CHAPTER IX.
1841—1844.

NEWCASTLE, EDINBURGH, DUBLIN.

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URING the next three years Mr. Burns was incessantly engaged in evangelistic work, partly in places which he had already visited, and partly in new fields. Of the latter the most conspicuous were New­castle, Edinburgh, and Dublin, and to a brief notice of his labours there I propose to devote the present chapter. They were, of course, in most respects essentially similar to those which we have already described in Dundee and Aberdeen, but still possessed some features sufficiently distinct to deserve a separate, though less detailed record. At Newcastle, the first aspect of the field and his first trial of the work were not encouraging. I know not if the “sins and sorrows of the great city” be really greater there than in other communities of similar extent and character with which he had been before acquainted, but it seemed to him, at least, as if it were so. The giant forms of evil with which he had everywhere to contend, stood forth before the eye in more naked and unblushing prominence, as though iniquity were, in truth, too strong to feel ashamed or hide its face. He found himself in the presence of a power which, alike in its extent and terrible energy, startled and shocked him, and threw him back as scarce ever before on the power that is infinite and divine. “The people of God,” he writes a few days after his arrival, “are rallying in their places, and we have them of every name on our side. Ah! but the LORD is with me as a mighty, terrible ONE. This is enough.” “I ask it as a favour,” he writes to his endeared friend Mr. Milne, “and *plead* for it, that you will lay before your people the case of Newcastle, an iron-walled citadel of Satan. Al­mighty power, and that alone, can make a breach and plant the banner of salvation in the Lamb on its proud ramparts. They *must* cry, they must wrestle; for the devil is in the field, and the day will be hot.” While, too, “the enemy thus came in like a flood,” it seemed to him as if the forces on the other side were comparatively few and feeble. “The Scotch Church,” says he, “is low here; the audiences were not large. During the week I preached every night but Tuesday and Saturday, but chiefly to the church-going few, including some Christians, with a view to stir them up to come nearer to God. . . . Went out at meal hour and began to invite sinners. Very apathetic. The sleep of death is on the city.”

The spell of apathy, however, was soon, at least par­tially, broken. The announcement of a Sabbath pleasure trip of a more than usually offensive kind having met his eye, his spirit was stirred within him, and he denounced it in a terrible placard, which he signed with his own name and posted up in every street and open place in Newcastle. It fell like a bomb-shell in the midst of the community, startled the ears alike of friends and foes, and drew general attention to the preacher and his mes­sage. A solemn tract on the sins of the city and the impending judgments of God was at the same time pre­pared and sown broadcast among the people. The newspapers too, both local and metropolitan, took up the matter, bitterly denounced his proceedings, and thus still more loudly rang the bell of alarm in the ears of a com­munity from whom he only desired a hearing, even though they should strike while they heard him. “News­papers and Socialistic placards,” wrote his friend Mr. Bonar of Kelso, “have been making Edinburgh, and I suppose other places, ring with your doings in Newcastle.” But he remained calm amid the storm, unmoved alike by the rage of enemies and by the doubts and fears of friends, so only the cause of Christ were helped, and not hindered. “The people in Scotland,” said he, “are thinking that the opposition must be awful here. But it is like bomb-shells thrown over our heads and bursting at a distance. They know more of it in London than I do in Newcastle. ‘Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.’”

Meanwhile, according to his wont, he soon exchanged the empty churches for the open and crowded streets—preaching to varying audiences and with varying tokens of success on the quay, at the ’Spittal Square, in the Corn and Cloth Markets, in the open space beside the castle, sometimes in continuous and impressive discourse, some­times in a running fire against Secularist or Romish objectors who started up as opponents from amongst the crowd; sometimes alone, and sometimes dividing the ground with the political lecturer or the puppet showman, who spread forth their rival wares at a few paces’ distance. He had some encouragement, but no very marked or decisive evidence of blessing. He speaks from time to time of “solemn attention;” “very great attention and eagerness;” “a very large and deeply solemn audience;” “a large audience who stood riveted to the end;” of a “service of three hours’ duration, in the castle-yard where Whitfield preached of old;” “and would have remained almost till midnight;” “a considerable audience who con­tinued immovable under darkness and rain;” “the people so much impressed that the stars were out in the sky before we separated;” “some of the old sailors on the quay weeping, and pressing their money on those who gave away the tracts at the end;” yet there were few or none who sought him out in private for spiritual counsel and instruction. Perhaps this might in part arise from the fact that his street audiences here consisted almost exclusively of men—the softer and more impressible sex having, as he suggests, either less curiosity, or more fear of noisy crowds, than in the cities of the north. Now and then, too, after all his labours were over, he would go forth into the dark streets, with a bundle of his “plain sentences” under his arm, that he might see the city in its midnight dress, look down into the depths of that abyss of ruin which for the love of God and man he so vehemently longed to sound, and it may be hold out the torch of life eternal to some poor wanderer whom he might never hope to meet at any other place or time. Strange scenes would sometimes on these occasions meet his eyes and ears: “I went out after coming into my room and with a bundle of the “plain sentences” paraded some of the chief streets. In this I met with some strange incidents. I offered near the mouth of the Arcade a copy to a gentleman half-intoxicated. He swore fear­fully and said, ‘Oh, what a cursed country this is! I might go through every town on the Continent, and not meet with such another rascal as you infesting me. Rome is infinitely better than this,” &c. On another occasion he writes: “After the meeting I spent a half-hour on the street with tracts, and met with awful proofs of the enormous wickedness of the people, also with many whose language amid their sins seemed almost to be, Oh! that I were saved, oh! that you could do me any good.” One is reminded of the heathen in Tertullian’s days, of whom he tells us that even their oaths and ejaculated utterances of grief and fear bore witness to their deep consciousness of God and of a higher world, and showed that the “testi­mony of the soul” was by its very nature on the side of Christ.[[1]](#footnote-1) Sometimes conscience would still more distinctly speak and take part with the reprover against the sinner: “I spoke to three young gentlemen intoxicated; they mocked; but one of them, having separated from the rest, went along with me a short way. He then left me and whistled for his companions, but they had deserted him; and conscience-stricken he called after me, and when I went back asked where I was from, my name and resid­ence, and promised to call on Friday at five P.M., saying with some feeling, ‘he had much need of a lecture.’”

Still there was no deep and general impression, and even the partial interest that had been excited began after a season gradually to die down towards the former state of apathy. The congregations in church were small, the audiences in the open air less numerous and less solemn. The sensation created by the Sabbath placards was pass­ing away, and no deeper and mightier influence apparently had come to supply its place. Even some of his friends, who had most sanguinely hoped for a rich and wide­spread blessing, began to lose heart. “I had hope at one time,” said one of the most ardent of these, “but now I confess it is gone. Every ear seems closed.” He himself too almost despaired. Receiving a letter from Mr. Parker, in which he expresses his astonishment that the people could bear his words, he writes in his journal bitterly, “Alas! the people can bear anything here as yet. The body seems so dead, that though you plunge the knife to the heart there is no pain.” But it was only the lowest ebb, before the turning of the tide, and before another day had passed it was in full and buoyant flow. God had only made him utterly to despair of self, that he might the more simply and wholly triumph in Christ. We cannot here indulge in numerous extracts, but one or two con­tinuous passages must be given, as affording a vivid picture of the nature of the hot battle which he had expected and which had come at last, and of the spirit in which he fought it:

“*Thursday, September 23d*..—During the day I was very weak in body, and was tempted to think of *neglecting* an opportunity of doing good at the cattle-show, which is held here this day. But the passage turned up, ‘If thou say, Behold, I knew it not,’ &c., and I was compelled to go. I found that there was no opportunity for *preaching,* asthe show was within a park, and the people outside were staying but a few minutes. Alas! perhaps it may be found in the day of God that there *was* opportunity. Certainly the show­men found an *opportunity* of attracting many. However, I *only* gave away tracts, spoke to the people here and there, and intimated that I would preach in the cloth-market in the evening, which is at the end of the corn-market, the place where, at three P.M., about a thousand were to dine together. The tracts were received by *high* and low. . . . After dinner I felt my strength of body *renewed,* and had hope of something being done of God in the evening. A little after six we went to the scene of action, and found a great crowd around the place, many of them trying to see in through the windows, and multitudes waiting for the music at intervals. I thought of heaven lighted with the brightness of a thousand suns, and of poor lost souls longing to be in when it is too late, and forced to hear from afar the joyful praises of the redeemed, loud as the noise of many waters. We had no sooner begun than an immense crowd gathered round. Some of the enemies were enraged and urged the police to interfere, crying, ‘Down with him, down with him.’ The policeman told me that the people were disturbed by us within, but this was so absurd that he did not insist on it; and as he could not find us guilty of a breach of the *peace,* he soon went away. But although the enemy could not oppose us by *legal* force, they did not cease to show their deadly hatred of what was said and done. Once a stone was thrown, again a quantity of manure, which bespattered my clothes. After­wards, *in the time of prayer,* when we were prevailing against them *without hand,* they raised a burst of horrid laughter, and pushed the crowd at the side on me with the view of overthrowing the pulpit. At this time I had to pause in the prayer, and when I began to tell them that they could do *nothing* without the Lord’s *permission,* and that all they did would promote his cause, &c., they were quieted for a time; and I was led out to speak with greater power, perhaps, than ever before in Newcastle, putting the sword into the very heart and bowels of the town’s iniquities. At this time, and ever after it until ten o’clock, when we parted, there was the greatest solemnity, and a deep impression; and though I was frequently interrupted with questions, they *all* tended to bring out in a *marvellous* way the truth of God, so that they who put them were silenced and the people rejoiced. During the first hour and half we were obliged to contend, at inter­vals, with a tumult of people all around the music in the Corn-market, and the movements of a travelling show taking up its encampment close to us. Even amid those trials, although increased by the contradiction of sinners, I was enabled *not* to waver nor faint; afterward, however, the meeting in the market broke up, the show people were quiet, the streets were nearly empty, and we worshipped the Lord amid solemn silence for another hour and half. At this time the singing was truly sublime; and the whole scene, when con­trasted with what it had lately been, was fitted to deepen the impression of the word in the hand of the Spirit. I did not speak on any text, but used the various circumstances of the feast so near as to set off by way of comparison and contrast the feast of fat things on Mount Zion. I did not proceed *regularly,* but from time to time noticed such topics as these:—That feast is for the body, this is for the soul; that is one of which you easily take too much, in this you cannot *exceed;* thatis soon over, this will last *eternally;* that would tire and nauseate if often repeated, this becomes sweeter every day; that is only open to those who can pay for a place, this is provided freely for the poor: it is made *free* not because it is of *little* value, but because it is *so* costly that no *money* can buy it, and in order that it may be a feast for *all;* that is made on bullocks and fatlings, but this, oh! wonder of won­ders, is made on the body and blood of God’s own Son; the greatest sinners are welcome to it *now,* and the greater they have been they will sit nearer the head of the table as hon­oured guests, in order that the more the grace and mercy of Jehovah may be displayed to view! These and similar points gave ground from time to time for varied information to the mind, and appeals to the conscience which seemed to arrest many; and the effect of this was aided by the many truths which were from time to time drawn out by the ques­tions and objections of enemies. One man cried there was no hell, and demanded a definition of it. He was answered, ‘If thy right hand offend thee,’ &c., and remained silent. Another said there were no devils, and this was the occasion of tearing away the veil from the iniquities of the town, and exposing *their* power over men in its deformity and dread­fulness. Many in different ways tried to vex us, but this ex­plained the text, ‘Consider him who endured,’ &c., and gave us ground for praise that we had *not yet* resisted unto *blood.* Nay, one shameless man, whose question the *people* would hardly bear, asked me, ‘How are *you* supported?’ a matter of general wonder. I answered him that I never needed to ask a penny from anyone, but that even since I came *here* £10 had been sent to me unasked, and partly without a name![[2]](#footnote-2) They seemed confounded. At ten o’clock we asked the parting blessing and separated—indeed only for a moment, for when I got to the lamp I took out my Bible to look at a verse, and the whole crowd gathered round and stood with breathless attention while I read what God had sent me, ‘None of these things move me,’ &c., and told them some things about my own conversion. We then parted, and it would not have been so soon, had not the policeman desired it.

“Though I spoke nearly four hours amid such difficulties in the open air I was not fatigued, and am well today. Oh! that I were only well in soul, and fit to renew the combat. Come, Lord Jesus! come quickly! Amen! Amen! Glory to Jehovah!

“*P.S.—*WhenI came into my room and looked at the Bible which was lying open, my eye rested on Psalm cxi. 4, 5. Oh! how glorious and how seasonable it was! ‘He hath made his *wonderful* works to be *remembered;* the Lord is *gracious,* and *full* of compassion. He hath *given* meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of *his covenant!’* Halleluiah!

“*Friday; September 24th*.—Sometimes when we think we are much assisted, there may be less *divine* power attending the word than when we are ready to conclude nothing has been done. I trust, however, that the Lord is bringing me nearer to the town, and that soon his own artillery may be opening fire with effect on its central towers and carrying alarm into its citadel! It is not at once that we can come into close conflict with such an enemy, and time is needed to study the enemy’s position and weak points, that the fire may take full effect. The Captain of the Lord’s hosts is all-wise to direct, and all-powerful to execute. *He* will work, and who shall let it? Who art thou, oh great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou *shalt* become a plain! And he shall bring forth the top stone with shoutings of grace, grace unto it. Oh! how glorious a sight to behold this town awakened from its deep sleep, and calling upon God with the *whole heart/* ‘The *waste cities shall be filled* with *flocks* of men!’ Be it unto us according to thy word. Amen.

“*Sabbath, 26th September. . . .* At five I went out to preach at the ’Spittal, as a man having no strength, yea, as a worm and no man, saying to Mr. S——, I never was so low as this. If it were so that I were truly humbled, it would be different; but I am dead, and that is all. I could not fix upon a text; indeed, every door of hope seemed closed, and I knew that God, and he only, could grant deliverance. I found many already assembled, and in the course of a very short time the crowd became much greater than on any former day, and continued so, and even increasing to the end. I thought of preaching on ‘Seeing, therefore, that we have a great high-priest,’ &c.; but when I opened the Bible after prayer, my eye rested on Revelations xx. 15, and this I fixed on, with dawnings of hope that *the Lord* would again speak by my unclean lips. I began from these sublime and awful words, ‘And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it,’ &c., making some simple remarks on the throne—its greatness, its whiteness, &c. After prayer, I resumed, and spoke a little with an increasing sense of the divine presence and power on the rising of the dead, our individual rising and appearing at the dread bar of judgment, &c. We then prayed again, and in doing so I felt—more, perhaps, than since I came to Newcastle—as if a direct communication were opened between my soul and the Divine Mind. My heart was truly *drawn* out and up to God for the *advancement of Emmanuel’s glory,* even more than for the salvation of guilty worms, as a heart-satisfying end. After this I got closer still to the people, and was enabled in a way quite new to me here, to open up the sins of the town, their defor­mity, their dreadful working, and inconceivably awful issues in eternity. I also found myself in an agony to compel sinners to come to Jesus *now,* and not even the next hour, which I felt was not man’s but God’s. Indeed, I felt so much that I could almost have torn the pulpit to pieces, and the audience seemed to sympathize throughout. Oh! it was a glorious, an awfully glorious scene! The fleecy clouds were showing here and there bright stars, and the harvest moon was diffusing a sombre peaceful light upon the quiet world around us. We dying, and yet immortal creatures were contemplating the eternity before us, looking to the appear­ance of the Son of Man in the clouds, conceiving ourselves placed at his bar, wondering and thinking what would be our sentence, and whether we would rise with him to heaven, or be drawn from him into hell; some were, I hope, opening their eyes to their awful destiny as sinners, and on the very point of seeking refuge for eternity from the wrath of God in the cleft Rock of Ages. I trust that some were saved, I have no doubt that God was with us of a truth. At a quarter to nine we closed; and as we had remained so long in the open air, I thought it better not to meet in the church as we intended, but to retire direct to our closets. After I had been a few minutes in the house, two friends came to me from the church, and told me that it was nearly full with a congregation entirely different from what I had had in the open air, and that they had been waiting for me since seven o’clock. I had again, accordingly, to go out in the Lord’s name, and I spoke on the same as in the open air, though by no means with the same consciousness of the divine presence. We came out after a solemn meeting at a quarter to ten.”

After visiting several other places in the north of England, and among others Sunderland, where he preached “to a dense and hungry audience, who seemed to open the mouth wide for the blessing,” he returned to Scotland, in order to take the temporary charge of the congregation of St. Luke’s, Edinburgh, in the absence of his valued friend Mr. Moody Stuart. Of his labours here I am happy to be able to present the following graphic account from the pen of a friend to whom I have been already indebted, and who then watched his footsteps with deep and sympathetic interest:—

“In the winter of 1841-2 Mr. Burns supplied the pulpit of St. Luke’s, Edinburgh. Mr. Moody Stuart, owing to an affection of the voice, had been advised to spend the winter in Madeira, and Mr. Burns was requested to take his place. He began his work in Edinburgh on the 14th November, preaching in the forenoon from 2 Cor. iv. 1-6; and Dr. Bruce of St. Andrew’s Church (of whom he always spoke with filial affection) in the afternoon.

“The work of this winter forms a unique chapter in his life. A special interest attaches to it. He had to be­come both pastor and evangelist. True to the motto of his family, “Ever ready,” he soon showed that he could be both. He at once began a course of lectures on the Sabbath forenoon upon the Epistle to the Romans, and another course at the Thursday prayer-meeting upon the Epistle of James. On Monday evening he taught two classes: a female class for expounding the miracles, and a young men’s class at a later hour, where he took up the parables of Christ. Every Saturday afternoon he con­ducted a class for children. Two courses of lectures—three classes—sermons upon the Sabbath afternoon sug­gested by the special circumstances of the times or of the congregation: here was sufficient work for an ordinary man. But he was no ordinary man. He was always longing to be on full work again. The college session had begun. He taught a private Greek class in his lodgings.[[3]](#footnote-3) The College Missionary Association met every Saturday morning for prayer and the reading of essays upon topics connected with foreign missions. He at­tended these meetings, and by the blessing of God infused his own fire into the hearts of many of the students. At the concluding general meeting of the Association, when about two hundred students were present, he moved one of the resolutions, and it was the universal impression that there never had been such a meeting in the college before.

“A large number of students attended his ministry—not only divinity students, but gownsmen of all stages with their pale eager faces. Memory recalls such names as Alexander James Campbell, John Donaldson, John Craven, Alexander Thain, Frederick Sandeman, Robert Ireland, Robert Taylor, Duncan Maclaren, M. Macgregor,[[4]](#footnote-4) Walter Davidson, Donald Sutherland, Patrick Neill, William Balfour, Neil Macleod, A. Luke, Thomas Gar­diner, Thomas Just, &c. He invited them to his lodg­ings; he sympathized with their difficulties; he guided those who were groping in the dark and seeking the way to Zion. Those who had the rare privilege of meeting him in private, and seeing his close walk with God, were at no loss to understand the power which attended his public ministrations.

“With him the winning of souls was a passion; calm, but intense, consuming. As Foster has said of John Howard, ‘It was the calmness of an intensity kept uniform by the nature of the human mind forbidding it to be more, and by the character of the man forbidding it to be less.’ He cast his net into all waters. He wished to get access to the soldiers in the castle. He visited the barracks, dis­tributed tracts, and invited them to his open-air services in the High Street. He frequently visited the Shelter, the jail, the bridewell, the Magdalene Asylum, the Orphan Hospital, the Dean Bank Institution, &c., and preached to the inmates. Wherever the lost or neglected were to be found he was there; like Him who yearned over a world plunged in sin, telling them of rest for the weary and hope for the guilty. From the very refuse of society he gathered jewels for Emmanuel’s crown. Very touch­ing to see him, as I have done, giving tracts and speaking tender words to the fallen. To him they were lost pieces of silver; and the thought that they might even yet have Christ for their brother, and heaven for their home, filled him with a tenderness which he had no name for.

“In the midst of his abundant labours in Edinburgh, the Lord opened a wide door for him in Leith. From January to March he preached on Wednesday and frequently on Sabbath evening in North Leith, South Leith, and the Mariners’ Church, to densely crowded and (to use a favourite word of his own) ‘hungry’ audiences. The weather was severe—keen frost and snow—but the in­terest swelled and spread until the attendance even on the Wednesday evening was overflowing, and so deep was the impression that the people could not go away after the blessing. An after-service for prayer and direct­ing anxious inquirers had to be held; and such was their distress that they had to be removed to the vestry, where he sought to give them ‘the oil of joy for mourning.’ Mr. M’Cheyne took part in one of these services, and spoke and prayed with the anxious. It seemed as if the ever-memorable scenes of Kilsyth, Dundee, and Perth were to be repeated in Leith. So wide-spread was the impression, that a gay lady in Leith said the people were all going mad. In his young communicants’ class he soon gathered in abundant fruits of his labours in Leith—sheaves of joy. To use his own words, “The Lord gave him spring, summer, and harvest, that winter in Leith.” About the middle of March, in consequence of the resolu­tion of the directors of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway to run trains upon the Sabbath, he ‘bade the people of Leith farewell for a season, in order that he might give his whole heart to the work in Edinburgh.’

“One memorable incident which belongs to his work in Leith I must not omit. He wished to get access to the sailors. One Sabbath afternoon Dr. Gordon agreed to take his place in St. Luke’s, and he ran down to preach on the quay at Leith, taking two or three of us with him to distribute tracts and invite the sailors. It was on the 2d January, 1842. He stood halfway between the upper and lower bridges. I was never more struck with his tact and fertility of resource. A large crowd assembled—a sea of bronzed faces. After reading his text—Ecclesiastes viii. 11: ‘Because sentence against an evil work,’ &c.—it began to rain heavily. He paused, and prayed that God would restrain the clouds that the people might hear the word. The rain continued, however, and we ad­journed to a large shed at the head of the quay. He resumed, and the rain ceased. I shall never forget the look of wonder with which that crowd gazed on the clear sky. They plainly felt that there is something deeper in prayer than is dreamed of in human philosophy. The preacher spoke as if he had spent his life before the mast: his skilful use of sea-phrases gave rare zest to his discourse—and, rising to a climax, he cried, ‘Sailors! the breakers are ahead! the storm is rising! you are running upon a lee-shore! in a few moments the ship (the world) will strike and go down! The life-boat is Christ! It is lying alongside—it is ready to move off! Come away, sailors, come away, or it will be too late!’

“It was on Sabbath the 13th of March that the first Sabbath train was run between Edinburgh and Glasgow. Mr. Burns’ spirit was stirred to its depths in connection with this question. His zeal for God and his love for his country were ‘as a burning fire shut up in his bones.’ He regarded the Sabbath as the palladium of Scottish Christianity. In name of the session of St. Luke’s he wrote a remonstrance to the shareholders, setting forth the ‘fearful iniquity’ of trampling upon the sacred day, and the ‘awful judgments’ which it must inevitably bring down upon the land. He attended the two great meet­ings held in the Hopetoun Rooms and in the West Church by the friends of the Sabbath to oppose the open­ing of the railway; and spoke with great thankfulness of the powerful speeches of Drs. Cunningham, Candlish, and C. J. Brown, and Messrs D. T. K. Drummond and Makgill Crichton, in favour of the entire sanctification of the Lord’s-day. He preached for several Sabbaths upon the subject, and discussed it in all its aspects; he prayed with even more than his wonted fervour, that He who saith to the sea, ‘Hitherto shalt thou come but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,’ would arrest the advancing tide of Sabbath desecration: and he inti­mated that he would preach at the railway-station every Sabbath at seven in the morning and at six in the evening—the hours at which the trains were advertised to start

“True to his word, he was at the railway-station at seven o’clock on the following Sabbath morning. He spoke of it as ‘a momentous day in the history of Scotland.’ A great crowd assembled, and joined with deep solemnity in the service. It was after nine before they dispersed, some of them in tears. He conducted the ordinary services in St. Luke’s, at eleven and two, with unusual tenderness and power, as if the morning service had only put a keener edge upon his spirit; and was at the railway-station again at six, surrounded by a dense concourse of several thousands. The station was then at the Hay­market, in the outskirts of Edinburgh, and as the *bruit* spread, the people poured out to hear this extraordinary man, as they once did to hear the Baptist in the wilder­ness. Like a soldier mounting the breach, or leading a forlorn hope, he stood upon a large stone, and sang the Psalm’

‘Horror took hold on me, because

Ill men thy law forsake,’ &c.,

and preached one of his most characteristic sermons to a deeply impressed audience. He continued till nine o’clock in the evening, having been about nine hours engaged altogether. For the next three months his usual Sabbath work was four services—two at the railway-station and two in St. Luke’s. He was often engaged for eight or nine hours—he often had to raise his voice so as to be heard by thousands; and yet he used to say that he was as fresh on Monday as on Saturday. He was ‘a wonder to many.’ Like Ezekiel, he was set for a sign. His brethren in Edinburgh were full of joy at his lion-like courage and noble testimony; and only wished that they had bodily strength to stand by his side. As he himself said, Even if no good was done to souls by these services, the lifting up of a bold testimony for the Lord’s-day in the hearing of thousands, and in the face of the world, was a work worth living and dying for.

“So grave did he consider the crisis to be that he resolved to hold meetings for prayer every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at noon—to preach in the open-air at other points—and to turn his female class into an evangelistic service in the church. It is not easy even to recount his labours from this date. And instead of being worried or hackneyed, his soul, like Gideon’s fleece, was drenched with dew, and his preaching was never marked by greater depth, variety, and freshness. It was the culminating point of his work in Edinburgh. The church was overflowing. The word was sharper than a two-edged sword. There was a Bethel-like fear over the congregation. Every head was bowed. It was felt that ‘the living God was in the place.’ Some who had enter­tained prejudices against the preacher were ashamed when they found that solidity and impressiveness were the leading characteristics of his teaching. At the spring communion two hundred joined from other congregations. In his young communicants’ classes he met continually with deeply interesting cases of persons recently awakened, and heard of others. At the close of a Monday prayer-meeting some remained behind, who seemed to be under ‘a divine convincing work;’ and as they went away, one of the elders said with sparkling eyes, ‘That’s the Lord’s work beginning.’ And so it was. The day alone will declare the fruits of that winter’s work. If the Spirit did not come down as a rushing mighty wind, yet the promise was fulfilled in abundant measure, ‘I will be as the dew unto Israel.’ What the old chronicler said of the effects of Richard Cameron’s preaching, might be said of Mr. Burns’ preaching on not a few of those Sabbaths in St. Luke’s: ‘The people fell into a state of calm weeping.’

“I have said nothing of his Sabbath-evening services in the Queen’s Park, or of the solemn meetings he addressed at the end of the old Tolbooth Church in the High Street, where there were manifest tokens of the divine presence, and where beyond doubt fruit was gathered unto life eternal. I have said nothing of his quick eye in seizing opportunities of dropping a word in season, in the house and in the street, on coach or track-boat, to anyone whom the thousand eddies and swirls of daily life threw in his way. I have said nothing of four evangelistic tours which he made in the midst of his Edinburgh work—one in April, 1842, to Milnathort, Bridge of Earn, Perth, Burrelton, Collace, Abernyte, Dundee; another in June, to Dundee, Kilspindie, Anstruther, Logie, Cupar-Fife, and Falkland; and two in August and September to the High­lands of Perthshire. One recalls it with amazement. Here was a man who crowded the work of years into months—of months into weeks—of weeks into days. The work of many a lifetime was compressed into this single winter in Edinburgh. He often spoke as if he had a presentiment that his exhausting labours would soon wear out the earthly tabernacle, and he hasted to do the work of Him that sent him.

“My space is done, else I could give fragments of his Meditations’ which I still vividly remember—morsels of living bread which the Master had blessed and broken. In digging in the field of the Word he threw up now and again great nuggets, which formed part of one’s spiritual wealth ever after. A mind of keen insight and power—he was given to study subjects rather than texts, so that if he studied one text he sometimes preached from another —and always longing to resume those habits of close and consecutive study which he pursued until he was carried away by the tide. He was a great puzzle to students—his work, his circumstances, and his methods were so ex­ceptional; but those who were so minded could learn from him the greatest lesson of all for the work of the ministry—the *omnipotence of faith and prayer.*

“For reasons which I suppress, I had the privilege of seeing him often in private—generally twice a week. Little notes, too, he used to send me; and although I have lost them, their contents are written ‘as if in star-fire’ on my heart. Here is one. He had asked me to breakfast, but was unexpectedly called from home. He left a note expressing his regret, and adding, ‘We are often disappointed in our meetings with man, but never in our meetings with God at a throne of grace, where we are ever welcome in the blood of Jesus.’ In another, written from Dublin, he says—‘May the Lord carry on his own great work within and around us, and may we be enabled to glorify him in life and in death!’ The very last words, I think, I ever heard from him—standing at his father’s door one night in 1854, under cold November skies—were, ‘We must run!”

Allusion has been made to those rapid excursions to other fields which occasionally interrupted the more even tenor of his labours at St. Luke’s. Of the incessant and exhausting toil which such excursions involved no one acquainted only with the ordinary scenes of evangelistic work can easily form a conception. A single specimen, therefore, we must give, and we do so all the more readily that it will carry us back for a moment amid the scenes of his former labours in Breadalbane and Strathtay:—“To one with an exact knowledge of the geography of Perthshire,” says the same eye-witness, to whom I am indebted for the above notices, “his labours during the week from Sabbath the 14th August, 1842, to Sabbath the 21st inclusive, furnish one of the most extraordinary episodes even in his life. There were no railroads then in Perthshire, but he had an interesting fellow-labourer in the shape of a fine fast trotter, as worthy of the name of ‘Church Extension’ as Mr. M’Cheyne’s pony. He was a famous rider, and sat his horse like a knight. On Sabbath the 14th he preached at Blair-Athole (1) for five hours in the churchyard to an assembly of at least 4000 persons, and (2) in the evening in the church for three hours to an audience that would have remained till daybreak. On Monday evening he rode to Moulin, and preached (3) to a deeply affected audience. On Tuesday he rode to Kinloch-Rannoch (20 miles), and preached (4) in a park at the south end of the bridge, from two to five o’clock, to an interesting congregation of shepherds, gamekeepers, foresters, graziers, cattle-dealers, &c., gathered from both sides of Loch Rannoch. After a hurried dinner he struck across the west shoulder of Schiehallion, one of the most trackless and difficult passes in the Highlands—taking a guide part of the way, to Fortingall (18 miles); rode six miles farther to Lawers, crossed Loch Tay to Ardeonaig—preached (5) there on Wednesday at twelve, and recrossing the lake preached (6) at Lawers the same evening. On Thursday he rode down to Grandtully (17 miles), and (7) preached with great power in the churchyard to a dense crowd from Hebrews xii. 18-25. On Friday he rode up to Fortingall (12 miles), where he preached (8) in the open air from two to nearly six p.m., a sermon (Hebrews ix. 27, 28), which made a deep impression, many of the audience being in tears; and returned to Grandtully the same evening. On Saturday morning he started at six for Balnaguard, preached (9) there at seven o’clock to a large company, many of whom had got saving good under his ministry previously—caught the mail-cart at half-past eight, reached Edinburgh in the evening, and preached thrice (10, 11, 12) in St. Luke’s on the following day.

“The congregation at Blair-Athole on the 14th,” continues our informant, “was a most imposing sight. Most of them were men, and the ground being a dead level, and inconvenient for sitting, most of them stood. The thirst to hear was so intense, and the blessing which had crowned his previous visits so wide-spread, that almost the whole population, not only from the vale of Athole, but from Straloch, Strathardle, Kirkmichael, Glenerochy, Dalnacardoch, Foss, Glenfincastle, Strathtay, and Strath-tummel, flocked to hear the great preacher of repentance. As he read the opening Psalm. Ps. xxii. 27-31—

‘All ends of th’ earth remember shall,

And turn the Lord unto,’ &c.,

and during the first prayer, you felt as if the light of the other world struck on his face. His text was John xviii. 11, ‘The cup which my Father,’ &c.: and as he proceeded to explain the emblem, ‘the cup,’ he said, ‘Wine is the strength or essence of the grape. God’s wrath is his whole being *as directed against sin.* He looks upon sin as infinitely base and vile, and therefore he is indignant: and the wine of his holy anger is poured out in *all its strength* into the cup of his indignation. This wine was not diluted when the cup was put into the hand of the Son of God. Look at the anguish sin has wrought. The tears of mankind have never ceased to flow since it entered the world. No sooner do they dry on one cheek than they begin to run down the other: no sooner does one widow lay aside her weeds, than another begins the wail: and yet *one diluted* drop of God’s wrath has done it all. What anguish, then, must have been in the cup which the Father gave his Son to drink!’ Words like these cut deep into many a heart that day. I saw a white-haired old man in the gate weeping bitterly, and saying, ‘Oh! it’s his prayers: I canna stand his prayers!’

“Those who could hardly speak a word of English understood him. An old person who literally did not know one word, and always sat on the pulpit stair when he preached, was asked, what was the use of *her* hearing Mr. Burns? ‘Oh,’ she replied, “I can understand the Holy Ghost’s English!”

Between the scenes now described and those to which we have next to refer, great and startling events had taken place. The ancient and venerable Church of Scotland, of which Mr. Burns had been an attached and faithful member, had been broken in pieces, and from its ruins had arisen a new and powerful society with which a large proportion of her most devoted sons had cast in their lot. With the movement which led to that remarkable revolu­tion, and with the principles which lay at the foundation of it, he most thoroughly sympathized; and when the critical day of exodus arrived we find him hurrying away from the busy scenes of his evangelistic work in Fife, that he might witness that signal and illustrious act of faith, and share the inspiration and the triumph of that solemn hour:—“Tuesday,” he writes in his journal, “to Edin­burgh per steam through a great storm on the way to the Assembly. Thursday, I was honoured to join in the solemn procession of ministers, &c., from St. Andrew’s Church to the Free Assembly Hall, Canonmills, walk­ing between my father on the one side and Uncle George of Tweedsmuir on the other. This was a scene of which I know not what to say! The opening of the Free Assembly was graciously solemn. Surely the Lord was there.” But the scenes which immediately after fol­lowed, though deeply important and spirit-stirring, were not perhaps peculiarly favourable to the quiet prosecution of his special work. The country was all astir and filled with the din of ecclesiastical reconstruction and organiza­tion, and though this enthusiasm of church life and church work was itself of most wholesome influence on the general interests of religion in the country, and indeed, as it is believed, lent an impulse to the spiritual life of many, never to be forgotten, it was scarcely in unison with the peculiar mission of one whose one exclusive theme was that of repentance and the second birth. While therefore he still unweariedly prosecuted his appointed work wherever the divine Master seemed to point the way, he yet felt that the auspicious season for such work had in a great measure, at least for the present, passed. It was a time not so much for the awakening of life, as for the exercising and turning to good account of the life already awakened—a birth-time rather for the collective church than for individual souls. There was, indeed, abundant and most momentous work to be done, but work not precisely of that kind for which he felt himself especially fitted, and to which he believed himself to have been by the irresistible call of God specially devoted. It was his part not to rear, or even materially to assist in rearing, the outward fabric of the house of God, but to help by God’s grace in gathering the living stones of which it was to be reared. He was the more willing accordingly to listen to calls which were coming to him, with increasing frequency and urgency, from fields that lay beyond the sphere of the existing movement, and among these from Dublin, where he found himself on Saturday, April 6th, 1844, under the hospitable roof of his valued friend the Rev. Dr. Kirkpatrick, one of the ministers of Mary’s Abbey Church. The following graphic and deeply interesting narrative, for which I am indebted to his kind host, will give some idea of the nature of his labours, and his manner of life in this new and untried field:—

“I had seen your brother in Perth, and had invited him to my house in Dublin. He accepted my invitation; and after he had finished his immediate engagements in Scotland he suddenly appeared at my door, with a small bundle in his hand, containing the whole of his travelling apparatus. His principal object in coming to Dublin was to find opportunities, if possible, of making known to Roman Catholics the message of the gospel. Accord­ingly, he selected as the place of his public labours a suitable piece of ground in front of the custom-house; a place in which Father Matthew had administered the temperance pledge, and where he could address his audience without obstructing the ordinary thoroughfare. This area was surrounded by a low chain fence, inside of which he stood on a chair, and spoke to the people, who occupied the space between him and the building. Here he took his position evening after evening, and amidst innumerable annoyances and interruptions he sought to bring before his ignorant and prejudiced hearers the word of eternal life. It requires no small amount of courage, and tact, and temper, as every one knows who has made the trial, to address an unsympathizing or hostile Irish mob. Mr. Burns was exposed to many opprobrious salutations, derisive questionings, vehement denials of the statements which he made; sometimes the uproar was so loud and long-continued that he was obliged to desist altogether; often his clothes were torn; not seldom the chair on which he stood was broken; but he never was impatient, nor ever for a moment lost his self-com­mand. Amidst the most noisy and turbulent scenes, his countenance was beaming with joy, insomuch that some of his persecutors were constrained to say, ‘He is a good man; we cannot make him angry.’ The ringleaders of the mob occasionally joined hands, and rushed down upon him for the purpose of driving him from the chair, or of throwing him down upon the street; but he was always protected from the danger of these assaults by a body-guard of three young men, members of my congre­gation, who were never absent from these meetings; and who, standing behind him, caught him in their arms till the wave had passed by and spent its force; and then, having set him on the chair again, he proceeded in his address with as much quietude of manner as if no interruption had taken place. The questions interjected by the crowd from time to time, while he was perhaps in the middle of a sentence, were sufficient to perplex a speaker of less experience and of less self-control than Mr. Burns. Let me give some specimens of the style of interrogation to which he was subjected in the course of his addresses:—‘What book is that which you hold in your hands?’—‘It is the Word of God.’ How do you know? can you prove that it is the Word of God?’—‘I shall prove that it is if you deny it; but if we both of us admit it to be from God, why need I stop to prove it?’ ‘What is your commission?’—‘I shall read it to you, my friends,’ ‘Let him that heareth say, Come.’ Eleven years have now passed since I heard the Lord speaking to my heart, and saying ‘Come,’ and ever since I have been saying ‘Come’ to as many sinners as were willing to listen to me.’ ‘You may go, we don’t want you here.’—‘My friends, it is to those who don’t want me that I am always most anxious to go; for I find that they are the people who have most need of me.’ ‘Bravo’ shouted someone in the crowd, pleased with the readiness and appropriateness of the reply. ‘From what country do you come?’—‘From Scotland.’ ‘Have you no sinners there?’—’Yes.’ Have you not much drunkenness in Scotland?’—’Yes, a good deal.’ ‘Why did you not stay at home to convert the drunkards before you came over to teach us?’—‘For this reason, in Scotland the drunkards know that they are sinners, and do not attempt to justify themselves in their sins. But here I see people who curse, and drink, and tell lies, who say, nevertheless, that theirs is the true religion. Now these people must be labouring under a great mistake, and I have come to set them right in this matter.’ ‘But *our* church is the true church, and we have our priests to teach us and to keep us right.’—‘My friends, your saying that you are members of the true church does not prove that you really belong to it. Let me read you a passage from the Word of God. John viii. 39, 44: ‘They an­swered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said unto them, If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.’ This passage fell upon them like a thunderbolt, and silenced them for a season, while the speaker in the meantime pursued his address. The scenes described in the Gospels under the preaching of the word were thus vividly illustrated, and to some extent re-enacted, under the ministry of Mr. Burns.

“On one occasion he proposed to vary the commence­ment of his open-air service by the singing of a psalm. I endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose, by representing to him, that as his audience knew nothing of our metrical psalms, nor of our psalmody, his attempt to sing would serve but to increase and embitter the spirit of opposition. He was anxious, however, to make the experiment, and announced the 62d Psalm. After read­ing a portion of the psalm, he commenced to sing the 5th verse,

‘My soul, wait thou with patience

Upon thy God alone.’

The crowd, taken by surprise, listened to the first line in mute astonishment; then burst into a laugh of derision; then forming themselves into a compact phalanx, they rushed down upon Mr. Burns just as he had completed the first two words of the second line. The three friends, who were ever near, drew him aside till the crowd swept by, and after a considerable interval placed him once more upon the chair; and he then with his usual compo­sure resumed the tune at the part of the line, ‘thy God alone,’ which he had reached before he was interrupted.

“One evening, when he was obliged to stop short in his discourse in consequence of his chair being broken, he went down along the quay on the other side of the river, for the purpose of addressing himself to the coal-porters. It was in vain that his friends represented the danger to which he would be inevitably exposed; he replied, that ‘he had never known fear.’ His courage was soon put to the test. Whenever he commenced to speak, an angry mob quickly assembled, and loud and threatening shouts drowned all his efforts to be heard. The police came to his assistance, and kindly but firmly required him to cease. Still he was unwilling to give up the attempt, but after several ineffectual efforts, the mob becoming larger and more ferocious, the police peremptorily insisted that he should be silent and cross the river in the ferry-boat, ‘for if you attempt to go back along the quay,’ they said, ‘we will not be answerable for your life.’ ‘But I cannot pay for the ferryboat.’ ‘It will cost you only a halfpenny.’ ‘But I have no halfpenny,’[[5]](#footnote-5) he replied. ‘Here is one for you,’ said a good-natured policeman. Accordingly Mr. Burns stepped down into the boat, and holding up the halfpenny, he cried out to the people on shore, ‘See this, my friends, I have got a free passage. In like manner you may have a free gospel, a free forgiveness of all your sins, a free passage to the kingdom of heaven. Without money, and without price.’ And thus he proceeded to deliver a message to the persons who were crossing with him in the boat.

“It is not to be concluded from these details, that his labours in this arduous field were wholly unsuccessful. One Sabbath morning, his audience at the custom-house were more quiet than usual. His subject was regeneration, ‘Except a man be born again,’ &c. At the close of his sermon a man who had been listening attentively said, ‘Well, sir, if what you have said be true, you had much need to come from Scotland to tell it to us, for we never heard of this doctrine before.’ After Mr. Burns left Dublin, several Roman Catholics came to inquire about him, speaking respectfully of his labours, and of the loving and genial spirit in which they were conducted.

“During his stay in Dublin we had prayer-meetings in the church of Mary’s Abbey almost every day. The prayers of Mr. Burns were very striking—distinguished by deep acquaintance with Scripture, by intense fervour, and by strong faith. He truly pleaded with God, and occasionally seemed to get near access to his presence. But his addresses to our Presbyterian people failed to produce much visible impression. His failure in this respect disappointed and grieved me very much. The congregation looked forward to his promised visit with much interest; having been largely informed of the won­derful success which God had vouchsafed to him in many districts of Scotland, they expected to hear from him a fuller exposition, and a more specific application of scriptural truth, than he was wont to give; and they were somewhat dissatisfied to observe that his discourses ap­peared to be wholly extemporaneous. I tried to induce him to give some time to special preparation, but without success, and regarding his course of procedure as beyond the range of ordinary men, I forbore to press my objec­tions. I continued, however, to think that he was mis­taken in expecting that his word would be with power when he did not beforehand consider how to divide and to apply it; and that he was also mistaken in attributing his want of success, as he was at that time accustomed to do, solely and exclusively to the hardness of the hearts of the people. His views on these points, I think I have since learned, subsequently underwent considerable change; and I am sure that he was prepared to adopt any means which appeared to him most directly and effectively to bear on the advancement of the kingdom of God. This great object alone engrossed him. Political or even ecclesiastical affairs had no attraction for him. He was bent earnestly and ever on the salvation of souls. This grand concern occupied and absorbed his daily prayers, his social converse, his public addresses, the whole course of his thoughts, the whole business of his life. Why are there not more of us like him? The need of such men is as urgent as ever; and we know that the grace of God is not less rich, nor his promises in Christ less sure, nor his gifts less varied or less rich. ‘Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief.’”

The following brief snatch of reminiscence by a respected minister of the Free Church of Scotland,[[6]](#footnote-6) gives another vivid touch to the picture, and affords a pregnant hint as to the unseen results of those despised and self-denying labours:—

“I only saw him once in Dublin. I was then a student in Trinity College, and I remember well, passing along by the custom-house I came upon a crowd, which as I drew near appeared greatly excited. I stopped to listen, and I found that William Burns (as I afterwards came to know) was addressing them. I think I see him still: with what a strange calmness he spoke! with what meekness he met all their taunts! He was hooted, pelted, insulted, but quite unmoved he held open his Bible, and answered every onset by saying, ‘But hear me, hear what God says to us in his blessed Word.’ I remember he was speaking from John x. concerning the good Shepherd and the door of the sheepfold. At times the crowd were quieted down to listen, and *one* at least of the hearers walked away, forgetting for the time Greek iambics and mathematical deductions, but filled with the thought, ‘That stranger has a peace and a life of which I know nothing.’ Next time we met was at the Duchess of Gordon’s, Huntly Lodge, on his return on a visit from China; and I have never for­gotten that happy season, or his last words, as, entering the railway-carriage, he said, ‘Now for China!’”

One or two characteristic extracts from his own journal will carry us still deeper into the heart of the combat and of the combatant.

“*At 34 Wellington Street, Dublin, Rev. W. B. Kirkpatrick’s. Monday, April 8th.— . . .* On Saturday, after being here an hour or two, I thought of going to preach in the open air, but on going through the streets thought it better to wait a little until my way should open more gradually. Yesterday I preached for Mr. Kirkpatrick at twelve, on ‘Go ye into all the world,’ &c., and in the evening in Adelaide Road Church, on John iii.: regeneration. I had assistance on both occasions, and in coming home at night spoke to numbers. I found them avery engaging people, very open and frank, and accessible to kindness. O that Jesus may be glorified among them! . . . This evening I felt the hand of the Lord laid upon me so powerfully that I could not but go forth to attempt entering fairly on his work. I went down to the quay to look out for a suitable place to preach, and having found one I tried to begin, urged by his word, ‘Preach the word,’ &c. The enmity which even the attempt to open my mouth provoked showed what I may look for if I do the Lord’s will. When I asked some sailors if they would attend they seemed disposed, but shrunk away, saying, ‘This is a bad part of the world, for there are too many on the other side of the house.’ In coming away to the meeting in the chapel I asked the Lord to direct me to some true child of God—not aminister—who might go with me when I next attempt this work, and as soon as I got to the church I was introduced to one of the elders, who seems the veryperson. After the meeting, again I met with another, who seems equally desirable. The meeting was very sweet. I spoke a little on the account of Hagar and her son, Genesis xxi., prayed, and was followed by Mr. K. in prayer. He is a man of genuine piety and very considerable power.

*“Tuesday Evening.—*Duringthis day my path has opened a little, or rather not a little, farther. During the former part of the day I wrote letters to Scotland. Was alone with the Lord, and also traversed the city that I might get a full view of its character, naturally and morally, which is always most easily done before you become known. I conversed with Mr. Drysdale, the elder to whom I alluded above as aman of God. . . . I spent an hour with him in his work­shop alone. He gave me an awful account of the difficulties of out-door preaching in Dublin; but after much converse I felt that I must make the attempt. He would gladly have gone with me, but was engaged this evening at the great meeting in connection with the Presbyterian marriage ques­tion, and thus I was left quite alone. However I went, look­ing to the Lord, and took up my position on the open ground to the west of the custom-house, laid my hat on the ground, and standing afew paces from the footpath began to read, ‘It is appointed unto men once to die,’ &c. I had soon a large and most interesting assembly, but, as usual, the Romanists introduced their questions, and when the answers came too near them they began to make a rush with the view of putting me down. A police-officer also came and advised me to remove. I said I believed that I was trespassing no law—that that was the ground where Father Matthew spoke—and that I would not remove unless he had authority to stop me. He seemed to be a Romanist, and was evidently set on putting me down, so that after throwing the responsi­bility on him, and telling the people where I would preach tomorrow, I came away with adisburdened conscience. Dear people! they seemed intent on hearing, and followed me far on my way home despite of all I could do. . . .

“*Friday, April 12th*.—Half-past one o’clock this morning I awoke under a powerful assault of despondency and unbelief—tempted to say, Let me sit still and take things in the ordinary way. However, at worship, the fifth chapter of Hebrews, read by Mr. K., particularly the words, ‘Be fol­lowers of them who through *faith* and *patience* are now in­heriting the promises,’ quickened me again. We had some interesting conversation on the need of perseverance, and of in this taking a lesson from O’Connell; and at half-past nine I went down in the name of Jesus to the scene of last night’s meeting. I asked one captain to give me his ship to preach in, but he refused. I was then standing in doubt to what ship to go to next when I saw some poor Romanists—emigrants, I suppose—on board another vessel, who seemed to know me, and were mocking. I asked them how they were so unwilling to hear the Word of God; they said they loved it, but not from me—that I could not preach it, &c. This opened the way. With all their confidence they mingled many oaths, which I told them certainly showed that they were not on the right way. A crowd gathered, and I had the best hour among them that I have had in Dublin. I was greatly aided in gaining their confidence. They threatened to throw me into the river at first, but I told them I did not mind that—they treated my Master worse. One asked me for my commission; I pointed to ‘Let him that heareth say, Come.’ One said something vile; I said, ‘You know that when you go to confession you must confess that as a sin.’ Another, hearing of confession, and thinking that I was speaking against it, said, ‘What do you know about confes­sion?’ &c.; I said, ‘Not much; but I am saying no more than I know,’ and repeated what he had said. He was pleased. One said, ‘You must be saved by prayer and fasting;’ I affirmed it, but showed the infinitely higher place of the blood of Jesus. One pressed me to prove that the Bible was the Word of God, wishing to bring me under church authority; I said I would do so if he denied it, but that as we both admitted this, why should I prove it, and so we got to more practical and personal matters. I was so full of God’s joy in all this that I could not but smile, or rather laugh, in speaking to them; they wondered at this, and said, ‘He is a good man, we cannot make him angry.’ I told them I would come back again at the dinner-hour and speak again; and so we parted. This was a good beginning. At twelve we had a very good prayer-meeting; and all that seems needful is faith, and patience, and prayer. I am just about to return again to the field; but ah! I must go deeper this time, and be prepared for the worst that the enemy can devise or execute. ‘They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the *word* of their testimony; and *they loved not their lives unto the death.’* Oh! to be enabled thus to fight and overcome!

*“Evening.—*Thepublic duty of the day is now over, and I have abundant cause to sing of mercy. At the dinner-hour I got a good many to hear, and had increasing assistance. In the evening I got free of all controversies, and spoke with divine relish on the love of God: ‘God commendeth his love toward us,’ &c. We met with some opposition; among other things, someone threw a pailful of water at me from a ship’s side, but it did not harm me. The impression was greater than before, and though the policeman who first put me down came near, he did not interfere. They are a very interesting people, and if I be faithful to the Lord’s call I doubt not to see some or many of them obeying the gospel. It is now near to the end of my first week in Ireland, and I have indeed cause to thank the Lord that so soon I should be within sight of so full and blessed a work.

“*Saturday, April 13th. . . .* This day I have kept as a day of rest, with the exception of having a prayer-meeting at twelve o’clock, at which I read Isaiah xliii., and felt something of his presence. This day has been wet, so that I have had less unwillingness to defer my public engage­ments until tomorrow. During the chief part of this evening I have been led to look afresh at the dark side of my pros­pects, and so have felt as if nothing could be done; but again I am revived by God’s own perfect words. I have just come to my room from family worship, where Hebrews vii. 18 to the end was read. I saw something of his glory as a priest, and had some nearness and fulness of heart in prayer, and have again a renewal of hope regarding this poor city. I found today also that hope and expectation is springing up in the hearts of some of God’s children who at first despaired of anything being done. Last night I told those who disturbed us that I knew well that ‘the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison,’ but that we would specially pray for them, and that God would fulfil his word, ‘ He stilleth the tumult of the people.’ They seemed struck at this; I added, I will get you all very quiet yet before I leave you. Nothing gives one so great an opening as joy, and love, and peace; and I find these poured into my heart when among these poor outcasts in an uncommon measure. Many of the emigrants who in the morning cursed me hung upon my lips in the evening. One poor woman said, ‘Ah! I see the tear of mercy in his eye.’ When they made any commotion I said, ‘Now, the policeman will stop us;’ and they became as quiet as the river beside us.”

He returned to Scotland on May 10th, and after three months of evangelistic work, chiefly in Paisley, Port-Glasgow, Renfrew, and other neighbouring places, pro­ceeded to the British dominions of North America, where we shall have in the next chapter to trace his footsteps.

1. Testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It may be right to state here once for all, that from the time of his leaving Dundee until his departure for China, he relied wholly on such support as was spontaneously sent to him by those who desired to further his special work. The result was that while his own immediate wants were amply supplied, he seldom lacked suffi­cient also to contribute liberally in behalf of Christ’s cause and Christ’s poor. The above is given as a specimen of such entries in regard to this matter as occur from time to time in his journal. The following is the first of these, of date, Perth, January, 1840: “Received *£*1from a friend for personal expenses, making now in all, given me since I ceased from my engagement at Dundee, £53. So wonderfully is the Lord providing for all my wants! Praise! Oh Lord! deliver me from covetousness, and enable me with overflowing gratitude and joy to give all that I don’t require to promote the extension of thy blessed kingdom in this poor ruined world. Amen.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. During the winter of i844 he also taught a Hebrew class in the New College, for the benefit of the pupils of his revered friend, Dr. Duncan. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Late minister of the Free Church, Gartly. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See note, page 225; also, a touching incident in his journal of date October nth, 1847 (Chapter xii.), illustrating how literally he carried with him “neither purse nor scrip,” &c. It might be said of him, with absolute truth, during this period, in which, in the matter of temporal provision, he so simply walked by faith, that “when he had gathered much he had nothing over, and when he had gathered least he had no lack.” He had never too much for him­self and for the poor, and never too little for himself. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The Rev. H. M. Williamson, Free High Church, Aberdeen. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)