CHAPTER VIII.

1840.

WORK AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

“I

SHALL never forget,” says one to whom Mr. Burns “was more than any other man,” “the first time I saw him. It was at Lawers, on Sabbath the 16th of August, 1840. The whole country was ringing with the wonderful movement in Kilsyth, Perth, and Dundee, with which his name was associated. It was rumoured too that a short time before a person had died in connection with one of his services. A great multitude assembled, not only with the ordinary feelings of curiosity, but with feelings of wonder and solemnity deepening almost into fear. I can remember the misty day, and the eager crowds that flocked from all directions across hill and lake. The service was of course in the open air, and when the preacher appeared many actually felt as if it were an angel of God. There was an indescribable awe over the assembly. Mr. Burns’ look, voice, tone; the opening psalm, the comment, the prayer, the chapter, the text (it was the parable of the Great Supper in Luke xiv.), the lines of thought, even the minutest; the preacher’s incandescent earnestness; the stifled sobs of the hearers on this side, the faces lit up with joy on that; the death-like silence of the crowd, as they reluctantly dispersed in the gold-red evening—the whole scene is ineffaceably daguerreotyped on my memory. It was the birthplace of many for eternity. Last year (1868), when a deputation from the General Assembly visited the presbytery of Breadalbane, in connection with the state of religion, a venerable minister stated that such of the subjects of that gracious work as still survive adorn the doctrines of God our Saviour in all things. Most of the congregations in the district received the divine shower.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Mr. Burns’ labours in Breadalbane, or the romantic dis­trict that lies along the margin of Loch Tay, took place between the periods of his first and of his second visit to Aberdeen described in the last chapter, and constituted altogether one of the most interesting and characteristic parts of his whole evangelistic course. Here he was peculiarly at home. The solemn forms of the everlasting hills and the great shadow of the supernatural which they seemed to cast even over the spirit of the people were congenial to him. The Sabbath stillness too, and the fresh and healthful upland air, contributed to restore tone and vigour to a frame on which the fevered atmos­phere of city life and city work had begun sensibly to tell. Never probably at any period of his life was he more happy in the best sense than during this interval of quiet thoughtfulness and restful labour—kneeling in lonely prayer in some forest thicket by the river or mountain side, or standing up before those arrested crowds that hung upon his words, silent and solemn as the mountains around. Never, probably, were the sacred impressions produced by his preaching more deep and spiritual than here, or the tendency to an unhealthy and nervous excitement less. The following graphic words from the writer already quoted were true of him at all times, but at this time emphatically so: “Like the Baptist he came preaching repentance, and with terrible earnest­ness warned the thousands that flocked to hear him to flee from the coming wrath. Like the Baptist, too, he was independent of home ties—lived, as it were, in the wilderness, ‘making himself grandly solitary for the work of Christ!’ His very eyes left their light with you after he had gone. . . . And yet there was an Isaiah-like grandeur about his expositions of the gospel. When his lips were touched with the live coal, it was indeed a feast of fat things to hear him. And even when he was straitened, which he often was, owing to the incessant demands upon him, there was always something precious which stuck fast in the memory.”

To this interesting period of Mr. B.’s labours we pro­pose to devote the present chapter; but it will be proper before entering on it, to glance briefly at the course of his movements during the three preceding months.

For some weeks after he left Aberdeen, those seasons of “straitening,” of which Mr. Macgregor speaks, had been more than usually frequent and painful to him. The reaction of feeling and the physical exhaustion naturally succeeding a time of high excitement, produced a languor alike of mind and body, which even his vigilant self-jealousy could not avoid attributing, in part at least, to other than spiritual causes. Thus at Dundee, May 3d, at the close of a Sabbath’s services, he writes, “I was tired and had not much of the Lord’s comfortable pre­sence in my work, feeling that I needed rest for the body and a season of solemn retirement to meet with the Lord in personal communion.” And again at Stirling, May 6th, “I did not come here with an expectation of doing much, on two grounds: 1st, That my bodily strength was much reduced; and 2d, my mind needed recreation to restore its elasticity and power.” Yet even then, sometimes the bow drawn at a venture, albeit by an enfeebled hand, would send an arrow of divine con­viction home to some favoured heart:—“I was going out,” says he, May 13th, “on Monday night among the people, and dropping words here and there, I somehow looked up the stair when the people were coming down, and the eye fixing on a young man, I pointed to him and said aloud, ‘Will *you come* to Christ?’ On Tuesday this young man came to me in great distress, and told me that he was a smith belonging to Scone, who was living there when I was in Perth, and often attended our meetings. He said he often wanted to be awakened, and wondered how he was so little moved, when so many around him were. He remained in his undecided state until these words were so remarkably directed to him. They went like a knife to his heart, and seemed to bring him to the foot of the cross!”—He struggled on in the endeavour to fulfil engagements already made, till a decided attack of illness compelled him to pause and “rest a while” under the hospitable roof of Collessie manse, where his kind friends Mr.[[2]](#footnote-2) and Mrs. M’Farlane welcomed and nursed him with an affectionate tenderness, which he never afterwards forgot. In a week or two, however, he was at his work again, preaching to large and deeply moved audiences in various places in Fifeshire, and meet­ing with unexpected encouragement and support even from some of those ministers who would have been thought least likely to favour his line of things. Dr. Barclay of Kettle, the oldest minister of the Church of Scotland, then in his ninety-first year, who had been always ranked amongst the Moderate party, shook him warmly by the hand as he came down from the pulpit, saying, “I thank you most heartily,” and urged him to return. Dr. Ferrie of Kilconquhar,[[3]](#footnote-3) reputed of similar views, made him free alike of his house and of his church, entered with the deepest interest into all the solemn scenes which attended his preaching, and told him that “while he was with him he was to act exactly as if he were the minister of the parish.” In the neighbouring parish of Anstruther, then under the pastoral charge of Dr. Ferrie’s son, he had a like freedom of action, and a like open and effectual door of access to the consciences and hearts of the people, all the ministers of the place cordially uniting their congregations to form one deeply solemnized audi­ence, in the midst of which “some of the most hardened sinners of the town were seen turning pale as death and shedding tears” under the preacher’s appeals. Here he was in the midst of interesting scenes and reminiscences. “Mr. Ferrie’s manse,” he writes, “is the same that the celebrated James Melville, minister of East Anstruther after the Reformation, lived in, and I spent most of my time on Saturday as also on Sabbath in his study, a little room over the stair which juts out from the house on the outside. It is called ‘The Watch Tower,’ and is well suited to the name, as it has three small windows looking east, west, and south, from which one can see almost all the town and the whole frith.” And again, two days afterwards, July 1st, “I spent the day chiefly alone, seeking personal holiness, the fundamental requi­site in order to a successful ministry. I was in Burleigh Castle for an hour on the first floor, which is arched and entire, having climbed up by a broken part of the wall. Before me I had to the right Queen Mary’s Island in Lochleven, and to the left the Lomonds, where the Covenanters hid themselves from their persecutors, and I stood amid the ruins of the castle of one of their leaders. The scene was solemn and affecting, and I trust the everlasting Emmanuel was with me. O that I had a martyr’s heart, if not a martyr’s death and a martyr’s crown!”

After rapid visits to Strathmiglo, Milnathort, Cleish, Kinross, and Dunfermline, he now proceeded westward by Stirling, Gargunnock, and Kippen, to Kilsyth, and thence, after nearly a month of quiet pastoral work, which was to him almost like repose, northward to those scenes amongst the “Sabbath hills,” where we have now to trace his footsteps. Here his own journal is so full and interesting, and gives withal so vivid a picture of the whole form and idea of his life, that I am tempted to give the larger part of it almost entire. He had left Kilsyth on the 12th August, and after spending two days of incessant labour in Glasgow, proceeded north­ward *via* Lochlomond and Glen Falloch to Lawers, where he commenced his labours on Sabbath the 16th, the day referred to by Mr. Macgregor, and thence advanced gradually eastward to Fortingall, Aberfeldy, Logierait, Moulin, Tenandry, Kirkmichael, as God in his providence opened the way, welcomed everywhere by a solemnly expectant and willing people. His first entry is at Inverarnan, at the head of Lochlomond, and opens with a graphic incident characteristic of the place and of the people:—

“*Inverarnan, Friday, August 14th.—*Itravelled to Inverarnan, at the head of Lochlomond, where I slept. Nothing particular occurred by the way, except that I spoke to one or two of my fellow-travellers, wandering in quest of pleasure, and was generally in such a dead frame of soul that I had to remain below, and could not dare to open my mouth in the Lord’s name. At Inverarnan I spent much of the afternoon in wandering about and admiring the grandeur of the Lord’s works in this mouth of the Highlands of Perthshire. I noticed two things among the people as affording an index to the nature of the privileges they had enjoyed. Some seemed to have full knowledge of a kind that is only to be got by hearing the most spiritual and systematic of our Scottish preachers, and one woman I met on the road who seemed to me a perfect specimen of a groaning hypocrite (perhaps I am doing her injustice, the Lord pardon me if I am); as soon as I began to speak to her, she wrung her hands and twisted her features as if trying to manufacture the symptoms of repent­ance, &c. This agreed well with what I know had been the Lord’s dealings with this part of the country. They have had under some ministers the *very best preaching,* and some of the people retain not only the mould of the doctrine taught them, but the recollection of the deep and overpowering emotions which it produced in the hand of the Spirit upon many minds at a former period; particularly about twenty years ago, when Breadalbane, &c., was signally blessed of the Lord, under the preaching of Mr. M’Donald and other godly min­isters.— Evening, I had a meeting in the toll-house adjoining the inn, with about twenty persons, chiefly men, who seemed solemnized. The innkeeper was not very anxious for this meeting when I spoke of it to him. He had much scriptural knowledge, and many of his expressions put me in mind of Mr. M’Donald’s phraseology, but his attachment to his trade seemed stronger than his theology. His family I was much interested in, and they upon the whole received me well, though I did not spare the publicans’ trade even when Mrs. M’Callum was present. I this forenoon travelled by the Dunkeld coach from Inverarnan to Lawers, up Glen Falloch, down Glen Dochart, and by Killin along the side of Loch Tay, a splendid route for a great part of the way. I did little on the way but sigh occasionally over the poor people whom we passed, and to wish them an interest in Emmanuel. I also gave away one or two little books to Highland boys in their kilt, who hung upon the coach from time to time. Dear boys, they looked surprised and pleased! At Killin I break­fasted along with two young gentlemen on a fishing excursion, who seemed to eye me suspiciously with my black clothes and white neck-cloth, and took care to allow me to begin breakfast before them, I thought, in order that I might not ask a blessing aloud. When leaving them I said, I am afisher too.’ They looked grave, and one of them said, ‘Oh! afisher of men, I suppose.’ ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘but like other fishers we have often to complain of a bad fishing season.’ They smiled, and so we parted. I arrived at Lawers at one P.M., and found Mr. Campbell a truly pious and very kind man. His partner equally so.—Evening, I walked up the hill, and prayed for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. I had, how­ever, to walk by faith and not by sense.

*“Lawers, Sabbath, August 16th.* —A congregation of, I suppose, fifteen hundred assembled, though the day was unfavourable, at the tent by twelve o’clock, to whom I preached, but with little assistance, speaking comparatively, from Luke xxiv. 16, &c.; at the end I told them that I had got no message for them from the Lord, but that I was not there­fore led to despair of yet getting a blessing among them, as I generally found that when the Lord meant to pour out his Spirit, he first made both preacher and people sensible that without him they could do nothing. A godly man has since that time told me that he felt an unusual fulness of heart that morning at family worship, and thought there would be some­thing unusual done.—Evening, We met in the church, which holds five hundred sitters, and was crowded. I preached from the parable of the barren fig-tree, and had much more assistance. A good many were in tears, and one cried aloud as we were dismissing them.

*“Lawers, Monday, August 17th.—*Wemet for public wor­ship at twelve o’clock. The church was crowded, though the day was very stormy. I spoke from the 51st and 32d Psalms, particularly upon confession of sin, and the people seemed very solemnly impressed, some, perhaps many, being in tears. When I had done Mr. Campbell came up and spoke a little very solemnly in Gaelic, and the people became much more visibly moved. When the blessing was pronounced a great many remained in their seats, and some of them began to cry out vehemently that they were lost, &c. &c. We in con­sequence continued praying and speaking to them until about five o’clock, when we thought it good to let them remain alone, seeing that we were to have public worship again at six o’clock; at half-past six Mr. Campbell of Glen Lyon preached in Gaelic from Matthew xxv. 10, and gave some account at the close of the wonderful work of the Lord at Tarbat in Ross-shire. When I went into the church near the close, I heard some persons groaning, and when we were separating one woman cried out bitterly. We parted about half-past eight, as we were to meet next day at twelve again. A great day!

*“Tuesday, August 18th.—*We had aprayer-meeting at twelve, when the church was three-fourths filled. Mr. M’Kenzie began and was followed by Mr. Campbell, both in Gaelic. This occupied nearly two hours, and when I went to the pulpit I found it my duty to dismiss the people without detaining them any longer, offering, however, to converse with any in­dividuals who might desire it. From one hundred and fifty to two hundred waited about the door, and with these I engaged in prayer. During the prayer the Spirit of God was mightily atwork among us, so that almost all were deeply moved, and one man cried aloud. Mr. M’Kenzie said that he almost never felt in the same way as at this time. After prayer I addressed the people in a series of miscellaneous remarks tending to bring them immediately to surrender to Jesus. Many I saw in tears, and among these a number of fine stout young Highlanders. We then prayed again, when the impression continued, and concluded by singing Psalm xxxi. 5.

“This day at a quarter to one conversed with the following anxious inquirers:

“1. M. C., aged seventeen, C—h, East Lawers, ‘Oh! I am deep, deep in sin.’ She got her eyes opened on Sabbath night in the church. ‘I saw that I was utterly lost.’ ‘I have not found Christ yet.” Who can lead you to Christ?’ ‘The Holy Spirit.’ Deeply affected.

“2. C. C., above twenty, C—e, West Lawers. Concerned three years ago, particularly from a sermon of Mr. Campbell’s of Glen Lyon, on ‘How shall we escape?’ &c. He said, that if they went away from the church neglecting Christ, they would be trampling on his bosom, &c. It was this that affected her. She has been more deeply affected during these days past.

“3. C. R., aged twenty, C—n, West Lawers. ‘I can get no rest nor peace, my heart is seeking after something which I cannot get. This began when I came into the church on Monday morning and heard you praying. I felt as if my heart would come out. I have been seeking Christ, but I have not got near to him yet.’ Deeply and tenderly affected.

“4. R. M., servant to Mr. Campbell, came with them from Benbecula (about eighteen years); was awakened on Saturday night at worship in this room, the first meeting that I had after arriving. ‘I felt as if something were gripping my heart in the inside, and could get no rest since that time.’ Seems deeply and *habitually* concerned. This we see, as she lives in the house.

“5. J. M’L., C—r, West Lawers (about twenty years). ‘A word of Mr. Campbell’s of Glen Lyon, which he had at the sacrament (ten weeks ago), always keepit wee me. He said that Rebekah’s brother asked her, ‘Will you go with this man?’ and so he said we were to go with Christ. This keepit wee me, and when Mr. Campbell came into the pulpit on Monday night, I first thought, have not yet gone with Christ,’ and when he spoke of the door being shut, and we being out for ever, I saw that I would be out, &c. I have got no rest since. (She cried out in agony that night.) I often was concerned before, but it always went away when I came out. If the Lord had not been merciful I would have been in the place where his mercy is gone for ever long ago, to be sure,’ &c.

“6. B. M’G., M—h, four miles west (aged twenty-one years). Was a little touched at the Glen Lyon sacrament (ten weeks ago), when Mr. Campbell’s brother was preaching, especially by his saying, ‘If you are missing the Spirit it will be ill for you.’ I did not go on however at that time until Sabbath, when I felt something at my heart, I did not know what, and I got worse and worse every day. I heard my conscience crying I was guilty in everything,’ &c. &c.

“7. C. C., aged fifteen, a cousin of M. C., stays at C—h, East Lawers; awakened on Monday forenoon; can make little out of her, she has so little English.

“8. C. M’G., aged fourteen, C—h; awakened yesterday forenoon at Struan. She has little English, and I had to question her, through Mr. Campbell, in Gaelic; yet she understood enough to reach her heart, and told me in Gaelic that I had said their hearts were as hard as steel, and how when a sheep was lost they would all go out one this way, and one that way, and the shepherd would go to the hill till they found it, and then they would be satisfied, &c. &c[[4]](#footnote-4). . . .

“In the evening I preached at six o’clock to a crowded and most solemn audience from Isaiah xlv. 22, and enjoyed some degree of assistance, I think. We concluded about nine o’clock, but just as the people were going away ‘a woman that is a sinner’ cried out vehemently, and we had to stay and pray again. Many of the people were in tears, and among these some stout hardy men. Praise to the Lord! It is sweet to see how the people show their kindness when their hearts are opened to Jesus. During these few days there have been four fat lambs sent as presents, some to Mr. Campbell and some to me, with many other articles, such as butter, &c.

*“Breadalbane, Fortingall, Friday August 21st*.—In the Lord’s wonderful providence, the minister of this dead parish consented to my preaching there this day at twelve noon, and accordingly we went; this morning I felt such an entire vacancy of mind and heart, that it seemed impossible that I could preach. However in secret prayer before leaving the manse I had hopes of a good day. The people were met at the tent, but the wind being high we adjourned to the church. I spoke with assistance at the outset from Psalm lxxii. 16-18, and had considerable enlargement in prayer. The subject was conversion; text, Matthew xviii. 3, and in discoursing upon this I experienced more assistance in attempting to speak home to the very marrow of men’s souls than at almost any other time (a few occasions excepted). Two wicked men could not stand it, as we supposed, and retired from their seats. Many others, and among these the stoutest men, were in tears. At the conclusion, when I had pronounced the blessing, I sat down in the pulpit in secret prayer as usual, but to my amazement I heard nobody moving; and waiting a full minute I rose and saw them all standing or sitting, with their eyes in many cases filled with tears, and all fixed on the pulpit. It was indeed a solemn moment, the most solemn Mr. M’Kenzie and Mr. Campbell said they had ever seen. I asked them what they were waiting for, and whether they were waiting for Christ. I prayed again, when there was the utmost solemnity, and then spoke a little from a Psalm which we sung, and then parted at four P.M. The people retired slowly and most of them in tears. We dined at the manse, when all were very serious, and came away immediately in order to hold a meeting in this parish at six o’clock. As we came along the road we overtook some men and women in deep distress, as their tears and sober counten­ances indicated, and their iron grasp when we shook hands with them. Many also came to their doors and recognized us with evident concern. At six we had a meeting for an hour and half in a house at the east end of this parish, when about a hundred were present. Praise to the Lamb!

“In the evening I walked up the side of Ben Lamers, until I could command a view from the head of Glen Dochart to Dunkeld, having Loch Tay in the centre from Kenmore to Killin. It was a beautiful evening, and the scene was magnificent. However, all my thoughts of external scenery were well-nigh absorbed in the thought of the wonderful works of Jehovah which I had witnessed during the week that was closing among the poor inhabitants of this splendid theatre of the Lord’s creation. I could have supposed that I had been in Breadalbane for a month instead of a week; the events that had passed before me were so remarkable and so rapid in succession. It has been indeed a resurrection of the dead, sudden and momentous as the resurrection of the last day—nay, far more momentous than it to the individuals concerned. After coming home I was alone, and felt much my need of a broken and grateful heart. Mr. Campbell was telling me of some very noted sinners among his people whom he had met with, and who seemed to be genuine penitents.

*“Breadalbane, Ardeonaig, Sabbath, August 23d*—This morning I crossed the loch at a quarter past eleven, along with hundreds of the people, to preach at the missionary station of Ardeonaig, under the charge of amost primitive Christian minister, Mr. M’Kenzie, a nephew of Lachlan M’Kenzie, late minister of Loch Carron, a very remarkable and eminently honoured minister of Jesus. The tent was placed on the hill-side behind the manse, very nearly on the spot where it stood in the days of the former revival under Mr. M’Donald of Urquhart, and the minister who then was placed here, the eminently godly Mr. Findlater, whose memory is sweet in this neighbourhood. There was an immense assembly, collected from a circuit of from twelve to twenty miles, which could not amount to less than 3000. Mr. M’Kenzie began in Gaelic at eleven. I succeeded him in English at one, preaching from Ezekiel xxxiii. 11. I felt a great uplifting of the heart in pride before God, and though I was enabled so far to get over this as to be able to speak boldly and strongly upon the ‘evil ways’ of men from which they are called to turn, yet I could make nothing of the dis­play of Jehovah’s love which is made in the words, ‘As I live, I have no pleasure,’ &c.; and though I stopped and prayed with the people for assistance, yet I had to conclude abruptly, having nothing to say but what would profane and degrade in the eyes of the hearers these marvellous words. I came into the house at four o’clock, much cast down on account of the reigning vanity and pride, and self-seeking of my desper­ately wicked heart, and was driven to my knees, when I found the Lord very gracious, and had a sweet anticipation given me of the Lord’s presence in the evening, when we were to meet in the church. Accordingly we met at six o’clock. I did not discourse on any set subject, but was led to speak upon the Psalm which we were to sing (Psalm cii. 11-14), and in this I felt so much enlarged, that both people and preacher were tenderly moved with a view of Emmanuel’s love. After we had prayed I made a few additional remarks of a miscellaneous kind, which seemed also to come home to the heart. When we were separating, some individuals began to cry aloud. I tried to quiet them, as I am always afraid that they are in danger of drawing the attention of many who are less affected away from considering the state of their own souls. However, they could not be composed, and when I went up to the gallery, where the most of them were, I found to my joy that they were persons from Fortingall, who had I suppose been impressed on Friday. We took them along with a number of other persons in the same state into the manse, and after prayer sent them away, though not in the best state for going to so great a distance. Praise! I saw a number of men in the church muchaffected, but they did not come so prominently forward, being better able to restrain their feelings. . . .

*“Monday, August 24th.—*Duringthe greater part of the day my soul was in a light and easy frame, for which I was rebuked in speaking with Mr. M’Kenzie; and from this time till the hour of meeting I was under a humbling sense of pride and impious profanity of heart in the work of God, insomuch that it seemed to me almost beyond hope that I should be supported of the Lord in his public service. I could fix on no passage to speak from, but was led to study with a personal reference Ezekiel xxxvi. 25-27. After I had sung and prayed in the church, I was thinking of speaking on this passage, but not having very clear direction to it, I thought it better to sing again that I might have further opportunity to cry to the Lord for guidance. I opened the psalm-book and my eye rested on Psalm lxix. 29. The suitableness of the words to my own spiritual state attracted me, and I began to make a few remarks in consequence upon them. I soon however got so much divine light and assistance in commenting on them, that I spoke from them I suppose for an hour, much affected in my own soul, and to an audience in general similarly moved. Mr. M’Kenzie seemed much affected, and said when we came into the manse that I had not had such an hour in Breadalbane before. Oh! how wonderful are the Lord’s dealings! how fitted to humble the pride of all flesh, and teach us a child­like and entire dependence on him for all blessings! We were hardly in the manse until a number of men and women came in after us, in deep distress of soul, with whom we had to pray again. . . .

*“Lawers, Tuesday, August 25th.—*Wehad a meeting here at one o’clock, of thanksgiving to Jehovah for his glorious work in the souls of the people here during the past days. It was conducted chiefly in Gaelic by Mr. Campbell and Mr. M’Kenzie. I spoke a few words at the end, from Psalm cxlix. 1-4. The people seemed in a very solemn frame. As we came from the ferry-boat, we looked into the old church on the lochside, now used as a barn, and joined in giving the Lord praise for the marvellous displays of his saving grace made in it to many who are now in heaven!—Evening, we had a public meeting at six. The evening was fine, and the audience could not be much under 100, I think. Many had come a distance of 8 miles. I was, as yesterday, brought under a deep sense of my inability to say anything to the Lord’s glory previous to our assembling, but I was aided in my extremity in no less a degree. I read Mark ix. 41-50, and preached from Luke xvi. 16. I believe I never spoke more *faithfully* in the pulpit than at this time from these three particulars:—He that *presses* into the kingdom of God, I. Sets his *whole heart* on Christ. II. He gives up all that would prevent his following the Lord fully. III. He fights his way to heaven through the opposition of his enemies. 1. The Devil. 2. The world. 3. The old man, &c. &c. There was very little visible emotion among the people, but the most affecting solemnity and most riveted attention. It was as if the veil that hides eternity had become transparent, and its momentous realities were seen appearing to the awe-struck eyes of sinners. We parted at a quarter-past nine, after pressing on the people to retire directly home to the throne of grace. I am told to-day (Wednesday) by Mr. Campbell, that for a quarter of a mile from the church every covered retreat was occupied by awakened souls pouring out the heart to God. He seems to think, from all that he saw and has heard today, that last night was the most solemn season that we have had at this time. Praise, praise! O *humble* me, good Shepherd, and be thou exalted over all! Amen. . . .

*“Lavers, Friday, August 28th.—*Werode home by Fortingall, passing down to the foot of Glen Lyon, through some of the most sublime scenery that I everwitnessed. . . . I felt awfully the power of corruption in my heart by the way, and when we were within a mile of the foot of the glen I went out and getting down among the rocks by the river side, where the voice was lost in the noise of the gushing flood, I was enabled to cry aloud for help to the Lord. The Lord heard me I think, though, alas! I neither then, nor almost at any time, can get so near to him as I did in former times; I come rather as a minister than as a sinner. Lord, help me! At Fortingall I met G— G—, formerly in the 79th regiment, in which he served at eight storms and twelve general engagements, and yet escaped with a single wound. He is known in the country as an awful drunkard and a discontented radical, and yet, to the astonishment of many, he was so much affected when I was at Fortingall, that he has been with us at all our meetings since. He said, ‘There *is an* impression on my soul, and I am determined to follow it out.’ I could not see that he had got a full view of his sins, but it was sweet to see him even inquiring. . . . I could not believe, when on the way home, that it was possible for me to address in the evening a public meeting at Kiltire, four miles west from Lawers, but when going to the place of meeting I felt that humiliation under God’s gracious hand which filled me with hope. The house was crowded, and many were outside at the windows. There must have been 250 in all. I spoke from John x. 27, and had my closed lips again opened, to my own astonishment. The people were deeply solemnized and tenderly moved. It was our last meeting, and I know that many would have wished to shake hands at parting; yet I was rejoiced to see that they seemed so solemnly engaged about the truth, that few sought after this and went rapidly off in solemn silence. Indeed, I think I never had so pleasing a separation from any people. Glory to the Lord! In walking home I overtook a few of the people. They said nothing, but walked in thoughtful silence, and in some cases wept. . . . In looking back upon this work from the beginning till now, it appears to me more clearly the fruit of the *sovereign* operations of God’s Spirit than almost any other that I have seen. We have never needed to have any of those after-meetings which I have found so necessary and useful in other places, the people were so deeply moved under the ordinary services. I never saw so many of the *old* affected as in this case. The number of those affected are greater in *proportion* to the population than I have ever seen, and there has been far less appearance of *mere animal excite­ment* than in most of the cases that I have been acquainted with. Perhaps most of these advantages are to be traced to the excellent ministry under which they have been, and to their universal acquaintance with conversion as a necessary change, and one that some of their fathers underwent.

*“Lawers, &c., Saturday, August 29th.—*Ileft my dear and kind friends at half-past twelve by the coach, after visiting a young man on his sick-bed, a son of the Baptist minister. Many of the people recognized me as we went along. Mrs. M’N—— or Mary M’G——, who was on the road, burst into tears and threw herself down upon the dyke. We had a delightful drive. At Kenmore a gentleman in clerical dress, who had been on the front of the coach, addressed me and said, ‘You have very affectionate hearers; I am glad to see it. I am a minister of the Church of England, and have under my care fifteen thousand souls in the heart of London,’ &c. Another English gentleman who was standing at the inn said to me, ‘That is one of the excellent of the earth, his name is Mr. W——. He was a missionary, but had to come home from bad health, and is now travelling from the same cause.’ He had a livery servant with him. He left us at Aberfeldy, and I went down and spoke to him while the horses were changing. He seemed a sweet humble Christian man. ‘Oh!’ he said, ‘that is a heavenly scene, if we had only a heaven within; at least *I* want that,’ &c. We parted with Christian salutations. The Lord’s people are indeed *one in him,* though *separated in the world. . . .*

*“Moulin, Tuesday September 8th.—*Thismorning I rode with Mr. C. to Straloch, in this parish, through Glen Brirachan, and then preached to about five hundred in the open air at twelve o’clock. I was under a heavy load of conscience all the way to the place of meeting. I got a little relief during the time that Mr. Drummond of Kirkmichael, who had come to meet us, prayed in an adjoining house before I began; but still I was in such bondage of spirit that I could hardly speak to the people, feeling as if they were seeing the infidelity and hypocrisy of my heart from my countenance, and so being unable to look them directly in the face. My text was Isaiah xxxii. 2, first clause, in which I considered, 1st. Why we needed a covert, &c. 2d. What was meant by the wind and tempest. 3d. Who the ‘man’ spoken of is. 4th. How he becomes a hiding-place. After some introductory remarks on the text I prayed, and then got considerable liberty in speak­ing of the evil of sin, and its deserving the wind and tempest of divine wrath. However, when I proceeded to the second head, this assistance was withdrawn, and I was so dark and dead that I had to draw quickly to a close. I prayed, and gave out aconcluding psalm, during which Mr. Campbell came and pressed me to say a few words more, as there were people there who in all likelihood would not be got at again. This affected me, yet I could get no greater liberty to speak, and told him that I could not speak at that time for the whole world. I intimated when I had pronounced the blessing, that I desired to speak further to them, and that I was persuaded there must be some cause, either in me or in some of them, for the withdrawal of the Spirit of God; but that though I had no message for them at that time, I would rejoice to remain with any *who were really desiring a blessing to their souls,* and join in crying to the Lord for his help. No one went away. We joined in prayer, the people with far greater solemnity, and I with some degree of liberty; and after I had ended I felt so carried above the power of my enemies, that I began at once upon the topics I had left; and throwing down the gauntlet to the enemies of Jesus, I spoke for a long time with such assistance that I felt as if I could have shaken the globe to pieces through the views I got of the glory of the divine person of Christ, and of his atoning sacrifice to rescue sinners from *eternal death.* The people were bent down beneath the word like corn under the breeze, and many a stout sinner wept bitterly. We separated about four o’clock, and I felt myself called, in con­sequence of what I had seen and felt, to agree to Mr. Drummond’s request that I should go to Kirkmichael on Sabbath week instead of to Grandtully as I had intended. Glory to the Lord! We had some of the *gentry* there *in tears! . . .*

*“Wednesday, September 9th.—*Irode up in the forenoon to B., the property of Mr. S. of S., Perth, where he and his family at present are; with the view of preaching at Tenandry church, near which they are*.* The scene is the most sublime that I have almost ever seen, including the pass of Killiecrankie, &c. &c.; but I have no time, even had I the power, to describe the grandeur of the Lord’s works in nature. I felt the temptation to be unfaithful to the ‘rich man’ with whom I was called to live, and through this compliance un­faithful also to the poorer classes around. If we are unfaith­ful to the rich and great all our faithfulness to others must be more or less hypocritical. This I felt, and being made to cry to the Lord for help, I got so completely over it that when preaching in the evening at Tenandry, with the S.’s, Mrs. H. of S., the builder of the church,[[5]](#footnote-5) &c., present, I spoke boldly and openly of many things that the rich alone could under­stand, and which they would find it hard to bear unless they would unreservedly submit to Christ and his cross. We met at five o’clock; I spoke from Hebrews iv. 7. At first I had assistance enough to expound, but not enough to reach the conscience with keen exhortation and reproof. However, after praying, I got this for a considerable time, and the people were so much affected that all were riveted in their looks and some were weeping audibly. The plan followed was this:—I considered the meaning of, 1st. Hearing God’s voice. 2d. Hardening the heart. 3d. The arguments against this sin. (a) Our losing the promised rest; *(b)* Our having been long called already—‘after so long atime;’ (c) Our being called ‘today.’ After I had ‘prayed I sought to im­prove these truths by selecting a few passages of God’s word, such as ‘Ye must be born again,’ &c.; ‘Come now and let us reason together; and pressed the people by the arguments of the text to hear and obey these immediately as *the voice of God.* It was this part that seemed to come chiefly *home.* We had an after-meeting with the anxious, who seemed to be numerous.[[6]](#footnote-6) . . .

*“Saturday, September 12th.—*Atsix P.M. I left Moulin manse, and had a very solemn and affecting parting from this dear family. The servants I conversed with individually during the day, and all, but particularly three of them, were very deeply affected, as they had previously been in church at several of the meetings. Leaving Moulin by Mr. C.’s gig, I drove down the strath to Logierait, where I was kindly re­ceived by Mr. Buchanan (another Moderate minister) and his sister. I spent the evening for the most part alone, and in conversation with Mr. B., who is a man of superior talents and attainments in knowledge, and seems to have a good dis­position towards those remarkable outpourings of the Holy Spirit in Scotland against which so many are arrayed in open enmity.

*“Logierait, Sabbath, September 13th.—*Themorning was fine, and an immense congregation assembled at twelve o’clock in the churchyard, with whom I continued unin­terruptedly until five P.M., singing, praying, and preaching the word of life. The subject was 2 Corinthians v. 19–vi. 2. The people were very solemnly affected, indeed more visibly so than on any previous Sabbath that I have been in the Highlands; at one time many were crying aloud in agony, and tears were flowing plentifully throughout the audience. One of the addresses that seemed most signally blessed originated in a somewhat remarkable way. As I was about to engage in prayer at the middle of the service, I noticed two young gentlemen looking down upon the audience from a little eminence afew hundred yards distant from us; and feeling a strong desire to say something that might arrest them in their carelessness at so awfully solemn a time, I called on the people of God to join me in praying for them, and spoke so loud that they could easily hear me. When I was doing this a third young man ascended to my view, and joined his companions. The three put me in mind of the three young men who were so remarkably converted at the Kirk of Shotts, when going to Edinburgh to be present at some scenes of public amusement. I told this anecdote, en­larging upon many things which it suggested with much liberty, and the impression seemed to be deeply affecting. The young men in my view, as soon as they heard me speaking of them, and had the eyes of the congregation turned upon them, withdrew from their position and came near, concealing themselves behind the church, where they no doubt heard what was said. The rich people, with *very few* exceptions, remained *to the end;* and some of them I thought seemed solemnly affected, at least for the time. Some of the most pointed appeals were addressed specially to them. Mr. B. seemed satisfied, and gave me encouragement to come to him again. Both he and Mr. C. of Moulin expressed them­selves as agreeably disappointed, having expected to hear something very exciting, and not solid and sober.

*“Monday, September 14th*.—This day I spent chiefly alone, in letter-writing, &c., having no meeting in the evening. Oh! how sweet and profitable to my soul I find a day on which I have no public duty! Would that I had more such, if it were the Lord’s holy will! In ordinary cases they would be absolutely indispensable, but when the Lord moves in so mighty and sovereign a manner as he is doing now, the mountains become a plain.

“*Tuesday, September 14th.—*Mr*.* B. left today to be absent from home for a fortnight, and parted with me, expressing regret that we could not meet again in public, and pressing me kindly to make all the use I could of his house, &c., in his absence. This I did. We joined solemnly in prayer before parting. The Lord bless him!—Evening: I went down three and a half miles toward Dunkeld and preached at Dowally. The subject I forget. The season was pleasant but in no respect remarkable. I went home again to Logierait at night.

*“Wednesday, September 16th.—*Beingtired last night, and having told the servant that she need not awaken me in the morning, I slept until past ten A.M., and got up, fearing to be too late for the Lochlomond coach, which passed up to Grandtully on the other side of the Tay at eleven o’clock, and trembling at the thought of being hurried so quickly through my secret duties. I got hastily ready, and without taking any breakfast got my luggage ready and set off. On reaching the ferry-boat I learned to my grief that the coach had passed fully a quarter before the usual time, and was already out of sight, and that thus I was left to walk a distance of six miles. I went on with my bag in my hand, thinking that the Lord might have some design of a gracious kind concealed under this frowning occurrence; and when I had gone about one and a half miles, and was passing through the little village of Balnaguard I discovered one which fully explained his mysterious intention. For after I had passed a great number of people engaged under the burning sun in cutting down and also in gathering in the plenteous fruits of the earth, two men in the prime of life came running to meet me, evidently under concern about their state, and pointing to a school-house beside us, the shutters of which were shut in consequence of it being the harvest season, pressed me to meet the people there though it were but for half an hour. I went in, and in the course of not more than seven minutes the room was crowded to the door by people of all ages, from the child of seven to the grandfather of seventy. We prayed; I read the 70th Psalm in the metrical version, and made a few remarks on the last eight lines; we then prayed again, and I came away leaving these dear people in as solemn a frame, to all appear­ance, as I have ever witnessed any audience. There could not be fewer than one hundred and twenty present, and among these I hardly saw one that was not shedding tears. The wonderful providence by which we had been brought together affected us much, and I was so much struck with the dealing of God in this and in the state of the people, that I intimated another prayer-meeting among them for Friday forenoon, when I expected to pass them on my way to visit Dowally a second time. During the time of our meeting I noticed a farmer of the name of M’G. of H— of Grandtully, come in and stand listening with the most riveted attention to what was said. He was a rough-looking man, and one whom I noticed in this character the first night that I was at Grandtully, saying to myself, ‘How wonderful it would be to see that man brought under conviction of sin.’ From his appearance at Logierait on Sabbath, and now at this meeting, I entertained a hope that this might be the case. When I came out and met him, my hope was agreeably con­firmed. Having to go from home on business, and being anxious to be at our meeting at Grandtully in the evening, he had set out very early and was now returning in the utmost haste. When he heard that I was at Balnaguard he sent home his horse that he might be present and accompany me home. We accordingly had a good deal of solemn con­verse on the way. He seemed under deep concern, and pressed me to go in, though my time was nearly gone, and pray with them. I did so, and hardly had I entered when the room was filled with old and young, collected from the harvest-field. Without saying a word we joined in prayer, and so remarkably was the presence of God granted that all were in tears, and some cried aloud. After prayer I left this scene, which was certainly one that displayed the finger of God as much as any one in which I ever was, and walked home in company with R. D., a stepson of M‘G’s., and the boy who cried out in the church at Grandtully on the first night that I was there. He seems to continue under deep concern, and has got some comfort since that time. He went, dear boy, with me to carry my bag. When we had got to a considerable distance, a number of those who had been affected in the house came running across the fields to meet us again, weeping bitterly; but I did not en­courage this, and sent them to secret prayer. I arrived at Grandtully by five o’clock, and hardly conscious of fatigue. ‘The Lord will give strength to his people.’ As thy days, so shall thy *strength* be!”

Here we must reluctantly break off this remarkable and deeply interesting itinerarium. Remarkable and interesting I cannot doubt that it will be regarded by every Christian mind, however differently men may judge in regard to some of the points which it naturally raises for consideration. It brings, indeed, into the strongest relief at once that in him which in the view of all was most admirable, and that which was most peculiar, and in the view of some open to question. In particular the pre­dominantly, sometimes almost exclusively subjective char­acter of his ministry stands out in the broadest light. He spoke, apparently *could* speak, only what he felt, and that only while he felt it, and so far as he felt it. He must utter the very present experience and conviction of his soul, or be silent altogether. Out of the abundance of the heart alone could his mouth speak. The declaration of a mere intellectual belief, or remembered conviction of the past, seemed to him a mockery and almost a falsehood. His preaching was thus in the strictest sense a cardiphonia—the voice of an instrument that could sound only as the breath of the eternal Spirit of God swept over it. Truths merely known, believed, arranged in logical sequence in the mind or in written discourse, was to him no message from God to human souls; but only truth “quick and powerful,” and glowing in living fire within the heart. Most significant in this point of view are such expressions as these in one of the above extracts: “I could not speak at that time *for the whole* world.” He said afterwards of the same occasion to a friend, “that the adversary of souls had been at his right hand the whole time; and that each statement which he sought to make from the Word of God seemed to be contradicted by a voice within as soon as made.” At another time he felt as if the people might see through his very eyes the hypocrisy and falsehood of his heart, while he uttered mechanically the sound of words, the life and power of which he did not feel. I offer no opinion now in regard to the profound question here involved: whether the principle on which he acted was in itself just; or whether, if just for him, the course of action to which it led were a fit precedent and example for other men. The question is not even properly raised in this form, for his whole ministry during those remark­able years was so plainly exceptional that no warrantable inference can be drawn from his case to that of others. His function and vocation was rather that of the old prophets uttering from time to time the message and the “burden” given to them under the immediate impulse of the Spirit who gave it, than that of the priests whose lips ought at all times to keep knowledge, and to impart its sacred lessons to others even when for the time they enjoy not the full sweetness of it themselves. Even those who may think that the principle on which he acted was carried out by him to too extreme a point will scarcely deny the general truth, that however it may be with the other functions of the pastoral office—as of instruction, admonition, counsel, persuasion, consolation—for the special work of awakening souls an awakened and imme­diate sense of eternal realities is of all things most essential. It may be possible enough to explain a doctrine or enforce a duty without anything more than a general and habitual conviction of the truth involved, yet surely if we would make others weep we must weep ourselves. At least if in this matter he erred, he erred on a safer side than that of those who would divorce altogether the message of the preacher from the experience of the man, and who can discourse of the deepest and most sacred exercises of the soul with an equally free and fluent speech, with a cold and with a burning heart. Better a single word spoken in the spirit, than a thousand words of mere sounding breath; better to utter in a few broken sentences a real message from God, than to speak with the tongue of men and of angels a heartless, soulless message of our own.

After all it can scarcely be doubted that the extreme fluctuation of feeling and of consequent freedom of utter­ance manifested in these journals was in great measure owing to that exhaustion of the vital powers, and that lack of opportunity for studious meditation which the incessant labours of this period entailed; and that in more favourable circumstances his spiritual experiences might have been more equable, and his power in the pulpit more constant. It would appear from expressions which occur here and there in the journals that this was occasionally at least his own impression, and there is much in their general tenor which goes strongly to confirm that view. It is observable how often his times of deepest depression immediately succeeded his times of highest elevation, as though the one were at least in large measure the reaction of the other. The temporary quiescence of the feelings, equally with the corresponding languor of the bodily frame, was but the inevitable and even salutary result of the sudden unbending of the bow which had been too long and too tightly bent; and it was his trial rather than his error that he could, during these three remarkable years, so seldom obtain that needful restorative repose. It was in circumstances such as his that the gracious Master, who knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust, said to his disciples, when they were worn out with the greatness of their labours and with those manifold distractions which left them no leisure even to eat, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile.” There was no such interval of retreat permitted to him now; but the enjoyment of that precious boon was reserved for another and not distant day.

1. *The Shepherd of Israel: or Illustrations of the Inner Life. By* the Rev. Duncan Macgregor, M.A., Minister of St. Peter’s, Dundee. Pp. 236-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Now Dr. M ‘Farlane, of the Free Church, Dalkeith. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Also Professor of Civil History in the University of St. Andrews. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. These few cases are given here once for all, as a specimen of the sort of notices which occur constantly in the course of these journals. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Situated inthe birch wood overhanging the pass of Killiecrankie. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “This service,” says one who was present, “lasted from five o’clock till nine, beginning early for the convenience of those who had long distances to walk home, and continued late because the hearers hung upon the preacher’s words until the sun had set and the full moon had arisen. It was a memorable night in the history of many.”—*Notes* *of Addresses by the Rev. William C. Burns,* edited by M. F. Barbour, page 28, where a sketch of the sermon will be found. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)