D. McLaren 1862

THE

LIFE AND WORK

OF

DUNCAN M^c^LAREN

BY

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PREFACE.

THIS biography has been written in the belief that the life of Duncan McLaren exalted individual public service as at once the privilege and glory of a free people—the foundation of the well-being and safety of the commonwealth; and that a faithful record of his long and arduous career, as merchant, citizen, councillor, and statesman, illustrating the chivalrousness of spirit in which his public work was undertaken, the heroism and fidelity with which it was carried on, and the substantial public benefits it secured, may not only stimulate public-spirited men to self-sacrificing efforts for the common good, but, in these days when the principle of self-government is being universally applied, in county as well as in municipal and national administration, be read with a sense of encouragement as well as gratitude. The best guarantee for the future prosperity of the country, under the extension of the conditions of national life established in 1832, is to be found in the increased purity and efficiency of administration and the more actively beneficent tendency of legislation which were introduced with the first Reform Act.

Duncan McLaren's public work began with the Reformed Town Council, and it extended over a period of upwards of fifty years. Its record is writ large in the civic annals of Edinburgh and in the political history of Scotland. For

his service was at once continuous and multiform;—educational, municipal, ecclesiastical, and political. There were distinct epochs in his career, when exceptionally onerous duties or strikingly successful achievements gave evidence of his remarkable powers of resource, and won for him special expressions of public gratitude. His establishment of the Heriot Free Schools; his settlement of the City affairs; his championship of the cause of Free Trade; his controversy with Mr. Macaulay; the social reform inaugurated during his Lord Provostship, which resulted in the Forbes Mackenzie Act; his sixteen years of parliamentary work as senior Member for Edinburgh, are in themselves distinct and prominent features capable of presentation in chronological order. But they were only incidents in struggles and controversies which lasted the greater part of his public life, and in which, so long as they were public questions, he bore always an active and generally a leading part. His establishment of the Heriot Free Schools was only the starting-point of labours as national educational reformer which never ceased until the adoption of Lord Advocate Young's Act in 1872. He was an advocate of penny postage, free tolls, and the abolition of petty customs long before the agitation for the abolition of the Corn-laws was set on foot; and after his friend Richard Cobden had been withdrawn from the field of battle, he contended in the House of Commons as well as in the Chamber of Commerce for the development of Free Trade policy. His superintendence of every department of municipal life in Edinburgh, for years after he had left the Council, was as vigilant as his participation in every new public movement for the good of the people was prompt and energetic. His resistance to Church aggression, his battle for religious equality, his advocacy of franchise reform as the right of every

householder, were carried on simultaneously and persistently alike in local and national affairs, from the day on which he entered public life till his death.

To portray a public career so prolonged and many-sided, so full of activity and so crowded with details, so well ordered and so complete, is necessarily a work of great difficulty. Where the interest of a life centres in personal narrative, it is easy for the biographer to give its history in chronological order. Where, as in Mr. M^cLaren's case, his life expressed itself in the widely varied public questions which engrossed him, the subject classifies itself naturally according to work. The reader of the following pages will therefore find that sometimes at the end of a chapter he is brought almost to the close of Mr. M^cLaren's life, while in the next chapter he again sees him at the beginning of his career. But while sequence in time is necessarily excluded from the plan of this biography, no other mode of treatment could do justice to a life so impersonal as Mr. M^cLaren's, and so intimately associated with all the leading political and local questions of his day.

In the execution of his task the author has had many encouragements and advantages. He was invited to undertake it by Duncan M^cLaren himself, from whom he received some specially prepared memoranda. The stores of papers and documents collected at Newington House were placed at his disposal. The aid of the various members of the family was always within his reach, and was rendered with a filial devotion and a loyalty to truth in themselves beautiful and inspiring. Mrs. M^cLaren's stimulating sympathy and help never failed, and are exhibited more particularly in the introductory chapters, dealing with her husband's personal and domestic life, and in the concluding chapter, describing his last illness.

This work has been, from first to last, a labour of love; and if the reader's appreciation of the character of Duncan M^cLaren increase during the perusal of this memoir in anything like the proportion with which it has increased in the mind of the author during its compilation, he will feel that his efforts to do justice to a great and noble life, and to attract by Duncan M^cLaren's example pure-hearted patriotic men to public service, cannot have wholly failed.

> "Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
> Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
> Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth.
> Yet I discern in what is writ
> Good cause for the peculiar interest
> And awe, indeed, this man has touched me with."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE, *December* 1888.

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THE LIFE AND WORK

OF

DUNCAN McLAREN.

CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE AND EARLY LIFE.

The Highland home of the McLarens.

The Braes of Balquhidder, the country lying between the head of Loch Lomond and Loch Earn, under the shadow of Ben More, is the recognised home of the McLarens. But the clan had a history before they settled in "the town at the back of the country." Students of Gaelic traditions and history assign to the clan an ancient descent. Setting aside a legend, conveniently shrouded in the mists of antiquity, associating the origin of the family with a "Mermaid's love," Logan, in his work on the "Clans of the Scottish Highlands," makes the authentic history of the McLarens commence with the sixth century.[1] According to this authority, Laren or Laurin, one of the sons of Eric, who settled in Argyle in 503, acquired the district of Lorne, which from him is said to have obtained its name. This appellation, however spelt, is invariably pronounced *Lawren* by the Gael; and there can be no reasonable doubt that it is a modification of Lawrence, the name of the saint who suffered martyrdom under Valerian, A.D. 261. Its Gaelic orthography is *Labhrainn*, the *bh* being quiescent. In 843 Kenneth McAlpin, chief of the descendants of Eric's sons, overthrew the Southern Picts, took possession of their ter-

[1] This legend is recognised by the Heralds of 1781 in the armorial bearings of Lord Dreghorn, son of the famous mathematician, Professor Colin McLaurin, who claimed the chiefship.

ritories, and transferred the seat of government to their capital, Abernethie in Strathearn, in Perthshire, where Kenneth was crowned king of all Scotland. It was the established custom that conquerors should apportion the lands acquired among their victorious followers; and it is somewhat more than assumption to say that the chief of the tribe of Laurin of Argyle received a due share.[1]

The country of the clan.

Balquhidder and Strathearn have ever been known as "the country of the Clan Laurin," and the identity of the appellation, as demonstration of a common origin, is corroborated by the tradition that three brothers from Argyle had this territory assigned to them—the eldest occupying the centre, the second the Bruach at the west, and the third the extreme east of the district. This tradition is borne out by an observance jealously regarded to the present day, in accordance with which the burial-places of the three branches of the clan are marked out in the kirkyard according to the location described.

Romantic history.

This is not the place, however, to write the history of the clan, interesting though it be. Suffice it to say, that it is as full of romance, appeals as strongly to the love of adventure, and is as typical of Highland chivalry and as illustrative of the vicissitudes of cateran life, as the history of other more prominent Highland families. For the Laurins were a brave, resolute race of men; on one side of their nature, like the Highlanders, generous and loyal-hearted; on the other, resentful and pugnacious, gentle friends but terrible enemies, "faithful in love" and "dauntless in war." They bore a conspicuous part in the early national struggles,

[1] See "The Highlands of Scotland," by Skene; Logan's "Clans of the Scottish Highlands;" "History of the Highlands," by James Brown; "Historical Geography of the Clans of Scotland," by T. B. Johnston and Colin Robertson; or, "The Stewarts of Appin," by H. T. Stewart.

and they frequently, too, displayed their valour in conflic with neighbours like the Buchanans, the M°Donalds, the M°Gregors, and the Campbells. The persistency, indeed, with which they carried on their tribal feuds was the chief cause of their decay. It gradually wasted their strength, caused their dispersion, and led them to re-mingle with the Argyleshire branches of the family. Few of the descendants of the ancient clan are to be found in the old Balquhidder country; and the traditions of the Stewarts of Appin and of the M°Larens are to a large extent identical. Dr. Mitchell assigns the chiefship to Donald M°Laren of Ardeveich, Loch Earn Head, and mentions that one of his distant progenitors signed the Ragman's Roll in 1296.

Distinguished clansmen.

Among the many distinguished men who, in comparatively recent times, owned kinship with the clan, may be mentioned the Rev. John M°Laurin, son of the parish minister of Glendarrich in Argyleshire, born in 1693, for many years minister of Ram's Horn or St. David's parish church in Glasgow, one of the most eminent preachers of his time, and the author of sermons described by the late Dr. John Eadie as "grand and massive, abounding in original, profound, and suggestive thought, and yet very spiritual in force." He had a younger and more famous brother, Colin, who, as professor of mathematics, first in Aberdeen, and afterwards in Edinburgh, honourably maintained the national reputation for learning. John, the son of the Professor, attained the dignity of a Senator of the College of Justice under the title of Lord Dreghorn; and among other distinguished representatives of the clan was Ewen M°Laurin, who, during the first American war, raised at his own charge the South Carolina Loyalists. But of the members of the clan who have signalised themselves in the church, the army, medicine, and law, none has rendered

more conspicuous service to his country than Duncan McLaren, the citizen-patriot, who for upwards of half a century led the van of political progress in Scotland, and whose more than fifty years of public work supply a record of devotion to social and national well-being as honourable as is to be found in the range of Scotland's political annals.

Duncan McLaren's Highland home.

Duncan McLaren did not concern himself with those claims of long descent which exercised the imagination and gratified the pride of other members of the clan. He was born poor, and he never forgot or strove to conceal the fact. But he had an honourable parentage, and of that heritage he was justly proud. To his mind the home of his family never was Balquhidder, but always the sea-swept shores of Argyle, at the entrance of the Linnhe Loch, whose waters pour into the Firth of Lorne, where the green island of Lismore guards the entrance of the great water-way into the Inverness-shire Highlands. On the one side stretches to the Atlantic the Sound of Mull, while towards the mainland the peaks of Ben Cruachan rise behind the mouth of Loch Etive. In ancient days the Bishops of Argyle made Lismore their fertile and peaceful abode, and there the forefathers of Duncan McLaren lived for generations. John McLaren, his grandfather, was a man of some substance. He occupied the farm of Ballymachelichan, and as evidence of his appreciation of learning it may be mentioned, that he joined with other three heads of families of the district for the maintenance of a teacher for the education of their children. The school where the pupils met was as nearly as possible equidistant from the four homesteads, and the teacher boarded successively with each family for three months. The household at Ballymachelichan, in its happiest days, consisted of John McLaren, the farmer, his wife, his sister Effie, and three sons, John, Neil, and Duncan. The

His parentage.

memory of John M°Laren's wife (whose maiden name was Mary M°Coll) was lovingly cherished in the family. She was a fair-haired, beautiful woman, and ruled her family by the power of love. Her sons were devoted to her; and Effie, her sister-in-law, regarded her with feelings of warmest respect and esteem. A pathetic story illustrates the strength of her attachment to her husband. One day when he was absent on the mainland, a wild storm arose and lashed the waters of Loch Linnhe with fury. Concerned for the safety of her husband, she went to an exposed spot, commanding a view of the course which the returning boat was likely to take. Regardless of the pitiless rain and the biting wind as she was of her own welfare, she remained too long at her post of observation, straining her eyes seawards, hoping to catch a sight through the mist of what she held so dear. Her husband landed in safety, but the anxious wife never recovered from the effects of this exposure to the storm, and all too soon the once happy homestead became a place of mourning. Oppressed by the gloom that had settled over his household, the father introduced, perhaps too quickly, a young wife, and the sorrowing sons were bitterly resentful. Their aunt Effie took their part, and it was soon found that the old family concord could not be restored. John and Neil, the two elder sons, left Lismore for ever, and Aunt Effie with them, leaving behind Duncan, the youngest son, who soon afterwards died.

A family separation.

The wayfarers had no certain place of abode in view when they left their father's roof. They established themselves for some time in the old country of their clan at Bridge of Earn in Perthshire, but subsequently they drew nearer to their native district, and made their abode in Glenorchy at the head of Loch Awe. Thence Neil went

to Appin to stay with relatives named McMarrich, who treated him as a member of the household. Here he found a new home, and, acting the part of an adopted son, he became known as Neil McMarrich. He possessed much of his mother's beauty; and possibly his comely appearance helped him to win the favour and affection of the elder McMarrich. He prospered in business, and soon finding himself able to rent and stock a farm, he asked his brother John, then just married, to leave Dalmally and join him. This arrangement was agreed to, but the untimely and tragic death of Neil prevented its fulfilment. The sad occurrence was the result of misplaced affection, not however on the victim's part, and the incident well illustrates the yet unsettled state in which the Scottish Highlands remained at the end of the eighteenth century. Then, as now, the country was thinly peopled. Farming, it is true, was just emerging from its primitive and uneconomical methods, but roads were still bad and transport difficult, and the markets were too distant to justify the expenditure which alone could render farming really profitable, even if the crofters in general had been as well able as was Neil McLaren to stock their farms. Law was dispensed also by methods much less satisfactory and much less certain than those which obtain to-day; while the order that was maintained was achieved rather by the action of the well-disposed among the population than by the strength or vigilance of the central authority. In communities so placed, the passions, by which in all times humanity is actuated, have freer play, and the fear of punishment, which in more settled states frequently acts as a deterrent from crime, is much less powerful than where law is strong and the pursuing feet of justice swift and certain. In all conditions of society, settled and unsettled, jealousy and the

Scottish Highlands.

desire to escape from inconvenient pecuniary obligations have acted as powerful motives in the human heart, and they did not fail of their influence in this family tragedy. Neil had a friend called M'Intyre, to whom he had been able to render pecuniary assistance, and M'Intyre in turn felt himself bound to repay his obligations, either in similar form, or, as was more common at the time, in kind. Nor is there any reason to think he would have attempted to repudiate his liabilities had not jealousy entered his breast. M'Intyre was engaged to a young woman who was also acquainted with Neil M'Laren or M'Marrich, and over her heart Neil's handsome face and figure, together with his prosperous career, had obtained considerable influence. Neil himself, it is believed, did not at all reciprocate her admiration; but the fact of its existence, which she was unable to conceal from M'Intyre, was sufficient to madden him against his friend. He made a pretext that he wished to repay Neil the advances he had made him, and invited him to meet him at a lonely spot in the country for this purpose. There was nothing unusual in this proceeding. It was generally considered a wise thing, when considerable sums or articles of value were in the possession of any one, that the fact should be concealed. Accordingly Neil made his way to the place without any misgiving, and was attacked by M'Intyre from behind and brutally murdered before he could have had time to suspect foul play. Leaving the body by the ford where the deed was committed, M'Intyre fled and disappeared. Alarmed at the prolonged absence of his brother, John went off into the Appin country to search for him. His horror at finding his brother's body lying by the ford wrapped in his plaid was such that he was never the same man afterwards. He assembled twenty men, who raised the hue and cry and

A family tragedy.

set off in pursuit of the murderer, with the intention that his blood should expiate his crime. The search was long and minute, but fruitless. M^cIntyre had a long start of his pursuers, and knowing that it would never be possible for him to return to the district, as his crime would sooner or later be traced to him, he made his way south and enlisted in the army. He was sent to Jamaica, where he was convicted of another capital offence and condemned to be shot.

On John M^cLaren, besides the mental suffering he endured, the sad event had disastrous consequences. Not only did it dash to the ground all the hopes of the brotherly reunion to which he was looking forward, but in addition to this Neil's debtors for the most part seized the opportunity to repudiate the debts they owed him. It was with these moneys that John had hoped to stock the farm. Besides this, John felt himself not only bound in honour to pay his brother's debts, but also to fee the twenty men who had assisted him to pursue the murderer; and in doing so he completely impoverished himself. In his wife, Catherine M^cLellan, however, he found a brave and competent helpmeet. She too came of a good and honourable stock. Though bearing a Stewartry name, her family considered themselves Highland in blood as well as by birth. She was the youngest daughter of John M^cLellan and Sarah M^cIntyre, who occupied the farm of Edandonich in Glenorchy, between Dalmally and the boundary line of Argyleshire and Perthshire. John M^cLellan was a leading man among the farmers and crofters of the district, their representative in any dispute with the factor, and their spokesman in consultations or communications with a man of even greater authority than the factor—the minister. John possessed the confidence of the landlord as well as of the tenantry.

The M^cLellans.

His probity and discreetness caused him to be selected by the factor for the conveyance of the rent-money to Edinburgh, and in these missions he was generally accompanied by an escort of not less than ten men. Sarah M°Intyre, his wife, was a woman of the strongest type of character. Industrious herself, she meant that her children should be industrious also, and she ruled them with an iron will. She allotted tasks to her daughters and servants proportionate to their skill and attainments, requiring each of them to spin a certain amount of wool or flax daily in addition to her share of household work; and she also found evening occupation for her sons. All the wearing apparel was home-made and home-dyed, for the good woman was skilful in all housewifely accomplishments. She had a fondness for colour, and was constantly experimenting and planning to discover a way of getting brighter tints. Her husband so far sympathised with this hobby as to bring home from Edinburgh, on one of his visits there (carrying it, it is said, all the way in his hand), a large brass pan to supersede the ordinary thick black pot of the Highland farm, in the hope that the nobler metal might not, like its iron predecessor, interfere with the bright scarlet and other vivid colours she liked. In her old age—she lived for ninety years—she did not let her authority depart from her. Even when confined to bed, she kept a vigilant eye on the household, and negligent wrong-doers were frequently surprised by strokes from a long stick she kept by her side.

Marriage of John M°Laren and Catherine M°Lellan.

The M°Lellan family consisted of five sons and two daughters. The youngest of these was named Catherine. At the age of seventeen years she married John M°Laren, then established with his aunt Effie at Dalmally. Twelve children were born of the marriage. Of these, seven died in early life, leaving no descendants now alive. Margaret

married a McKay, and left a son and grandchildren, now settled in Canada. John left descendants, amongst whom is William Ralston, his grandson, distinguished amongst journalists for his contributions to the *Graphic*, *Punch*, and other illustrated periodicals and books. The three youngest children of the twelve alone survived the first half of the century, and they all reached a great age. These were Janet, who died in her ninetieth year; Euphemia, who died in her eighty-eighth year; and Duncan, the subject of this memoir, who was born 12th January 1800, the first day of the century, reckoned according to the old style, which still obtained in Scotland.

Scotland at the end of last century.

In 1799 John McLaren with his large family had removed from Glenorchy to Renton, a small industrial town in Dumbartonshire, on the banks of the Leven, at the foot of Loch Lomond. Times were bad in the country; and though that primitive condition of society which compelled a private individual to raise a force of twenty men to pursue a murderer, and made it necessary to send ten men as escort when a messenger travelled to Edinburgh with rent-money, was passing away, the condition of the humbler classes was nevertheless one of deep poverty.

National Debt.

The French war, disastrous to the interests of all concerned, was drawing to a close. The National Debt, which rose in 1815 to over £900,000,000 sterling, was then already pressing heavily on the nation, and every rank of society was suffering throughout the country. A few, indeed, had benefited by the fictitious demand which the war had created, but even this temporary inflation of prosperity had to a great extent disappeared. All commodities had become much enhanced in price, and wages, though they had risen, had not increased in proportion to the rise in the price of commodities. Wheat was more than double what it had

been a few years before, and actually stood in 1801 at £5, 19s. 6d. a quarter. The depressed state of the United Kingdom was unmistakably seen in the increased expenditure on the relief of the poor, which, standing at an average of about £2,000,000 sterling for England and Wales in the three years ending 1785, had risen to about £4,000,000 in 1800, and rose steadily during subsequent years till, in 1818, it reached nearly eight millions sterling, equal to a rate of no less than thirteen shillings and fourpence on every man, woman and child in the country. In the meantime, the population had not increased above one-eighth, and the drain on the strength of the country was such that it was doubtful if at that time any particular increase was taking place. The increased cost of provisions supplied to the paupers could not, on the most free computation, account for more than fifty per cent. of the increased expenditure on the relief of the poor, so that fifty per cent. still remained as a fair allowance for the increase of pauperism that had taken place. Still, manufactures were slowly developing themselves. During the years immediately preceding this time a few power-looms had been erected in Glasgow and the neighbouring country, chiefly for weaving calicoes. Some of the people connected with this industry had prospered. The schools in the manufacturing districts were better than those in the country parts, and when John M^c^Laren came to look at his large and still increasing family, it is no matter for wonder that he should conclude that they would have a better chance in industrial life there than in the Highlands.

Duncan M^c^Laren's parents.

John M^c^Laren was essentially "a staid God-fearing man," chastened but not soured by trial, and enjoyed, like his son Duncan, a remarkable evenness and placidity of temper. That son and his two sisters, in the evening of their own lives,

casting their memories back across an intervening space of more than half a century, could say with perfect truthfulness that they had never seen him give way to anger. In the household of such a man, living at such a time and brought up in the traditions of piety which have always been characteristic of the Scottish peasantry, it will be readily believed that religion had no secondary place. The study of the Bible was carried on after the reverent manner with which the national poet has familiarised all the world in the "Cottar's Saturday Night;" and the father was above all things anxious that his children should be brought up in the faith which, amid his many disappointments, had proved to him so effectual a support. But the life of the family, although the religious sentiment was dominant, was not gloomy or ascetic. Considering their limited means, John and Catherine McLaren dispensed a liberal and cheerful hospitality. They were good and friendly neighbours; and all family friends and connections passing by Loch Lomond between the Argyleshire or Perthshire Highlands and Glasgow were entertained freely by the bright, energetic, and practical housewife in the Renton home. Catherine McLaren was possessed of a strongly marked individuality. Her daughter Janet, writing of her in her own old age, furnishes the following beautiful portraiture of her mother for the grandchildren who were taught to admire and love her memory:—"I do not know what to say about my mother, for she was perfect in the eyes of her family, and everything she did was right. This opinion was shared by others also who knew her well. Mr. Patrick Mitchell, the manager of the large printworks at Renton, met my brother John one day, and asked him where my mother had gone to live. He said, 'To Glasgow.' Mr. Mitchell replied, 'Well, she has not left her equal in worth and industry in the county of Dumbarton.' She was indus-

MOTHER OF DUNCAN McLAREN
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trious to the end of her life, and as long as she was able to sit up, she was either knitting or sewing. She was skilful with the spinning-wheel, and could show many a piece of linen woven of the yarn which she had spun in her Highland home. In her old age she often referred with regret to the disappearance of the domestic spinning-wheel. Notable for her frugality, her horror of debt—the chief surely of the minor domestic virtues—enabled her to live within her income under all emergencies." Her pre-eminent housewifely qualities, her unfailing courage and tireless energy and happy temperament, long had scope for their exercise. Her husband was struck down by paralysis, and after a protracted illness, during which the future welfare of the family was his chief care, he died in his seventy-fourth year. It was then his widow removed to Glasgow, to be near her children and grandchildren there; but afterwards, yielding to the request of her youngest son, the subject of this memoir, she went to Portobello, where she died at an advanced age. Her portrait, painted when she was over eighty years of age, shows a handsome old lady, whose features express much firmness and uprightness of character.

Death of his parents.

In her successive removals she was accompanied by her two daughters, Janet and Euphemia, the latter named after the brave Aunt Effie of old Lismore and Dalmally times, who lived helpful and honoured till she attained the ripe age of one hundred and two years. Janet and Euphemia reproduced in their characters all the piety, fidelity, and independence which characterised the parents. Janet was a woman of very superior intelligence. Her love of books, which began in childhood, continued throughout her long life, and rendered her a most interesting companion. She followed the developments of public life, and especially her brother's share in them, with keen interest.

His sisters.

Besides being practical and sensible, she also had her grandmother's artistic sense and love of colour. "Greatly she surprised us," writes Mrs. Duncan McLaren, "when in 1851 we took her to the first Exhibition in London, by her partiality for the goldsmiths' department, and her knowledge of all famous and national jewels. She had, too, a heroic love for all that was truly good and noble in the history of her country, and her demeanour was courteous and dignified towards all. Aunt Phemie," her sister-in-law continues, "was a domestic character. It would not be easy to describe her worth, her devotion to those she loved, her nursing power, which was often called into use in her brother's family. She was like the goddess of the sick-room, and there was a tradition in the family that any patient, however ill, who came under her care, was sure to recover. She was one of those unmarried women whose self-denying love has proved so great a blessing to many a family circle." "Aunt Janet" died in 1883, in her ninetieth year, her younger sister surviving her little more than a twelvemonth; and their niece Henrietta, the only daughter of a long-deceased brother, who had been their companion and devoted nurse for many years, died soon afterwards.

His childhood.

The traits which distinguished the manhood of Duncan McLaren displayed themselves in the child. Patience, calmness, pertinacity of purpose, the resolve to test everything for himself, and not least, the readiness to learn from experience, all were part of his character from his earliest years. An incident illustrative of this used to be related of him. One Sunday, when he was about four years of age, he was left in the charge of his sister Janet while the family were at church. To console him for her absence his mother had given him a penny "to himself." The

child wished to spend it on a cake, and though his sister told him it was the Sabbath and that the baker's shop would be shut, nothing would satisfy him but to try. She led him at last to the baker across the road and knocked. A woman came to the door, and, on hearing the request, abruptly shut the door, saying indignantly that nobody sold cakes on the Sabbath. Janet expected some sign of disappointment, but the boy walked away apparently quite satisfied at having made the attempt, and having had a reasonable answer. This was in keeping with his conduct all through life. He used to say that the word "cannot" was not in his vocabulary; he never believed that anything was impossible until he had proved for himself that it was so. "Try" was his motto, and if he tried and failed, he was contented, so long as he had done his best and could do no more. 1804

In those days luxuries were rare in Scotland, and for the simple Highland family on the Leven a comfortable lot was only to be won by work; and no time was lost in developing the capacities of the children, industrial, mental, and moral. At ten years of age Duncan was better prepared for the battle of life than many a lad of modern times when well into his teens. In 1810 he was sent to live with a kinsman at Dalmally who had no children of his own. The parting with his mother was not easy either for him or her; but he was going to live with his mother's nephew, Hugh M°Lellan, and the separation might have been worse. His cousin lived at the farm of Tulloch. The house stood on a hill where Glenorchy joins the lesser valley of Glen Strae. Below lay Kilchurn Castle, mirrored in the placid waters of Loch Awe, while the blue ridges and misty corries of Ben Vurie bounded the valley on the right, and supported the mighty buttresses of Ben Cruachan, which rose Leaves home for Dalmally.

1810 Dalmally.

beyond. Such was the spot in which Duncan passed the next two years of his boyhood; and the picture of the scene, painted by the brush of Arthur Perigal, was one of the best-prized possessions of his later days. Not two miles from Tulloch lay Edandonich, where his parents dwelt eleven years before. But while the house at Edandonich stands now as it did then, the only remains of the cottage at Tulloch are the few stones that mark its boundary. It has shared the fate of many another crofter's homestead in the Highlands, where green patches in the heather are the only vestige of the dwellings of the honest, frugal peasants of those days. But in the Dalmally country the crofters are not extinct, and the fertile oat-fields on the river-side still testify to the worth of peasant-farming.

Boyhood.

Though small for his age, the boy had considerable activity and muscular strength, and his quick eye and steady nerve enabled him to bear his part well in country sports. He used to tell how on one occasion a great shinty or hockey match, in which the best talent of the country-side was engaged, was played at Dalmally, and how he was one of the Dalmally players. His side was sorely pressed, and a big Highlander, secure of victory, was taking his aim for the final drive, when, to his amazement, he saw the ball disappear. Little Duncan McLaren, whom he had despised as a rival, had slipped up behind the Highland giant, and placing his club between the man's legs, had nimbly drawn off the ball, and before the champion could recover from his surprise, the ball, smartly hit by Duncan, was bounding towards the opposite goal, amidst the applause of the bystanders. But the attractions of outdoor sports were not allowed to interfere with his school-work. An old man who had been his schoolfellow said to Mr. Bright, on one of his visits to Dalmally, "Duncan wasn't much for play;

he loved his books better." He proved himself an apt scholar at the little school above Strae Bridge, and made such progress that in a short time the old teacher began to use him as an assistant, and to talk of his succeeding him in the onerous duties and scanty emoluments of the Highland school. 1812

But when he was in his twelfth year, an opening occurred possessing stronger attractions for his relatives than the prospect of the reversion of the mastership of Glen Strae school. Mrs. M'Lellan's brother, Nicol M'Intyre, was in business as a merchant at Dunbar, and it was arranged that Duncan should go to him as an apprentice. Accordingly in the spring of 1812 the young lad quitted Dalmally for Dunbar. Across the valley and above Kilchurn Castle stands on a hill a monument to the Gaelic poet Duncan Ban M'Intyre. An easy carriage-road from Dalmally now ascends this hill, and winds along the loch to Cladich, and thence to Inverary. But in those days a hill-path scarcely indicated the way, and the boy had before him a weary and lonesome journey on foot. In the sixteen miles of mountain-track before reaching Inverary, he scarcely saw a sign of human life, and the way was to him entirely unknown; but he had been told to keep by the stream, and so he followed the Aray, from which the little town takes its name. Thus guided, he arrived in safety at his night's resting-place on the shore of Loch Fyne, and slept within sight of the castle of the great magnate of the district—The M'Callum More. Thence he proceeded to Dunbar; and a few days afterwards his father was apprised by the following letter of the wayfarer's safety:— Journey to Inverary.

DUNBAR, *May* 2, 1812.

DEAR SIR,—According to your request, I hand you this line to acquaint you of Duncan your son's arrival in this place, Thursday Arrival at Dunbar.

1812 evening last, with the Dunbar carrier; and he is going to do well seemingly, but his trial is but short yet. He is not so big as Hugh McLellan described him to me. If I had known him to be so young, I would have had him for four years in place of three, as he will be of very little use to me for twelve months upon account of his being so short. He cannot take down the goods nor put them up again for some time. You can consider if you think what I say to be reasonable, and also whether I am to keep him in clothes, school, &c. Let me hear from you soon, and I'll write you occasionally now and then, informing you of Duncan's welfare.—Yours sincerely, N. McIntyre.

This letter reflects much better than any lengthy description could the character of Mr. McIntyre. The shrewd and self-regarding but not discourteous country merchant stands out friendly and kindly as representative of the Scottish *bourgeoisie* of his day. The apprenticeship seems to have been extended from three to four years, but it does not appear that any further schooling was obtained for the boy, who was left pretty much to his own resources in picking up information by miscellaneous reading. At Dunbar, which was described by Smollett about fifty years before this time as "a neat little town situated on the seaside, where in the country-inn their entertainment far exceeded their expectations," though he gives no credit to the Scotch for that, because, as he says, "the landlord was an Englishman," Duncan was scrupulous in his attention to business, and soon so ingratiated himself both with his master and his customers, that long before the apprenticeship was over he had practically gained complete control over the business. He has himself, in a public lecture delivered in Edinburgh in 1868, given an account of the way in which his leisure-time was spent during this critical and formative period of his life and character. "As you may suppose," he said, "at that early age my education was not very

A four years' apprenticeship.

extensive. I could do what in England they call the three R's pretty well; and that was about the bulk of it. But I was fortunate in having a good deal of leisure, and, through the kindness of my employer, I was allowed to use that leisure in the way of reading or doing anything else I liked. I became a voracious reader, and all the books in the house I soon got through. Then my friend begged and borrowed for me, and as it became known I was fond of reading, a relation of his said he would send me something that would give me plenty to do. He sent two large quarto volumes of Gregory's Encyclopædia. I was not daunted, but began at the beginning and read them through, except the articles on Mathematics and Algebra, and matters of that kind, in which I was not sufficiently instructed. But although that may seem an absurd kind of educational process, and one I should not recommend any one else to follow, because they might get much more useful books, I feel bound to say I got more benefit from the reading of that work than from any reading I ever had. At that early age things got impressed upon my mind. I got a smattering of everything; whether gunnery, fortifications, shipbuilding, cannon-founding, or anything whatever, I went on and read it out and out; and in this way I got a good deal of information. At this time the *Scotsman* newspaper was first published. One of my friends took in that paper, and was so kind as to give me a reading of it, from which I derived great advantage. The foundation of all the political knowledge I ever had was derived from that paper, which was most ably conducted at that time."[1]

1814

Self-culture.

[1] The first number of the *Scotsman*, price fourpence, was published 25th January 1817, and the reference in the extract must therefore be, at the earliest, to the year during which Mr. McLaren remained in Dunbar after the apprenticeship was ended.

1816 It may here be mentioned, that after this lecture had been delivered, the son of the old Dunbar friend referred to sent him a number of early volumes of the *Scotsman*, thinking that it would interest him to see again the very numbers of the paper he had read over half a century before.

Engagement in Haddington. In 1816 the apprenticeship ended, and he remained with his employer at what now seems the very small salary of £14 a year, with board and lodging. In 1817 he was engaged by Mr. M'Intyre's brother in Haddington, the county town of East Lothian, for £16 a year, with board and lodging; and in the following year, tempted by a salary of £40 and the attractions of a wider field for work, with the better opportunities of advancement it offered, he passed into the employment of Messrs. John Lauder & Co. in the High Street of Edinburgh. This firm was then carrying on a large retail business in the city, and a wholesale business in addition in various parts of Scotland, and were in high repute as merchants of standing and honour.

Removal to Edinburgh. Few young men entering on the business of life in Edinburgh or any other large town, free from the personal supervision of parents or of friends, ever voluntarily subjected themselves to a severer discipline than did this country youth of eighteen years of age. His early religious training made it impossible for him to be satisfied with the gay frivolities sought by many youths, and conspired with his thirst for knowledge to point out a more excellent way. In

Life in Edinburgh. summer the day began by a three-mile walk before breakfast to Newhaven for a bathe in the Firth of Forth, and then back to breakfast in time to open the shop at eight. The whole day was spent at business, the hours for which were at that time considerably longer than they are now. Immediately on his arrival in Edinburgh he had joined the

Select Subscription Library, and there, or at the School of Arts, most of his evenings were spent. To the former institution indeed he was happily able to afford material assistance as well as to receive benefit from its books, for he actively helped in the management, bringing to its service that talent for accounts which was destined afterwards to play so important a part in affairs of much greater consequence. For a series of years after this time he prepared for the benefit of the members statistical statements of the affairs of the Society, showing the membership, classifying the books, and setting forth the state of the accounts. At the School of Arts courses of lectures were given in the various branches of general education, and young M°Laren availed himself of the advantages of many of these. In the lecture from which extracts have already been made he thus refers to some of the experiences of this time :—"During the period I was with Messrs. John Lauder & Co., and for some years afterwards, I took every opportunity of improving my education by attending lectures, and by cultivating reading of a more elevated kind from a better selection of books, for I became a member of the Select Subscription Library and had access to all kinds of books; and I may state that I mastered Adam Smith at an early period of my life, to my great advantage. One of my employers had a nephew [1] who took the first prize in mathematics in Professor Leslie's class. This was a day-class at the university; no young man who was engaged in business could attend it, and he offered to instruct me gratuitously in the evenings. I gladly accepted his offer, and went through Euclid with him, feeling greatly obliged and greatly benefited by the instruction I then 1818

[1] Afterwards known as Dr. John Taylor of Busby, one of the most accomplished scholars in the ministry of the United Presbyterian Church.

1818 received. I also attended lectures on various subjects, including chemistry, and before the dreadful Burke and Hare murders I attended a full course of lectures on anatomy by Dr. Knox, who figured so conspicuously in that affair. I also attended some lectures at the School of Arts."

A life-long friend.

Among the very few intimate friendships which Duncan McLaren formed during his early life was one with Charles Leopold Robertson, a companion of his own age, who also attended these lectures. Alike in many of their circumstances, their lives diverged into very different courses, but were marked by the same sense of duty and principle. Mr. Robertson's narrower life, first as a clerk in an Edinburgh bank, and subsequently as manager of the Wilts and Dorset Banking Company at Frome, proved no barrier to the deep interest which the friends took in each other to the last. On his death in 1875, Mr. Robertson left, as a portion of his small savings, the sum of £400 to the friend of his youth. It seemed only right to use this money to preserve the memory of so good a man in his native city which he loved so well; and Duncan McLaren therefore, at a meeting of the Watt Institute and School of Arts, now known as the Heriot-Watt College, explaining these circumstances, offered the money to establish some small annual prizes bearing Charles Robertson's name. Lord Shand, however, who presided, proposed that they should bear the double name of the McLaren-Robertson prizes, in remembrance of the early friendship which had been formed in that institution, and this suggestion the meeting heartily endorsed. Wishing that more particulars of the self-sacrificing life of Charles Robertson should be known to the recipients of these prizes, Mrs. McLaren wrote a touching little account of the story in the form of a letter, headed "A Quiet Heroic Life," a

copy of which, it is provided, shall be given every year to each prize-winner.[1] 1818

Another book which young McLaren mastered as thoroughly as the "Wealth of Nations" was Paley's "Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy." The distinguished author of the "Evidences of Christianity" died in 1805, and his works were at this time at the zenith of a fame which they maintained undiminished for many years thereafter. To his latest days the impression made on Duncan McLaren by the study of the "Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy" was never effaced. Thus it was that, in a newspaper letter written about three months before his death, he very happily applied an extract from Paley in explanation of the moral law that promises are binding "in the sense in which the promiser believed the promisee accepted the promise;" that it is the expectation on either side that constitutes the promise, and, "consequently, any action or conduct towards another, which we are sensible excites expectation in that other, is as much a promise and creates as strict an obligation as the most express assurance." And with characteristic adherence to principle, he goes on to say: "As the moral law cannot be altered, why should not the law of the land be altered in conformity thereto by an Act of Parliament to apply in future cases?" A writer who claimed personal acquaintance with the late Lord Iddesleigh said Moral training.

[1] The conditions of eligibility attached by the College to these prizes are as follows:—(1.) Men and boys employed in any trade or other manual labour or occupation as ordinary workmen, and as such earning daily or weekly wages, or apprentices in the same occupations; (2.) Young women employed in shops or warehouses, or in any kind of mechanical or trading occupation, and as such earning daily, weekly, or monthly wages; and (3.) Young men under twenty years of age employed in shops or warehouses as salesmen, clerks, or porters, and as such earning daily, weekly, or monthly wages, and also apprentices in shops or warehouses.

See Appendix.

1818 some time ago, that he also recognised this interpretation of the bearings of the moral law as stated by Paley, and, like Mr. McLaren, strove to give effect to it as a rule of conduct and life.

Liberal sympathies.

Born at the commencement of this century, Duncan McLaren naturally participated in the liberal spirit which marked the growth of the new age. His early years were spent amidst the excitements and alarms of war, but now that these critical times had passed away, it was seen that the spirit of modern thought and liberal opinion had lived and gained strength notwithstanding all the efforts of bitter Tory opposition to crush it. Edinburgh had played her part nobly in the struggle for liberty, and no adopted home could have provided better soil on which to nourish and strengthen a mind of the quality of young McLaren's. Within a few years there had passed through the University of Edinburgh, in preparation for the distinction which in different spheres awaited them, such men as Brougham, Jeffrey, Cockburn, Lord Henry Petty, Lord John Russell and Francis Horner. These and many others were penetrated with the new spirit, and through them the seat of learning, founded by James VI. for the people, was to wield her just influence, and to give philosophic sanction to the movements which were destined to result from the changed standpoint of the time.

The Pantheon meeting.

In 1814 was held the first assemblage of the people of Edinburgh for a public object, when a petition was adopted in favour of the abolition of West Indian Slavery; a most significant meeting to those with insight to read the signs of the times. In 1820 a great demonstration was held in the Pantheon in favour of Reform, at which Duncan McLaren, just come as a youth to the city, first held up his hand for freedom; and in after years he often referred to this as

evidence of his early zeal as a Reformer. Jeffrey, Cockburn, and their companions were at this time the leaders of Edinburgh Liberalism, and they, along with the men who founded the *Scotsman*, sympathising with the movement they saw going on in their midst, were not wanting in courage or wisdom to direct it. 1820

Such were the circumstances amidst which young M^c^Laren took up his residence and entered on his life-work in Edinburgh. Though no university training had bestowed on him the power of giving expression to his youthful aims and impulses, he had at least been born amid the very changes whose onward movement was to bring to vigorous maturity that modern spirit the infancy and early childhood of which had been coincident with his own. There was thus the less reason for any verbal or literary expression of the hopes and aspirations which were silently working within him. But such success as might lie before him could be achieved only in one way. Indeed there is much reason to believe that the success which did in fact so richly reward his patient endeavour was for a long time entirely out of the reach both of his ambition and his desire. Nothing seems to have been in his mind beyond the determination industriously to do his duty towards those into whose service he had entered and whose interests he had at heart, while he was equally resolved to omit no opportunity for self-culture, in order to fit himself for whatever path the future might open up to him. These aims, he knew, could be attained only by the exercise of virtues which, if laudable to the onlooker, are very apt to appear to the performer of them rather commonplace and repellent. But a mind trained in the old Scottish Covenanting spirit was accustomed to make little account of liking or disliking. He determined at once to base his future life on the patient performance

A rigid self-discipline.

1820 of duty, and on the practice of the rigid economy which his own clear perception recommended and his limited income rendered inevitable. Forty pounds a year is not much in these days of cheap food and cheap clothing; but it was a good deal less in 1818, when wheat was worth eighty-six shillings a quarter, and when oatmeal was nearly twice as dear as it is to-day. Withal, he was not unmindful of the claims of kindred and hospitality. His mother, then a widow, was living in Glasgow with her two daughters, and on one occasion when Duncan went there on business, he brought his sister Janet back with him to his lodgings in St. Patrick Square, to show her the beauties of the capital. They travelled by canal-boat, as being cheaper than the coach. Janet was surprised to see how well her brother lived, for tea, which was then a costly luxury to the ordinary householder, appeared regularly with other good things on the breakfast-table. But the reason of this good fare was revealed to her when, on the morning of her departure, she chanced to overhear her brother say to the servant, "Jessie, you'll bring porridge to-morrow again as usual."

A sister's visit.

Religious convictions.

His religious convictions were shown by the step which he soon took of connecting himself with Bristo Street United Presbyterian Church, then under the ministry of Dr. James Peddie, and the chief centre of Liberal Dissent in Scotland. It does not appear that the rising scientific scepticism of the time had exerted any influence on his mind at eighteen years of age, or that his knowledge of books and culture, such as it was, had in the least dimmed the clearness or imparted any hesitancy to the fulness of his assent to the simple faith in which he had been brought up, and in which those around whom centred his most loved and honoured recollections had lived. His mind was thus well

prepared, like a soil carefully tilled, for the acceptance of the teaching of the venerable and public-spirited minister, into whose Christian work and denominational activity he threw himself thoroughly and without reservation. For Dr. James Peddie he entertained a high respect and admiration; and in after years he frequently referred in terms of grateful appreciation to the advantages he was conscious of having derived from association with him. There can be little doubt that to the influence of that association must be in large part attributed the determined attitude which he afterwards assumed in reference to the Established Church, and the efforts he made towards the organisation of the Scottish Voluntaries in defence of their rights and privileges. In a note written by the Rev. Dr. William Peddie, son and successor in the Bristo Street ministry of Dr. James Peddie, it is said, "Mr. M°Laren was admitted a member of the congregation soon after he came to Edinburgh. In the year 1838 he was elected to the eldership, but he saw it meet to decline acceptance of that office. He continued, however, a steady and attached worshipper in Bristo Street Church for a long series of years, and manifested not a little active interest in its concerns, even up to the period when his time became more engrossed with civic and political affairs. He was always ready to give his valuable service in any case of difficulty, and took his share in all the pecuniary responsibilities of the congregation with exemplary liberality. He and his family occupied the same pew with Mr. John Ritchie, the proprietor of the *Scotsman*, and this circumstance may be noted as marking the period of his first indirect connection with that powerful newspaper."

1820

Connection with Bristo Church.

CHAPTER II.

PERSONAL HISTORY.

1820 DUNCAN M°LAREN remained in the service of Messrs. John Lauder & Co. from 1818 to 1824, at a salary which increased every year. But his duties and responsibilities increased far more rapidly. He attended closely to business, and his employers' interests were considered his own. An illustration of his scrupulous fidelity was given soon after his arrival in Edinburgh. An East Lothian banker had been accused of forgery. Mr. M°Laren was requested by the police authorities to go to Glasgow to identify him. His evidence proved the prisoner not to be the real culprit.

Faithful service.

When offered some remuneration for his services, he refused to take anything beyond the coach-fare, saying that he had been put to no further expense, as he stayed with his mother. "At least," said the procurator-fiscal, "you will accept some acknowledgment for the time you have spent." "No; my time is my employer's, not my own," was the response. The incident reached the ears of Mr. Lauder, and confirmed him in the opinion he already held of the young man's unbending integrity, and he soon intrusted him with the confidential business of the firm, occasionally sending him to London to buy goods, a mission at that time generally reserved for principals. The confidence he inspired among the business men with whom he was brought into relation resulted in an offer which came from a

large wholesale house that he should go as their representative to South America. This offer was accompanied by the promise of what was considered at that time the handsome salary of £200 a year. He had resolved to accept the offer, when the firm got into difficulties, and the negotiations were dropped. He was much disappointed, and in after days has been heard to say that had he at that time been offered a post for life worth £200 a year, he would have accepted the offer gladly, and would have thought himself a fortunate man.

1824

A South American offer.

A much more substantial proof of confidence in his business talents and uprightness was soon afterwards afforded to him. In 1824 Mr. Lauder wished to retire from business. Duncan M^c^Laren in the following autobiographical note, penned late in life, gives an interesting account of the change in his position which resulted from this decision :—"During the last three years of my engagement with Messrs. Lauder and Co., I was intrusted with the confidential work of going to the market to buy goods. During this period I became acquainted with Mr. White, of White, Urquhart, & Co., Glasgow, an excellent man in all respects, who took a fancy in a certain sense to me, and thought, from what he had seen and heard of my talents and industry and my desire to promote the interests of my employers, that I would be certain to succeed if I began business on my own account. He knew that I had no money of my own excepting a trifling amount from savings on my salary, after assisting near relatives who were poorer than myself; and, to my surprise, he one day told me that he had formed such an opinion of me, that, if I desired to begin business, he would lend me whatever money I required, at a low rate of interest, and without any security. I thanked him very sincerely, and said I would take six months to consider the

"A great benefactor."

1824 matter, and then inform him what decision I should come to. One difficulty with me was—what if I should not succeed and should lose my friend's money? And how could I ever repay him if such should be the case?

"Eventually I felt satisfied in my own mind that I should succeed, and resolved to accept my kind friend's offer. When I told him this with overflowing expressions of gratitude and thanks, he asked me how much money I should require. I said I had carefully considered the matter, and thought that £800 would be the requisite sum. My friend thought this was rather a small sum, but said when I had occasion to go to the markets (London and Manchester), as was then customary in spring and autumn, he would give such additional temporary loans as I might require. He gave me a draft for £800, for which I gave him my promissory note, and I took a shop in what was then an excellent central situation, and succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations. My friend often made me additional temporary loans on going to market, and in a few years I repaid him in full, principal and interest, and up to the present day never think of him without the deepest feelings of gratitude." The correspondence relating to this generous offer was carefully preserved, the packet being labelled "From my great benefactor."

Begins business on his own account.

The small shop in the High Street in which Duncan McLaren commenced business on his own account in 1824 was opposite St. Giles's Church, a few doors above the Royal Exchange. It now forms part of the extensive premises occupied by the firm of McLaren, Son, & Co. It was then the property of Sir John Marjoribanks of Lees, father of the present Lord Tweedmouth. To show the principles on which he commenced business, we again quote from his public lecture:—"At that time the profits were

large—considerably larger than they are now. And there was a curious system in Edinburgh, then almost universal, of naming a higher price for an article than that which people were really willing to give. It used to be called 'prigging,' and in certain districts of the city, particularly the South Bridge, it was carried on to an extent really quite disreputable. With the exception of Alexander Cruickshank, a Quaker, opposite the Surgeons' Hall, I believe there was hardly a shopkeeper who would not make an abatement on the total of the account, or on the price of a single article. I did not like that system, and I resolved, when I began business, that I would make no abatement in any shape or way, directly or indirectly—that I would take shillings as well as pounds, and pence as well as shillings. I was warned that this plan would never do; people would be offended, as it had been tried before; but I said I would try, for I was satisfied that it was the right way. I did try, and it succeeded, and the practice I began is now all but universal in this city."

1824

His principle of conducting business.

In those days the New Town of Edinburgh was becoming an important part of the city, but as it was wholly used for residential purposes, business was done almost entirely on the South and North Bridges and in the High Street. Princes Street was a terrace of dwelling-houses, and those who know it now as one of the finest promenades in Europe, consisting entirely of magnificent hotels, shops, offices, and clubs, will find it difficult to imagine it as the quiet side of Old Edinburgh. The Mound was then hardly completed, and the North Bridge was the main access to the New Town. Railways and omnibuses there were none, and coaches were few in number. Hackney-carriages were rarely used, and the street-porters, of whom a few still remain, did most of the work of carrying goods and

Edinburgh in 1824.

1824 passengers from street to street. At the corners of the streets frequented by these useful functionaries there were usually to be found two or three sedan-chairs, in which ladies at all times, and gentlemen when in evening-dress, were carried by two stout Highlanders, often at a brisk trot. The character of the streets and closes of the Old Town of Edinburgh, caused this mode of locomotion to survive in its precincts long after it had fallen into disuse in other towns. By this time, however, the fashionable and professional world had deserted their former residences in the Old Town, with the exception of George Square. One of the last survivors of the Edinburgh society which peopled the once aristocratic High Street was an ex-governor of a West India island, who occupied a flat above McLaren's shop, and there entertained his friends in the style of the previous half-century. But, lying as it did between the Law Courts and public offices in and about the Parliament House, the Council Chambers, and the University on the one side, and the streets and squares of the New Town on the other, the High Street was particularly well situated for the purposes of trade.

Business prospers.

The business prospered, and soon gained a reputation beyond the bounds of the city. Mr. McLaren had the power, which does not always accompany personal capacity, of choosing the right men to assist him. Having chosen them, he always trusted them implicitly, and the consequence was perfect confidence between employer and employed; and changes seldom occurred, except such as were caused by promotion and the extension of the business. He interested himself also in the welfare of all who served him, and, at a time when long hours of service were exacted, he heartily supported the short-hours movement—a service

which in 1832 unexpectedly obtained for him a cordial vote of thanks, as expressed in the following letter :— 1829

Short-hours movement.

EDINBURGH, *October* 20, 1832.

SIR,—The Committee of the shopmen and mercantile clerks having understood, through a quarter on which they place the greatest reliance, that you have rendered them most valuable service in aiding their efforts to induce some of the most influential merchants in the Lawnmarket to shut their shops, in accordance with their memorial, they have deputed me to return you their most sincere thanks for your kindness, as they feel assured, from the denials they received in your neighbourhood, that without your aid they would not have succeeded in their object.

They are the more grateful for your unlooked-for exertions when they contrast it with the selfish feeling displayed by some merchants.

The Committee have charged me to express a hope that the young men you employ will, after this mark of attention to their interest, feel it a duty as well as a pleasure to redouble their exertions. (Signed) THOS. MOFFAT.

As the business increased and additional premises were required, Don's Close and adjoining property were annexed, and by an arrangement with the Town Council, Warriston's Close was made double its former width, as compensation and substitute for Don's.

Marriage with Miss Aitken.

In 1829 Duncan M^cLaren married Grant, youngest daughter of William Aitken, formerly a merchant at Dunbar, but who at the period of young M^cLaren's apprenticeship had retired from business, and had built himself a house at Haddington called "The Retreat." Grant Aitken's sister was the wife of Nicol M^cIntyre, with whom Duncan had served his apprenticeship. In these circumstances, and during his residence at Haddington, the friendship which had been formed between the young people laid the best foundation for the happiness which was so fully

1829 realised in their too short married life. Mrs. M'Laren was of a cheerful and vivacious disposition. A portrait painted soon after her marriage represents her as possessing much sweetness and intelligence, with great delicacy of feature. She took a deep and loving interest in all her husband's pursuits, and in matters beyond the joys and cares of her own household, as we find in a playful letter written to him when he was on one of his London journeys, in which she threatens him with a scolding on his return home for having sent her only a Scotch paper when she was longing for an English one.

They began their married life in a house in Princes Street at the corner of Castle Street, looking over the well-known gardens to the Castle beyond; but after a while they removed to a house in Ramsay Gardens on the Castle Hill. The locality was named after the author of the "Gentle Shepherd." In addition to its associations, it commanded a magnificent view of the New Town and north side of Edinburgh, with the Firth of Forth and the Fife-shire hills on the north side of the estuary.

Heavy bereavements.

Of the three children born of the marriage, two still survive, one now Lord M'Laren, a judge of the Court of Session, the other Mrs. Millar of Sheardale. But this happy married life was of short duration. Grant M'Laren died in 1833, in the twenty-ninth year of her age. With much to live for, the young wife and mother met the blow which was to remove her from earthly happiness with Christian fortitude. The grief caused by this sad event was intensified by the death soon after from croup of Anne, the eldest daughter, a child of great promise, when less than five years old. Her innocent and intelligent companionship had been her father's solace after his bereavement. For the first trial he had been prepared by

a suffering illness, but the shock which he sustained by the sudden death of this beloved child cost him more, he has been heard to say, than all the troubles of his life put together. 1833

But private grief cannot stay the march of public events, though it often leads those who suffer from it to take a part in them. The echoes of the conflict connected with the passing of the great Reform Act had just died away, and the changes introduced by the reformed Parliament were beginning to be felt. The Municipal Corporations Bill passed into law in 1835, the year after his second bereavement, and he threw himself into public life and entered the Town Council. In ecclesiastical affairs also the times were full of interest. The Non-Intrusion controversy had been raging for some years, with an interest for Scotchmen which perhaps only Scotchmen are capable of understanding. His judgment and sympathies were generally on the side of the Dissentient Evangelical party, with the exception of those episodes in their history in which they sought to place the resolutions of the Church above the law of the land. Their ultimate heroic secession from the endowments of the Church, at what they believed to be the call of duty, commanded his appreciation and even reverence, and led to the close alliance which so long subsisted between the leading politicians of the Free Church of Scotland and himself. The claim of public duty.

To return to the more strictly private side of Duncan M'Laren's history. The three years which intervened between the death of his first wife and his second marriage were perhaps less eventful as regards public work than those which immediately followed. In subsequent chapters his introduction to the reformed Town Council and his efforts for the extrication of the city's affairs from finan-

1835 cial embarrassment are fully reviewed, and it would serve no useful purpose to go over the same ground here. It will readily be understood that the political and municipal work of the young city merchant laid the foundation of private friendships and intimacies which subsisted through life. It was in the course of his labours in municipal affairs under the reformed Town Council that he was introduced to the house of William Renton in Buccleuch Place, at that time a centre of Liberal thought in Edinburgh.

The Renton family.

Mrs. Renton [1] was a woman of strong character and untiring benevolence, the mother of a large family, of whom more than one member attained positions of distinction and usefulness in the Church, in politics, and in finance. She was an example of the influence of the teaching and training of Evangelical Dissent on the minds and lives of the women of Scotland. Her piety was deep-seated and eminently practical, and the extent of her beneficent ministry made her name a household word among the poor and suffering. Few of her contemporaries were better versed in current political and ecclesiastical questions, and all her convictions and sympathies were with the Protestant democracy that asserted the duty of self-government along with the sacredness of personal freedom and responsibility both in Church and State. When the political martyrs, whose monument is the chief attraction in Calton Cemetery, were lying in the Calton Prison, she and her mother personally ministered to their wants; and from that time she was ever in the forefront of political thought and activity. With so much in common to draw him into near sympathy with this family, Duncan McLaren was led to form a closer

[1] A beautiful memoir of Mrs. Renton was written many years ago by her son, the Rev. Henry Renton of Kelso, and printed for private circulation only.

union with it by his marriage with the youngest daughter, Christina Gordon Renton. 1836

Marriage with Miss Renton.

Like the first, the second period of married life was of short duration. The marriage took place in 1836. Unfortunately, the delicacy which had given Christina Renton's parents anxiety from her girlhood increased after marriage; and although she bore her sufferings without complaint, it was impossible that her husband should not feel a good deal of anxiety on her account. He would fain have given up public life, but by this time he had been elected City Treasurer, and had got deeply into the business of unravelling the complications and confusions into which the Edinburgh city finances had fallen. His wife, moreover, had a chivalric love for the public work in which her husband was engaged, and encouraged him in the course which her own judgment told her was the path of duty. He felt himself, what was even more fully realised by his friends, that to withdraw at that stage would involve a disastrous surrender of public interests, which no one else at the moment was so competent to deal with. In 1838 the bill before Parliament for the settlement of the City affairs was being examined and criticised, and Duncan M'Laren was obliged to remain in London in charge of it until it finally became law.[1]

Home claims and ties.

Letters from London.

During his stay in London he wrote long and numerous letters to his wife, in which he gave full and detailed accounts of the negotiations which finally culminated in the passing of the bill.

[1] The issue of the business is now matter of history, a curious reference to which was made in the hearing of the writer of this note, showing how widely that history has become known. The editor of one of the newspapers in a Yorkshire borough was talking of the condition of the municipal accounts, and after stating that in his opinion they were by no means in a satisfactory state, and regretting that there was no one of leisure in the town competent and willing to attempt to set them straight, he ended with the declaration, "We want a Duncan M'Laren here!"

1838 The Queen's coronation.

The following interesting letter gives an account of his visit to Westminster Abbey to witness the coronation of Queen Victoria in June 1838 :—

"I found," he writes, "a letter from the London agents for the city, Spottiswoode & Robertson, saying that one of the city Members, Sir John Campbell,[1] had a coronation-ticket for me, and requesting me to call soon in case I needed court-dress. I of course called early, and was presented with the ticket by Lady Stratheden (Sir John Campbell's wife), who came into the room for the purpose. I asked her about dress, and she said, to my great relief, a dinner-dress was all that was required. She said, too, I had better be at Westminster Abbey at five o'clock in the morning to get a good place! This was rather early for me, but I accepted the ticket. Lady Stratheden is a peeress in her own right, and as such, I presume, she got a few tickets. I had no doubt this was the way it came, else *you know* I would not have taken it from her or any one else if it had been purchased, for they were selling as high as £25. I got up at half-past four this morning, and was in the Abbey by half-past five, and remained there till four in the afternoon. I had a delightful view of the Queen and all the company as they arrived for several hours before her. They passed in review before me, and it was a splendid sight,—the whole nobility of the land passing before one leisurely from six to ten o'clock. I only wished you had been with me to make my enjoyment greater. There was nothing struck me so much in seeing the peeresses walk along before me in procession as the fact that, with very few exceptions, they were all very stout women. I really never saw so many stout ladies, or women of any rank or class. I remarked, too, that when any one about fifteen stone weight appeared who was well made, the whisper among the gentlemen near me was, 'She is a very fine woman.' All those of a more slender form were allowed to pass without notice. It was very beautiful to see them in their crimson velvet robes, with trains three or four yards long, sailing

[1] Afterwards Lord Chancellor.

along the ground like peacocks. The Queen is rather little as compared with those whom I have been describing. I saw her for at least ten minutes, as there was a stoppage in the procession, or at least a very slow movement, when she was near me; and I saw the Duchess of Kent for a much longer time. The Queen is decidedly what would be called good-looking anywhere. The whole thing was worth going a thousand miles to see." 1838

On his return home, he found the state of his wife's health had not improved, and owing to this domestic anxiety, he began to extricate himself from the burden of municipal duties. But all his loving care, combined with the efforts of the best medical skill, were unavailing to restore the lost health. The weakness steadily increased, and the winter of 1841 found his home again darkened by bereavement. The second family consisted of three children, the eldest, Agnes, now Dr. Agnes M^cLaren; Duncan, named after his father, and his successor in the business; and Catherine, who became the wife of John S. Oliver, his partner in business. She, like her mother, died in early married life, leaving two sons. Heavy sorrow.

Lord M^cLaren has kindly placed at the disposal of the biographer the following reminiscences of the family life between 1836 and 1845:—

"My earliest impressions of home life belong to the period of my father's second marriage. He was then living in No. 2 Ramsay Gardens, a little terraced street on the Castle bank, which overlooked Princes Street, then almost entirely a residential street. I think the New Club (which I remember being built) was the first break in the dull and decorous uniformity of this now picturesque and lively thoroughfare. Railways had not then been thought of, and the Princes Street Gardens, through which we were accustomed to walk to the New Town, had the aspect of Lord M^cLaren's reminiscences.

1841 a suburban park, stretching away towards the fields and woodlands on which the West End of Edinburgh has since been built. In these days my father doubtless found his corner in the Castle rock a very convenient abode, being, as it was, within five minutes' walk of his business and of the Council Chambers, between which he spent the chief part of his time. He gave me the impression of being always occupied. He was in the habit of dining at four o'clock, and after dinner he went back to business, for at that time a great deal of shopping was done in the evening, and the introduction of gas, which I remember being talked of as a new thing, no doubt made the streets appear most brilliant to a generation which had been accustomed to the dismal lantern and the link-boy's torch.

"In the summer months we lived a good deal at New Gardens, a quaint little house near Queensferry with a walled garden, almost on the site now occupied by the works of the Forth Bridge contractors. My father generally came out in the afternoons, returning to business in the mornings; but excepting occasional country drives and walks in Dalmeny Woods, I cannot recall any particular incidents of our life.

"During this period he was successively Bailie and Treasurer in the Corporation of Edinburgh, and I remember that his friends used to speak of the Provostship as a thing in store for him, though at that time I do not think he desired it. I am speaking still of the period of his second marriage, 1836–1841; and during a great part of this time his wife's health was a cause of great anxiety to him, though I was then too young to realise this fully. I recollect more than one journey with her, undertaken for the benefit of her health. This was before the establishment of the main lines of railway through England. My second mother never regained her health, and her death, which occurred on the 1st November

1841, was a great grief to my father. I think that for some years afterwards he took less part in local politics than he had been accustomed to do, and did not see much company. 1841

"From 1841 to 1844, being unable to attend school or leave the house in the winter months on account of illness, I was a good deal with my father in the evenings. He wrote much for the press, writing with great rapidity in the same bold, clear-cut character which has become so familiar to a large circle of correspondents. He was accustomed to hand me the sheets of MS. to look over as he wrote them, and in this way I came to know about Edinburgh politics and finance, the management of the Police and of the Infirmary, National Education, and the various notes of the 'drum ecclesiastic,' which in those days conspired to distract the public attention from the real and pressing necessities of the illiterate poor. I think the Free Trade movement was the mainspring which drew my father back into public life. But there his action was viewed with jealousy by that school of Whigs who take the epithet 'old' as part of their proper designation. Liberalism had just received a severe check by the return of Sir Robert Peel to power at the head of a large majority, and was also suffering from internal dissension and the inability of its leaders to appeal to the popular imagination, or to sympathise with the wants of the commercial and industrial classes.

"My father was one of the first in Scotland to realise the absolute necessity of the 'total and immediate' repeal of the corn-laws, and he received little support from his former allies in the Council and the city. Lord John Russell had declared for a 'fixed duty' of five shillings on corn, I presume with the view of conciliating that considerable section of the Liberal party whose interests were bound up with the land, and the Edinburgh Whigs were very angry with any one

1841 who presumed to be more advanced than their chief. They used to come to the Free Trade committee meetings with their 'one-horse' affair, the moderate fixed duty; but were, as I understand, invariably beaten by my father and the Free Trade party, who held fast to the principle that the taxation on food was public plunder for the benefit of the landowners. My father worked incessantly at this question, carrying on a large correspondence with all parts of Scotland and organising meetings; but at this distance of time I cannot give details. There was a great Anti-Corn-Law meeting in the Music Hall, I think the first public meeting held in that building. I was present, and heard speeches by Cobden, Bright, and (I think) Colonel Perronet Thompson, well known as a vigorous writer and speaker on this subject. Cobden was my father's guest on this occasion, and his visit was the foundation of an intimacy which lasted through life, and which I need not say my father highly valued.

"I now pass to some purely personal matters. One marked characteristic of my father was his great sensibility to the sufferings of others, and sympathetic kindness on all occasions of illness or failing health in his family circle. My own health, which had been much shattered in these years of early boyhood, had so far improved that in 1844 a very competent adviser, the famous physician Andrew Combe (brother of George), predicted my complete recovery if I could be removed for a term of years to a milder climate.

"There was no lady friend to whose care I could be intrusted, and my father resolved to accompany me to Madeira, which was at that time considered the most suitable invalid resort for such patients as myself. During the summer I had travelled with him round the West Coast of Scotland and through the central districts of the Highlands, and in October 1844 we sailed together from Liverpool for

Funchal, Madeira. We had a rough passage, and the view of the terraced and vine-clad slopes of this most lovely bay might be compared to the gardens of Armida, if you substitute the figures of sunburnt fishermen for the nymphs of the Italian poet. We spent four or five months here, residing in a villa boarding-house, enclosed in a semi-tropical garden, where geraniums and fuschias bloomed through the winter. 1841

"My father and I spent a great part of our time on horseback, generally riding out some miles into the country in the morning, and again in the afternoon after an early dinner. Sometimes we went an excursion of three or four days. At that time he was very much interested in geology, a study which he had taken to through association with his early friend, Charles Maclaren, then editor of the *Scotsman*, and author of 'Geology of Fife and the Lothians.' The volcanic scenery of the Madeira Isles was a subject of fresh interest to my father, being of course entirely different from anything to be seen in the United Kingdom, and he would often call my attention to the phenomena indicative of the order of succession of the volcanic outbursts, while I endeavoured to interest him in the flora and ferns, which I cultivated with, I suspect, a very slender foundation of scientific acquirement. He was never a great reader of library books, but was insatiable in his search for information, and he had not been long in the island before he set to work to find out all about the laws, local customs, trade, and finance of this dependency of Portugal. From official documents which he had translated to him, from intercourse with English and native residents, and from his own observation, he wrote an interesting series of letters on Madeira, which appeared at the time in one of the Edinburgh newspapers, and were afterwards published by Messrs. W. & R. Chambers as one of their series of popular tracts.

1841 "He did not enter much into the gaieties of the English society here, but was nevertheless a popular member of it, knowing almost every one, and entering more or less into their different interests. During his stay in Madeira he made the acquaintance of John Scott Oliver, who was in business there, and who some years afterwards became my father's partner, and in 1862 entered into a nearer relationship by marrying my sister Catherine.

"Instead of coming home direct from Madeira, my father joined a party who engaged a coasting steamer for a trip to Gibraltar. Thence we travelled through Spain, the North of Italy, Switzerland, and Germany to England. I do not enter into particulars of this journey, because I daresay there is not much in it of the material from which biographies are made. But some of my recollections contrast curiously with the present order of things. For example, there was not a mile of railway in any part of our continental route, and in crossing Spain we were drawn by a dozen or more mules along roads which were generally execrable. The top of the diligence (which carried the mails) was occupied by carabineers with loaded muskets, but they did not in our journey find any occasion to use them.

"Here I think I may break off my memorandum, because, after spending a brief summer at home, I was abroad again for two years and a half. I returned about the time of my father's marriage to Miss Bright, which may be considered a new epoch in his life and that of his family. There is no doubt as to the powerful influence which my present mother exerted in strengthening and refining the intellectual character of my father, an influence which was not less beneficent towards the members of his family. But it is not possible for me to enter more fully on these topics in the present volume."

CHAPTER III.

MARRIAGE WITH MISS BRIGHT AND SUBSEQUENT FAMILY LIFE.

THE Anti-Corn-Law agitation was the connecting link between Duncan M°Laren and his future domestic life. It was at the Conference held in London during the Parliamentary session of 1842, when, as chairman, he rendered great service to the Anti-Corn-Law League, that he first became acquainted with John Bright. A warm friendship ensued, and he agreed to visit Rochdale during the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Manchester, which he had arranged to attend. John Bright, on his return home, spoke of his new friend as one of the most remarkable men he had ever met, and the prospect of his visit accordingly excited pleasurable anticipations. 1842

The following letter, written by Mrs. M°Laren some time after her marriage, gives an interesting account of this visit, and the important results to which it gave rise :— Visit to Rochdale.

November 30, 1853.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am thankful that our Blackpool journey had such good results, and that my husband's efforts on your behalf have been successful, and that you find yourself happy and comfortable after so much that has been trying to you. He certainly has a wonderful power in arranging difficult matters, but people see how just his views are, so he succeeds with them.

You ask me to tell you how I first became acquainted with

1842 him. To answer your question, I think I must, as children say, begin at the beginning. You know I lived at One Ash with my brother John Bright, after the sad loss of his wife, during all the Anti-Corn-Law agitation. When he returned from the great Anti-Corn-Law Conference in 1842, he told me he had met one of the most extraordinary men he had ever seen, and his name was Duncan McLaren. He described how the Conference was likely to end in nothing owing to so much difference of opinion, when that good man, Joseph Sturge, proposed that Duncan McLaren should take the chair. Many looked surprised, as few knew him. He took the chair, and made such a wonderful *résumé* of the opinions that had been expressed, deducing from them what the Conference ought to decide upon, that the meeting soon found itself brought into harmonious conditions. "But," my brother added, "the very appearance of the chairman, with his large head, clear open brow, and gentle voice, albeit with his Scottish accent, made a powerful impression upon the whole audience." He presided over that great meeting during the first two days. My brother spoke of his chairmanship with the greatest admiration. He dwelt also with much pleasure and interest on the acquaintance both he and Mr. McLaren had made of a gentleman there, Mr. Hamer Stansfeld, which afterwards ripened into a warm friendship. It was the same Mr. Stansfeld who introduced hydropathy into England, and by whose efforts the Ben Rhydding Hydropathic Establishment was built. You will smile when I give you a proof of the deep impression these descriptions of men my brother had so much admired made upon me, for our minds were then full of hero-worship for all who worked prominently on that great Anti-Corn-Law question. Some little time afterwards, being at Malvern with my brother Benjamin, we ascended the beautiful Malvern Hills. I shall never forget the music of the Hereford Cathedral bells which broke upon our ears as we gained the summit. A gentleman and lady were there before us, with whom we entered into conversation. I hardly know how it possessed me, but I said, "Pray excuse this question. Is your name Hamer Stansfeld?' He replied, "Yes; but how do you know me?" I said, "Because

you exactly answer the description my brother John Bright gave of the Hamer Stansfeld he met at the Anti-Corn-Law Conference in London in 1842." I hardly need add this was the beginning of a pleasant friendship. Shortly afterwards the British Association Meeting was held in Manchester. Mr. M^cLaren, in accordance with an invitation which my brother had given him, wrote to say he hoped to be there. A little proud of the incident on the Malvern Hills, I playfully said, on leaving home to attend the meetings of the Association (my brother being detained at home by a cold), "I shall be sure to find Duncan M^cLaren at one of the meetings, and shall bring him back with me." However, I found no one who answered to his description. On my return, my brother met me at the door, and I said, "You will be disappointed to see me come home alone, but Mr. M^cLaren was not there." "No," my brother said, "he preferred coming here, and has been with me all the afternoon." This was my first introduction to Mr. M^cLaren. He looked older than I expected, but he was under the influence of a great sorrow. Next day, Sunday, we went down to Green Bank to dine with my father. Two ladies were staying there, Mrs. Richardson and her daughter from Belfast. They were to sail for Dublin the following day, and were to accompany us next morning to Manchester *en route* for Liverpool. We were to drive to Manchester, as we always preferred this to going by train. Mr. M^cLaren asked us if this was wise, and urged us very much to go by train, as these ladies were bound to go by a certain train to Liverpool in order to catch the Dublin steamer. We said there was no danger of our not being in time, and we preferred driving as usual. We were surprised, to say the least of it, to find a comparative stranger press his views so much upon us as to the risk there was in driving. We started as agreed upon next morning, when, to our dismay, after going about four miles on the road, one of the horses fell down in a fit. Judge of our humiliation! Not a word escaped Mr. M^cLaren about his superior wisdom; he was full of sympathy and full of help. We happened to be near a small station, so we waited for the next train and proceeded to Manchester, but our friends were too late for the Liverpool train

1842

1848 and missed the boat for Ireland. As you may suppose, this laid the foundation for an almost superstitious regard for Mr. McLaren's judgment, which feeling has often been called forth during our married life, and the children share it with me. When I tell him if he had lived a couple of hundred years ago, he would have been thought to have second-sight, he quietly replies, "Then second-sight comes from the power and habit of observation and the possession of common sense." This is too long a letter, but I thought you would like to hear the whole story.—Yours ever affectionately, PRISCILLA McLAREN.

arriage th Miss ight.

It was not, however, till 1848 that the friendship thus begun resulted in marriage. A second letter from Mrs. McLaren's pen describing this event forms a fitting sequel to the one just given describing their first meeting.

NEWINGTON HOUSE, *December* 16, 1853.

MY DEAR FRIEND,— . . . You know the close tie which bound me to my brother John from my girlhood, and his motherless little girl, Helen,[1] was like my very own. What I felt in giving up this child of my affections to another mother when my brother married again was a good preparation of heart for the duties which had been pressed upon me, and which in future were to be mine. . . . The outward separation from the "Society of Friends," to which I was deeply attached, and which was a consequence of marriage with one not united in membership to it, was a great burden to me; but I felt that the deepest feelings of the heart ought not to be set aside for the sake of a rule that was not only impolitic but unjust.[2] . . . Amongst the "Friends" no minister is employed in the marriage-service; the bride and bridegroom "do themselves the solemn rite perform."

[1] Now Mrs. Helen Bright Clark, of Street, Somerset.

[2] At that time members of the "Society of Friends" marrying those of another denomination forfeited their membership. This rule is now dispensed with, and "Friends" have opened their meeting-houses for marriages with those not in membership with them.

McLaren, in order to meet my views on this point, consented that we should be married at the Registrar's office. This was objected to as not being respectable. "Then," I said, "this is an opportunity for making it respectable." 1848

My husband had seen very little of English scenery; so after our marriage we visited Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. He was charmed with Haddon Hall and other houses of historic interest, and in visiting the Dukeries he enjoyed the splendid trees, which gave him a good idea of the woodland beauty of the ancient forest of Sherwood.

We saw Newstead Abbey, and were much interested in visiting Annesley Hall, the home of Miss Chaworth's girlhood as well as that of her married life. It was to the unrequited love which Byron had for her that we owe that touching poem of unsurpassed beauty, "The Dream." We went afterwards into Wales, where I must say McLaren found a pleasure quite as congenial in watching the riveting of plates and other operations in the construction of the Tubular Bridge across the Menai Straits.[1] We then proceeded to the English Lakes, and Rydal and the beautiful surroundings of Wordsworth's home life concluded what is called the "wedding journey;" and when my husband, after his long and patient waiting, landed me at the home which was to be *ours*, the door opened upon a group of three little girls in pretty white frocks, each holding a lovely bouquet to present to me as a love-offering, whilst two dear boys and the grandparents met us with an equally affectionate welcome. . . .

This is an egotistical letter; but as you asked for it and I promised it, I feel bound to send it.—Yours always lovingly,

P. McL.

It was to his house 24 Rutland Street that Duncan McLaren brought the wife who for thirty-eight years helped, loved,

[1] Though this bridge was considered a great wonder at that time, it appears almost insignificant compared with the more recent efforts of scientific skill. Mr. McLaren, on visiting the scene of the Forth Bridge, said it was so great a wonder, that if he were living when it was completed, he should like to be taken to see it, even if he died half an hour afterwards.

1848
Atland Street and Newington House.

and encouraged him with unceasing devotion. His home became a place of sunshine, sustained by a warm all-pervading affection; and its owner, conscious of a new impulse and inspiration influencing the highest and noblest qualities of his mind, devoted himself to public work with redoubled ardour. Here two of his younger children were born, Charles Benjamin Bright, now a barrister at the English bar, and Member for Stafford from 1880 to 1886, and Helen Priscilla, now wife of Dr. Rabagliati. In 1852 he bought Newington House, where he resided for the remainder of his life, and which is associated with all his important public labours, both as Lord Provost and Member for the city. In this house was born his youngest son, Walter Stowe Bright, now in business in Keighley, Yorkshire, and Member for the Crewe Division of Cheshire.

Duncan McLaren's reputation as a man of business, and his mastery of the science of accounts, brought him many opportunities of occupation wider and more varied than that which he had chosen at the outset of life; but his time and energies were devoted, as a rule, rather to the public advantage than to his own. Some of the public services outside the sphere of politics, which later in life he was in the habit of recalling with pardonable pride, were connected with railway management. He assisted in the dethronement of Mr. Hudson, "the Railway King," so called because of the magnificence of his railway building enterprises. Certainly never was monarch less regardful of the interests of his subjects than was Mr. Hudson of the infant struggles of the English railway companies, or more reckless in the use he made of his supremacy in the direction of railway policy. In May 1849 the shareholders of the York, Newcastle, and Berwick (now part of the North-Eastern) Railway Company appointed a special committee of investigation into the

Dethronement of the Railway King."

affairs of the line, and Duncan M^c^Laren was asked to serve on it, his colleagues being Messrs. James Meek, Horatio Law, James Leechman, and John Ripling, with Mr. George Leeman (afterwards Member for York) as secretary. The committee issued a series of reports as the result of their searching and elaborate investigations, which ended the reign of Mr. Hudson, marked out a safer and sounder policy and system of management, and restored the control of their property to the shareholders. In the financial part of the investigation Duncan M^c^Laren took a prominent part, and a handsome piece of plate which each member of the committee received from the shareholders testified their appreciation of the services rendered. While still acting as a member of this committee, he was appointed a director of the company at the half-yearly meeting of the shareholders held on 23rd August 1849; and he remained a member of the Board for six years. 1849

Skill as accountant and statistician.

Previous to his appointment as a member of the investigation committee of the affairs of this company, he had acted for some time as auditor of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway Company, but on his appointment to the former position he felt compelled to withdraw from the latter. His resignation caused much regret. The chairman of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Company personally urged him to reconsider his decision, saying, on behalf of himself and his colleagues, that they felt clearly "that it is impossible to find a successor so well qualified to act, and who would be satisfactory to the shareholders," and suggesting that his name might at least be retained as co-auditor, while the work was done by his colleague. He, however, was then, as ever during his life, steadfast in his resolve to undertake no responsibility which he was not able to discharge by his own personal efforts. He

1850 had never made a special study of accounts beyond what was necessary for an ordinary private business, but his power of unravelling intricate masses of figures and drawing conclusions from them seemed to be intuitive; and the financial part of any new undertaking in which he was from time to time engaged was immediately seen through and carefully watched.

At the time of his joining the Committee of Investigation, he was engaged in winding up the affairs of the Exchange Bank of Scotland, of which he had acted as manager from its origin in 1845; and in anticipation of the close of this work, attempts were made to engage him professionally in railway administration. Mr. H. G. Thompson of Moat Hall, York, then acting as general manager of the York and North Midland and the East and West Yorkshire Railways, conceived a great regard for him, and earnestly endeavoured to induce him to become his successor in that post. In the summer of 1850 Mr. Thompson wrote: "Would you, after your Exchange Company's affairs are wound up, accept any place connected with the management of a railway company, with an adequate salary?" After some further correspondence, the offer was conditionally accepted. But the ties which bound him to Edinburgh and to independent public life were stronger than he at first thought; and, supported by Mrs. McLaren, who shared his interest in public work, he eventually resolved to remain a citizen of Edinburgh, and accordingly wrote to Mr. Thompson withdrawing his acceptance of the proposed engagement. "It is the only instance," he said, "in the course of my public life in which I have halted between two opinions. I hope most sincerely you will find some person better qualified in all respects than I am to fill the office." Mr. Thompson sent a kind letter in reply, asking for a reconsideration of the decision, and expressing his

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own willingness to continue in office for a time, if the delay would help to clear the way for his friend's removal southwards. 1850

Another offer of railway management.

Meanwhile another offer came from Manchester. Mr. Bannerman, Mr. Houldsworth, and other prominent Lancashire merchants invited him to accept the managership of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company. With less hesitation, he declined this second offer, and again asked Mr. Thompson to liberate him from his conditional acceptance of the York appointment. By these decisions York and the railway companies may have lost, but Edinburgh and himself were certainly the gainers. The following letter, written by Mrs. M^cLaren, throws further light on the motives that led to the refusal of these offers :—

Motives which led to refusal of these offers.

. . . Now that it is all over, I am going to tell you of a temptation we have been under, which might greatly have altered our future life. M^cLaren's services connected with railway matters, in which you know he has been for some time engaged, have caused quite a sort of love affair between him and Mr. Thompson of York, which has had a painful as well as a pleasant side to it, as I suppose all unsuccessful love affairs have. Mr. Thompson was most anxious that M^cLaren should succeed him as general manager of the York and North Midland Railways. The offer was most urgently made, with every inducement to tempt us to accept it. The idea to me of living at York was delightful, for besides bringing me nearer to my old home and you all, M^cLaren knew how fond I was of York and its surroundings, with all their dear old associations; and this, with a strongly reciprocated regard for Mr. Thompson, caused him half to accept the offer so persistently made by his friend. Whilst we saw much that was pleasant in the prospect placed before us, we could not but feel there was another side to the picture—that there was much to look back upon as well as to look forward to. I thought of all M^cLaren had done for Edinburgh, and felt

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that, with such a past, there must be much in the future that might call for talents such as he possessed.

Though great ability was needed, there were others who could manage railway business, whilst McLaren's mind was adapted for political work. With his strong sense of justice, and great moral courage and force of character to act upon it, there could not fail to open for him in his own city a more distinguished and congenial career of usefulness, from which it was his duty not to turn aside. As this consciousness grew upon us, we felt we must give up the thought of living at York, but it cost McLaren a good deal to disappoint his friend. I hope the future may justify the decision he has arrived at. I feel sure J. will approve of it.

voidance
speculaons.

From this time Duncan McLaren abandoned all connection with railway management, while his experience in the conduct of the affairs of the Exchange Bank had caused him so much mental worry, that he resolved never again to endanger his happiness by connection with joint-stock companies. So thoroughly did he carry out this resolution, that when the company for the establishment of the Edinburgh Literary Institute was formed in 1870, he refused to take shares in the concern, although his son Duncan was one of the founders. He, however, cordially approved of the object of the company, and gave a handsome donation to the funds. In 1885, referring to a suggestion that he should take some shares as security for a loan, he wrote to say that he would lend the money, but would rather not have the shares. And about this time, in a private conversation, he said, "I daresay I might have been a rich man if I had directed my efforts to make wealth, and had invested in stocks and shares, because, with my knowledge of the world of business and my general power of judgment, I could probably have made good investments, but I did not care to be troubled with it. I did not wish my peace of

mind to be disturbed by fluctuations of the market. I valued my freedom from worry of that sort more than money." 1850

An imperfect view of Duncan M^cLaren's character would be given if no reference were here made to his family life. Known as he was to the outside world, devoting his energies to the public service, sparing neither himself nor any one else in his efforts to further what he believed to be right, it might have been supposed that he had little time for domestic and family duties, and that he was as stern and unbending in private as he was in public life. Few estimates of his character could be more inaccurate. There probably never was a man who more strongly felt that his first duty was to his family. We do not always see that men who have actively engaged in public work find that their children follow in their father's footsteps. It may be that the principles which many men labour to promote are not made sufficiently interesting to their children. But Duncan M^cLaren's religious, moral, and political principles were carried into the home life, and were made the subject of daily conversation and of "table-talk," so that his children were imbued with his principles from their earliest years, though no attempt was made to force their minds into a particular groove. To this his wife gave every encouragement. Family interest in highest principles cannot be maintained where both parents are not alike interested in them. Family training.

A lady intimately acquainted with the home life at Newington House writes: "I think a few touches even of nursery life may tell as much of character as some of the more important details of a man's public career, and thus I send you a few recollections of Mr. M^cLaren connected with the child life of his home. One of his boys had rheumatic fever, and on one occasion, when it was needful to attend to

1850 a complete change of toilet, the child, dreading the pain, persistently refused the ministrations of his mother and the nurse. His father being appealed to, came to the rescue, and requested the nurses to leave the room, saying 'Just leave the boy to me.' They heard outside the gentle tones of the father soothing the child, and were shortly called back to find the bed and the little invalid made, as the saying is, all over again. The confidence in his father was exemplified by this boy on another occasion. Visiting a family near, a small box was laid aside after resisting every effort to open it. The little fellow timidly asked if he might take it home, as he was quite sure his father could open it. Mr. McLaren, spurred on by his child's faith in him, spent some time in mastering the difficulty, and at last opened the box, which the boy carried back in triumph. The Rev. Dr. Robson of Glasgow, who was staying at Newington House, was so touched by this little incident, that he used it in his next sermon to illustrate the need of a more implicit faith in the power and love of our Heavenly Father.

His children's faith in him.

"I must not omit another result of the faith felt in him by his children. One of them used to stammer, which gave his father much concern. One day he called the child to him, and said, 'Now, my boy, I am going to cure you of stammering; open your mouth;' and taking a pencil-case from his pocket, laid it upon his tongue with some pressure, saying, 'Now, go away; you will never stammer again.' His faith cured him, and he never stammered afterwards.

"I remember one of the pictures in the children's nursery was that of 'William Penn's Treaty with the North American Indians,' the only picture which, in the more rigid days of Quakerism, was allowed to hang on the walls of the houses of the 'Friends,' and the children were told that was 'the only

treaty ever made without an oath, and the only treaty which was never broken.' So Voltaire said. That picture taught the lesson of justice, whilst in that of Fisch representing Charles V. in the studio of Titian stooping to pick up the brush which the artist had let fall, they were taught by an Emperor the same truth as that taught in the lines of the peasant-poet of Scotland, [1850

> 'The rank is but the guinea stamp,
> The man's the gowd for a' that.'

"And the following anecdotes were perhaps the result of such teaching. Mrs. M°Laren went one Sunday evening into the children's bedroom to tell them of a revival of religion in America, about which their minister, Mr. Robertson, had been telling his people. She did not think the youngest boy could understand much about it, and was not a little surprised when he rose up in bed and said, 'But, mamma, did he say it had reached the hearts of the slave-owners? for if he did not, I don't think much of it.' When the Prince Consort came to Edinburgh to lay the foundation-stone of the Post Office, this boy refused to go to see the ceremony, saying a prince was no better than any other man. When told it would be disrespectful to his father not to go, as he had got a ticket for him, he went. The reverential attitude of the Prince during the long prayer offered in the cold east wind which prevailed on that morning, and his pure and noble countenance, struck the child with so much awe and admiration, that when all was over he said almost breathlessly, 'Oh, papa, when I'm a man I hope I may be like Prince Albert.'"

During the earlier portion of his life, Duncan M°Laren, no doubt, was imbued with a considerable share of the old Scotch disciplinarian feeling in educating his children, but gradually this passed away, and his habit was to appeal

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to their reason, and not to rest upon his own authority. Though the parental tie was very strong, and respect for his wishes and judgment was always shown, he was anxious not to carry this deference too far; and while he was ever ready to advise and help his children, he would always add that he wished their decision in thought and action to be entirely their own, and not to be merely the echo of his opinions. His judgment was, however, so sound as to inspire in his family almost unbounded confidence, which led them to consult him on all occasions, even up to the latest period of his life. The veneration with which he was regarded by those in every part of Scotland with whom he was associated in public questions was shared to the fullest extent by the inmates of his own home.

The Sunday evenings.

The Sunday evenings were always interesting, when he instructed his children in Scripture history, deducing therefrom lessons for practical everyday life. Neither in politics nor in business would he tolerate any deviation from the moral law, and public rectitude he regarded as of equal moment with private morality. Such was the teaching of his own life. He held no principle more strongly than love of peace and horror of war, and in these Sunday evenings he would dwell often on this topic, insisting on the duty of peace both from a religious and a political point of view. So deep were his feelings on this subject, that his children remember that at the dinner-table during his Lord Provostship, after the first engagement in the Crimean War, when the list of the killed and wounded was handed to him, he broke down, and was unable to read the contents aloud to his family. Long afterwards, in 1870, when the Franco-German war was declared, a German lady, who was a guest in the house, relates that when he told her the tidings, his eyes were full of tears and his voice trembled with emotion.

In the subordinate details of life he constantly impressed upon his children the time-honoured and familiar maxims, "Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well," and "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again," which had been of so much service to him in his own career. Slip-shod work and untidiness he could not endure. Even in the cutting and folding of a newspaper he was scrupulously neat, and was annoyed if any one were not the same. As a newspaper-reader, he was omnivorous, and when he was absent from his children, he seemed constantly to have them in his mind even during this his favourite occupation; for if he came upon any paragraph which he thought would interest any one of them, he would at once cut it out, write his or her name on it, and send it off by post. The scrap-books containing these cuttings, which are still preserved, show how much his thoughts must have centred on the instruction and welfare of his children. 1856

His letters show how much he sympathised with them in their juvenile pursuits. The following are examples of many:— Letters to his children.

BEN RHYDDING, *October* 17, 1857.

MY DEAR WALTER, HELEN, AND CHARLES,—I am longing very much to see you all; I hope to have this pleasure some day next week. I am glad to hear you are all well. Mamma and I are much better, and she thinks I am growing younger, but I think this must be a mistake. We have a pretty little lake here, and there are six white ducks which always swim on it, or rest on a little island in the middle of it. The lake is about the size of our lawn. To-day I threw in some small bits of gingerbread to them, and they dived for them, and caught them very cleverly before the bits had sunk to the bottom. I daresay they thought the gingerbread very nice. I threw the gingerbread so near the different ducks that I think every one of them got a taste, for the one nearest to where the bit of gingerbread fell was always

1859 sure to get it, though they all tried. You know this is the way I like little children to be treated—just as the ducks were—that they should all get the very same kindness, and no one should be greedy or try to get more than his just share.—I am your affectionate father, D. McLaren.

EDINBURGH, *May* 22, 1859.

MY DEAR CHARLES,—Yesterday I remained in the garden all day working, and your rabbit-house was the better for it. The buck killed one of the young ones, which was taken away and buried, and the place was all cleaned out. I then sent one of Currie's men inside the inner house, and with a hatchet and pieces of wood he filled up the passage through which the rabbits passed from one end to the other. When the man was in, you could not see a bit of him, even the feet. It was large enough to hold him, although your mamma thinks it is hardly large enough to hold rabbits. The buck is now shut up at one end. I gave them a large quantity of dandelions, for which they looked very thankful, but the buck looks rather solitary in his separate dwelling.

I got the earth all delved up in the north end of the henhouse-yard, so as to let the hens scrape and work in it, as they do in the wood. It was very hard, and the man had to take a pick to break up the earth. We have brought back the cock and hen from the stable-yard, and the dogs will now have it to play in. The hens have dug up your gardens very much, and they don't look well. I took out all the weeds from the border yesterday.

There are a great number of dandelions in the wood, for the gardener allowed them to run to seed without cutting them; so I began to pull them up for the rabbits. When the potatoes were planted, and when this ground was cleared, I then pulled them regularly upwards, taking *all* of them out as I went up, so that the ground is now cleared up to the ring-swing. This is the way to do anything *well*;—to make a portion of it, however small, quite perfect and complete, and then another and another, and in course of time the whole will be done by perseverance. The way little boys and careless people do is to pull one here and another there, and in this way their work is of no real

advantage. When the people of this country go to the backwoods of America to plant corn, they find the whole country covered with trees, and they begin, as I did with the dandelions, to uproot *all* the trees *within a small space*, and then they build a wood house for themselves with the trees. When this is done, they cut down *all* those within a *small* circle (as great as they can overtake), and on it they plant potatoes, corn, and other things to live on during the winter. In spring they begin to cut more and plant the ground, and so on year by year, until many miles of country—as great as from Edinburgh to where you now are at Southport—which were all forests are now corn-fields; but if they had cut one tree here and there, they would never have succeeded as they have done. 1859

You know when George was here he always talked about the rabbit-house not being "right made," and that the passage ought to be filled up; but he was a man who liked to talk rather than work, and therefore he did not fill up the place himself. When Currie's man told me the rabbit was killed, I told him to bring the hatchet and cut some pieces of wood, and go inside and fill them up, and I was there and saw it done. It was finished in less than half an hour altogether, and I am sure George talked far more than half an hour about it, but never worked to put it right. Now, when you and Walter grow up, I want you to learn that the right way is not to go on talking about evils, but to try to remove them by *doing something*, in place of speaking about what ought to be done.

Mrs. Robson was here a short time yesterday. Grandmamma is rather better. She was out in the garden yesterday. We are all well. Much love to all.—Ever your affectionate father,

D. M^c^Laren.

Edinburgh, *May* 11, 1862.

My dear Charles,—I believe to-morrow will be your birthday, and that you will then be twelve years of age. I affectionately congratulate you on the event, and wish you every measure of happiness which any one can enjoy. Before I left Ventnor I told you that within three months of your age I went to be an apprentice about a hundred miles away from my friends, and in a town

1862 which did not contain a person that I had ever seen before. You will have great advantages as compared with this experience of mine, and I hope you will so improve them that you may be so much more happy, distinguished, and good than I was, as your superior advantages seem to render possible. For you know the Bible strongly enforces the principle in many forms, that according as our advantages and opportunities of doing good to others and ourselves increase, so do our responsibilities increase, and that all these considerations should constantly be present to our minds. . . . .

I got safe home about eight o'clock last night, having left London at nine in the morning. Duncan met me at the train. I found him, and Grant, and Agnes quite well. John's book is hard work for him. He has got 450 pages printed, and there are other 600 to print, and of them about 100 pages are still to write. I mean *printed* pages. There would be about two written pages to each printed page.

I hope you, as being the oldest boy at Ventnor, will take good care of your mamma, and get her either to ride out on Helen's horse or to drive out in a carriage, for her health requires that she should do either the one or the other. Give my love to her, and to Catherine, Helen, and Walter. I hope you all agree well together and are kind to one another.

At Portsmouth Dockyard I was in a room 1092 feet long. Our premises in the High Street are only 193 feet. In that room I saw boys, not bigger or stronger-looking than you are, who had to earn their living by carrying the small cords out of which ropes are made from one end of that room to the other, and in doing this they walk as much as twenty-five miles a day. It was a room for spinning ropes for ships of war. Now tell me how many times the boys would have to walk from end to end of the room to make up the twenty-five miles, which is equal to walking to Ryde from Ventnor and back again.

I am, my dear Charles, your affectionate father,

D. McLaren.

Duncan McLaren did not always get credit for the deeply sympathetic nature which he possessed. It is true he did

not form friendships easily, and had little of that *bonhommie* of character which leads to a certain kind of popularity. Ordinary society had not that attraction for him which he found in the companionship of men whose lives were devoted to intellectual or public work. Thus at one time he took great interest in attending the annual meetings of the Association for the Promotion of Social Science and of the British Association; but he was attracted to them more by the men he met there and the friendships he formed than by the discussions, in which he took but a small part. 1862

It was at the meeting of the former in Glasgow in the year 1860 that he first met Henry Fawcett, who was there with his sister. In a memorandum, written at the time of Professor Fawcett's death, Mrs. M^cLaren says:— Meeting with Mr. Fawcett.

"*Nov.* 7, 1884.—This morning has brought the sad intelligence of the death of Henry Fawcett. What a loss to us women and to the world! I don't know when I have seen M^cLaren so much affected. It was at the Social Science Meeting in Glasgow we first met Mr. Fawcett and his sister, Maria, who was devoted to him. I never before realised how much affectionate feeling could be expressed in one word. She told us the touching story of her brother's blindness, and whenever she spoke of 'Harry,' she threw into the word such a depth of love and tenderness of feeling as it would not be easy to describe; and yet there was mingled with it a cheerfulness of tone which in the circumstances only his own indomitable spirit could have imparted to hers. After the meetings were over, they paid us a visit at Newington House, which we much enjoyed. In February 1860, when Mr. Fawcett first came out as a candidate for parliamentary honours by offering to contest Southwark, M^cLaren appeared unexpectedly on the platform and addressed a meeting in his favour, speaking of his intellectual claims in the highest terms. Subsequently, after Mr. Fawcett's first contest in Brighton in 1864, my husband wrote me, 'You will see with regret Fawcett is beaten, because the Whig candidate would not give in. I am

1862 rather glad a Tory got in since Fawcett did not.' On the occasion of a pleasant journey into Cornwall, we returned by Salisbury and visited the Fawcetts, who gave us a warm welcome in their pretty home in the country. They seemed very grateful to McLaren for having endeavoured to help their son at his election contest. It gave them as much pleasure to talk of 'Harry' as it gave us to hear about him. They told us how, when he was a boy, he one day gave them some concern by not returning home in time for dinner. When he made his appearance, and was questioned as to the cause of his absence, he said he had always pitied a poor apple-woman who sate at a stall and never seemed to get any dinner, so he had told her if she would go home and get her dinner, he would keep her stall till she came back. 'As the woman accepted my offer,' he said, 'it kept me from my own dinner, but now I am ready for it.'

"This first story we heard of his boyhood's life had its fitting and consistent sequel in almost the last act of his manhood. He had declined, along with Mr. Leonard Courtney, to follow the Liberal Ministry, of which they were both members, in voting against Mr. Woodall's amendment to the Reform Bill of 1884 to extend the franchise to women. When addressing his constituents at Hackney, he faced with a brave denial the assertion that to have passed that amendment would have overweighted the bill, adding, 'Depend upon it, the claims of women householders to vote will be so irresistible, that when the suffrage has been conferred on every man who is a householder, however poor and uneducated he may be, the demand of women householders to be enfranchised will not rest till it is conceded;' and with these last words he left us. His life seems to me like a grand poem, and he died as such a warrior should die, with the sword of truth unsheathed." [1]

[1] When one or two amongst those who were opposed to justice to women had, in the House of Commons in 1876, traduced some who worked in that cause, Mr. Fawcett in a noble speech defended the ladies from such "vile aspersions," saying they were women of whose friendship any man who knows them, on whatever side of the House he may sit, "must feel proud."

1864

Visit to Mr. Cobden.

In 1864 Mr. and Mrs. McLaren attended the British Association Meetings at Bath, and thence proceeded to Dunford on a visit to Mr. Cobden. Greatly he enjoyed this intercourse with his old political friend, and their daily drives in the neighbourhood of Midhurst. This was the last occasion on which these two friends were to meet, for on the 2nd of April on the following year the whole country mourned the death of Richard Cobden. A month later Mr. McLaren in a letter to his wife wrote: "To-morrow is our Chamber of Commerce meeting. I suggested that we should get up a Chamber of Commerce subscription for a marble bust of Cobden to be placed in the chamber. The idea has taken well, and it is to be proposed formally to-morrow by Mr. David McLaren, and I have no doubt will be carried and will succeed." Next day he wrote: "I brought forward the resolution regarding Cobden's death, but said nothing that I intended to say. I felt very sad and broken down, but what I did say seemed to please the people. Mr. R. M. Smith seconded the resolution, but said little. Then Mr. David McLaren moved the resolution about the bust, and made a most beautiful speech, and Mr. Todd seconded it. We commenced the subscription at once."

The same winter (1864), owing to the severe illness of one of his children, he took a house at Clifton, and while there, in addition to the sadness caused by the loss of his dear friend Mr. Cobden, he had also to lament the death of his brother-in-law, Samuel Lucas, the editor of the *Morning Star*,[1] which occurred just as the nation received the shock of the news of the assassination of President Lincoln. It was under these depressing circumstances that

[1] Then the only Advanced Liberal daily paper in London, and since merged in the *Daily News*.

1864 he received a requisition asking him to become a candidate for the representation of Edinburgh. This caused him to abandon the idea which he then entertained of removing for a time to the South of England, and he returned to Edinburgh.

In September 1865 Mrs. McLaren writes :—

"McLaren wrote for tickets for the British Association at Birmingham, and received a most kind letter from our friend Mrs. Joseph Sturge, asking us and our children to be her guests. . . . It is delightful to be in a real Quaker home, there is such a charming simplicity and truthfulness about everything. We enjoyed our visit immensely, and McLaren was in his element in this atmosphere of benevolent thought and action. Joseph Sturge[1] took us to see the Reformatory for boys at Stoke, which his father had established many years before."

Later, in 1873, Mrs. McLaren again writes :—

"We have again been to Birmingham, and have had a time of great pleasure mingled with thankfulness over the occasion of the great meeting to welcome my brother, John Bright, on his reappearance in public life after his long illness. What a treat it was to hear his beautiful voice once more raised in the cause of truth! We were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Middlemore, and were much interested in the work carried on by their son in rescuing gutter children. He takes them out himself in detachments to Canada, after a preparatory training in his admirable Homes."

Mrs. McLaren adds :—

"My husband's last visit to Birmingham, and to his dear friends the Sturges, was at the demonstration to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of my brother's connection with the borough as its parliamentary representative—a wonderful manifestation of enthusiastic esteem for their long-tried Member!"

[1] The son of the Birmingham philanthropist.

The last meeting of the British Association which Mr. McLaren attended with his wife and children was that held at Bradford in 1873, where they were the guests of Mr. Robert Kell, one of the leaders of the Radical party in the West Riding of Yorkshire. It would not be easy to describe the pleasure he felt in the friendship of Mr. and Mrs. Kell, nor the grateful sense he had of their unvarying kindness to his family. 1865

Among the personal friends who contributed to the relaxation of his parliamentary life were Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Pennington, at whose beautiful home amid the Surrey hills he and Mrs. McLaren were frequent visitors. The Saturday to Monday parties at Broome Hall included many guests of eminence in politics, art, or letters, and longer visits during parliamentary recesses afforded opportunities of ripening House of Commons acquaintances into personal friendships. Mr. Pennington himself sat for the borough of Stockport, and Mr. McLaren stayed with him at his London house during the early months of more than one session. At other times, he and Mrs. McLaren were the guests in London and Brighton of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Taylor, at whose house he first met Mazzini. There he learned to appreciate the single-minded and unselfish character of the Italian patriot; and he regarded him, to use his own words, as "the most Christlike man he had ever met." He became associated with those in England who lent their assistance to the cause of Italian unity, and on more than one occasion the Italian friends of the exiled Mazzini availed themselves of his address in Edinburgh as their only safe means of corresponding with their chief. Mr. Peter Taylor, then Member for Leicester, was the son of an old colleague in the Anti-Corn-Law work, and was himself well known as an Advanced Radical in the House of Commons. Every- Parliamentary friendships.

1865 thing that could promote social and legislative reform of the laws affecting women was warmly and actively supported by Mrs. Pennington and Mrs. Peter Taylor, as well as by Mrs. Thomas Taylor of Aston Rowant, in Oxfordshire; and Mr. McLaren's interest in these questions, in which Mrs. McLaren took an equally active part, enabled him to sympathise with and appreciate the success which the efforts of these ladies, and others of their circle, achieved. For Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Taylor he entertained the warmest regard, and he enjoyed his visits to their country-house in the richly-timbered slopes of the Chilterns with a zest which only a lover of Nature condemned to the hard labours of a session at Westminster can understand.

Amongst his other more intimate friends associated with him in Parliament were John Stuart Mill, John Benjamin Smith (a veteran reformer, whose political life began at the massacre of "Peterloo"), Mr. James Stansfeld, and Mr. H. D. Pochin, in whose homes he was a welcome guest; and by the marriage of his son Charles with Mr. Pochin's only daughter a connection between the two families was formed.

A visit in 1867 to the old family home at Dalmally seemed to revive his early attachment to the North. The subjoined letter from Mrs. McLaren, giving an account of this Dalmally trip to Mr. McLaren's sisters in Edinburgh, shows how keenly she sympathised with her husband in visiting the scenes of his boyhood:—

MANOR HOUSE, OBAN, *September* 9, 1867.

MY DEAR SISTERS,—I hope Aunt Janet is still making progress, and that she will soon be able to prosecute her journey. We thought often, on our way here, that if she could have seen the beautiful scenes we saw, they would have done her far more good than all the doctors in Edinburgh. I have wished each day to

write to you about the spots dear to you from early associations, but I did not feel well enough to attempt the task, as all the particulars I wished to give would involve a long letter. Will you please send this on to Agnes to read, and she can either keep it or you can preserve it, so that I may have it again as a memorandum of our delightful visit to dear Dalmally. 1865

We found Glasgow depressing, but the fresh air of Loch Lomond had a very reviving effect. The lake and its surroundings did not present such an appearance of beauty as I should have liked for the sake of Helen and Walter. There were no shadows, and the water was not calm and peaceful-looking. Still the scene was very fine when we reached Luss, and Inversnaid waterfall was grand; and as nearly all the passengers left the boat there, we could enjoy more fully the view at the head of the lake. We spent the night at Inverarnan, a charming little hotel with cottage windows. It was a sweet rural spot, far nicer than Oban, in my opinion. We had a capital lunch—so good that the young folk made it their dinner, and only papa and I went down at five to a little *table-d'hôte*, when four gentlemen besides ourselves formed the company. The boys went out for a walk, and we followed. The views along the road were exquisite.

Next morning, the 16th, we started in a carriage and pair for Tyndrum. We had a very communicative and intelligent driver. He seemed aware of his powers of pleasing, and his rich Scotch accent added a charm to his information. He pointed out a farm of the old style, where, he said, he often went on winter evenings to sit round the fire in the middle of the room, over which hung the *pot*. A widow, whose memory went back to other days, held the farm. She always gave her guests the best she had, and told stories of times gone by, contrasting them with the present. The Marquis (Breadalbane) wished to build her a better house, but she preferred this old home with all its associations.

Old times came vividly back to papa's mind as we drove along; for he too could contrast the present with past times, when, a youth of seventeen, he crossed the hills alone from Dalmally to Loch Lomond without seeing an individual or a house for miles. Assisted by the knowledge of the mountain passes possessed by

1867

our nice driver, many things came back to his remembrance connected with the locality which had been lying dormant for years, and I longed very much that we could have retraced the very paths he trod. This could not be, except in imagination; but I liked to witness old thoughts and feelings stirred up again. It was a beautiful drive along Glen Falloch, the scenery becoming less interesting at Tyndrum, where we changed our carriage and horses, and parted with our choice guide and driver, who deserved much credit in answering all our questions, seeing he had a most painful whitlow on his finger, which had undergone an operation too soon—much in accordance with the ways of doctors—and he had in prospect another operation next day.

Heights and depths are our regular experience through life, and now we made a sad descent, so to speak, in our driver. This one would scarcely answer a question. His voice was as a feeble squeak from the poorest penny-trumpet. So we contented ourselves with our own observations, and our admiration went on increasing as the road opened out into the wide valley of Glenorchy, which took us into Dalmally, passing the Free Church and the minister's house before reaching the town. We got very nice rooms and ordered dinner, which was sent up so cold that papa, who can bear many a more important trial with more philosophy than cold viands which ought to be hot, gave the waiter a strong reprimand, which seemed to cool his interest in us, until papa asked him several questions about the neighbourhood, viz., is there a village near here called Edandonich? and is there one called Shainmealachan? and is there not a house that they call Tulloch not far off? But the waiter expressed his ignorance. Still papa looked out of the window as though trying to recognise the faces of vanished friends. By and bye the waiter came back with a manner betokening much more interest in us, and told us that one below had said these places all existed, and he tried to point out their localities. After dinner we sallied forth, and as Aunt Janet said the house they were all born in was still there and stood near the church, we thought we could not miss it. And we fancied we saw it, yet did not think we were right either, and so walked on and on along a beautiful road, when we saw an elderly

Visit to the old Dalmally home.

man with a bowed figure. "This will be the postman," said papa; 1867
"we will question him." Papa repeated his inquiries about the old places. The man said he would guide us to any objects of interest we might wish to see, and added, "You must have been well acquainted with this country some time, sir. The waiter told me there was a gentleman making inquiries about the place, and his name was McLaren. Are you the Lord Provost of Edinburgh? for he came from this place, and we are all very proud of him." Papa put him off and said he was not the Provost. "Well, well," said our guide, "but I'll take you to where Mr. McLaren stopped at a cousin's house. The cousin was called Hugh McLellan." And he went on to describe the family, and how there was a school-house a little on the other side of the road by the river-side, pointing out the very spot on which it stood. "He was counted a very wise boy—always a wise boy. There was none other like him. And when others would play, he would be at his lessons. Nothing could keep *him* back from the school. He was the cleverest boy there. But there came a letter from a Mr. McIntyre" (and here he related his connection with the family) "from Dunbar, asking for a suitable boy as an apprentice," &c., &c., going on to tell how the boy went to fill this place, and how well he did there, until he was made a partner and married a rich lady, and went on from one success to another, until he became Lord Provost of Edinburgh. "And I've been told," he added, "that he is now Member of Parliament." And so beguiling the way, which was a long one, he reached the very spot where the ruined cottage stands, on a hill overlooking one of the most exquisite of views; hills covered with beautiful light and shadows to the right, and Loch Awe and Kilchurn Castle to the left. It might have satisfied a monarch for the grandeur of its position. But that little ruined cottage felt more to me than Balmoral with all its associations and surroundings of royalty, especially when I looked to where the little school stood. It seemed more like a dream than a reality as I pictured in imagination the boy who, more than fifty years ago, trod and re-trod the path between that humble dwelling and the equally humble school-house amid such glorious scenery. And yet his soul was not fired by the sense of

1867 the natural beauty which surrounded him; it was animated rather by a prosaic sense of duty, which has led him on ever since through many a dull routine, and borne him up to heights which he did not dream of then. But there have always been depths of poetic feeling within his heart, though these could only be reached by the hand of obedience faithful to the claim of the hour; and whether this might lead to deeds of gentlest love and charity, or to those of high and heroic daring, it was all the same—his heart could always be moved at the shrine of duty.

Walter and Helen brought away some little relics from this spot of deepest interest. As we retraced our way to the inn—two miles and a half—heavy rain set in. But we were still interested in our guide's remarks, one of which struck me from the feeling with which he expressed it—that it was well for a man to be wise in his youth. We were pretty well drenched ere we reached the inn. We had hoped to have enjoyed our little excursion again over a snug tea by a peat-fire, but were disappointed. I went to bed at once to get rid of wet clothes, and papa, still following on where duty led, looked after the wet garments of the rest. Next morning our guide came at half-past nine to take us to the cottage where papa's parents had lived, and where his brothers and sisters were born. It was a pretty spot, but not so romantic as where cousin Hugh McLellan had lived, and yet one the heart might well love. A widow lives there with beautiful children. There was a spinning-wheel, telling of old-fashioned industry, and everything to make Highland cottage-life perfect except the "gude-man," who had gone to his rest some ten years ago. We lingered over the place, regretting to leave it; but the postman had his duties to attend to, and so had we. Papa and the boys and Helen went afterwards to visit a distant relative named James McNicol, but I was too tired to venture farther. Before twelve we were off again on our journey, regretting much to leave Dalmally. The old postman took care to be on the road-side to give another look at papa. His eyes did not rest on any of us, but drank in all they could of him whom he considered the hero of the place. We felt rather disappointed with our drive along Loch Awe; indeed, nothing felt very interesting to me

since we left Dalmally. I should like to have stayed there. We lunched at a dreary place called Taynuilt, and reached Oban about five, finding Manor House very nice and comfortable. I trust the "leap in the dark" made by the House of Commons last session may be as successful as this one has been, for we took the house without having seen it. But papa is mostly always right. 1867

I forgot to mention that we informed the postman-guide who papa was, and then put him right where he was wrong in his history, especially as to the fable of the "rich wife." We have been to call on Professor and Mrs. Blackie. I am glad to hear of you, through Agnes, a good report. With our united dear love to yourselves and Henrietta, I am, your affectionate sister,

PRISCILLA M^cLAREN.

A Continental tour.

"During the summer of 1871," his son Walter writes, "my sister Agnes and I had been to Ober-Ammergau, in Bavaria, to see the Passion Play, and we were so much charmed with it that we persuaded my father and mother to see it in the autumn of the same year. Mrs. Pennington and her daughter went with them, and they were joined by my brother Charles, who had been studying at Heidelberg. In spite of the heat, and the crowd, and the primitive accommodation which the place afforded, my father was deeply interested by this singular festival and its surroundings. The reverential and dignified presentation of the Passion Play probably jarred less upon his feelings than if he had been a frequenter of the ordinary secular drama; but there is no doubt that to his mind, trained in the Puritanical spirit of his own country, the spectacle of Bavarian peasants enacting the life of Christ was not altogether congenial. From Munich my father and mother went on to Italy. Venice and Rome were the cities my father most wished to see. As regards Venice, this wish was gratified. The old-world city, with its water streets and swift silent gondolas, charmed

1867 him beyond his expectations, whilst his love of architecture, stimulated by the study of Ruskin, made the stately rows of mediæval palaces an unceasing delight. In honour of a visit from the King of Italy the city was illuminated, and the contrast between the solemn dignity of a long-past grandeur and the lively brilliance of this nineteenth century festival touched his deepest feelings. Unfortunately he was here overtaken by a severe illness, due to the unwholesome state of the canals, from which he only fully recovered in the Riviera. I quote the following extract from one of my mother's letters:—

"'At Bologna my husband's illness returned, and acting on the advice of our friend Lyon Playfair, who, with his wife, were at our hotel, and to whose kind help and sympathy we owed much, we turned our faces homewards. At Avignon we visited John Stuart Mill. . . . Before reaching his house we came to the cemetery in which his wife lies buried. It felt to me like classic ground. The grave was covered and surrounded by flowers of rare and exquisite beauty, and formed a contrast, the reverse of what we usually see, to the living home of the husband, which had a sombre and cheerless look as we approached it by a shaded avenue. But the warm reception given to us soon made everything feel bright; and in the drawing-room, which opened through French windows upon a sort of terrace-balcony—"all planned by my daughter," as Mr. Mill proudly explained to us—a fine view burst upon us of the distant mountains, with the summit of Mont Ventoux veiled in snow.

"'The visit was delightful to us, and when conversing with Mr. Mill I was reminded, not for the first time, of the words, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life;" for whatever may be the views of Christian doctrine held by this distinguished man, his spirit is imbued with that love for his fellow-creatures and that love of justice towards all which Christ came to teach.'

"After the session of 1872 we travelled for some time on

the Continent to give my father the rest and change he much needed after his hard parliamentary work. Most of our time was spent on the shores of the Swiss Lakes, in whose calm beauty, brilliant colouring, and bright sunshine he delighted; while the intense heat, so trying to many, always seemed to give him new strength. A somewhat curious trait, at which we often smiled among ourselves, was his great dislike in travelling to use the public rooms in hotels. We could seldom persuade him to remain long in any place where these were the only accommodation; but when we could get a private sitting-room with a balcony commanding a beautiful view, we always knew that we could stay in that place as long as any of the party wished it. The Court of Arbitration on the Alabama claim was then sitting, and we happened to be at Geneva when the award was given. The decision was heard with great satisfaction by my father, who had always believed the British Government to have been in the wrong, and who had followed all the proceedings with lively interest. He was present at the dinner given to the arbitrators by the State Council of Geneva. We stayed a good while at Chamounix, making many excursions, in which my father, then seventy-two years of age, was really the most vigorous of the party, walking and riding all day without fatigue, and taking upon himself all the trouble of arranging everything. His pleasure in again seeing Mont Blanc and crossing the Mer-de-Glace was as keen as it had been twenty-seven years previously, when he had visited at Chamounix with my brother John. In crossing the Tête-Noire, I remember we met a very lively old lady of seventy, who made a yearly ascent of Mont Blanc, and who told us that every night of her life she ended her prayers by a petition that she might again be permitted to see the view from the top of her favourite mountain!" 1867

1879

In the later years of his life, however, it was in the Highlands of Scotland that Mr. McLaren found most enjoyment in the autumn months.

A holiday in the Highlands. Highland character.

During a residence with his family at Pitlochry in 1874, he and his wife visited the David Ainsworths at their shooting-lodge at Loch Rannoch. Referring to this visit, Mrs. McLaren writes: "He was always deeply touched by any trait which showed the depth of feeling in the Scottish character. While resting at the Rannoch Hotel, he was much interested in the conversation of the widowed landlady, who had brought up a large family under difficult circumstances; but she said, 'When my eldest daughter married, I cannot tell you what I suffered that night when I locked my door, and felt that I had locked one child out.' 'Ah!' he said, 'how different from those fashionable women who are glad when they get one daughter "off!"' Another little trait of Scottish independence of character greatly pleased him. In taking a walk along the moor, we came to a cottage in a most desolate place inhabited by a poor old woman. He said to her in a tone of pity, 'You must be very lonely here in the winter time.' 'Lonely,' the old woman replied, 'I'm nae lonely. I have for company my clock, my cat, and my kettle!' On our return to Pitlochry, while taking some refreshment at the Bridge of Tummel, a farmer near, hearing of us, came, as he said, 'to pay his homage to Mr. McLaren,' and then alluding to John Bright, said, 'I have a great love for these warriors.'"

At Inverness and Strathpeffer.

The autumn of 1879 was spent at Inverness, at Dunain Park, and his attachment to the capital of the Highlands was strengthened by the Town Council conferring on him the freedom of the Burgh. His stay here was prolonged by severe illness. His anxiety to take part in Mr. Gladstone's meetings during what is known as the first Midlothian cam-

paign induced him to hasten back as soon as he was able to travel, but his strength did not permit him to be present. In 1884 he spent some months at Strathpeffer, enjoying the beautiful scenery of this neighbourhood and driving more than once to Glen Carron Lodge, the residence of his eldest son, and also to Loch Maree and Lochinver. During this visit a bye-election took place for Ross-shire, on the retirement of Sir Alexander Mathieson of Ardross. The Tory candidate was Mr. McKenzie the younger of Kintail, while Mr. Munro-Fergusson of Novar championed the Liberal cause. This election was memorable from the fact that Dr. Roderick Macdonald (who subsequently under the extended franchise defeated Novar, and now sits for the county) came forward as a crofter candidate. At that time the Land League in Ireland was, from the attitude of the Irish party in Parliament, highly unpopular in Scotland and England, and the Highland Land Law Association, of which Dr. Macdonald was the representative, to some extent suffered in the public estimation from the supposed similarity of their aims to those of their Irish friends. The contest in Ross-shire was regarded as one between a good Liberal and Tory on the issue of the extension of the county franchise, and the introduction of Dr. Macdonald seemed unnecessary and likely to lead to a Tory success. Mr. McLaren espoused the cause of Novar, and at eighty-four years of age he addressed more than one meeting in his favour. It is only fair, however, to add that he sympathised with the aims of Dr. Macdonald, and no one rejoiced more than he did when the Doctor and five other crofter members were returned at the general election of 1885.

1884

A Ross-shire election.

Early in January 1885 he suffered much anxiety owing to a severe illness which for six months prostrated the strength of Mrs. McLaren. One of the family writes: "It

Severe illness of Mrs. McLaren.

1885 was on his birthday, the 12th of January, my brother-in-law and sister came over from Bradford on hearing of my mother's serious illness. In reply to their congratulations on the day, as my father met them at the door, he said, 'Ah! it is the saddest birthday I ever had in my life.' The skill of Dr. Rabagliati on that first visit averted immediate danger. During her long illness no loving thought or attention was spared by any member of the family, but to the unselfish devotion of my sister Helen, who left her home and nursed her for four months, we owed much. The nightly prayers offered at the bedside of my mother by my father were very touching. One day when she was very ill, he came to her and said, 'Now, my dear, I have had a strong and unmistakable feeling that you are going to recover; when I kneel with you I must now use words of thanksgiving. You will recover, and will be raised up to do some things on which your heart is set.' Whether it was the strong faith she, along with the rest of us, had in my father, I know not, but recovery began; and in August my father, encouraged by her valued medical attendant, Dr. Playfair, thought she might be removed to Highland air. Forgetful of his weight of years, he took long journeys to find a suitable house. It was not easy to do this so late in the season. It was with difficulty he could be persuaded to let any one accompany him on these journeys, and it was only on the plea that it would be a great treat to an American cousin who was staying with us that he consented to have a companion; so difficult was it for him to recognise any diminution of physical power.

"When she was convalescent, my father brought a large bundle of letters, neatly tied up, which had cheered him through her illness, and gave them to my mother, saying, 'When you are able you will like to read these; they contain

the most touching expressions of sympathy for me and loving admiration for you which I ever read.' I give these particulars that the friends who penned those letters, should they read this memoir, may know in what estimation they were held, and what comfort they gave." 1885

Two months were passed with great advantage at Grantown, where they were helped and cheered by the companionship of their daughter, Dr. Agnes McLaren, and by visits from their son Charles, with his wife and their eldest boy, also from Mr. Bright, who enjoyed driving to his old quarters at Tulchan Lodge, where he had so often indulged in his favourite sport of salmon-fishing. His daughter writes:—"A little incident occurred here which greatly pleased my father, who loved to recognise heart virtues in his children. His grandmamma had given little Harry, on setting out for a walk, some coppers in case he met any footsore pedestrians on the way. On his return he said he had not seen any poor people, 'but might he save the money to give to a poor woman who sold flowers in South Kensington when he went home again, as she used to sit for warmth at the grating of a druggist's shop, and the policeman had ordered her away to another place where it was very cold?' My father, who knew what it was to carry the burdens of the poor on his own heart, welcomed this trait of loving sympathy in that of his grandchild." Anecdote of little grandson.

"It was whilst at Grantown," Mrs. McLaren writes, "that Adam Black's Life came out. My husband read it with intense interest, and I could see that it rekindled so much life in past events, that he began to be a little shaken in the strong feeling he always had expressed, when appealed to by many friends that he should leave some reminiscences of his own life, that the questions he had fought for were of too dry and uninteresting a nature to be of any interest

1885

for the present generation." On leaving Grantown, Mr. and Mrs. McLaren once more visited Inverness, joining there their youngest son, Walter, then a candidate for the Inverness Burghs. Mr. McLaren was deeply interested in his son's championship of the principles of Advanced Liberalism. The contest was fought almost entirely on the Disestablishment question, and he attributed his son's defeat, and also the reverse sustained by the Advanced Liberal party at this election in Edinburgh and other Scotch constituencies, largely to the influence of Mr. Gladstone's speech in the Free Assembly Hall, Edinburgh, excluding Scottish Disestablishment from the authorised programme of the Liberal party. He, however, never felt himself bound to limit his aims to a programme authorised by party leaders, and was always eager to press forward his own more advanced views. A noteworthy opportunity for doing so occurred while he was at Inverness. When Mr. Chamberlain visited the town, and delivered a powerful speech on the Crofter question to an audience of over four thousand persons, he, at the request of the Liberal Association, followed him by a speech advocating Radical principles with all the vigour of his earlier days. He also spoke at several of his son's election meetings on the subject of Church Rates and Disestablishment. These were the last political meetings he ever attended, excepting that held in Edinburgh on Disestablishment a few weeks before his death.

Speaks at Mr. Chamberlain's meeting.

During his residence in Inverness, and especially during the electoral contest of 1885, he was brought into closer intimacy with his nephew, the Rev. George Robson, minister of the United Presbyterian Church. How highly Mr. Robson prized this confidential and affectionate relationship may be gathered from the letter he sent Mrs. McLaren after his uncle's death :—

1885

A nephew's tribute.

"I would like to say that I feel very thankful for all the intercourse I have had with Uncle McLaren during these last twelve months. I have learned for myself the sterling splendour of his character, and have had something like a personal acquaintance, in some measure, with the disinterested devotion of his life to the public good. To have had this intercourse with him has lent to my own life a feeling of being richer and stronger, and by so much I feel the poorer, as countless friends will feel the poorer, that his presence is withdrawn from us. We hardly know the full worth of such men till they are gone from us; it needs the stroke of death to set their life forth round and complete, their character in its true proportions. I do hope that the story of his career will be told in a form which will set before the youth of Scotland, for many a day to come, the stimulus of what is to my mind a unique example of the very best qualities of the Scotch character, and of the honour and success they achieve in the warfare of life. I like to think of his untiring labour for the good of the people, for it always seemed to me to rest upon a loyal faith in God. His purity of aim and transparent integrity of manner and spirit could not have been otherwise so steadfastly maintained. One of the vivid recollections of my boyhood is hearing him explain the tenth chapter of John at Peebles to Helen when she was but a child; it charmed me then, and I have never forgotten the impression made by the simple, direct translation into our life and circumstances of the likeness of the Good Shepherd and the sheep. It came back to me again when you told me at Dunain Park how he had said, in reference to my little sermons to children, that he thought them as convincing to adults as to children. It was quite in keeping that, in his relations to the kingdom of God, he loved to feel and think as a little child."

1885

The sketches of Duncan McLaren's personal and family life presented in these three chapters will, it is hoped, have helped towards a just appreciation of his character, and a sympathetic interest in the record of the fifty years' public life and work, to which the remaining chapters of this book must be devoted.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REFORMED TOWN COUNCIL.

1833

TRUE patriotism is not merely love for one's country. It includes the practical expression of that love in the form of disinterested service—work undertaken for the benefit of the State, independently of private aims and ambitions, and in recognition of the supreme claims of the commonwealth in matters temporal. In different ages and in different ways this claim has been advocated and honoured by the pure-minded and courageous, most frequently in the department of arms, sometimes in the affairs of civil administration, sometimes in the sacrifice of worldly goods and comfort—solidifying and ennobling national life while the impulse lasted, carrying forward the human family through successive stages towards the ideal of human life, and transmitting to succeeding generations a stimulating influence that never dies. With new times come new methods and new laws; and when the spirit of the age developed in Scotland an irresistible demand for local self-government as the highest condition of human freedom, an opportunity was presented in the reform of the municipal institutions in 1833 for the exercise of patriotism of the severest and purest kind. The old close Corporations, rotten and wasteful as well as secret, were abolished, and the public service was opened to all, subject to the safeguard that he who desired to enter it must be elected by the

Conditions of municipal service.

1833 public, and must perform his duties under the gaze and the criticism of those to whom at the end of his term of office he must give an account of his stewardship.

The call to public life.

The patriotic sentiment, in the sense just explained, then beat strong in Scotland; and in Edinburgh, as in other towns, many public-spirited citizens volunteered for service under the novel and hard conditions imposed. Duncan McLaren was not among these volunteers. He was an ardent Liberal, and his loyalty to the cause of the people made him anxiously concerned for the successful working of the new popular institution set up in the midst of the community; but he would not compete for a share in municipal administration with men who for many years had been fighting the battles of civil and religious liberty, and whom he was willing and proud to regard as his leaders, without aspiring to be their associate and coadjutor. Though then thirty-three years of age, he had not hitherto been identified with public work. Seven years previously he had joined the Merchant Company, but simply as a business man. He had entered as burgess and guild brother; and according to the compulsory laws then in force, the fees claimed by the unreformed Town Council for this privilege of citizenship amounted to nearly £25. His business, after nine years' gradual development, still required close personal supervision, and imposed on him duties sufficiently onerous to have fully occupied his time. But while his own thoughts and inclinations were not at this particular time turned towards municipal service, those who knew and appreciated his character and talents marked him out as eminently qualified for the kind of work required; and as, many years afterwards, Richard Cobden urged John Bright to seek relief from domestic sorrow in public cares, so his friends advised him to undertake the new and exacting duties of a Town

Councillor as a means of rousing him from the depression of spirits caused by the death of his wife and child. Thus advised, he consented to be nominated a very short time before the election, and on the polling day the £10 householders ratified the action of his friends by placing him among the six citizens elected as the representatives of the Second Ward. 1833

In his letter to the electors intimating acceptance, he said :— Acceptance of office.

GENTLEMEN,—Being unfettered by any pledge, and indebted to no exclusive party for my return, I esteem the honour the more highly, and while I remain one of your representatives I shall endeavour to merit the confidence you have reposed in me by an assiduous and conscientious discharge of the duties of the office.

Every question that comes before the Council I shall carefully consider, and will give an independent vote without reference to party politics. In filling vacant offices, I shall consider it my duty to advocate the most rigid economy, and in every case to vote for the candidate that appears to me best qualified to perform the duties.

I feel highly gratified by the flattering support afforded me as indicated by the state of the poll, having consented to allow myself to be named as a candidate only the day before the election.

I am, gentlemen, your very obedient servant,

DUNCAN M^cLAREN.

Of all his colleagues in the Town Council, he felt most drawn to Adam Black. As a young man he had conceived a great admiration for this doughty champion of Reform in pre-Reform days, and this admiration, strengthened subsequently by years of close and friendly co-operation, remained with him, notwithstanding later differences, till the day of his death. Mr. Adam Black.

1833

In a letter to Mr. Black's sons, written from Grantown-on-Spey on 8th October 1885, after a perusal of the Memoirs,[1] he gave affectionate expression to the time-tested estimate of his early friend. "In the reformed Town Council," he wrote, "I became acquainted with your father. I was a member of his committee, and my seat was next his at the Council-room. He was sixteen years my senior, and had far more experience of the world than I, who up to that time had lived a very retired, obscure life. I greatly admired Mr. Black's talents and sound judgment, and generally followed his lead in voting with him about municipal affairs; but in politics I was more Radical in my notions than he was, and this difference of opinion gradually increased as I became mixed up with the Anti-Corn-Law agitation and acquainted with its leaders. . . . I can truly say that, for your father personally, I never ceased to have the greatest respect to the day of his death, although our intimacy ceased many years earlier in consequence of political differences of opinion and action."

Work of Reformed Council.

These reformed and reforming Town Councils had laborious and delicate tasks before them. As successors to the close Corporations that had wasted the public patrimony and incurred enormous debts, they were required to clear public faith "from the shameful brand of public fraud," and the operation excited against them many keen and bitter enmities. Perhaps nowhere was more angry criticism encountered than in Edinburgh. The new Council was persistently vilified by the friends of the dispossessed oligarchies and the foes of free popular government. A local Tory journal represented the "course of business" at the people's Council

[1] "Memoirs of Adam Black." Edited by Alexander Nicholson, LL.D. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black.

1833

The new Council vilified.

as "one of continual uproar, mixed up with brawling, laughing, groaning, grinning, hooting, hissing, ruffing, and every other indication of *good breeding* usually exhibited in the galleries of the lowest minor theatres;" but the published reports of the proceedings suggest nothing, and even the illustrated specimens of misconduct quoted by this irate censor contain nothing to justify this sweeping condemnation. The chief ground of complaint or dislike was evidently the representative character of the assembly, and its fidelity to popular interests. For the Tory censor proceeds:—"Business is not what these persons want to discuss, but to give utterance to wild theories, rabid Radicalism, wretched wit, and disgusting buffoonery. The Council is regularly divided into Whig, Radical, and Independent. The Whigs sit at the upper part of the hall, and the Radicals cluster at the lower. . . . Truly these councillors are beginning to find out, from the progress of public business in their hands, that they are not fit to manage our concerns, as they are ashamed of the disorderly nature of their meetings, which are verily full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. We must watch these unruly spirits."[1]

Ecclesiastical intolerance.

But wholesale vituperation of this kind, while it may be accepted as indicative of the irreconcilably unfriendly attitude of a section of the population to the new municipal administrators,[2] was harmless compared with the efforts of

[1] *Edinburgh Evening Post*, October 1834.

[2] The following note, kindly furnished by Mr. David McLaren, now of Putney, shows that humbler officials, as well as servants, conspired to discredit and defeat the new system of government, and tells the story of their complete discomfiture in Heriot's Hospital:—"There was nothing more characteristic of Mr. McLaren than the readiness with which he turned to figures in support of any position which he took up. An amusing instance of this took place in connection with the measures promoted by the Governors of Heriot's Hospital after the members of the reformed Town Council

1834 the representatives of "vested interests" to introduce their claims and their defenders into the municipal parliament. Mr. McLaren, as an increasingly influential Dissenter, early became the object of their antipathy. At the election of 1834 he was opposed, not on the ground of anything he had done, although his active connection with twenty-two special and ordinary committees, including nearly all the most laborious, might have afforded a watchful enemy some cause of offence capable of public statement, but simply and solely because, being a conscientious Voluntary, he was "not a proper person to elect to represent the ward in the Town Council," and because, "in all our civic

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took their place at the Board of that Institution. Great abuses had arisen in the home management; the waste of provisions was said to be extraordinary. A new dietary was ordered, ample but not extravagant. As might have been expected, it was extremely unpopular among the old employés. They stirred up the boys against it, alleging that they were being starved. A large Newfoundland dog belonging to the Hospital—a great favourite—died suddenly. The servants told the inmates it had succumbed to the new dietary. In order to see that justice was being done to their regulations, the Governors determined that for a time two or three of the House Committee should be present every day at the dinner-hour. One day it fell to Mr. McLaren, with two others, to attend. Broth or soup was brought in. It certainly did not look very attractive. It seemed very doubtful whether the full quantity of ingredients ordered had been put in. The peas especially seemed absurdly defective. The two other members could only shake their heads and doubt. Mr. McLaren ordered the cook to be sent for. 'Are you sure you put in all the quantities which were ordered by the Committee?' 'Quite sure, sir,' was the reply. 'There were eleven pounds of peas ordered; did you put in that quantity?' 'Yes, sir.' 'You are sure? Ah! There are 180 boys in the Hospital. We shall suppose there are four in the sick-room, or absent somehow. That will leave 176 to dine here. That is the exact number of ounces in eleven pounds. Do these three peas in this plate weigh an ounce? Does that pea in the other plate weigh an ounce?' The cook was dismissed, and the whole establishment with her, if I remember rightly. My informant, one of the members present, was Councillor Gifford, father of the late Lord Gifford and of the present Master of the Merchant Company."

elections it should now be Churchman or Voluntary." It was admitted that he had proved "an active and efficient councillor," but he was a Voluntary, and the able and chosen champion of those who advocate liberal opinions, and therefore he should be relegated to private life. Mr. McLaren, in his address, while thanking the electors for the honour they had conferred on him in the preceding year, by returning him when he was comparatively little known, although put in nomination only the day before the election, very sharply rebuked the bigotry that refused the rights of citizenship to Voluntaries. While he declined to canvas, and warned the electors that he could not continue to render the same amount of service as he had done, his constituents gratefully and heartily reappointed him as their representative on his own conditions. But these conditions he himself set aside. He was a willing horse in the public service, and new burdens were being constantly laid upon him. He was soon promoted to the Magistracy. Two years afterwards he surrendered his Bailieship to assume the more congenial duties of the Treasurership, in succession to his friend Mr. Black. With each change his duties became more onerous and his influence increased. Within four years the unassuming High Street merchant, who had hitherto lived a very retired life, had, by his industry and his acknowledged single-heartedness and purity of motive, become the leading member of the metropolitan Town Council.

1835

Increase of duties.

At that time this was no small distinction. The first reformed Town Council was composed of men conspicuous alike for their talents and for their devotion to the public good. An examination of the municipal annals of this period discloses abundant proof of the ability, energy, and fidelity of the councillors. The more important of the reports prepared by

A commercial scheme.

1835 committees and their conveners were printed in order to facilitate careful study on the part of all the members, and they cannot now be read without admiration, characterised as they are by originality of research and thoroughness of treatment, whatever may be the subject under discussion. One of the earliest of these reports, bearing the signatures of Councillor Grainger, the convener, the four Bailies Thomson, McFarlane, Donaldson, and McLaren, Deacon-Convener Banks, and Councillor R. H. Jameson, and dated February 1835, treats of "the eligibility of this city and its environs for manufacturing establishments." These early councillors recognised that it was their duty to study the economic conditions which tend to increase the wealth and material prosperity of the city, and they thought that such results could be best attained, not by the development of schemes of municipal socialism,—indeed, if such a remedy ever occurred to them, the impoverished state of the city finances must have forbidden any attempt to give it practical effect,—but by the encouragement of commercial enterprise. The committee evidently thought that Edinburgh might and ought to be made a great industrial centre, possessed as it was of those five natural aids to mercantile activity, viz., 1st, an abundant supply of cheap fuel of good quality; 2nd, an abundant supply of water at a moderate expense; 3rd, a populous district in its immediate neighbourhood, where young operatives of both sexes may be always obtained at moderate wages; 4th, a seaport in its immediate vicinity, and facilities of internal communication for the convenient importation of raw material and for the exportation of manufactured goods to home and foreign markets; and, 5th, abundance of good building materials. "The committee thought it prudent that, in the interests of Edinburgh, these facts should be made known through the medium

Proposal to make Edinburgh a manufacturing centre.

of their report, and they recommended (not as a Corporation scheme, but as a distinctively commercial speculation outside of the Corporation) the formation of an 'Association for the Encouragement of Manufactures,' in so far as is necessary for providing buildings and machinery, and these only to be let on lease to enterprising and responsible individuals." 1836

A still bulkier document, extending to seventy-four pages of large pamphlet size, issued during the same year, illustrates unity of aim with diversity of opinion—hearty co-operation in the defence of the rights of the Corporation along with independent individual effort. It is the municipal reply to the report of the Burgh Commissioners, which threatened the Council's patronage in the University and its interests in the port of Leith. The reply embraces an able statement by Bailie Donaldson relative to the Council's patronage and management of the University, a report on the same subject by Bailie M^cFarlane, who was formally thanked "for the ability, the propriety, and the dignity with which he had performed the task," along with a report by Treasurer Black and a speech by Bailie M^cLaren on "The Revenues of Leith and the Interest of the Corporation of Edinburgh in these revenues." Mr. Black was at this time the leading authority in the city on the subject of the ecclesiastical revenues, and a careful, painstaking report which he prepared, including a financial investigation dating back to the beginning of the century, laid the foundation for the future Anti-Annuity-Tax agitation. With commendable discretion and firmness, Bailie Sawers managed the relations of the Town Council with the Royal Infirmary, pointing out, when the right of municipal interference was challenged in 1837, that the Council "cannot consider any of the great institutions of the city as a

The University and the Infirmary.

1837

matter of indifference to the representatives of the community, and least of all the Royal Infirmary, of whose management two of the Council must always form a part, and which annually derives the sum of £2000 (being more than one-third of the yearly revenue) from the attendance of students, in consequence of the regulations of a course of study sanctioned by the Town Council as patrons of the University."

About this time also the practice of examining parliamentary bills affecting municipal or Scottish interests was begun, and the reports submitted were generally masterly and elaborate. Referring to this period of exceptional municipal activity, Mr. McLaren at a later date named Sir James Spittal, the first Lord Provost of the reformed Town Council, as one of the inspiring forces, remarking that "there never was a man who more devoted himself heart and soul to the duties of the office, and gave his whole time and thoughts to it than he did." But the most cursory examination of the municipal history reveals Mr. McLaren himself as the chief centre of activity, initiating an administrative policy as pure and economical as the old close system was jobbing and wasteful, and at the same time expounding and defending it in exhaustive reports. His paper on "The best means of obtaining immediate accommodation for pauper lunatics," was one of the first steps taken in the direction of that humane treatment of the insane which happily now prevails universally throughout Scotland. His scheme for the reduction of the dues payable on the admission of burgesses, carried in 1837, was a fitting preliminary to his bill, passed by the Imperial Legislature in 1876, for the extension of the status and rights of burgess-ship to all ratepaying householders. Referring to Mr. McLaren's work and place in the first reformed Town Council, Mr. James

Energy and faithfulness of Sir James Spittal.

Humane treatment of the insane.

Aytoun, one of his colleagues at this early period, in a speech in support of his candidature for the Lord Provostship in 1851, said:— 1837

"I recollect well when he took his place amongst us, with his pale, contemplative face. We were all untried, at least had never worked together, and almost from the very outset Mr. M^cLaren acquired, as if by a species of instinct, that leading position among his colleagues which he has retained ever since with all those among whom he acts. Every one of us soon perceived, and with astonishment, his judgment, his tact, and his persevering industry. He soon became an excellent speaker and writer, and in a very few months he was acknowledged by general consent by far the ablest man in the Town Council."

CHAPTER V.

SETTLEMENT OF THE CITY AFFAIRS.

1838 In this position of acknowledged though unclaimed pre-eminence, Duncan McLaren was called upon to undertake a work which had baffled the skill of his accomplished predecessor in the Treasurership—namely, the extrication of the city finances from a position of impending bankruptcy.

In 1836 Mr. Black and Mr. Donaldson, deputies from the Council, wrote long private letters to Mr. McLaren from London, lamenting the little progress which was being made in the negotiations with the city creditors, calling attention to an attempt to complicate the question by a simultaneous settlement of the Annuity-Tax difficulty,[1] and telling him he must join them in London. Mr. Black wrote: "We found both Abercromby and Campbell (the city Members) set on mixing up the Annuity question with the general settlement. To us it appeared the sure way to ruin the whole scheme, for there was no prospect of Government furnishing the means of paying the clergy. There was less prospect of their abolishing the tax without providing a substitute. Therefore, if they relieved one class they must proportionally burden another, who would unquestionably oppose any such arrangement; or, if they merely changed the name of the tax, then

[1] The Annuity-tax was a rate levied in aid of the stipends of ministers of the Established Church, and was bitterly opposed by the Voluntaries.

the whole affair would only be considered as humbug and excite indignation; in which circumstances the whole measure was in imminent danger of being shipwrecked." Mr. Donaldson was even more despondent of a satisfactory issue. He wrote: "The drift of some of the people here (I mean of the Edinburgh people) is to starve the Corporation." On January 25, 1838, Sir John Campbell also wrote Mr. McLaren in a most discouraging tone. "I am obliged," he said, "to you for the copy of your able speech. The subject is so beset with difficulties that what is to be done I know not." But the successful completion of this work was urgently necessary for the establishment of the conditions of freedom and independence, without which the new municipal system could not have a fair trial. In beginning his attempt to arrange the financial affairs of the city, Mr. McLaren was conscious that the magnitude and difficulties of the task would withdraw his attention unduly from the management of his own business, but he was equally conscious that an early and satisfactory settlement was essential to the well-being of the community; that postponement simply meant the multiplication of complications, the increasing exasperation of all the parties concerned, and the growth of the financial burden, already threatening to overwhelm the municipal life of the city. Accordingly he resolved to make what, for him at the time, was the very serious sacrifice of almost complete withdrawal from his own private business to promote the interests of the community in a department of service for which he possessed a special aptitude, and it might be said of him as of the old Roman purist, that he "neglected his own concerns and rose before day to find those of the public." In a private memorandum, written a few months before his death, he thus described the financial situation with which fifty years previously

1838

Evils of postponement.

1838

The financial situation.

the city was confronted, and the way in which it was met:—

"The city affairs having become sadly involved by the extravagance of the former Tory Town Councils, and in later years chiefly by the building of three churches in the New Town—St. George's, St. Stephen's, St. Mary's—which together cost upwards of £80,000, the Town Council was unable to meet its engagements, to pay interest on its debt or its bonds as they became due. Its ordinary debts amounted to nearly £400,000. The magnitude of these debts and the complication of the affairs involved, including an additional debt to Government of about a quarter of a million, secured on the harbour and docks of Leith, which financially were the property of the city of Edinburgh, induced the Government of the day, on the advice and with the consent of local parties, to pass a public Act of Parliament sequestrating the revenues and properties of the city, so far as these might be found available for the benefit of its creditors, and appointing trustees for the creditors named in the Act, viz., Lord Rosebery, Lord Melville, Mr. James Gibson-Craig, Mr. Learmonth of Dean, Mr. Richard Mackenzie, W.S., and Mr. W. McHutchen, a large creditor. This Act was passed in 1832, and the new Town Council, which came into office in November 1833, had the great responsibility of endeavouring to effect an arrangement which would be satisfactory both to the trustees and the creditors, whose assent was required to the Act, and also to the Government and to parties connected with various institutions having pecuniary interests involved, such as the University, the High School, and many more private trusts. The Treasurer, of course, had a large share of the responsibility of negotiating with all the parties interested, and Mr. Black did a great deal to remove difficulties, but when

he retired there was no immediate prospect of a settlement. I followed his example in doing all I could to arrange matters, but the difficulties seemed overwhelming, there were so many interests involved, in addition to those of the ordinary creditors of the city. At length a basis of arrangement was suggested by me, which was ultimately carried through by a public Act, 'The Edinburgh and Leith Agreement Act,' passed in 1838."

1838

Opposition of the creditors.

But this transaction, thus modestly and summarily described, was not easily effected. The municipal boat did not reach smooth water and a safe anchorage the moment Mr. M^cLaren appeared at the helm. It encountered for a time a persistent succession of storms, stirred up largely by the factious and intolerant spirit of the Anti-Reform party, Churchmen as well as Tories, who had no affection for the new system of government, and were only too willing to see it discredited. Mr. M^cLaren, however, instead of being discouraged by this opposition, displayed increasing firmness in maintaining the interests of the city. His starting-point was that the offers of compromise formerly made by the Council and rejected by the creditors were too favourable and could not be repeated; and he was strengthened in this position by the withdrawal of Lord Rosebery, Lord Melville, Sir James Gibson-Craig, and Mr. Richard Mackenzie, W.S., from the trust because of what they considered the unreasonableness and unwisdom of the majority of the creditors. Further, he showed to the Council means by which, under the operation of what were called Ale Duty Acts, they could exercise some compulsion on the creditors and their trustees in guiding them "to adopt a more conciliatory course of conduct towards the Town Council, and to agree to a reasonable compromise." Later, the possibility of the assertion of claims against some of the creditors as creators of the

A weapon of offence.

1838 debt was raised. Apparently as a diplomatic stroke for the purpose of compelling the creditors and their friends to a more conciliatory disposition, rather than with any serious intention of prosecuting the suit, the Treasurer quoted unrepealed Acts of Parliament "to show that the old Tory Town Councils of Edinburgh were prohibited by law to borrow from private parties above a certain amount; or in other words, that the debts of the city were never to exceed £100,000." And the following formidable list of debts incurred during the government of successive Provosts since the year 1813 was compiled:—

1813.	Provost Creech, . . .	£22,566	10	7
1814–5.	Provost Marjoribanks, .	10,822	16	10
1816–7.	Provost Arbuthnot, . .	20,174	17	9
1818–9.	Provost McKenzie, . .	7,105	13	6
1820–1.	Provost Manderston, . .	11,490	16	6
1822–3.	Provost Arbuthnot, . .	29,561	14	6
1824–5.	Provost Henderson, . .	19,480	16	9
1826–7.	Provost Trotter, . .	44,894	8	0
1828–9.	Provost Brown, . .	48,519	3	9
1830–1.	Provost Allan, . . .	44,951	12	11
1832–3.	Provost Learmonth, . .	5,026	8	8
	Total debt in twenty-one years,	£264,595	19	9

"Such," remarked the *Edinburgh Chronicle*, a paper friendly to the Corporation and the Reform party, "is the splendid sum for which the creditors have evidently a claim! and what a pretty specimen of Tory extravagance does it exhibit! The debt incurred during Mr. Learmonth's Provostship would have been much greater, had not part of the Leith revenues, which should have been applied towards the payment of the instalments due to Government, been applied in payment of the ordinary expenditure of the burgh. We hope the creditors will look sharply after their interest, and thus both serve themselves and relieve

the burdens of the city. Certain of the creditors, who are old corporators, will perhaps now regret, when too late, that they did not accept of the offer of a settlement made by the Town Council and by Government." 1838

In a series of letters addressed to the municipal electors of the city in October and November 1837, Mr. M'Laren explained that self-defence, and not vindictiveness, prompted the adoption of this monitory attitude. He had found that in their correspondence with the Town Council, and more especially in their rejection of the offers of settlement made during Mr. Black's Treasurership, the trustees for the creditors always assumed "high ground," and had exhibited an "utter disregard of every interest but that of their constituents;" and he therefore was induced "to look carefully into all the Acts of Parliament regarding the affairs of the city, in the hope of being able to discover some effective means of defence against the encroachments." That hope was realised. The investigation he made satisfied him "that the old Town Councils were expressly prohibited by various Acts of Parliament from contracting additional debt; that for three-fourths of the existing debt neither the funds of the city nor the property of the burgesses is liable; and that the creditors are only entitled to claim repayment from those members of Council by whom it was contracted." Letters to the electors.

These conclusions he supported by a long series of quotations. He pointed out, too, that one or two faithful Abdiels had protested against the incurring of these debts in violation of the law, and that, in spite of their recorded protests, the administration became increasingly extravagant and profligate. He showed that during the concluding years of the close *regime*, from 1818 to 1833, more debt was incurred (viz., £209,472) than during the whole previous period of

1838 the existence of the Corporation. He added, "The *proportionate* increase of the National Debt was never nearly equal to this; and it may well be doubted whether the annals of any Corporation in Britain afford a similar instance of reckless extravagance." With this weapon of offence in his hand, Mr. McLaren was not disposed to let the interests of the city be sacrificed, nor the representatives of the city browbeaten by the trustees for the creditors. He gave warning that if the policy of intimidation were continued, he would "carry the war into the enemy's camp" with the watchword of "No quarter;" that if no reasonable compromise were agreed to —by which he meant a compromise more favourable to the city than the one the creditors had formerly rejected—he would advise that "steps should be taken to fasten the responsibility on those parties by whom the debt was contracted," and the Corporation, which ought to have been one of the most flourishing in the kingdom, overwhelmed by the shame and ruin of bankruptcy. As the controversy proceeded his indignation increased, and he concluded another letter in these words:—

"If the burgesses would compel the old corporators to refund to the extent of their delinquencies during this period of fifteen years, there would be ample funds and to spare with which to pay the creditors in full, even after construing all the acts of the Council in the most liberal manner, and allowing them to get credit for £42,000 expended during this period in the erection of St. Stephen's and St. Mary's Churches, which yield a fair return. Even if £150,000 could be recovered from the old spendthrifts, there would remain ample funds with which to pay the creditors and carry on the business of the city, without having recourse to any new assessment on the inhabitants."

New hopes. Sir John Campbell, writing Mr. McLaren on November 20, 1837, said, "I cannot refrain from expressing to you

the extreme pleasure with which I have perused your letters to the municipal electors of Edinburgh. The legal argument, even, you put with great perspicuity, acuteness, and force. I do trust that a final settlement is now at hand, and I am convinced it is mainly to be ascribed to your exertions." 1838

But while thus exhibiting towards his opponents a resolute front, sustained by a knowledge of the financial and legal difficulties greater than had hitherto been displayed by the city representatives, Mr. M^cLaren was preparing a basis of arrangement, as though he believed the settlement was within measurable distance of accomplishment. In his negotiations with all the parties concerned he was greatly assisted by the advice and action of Mr. Rutherfurd, then Solicitor-General, and who afterwards filled with conspicuous ability the offices of Lord Advocate and judge in the Court of Session. But all the elaborate financial calculations were his own, and these alone demanded from him an amount of labour greater perhaps than had ever before, or has since, been rendered by a lay Town Councillor without professional assistance.[1]

[1] At a banquet given to Sir James Spittal, the Lord Provost, Mr. J. T. Gordon, afterwards Sheriff of Midlothian, in proposing "Mr. Duncan M^cLaren and prosperity to the finances of Edinburgh," made the most complimentary recognition of the labours of the devoted and public-spirited Treasurer. Mr. Gordon said, "It is to the credit of Mr. M^cLaren that his friends are justly proud—that a party in the State are thankful for the assistance of his extensive learning, singular acuteness, and indomitable industry. But it is surely far more to his credit that, without touching forbidden ground—without uttering anything unbecoming in me to speak, or disagreeable for this meeting to hear—I can now call upon a mixed assemblage of his fellow-citizens to acknowledge how all the information, and talent, and assiduity for which Mr. M^cLaren is distinguished have been beneficially directed by him of late to the service of the most precious interests of the city. (Hear, hear, and great cheers.) Occupied with the

1838

But it was after the basis of arrangement elaborated by Mr. McLaren had been tentatively accepted in Edinburgh, and the field of negotiation or of conflict for final adjustment had been transferred to London, that the most trying, if not also the most arduous, part of the work began. Before leaving Edinburgh, he had conscientiously and unreservedly informed his colleagues of all his plans and proposals, and having obtained their approval, he went to London as their plenipotentiary. The words of his commission (dated 24th April 1838) were:—"They (the Town Council) authorise Treasurer McLaren forthwith to proceed to London, with full powers on the part of the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council to act for them in completing the general arrangement with the creditors, and otherwise giving and granting to him full power and authority for them, and in their name to sign and present any memorials that may be necessary to Her Majesty's Government, or any petitions to either House of Parliament that may be required, or any other documents whatever." He went single-handed, without the aid of Town Clerk or other official, except the town's

A plenipotentiary.

cares of a large and flourishing business—engaged in the performance of many public functions—and, allow me to say, subjected not unfrequently to attacks which are, perhaps, the necessary lot of men of his eminence—with all those objects to direct his eye and fill his hands, it is yet impossible for me to speak of the whole extent of ability, research, and perseverance brought to bear by Mr. McLaren upon the most delicate and difficult questions in the settlement of the city affairs. It was but this forenoon that a worthy colleague of his showed me a paper of many folio pages, and said, 'There is a report by Treasurer McLaren, which probably few accountants in Edinburgh would have drawn up under a few hundred guineas.' This Mr. McLaren did in the simple conscientious discharge of his duty (cheers); and I am sure that Mr. McLaren feels himself to be better paid in the continued and increasing approbation of his fellow-citizens than he ever could have been if paid by gold."

London agent, and with the privilege of consulting with Sir John (afterwards Lord Chancellor) Campbell, the Attorney-General, then one of the Members for Edinburgh, if at any time this busy professional man could be caught. In starting, he was thrown entirely upon his own resources, and he felt the responsibility to be heavy. First he had an audience with Sir William Rae, ex-Lord Advocate, and chief representative of the creditors, a man of great talent and wide experience, and with Mr. Robert Philips, the conscientious representative of the town and harbour of Leith. By the consent of the Government to discharge one-half of the debt incurred by loans for the building of Leith docks, and to postpone the payment of principal and interest on the other half until all other claims should be satisfied, the negotiators had an advantageous starting-point; and ultimately they adjusted the terms of agreement among themselves in a manner which proved highly satisfactory to all.[1] It was not, however, an easy matter to effect this. Protracted conferences took place with the Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed to consider the matter. The Committee consisted of Mr. Labouchere (chairman), Mr. Stewart, M.P. for the Haddington Burghs, Sir James Graham (whose courtesy and helpfulness made an abiding impression of gratitude on Mr. M'Laren's mind), Mr. Hawkins, Sir George Clerk, the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Spring Rice), Mr. W. Gibson-Craig, Mr. Warburton, and Sir W. Rae. For the character and ability of Mr. Labouchere (who was afterwards created Lord Taunton), Mr. M'Laren retained a great respect, and he 1838

[1] For the information of those who desire to see in full the terms agreed upon, they are given on page 127.

1838 was wont to tell with approbation, as an illustration of public spirit and integrity, how Lord Taunton, having received £80,000 from a railway company in compensation for a passage through his Somersetshire property, returned the money in later years on account of the increased value his estate had derived from the construction of the line. In his intercourse with the Committee, Mr. McLaren displayed a candour which won confidence, and a knowledge which commanded deference, and thus gained influential friends for the scheme.

In a letter to his wife, dated 4th July, he said, "I expect to get *justice* for Edinburgh, which you know is all I want from any one. But most assuredly justice would not have been obtained unless I had come." Two days afterwards he wrote, announcing that the justice he desired had been obtained:—

"On seeing Sir James Graham half an hour before the Committee met, he mentioned accidentally that the Lord Advocate (Mr. Murray, then Member for Leith), who is not a member of Committee, was to be present on the part of Leith to conduct the case along with Mr. Philips. I said there must be some mistake in this, for Sir John Campbell had told me they had both agreed not to interfere. Sir James replied that the Advocate was certainly to be there, for he had been invited by Mr. Warburton, who had told him so, and he advised me to try to get the Attorney-General immediately. However, I thought, as he knew nothing about the matter, I would lose as much by having him as I was likely to gain, since I had not had an opportunity of priming him beforehand. When I mentioned the suggestion to Sir William Rae about Sir John, and added that I did not like to have to contend with the Advocate as well as Philips single-handed, he said there was no fear of me, that he would back me against the Advocate on the subject any day, and Mr. Spottiswoode also advised me to proceed alone. I went accordingly and debated

the different points at great length, and gained nearly every one of the least importance that I thought worth pressing; *but you must not say this till the bill is passed.* The Committee always paid great attention to what I said, and seemed disposed to make allowances for my deficiencies. We were all desired to retire, according to custom, when they were about to divide on the most important point, and the Advocate also. Shortly afterwards they sent for me alone to ask my opinion as to what I thought of a compromise, and what sum would be fair. I had never thought of the contingency, but gave them an honest offhand opinion, and they all seemed to feel that it was so. I retired, and was again called in by name to get my opinion on the conditions of the compromise, and again retired. We were afterwards all called in and informed, to the amazement of the Advocate and evident mortification of Philips, that the Committee had agreed to a compromise, which was the very compromise and sum which I had suggested. The Advocate and others were all in the lobby while I was called in, and when I came out I never said a word to them about what had passed. I am very well pleased with the result." 1838

But he never relaxed his personal vigilance and energies. He remained at his post till the measure had passed both Houses of Parliament. Had it been otherwise, it is almost certain the scheme of settlement would once more have been upset. Several surprise oppositions were started. One of these proceeded from the Duke of Buccleuch. The story of his Grace's opposition, and of the city plenipotentiary's successful dealing with it, is thus told. Writing in July to his wife, Mr. M^c^Laren said:— The Duke of Buccleuch.

"When engaged writing one day in the office of Messrs. Spottiswoode & Robertson, the London solicitors for the city, a gentleman passed through the room whom I did not notice. Shortly afterwards Mr. Robertson came to me, asking me to come in to explain to the Duke of Buccleuch, who had called about clauses in the bill which the Duke thought affected his

1838 properties at Granton, by including them within the burgh of Leith. It was a most intricate and difficult question about boundaries and rights of jurisdiction. . . . The Duke was greatly alarmed, having had letters from his agent in Edinburgh that his rights were affected, and he said he had already asked Lord Camperdown to delay the bill. I knew all about the difficulties, and turned up the Acts on the subject, and gave him a satisfactory explanation, which occupied three-quarters of an hour. He said he did not think he could be affected, and he was to state to Lord Camperdown that he would offer no opposition. If I had not been here great mischief would have followed, as his Grace has much influence in the House. Mr. Robertson said after he left, that it was a mercy I was here and in at the time, for neither he nor any other person in London could have removed the objections."

The Duke of Buccleuch afterwards formally intimated withdrawal of his opposition, and the accidental interview which had so satisfactory a termination proved the beginning of an acquaintance between the Duke and Mr. McLaren which, in spite of differences of political opinion, was maintained, and with growing respect on both sides, until the Duke's death in 1884. When it was proposed to erect the monument in honour of the Duke of Buccleuch which now faces the west door of St. Giles's Church, Mr. McLaren was one of the earliest and heartiest supporters of the scheme.

The city clergy.

A surprise opposition of another kind caused keen irritation. It proceeded from the city clergy. In a letter to the citizens, dated 17th July 1838, Mr. McLaren thus explains the circumstances:—"Yesterday a new opposition was started, Sir William Rae having left on Saturday for Scotland, thinking all safe. The Church, as usual, is the opponent of this, as of every other good measure. A petition from the Presbytery of Edinburgh to both Houses of Parliament

was sent up, and that to the House of Commons was presented last night by Sir Robert Inglis, the Member for the University of Oxford, perhaps the Highest Churchman in the House. It was to the effect that the claim of the Presbytery for a *preferable* right to get funds to build new churches should be reserved to them. This is in opposition to the principle of the bill. I told their agent yesterday that I would never admit or reserve any right of *preference;* that I would oppose it to the uttermost, and rather allow the bill to be thrown out in the Lords than submit to such a condition. I wrote to Sir William Rae strongly to the same effect last night, and sent a copy of my letter to the Council, telling them that such was my fixed resolution, and that if they did not get the Presbytery to withdraw their opposition by return of post, they might consider that this would be the result, as their agent said he would get some of the Bishops to move and carry the clause in the Lords. You know that in the Lords the Church can and will do anything, but I will give the Presbytery the odium of *throwing out* the bill rather than of defeating it by a side wind. It will be read in the Commons a third time this evening, and carried to the Lords and read a first time there, and finished, I think, one way or other, on Friday. I called on Sir Robert Inglis to-day, and gave him a full explanation of the case, and I am sure it is *too bad* for him. I don't think he will move in the matter." 1838

In his active efforts to defeat this device, Mr. M'Laren called on many other influential members besides Sir Robert Inglis. He sought and obtained interviews with the Speaker, Mr. Labouchere, and Mr. Stewart, and intimated his resolution to oppose "the trick" out and out. He was then asked by Sir James Graham, "a very High Churchman," to call for him at his house next morning.

1838

Interview with Sir James Graham.

"I called," says Mr. McLaren in another letter, "and found he was strongly imbued with notions in favour of the claims of the clergy. I argued the point with him fully in presence of his lady while they were at breakfast, and at last got him to say that it was right to abolish the whole thing, and that he would not interfere by proposing any amendment in the House. The House was to meet at twelve to-day, and he was breakfasting at half-past eleven! Accordingly the bill came on and passed without a word on the subject. . . . I called with Mr. Philips (Member for Leith) afterwards on the Earl of Camperdown, to get him to take charge of the bill. We had letters of introduction from Mr. Stewart and the Lord Advocate. He received us cordially, and is to take it in hand. Lord Melville has gone, and Lord Rosebery has not returned from the country."

Fortunately little further trouble was experienced, and the bill shortly afterwards became an Act of Parliament.

The Act.

The Act was literally a *magnum opus*. It consisted of no fewer than eighty-three clauses. It secured for the creditors of the city three per cent. annuities on their debts, amounting to £400,000, but it dealt besides with interests affecting the Government, the port and burgh of Leith, the University, and the city clergy; and it satisfied them all. If ever, in a moment of self-complacency produced by the consciousness of having striven his best to hold the balance even through the multitudinous contentions and complications that obstructed his path, Mr. McLaren, as the chief author of the scheme of settlement, ventured to anticipate the reward of public approval, the appreciation actually shown must have greatly exceeded his most sanguine expectations. At a meeting of the Council held on 31st July 1838, the Treasurer gave a full and lucid account of his stewardship, clearly described the provisions of the Act, and their relations to the several parties implicated, and acknowledged the help he had received from Mr. Rutherfurd and Sir James Graham, the

Account of stewardship.

immense amount of trouble taken by Sir W. Rae, the exertions of Mr. Stewart and of Lord Camperdown in conducting the bill through Parliament, and the liberality of the Government, which surrendered a debt of £200,000. He had blame to cast on no one; and when asked as to the nature and amount of aid he had received from the city Members, he explained that Mr. Abercromby, from his position as Speaker, was precluded from interfering, while if Sir John Campbell had not given much assistance, it was because it was not needed. "He (said the Treasurer) saw Sir John Campbell the very first day he was in London, and he stated that he would be happy to do everything in his power, and be ready to make any sacrifice for the purpose of promoting the interests of the city. Sir John Campbell stated this in a manner so frank, that he had no doubt Sir John would not have felt it a trouble if he had seen it necessary to call upon him; but he had never been placed in a position that rendered it necessary that he should avail himself of his very handsome offer. The city had given him full powers to act for them, and he had always acted according to the best of his own judgment, without consulting Sir John on any point." As regards the general result, he believed the settlement would prove of great benefit, not only to the creditors, but also to Edinburgh and Leith, reviving both "from the state of languor in which they had been for some years, and would ultimately be the means of producing the most important benefits to both communities." He further explained that the University was placed in a more favourable position financially by £2500 than it had ever been before, "which was a matter of great importance to the prosperity of the city;" while, as regards the city clergy, from whom he differed in principle, he mentioned that he had not acted 1838

1838 in a paltry spirit, because "the only error he had discovered in the bill in its passage through Parliament was one in their favour, and though the slightest mention of it to the Committee would have got it altered, he had spoken of it to no one but their own agent."

Universal satisfaction. When he had finished his long statement, Mr. McLaren found he had no critics in the Council. His colleagues did not conceal their feeling that their Treasurer, as their plenipotentiary, had acquitted himself with a distinction beyond their expectations, and had rendered the community a service greater than they had believed possible. Their speeches were full of laudation of Mr. McLaren and of self-congratulation that "Edinburgh had in its midst a person capable of conducting matters of such importance," and that for the first time they were in reality "a free Town Council." On the motion of Bailie Crooks, seconded by Bailie Sawers, the following notice was adopted and formally communicated to the Treasurer by Sir James Forrest of Comiston, the Lord Provost:—

"That the best thanks of the Council and the community are due to the Treasurer for his valuable services in London, as Commissioner for the Council, during the time when the bill was in course of preparation and passing through Parliament; that it is the unanimous feeling of the Council that it was owing to these services that complete success has attended the measure; and that the Lord Provost be requested to convey the thanks of the Council to the Treasurer from the chair."

But the expression of appreciation was not confined to the Council; it was repeated by the press of the city, and endorsed by the general verdict of the community. Mr. McLaren having, on the 10th August, issued an address to the municipal electors of the city pointing to the provisions of the Act which fulfilled his promise that the settlement

which he arranged would be more advantageous for the Corporation than the offers they had rejected, a controversy arose as to which of the parties had most profited. Referring to this contention subsequently, he happily remarked, "The only difference of opinion I have heard of is a good-humoured dispute as to which of the parties has got the best bargain. Our Leith friends insist that they have got the best, the creditors contend that the best lot has fallen to them, while the city think they have not got the worst." 1838

Appreciation of Mr. McLaren.

"The community of Edinburgh," said the *Edinburgh Observer* of the time, "owe Mr. McLaren a debt of gratitude which probably they will never be able to repay. All parties being satisfied with the measure is proof strong as holy writ that the work as a whole has been well executed."

But one point on which nearly all the parties concerned were agreed was, that for the settlement which pleased them all they were chiefly indebted to Mr. McLaren. They knew that but for his rare talent for figures, his clearness and calmness of judgment, and his unexampled devotion to public duty, their extrication from the pit of financial confusion and ruin, dug by the extravagances of pre-Reform administrators, would have been an impossibility. They knew, moreover, that the work had been achieved at no small personal sacrifice to their Treasurer, who, while lavish of his own service to the community, was severely scrupulous as regards the acceptance of payment or reward for the public work he rendered. He rigidly limited his charges while in London to his own modest personal expenses, determined that beyond these he would take nothing from the Corporation, his wish being to serve the city, not to enrich himself.

It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that a public testimonial should have been suggested as an expression of

1838 gratitude for a great work done, and of appreciation of the spirit in which it was carried through. The proposal was formally submitted to a meeting of the principal inhabitants of Edinburgh and Leith, held in the Council Chamber on October 3, 1838, under the presidency of Sir James Forrest, Lord Provost, and attended, among others, by the Attorney-General, Sir John Campbell, M.P., Sir J. Gibson-Craig, Sir J. Graham Dalzell, Provost White of Leith, Mr. John Craig of Great King Street, and several of the magistrates and councillors of the two Corporations. Time and reflection had strengthened the public sense of the value of the work which had been accomplished, and the speakers were even less reserved in their praise than the surprised and gratified Town-Councillors at their July meeting. The Lord Provost spoke of the devoted application of the energies of Mr. McLaren's powerful mind to the city's affairs, with results which promised the highest material benefits to the city through the revival of public confidence and commercial prosperity. Sir James Gibson-Craig certified that it would "be impossible to find any man who had acted in these affairs with more respect to himself and more utility to the community." Mr. Robert Cadell tellingly illustrated the benefits which had been conferred on the creditors. "A considerable portion of this sum (£400,000) was," he said, "held by ladies and women with small means, whose all was invested in what was considered at the time a safe deposit. Very many of their cases were extremely hard. Let them only think of these poor women—their bread-winners gone, and their necessities compelling them to sell to the cool, calculating holders of money, who purchased, or were ready to purchase, the debts below their value—a settlement was to these poor creatures saving them from starvation or the poorhouse."

But, he added, the citizens of Edinburgh had greatest cause for congratulation—"they ought to feel proud that the city's affairs were no longer bankrupt, that, in fact, Edinburgh was again in a position that the finger of scorn could not be pointed at her." As one who had had opportunity in London of knowing how much time and pains Mr. M^cLaren bestowed on the fulfiment of his mission, and how much his opinion was respected in the Select Committee, Mr. Cadell testified that "no point could be raised, no difficulty started, which Mr. M^cLaren was not instantly ready to meet with a full and perfect knowledge of the subject." Sir John Campbell, the future Lord Chancellor, was even more complimentary alike to the Treasurer, whom he described as "a great public benefactor," and to his work, which he regarded as of the highest importance, as affecting not merely the reputation of the city, but its future prosperity. Sir John thus proceeded:— 1838

"A great public benefactor."

"When he first became connected with Edinburgh, he found that the insolvency of the Corporation, arising from causes which it would now be unprofitable to trace, had caused the greatest confusion and mischief. There was the utmost difficulty in conducting the municipal affairs of the city, and it was only a high degree of patriotism and public spirit which induced individuals of respectability to fill situations of public trust. The creditors of the city had no means of procuring payment of their debt or rendering their securities available. There was a general distrust among all orders of the community. Strangers even were prevented from settling here as they desired, from an apprehension of the unknown burthens which might be brought upon them. Property was depreciated—trade was paralysed. From the complicated nature of the disputes and the conflicting interests of the parties concerned, a satisfactory settlement long seemed impossible. On several occasions he himself had anxiously tried to assist in the negotiations which were going forward, but disappointment

1838 was always the result; and at last he saw nothing before him but sequestration and long litigation, which would have swallowed up the funds for which the parties were contending. Under these circumstances Mr. McLaren came forward and proposed a plan based on justice and equity, which was universally approved of; and by his zeal, intelligence, and perseverance that plan was sanctioned by the Legislature, and a long course of peace, harmony, and prosperity was opened to the citizens of Edinburgh."

A subscription was at once proposed. Sir James Spittal accepted the convenership of the committee, and Mr. Adam Black acted as treasurer. By February of the following year (1839) their work was completed, and on the 6th of the month the presentation was made in the Merchants' Hall, Hunter Square. The testimonial consisted of silver plate of the value of upwards of £500, on which was engraved the following inscription:—

The testimonial.

"Presented to Duncan McLaren, Esq., by his fellow-citizens, as a mark of their esteem for his personal worth and great talents, and of their gratitude for the invaluable services he has rendered to the community as City Treasurer and member of the Town Council of Edinburgh; especially for his able, laborious, and successful exertions in effecting a settlement of the affairs of the City.—Edinburgh, 1839."

The Solicitor-General's speech.

On the motion of Sir James Spittal, the Lord Provost was called to the chair, and the presentation was afterwards made in name of the subscribers by Solicitor-General Rutherfurd. No man knew better than he the nature of the difficulties which confronted Mr. McLaren, and which he surmounted, in carrying through the settlement of the city's affairs, and no man was better qualified to bear testimony to the value of the service thus rendered. Having referred to his remarkable business habits and capacity, and to the ungrudging sacrifice he had made of personal

ease and comfort and attention to his mercantile duties, 1839
Mr. Rutherfurd spoke of his assiduous devotion to the affairs of the city, and to the perfect mastery he had acquired of all their complex and intricate details. He then proceeded:—

"You all know the circumstances in which he found matters. Leith and Edinburgh regarded each other with distrust and jealousy, the funds of the College were non-existent, and the city was reduced to a most degraded and humiliating situation. In consequence mainly of his exertions, all these have disappeared. He leaves office with the creditors not only possessing a larger return for their debts than at one time they ever hoped to receive, but with the College also in the enjoyment of a revenue of £2500, being more than they ever before possessed, while Edinburgh is reinstated in the situation in which she ought to be as the metropolis of Scotland, and Leith is relieved from a dependency which was neither creditable nor useful to her. (Cheers.) Of course I do not mean that his own individual hand accomplished all these purposes. Of course he had assistance and co-operation. Of course a great deal is due to the liberality of the Government in bringing about an arrangement by which they consented to waive a debt of £200,000. But taking into account this concession on the part of the Government, estimating—and I assure you I was in a position to estimate the assistance received from other quarters—I speak no more than the truth when I say that my friend Mr. M^cLaren was the person to whom these arrangements were principally intrusted. (Loud cheers.) . . . I know well that at the last hours, when other parties were in London, and all hopes of passing an Act of Parliament were nearly gone from some hitch or other, they were anxious to have his services; and so fully impressed were parties on the other side with the conviction that without his hand the work could not be accomplished, that they made a point, and I was applied to to use my influence to persuade him in the first instance to go to London, and then to remain there till he saw the measure safe and secure. (Loud cheers.) Under these circumstances, and looking at his possession of all those qualities which are required of a public

1839 man; looking at his great integrity, his firmness and decision, his making himself acquainted, at all sacrifices, with the interests with which he had to deal, and, in addition to these, his remarkable sagacity, and—I know I hurt my friend in speaking thus of him in his presence, but there are occasions when men are bound to hear their own praise—his remarkably sound and practical business habits, added to his moral and intellectual qualities, in which he has few equals—in consequence of these things, it is that we have been led to come forward and prepare this testimonial. (Loud cheers.)"

Mr. McLaren's reply.

Mr. McLaren, in his reply, acknowledged the loyal support he had received from his colleagues, and expressed his appreciation of "the most kind and cordial and effective co-operation" of Mr. Philips, representative of Leith. But as Mr. Rutherfurd's commendation was to him most acceptable because best informed, so his own public recognition of Mr. Rutherfurd's help was the heartiest. "I feel," he said, "all the delicacy of my position, and the awkwardness of having it supposed that I am returning compliment for compliment, but I speak only the feelings of my heart when I say, that but for the influence of the Solicitor-General, but for the way in which he conducted the correspondence with the trustees, putting us right and keeping us right, we might have worked for a settlement day and night as long as we pleased, but the thing would never have been accomplished."[1]

As regards his own connection with the transaction, Mr. McLaren said, "I regard this splendid token of your approbation as an invaluable return for my services to the city. These services were rendered—I am sure all who know me will believe—in the most disinterested manner, without the hope or the expectation, or even the thought,

[1] Mr. Rutherfurd was presented with the Freedom of the City in recognition of these services.

of any recompense. I was convinced in my own mind that I was doing all in my power to promote the interests of my fellow-citizens, and that was all the reward I expected. I got so much into the middle of these arrangements, and knowing of how much consequence it was in matters of such magnitude, involving nearly half a million of money, that they should be settled at once, and not by a succession of persons, each doing a little, I became anxious to have them brought to a conclusion; and for that purpose I made sacrifices greater than I at first thought of doing. I am happy that matters have turned out so well—that, mainly by the liberality of Government and by the candid spirit in which the arrangement was discussed in a Committee of the House of Commons, composed of men of all political parties, we have got all fairly settled." He concluded: "This testimonial will ever be appreciated with gratitude while I live, and I am sure that those who come after me will be exceedingly proud of it." The only other speaker was the Lord Provost, who, in closing the pleasant proceedings, added this high testimony to Mr. M^cLaren's merits: "He had devoted himself to the interests of the city with an energy which would have led an observer to imagine that he had nothing else to do, and many of his reports and calculations, drawn up for the use of the Town Council, would have done credit to the most experienced accountant in Edinburgh." 1839

The Lord Provost's testimony.

The public testimonial and the speeches delivered at its presentation by no means exhausted the compliments Mr. M^cLaren received. Many came to him in writing. One of the earliest of these appreciatory epistles was from a talented Scottish nobleman, who had formerly bestowed much disinterested labour on the unravelment of the financial entanglement, but without the success he desired and

Complimentary letters.

1839 deserved. In a letter dated Dalmeny Park, August 17, 1838, Lord Rosebery wrote: "I am happy to embrace the present opportunity to express the great satisfaction which the late settlement of the city's affairs gave me. Though I lamented at the time that the offer, which was made when I was one of the trustees, was rejected by a majority of the creditors, I never hesitated in wishing that any arrangement more satisfactory to them and equitable to all parties should be carried into effect. With this sincere feeling I rejoiced that a plan was finally proposed and adopted, which I trust will be found in its operation to combine this principle with a liberal regard to all the great interests which were at stake on the question." Sir James Graham, in reply to a letter of thanks for his sympathy and aid during the arduous conferences and negotiations in London, wrote: "I endeavoured in the Edinburgh case strictly to discharge my duty, without favour or affection, and it is a gratifying circumstance when this conduct is so fortunate as to win the approbation of persons whom I respect so much as you." Mr. Labouchere wrote expressing himself "truly gratified." Sir John Graham Dalzell was also warmly complimentary:—"I speak," he said, "literally as I think. No one has proved of equal ability or has devoted equal time and attention to the city's affairs, and all without the smallest pretension or ostentation on your part. The citizens owe you a deep debt of gratitude." Nor were less welcome the hearty congratulations of an old and steadfast friend, expressed in the simple and direct language characteristic of the speech of the members of the Society of Friends:—"I wish thou mayest through life, and at the close of it, enjoy an approving mind in proportion to the services thou hast rendered thy fellow-citizens. Thy exertions too, in ecclesi-

astical matters, thy clear sound statements, thy straightforward, upright conduct on all occasions, have not been esteemed higher by any one than by thy sincere friend, JOHN WIGHAM, Junior." 1839

Some may be disposed to think that this catalogue of the praises of Mr. McLaren as the liberator of the city of his adoption from financial collapse has been unduly detailed and prolonged. But the performance thus celebrated was no ordinary service. At a trying period in the history of free institutions it afforded a splendid vindication of the municipal system, and it still takes rank as one of the most notable achievements recorded in the municipal annals of Great Britain. This distinction achieved by Mr. McLaren at the threshold of his public life has been regarded with peculiar interest and gratification by thousands of his political disciples, who in all parts of the country, at different periods of his half-century of active service, have been conscious of having received guidance from his instructions and example. A notable achievement.

Mr. McLaren was not spoiled by all this approbation. He set aside the flattering assurances of men competent by experience and observation to express an opinion on the subject that he was possessed of the qualities which fit for senatorial service, and which would quickly win for him a high position in Parliament, and he prepared to return to his counting-house. His attention to business had been seriously interfered with by the monopoly of energy claimed by his public duties and by his prolonged detention in London. Home claims, too, always strong and attractive, but now made urgent by the declining strength of his wife, interposed, and he began to arrange for a temporary withdrawal from municipal work. Immediately after the passing of the Act he revolutionised the system of keeping Return to business.

1839

Reform of city accounting.

the city accounts by introducing "the principle uniformly acted upon in every department of the national revenue—that of charging the whole of the expenses connected with the collection and management of each department against the gross sum annually collected, and, after providing for these charges, stating only the balance as the real amount of the revenue." He constructed a series of financial statements illustrative of the operation of the new system, and also conforming to the principle of the settlement with the city creditors.[1]

Having set agoing this new and better method of stating the city accounts, Mr. McLaren resigned the Treasurership in November 1838, preparatory to his withdrawal from the Town Council at the close of his term of office in November 1839.

Absence from the Council did not, however, bring Mr. McLaren entire relief from public duty. Further healing legislation was required, and his experience and talent as an honorary parliamentary agent were earnestly applied for.

The Petty Customs.

An agitation had been carried on for some years by the traders of the city against the petty customs, which were most vexatious in their incidence and operation; and during his Treasurership Mr. McLaren had prepared a

[1] The following note is interesting, as coming from a very competent critic:—

15 St. Andrew Square, *8th November* 1838.

My dear Sir,—I return you my thanks for the copy of your report which you have been so kind as to send me. I have no hesitation in stating it to be the clearest and the most able and practically useful document which exists regarding the situation of the city affairs. I would certainly avail myself of your invitation to point out errors in it if they were to be found; but I consider the document to be as remarkable for its correctness as for its ability. . . .

Robt. Christie.

scheme for their abolition, introducing a uniform rate of a penny per cartload on all goods, with a few exceptions, such as building materials, brought within the police boundaries. The negotiations were prolonged beyond the period of his councillorship. But his plan was not abandoned, and in 1840 the traders and farmers, having accepted it, requested him to proceed to London to take charge of the bill he had prepared. Under a strong sense of duty, though reluctantly, because of the pressure of home-ties, he complied with their request, again unattended by Town Clerk or any paid official, or even any Town Councillor. After having been examined by Committees of both Houses, he succeeded in carrying the measure through Parliament, to the great satisfaction of the parties interested. Associated with him in the work was Mr. William Gibson-Craig, then Member for the county. Lord Melville was also most helpful. Writing from Melville Castle on 8th March 1840, he said, "Many thanks for your very satisfactory communication of yesterday's date, and which is the more acceptable as I had not heard from any other quarter what progress was making in the Edinburgh Customs Bill, except what I observed in the votes and proceedings of the House of Commons. I am writing to-day to Lord Haddington, and shall mention the bill to him. I am sorry that you are to have the trouble of another journey to London." 1840

Mr. Black and the Provostship.

The intimacy with Mr. Black survived this first municipal period; but though neither knew it, or wished to know it, the parting of the ways was near. Attempts were made to put the two friends in competition for the Lord Provostship in 1840. Mr. McLaren discouraged these attempts so promptly and firmly, that no one could doubt his resolution to remain for a time out of the Council; and thereupon the Churchmen began to applaud him, to the disparagement of

1840 Mr. Black, being anxious to have both the champions of civil and religious freedom out of the way. Some years previously Mr. M^cLaren had been opposed as a Town Councillor solely on the ground that he was a Voluntary. Mr. Black in his candidature for the Lord Provostship was opposed precisely on the same ground; only he was now, in 1840, represented as the more objectionable man of the two—"a dangerous person, and violent in his opinions," "while Mr. M^cLaren was a mild man." Mr. Black was defeated on this occasion, but his friends were not discouraged; and at a banquet given in his honour on 25th November they pledged themselves to prosecute with renewed vigour the cause of civil and religious liberty, in which their champion had sustained a temporary reverse. Mr. M^cLaren was chairman of the committee that organised this demonstration. The leaders of the Edinburgh Whig party (who afterwards became Mr. Black's chief political supporters) are said to have absented themselves from this banquet. In his letter to Mr. Black's sons in October 1885, Mr. M^cLaren thus explained the cause:—"The general feeling at the time was that there were hopes on the part of the Whig leaders that Government would yield to such an extent to the claims of the Non-Intrusionists as would prevent any disruption, and would make that party supporters of the Liberal Government in all time coming. It was said that Fox Maule (afterwards Lord Dalhousie) and Mr. Rutherfurd (then Lord Advocate) were the chief negotiators in this matter, and that their influence kept away the leading Whigs from the dinner, lest their appearing in support of Mr. Black and the Dissenting interest might injure the negotiations. But this beautifully laid scheme went sadly agee."

Whig strategy.

Mr. Black's defeat was temporary, and indeed prepared the way for a greater triumph. In 1843 he was unani-

1843

A welcome home.

mously chosen for the civic chair, and it was as Lord Provost that he, in July 1845, presided at a banquet given to Mr. M^cLaren as a public welcome home on his return from Madeira. Lord Provost Black on this occasion proposed the toast of the evening, and among others who were present to testify their appreciation of Mr. M^cLaren's public services and their gratification at his safe return were Mr. Charles Maclaren, editor of the *Scotsman*, and Councillor Macfarlane, a future candidate for the Lord Provostship.

The following are the terms of the settlement of the city's affairs as adjusted by Mr. M^cLaren :—

1. That the whole debts due by the city, as on January 1, 1833, including those charged on the Ale Duty, shall be compounded by payment to the creditors (other than the life annuitants) of a perpetual annuity of three per centum, free of all deductions, and redeemable only on payment to the holder of one hundred pounds sterling for every three pounds of annuity.

2. That the life annuitants shall receive, during their lives, three-fourths of the annuities due to them, in terms of an arrangement made between them and the trustees for the creditors.

3. That these annuities shall be paid half-yearly, and shall be constituted by bonds, to the transference of which the greatest facilities shall be afforded.

4. That the city shall grant a valid preferable security for those annuities of the whole property, of whatever description, now belonging to the city, with the following exceptions :—

(1.) The common good of the city and liberties. But this

to form the security of an annual payment to the creditors of £1000.

(2.) The assessment of one per cent. in lieu of the import on wines.

(3.) The fees payable on the entry of burgesses and guild brethren.

(4.) The petty port customs of Edinburgh, which, to remove all doubt on the subject, are to be declared by the Act to have fallen.

5. The city, after granting this security, shall do nothing by which the subjects of it may be dilapidated or their value materially diminished.

6. In the event of the foresaid annuities not being duly paid, the creditors shall have power, on three months' notice, to take possession of the whole subjects in the security (with the exception of the common good, in regard to the security over which a special provision shall be made), and the said subjects shall be completely surrendered to the creditors, to be disposed of by them in such manner as they may deem best, without any liability to account to the city thereanent; provided always that the Royal Exchange Buildings, the Meadows, Bruntsfield Links, Calton Hill, and Princes Street Gardens shall be retained by the city at a value to be fixed by Sir William Rae and Mr. Solicitor-General Rutherfurd, and, in the event of their differing, by an oversman to be appointed by them; it being always understood that the Gaols and High Schools are subjects on which no valuation shall, in that event, be put. That in the event of the subjects forming the security to the creditors being made over to them, and of the trustees of the middle district having then made good a claim against the city on account of the repairs of the streets, such claim shall form a burden upon the revenue reserved from the security for behoof of the city, estimated at £4500, in so far as the free revenues made over to the creditors, after the deduction of all preferable burdens and expenses, shall not amount to £8500, including the sum of £480 payable from

the merk per ton, and exclusive of the sum of £2500 to be derived from the Leith revenues.

The nature of the original agreement regarding the interests of the city and creditors in the revenues of the port of Leith will be seen from the printed copy of the entire proposals of the agreement sent with this, but that agreement has subsequently been modified for the reasons stated in Mr. M'Laren's "Explanatory Remarks," and the following propositions have *now been adopted in lieu of the original articles in reference to the revenues of the port of Leith.*

(1.) To give the creditors £2500 from the Leith revenues in lieu of all claims which they have thereon.

(2.) To provide that £2000 per annum shall be made payable in lieu of the merk per ton to be abolished, and that the sum of £480 presently payable from the merk shall form a burden on the other revenues of Leith, and be perfectly secured in the same manner as the sum of £2500.

(3.) To provide that the debt due to the College of £13,119 shall be extinguished, as recommended in the reports of Mr. Labouchere and the Select Committee, and that the annual payments chargeable thereon, together with the other claims for the support of the University and public schools, shall form a burden on the sum of £2500 proposed to be given for educational purposes out of the revenues of Leith.

(4.) To provide that the bonds be free from stamp duties, and transferable by endorsation in terms of the reports above referred to.

Statement for Government.

Mr. McLaren next prepared for the satisfaction of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but generally in the interests of the scheme of settlement he had outlined, a detailed statement of the case entitled "Explanatory Remarks," which was subsequently printed as a parliamentary paper by order of the House of Commons. In conformity with the modifications suggested in the "Explanatory Remarks,"

the parties subsequently agreed to introduce the subjoined propositions in their terms of agreement, in lieu of the original articles in reference to the revenues of the port of Leith :—

(5.) That the common good or market dues, customs, and imposts of whatever description leviable within the boundaries of the municipal burgh of Leith, together with the gaol buildings, shall be made over to the Magistrates and Town Council of Leith, they being bound in consideration thereof to relieve the trustees of the Middle District of the obligation incumbent upon them under the terms of the Act 5 and 6 Will. IV., c. 68, to uphold and maintain certain roads and streets within the town of Leith which it was formerly incumbent upon the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council of Edinburgh to keep up and support, and to free and relieve the said Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council of Edinburgh of all claim of relief competent to the said trustees against them thereanent under the provisions of the said Act ; and further, that the said Town Council of Leith shall free and relieve the said Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council of the city of Edinburgh from all claims on account of the municipal government of Leith ; declaring that the obligations incumbent on the Commissioners of the Docks and Harbour, and those presently or who may hereafter be vested with the administration of the revenues thereof in regard to the streets of Leith, shall not be lessened or affected by anything herein contained.

(6.) That power be given to the Town Council of Leith to purchase the superiority of Leith, and that at such price as shall be fixed by the two arbiters to be mutually chosen by the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council of Edinburgh, with concurrence of the Committee of Creditors, and the Provost, Magistrates, and Council of Leith, or, in case of difference of opinion, by an oversman to be chosen by such arbiters.

(7.) That the Links of Leith shall be made over to the Town Council of Leith, for behoof of the community of the burgh, for an annual payment to the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council

of Edinburgh of £25 sterling, being the amount of the present annual rent thereof. The Town Council of Leith to have the power to purchase this annual payment at the rate of twenty-five years' purchase at any period: the Links to be preserved as an open area in all time coming for the use of the inhabitants: the price of this and of the subjects authorised to be sold to be applied to the extinction of the transferable bonds.

(8.) That the Town Council of Edinburgh shall within one year from the passing of the Act to be obtained for the settlement of these affairs be bound to pay from their current revenues to the Town Council of Leith the sum of £500 in lieu of all claims on account of the common good of Leith heretofore drawn by the city of Edinburgh, and which payment shall be held to be a full discharge of all such claims on the part of the Town Council and community of Leith.

For the accomplishment of the foregoing public objects, and also for the purpose of improving the public harbour of Leith and rendering it fit for the accommodation of the trade, it is humbly submitted that the propositions contained in the reports of the Select Committee and of Mr. Labouchere to abolish or limit the amount of the debt due to the Government should be adopted, and that an independent Commission should be created, invested with sufficient power for the improvement and proper management of the port.

More than forty years after the adoption of this arrangement a leading member of the Leith Dock Commission, whose acquaintance with the affairs of the port extended back to a period anterior to 1838, declared it was Mr. M°Laren that had "made Leith"—meaning thereby that the abolition of the merk per ton effected the liberation of the commerce of the port, and thus permitted the remarkable development and prosperity witnessed in subsequent years. The annual payment of £2000 in substitution for the merk per ton continued down to 1870, when the Act

abolishing the Annuity-Tax in Edinburgh and Montrose was passed. A clause was introduced into that Act authorising the Leith Dock Commission to redeem the £2000 a year by a payment of £40,000, which they did soon after the Act was passed; and thus ended the merk per ton and its substitute. The debt to Government was discharged in 1860 by a payment of £50,000, but the Dock Commission still pays £5680 per annum to Edinburgh, being £3180 to the city creditors and £2500 to the College and schools.

CHAPTER VI.

ESTABLISHMENT OF HERIOT FREE SCHOOLS.

1835

Aim of the Free School system.

YEARS before the time when Mr. Bright, in his powerful speech delivered in Edinburgh after the passing of the Household Franchise Reform Bill, had pleaded that the helping hand of Christian justice and kindness should be "let down to moral depths deeper than the cable fathoms, to bring up from thence misery's sons and daughters, and the multitude who are ready to perish," Mr. M^cLaren was enabled to embody in practical statesmanship the principles so beautifully and urgently commended by the champion of reform. That was the originating aim of the Free School system which he linked to the Heriot Trust, and which subsequently became the most beneficent feature of its administration.

The citizens' claim to Heriot bequest.

The greatest good of the greatest number was the foundation principle of his municipal as well as of his parliamentary policy, and in the increasing revenues of the Heriot Trust he found the means of giving the doctrine practical exemplification. He believed that free schools, though not expressly provided for by the will and statutes, were nevertheless in strict harmony with the design of the founder. But he also believed that the citizens had even a stronger claim to the surplus than the right of inheritance conferred by George Heriot's will. It was through the wisdom and carefulness of their representatives that the

1835 original bequest of £23,625, 16s. 3d. had not only built a handsome college and provided for all the requirements of the will, including the maintenance and education of 180 boys within the Hospital, the payment of apprentice fees for boys who had left the Hospital, and of ten £20 bursaries to students at the University of Edinburgh, but had been employed so as to yield in 1835 a revenue of £14,500, leaving a clear surplus of £3000 a year. He was jealous for the right of the citizens thus acquired, and he was also concerned for their welfare. He feared that if this surplus remained unemployed or unclaimed for any length of time, some means of dissipating it, not advantageous to the general public, would quickly be discovered; and he set to work at once to make it available in a way most beneficial to the city. He proposed a system of free schools, as the best and safest means of aiding the class most deserving of help; a boon certain to be prized by the common people, who knew that the absence of education meant the degradation of their children, and that help from a fund destined for them by bequest, and guarded in their interest by their municipal representatives, could in no sense be fairly regarded as a pauper's dole.

Promotion of Free School Bill.

Having satisfied himself of the justice and general advantageousness of his policy, Mr. McLaren forwarded its adoption with characteristic vigour. He spared no effort to carry his colleagues with him, and to have his action fortified by an approving public opinion. On 13th May 1835 he proposed at a general meeting of the Trust, "that it be remitted to the committee to consider and report as to the propriety of applying part of the surplus revenue of the Hospital to the erection of one or more schools for the education of the sons of such burgesses as cannot be admitted into the Hospital." His motion

1835

was adopted, and the remit was made to the Committee on Superintendence of Schools, of which Bailie Macfarlane was convener. For the guidance of the committee Mr. McLaren prepared a statement judicial alike in structure as in tone, advocating his reform on financial, legal, and educational grounds. He showed that the increased and still increasing revenue of the Trust had provided a revenue far in excess of the requirements of the will; that it would be impossible ever to employ the surplus revenue in enlarging the present Hospital, or in building another for the benefit of the decreasing number of burgesses; while to admit the children of such burgesses as were sufficiently able to maintain them to all the benefits of an institution which the Governors were charged in the most solemn manner to administer only to relieve the poor, would be a far greater evil and a more flagrant violation of the spirit and letter of the will of the founder, and of the statutes of Dr. Balcanquil, his executor, than the proposed application of the funds for the purposes of education, even although the benefits of gratuitous instruction were extended to the destitute children of all classes and of both sexes.

Explanatory statement.

He did not conceal his distrust of the hospital system of education, for he expressed the view "that £800 a year judiciously expended on schools would do more good than the £8000 which is expended in connection with the Hospital." It will thus be seen he was, in point of time, a generation in advance of the modern reformers, by whom the hospital system has been condemned; nor did he conceal in the year 1835 that he was prepared for something approaching to a complete system of free elementary education, for he indicated his belief that the surplus would soon prove sufficient to erect and maintain a George

Distrust of the hospital system.

1835 Heriot school in each of the thirteen city parishes, "which would be amply sufficient to educate gratuitously all the poor children in Edinburgh, besides fulfilling in the most ample manner the liberal intentions of the founder respecting burgesses' children. Thus the revenues of the Hospital would become an inestimable blessing to the community."

Mr. McLaren's policy approved.

Mr. McLaren's statement, which concluded with a proposal that an Act of Parliament should be procured to remove all doubt as to the legality of the proposed application of a part of the funds of the institution, commanded the general assent of the committee, and it was printed for distribution among the Governors in anticipation of a meeting convened for the 12th October. When the Governors met, they unanimously approved of Mr. McLaren's work and expressed sympathy with its object; but some cautious members were indisposed to accept the responsibility of an immediate settlement, and suggested a year's delay in the application to Parliament. Meanwhile opinion outside grew steadily in favour of the reform. The press generally supported it.

A dilatory proposal discarded.

Press approval.

The *Scotsman* newspaper said:—

"We may now be able to congratulate our townsmen on the acquisition of a number of free schools adequate to the instruction of all the poor children in the city. We are satisfied that the Hospital at present yields no advantage to the town proportionate to the magnitude of the funds, and by a more strict observance of the statutes as to claims for admission we have no doubt that a much larger portion of its revenue than £3000 may by-and-bye be made applicable to the beneficial object recommended by the committee."

The *Edinburgh Patriot* wrote:—

"Edinburgh already owes much to the munificence of George Heriot, but if the worthy Bailie's (Mr. McLaren) philanthropic idea of thus distributing the surplus funds of the institution be

carried into effect, her debt of gratitude will be vastly increased, nor will the citizens soon forget that it is to the spirited and patriotic exertions of Mr. McLaren that they will chiefly owe this lasting advantage." 1835

Mr. McLaren likewise communicated his purposes to the county and city Members. Sir George Clerk replied :— Parliamentary encouragement.

"It does not appear to me that any more eligible application of a portion of the surplus revenue of the Hospital could be proposed, and as it further appears from the extracts from the will of the founder contained in your suggestions that such application is not inconsistent with his benevolent intentions, I think that few or no objections will be urged to this measure, the principle of which I approve. Not having seen the bill which it is intended to bring into Parliament to remove any doubts that may exist as to the powers of the Governors to apply part of the surplus funds, I cannot pledge myself to support all the minor details of such a bill, but I shall always feel anxious, as far as it can be done in accordance with the intentions of the founder of the Hospital, to extend to the children of the poor in the city of Edinburgh the inestimable advantages of sound and religious education."

Sir J. Campbell, the city Member, wrote :—

"I have read your suggestions with great interest, and I entirely concur in your view of the subject. There seems to me to be no doubt that the proposed application of the surplus is in conformity with the intention of the founder, and is the most expedient that could be devised. I should think the bill is not likely to be at all opposed, but if it be, it shall have my strenuous support."

Encouraged by the favourable reception given to his scheme, and by the general demand for immediate action, Mr. McLaren, with characteristic courage and self-reliance, resolved to secure for the Governors the opportunity they had neglected on 12th October, and on his own respon- Prompt action.

1836 sibility, and in his own name, he gave the necessary parliamentary notice of the proposed bill in time for its presentation during the coming session of 1836. When the Governors again met on 16th November, they heartily endorsed Mr. McLaren's action, and accepted the notice he had given as their own. They instructed the committee to prepare the heads of the proposed bill, and they "directed the Treasurer to repay Councillor McLaren the expense he had been put to in giving the requisite notice of the proposed application to Parliament." No further interruption to the progress of the measure occurred. The petition for the bill was signed on the 15th of February 1836. The heads of the bill were finally approved on the 3rd of March, the measure passed both Houses of Parliament without opposition, and on the 14th of July it received the royal assent under the title of "An Act to Explain and Extend the Powers of the Governors of the Hospital in Edinburgh founded by George Heriot, Jeweller to King James the Sixth." The total expense of procuring the Act was £922. For nearly fifty years this remained the charter of the poor of Edinburgh to a system of education, wide-reaching, free, and unsectarian, such as no other community in the United Kingdom then enjoyed.

The Act passed.

Vote of thanks to Mr. McLaren.

The Governors of the Hospital did not forget the service Mr. McLaren had rendered after success had been achieved. At the first meeting of the Governors held after the bill had become law, Bailie Donaldson moved, and Dr. Macaulay seconded, the following resolution:—"That the Governors feel it their duty to express their approbation of the eminent services of Councillor McLaren in having originated and greatly aided in bringing to a successful issue this important measure, and that this testimony of their approbation be entered on the records of the Hospital." Two

years afterwards, at the meeting at which Mr. M°Laren received a presentation in recognition of his settlement of the city's financial affairs, the Solicitor-General (Mr. Rutherfurd) paid a warm tribute alike to the author of the School Act and his work. He said :— 1836

"It is also of importance to recall another benefit to the cause of education which I believe my friend first originated, and which has since been confirmed by Act of Parliament, to extend the benefits of the institution of Heriot's Hospital by employing the funds in erecting schools and diffusing the blessings of education more extensively over the community." Solicitor-General Rutherfurd's tribute.

But the most gratifying reward of this beneficent effort on behalf of the classes of the community most in need of help was the remarkable success of the free schools. True, much preliminary work was necessary, but no time was lost with it. By the 11th of October Mr. M°Laren had obtained for his committee the authority of the Governors to proceed with the erection of the first outdoor school "on that waste area at the entrance to the Hospital grounds leading from the Grassmarket opposite the porter's lodge." The foundation-stone was laid in April 1837, and sites for other free schools were purchased in October of the same year. The first school was opened in October 1838, and the other free schools in October 1840. By 1854 ten were in operation, three infant schools, containing 606 children, and seven juvenile ordinary elementary schools, accommodating 2217. The total cost of erection of these ten schools amounted to the very moderate sum of £22,015; and at the date mentioned the rate of maintenance, including salaries of teachers, books for the scholars, and all other incidents, was £1, 4s. 3d. per annum per child. By-and-bye the benefits of this free elementary education were extended, Success of the free schools.

1838

until the roll included upwards of 5000 day-scholars and 1000 night-scholars.

Personal supervision.

But Mr. McLaren did not only help to secure an early start to the free outdoor schools and a wide diffusion of their benefits by means of economical administration. He remained a member of the Trust till 1839; he was *ex officio* chairman during his three years' Provostship, 1851–54; he served for another year in 1860–61. But whether a member or not, during the whole period of his public life, from 1832 till 1886, he kept himself cognisant of all the affairs of the Hospital; and while he never obtruded his ideas or opinion, his influence was felt in, and to no small extent guided, the more important deliberations and decisions of the Trust during that long period of fifty-four years. His policy was uniform; its objects were the extension of the benefits of the educational scheme of the Hospital to the widest possible limits, and the guardianship of the interests of the poor. During all that time the Governors were remarkably, indeed it may be said unflinchingly, loyal to that policy. When

Separation of classes disallowed.

in 1839 the Dean of Guild, speaking in name of "several respectable burgesses" who did not wish their children to mingle with the children of the poorer classes, and at the same time desired for them more than the elementary education provided under the Act, proposed that one of the schools should be reserved exclusively for burgesses' children, the Governors seemed practically unanimous in deprecating any separation of classes. The old "use and wont" of the Scottish educational system was that the children of all classes, the sons of the laird, of the minister, and of the labourer, should meet on equal terms in the parish schoolroom and in the playground, and the Heriot Governors were not disposed to countenance any breach of the old social solidarity, as far as their schools were concerned. Mr. McLaren showed by a reference

to the Act of Parliament that the outdoor schools were open only to three classes, viz., first, the children in poor circumstances of deceased burgesses, who had a preferable right; second, the children of burgesses "whose parents may not be sufficiently able to maintain them;" and lastly, "the children of poor citizens or inhabitants of Edinburgh." The Rev. Dr. Lee, afterwards Principal of the University, Lord Provost Sir James Forrest, and others, concurred with Mr. M^cLaren, and the Dean of Guild unconditionally withdrew his motion. 1833

"Use and wont" was maintained in another respect. Practically this was the basis on which the religious difficulty was settled. Indeed, it may be said that conformity to the parish school arrangement, so far as religious instruction was concerned, and regard for the spirit of George Heriot's will, kept the Governors free of the religious difficulty altogether. In a letter published in 1854, during the last year of his Lord Provostship, Mr. M^cLaren thus described the provision for religious instruction in the Heriot schools, in refutation of the idea that parliamentary securities were necessary:— The religious difficulty solved.

"In each of the Heriot's schools there is a religious instruction class for an hour daily, which all the children in the juvenile schools willingly attend, being the first school hour (from nine to ten A.M.). There is also in each a Sabbath-school at the same hour, which all the children are expected to attend whose parents do not prefer sending them to some other Sabbath-school, connected with their own religious denomination, or one which may be more convenient from its vicinity to their residence. In such cases the children are not expected to attend the Heriot's Sabbath-schools, but very large numbers do attend, and the result is that all the children of the various sects into which the great community of Edinburgh is divided (with the exception of the Roman Catholics, who do not send their children to these schools at

1838 all), acquire at the Heriot's day and Sabbath schools what their parents severally believe to be 'a sound religious education.' . . . Here a state of perfect peace and amity, as regards the religious education of nearly one half of the children of the poorer classes within the city of Edinburgh, is proved to exist beyond the possibility of cavil or dispute; and surely the same end might be attained in other cases by the employment of similar means."

Unsectarian administration.

But in reference to the appointment of teachers the Governors took a step in advance of parish school "use and wont," and prepared the way for the more liberal terms of settlement embodied in the Education Act of 1872. From the beginning the Governors resolved that they would impose no test on the members of the teaching staff, either in the supposed interest of religious orthodoxy or of the Established Church. Considering the composition of the governing Trust, namely, the Town Council and the ministers of the Church of Scotland for the city of Edinburgh, and also considering the time in which the arrangement was made, between thirty and forty years before the same principle was embodied in a national Act of Parliament, the liberality displayed by the eighteen Established Church ministers and the intelligent prudence shown by the general body of the Governors seem equally entitled to commendation. In the letters of 1854, already quoted, Lord Provost McLaren wrote:—

"They imposed no test; they required no declaration of religious belief; they left it to the good sense of each Governor in all time coming to vote for such masters as he believed in his conscience would impart to the children a sound religious education, leaving it to the candidates to furnish evidence, by certificates or otherwise, of their fitness to impart religious instruction in the same manner as they provided evidence of their fitness to impart secular instruction."

1838

The result was that in course of time Congregationalists, United Presbyterians, and Free Churchmen, as well as Established Churchmen, became Heriot teachers, with the best advantage to the character of the religious and secular instruction provided.

Liberal rules and regulations.

This plan of "no legislation on the subject," as Mr. M^cLaren described it, was carried out under the rules and regulations for the management of the schools which the Act of 1836 authorised the Governors to frame. It bore the impress of Mr. M^cLaren's liberal ideas, for which he was then earnestly contending, alike in the educational and political sphere. It was, though on a limited scale, yet in a double sense a triumph of the Voluntary principle, of which he was, even then, one of the most powerful champions in Scotland; and it was a forerunner of the cognate legislation passed by the Imperial Parliament, with no little difficulty, and with much fear and trembling, in 1872. Yet these principles, which under Mr. M^cLaren's guidance the Governors of Heriot's Hospital were ready in 1838 to accept, and did accept, were for nearly forty years afterwards dreaded and denounced as revolutionary and infidel by many good and religious men and women. Thus Edinburgh, while setting an example which attracted the notice and commendation of men who, in other spheres, were regarded as pioneers in the cause of educational reform, enjoyed a boon denied to the country generally till the passing of Lord Advocate Young's Act of 1872.

The conditions of admission.

Another portion of the rules in the preparation of which Mr. M^cLaren showed special concern was the system of inquiry which was instituted before admission to the outdoor schools could be granted to any applicant. The inquiries were designed to secure two objects, viz., the preservation of the benefits of the free outdoor schools for the

1838

most needy of the deserving poor, and the development of a kindly interest in those classes on the part of the well-to-do neighbours and citizens. As regards applicants, the object was to find out and give preference to the children of families who had lost their father, or mother, or guardian; where the bread-winner had been struck down by disease or accident; where the earnings were lowest in proportion to the number of mouths to be fed, and where the struggle with poverty was bravest; for receipt of parochial relief was regarded as a bar to Heriot aid. On the other side, as regards the opening up of a legitimate field of benevolence for dutiful citizens more abundantly blessed with worldly prosperity, the employer was consulted as to the rate of wages earned, the minister as to the character of the family, and two respectable householders were asked to certify to the general accuracy of the facts set forth in the application form. All this meant inquiry; inquiry excited interest, and this interest was in many cases continued until the family, relieved at a critical moment and put in the way of employment, had struggled back into a condition of comparative comfort.

Knitting of class with class.

The immediate educational results were gratifying beyond expectation. They effectually vindicated the free school system, and prepared the public mind for a reform which is now not far distant. The attendance of pupils was more regular than in the best elementary schools where fees were exacted, and the average standard of educational efficiency attained was higher. The testimony given from time to time as to both of these points was unequivocal. Mr. John Gibson, whom Mr. McLaren, in his evidence before the Endowed Institutions Commissioners in 1879, described as "one of the ablest men who ever filled the office of inspector of schools," and who afterwards became proprietor of

Educational results.

Commendation by Government inspectors.

Merchiston Castle School, spontaneously offered the following certificate. He wrote :— 1838

"In 1843 Mr. George Combe introduced to Mr. M^cLaren the Hon. Horace Mann, Massachusetts, and Dr. Howe of Boston, who had visited Edinburgh to inspect its educational institutions, and asked him to direct 'their attention to whatever is best worth seeing in our city schools or Heriot schools.' Mr. Mann also bore a letter of introduction from Mr. Joseph Hume. Indeed, it may be said that for many years every distinguished visitor to the city, who wished to learn what was most noteworthy about its institutions, was shown the free Heriot schools. Strangers are attracted towards them by the accounts which they hear of the immense good they are accomplishing, and the wonderful change which they promise to effect upon our poor population. Every one projecting the institution of schools for the poor in Edinburgh and the surrounding country looks to them as the best models. . . . It is not too much to say that these schools form by far the most valuable elementary educational machinery existing in this country."

And to the chief author of the Act and of the regulations which brought this educational machinery into operation Mr. Gibson, with equal spontaneity, paid a well-earned tribute.

"I cannot (he wrote) pass from the consideration of these schools without mentioning that it is chiefly to Mr. Duncan M^cLaren, of this city, that the inhabitants are indebted for these invaluable institutions. By him was the suggestion first made that the surplus income of the Hospital should be devoted to such an object. To his enlightened interest in the elevation and amelioration of the condition of the poor, and to his zeal, activity, and sagacity in conducting the negotiations and arrangements necessary to the completion and establishment of the scheme which he had originated, is the promptitude in

1838 carrying the suggestion into effect principally to be ascribed. The accomplishment of such a measure of philanthropy may well be to him a subject of self-gratulation, and secure for its author the warmest gratitude of every one interested in the religious and moral wealth of the population."

Mr. John Gordon, another Government inspector, bore testimony as strongly eulogistic. He spoke of the convenience of the situation of the schools for the class of children for whom they were intended, praised the accommodation provided, including "the ample supply of school-room requisites," and expressed approval of their leading characteristic—"the exemption of all from the payment of school-pence." He continued: "They constitute a class of schools second in general merit to none of the purely primary class throughout the district. Of 7371 presentations in the three subjects of reading, writing to dictation, and arithmetic, according to the requirements of the Revised Code, there were 97½ per cent. of passes." As regards comparative attendances, Mr. McLaren, in his evidence before the Commission already referred to, stated that for the seven months ending 1st May 1879, out of every 100 children attending elementary schools, the absences were:—In the Heriot schools, 8; in the Board schools, 16; in the new Board schools, 19; and in the Roman Catholic schools, 21; while the average absences of all Scotland were 24, for all England 29, and for all Ireland 30. In a speech delivered in the House of Commons ten years previously, he had given the explanation of the superiority of attendance in the Heriot schools. "If a boy was absent," he said, "the teachers made inquiry, and if he was absent three times without good reason, he was dismissed from the school. The privilege of getting an excellent education free of expense was so highly valued, that the pupils dared not stay away.

Regular attendance.

Whereas, when weekly fees had to be paid, parents were apt to keep their children back from school for a whole week when circumstances prevented or threatened to prevent their attendance on one or more days of the week." 1838

CHAPTER VII.

JOURNALISTIC WORK.

1833

A voluminous writer.

MR. M^cLAREN was a voluminous writer. Few professional men of letters, even among the busy scribes connected with the daily newspapers, have produced more copy for the printers, and this prolificness is all the more remarkable because of the nature of Mr. M^cLaren's writings. They dealt largely with facts and figures. They were the records of original research and of skilful and accurate tabulations, representing the work of the historical student and accomplished statistician in combination with the journalist's ready adaptation of ascertained or accepted results to the illustration of present duty. It was not the desire of literary fame that inspired his pen, though in his later years the discovery of the survival and continued appreciation of some letter or pamphlet, the existence of which he had temporarily forgotten, would afford him genuine satisfaction. He did not despise literary excellence, but he sought to attain it for its immediate and direct practical advantages to him as a public teacher and counsellor. Nor was it as a professional *littérateur* that he laboured incessantly at his desk. His literary work he regarded as only a part, a fractional but necessary and important part, of the public service he rendered at the call of duty and of patriotism. His elaborate municipal reports, some of them on questions that seem now-a-days comparatively trivial, but which he, as a guardian of civic interests,

Motives as a journalist.

felt could not be ignored or be-littled, would, if compiled and republished, form a small library. His literary work in connection with the Central Board of Dissenters, apart from its great value in inspiring and consolidating the Dissenting party in Scotland as a political power, was enormous in bulk. His pamphlets on the Annuity-Tax question, Heriot Trust and Fettes administrations, and the Corn-Law agitation, would of themselves constitute several large-sized volumes. His letters to newspapers on current controversial questions, alike in the social, municipal, ecclesiastical, and political spheres, sometimes extending to two or three columns in length, are legion. Where he felt he had any call to speak, or any information to communicate which he thought would be of public advantage, or would aid the cause of truth and justice in the thousand and one causes in which he was interested at different periods of his long and active life, he never concealed his opinions or withheld his contribution. The popularity and disfavour of the view or cause that claimed his aid never entered into his calculations. He knew well that truth and justice were not unfrequently with minorities, and he did not fear to act on the principle of his favourite quotation, that— 1833

> "He is brave who dares to be
> In the right with two or three."

And it was not unfrequently as the champion of unpopular causes, but often also as the defender of principles and reforms he had helped to embody in legislative enactment, that he appeared as a writer in the correspondence columns of the *Times*, the *Morning Star*, the *Manchester Examiner*, and in the Edinburgh and Glasgow papers.

One of his contributions to the *Morning Star* was a graphic sketch of the dinner given to Lord Brougham in

1833

Sketch of the Brougham Banquet of 1859.

Edinburgh in October 1859, in recognition of his eminent services as a statesman. In Mr. McLaren's opinion, it was a mistake that this demonstration was made non-political —an arrangement which, while it secured the presence of not a few prominent Scottish Tories, deprived his Lordship's Liberal friends of the opportunity of grateful reference to his political services, and hampered the freedom of the orator himself. Compared with former tributes of a similar kind given to the same statesman in 1824, when he was still a member of the House of Commons, and in 1834, in company with members of the Grey Cabinet, when he was still Lord Chancellor, the 1859 banquet was, in Mr. McLaren's judgment, a failure; for the "gathering had no soul;" "the animating principle for a successful meeting was wanting."

"Lord Brougham," he continued, "has undoubtedly been a distinguished character in all the departments which the speakers severally described, but he was a great man chiefly as a political character—as the man who fought, although then unsuccessfully, the battle of the people against the Lowther interest, when they had few friends, assisted by those whom he described as 'the honest grey-coats of Westmoreland.' He was great as the champion of the people when he wrested the representation of the largest county in England from the hands of a grasping aristocracy; he was great as the successful defender of the constitution, which was shamelessly sought to be trampled under foot in the person of Queen Caroline; and he was, if possible, still greater as the successful champion of the rights of the people in compelling, by the force of his withering eloquence, a reluctant House of Lords to pass the charter of our modern liberties—the Reform Bill. He fought the battle of the Reform Bill day after day during two sessions, not only on the great principles of the measure, but on all the details of the clauses, of which he had made himself master. Referring afterwards to this fearful struggle, to the numbers and influence arrayed against him, and the spirit by which his opponents

were animated, the noble Lord compared the contest to a struggle for seven months 'in a den of thieves.' Probably the Duke of Argyll, when bespattering his order with so much praise, forgot these passages of arms between the nobility of descent and one of Nature's nobility. But to return from this digression; all these really great services of Lord Brougham were ignored, except one which was most handsomely referred to by a political opponent, Professor Aytoun, who, with singular felicity of language and good taste, noticed Brougham's superhuman efforts in defence of Queen Caroline. The effect of this mal-arrangement was to destroy all enthusiasm in the meeting—to make it 'flat, stale, and unprofitable.' It was performing the play of 'Hamlet' with the part of Hamlet left out. It was such a scene as might have been witnessed had a dinner been given to the Duke of Wellington at which all reference to his battles was by agreement omitted, and his praises sounded as a distinguished literary character, the proof being the composition of his admirable despatches." 1833

Mr. M^cLaren was disappointed with the company as well as with the speaking.

"There was," he said, "only one man on that platform who ever moved a hand in this city to assist Lord Brougham in fighting the battles of the people. That exception was Mr. Adam Black, now Member for the city, and his speech, not very well heard in many parts of the hall, was the only one which appeared to breathe the same spirit of freedom which was so often and so effectively heard in Edinburgh during the period of the Reform agitation, and for some years thereafter."

Leader-writing.

Frequently Mr. M^cLaren's communications appeared in the form of editorials, and in his early public life in no journal more often than in the *Scotsman*. During the editorship of Mr. Charles Maclaren (an intimate friend, but not a relative), he was a constant contributor. The *Scotsman* was at that time in sympathy with Mr. M^cLaren's public work, and cordially

1835

supported it. Between the editor and the contributor a warm friendship arose. They had many mental and moral characteristics as well as public interests in common. Both were men of finely balanced minds, both were purists as regards public service, and both laboured whole-heartedly and devotedly to ensure the success of the popular representative systems of municipal and parliamentary government which had recently been inaugurated. In conducting his municipal work, Mr. McLaren found it advantageous to make use of the columns of the *Scotsman*, and he was heartily and repeatedly invited by the editor to do so. But he did not by any means confine his communications to strictly municipal topics. He discussed the public questions of the day in the leading columns of the Liberal journal, and it was probably in large measure due to his influence and work that the *Scotsman* became for the time the trusted champion of the Voluntary party, and the opponent of the aggressive policy of the Established Church. Such was Mr. Charles Maclaren's sympathy with the views of his literary associate, that he was in the habit of passing his manuscript to the printer without the usual editorial revision. Grateful as well as appreciative, he sent many a complimentary epistle to his correspondent. Such of Mr. Charles Maclaren's notes as survive are for the most part undated. Here are a few illustrations:—

Relations with editor of *Scotsman*.

Editorial encouragement.

My dear Sir,—I went to Glasgow on Wednesday with Mrs. M., and on my return to-day found your note awaiting me. You might have taken for granted that I would never think of refusing you any space you may require for the purpose you have in view, or for any purpose which may lead you to communicate your sentiments to the public through a newspaper.—I am, my dear sir, yours faithfully, Chas. Maclaren.

Friday, 2 o'clock.

And again— 1836

"Your communications are always most welcome. I shall be happy to receive the letter you propose."

"Your article in yesterday's paper is excellent. It shows up the pretended Liberal admirably, and has the force of demonstration.

"Will Mrs. McLaren and you favour me with your company to tea and supper next Wednesday evening at seven?"

"I get so many good things from you, that I seldom think of thanking you for them singly, but I cannot pass over your article of Saturday in silence. It has your best qualities as a writer—exact method, scrupulous accuracy, perfect disinterestedness, and practical ability. It does credit to the paper, and will do much good. There are very few persons in Edinburgh who could have written it."

Of course the articles referred to cannot now be identified, nor can even their subjects be named. Subjoined is one dated letter showing more substantial appreciation of service:—

SCOTSMAN OFFICE, 17*th October* 1836.

An appreciated gift. Mr. Ritchie and I request your acceptance of a set of the *Edinburgh Review* from the commencement, as a slight acknowledgment of the obligations you have laid us under by your valuable communications to the *Scotsman*.

The book was selected as one likely to suit your taste and your habits of reading. I know no single work which contains so large a mass of matter calculated to prove interesting and useful to a reflecting man, and the two ample indexes render the whole of its contents as accessible as those of an encyclopædia.

With best wishes for your health and happiness, in which Mr. Ritchie joins me, I am, my dear sir, yours most faithfully.

The book will be delivered at your house some time this evening.

Duncan M'Laren, Esq.

1838

This token of appreciation afforded Mr. McLaren much gratification, and the work continued without interruption, and with apparent mutual satisfaction, for fifteen months longer. One morning Mr. McLaren was surprised by the following communication :—

SCOTSMAN OFFICE, *January* 25, 1838.

Payment offered.

MY DEAR SIR,—Mr. Ritchie and I request your acceptance of the enclosed for your valuable communications to the *Scotsman* last year.

Our rule is to pay all who contribute articles to the paper at the rate of £1 per column. I do not speak of letters or communications intended to serve the interest of private parties, but of articles on subjects of general interest, such as the editor himself would write if he had leisure and information. Your articles are all of this description. By their invariable accuracy, the judicious manner in which they are cast, and the interest of the matter they contain, they are calculated to benefit the paper, and are such as we are willing and glad to pay for. . . .

We pay —— for every line he writes. We paid —— formerly in the same way, and no reason exists why you should not accept a very moderate remuneration for the labour which puts money in our pockets. Had your articles been connected with some event or business which was to lose its interest in a few months, we would have presented you with a piece of plate or something similar, but it is our wish and hope that they may be continued for years, and we are therefore anxious to place them on a business footing. The sum enclosed is by no means adequate to the value of your communications to us; and I trust therefore you will have no hesitation in accepting it, along with the cordial thanks of Mr. Ritchie and myself.—I am, my dear sir, very truly yours,

CHAS. MACLAREN.

£50.

Notwithstanding the friendly tone of this letter, Mr. McLaren interpreted it as an intimation that the proprietor and editor desired his relations as a perfectly free and

DUNCAN McLAREN

From a Portrait painted by Colvin Smith, R.S.A., in 1838.

independent contributor to cease. Hitherto he had written and worked in the interests of the public, and not as a professional journalist; hence he felt himself precluded from accepting literary remuneration. His first impulse was to return the cheque, and to express his willingness to continue his assistance on the old footing; but further reflection suggested to him, perhaps causelessly, that differences of opinion —a desire to recover for the editor the supervision of the communicated "editorials," which he had practically surrendered—might have been the cause of alteration of the relationship intimated to him; and recognising the right of the editor to claim entire responsibility and unfettered freedom in the management of his own journal, Mr. McLaren made up his mind to sever the connection, which, so long as it caused no embarrassment to Mr. Charles Maclaren, had afforded himself unqualified enjoyment. He accepted the cheque and the accompanying letter as a termination of the old arrangement, and as he did not wish to write for money, he shortly afterwards resolved to offer no more editorial communications. It may be interesting to note that this cheque was applied towards the payment of the portrait of himself by Colvin Smith, R.S.A., a photograph of which appears in this volume.

1838

Altered relations with *Scotsman.*

The letter intimating the resolution to decline any relation to the literary staff of the *Scotsman*, other than that of a voluntary and honorary contributor, caused Mr. Charles Maclaren "a good deal of pain." But he found himself unable to continue to accept unpaid service, evidently regarding such an arrangement as not only placing an undue strain upon private friendship, but also as inconsistent with his ideas of independent journalism. Accordingly, he asked Mr. McLaren to think over the subject once more, remarking in his closing sentence, "I would consider it no small misfor-

Mr. Charles Maclaren's disappointment.

1838

tune to lose your counsel and assistance, and a still greater one to lose your friendship."

Mr. McLaren's resolution was not changed by this appeal, but this did not interfere with the relations of private friendship between him and the editor, which subsisted for many years unbroken. For a time, at least, Mr. Charles Maclaren followed the public career of his old literary colleague with the keenest interest and sympathy. When the Treasurer was preparing to leave Edinburgh on his mission to London as the Council's plenipotentiary for the settlement of the city affairs, Mr. Charles Maclaren gave evidence of his interest in this ecclesiastico-political work by volunteering the subjoined note of introduction to the editor of the *Morning Chronicle* in London :—

SCOTSMAN OFFICE, EDINBURGH,
26th April 1838.

Introduction to editor of *Morning Chronicle.*

MY DEAR SIR,—My friend, Mr. Duncan McLaren, Treasurer to the city of Edinburgh, is now in London on the town's business. He will deliver this note to you personally or leave it with his address.

My object in introducing him to you is this : Doctors McLeod, Chalmers, & Co., who are now in London, have been publishing special pleadings and garbled statements in the *Times* on the subject of our Kirk. Now, the articles on these subjects in the *Scotsman* have, with few exceptions, been written by my friend the Treasurer. The long one you copied ten days ago was his. The shorter one, copied into the *Chronicle* of Saturday 21st, was his also. Previous and elaborate articles on Funds and on the Scottish School Bill were his too, with most of those on the pretended *religious destitution* of Edinburgh and Glasgow, on our Annuity or Stipend Tax here, and similar subjects. There is no man living who has so complete a hold of the *facts* on these matters, and he is equally unrivalled in the minute accuracy with which he treats whatever topic he touches. If, therefore, he should see occasion to attack or reply to any article in the *Times*,

he will send it to you, and you may rely on its correctness with the most entire confidence. 1838

All his articles in the *Scotsman* go in as editorials, but on this point you will, of course, do as you think best. I may add that my friend is a man of sterling principle, and has one of the clearest and soundest heads I ever met with.—I am, my dear sir, very truly yours, CHAS. MACLAREN.

Growing estrangement.

Estrangement from the *Scotsman*, however, increased. Mutual friends, especially Mr. George Combe and Lord Dunfermline, strove to stop the growing breach, and each of the principals evidently put a willing restraint upon himself to prevent misunderstanding. A letter from the editor, in reply to a mild remonstrance on the subject of some journalistic animadversion which Mr. M^cLaren had considered scarcely called for, illustrates this mutual reluctance to separate:—

"Your note (wrote Mr. Charles Maclaren) was most considerate and also most generous, but it was not necessary. I know your firmness of purpose, and thought that it took a wrong direction on Thursday; but I know also your fearless adherence to the dictates of your conscience, and, like all men of well-poised minds, who make the approbation of the internal monitor their sheet-anchor, you are little disturbed by censures delivered in good faith, as mine would have been had I written any. But when I find it necessary to point out an error on the part of a friend, I never impeach his motives, thinking it sufficient to give my reasons for holding him to have committed an error of judgment. I would have done this to any friend, but I feel it to be doubly due to you, whose unswerving rectitude of purpose I know so thoroughly."

And still adhering to the old trustful relationship, he added:—

"I send you three small publications of mine, which fell into

1838

my hands yesterday in rearranging my papers, a task which has loaded me with labour for a week past."

Growing differences.

But in spite of private feeling, differences of opinion on public questions continued to emerge. Mr. McLaren's Liberalism broadened and ripened with his growing experience and with the development of the political power of the people. It welcomed the liberation of the Evangelical party from state control, and appreciated the impulse to reform, operating first on social questions, which the Free Church brought with it into the civic and national life. It received stimulus from contact with the robust and aggressive Liberalism that originated and sustained the Anti-Corn-Law agitation. "My impression is," wrote Mr. McLaren in a letter to the sons of Adam Black (referred to in another chapter), "that your father did not materially advance towards Radicalism during this period." Nor did the party in Edinburgh with which Mr. Black was associated. This party became more concerned for the unattainable idea of the "unity of the Liberal party" than for the immediate advancement of the principles of free trade and religious equality. Mr. McLaren cared very little for the cry of "Liberal unity," which he regarded as meaning nothing more than keeping Liberal statesmen in office by sacrifices of principle. He was intensely interested in the assertion of Voluntary principles, in the promotion of Temperance legislation, and in the propagation of the doctrine of Free Trade,—certainly much more so than the party known as the "Parliament House Whigs;" and in gradually separating himself from them, he also fell out of sympathy with the conductors of the *Scotsman*, as did a large and influential section of the Liberal party.

Projection of a rival journal.

In 1847 he was asked to assist in the establishment of a new Edinburgh paper, the *Scottish Press*, with a view "to enable Scottish Dissenters to carry forward to the best

advantage their various plans for promoting justice, liberty, religion, and happiness, both within and beyond their pale." The *Scotsman*, which had been originally regarded by Dissenters as a fair and friendly organ, was considered by them to have lately changed its attitude and tone towards the Nonconformist Churches. Former friends and supporters connected with these Churches became dissatisfied. Hence the movement for the *Scottish Press*. Mr. McLaren, as a prominent Dissenter, enjoying in a high degree the confidence of the party, was, of course, cognisant of the proposal on foot, but anxious to regain his old friend, or at all events unwilling to go into opposition without notice or warning, he addressed a letter to the proprietor of the *Scotsman*. He frankly told him that it was proposed to start a new paper, to be published twice a week, in order to represent especially the Dissenters, who had been much annoyed by the attitude of the *Scotsman* on the Sunday question and on other matters. He said he was anxious to prevent any misconception as to his own share in the matter, and explained that he had taken no part in organising the paper, but had given a subscription towards the expense of starting it, and his aim was, by a friendly warning, to induce the *Scotsman* to modify its policy, so that it might not be necessary to have a rival in the field who might possibly damage it. He concluded the letter by the following interesting statement of his own views:—

1847

A warning letter.

"To prevent any misconception as to what I mean by the conduct of the *Scotsman* on the Sunday question, I may state that my own opinions as to what *ought to be done* are the same as those of the *Scotsman*—that the trains should run twice on Sunday, and each man who uses them be responsible only to his Maker for his conduct; and I believe three-fourths of all the people of Edinburgh and Glasgow, if polled, would give the same deliver-

Sunday question.

1847

ance. But supposing there are 1100 ministers of the Established Church, 650 of the Free, and 1000 of all other denominations, or 2750 in all, I do not believe 250 hold my own opinions, and I believe 2500 hold my opinions to be wrong, and diametrically opposed to the Word of God. Now, the *Scotsman*, in *tone and spirit*, holds all these ministers to be fools, and fanatics, and bigots, and people not to be reasoned with, and assumes that only a mere handful of people hold their views. My opinion is that a very considerable proportion of what are called 'religious people' hold these views, and think *us* wrong."

Plain speaking.

This letter, though kindly meant, did not produce the conciliatory effect desired. The probability is that its influence was the reverse of conciliatory. Its author, among the many qualities valuable and useful in public life which he undoubtedly possessed, sometimes showed himself deficient in that undefinable something which we call "tact." To the end of his life he never could understand that a plain reference to facts, unaccompanied by the usual conventional phrases, might give offence. He could not see that the possessor of an "agricultural implement" should object to having it called a "spade." In this case it is probable that his well-intentioned warnings, suggested by the old regard both for Mr. Charles Maclaren and Mr. Ritchie, provoked resentment. At all events, this was the view he himself was afterwards compelled to take; for the tendency towards alienation increased on both sides. Charles Maclaren was joined (in the year 1845), and afterwards was succeeded, in the editorship by Alexander Russel. With Mr. Russel, while editor of the *Fife Herald*, Mr. McLaren had had amicable correspondence with reference to the Anti-Corn-Law question. But the relationship had never been intimate, and Mr. Russel, in criticising the public conduct and policy of the founder and leader of the

The new editor.

Independent Liberal party in Edinburgh, was unrestrained by the friendly feelings and high opinion entertained by Mr. Charles Maclaren for his old contributor. Mr. M^c^Laren also drifted farther away from the *Scotsman*. He actively aided first the *Scottish Press*, and at a later period the *Caledonian Mercury*, and therefore occupied to a certain extent a position of journalistic rivalry. Political differences called this rivalry into full play, while they steadily widened both the personal and the public breach. In the election of 1847, Mr. M^c^Laren was an influential promoter of the opposition which ousted Macaulay (whom the *Scotsman* as resolutely supported), and which placed Charles Cowan at the head of the poll. Five years afterwards, in 1852, when Mr. M^c^Laren was a parliamentary candidate, and when Mr. Cowan and Mr. Macaulay were also in the field, the *Scotsman* taunted Mr. M^c^Laren with the break-up of the coalition. The hostile criticism continued after Mr. M^c^Laren's defeat and Mr. Macaulay's success. Matters came to a crisis at the election of 1856, when Adam Black was nominated by the Whigs, and Francis Brown Douglas by the Independent Liberals, to the vacant seat caused by Macaulay's elevation to the peerage. The *Scotsman* became so reckless and abusive in its attacks, that Mr. M^c^Laren deemed it necessary to apply to the Court of Session for redress. Mr. Inglis, then Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, now Lord Justice-General, was Mr. M^c^Laren's senior counsel in the libel trial which followed, and in a very able and temperate address to the jury he thus explained the object of the action:—

1847

Action for libel.

"It is perhaps very much to be regretted that, in this country, and indeed almost everywhere, there is no means of estimating such an injury except by the vulgar medium of pounds, shillings,

1856 and pence; but I tell you at once I do not come here with any greedy demand for money. That is not the object of this action. By no means. The only object Mr. M^cLaren has in view is to vindicate his character and set himself right in the eyes, not merely of the citizens of Edinburgh, but of that far more extended class to whose eyes these articles have come, and by whom they have been read, and who have no opportunity of understanding what is the malignant spirit that dictated these articles, and who are therefore almost bound, in justice to the newspaper, to draw the inference that there must be some good foundation for this, and set himself right in the eyes of his fellow-citizens here and his fellow-countrymen elsewhere. It is for that purpose alone that this action has been instituted."

The counsel for the defenders were Mr. Moncreiff, afterwards Lord Justice-Clerk, and Mr. Logan. The chief grounds of defence were that the case was one neither of private slander nor of calumnious ridicule, but of justifiable criticism; that Mr. M^cLaren was himself in the habit of using strong language in speaking of opponents; that "liberty of speech and writing in this free country were involved," and that the object of the action was not to vindicate character, but "to gratify vindictiveness" and "to vent want of success in spleen."

The verdict.

The judge and the jury, however, took a different view. Lord Justice-Clerk Hope's summing up was distinctly in favour of Mr. M^cLaren, and the jury awarded damages to the amount of £400. This money Mr. M^cLaren handed over to the Heriot Trust to provide good-conduct prizes for the children attending the Heriot outdoor schools. The prize was to be awarded by the votes of the scholars in each class.

Results of trial.

The trial, which lasted two days, and which, as has been seen, engaged the foremost talent of the Scottish bar, excited, not only in Edinburgh, but throughout Scotland, a

keen amount of interest. Both parties had warm sympathisers; but while the press generally took the side of the libelling journal, it was significant that Mr. McLaren's popularity in Edinburgh was greatly increased.[1] 1856

An additional motive to that stated by Mr. Inglis prompted Mr. McLaren to bring this action. He knew that many good men were deterred from serving the public by the dread of journalistic criticism; though in his own conduct he showed that no criticism, however unsparing and unjust, could drive him from the path of duty. In the midst of many arduous labours, carried on frequently under the fiercest attacks of his watchful and relentless opponent, he was sustained by the confidence and esteem of his fellow-citizens and his fellow-countrymen, who with ever-increasing admiration and veneration followed him as an able and trusted leader. "Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just;" and secure in this triple armour, Mr. McLaren calmly held on his way as a leader and defender of the people. It is pleasant to be able to add that, many years after the libel case, and just after the election of 1874, in which the *Scotsman* had heartily supported Mr. McLaren, and powerfully aided in securing for him the sweeping majority by which he was returned, Mr. McLaren, seeing Mr. Russel in the lobby of the House of Commons, stepped forward and offered his hand. The genial editor heartily responded, and a

Friendly meeting with Mr. Russel.

[1] "It is notorious that at this present moment Mr. McLaren is tenfold more popular and respected than ever he was before. Ever, in fact, since the date of his prosecution of the *Scotsman* for libel, his popularity has been steadily on the increase. We do not tender our bare assertion in proof of this. The reception accorded to Mr. McLaren at all meetings, but particularly at *public* meetings where he appears, proves it. On these occasions his reception is more than warm—it is enthusiastic. This is a notorious fact, familiar to every one."—*Daily Express*, December 27, 1856.

1874

pleasant though short conversation ensued. Afterwards Mr. Russel expressed to mutual friends the great gratification which this meeting at Westminster afforded him. It was an interesting episode, bringing to an end the warfare of more than a quarter of a century,—illustrative of the truth that nobility of soul can be best tested when there is anything to forgive and forget.

Versatility as a writer.

As a newspaper contributor and correspondent, Mr. McLaren wrote on a great variety of subjects. Trade and commerce, banking and railway administration, were favourite questions, and his treatment of them always evinced careful preparatory investigation as well as fertility of suggestion. On all matters affecting municipal administration and local and national taxation, and the rights and wrongs of Scotland in relation thereto as compared with England and Ireland, he was an acknowledged authority; and his papers, whether published as letters to editors or as pamphlets, never failed to stir inquiry and debate.

Perhaps the most noteworthy of his impromptu journalistic contributions was an elaborate statistical paper, published in 1861, entitled, "Expenditure of United States compared with United Kingdom." His first series of tables brought out these comparative general conclusions:—

The United Kingdom and the United States.

"In Britain we have an annual expenditure of £69,619,266 for thirty millions of people, and on the other side of the Atlantic an expenditure of only £19,853,960 for thirty-two millions and a half of the same race! But even this comparison," he continued, "does not do full justice to our American cousins. To make the comparison perfectly fair, we ought to deduct the American expenditure for payment of Members of Parliament, seeing that we pay nothing—at least nothing directly as an acknowledged matter of business—under that head. We must likewise deduct the expenditure for Post Office purposes above

the revenues received, as we have no similar expenditure in the United Kingdom, in consequence of our small, densely-peopled territory. Above all, we are bound to deduct the difference betwixt the expenditure for 'Common Schools' in the United States and our 'Educational Grants'—the former being £4,446,814, and the latter only £982,575, making a difference of £3,464,239 in favour of America. When these three sums, amounting to £5,044,430, are deducted, the fair comparison will be as follows:— 1884

United States.		United Kingdom.	
Population, . . .	32,600,000.	Population, . . .	30,000,000.
Comparative expenditure, . .	£14,809,530.	Comparative expenditure, . .	£66,619,266."

The chief object of this investigation was to aid the cause of national education at home, by showing the pre-eminence accorded in the States to education as a Government business or department, and by describing the operation of the "common schools" system, which not only made education universal throughout the States, but welded into one vast and loyal English-speaking community populations drawn from all the nationalities of Europe.

Mr. M^cLaren retained to the close of his life the journalistic instinct, seizing on current controversies or passing movements as texts for the illustration and enforcement of his political faith. During the leisure of holiday seasons more especially, he not unfrequently surprised his friends by the publication of an occasional letter dealing with some question with which, so far as they were aware, he had never closely occupied his mind. One of the latest of these fugitive pieces was written during the autumn of 1884, when he was residing at Strathpeffer, and its subject was the depreciation of land as the consequence of the great decline in the value of farm produce.

1884 He was a close and conscientious student of the contemporary history of his country for upwards of fifty years, whilst old historical documents, especially ancient municipal records, possessed for him a charm as great as many readers find in the modern novel. The knowledge thus gained he often brought to bear on the social and political controversies of his own day, and it contributed not a little to his sound judgment and sagacity in political matters. If, at the close of a life-long career of political activity, he found himself generally in accord with the views and aspirations of his fellow-countrymen, it may truly be said that differences were more often resolved by the majority of his party coming over to his views, than by the surrender of his own convictions for the sake of an ephemeral popularity.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VOLUNTARY CONTROVERSY.

1833

Liberalising influence of Dissent.

WHY is Scotland Liberal? Cobden's famous dictum, endorsed lately by Mr. Gladstone, "The soul of Liberalism is Dissent," supplies an answer. The influence of Dissent was undoubtedly the most powerful motive in placing Scotland in the vanguard of British Liberalism, and, more than any single man, Mr. M'Laren organised Scottish Dissent as a political force.

If any one doubts either of these assertions, let him study the history of Scotland for the second quarter of this century. The Dissenters of that period were necessarily men of great force of character and strict conscientiousness, accepting in the fullest sense the Protestant principle of personal responsibility to God in all the duties of life, and more especially in relation to Church ordinances. If they had not been men of this stamp they would not have remained Dissenters, because all material advantages, personal comfort, and social position pointed to an easy-going religious conformity. But regard for purity and freedom of worship brought their fathers out of the Establishment. Taught in the same religious school which recognised Melville's doctrines of the two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland, they faithfully maintained the testimony of their fathers in the face of worldly allurements. Exposed to political and spiritual

1833 injustice, inasmuch as they were required to support a Church whose ministrations they could not accept, they were taught an application of Melville's principle of far-reaching influence and priceless value. Claiming for themselves the freedom of worship or "spiritual independence," they were bound to acknowledge the right of others to that which they themselves required; in other words, to demand the exclusion of the State from the sphere of Church patronage, with all its attendant duties in relation to pecuniary support, and all its attendant responsibilities in the shape of civil control. Wrong-bearing is often a valuable schoolmaster. Most gifted men cradled into poetry by wrong have learnt in suffering what they have taught in song; and the Scotsmen most exacting in their sense of religious duty were taught by the spiritual and political injustice to which they were subjected in giving effect to their most sacred convictions to demand universal toleration for all creeds and fair play for all Churches. That demand of a fair field and no favour, applied in the political domain, is the foundation of Liberalism; and as the Presbyterian order of Church government created a tendency to political democracy, so Presbyterian Dissent, making the additional claim of universal toleration as the only abiding security for itself, communicated fresh activity and strength to Liberalism, guiding and directing it in later years to resist and defeat the "levelling-up" method of meeting the irresistible claim of religious equality; making the endowment of Roman Catholicism at Maynooth and the continuance of the *regium donum* in Protestant Ulster equally impossible; enforcing a policy of complete disestablishment in Ireland, and gradually winning for a free church in a free state recognition as an essential plank of the Liberal programme. It is to Mr. McLaren's share, in

combination with the Scottish Dissenters, in promoting this development of Liberal policy, that attention is now to be directed. 1833

Political organisation.

As has formerly been noted, Mr. M^cLaren's entrance into public life was contemporaneous with the new development in self-government which dated from the Enfranchisement Act of 1832. Simultaneously with, if not even in advance of, his efforts to direct the power conferred upon the £10 householders to the promotion of municipal reform, were his attempts to organise the voting power of the Dissenting communities in the interests of ecclesiastical reform. For he was an ardent Dissenter, and his close personal contact with the prominent ministers of the Secession Church in Edinburgh in his early manhood—men of the mental calibre and self-sacrificing zeal of Dr. John Brown, Dr. Ritchie, Mr. Kirkwood, Mr. French, Mr. M^cGilchrist, and especially his own minister Dr. James Peddie—conjoined with extensive reading in early life, had prepared him for the forthcoming Voluntary controversy. His persistent counsel to his fellow-Dissenters was:—"Make use of the franchise; show in politics the same independence of judgment and action you have displayed at all hazards in Church affairs, and organise for united effort." Such advice, harmonising with their convictions and views of duty, was almost universally acted on. The result was that in nearly every Scottish constituency the Dissenters, recognising politics as the present duty of the "Church militant," at once stepped to the front as leaders of the people towards the realisation of their democratic aspirations.

Dissenters at this time were a minority of the population, in many districts despised by the aristocracy, in others persecuted; but what they lacked in numbers and social influence, they made up in activity and independence, in

1834

earnestness of purpose and definiteness of aim. Thus they came to be "the backbone of Liberalism" and a dominating factor in Scottish politics. Hitherto the tendency of Dissent had been towards further division; the tendency was now changed to reunion. State or civil authority in the Presbyterian Church had been the original cause of disruption, and the one common effort, begun in the sphere of political action, brought the scattered fragments of Presbyterian Dissent together, manfully supported by Independents and Baptists. This now united Dissenting party Mr. McLaren by pen and speech greatly helped to rally, and in an early stage of its two-sided conflict with Established Church aggression and Tory obstructiveness, he became its most prominent lay representative.

Reunion of Dissenters.

The Voluntary Church Association, of which the venerable Dr. James Peddie was president, with his eldest son, Mr. James Peddie, W.S., and the Rev. Dr. John Brown as secretaries, and Mr. James Duncan, W.S., as treasurer, gave place in 1834 to the Scottish Central Board of Dissenters, of which Mr. McLaren was made chairman, with Mr. James Peddie as secretary, and Mr. Archibald Smith as treasurer. This Central Board originated in a meeting held in Rose Street Church, under the presidency of Mr. McLaren, at which it was resolved that the grievances of Dissenters could only be redressed by "an immediate, total, and eternal separation of Church and State." It speedily became the head of a federation of Voluntary or Dissenting societies, and the members of the executive found that their offices were no sinecures. The Board placed itself in direct antagonism to the church extension scheme, then promoted with unexampled vigour by the Evangelical party in the Established Church, under the leadership of Dr. Chalmers. The principle on which that church extension scheme rested

The Central Board of Dissenters.

was that accommodation and religious instruction in connection with the Establishment should be provided by the State for the whole population, as a national duty, irrespective of the means of religious instruction existing outside the pale of the National Church. The demand obviously implied the formation of a league between Church and State for the obliteration of Dissent, and the institution of an all-embracing State Church uniformity. By this time the Presbyterian Dissenters, in harmony with their Baptist and Independent allies, while sympathising with the Evangelical opinions of Dr. Chalmers's party, in contradistinction to the principles of Moderatism, had fully and firmly accepted the Voluntary principle, as affording the best security for Evangelical teaching on the one hand, and popular rights on the other. They did not feel themselves called on to acquiesce tamely in a measure designed to strengthen Church Establishments, much less to submit to denominational extinction. Very ably and resolutely did the Central Board vindicate their rights. They met pamphlet with pamphlet, petition with counter-petition, statistical claims with masterly analysis and exposure; and while the clerical members were actively engaged lecturing and publishing, masses of statistical work and of correspondence were done by Mr. M^cLaren, assisted mainly by Dr. Peddie's sons, whose filial devotion maintained their father's authority and influence as a pillar and ornament of Dissent long after the decay of his physical powers would have unfitted him for active leadership. In their first report the Central Board thus described their work:—

1834

The Voluntary controversy.

"As soon as it was understood that a general plan had been formed for getting up petitions to Parliament in support of this measure (the Church Extension Scheme, including the applications for endowments for chapels of ease), founded on very erroneous statistics, circulated by the Assembly's Committee, and when the

1834 subject was alluded to in Her Majesty's speech as a measure for the consideration of Parliament, the Board, by correspondence with the proper quarters, procured as accurate accounts as possible of the existing accommodation, both in Established and Dissenting churches, in all the different places alleged to be deficient in that respect. They then drew up and printed a Statement containing the results of their returns, in which they think it was satisfactorily shown that the measure was both unnecessary and unjust. Copies of the Statement were sent to most of the Dissenting ministers in Scotland, accompanied with a circular urging on them the necessity of counter-petitions against the grant being sent from every district; and in order to diffuse correct information on the subject as widely as possible, the Statement itself was sold at rather less than cost price. The Board also transmitted a copy of it to every Member of the House of Commons, from a very considerable number of whom prompt and decided intimations of their resolution to oppose the grant were received. The Statement, the Board have reason to think, has been productive of much benefit in opening the eyes of many to the injustice and sectarian character of the scheme, and of arousing such opposition to it as to render it extremely improbable that any Ministry that consults the opinions of the people will give it their support."

The State Church's claim.

The Statement contained a calculation showing that compliance with the Church's claim would involve a cost to the imperial exchequer of £7,000,000; and the principles on which it rested its opposition to the claim and its refutation of the Assembly's "erroneous statistics" were these:—"That as Dissenters are included in the population, their church accommodation should also be included; that accommodation for 100 out of every 216 of the population is sufficient for the whole, as proved by Dr. Chalmers's investigations; that it is unfair to single out one parish of a populous town or district without regard to the surplus accommodation in the immediate neighbourhood; and that

the Voluntary system, under which the chapels of ease arose and have prospered, is sufficient for their future support. Mr. M^cLaren further, as a member of the committee that prepared the analysis of the denominational statistics for the whole country, gave evidence before the Religious Instruction Commission, and the report of his evidence occupies a third part of what they thought needful to publish in their first report. The Dissenters, thus brought into line over the whole country, thus unified as a political force, in spite of the absence of quick and certain communication (for these were the days of mail-coaches and dear postage), and thus fortified by arguments and statistics, succeeded in controlling the political situation against the Evangelical party, powerful as it was in numbers, influence, and talent, until the final conflict with the State which resulted in the disruption of the National Church. It was because of the part he took as the champion of the Dissenters in their stubborn resistance of the claims of the Church Extension party, and of their efforts to nationalise the Establishment on the principle of absolute independence of the State, that Mr. M^cLaren was in after years described by Mr. Hugh Miller as the "author of the Disruption." 1834

Establishment aggression.

Brave men engaged in a successful battle do not always see the progress they are making, and a fear that they are losing rather than gaining ground sometimes stimulates to increased energy. With a powerful and energetic combination arrayed against him, and with statesmen in office so friendly to the Established Church that they were willing to grant Dr. Chalmers and his friends almost anything short of complete spiritual independence, it is not wonderful that Mr. M^cLaren occasionally felt the influence of such an apprehension. And it was well for the cause of the Dissenters that their courage and resolution were thus tried.

1840

In 1841 the Scottish Dissenters had abundant cause for concern. The Ministers of the Crown, in constituting the Bible Board, proposed that Church membership should be a condition of office, thus in a manner affirming that a Dissenter was not fit to be intrusted with the revision of the text of the Bible—a proceeding which Mr. McLaren denounced as practically tantamount to a re-enactment, so far as the Bible Board was concerned, of the Test and Corporation Acts. Further, a clause was inserted in the Prisons Act by which no Dissenter was eligible to the office of prison chaplain, and under the operation of this retrograde legislation a chaplain in Edinburgh actually lost his situation. Again, an Act was passed establishing forty Highland schools, whose teachers were to be maintained, not by the heritors, but out of the public funds. In order to put these schools completely under the control of the Established Church, Government consented to the imposition on the schoolmasters appointed under the Act, of the Confession of Faith in the form in which it was subscribed by Established Churchmen, and without the modifications under which it could be subscribed by Protestant Dissenters. More recently Government gave the Church a controlling power in the appointment of the inspectors of schools. Speaking at a public meeting of Dissenters held to consider and protest against these encroachments, Mr. McLaren said, "My friend Mr. Gillon, at my request, moved for a copy of the correspondence between the Privy Council and the Committee of the Assembly. It has been printed by order of the House, and has come to Edinburgh only within the last four or five days, and a more truckling document to the Church, a more discreditable correspondence on the part of Ministers prostituting the powers of the Privy Council and Crown, and laying them at the feet of the General

Submissiveness of Government.

Assembly, I never read." These and similar illustrations of the submissiveness of the Government to the demands of the Church on minor points, irrespective of the claims and rights of Dissenters, convinced the advocates of civil and religious equality that more than statements, and petitions, and public demonstrations were required at their hands. They brought them to the conclusion that a special representative of their views was needed in Parliament, and the meeting of Dissenters held in Edinburgh in 1841, elsewhere referred to, on the motion of Mr. McLaren, adopted the following resolution:—"That the Dissenters of Edinburgh, . . . viewing with alarm the recent encroachments on their civil rights, many of which might have been prevented if their opinions had been properly represented in Parliament, and forming, as they do, a large portion of the Liberal constituency, consider themselves justified in requiring that one of the city Members, in addition to being well qualified in other respects, should possess that intimate knowledge of their principles and tried attachment to their cause which will secure their entire confidence, and entitle them to expect that he will constantly exert himself to prevent the occurrence of similar aggressions." The speech in which he supported this resolution was a masterly and effective exposition of the irritating wrongs to which the Dissenting communities were being subjected, through the agency of a Government eager, by minor concessions, to entrap the Church into some compromise of her essential and fundamental claims. He took pains, however, to make it evident that something more than sectarian service was necessary. He wished, indeed, a Member "who shall watch over and defend our rights—who will always be on the alert when any aggression is attempted—who will be prepared, for example, to go to Lord John Russell in such a case as the

1841

Parliamentary representation needed.

1841 Bible Board, and prove to him that he was about to impose on the Dissenters of Scotland the shackles which he removed from the Dissenters of England in 1829, and from which their Scottish brethren had been relieved since 1689." But at the same time he wished a Member who would be otherwise well qualified for parliamentary duties, and who would be a thorough all-round Liberal. "I for one," he concluded, "would never agree to put forward a man for whom I could not hold up my face and say that, in addition to being well qualified to defend our rights, he was trustworthy in other respects; that he was a true friend of the people, and one who would not consent to legislate or carry on the Government of the country for the benefit of any one sect or party." The ideal Member thus sketched the Dissenters of Edinburgh never obtained until Mr. McLaren himself was returned in 1865. But at the time at which this sketch was drawn, a seat in Parliament was, in fact, unattainable by the ordinary citizen.[1]

Mr. McLaren named. The Rev. Mr. McGilchrist, who spoke after Mr. McLaren, did indeed point to the proposer of the motion as the coming man, as "an individual who would be alike acceptable to Churchmen and Dissenters, who had no other object in view than the real interests of this metropolis—the great ends of good government, the enactment and administration of impartial laws, the extended commerce and growing prosperity of the Empire." But Mr. McLaren at once interposed and declined nomination, saying "he certainly could not but feel flattered by what had fallen from Mr. McGilchrist, and by the manner in which his name had been received by the meeting,

[1] According to our ancient constitution, Parliament was supposed to consist of commissioners of shires and "burgesses."

but he trusted that no person present would believe for a moment that if he had known that, in any sense or shape, he would have been proposed as a candidate, he would have been there to take any part in the proceedings." 1841