Elizabeth Hume Ross, ‘James McLaren, Schoolmaster’,
Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, Original Series 33 (1969), pp. 27–30.

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of a new union, the Edinburgh Society of Cabinet and Chair Makers. The Branch seems to have accepted its supersession with equanimity. At its meeting early in September a motion was unanimously approved "that the Cabinet and Chair Makers of Edinburgh having formed a New Trades Society which is likely to embrace the greater part of the Trade, the members of this Union, in Order that they may be enabled to join that Society, deem it expedient to suspend for Three months the present rate of weekly payments, Monthly Meetings, and the admission of New Members, and that the Members pay one penny per Month as insurance money. . . ." Thereafter quarterly meetings only were held, the last being in September 1837. Shortly after that date, with the expiration of the annual insurance policy, the Branch sold off its box, copper plates, and books to the new Society, shared its total funds, amounting to £9 12s. 10d., equally among its remaining 26 members, and dissolved.

APPENDICES

I An extract from the Minutes

Edinburgh,
3*rd December* 1833

This being the Ordinary General Monthly Meeting for the receiving of Monthly payments and for the enrolment of Members, the Meeting being opened By the President and several important communications read, A Proposition was made by John Donaldson that a Meeting be held on Wednesday the 18th Inst. for the purpose of Discussion the Laws of the Union and was agreed too unanimously. A Motion was then made by Henry Horn and Seconded by James Shaw that the Glasgow Weekly Liberator news paper be taken for a quarter for its usefull information for this Branch of the Union, the paper to be in the Committee room Saturdays and Mondays, and was agreed to unanimously.

II An extract from the Accounts

Expenditure		£	s	d
March 5th, 1833:	Expenses of General Meeting		11	7½
	Ditto of Committee		2	
	Postage from Glasgow			7½
9th,	Room rent and candle		1	2
16th,	Ditto Do.		1	
21st,	Ditto Do of General Meeting		10	
	Printing		4	6
	Delivering bills and posting		2	6
	Postage from Glasgow			7½

JAMES McLAREN, SCHOOLMASTER

by The late Miss ELIZABETH HUME ROSS

We are indebted to Dr Jean Durrant of London for permission to publish this family memoir. The author and her late sister, Miss Johanna C. Ross, were well-known figures at meetings and excursions of the Club for many, many years; their father, Dr Thomas Ross, was an original Council member and a contributor to several of the early Books. Terrestrial and celestial globes, by Kirkwood of Edinburgh, which were used by James McLaren in his school were presented by Miss Ross to the National Museum of Antiquities.

I think my maternal grandfather, James McLaren, must have spent all his working life in Stockbridge, Edinburgh—in Hamilton Place on the south bank of the Water of Leith. He was a red-headed Scottish Highlander, born in Perthshire in 1805. I do not know who his father was, but he evidently was able to give his son some education and James McLaren wanted more, so he came to Edinburgh University and took a teacher's degree.

James McLaren was not tall, he carried himself well, and would, I think, in spite of having a big nose, been considered good-looking. He was very particular about his dress, always was professionally dressed in black broad cloth, a white tucked shirt, a white muslin tie tied in front, elastic-sided boots, and I remember him having sore feet; I don't know if chiropodists had begun their kindly work in his day.

He had two stone houses in Hamilton Place—three-storied houses with areas, numbers ten and eleven. Number ten was his dwelling house, eleven the school. The school had a playing field to the back with such big stones as foundation that boys who played there would have their boots worn out. I should have said children, not boys, for girls went to that school too. Number ten had a coloured tiled passage from the front door to the dining room past the foot of the stair. The dining room was a long room with a fireplace at the upper end and a big sideboard at the lower, with a horsehair sofa and chairs and windows to the south. My Grandmother's portrait hung over the fireplace. She was Elizabeth Hume from the Borders. Her portrait was painted by an artist whose name I have forgotten, but my father painted the name so firmly on the back that we will see it when we take the picture off the wall. I believe he painted it for pleasure as a gift. He also painted a portrait of the Duke of Atholl of his day, it now hangs in Blair Castle. My sister saw it when she was north and was delighted to see it was painted by the same artist who painted our grandmother "Elizabeth Hume."

In number ten the big front room was called the "study." There was a big bookcase in it ordered by my grandfather but not taken into his house until he had every penny ready to pay for it, a handsome writing table, books that were what teachers needed (all bound in calf), three big volumes of "Universal Biography," twenty volumes of Dr Johnston's Lives of the Poets, two volumes of Scottish "Domestic Tales" and one of "Uncle Tom's

Cabin." This is the one book that is lost and is the one I would like to have. Fancy "Uncle Tom" in calf with very fine illustrations. When any of the Ross children were ill or "no just that well" Mother got "Uncle Tom's Cabin" from her father to read aloud. I don't know if it was curative or just very interesting. There was a modern glass window in the study, but there was no modern hot water system. A big room downstairs had basins down one side with a cold water tap. I wonder if on a chilly night a pail of hot water might be handed in from the kitchen, for I remember the kitchen was a cosy place with a good fire, two wooden lug chairs, and a 8-day clock (now in this house) and two maids Mary and Janet Liberton. Mary McLaren (my mother) was very fond of them and has told me about them. She, Mary McLaren, had crocheted a collar for one of them, had washed it and put it to dry in the oven (why in the oven?) and it was burnt to a cinder to the great sorrow of little Mary who took some time to get over it.

I don't know the date of my grandfather's wedding day, but I know he had a school in which to teach, some pupils ready to be taught, and a house in which to live, and what he needed now was a wife to be mistress of his house and a companion to himself. He got a lovely one in Elizabeth Hume from the Borders. Her portrait shows a comely young woman in a fluffy muslin cap which shows her dark hair in front. Now that she was a married woman it was correct that she should wear a cap. She wears a fitting bodice cut open at the neck, a white collar and chemisette and for a modern touch a crimson shawl thrown over her shoulders. My mother's aunt though married, never wore a cap. I think they must have gone out of fashion about this time. My Mother's aunt would come to see her niece in a bonnet and if she was making a call would sit in her bonnet all the time, but if she was invited to a meal she brought her cap in a little basket, took off the bonnet, put on the cap, and was dressed for dinner!

James McLaren and Elizabeth Hume had seven children who grew up, two girls and five sons. The two girls married and had children, my mother four, Aunt Kate five. The sons went to the University, two took teachers' degrees and two medical. The oldest of my uncles was John McLaren. He was a writing master in Glasgow Academy. One of his predecessors could not keep order in his class, and some one asked "Could John McLaren keep order?" "Oh yes, he was called the Bulldog." I expect he kept order but not by bulldog methods. That was his job for which he was paid his salary. But what was his job 'con amore' for which he was paid no salary? A Singing Boys' Choir. So on Saturday mornings John McLaren met the singing boys of Glasgow Academy. Every season they gave a concert in the Queen's Rooms. I have been told that it was in those days an Event. Boys in the kilt wearing button-holes. "Ask your mother to give you a button-hole" said John McLaren to the boys the day before the Great Day. Old Academy boys came back to sing bass and tenor and the school boys sang as only boys can sing. John McLaren's wife was accompanist, and a very good one she was.

The next brother was James McLaren, jun. He was the best teacher my sister and I ever met. When we were beginning to grow up we would meet girls who would say "I can't read a Shakespeare play now—it was spoiled at school." That was never the case with Uncle James's class. Interest was kept up all through, other books were brought in, Carlyle's "French Revolution" was not thought to be above us. We had heard of the "Beautiful Charlotte" and the squalid Murat. The lesson was a peg on which to hang something else.

Willie had a country practice and died young. Peter was the more successful, began in Lasswade, came to work in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, had wards there, and eventually an Edinburgh practice. He had the most valuable medical gift of making patients feel better by simply meeting them—a kind of personal magic a great asset.

At this period in Scotland marriages were not celebrated in church but in the drawing-room or guest chamber of the bride's father's house. I think that was so for "gentle" and "simple" alike. So on this wintry day, 28th December 1869, James McLaren was free to give his daughter away. Mary McLaren, my mother, was married to my father, Thomas Ross, an architect, who later, with his partner Mr David McGibbon, was joint author of the "Castellated Architecture of Scotland" and of the "Ecclesiastical Architecture."

James McLaren's second daughter married John Young and lived with him in Glasgow. She is dead but a son and daughter are still living in Glasgow and several grandchildren. All my Mother's children are dead except me and as I am 95 I hardly count. She has a granddaughter living in London, a medical doctor married to an engineer.

We Ross children went to our Grandfather's school for some years till the boys went to the Academy and the girls to a private school. As children we liked our grandfather. He often came to see our mother in our flat in East Claremont Street, always bringing with him the biggest orange he could get. It had first to do duty as a geography lesson—the earth was round like this orange, flattened at the poles, and it had the equator put round it, latitude and longitude marked on it; it was peeled and divided up, and the first geography lesson was happily over!

The little shop next to ten Hamilton Place was a dairy, and next to that was the Stockbridge Market separated from the street by pillars. There is still a light lane there running south to Saunders Street with steps at the end. The Market had several stalls, and there was room for a cart to get in. At the top was the Butcher's Stall, open to the sky. I am sorry that I have forgotten the butcher's name for he was one of the most courteous men I have ever met. Most of his sons went to the University and I expect had responsible posts in the city. The fish stall was kept by Mrs. Young. All I remember about her was that she wore fishwife's dress. The vegetable stall was kept by a Miss Doig, a character who could speak her mind. My mother once went to Glasgow to visit her sister Mrs. Young. On her first meeting with Miss Doig after her return she said "There were fine oranges in Glasgow, Miss Doig, not so dear as yours," "Oh" said Miss Doig "they'll eat anything in Glaskey." The most easterly shop in the street was the Bake House. In my grandfather's time it was served by Mr. Johnston the baker, with all the necessary tools of his trade. His children all had their education at James McLaren's school. I remember some of the girls—there were several. When they were done with school James McLaren wrote them a letter wishing them well in life and thanking them for their kindness to him; these letters were much appreciated, I believe. Johnston the baker sent a man from the shop every forenoon with a basket over his arm and in the basket were biscuits and cookies, 'parlies' were my favourite. If you were lucky enough to have a few pennies you could have a treat. It's wonderful how far a penny or even a ha'penny would go. Parleys were delicious. The sun always shone and we never thought of going to the moon or back to the ice age!

My grandfather thought the Merchant Company Schools ruined him. Perhaps they did anyway his type of school was a thing of the past. The Merchant Company Schools had come to stay, and changes in education are always going on.

James McLaren, for long a widower, was beginning to grow old, and his house was not so comfortable as it once was. Both his daughters were married and Mary and Elizabeth Liberton were away too, and their successors not so good, so my parents decided to leave their flat in East Claremont Street and come, bag and baggage, to ten Hamilton Place and look for a house to take their own family and my grandfather and Uncle James which they eventually did. My grandfather died in my father's house.

MUNICIPAL POLITICS IN VICTORIAN EDINBURGH

by W. H. MARWICK

WHILE much has been published regarding the legal and administrative aspects of local government,[1] both in Scotland generally and in Edinburgh in particular, the history of its practice, especially of the political and other controversial issues that affected it, appears to have been little studied. This paper seeks to explore some of these, during the period that may be roughly defined as the Victorian Age. The period considered commences with the election of the first reformed Council in 1833, as constituted by the Burgh Reform Act of that year. It concludes with the 'general election' of 1900. This also marks an epoch, in the return of the first official 'Labour' candidate, following on the establishment in January 1900, of the Scottish Workers' Representation Committee—officially supported by Edinburgh Trades Council—which has evolved into the Scottish Council of the Labour Party. This emergence or revival of party politics constitutes one main theme of contemporary interest. Other issues, such as charges of apathy, dilatoriness, vandalism, parsimony—whether justified or not—will be examined; and it will be sought to demonstrate how far they are novel or recurrent phenomena.

Sources of information are inadequate, hence gaps and errors are probable. Most of the data have been derived from files of *The Scotsman*, which, happily for the historian, then gave full reports of Town Council and Ward meetings, and devoted space to editorials and correspondence on municipal matters, despite a fear, expressed in 1834, that "readers might be bored with lengthy Town Council reports."[2] Allowance must be made for the bias of the newspaper. Originally, under the guidance of its founders, John Ritchie (1778-1870) and Charles Maclaren (1782-1866), editor from 1820 to 1845,it was a strong supporter of reform, as illustrated by its editorial at the first election: "We recommend electors to commit the new system during the period of nonage exclusively to its friends, we mean Whigs and Radicals, who will do everything to promote its success. The first Council will be a sort of constituent assembly; it will have to form a new system as well as administer it. We are opposed to all principles of exclusion, but after the Tories have packed the Council at their pleasure for half a century, we see no want of charity in keeping them out for two or three years. After our ship is launched, we shall have no objection to take passengers of all descriptions aboard, but when she is undergoing a thorough repair, we would not employ as carpenters those who have an interest in scuttling her." Five years later, it spoke of the "sly underhand plotting peculiar to that party." From 1849 to 1876, on the other hand, under the editorship of Alexander Russel (1814-76),[4] *The Scotsman* tended to a conservative Whiggism, in opposition to the "disorderly elements" of radicalism as voiced by Duncan McLaren, especially in the 'sixties. Russel was primarily an erastian and anti-clerical in his attitude to the ecclesiastical controversies of the period. In 1886 *The Scotsman* became Unionist, and inclined towards Conservatism, though professing support for non-intrusion of party politics in local government.

Further details have been drawn from such books as the biographies of Adam Black