

CHAPTER III.

1839.

OPENING MINISTRY.

IN the report of the University Missionary Association for the year 1838, the seventeenth from its institution, I find the following interesting notice:—"Gratifying as the preceding facts must be regarded, it is with deeper gratitude and far higher pleasure that your committee intimate the fact that two of their own number, the one for two, and the other for four years a member of this society, have during the present session publicly offered themselves to the church of Christ as missionaries to the heathen, and have been accepted. This society has numbered among its members not a few who were devoted to the same high calling, and it is perhaps probable that it has contributed in other cases to foster convictions which afterwards led to a similar dedication; but in the present instance it has formed the principal, if not the only special, instrument which the Lord of the vineyard has employed in calling his professed disciples to engage in this—the noblest department of his service upon earth."

Of the two here mentioned the subject of this memoir was one, the other being, I think, a member of one of the nonconformist communions in England, then resident at the University, as a scholar on the Williams' foundation. To his own case my brother makes brief but pregnant reference nine years afterwards in a retrospective notice in his diary, while at sea on his way to China: "At Glasgow University, during the winter 1837-8, I was led, from my connection with the College Missionary Association, to feel so deeply my personal responsibility in regard to the spread of the gospel among the heathen, that after much prayer and many solemn exercises of soul, I took the solemn step of writing to my father, to request that, if he thought good, he should communicate with Dr. Gordon, the convener of our India committee, and let him know that, should the Church deem me qualified, I would be ready to go as a missionary to Hindustan. He did this, and the committee having given me encouragement in the matter, I looked upon myself as publicly devoted to the missionary field. In my own soul, and in all my public duties connected with missionary meetings, &c. &c., I felt from that time forward a greatly enlarged measure of the presence and blessing of God, tending to confirm me more deeply in my cherished hope and purpose. This was the last session which I needed to spend at College to complete my curriculum; but, partly because I found myself profitably engaged in study, and still more, I believe, because I waited in expectation of a call to the missionary field, I remained at College during the following win-

ter, and in the spring of 1839 a proposal was made by the colonial committee that I should go out for a season to fill a charge at St. John's, New Brunswick, and proceed direct from America to India when the India committee should require me. It was expected that the India committee would accede to this proposal, but they refused, wishing that their agents should be free to go when wanted, and so the matter ended. This was at the very time when Mr. M'Cheyne, about to set out for Palestine, wrote, asking me to take his place at Dundee. I found myself unexpectedly free to do this, and being speedily licensed I entered on my duties in that memorable field. This was at the beginning of April. In the month of June or July I received the call that I had long looked for, being asked by the India committee to go to Poonah in the presidency of Bombay. My engagement at Dundee stood in the way of my at once complying, and another call which the Jewish committee gave me to go to Aden in Arabia increased the difficulty. While asking guidance in regard to my duty I went to the communion at Kilsyth in July, when the Lord began to employ me in a way so remarkable for the awakening of sinners, that in returning to Dundee, and finding myself in the midst of a great spiritual awakening, I was obliged to make known to both committees that, while my views regarding missionary work remained unchanged, yet I found that I must for the time remain where I was, and fulfil the work which God was laying upon me with a mighty hand."

In giving this extract I have somewhat anticipated the course of events in that part of the narrative on which we are now entering; but it was necessary to do so, in order to present in a clear light the relation in which my brother at this time, and for several years thereafter, stood towards that great work to which he had solemnly, and as he deemed irrevocably, dedicated himself. He had given himself deliberately, and in some sense publicly, before God and His church, to the service of Christ in the field of heathen missions, and he believed the offering had been accepted. Having thus lifted up his hand unto the Lord, he felt the vows of the great Master upon him ever after, and he never drew back or dreamed of drawing back. Their performance was deferred only, not relinquished, and deferred not by himself, but by Him to whom they had been made, and at whose disposal he had wholly and unreservedly placed himself. And so, when nine years afterwards the long-expected summons suddenly came to him, it found him with the unchanged purpose still fresh upon his soul, and ready to march at a moment's warning at the great Captain's bidding. Meanwhile the field immediately before him was white unto the harvest, and he was thrust forth into the midst of it by a high and mighty hand. A great work was laid upon him which could neither be evaded nor postponed, and he had no choice but to give himself wholly to it, and to do it with his might. The door opened to him was wide and effectual, beyond probably what he had ever dreamed. He had indeed, as I dis-

tinctly remember, very exalted views of what might be expected even in these latter days from the outpouring of the Spirit, in answer to the earnest prayers of a reviving Church. His mind had dwelt much, in common with many others about that time, on the divine promises to that effect, and on the grand typical fulfilment of them on the day of Pentecost. That memorable scene he regarded not as an isolated event, but as a pattern of what the Church might hope in any age to see, it might be even still more gloriously. Even some of the most startling outward manifestations of the Spirit's working then displayed he regarded not as exceptional circumstances, but as what might be repeated any day before our eyes. The cloven tongues, and the gift of many languages, had indeed passed away, with the age of miracle to which they essentially belonged; but the cries of stricken consciences and the loud sobs of broken hearts belonged not to that age, but to every age, and would, he believed, be heard more or less wherever in a congregated multitude of sinful men the arrows of the mighty King are sharp in the hearts of his enemies. I remember having a discussion with him on this very subject in the course of a quiet walk from Glasgow towards our home at Kilsyth, shortly before he commenced his work in Dundee. I ventured to question whether, even though the working of the divine Spirit in the bosom of a Christian congregation were as powerful and profound as in pentecostal times, the habitual reserve and self-restraint of modern life, especially amongst the more educated classes, would not prevent such unrestrained expression of inward feelings, as that there displayed. To this view he demurred, deeming that if the mighty rushing wind, which bloweth where it listeth, should indeed come with power, we should hear the sound thereof, so that even the world itself should not be able wholly to close its ears. Little did I think that within a month or two of that time, and in the parish church of that very place to which we were then bending our steps, I should myself witness what seemed so remarkable a verification of his words. Probably he himself, even while arguing the possibility of such a thing, little dreamed that it was in truth so near at hand.

He entered on his labours at Dundee on the first or second Sabbath of April, taking as his text Romans xii. 1,—the same words on which he had preached his first sermon in his father's pulpit at Kilsyth a short time before, and which were in truth prophetic of the whole spirit and character of his future life and ministry. The work he now undertook was indeed an arduous, and to one so young and inexperienced, a peculiarly trying one. Robert Murray M'Cheyne, whose name has since become a household word throughout the universal Church, was already widely known throughout Scotland as one of the most gifted, holy, and successful ministers of recent times; and it was no light or easy thing for anyone to enter, even for a season, into his labours. An overflowing congregation, of every class and degree in life, drawn to-

gether, many of them, from considerable distances in the town and country round, accustomed to the charm of a peculiar ministry which would be apt to render any ordinary teaching tame and common-place, and above all, throbbing throughout with a high tone of spiritual excitement which it was difficult to meet and to sustain, presented altogether a sphere of labour from which the young evangelist, profoundly conscious of his own insufficiency, might well recoil. But it was, in truth, that very consciousness of insufficiency, and consequent utter abnegation of all trust in himself, that made him strong. Feeling in the depths of his soul that without Christ he could do nothing, but that through his grace strengthening him he could do all things, there did not, after all, seem to him so much difference in point of mere difficulty between one duty and another. Without the immediate presence and help of his divine Master he could not speak even to a handful of little children in a Sunday-school; with that presence and help he could stand unabashed before the mightiest and the wisest in the world. It will be seen from constant entries in his journal how perpetually present was this thought to his mind, and how it formed the master principle of his whole life and ministry; and it seems to me to have been so in a very remarkable degree from the beginning. And hence, no doubt, it was that on the very first day of his ministering before that great congregation, and when many anxious eyes were turned on the youthful face and form of one who seemed to them all too weak for such a burden, he appeared conspicuously calm and self-possessed, as one visibly standing in the shadow of the Almighty, and consciously speaking the words that were given him of the Lord. I have heard old members of the congregation tell how their hearts trembled for him, when they saw what seemed to them a mere stripling standing up in the place of one whom they so revered and honoured, and how almost at the first sound of his voice, as he led with such deep-toned spirituality and power the prayers of the sanctuary, their fears vanished, and they seemed to hear only the sound of his Master's feet behind him. Accordingly he seems from the first to have taken a singularly fast hold of the congregation, and to have filled to a degree which one would scarcely have thought possible, alike in authority and spiritual power, the place of their absent pastor. Young, inexperienced, measured and slow of speech, gifted with no peculiar charm of poetry or sentiment or natural eloquence or winning sweetness, he bore so manifestly the visible seals of a divine commission, and carried about him withal such an awe of the divine presence and majesty, as to disarm criticism and constrain even careless hearts to receive him as the messenger of God. If his words were sometimes few, naked, unadorned, they were full of weight and power, and went home, as arrows directed by a sure aim, to the hearts and consciences of his hearers. Literally it might be said of him, that his speech and his preaching were not with excellency of speech and man's

wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. The result accordingly was soon seen in a visible increase of spiritual inquiry amongst the people, and a generally heightened tone of solemnity and earnestness in the congregation at large. In the words of an esteemed member and office-bearer of the congregation, who has been able to recall with singular distinctness the scenes of those days:—"Scarcely had Mr. Burns entered on his work in St. Peter's here, when his power as a preacher began to be felt. Gifted with a solid and vigorous understanding, possessed of a voice of vast compass and power—unsurpassed even by that of Mr. Spurgeon—and withal fired with an ardour so intense and an energy so exhaustless that nothing could damp or resist it, Mr. Burns wielded an influence over the masses whom he addressed which was almost without parallel since the days of Wesley and Whitfield. Crowds flocked to St. Peter's from all the country round; and the strength of the preacher seemed to grow with the incessant demands made upon it. Wherever Mr. Burns preached a deep impression was produced on his audience, and it was felt to be impossible to remain unconcerned under the impassioned earnestness of his appeals. With him there was no effort at oratorical display, but there was true eloquence; and instances are on record of persons, strong in their self-confidence and enmity to the truth, who fell before its power—who,

"Though they came to scoff,
Remained to pray."

As already hinted, nothing could be more different than the whole style and character of his mind, from that of him whose place he yet so worthily filled. Of the rich aroma of sanctified poetry and pathos which imparted their distinctive charm to the life and writings of M'Cheyne, he had none. His characteristic was strength, not beauty, clearness and force, rather than freshness and fulness of thought and diction; and it was not even, except when he was profoundly stirred by strong spiritual influences, that one became conscious of the deep fountain of enthusiasm and of intense emotion that was within him. In the words of Mr. Moody Stuart, who intimately knew him from the very first days of his spiritual life, and who seems to me to have formed a singularly just estimate of his character and gifts, "the hard plodding for a great object, the sagacious intellect, the quick linguistic apprehension, common sense, mother wit, coolness and presence of mind in every variety of circumstance, were more his natural characteristics, than the elements which go to constitute the enthusiastic and exciting preacher. In the midst of the revival at Kilsyth he would sometimes relieve the tension of his mind by reading the Greek classics; and he possessed the bodily strength, the courage, and all the other qualities that would have enabled him to cross the continent of Africa, like Dr. Livingstone, if he had set his

heart on such an object. No man was less a fool by nature, yet no man in modern times did more entirely become a fool for Christ's sake. His preaching was in a most peculiar manner by the power of the Holy Ghost, 'in demonstration of the Spirit and in power,' and 'mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.' He had no pathos, no fancy, little natural enthusiasm, and not much that could be called natural eloquence, but he had a firm grasp of gospel truth, a capacity for clear and forcible statement, and a voice capable of commanding any audience, however large, in the church, in the street, in the field; and when the power of the Spirit rested upon him, there were the thunders of Sinai in all their terrors, the still small voice of the gospel in much of its tenderness, the fervent fluency of a tongue touched with a live coal from the altar, the irrepressible urgency of one standing between the living and the dead, the earnest pressing of salvation that would accept no refusal; himself standing consciously and evidently in the presence of the great God, with heaven and hell and the souls of men open before him, with Jesus Christ filling his heart with his love, and pouring grace into his lips, and with multitudes before him weeping for sorrow over discovered sin, or for joy in a discovered Saviour."

His first impressions of the place and of his work will be partly gathered from the following letter to a sister:—

"Dundee, Seafield Cottage, April 10th, 1839. . . . I would gladly fill my sheet in narrating what I have been able to ascertain of my situation and circumstances here, were it not that I must husband every moment of my time for my engagements in visiting the sick and dying, examining intending communicants, and preparation for the Sabbath that is approaching. I am not left without many circumstances to encourage me in my arduous labours; not a few hearts seem in a good measure prepared to hear the gospel as the Word of God, and some I have met with whose experience in the spiritual life affords the strongest stimulus to my own growth in grace, and whose ideas of Christian ministrations will, I fear, make me to appear among them as an ignorant babler. They appear, however, a very kind and not uncharitable class of people, as far as I can discover; they will, I hope, pray for as well as censure me; and as I have had a clear call from the Lord, without my own interference, to come among them, I desire to cast all my burden upon his blessed shoulders, and to wait with earnest wrestlings until he appear among us in his glory to build up Zion. Let us go on to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God."

In another letter, dated about two months after (June 18), addressed to a deeply revered aunt at St. Andrews, he declines an invitation to preach there on a Sabbath, on the ground that "the people are in that interesting state of hopeful movement and inquiry, in which it is least of all the duty of their appointed teacher to be absent from them;" and then proceeds in that intense strain of ardent aspiration which had already become characteristic of him, and which seems almost prophetic of what was so soon to come:—

“It is my earnest desire and prayer, dear aunt, that the Lord may look down in his infinite mercy and grace on St. Andrews, which in ancient times he so highly honoured, but from which, alas! is not his glorious presence greatly withdrawn? Oh! for a Rutherford or a Halyburton to awaken slumbering sinners at ease under the wrath of an angry God, and to stir up the true people of God to abound in the love and in the praise of Jesus! ‘Wilt Thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in Thee.’ Oh! may the Lord grant to that remnant that serve him in the Spirit to be ‘zealous, and strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die,’ to plead, yea, to besiege the throne of grace with their unceasing and importunate pleadings, that He may appear in his glory, and build up Zion, giving ear to the prayer of the destitute and the groaning of the prisoners. Oh! what a plea is the name of Jesus! how omnipotent to move the heart of the Father, who loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands! None of God’s people have yet proved the power of that matchless name in the presence of Jehovah. Let us henceforth do so in the strength of Jesus, and we may yet see before we leave the kingdom of grace for the kingdom of glory, such a plenteous rain as will refresh God’s heritage which is weary. The time is short! Behold! the Judge standeth before the door. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!”

It is at this point that the detailed journals of his life and labours, which he began in September, 1838, become for the first time fully available. These will form the main substance of our narrative during the whole period which they cover, supplemented only here and there by such illustrative light as the recollections of others or any surviving fragments of correspondence may throw upon them. They will, I am sure, be far more acceptable to all really interested in his work, than anything, however highly and even truthfully coloured, which could possibly proceed from any other hand. To anyone in the slightest degree acquainted with the character of the writer, and who knows how jealously guarded and almost, as one might say, penurious he was of his words in anything relating to himself or his work these simple but pregnant annals, written as in the presence and under the very eye of God, will have an impressiveness and a meaning beyond the reach of eloquence. At first they are occasionally somewhat broken and fragmentary, but they increase in fulness and freedom as they proceed, and in parts, albeit naked and unadorned as ever, have all the vividness and force of a record written in the field, and amid the thick of battle. The following extracts relating to the same period to which the letters just quoted belong, will still further illustrate the nature of his work, and the inner workings of his soul in connection with it, during the first months of his ministry in Dundee, as well as form a fitting introduction to the more stirring scenes which will form the subject of the next chapter

“*April 17, 1839.*—Met with two young communicants, M. W— and E. W—, by appointment at twelve o’clock. Prayed with them, and conversed with each separately. They both appear hopeful converts to the Lord Jesus.

M. W— doubts the evidence of her faith from want of love to Christ, hardness of heart, &c., and was exhorted to come to Christ for these and all other fruits of the Spirit. E. W— appeared to think she was a true believer, and gave an interesting account of her supposed conversion under Mr. M'Cheyne's ministry; she is very intelligent, well acquainted with Scripture, and really appears to have known something of genuine spiritual exercise. I prayed with them at parting, and bade them farewell with mixed feelings of joy at the tokens of God's work which I thought I saw, and sorrow that I should feel so little in dealing with cases so interesting and encouraging. O Lord, keep these dear young disciples from the devil, the world, and the flesh; perfect thy love in their hearts, thine image in their souls, and grant to me in thine infinite grace to experience more pure and tender love for the lambs of the flock. This I ask in the name of my Lord Jesus. Amen.

*“Fast-day, 18th.—*In coming from the evening discourse I was met by the father of James Wallace, Paton's Lane, a boy of twelve, whom I had previously called to see, and found, on my entrance, to my astonishment and delight, such a specimen (if all signs do not deceive me) of the work of the Holy Spirit as I have I think never before witnessed on a sick-bed, except in the case of —, Rothesay. James was lying placidly on his couch, pale and sickly, but his eye beaming with intelligence and inexpressible joy. He told me at once that he had been afflicted for his profit. I asked him what he needed from Christ He said, ‘Redemption.’ Q. Tell me some of the particular things you need. A. A new heart and right spirit, deliverance from temptations, the world, and the devil. Q. Can Christ give you these great things? A. Yes. Q. Why can he do so? A. He is the Saviour of sinners. I then led him back to the pre-existent state of Christ as the eternal Son of God, and then—Q. What did he become? A. A man. Q. What did he do? A. He suffered persecution, he sweated great drops of blood, he was nailed to the Cross that he might redeem sinners. This I said was wondrous love. A. Yes. Q. Do you love Christ? A. Yes. Q. Why? A. Because he loved me. Q. When did you get these views of Christ? A. Since I lay down here. Q. Who has taught you? A. The Holy Spirit. Q. Did you seek him first, or did he seek you? A. He sought me; ‘I am found of them that sought me not’ Q. Can you ever praise Christ enough? A. No. Q. Would you like to sing his praise in heaven? A. Yes, for ever. I said, There is a song which they sing in heaven: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory;’ and they say also, ‘Worthy is the Lamb.’ A. Yes; that's the four beasts. Q. What do you chiefly desire; is it to get better? A. No; to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Q. What would you wish for all those about you? A. That they should know Christ, and love Christ, for he teaches us to desire that all should know him. Q. Do you pray much? A. Yes; he commands us to pray always. Q. Can we pray ourselves? A. No; the Holy Spirit helpeth

our infirmities, with groanings which cannot be uttered. Q. Would you like us to pray? A. Yes, very much. When we had done, I said I would come soon again. He said, 'Yes; He has promised that where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he will be in the midst of them to bless them and do them good.' These are a few of the precious and spiritual sayings of this dearly beloved boy, not in the order in which they were uttered, for that I cannot recall. He also said of himself, that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God gets perfect praise. He said he had heard Mr. M'Cheyne with great pleasure; and that his father had one day told him something that he had said, 'When water is spilt upon the ground, it cannot be gathered up again, and yet the sun gathers it up; and so Christ draws sinners to himself when they are lost.' I came away with mingled feelings of astonishment at the work of the Spirit, and desires for gratitude to him for his wondrous love in calling me to behold his marvellous works. . . . I went from this to Mr. M'Cheyne's, and spent a few minutes with Mr. Moody, who goes off to-morrow at 7. Came home tired; had worship, and went to bed at eleven. Unspeakable mercies, unspeakable unfruitfulness and ingratitude. The glory will be all the Lord's, for the mercy and the grace are his. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.' Amen.

"19th.—Rose at eight, breakfast at Mr. Thorns'; Mr. and Mrs. Parker from Aberdeen, &c., present. Copied the first of Mr. M'Cheyne's pastoral letters; into town; walked home with Mr. Neilson; studied treatise on *Rejoicing in Christ*. Visited two poor sick people—no decided indication of spiritual life; met communicants at seven—spoke to them on the nature of the Lord's Supper from the questions on that subject in the Shorter Catechism—had some freedom and a little degree of light on the glory of Christ's love in his obedience and sufferings—concluded at nine, and found a dear brother in Christ waiting me, Mr. M'Donald, of Blairgowrie—walked with him to Mr. Thain's, and entered into a proposal that I should exchange pulpits with him before the Assembly, and preach on missions. Came home and prepared for bed at a quarter past eleven.

"20th Public worship at two. Mr. C—, Bridge of E—, discoursed on Acts vii. 54 to the end,—the martyrdom of Stephen. A very interesting style of lecturing; a spiritual man, and much fitted to edify; admirable prayers with great variety. Met afterwards with young communicants to serve them with tokens. Dinner at Mr. M'Cheyne's; present, Mr. Cumming and Mr. Grierson of Errol; instructive conversation on Popery and the signs of the times. Met at half-past six P. B. and R. N., young communicants; conversed with them separately till 8. P. I found better informed than I expected, and I think rather serious. R. N. was very ignorant of himself, and sour when taken cross-ways; was found to think that he loved God, and might be saved by works; tried to show him his state and the necessity of

conversion. Gave P. B a token, and sent R. N. home to his closet, to meet me at a quarter past ten to-morrow, and see if he then wants a token. Oh! what need of the powerful presence of the Holy Ghost, without whom a free Saviour will, and must be, a Saviour despised and rejected of men. How hard it is to unite in just proportions the humbling doctrine of man's inability to come to Christ without regeneration, and the free gospel offer which is the moral means employed by God in conversion! Oh! Spirit of Jesus, my Saviour, lead me, a poor, ignorant, and self-conceited sinner, to the experience of this great mystery of grace, that I may know how I ought to declare thy glorious gospel to perishing fellow-sinners! Amen.

"April 23d (Communion Sabbath).—On Sabbath Mr. Sommerville officiated; action sermon from Ephesians i. 6,7. Mr. Cumming preached in the evening, but I was absent, having been called to preach for Mr. Baxter, Hiltown, instead of Mr. M'Donald, of Blairgowrie, whose brother died at Perth on Saturday morning. I heard Mr. Baxter's address, excellent and solemn; went home with him, and spent the interval chiefly in prayer, and was more than usually helped in public duty. I went home again with Mr. Baxter, had tea and edifying converse; joined with him in prayer, and departed at half-past nine.

"Monday. . . . Warned by Mrs. P— against the danger to which young ministers are exposed; home to my studies at a quarter past eight; got some humiliation, or rather some discovery of pride in prayer. The Lord is indeed infinite in mercy when he bears with me; to his name shall be the praise.

"24th. . . . Home at a quarter past eight; studies till a quarter past ten, interesting and profitable, especially reading from Fleming's remarkable and precious *Fulfilling of the Scripture* regarding the strength afforded to God's saints under trials and for difficult duties. Praise the Lord. But O for a revival of that experimental deep-laid religion which Fleming valued and exemplifies so fully in his pages! 'Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord! awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.'

"Evening of 25th. . . . Discoursed on 1 Cor. i. 26 to the end, not much freedom, but a measure of faith in the truth; then read No. 3 of the Revival Tracts about Baldernock. Discovered through grace, an awful hungering after applause from man, and came home fearing that God may utterly forsake me in consequence of my self-seeking in his service; this He would have done long ago had not his love been free and unchanging in Christ Jesus. O for a spirit of humble wrestling prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that sinners may be awakened, and saints greatly edified and advanced! I wrote something more, had worship, and am now about going to rest. The Lord give me a song in the night to his glorious praise!

"29th. I have found no time these past few days to keep a note of memorabilia, and must now shortly review the facts that have occurred in the in-

terval. I have been rising regularly a little after six except to-day, when I lay till eight. On Friday and Saturday I wrote and committed my discourses on Psalms xxiii; lxxi. 16. Considerably assisted in preparing. On Sabbath had great calmness and composure, but I think a great want of holy thirstings after God. I had, however, more than usual liberty in prayer and preaching, especially in the afternoon. O that Christ were exalted and man forgotten among this people! Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain that they may live. . . .

“April 30th.—Called on M— L—, in distress since the time of the cholera—reading Rutherford’s *Letters*—seemed a really experienced child of God—said many striking things: e.g. ‘The ways of God are strange; we maun just wait to see what airt he taks.’ She said among other things, ‘Ministers shudna use big words, they micht as weel speak Erse¹ or Latin; it’s weel we dinna need sic big words at a throne o’ grace.’

“May 1st Studied during all the day my sermon on Matthew xi 28. James Hamilton called. . . . At six at tea, Mr. N—, Mr. C—, Mr. C—, Mr. J—, Mr. M—, to consult about Sabbath-schools and the formation of a parochial missionary society. Mr. T— came in accidentally at eight and remained till ten, when we separated with prayer—a pleasant meeting; but I had an affecting disclosure to myself of the pride and vanity of my heart, which praise of late has awfully stirred up; none but an omnipotent and infinitely gracious Saviour will suit my case. Blessed be the Lord, Jesus is such as I need, and he has said to me, ‘Come, ye labouring and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ I want rest from the dominion of sin. O that I wished it with an eye to the glory of God; this also I look to Jesus for. ‘It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.’ No man can come to Christ except the Father draw him. Draw me, O Father! effectually to the praise of thy glory in Christ Jesus. Amen.

“May 2d. . . . Studied during the day Matthew xi. 28, and read over several of the Revival Tracts. In prayer for the evening sadly dead and dark. I have not seen the King’s face these many days. Visited James Wallace at six, and found him rejoicing and advancing in knowledge as well as experience. He said he was ten days nearer death than when I last saw him, and this with joy. I asked him if he was not sorry. A. No; to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. He said he had found out many wonderful passages, and when I got his Bible it was all folded down at the most striking texts. He alluded to a number of them:—‘All our righteousness is as,’ &c. Isaiah xii. he said was sweet. I consulted him upon the meaning of many experimental passages, among others my present text, Matthew xi. 28, and found great light from his Spirit-taught knowledge. Who teacheth like God? His work is

¹ i.e. Gaelic.

perfect. Met at half-past six with the tract-distributors in the vestry; said a few words and prayed. At the prayer-meeting I read, and shortly spoke on Isaiah liii., and then read parts of No. 3 of Revival Tracts—was helped considerably—many anecdotes brought to mind—great attention. ‘Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord! awake, as in the ancient days, as in the generations of old!’ Glorify Christ, O Holy Spirit! in our hearts and throughout the whole world. Amen.

“7th.—Had a letter on Friday—sweet and comforting—from R. M’Donald, Blairgowrie; wrote him in answer. Sabbath forenoon I was ill prepared, and was not sensibly so much assisted as on former occasions—felt regret, but alas! chiefly, I fear, from a regard to my name as a preacher, not to Christ’s as a Saviour. In the afternoon exchanged with Mr. Roxburgh, and was more than usually supported to declare the truth. . . . Yesterday spent the morning in prayer. Walked, and read Boston’s life—A precious monument to the praise of grace—noble standard of ministerial character! Dined at —; I felt not at home in the atmosphere of this world’s carnal security, which is so generally breathed at dinner-parties. Off at six to a meeting in the vestry on church extension—class at seven—the school-room quite full—very interesting opportunity—subject, John i. 1-14, along with Genesis i.—Christ’s supreme Godhead; how glorious the doctrine—how conclusive the evidence! The Lord was with me more than usually.

“8th. . . . On Friday I went to Blairgowrie—spent the remainder of the day and the morning of Saturday most pleasantly and profitably with my dearly beloved brother R. M’Donald, and also his fellow-labourer Mr. Smith—we had two seasons of special prayer. Mr. M’D—having left me on Saturday for town (Dundee) after we had dined together at Mr. T—’s, I remained there over Sabbath, . . . Mrs. T— is, I think, a truly pious woman, and both she and Mr. T— with all the family are most kind and interesting. Dear A— was taken ill of scarlet fever on Saturday, and this excited us all a good deal. On Sabbath night he was very anxious to see me regarding the state of his soul; however, we were afraid to increase the fever, and I only stood at his bedside and repeated a few of the invitations to come to Christ for all. I was brought by this event nearer to eternity, and felt more of the reality and awfulness of perdition than I remember ever having before. O that the Lord would sustain me in a constant and prevailing sense of the fearful guilt and danger of sinners remaining at a distance from Christ, and his free and offered gift to perishing sinners. On Sabbath I preached thrice—twice in the church on Matthew xi. 25, 26, and in the evening in Mr. Smith’s chapel from Psalm lxxi. 16. After coming out in the evening I went up to Mr. M’Donald’s Sabbath-school, in the church, and spoke a little before concluding with prayer. This is a most engaging assembly of young people, and I have reason to think, from what I saw, that God is doing some gra-

cious work among them. Yesterday (Monday) . . . the class in the evening was full to the door—subject, Mr. M'Donald's forenoon sermon, "They glorified God in me;" very interesting. . . .

"21st.—I composed and committed two discourses on Matthew xi. 27, first clause, and was more than ever supported in the pulpit, especially in the afternoon, when I was enabled to plead with sinners to submit to the King of Zion. In the evening I visited J. W—, where I met K. B—, the woman who sits in the pulpit stair. She said all head-learning could not enable a man to feed the lambs; there must be first repentance, as in the case of Peter. She exhorted me with spiritual earnestness to watch for individual souls, saying, 'You may lose a jewel from your crown; though you do not lose your crown, you may lose a jewel from it.' She appeared to recognize the work of God in my soul, and spoke with great pleasure of the discourses of that day. Praise all to God! I am vile, vile, vile. . . . O that the Lord would give me the skill of a Brainerd or a Dickson, for my present difficult and most precious duties! 'Establish the work of our hands; yea, the work of our hands do thou establish it.' How various are God's ways of dealing with the soul; how much does he display his sovereign hand in bringing souls under conviction and into the peace of believing. One of the class came upon Monday night when we were dismissing, and asked if I could tell her anything she could do for Christ. O what a precious question, when put in the spirit of Paul—What wilt thou have me to do? Among other things I told her to be sure to ask the Lord himself, and to leave the matter in his hands.

On hearing of one awakened under his sermon on Psalm lxxi. 16, he writes: "O marvellous grace, that the Lord should regard *at all* my carnal, self-seeking ministry; to him be the glory *eternally!* . . . Lord Jesus, the good Shepherd, lead this wandering sheep to thy fold; even now do thou fan into a flame by the quickening breath of thy Spirit that smoking flax which thou hast touched with the heavenly fire of thy matchless grace, and give me grace—the grace of the indwelling Spirit to fit me for feeding the lambs and tending the sheep. Thy blood and obedience freely offered to sinners of the deepest dye, are all my pleas with the Father. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, and cause many to say with hearts smitten with the rod of thy strength, 'We would see Jesus.' Amen. . . . On Sabbath I preached in the forenoon from Matthew xviii. 2, 'Except ye be converted,' &c.; and in the evening from Psalm cx. 3, 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,' when a collection of £8, 10s. 6d. was made to assist in establishing a parochial library. I was more than usually assisted of the Lord all day. O how much I would wonder and adore his long-suffering and grace in bearing with me, and in still preventing me with his tender mercies. It is all to the praise of the glory of his grace. 'Not for your sake do I this.' Truth, Lord. The *wages* of sin is *death*, but *eternal life* is the *gift* of God through

Jesus Christ our Lord.' On Monday Mrs. T—, Mrs. L—, and M. L— called and presented me with a Bible, Eusebius' History, and Dr. Duff's *Missions the Chief End of the Christian Church*, from my female class. I returned thanks with them on my knees. I am vile, vile, vile, and feel myself most so when thanked for serving him. May He return their kindness in enabling me to give them back with 'demonstration of the Spirit and power,' the word contained in the blessed volume they have given me. It is Bagster's English Polyglot, with index and concordance, and is finely bound in morocco.

“. . . . I had a sweet note the other day from W. U—, in which he asks me, 'How is it with your soul? Is the glory of God ever in your view? Do you desire above all things to glorify him upon earth? Is this the grand centre-point in all your wishes?' Thanks to God for these questions thus faithfully put by his dear young servant

“*June 6th.*— A. M— came with joy to tell me that she had found her own case all opened up the last two Sabbaths, and that she now found herself as under Mr. M'Cheyne's ministry. I told her not to cast sparks from hell into my inflammable heart—to give thanks to God, and to beware of commending man. On Monday I had a visit from an interesting old woman, Jean D—, who in her youth was a parishioner of my father's at Dun, while servant with Mr. M—, Somershill, and whose mother, Jean M—, lived at Arat's Mill, and was often visited by my father in her last illness. She told me many interesting facts, among others the following:—While a servant with Mr. M—, my father came round and catechised her, and she told me the questions he put, and the kind manner he spoke to her. She requested to be allowed to attend his Sabbath-class; he objected that she was too old; but she was so anxious, that though twenty-five, she was admitted. Her parents were both godly people, who prayed much, and on the Sabbath afternoons they used to sit in the summer time upon a green, and go over all that had been said. She said then more would have been got over at such a time than now was learned in a year, when people left almost all behind them at the church. Her father, when he could not through sickness rise to pray with them, knelt and prayed in his bed. She had a brother who went to Brechin to learn a trade, and went astray; but was hurt, became ill, and then came home and was brought under convictions of sin. He had very dark and despairing views of himself for a long time, and would often cry like a child. One day he had been a good while out of sight, and her mother said to Jean, 'Where is your brother?' He soon after appeared, rising from the green where he had been, as she thought, at prayer, and came into the house with a smiling countenance. They were amazed, and asked the reason; he said, 'O mother, I see that there is more merit in the blood of Jesus than there is guilt in my sins, and why should I fear?' This brought tears of joy into all their eyes. He afterwards died in great peace, the peace of God in believing the gospel.

This woman told me many interesting facts regarding Mr. Coutts and our uncle at Brechin—what were their texts, particularly at communion seasons, and many things that they said. Regarding her later history also, since she came to this neighbourhood, she gave me a full account, in many respects remarkable. One of her sons now comes regularly to St. Peter's, from Longforgan, a distance of five miles. The origin of this is very remarkable. One day in winter, he and another man were working in a quarry, and happened to be beside a fire, when a person came up on a pony, and, for what reason they did not know, came off, and went up to them. He entered into conversation on the state of their souls, drawing some alarming truths from the blazing fire. The men were surprised, and said, 'Ye're nae common man.' 'Oh yes,' says he, 'just a common man.' One of the men, however, recognized him as Mr. M'Cheyne, and they were so much impressed that Jean D—'s son resolved, as soon as the weather would allow, to come in to hear him. The consequence has been, that he has continued to come regularly. She hopes that he is really a converted man, and told me that he has been for some time a member of a prayer-meeting. What a striking lesson to be 'instant in season and out of season.'

July 2d.—My manifold engagements have prevented me from recording the multiplied and wonderful doings of God towards me in this book which have occurred during the past month. I can now only note a few. I went to Edinburgh on the 8th of June, at Mr. Moody's request, and preached for him on Sabbath afternoon, from Matthew xviii. 2, 'Except ye be converted,' &c. On the Saturday I saw Mr. Candlish and other friends relative to the mission to Aden. That day the Lord directed me most marvellously to meet with several remarkable saints whom I had not before seen. . . . On my way home I called on Mr. M'Cheyne, and finding that they were dividing a sheet among them, and sending a letter to Constantinople for Mr. R. M. M'Cheyne, I was kindly allowed to occupy part of the remaining space. This was a wonderful day to my soul,—a day fitted to humble me very low before Him under whose teaching I have so little profited in comparison of many others, and to exalt in my eyes more than ever the riches and sovereignty of the grace of a redeeming God. Since I came home, three Sabbaths have elapsed. On the first (June 16), I preached all day from Matthew xi. 28. Owing to my many engagements I had nothing written but a few sentences of the forenoon sermon; but, thanks be to Jesus, on whose strength I was enabled in some degree to rely, I never, perhaps, preached with greater liberty and power. Next Sabbath (23d) I was upon the following two verses. In the forenoon I was considerably deserted of God, and was much weighed down in the interval owing to my having nothing written for the afternoon, and my fears that God was about to make me ashamed before the congregation that I might thenceforward prepare more carefully. I cried to the Lord in

my distress, and he heard me, and in the afternoon, as soon as I began to speak upon these words, "I will give rest to your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light," I felt most sensibly the quickening breath of the Holy Ghost upon my soul, and was enabled to preach in a way more affectionate, full, and earnest, than almost ever before. I resolved, however, in future to prepare more carefully if possible. Last Sabbath (30th) I began in the forenoon to lecture through the Colossians, taking the inscription and salutation as the first subject, and in the afternoon I commenced a series of discourses on Psalm cxxx., taking the help of the great Owen. I was much supported all day, and had nearer views of the holiness of Jehovah than ever before in the pulpit. There are some favourable symptoms of the presence of God among the flock. Two prayer-meetings have begun among the young women, those among the older people are becoming larger and more lively."

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Already had the fond anticipation of the absent pastor in behalf of his youthful assistant begun to be realized: "You are given," he had said, "in answer to prayer, and these gifts are, I believe, always, without exception, blessed." Thus far he had proved faithful in keeping the vineyard of another; but he was now on the eve of being called to enter on a field and line of service peculiarly his own.