

CHAPTER VI.

1839–40.

ST. ANDREWS, PERTH, &c.

WITH the return of Mr. M'Cheyne, Mr. Burns' stated labours at Dundee necessarily came to a close, and though the somewhat delicate state of his friend's health still for a season rendered his assistance in pastoral work more or less needful, his movements became henceforth of a more varied and desultory kind. On the 27th he was at Abernyte, of which his endeared friend Mr. Hamilton was then the assistant minister, where he addressed a crowded audience from the words, "God so loved the world," &c. "The people seemed much solemnized, and at the close a few were shedding silent tears. Mr. Wilson, the old minister, stayed till near the end (about twelve o'clock), and seemed much interested; and dear James Hamilton, who I think is decidedly growing in grace, spoke to the people a little towards the end in a very close and affecting way." From thence he proceeded to Bridge of Earn, where, though he complained that he "did not feel particularly assisted in preaching, and was much humbled, on coming out, from a view of his own want of simple and supreme desire for the divine glory," he enjoyed much the congenial society of the minister, Mr. Cumming, and rejoiced to hear of some hopeful tokens of a coming blessing on his field of labour. "Pray on," Mr. Somerville had said at the close of the communion services the week before, "and you will soon have a revival here." Next morning he was in Perth, and had his first sight of a field already white unto the harvest, and in which he was soon to spend many a day of abounding but delightful labour:

"Friday, November 29th, 1839.—I had intended to leave Perth this morning by ten o'clock, but was prevailed on by Miss M—, whom I saw at the Bridge of Earn, to think of remaining till four P.M., and then thought I might as well stay all night and preach among them; accordingly I came to Perth at one o'clock, and having met Andrew Gray at Mrs. M—'s, where I took up my lodging, it was agreed that I should preach in his church at seven o'clock. Some men were accordingly sent round to give intimation, and short and partial as the notice was, the church was crowded, and hundreds went away who could not get admittance. I preached from Job xxxiii. 24, and had unusual liberty throughout. We did not separate till near eleven, and I am persuaded that had I had time to wait there were not a few who were in deep anxiety about their souls; as it was, two men and four or five women came up after me to the vestry under deep concern.

"Saturday, November 30th, 1839.—I this morning met at breakfast Andrew Gray and Mr. Milne, who has just been settled in St. Leonard's Church, and with them I walked about on the quay for a considerable time waiting for the boat, which was con-

siderably behind her time owing to the flood in the river, and had much interesting conversation. Both of these dear friends, but especially Mr. Milne, seem deeply anxious for a stirring among the dry bones in poor Perth, where they are very many and very dry, and both kindly pressed me to come back to them soon.”

He returned to Dundee, but only on his way to St. Andrews, to which he had been strongly urged to return with the view of following up the impression created at his first visit:—

“*Sabbath, November 31st, 1839*—I preached in the forenoon for Mr. Robb at Strathkinnes—text, John xv. During the first prayer I had great nearness to God. Riding straight home I went almost immediately to the parish church, and there preached to an immense audience, including Drs. Haldane, Buist, &c., Professor Jackson of the divinity chair, Sir D. Brewster, Mr. Gillespie, &c. Before all these learned men, blessed be the Lord, I was not allowed to feel in the least abashed, but testified the gospel of the grace of God to them all with as much plainness and liberty as on most other occasions—subject, Job xxxiii. 24. I preached to a most densely crowded audience in the evening in the Secession Church, with more enlargement than during the day, from Isaiah liv. 5. At half-past nine I went home, feeling less fatigued than in the morning, though I had spoken for between seven and eight hours.

“*Monday, December 1st, 1839*.—This morning I preached to the inquirers, in Mr. Lothian’s church at eleven o’clock, from Psalm li., upon repentance. It was a solemn season. At two o’clock I met the fishermen in the Secession Church, and preached to them in as nautical a mode as I could command, feeling much supported. At eight o’clock I lectured to a crowded audience in the Secession Church from Luke vii. 36-52. It was an affecting subject, and not a few of the people as well as myself appeared to be in a very tender frame. On coming down from the pulpit many came to bid me farewell, with whom I was led by circumstances to stand and speak for a considerable time. Many at this time were weeping profusely, and *I hope* the Holy Spirit was sealing some souls to the day of redemption.”

These hopes were not disappointed. “To many,” says an old disciple, whose name will long be fragrant in the city and neighbourhood of St. Andrews, “that season, I trust, was the birth-time of their souls, and to believers a time of great revival and refreshment. To *me*, it was a feast of fat things, and I trust of great blessing. Certainly I never heard the gospel message so clearly preached, so unfettered, so unclouded; and as faith cometh by hearing, so faith came to my soul, and, out of obscurity, I saw and felt the love of God in a way so melting and so overflowing as to make me weep. May I never lose the impression produced by that sermon from these words: ‘He that believeth doth enter into *rest*,’ and another also from Mr. Wight, ‘Hold fast the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end.’ What an exhibition of the fulness and freeness and completeness of salvation to the believing soul! “Doubting Castle” was quite demolished; every chain struck

off; closed lips opened to shout for joy and sing praise to our redeeming God.” . . .

On the 6th December he expresses himself as “in great difficulty in knowing my own duty, whether to remain steadily in Dundee or to visit it only among the many places which seem at present ripe for the harvest.” In the meantime, however, he continues his evangelistic excursions, guided simply by the calls which immediately pressed upon him, and having no other plan than that of doing what his hand found to do, and doing it with his might. The next entry is interesting, as illustrating the manner in which he unweariedly sought to sow the precious seed beside all waters, scarcely ever losing an opportunity of speaking a word in behalf of his Master wherever there was a human ear to hear it, whether in the house or by the way, on the top of a coach, on the deck or cabin of a boat, or to the random travellers on a country road. Instances of this occur perpetually, and in every variety of circumstances, in his journal, and give perhaps more than anything else in his life and ministry, the impression of one who lived for nothing else but to serve and glorify Christ. It is touching often to mark how eagerly and thankfully he hailed such opportunities, not as calls to the discharge of a difficult duty, but as special tokens of the divine mercy and favour towards himself. To give him the liberty of conducting divine worship and delivering the message of grace, at any time or in any place where a few immortal souls were gathered together, was to lay him under the deepest of all obligations. Thus no one who ever spent the briefest time alone with him, or even met him casually by the way, could for a moment doubt that in the truest and fullest sense to him “to live was Christ.”

“Thursday, December 5th, 1839.—I this day went by coach from Dundee to Cumbernauld. . . . At Cumbernauld I left the coach, after giving tracts to all on it and in it (a practice which I intend to follow wherever I go, as eminently calculated to advance the salvation of souls), and walked over the hill towards Kilsyth. I first made up to two boys going home from school, who seemed very ignorant of Jesus. I spoke to them, gave them tracts, and shortly prayed with them on the road. I next met Mr. Lusk going home, with whom I also prayed on the road. At the Craigmarloch Bridge I met widow Mitchell and her daughter Agnes, an old school companion of my own. With them I prayed—going for a little into the house. At home I found all well—my father absent at the presbytery, and expected to return in the evening with some minister to officiate in the evening meeting. This duty, however, was devolved upon me. . . . I preached from Ephesians v. 1, chiefly seeking the edification of those lately converted to the Lord. During the service my father and Dr. Smyth¹ of Glasgow came in. It was delightful indeed for me to meet, after the congregation dismissed, with many of the dear lambs of Jesus’ fold, who appeared to be growing in faith and love both towards Jesus and towards each other. All the road home was strewed with little groups of these clear be-

¹ Minister of St. George’s Parish, Glasgow.

lievers waiting to welcome me back among them and receive some word of exhortation.”

One object he had had in coming to the west had been to address once more the members of the Glasgow University Missionary Society, which had formed so important a link in the history of his higher life, and with which so many hallowed associations were connected. Difficulties, however, had arisen in obtaining the use of the usual place of meeting within the University, and he was constrained to content himself with a few hours of private, but to him most delightful intercourse with some of those who were most like-minded with himself in regard to the great cause he had come to plead. Meanwhile, important work was awaiting him in another quarter, where he was not expected, but much desired:

“*Saturday, December 7th.*—In the afternoon I sailed down the Clyde, but was in a very dead frame of soul, and could hardly bring myself to speak for Jesus to any of the passengers. Indeed, though it is always duty to be doing the work of an evangelist, it is a duty entirely dependent upon the prior one of ‘living in the Spirit.’ It is a fearful sin to be going through the world with a light kindled by the Holy Ghost to guide sinners to Jesus, and yet to carry this as a dark lantern which can give no benefit to anyone. But ah! how vain is it, on the other hand, to hold up a lamp to one when the light is almost out, and the oil is nearly done! May I always be like a lamp full of oil (the Holy Spirit), burning brightly with the love of Christ, and guiding those that are in darkness to the strait gate and narrow way that leadeth unto life!

“Before I left the boat I spoke to a young woman from Gourock, whom I saw in mourning, and who, I found, had lost within the last six years her father and mother, and her uncle and aunt, with whom she went to live after her parents died. She seemed anxious, but in great danger of settling on the quicksands of legality. I gave her a copy of Ralph Erskine’s sermon on the *Harmony of the Divine Attributes*.

“At Port-Glasgow I found the Simpsons all well, and was delighted to find that I had indeed come opportunely, and according to a marvellous dispensation of the Lord’s providence. Mr. Kennedy, expecting my brother I— to preach his first sermon in his church on Sabbath, had agreed to go to Greenock on that day, and fill Mr. Smith’s pulpit in his absence at Rutherglen communion, but, to his dismay, on Saturday morning he got a letter from I— saying that he could not come, and that Mr. K. was mistaken in supposing that he had ever given a promise to do so. Mr. K. was just sitting with the letter in his hand, and hardly knowing what to say or do, when Mr. Simpson came in and showed him my letter from Glasgow, which I had written without any concert with I—, intimating that I would be in Port-Glasgow on Sabbath, and that I would wish him if possible to secure Mr. Smith of Greenock’s pulpit for me one half of the day—the very pulpit which Mr. K. had agreed to fill. It was accordingly fixed that I should preach forenoon and evening in Port-Glasgow, and afternoon in Greenock.

“*Sabbath, December 8th, 1839.*—In the forenoon of this hallowed day I lectured to Mr. Kennedy’s people from Romans iii. 19. They seemed attentive. Riding down to Greenock, I preached, with considerable liberty from the fear of man, and desire for the

glory of God in the salvation of sinners, from Job xxxiii. 24. Riding home again I preached to a crowded audience from Isaiah xiii. 21. . . . After coming home I enjoyed with the Simpsons a sweet season of communion, especially at family worship. Dear and godly Mr. Simpson seemed full of the Holy Ghost, &c. . . .

“Monday, December 9th, 1839.—At Paisley I stayed with my dear sister till twelve o’clock, when I set out by coach for Glasgow. She has indeed been sorely chastened, but it has been in infinite mercy, and she seems to be becoming through this means in the hand of a redeeming God and Father, a partaker of his holiness. Praise to the Lord!

“After being an hour and half alone at Uncle I —’s, I went down to a prayer-meeting of our Missionary Society Committee at Mr. Govan’s.² There were about sixteen present. Mr. Govan began with prayer, and after we had sung I then read and spoke for some time with much comfort from a part of the 68th Psalm: ‘O God! thou to thine heritage,’ &c.; after which we sang a part of this sweet Psalm, and prayed, the service devolving upon me. After the blessing was pronounced, the memorial to the Senatus was read, and as its success was closely connected with the glory of the Lord in the salvation of the students, I suggested that we ought to lay it before the Lord in special prayer before we separated. Mr. Stevenson³ accordingly prayed with us in regard to it; and we parted, seeming to have all enjoyed our meeting, and some of us at least having, I trust, found it a meeting with the Lord Jehovah, the portion of Israel. It seemed to us a token for good that the Lord by his providence had shut us up, beyond our own intention, to begin our missionary meetings with one for prayer alone, a thing which we had never before done. Before parting I pressed upon my dear brethren the necessity of labouring for the conversion of the students of their own acquaintance, and of having prayer-meetings to which to invite such as might be under some concern about salvation, though not far enough advanced to take part in conducting such meetings.

“Tuesday, December 10th, 1839. Preached to the dear Kilsyth flock in the evening from John xv. 1, 2. . . . I had in the afternoon of this day several very interesting conversations with particular individuals—as widow Miller, a remarkable old woman, who was converted on Monday evening, July 29th, in the meal-market, while I was speaking after Mr. Somerville had concluded. She appears to be making marvellous progress in the knowledge and love of Emmanuel, and being naturally of a superior cast of mind, she makes the most beautiful and striking remarks; she said, for instance, ‘Oh! you must rouse them, you must rouse them to-night, just as a mason drives his chisel with his mell upon the stones; and are we not all stones—rough stones, till God hew and polish us? You roused them before, just as if you were to put a cold hand on a man’s warm face.’ She said also to a poor old beggar, ‘Oh! you must be made new Robby; it’s old Robby with you yet. I was old Betty, but I am new Betty now, and you must pour out your old heart before the Lord and get a new one,’ &c.”

After brief visits to Bo’ness, Dunfermline, and other places by the way, he reached Dundee once more on the 23d, and thence proceeded two days

² Now a Missionary of the Free Church, Lovedale, Africa.

³ Now Minister of the Free Church, Pulteney Town, Wick.

after to Perth, in which he was to find his chief scene of labour for several months to come.

The nature of the field on which he now entered, as well as the character of him with whom especially it was his lot there to labour, will be familiar to very many of my readers from the admirable memoir of Mr. Milne, lately given to the world by Dr. Horatius Bonar. He was indeed “a man greatly beloved,” and a true and worthy “yoke-fellow” of the subject of these pages throughout the whole course of those memorable days. Of one mind and of one heart, of differing gifts, but of equal devotedness and singleness of purpose in the service of Christ, they fought the good fight side by side, without a dream of personal rivalry, or any other thought whatever, but that of “striving together for the faith of the gospel.” It was especially admirable to mark the perfect self-abnegation with which the young and gifted pastor saw his work, as it were, for the moment taken out of his hands ere ever he had almost entered on it; and rejoiced in the fruit of his brother’s labours even as though it were his own, content either to thrust in his own sickle or to see the harvest reaped by another hand, so only the Master’s garner were filled. Closely linked together in life, in affection and in sympathy, it was interesting to many also to notice that in death they were not long divided, having been called to their eternal rest within a few weeks of one another, and both at a comparatively early age, having lived much and long in a little time.

The rapid and pregnant brevity of the first notices of Mr. Burns’ labours here indicate at once the remarkable power with which the sacred movement set in almost from the first day of his arrival on the scene, and the incessant and absorbing occupation which in consequence devolved upon him. His days and nights were so filled up with acts, and with those intense exercises of soul which are the living breath of acts, that he had little time either to narrate or describe:—

“December 28th, 1839.—Took up my abode at Mrs. M.’s, my kind friend, at 2 King’s Place. Agreed to preach twice to-morrow.

“Sabbath, December 29th, 1839, forenoon.—Preached in East Church, Dr. Esdaile’s. I was not left to myself, I hope. Subject, Isaiah xlii. 21; time too short to allow of sufficient fulness; church full, the gay people of Perth—the magistrates present. Afternoon, St. Leonard’s, great crowd; subject, conversion, Matthew xviii. 3; more aided than ever before on this text, I think; solemnity deep. Inquirers invited to meet at seven in the evening, and at one P.M. on Monday. Evening: about one hundred and fifty were present. The Lord was very near. . . . We had to continue together till about eleven o’clock. . . . This was a meeting very similar to some of the Lord’s most gracious visits at Kilsyth and Dundee. Praise and glory to his matchless name!

“Monday, December 30th, 1839.—From two to three hundred were present at one o’clock; a solemn season; separated about four. Evening; an immensely crowded audience in the Gaelic Church; subject, Isaiah liv. 5, first clause; much aided; great solemnity; some in tears. After the blessing spoke a little to some that lingered; much affect-

ed. I was pressed by them to go into the session-house. It was overflowing; all in tears nearly. Sang, read, spoke and prayed for an hour—they would not go; Mr. Stewart concluded with prayer, the tears were standing in his eyes; indeed it was an affecting scene!

“December 31st, 1839, forenoon.—Meeting at one, a few hundreds present; Mr. Cumming, who had promptly answered our call for aid, began. I then followed upon Psalm cx. 3; a solemn meeting; when it was ended the vestry was filled with weepers, with whom we had to pray and sing a long time. Evening in Mr. Turnbull’s church, at seven o’clock; subject, Matthew xi. 28; dense crowd. Meeting at ten o’clock in St. Leonard’s Church, to bring in the New Year. We all took part in the service, Mr. Cumming first, Mr. Milne second, and myself third; we separated about one o’clock on the New Year’s morning; a sweet season. I never brought in the New Year so sweetly before.

“Wednesday, 7 January 1st, 1840.—Meeting forenoon from eleven to four; Mr. Cumming, Mr. Milne, and myself officiated.

“Friday, January 3d, 1840.—Meeting in the forenoon in Kinnoul Street Church, Mr. Bonar of Collace present, and officiated along with Mr. Milne, Mr. Turnbull, and myself: We met with many interesting cases in the vestry. I went off to Dundee at four o’clock, and left Mr. Bonar to officiate in the evening. He preached to a most densely crowded audience in St. Leonard’s Church, from the Ethiopian eunuch; Mr. Milne also spoke, and it is said to have been a most solemn season, not a few in tears.

“Sabbath, January 5th, 1840, forenoon.—Sat in St. Leonard’s, Mr. Milne on the barren fig-tree. Afternoon, I preached in Mr. Gray’s on Ezekiel xxxvi. 26, 1st clause. Evening, in Dr. Findlay’s immense church, from 2 Cor. v. 21; very much aided in exposition and application; densely crowded; thousands went away, I am told, without getting in. Glory to the Lamb!”

Prayer, temptation, and deep humiliation of soul, as usual, prepared the way for more abounding joy and strength:—

“Friday, January 10th, 1840.—In the evening I spoke from Romans v. 1, but felt much straitened, and was so filled with self-complacency, vain elation, and spiritual blindness, that I had to stop in a very short time and felt called on to tell the people that I believed, and had been made to feel for some days, that unless we were humbled under God’s mighty hand and the people ceased from their idolatrous confidence in instruments and looked more to God alone, I was convinced his work would not go on, &c.

“Saturday, January 11th, 1840.—I was alone during the greater part of the day seeking humiliation before the Lord, and began through grace to discover how far, alas! I have fallen from that contrition of soul for sin which I once enjoyed. Lord, I am indeed set in slippery places. Lord, humble me and keep me from falling into the snare of the devil!

“Sabbath, January 12th, 1840, afternoon.—Preached in Mr. Gray’s from Romans xii. 1, with some degree of brokenness of heart and comfort in the Lord. Evening, preached in Dr. Findlay’s from Ephesians iv. 30, on the work of the Holy Spirit. It was a solemn season, an immense assembly. I had great liberty, especially in pressing sinners not to resist the Holy Ghost. Dr. Findlay was with me in the pulpit. . . .”

Here, as elsewhere, and perhaps even more than often elsewhere, he was, in the most emphatic sense, instant in season and out of season, never deeming any place or time unsuitable in which a word might be spoken for his Master, and an effort made to win the life of souls. The highways and hedges, the river steamboat, the roadside inn, the mart of business, the purlieus and haunts of vice and crime, were to him, equally with the crowded church or upper chamber, the fit arena in which to fulfil his divine ambassadorship, and “compel men to come in” to the house of God. The following incident is strikingly illustrative of this, as well as of the pervasive influence of the movement in the Perth community at this time, and the unlikely quarters into which it found its way:—

*“January 16th, 1840.—*In the evening I met a great many young men in the vestry, and found among them a great number of interesting cases. At eight o’clock I visited the prayer-meeting of females in Miss Ramsay’s, which was very full and interesting. Coming out I saw behind a public-house some men and women sporting themselves, and went up and said, ‘You are making work for the day of judgment.’ They all ran in except one young man, a son of the housekeeper; he was subdued. I asked him if he would allow me to go in and pray. I got into a large room; many assembled, and we had a very solemn meeting. They all promised to come out to the meetings at parting.”

The sequel appears in a brief entry about a fortnight after:—

*“January 30th, 1840.—*When I went home Mr. Milne told me he had heard that Mr. L., the public-house keeper, in whose house I was so remarkably led in God’s providence to hold a meeting, had given intimation to his landlord that he was going to give up his shop at the next term, and to leave the spirit-trade. . . . Praise to the Lord!

The power indeed that attended his words, and the effects which often in the most unexpected quarters followed them, was at this time most remarkable. “I never thought,” exclaimed a strong, careless man, who had heard him, “to have been so much affected; it is surely something altogether unearthly that has come to the town.” Another “had come with a companion to our meetings one night to mock, and they both did so, and went from the church to a public-house. However he would not go in, refusing with an awful oath to do so. On his death-bed he called for his companion, and asked him if he remembered these things. He replied he did. ‘Well,’ he says, ‘I would give a thousand worlds to-night that my soul were in the state his is.’ He died after he said these words!”

On Sabbath the 19th he was at the communion at Dundee, when he had the solemn joy of sitting down at the table of the Lord, “along with many dear believers, not a few of them his own children in the Lord,” but imme-

diately afterwards returned to his work in Perth, which seemed still steadily to grow in depth and widespread influence:—

*“Sabbath, February 9th, 1840, afternoon.—*Preached in Mr. Turnbull’s to a crowded audience, from John iii. 4, 15. I felt under the bonds of unbelief during the chief part of the discourse, but towards the close was enabled by the Lord fairly to break loose and speak with some degree of faith and joy in Emmanuel, especially when insisting on the stronger grounds for faith in our case than in the case of the Israelites. They were called to look to a piece of brass as a saviour, and thus their looking was an act simply based on the divine *word*; but we are called by the same divine word to look for life not to an object of no intrinsic power or value, but to the most glorious Object in the universe, the Son of God purchasing the church on the cross with his own blood, &c. I saw several persons in tears; I was weeping myself, and found this a blessed time. Praise to the Lord!—*Evening:* the crowd was so great seeking to get into St. Leonard’s Church, that it was supposed there were more collected in the street an hour before the time than would have several times filled the church. The press was so great when the doors were opened, that several persons were somewhat injured. I preached from Romans x. 4, and felt considerably aided; though to myself the season was not quite so sweet as in the afternoon. We prayed particularly for the raising up of Jewish missionaries, according to the call of the Jewish Committee by circular, and prayed that some of those present, if it were the Lord’s will, might be called to this glorious work.

*“Monday, February 10th, 1840.—*The day of Queen Victoria’s marriage. Last night about eleven o’clock Agnes S—, Miss R—, and two other females, called to express their regret that no advantage had been taken of the cessation from labour on this day for advancing the glory of Jesus. I had amid so many engrossing duties never thought that this was the day, and it had escaped Mr. Milne also. We prayed together on the subject. . . . I met the people of God and many inquirers at half-past twelve, and we continued together till three. I spoke upon Colossians iii. I met with several people during the day; walked with Mr. Milne distributing many tracts, and having many interesting conversations with persons on the road.—*Evening:* there was to be a grand display of fireworks on the Inch, and we hardly thought that the church would be anything like filled. However, it was quite full, and after a time not a few were standing. I spoke upon the 45th Psalm, commenting on the glory of the Bridegroom Emmanuel, and the privileges of the Bride the Lamb’s wife, and thus enforcing the divine call, ‘Hearken, O daughter, and consider,’ &c. I felt much of the Lord’s presence, and had a full persuasion from the frame of the hearers that some, if not many, were in the act of being betrothed to Christ for ever in righteousness, and judgment, and loving-kindness, &c., Hosea ii.; and while we were thus celebrating in the British dominions the marriage of our beloved sovereign, I trust there was joy in the presence of the angels of God over sinners espoused to the Lamb. How infinitely does the one event transcend the other in importance and glory! and yet, alas! this poor world, blinded by Satan, extols the one and despises the other. . . . Awake, O gracious Lord, awake this sleeping world! Amen.

*“February 28th, 1840, evening.—*We had a very large and solemn meeting. I concluded the exposition of Hosea xiv., and then spoke of the nature of the duties for tomorrow (appointed among us along with some of the people at Dundee, Kilsyth, Dunfermline, and Stanley, as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer), and also of the reasons for the appointment of this day.

“March 1st, 1840.—We had this day a solemn fast, kept by many I have no doubt very strictly, as far as the duty of abstinence is concerned. We met at two o’clock P.M. I spoke upon the exercises appropriate to this day:—

“1. Self-examination in order to the discovery of sin—of the heart and nature as well as of the tongue and life—by the law and the Spirit of Jehovah. 2. Humbling the soul before God under sins discovered. 3. Confession of sin, full and particular, free and filial. 4. Penitent turning from all sin. 5. Entering into the covenant of grace by the receiving of Emmanuel and the surrender of the soul to him and to God through him. 6. Special prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon this city, and the other places united with us in this fast—the great end designed in its appointment. There was very great solemnity.—Evening: we met again in Mr. Turnbull’s church, Kinnoul Street, and concluded the subject. I had at this time more melting of heart under a sense of the love of God than ever I remember to have had in the pulpit, and I think shed more tears than ever before in preaching. The people also seemed in an unusually tender and solemn frame. Glory to the Lamb!

“March 10th, morning.—Alone, and writing letters, especially to the young people attending Miss Haldane’s Greenside School. While writing this letter, and speaking of the interposition of Jehovah-Jesus between the wrath of God and sinners, I got a view of the glory of this mystery surpassing anything I had ever enjoyed before, and the tears fell plentifully from my dry eyes.”

Amid these abounding and exhausting labours in a sphere in which so wide and effectual a door had been opened to him, he still found time and strength for occasional evangelistic excursions amid the villages around, the results of which were often deeply interesting. In this way he visited at different times during this period the parishes of Auchtermuchty, Strathmiglo, Dunfermline, Muthil, Stanley, Auchtergaven, Caputh, Kinfauns, &c. One or two notices of these more desultory, but not less fruitful labours may be given, as examples of what, for several years to come, constituted a large and important part of his work. Thus, of date February 18th, 1840, he writes:—

“Tuesday, February 18th, 1840, forenoon.—In closet, wrote several letters, drove out to Stanley in gig, gave tracts to all by the way; well received.—Afternoon, with Mr. Mather the minister, and chiefly in closet; a humbling season.—Evening: immense crowd in the spacious church; a thousand people work in the mills—subject, Luke xxiv. 47; more aided than ever on the same subject. A very solemn season; many met me deeply affected as I retired. Walked home to Perth seven miles, arriving at half-past twelve, accompanied by nearly twenty from Perth; men, women, and children seemed all very solemn and heavenly in their demeanour; prayed before we parted.

“February 25th, 1840.—I drove out to Balbiggie to preach in the Secession Church. The man who drove me seems very like a Christian, and told me that of late, especially since our meetings began, there had been an astonishing change on the face of the country round in point of morality and anxiety about religion; on the way out all the people came to their doors with a great appearance of anxiety, and I gave away many tracts. The hour of meeting was six; the people were many of them assembled at two

o'clock, and at half-past four, when I went, the church was full. I preached on Psalm cx. 3, and had considerable assistance, feeling much joy in my own soul, &c.

"March 19th.—(Returning from Auchtergaven.) We made up on the way to the Stanley people, a great crowd, and I knelt down with them at the roadside under the bright moon and prayed. Their love and deep solemnity put me much in mind of the first Christians. After singing and pronouncing the blessing, we parted in affecting silence!

"Sabbath, March 22d, 1840.—I rose this morning strong in body, but with much conscious deadness of soul, and awfully assaulted, as I *often* am, by doubts regarding every truth of God in his Word. I preached in the church from Matthew xi. 28, and had little enlargement in the exposition of the text, feeling still an inward struggle with infidelity. However, after I had closed the Bible, and was concluding with a few words of exhortation, the Lord gave me the victory over unbelief, and I had such an impressive realization of the state of the unconverted, that I was enabled to speak very closely to their consciences, and beseech them with *all* my heart to awake from the sleep of death and flee to Jesus for refuge. I saw the tears starting from the eyes of some men advanced in years, and felt that the Lord was indeed present. The meeting lasted three hours and a half. After dinner, Mr. Maclagan,⁴ who was very kind, pressed me to come again, saying that a number of his people had been benefited by our meetings in Perth."

The period of his continuous ministry in Perth was now drawing to a close. He had received repeated and urgent invitations to visit Aberdeen, the scene of his second home, and of his college days, which he was unable any longer to resist, and he felt at the same time that he had already remained in Perth long enough to fulfil the functions of a distinctively evangelistic ministry. What further work remained to be done in order to turn to the best account the powerful impulse that had been given, was more of a pastoral than of a missionary kind, and that work he felt was abundantly safe in the hands of Mr. Milne, Mr. Gray, and the other brethren with whom it had been his privilege and delight to labour throughout the whole course of those eventful days. The sacred spring-tide, however, flowed on with unabated force to the last, and he closes, immediately before leaving Perth, the first year of his ministry as a preacher of the gospel, and the twenty-fifth year of his earthly life, in a sort of solemn "triumph in Christ," who still continued in so remarkable a manner to make manifest through him the savour of his saving knowledge and grace.

"I drove home, praying all the way, and after an hour alone I went to the church (St. Leonard's) at six with clear direction to Deuteronomy xxxii. 35 as my subject. The church was as usual a solid mass of living beings. I availed myself of many hints in Edwards' sermon, proceeding in the following order:—I took the whole verse as my subject and considered, I. What was meant by vengeance, recompense, and calamity,

⁴ The Rev. James Maclagan, minister of Kinfauns, afterwards Professor of Divinity in the Free Church College, Aberdeen—a man of great learning, elevated piety, and spiritual depth and fulness of thought.

the things that are coming on the wicked; which, copying Edwards in his application, I opened up in three particulars: 1st. It is the wrath of Jehovah. 2d. The fierceness of his wrath. 3d. The fierceness of Jehovah's wrath for eternity. II. In the second place, I put the question, What is it that defers this wrath till the due time, the day of calamity? in other words, what is it that keeps an unconverted sinner a moment out of hell? To this it was answered, Negatively, 1st. It is not divine justice. This has already sentenced the sinner to eternal wrath. 2d. It is not that God is pleased with the sinner; on the contrary, he is awfully angry with him, and in many cases more angry than with many that are already in hell. 3d. It is not on account of anything that the sinner has done, or is doing, or intends to do. 4th. It is not on account of a good bodily constitution or great care to preserve life on the part of the sinner or other persons on his behalf. 5th. It is not on account of any promise given by God to the unconverted. But, Positively, Sinners are kept out of hell from moment to moment only by the long-suffering of God, who 'endures with much long-suffering,' &c. I then came to apply the subject to the case of the unconverted, and went on to point out that they were suspended by the hand of a long-suffering God over the pit of hell, and were yet madly hating and resisting that God, and provoking him to let them go and fall into the flames, especially by rejecting Jesus his unspeakable gift. These statements appeared to be accompanied with an extraordinary measure of the Holy Ghost, and the feeling of the hearers became so intense that when one man in the gallery passage audibly exclaimed, 'Lord Jesus, come and save me,' the great mass of the congregation gave audible expression to their emotion in a universal wailing. I immediately changed the theme, and began, as at Kilsyth, to repeat such invitations as Isaiah lv., pressing Jesus on all as God's free gift. After a few minutes the great multitude became more composed; but as I went on particularly addressing those who continued impenitent spectators, the feeling became again as deep and general as before. To me, looking from the pulpit, the whole body of the people seemed bathed in tears, old as well as young, men equally with women. This second display of feeling continued a few minutes and gradually ended, a few only here and there throughout the church continuing in great and visible distress of soul. When the impression became so deep and overpowering, many that did not like, or did not understand, such a glorious manifestation of the divine power, were offended, and one man came up the stair of the pulpit and asked me to dismiss the people! After I had prayed and sung with the people a considerable time beyond the usual period, with brief addresses interspersed, I pronounced the blessing, and asked them to disperse, promising to meet with any who might wish further prayer and direction in a school-house. Hardly any, however, would go away, and even after all the lights in the church but two had been one by one extinguished, a few hundreds still remained in the church, who would not, and in some cases could not, retire. Mr. Milne arrived when it was nearly ten o'clock, and we found it necessary again to sing and pray. After we had done so we at last got the people away. I went down to Miss Ramsay's school, and there met with as many as the house and passage would contain, both men and women, though chiefly the latter, all in deep distress about their souls, and in most cases in tears. I remained for an hour, and then left them all to pray and sing together, which they continued to do for some time longer. This glorious night seemed to me at the time, and appears from all I have since heard, to have been perhaps the most wonderful that I have ever seen, with the exception perhaps of the first Tuesday at Kilsyth. There was this difference chiefly between the two occasions, that a great many of those affected at this time had been convinced or converted during the previous weeks, while at Kilsyth almost all but

the established children of God were awakened for the first time. Glory to the Lamb! This is the last Sabbath of the first year of my ministry as an ambassador of Christ! To the praise and glory of infinite, eternal, free and sovereign mercy and grace. Praise the Lord! . . .

“*March 28th*, 1840.—When during this day I tried to be grateful to the Lord for all the marvellous work that I have seen during the year that was closing, I felt my soul almost overwhelmed, and could only think with joy on the subject, when I remembered that I had an eternity to spend in praising and blessing God. Praise to the Lamb! infinite, eternal praise; mercy sovereign, infinite, unchangeable, everlasting! The Father electing, the Son redeeming, the Spirit renewing.

“To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
The God whom I adore,
Be glory, as it was, and is,
And shall be evermore!”

“*Wednesday, April 1st*, 1840.—This day begins my 26th year. I would act for the Lord Jesus henceforth as if I had hitherto done absolutely nothing in his service. May He enable me. I spent the morning alone and in fasting. The Lord, I trust, was near, though I cannot say that I spent the season in a manner befitting such an occasion. Indeed, I can hardly dare to think of God’s dealings with me. They overwhelm my soul with astonishment. I wait for *eternity* to study and admire and extol them.”

Such were those remarkable days at Perth during the spring of 1840, as their history is traced in the simple and solemn words of the chief actor himself. It may be desirable, however, for a moment to look at those scenes as seen by another eye; and this we are enabled to do through the following interesting recollections kindly furnished to me by one who herself “owed much in afterlife” to the sacred impressions received at that memorable time. Of the after and permanent results of the work then done we shall afterwards have occasion to speak; what we have now to quote refers rather to the immediate aspect of the movement while still in progress, as it presented itself to one who lived through it and deeply shared its spirit:—

“It was in a hotel in Rome that we first read, in the columns of *Galignani’s Messenger*, the name of William Burns. The article was a bitter and sneering caricature. Returning to Scotland a few weeks later, without having had any opportunity of being in church in the interval, and with the bewitching mummeries of the Roman Church, as they surrounded the person of Gregory XVI., in vivid recollection, we were taken to an inquirers’ meeting, conducted by Mr. Burns in Perth; and the thirty years which have since sped away, instead of effacing, have only deepened the impression of the scene we then witnessed. William Burns was speaking from Revelation xix., of the doom of Antichrist, and the hallelujah which shall rise from the redeemed when the smoke of her torment shall ascend in their sight. He was warning the unsaved that over their destruction also the same assenting ‘Amen, hallelujah,’ must yet arise, if they persisted in rejecting Jesus. He was inviting poor sinners to come to Calvary’s fountain and wash and be clean. He was warning such as imagined they had washed and were living unholy, thus: ‘You are saying, ‘If I sin it will easily be washed out again.’ Or, if not *say-*

ing it with the lip, you are acting it out fearfully in the life. Ah! the soul that has washed its filthy garments in the stream of Calvary is careful how the remedy is used. Many believers have so much allowed the stains of conformity to the world to disfigure the white robe, that instead of representing the work of God within, they are scarcely to be distinguished from the servants of the devil.' He was setting before believers the coming joys of the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and said, 'This blessedness is not so far off as the world seems to think; the meanest saint can tell that it has already set in with a sweetness unspeakable. Ushered into the breast of many by billows of affliction and temptation, beating wildly on the soul with their tempestuous swell, yet are the beginnings so glorious and so blessed, that they are an earnest of a springing up of a life eternal in the heavens. On the joys which shall crown our union with Emmanuel no destroyer shall lay the withering blight of his death-cold hand; no ruthless separation shall snatch our happiness from us, or us from our happiness. After washing for a few days more in the free fountain here—after a few days more weeping on account of sin and sorrow—you shall awake suddenly in the city of our God, to walk with Emmanuel for ever in the courts above. The company, small here, will be innumerable yonder. Ten thousand times ten thousand are their voices, and ten thousand times ten thousand are the harps they tune; but it is as the sounding of *one* voice. Hallelujah! 'tis the keynote of an eternal song. Only *one* name rests upon their lips, it is Emmanuel. They know but *one* song, the song of the redeemed. It is sometimes difficult to say here '*all* his judgments are righteous,' for they are often heavy and severe. When you join that company, your narrow and short-sighted views will be gone. If I were ever to see the smoke of your torment ascending before the throne, I would have to say Amen; hallelujah! and if you, standing on high, were to see the smoke of my torment ascending, you too would cry Amen; hallelujah! . . . An hour has nearly elapsed since we began to speak with you; it is just taking wing; a few seconds and it will have fled to bear its tale to the judgment-seat. Shall it announce the submission of a sinner, the return of a prodigal, the adoption of a son into the family above?' The deepest solemnity pervaded the assembly, as the simple searching truth was calmly presented. Individuals were conversed with in St. Leonard's Church for an hour or two afterwards; and many a burden was there laid upon 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' These inquiry-meetings were held three times a week, and in the evening the church was open for the crowds that thronged it from town and country. An hour before the time of service every seat was filled. The multitude generally remained in silence, and many heads were bowed in prayer. The stairs leading to the pulpit were also filled, and it was with difficulty the preacher could be conducted thither. The Rev. John Milne, the recently settled pastor of the congregation, usually shared the pulpit with the speaker. We recall especially one evening when a chair was handed up for James Hamilton, then of Abernyte, to sit at their side. It seems now as if one chariot had sufficed to carry home the three, 'William Burns, John Milne, and James Hamilton.' That night was one of power.

'Tough boughs require sharp pruning,' said the preacher, when someone would have tried to blunt the knife, by advising him to the use of more measured and tempered language. 'A sleeping minister and a sleeping congregation, what will they do in the day of judgment?' He was privileged to break this sleep—in congregations, in kirk-sessions, and in manses. The first part of his discourse always embodied a mass of telling doctrine, holding up the divine law right in face of the sinner's conscience. The appeals in the latter part were irresistibly winning, brimming over with the freely of-

ferred love of Jesus. The Spirit was glorified. He arrested many before the preacher had time to enter his subject; in some cases the arrow sped from the first psalm that was given out, and many were awakened during the opening prayer. It is not easy to describe his prayers. Adoration of Jehovah's untreated glory, as it falls on the darkness and corruption of man's heart, and reveals the abyss of a yawning hell, filled the first part. He brought himself and the saved part of his audience down into the sides of the pit whence they were hewn, in a way that made the greatest outcast in the church feel that he or she was sympathized with and carried abreast; and then his soul would as it were be seen to pass anew through the cleansing flood, up into the very presence-chamber of the King of kings, and there looked up into the Father's face with unutterable love. His theology was unbiased, and swung like a pendulum across the truth of God, avoiding all limited, classified, partial, and one-sided expressions of it. His training of young converts was thus invaluable to them. 'No cross, no crown,' was the term of enlistment. 'Suffering is the law of the kingdom.' The greater your sacrifices for Christ, the more of his joy will fill your heart.' Forsake the glass, the dance, and the song, if you would drink of the rivers of his pleasures, if you would leap for joy on the shores of Emmanuel's land, if you would take up the unending hallelujah.'

"He warned the young that if they would live near the Lord, they must be content to be singular even among believers, and to travel sometimes almost alone. 'I am often reminded of this,' he said, 'when setting out by the early stage-coach. The morning is sharp, companions few, and from the top of the coach you see whole streets shuttered in as in the night. But just here and there, one, earlier up than others, has begun her morning work, with no one apparently to notice or thank her. She will find out the good of it before nightfall. So with you. Forget the crowd, walk with God alone.'

"It was a high standard he himself set before them. 'The longing of my heart would be to go once all round the world before I die, and preach one gospel invitation in the ear of every creature.' He had a tender regard for those who were kept long in darkness: saying, that those to whom the Lord had revealed much of their own sin and misery in the place of dragons, were often led into high places in the school of Christ.

"All the roads from the town were nightly trod by groups of country hearers. Some were returning home to sing for the first time the new song. Others with heavy pace carried an arrow rankling in the heart. Others bore the good news of companions in town turning to God, the public-house signs taken down, the police comparatively idle, and families and workshops sharing the wide-spread blessing."

In the words, in fine, of Mr. Milne, used a year and a half afterwards, on a retrospect of these remarkable scenes: "God's people quickened; backsliders restored; the doubting and uncertain brought to decision and assurance; hidden ones who for years had walked solitarily brought to light, and united to a family of brothers and sisters; a large number of the worldly, thoughtless, ignorant, self-righteous turned to the Lord; a peculiar people growing up, who are separate from the world, know and love one another; watch over, exhort, and aid one another, and seem to grow in humility and zeal;"⁵

⁵ Evidence supplied to the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale, in answer to queries proposed by them, October 25, 1841. See Life of Rev. John Milne, p. 55.

such is the summary history of the work done and the fruits of blessing gathered in at Perth during this signal “time of power.”

After a few more days spent in fulfilling some country engagements, he started for Aberdeen on the 7th, amid a crowd of loving friends who had assembled to bid him farewell; but rejoicing still more to see, as he passed through Bridgend, “that William G—’s sign as a spirit-seller was taken down!”