

DR. ALEXANDER MACLAREN, THE PRINCE
OF BIBLICAL EXPOSITORS.

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Any enumeration of the twelve foremost preachers of the nineteenth century by whomsoever made—by Anglican or Free Churchman—in Great Britain or in America, would be sure to include the name of Alexander Maclaren. At a complimentary breakfast given to him by four hundred of his ministerial brethren on the occasion of his Jubilee in 1896 he was the recipient of an address in which it was said:

“Your sermons, whether heard or read, have refreshed, instructed and inspired us. We emphasize the fact that you have been and still are a widely influential and singularly helpful preacher to preachers. Ministers of all denominations honor and love you. Not only in this country, but also, and scarcely less, on the American continent, and in Australia and other British colonies you are gratefully appreciated. All English speaking people accord you a prominent place among the great preachers of the nineteenth century, such as Robert Hall and Thomas Chalmers, Thomas Binney and Canon Liddon, Charles Haddon Spurgeon and Robert William Dale.”

Let it be frankly stated at the outset that we write from the standpoint of the above address. Unqualified eulogy would be as distasteful to ourselves as it would be to the subject of our article, and we shall strive to adhere rigidly to the law of truth and soberness. But it will be no difficult task to prove the validity of our judgment.

Alexander Maclaren was born in Glasgow on February 11, 1826. He came of a good stock and heredity and environment account for many of his finest qualities. His father, David Maclaren, was born in Perth, in 1785, was originally a member of the Church of Scotland. He was, as are so many lads in religious homes in Scotland, destined by his parents for

the ministry, and he spent some time in the University of Glasgow, with a view to prepare himself for it. But at that time Scotland was stirred by the revival under the Haldanes, and David Maclaren was profoundly influenced by it. One result of this was that he left the church of his fathers and became an Independent—much to the chagrin of his parents, who resented so unexpected a lapse. The church of which the distinguished Dr. Wardlaw was pastor was then the leading Independent or Congregational church in Glasgow, and David Maclaren joined its fellowship. There also he found his wife, Mary Wingate, the daughter of a Cameronian Covenanter who had been excluded from the Cameronian fellowship for the crime of going to hear a missionary sermon by Dr. Bogue. She was a woman of strong and saintly character, “whose patient fortitude, calm wisdom and changeless love were her husband’s treasure for many years of mingled sunshine and storm and are still fresh and fragrant,” said Dr. Maclaren in 1902, “to her children to-day.” The question of baptism naturally presented itself to the mind of one whose face was toward the light, and David Maclaren examined it “in the light of Scripture only” and so, said his son, “it was conclusively settled.” Other members of Dr. Wardlaw’s church were confronted by the same question and ultimately forty of them seceded and met by themselves under the pastoral care of Mr. Maclaren and Mr. James Buchan. They later united with a church of Scotch Baptists in George Street. But in consequence of some division of opinion a number of the members left the church in George Street and formed themselves into a separate church which now meets in John Street. Mr. Maclaren exercised the pastoral function in this church from 1823 to 1836 conjointly with Mr. Charles Wallace. “His ministry was marked by much intellectual vigor and clearness. It was richly scriptural, expository and instructive and withal earnestly evangelistic. It was not oratorical, but it was full of Christ and of personal experience.” We cannot wonder such a father should make a deep impression on such a son, and that the memory of it should

powerfully influence that son in his own great work. That Scotch Baptist church was a church of strong men "who were mighty in the Scriptures, held their convictions with the grip of a vice and could give a reason for the faith that was in them." In 1836 David Maclaren accepted the position of manager of the South Australian Company, which had been formed to develop the colony. He was one of the founders of Adelaide and practically created its port—Maclaren Wharf and Maclaren Vale still commemorate his connection with the city. His Sundays he devoted to preaching and established a church in Adelaide on Scotch Baptist lines. After four years, he returned to the homeland and became London manager of the company. He died in 1850.

Alexander went to the old grammar school in Glasgow where he had as a classfellow Robert Rainy, afterward the distinguished leader of the Free and the United Free Church of Scotland. Later he attended classes at the University. He was baptized by the Rev. James—afterward Dr. Paterson of Hope Street church. The year of his baptism can be inferred from a letter he wrote the children of his Sunday school in Manchester in answer to their congratulations on his seventieth birthday. He says:

"I was baptized when I was eleven years old. I am now seventy, and for all these years Jesus Christ has given me far more than I deserve. He will do the same to every young heart that will love and serve Him."

After the father's return from Adelaide the family removed to London, and Alexander applied for admission to the college at Stepney—the forerunner of Regents Park, in 1842. His father had previously taken him to the Rev. Charles Stovel, and asked whether he thought his son would make a preacher, to which query came the laconic reply, "Well, well, perhaps he may!" The committee of the college had some misgivings about receiving him on the score of his youth, for he was only sixteen. According to Dr. Angus he entered Stepney "with turned down collar and a short jacket." But he was a youth who could not be set aside. The

Rev. Samuel Green went home from the committee and said to his son, afterward the beloved Dr. S. G. Green, already a student in Stepney, "We have accepted to-day a young scholar who will cut you all out, Sam." There is a tradition, however, that he was not to be allowed to go out to preach until he was more elderly looking! He rapidly gained the affection of his fellow students, though he took no part in their frolics. From Dr. Benjamin Davies he imbibed a love of Hebrew which he retained throughout life and which went far to make him so capable an expositor of Scripture. He worked hard, won many prizes and took his B. A. degree before he was twenty. An address which in 1864 he delivered at Rawdon College on "The Student, His Work and Right Preparation for it," a noble and inspiring utterance, derives its chief value from the fact that it portrayed the speaker's own ideals, and efforts he made to reach them. Beyond the routine class work he read widely in general literature—Shakespeare and Elizabethan poets, Milton, Wordsworth and Scott. His two favorite preachers were Thomas Binney and Henry Melville, the golden-mouthed orator of the Golden Lectures. He frequently in after life spoke of Binney as "the man who taught me how to preach."

Before his college course was completed Maclaren received a call to the pastorate at Portland Chapel, Southampton. The church was then in low water. The congregation in a building which seated 800, numbered about 50, and the membership had dwindled to 20. The salary offered was £60 a year! There was nothing in the situation to tempt an ambitious youth, but this young man was not as others, and probably the difficulties attracted him. The college authorities were reluctant to let so promising a student go before he had taken his M. A. degree, but acting on his father's advice he accepted the invitation and settled in Southampton in 1846. He had uphill work, but there were certain great traditions connected with the church which inspired him. John Pulsford, that quaint, mystical soul whose "Quiet Hours" are a delight to all who love to be "alone with the Alone," was one of his

predecessors. The young minister gave to the people of his best. The empty pews began gradually to fill, the membership of the church increased and there were not a few who recognized that a prophet was among them. Young men, more than others, were attracted by his preaching that struck a new note and its impression on men was in many cases life-long. In addition to his two sermons on the Sunday and his week-night address, he conducted a Preparation Class for Sunday school teachers, instructed some of the young men in the Greek Testament and with others read Carlyle and the poets.

The late Lord Tennyson used to say concerning his beloved wife, "The peace of God came into my life when I wedded her." Not less gratefully did Alexander Maclaren feel with regard to his wife, whose soul was set to his, "like perfect music unto noble words." Their marriage did not take place until he had been in Southampton ten years, i. e., in 1856. This "beautiful and gifted lady" was his cousin, Marion Maclaren. Her father was an Edinburgh citizen of high standing and a deacon in Dr. Lindsay Alexander's church. Only in his own words can we venture to refer to one, the charm of whose character we felt to the full and whom it was indeed a rare privilege to know.

Writing to Sir W. Robertson Nicoll in 1905 Dr. Maclaren said:

"In 1856 Marion Maclaren became my wife. God allowed us to be together till the dark December of 1884. Others could speak of her charm, her beauty, her gifts and goodness. Most of what she was to me is forever locked in my heart. But I would fain that in any notices of what I am or have been able to do it should be told that the best part of it all came and comes from her. We read and wrought together and her clear bright intellect illumined obscurities and 'rejoiced in the truth.' We worked and bore together, and her courage and deftness made toil easy and charmed away difficulties. She lived a life of nobleness, of strenuous effort, of aspiration, of sympathy, self-forgetfulness and love. She was

my guide, my inspiration, my corrector, my reward. Of all human formative influences on my character and life, hers is the strongest and best. To write of me and not to name her is to present a fragment."

The young preacher's fame naturally began to spread. Visitors to Southampton were brought under his spell. Among these was Edward Miall, the pioneer champion of the Religious Equality movement, who went to Maclaren's service one Sunday morning and was so delighted with it that he went again in the evening. At the close of the service he invited the young preacher to supper at his hotel and then accompanied him back to his lodgings. But not content with that, the two men walked backwards and forwards till near midnight. Mr. Miall spoke wherever he went of the remarkable preacher he had heard at Southampton. Another great Congregationalist was similarly impressed—the Rev. David Thomas, of Bristol—a man of kindred spirit, who after a Sunday spent in Southampton, strongly urged that a wider sphere should be found for a man with such unique gifts.

In 1858 the opportunity which his friends desired came, and Mr. Maclaren was invited to the pastorate at Union Chapel, Manchester. His removal from Southampton was a source of deep and universal regret among his friends, and in the "farewell address" presented to him a fine tribute was paid to his chivalry, courage and fidelity. "We do not forget the discouraging circumstances under which the relations began. We remember, too, how slowly the clouds cleared away: how painfully the upward path was climbed: how in the face of many temptations to despair you manfully stood to your post and resolved to hope, and we feel that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to estimate the Christian labor carried on so patiently and perseveringly."

The first minister of Union Chapel was the Rev. Francis Tucker, B. A., who left a large and flourishing congregation. But before his successor had been long in Manchester the chapel became too small, and in 1869 the present beautiful and commodious building, which has been not inaptly styled

the "Nonconformist Cathedral of Lancashire," was opened. The seats which can be let number 1,400, and when the extra seats are in use it accommodates 1,800. This new building also was soon taxed to its utmost capacity, every sitting being occupied and all available space filled. The congregations were as remarkable for their composition as for their size. They contained men of all classes and creeds, rich and prosperous merchants, men distinguished in professional life, and others working their way toward success. Young men from the offices and warehouses of the city sat side by side with artisans. Strangers were attracted in large numbers, among them clergymen and dignitaries of the Established Church, Nonconformist ministers, literary men, artists and students from the theological colleges. One Sunday in 1875 there were in the congregation a Canon of the Roman Catholic Church, a Dean or Archdeacon (I forget which), of the Church of England, several clergymen, Professor Henry Rogers, author of the "Eclipse of Faith," Professor A. S. Wilkins, of Owens College, and four or five ministers. The Wednesday evening service became, as the years went on, no less remarkable for bringing together people whose one bond of fellowship was admiration for Dr. Maclaren.

But he had other and more gratifying signs of success. In 1862 a mission was started in Gorton, which led to the establishment of a flourishing Sunday school and the formation of a vigorous church, which soon became self-supporting, and the parent of another church in the neighborhood. In 1870 a second mission was started in Wilmott Street, Hulme, one of the poorest parts of the city, and there, as the Rev. J. E. Roberts testifies, "a splendid work has been carried on among the needy folk for nearly forty years." A third mission was begun in Rusholme, and this has been selected as the site of "the Maclaren Jubilee Institute," and a fourth was opened in Canning St., Hulme, in 1903. Of this aggressive and beneficent work, Dr. Maclaren was the inspiration. An idea was at one time current in certain quarters that he stood aloof from such work. No idea could be more false. His

interest in it was deep and vital, and any one who accompanied him to meetings in connection with these various missions, as it was occasionally my privilege to do, and saw him in contact with the poorest of the poor, would have no misgivings on that point.

For many years Dr. Maclaren was one of "the three mighties" of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association of Baptist Churches, the others being Hugh Stowell Brown, of Liverpool, and Charles Williams, of Accrington. No one was so frequently elected to preach the association sermon, to write the circular letter or to take a prominent part in the meetings as Dr. Maclaren. Ministerial recognition services were considered sadly incomplete if he could not be present, and the joy at the opening or reopening of a chapel was sensibly diminished, when he could not preach one of the sermons. He was in himself a committee of reference or board of arbitration. His counsel was continually sought and wisely and generously given. To ministers he was a true and faithful friend and did many an act of kindness unknown to all but its recipient.

In 1878, on the completion of twenty years' work in Manchester, he was presented by his congregation with an illuminated address, expressive of the high appreciation in which he was held, a check for two thousand guineas, a gold watch, a clock, and a typewriter. With the typewriter he was as pleased as a child with its toy, for he was never fond of writing, and, as he once playfully remarked, "never had much of a fist."

The denomination recognized his exceptional claims by making him president of the Baptist Union in 1875, when he was only forty-nine. Previously the chair had been filled only by more venerable fathers. How he regarded the honor was evidenced by the words of "heartly thanks" with which his address opened:

"Our simple congregational polity has few distinctions, no privileges, no prizes, as we are often reminded by critics who think that they have hit a blot. But I, for one, know of no

position, whatever be its adventitious accompaniments, which I should value so much as to be chosen by 'mine own people'—a free Christian democracy, among whom my work is done and my life lived, to the highest place they can give. Its very bareness of authority and emolument makes it the more grateful. A laurel crown is worth more than a gold coronal when it means brotherly confidence and kindly judgment of one's poor work. And I thank you, that you should put me, though unworthy, here to-day."

His two addresses from the chair are still vividly remembered. That in the spring was entitled, "The Gospel for the Day," the autumnal address at Plymouth was, "The Outward Business of the House of God," and he dealt largely with ministerial stipends, many of which were, and alas! still are, disgracefully low. Mr. Spurgeon was delighted with the address, and its influence on the growth of the Annuity Fund and of "the society with the long name," as he wittily called "The Baptist Pastors' Income Augmentation Society," was soon evident. No one who heard it will ever forget his sly reference to the Baptist Union work—its endless powers of talk—and his plea that something should be done to make it more of a power. "Hitherto," he said, "it has done little. We might address it with Wordsworth's question to the cuckoo—

" 'Shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice?'"

A second time Dr. Maclaren was called to the presidency of the Union, at the opening of the new century, in 1901, when there were united meetings of the Baptist and Congregational Unions in the spring. The circumstances were unique. Dr. Parker, for so many years Dr. Maclaren's neighbor in Manchester, was chairman of the Congregational Union, and additional interest was lent to the gatherings by the presence of his old schoolfellow, Dr. Rainy, the leader of the United Free Church of Scotland. To see those three men, who stood head and shoulders above all others in the pulpit, together, was a sight never to be forgotten. Dr. Maclaren's

theme was entitled, "An Old Preacher on Preaching." At the autumn assembly of the Baptist Union in Edinburgh he delivered his remarkable address on "Evangelical Mysticism," which called forth emphatic eulogies, not only from "his own people" and their Presbyterian cousins, but from high Anglicans and Sacramentarians like Lord Halifax, the president of the English Church Union in one direction and from the Society of Friends on the other. To another supreme position Dr. Maclaren was called in 1905, the presidency of the Baptist World Congress, and his address on "In the Name of Christianity and by the Power of the Spirit," was as sublime as it was simple. His presidency gave a completeness to the Congress it would otherwise have lacked.

Academic distinctions also fell to his lot. He was the first English Nonconformist or non-Presbyterian minister to receive the degree of D. D. from Edinburgh University, and there is a story that in returning home he left the gown in which he had been capped in the railway carriage! Glasgow conferred on him the same honor. When the University of Manchester was founded, he was one of those selected for the honorary degree of Litt. D., and elected to the Court of Governors. In 1896, to celebrate his ministerial jubilee, a large sum of money was subscribed by the citizens of Manchester, who commissioned Sir George Reid to paint his portrait for their art gallery, while a replica by the same distinguished artist was handed over to the trustees of Union Chapel. No more lifelike portrait of the great preacher exists. It has caught the erect figure, the keen eagle glance of the eye, the striking face luminous with high thoughts and noble passion. It was at this presentation that the then Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Moorhouse, said: "Thirty years ago I was studying with great profit the published sermons of the man whom we are honoring to-day. In an age which has been charmed and inspired by the sermons of Newman and Robertson, of Brighton, there were no published discourses which for profundity of thought, logical arrangement, eloquence of appeal,

and power over the human heart exceeded in merit those of Dr. Maclaren."

It was in this year also that the complimentary breakfast, to which we have referred, was given to Dr. Maclaren by his ministerial brethren. It was a memorable gathering, attended by prominent representatives of all the Free churches. Dr. Maclaren's reply to the address was, as Dr. Parker described it, "overwhelmingly pathetic." The incisive force with which the following words were spoken, the solemn impression they made on that large assembly, will never be forgotten:

"Your praise wakens conscience. Things look so different seen from the inside from what they do from the outside, and there rise up so many spectres of mingled motives and perfunctory work and opportunities let slip that it is hard to believe that any body can look at the work which I know to be so poor and find such words as my friends have used this morning by which to characterize it. . . . I remember Thomas à Kempis' great words, 'Thou art none the holier because thou art praised and none the worse because thou art censured. What thou art, that thou art and it avails thee naught to be called any better than thou art in the sight of God.' So I only say, while thanking you all for your love and appreciation,

" 'Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.' "

There was a quiet humor in the Doctor's words to young ministers:

"I thank God that I was stuck down in a quiet little, obscure place to begin my ministry. For it is what spoils half of you young fellows: you get pitchforked into prominent positions at once, and then fritter yourselves away in all manner of little engagements that you call duties, going to this tea meeting and to that anniversary and the other breakfast celebration instead of stopping at home and reading your Bibles and getting near to God. I thank God for the early days of struggle and obscurity."

Attempts were at various times made to draw Dr. Maclaren

away from Manchester, but notwithstanding his occasional grumbles at its climate (and it was no uncommon thing for him to indulge in them in his times of depression), he elected to remain in "dear grimy old Lancashire—the noblest field of work in England." Once he was invited to "preach with a view" in a certain university city and a few days after the invitation reached him he said to me, "That matter was soon settled. I told them that for a man to move there must be two forces at work—one driving him away from the place he is in, the other drawing him to the place to which he is invited, and that in my case I felt neither the one nor the other." The only time he was seriously "shaken in his mind" was several years after the death of Mrs. Maclaren, the sense of loneliness and depression had grown upon him. An effort was made—mainly at the instance of the Rev. Charles Williams, to secure him for the chair of Hebrew at Regents Park College, and to link with the duties of the chair one sermon a Sunday at Bloomsbury Chapel. The Hebrew professorship would have afforded him congenial work, and he was not insensible to the opportunity of influencing our coming ministry. But he decided to remain in Manchester.

His health was never very robust. His highly strung, delicate nervous constitution exposed him to suffering from which ordinary men are free. He was a martyr to neuralgia. An internal trouble at one time made it necessary for him to lie for hours together on his couch, and in this attitude many of his finest sermons were made. Occasionally when preaching he had to grasp the sides of the pulpit to steady himself, so intense was his pain. How he was able to continue his work so long in his then state of health was a marvel to all who knew him. He thought of a colleague long before he secured one.

"I am going on here preaching once a Sunday," he wrote to a friend, in 1882, "and filling in with occasional supplies, which is most unsatisfactory. It cannot go on. The worry of it, and the poor results of all the worry will force me to cut it soon. If I cannot find a colleague or curate, I see

nothing for it but to resign—and indeed if I could see any congenial work in London, I think I should do so now, for, apart from all other considerations, I feel as if I could not stand this climate much longer, and should like to be in the sunshine at the end. Altogether I am at my wits' end, and cannot see my way. The feelings of unsettlement is miserable and hindering. But I suppose I must just wait till the cloud moves. I can, for the most part, but sometimes I get impatient."

It was a happy event that he at length found a capable and congenial colleague in the Rev. J. T. Raws, who remained with him for seven years (1883-1890), and then Mr. Raws was succeeded by the Rev. J. E. Roberts, M. A., B. D., first as assistant minister and subsequently as co-pastor and successor. Mr. Roberts is too strong a man to be an imitator of his revered predecessor. He works manfully on his own lines and has worthily maintained the traditions of the influential pulpit he was called to occupy.

In 1888 Dr. Maclaren paid a prolonged visit to Australia, preaching continuously in Sydney, Victoria and South Australia. Wherever he went he had an almost royal progress and did much to secure for the Victoria Baptist churches in their jubilee year their magnificent Church Extension Fund of £50,000. Efforts were made to retain the distinguished guest for further service in the colonies and suggestions were made that he should act as the Baptist Archbishop of Australia, but his heart yearned for home. Incidentally, Dr. Maclaren's health was greatly invigorated by his Australian tour, and it was commonly said that it had renewed his youth and added twenty years to his life. It certainly did much for him, though it did not restore his old strength. Several years afterward he wrote, "I have been fairly well since my Eastern trip, but I am very weary and do not know exactly whether to resign in June, when I shall have done my fifty years, or whether to hold on a little longer." Whatever he thought of the matter, his friends would not hear of his resignation. He continued for seven years longer until in 1903 he became

pastor emeritus, and held that position until his death on May 5, 1910.

What were the characteristics of the preaching which drew such large and intelligent audiences and exercised over them so potent a spell? Dr. Maclaren had the advantage of a fine and inspiring personality. Who could look at that erect figure, that mobile face, piercing eyes, a glance of which often spoke volumes, or listen to that clear and telling utterance which rang out in bell-like clearness and gave to every word and every syllable its proper value, and remain unmoved? The power of speech, of hand and eye combined to give the preacher an unique force. Slim and wiry, he had not the portly figure of Robert Hall or Thomas Chalmers, but he was no less equal in his bearing. He was *ἀναξ ἀνδρῶν*, a King of Men. In whatever company he was present his supremacy was instinctively felt. He was what Dr. John Brown called a *solar* man, a sun with its attendant planets. With what illuminating and arresting force he read the Scriptures, investing the familiar words with new charm and glory! "I never heard anything like it," one after another of his hearers said. His intellect was keen and penetrating, his thought sharp and incisive. He saw into the heart of things, as with the intuition of the seer. His fine imagination irradiated his subtle logic and embellished his severest statements of truth. His speech, even when impromptu, was graceful and effective. He naturally expressed himself in metaphor. Long before Henry Drummond wrote his *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, Dr. Maclaren made large use of the analogies which exist between the material and spiritual realms, seeing in the phenomena and processes of the one instructive resemblances of the other. No sermons in the English language abound in such choice and magical similes—phrases that captivate the memory and haunt it as with strains of celestial music.

Dr. Maclaren's doctrinal standpoint was thoroughly evangelical. During his first pastorate he had doubtless to work his way toward a creed and was far from orthodox.

Late in life his friend Charles Williams told him that his sermons were in those days a mixture of the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and Thomas Carlyle. The veteran preacher laughed and after a little fencing admitted that there was some truth in the charge. He acknowledged the immense influence which Carlyle wielded on his early preaching. "He was the one strong man of his day, and his denunciation of shams and follies made him my hero for a long while."

But as the years went on he became more and more orthodox and laid increasing emphasis on the central truths, the deity and atonement of Christ, the value of His resurrection, the personality and power of the Holy Spirit, repentance and faith, the obligation to holiness and the moral dynamic of the cross. Those were among the certainties—"triumphant certainties"—which he continually preached. On other matters he was less dogmatic and even reticent. Many years ago I told him of a sermon of Dr. William Pulsford's I had heard on future punishment. The preacher dwelt strongly on the antinomies of Scripture, exhibiting first the passages which apparently point toward universal restoration and afterwards those which indicate an eternity of punishment. On my expressing dissatisfaction with Pulsford's treatment of the theme, he looked very grave and said, "What else could he do?" At times I used to think he inclined toward the conditional immortality theory, as did Dr. R. W. Dale, and there are several passages in his sermons which point in that direction. But I am not sure that he would have acquiesced in the inference which might be drawn from them. With regard to the higher criticism his position has been accurately expressed by Principal Blomfield, whom he invited in 1882 to act as his assistant.

"When I was at his home, I was beginning to struggle with the critical questions of the Old Testament. I must confess that I got little help. He was master of all the positions of the critics. But the whole bent of his mind was conservative. 'The Bible has been criticised enough, it wants appreciation.' Then, too, he felt that the work he had to do

lay in a region beyond that which the critics knew. And he was intensely insistent that the pulpit was the place for the proclamation of certainties and not for argument, discussion or apology."

He was once told that his preaching failed because it had no word to the honest doubter, and replied, "No, the gospel is for men that believe." His whole position in these respects is stated with a wealth and precision of language and charm of illustration in his first presidential address to the Baptist Union on "The Gospel for the Day"—in the judgment of the present writer one of the finest of all his utterances, and of enduring value.

Dr. Maclaren was a convinced Baptist, but not a strong denominationalist. His church was of the open-membership type. He once said to me, "I don't often preach on the subject [baptism]. I don't care to, but [with a twinkle in his eye] when I do it, I slay the Philistines hip and thigh." He often declared that if he were not a Baptist he would belong to the Society of Friends. He had indeed many affinities with them, and in a speech delivered at a conference of Friends in Manchester in 1894 he claimed to have long been a sympathetic student of early Quaker literature. "I sometimes think that I know more about George Fox, Barclay, Penn and Pennington than some members of the Society do." He spoke gratefully of what we owe to the Society of Friends. "In 200 years it has been an object lesson in the might of gentleness, the eloquence of silence, the dignity of calmness, and the heroism and overcoming energy of patient suffering. It has brought 'the still strong man in a blatant land,' that the poet longed for, it has been the little leaven that leaveneth the whole lump. . . . Your emphatic recognition of the inner light and guiding spirit has made you the apostles of that wholesome mysticism which is inherent in Christianity."

But few words can be said as to Dr. Maclaren's methods of preparation for the pulpit, whether general or specific. He was a great and incessant reader, and his mind invariably re-

acted on what he read. He delighted in history and in books of travel. He was an eager student of the poetry of the great Elizabethans and the great moderns. He was saturated with Tennyson and Browning, the latter gaining a stronger and stronger hold on him toward the end of his life. His first hour after breakfast was sacred to devotional reading, meditation and prayer. He read regularly and carefully every day in the Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament, and knew great portions of them by heart. His well stored and highly disciplined mind was a treasury of homiletic thought and illustration.

He had a great contempt for men who mechanically "get up" their sermons, and for those who—as he said—put all their goods into their front window. He aimed at simplicity and directness of speech. He once asked me if I knew a certain somewhat dull and prosaic member of his congregation. "Well, now," he went on, "often when I am preparing my sermons, I keep that man before me and say, 'What I have to do is to get this thought behind that fellow's skull.'" And he spared no pains to do it.

Dr. Maclaren's sermons have, we believe, had a wider circulation than those of any other preacher, with the one exception of Mr. Spurgeon's. And yet he scarcely wrote and would never have published them, had they not been in a sense wrung out of him. That which was afterwards known as the first series of "Sermons Preached in Manchester" was originally printed for private circulation. The preface, disclaiming all pretensions to accuracy either of matter or of manner is thoroughly characteristic. The sermons are "offered to the church and congregation of Union Chapel as a memorial of a year which to the preacher has been made bright by their affections. It was their kindly overestimate of them when preached which led to their being somewhat reluctantly issued from the press. The same kindness will be needed even more in *reading*, and to it this little book is confidently entrusted. Perhaps God will make His strength known through its weakness." The second volume was, like the first, issued in weekly

parts, but afterwards they appeared only in volume form, except that later they were reported for the *Baptist Times and Freeman*. They form a library in themselves, even if we omit what Dr. Jowett calls "the mighty volume on the Colossians" in the Expositor's Bible, and the three volumes on the Psalms. In the thirty or forty "Expositions of Holy Scripture" the whole of his work, much previously unpublished, has been collected, and forms his most precious legacy to the Church. We owe this monumental work to the initiation, the tact and persistency of Sir W. Robertson Nicoll. "I cannot say," he tells us, "that he received the suggestion too graciously." Perhaps a stronger expression might have been used. But there can be no doubt that the preparation of the volumes for the press gave the Doctor real delight, and we shall all endorse Sir William's estimate of the value of these "Expositions": "The generations to come will care little for our sermons to the times, but they will listen to the sweet, clear voice of the man who preached to the end of Gilead—and Beulah—and the Gates of Day." Dr. Dale declared that Dr. Maclaren *saw* what he said. And the *Times*, the chief English newspaper, in its obituary notice declared him to have been the greatest preacher in any of the Free Churches, and worthy to be ranked with Newman and Liddon. "If," as Schleiermacher said, "good preaching ought to combine perfect moral humility with energetic independence of thought, a profound sense of sin with respect for criticism and a passion for truth, Alexander Maclaren will take his place among the comparatively small company of the great preachers of the world."

Concerning the private life of Dr. Maclaren this only need be said, that to those who were admitted to the charmed circle of his home it seemed ideal and perfect. As a friend he was staunch and steadfast. To people who did not know him he often appeared brusque and unapproachable and he met with scant courtesy those who without reason forced themselves on his attention, or attempted to flatter him with empty compliments. He had a fierce hatred of shams, and scorned

the men who claimed to be what they were not. When his indignation was aroused a glance of his eye was scorching. But no man had a warmer or more tender heart, and to spend an hour with him in his study or to have the privilege of walking with him was a supreme treat. His cheery smile, his sparkling humor, his clever repartee, his charming power of reminiscence made his conversation as memorable as his public speech. Robert Browning once spoke of Alfred Tennyson as "In Poetry illustrious and consummate: in Friendship noble and sincere." For the word Poetry—as I have remarked elsewhere—substitute Preaching and you have an accurate delineation of Alexander Maclaren.