourable friend who were sitting behind him—and those honourable friends on his own side generally pelted him with the greatest severity—I was amazed to see how he could reply to those attacks with the degree of calmness and good-nature he manifested, and how he always avoided ascribing any improper motives to them, but, on the contrary, frequently went out of his way to say how satisfied he was that Mr. So-and-so was stating what he cordially believed."

A course marked out and followed.

But though the Franchise Bill of 1866 was defeated, Mr. McLaren did not lose faith in the cause, nor even in its early triumph. He comforted himself and his friends by reminding them of the Anti-Corn-Law struggle—how the Conservatives, who had rejected a moderate measure which the League were prepared to accept as a temporary compromise, were shortly afterwards compelled by the logic of facts and the strength of political necessity to yield the League's enlarged and uncompromising demand for total and immediate repeal. His wide experience and keen political insight enabled him to make an accurate forecast. "I should not be surprised," he said, "if a similar result were to take place in regard to the franchise; if a measure were introduced and carried, probably going farther than the measure which was rejected last session." As a Reformer rather than as a partisan, he offered what encouragement he could to the Tory Government to attempt a thoroughgoing and satisfactory settlement. Mr. Gladstone had pro-

mised to give "a fair and candid consideration" to a good Reform Bill if the Tories brought in such a measure. "And that," said Mr. McLaren, "will be my course. I do not care who brings it in; by me it shall be judged according to its merits or demerits." In the succeeding session he conscientiously and courageously fulfilled that pledge. 1866

Mr. McLaren's first impressions of Mr. Disraeli's bill, with its endless qualifications and reservations, did not inspire him with much regard for the measure. In its original state he thought it the most objectionable Reform Bill he had ever seen, and he was prepared to give it the most resolute opposition in his power. But the Tory leader's speech in introducing the measure, and his attitude of accommodation, modified his opinion of the Government's proposal, without, however, in any way lessening his opposition to its objectionable features. He could not overlook the broad fact that the bill was founded on the principle of Household Suffrage, so far as the borough representation was concerned, and Mr. Disraeli's language and known tendencies suggested to him the possibility, nay, the feasibility, of stripping the bill of every fetter and restrictive device introduced by the draftsman for the purpose of neutralising this general principle. In afterwards speaking to his constituents he thus explained his interpretation of the Tory leader's position and described his own line of conduct:— Mr. Disraeli's bill.

"Mr. Disraeli said in effect, 'We know our party cannot carry a Reform Bill without the assistance of the opposite side, and the Opposition know from the experience of last session that they cannot carry one without our assistance. Let us then agree that a joint action shall take place, that the House of Commons and the Government may frame a good bill in Committee, both parties making concessions in order that one may be carried this session.' Now, this proposal seemed to me a fair and reasonable one, and

1866

Possibility of amendments.

also a very safe one for the Liberal party; because, if the promises thus made were not performed, the Liberals, having a large majority in the House, could extinguish the bill on report, when it came out of Committee, or on the third reading. But it was objected by some that this was not a dignified course for a Government to pursue. I thought, however, that it was a wise course for the cause of Reform. Besides, you did not send me to Parliament to watch over the dignity of any Government, and I thought they were the guardians of their own political honour."

It will thus be seen that party interest in its narrower sense—that is to say, as respects the immediate resumption of office—was not in Mr. McLaren's mind at all. What concerned him was the settlement, on a broad and liberal basis, of the franchise reform, for which the constituencies had declared; and he was willing to co-operate with Mr. Disraeli in effecting such a settlement, even although the temporary coalition meant the retention by the Tories of office without power.

Principle before party.

By the adoption of this attitude Mr. McLaren gave keen offence, not only to the official section of the Liberal party, but to some of his personal friends, who had lost all respect for and confidence in Mr. Disraeli, and who thought the possession of place by the Tories under such circumstances a grave national peril. But neither the pressure of the Whips nor the entreaties of friends, with whom difference was to him acute pain, could move him from the position which his sense of public duty constrained him to take up. Although perhaps he did not fully realise it then, he had reached a crisis in his political history similar to that which overtook him at the beginning of the Anti-Corn-Law agitation. He was forced to choose between party advantage and public interest; and though party advantage meant for him also increase of personal influence and opportunities of

usefulness, he put personal considerations entirely out of view and decided in favour of public interest. As the struggle proceeded the painfulness of this difference increased, but Mr. McLaren steadily and fearlessly maintained throughout both his integrity and his consistency. 1866

When the Liberal party was first summoned to Mr. Gladstone's house to consider the policy to be pursued, Mr. McLaren was one of the Members whose influence prevented the adoption of a resolution to throw out the Government bill on the second reading. He attended a second meeting held a few days before the bill was to enter Committee, at which Mr. Gladstone intimated that Mr. Coleridge, now Lord Chief-Justice, had been selected to move an instruction for the substitution of a rating franchise for household suffrage. But Mr. McLaren did not approve of this policy. The adoption of the instruction would, of course, have proved fatal to the bill; the defeat of the Ministers on such a point would have been followed by dissolution; and the popular cry which the Tories would use as the defenders of household suffrage would have greatly strengthened their position in the next Parliament. He considered the tactics of his party mistaken, prejudicial alike to the cause of Reform and to their own interests, and accordingly he endeavoured to prevent their success. Opposition to Liberal leaders.

How loyally and ably he was sustained by intelligent home sympathy in this period of trial, when many esteemed Liberal friends forsook him and blamed him, will be shown from the subjoined extract from a letter written by Mrs. McLaren to a valued and intimate correspondent who had taken offence :—

"Whilst I do not wish to speak boastfully of what we did, I may say that the more I look back upon it, the more I am convinced we did right in considering during that anxious

1866 moment measures rather than men. And, without any undue self-complacency, I may be permitted to add that they who were far-seeing enough to join the Tea-Room party can afford to smile at any derogatory remark which may be thrown out by those who may have been less earnest in the cause of the people than in that of party, believing, as we do, that light is equally to be valued whether it penetrates a cottage or a palace, the mind of the humblest member of the House of Commons or that of its most distinguished statesman.

"The country was tired of Reform bills, woven, like Penelope's web, only to be unravelled again and again. As in almost every other great struggle, neither the Whig nor the Tory party *alone* could lead on to victory. Disraeli himself acknowledged this to be the case with the Reform Bill. The Tea-Room party saw how useless it was to fight against the inevitable, and, trusting to Mr. Disraeli's promise that the House of Commons should carry the bill, after moulding it in the best form its united efforts could achieve, the Tea-Room party decided the bill should go into Committee; and you know the result—the long-vexed question of the franchise has been settled, as we believe, for some time to come.

"We all know, and posterity will fully acknowledge, *who* rolled the stone up the hill. Although at the last great push nearly every one lent a helping hand, many putting their shoulders to the work, it is true, not from choice, but for self-preservation.

"The triumph is a great one for the working-classes. Many are anxious as to how they will use their newly acquired powers, and predict at first many mistakes. I would ask, Have their richer brethren made no mistakes? Why, the Legislature, nearly ever since the previous Reform Bill was passed, has been unmaking bad laws made by those we have been accustomed to call the privileged classes. It was said long ago, by One who is no respecter of persons or classes, 'Let my people go, that they may serve *me*.' I have faith in the newly enfranchised that they will consider the freedom they have gained as a trust, by the exercise of which they can help in a

very large degree the extension of a righteous legislation, and thus bring down blessings upon themselves and our common country." 1866

Here is Mr. McLaren's own account of the formation and of the policy of the "Tea-Room" party:— The Tea-Room party.

"When the facts respecting this second meeting at Mr. Gladstone's got abroad, many of the friends of Household Suffrage became alarmed at the idea of Members voting against that principle, even although then imperfectly developed in the bill, and it was resolved to hold a meeting of members in the Tea-Room on the Monday afternoon on which the instruction was to be moved; the meeting at Mr. Gladstone's house having been held on the preceding Friday. No circular was issued calling this meeting. It was a spontaneous gathering, by one Member telling another what had been suggested. I had been confined to bed for two days, when Mr. Seely called and informed me of what was intended. Although very unwell, I approved so much of the desire to defeat the proposed instruction, that I made an effort to get to the meeting, and after expressing my opinion in favour of the movement, returned home without being able to enter the House of Commons. There were nearly fifty Members there in the Tea-Room, and it has been generally agreed that about other thirty, who were absent from not having heard of the meeting in time, and from other causes, would have voted with them, and thus have rendered the success of Mr. Coleridge's amendment impossible. A deputation instantly waited on Mr. Gladstone and informed him of the state of matters, and he at once agreed that Mr. Coleridge's amendment should be withdrawn."

Seventeen years afterwards Mr. McLaren wrote a more detailed account of the Tea-Room meeting and of its policy in a letter addressed to his friend Mr. Seely, long Member for Lincoln, to whom he attributed the chief credit of a work which he never recalled without satisfaction:— Letter to Mr. Seely.

1867

EDINBURGH, *June* 19, 1885.

MY DEAR MR. SEELY,—I am greatly pleased to observe that you are to stand again for Lincoln, which you have served so long and so well as an Advanced Liberal. When I entered the House a few years after you, and was introduced to you as holding your advanced views, I was very kindly received, and on many occasions had the benefit of your experience and wise counsel, which I greatly valued and profited by. I have often told my friends, here and elsewhere, that I consider you, more than any one Member of Parliament, the father of the Household Borough Franchise Bill as carried in 1867. I well remember all the facts connected with the passing of that measure, because it had always been a part in my political creed.

Mr. Disraeli's revised Reform Bill included household suffrage, in order, as Lord Derby afterwards said, 'to dish the Whigs.' That party, and many other Liberals as well, were alarmed at the extent of the proposed change, and resolved to oppose it. They accordingly arranged that Mr. Gladstone should move an amendment to the effect that a £4 rating franchise should be substituted, equal to £6, 5s. of real rent, so that all persons occupying houses of less value should be excluded. This would have made an enormous difference in the number of the new electors. Mr. Gladstone's amendment was to be moved on a Monday, and was thought certain to be carried, as the Liberals had a considerable majority in the House, and the result would have been to dish the Tories and secure the advent to power of the Liberal party. I well remember your having called on me on the preceding day and found me confined to bed. But I saw you notwithstanding. You explained the great importance of the pending issue, and advised that as many of the Radical party as were earnest friends of Household Suffrage should be got to support Mr. Disraeli's proposal, because he could get it carried through the Lords, which the Liberal party could not expect to do, even if they should afterwards introduce a similar bill. You told me that you had already seen a number of Members who had agreed to meet on the Monday for consultation in the large Committee-room of the House of Commons an hour before the

meeting of the House. I promised, if at all able, to join your party, and you left hurriedly to call on as many other Members as you could overtake. I was able to attend, although at some risk. The result was, that, owing to your personal exertions alone, forty Members attended, and unanimously resolved to support the Household Suffrage clause in opposition to Mr. Gladstone's amendment, and they sent a deputation to Mr. Gladstone to inform him of the fact. I remember that my friend Mr. Fawcett was one of the deputation, but I am not quite certain as to the others. The result, however, was—and by your exertions alone—that Mr. Gladstone did not move his amendment. Household suffrage was carried, and the Whig Government did not come into power as was expected. 1867

I have no doubt you remember how we were abused by the press for our conduct. We were stigmatised in the most opprobrious terms, and threatened with the loss of our seats at the next election. I well remember a favourite epithet bestowed upon us, "The Forty Thieves." I always felt proud of the small part I had in the transaction as one of your followers, and did not mind the abuse, which did me no harm. Your constituency have great cause to be proud of the conduct of their Member on that memorable occasion. I will conclude with an important question, deserving serious consideration at the present time, namely, if household suffrage in the boroughs was defeated in 1867, as it would have been but for your exertions, could we have carried household suffrage for the counties in 1885? I think not.

I am thankful to say that, although three or four years your senior, I still enjoy good health, as you will probably infer from my handwriting. I have written this letter with my own hand. —I am, my dear sir, yours very sincerely,

D. McLaren.

As already seen, the policy of the Tea-Room party prevailed. The Liberals, instead of seeking the displacement of the Tory Ministry, laboured to improve their bill, and the result was the practical adoption of household suffrage—a

1867

Liberalising amendments.

basis of settlement Mr. McLaren had long desired, and which he now welcomed without the slightest misgiving. To secure at once the improvement of the Government measure and the attainment of household suffrage, Mr. McLaren worked, through good and evil report, with the most painstaking zeal and assiduity. Attempts were persistently made to represent him as a factious sectary, a disloyal Liberal, a Tory in disguise, and so on; but his own conduct and the success of his efforts to liberalise the Government bill baffled the malignity of his critics. While the bill was before the House, he was seldom out of his place. Of fifty divisions which took place, he was absent from only one; and that one, suddenly and unexpectedly called for, was simply on a question of adjournment. So far from being a supporter of the Government, he voted almost steadily against them; so far from being an opponent of Mr. Gladstone's party, as his critics represented, he excelled in the fulness and cordiality of his co-operation with the Liberal leader in his efforts to improve the bill. "The Conservative Whigs," he afterwards said, "were the great defaulters. Many of them did not desire a really good bill, and left Mr. Gladstone in the lurch, declining to attend or to vote with him." Mr. McLaren's record of his votes most conclusively shows the emptiness of the charge that he was a deserter from his party and an opponent of his party's leader:—

Co-operation with Mr. Gladstone.

"In forty-one divisions I voted against Mr. Disraeli, and in eight I voted with him. On five of these occasions Mr. Gladstone also voted with him. In other two of these divisions, Mr. Gladstone was absent, but I know he would have voted as I did had he been present. One of the two was carried by 259 of a majority, composed of the Government supporters and Liberals, against 25 of the extreme Tory party, who wished joint-occupants to vote under the Household Suffrage franchise. The other

division was carried by 159 to 87, not to preserve the existence of Lancaster and Yarmouth by merely suspending the writs for a term of years; and Mr. Gladstone had both spoken and voted for the disfranchisement of these burghs on another occasion. My third and most important vote with Mr. Disraeli was given in the spirit of the Tea-Room meeting, to prevent the bill from being altered on a point to which the Tories attached so great importance, that it was understood they would have abandoned the bill if they had been beaten. It was on the more celebrated than well-understood question of the compound householder and the opposing proposals of Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Hibbert. Believing that there would be very little difference between their practical working in enfranchising electors, I gave my vote to Mr. Disraeli to save the life of the bill. The majority was 322, including most of the Tea-Room party, against 256. The only other vote I gave against Mr. Gladstone was on the Women's Suffrage clause; but Mr. Gladstone voted with Mr. Disraeli in three of the forty-one divisions in which I voted against him. One of these was on a clause providing for vote by ballot, which I supported, while the leaders of the two parties voted against it." 1867

Mr. Mc Laren believed he was far more in harmony with Mr. Gladstone's political views than the official party men who sought to shelter themselves behind the name and fame of the great party leader. In his address to his constituents in October he said:— Mr. Gladstone's leadership

"From what I have seen and heard of him since I entered Parliament, I am satisfied Mr. Gladstone is by far the fittest man to be the future Prime Minister of this country; and I believe the Radical Members, although lamenting his shortcomings on certain questions, would hail his advent to power with far more cordiality than the Conservative Whigs. But with all my admiration for his talents and character, I cannot admit that the main improvements in the Reform Bill were carried by Mr. Gladstone or by his influence, far less by the influence of the assailants of the 'Tea-Room' party, who have so strangely magni-

1867

fied their own importance. The fact is, that in the thirty-five divisions in which Mr. Gladstone voted against Mr. Disraeli, he was beaten in twenty-seven and successful only in eight; and I leave you to judge whether it was the men who constantly attended and voted with him, or the men who remained at home attending to their own business, who were the cause of these defeats. It was neither Mr. Gladstone, nor Mr. Disraeli, nor the Whigs, nor the Radicals, that carried the bill in its improved form; for nearly all the bad clauses were dropped out without a division. I will inform you, in the words of an eminent Whig lawyer, but not of the present Edinburgh school of Whiggery, how the bill was carried. Mr. Coleridge (the present Lord Chief-Justice), to whom I refer, says: 'They knew perfectly well that they owed their great measure not to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but to the fervour of popular enthusiasm, and they knew how, through one great man, above all others in the land, whose conduct last session had shown him to be one of the greatest statesmen of the day, it was that the fervour of popular enthusiasm was raised to such a height as to make it irresistible—and that man was John Bright!'"

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ero.

he Ballot.

Mr. McLaren was not only in advance of his party in advocating an extension of the franchise and in preparing the public mind for household suffrage; he was equally far ahead of it on the subject of secret voting. He was an advocate of the ballot long before the Liberal party generally was educated up to an acknowledgment of its value as a protection for the humbler class of voters. The bill carried through Parliament in 1871 by Mr. Forster received from the first his heartiest support. All cognate reforms, such as the extension of the hours of voting, the suppression of corrupt practices at elections, the lightening of expenses with the view of facilitating the admission of comparatively poor though otherwise thoroughly qualified men into the House of Commons, were from time to time advocated by him, as opportunity

offered. He held that every householder was entitled to the rights of citizenship, and to be protected in the exercise of these rights. He believed the franchise to be a security for, and an agency of, national stability, linking the mass of the people in affection to the State, giving them a sense of self-interest, and a consciousness of participation in the control of national prosperity. And he supported the ballot, the Corrupt Practices Act, and other protective measures, with a view to the preservation and effective use of the new Magna Charta. 1867

But though few men more heartily welcomed or more highly appreciated the great enfranchisement measure of 1867, with its supplementary reforms, Mr. M^cLaren did not accept it as a final settlement. He had no faith in "finality" measures; and in this case, unexpectedly liberal and comprehensive though the new franchise was, it fell short of his early ideal. To that plan of universal household suffrage he was still faithful, for experience and knowledge of his fellow-countrymen had confirmed his conviction that in Scotland, at all events, the county householder was on the whole better qualified for the franchise than the average borough householder. Accordingly, alike by speech and vote and personal influence, he encouraged Sir George Trevelyan in the earliest stages of the movement which he headed for the purpose of inducing the Liberal party to adopt a uniform parliamentary franchise for boroughs and counties as one of the acknowledged planks of the Liberal programme. County franchise reform.

The steady progress of this movement afforded him the liveliest satisfaction, and when the time for settlement approached in 1884, recognising the supreme importance of the issue, he counselled all his fellow-reformers, however ardent they might be in the advocacy of their particular schemes, to subordinate everything to the question of the

1884

hour, as not only embracing them all, but as giving the assurance of their earlier success. When spending an autumn holiday at Strathpeffer in 1884, he, as a Highlander and as a Reformer, attended a meeting at Dingwall in connection with the candidature of the young Laird of Novar for the representation of Ross and Cromarty, which had just become vacant by the resignation of Sir A. Matheson. He wished the election to be used as a means of strengthening the hands of the Liberal Government in their struggle with Lord Salisbury and the House of Peers, which was then plainly impending; and, much gratified by Mr. Munro Ferguson's speeches, assured of his fidelity to the Liberal cause, he earnestly counselled the electors of Ross and Cromarty to return him to Parliament by a decisive majority, in testimony of their determination to have, as in the times of former franchise struggles, the bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill. He also attended another meeting during the same election at Invergordon, driving sixteen miles to it, to raise his voice in favour of the youthful candidate. But the effect of his words was seen elsewhere and otherwise than at the poll. Speaking at a great county demonstration at Dingwall, held two months later, Mr. Peter Macleod of Stornoway happily recalled the incident, and presented a view of Mr. McLaren's life at once striking and true, which revealed the secret of his extraordinary influence among the Bible-loving Highlanders :—

peech in
oss-shire.

"The last time," said Mr. Macleod, "I had the pleasure of appearing on a Dingwall platform, I heard Mr. Duncan McLaren dispose of this sophistry of the Tories, viz., that they had not opposed, but had simply refused to accept, the County Franchise Bill. We were then on the eve of achieving a great and memorable victory in the county, and Mr. McLaren's appearance that evening I thought augured well for Novar's success.

1884

The good fight of faith.

It reminded me most forcibly of, to me, one of the most touching incidents in Holy Writ, where Paul the aged, having fought a good fight, having finished his course, and having kept the faith, enjoins his son Timothy to fight the same fight, to walk the same course, and keep the same faith. Mr. Duncan M^{c}Laren, the grey-haired veteran, the hero of a hundred fights, the ex-M.P. for all Scotland, pronounced his benediction on the head of young Novar, and the victory was ours."

Throughout a long lifetime, in many arduous and protracted conflicts, Mr. M^{c}Laren had indeed kept the faith; and in the evening of his days his heart was gladdened by the crown which, as a political reformer, he had most desired and had consistently striven to obtain—the full establishment of his fellow-subjects in their political rights as the free citizens of a free country.

CHAPTER XXII.

NATIONAL EDUCATION.

1858 Education Reform.

His long and intimate association with the Heriot School system made Mr. M^cLaren recognised as an authority on questions of educational administration. Many of the visitors from England, the Continent, and America who inspected the outdoor schools sought interviews with their founder, and often engaged him in correspondence. By governors of other hospitals his advice was frequently asked, and he spared himself no trouble in supplying information and counsel to applicants whom he believed to be acting in the public interest, and from an anxiety to secure an extension of the benefits of the foundation.

Town Council and University.

But the administration of Heriot's Hospital was not the only educational work with which he was associated. He took his share, though not the leading place, in the struggle for the retention of the Town Council's management of the University. He believed that the connection had proved good for both institutions, and it was regard for the interests of both that induced him, during the two periods of his civic administration, and on the public platform as well as in private counsel, to contend for the continuance of the patronage. When the bill of Lord Advocate Inglis was introduced in 1858, he, while friendly to reform and to the development of self-government within the University, objected strongly to the with-

drawal of the patronage from the Town Council, not only without evidence of misuse, but even without inquiry—"a thing which he believed was without a parallel in the annals of Parliament." On the strength of a personal acquaintance formed during his Lord Provostship with the late Lord Aberdeen, whom he regarded as "one of the fairest and most upright men in Parliament," he personally wrote to that distinguished statesman, asking him to use his influence in Parliament to prevent the threatened injustice. The following was Lord Aberdeen's reply:— 1858

Appeal t Lord Ab deen.

ARGYLL HOUSE, *July* 20, 1858.

MY DEAR SIR,—I should have supported with great pleasure the claims of the Edinburgh Town Council to preserve their patronage of the professorships, for I well recollect being struck by the admirable manner in which, on the whole, it had been exercised. Not being able, in consequence of illness, to attend the House of Lords yesterday, there was no opportunity of my saying anything. I understand, however, it was urged that a compromise on the subject had taken place in the House of Commons, and that any change now effected would be regarded as a breach of faith. I trust the modifications introduced into the bill may ultimately prove satisfactory on this point.—I am, my dear sir, very truly yours, ABERDEEN.

Seven years afterwards, in speaking at a meeting of the members of the Mechanics' Library, Mr. M'Laren renewed his testimony in favour of the old in comparison with the new system of professorial elections. He was contrasting the advantages working-men possessed as politicians compared with more learned men in their greater freedom from prejudices and scholastically acquired fallacies, and he thus proceeded:—

"He would give as an instance, to show the application of this principle, the Act of Parliament which was passed taking the

1858 patronage of the University from the Town Council and conferring it on a small body of excellent men. He had seen the working of both systems; he knew a great deal about the one, and he believed he knew a little about the other; and his opinion was, that there never was a greater error made than that change. Not one member of the Town Council, perhaps, was himself qualified to say who would be the best professor to fill a vacancy in the Senatus Academicus. They did not profess to be qualified; but they listened to the testimonials of those who were qualified, each man considering himself one of a jury of thirty-three impannelled to try the cause. It was a jury indifferently chosen—not a jury of professional men, mathematicians, and lawyers. . . . The University throve under this system. In the case of the smaller number of men who now held the patronage, being all of them men of mark, and themselves mixed up in University affairs, and being good judges, they necessarily relied more upon their own opinions, and did not always reflect the opinions of the scientific community. He was quite sure the Town Council and the Senatus could not do a better thing than to return to the old system of appointments."[1]

As a member of the Town Council of Edinburgh when that body had practically the control of the University in its hands, and as on several occasions one of the Council's representatives on the Board of Curators after the Universities Act of 1858 had changed the administrative arrangements, he proved himself as faithful a guardian of the higher education as he did of the technical education in connection with the Watt Institution, and of the elementary education in connection with the Heriot outdoor schools. In

[1] We give this opinion because it is characteristic of Mr. McLaren, and because it illustrates his unvarying confidence in the working of representative institutions. Most people will agree with him that the patronage of the Town Council was, on the whole, exercised wisely and well. As much, and no more, can be said for the exercise of patronage by the present Board.

each of these departments his chief concern was the well-being of the pupils. When Sir David Brewster, the gifted and accomplished Principal of the University of Edinburgh, renewed, in 1864, a frequently-presented plea for increased parliamentary grants, and complained, more especially, that the Scottish Universities were unjustly dealt with, in comparison with the Queen's Colleges in Ireland, Mr. McLaren, while admitting that the complaint was well founded, and while emphasising and enforcing it, made this somewhat severe rejoinder: "What is most wanted in Scotland are scholarships or fellowships for the benefit of the meritorious students, and not additional grants for the benefit of professors. The recent grant of £10,000 a year all went into their pockets, without lessening the fees formerly payable by the students. The next grant, if one should ever come, ought to be exclusively for the students, since the last was exclusively for the professors." While the exercise of University patronage in Edinburgh has on different occasions excited keen feeling and sharp discussion, it may safely be affirmed that Mr. McLaren's votes were uniformly given on public and scientific grounds, and that in no instance had he occasion to regret the choice in which he took a part. Speaking in the House of Commons on March 13, 1879, in opposition to a motion condemnatory of mixed classes or colleges, which was proposed by an Ultramontane Irish Member, he gave the following illustration of the principle which guided him as a patron of University chairs, and which recalled the interesting fact that he was largely responsible for the connection of Professors Kelland and Blackie with the University of Edinburgh:—

1858

Protection of interest of students

"More than forty years ago," Hansard reports him to have said, "he was a member of the electing body which appointed the professors in Edinburgh, and he remembered taking deep

1858
Election of professors.

interest in promoting the return of a clergyman of the Church of England who was a candidate for the professorship of mathematics, because he believed him to be the best qualified of all the candidates. He remembered another instance, when, at a later period, about twenty years ago, a gentleman who was a very distinguished Greek scholar offered himself as a candidate for the Greek chair. That gentleman was, he admitted, opposed by certain parties on the ground that he was not sufficiently orthodox for the prevailing Presbyterian sentiment. That objection was strongly urged, but it did not prevail; and he was glad to say that that gentleman was appointed, although by the very small majority of his (Mr. McLaren's) casting vote. He was proud of having been the means of appointing a distinguished scholar, although objected to by some on account of his supposed religious views."

National education.

Mr. McLaren was an early and earnest advocate of a national system of elementary education. Yet for many years, as occasional legislative measures were proposed, he exerted himself as a critic rather than as a supporter. He was asked, but did not see his way, to co-operate with the Royal Commission appointed in 1858. He was quite sensible of the difficulties arising from denominational jealousies and class-interests that obstructed the path of any practical statesman who attempted a settlement, and he was prepared for a certain amount of compromise. He was sensible, too, of the urgency of the case. But the

Criticism of Government measure.

measures framed by Lord Advocate Moncreiff on the basis of the report of the Commissioners made, in his view, too complete a submission to these difficulties, and also came so directly in conflict with democratic principle, that he felt obliged to offer strenuous opposition, saying once and again, "Better no bill than such a bill." A letter he published in 1862, declaring that the bill of the year, in its rating provisions for the future maintenance of the schools,

gave an amount of relief to the landowners equal to a grant of £1,000,000 sterling, caused at the time no small sensation, and was angrily controverted. He summed up his contention thus:— 1862

Objection to relief of landowners.

"By this bill the landowners of Scotland will get an addition made to the net rental of their estates amounting to £30,000 a year; and as land now sells at about 33¾ years' purchase, this will be equivalent to a grant of £1,000,000 made to them from the Consolidated Fund at the expense of all other classes in the United Kingdom."

Mr. McLaren was equally severe in his condemnation of the machinery by which the new system was to be carried out:—

Irresponsible Commissioners.

"An irresponsible Commission," he wrote, "is appointed by the bill, consisting of sixteen University functionaries and four members to be appointed by the Crown, but not one member to represent the people or any local authority. They are not to be appointed, as the English Education Commission was, to examine and report to Her Majesty, but they are appointed to act at once, without the knowledge or consent of Parliament, and to expend £75,000 a year of the public money, which is to be appropriated annually for ever as this irresponsible body shall be pleased to direct; and this appropriation is to include the annual payment of £30,000 a year to the landowners, or whatever sum, less or more, the one-half the salary and other expenses may amount to; and in return for this the people are to get nothing whatever from the landowners. The latter have now the sole appointment of the schoolmasters and the management of the schools, and they are not only to retain all the power they now have, but to obtain more, by getting the same power over all the 'rural' schools to be erected under the bill, the one-half of the expense of which is to be laid on the Consolidated Fund, and the other half to be raised by a local rate levied in equal portions from the whole occupiers and owners of all lands and houses within the parish or district down to the very smallest cottages."

1862 Through the ten years' controversy that ensued he firmly maintained his objection to the transfer to the ratepayers from the landlords of burdens under which their estates were acquired, or which were imposed by the Act of 1667. Illustrating his position by a reference to the case of a parish near Edinburgh, he said :—

"There are twenty heritors who pay the whole cost under the Act of 1667; the result of passing this bill (1871) will be that these twenty heritors, instead of paying the whole sum, will pay little more than £27, and the rest of the contribution will be spread over the villagers and poor people around, who never paid a farthing before. In short, the effect of this bill would be to put nearly £140 a year into the pockets of these heritors, and to make their estates so much the more valuable in the market."

With equal pertinacity and more success he objected to the attempt to introduce the principle of indirect representation, for which the Education Department and the Royal Commission on Educational Endowments afterwards showed such a marked partiality. He claimed for the ratepayers of both sexes complete control of the local funds, and it was on this ground that he consistently protested against the device of the cumulative vote. In a speech delivered in Parliament in 1871, he described the retention of the cumulative vote as the one blot in Lord Advocate Young's Education Bill. "I always thought that," he said, "a most extravagant and absurd proposition; and I now maintain in regard to it, that Scotland ought not to be tied to the heels of England in everything. Merely because England made a blunder, I see no reason why Scotland should be made for uniformity's sake to repeat the blunder." After the School Board of Edinburgh began its operations he frequently felt called upon to criticise its administration and its policy, and he seldom missed the opportunity of pressing

home his conviction that the cumulative vote sheltered, if it did not encourage, extravagance, owing to the denominational zeal and activity evoked during the elections. It seems not unlikely that public opinion on this subject may lead to the adoption of the simpler system of election by majority, as recommended by Mr. McLaren, who in this, as in other controverted points, proved himself a Liberal in advance of his time. 1872

Mr. McLaren was opposed to the establishment of a Scottish Central Board of Education. He frankly admitted that the prevailing sentiment in Scotland (influenced, perhaps, by his own persistent advocacy of Scottish rights and claims) was in favour of a Central Board as a concession to the demand for "justice to Scotland," and as a counterpoise to some extent to the exceptional educational privileges given to Ireland. The two questions, however, are really quite distinct. Mr. McLaren had on different occasions objected to the extension to Ireland of special pecuniary advantages, virtually at the expense of England and Scotland, and more than any man he had exposed, and continued to expose, the injustice done to Scotland through the smallness of the Treasury grants for education and in aid of local taxation in proportion to her population and to her contributions to the imperial revenue, when compared with the grants made to Ireland out of her relatively smaller contributions to the public exchequer. In a speech delivered in the House of Commons after the Education Act was in operation, and while Lord Beaconsfield's Government was in office, he pointed out that while Ireland had received £447,000 for educational purposes, Scotland had received only £130,000, though Scotland contributed to the imperial exchequer about a million a year more than Ireland. But he would not justify waste in Scotland on the ground of the exist- Objection to Central Edinburgh Board.

1872

ence of extravagance in Ireland, and the proposed Central Board in Edinburgh he regarded not only as so much waste in itself, but as an encouragement of waste in the Local Boards. The system of administration through intermediary Edinburgh Boards[1] had not commended itself to him, and he distrusted the proposed Central Education Board on economic grounds, as well as from regard to the freedom of the Local Boards. He wished the real power of management to remain with them, as most directly representative of the ratepayers and parents. It may here be noticed that, on the expiry of the time for which its members were appointed, the Scottish Board was allowed to lapse. It had not many friends in Parliament or in the press, but it may be admitted that it performed the preliminary work intrusted to it fairly well, and it may be doubted whether the Education Office in London would not have encountered even more opposition had this work been intrusted to it.

State Church clergy and taxation.

Mr. McLaren was strongly in favour of making the Local School Boards as representative as possible. With this object in view, he proposed to make the State Church clergy liable to the education rate, so that, in conformity with constitutional principles, the parish minister might be eligible for election as a ratepayers' representative. He had in former times vigorously opposed the bestowal of a special parliamentary franchise on university men incorporated in different districts as learned guilds; but he was equally opposed to the exclusion of any class either from local or imperial representation, and therefore he asked that the State clergy, by being made liable to assessment, should

[1] This subject is more extensively dealt with in the chapter describing the movement for the reform of the government of Scotland.

be given a valid constitutional right not only to representation on, but to service in, the School Boards. 1872

Bible-teaching.

Again, as a national educationist, he was an out-and-out opponent of State-aided denominationalism. He considered that no sectarian system could fairly claim to be supported by Government aid. At the same time he refused to allow the Protestant translation of the Bible to be placed in the category of prohibited books. He believed that in Scotland the religious difficulty had assumed a magnitude in the eyes of statesmen and politicians which it did not really possess. The mass of the people were Protestant, and Catholic parents would not allow their children to attend the national schools. In these circumstances it was absurd to object to the use of a version of the sacred writings as to which all interested were agreed. While personally ready to accept the Shorter Catechism as a confession of faith, he was not satisfied of its suitability as a class-book for children; he thought it "too abstruse for the general run of children," and therefore he believed it could be withdrawn from the public schools without loss to religion of the Presbyterian or any other faith. Moreover, in considering this question, he bore in mind that the imperial Parliament had to legislate for three kingdoms, and that the Presbyterians of Scotland could not claim the Shorter Catechism for their schools without giving to the Church of England a strong title to claim Church of England teaching in the English schools, and to the Roman Catholic Church denominational teaching in Ireland, and without thus sanctioning what he regarded as the obnoxious principle of concurrent endowment. But he held that the reading of the Bible stood in an entirely different position. He denied that a book accepted as the common text-book of Christianity could be fairly regarded as sectarian, and he argued that it could be

The Shorter Catechism.

1872 taught without a sectarian bias. "I should like," he said, "to see the Bible read, and its grand moral precepts and its scriptural history and biography impressed on the minds of the children." On another occasion the words he employed were:—"I hold that the Bible should be taught, and not read merely. A simple reading of the Bible to young children I have always held, and I have often expressed that view in public, to be a mockery. I am in favour of the Bible being read and taught in good faith, like any other book of instruction. I do not believe that there is a schoolmaster in the whole of Scotland who would pervert his office in order to draw children from one church to another." And this was the position he occupied during the whole controversy.

Improvements and defects.

The various bills, with their various editions, which were introduced to the House between 1862 and 1872, approximated, with occasional partial exceptions, more and more to his ideas of a practicable national settlement, and to the general consensus of Scottish opinion, which during forty years he had done much to form and to guide. Accordingly, his attitude to the more recent bills was distinctly friendly. He yielded none of his former points of contention, but in the bills of 1871 and of 1872, more especially the latter, he perceived concessions so large to liberal principles, and such hopeful prospects of a peaceful and satisfactory settlement, that of each he said: "The bill has faults which we must try to remove or modify, but better that it should pass with all its faults than that it should be lost." Perhaps no public man in Scotland had striven more strenuously than he to secure for his country a really liberal measure of national education; and when such a measure was at last framed and offered, no Scotch Member employed his influence more loyally and effectively to

promote its enactment. His closing words, as the bill of 1872 was about to be read a third and last time in the House of Commons on June 28, 1872, were:—"He had proposed several amendments to the bill, some of which had been accepted, while others had been rejected. He was satisfied, from all the information he had been able to obtain, that no measure could be passed in the House which would be more acceptable to the people of Scotland. With one exception, he thought that the bill was all that it should be, and that it would work wonders for the people." The single exception in his mind was probably the unwarrantable concession Mr. Forster had made to the denominationalists when the bill was passing through Committee, against which Mr. M^cLaren and the Independent Liberal members earnestly and persistently protested as an incitement to and support of proselytism—an objection which, in the practical working of the Act, has proved only too well founded. Other defects were unfortunately introduced by the amendments subsequently carried in the House of Lords.

1872

Support of Lord Advocate Young's Bill.

In his speech to his constituents in December 1872, while renewing his general expression of satisfaction, and complimenting Lord Advocate Young on the ability he had displayed in framing and carrying the measure, Mr. M^cLaren made a last protest against the relief given at the expense of the ratepayers to the landowners (amounting, according to his estimate, to £48,000 a year), adding characteristically that "it was no doubt intended as a bribe to the great landowners to induce them to agree to the other parts of the bill."

CHAPTER XXIII.

OVERTHROW OF THE HERIOT FREE SCHOOL SYSTEM.

1869

THE general satisfaction with which Mr. M^cLaren welcomed the establishment of a national system of elementary education would doubtless have been modified if he had foreseen that it was to prove the foundation of an attack on the free system he had been able to set up in Edinburgh. He expected and was prepared for further reform in the educational work of Heriot's Hospital, but in the direction of, and on the general line of, the system he had marked out. The outdoor free schools, and indeed the whole administration of Heriot's Hospital, Mr. M^cLaren regarded with justifiable pride. He knew that the elementary schools had been examined by German and American educationists, as well as by Her Majesty's Government inspectors, and had invariably excited the highest commendation. He felt, with respect to the financial investments and accounts of the Hospital, that whatever record was brought to light, the Governors, from the time of his first connection with the Trust, had nothing to be ashamed of. He believed that official inquiry would discover no trace either of waste or of jobbery, and that through the operation of the Act of 1836 the surplus funds of the Trust, after the fulfilment of the express and special requirements of the founder, had been utilised to the greatest possible advantage. Accordingly he courted inquiry, convinced that investigation of

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the affairs and administration of the Hospital and its enormous revenues, would disclose results redounding to the credit of local self-government, and encouraging reform in the case of other similar institutions on the lines he had laid down and tested. 1869

In the House of Commons in 1869 he seconded Sir Edward Colebrooke's motion for the appointment of a Royal Commission "to inquire into the nature and amount of all endowments in Scotland, the funds of which are devoted to the maintenance or education of young persons; also to inquire into the administration and management of any hospitals or schools supported by such endowments, and into the system or course of study respectively pursued therein; and to report whether any and what changes in the administration and use of such endowments are expedient, by which their usefulness and efficiency may be increased." In the same session he also supported Lord Advocate Young's bill "to make provision for the better government and administration of hospitals and other endowed institutions in Scotland." But his eyes were soon opened. In the following year, 1870, in a remarkable book entitled "Recess Studies," issued by several of the University professors, which excited no small interest in educational as well as in municipal circles, the late Sir Alexander Grant, two years after his election as Principal of the University, made a violent attack upon the Heriot Hospital administration on financial as well as educational grounds, contemptuously speaking of the £4500 expended on the outdoor schools as so much money thrown into the streets, and practically claiming the bequest on behalf of the University. The constitution of the Royal Commission he had himself helped to create also disappointed Mr. McLaren. He had expected it to consist of perhaps three persons acquainted with Scottish affairs,

Inquiry courted.

"Recess Studies."

1870

and he and his parliamentary colleague, Mr. Miller, had recommended Mr. George Harrison, then chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, as one of the three members.

An unsatisfactory Commission.

But the Commission actually appointed consisted of six gentlemen, most of them Whigs—that is to say, connected with the party which the election of 1868 had shown to be "the smallest and least influential of the three political parties in Scotland."[1]

Speaking of the members of the Commission some time afterwards Mr. McLaren said:—

"I know most of them, and I hear good accounts of those to whom I am not personally known. I could not desire better men to be arbitrators in any matter in which I was personally concerned; but in such an arbitration there would be agents or counsel employed on both sides, and the result would be that the facts would be fully and fairly explained before the arbitrators. I lament that this cannot be done by the present Commission. The members of the Commission have been all appointed—I say it with due deference—because of their ignorance of the matter about which they are to inquire. They know nothing about the endowments of Scotland. They are neutral persons. They know nothing about the institutions of Edinburgh, and know nothing about the feeling of the citizens. There are no agents or counsel to bring the facts fully and fairly before them, and no agent or counsel who know the facts to cross-examine the witnesses. . . . I lament this fact, and that there is not even the element of publicity."

It was a hole-and-corner inquiry, and Mr. McLaren's public life was a consistently maintained contention that hole-and-cornerism ought to have ended with the rotten close burgh system, and that government by the people and for

[1] The members of the Commission were Sir E. Colebrooke, Lord Rosebery, Sir W. Stirling-Maxwell (who died in 1878), Mr. C. S. Parker, Mr. J. Ramsay, M.P., Mr. H. H. Lancaster, and Mr. A. Craig-Sellar.

the people should be conducted under the public inspection. Further cause for dissatisfaction and disquietude was furnished when, after the Governors of Heriot's Hospital had framed, in compliance with the Lord Advocate's Act for facilitating the reform of the endowed institutions of Scotland, an extremely liberal Provisional Order, the Government withheld their consent. Under this order the Governors proposed to convert the Hospital into a day-school, to continue and extend the outdoor primary schools, to complete a graduated system of education by the erection of a higher or secondary school, to enlarge the provision made for the supply of industrial or technical education, and to increase the benefaction to the University by means of bursaries and fellowships. This plan of reform, while it obviously rested on a well-grounded anticipation of a continued growth of revenue to supplement the sum liberated by the conversion of the Hospital building to a day-school, did not satisfy the suddenly developed scheme of the University reformers. And when, to other provocations already mentioned, the Government added secret negotiations with the chief opponent of the Heriot Schools, Mr. McLaren went definitely and resolutely into opposition. He declined to give evidence before, or further to facilitate, the work of a Commission which he believed to be prejudiced as well as imperfectly constituted. He called attention to the delays sanctioned by Mr. Bruce (now Lord Aberdare), the Home Secretary, which staved off acceptance of the Provisional Order, notwithstanding the ready compliance of the Governors of the Trust with his succession of contradictory demands. Mr. McLaren summoned the citizens to open conference, and before a large meeting held in the Literary Institute on December 16, 1872, he delivered an able address, which afterwards was published by request in

1871

Heriot reform obstructed by Government.

Mr. McLaren's disappointment.

1872
Literary Institute Lecture.

pamphlet form.[1] He complained at the outset of the "underhand" tactics of the Government in their opposition to the Heriot Hospital scheme of reform. "When," he said, "the Provisional Order was applied for by the Governors to improve the Trust, which was so unjustly opposed by Her Majesty's Government, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in place of referring the various matters to a public inquiry before the Sheriff in Edinburgh, as was required by the Act of Parliament, did, most unconstitutionally, as I think, send his private secretary to Edinburgh to make private inquiries behind the backs of the Governors, and this gentleman was traced by them to the house of the learned Principal, who was understood to be the leader of the opposition to this valuable scheme."

Reply to Sir A. Grant.

In this address Mr. McLaren's controversy was chiefly with Sir Alexander Grant, and not with the Government, or even with the Commission. He had little difficulty in showing that the Principal, as yet new to Edinburgh life and imperfectly acquainted with its institutions, had entered into the controversy much too hastily and with inadequate preparation. He showed conclusively, in contradiction of the assumption of the Principal, that the Heriot bequest was primarily destined exclusively for Edinburgh; that the conditions necessary for the retention of the bequest had been scrupulously fulfilled by successive generations of trustees; that it was an educational endowment intended entirely for the benefit of the poor; and he exposed the one-sidedness and inconsistency of the contention that, on the one hand, an educational endowment administered in the interest of the poorer citizens,

[1] "Heriot's Hospital Trust and its Proper Administration." By Duncan McLaren, Esq., M.P. Edinburgh: W. Oliphant & Co.

who are numerous, exerted a pauperising influence, but, on the other, produced a stimulating and elevating effect when, in the name of a higher education, it was applied in the interest of the more comfortably situated classes and the comparatively few whose education at the University was practically prolonged into the years of manhood. The pith and marrow of the Principal's essay practically, he said, amounted to this—"That the purposes to which Heriot devoted his fortune should be totally disregarded; that the children of the poor burgesses, brought up under every disadvantage arising from poverty and the death of their natural protectors, should be asked to pay fees to compete in primary schools with the children of those in better circumstances, who have enjoyed all the advantages of paternal home training, and many of them of home teaching, by persons paid for that purpose." He objected to the Principal's proposal to convert the Hospital into a college-hall attached to the University, to grant bursaries and scholarships open to all students out of a fund intended and husbanded for the benefit of Edinburgh, and to multiply endowments for the High School and other similar seminaries attended by the children of the rich, holding that such changes involved a direct breach of the founder's will, a misapplication of the funds, and a spoliation of the poor for the benefit of the rich. The evidence he presented of the high standard of efficiency attained in the primary Heriot schools conclusively answered the reckless statement that the maintenance of these institutions was so much money thrown into the streets; and his reply to Sir Alexander's criticism of the financial administration was, if possible, still more effective. 1872

From this time forwards it may be said, with no exaggeration, that Mr. M^cLaren, as the champion of the rights of the poor in the Heriot Trust, had the people of Edinburgh

1872

Public support.

at his back in a way in which few public men have ever been sustained by any community. The citizens took the alarm and prepared for combat in self-defence. The Heriot question entered into municipal and parliamentary politics and asserted its pre-eminence. Admission to the Town Council or to Parliament became impossible until a pledge of fidelity to the Heriot Trust had been given. And nobly was that pledge kept. The unanimity maintained in the Town Council throughout a long period of conflict, during which the enemy frequently changed his tactics and constantly exercised social pressure in the hope of making a breach in the municipal ranks, was one of the most remarkable illustrations of loyalty to the interests of constituencies which the history of local self-government has ever supplied. The Councillors and the Governors were periodically supported by the unanimously adopted resolutions of large and enthusiastic meetings. They were likewise encouraged by the unflinching vigilance maintained by Mr. McLaren in the House of Commons and the wide personal influence he there enjoyed. The Government, however, refused to yield, and though they passed the Merchant Company's Provisional Orders relating to the endowed schools belonging to that body, they, professed Reformers though they were, stayed the work of reform in the Heriot Trust, which the Governors were ready and anxious to begin, until the temporary power conferred by the Act of 1869 had lapsed. Thus, through Government obstruction, which no amount of conciliation on the part of the Heriot Governors could remove, a liberal and far-reaching scheme of reform was defeated, and the citizens of Edinburgh were deprived of an enlargement of educational benefits at the expense of a bequest belonging to themselves which the guardians of their interests were able and willing to bestow.

Fidelity of the Council.

1876

Meanwhile the Governors of the Hospital, anxious to do the greatest amount of good they could, in the absence of the extended powers denied them, established evening classes, and very quickly about 1000 young men and women enrolled themselves as night-scholars. In 1876, mainly for the purpose of strengthening the position of the Trust, and of removing the chief ground of objection taken by the Commissioners, viz., the limited and always decreasing area of selection for admission to the Hospital caused by the burgess rate, Mr. McLaren proposed and carried a bill assimilating the law of Scotland to that of England respecting the creation of burgesses. This Act conferred on all householders, whether men or women, who paid their poor-rates and municipal taxes, and who had resided three years within the burgh, the full right of burgess-ship, and in Edinburgh the number of burgesses was at once increased from 500 to 20,000. It was no longer difficult to find children legally qualified for admission as foundationers to the Hospital, and in a few years it was ascertained that 110 of the 180 boys educated and maintained within the Hospital building, in accordance with the will of the founder, were "puir orphans and fatherless children of decayit burgesses." Immediately after the passing of this Act of 1876, Mr. McLaren addressed a letter "to the new burgesses," clearly and fully explaining its provisions, and reminding them more particularly that George Heriot left his funds for the benefit of the poorer class of burgesses in the city—pointing out that as in Heriot's time "burgess" and "householder" were nearly convertible terms, the new Act brought within the scope of the benefits of the trust the people intended by the founder, "excepting women householders, a class which in all probability he did not contemplate, but one now requiring special sympathy and

Evening classes established.

The Burgess Act.

Letter to new burgesses.

1876 care, owing in too many cases to the destitute and distressing condition in which they are left as widows with children." He added :—

"I have for many years formed a strong opinion respecting what should be done about the Hospital, but no circumstances equal to the present have ever presented themselves for carrying these views into effect. One of my objects in pressing forward the bill was to facilitate the extensive changes which I thought ought to be made in this institution for the benefit of the whole city. I would, if I had the power, make Heriot's Hospital a great civic school for the clever boys and girls selected from the elementary schools, to be educated along with the boys placed on the Hospital foundation; and from these again I would afterwards select those who wish to pursue a university education, with reasonable prospects of success, and who required pecuniary assistance."

A second Commission.

The Governors of the Hospital were interrupted in the consideration of reforms on the lines indicated by Mr. M^cLaren by the issue of another Royal Commission in 1878. The constitution of the Commission showed that Mr. M^cLaren's criticism of its predecessor had not been without effect. It was a Scottish Commission in fact as well as in name; it embraced both Whigs and Tories, and the civic or municipal element was represented. Its members were Lord Moncreiff; Lord Balfour of Burleigh, a young Conservative nobleman, eager to make himself useful to his country; Sir James Watson, an ex-Lord Provost of Glasgow, an honourable and conscientious man, who had had prolonged and varied experience of municipal administration; Mr. Ramsay, M.P. for the Falkirk Burghs, but more closely connected with the commercial capital of Scotland, and a member of the former Commission; Mr. J. A. Campbell, M.P., also a Glasgow citizen, but representing the University

1878

rather than the municipal interest; Professor Tait of Edinburgh University, a distinguished representative of science, and Dr. Donaldson, Rector of the High School of Edinburgh, an experienced educationist, whose efforts as a reformer were, however, mainly devoted to the establishment of secondary schools, and whose views it was well known were hostile to the designs of the Heriot Governors. It was therefore sufficiently apparent from the outset that this second Commission, though its composition met some of the objections stated by Mr. McLaren to its predecessor, offered little prospect of reconciliation with the defenders of the Heriot Trust; and indeed its issue was generally regarded as a renewed declaration of war on the part of the Education Department at the bidding of the spoilers of the heritage of the poor. But this Commission conducted its inquiries in presence of the press, and therefore of the public, and Mr. McLaren, who was requested by Lord Provost Boyd to attend and state his views, on the ground that "the citizens would highly appreciate" the service, at once complied with the suggestion. Accordingly, on June 7, 1879, he appeared before the Commission. He had made full preparation for the interview, and the statement he presented was undoubtedly the ablest and most pointed refutation of the claims of the University party, and at the same time the completest and most masterly defence of the position of the Corporation and of the Heriot Trust, as the representatives of the citizens, which had yet been submitted.[1]

A renewed declaration of war.

Mr. McLaren's evidence.

He was now verging on fourscore years, but his mental powers were active and vigorous as ever. He was inti-

[1] "Evidence before Royal Commission on Endowed Institutions," by Duncan McLaren, M.P. Edinburgh: Neill & Co.

1879

mately versed in all the details and intricacies of the controversy, and his whole moral nature, his sense of justice, his fidelity to what he believed to be the rights and interest of his humbler fellow-citizens, stimulated his intellectual energies. He proved more than a match for the adverse Commission; and his triumph in the conflict was so conspicuous, that many citizens who had long been engaged in the same struggle and on the same side sanguinely assumed that the cause had been won.

Outline of evidence.

Here only the merest outline of the evidence can be given. The first conclusion enforced was "that the Trust, as constituted by George Heriot, was wholly an Edinburgh trust," designed for the public weal and ornament of the city; that the claim of St. Andrews University as a secondary legatee was excluded by the fidelity with which the primary requirements of the will had been fulfilled; that the High School had no claim whatever; that ample justice had been done to the University as regards bursaries; that, in short, the funds of the Hospital had been and were justly and advantageously applied, and that the diversion of them to objects outside of Edinburgh or in Edinburgh in such a way as practically to exclude the poor of the city, meant spoliation and jobbery. Mr. McLaren went further, and showed that even under the Act under which the Commission were sitting the views for which he contended were protected, and justified his contention by a reference to statements made by Mr. Cross, then Home Secretary, at an interview he had with an Edinburgh deputation before the bill was passed. Quoting from a report of the interview, Mr. McLaren said:—

"'There were two points in particular on which the inhabitants of Edinburgh held very strong opinions opposed to the report of the Commission. The first was that no change should

be made which would make the Hospital a Scotch trust, in place of continuing to be, as at present, an Edinburgh trust, which Heriot ordered it to be from the love he bore to his mother city.' Then there is this interjection by the Home Secretary—'There I am entirely at one with you.' The other point, I went on to speak of was this:—'That no arrangement should be made for granting bursaries to be competed for from all parts of Scotland by all classes, rich and poor, mingled together. The effect of such a competition would inevitably be, that the sons of the middle and richer classes, being, as a rule, more advanced with their education than the sons of the poorer classes of corresponding ages, would carry off all the bursaries, and the working-classes would thus suffer a great injustice; because Heriot established the trust for the sons of burgesses who were not sufficiently able to maintain them.' The Home Secretary again interposed—'There I also agree with you.'" 1879

Mr. M'Laren next re-exposed, with greater elaboration and detail than he had employed in his speech in the Literary Institute, the mistakes into which Sir Alexander Grant had fallen in his criticism of the financial administration of the trust. Then he pointed to the Burgess Act of 1876, as having removed "the main ground of some of the recommendations of the Endowed School Commissioners made in 1870 respecting the application of the funds of the Hospital, then confined (apart from the free outdoor schools) to such a small number of persons." He gave statistics and quoted reports illustrative of the pre-eminent educational success of the elementary outdoor schools, and of the way parents appreciated the boon of free education for their children. Asked by Lord Moncreiff to state his views as to gratuitous education, Mr. M'Laren answered boldly that he would approve of free elementary education, not only in the Heriot Schools, but also in the Board Schools; and he showed that, so far as Edinburgh

Free education.

1879 was concerned, free education could be provided from the available surplus funds of the Hospital conjoined with the Government grant, which the free schools might have earned so far as educational attainments were concerned, but which they had never demanded lest Government money should bring with it Government control and breach of the requirements of Heriot's will and statutes as respects religious instruction. The passage bears so directly on the interests of the citizens of Edinburgh, and on the question of free schools throughout the country, which is now being put forward prominently in the political programme of the Liberal party, that it may advantageously be here reproduced *verbatim* :—

Proposed abolition of school fees.

"I am strongly in favour of gratuitous education, and if I had my will, I would abolish all fees in the Board Schools of this city, and I would do so throughout Scotland. That I may not be thought very extreme in my views, I wish to say that, so far as I have been able to find out, the original system of the parish schools in Scotland was a system of entirely free education. The parish school was the same as the church; they were places open to the whole inhabitants to come and be taught—in the one to be taught letters, in the other to be taught religion. I have carefully read all the School Acts relating to Scotland, and so far as I can find, I cannot see a trace of any authority to charge fees till the passing of the Act of 1803; and it is my firm belief that that was done just to save the pockets of the heritors at that time. The stipends of the schoolmasters were so scandalously small that they could not possibly be maintained any longer, and the heritors by the Act agreed to give a little more; and, in order to make the incomes of the teachers something better, in place of giving a reasonable sum themselves, they got Parliament to enable the schoolmasters to levy a sum—which the heritors themselves ought to have paid—from the poor parents whose children attended school. Some people whom I have talked to are startled at the amount of money which they suppose would be required to do what I have suggested, but really it is not

at all large. I think the whole Edinburgh School Board fees amount to about £3800. [*Rev. Dr. Scott.*[1]—The whole fees for the year ending 15th May last amounted to £4044, 5s. 11d.] Then there is upwards of £700 a year spent in watching those children, to bring them to the school, and about £70 in prosecuting the parents before the Sheriff—altogether about £800 spent in bringing the children to the school; whereas in the case of the Heriot Schools they come without anybody to bring them. Then the school fees are collected weekly or monthly by the teachers, who account to the Board, and there must be a vast amount of clerks' work and time taken up by clerks and teachers; and it would be a very moderate computation to say that £200 a year might be saved in that way. Adding these three sums together, I say that £1000 a year is expended by the School Board because of the fee-system. Well, if you deduct that from the gross income raised by fees, you have £3000 a year as the loss by the abolition of fees. A penny a pound on the rental of the city yields £5600; a halfpenny a pound would therefore yield £2800: so, if you just increase your school-rate on the city of Edinburgh by a halfpenny a pound, you get rid of the fees and of all the bother connected with them: you get the children to attend better, their education gets on more rapidly, and therefore more successfully, and I hold that great benefits would arise therefrom." 1879

At a subsequent stage of the examination Sir James Watson recalled Mr. M^cLaren's attention to the loss of the Government grant, and his answer showed he was eager for and hopeful of an arrangement by which the money would be secured to the ratepayers in combination with a complete system of free elementary education :—

The difficulties stated.

"*Sir James Watson.*—If you thought that by taking the benefit of the Government grant, which would amount to £4000, no injury would result, would it not be for the benefit of the institution to get that grant?—Of course it would be if there were no

[1] Then chairman of School Board of Edinburgh.

1879

countervailing evils. But there are just two difficulties. The one is what is called the conscience clause, and the other is the regulation of the Privy Council for setting apart separate hours for religious teaching, and not teaching religion at any other than the hours named. The will and statutes of Heriot are permeated with statements about the religious training and upbringing of those boys, which are so clearly their intention—perhaps more than anything else—that I fancy the Governors feel they would not be acting in the spirit of George Heriot's will and statutes if they were to give only the minimum of religious training that is required to be given by the Privy Council. However, I speak from general impression, and not as an authority on this subject; but I have ascertained that if these two difficulties were got over there would not be anything to prevent free schools in Scotland—although there is in England—from getting the benefit of the Government grant; that those schools would be just as open to be examined as are the Board Schools, provided the Privy Council were satisfied on those two points. I think the first point I named is already practically settled—that is, about the conscience clause—because I saw in the newspapers within the last six months that a discussion took place in the Hospital on the application of a parent to have his child exempted from being taught the Westminster Catechism, and, after due consideration by the Governors, they resolved that the child should be exempted. I call that a conscience clause. Of course, if right in one case, it would be right in every case, and I call that compliance with the conditions of the Privy Council as regards the conscience clause."

An easy mode of settlement.

And again, in answer to Mr. Campbell, he explained that the question had been considered when the School Act of 1836 was applied for, and that it was found scrupulous Governors did not like to disregard the hard and fast lines laid down in the old regulations, even to gain a pecuniary advantage. He however added:—

"Such scruples, I have no doubt, are still held, and they should be respected; but if Dr. Scott, and Mr. Giffen, and Bailie Tawse,

and others of the Governors were to lay their heads together, I do not despair of their being able to make arrangements which would comply with the spirit of Heriot's directions, and yet satisfy the Privy Council." 1879

His final words on this subject, in answer to Lord Moncreiff, were these :—

"I would make all the schools in Edinburgh and in Scotland free if I could. They are free in the United States, and in nearly every country in Europe, and why they should not be free in this rich country I cannot understand; and I think that while you would pay a halfpenny per pound more to my friend Dr. Scott, you would pay perhaps a penny per pound less to the superintendent of police and for prisons."

The Hosp tal systen

On other questions raised during the inquiry he showed himself quite as advanced a reformer as any of the members of the Commission. Of the disadvantages of the Hospital system generally he had been convinced many years ago, and had advised the discontinuance of Hospital training whenever such a change was possible consistently with the conditions prescribed by the founder. He had given advice in this direction many years previously to the Governors of Gordon Hospital, Aberdeen; and as regards Heriot's, he had in 1873 proposed that the building should be converted into a great civic secondary school for the poor boys and girls educated in the Hospital outdoor schools who after thirteen years of age desired the benefits of a higher and more advanced education, while bursaries should be provided for the assistance of the pupils who wished or were considered qualified for a university training.

To this graded system, with its ladder from the infant primary school stretching up to the university, he still adhered, provided always that the beneficiaries were confined to the sons and daughters of poor citizens of Edinburgh; and

1879 while he told the Commissioners he was not then prepared to advise the abolition of the Hospital as a place of residence, because of the larger number of the poor fatherless children whose claim for admission had been legalised by the Burgess Act, still, speaking generally, he rejoiced that the Hospital system was becoming more and more obsolete. "I do not believe," he said, "it is good to herd together a great number of human beings, old or young, under one management, either as children or as soldiers in barracks, or anything else. I think that the more family life is scattered through the population the better for the good of the country." Further, he quite readily concurred in the proposal made by the Governors, and afterwards commended by the Commissioners, for the development of the Watt College as an expenditure of the Heriot funds in a way fitted to benefit the classes the founder desired to assist.

The Watt College.

"'Do you think,' asked Lord Moncreiff, 'that there are parents who would be desirous that their children should go to the Watt Institution?'—'Yes,' Mr. McLaren replied, 'and the proof is that they do go. There were about 2000 in attendance last year.'"

He had all along taken an interest in the Watt Institution, and remembering the advantage he himself derived from teaching imparted in the evening after he had begun the business of life, he had, as a Director of this institution, consistently endeavoured to adapt its educational arrangements as to time and character to the wants of young men compelled to work for a living or to help a struggling household. He believed that a portion of the Heriot funds applied in aid of the Watt College would reach a deserving class who needed and would appreciate the help, and therefore this particular part of

the scheme of reform secured from the first his warmest support. 1880

But the whole project again failed; and through the obstructiveness of the Commission appointed to facilitate these reforms, the Governors of the Hospital were again baulked of their desire to do good. Their first Order was stopped because the Home Secretary of the day (Mr. Bruce), guided by the law-officers of Scotland, discovered some technical flaw which other legal advisers afterwards certified was no flaw, and which had neither hindered nor afterwards invalidated the Orders promoted by other governing bodies, notably the Merchant Company of Edinburgh. Another failure.

The second Order, framed in accordance, as Mr. McLaren and the Governors believed, with the views of Mr. Cross, the Conservative Home Secretary, and Mr. Watson, the Conservative Lord Advocate, were received and generally approved by the Liberal Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt, who in a letter to Lord Moncreiff, dated 17th June 1880, earnestly urged an immediate and pacific settlement of the controversy. But this Order also was stopped, and the labours of Commissioners, witnesses, Governors, and Parliament were cast to the winds. The Commissioners reported that "until the constitution of the governing body was fully inquired into and revised, it was inexpedient to devolve on it new powers or to proceed further with the projected reforms."

The ground of conflict was now to a large extent changed. The governing body, who had hitherto guarded the bequest as a patrimony of the poor of Edinburgh with conspicuous financial and educational success, consisted of the members of the Town Council and of the city clergy. These two bodies in George Heriot's time embraced the fullest and most comprehensive, and perhaps also the fairest, Heriot governing body attacked.

1880

representation of the citizens that could have been suggested.

In the course of time, as secessions from the State Church increased and Nonconformist communions grew in strength, the city clergy became less distinctly and less fully representative of the general community. But although several of the clerical Governors always distinguished themselves by the zeal and abundance of their service, as a matter of fact the management was largely in the hands of the lay Governors. It was not, however, to the imperfectly representative element in the constitution of the trust that the Commissioners objected. Their quarrel was with the municipal Governors, just because they were representative of the community and directly responsible to public opinion, as Members of Parliament are. The ratepayers, who approved of the past administration of the trust, and more especially of the application of the funds to the provision of gratuitous education, elected Town Councillors who sympathised with their opinions, and because of the perfect working of the representative system in the constitution of the Trust, the Commissioners declared that until a change was made freeing the governing body from popular control "it was inexpedient to devolve on it new powers or to proceed further with the projected reforms." The *raison d'être* of this desperate plea, which recalls the principle on which the old and rotten close burgh system was defended, was obvious enough. The Commissioners aimed at the abolition of the free schools, while the citizens and the Governors whom they elected desired their continuance. For the purpose, therefore, of the innovators, a governing body was necessary who would not be subject to popular control, and who would be able to abolish the free schools in defiance of the people's will. Incredible though it may

Commissioners' objections to popular bodies.

appear, a Liberal Government, pledged at the time to the introduction of a large and far-reaching measure of local self-government, and composed of members recognising the supremacy of the democratic principle, submitted to the reactionary dictum of the Commissioners, and in the session of 1880 a new Educational Endowments (Scotland) Bill was introduced by Lord Spencer in the House of Lords, conferring on the Commissioners to be named in the Act the power of "altering the constitution of, or abolishing the existing governing bodies, corporate or unincorporate, with such powers as they think fit." The bill contained other clauses suggestive of hostility to the Heriot free schools, and of a disposition to protect from inquiry and reform the institutions in which the close and irresponsible system of management had had free and uninterrupted play. One clause, excluding from interference all endowments which had come into operation within the preceding fifty years, was, rightly or wrongly, read as specially intended for the protection of the Fettes Hospital. Another clause provided for a de-localisation of funds, that is, the distribution over Scotland, or, in the case of Edinburgh University bursaries, practically over the whole world, of funds destined by will for a particular locality or object; and further, was so framed as to permit of the diversion of funds, like those of the Heriot Trust, applied in the interest of the industrial classes, to secondary or higher education, which only the middle classes could reach. In other words, the transference of the benefits of the Trust from the many who are poor to the comparatively few of a higher class. The clause referred to was expressed thus:—

1880

Another attack.

Fettes Hospital.

"It shall be the duty of the Commissioners to reorganise educational endowments, with the aim especially of supplying *the needs of every part and district of Scotland* as regards secon-

1880

dary or higher education, whether in the industrial arts, or as a preparation for commercial pursuits or for the universities."

Opposition to Lord Spencer's Bill.

Mr. McLaren at once put his finger on these blemishes of the bill, and the warning he sounded quickly called the Heriot Governors, the Town Council, the Liberal Association, the Trades Council, and the citizens of Edinburgh into active opposition. Fortified by the practical unanimity prevailing among his constituents in support of his position, Mr. McLaren used all his parliamentary influence and skill to secure the desired amendments. In the House of Lords he obtained the help of the Marquis of Huntly; but the reception given by the Government to the attempted improvements was so discouraging, that the necessity for resolute opposition to the bill as a whole became only too apparent. Referring to the unbending attitude of the Government on the points mentioned, more especially as regards the alteration of the constitution of popularly elected trusts, Mr. McLaren wrote:—

"I may be permitted to ask why, if George Heriot left, as he did, his property to be managed by the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council of the city, now forty-one in number, with the addition of the thirteen city ministers; and if they have managed it so well, as is the fact, that the original capital of £23,000 now yields annually £24,000; and if these trustees, without one dissenting voice, including men of all political parties and of all religious creeds, are opposed to this bill, backed up as they are by the great body of the people, why should Earl Spencer desire to improve our institutions after the English model? Why not leave well alone?"

But the Government would not let well alone, and their resolution to push the measure through Parliament, practically without alteration, brought them into conflict with a

1880

resolution still more unbending and equally watchful. It was the 27th of July before the measure reached the House of Commons, and though the session was prolonged till the end of August, Mr. McLaren's opposition, supported by Mr. Dick Peddie, Mr. Holms, Mr. Grant, and other faithful Scotch Members, proved effectual. Of course, Mr. McLaren was vehemently denounced as an obstructionist by critics who conveniently forgot the effective obstruction offered by themselves to the Provisional Orders promoted by the Heriot Governors. The responsibility for the prolonged delay in effecting the educational reforms which the finances of the Hospital permitted was serious enough, but it lay with the opponents of the Heriot administration, and not with Mr. McLaren. He was still ready for reform of the right sort. At his meeting with his constituents on the following December he still assumed and encouraged an attitude of expectancy. He believed the amendments he had sketched, and which had been printed on the orders of the day, were faithful statements of Liberal principles, and he had faith in the democratic Liberalism of Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues.

Mr. McLaren's sleepless vigilance.

Responsibility for the delay of reform.

He was willing to assume that the Ministry had at first accepted the bill from the Education Department without giving it the careful examination needed for the discovery of what he regarded as the reactionary and spoliatory provisions hid in its clauses, and that as these had been exposed, the necessary alteration would be made. "I have no doubt," he said to his constituents, "the Government will still further improve the bill when introduced next session, so as to secure its passing without much opposition." Unfortunately, when the amended bill was introduced in the session of 1881, Mr. McLaren was no longer a member of the House, and the various attempts then made, partly

Improvements expected.

1882

Continuance of parliamentary struggle.

by negotiation and partly by discussion in the House, again failed. Mr. John McLaren, then Lord Advocate, who succeeded his father in the representation of Edinburgh, loyally assisted these efforts, believing that the differences between the Government and the supporters of the Heriot Schools admitted of being arranged by mutual concessions; but all his official influence and skill were baffled, and the desired reconciliation was not attained. Mr. Buchanan, who was elected Member after the Lord Advocate's elevation to the bench, made a careful study of the whole question, and in the session of 1882, and in various interviews with Ministers, battled bravely for the rights of the citizens of Edinburgh, and for the Liberal principles threatened by the Government measure. After the most important of these interviews, held on 22nd May, with Mr. Mundella, the Vice-President of the Council, and Lord Rosebery, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, and when a closer approximation to the views of the Governors seemed probable, Mr. McLaren, at the request of Lord Provost Boyd, embodied in the text of the Government bill all the amendments, whether framed by sympathising Scotch Members or by the Governors of the Hospital, which he considered necessary to prevent the de-localisation of funds, the alienation of their application for the benefit of the poor, or the limitation of the popular representative element in the constitution of the Trust. The Government had by this time altered the clause which excluded Fettes College from the scope of the inquiry. On the 8th of June Mr. McLaren sent copies of the bill thus amended to each member of the Heriot Trust, to each of the Scotch Members, to Mr. Mundella, Lord Rosebery, and the Lord Advocate. He introduced a prefatory statement explaining the circumstances which had led to his interference, repeating

Mr. McLaren's amended bill.

the expression of his opinion that ninety-nine out of every hundred of the inhabitants of Edinburgh, "who knew the facts well," disapproved of the bill as framed by the Government, and adding:— 1882

"My opinion is, after having carefully studied the history of the Hospital, that it has been one of the best managed institutions in the United Kingdom. There was left by the founder £23,000 in money, but no lands, with which to erect and endow the Hospital; and the annual revenue now exceeds that sum, after having (in addition to fulfilling all the original purposes of the endowment) in the course of the last forty-five years erected and maintained sixteen free schools, now educating about 4500 children, and about 1500 of more advanced ages at evening schools. All these schools are entirely free, even to the extent of furnishing books to the children; and it may be stated that 91 per cent. of the boys and girls on the roll of the day-schools are in average attendance, which, it is believed, cannot be paralleled in any other schools in the United Kingdom. It only requires to be noticed, to prove the excellent management, that the institution is entirely free from debt."

The adopted amendments.

This composite bill, with the amendments introduced by Mr. McLaren printed in bolder type than the original text, proved most helpful in effecting the ultimate settlement. It guided and steadied public opinion outside, and it facilitated the heavy and responsible task of Mr. Peddie, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Charles McLaren, and other Members, in labouring to reconcile the clauses of the measure alike with public opinion and Liberal principles. Considerable improvements were effected by the Government. In accordance with Mr. McLaren's suggestion, the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, which was being used very largely as a denominational agency in the interests of the Established Church, was specially named as one of the institutions requiring reform; the popular representative

1882 element in the governing bodies was increased from "a majority" to "two-thirds;" the right of girls[1] to the benefit of educational endowments was again recognised, and the 15th clause was thus altered as a protection against the delocalisation and alienation to which Mr. McLaren specially objected:—

"In framing schemes, it shall be the duty of the Commissioners, with respect alike to the constitution of the governing body and to educational provisions, to have regard to the spirit of the founders' intentions, and in every scheme which abolishes or modifies any privileges or educational advantages to which a particular class of persons is entitled, whether as inhabitants of a particular area or as belonging to a particular class in life or otherwise, they shall have regard to the educational interest of such class of persons. Provided always that where the founder of any educational endowment has expressly provided for the education of children belonging to the poorer classes, either generally or within a particular area or otherwise for their benefit, it shall continue, so far as requisite, to be applied for the benefit of such children."

Mr. McLaren still dissatisfied.

But Mr. McLaren was far from satisfied. He knew much had been gained, and for that he was thankful. But he perceived that the clauses were not sufficiently explicit to tie the hands of an unfriendly Commission bent on the diversion of the educational endowments still left in the possession of the poor, and he remembered that while in the Commission[2] the interests of the Hospitals proposed to be affected were not represented, the hostile interests were supreme, "a majority of the Commissioners being members of the association for promoting secondary schools out of

[1] This was in the original bill drawn up by Mr. Donald Crawford, and revised by Lord Advocate McLaren.

[2] The members of this Commission were Lord Balfour, Lord Elgin, Sir T. J. Boyd, Lord Shand, Mr. J. A. Campbell, M.P., Mr. Ramsay, M.P., and Mr. J. Ure, then Lord Provost of Glasgow.

the funds of the Hospital." Unhappily his fears were more than justified. In July 1884 the Commission, after having heard evidence, issued their report, which plainly pointed to the suppression of the outdoor schools, and provided for a large transference of the funds to university purposes. Mr. McLaren was at the time residing at Strathpeffer in Ross-shire, and, ever vigilant, he at once challenged the Commissioners' report as contrary to the evidence which had been submitted to them, contrary to the Act under which they conducted their inquiry and prepared their scheme, and contrary to justice and the interests of the poor. From the Commissioners' scheme he prepared a tabular statement, showing that the money proposed to be granted to new objects, and thus to be alienated from the legitimate beneficiaries of the Trust, amounted to £11,370 per annum, or a capital sum of £340,100.

1884

The Commissioners' confiscatory proposals.

Full of indignation, he denounced the Commissioners' proposals as certainly "the most gigantic scheme of legalised robbery" which had ever come within his observation. He recited the various proofs of successful administration of the Trust, and, in presence of the very doubtful prospects of success in store for the new experiment, he complained that the Commissioners, instead of letting well alone, had upset everything, "turning out the Heriot Trustees who had managed so well, and appointing a kind of conglomerate body in their place," consisting of twenty-one persons, eleven elected by the Town Council, three by the School Board, two by the Established Church ministers of Edinburgh, one by the Non-Established ministers, two by the University Senatus, one by the Royal Society, and one by the Chamber of Commerce. He denied that the University had any claim to the bequest under the will, because, although Heriot in a codicil directed

1884

that his trustees should keep "ten bursaries in the College of Edinburgh for ever, allowing yearly five pounds sterling to each," he intended this application of the money as a benefit to the Hospital, and not to the University, for he provided that the professors should take nothing for teaching the bursars. He complained that the Commissioners had acted as if the main object of their appointment had been to take from the poor and give to the rich, and charged them with having in this respect exceeded their power, and transgressed the Act which called them into existence. He reproached them with being the unconscious aiders and abettors of Communism.

"Their action," he sarcastically wrote, "will, no doubt, rejoice the hearts of the disciples of Henry George and other Communists, as well as the more violent section of the Highland Land-Law Reform Association. I fear they will not be able to see any difference in principle betwixt transferring the estates of George Heriot from the poorer to the richer classes, and transferring the estates of the richer classes to the poorer, as has been so much urged of late by certain foolish agitators."

Appeal to the working-classes.

He appealed to the working-classes to take energetic action in their own interests.

"I have seen the day," he said, "about half a century ago, when the working-classes of Edinburgh had public-spirited leaders and good speakers, who would have made the city ring with their demands for protection against the flagrant injustice proposed to be done to them and their families in all time coming by this scheme of the Commissioners."

In a subsequent letter, dated 31st July, and also written at Strathpeffer, he earnestly renewed this appeal. He wrote:—

"I trust the working-classes of Edinburgh will defend their

rights to the magnificent estate left them by Heriot. In his first deed he referred to 'decayed' burgesses as the persons to be cared for, but in his will he cancelled this, and left his estate wholly to the poor and destitute. It is now in the main proposed to be transferred to the comparatively rich." 1884

This appeal stimulated fresh opposition to the scheme of the Royal Commissioners. But the working-classes were at the time keenly interested in the Reform struggle, which had just been complicated by the action of the House of Lords in rejecting the County Franchise Bill, and they were tired, too, of the fight. The enemy had so frequently been driven off, that they failed to realise the gravity of the danger threatening them. Accordingly the response was not nearly so effective or constant as Mr. M'Laren had expected, and the scheme of the Commission was, notwithstanding an active opposition in Parliament, in due course passed as a Legislative Act. Mr. M'Laren deeply regretted the result, not only because the free schools were suppressed, whereby a check was given to the development of free elementary schools as a basis of our national system of education, nor merely because of the grave injustice done to that class of the population least able to protect their own rights, but also because the ultimate collapse of the opposition to what he regarded as the confiscatory and reactionary policy of the Education Department afforded evidence of a decaying public spirit among his fellow-citizens. The sche passed.

His feeling of regret was, if possible, increased by the very different kind of treatment meted out to Fettes Hospital. In his eyes the administration of this Hospital or bequest was as faulty as that of Heriot's was commendable. He believed Sir William Fettes intended his bequest for the benefit of the poor, irrespective of rank, sex, or locality. Criticism Fettes adminstr tion.

1884

"There are no exclusive words in the will," he said, when examined before the Commissioners in December 1883. "The will does not say, as Heriot's will did, that the children are to be children of burgesses; nor does it say, as Watson's will did, that they are to be connected with the Merchant Company. I apprehend there was no man living who knew better all about Edinburgh than Fettes did. He, I apprehend, said, 'All the world should have access to my Hospital. I will have nothing to do with burgesses, or the Merchant Company, or such, but with every person that comes under the description (1) either of children whose parents are unable to maintain and educate them, or (2) others whose parents are unable to educate them, without saying anything of maintenance.' I think that all these are eligible, and I will give an instance to illustrate the breadth of my view. I think that if a poor man lost his all by such a calamity as the City of Glasgow Bank, and that all was £100, he had just as good a right to benefit from this fund as a man who lost £10,000, if both were equally unable to educate their children."

But in the Fettes administration he saw that this equality of claim was not recognised; that the benefits of the foundation were strictly reserved for persons in the higher ranks of life; that while girls in all conditions of rank and circumstances were rigidly excluded, boys were admitted whose parents were not so destitute of means to educate their children as the description in the founder's will implies; that, moreover, the sons of the wealthiest parents, moving in the highest ranks of society, though paying fees for board and education, were as pupils admitted to the benefits of the scholarships and exhibitions and lodging accommodation, all provided out of the funds destined by the founder for the relief of the innocent victims of misfortune. He complained, too, of the constitution of the governing body; that indeed he regarded as the *fons et origo mali*. He believed that Fettes intended a board of manage-

ment somewhat similar to the Heriot Trust in its representative character and its open conduct of business. But he saw the powers of the Fettes Trust confined to a practically self-elected body, transacting its business in secret, unamenable to public opinion, and consequently extravagant in its administration and restrictive in the distribution of the benefits of the Hospital. Under an open and representative system of management the Heriot bequest had been so husbanded that in the course of years it had from an initial capital sum of £23,000 risen to a colossal fortune yielding an annual revenue of £24,000 or £25,000, maintaining a handsome Hospital and providing free education for 7000 boys and girls, and gathering a surplus in order to extend its free educational benefactions. Under a close and irresponsible system of management the Fettes original endowment of £166,000 (which between 1836 and 1881 had accumulated to upwards of £450,000, £227,664 having been spent on building, and £230,479 remaining otherwise invested) had been so administered that the net annual revenue was about £6400, while the number of foundationers was restricted to fifty. The former system as regards extent and numbers had produced the maximum of educational advantage with a steadily and rapidly increasing revenue; the latter the minimum of educational advantage, with a steadily declining annual revenue. Adhering to the fundamental doctrine of all his public life, "the greatest good of the greatest number," Mr. M'Laren as resolutely and fearlessly condemned the Fettes administration as he championed that of Heriot's; and in the years 1883 and 1884 he laboured most industriously, both by pen and speech, to show the tendencies and results of the two systems. He addressed to the Lord Provost, the Master of the Merchant Company, and the chairman of the Chamber of

1884

Results free and close systems compared.

1884

Commerce, as guardians of the well-being of the citizens, a series of five letters, afterwards published in pamphlet form,[1] containing a clear and telling exposure of how the rights of the poor had been seized for the benefit of the rich by the self-elected Fettes Trustees. His pleas for the restoration of the funds of the Hospital to its legitimate object, though warmly sympathised with by the public bodies to whose Presidents he addressed his letters, were not given effect to by the Commission, who were hampered in their suggestions of reform by the unsuitability of the costly college buildings for any other object than that for which the trustees had erected them. But he was not so disappointed with the failure of his attack on Fettes as with the failure of his defence of Heriot's; and he regarded the elucidation of facts as a necessary preliminary to the reconsideration of the whole question of the relation of the honest and industrious poor to the educational endowments of the city. So firm was his conviction that justice would ultimately prevail, and so near to his heart did he carry the interests of the people, that even the day before his death he referred to the subject, and expressed the belief that not many years would elapse before a popular demand would be made for a rectification of the unfair and unwise distribution of the heritage of the poor.[2]

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[1] "Fettes College Trustees and the Rights of the Citizens of Edinburgh," by Duncan McLaren, Esq. Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson, & Co.

[2] An incident characteristic of Mr. McLaren may here be mentioned. When it was proposed by some of the Heriot Governors that his bust should be placed in the Free Heriot Schools, he declined the intended honour, replying: "No; George Heriot did not leave his money to pay for busts of Duncan McLaren."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHURCH-RATES AND DISESTABLISHMENT.

1868

Leader of Scottish Nonconformists.

Mr. McLaren's public influence was not confined to the older Dissenting denominations. After the Disruption it gradually extended to the Free Church, and as his services, first as Lord Provost of Edinburgh, and afterwards as senior Member for the city, multiplied, it increased and strengthened. Indeed, on the withdrawal from Parliament in 1868 of his friend and political associate, Mr. Murray Dunlop, he was looked to by the Free Church majority as the most reliable of their political friends, and was acknowledged as the chief representative at Westminster of Scottish Nonconformity. His services in connection with the agitation for the abolition of Scottish "Ecclesiastical Assessments," or, as they should be styled in proper English phrase, Church-rates, were specially appreciated by Free Churchmen. Many of the most startling illustrations of the severity of the Church-rates grievance, contained in the effective speeches on this subject which he delivered at St. Stephens and at public meetings, were drawn from the experience of Free Churchmen, and they supplied a case for legislative reform which, from a Liberal point of view, was soon found to be unanswerable. In 1870 Mr. McLaren's bill for the abolition of the rates was rejected by 117 votes, 108 having voted for, and 225 against the second reading. But Liberals felt that moral victory lay with the Member

Church-rates.

1871 for Edinburgh; and the advantage thus gained was pressed home during the recess. In the following session the bill rejected in 1870 was reintroduced, and its second reading was proposed in a speech teeming with apt and telling illustrations of the wrong done to Dissenters, and the prejudice created against the Established Church by the operation of the existing law. Liberals who had voted for the abolition of Church-rates in England could not further withstand Mr. McLaren's arguments and statistics, and on this occasion the second reading was carried by 121 votes against 76. Lord Advocate Young then undertook to deal with the question on behalf of the Government. But other and more urgent work unfortunately interfered to prevent the fulfilment of his intention, and by the time Mr. McLaren was free to resume his independent individual efforts with any chance of success (for the Tory House elected in 1874 rejected the bill by 210 votes against 155 in 1876, and by 204 votes against 143 in 1877), the question of Disestablishment in Scotland had, or was supposed to have, entered the region of practical politics.

Disestablishment. For the raising of the larger question the Tory and Church party was responsible. As forty years previously the aggressive movement of the Establishment for church extension provoked the Voluntaries into active resistance and reprisals, so the Patronage Abolition Bill, promoted in the first session of the Tory Parliament, which lasted from 1874 to 1880, was resented by many Liberals as a measure intended to "dish the Free Church," and was met by a counter-demand for disestablishment, in which, for the first time in its history, the Free Church took a part. Mr. McLaren was highly gratified by this development of Scottish Nonconformist policy; and to give it free scope, and in order to let the extension and strength of the now united Nonconformist party be concen-

trated on the one object which embraced the whole Nonconformist claim, he withdrew his Church-Rates Abolition Bill. Mr. McLaren always maintained that the Church, if freed from the disadvantages associated with State establishment and endowment, and from the prejudice against it which this association fostered, would grow in prosperity and efficiency; and it was on the ground of direct advantage to the Church as well as to the community that he advocated the abolition of the Annuity-tax and Church-rates. The prosperity enjoyed by the Establishment in Edinburgh after 1870 was accepted by him as confirmatory of the lessons taught by the experience of the earlier Dissenting communions and of the Free Church—that compulsory maintenance was inconsistent with the genius of Christianity, and that State aid was a hindrance rather than a help to church work; and he hoped that this evidence of the advantages of freedom from reproach would operate on the minds of Churchmen themselves and materially assist the new Disestablishment movement. But he never surrendered his Voluntary principles. On the contrary, he gloried in them, as the foundation of his own political creed and of genuine Liberalism. He warmly supported in and out of Parliament Mr. Gladstone's resolutions of 1867 for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church, and the great legislative measure which he founded upon those resolutions after the general election of 1868. He was the vigilant defender of Nonconformist interests and claims in connection with minor questions as they emerged in Parliament, such as the appointment of chaplains, the arrangements for the census, the compilation of parliamentary returns, and the termination of State endowments in the British Dependencies. In his intimacy with Mr. Miall, whose Disestablishment resolution in the House of Commons

1872

Mr. McLaren's attitude.

A consistent Voluntary.

1873 he seconded in 1873,[1] his connection with the Liberation Society, and his entertainment at Newington House of English Dissenters during political visits to Edinburgh, he had repeatedly made public proclamation of his Voluntary faith, and given unmistakable proof of his fidelity to the convictions which inspired his first public work as chairman of the Central Board of Dissenters. As earlier chapters of this work testify, his political life had been one of constant conflict against Church Establishments in the root and in the branch, and it is unnecessary here to recapitulate the details of this strife. When, therefore, Disestablishment in Scotland was raised as a practical parliamentary question, he had nothing to conceal and nothing to explain. He was utterly free from the temptation to mystification or evasion

[1] When the English Nonconformists began their Liberation campaign in Scotland, they turned to Mr. McLaren as their chief ally. Mr. Miall, then their spokesman and afterwards their parliamentary leader, sent the following letter:—

BRITISH ANTI-STATE CHURCH ASSOCIATION,
12 WARWICK SQUARE, PATERNOSTER ROW,
LONDON, *October* 5, 1846.

DEAR SIR,—The Executive Committee have resolved upon sending a deputation into some of the more important towns of Scotland before the close of the present year, to awaken public attention to the objects and claims of this Association, and to the importance of diffusing as widely as possible a knowledge of the principles, in prospect of the probable movements of the Legislature in favour of a modified extension of Church Establishments. They have directed me to apprise you of the resolution, and to request your co-operation in carrying it into effect. Perhaps you would favour them, as early as you can make it convenient, with your notions of the following points:—(1.) The towns which it will be most important that a deputation should visit, and the order in which it would be most convenient for them to be taken. (2.) The period of time towards the close of the year which will be freest from local engagements or customary visitations from other societies. (3.) The names of gentlemen attached to this Association who might be acceptably received by Scottish Nonconformists as a deputation.—I am, dear sir, yours respectfully,

EDWARD MIALL.

to which many Liberal Members and candidates at the election of 1880 weakly yielded, under the supposed necessity of retaining Nonconformist support without alienating Liberal Churchmen. He had been elected Member of Parliament for Edinburgh, as a Voluntary; as a Voluntary he had been known in the House of Commons; and as a Voluntary seeking for Disestablishment at the earliest possible moment he wished still to be known to all his constituents. He desired and advocated the formal inclusion of Disestablishment in the platform of the Liberal party. When Mr. Gladstone's "Authorised Programme" appeared during the general election of 1885, he was surprised and disappointed at its evasion of this question; and his influence was thrown into the scale with those candidates in Scotland who were regarded as the exponents of Mr. Chamberlain's "Unauthorised Programme." Fearlessly and unhesitatingly he identified himself with the new movement, in which he was proud to see that Free Churchmen, recognising him as a political leader, were as energetic and resolute supporters as his old Dissenting friends. 1877

"I need make no confession of faith on the subject," he wrote to the chairman of a meeting held in Edinburgh in 1877; "for forty years ago I attended a public breakfast in the Waterloo Rooms in support of the Voluntary principle, and subsequently thereafter I had the honour of taking part in a public meeting in this city by moving that the late Mr. Douglas of Cavers should take the chair. I suppose I was asked to do so because I was one of the Magistrates of Edinburgh at both periods. As to Disestablishment apart from the abstract Voluntary principle, I am equally in favour of it, and showed my opinion on the last occasion when my friend Mr. Miall moved the question in the House of Commons, when I seconded his motion by request, and spoke in its favour. I may add that, as regards Disestablishment in Scotland, I am of opinion that when it takes place, the funds

1886 now given to the Church should be devoted to education as a substitute for the school-rates now levied in every parish. To prevent misconception in any quarter, I think it right to explain that I would not desire to deprive any existing minister of the Church of Scotland of any advantage which he now enjoys from stipend or manse, or in any other way."

The time has not yet arrived when the history of the elections of 1885 in Scotland can be written; but it is sufficient to remind the reader that they resulted in the defeat of the Radical Disestablishment candidates through the union of the Tory party with the more reactionary Liberals, such as Mr. Goschen and Mr. Finlay, who were then supported by Mr. Gladstone. Their political alliance with Mr. Gladstone, however, was of very short duration; and their general attitude towards thoroughgoing Liberal legislation amply justified Mr. McLaren's opinion, that unless a man were sound on Disestablishment his Radicalism could not be of a robust type.

Mr. McLaren's last public meeting.

From this time to his death he never missed any opportunity which presented itself of advocating in public, and more especially before his fellow-citizens, complete Disestablishment and Disendowment (subject always to the preservation of the life-interests of the ministers), as an urgent political question, whose settlement could not longer be delayed without detriment to Church and State. The last public meeting he attended was one in favour of Disestablishment, held in the Synod Hall on 15th March 1886, as the Scottish Nonconformists' answer to a bill promoted by Mr. Finlay, the Member for Inverness, which at that time excited public opinion in Scotland as an attempt, though a singularly abortive attempt, to weaken the Voluntary party by modifying, in the direction of comprehension, the powers and the constitution of the Established Church. When the

invitation to the meeting reached Newington House, Mr. M^cLaren was unwell, and the weather was unpropitious. But the veteran of eighty-six years (who had concealed his illness from Mrs. M^cLaren, then absent with friends in London), was unable to resist the summons. Physical weakness had not diminished his intellectual force or cooled the ardour of his political aspirations. He was heart and soul with the object of the meeting, and he longed to be with his friends to show his continued sympathy. Too easily he persuaded himself that he was quite capable of the exertion, and by the afternoon of the 15th of March he convinced himself he had not felt so well for many a day. He therefore decided to make one other public testimony of his Voluntary faith by presence, though not by speech; for he had from the first definitely declined a proposal that he should preside. He was welcomed most enthusiastically by the audience that filled the large building, and he was cheered more loudly still as he rose to nominate the chairman. Highly gratified by the earnestness of purpose shown by the meeting, and believing that the condition had been fulfilled on which he had predicted the early triumph of the Disestablishment movement—that the young men should "take part in the good work, and carry it on with vigour, and in the manner which was done in the old time"—he returned home. But in passing from the heated atmosphere of the crowded hall to his carriage Mr. M^cLaren caught a chill, though he refused to believe that he had suffered from the exposure. He had, however, rendered his last service as a Voluntary, but he had got a view of the Promised Land.

1886

Anticipation of success.

CHAPTER XXV.

RETIREMENT FROM PARLIAMENT.

1880

Parliamentary reputation.

When Mr. M°Laren entered Westminster to take his seat in the new Parliament elected in 1880, he was again welcomed by those who valued his incorruptibility of character, and devotion to the national service, and who felt that these were actual living influences, commanding the reverence and inspiring the enthusiasm of younger men. In spite of his burden of eighty years, his interest in politics was as keen as ever, and though a growing deafness unfitted him to some extent for participation in debate, his vigour remained unabated. He was, in truth, an embodiment of the Laureate's ideal of the statesman—

> "A life in civic action warm,
> A soul on highest mission bent,
> A potent voice of Parliament,
> A pillar steadfast in the storm."

And having given something like fifty years of service to the State, it was not to be wondered at if he felt much gratified that two of his sons were able to take their seats with him;—his eldest son John, who was elected for the Wigtown Burghs and became Lord Advocate, and his third son Charles, who was elected for Stafford.

The session proved for Mr. M°Laren a laborious one. As is shown in another chapter dealing with the Heriot Schools, very special demands were made upon his time and his

strength, and in addition to the extra burden of a serious conflict with the Government in regard to educational administration in Edinburgh, his correspondence became extremely heavy. He felt and confessed the pressure of his duties; and his "thorn in the flesh," his increasing deafness, frequently excited in his sensitive mind misgivings as to his power to maintain the standard of efficiency in service he had hitherto exacted from himself. Somewhat sadly he came to the conclusion that his parliamentary days were numbered. At the meeting with his constituents in December 1880, he had intimated that he did not intend, owing to his advanced age, to seek re-election, adding that if he should feel himself unable from impaired health properly to discharge his duties, he would resign his seat even before the expiration of the existing Parliament. An immediate resignation, however, was not expected. But in this case the unexpected happened. Two considerations came into play to suggest a withdrawal from public life. The first was of a public character. As explained in an earlier chapter, Mr. McLaren had in the session of 1880 succeeded in arresting reactionary legislation threatening the Heriot Trust and the Heriot Schools, and had obtained from Government promises which seemed to justify the conclusion that the popular constitution of the Heriot Trust would be maintained, and that the free schools would be preserved. A writer in the public press, who lamented Mr. McLaren's retirement, expressed his conviction that the "electorate would gladly have excused its senior representative, though he had relaxed the rules which regulated his public life, and had consented to take some of the ease which many younger and stronger Members claim without remorse of conscience," but added that he was "too conscientious and too sensitive to be contented with inefficient

1880

A heavy session.

Reasons for retiring.

1880 or partial service." Nevertheless he recognised a certain fitness in the time of the withdrawal. "His work is done," said the writer already quoted. "The Liberalism with which his name is identified is secure. All or nearly all the Scotch Members who support the Government are Liberals in the sense in which, through a long lifetime, he has always been a Liberal—defenders of popular rights and interests, and not self-seeking partisans. Further, the particular measure which, as Member for Edinburgh, and as the reformer of the Heriot Trust administration, he found himself called upon to resist last autumn, has this session been altered in conformity with the liberal principles for which he contended. So far as we are able to judge, the great and much-prized boon which Mr. McLaren years ago secured to his fellow-citizens in connection with the Heriot Trust is no longer endangered; and he therefore can retire from his parliamentary post with safety as regards the interests of his constituents, and with credit and honour as respects himself." Unfortunately the anticipation of the security of the Heriot Free Schools here expressed was not realised, but at the time Mr. McLaren was led to believe that the struggle was ended, and so the more easily did he reconcile himself to the termination of his parliamentary career.

The other consideration was more private in its nature. His eldest son had succeeded to the office of Lord Advocate, and therefore had to vacate his seat. Unfortunately a slight Tory reaction set in at the close of the general election, strengthened in the case of the Wigtown Burghs by the momentary unpopularity of Mr. Gladstone's appointment of Lord Ripon (then a recent secessionist to the Church of Rome) to the Viceroyalty of India; and the Lord Advocate, when he asked for re-election on his accession to office, was defeated by a small majority. Later in the year he

attempted the still more difficult seat of Berwick-on-Tweed, and was again defeated. The Lord Advocate attended to his duties with great assiduity, and discharged them with skill and ability. But an outcry was raised that Scottish interests could not secure the attention they deserved in the absence of the Lord Advocate from Parliament, and Mr. McLaren, who had himself in former years frequently urged the need for the constant presence of this official, keenly felt the position. A hope was entertained that Government would find some safe seat for their highest political Scotch functionary, but this hope was disappointed. When Parliament resumed in January 1881, Mr. McLaren knew that the Lord Advocate had sketched out for himself important legislative work, but continued absence from the House of Commons was, he was well aware, a fatal barrier in the way of the successful promotion of such legislation. In addition to this, there were other reasons, having reference to various contending interests, into which the present is not a suitable time to enter, that appealed with great force to that sense of justice which was the ruling power in Mr. McLaren's mind. But it may be said that on no other occasion was his adhesion to justice more severely tested, nor more faithfully acted upon. While painfully conscious that he laid himself open to the charge of inconsistency on the part of those not fully acquainted with the whole circumstances of the case, having always maintained the undesirability of Edinburgh being represented by a Government man, he felt called upon to put aside these considerations of self, and, as he believed, in the interest of justice resigned the position he so much prized. He therefore issued the following address to the electors of Edinburgh :—

1881

Lord Ad
cate Mc
ren.

1881 "I am thankful to say that I was able to attend in my place on the opening of Parliament, and daily since that time as the House met, and to vote in every division without inconvenience; but circumstances have unexpectedly occurred which seem to make it my duty now to place my resignation unreservedly in your hands, and accordingly I have this day applied for the Chiltern Hundreds.

"I beg to tender you my most grateful thanks for the confidence you have reposed in me during the last sixteen years, and for all the kindness that I have received at your hands. I cannot refrain from stating that I contemplate with much pain this step, which will sever the connection that has so long subsisted between you and myself.

"When you first elected me to represent you in Parliament, I promised that my efforts would be mainly directed to promote the interests of Scotland generally, and those of Edinburgh in particular; and I think no one of the 17,807 electors who so zealously and disinterestedly supported me at last election will question the fact that I have redeemed these pledges to the best of my ability."

It was not to be expected that Mr. McLaren could leave that House, the scene of so much interest, without a pang. He had not told any one in the House of his intended resignation, but on the last occasion of his presence there, when a division was being taken late in the evening, Mr. Seely, Member for Lincoln, who was nearly the same age as himself, noticing that he looked troubled and unwell, took his arm, and the two old friends went for the last time into the lobby together; the one little knowing the pain which the consciousness that it was his last act in that House was giving to the other.

The Lord Advocate offered himself as a candidate for the vacant seat, and the constituency, though deeply regretting their separation from Mr. McLaren, showed their appreciation of the spirit which prompted the self-sacrifice, and in

recognition of the acknowledged talents of the first officer of the Crown in Scotland, they placed him at the top of the poll by an overwhelming majority over Mr. Jenkins. 1881 Election of Lord Advoca

On bidding farewell to parliamentary life Mr. M^cLaren received an honour unprecedented in the history of the House of Commons. As his last election showed, he had triumphed over all factious opposition in the city of his adoption, and won for himself grateful recognition as the uniting and rallying centre of the different shades of Liberalism represented in the Scottish capital; so at Westminster a certain primacy among equals, due to his age, his services, and his character, was spontaneously conceded to him; and a ceremonial leave-taking was organised, chiefly on the initiation of Dr. Cameron, the senior Member for Glasgow, and Mr. Ramsay, Member for the Falkirk Burghs, as typical a Scotchman as Mr. M^cLaren himself. All the Scottish Members present in the House, with the single exception of the Prime Minister, the Member for Midlothian, signed the following address, and many English Members expressed their regret that they were not eligible to sign, as the presentation was intended to be purely Scottish:— Address from Scottish Members.

"*To Duncan M^cLaren, Esq., late Member of Parliament for the City of Edinburgh.*

"The undersigned Scotch Members of Parliament, of both political parties, desire to express their regret at the termination of your long and useful career in the House of Commons. They have had many opportunities of observing the assiduity and care with which you have performed your parliamentary duties, and of admiring the extent of your knowledge on all questions affecting Scotland, and they desire to express the hope that your life may be long spared to continue, out of Parliament, a career of public usefulness."

This address was beautifully inscribed on the title-page

1881 of an album containing the signatures of the Scottish Members, and the names of the constituencies they represented. At the top of the title-page is a beautifully executed drawing of the picturesque town of Edinburgh. In the foreground the Calton Hill stands prominently out, while in the distance Arthur's Seat and the Salisbury Crags are, with a due regard to perspective, clearly and accurately delineated. In the ornamental border surrounding the address is a medallion likeness of Mr. McLaren as Lord Provost of Edinburgh, while at the foot of the page is a coloured sketch of the Palace of Westminster and of the Thames flowing into the distance, designed with the object of showing Mr. McLaren's connection with Edinburgh and Westminster. The album itself was enclosed in a richly ornamented box of white Algerian onyx, displaying the arms of the city of Edinburgh in gold, and a chased gold plate bearing the words, "Presented to Duncan McLaren, Esq., late M.P. for Edinburgh, by the Scotch Members of the House of Commons on his retirement from Parliament, January 20, 1881."[1]

resenta-ion cere-ony. The presentation was made in one of the committee-rooms of the House of Commons on the 30th of March. Mr. McLaren, accompanied by his wife, his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Charles McLaren, his two sons then in Parliament, the Lord Advocate and Mr. Charles McLaren, and his two brothers-in-law, Mr. John Bright and Mr. Jacob Bright, entered the room, where was assembled a full and representative gathering of the Scottish Members. Mr. Gladstone was absent, but he was not unrepresented. Sir Lyon Playfair, then Member for the University of Edinburgh, and Chairman of Ways and Means, was chosen to

[1] This beautiful and appropriate gift was the workmanship of the well-known engravers and lithographers, Messrs. McClure & McDonald, Glasgow.

preside at the ceremony, and read the following letter from the Prime Minister :— 1881

10 Downing Street, Whitehall,
January 24, 1881.

Mr. Gladstone's letter.

Dear Mr. McLaren,—In conformity with the general rule, to which I am obliged pretty strictly to adhere, I have refrained from subscribing a document framed on behalf of the Scottish Members, but I cannot refrain from writing a few lines to state with what sincere regret I subscribed, according to my official duty, another document which opened the door for your exit from the House of Commons at a time when all the qualities you possess have so wide a field for employment in that assembly. Your ability, your application, your stout heart, your facility of clear exposition, will be long and well remembered by your parliamentary comrades; and your great courage in the discharge of laborious duty amidst advancing years will, I trust, have many admirers, even if few imitators. With every good wish for your serene and prolonged old age, I remain, dear Mr. McLaren, very faithfully yours, W. E. Gladstone.

The chairman then continued :—

"Gentlemen, the number of Members who are present with us indicates how much at heart they have the ceremony that is about to take place. I esteem it a high honour to be asked to present this testimonial in the names of the Scotch Members of Parliament. Mr. McLaren has the advantage of many of us in years, although, perhaps, he is not such an old parliamentary Member as some of those who are now present. I think, however, we will all agree that we never knew a Scotch representative who so entirely devoted himself to the duties of parliamentary life. (Cheers.) He never once forgot that he was the representative of our great Scottish metropolis; but he at the same time always remembered that he had even higher duties than those of a Scotch representative to perform, and he took an active interest in all the measures which promoted the social welfare of the people in all sections of the United Kingdom. (Cheers.) As to

1881 the personal qualifications which he brought to his work in the House of Commons, you all know how great they were. . . . From the experience which he had derived in his municipal and public life in Scotland, he brought an amount of exact knowledge, minute information upon public questions, a large experience both of Scotch and of general legislation, combined with varied qualifications, to the discharge of his parliamentary duties here, which enabled him, on all occasions in connection with Scotch interests, and on many other occasions on subjects of Imperial interest, to give the benefit of his exact knowledge and lengthened experience, either by private counsel or by general support in the House. . . . I may say that probably never has any testimonial to a man's political worth met with such universal approval or been so generally subscribed to by the representatives of the nation to which he belongs. (Cheers.) Every Scotch representative has signed this testimonial, saving only Mr. Gladstone, the most illustrious among all of the Scotch representatives, whose name is absent on account of official exigency. But the letter from the Premier which I have read will probably be kept in the casket, and cherished more dearly than the signature."

Alluding with pleasure to the presence of Mrs. McLaren, the chairman remarked, amid the cordial and sympathetic cheers of the company, that "all who have the honour of her friendship know with what affection she supported you, Mr. McLaren, in public and private life—a support which has been a source of admiration to all who have been privileged to witness it." In concluding he said: "Allow me now to offer you this testimony of our high esteem, and to accompany it with the wish that you may still have a long life to carry out those objects of public usefulness to which you are still devoted in our metropolis of the North. We hope that this memorial will convey to Mrs. McLaren the most grateful of all assurances to a loving wife, that her husband's character and worth are appreciated as they

ought to be. To you, and your family after you, may it prove a lasting assurance of the esteem in which you are held by your late parliamentary colleagues." 1881

Mr. M°Laren, speaking with considerable emotion, replied :—

Mr. M°L ren's rep

"Dr. Playfair and gentlemen, I know not how to thank you for this mark of your kindness. I feel that you have overestimated my services very much in what I have done; but I can say that I came to this House with the intense desire to do what was fair and right and honest to all men. My feelings and my judgment were strongly in favour of the Liberal party and Liberal politics, and I may say even my prejudices were in that direction; but I always endeavoured to act in a fair spirit to those who held different views from my own. The general course of my career in the House was to give Liberal votes, but on several occasions I felt myself compelled to give votes for my opponents in politics. I thank you very much for your kindness and for the personal politeness which I have met with on all occasions. I came to the House of Commons, I may say, unsupported by any prestige or any political party, for I got in by fighting and beating the dominant party at the time. (Cheers.) I had no aristocratic or other privilege. I can truly say that, from my earliest youth, I never had a patron of any kind. I am glad to think that so many Members of the House of Commons, during the sixteen years which I have been a Member, are willing to appreciate any services which I had an opportunity of rendering to my country, and of overlooking any faults which I am quite sure I must have committed on many occasions, for no man can assume that he is always right."

After shortly reviewing the different political events of his life in which he had participated, he said :—

"I need only add that I thank you with a full heart for this mark of your kindness and affection, which I am sure my family and those who come after me will appreciate more than anything

1881

which has ever happened in the course of my career. I am thankful to Providence that my life has been spared so long, and that it should have been crowned by this mark of your approbation. It is not easy for any one in my present position, with the many things that flow into the mind, to express himself adequately, and I feel that I have expressed myself very inadequately, for I am always more easily overcome by kindness than by opposition." (Loud cheers.) "But yet," he added, "I feel I can say that, with all the imperfections which have attended my career, I do not believe it was possible for anybody to be more desirous to act fairly, honestly, and truthfully than I have been."

n interruption.

The London correspondent of the Edinburgh *Daily Review*, who witnessed the presentation of the testimonial, described an incident which at once emphasised the remarkable tribute of respect paid by the Scottish Members and illustrated Mr. McLaren's fidelity to the call of duty. "The scene," said this eye-witness, "was unique and interesting, and it was interrupted in quite an amusing way. Mr. McLaren, who never erred much on the side of long speeches, at all events in the House of Commons, was drawing his brief and in some respects touching remarks to a close, when the division-bell rang, and a messenger, opening the door, according to parliamentary custom, shouted, 'Division.' The interruption was inopportune, but Mr. McLaren stopped suddenly, and urged that Members should hurry off at the call of duty. For a moment it seemed possible that there would be a general exodus; but not a man stirred, and Mr. McLaren was cordially invited to 'go on.'"

It is needless to say that this signal honour afforded the highest gratification to Mr. McLaren's family. In sending his congratulations from Keighley, his son Walter McLaren drew a parallel reviving old memories, on which his father loved to linger, and which greatly pleased him. "In your

speech," he wrote, "you referred to Lord Grey's banquet, at which so many prominent Liberals from all parts of Scotland were present to do him honour; and I thought what a striking resemblance there was between the banquet and your presentation, and yet what striking differences, according to the differences in Lord Grey's character and your own. The resemblance is plain, for he had all the well-known representative Liberal Scotchmen of the day round him, and you were surrounded by the representatives of every constituency in Scotland, which was a greater honour than Lord Grey received, for his friends were merely Liberals, but you have compelled the admiration of the Tories also. But the contrast is no less striking, for he, being a great peer, had a great banquet, with all the pomp that suited his office, but you received your honour in the much more congenial atmosphere of a committee-room of the House of Commons; and having been all your life a hard worker, who did your duty without any show, it was much more fitting that your presentation should be made in the quiet and business-like way which was adopted. . . . I have had many expressions of pleasure from my friends here in reference to the presentation, and all feel that, though there is no precedent for such an event in the House of Commons, the course taken by the Scotch Members is a well-deserved tribute to you." 1881

The press throughout Scotland was unanimous in its sympathy with this expression of esteem. The *Scotsman* wrote:— The verd of the press.

"Mr. McLaren had the confidence of all the Scottish Members, as one whose vigilance in regard to Scottish interests was of service to them all as well as to his country. Diligence such as he showed in the performance of his duties could not fail in approval. His constituents showed what they thought of it by

1882 the ever-increasing majorities they cast in his favour. So far as we remember, there is no man who fought a contest at the last general election whose majority was so decisive against his opponent and so convincing as to the opinion of his constituency as that by which Mr. McLaren was returned. The presentation on Wednesday shows that what the electors of Edinburgh thought of him in March 1880, the Scottish Members think of him now. . . . The address, the manner in which it had been got up, the presentation, the reply, were all calculated to enforce once more the old moral that he 'who is diligent in his business shall not be without the honour that is his due.' The closing words of Mr. Gladstone's letter will find an echo in Edinburgh as in all Scotland, where there will be but one wish—that Mr. McLaren may enjoy a serene and prolonged old age."

Presentation of portrait. Meanwhile a local tribute was being organised. Lord Provost Boyd called a meeting of citizens interested in public work, and proposed that Mr. McLaren's portrait should be secured for presentation to the Town Council, to be placed in the Council-chamber. The meeting was numerously and influentially attended, and the only difference of opinion which was expressed had reference to the confessed inadequacy of the proposed memorial. Mr. Hugh Rose and others suggested that a public statue or a bursary should be conjoined with the proposal for a presentation portrait, and expressed their conviction that the citizens generally would frankly and gratefully co-operate if some suitable memorial of Mr. McLaren's work and character were undertaken. The answer given to their suggestions was that the citizens fortunately had Mr. McLaren still with them, and that meanwhile the portrait for the Council-chamber was the tribute supposed to be most agreeable to his feelings. The presentation of the portrait, painted by Mr. Reid, R.S.A., took place on 31st January 1882, when the Council-hall was crowded with citizens, representing the municipality, the

learned professions, and the public and political life of the Scottish capital. Mr. M^cLaren was accompanied by Mrs. M^cLaren and various members of his family, and among the letters of apology for absence which were read was one from Lord Rosebery, who wrote:—"This ceremony, which places him (Mr. M^cLaren) among the worthies of Edinburgh, may be considered the crown, but not, I trust, the completion, of a long and honourable career, distinguished by an energy and a singular devotion, both as Provost and Member of Parliament, to the interests of your ancient city." The duty of presenting the portrait to the Corporation was intrusted to Mr. Josiah Livingston, then Master of the Merchant Company, who recited the chief facts and events of Mr. M^cLaren's fifty years of service to the city; and unveiling the portrait, exclaimed with genuine pride and appreciation, "There is the likeness of an honest man, the likeness of a good citizen, the likeness of a man of great abilities, who laboriously exerted them for the good of his fellow-men,—the likeness of a man who under all conditions of life has done his duty." 1882

Lord Provost Boyd, in accepting the gift on behalf of the Corporation, said, "The unanimous and cordial manner in which the Town Council at their last meeting agreed to receive this portrait to adorn the hall in which their deliberations are held, and in which Mr. M^cLaren in days gone by played so distinguished a part, is a sufficient proof of the value in which they hold what he has done; and for myself I may add, that I consider I have been fortunate in occupying the position of Lord Provost when such a well-merited public tribute of respect has been paid to our friend."

Mr. M^cLaren in a brief speech cordially thanked the contributors, and expressed his appreciation of the honour which had been conferred upon him, noticing with satis- Mr. M^cLaren's reply

1882 faction the fact that men of every political party were present, and he referred especially to Mr. Macdonald, then Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, afterwards Lord Advocate in Lord Salisbury's Government, and now Lord Justice-Clerk. Mr. Macdonald had twice on behalf of his party stood as a candidate for the representation of the city, and adverting to these contests, Mr. McLaren good-humouredly remarked, "I daresay he will excuse me for saying we did not fight with any degree of acrimony, but more with the gloves than the fists"—an observation to which Mr. Macdonald afterwards made rejoinder, that notwithstanding the gloves, he felt the blows were extremely hard, and he was glad that he would never have to respond to the call of "time" again to face such an opponent as Mr. McLaren. Not egotistically, but with a serene satisfaction and enjoyment justifiable and beautiful in old age, Mr. McLaren recalled several incidents of his public career, and more especially his introduction to public life in that very room in which his portrait had that day been placed by his fellow-citizens.

Reminiscences.

"Here," he said, "I first learned to take any part in what may be called public business. I was associated with many able and excellent men who were returned at the first reformed Town Council. I remember them pictorially in my mind, most of them, and I think with great pleasure of having co-operated with them. Here (pointing to portraits on the wall of the chamber) are two worthies of that time—Sir James Spittal, the first Lord Provost, and Mr. Adam Black. Well do I remember that Mr. Black and I sat side by side for several years, and that I benefited, I am happy to say, very much by his kindness. He was greatly my senior in years and still more in experience of all public affairs. We always acted together in Town Council matters, and I am pleased to have an opportunity now of saying how much I respected him, and how much I was indebted to him on many occasions for

his wise counsel. I should be pleased just to think that my portrait should be in the same apartment with that most valued citizen, and that it will be a sort of ideal continuation of the friendship and respect which I felt for him. In later years, though we differed on certain political questions, I never lost for him that respect; and I have reason to believe that he entertained kindly feelings towards myself." 1882

"The room," writes an eye-witness, "was crowded, and beautifully decorated with flowers. Every one looked as though his heart were thoroughly in the occasion. Looks of love and of homage and of deepest pleasure fell from all eyes on the faithful warrior who had fought so many of their battles, heedless whether praise or blame fell upon himself. One felt that a deep, thorough appreciation of the man on whom this honour was to be bestowed was entertained by all, and that it was no ordinary tribute of affection that was being paid. Mr. Livingston spoke well, and the portrait was unveiled as he spoke. I never saw Mr. M'Laren look better; it must have brought solemn thoughts to a matured mind like his thus to see himself, and, as it were, his past life, pictorially represented, to be looked upon and his memory recalled by men and women yet unborn in the city so dear to his heart."

Though now in his eighty-third year, Mr. M'Laren was in the enjoyment of excellent health, and interested himself as keenly and as closely in public questions as at any period of his life. Before bidding good-bye to his friends in the Council-chamber he expressed a grateful consciousness of what he owed to Providence for the blessing of health and strength still vouchsafed to him. "I feel," he said, "now that Parliament is approaching, a little like the old war-horse, 'snuffing the battle from afar;' and although I cannot be present, I have the feeling—thank God for His

1883

goodness to me—that I should be quite able to set off to-morrow." But while he had these pleasurable associations with the past, he often spoke of the happiness he enjoyed in the years of comparative repose which followed the termination of his parliamentary career. Yet his presence in the House was sorely missed by Liberals throughout Scotland when such important questions as Disestablishment, Educational Endowments, the reform of the arrangements for the government of Scotland, and the Crofters' grievances were discussed.

A busy parliamentary recess.

But though absent from Westminster, Mr. McLaren was not idle. He continued to take part in public affairs. The period of his retirement became one continued parliamentary "recess" in the meaning in which in these days of superlative political activity the term has come to be regarded by earnest-minded politicians—a period during which freedom from the drudgery of parliamentary attendance gives enlarged opportunities for educational political work among the constituencies. Mr. McLaren made full use of this freedom. His library was his watch-tower and his workshop. In it he read the newspapers and studied blue-books with as much diligence as when he was a Member of the House of Commons; and he maintained a large correspondence with Reformers in every part of the United Kingdom, but in Scotland chiefly with those who were carrying on the war against privilege, in which at different times he had taken a leading part. How vigorously he fought the battle of the poorer citizens in connection with the Heriot Free Schools is elsewhere described. Disappointed with the part the School Board had played in the controversy, he watched its management with a keenly critical eye, and advocated again, as he had previously done, the abolition of the cumulative vote in the

triennial elections, with the view of liberating the Boards from sectarian control and placing them more in touch with the opinions of the general body of the ratepayers. Municipal administration, too, felt the healthful influence of his vigilance, and the reforming party in the Parochial Boards, more especially the lady members, were encouraged by the knowledge that his sympathy and advice were always at their command. 1884

Although he had given up attending large public meetings, he occasionally broke through this needful rule. When the citizens met to support Mr. Gladstone's proposals for the reform of the procedure of the House of Commons, he was amongst them. His sympathy with the Crofters also brought him again to the front; but the most noteworthy meeting he attended was the one convened by the citizens in the Free Assembly Hall in defence of the Heriot Free Schools in 1884. The Lord Provost presided, and Mr. McLaren, who spoke with much of his old vigour, was received with the greatest enthusiasm by the vast audience; and as he left the hall shortly before the close of the meeting, the whole audience rose, and he felt that the ovation then accorded to him exceeded in affectionate warmth and earnestness anything which he had ever received.

The last act of his life in London, on the occasion of a visit there in 1884, was when, after a rather severe illness with which he had been there overtaken, he spent the afternoon before his departure for Edinburgh at Barn Elms, an interesting and historic house on the Thames, and at that time the residence of his son Charles, who had invited Inspector Denning and the police usually in attendance at the House of Commons, with their wives and families, to an entertainment in the grounds. His well-remembered face was cordially welcomed by those to whom it had long been

The parliamentary police.

1884 so familiar in the precincts of St. Stephens; and the pleasure to him was equally great. At the request of Inspector Denning, he spoke a few friendly words to those who were present, dwelling on the kind attentions he had always received from the men, even in the smallest matters, and remarking that small services were apt to linger in the mind of the recipient long after more important ones had passed away.

His life's battle was drawing to a close. Like all who have to contend with opposing forces, he had developed those unflinching qualities of mind which characterise the reformer. But while consistent to the last, and steadfast in his adherence to the causes he advocated, he emerged from the various conflicts he sustained with a character serene and strengthened, wise, far-sighted, moderate, and just. Thus, in the concluding years of his life he judged old opponents most charitably, and sought only to remember the good they did, thinking and speaking more of their points of agreement with, than their causes of difference from him. The "valiant will to smite the wrong" remained with him to the last, but the "simple faith and truth," the "wisdom deep and calm," which are so beautiful in old age, were his. He frequently spoke with admiration of the serenity of temperament which so well befits declining years, and sometimes alluded to his old and esteemed friend Charles Cowan of Logan House as an example of this. The virtue which he beheld in this honourable representative of an honourable family was by them seen and admired in himself. Referring to this period of Mr. McLaren's life, Mr. John Cowan of Beeslack wrote: "Of late years I have loved to look on his calm and beautiful countenance, so full, as it ever seemed, of rest and peace." Yet these years were not free from disappointments. The abolition of the Heriot Free

Schools was, as we have seen, a specially heavy blow. But as the great electoral reforms of 1884 advanced towards their completion, as he observed the peaceable conduct of the people in their imposing demonstrations, and saw in their use of the franchise in 1885 wisdom abiding with power, his trust in the future ever increased. With confidence and gratitude he descried "above the hill-tops of time the glimmerings of the dawn of a better and a nobler day for the country and the people he loved so well."

1884

The better day.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IRELAND AND HOME RULE.

1835

Mr. M'Laren's attitude to Ireland and the Irish question was that of the Constitutional Reformer. He deprecated violent agitation, and wished to take away all excuse for it by the enactment of just laws. That was the keystone of his position during fifty years of his public life.

He was very early convinced of the need of reforms in the administration of Ireland; but a Unionist—not merely in the party sense in which that term has lately been employed, but on broad imperial grounds—he was not free from suspicion of disloyal motives on the part of the earlier Irish agitators; and a Constitutionalist, he was strongly opposed to illegal or violent methods of demonstration. Hence, in spite of his own Liberal and reforming sympathies, he kept aloof from O'Connell. When the great Irish orator visited Edinburgh in 1835, Mr. M'Laren was invited to take part in the welcome prepared for him. Mr. W. Tait, the publisher of *Tait's Magazine*, wrote: "May I propose your being added to the O'Connell Committee? From the persons who have purchased tickets, I can see that the company is to be a highly respectable one, and far from being exclusively Radical." The reply sent next day was as follows:—

O'Connell.

Edinburgh, *September* 11, 1835.

Dear Sir,—I am favoured with your note requesting to know whether you may propose to add me to the O'Connell Committee.

In answer I beg to say (although you may think me politically intolerant) that I cannot conscientiously approve of Mr. O'Connell's public life, and therefore do not intend being present at the dinner. Having heard objections stated to his religious creed, I think it right to say that, if I had approved of his conduct in the main, the circumstance of his being a Roman Catholic would have been an inducement for me to attend the dinner to show that I did not approve of the principle of estimating the worth of a public man by his religious belief, which ought, in my humble opinion, to be a matter entirely between him and his Maker.—I am, dear sir, yours very truly, D. McLaren. 1835

W. Tait, Esq.

In contradistinction to this repellent attitude towards the Nationalist party, and as an illustration of the kindlier aspect of his relation towards Ireland and Irishmen, another letter, written thirty-seven years afterwards to Mr. McCarthy Downing, may here be introduced:—

Newington House, Edinburgh,
November 15, 1872.

My dear Sir,—It was with deep regret I heard of the death of our friend Mr. Maguire, M.P. for Cork; for although, as you are aware, I differed from him in some matters of great importance, I always admired his talents and genial courteous manners, and was especially delighted with the deep interest he took in all questions tending to elevate the sphere of women, and to procure for them, in the medical and other walks of life, equal rights with men. While he was engaged writing his book on "The Next Generation," he applied to me for information respecting the contest going on in this city to enable ladies to get the benefit of a university medical education; and he appeared to be much interested in the information I was able to send him on the subject. I see there is to be a subscription got up to express the great respect in which Mr. Maguire was held by the country at large, and as an expression of deep sympathy with his bereaved wife and family; and I trust the remembrance

The Maguire testimonial.

1866 of his many virtues will call forth a generous response. Not knowing anything of the arrangements for collecting the fund, I take the liberty of sending to your care a subscription of £10 from my wife and myself. I may state that my wife had met Mr. Maguire, and sympathised with his views on all women's questions, and admired his public character as much as I did, and she has written to some of her friends in London calling attention to the loss the cause of progress has sustained by his death, and suggesting that subscriptions in aid of the fund should be sent by them to your care.—I am, my dear sir, yours very truly, DUNCAN McLAREN.

Mr. McCarthy Downing, M.P., Prospect House,
Skibbereen, co. Cork.

Mr. McLaren was a well-wisher of Ireland, but he had no faith in "coddling" treatment. He sturdily resisted every attempt to purchase her good-will by the multiplication and enlargement of Treasury grants. He consistently and fearlessly objected to any special favour shown her in the Civil Service votes, and incurred no little odium by his statistical analyses, which showed that in respect of law and justice, poor-law and police administration, national education, public parks, fisheries, &c., Ireland received more than her fair share of the imperial revenue. But when political or social redress was claimed by the Nationalists by constitutional methods, he was, while in Parliament, one of their most trusted and valuable allies. The first vote he gave as a member of Parliament was for justice to Ireland. At the opening of the session of 1866 The O'Donoghue moved an amendment on the Address to this effect:—"To express our deep regret that great disaffection exists in Ireland, and humbly to represent to Her Majesty that this widespread disaffection is the result of grave causes which it is the duty of Her Majesty's Ministers to examine into and remove." Mr.

The first vote.

McLaren was one of a minority of 25 who voted for the amendment, while 346 voted against it. Along with him in the minority were John Bright, George Hadfield, John Stuart Mill, and T. B. Potter, the other supporters of the amendment being Irish members.[1] 1866

His early association with The O'Donoghue and his friends had exposed him to some injurious comment. He was even spoken of as an aider and abettor of Fenianism, and he was violently attacked by his political opponents in Scotland for this act; but such attacks did not disturb him. Speaking to his constituents at the close of the session in reference to this vote, he said, "If the same question were to arise to-morrow, I would give the same vote with the utmost confidence. . . . I think no man living could say I did it from political or party motives." In pursuance of this policy, he also, towards the close of the session, voted for an amendment moved by Mr. Maguire to the second reading of a bill for suspending the Habeas Corpus, to the effect "that measures of repression, unaccompanied with measures of a remedial character, tend rather to aggravate than to lessen those evils in which perennial discontent and periodical disaffection have their origin in Ireland; and that a wise, generous, and thoroughly liberal policy is that which is alone calculated to promote the material prosperity and contentment of the Irish people,

[1] Mr. John Stuart Mill, in his "Autobiography," page 237, refers to this. He says:—"The same idea, that the use of my being in Parliament was to do work which others were not able or not willing to do, made me think it my duty to come to the front in defence of Advanced Liberalism on occasions when the obloquy to be encountered was such as most of the Advanced Liberals in the House preferred not to incur. My first vote in the House was in support of an amendment in favour of Ireland, moved by an Irish Member, and for which only five English and Scotch votes were given, including my own: the other four were Mr. Bright, Mr. McLaren, Mr. T. B. Potter, and Mr. Hadfield."

1880 while adding to the strength and enhancing the moral dignity of the Empire."

At a later period, viz., December 1871, speaking of these votes, Mr. McLaren said, "I have always voted for Liberal measures in regard to Ireland. I have been more Irish in that respect than some of the Irish Members themselves, for the first vote I ever gave in Parliament was for an amendment to the Queen's Speech in favour of doing justice to Ireland. There were only five English Members in the minority, of whom I was one, and above 300 members of the House voted on the other side. For doing that, I was represented in certain quarters as a Fenian; but I held the principle that until you tried to remove the wrongs of Ireland you had no right to coerce Ireland, and therefore I voted so far as I could to give Ireland the same liberty which England and Scotland have."

In the last speech he delivered to his constituents as Member for the city (December 1880), Mr. McLaren reiterated the doctrine that conciliatory measures ought to accompany special legislation for the enforcement of the law; and he gave his approval in advance to a scheme of land-law legislation, then attributed to Mr. Gladstone, based on the principle of the three F's—fixity of tenure, fair rents, and free sale of the tenant's interest. "I think," he said, "with the eminent talents of Mr. Gladstone and his great experience, that if any bill of this kind was prepared by him to be pressed through Parliament, it would meet with great sympathy from honest men of all classes in this country."

Land reform.

Mr. McLaren was also in advance of his party in the advocacy of the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, and he heartily supported the various bills and resolutions proposed for the assimilation of the municipal and parliamentary

Disestablishment and franchise equalisation.

franchises in Ireland to those in operation in England and Scotland prior to 1884. When the great and latest Reform Bill was proposed by Mr. Gladstone, he cordially approved of the Prime Minister's insistance on the inclusion of Ireland in the scheme, and the equalisation of the franchises and electoral conditions of the three kingdoms. He likewise supported the demand for the closing of public-houses in Ireland on Sundays when it was made by the Irish members and the Irish people; and in his address to his constituents in 1871 he even went so far as to say, "I would deprecate any separation whatever of the nationalities. But if it could be shown that Home Rule for Ireland would be practicable, and that it would please the Irish people, I would be quite agreeable that the Irish people should have Home Rule." [1] 1883

Distrust of the Nationalists.

But events occurred between 1871 and 1884 which pained and disappointed him, such as the lack of appreciation on the part of the Irish Members of the efforts made by the Liberal party on behalf of Ireland, and their insulting and contumacious treatment of Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright, and their Ministerial colleagues who took charge of the Irish departments of the Government. With the most honest and firm resolution to deal justly and generously by the Irish people, he deeply regretted the apparent irreconcilability of the Nationalists, and more especially their refusal publicly to disavow any connection with the American agitators in the midst of the dynamite conspiracies, even after the assassination of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke through the agency of the secret society of Invincibles. But

[1] It is quite certain that in this passage Mr. McLaren was not referring to an Irish Parliament. The Irish Home Rule party at this time had not defined "Home Rule," and the expression was understood by many to mean a large extension of local self-government.

1885 he never had much confidence in Mr. Parnell and the new school of Irish politicians as guides of the Irish people.

Mr. Gladstone's precipitancy. When Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule policy was suddenly launched upon the country, the Prime Minister's precipitancy he thought worse than a blunder; he resented it as a fatal stroke at party cohesion, as a virtual assumption of political autocracy or dictatorship. He did not deny that fresh urgency had been given to the Home Rule question by the return of 85 Home Rule Members from Ireland, and he was much impressed by the significance of the strength of the Ulster vote in favour of Mr. Parnell's policy. But he held that the majority given to Mr. Gladstone at the general election which took place in the autumn of 1885 was not commissioned to deal with the question of Home Rule, and that while Mr. Gladstone would have been perfectly justified in entering into negotiations with Mr. Parnell with a view to a just and leisurely consideration of the whole subject in anticipation of needful future legislation, he ought meantime to have made some attempt to carry at least part of the domestic reforms which were confessedly overdue for England and Scotland, and ought certainly to have consulted his party before he set aside "the authorised programme."

Opposition to new policy. Thus it was that, viewing with distrust the aims and objects of the Nationalist leaders, and resenting also Mr. Gladstone's method of procedure, Mr. McLaren found himself in hostility to the new policy. Recalling the special advantages enjoyed by Ireland from the British Treasury, engaged also at the time in historical studies which led him to the conclusion that the suppression of the Scottish Parliament had proved a great benefit to the country, the more he thought of the new policy the more strongly did he become convinced of its unwisdom and danger. From the

point of view of a Scottish Liberal keenly concerned for the accomplishment of various reforms affecting the social and moral welfare of the people, he recognised the loss involved in the disruption of the Liberal party. But regard for party advantage and for the immediate interests of reforms dear to his heart could not shut his eyes to the terrible evils—the intensification of social disorder and the outbreak of civil war—which he thought were involved in the new Home Rule policy. 1886

Mr. Childers' candidature.

The unexpected occurrence of a parliamentary election in the Southern Division of Edinburgh by the sudden death of Sir George Harrison in January 1886 compelled Mr. McLaren, as an elector in the constituency, to make a public declaration of his views earlier, perhaps, than he would otherwise have done. Mr. Childers was nominated as a candidate; but while Mr. McLaren held the right hon. gentleman in high esteem, alike for his personal character and his administrative talents, he was not at the time prepared to support his candidature, partly because he desired a Member who would support Disestablishment, but mainly from a wish to keep himself and the electorate uncommitted to Mr. Gladstone's Irish Home Rule policy, at that time as yet only imperfectly explained. Mr. David McLaren wrote him from London on the subject, expressing grave doubts as to the wisdom of the Prime Minister's scheme, and urging his friend once more, in the interest of various Scotch questions which had been put in the background during the general election of 1885, and also with the view of trying to save both the Liberal party and Ireland from the disastrous course on which he feared Mr. Gladstone was entering, to undertake parliamentary service as one of the representatives of Edinburgh.

Mr. McLaren, in his reply to his old friend, dated Feb-

1886

ruary 5th, frankly and clearly expressed his own apprehensions and misgivings, but quietly and firmly put aside the call to re-enter Parliament. He wrote:—

tter to r. David cLaren.

"As things have appeared since your letter was written, and in particular since Gladstone's address has appeared, the idea of an Irish Parliament and its command of the armed police is put in abeyance in the meantime. They do not appear on the face of the address, but I have a suspicion that they may be concealed under a multitude of vague words, and may appear in full force some day. However, one can't fairly go on *suspicion* alone.

"As to Mr. Childers, he and his wife called on me as an old parliamentary and political friend. I was out, but they saw my wife. They were aware before they called that I was opposed to any Whig Government man, for I had stated this at a meeting, and some one had told this to Mr. Childers.

"Next day, as a matter of courtesy, I called on them, and, to prevent any misapprehension, the first thing I said was that I was an opponent of his for the reason above stated. He said he was aware of my views, but thought it right to call notwithstanding. We talked about several things, and I said I was glad to understand from his reported speech, although it was not very explicit, that he was opposed to an Irish Parliament with the charge of the armed force of constabulary. He said he was *entirely opposed to such a thing.* I told him how strongly I felt on the subject; he *seemed* to agree with me.

n Irish arliament nd con- abulary ntrol.

"You would see that Mr. Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Trevelyan both spoke very strongly against these things, and yet they are now members of the Government, and also Mr. Chamberlain. With my practice through life of calling a spade a spade, I cannot reconcile these things without assuming that Gladstone has told them all that he will not propose this kind of Home Rule. However, I am still by no means satisfied that an Irish Parliament will not be proposed with plausible guarantees so-called, which would be swept away in a short time, and separation or civil war, or both, be the result.

"Of course in such a case, if I were still preserved in health and strength such as I now have, I would do all I could to get some younger and more suitable man, such as yourself, to come forward, and support him by my vote and any influence which I might have, which I fear is not nearly so great as you suppose; for remember it is fifty-three years since I entered the Town Council, and forty-eight years since I got the city affairs settled, and thirty-five years since I was elected Lord Provost, so that the present generation of active men who *now* move in political matters are to an enormous extent men 'who know not Joseph.'" 1886

Subsequent events quickly showed that Mr. McLaren's apprehensions as to the final shape of the Ministerial proposals were well founded, because, in the fuller and more authoritative explanations of the new Home Rule policy, it was made unmistakably clear that the fundamental and vital principle of the Ministerial plan was the concession to Ireland of an independent local Parliament sitting in Dublin, deriving its power from the Imperial Parliament, and in that sense only subordinate to it. Mr. McLaren was greatly disappointed and depressed. He did not readily abandon hope of the discovery of a *via media* which would save the Liberal party from ruinous division. Soon after this his health gave way, but from his sick-chamber he appealed to his most trusted political friend, John Bright, who, perplexed and distressed, was keeping silence when the country was looking to him for guidance. On the 11th April, only a fortnight before his death, he dictated a long letter to his brother-in-law, which he described as "a few rough notes as to what may be called the three kingdoms' part of the question," adding that he was physically unable to write letters with his own hand, and that his dear wife had kindly acted as his amanuensis. "I wish," he said, "I could converse with you for an hour about the details of the bill, or rather *plan;* but this cannot be." In part explana-

No middl way visibl

Letter to Mr. Brigh

1886 tion of his own views, he enclosed an article from the *Scotsman*, to which he said, "I could conscientiously subscribe, with very trivial exceptions as regards details." He proceeded :—

"But to my main point—the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, which it is now practically proposed to dissever; at least it is proposed to take steps at present which, according to all human probability, will either lead to separation in a complete form or civil war. Gladstone admitted the other day, in answer to your colleague Mr. Chamberlain, that he had made a great mistake regarding the separation of the American United States, and if he lives to my age, I have no doubt he will equally manfully admit that he made a still greater mistake about the separation of the United Kingdoms. . . .

The Liberal majority.

"Is it necessary to legislate in such a way as to require the exclusion of the Irish Members from Westminster? I say, *No;* and I think it the most revolutionary proposal ever made in Parliament during the present century, and one which would do incalculable evil to all parts of the Empire. The first rough consequence would be a great diminution permanently of the Liberal party in Westminster. At present Ireland sends 17 Tories and 86 Liberals of various sorts. Supposing Ireland, when it recovers from its delirium at the last election, were to send 23 Tories and 80 Liberals, the majority of Liberals who would be expelled from Westminster would be 57, which would greatly affect the whole future legislation at Westminster.

"Again, I understand from Gladstone's speeches and those of his party that he is prepared to apply the same principles by giving Scotland a separate Parliament, with equal powers to that of Ireland. This, I think, would be a great calamity for Scotland; and if I had the health and strength which I possessed in Anti-Corn-Law times, I would be prepared to do what you and other noble patriots did, and to do what our ancestors used to call 'to testify' against the proposed injustice.

"To pursue the Irish parallel:—Scotland now returns 12 Tories and 60 Liberals. But suppose in future years circum-

stances and opinions might enable the Tory party to return 18 Members, this would leave 54 for the Liberal party. But if you expel the Scotch Members from Westminster, the Liberal party would permanently lose a majority of 36 Members. This number added to the Irish majority would take permanently from the Westminster Parliament a Liberal majority of 93, and leave the Tories of England in what would be called the Imperial Parliament to ride rough-shod as far as they legally could not only over Ireland and Scotland, but over all the colonies and dependencies of the now United Kingdom. It might be called the Imperial Parliament, but it would only be the Parliament of England as a matter of fact. 1886

"And why should it have the exclusive control over all the colonies and dependencies of the present three kingdoms? Take the case of India for example. It used to be said of the Directors of the Bank of England that they would never admit a Scotchman as a member of their Board, and it was said at the same time that the Directors of the East India Company would never admit an Englishman on their Board. Now it was this Scotch Board that had the merit, as it is generally said, of conquering and annexing to the United Kingdom a large part of our present Indian Empire; and as the individual members had the power of nominating officers, that body was largely composed of Scotchmen, and many of the most important victories gained were won by armies commanded by officers of Irish and Scottish families. Now I don't mention this by way of approval, for I hold that very many of their proceedings were unjust on the grounds of morality and religion. But I narrate the facts merely as laying a solid foundation for my question—Why should England virtually become the sole governing power over India, to the exclusion of Scotland and Ireland? The Imperial Parliament.

"I remember, as no doubt you do, the law which the illustrious Athenian legislator passed, that when a State was divided by parties on great national questions, as we now are, every upright citizen was bound to take a side, and that any who did not should be expelled from the State. I sympathise strongly with the sentiment implied, although disapproving of the extent of

1886 the punishment; and as I now lie on my bed, where I have been over three weeks, and unable to take any public part in the matter, I relieve my conscience by writing to you as a true patriot and an influential statesman. I ask nothing—I suggest nothing; I merely state my opinion, and hope the right cause will win the day, and that the blessings of the Almighty may rest upon the labours of its supporters.—I am, yours very affectionately, DUNCAN McLAREN."

Mr. McLaren signed the letter which Mrs. McLaren penned, and his signature betrayed the emotion under which it was written.

This letter to Mr. Bright was accompanied by the following one from Mrs. McLaren:—

NEWINGTON HOUSE, EDINBURGH,
Sunday, April 11, 1886.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—I fear I hardly gave thee an impression in my last letter of how very ill my husband has been for the last three weeks. I did not think then that his being laid aside from all the absorbing interests of life was, as I fear now, a preparation for a longer and lasting rest. I wish I may be wrong, but when the heart is so seriously affected at his age, there must be great danger, and I see our dear invalid is less able for everything than he was a week ago. I never knew him so adverse to any political measure as to these of Mr. Gladstone's. The argument in his letter just written may seem of a very party character, but as he has never rigidly stuck to party lines, it means with him much more than mere party. It means all those advancing questions which come with advancing times. I never saw anything more impressive than his face and whole manner as he dictated the latter part of his letter. I have often called him a *seer*. Whether his views be right or wrong, his eyes in their solemn, piercing expression looked as though they gazed into the future, and his voice assumed a solemnity such as I have never heard in him before. And when he had finished he broke down and wept. It was a most touching scene. I am shut up with

my dear invalid, but am where I like to be, but where I would like things to be different. I dare not pray rebelliously for life, but I do pray that suffering may not be great. The doctor says that what he does suffer would appear distressing if borne by most men, but that his great reasoning power, unselfishness, and his power to bow to the inevitable enable him to preserve the wonderful calm which he manifests.—Thy loving sister,

PRISCILLA M^cLAREN. 1886

Mr. Bright had been in the habit of taking political counsel with his friend; and sensible of his wide and accurate knowledge and genuinely Liberal sympathies, he greatly valued his judgment and advice. The circumstances under which this communication was written, not to speak of the very powerful plea against the rupture of the Imperial Parliament which it presented, must of themselves have produced a great effect on Mr. Bright and strengthened him in his distrust of and hostility to the new legislative proposals. Mr. M^cLaren himself felt his own course clearer after he had unburdened his mind to his most intimate political friend; and he resolved to keep himself free from all responsibility as a member of the Liberal party for the policy propounded by the Liberal chief. On April 13, the Southern Liberal Association, which had previously chosen Mr. M^cLaren its Honorary President, adopted resolutions commending the Gladstonian policy, and three days afterwards Mr. M^cLaren sent the following letter intimating his resigation:—

To the Members of the Edinburgh Liberal Association.

Resignation of Presidency.

GENTLEMEN,—A few weeks ago you did me the honour of electing me Honorary President of your Association, on the understanding that I should not be called upon to do any work.

1886 Being a very old resident in the district, I accepted the honour in the spirit in which it was tendered. I observe from the *Scotsman* of the 14th that the Association met and passed certain resolutions embodying principles to which I have always been opposed, and which compel me to restore into your hands, which I hereby do, the honour you so recently conferred upon me. I need only refer to the first two sub-sections of your resolution. The first expresses great admiration of Mr. Gladstone's talents and sagacity, and refers to his unequalled experience as a parliamentary leader. To this extent I cordially agree with the resolution. When I had the honour of being Lord Provost of your city, I had great satisfaction, thirty-three years ago, in proposing that the Freedom of the City should be conferred on Mr. Gladstone. I greatly admired him then; I venerate him now, as one of the greatest and most patriotic Ministers this country has ever produced. But he never professed to be infallible. He has always laid down his plans for the consideration of the people, and rested his support of them in Parliament on the grounds that he believed they had the approval of the great body of the people. He has now brought forward a bill for establishing a Parliament in Ireland and removing the present Irish Members from the Parliament at Westminster, and it is as regards this bill that I am utterly opposed to the resolution passed by a majority of your Association; and I believe the great majority of the inhabitants, if tested, would be found to be against you, for during the sixteen years I represented you in Parliament I always voted against Mr. Butt's bill for an Irish Parliament, and was never reproved for this. You describe the bill to be—"To set up in Dublin a Parliament chosen by the Irish people for the control of Irish domestic affairs." It seems to me to go greatly beyond this, if we may judge from Mr. Gladstone's speech as to the bill itself; and thus, judging for myself alone, I am bound to say that I consider it by far the most reckless and dangerous measure ever proposed within my experience, and my experience is rather a long one; for I was present at the first great Reform meeting held in Scotland in 1820, usually called the Pantheon Meeting, from the place where it was held, and at

which the great Whig leaders of the Scottish bar were the chief speakers. 1886

It was implied by the speakers at your meeting that the bill might be so improved in Committee as to be made harmless to the other portions of the United Kingdom. I doubt the possibility of this. The principle of the bill is radically unsound, in my opinion; but if the principle be admitted, I think the clauses and details flowing therefrom, as now embodied in the bill, are quite logical and symmetrical. One strong objection against the bill in many quarters is the exclusion of the Irish Members from the Parliament at Westminster, and in this I participate, because I altogether disagree with the theory on which the bill is based; but, if we admit the theory of a separate Parliament in Dublin to be right, it seems to me that the exclusion of the Irish Members from Westminster is inevitable—it is a logical sequence. If any number of Irish Members were to be sent to Westminster after the establishment of their own Parliament in Dublin, with substantially the powers conferred by the bill, it seems to me that it would be to admit that the Irish were a superior race to the English and Scotch, and therefore, besides allowing them to manage their own affairs, they were to send a contingent to our Parliament to assist us in managing our affairs also; and bad as the bill now is, such an arrangement would make it still worse. The remedy is like the Highlandman's gun, which required a new stock, lock, and barrel. It is not desirable that Mr. Gladstone should be humiliated by the defeat of the bill, after spending the best part of the session in discussing it, and preventing the progress of other useful measures. The bill should be withdrawn, and some of the wisest heads in the three kingdoms, without regard to party, ought to be employed in devising a measure of Home Rule which would apply equally to each of the three kingdoms, and have a tendency to unite them more and more in one friendly bond of brotherhood, in place of separating them into distinct nationalities.

If an election were to take place at an early period, I hope it will be put on this distinct ground—Should there be a Parliament in Dublin or not? If in our district a candidate comes

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forward for an Irish Parliament and another against it, if I should be spared in health and strength, I should vote for the candidate against the Irish Parliament, whatever his other political opinions might be, whether Radical, Whig, or Tory, so strong is my conviction of the ulterior evil consequences which would flow from such a measure.—I am, gentlemen, yours faithfully,

DUNCAN McLAREN.

NEWINGTON HOUSE, *April* 16, 1886.

The writing of the letter.

It was not with a light heart, nor was it without the most anxious and earnest reflection, that Mr. McLaren wrote this letter. He estimated the pain and disappointment which his severance of political association with them would cause to men who were in truth his disciples—most of whom had regarded him all their days as their political guide—by the sorrow he himself experienced. But throughout his long life he had placed duty above personal feeling, and this imperious sense of duty asserted its supremacy even in the midst of the physical weakness and suffering which his family and his medical attendant saw were daily increasing.

This letter he was anxious should be in his own handwriting, but some portions of it he was obliged to dictate to his wife. His handwriting was clear and firm; and alternating as it did with Mrs. McLaren's, it was suggestive of the harmony and unity of their public work—the loveliness and pleasantness of their domestic lives. The day after its publication, Mr. McLaren was cheered by receiving a

Letter from Mr. Josiah Livingston.

letter from his friend Mr. Josiah Livingston, expressing much appreciation of his action, and adding that he rejoiced to think he must be much better to be able to write such a letter. Mr. McLaren, greatly touched, at once replied, writing the letter with his own hand. A special interest attaches to it, as the last political message or note he personally penned:—

NEWINGTON HOUSE, EDINBURGH,
April 17, 1886. 1886

MY DEAR MR. LIVINGSTON,—I had given up personal letter-writing, but cannot resist resuming to thank you for your kind, sympathetic letter. I do not wonder that my published letter has misled you and many others as to the state of my health. I am not so well as you had a right to assume from the publication of that letter. For the last month I have been closely confined to bed, never sitting up for a quarter of an hour; but I am glad to say my medical advisers think I am considerably better than when at my worst. They shook their heads at my yesterday's work, but I felt like our Covenanting ancestors of old on some occasions, that I had a message to deliver, and that I must deliver it, even if it should shorten my days. And accordingly my wife partly acted as my amanuensis, and I got it to the newspapers about eight o'clock, and they all kindly inserted it —even our old *Courant*—having to send it to Glasgow; but of course I did not in any case see a proof, and hence one or two verbal errors.

I am glad to say it does not appear to have done me any harm in the opinion of my medical advisers, who examined me this morning. Am glad to know of your convalescence, and am yours truly, D. M^C^LAREN.

My very kind regards to Mrs. Livingston and thanks for her sympathy and inquiries. D. M^C^L.

The letter intimating resolute opposition to Mr. Gladstone's policy and withdrawal from the Presidency of the Southern Liberal Association, while welcomed by many personal friends like Mr. David M^C^Laren and Mr. Josiah Livingston, gave great encouragement to the Scottish "Unionists." They were at the time organising a demonstration in Glasgow in opposition to Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule and Land Purchase Bills; and Professor Sir William Thomson, in ignorance of the conditions under which "the The Unionists.

1886 testimony" had been prepared, at once wrote Mr. McLaren inviting his presence and co-operation. He received the following reply:—

20*th April* 1886.

Dear Sir William Thomson,—I received with much pleasure this morning your note referring to my letter published on Saturday, and inviting me to speak at the great meeting of which you are to be chairman. Although I have made it a rule to abstain from public meetings for some time owing to my advanced years, I would most willingly have deviated from my rule on this occasion, and I could most cordially have supported your resolutions, if I had been in my usual state of health. But I am very sorry to say such is not the case. I have been confined to bed during the last month, and have no immediate prospect of being able to leave my room.

You would naturally infer from my published letter, as many others have done, that I was in good health; but the fact is that, after considering the question carefully on both sides, the present evils and the future prospects flowing from Mr. Gladstone's proposals seemed to me so overwhelmingly great, that, though quite unable to take any public part in personally rousing my fellow-citizens to a sense of the impending evils, I felt it to be my duty in some form to "testify," as our Puritan ancestors used to say, against the backsliding of the times. With these convictions pressing on my mind with an intensity which nothing of a political nature ever before approached, I resolved to write a letter of warning to my old constituents, who had so often received my opinions with such kindly consideration. My wife kindly acted as my amanuensis, and I dictated the letter from a bed of sickness and suffering with not a little risk, but with immense relief to my mind when it was dispatched to the press. —I am, dear Sir William, yours very truly,

Duncan McLaren.

In anticipation of the meeting, Sir William Thomson published the letter in the *Glasgow Herald*, and in his

introductory note the great mathematician and physicist described the author of the letter as "the veteran, long-tried, and well-trusted Liberal, Duncan McLaren." The letter was read at a crowded meeting in St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow, and without depreciating in any way the able and earnest speeches delivered at that great gathering, it may safely be affirmed that nothing said or read that night produced a deeper impression than the communication addressed to it from his sick-chamber by the Nestor of Scottish Liberalism. 1886

Concern for Liberal party.

Mr. McLaren did not quickly or willingly pass into opposition to Mr. Gladstone and his Government. He felt indeed distrustful of the new policy from the moment the first hint of it was given; and though every fuller and clearer explanation of it pointed to the adoption of the proposals he had most earnestly deprecated, he had clung through January, February, and March to the hope that some more or less satisfactory modification would be accepted by Mr. Gladstone. A few days before his last illness he said to a friend, with whom for two hours he had earnestly discussed the subject in all its bearings, with an eager desire to find a common platform on which the unity of the Liberal party might be maintained, and by which Scottish Reformers might be saved from the misfortune of Tory rule under Whig control: "By all means keep your mind open to the last. You are a young man; and it is right to keep your mind open. I am an old man; and on this question now, I am afraid, my mind is closed." But deeply though he felt his personal responsibility, and clearly though at last he saw the path which loyalty to his own conscience marked out for him, he kept free from the slightest tinge of intolerance. The separation of friends from him on this new development of policy caused him pain, but aroused in

Loyalty and toleration.

1886 him no resentment. He granted to them, as he claimed for himself, freedom of opinion, and he would not even seek to influence those who owed to him, and who most willingly and heartily owned, filial duty and reverence. Mr. McLaren was aware that his sons (as in the case of so many families) had taken, or were disposed to take, different sides on this question. In conversation with Mrs. McLaren on the subject, the reply was given unhesitatingly and earnestly, "They must think and judge for themselves, and follow their own convictions; I would not think them sons of mine if they did not." A few days before the close his son Charles, then in Parliament, arrived, and at times the great political question of the day and the impending debate and division on the second reading of the Home Rule Bill were discussed by father and son, calmly and earnestly, with strong mutual sympathy, although each was disposed to regard the principle of the bill from different points of view.

The spirit in which Mr. McLaren conversed with his son was in harmony with the following extract from a letter which he had written to him on March 30, enclosing a copy of his "Observations on Memorandum by the Assessor to the Royal Burgh of Lanark," dated March 10, 1886, relating to suggestions for a general reform of Scotch affairs in the direction of the establishment of a scheme of local self-government for Scotland, presented to the Convention of Royal Burghs:—

"Don't make any mistake about my wishing to influence you about the Irish questions. I was *very strongly* urged to give my opinion, and did so. You will notice the date, March 10. It was not *then* generally believed that the Land Purchase scheme was a real intention, and I did not believe so, or notice it, *for that reason.* But I am as opposed to this part as to the other,

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although that does not appear in my paper. Should you ever talk of the matter with Mr. Bright, please mention this. . . . You will understand from this that, although I tell you my real opinions, I do not wish you to follow mine *unless they shall agree with your own views of what is right.*"

CHAPTER XXVII.

LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH.

(*This chapter is from the pen of Mrs. McLaren.*)

1885 — It may not seem unfitting that I should write the closing chapter of my husband's life. Though there may be some things too sacred to lay before the public, I think a few particulars of his last illness, which no one but myself could give, may not be unwelcome to those who have perused the preceding chapters. To make the record of the last few months of his life more complete, it is necessary to go back to November, 1885, when he left Inverness to attend to political and business matters in Edinburgh. He caught cold on the journey, notwithstanding all the care taken to ensure its being safely accomplished, and he did not return to Inverness, as he had hoped to have done.

During his absence, our son Duncan sent me the following letter from Mr. David Dickson,[1] which urged that a Memoir of his father's life should be written:—

OSBORNE HOUSE, SPYLAW ROAD, MERCHISTON,
EDINBURGH, *November* 3, 1885.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—My perusal of Adam Black's Life has renewed in me the strong desire that your dear and honoured father would record something of his long and useful life. I have kept the paper which gave his address, I think to the

[1] Mr. Dickson was City Treasurer while Mr. McLaren was Lord Provost, and they acted cordially together in promoting civic economy and other useful public objects.

Cobden Club, some years ago, and it is *very interesting.* But what I think would be even more valuable than a narrative of the incidents of his life, would be *lessons* from his many experiences in *public life* that would be instructive and useful to our *younger public men*, of whom a large crop seems to be rising up. I recall with pleasure and profit some of the lessons I got from him when associated with him in Town Council business. Excuse me for urging on you the consideration of this, and believe me, with kindest regards, yours sincerely, 1886

DAVID DICKSON.

Duncan McLaren, jun., Esq.

One of the characteristics of Mr. David Dickson was that he was always trying to do good in many unseen ways of which the public knew nothing, not only for the present day, but also for the future; and under the inspiration of this letter, I hastily wrote and sent my husband a sketch of his life's work, to convince him that it was only right that the record of a life so useful should be preserved to his children, as well as to a wider circle of readers. The general election under the new Reform Act of 1885 was then taking place. When the polling-day in Edinburgh arrived, our daughters, Agnes and Helen, who were staying at Newington House, remarked how vigorously their father, the veteran who had fought for fifty years in the Liberal cause, went out to give what proved to be his last vote. Although no word of disappointment escaped him as some of the results of that general election were announced, yet, after the long strain he had been going through, there appeared signs of reaction. When I returned from Inverness, I saw with concern some evidence of diminished strength; and when Christmas came, he was willing that the usual family gathering should take place at our eldest son's house in Moray Place, which was no slight proof of the need he felt of rest. On New Year's Day I again

1886 spoke to him about the Memoir, saying that I had ascertained that our friend Mr. Mackie would feel it to be a work of love if he might undertake it. After a short time of silent thought, he looked at me with a smile which I can never forget, and said, "Well, I consent; but it is from no sense of worthiness. It is to please you I consent."

How little did I think what was to be the probable cost of that assent to my wishes! With all his wonted energy he began to arrange the accumulation of papers from 1833 into their different subjects, giving explanations concerning them to his friend who was to undertake the task, and this suggested to both the idea of devoting a separate chapter to each branch of his work. I often expressed my anxiety about the arduousness of the labour, but he treated it lightly at the time. Taking an old and much-esteemed parliamentary colleague who visited him into the room where he was at work, his friend said, "I have a room at home where my papers are stored, but I should not have the courage to attack them as you are doing." But Mr. McLaren never consulted his feelings; where there was work to be done, he did it.

Early in the year he insisted, in accordance with the advice of my medical attendant, that I should go to England to enjoy the cheering influences of my absent children and grandchildren for two or three weeks. Very reluctant to leave him, I went. The day after my arrival in London I was present at the marriage of a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Pennington, where I was surrounded by many old friends associated with our parliamentary life. "To hear of the warm affectionate way they have all remembered me," Mr. McLaren wrote, "has much compensated for your absence, especially, too, as I know how much you would enjoy it." In a later letter which, though written in a strain of pleasantry to disarm anxiety, and with an apology

for being a little egotistical, he told of a two hours' drive he had taken in the country. The day was cold, and on alighting from the carriage he had a feeling of faintness, attended with pain, which caused him to send for the doctor, but he added that he was again all right and never felt better in his life, which the doctor corroborated, and that he would not have told me, but that he liked me to feel that he never kept anything back from me. He begged I would not return home, as it would make him very unhappy to think of my travelling when there was such constant danger of the trains being blocked by snow. Partly from the almost superstitious regard in which I held his advice, and partly owing to the apparent strength which his daily letters and telegrams evinced, I unfortunately yielded, and anxiously waited for better weather. On reaching Bradford on my way home, I found the line to Edinburgh was blocked. My anxiety became intense. At three o'clock, on March 19, I received word that the line was cleared, and at the same moment a telegram, which had been kept back with intended kindness in the morning, as travelling was reported to be impossible, was handed me stating that Mr. M^cLaren was unwell. In half an hour I was on my way home. Tidings of improvement met me at the station in Edinburgh; but after the first warm and bright welcome was over, I began to see the seriousness of the change that had come over that once strong frame. 1886

The previous day he had addressed a number of copies of his last work on Local Government, written for the Convention of Royal Burghs. The servants had observed some nervous prostration, but his children had visited him and he had made no complaint. After breakfast next morning he complained of severe pain in his head; other symptoms of weakness followed, from which he rallied.

1886 He was able to converse cheerfully, but what struck me sadly was that he was quite unaware, even to the last, of how his illness commenced. In one sense I felt this to be a mercy, as I could not bear him to remember suffering when I was not near to endeavour to alleviate it. For a few hours next day his speech was slightly affected, though his mind was clear. Telegrams were sent to his absent children, and his son Walter at once returned from Bordighera, where he was staying on account of his wife's health. He overtook what work had been left unaccomplished in the arrangement of papers. This was a relief to his father's mind, who never afterwards alluded with any anxiety to his outward affairs, though with a smile he said, "If I were well, I should be firing off letters to the newspapers against Mr. Gladstone's bills." There was now so much hope of recovery that his son returned to Bordighera, and he himself was able to enjoy the daily visits of his sons and daughters in Edinburgh, at which social and political subjects were freely discussed. Perhaps in the eye of reason the expectation of his recovery had been scarcely justifiable. The attacks of pain in the heart rather increased. Still hope was not abandoned; and this hope in his mind seemed centred in the wish, which never left him, that he might once more visit the homes of his children in England, and see once more what he called his little English grandchildren. This idea led him frequently to ask his medical attendant whether, in case of partial recovery, he would ever be able to bear a railway journey. But he begged not to be buoyed up with false hopes, saying, "It will be no kindness, and I am ready and willing to meet whatever is appointed for me." It was not easy for those around him to discourage hope even in themselves, for after the spasmodic attacks were over there

was so much apparent strength, that Dr. Playfair, his kind medical attendant, whilst conscious of the extremely precarious nature of the illness, was sometimes encouraged to believe that, if complete rest could be secured, life might be prolonged. But for Mr. McLaren to live was to work, and the needed repose he could not take. 1886

After one severe attack of pain he said, "I have been putting my feelings aside, and looking at my case as dispassionately as though it were that of another man, and I see how little I can expect at my age any but one termination to my illness. I do not anticipate that this will be immediate, though I sometimes feel that I may pass away in one of these paroxysms. I should like to be kept calm and peaceful, so that no disturbing influences should be allowed to ruffle the serenity of spirit which ought to rule at a time like this. I wish to prepare for the change whenever it may come." There was cheerfulness and life in the sick-room, and the inward peace which was nourished by this conformity to the Divine will was beyond the reach of worldly discord. Disappointment could not cloud it, nor could physical suffering destroy it.

I remarked to him one day that I thought it was more easy to die when young than old. He said, "Yes, I think so too; we have struck out so many roots when we are old, and they are all so dear." He asked his medical attendants if they thought the effort of arranging his papers could have affected his heart. "For," he said, "to go over one's life's work in that way causes much feeling." His anxiety lest I should suffer by close attendance upon him was great, and when resisting his entreaties that I should drive out, saying I had no pleasure in going without him, and expressing my sympathy with him in his confinement to his room, he said, "You will have to learn to go out without me. I should

1886 enjoy being up and going out with you into the fresh air, and seeing the beauty of the coming spring; but I have much to be thankful for. My life is not and has not been a dull one; I have had many joyous times, many blessings, and much happiness, though mingled with trials, which fall to every human lot."

On the 15th of April he was reminded that the 16th would be the birthday of his dearly loved grandson Harry. "Then," he said, "I must write him a letter with my own hand, as it may be my last." I was afraid of such an effort. The letter was so characteristic that it may be inserted here:—

To Henry Duncan McLaren.

NEWINGTON HOUSE, EDINBURGH,
April 15, 1886.

MY VERY DEAR BOY,—Grandmamma tells me to-morrow is your birthday. I thought I would try to write to you a few lines on your seventh birthday, but I have not written any letters for ten days.

I write this in bed, where I have been constantly for twenty-six days, and have often been very ill, and have suffered much pain, which I hope you will never suffer.

You know I love you very much, and believe you have been a good boy, obedient to father and mother, and to grandmamma Pochin, and grandpapa, and loving and very kind and affectionate to your two little sisters, whom I also love very much.

I want you to understand that I am *very, very* old, and it may be the will of God that I shall never get better of this illness, but that I may die and be buried without ever seeing again my dear Harry or his loving little sisters; but it may be otherwise; and if so, I should like very much to go to London to see you all and your parents and grandparents; and perhaps it may be God's will so far to prolong my life.

And I want to explain about the difference between old age and young children like you, if you will do what I tell you.

First take seven little pebbles from the lawn and lay them down in a row thus :— 1886

* * * * * * *

You would think "That's myself—Harry."

Then you would lay down another row opposite it, and you would say, "That is for the first seven years of grandpapa's life, when he was as old as I am now." Then you would put down another and another, till you had put down ten rows altogether, and you would see that ten rows of seven would make seventy. That would represent me as *ten times older than you are* now, when I was seventy; and people often talk as if men when they are seventy would soon die, as that is the general expectation.

But to complete the picture by the little stones, of comparing my life with yours, you must lay down other two rows of seven, and that would be twelve times as old as you are, and show me to be eighty-four. But you cannot stop there. You must begin another row and lay down two stones and then stop. That will represent my age, eighty-six. This will show what a long distance in age there is between us, and how old I am; and that I cannot expect to live long.

Now, my dear boy, be good and affectionate and kind to everybody, but especially to your little sisters, and fear God in all your doings, and that the blessing of God may rest on you is the sincere prayer of your loving grandfather,

DUNCAN M^cLAREN.

His love for all his grandchildren was intense, as was his desire for their highest and best welfare. He often said, "How I long for the right training of their spiritual being, and that they may have the moral courage to help on what is right."

When it was needful that a nurse should be engaged, I told him that one of those recommended was an Englishwoman. He replied, "*You* cannot think this could be an objection with me." . . . Ultimately a Highland nurse was engaged, and it was interesting to see how much his

1886 heart turned towards her when he heard what he called "her good honest tongue;" and one could see how his thoughts turned to his own early days as he discussed with her subjects of Highland interest.

On the 15th April he was much cheered by the arrival of his daughter Helen, her husband, Dr. Rabagliati, and their eldest boy, Andretto; and again, closely following upon this, by the visit of his son Charles, bringing with him little Harry. These additions to the home circle brightened the latter days of his life. He always warmly and affectionately welcomed to his bedside these two dear boys, enjoying their conversation, and remarked, "How much more boys of seven know now than they did at that age when I was young."

As the paroxysms of pain became more distressing, it would be impossible to describe the expression of submission and fortitude which seemed to illumine his countenance, and many remarks can be recalled which we now believe were intended to prepare his anxious attendants for the change which was drawing near, but which they refused so to interpret at the time. His daughter Grant (Mrs. Millar), had presented him with a little book, "Daily Light on the Daily Path," which entirely consisted of texts of Scripture admirably selected and arranged. He liked it because, as he said, it contained the pure water from the pure fountain.

On the 24th Dr. Rabaglaiti was called home to Bradford. Mr. McLaren's farewell words of grateful appreciation of his visit, and of his valued professional services in conjunction with those of Dr. Playfair, were touching. He told him how great a comfort his presence had been, but that it was quite right he should leave him. It was affecting to see how much pain the parting cost him, and we could scarcely regret that, as it proved, he was spared any other parting words.

At the commencement of his illness a deputation of men from the Blind Asylum wrote to ask for an interview, as they wished to lay before him some questions of interest to them. This request, which he was not able to grant at the time, he did not forget, and it was almost the last act of his life to request his son Charles to write to them to say how much he regretted that he had not been able to see them or to render them the assistance they had asked for. 1886

On the morning of the 26th, after a night of suffering, during which he had repeated some of the Saviour's words of love, he seemed to have much to say to us. His memory was clear, and after giving his son Charles directions about some papers and other matters, he told him to bring a sheet of foolscap paper, and place it upon his table, saying he wished to dictate a letter to one who had caused him much irritation, but he added, "That is all past; I feel no irritation now—none." As he said this a beautiful expression of love and peace settled upon his countenance. He told his son to wait for half an hour, when he should be ready for him. He then spoke to me about the Memoir, and said that if it should ever be written, he wished that nothing should be inserted that could give pain to a single individual. After some other things of touching interest, he said, if in case of his death there should be any proposal made for a public funeral, he thought we ought to discourage it. He told me to sit near him; then asked for some flowers which had come the night before from Walter and Eva from Bordighera. He took a few out of the glass, saying, "How very beautiful they are! Place them where I can see them. Now let me rest—let me rest." The rest was of short duration; what he had foreseen as probable came to pass. A spasm came on. His head turned towards the light. The hand whose loving pressure was never before withheld, gave no response to the

1886 grasp of affection; there were a few deep breathings, and the loving watchers by the bedside knew that the brave and faithful spirit had passed from them to join in the higher life the "just of all generations."

Notwithstanding Mr. McLaren's advanced age, and although the fact of his illness had been known, the news of his death stunned his fellow-citizens. The letters bearing his signature, which had appeared in the newspapers a few days previously, gave evidence of so much mental activity and moral courage, that it was difficult for those outside his home to believe that the physical powers of the writer were nearly exhausted; and when the earlier reports were circulated, the townspeople refused to think it could be possible that "the good grey head which all men knew" would never more be seen on the street or on the platform. When the truth was realised, and when they comprehended the circumstances under which the last public letters had been written, admiration of the heroism and fidelity to conviction displayed in the closing hours of life mingled with and deepened the feeling of sadness inspired by the consciousness of irreparable loss.

After days of cloud and rain, the morning of the 1st of May opened with brilliant sunshine, and Nature seemed in harmony with the popular tribute, given with every mark of distinction and honour, to the "plain and simple citizen" whose remains were that day to be laid in their last resting-place. In accordance with the universal sentiment, the funeral was a public one. The coffin, which was borne on an open car, was so covered with wreaths of flowers, the

offerings of affection from all parts of the kingdom, as to be almost hidden from view. Friends from many parts of England came to be present on the occasion. All places of business were closed, and all classes and creeds united to do honour to the dead. Spectators looked out from the windows of the storeyed tenements, and lined the crowded streets from Newington House to St. Cuthbert's Churchyard, a distance of more than two miles. 1886

Religious services were conducted at Newington House, at Rosehall Church, and at St. Giles Cathedral, where official representatives of the University, the learned societies, and other public bodies of Edinburgh, and deputations from other parts of Scotland, assembled to await the *cortège*. As far as the Cathedral the car was preceded by the officials of the High Constables and the Merchant Company of Edinburgh, and by the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council. There the procession, now over a mile in length, was joined by the other public representatives, and slowly passed over the Mound and along Princes Street to St. Cuthbert's Churchyard. Those who witnessed the scene from the slopes of the Castle Hill can never forget it. Everywhere as the coffin passed the onlookers reverently raised their hats, and as far as the eye could reach, the procession moved through an avenue of sympathetic mourners. Within the churchyard boys from the Heriot Schools lined the path to the grave. Here the pall-bearers took their places—his four sons, two sons-in-law, the eldest grandson, and his brother-in-law, John Bright. Professor Calderwood having offered a prayer, the coffin was lowered, the twenty-third Psalm was then sung, and, by an interesting and accidental coincidence, it was sung to the old Gaelic tune with which Mr. M^{c}Laren's mother used to soothe him to rest as a child. Mr. Bright, who had first brought his sister

1886 into the presence of his friend, now led her from the grave which held all that remained to her on earth of the husband she had so much honoured and loved; and the relatives and friends left the scene through a crowd of solemn mourners.

As was remarked by a distinguished statesman present, no man, however exalted his position might be, could desire a higher mark of esteem and affection than had that day been given to Duncan McLaren.

"And now he rests; his greatness and his sweetness
No more shall seem at strife,
And death has moulded into calm completeness
The statue of his life."

IN ST. CUTHBERT'S CHURCHYARD.

MONUMENT TO THE MEMORY OF

DUNCAN McLAREN

On the Site of the Cottage at Tullich near Dalmally where he spent his School days.

ERECTED BY HIS WIFE.

APPENDIX.

THE following is the letter referred to on page 26, Vol. I., a copy of which is given to each winner of the M^{c}Laren-Robertson Prizes at the Watt Institute :—

A QUIET HEROIC LIFE.

TO THE STUDENTS WHO MAY GAIN THE "M^{c}LAREN-ROBERTSON" PRIZES AT THE SCHOOL OF ARTS.

The title of this little paper may seem paradoxical to some of you as we usually associate the word "heroic" with deeds of fearless and valiant action. Perhaps, when all shall be revealed, it may be found that a self-denying life in conscientious obedience to some high principle, though passed in comparative obscurity, will be deemed the highest heroism.

Such a life was that of CHARLES LEOPOLD ROBERTSON, and it is my wish that some further record of it shall be given than that of his mere name being attached to the M^{c}Laren-Robertson prizes. I regret that this record is of necessity so short. Mr. Robertson's mother was a Pole. His father was the captain of a trading-vessel. His upbringing and his education devolved entirely upon his mother. Mrs. Robertson had to practise much self-denial in order to give her son a good education, which enabled him to obtain a situation in the bank of Sir William Forbes & Co., Edinburgh. He became a student at the School of Arts, and it was whilst there that a warm friendship was formed betwixt him and Duncan M^{c}Laren. They had some experiences in common; each had a noble mother, and each out of a small salary helped to support his mother.

Mr. Robertson was soon promoted from the bank in Edinburgh to a higher position in an English bank, and ultimately he became manager of the Wilts and Dorset Banking Company at Frome in Somersetshire, where he passed the remainder of his life. When he left Edinburgh on the occasion of his first promotion, one of

Mr. M^cLaren's family said to him, "We shall hope, Mr. Robertson, to see you soon back again in Edinburgh." "Yes," he replied, with a smile—unconsciously verifying the proverb that "many a true word is spoken in jest,"—"I'll come back when your brother is Lord Provost." He did not return for more than twenty years, and Mr. M^cLaren was then Lord Provost of Edinburgh.

Mr. Robertson had become a small shareholder in the Forth Marine Insurance Company. It was before the time of limited liability companies. The company was unsuccessful, and Mr. Robertson, like many others, was brought to poverty, having to pay up the calls made upon him. He resigned himself to his fate. Burdened with a debt for which he was in no way responsible, he denied himself everything except the bare necessaries of life, and what most men prize, a married home and children to carry on his name. His sterling integrity and social nature, combined with a womanly tenderness of character, brought him congenial companionships, and made him a welcome guest in some of the happiest households in Frome, where his memory is still held in affectionate esteem. When, at last, his long-standing and cruel debt was discharged, with the first money he could call his own he took the train and came down to Scotland, and was warmly welcomed at Newington House by his old friend, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, and by those who had twenty years before hoped for his speedy return. The meeting was a very touching one. Old memories were revived, and old friends and acquaintances inquired after, but there were few to remember the unobtrusive youth who had left the city so long ago.

Mr. Robertson paid his friend a second visit when there were still fewer to recognise him, and one day coming in late for the family dinner, he made the affecting apology that he had been wandering through the cemeteries of the city to see what names of old friends he could find on the tombstones!

When the British Association was held at Bath in 1864, Mr. M^cLaren and some of his family who were attending it went over to Frome to see Mr. Robertson in his English home. He was greatly gratified by this visit, which proved to be the last time the two friends met.

Knowing what fidelity to principle had cost his loving, social nature, I have had the two friends photographed together from *cartes* taken about the time Mr. Robertson was last in Edinburgh, twenty-eight years ago, which have been kindly allowed to be hung in the Library and Students' Room of the Heriot-Watt Institution, so that the students may know something of the outward man whose honesty of life and great integrity I hope each may imitate in his or her own walk in life.

Mr. Robertson's frugal habits enabled him to save a little money, which he divided into equal portions, and left by will to chosen friends who had cheered him in his self-denying life. One portion of £400 he left to my husband, Mr. M^cLaren. It seemed only right to use this money, so conscientiously earned and saved, to preserve the memory of so good a man in his native city, and nothing would have gratified him more than by having it associated with that of his life-long friend for the benefit of others.

Though the prizes are small, if the example of the lives of Charles Leopold Robertson and Duncan M^cLaren should help those who gain them to meet the varying fortunes of life with a noble Christian integrity, they will not have been given in vain.

In Holy Trinity Churchyard, at Frome, is a grave with this simple inscription on the stone cross at its head—

CHARLES LEOPOLD ROBERTSON,

DIED 16TH OCTOBER 1875,

Aged 76 Years.

This short notice of a virtuous life is accompanied by true sympathy with all who aspire to do what is right. It may often be through much difficulty; but the promise is sure of blessing to the upright. That this blessing may be yours is the prayer of Mr. Robertson's friend and yours,

PRISCILLA BRIGHT M^cLAREN.

NEWINGTON HOUSE, EDINBURGH,
May 11, 1888.

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