

"McLaren of Manchester."

By C. B.

Alexander McLaren was born in Glasgow on the 17th of February, 1826. His father, a shrewd, devout, upright Scotchman, was the pastor of a Baptist church in that city, but, as is usual among the "Scotch Baptists," his whole time was not given to the church, but he was also engaged in business. His son was taught from his earliest days to regard personal religion as the one great reality of life; and at the age of eleven, on a profession of faith, he was baptized. He attended the high school of his native city, and both there and at its university acquitted himself with distinction; but he was still quite young when his family removed to London.

Soon after, he applied for admission to the Baptist College, then at Stepney. His appearance was so youthful, when he presented himself before the committee, that they had difficulty in believing he was the "Mr. McLaren" whom they had resolved to see first, as the writer of a remarkable paper that had gained their unqualified approval.

The youngest of the family by five or six years, he had no playmate at home. This circumstance told on him as a boy, making it natural for him to find companionship in books; and this early acquired love of reading led to those habits of systematic study to which he has steadily adhered through his whole career. Before he had completed his twentieth year he had taken the degree of Bachelor of Arts at London University, and had been chosen as minister by the Baptist church worshipping in Portland Chapel, Southampton.

When he entered on his work, the church was by no means in a flourishing condition, and the membership was very small; but after he began his ministry the numbers gradually increased. He worked hard, attended to every branch of church work, and desiring to raise the standard of Sunday-school teaching, he formed a class for teachers, which he himself taught. For twelve years he remained at his post, notwithstanding many temptations to leave it. His reputation as a powerful preacher grew, men of influence gathered around him, and his services were increasingly in request for "special occasions." But he avoided dissipation of energy; he rarely left his own pulpit, and each sermon preached there was the result of earnest study.

In 1858 he went to preach for one Sunday at Union Chapel, Oxford Road, Manchester, the pastor of which was vacant. At the close of the morning service the deacons arranged for a church meeting to be held on the Monday evening, and before twenty-four hours had passed an enthusiastic call was sent him: There was hesitation in accepting it. Twelve years had bound him in affection to his people, and it was hard to exchange the beauty of the sunny south, in which he delighted, for grimy Lancashire. But he could not put aside this invitation as he had done former ones; it was God's call.

On the first Sunday in July, 1858, Mr. McLaren began the pastorate which continues to this day, and which has made the name "McLaren of Manchester" known throughout Christendom. He took root in Manchester from the first. Crowds did not go to hear him as they go to a merely "popular" preacher, but earnest men and women came, recognized him as a teacher, and remained. After some years, to accommodate the ever-increasing congregation, a handsome new chapel was built, with large lecture hall and numerous class-rooms. The old name, however, of Union Chapel was retained. Gradually his name became a tower of strength to any cause with which he identified himself.

Through Dr. McLaren's whole career (the University of Edinburgh, in 1877, conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity), his services have been eagerly desired by the leaders of good work in Manchester and far beyond it; but, while anxious to help schemes for social and moral improvement, he has firmly held that for a minister the secret of success is "that he should concentrate his intellectual force on the one work of preaching." When he does appear on the platform he is enthusiastically received. He has never allowed his people to expect much from him in the way of postural visitation; and now his colleague, the Rev. J. E. Roberts, M. A., B. D., relieves him almost entirely from that branch of the work. He rather avoids society, and yet, when induced to enter it, no trace remains of unwillingness, far less unfitness to take a leading part. In the social circle, his look, his voice, his whole bearing, are as "magnetic" as in the pulpit.

There is a deep vein of shyness in Dr. McLaren's nature, which makes "personal dealing," as it is called, difficult for him; but in addressing hundreds he does deal personally with each. In a character sketch which appeared in The Christian some years ago, it is truly said: "Dr. McLaren cannot be described. We may speak of the spare figure, quivering with life and feeling; of the firm set mouth, the unmistakable sign of a tremendous will; of

eyes that pierce and shine and seem to compass everybody and everything in their quick, lightning glance; or of the strangely magnetic voice,—but in vain. We may describe his preaching as 'logic on fire,' or say that his words thrill like electricity; that he speaks like one wholly possessed by his theme, or that the speaker's *soul ensemble* gives one the best idea possible of etherealized matter, of spirit overpowering matter,—but all fails. The man must be seen and heard to be understood."

Dr. McLaren's first volume of sermons ("Sermons Preached in Manchester") was published in 1860, the second series in 1869, and these have passed through many editions. Many volumes have followed since, all reaching that high standard of intellectual grasp, beauty of language, and deep spirituality which he has taught his readers to expect. His contributions to the "Expositor's Bible,"—one volume on the Epistles of Colossians and Philemon, and three volumes on the Book of Psalms,—are of themselves sufficient to place him in the front rank of living expositors. Readers of the Sunday School Times do not need to be reminded of his excellent weekly articles on the International lessons which they have now for many years enjoyed and valued.

In 1856, Dr. McLaren was married to his cousin most happily,—a deep true union of heart and life. In 1880 he was laid aside by illness for a year, the only break in his fifty years' ministry. In 1884, after a week's illness, his wife died. This changed the world to him, but his faith did not falter, and now hallowed traces of an "accepted sorrow" can be seen in the lines of his face, heard in the pathetic ring of his clear voice, and, above all, in the chastened, tender, but always manly, strain of his mature teaching. His two eldest daughters are married, grandchildren are growing up around him, and one daughter and his only son still share his home.

During the year just passed, Dr. McLaren completed fifty years of ministerial service. An influential committee of citizens of Manchester, representing all denominations and political parties, was formed fittingly to commemorate his jubilee. He also received congratulatory addresses from his ministerial brethren of the Baptist and Congregational churches, and many good-wishes from both sides of the Atlantic.—S. S. Times.

The Hid Treasure—The Precious Pearl.

"That interpretation of Scripture that meets all the requirements without forcing is apt to be the right one."

If the "Treasure" and the "Pearl" in the two parables of our Lord in Matt. 13: 44-46 represent salvation in Christ, as many teach, there are some difficulties:

1. This interpretation makes salvation hidden, hard to find, whereas the exact opposite is the contrary.
2. It makes the man rejoice over a thing he does not yet know the value of.
3. It makes a worthless, bankrupt, outcast sinner, the purchaser of the most costly thing in the universe.
4. It makes him give up everything obediently, he might be supposed to have, before he comes into possession of the Treasure. The saved sinner is commanded by Christ to "deny himself,"—keep on giving up as long as he lives.

Moody says "Jesus is the 'Man' who found the Treasure, the 'Merchant' who bought the Pearl." Try the interpretation from this starting point.

1. "The field is the world."
2. The "hid treasure" is the sinful host, hidden in hovels, farmhouses, palaces; under the grime of carnal actions, the filth of vile products of the heart, (see Matt. 18: 18), the unclean robes of self-righteousness.
3. Christ is the one who bought the "field," the "pearl." "Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," Ps. 2: 8. "Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of all; the rod of thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed," Ps. 74: 2.
4. Christ paid a great price. "Feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood," Acts 20: 28. "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price," 1 Cor. 6: 20; 1 Cor. 7: 23. "God sent forth his Son to redeem them that are under the law," Gal. 4: 5.
5. Christ gave up "all that He had" in order to buy the "Pearl." "Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God; But made himself of no reputation, (emptied himself) and took on him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. 2: 6-8. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye are not redeemed with corruptible things—But with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Peter 1: 18. "Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity," Titus 2: 14. "Ye shall be redeemed without money," Isa. 52: 3, 7. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels," (my special Treasure, marg. reading), Mal. 3: 17.

6. Jesus paid the price *with joy*. "He brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness," Ps. 145: 45. This is prophetic as well as historic. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. He will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy: He will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing," Zeph. 3: 17. "Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame," Heb. 12: 2. "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied," Isa. 53: 11.

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Good Resolutions.

Let me look over your shoulder a minute, my son; I just want to see what you are writing in your new diary. Ah, yes; "Good Resolutions" for the New Year. Well, that's right; this is about the time of the year to plant them. I make a few good resolutions every year. Every month, I mean. That is, every week. Except in the summer and winter. Then I find it necessary to make one or two every day. Unless the way happens to be more than usually rocky, or steepy, or slippery, or dangerously easy. Then I notice that a good first-class resolution made about every fifteen minutes or so seems to steady me.

"You don't see how I could remember so many?" Oh, my dear boy, I don't make a new one every time. I do as the political parties do in their national conventions—I simply reaffirm the old platform. Still, every now and then a fellow does find out something about himself that he never suspected before, and it's always well to throw out a skirmisher or two against the new enemy.

"But you broke all your old resolutions last year?" So did I, my son, so did I. Broke some of them when they were so new you could smell the varnish on them. Sometimes I could sit down and cry—if I could be certain that nobody could hear me—when I see how easily I break a resolution that I worked so long and so hard to make. But you can't cry and work at the same time; so I mop away the fears with my sleeve, run out my tongue to catch the last belated straggler sliding down my cheek, and set to work to splice the broken resolution. And I'm not sure that the mended place isn't the strongest part of it—because I know where the weak place is, don't you see, and I'm not going to have it break there again if I can help it. True, there isn't so much gloss and gilding about it as there was on the new one; but in time it comes to have a weather-worn, battle-grimed look about it that is as reassuring as the seamed and grizzled face of a veteran.

Now, if in the course of the coming twelve months, or six weeks, or during the next day or two, or, say this afternoon, you should fail to keep one or two or half a dozen of the five or six resolutions you have written so nicely, you mustn't get discouraged and quit trying. If a fellow who falls refuses to get up he will never fall again. That is true. But then, he will never go anywhere. That is just as true. I'd rather see you stumble along all your life, and at last make a goal with more contusions and abrasions on you than your system has room for than to see you lie still where you were first downed. If you don't get up you are a dead youth, to all intents and purposes.

Do you play football, my son? "A little?" Well a very little would be enough for my old bones. Then you know that while a run of twenty-five yards is a good thing, a gain of one yard isn't to be despised. And, if it happens when you are only two feet from the goal line, it's as good as a forty-yard run. Oh there are numberless stumbles and falls and hurts and struggles and disappointments and discouragements on the celestial side of the Slough of Despond—in fact, about all the troubles you are going to have are on that side. But if I were you I wouldn't stay in the mire of the slough to escape them.

And be sure you make your good resolutions radical and strong in the first place. Don't put an "if" or a "but" in them. God won't help you to compromise. He won't help you to lop off half a sin. When you repent don't sidle. Turn clear around and face the other way. Tell me, did you ever know anybody to quit lying by resolving that he would only lie half as much this year as he did last? He is sure to lose his count and apt to lie twice as much. Did you ever know any one to improve his manners and morals by writing in his diary, "Resolved, That I will be tolerably bad this year, but not quite so bad as I was last year."

So, make your resolutions strong as you can, honestly intending to keep every word of every one of them. And when you break them, or when, as sometimes we are tempted to think, they just break themselves, make the same ones over again and make them stronger. By and by they'll become too strong to be broken. When a regiment's battle breaks under the withering fire of the enemy the colonel doesn't give up in despair and run away. No, he halts the scattered men, and reforms under fire, and when he can do that it shows that he is not only a colonel, every inch of him, but that he is colonel of a fighting regiment. You are no coward, my son. When your good resolutions break, then is the time for you to show your nerve: correct your alignment under fire and move forward. Though the devils be thicker than grass blades in June they can never overcome you unless you first turn traitor yourself and go over to the enemy.—Robert J. Rurdette, in Our Young People.