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An earnest pastorate



AN EARNEST PASTORATE.

“ We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”—ACTS vi. 4.—*Manuscript Motto in his Study Bible.*



Alex. Leitch

AN
EARNEST PASTORATE

MEMORIALS
OF THE
REV. ALEXANDER LEITCH, M.A.
MINISTER OF THE SOUTH CHURCH, STIRLING

BY THE
REV. NORMAN L. WALKER
AUTHOR OF 'LIFE IN THE SPIRIT,' 'CHRIST AT SYCHAR,' ETC.

'He wore out his life in quiet work, beneath his Master's eye.'

EDINBURGH
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CHAPTER FIRST.

HIS EARLIER LIFE.

Birth and Education—Dr. John Muir—License—Broughty Ferry—
Mr. Erskine of Linlathen—Professor Martin—Dr. S. Miller—
Chapel of Ease—Dr. Love—Settlement at Gartmore.

FROM one to half-past two o'clock on the afternoon of Thursday, the 23d day of April 1868, the town of Stirling appeared as it usually does on a Fast-day or a Sabbath. The shops were shut, and all business was suspended ; the streets were full of people, whose aspect indicated the pressure of some common sorrow ; and the tolling of the town bells at intervals intensified the feeling of solemnity which was abroad.

It was the funeral day of the Rev. Alexander Leitch, minister of the South Free Church—a man who never delivered one set speech in the General Assembly, who contributed nothing to the literature of his country, with whose very name, it is possible, many of his own brethren were little familiar, but who, by a long life of single-minded devotion to the glory of God and the highest good of his fellow men, had made such an impression upon the community in which he lived, that it was now mourning his death as if it had been a public calamity.

The memory of such a man will no doubt long

remain green in the recollections of many, and the monument which has since been erected over his grave will also help to keep his name from being speedily forgotten. But it may always be a question, in a case of this kind, whether a memorial may not be prepared which shall do more than it is possible for memory or a monument of stone to accomplish ;—a memorial which people can preserve in their own homes, and which will make them even better and more beneficially acquainted with their dead friend than they perhaps ever were while he lived in the midst of them. Often there are no materials out of which such a memorial can be constructed, and it makes a poor substitute to offer instead a series of empty panegyrics on the departed. But if materials do exist, and other circumstances admit of it, we can conceive of many advantages likely to follow from the attempt to continue after his death the usefulness of a good man, by the publication of a sketch of his life and of selections from his remains. It is in this spirit that the present work has been undertaken ; but the compiler wishes to say at the very outset that, greatly as he respected the subject of this memoir, he would not have faced the preparation of a volume intended to enshrine his memory, if he had not been beforehand convinced that much could be brought out in connection with his history which was fitted to be, in many ways, practically useful. While, therefore, those may be disappointed who take up the memorial in the expectation of finding a constant repetition of the fact that Mr. Leitch was a good man, full of faith and prayer, he hopes that others will experience more solid gratification in getting from these notices some useful practical hints and some substantial spiritual benefit.

Mr. Leitch was born in Glasgow on the 24th of February 1803. A communicant's certificate, preserved among his papers, and signed by Dr. Burns of the Barony, on November 1st, 1819, mentions that he had lived in that parish from his infancy, and had maintained up till that time, when he was sixteen years of age and was about to enter the Divinity Hall, a character every way consistent with his profession and prospects. But we have no intimate knowledge of this early period of his life. He must have gone to College when he was but a boy of twelve or less, for his Master of Arts diploma is dated April 1819; and the very fact that at such an age he did take his degree, speaks with sufficient explicitness for his diligence during his undergraduate course. There is nothing to tell, however, of his actual work during these years, nor of the beginnings of his religious life, nor of the companionships which he made while at the University. We know what classes he attended, because, with that business-like carefulness for which he afterwards became remarkable, he preserved the tickets of his professors; but not until he had completed his theological curriculum, and is about to take license, have we the means of forming anything like a distinct idea of what manner of person he was or promised to become.

Two passing glimpses of him, indeed, we get while he is yet a student. For some months, from November 1819 to January 1820, he taught a private school at Harkosyke, in the parish of Loudon, Ayrshire, to the entire satisfaction, as appears, of his employers; and while in Glasgow, at the University, he came across the path of Mr. Nixon, of Montrose, in such a way as to leave upon his mind a pleasant recollection.

“I went very very young to College,” writes Mr. Nixon, “and was there for years before I ever began to be anything like an earnest student. And it was in those earlier years that I came in contact with Mr. Leitch, and that only in going to or returning from College, as our homes lay so far in the same direction. And the most which I can at present recall, was the impression which I then took up, that he was much more like one that felt his responsibilities than I could pretend to be.”

This is not much, but it confirms the impression which is conveyed to us by his conduct as a probationer, that when he was licensed to preach the Gospel he was able to speak to those whom he addressed of a Divine love which he had himself already experienced.

While passing through the Divinity classes, Mr. Leitch appears to have been attracted from the Barony Church to St. James's by the preaching of Dr. Muir, and thus early the foundation was laid of a friendship which continued uninterrupted till the Disruption. Dr. Muir proposed him for license in the Presbytery—he procured him his first situation afterwards at Broughty Ferry—he was largely instrumental in opening the way for him both into Gartmore and into Stirling—and for many years in succession they regularly assisted each other at their respective communions. The story of their relationship is indeed highly creditable to them both. No father could have more earnestly sought to further a son's interests in the world than Dr. Muir sought to further the interests of one for whom, though he was no kinsman of his, he had conceived a peculiarly high regard; and Mr. Leitch would have been altogether inexcusable if he had not met such unremitting kindness

with gratitude and affection. As it was, the friendship continued, as we have said, until that trying event came which made them ministers of separate churches ; and we are not surprised to find that, whatever other letters he lost, Mr. Leitch seems to have preserved to the last all that were ever sent to him by Dr. Muir.

These letters, especially the earliest of them, furnish a fine specimen of the kindly Christian intercourse which was carried on forty or fifty years ago between the Evangelical ministers of Scotland and the preachers who sympathised with them in their views of the Gospel ; and in tracing Mr. Leitch's career as a probationer, we shall have very frequent occasion to refer to their contents.

On Thursday, 7th November 1822, Dr. Muir writes to his young friend to say that he had the day before proposed in the Presbytery of Glasgow that he should be taken on trial for license ; and, as it was necessary that he should be known to at least six ministers within the bounds, he gives him an open letter of introduction, with which to call upon the required number of the brethren. Among the ministers to whom Mr. Leitch was thus commended, and who, no doubt, stood sponsors for him when he was admitted to be a probationer, were, we observe, Dr. Chalmers and the " Pastor of Kilsyth."

The license, however, did not take place immediately. He was, in fact, too young to be entitled to receive it at the time when his name was first submitted to the Presbytery. And other things also must have come in the way to prevent the process from being rapidly accomplished. It was not until the 1st of October, 1823, that he was at last enabled to go for-

ward, with the full sanction of the Church, to the public discharge of those high functions, for the exercise of which he had been so long and so earnestly preparing.

His first sermon was preached in the Barony Church—the same, probably, in which he had been baptized—his text being Genesis iii. 15: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” During the remainder of the month of October he also officiated in other pulpits in Glasgow or its neighbourhood. But so long before as the 8th of August, he had, through the mediation of Dr. Muir, been appointed to the charge of a new school at Broughty Ferry, erected by the liberality of the well-known Mr. Erskine of Linlathen; and, as he had to enter on the duties of this office on the 17th of November, his ministry came to be exercised, from that date and for a year onward, chiefly in the north and east of Scotland.

On the 16th of November, for example, he preached at Monifieth; and from the carefully kept sermon journal which he left behind him, and which contains a record of where and how he spent every Sabbath that passed over him, from the date of his license to the week before his death, we learn that during the year which elapsed between November 1823 and November 1824, he officiated at, among others, the following places in Fife and Forfar:—St. Andrew’s, St. David’s, and Steeple Church, Dundee; Forfar and Broughty Ferry, Logie and Monimail.

Regarding this school in Broughty Ferry, Mr. Leitch has preserved the copy of a letter written by a Captain Paterson on behalf of Mr. Erskine, and addressed to Dr. Muir, from which we gather that the qualifica-

tions required in the teacher to be appointed were not exclusively scholastic. Mr. Erskine, whatever he became afterwards, was then regarded as one of the most earnest and evangelical men within the communion of the Church of Scotland ; and it is evident that he had in his eye not merely the secular education of the village, but the promotion of the highest interests of its inhabitants. Although Mr. Leitch, therefore, was by this time a preacher, he probably did not find, even apart from the occasional opportunities which were offered to him of occupying pulpits in the neighbourhood, that his energies were altogether turned aside from what had become the main purpose of his life.

“ It is quite unnecessary,” says Captain Paterson, “ for me to say anything of Mr. Erskine’s views in erecting the school, as you probably know them as well as I do, and the qualifications of Mr. Leitch seem all that can be desired for their fulfilment. We have a Sunday school of from 80 to 100 scholars, to which he will have no objection to give his superintendence. There is also a small library for the use of the village, which will be placed under his charge ; nor, I am sure, will he refuse to give his exertions on behalf of the Bible Society which has lately been set agoing. May the Lord direct him and bless him as an instrument in turning many wandering souls to the truth of the Gospel.”

These expectations were fully realised. Among his pupils was Professor Martin of Aberdeen, who to this day “ remembers well the order which characterised the school, and the invariable kindness and faithfulness of its teacher ;” while a letter now before us, written by an octogenarian, who was old enough in 1823 to be able to take notice of what was going on outside of

school, mentions several things which help to make Mr. Leitch's religious position in Broughty Ferry perfectly intelligible to us. He says, for example: "At that time the Moderates and the Evangelicals formed two distinct parties, and this parish had its full share of moderatism." Again: "The laws of the church were very stringent in regard to preaching, without liberty being asked and granted by the parish minister." Mr. Leitch, however (he goes on to explain), was in the habit of giving an address at the close of his Sabbath school; an address which consisted very much just of an "improvement" of the lessons taught in the classes, but which was attractive enough to induce the regular attendance of a considerable number of grown-up people; so that it might fairly be said that, in addition to the work which he was engaged to perform, he voluntarily conducted, all the time he was in Broughty Ferry, a set Sunday evening service. And our correspondent adds, "As Mr. Leitch was on the Evangelical side, and often commented very severely on the evils of the time—speaking of the failures of teachers as well as of scholars—his remarks sometimes gave rise to a great deal of discussion among those who heard him."

It is easy to see what sort of a life this was. Here was a young and ardent evangelical preacher, fresh from mission work in the wynds of Glasgow (for Dr. Muir, in one of his communications, refers to his having had charge, as a divinity student, of a district meeting in his parish), set down in a place where moderatism prevailed, yet with limited opportunities of good-doing. The laws of the church did not permit him to open his mouth to declare the unsearchable riches of Christ where and when he pleased. If he had attempted a regular service

on his own account, he would at once have been censured as insubordinate. But his zeal had one outgate,—through his Sabbath school—and there he appears to have spoken his mind in the hearing of the people so frankly, that many who had been accustomed, all their days, to hear nothing but smooth things, were startled out of their indifference.

And we are not in the least surprised to hear that his style of preaching not merely excited interest but provoked opposition. On this point he had written, apparently, to his faithful friend and counsellor in Glasgow; for, in a letter of Dr. Muir's, dated January 8, 1824, we find these sentences:—

“It gives me pleasure to hear you are so comfortably settled: it gives me yet more pleasure to hear that you are countenanced by God in your preaching occasionally. And, because you are so countenanced, therefore you must expect to be opposed. . . . Nor will the opposition do you any harm in the end. It will in the meantime show you the fulfilment of the word of God, and put an edge on your mind in prayer, and it will in future be better to you than much study without such trials in the way of preparation for preaching.”

Mr. Leitch's occasional services in the neighbouring pulpits at this period appear to have been extremely acceptable, whereof two testimonies, among a number, may be given. He officiated again and again, while living in Broughty Ferry, at Monifieth; and Mr. Bisset, who was then the assistant-minister there, thus writes on the 8th of June 1824: “He has several times preached in this parish, in Dundee, Forfar, and other places, when he has been ‘particularly’ remarked for the extent of his Scriptural knowledge, the impressive manner of his

delivery, his ardent zeal in defence of the truth, and the peculiar orthodoxy of his evangelical sentiments." The other testimony is of a more indirect kind. In the month of August he was asked to supply, for several Sabbaths in succession, the pulpit of Monimail, while Dr. Martin was in London baptizing one of the children of Edward Irving. He did so, and on that occasion left on one of his hearers an impression, which is described in the following terms by a grandson of Dr. Martin's, Dr. Samuel Miller of Glasgow: "Talking one day," he writes, "with Mr. Wilson of Maryhill, immediately after Mr. Leitch's death, we noted, among other things, the uniformly savoury character of his discourses; and I remarked, that this must have been the case from the very beginning of his career, while yet a young preacher, for I remembered a remark made by an aunt of mine long long ago (perhaps forty-five years ago), to the effect that she did not expect such doctrinally mature and unctious preaching from so young a licentiate."

All this while Dr. Muir was not losing sight of the ecclesiastical advancement of his protégé. So early as the 7th of February he sent to him at Broughty Ferry this letter, which speaks volumes for the esteem in which he held him:—

"Although it be now nearly two years since the building of a Chapel of Ease in St. James's parish here was proposed, and nearly one year since the authority of the General Assembly for building said chapel was obtained, yet I have been hitherto rather indifferent about seeing the building begun, because till lately I did not see where a fit minister could be found for it, even though it were finished; and chapels of ease without good and sufficient ministers in them, I consider

as lumber indeed. Of late, however, I have been casting my eyes toward you as the future minister of our chapel, and I intend to take the earliest opportunity of saying so to our elders and others concerned in this projected undertaking. All this I mention to you in this early stage of the business, because I find several of the leading people in Dr. Love's congregation asking where you are, and speaking as if they would like to see you assistant to Dr. Love in his present feeble state. When they have asked me where you are, I have told them, but added you were engaged till Martinmas next in your present situation. It may happen, however, that some of them may take it upon them to write to you ; and, if so, I could wish you would make no promises to them nor to others till you have first written to me."

Nothing, however, ultimately came of either of these movements, nor yet of another which Dr. Muir originated about an assistantship at Kilbarchan ; and Mr. Leitch, at the close of his engagement at Broughty Ferry, returned to Glasgow again for a time as a probationer at large. But his indefatigable friend had his success in the vineyard too much at heart to permit him to rest satisfied with this state of matters ; and in February 1825, we find him taking the necessary steps to secure a favourable hearing for him at *Gartmore*. This village is in the south-west corner of Perthshire, in the parish of the Port of Monteith. The parish church being five miles off, and a portion of the adjoining parish of Drymen being equally isolated, a desire early sprung up among the people of the district to have a church and minister of their own. This desire was gratified toward the close of last century. A chapel of ease in connection with the Church of Scotland was erected in 1790,

and the election of a minister was vested in the male heads of families. From the outset the cure was favoured with the services of a succession of able men ; but, of course, from its position, it did not possess the means of retaining ministers of mark when it was fortunate enough to secure them, and the vacancy which occurred in 1825 was made by an event, the like of which must have happened often—the translation of the incumbent of the time to the parochial charge of Fossoway.

For the vacant office there was no lack of candidates, but Mr. Leitch's way into it was happily made very smooth. He preached in the chapel on the 20th of February, the election took place on the 7th of March, he was formally *called* on the 28th of April, and he was ordained on Thursday the 7th of July. "The call," says one of his hearers in Gartmore, "was hearty and unanimous, there being only one dissentient, and this person became a most attached hearer and a very warm friend." It was, in a worldly sense, a situation of no great profit, the stipend promised amounting to about seventy pounds a-year, with a house and garden, but it offered what the young and zealous preacher must have been ardently desiring—a sphere in which there was full scope for the exercise of his ministerial gifts, and we shall immediately see that he proved himself a workman needing not to be ashamed.

In his sermon-diary, there is usually nothing entered but the name of the place at which he preached and the text, but on the 7th and 10th of July the entries made are somewhat fuller. Under the first it is recorded, "This day I was ordained minister of the chapel of Gartmore. Mr. Gray, minister of Kincardine, preached

from these words (John xv. 8) ‘Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples;’” while under the second we have this record, “This day I was introduced to the congregation at Gartmore by Mr. Muir, St. James’s parish, Glasgow, who preached from Matt. ix. 38, ‘Pray ye therefore,’ etc. I preached in the afternoon from Luke ix. 1, 2.”





CHAPTER SECOND.

MINISTRY AT GARTMORE.

Revival of Religion—Dr. Finlayson of Edinburgh—Communion Seasons—Snow-storm of 1827—Marriage—Letters of Dr. Muir—Mr. Hamilton Thom—Dr. Chalmers and Dr. Clason—Catholic Emancipation—Mr. Campbell of Row—Vacancies and Probationers—Woodside, Aberdeen, and the late Mr. Gray of Perth—Presentation to Stirling.

“AT the time of Mr. Leitch’s coming to Gartmore,” writes one who belonged to the district, and received lasting good from his ministry there, “the spiritual life of the place was at a low ebb, and all around, amidst nature’s loveliest scenery, was a moral wilderness.” The young pastor, however, was not discouraged, but, “full of faith in the Word of the truth of the Gospel,” he addressed himself to the task of reclaiming the waste, with a zeal, perseverance, and energy, which, by the blessing of God, soon issued in most satisfactory results.

“He organised,” we are told, “a missionary society and Sabbath schools. Classes for young men and young women were conducted by himself personally. He also established prayer-meetings on Sabbath and on week-days, both for young and old.”

“By these various means of grace, and, above all, by the faithful preaching of the Word, a marked change was produced on the lives of the people. The careless

and godless feared him, while, by those who knew the truth or were seeking the way into the kingdom, he was much loved, and his ministry highly prized. To the young, especially, he was kind and attentive, and he was blessed in leading to the Saviour many whom he afterwards tenderly watched and safely guided into the fellowship of the Church. Of these, not a few remain to this day as seals of his earnest and successful ministry, while many have gone to glory, leaving unmistakeable evidence of their interest in the inheritance."

"In short, without any of the stir which usually accompanies a revival of religion, a deep and permanent interest was awakened in divine things among the members of the church and in the surrounding district; and though not appearing particularly remarkable in the light of recent movements, yet the fact is not without interest when one thinks of the time, and more especially of the valley of death in which the whole thing took place. These recollections go back fully forty years."

Another account, kindly furnished to us by another friend, also connected with Gartmore, says—

"Having no seat in the Courts of the Church, Mr. Leitch gave himself wholly to the work of the ministry, to visitation from house to house, and to the organisation of Christian agencies suitable to the circumstances of the people and the place. He established district prayer-meetings, bringing neighbouring families together, enlisting the services of the grave and godly in conducting them, strengthening the spiritual life of many, and supplying healthy matter of conversation to all. Mr. Leitch early formed an auxiliary association in connection with the Bible Society, to aid its funds, to stimulate

the grace of liberality among his hearers, and, through the Society, to secure a copy of the Word of God for such as had it not.

“The outstanding features of Mr. Leitch’s ministry in Gartmore were twofold—viz., his deep interest in the young and his zeal for the revival of family religion. He carefully superintended the Sabbath school, encouraging parents to send their children, cheering the teachers by his presence, and dropping a kindly word to the scholars. Nor was his interest confined to the Sabbath school; the village day-school shared his devoted zeal; the class-books were improved, the classes examined, and the very games of the children were not overlooked. One of these games, the barbarous and cruel custom of cock-fighting on Fastern’s E’en, was, after some ill-feeling and not a little opposition, finally abolished through his exertions.

“The fruit of Mr. Leitch’s ministry in Gartmore the Day will declare; but the immediate result was a large increase in the attendance on the means of grace, much attention to the form of Divine ordinances, and an intelligent sympathy with every department of missionary and Christian work.”

All this was just such an outcome as one might have expected from the beginning at Broughty Ferry. We had there a young man with the love of Christ in his heart and the spirit of an Evangelist—eager to preach the Gospel to the last, but lacking full opportunity. Here he has an open door, and he throws himself into the work with all the ardour of one who has been waiting to give himself to it wholly. Nor need we have the least hesitation in saying, what was manifestly the fact, that his settlement in Gartmore was followed by a

revival of religion. The district was not then Gospel-beaten, the good news of salvation through the free grace of God was yet comparatively fresh to the people, and an increased attention to Divine things was a result which was quite to have been anticipated from abundant labours of the kind that have been described above. A ministry so earnest, so faithful, so diligent, and so prayerful, could not but be a fruitful ministry.

With regard to the character of his preaching at this time, we have before us a variety of testimonies. We select, however, but one, occurring in a letter addressed to Mr. Leitch's son by the Rev. Dr. Finlayson of Edinburgh, lately Moderator of the United Presbyterian Church.

“My memory,” says Dr. Finlayson, “associates him with the Port of Monteith, and recalls him to me as then remarkable for his fervour and earnestness as an evangelical preacher. In this respect he stood very eminent in the public estimation of that wide district. His services were greatly sought for on communion occasions. They attracted great multitudes, and formed the theme of much earnest conversation over the country side. In opposition to some who admired mere decorum and dull propriety in the pulpit, and who were ready to call his passionate fervour extravagance, I quite remember others used to say, in admiration and in justification, ‘He was at times *carried away* by his anxiety to bring the sinner to Christ.’ When I heard him on one of these sacramental occasions, this was quite the impression made on me. The great fervour was manifestly all honest and true, and arose from the depth and simplicity of his own personal convictions of the truth and preciousness of the message he had to deliver, and of

the paramount importance of its immediate and cordial reception by the sinner.”

Such a description enables us to complete the picture already partially drawn for us by these two hearers of Mr. Leitch. It appears that the zeal of God's house consumed him. His diligence in parochial work was equalled by his passionate fervour in the pulpit; and when one remembers his youth (he was but twenty-three when his ordination took place), and this additional fact also, that in the Church of Scotland at the time the Evangelical party had scarcely begun to lift up its head, it is not surprising that this ministry at Gartmore should have impressed itself, as a noteworthy phenomenon, on the minds and memories of many contemporaries.

Those communion occasions to which Dr. Finlayson refers, are again and again spoken of in the papers in our possession. They were important seasons at Gartmore as well as elsewhere. Ministers were brought to officiate from great distances, and people flocked to attend from all the surrounding country. At one time, in addition to the service held in the church, there were two sermons preached simultaneously from tents outside. These were what we may call the “Camp Meetings” of Scotland; and, in the old days, when Moderatism overspread the land, and Evangelical preaching was scarce, they must have afforded precious opportunities to many. In Gartmore a well of living water was opened in the desert, and some may have at times got there a refreshing draught who usually sat under a ministry which tended to set them to slumber.

One communion time appears to be particularly well remembered by the old people of the district. It was

that of March 1827. It happened during what, we suppose, was the greatest snow-storm of the century. Dr. Hamilton of Strathblane was to have assisted on the Sabbath, and had come a considerable distance on the way to fulfil his engagement, when the depth of the snow (22 feet, it is said) prevented his further advance. Mr. Leitch was therefore under the necessity of conducting the whole of the service himself, which, in addition to the usual action sermon, and fencing the tables, consisted of five table services and an evening sermon. As only one elder was able to get forward, Mr. Leitch was also obliged to assist in the distribution of the elements; and by all this he was so thoroughly exhausted, that he was constrained to sit down while addressing the communicants at the last table. It ought to be added that, at the close, the feeling of the hearers was that for double duty the minister had received a double portion of the Spirit.

While still at Gartmore, on the 21st of December 1829, Mr. Leitch married Miss M'Kechnie, in connection with which event a characteristic anecdote is told: "On the first Sabbath after the marriage," writes a hearer, "the curious were eager to know who was to preach. They fully expected a stranger, but Mr. Leitch led his young wife to his seat, and then himself quietly ascended the pulpit, taking for his text this passage in 1st Corinthians vii. 29: "But I say, brethren, the time is short, it remaineth that they that have wives be as though they had none." It was the last Sabbath of the year, and the subject was every way extremely suitable; but not many, under the circumstances, would have ventured to announce at the moment such a theme. "He preached, however," it is added, "with such power, that

the congregation soon forgot the speaker and his peculiar position."

During all these years a kindly intercourse, epistolary and ministerial, had been going on with Dr. Muir, and in his letters many allusions to public and other affairs occur, which give us interesting glimpses into the ecclesiastical incidents of the period.

Thus, in the autumn of 1825, not many years after Mr. Leitch's settlement at Gartmore, his friend in Glasgow mentions that the Presbytery had had before it the case of a Mr. Thom of Liverpool. Mr. Thom, well known afterwards as a Unitarian minister and as the biographer of Blanco White, had received his license in Glasgow at the hands of the Church of Scotland, and although he had moved across the Border, the Court from which he had got formal authority to preach did not suffer him to diverge into the paths of error without making an energetic effort to save him. It turned out to be a troublesome business. The case was not finally settled until the meeting of the General Assembly in May 1828; and then nothing remained but to complete the deposition of the heretic. But good Dr. Muir and his correspondent drew one useful practical lesson from it. "It shows," writes the former, "what an unsafe thing it is to receive the gospel of the grace of God *scientifically* only, into an unhumbled mind. Let us not quarrel with God, then, because of our humiliations. Nothing does the soul more good, under God, than sanctified afflictions."

Then here, in a letter dated December 1828, is a nice little bit of gossip about two good men, with whose names we are all familiar. "Dr. Chalmers has taken seats for himself and family in Mr. Clason's chapel of

ease. What a pity that he should be popishly affected ! But the Lord reigns ! And what is it that will harm us if we be followers of that which is good."

It seems odd to say that Dr. Chalmers was "popishly affected;" but this is abundantly explained in other letters of the same period. His meaning was, that Dr. Chalmers was not disinclined to Catholic emancipation, while Dr. Muir, and, we may add, his friend Mr. Leitch, opposed it with a vehemence which the people of the present day will have even some difficulty in understanding.

"The enemy," writes Dr. Muir in February 1829, "now threatens to come in upon us like a flood; but truly, says our God, it shall be well with thy remnant. Our general session, trades'-house, individual corporations, and city at large, have petitioned against admitting Papists to rule over us. Our Presbytery and Synod are immediately about to follow their example."

As is well known, these and other like efforts were vain; and, in a later communication, the changed position of the country is pathetically lamented.

"Alas! for the restraints taken off sin in the land, and off the agencies of Satan in our affairs, ever since we took off those restraints in the government of the country which our wise and pious forefathers imposed to prevent the growth of a diabolism, otherwise called Popery."

"I cannot get my spirits up," says the good man again, "since the time we voluntarily ceased to be a nation witnessing *for* Christ in the midst of the earth, and *against* Antichristian idolatry. . . . We have nibbling schemes on foot here to counteract the growth of Popery ;

but, when God withdraws, all self-devised schemes prove abortive. . . . *Reges ipsi delirant.* . . . Our rulers are out at sea, and act literally as children. . . . Their very plans of *Reform*, if effected, must hasten the evil day, by bringing in a great many Popish members into the legislature of our country. . . . Well, here have we no continuing city. . . . Let us be seeking one to come."

One of those "nibbling schemes" he speaks of is referred to in another letter.

"Our popishly-affected men in this place," he says, "have set up what they call an anti-popery lecture, delivered by sundry ministers in rotation, in the Tron Church once a fortnight, on Tuesday evenings. I do not join them, because, having done what they could to cause our favoured land to cease from being a witnessing nation for Christ and against idolatry, they cannot expect the blessing of God to attend their *self-devised* projects for preventing the growth of popery. . . . Psalm lxxxii. from verse 111 to the close fitly describes our condition. . . . Nor can we expect that either our present popishly-affected ministers of state, or our popishly-affected ministers of the church, will so far condemn their own recent proceedings in favour of Papists, from motives of mere expedience, as to seek the one to advise, and the other to pray the king, to call the nation to a national fast."

Once more, after telling his friend, in May 1832, that he had been appointed a member of the approaching General Assembly, he adds:—

"I go with rather a heavy heart, aware that God will continue to visit us as a church, and a nation, for the dishonour we have cast on *His Son*, by exalting antichrist to the seat of legislature along with him. But

sometimes we are called to *Do*, and sometimes rather to *Bear*, the holy will of God; and in both cases we must endeavour to 'do with our might what our hands find to do, for there is no work,' etc., 'in the grave whither we are going.'"

In these views Mr. Leitch very much concurred. Like many other good men of the time he viewed the admission of the Papists to a share in the government of the country with extreme disfavour, and one of his parishioners speaks emphatically of the exertions which he put forth in Gartmore to oppose Catholic Emancipation. It is not likely, however, that the passage of the act produced upon his young and genial nature the same gloomy and desponding impression which it did upon Dr. Muir. Whether he ever got heartily reconciled to the theory or not we cannot say; but he certainly came to be able to acquiesce in the inevitable.

Another notable incident of this period could scarcely fail to be referred to in the correspondence of two Scottish Evangelical ministers—the rise of Rowism. We find, in fact, several allusions to it in the letters of Dr. Muir. Thus, in December 1827, he writes: "Mr. Campbell, minister of Row, has been preaching here of late. I have not heard him; but while his zealous manner gains the approbation and excites the minds of some, his bold assertion (as they tell me) of the necessity of our *knowing* we are believers in order to our *being* believers in Christ, and consequently safe, provokes the indignation of others. If it were not for this, he might in all probability be thought of as Mr. Marshall's successor. He is certainly, according to his light, a Christ-exalting preacher, and these we much need everywhere." Two years later the character of the new light was more

perfectly understood, as the system had developed itself more fully, and the doctor speaks of the state of things with greater severity. "Mr. Erskine of Linlathen," says he [and the information would be particularly interesting to Mr. Leitch, who had known Mr. Erskine so well at Broughty Ferry], "expounds daily at Row, Lochgairside. . . . He now denies the *substitution* of Christ for the ungodly, the *intercession* of Christ in heaven, and the *imputation* of righteousness to the believer. . . . And yet he has such zeal and apparent love to the souls of men, that he deceives many. . . . He is, in fact, a mystic, and lives next door to Popery itself. 2 Cor. xi. 3 is still in requisition among us, and so is the text which says: 'If it were possible they would deceive the very elect.'"

Dr. Muir had been chiefly instrumental in opening the way for Mr. Leitch into Gartmore, but before the year was out he was moving for his translation into a more important sphere. The stipend was certainly very inadequate, and the manner in which the young minister had conducted himself in his first charge had fully convinced his friend that he well merited preferment. These considerations led probably to the writing of a letter which is now before us. It is addressed to Archibald Lyle, Esq., and has respect to a vacancy at Slamanan. After giving it as his opinion that the heritors and people should endeavour to unite upon one good man, and referring to the fact that the claims of another candidate had already been brought forward, he says: "A good man Mr ——— *may* be, but sure I am that Mr. Leitch *is* such; and I think, could he be heard, his preaching would please all parties. At all events, he is a talented man, and a man of God, and may be trusted. If you were to ask him to preach for Dr. Begg, in the church of

New Monkland, seven miles from Slamnan, and were he or you to write me that he consents and desires to do so, I would ask from Dr. Begg his pulpit for him on some early and convenient day."

What came of this innocent little plot does not appear, but the vacancy at Slamnan was not by any means the only one which the indefatigable minister of St. James's wrote about to Gartmore. The Doctor kept a watchful eye apparently upon the whole Church, and in his letters references occur, with more or less distinctness, to openings in Glasgow and Aberdeen, Dundee and Montrose, Rutherglen and Newton-Stewart. And of course, in connection with some of these, Mr. Leitch had his disappointments. For example, he was induced to preach in July 1830 in Woodside Chapel, Aberdeen, and the result was that he was proposed for the charge in opposition to another good man, who was also a candidate, Mr. Andrew Gray, afterwards of Perth. The congregation divided upon the two men, and, owing to some alleged irregularities attending the election, a rather unpleasant dispute arose, which was carried first before the Presbytery and then before the Synod. The point in debate was whether certain names were legally on the roll of electors. Mr. Leitch's friends affirmed that they were not—that they had been added after the roll had been formally made up, and they claimed that, if these names were excluded, the choice of the people had fallen on Mr. Leitch. Mr. Gray's friends asserted, on the other hand, that everything had been done in a perfectly legal way, and that they had the majority in either case. It is not worth our while, of course, to stir the mud of this old controversy. Enough to say that

the decision was, rightly or wrongly, given in favour of Mr. Gray, and that Mr. Leitch cheerfully acquiesced in the shutting of another door which at one time seemed to be providentially opening to him.

It is almost touching to hear how good Dr. Muir sought to comfort his young friend under such trials. The aspirants after ecclesiastical preferment in those days seldom found their path strewn with roses. There were comparatively few posts to fill, and when vacancies occurred there were always plenty of men eager to fill them. Nor did it follow then any more necessarily than it does now, that the successful candidate was invariably the one who deserved the appointment.

“Of ninety-three students examined by our Presbytery during the last seven and a half years, forty-two licentiates, ‘it is lamented,’ remain unemployed. How are these to be disposed of? Were a reformation of religion to take place in Ireland, *there* would be a field for them. But before the reformation, there must, I fear, be deterioration—in other words, the ascendancy of Popery. The Lord will do all His pleasure.”

Again, he says, “It is remarkable that of forty-seven preachers licensed by the Presbytery of Glasgow since June 1821, only two have hitherto been appointed to parish churches; so that no temptation or trial in this respect has befallen you but what is common in our day. Yet God is good to Israel. Still trust in Him, for He shall give you cause yet to praise Him, who is the health of our countenance and our God.”

The grievances of probationers still furnish a fruitful theme for comment and complaint, and it is not for us to say that they even now get justice. But this is cer-

tain, that the former days were not in this connection better than these. Not in Ireland, to which Dr. Muir looked as a possible outlet for the superabundant supply, but in our great colonial dependencies, immense fields of usefulness have been opened up for the energetic, and these, with the increased demands at home, render it greatly less likely now than it once was that men with anything like the requisite qualifications will be long left idle for lack of the offer of suitable occupation.

Forty years ago a man in the position of Mr. Leitch ran a very considerable risk of being left in a chapel of ease all his days. He appears to have had the ear of no patron in the Church of Scotland, he was a thorough-going Evangelical, and the parochial charges were very few in number the appointment to which lay in the hands of the people. But his laborious and successful ministry at Gartmore had made him sufficiently well known within a very considerable circuit, and when a vacancy occurred in Stirling in consequence of the translation of Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Macfarlane to Stockbridge, Edinburgh, a popular court, like the Town Council of that place, in whose hand the patronage was vested, could not altogether overlook his claims at least to a hearing. He was invited therefore to preach in the burgh on a particular Sabbath, and he agreed to do so. The day fixed on was (we find on referring to his sermon journal) the 8th of April 1832. He officiated in the forenoon in the East Church, and in the afternoon in the West, taking as his texts Heb. xi. 16 and 1 Pet. 5-7; and the result was his election on the 9th of June following. "The members of Council present were twenty, whereof

fourteen voted for Mr. Leitch, two for Mr. John Roxburgh of Glasgow, and four declined to vote." This was in due time succeeded by a call from the congregation, and his induction into the charge took place on the 13th of September, when Mr. Dempster of Denny preached and presided.





CHAPTER THIRD.

FIRST YEARS IN STIRLING.

Trying Nature of his Position—Mr. Thomson of Paisley—Sympathy with the Cause of the Gospel—Beginning of the Ten Years' Conflict—His First Vote in the Assembly—Anxieties about the Future—The Disruption Assembly—New Church in Stirling.

THE nature of the position in which Mr. Leitch found himself in his new sphere of labour, and the manner in which he met its peculiar difficulties, are well described in the following communication from Mr. Thomson of Free St. George's, Paisley.

“I remember well,” says Mr. Thomson, “Mr. Leitch's translation from Gartmore to Stirling between thirty and forty years ago, in circumstances peculiarly trying to a young minister entering on a new charge. I was a student at the time, and a member of the West Church congregation, between which and the East Church a lengthened and angry feud had existed, causing great alienation and strife, and illustrating the truth of the words : ‘Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth.’ As the first minister claimed the right to a colleague, and refused to leave the West for the East Church, and as the East Church congregation had previously engaged the services both of the first minister and of a colleague, it was found necessary for the sake of peace to appoint

Mr. Leitch to be colleague to both ministers, and consequently to preach every Sabbath in both churches. A more awkward and difficult position it is scarcely possible to conceive. It was like being placed between two fires, and there was much danger of being scorched by both. It required no ordinary tact and temper to be able to walk wisely, and to avoid being wrecked on Scylla or swamped in Charybdis. But Mr. Leitch was found fully equal to the occasion, and was enabled to draw forth an amount of general confidence, warm affection, and deep respect, which very few could have been expected to obtain. His transparent simplicity of character, his manifest unselfishness, his intense earnestness in his Master's work, and his indefatigable devotedness to the highest interests of the people of his charge, compelled them to regard him as a true and faithful friend, who sought not theirs but them."

This testimony is thoroughly confirmed by Dr. J. Julius Wood, who was himself one of the ministers of Stirling from 1836-9. "Inasmuch," says he, "as Mr. Leitch was colleague to both the other ministers, and preached to both their congregations, he charged himself with the pastoral charge of both their congregations. By what I always regarded as a great mal-arrangement, though there were three ministers in Stirling, there was only one parish, and each of the ministers was expected to attend to the whole parish (which contains between 8000 and 9000 souls), instead of each having a definite territory marked off for his exclusive oversight. This made pastoral work and visiting very laborious and somewhat unsatisfactory. But Mr. Leitch was unwearied in going about among the people as a minister; and wherever there was

distress of any kind, there he was sure to be found, with kind Christian sympathy and a word of comfort. I think this dropping in on his people as their minister, over and above his formal pastoral visits, was characteristic of his ministry."

We see, then, clearly enough how matters stood. In the first place, the cure was a more than ordinarily laborious one. With, not a manageable district, but the whole parish, placed under his pastoral superintendence—all the inhabitants, without exception, having an equal claim upon his services—Mr. Leitch could never have felt at any particular moment that his work was done. Then, there would have been something, even under the most favourable circumstances, unsatisfactory in the relation which he sustained to his brother ministers. He was a colleague, but that was not all. He had to divide himself as such. In the morning he appeared in the pulpit of the East Church, and preached as the co-pastor of the congregation assembling there; in the afternoon, he was to be found in the West Church, in a new connection, ministering with equal authority to an entirely different people. A careless man, with no particular interest in the flock or the work, might like the variety which this arrangement made; but for one who felt himself to be a steward, requiring by and by to give an account of his labours, the thing could not be pleasant, and Mr. Leitch must often have longed to enjoy a larger measure of freedom and independence. But the drawback to his position had special aggravations. Mutual jealousies existed between the churches to which he was attached; and nothing but the singleness of his aims and the blamelessness of his life could have prevented his being more or less entangled in the

strife. It was not, therefore, a particularly attractive-looking sphere that on which he now entered ; and it says not a little for his wisdom and faithfulness as a Christian minister, that he was able to fill it so as to earn the cordial respect of all.

He was now, what he had been supremely even in Gartmore, the diligent and laborious pastor. He loved the pulpit because he loved to preach Christ ; and "very seldom," says Dr. Wood, "did he ask his colleagues to take his duty for him." "But although he was greatly owned in the proclamation of the gospel, and many seals were given to him of his ministry, it was not as a preacher that he made himself most distinguished in Stirling. It was, above all things, as a man who, wherever he went, gave people the impression that "he was about his Father's business." He carried the light of the Word, as he had opportunity, from house to house ; he was unwearied in his visitation of the sick and sorrowful ; he took the deepest interest in the godly up-bringing of the young ; and very many still live to testify that they could not exchange half-a-dozen words with him upon the street without being reminded of what was uppermost in his own thoughts. We have by us proofs and illustrations of these things in any quantity—books kept by himself at this period, showing how systematically and unweariedly he had waited with the gospel on those who would not come to hear it in the house of God ; letters from both men and women, who are able to speak with a still fresh feeling of thankfulness of his "Saturday class ;" reminiscences of not a few who can recall, as if it had happened yesterday, what he said at sick-beds, or in short notes of condolence after deaths, or in the course of casual

meetings on the street or highway. But these are matters to which we shall have occasion to refer more particularly afterwards, when we come to speak of his pastoral "Methods;" and meantime we shall confine ourselves to giving, as heretofore, an outline of his more public career.

There were two ways in which, thirty or forty years ago, clergymen of the Church of Scotland showed on which side they were—the Evangelical or its opposite; and these were, *first*, associating with other good men in the revival of religion at home, and its propagation abroad; and, *second*, helping the constitutional party in the Church to recover the rights of which the Establishment had been unjustly deprived. Mr. Leitch was a thorough-going Evangelical in both respects. His chosen friends were those who loved the Lord Jesus Christ; his sympathies went warmly with all enterprises which aimed at the establishment of the kingdom of grace; and one of his earliest, if not his very earliest vote in the General Assembly, was given for the abolition of lay patronage.

The general bent of his mind to the cause of evangelical religion is plainly shown in all the letters which were written to him during this time. The following is from Mr. Dempster of Denny, a singularly holy and earnest man:—

"God," he says, "has been very gracious in enlightening you in the knowledge of Christ, and in honouring you as the means of imparting saving light and comfort to the minds of others. What if God has some special work for you in the West Church? No doubt He is, by your present discipline, taking the very best way which infinite love and wisdom can devise for your personal sanctification, and of bringing you to

experience, in increased measure, the blessedness of David when he ‘encouraged himself in the Lord his God.’ I would not wonder had you already found this to be the case, and you will do so more and more, continuing constantly, as you have been taught, to acknowledge the Lord in all your ways, and in many prayers to commit yourself to Him. . . . One cannot but feel, I admit, and perhaps painfully, the turning away of those supposed formerly to have been friends. But I think it is one of the wise observations of Milner, the Church historian, that there are no persons in a minister’s flock he will find steadily attached but those who are really friends in Christ—born from above. It is one of the very humbling and distressing features of the dark times in which we live, that, amidst an apparent zeal for the truth and liking to sound doctrine, there are really so few that seem savingly to know it, or to manifest the spirituality which it produces. O may the Lord give us and ours much of the Spirit, even more and more ! O to bear the image of Christ with increasing truth of expression, and to manifest it more and more distinctly in the meekness of heavenly wisdom ! ”

The same spirit also continues to breathe through the letters which still passed periodically between Mr. Leitch and his old friend Dr. Muir. There is not one of these, however short, which does not contain some remark about or allusion to spiritual things—something to indicate how near to the hearts of both was the cause of evangelical religion. One note from Dr. Muir ends abruptly thus :—“ *For He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever.* When this was sung with one accord by the worshippers of old, then ‘the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord !’ ” In another, there is

this brief sentence :—“ Dr. Scott of Greenock died on Saturday. Life from the dead is the most exquisite of all kinds of life, and such is the life God ordains for His people whom He accepts and loves in Christ Jesus our Lord.” A third letter, written in 1837, contains the following :—“ Your inference from your text of last Wednesday evening was perfectly legitimate. *We love Him because He first loved us. And love is the fulfilling of the law.* As said a godly woman whom I visited yesterday : ‘ I lived long in P——, before I came to Glasgow, now eight or ten years since. While there I regularly attended the ministry of Dr. ——, one of the ministers of the town, and there I was continually kept on the ground under the law. However, since I came to Glasgow I have had my bonds loosed, and I know and enjoy the Gospel.’ It is a surly husband that old husband of ours, the law. And now that God has declared him to be dead by the coming of Christ, ’tis a pity that we should not know it, and be married to that other husband *Christ* ; calling God no longer *Baali* (my Lord), but *Ishi* (my husband), as he permits and commands us.”

But Mr. Leitch was not merely a lover of good men, he evidently took a warm interest in all the schemes which, concurrently with the quickening of spiritual life in the Church, were originated about this time for the extension of Christ’s kingdom. When he began his ministry the Church of Scotland had under its direct charge neither a home nor a foreign mission. There were, however, independent societies formed outside the Ecclesiastical Courts, which drew their chief means of support from the godly members of the Church, and he was apparently one of the first to give such agencies his

countenance and sympathy. We have by us two letters which illustrate this—one from his colleague Mr. Marshall, himself a most saintly man, arranging for a collection for the Inverness Society (probably a home-mission agency operating in the Highlands); and another from Dr. William Brown, asking him to act as one of a deputation in aid of the Scottish Missionary Society, which began its work among the heathen of South Africa, before the General Assembly could see its way to enter on the field on its own account.

It is a specially noticeable fact, however, that Mr. Leitch commenced his ministry in Stirling just as the Ten Years' Conflict was beginning. The nature of that conflict is now so well understood that it would be superfluous to introduce any account of it here. Suffice it to say that it commenced not in consequence of certain individual ecclesiastics having adopted new views of the abstract rights of the Church, but as the direct result of a revival of religion. The Scottish people came to take a deeper interest in the cause of the gospel generally. They grew to be more and more convinced of the importance of an earnest ministry, and it was, in the first instance, to satisfy this natural desire for that, that the General Assembly was moved to take the steps it did to prevent the intrusion of unwelcome presentees into reclaiming parishes. As all parties are now agreed that lay patronage has wrought much evil in Scotland, and that it would have been better for the whole land if the rights of the Christian people had been earlier recognised, we do not need at this time of day to vindicate the wisdom of those who, in 1833 or 1834, were in favour of the principle of a Veto law. That the people should have an influential voice in the election of their own ministers

is at last accepted as an axiom. Let us, however, do full justice to the men who saw the fairness of the principle at a time when it was not so fashionable to uphold it. The very first Assembly of which Mr. Leitch was a member was the famous one of 1833 ; and from a printed paper now before us we learn that he came out at once on the Evangelical side by voting for the motion of Dr. Chalmers. That motion asked the Assembly to declare that "the dissent of a majority of the male heads of families resident within a parish ought to be of conclusive effect in setting aside a presentee." It was met on the part of Dr. Cook by a counter-motion in favour of a Veto with reasons, and was lost ; but it was renewed next year by Lord Moncreiff, and finally carried. Then new questions came to be raised. The Moderate party, finding themselves in a minority in the Assembly, sought help from the civil courts ; and a contest, which in its beginning had aimed only at the restriction of patronage, developed into a battle for the essential and inalienable freedom of the Church. In this second phase of the conflict Mr. Leitch displayed an equal interest with that which he had shown in regard to the first ; and, as his papers testify, he was all along looked to as one who might be confidently counted on to sustain the cause of liberty and evangelical truth.

One testimony to the known fidelity of Mr. Leitch in maintaining the constitutional principles of the Church of Scotland may be referred to in passing. Among his hearers in the East Church was the Provost of the town—Mr. Thomson, a man of high character and worth, but an Original Seceder. Circumstances had compelled him to leave the congregation to which he had been attached, and he had afterwards attended the Parish Church, but

he had never communicated there. After the Assembly of 1833, however, when a work of reformation seemed so manifestly begun, he resolved to take the step which his communion took as a body at a later period ; and in carrying out his plan he sent a letter to Mr. Leitch, which appears to us in the highest degree creditable at once to the writer and to the receiver.

“ In consequence,” says he, “ of your intimation last Sabbath [the letter is dated October 16, 1833] that the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is to be dispensed in the East Church on the 27th, I take the opportunity to address you, having been for a number of years only a hearer in the East Church, but not a joined member, arising from the peculiar circumstances in which I have been placed. I was brought up among the Original Seceders, and was an office-bearer, laid under the usual solemn vows to maintain the end of the Original Secession Testimony ; but some distressing circumstances having occurred in the congregation to which I belonged, I was compelled, very reluctantly, to withdraw from it. For some time past I have enjoyed the solemn ordinance in a neighbouring parish, on terms consistent with my vows. And as the leading object of the Original Secession Testimony was an unfeigned attachment to the Constitution of the Church of Scotland in her best days of Reformation purity and splendour, and a witnessing against the evils that prevailed in later times, *and believing that you substantially hold the same principles which I hold in high veneration, as the most consonant to the Divine rule*, I propose, if agreeable to you, to join you in the approaching solemnity.”

Mr. M’Corkle of St. Ninians also mentions a circumstance which shows at what an early period Mr. Leitch

took up a decided position in relation to the Church question : "I have a pleasing recollection of your father," he writes to Mr. Leitch's son, "shortly after he came to Stirling, as agent of the Glasgow Association for promoting the interests of the Church of Scotland. I visited Stirling with the view of lecturing on lay patronage, and of advocating its abolition. Your father was the only minister in the town who supported me on that occasion, and the kindness and hospitality which I then received from him are fresh in my grateful remembrance at the present day."

The principles he then held he maintained consistently throughout the whole conflict ; and although his natural sphere was neither the platform of the popular assembly nor the floor of the Ecclesiastical Courts, there are not wanting evidences that he spoke in favour of his principles as he had opportunity. We have by us now notes of addresses delivered by him on Spiritual Independence and Non-intrusion ; and the high ground which he took up in regard to both, proves that he regarded them not as the mere passing expedients of ecclesiastical politicians, but as points which had the most vital connection with the Church's welfare and prosperity.

With all that, however, we are not surprised that he viewed the Disruption, which he saw approaching, with the deepest anxiety. So early as 1833 he supported, at an anti-patronage meeting in Denny, a resolution to the following effect :—"That the meeting, being fully convinced of the rectitude and Scriptural foundation of the cause of Establishments, have no doubt that the novel associations called Voluntary Church Societies must be of brief continuance, and be productive of injury to the cause of true religion, if adopted in any country to the exclu-

sion of a Church Establishment." As time wore on, and further light was shed upon matters, he came to see that this was put rather strongly ; but he had, like many of his brethren, a profound faith in the need of religious establishments, and very serious misgivings as to the adequacy of Christian liberality ; and, not knowing what might befall the cause of the gospel beyond the bourne, he continued to hope that something might occur to prevent the irrevocable step being taken, even after others had abandoned themselves to despair. He did not attend the Convocation—his reason probably being the same as that which we find in the letter of one of his co-presbyters, a letter which we quote, because it so curiously illustrates the recurrence, in successive periods, of the same objections to proposed ecclesiastical action. "I think it quite inexcusable," it is argued, "that anything so important as the *Convocation* should have been definitely fixed by parties in Edinburgh without consulting the Presbyteries, and particularly ministers of large towns ; and I am about writing to Edinburgh to say so decidedly. It is just one of those hasty things they have of late been doing ; not much to be wondered at, perhaps, under the excitement of the times, but to be deeply deplored when they occur." Probably it was some such idea as inspired these sentences which induced Mr. Leitch to frame an overture, asking that the resolution to disrupt the Church should not be adopted *brevis manu* by the Assembly, but should be sent down, in terms of the Barrier Act, for the consideration of Presbyteries. What became of this overture we do not know. Perhaps it was never even submitted to the Stirling Presbytery ; but we find it among Mr. Leitch's papers, and in his

own handwriting, and we refer to it simply as indicating the state of his mind.

This is a subject, however, in which so many will naturally take an interest, that the following extracts from letters written by intimate friends of Mr. Leitch will, we are sure, be generally acceptable. The Rev. Andrew Milroy, of Edinburgh, writes thus:—

“I have a distinct recollection of Mr. Leitch being deeply exercised about the contendings of the Church—deeply impressed with the magnitude of the principles maintained—and very solemnly resolved to uphold these principles to the utmost. He had a great affection for Dr. Bonar of Larbert, and sympathised in his clear and earnest views of the obligation to uphold great principles at every cost—not to evade them, but exhibit them in their preciousness and power. As the Disruption drew on, and seemed near at hand, a feeling of anxiety took hold on his mind, and an aspect of sadness, which appeared in tender anticipations of the hardships and sufferings to which the wives and families of ministers were about to be subjected. I can well remember one occasion, after a communion season, when one or two brethren indulged in a little good-humoured banter with him as to such fears. He took it kindly, and even entered into the more hopeful views some of us were disposed to cherish.

“The light in which he dwelt chiefly on the grandeur of the principles we were seeking to vindicate, was their bearing on the kingly glory of the Mediator. This strongly possessed his mind, and stirred his energies in contending for them, and made him willing to encounter all the difficulties and troubles connected with the steadfast upholding of them, through good

report and bad report. One thing which seemed to weigh heavily on his mind, both in prospect of the Disruption and afterwards, was its effect in separating his ministerial connection with many to whom he had regularly proclaimed the everlasting gospel, watching over their souls, as keeping in view the 'giving an account.' ”

Mr. Wilson of Maryhill, the son-in-law of his oldest friend, Dr. Muir, was still more intimately conversant with the state of Mr. Leitch's mind about the same time ; and through the following account, kindly furnished by him, we get a very clear and a somewhat affecting view of how the crisis of 1843 was actually passed :—

“We were both,” says Mr. Wilson, “in St. Andrew's Church when the Disruption took place. We witnessed that memorable event, but did not at the time join in it. We were aware that Lord Aberdeen's Bill was forthcoming, and we delayed, in the hope that its provisions might enable us to remain where we were. I left the church when the Disruption took place, but Mr. Leitch remained to see what would happen. We met, however, in the evening, and he told me how sad he felt when he witnessed the benches that had been vacated by his brethren, and that, looking round on the party that remained, he could not bear the thought of being associated with them as members of the same Church. This showed pretty clearly on what side he was ; and I have no doubt that this feeling had a good deal to do with the course which he actually followed. I am not prepared, however, to say that he took the same deep interest as some in the questions which led to the Disruption. That he clearly understood these

questions, and carried out his convictions of duty in leaving the Church, there can be no doubt. Still they were subjects, as it appears to me, which held a subordinate place in his regard. *The Pulpit* was his main concern, and preparation for it his chief study and delight. . . . I have referred to our meeting on the evening of the Disruption. When about to part, our thoughts were naturally turned to the course which it behoved us to follow ; and I remember him saying that he was going home to consult his wife on a matter of such grave importance ; and I verily believe that his own convictions of duty were much strengthened by her firmness of purpose."

This last statement is confirmed by others ; and we gladly record this here as one which, while it reflects in no way on Mr. Leitch himself, is especially creditable to the partner of his life and trials. What the ministers suffered in 1843, and how much throughbearing grace *they* needed to carry them through the crisis of the Disruption—these are the things the world chiefly thinks of. But if all were known, it would be found that the Christian heroism of the time was not confined entirely to the men who actually signed the Deed of Demission. There were worldly wives in those days, who succeeded in keeping their husbands in when their convictions and inclinations would have disposed them to go out ; but these, we have reason to believe, were few in number compared with the many others of a different stamp, who not only faced cheerfully their own sacrifices, but made the thorny path easier for the witnesses who were compelled to do battle for the truth on the high places of the field.

It is easy, with the explanations given, to understand

the position of Mr. Leitch. He was attached to the Evangelical party, less as an ecclesiastic with high theories of Church Government than as a religious man concerned about setting up in the land the kingdom of Jesus Christ. While, therefore, he all along went with his party in their demands, because convinced that the interests of true religion required that the Christian people should have a voice in the election of their ministers, and that the Church should be left free from civil compulsion to obey what it regarded as the law of its Divine Head, he had no such stereotyped ideas as to how these ends might be attained in alliance with the State, as to be unwilling to consider any new plan that might be submitted to him. His peculiarly affectionate nature also shrunk from the contemplation of the hardships which he believed the Disruption would infallibly entail; and he would, as we have seen, have averted the evil day as long as he possibly could. To crown all, friends in whom he had confidence, among others Dr. John Muir himself, saw it to be consistent with their duty to remain; and among his papers we find at least one well-reasoned and elaborate remonstrance addressed to him about this time, pointing out all the consequences of demission. But whatever difficulties he had were, one after the other, removed, and with a clear conscience, a relieved heart, and a reinvigorated faith, he crowned his ministerial testimony in Stirling by sacrificing his living for the sake of his principles, and becoming thenceforward a minister of the Free Church of Scotland.

We have carried this account onward, without interruption, to 1843, that the unity of the narrative might not be disturbed; but now we must go back for a

moment, to notice an event which, while it so far cleared Mr. Leitch's way at the Disruption, made also the step which he took on that occasion a little more trying than it would otherwise have been. This was the building of a third church in Stirling—a circumstance which secured to him a flock of his own, and made his position as a parish minister far more satisfactory than it was at his first settlement.

The need for a new church had been long recognised, but it was not until the 24th September 1838 that the first decisive step was taken to secure its erection. On that day a meeting was held of all who were friendly to the formation of a third charge—Provost Galbraith presiding, and Mr. Leitch opening with prayer. It was then resolved unanimously: "That as at present there are only two churches connected with the Established Church of Scotland within the parish of Stirling, situated at the same place, and at one of the highest and most inconvenient parts of the town, with three ministers officiating therein collegiately, and having one kirk-session, while the population of the parish exceeds considerably the present church accommodation; and, in order to promote the spiritual and religious instruction of the people, a THIRD CHURCH, to contain not less than 1000 nor more than 1200 sitters, shall be erected in a suitable place, as near the foot of King Street as ground proper for the purpose can be obtained, and at an expense not exceeding £2500 sterling, exclusive of the price of the site of the church." The result of this meeting was the building of the North Church; and in the new distribution of the ecclesiastical edifices among the three parish ministers, the West Church fell to the lot of Mr. Leitch.

“It was expected,” writes Mr. Murdoch of Pitsligo, whose reminiscences of Stirling go back to this period, “it was commonly expected that when the change took place, Mr. Leitch’s congregation would be small, and I suppose he had made up his mind to this himself. It turned out, however, to be a very fair one. Mr. Leitch had always a good deal of humour, and a saying of his went about that so many people went up to his church to see the nakedness of the land, that they made a tolerable congregation. It was all very well for him to say so, but of course nothing but a strong attachment to his ministry, and a sincere love to himself, could have drawn so many to the top of the hill to attend his church.”

Another account of the change gives even a more favourable description of Mr. Leitch’s congregation :— “My own distinct recollection,” says the writer, “of the period when each minister got a church of his own, was that the West Church was crowded.” But the matter is not of much importance. It is enough to say that such a number of persons attached themselves exclusively to Mr. Leitch’s ministry, as to give him quite enough to do in connection with their pastoral oversight, and that from this time forward he possessed what he had often before longed for, a distinct parochial territory which he could strictly call his own. His connection with the East Church terminated on the the afternoon of the 22d of May 1842, and he commenced to take the sole charge of the West Church on the Sabbath following. The farewell words which he spoke in the East Church were from 2 Thes. ii. 16 and 17, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ, etc., comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work ;”

while in the West Church he at once began to lecture on the Epistle to the Romans, and in the afternoon he preached from Phil. ii. 1 and 2, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."





CHAPTER FOURTH.

AFTER THE DISRUPTION.

His last Sermon in the West Church—The Upper Guild Hall—
Mr. Milroy's Recollections—Mrs. Leitch—Presbyterial Cita-
tion—Mr. Munsie—Entering the South Church—Building up
a Free Church Congregation—Executions of Criminals—
The 93d Regiment—Tract Enterprise—Revival.

IT has been said that Mr. Leitch went home from the Assembly of 1843 without having signed the Protest, but his mind was soon made up as to his course of duty, and on the 28th of May he preached his last sermon in the West Church as a minister of the Scottish Establishment. One sentence in his sermon on this occasion made an abiding impression on a hearer. Speaking of his reasons for coming out, he said: "If I had found anything in Lord Aberdeen's Bill that could justify my remaining in the Establishment, I would not leave it; but, rather than be a party to the forcing of a minister on a reclaiming congregation, I would see my children begging their bread from door to door."

The Upper Guild Hall was the place in which he and those who adhered to him found a temporary refuge. It was far from being a suitable substitute for a church, and it could ill accommodate the worshippers who crowded into it; but many other outed congregations during the same period had to meet on the hill-side or on the sea-shore, and nobody in these bright days cared

very much to complain. "Immediately after the Disruption," writes Mr. Milroy, "I happened to be in Stirling on a Sabbath, and officiated at one of the diets of worship for Mr. Leitch. The remembrance is still vivid of the crowded hall in which the congregation following him were assembled, and especially of the fervour and warmth of the devotional service, of the genial and gladdening cordiality of the worshippers with each other, as banded together in maintaining a great and blessed cause. At that time, it is not too much to say, there was an enlargement of heart on the part of ministers in proclaiming the joyful message direct from the King, and a fervent frame in the hearers in listening to the setting forth of the character, perfections, promises, and will of their exalted Head. In all this Mr. Leitch visibly participated. There was a felt delight manifest in the countenance of the good man, and a humble consciousness of grateful thanksgiving for all the goodness that had been made to pass before him."

Like most of his brethren, Mr. Leitch did not at this time serve the Lord with what cost him nothing. He made worldly sacrifices. "My mother," says one of his sons, whose recollections go back to this period of trial, "my mother, who was a remarkably sweet, gentle, amiable woman, very prudent and of great intelligence, was also a firm Free Churchwoman. She kept up my father's purpose, cheered him on, and when we went to a greatly smaller house—so small that our surplus furniture had to be stowed away elsewhere (an indication perhaps not less of present hardship than of faith in the future)—she dispensed with one of our two servants, both of whom had been with us for a long time. . . .

To the cares and anxieties attendant on the new circumstances, her premature death was mainly due. It was sudden, and was caused proximately by typhus fever. She was with us at worship on Sabbath evening, though complaining of a sick headache, and died on the Wednesday following. We had sung in course on Sabbath evening the hymn, "The hour of my departure's come;" and after worship she went to my father, as we rose from prayer, and sitting on his knee and throwing her arms around his neck (which we had never seen her do before), she exclaimed that the hymn represented her case. . . . At dinner one day, immediately before the Disruption, my father, in dividing what was on the table, said: 'Children, eat plenty of food now—I don't see how I am to provide food for you in the future.' My mother, I remember, struck in with some remark, cheering, though almost rebukeful,—and full of faith."

People who are only able to view such forebodings and anxieties as Mr. Leitch seemed sometimes to have in the light of the success which actually followed the establishment of the Free Church, are far from being in a condition to appreciate either his state of mind or the sacrifices of the Disruption period. It required not merely a great deal of faith, but a good deal of imagination, to realise the formation, within a reasonable time, of such a fund as would afford even the barest subsistence-allowance to five hundred ministers; and we know it to be a certain fact that many a country pastor demitted his living without knowing, or even being able to guess, how himself and his family were to be provided with bread and water. Some we could name had made up their minds to emigrate; others saw no way of earning

a living but by betaking themselves to some new profession. Literally, they went out not knowing whither they went—impelled only by the sheer force of their conviction that it was their duty to go forward. The very thickness of the cloud which appeared to Mr. Leitch to darken his worldly future, gives increased lustre to a faith which proved strong enough to triumph over all his apprehensions.

In connection with the step which he finally took, we have by us a number of papers of more or less interest. Here, for example, is an exact copy of what some of our readers may never have happened to see—the presbyterial citation served upon those parochial ministers who “deserted their charges” at the Disruption:—

“*Stirling, 17th June 1843.*”

“I, James Ferguson, officer of the Presbytery of Stirling, by the authority of said Presbytery, hereby summon and charge you, Alexander Leitch, minister in Stirling, to attend the Presbytery of Stirling on the twenty-seventh instant, to answer to a *fama* that you have adhered to the Protest and Act of Separation, and Deed of Demission, and subscribed one of the same import, and deserted your charge.

“This I do on the seventeenth day of June eighteen hundred and forty-three, before these witnesses, Alexander M’Alister and Daniel Watson, both indwellers in Stirling.
JAMES FERGUSON.”

Probably Mr. Leitch let the *fama* speak for itself, and neglected to obey the summons; but the Presbytery appears to have been willing to use more than merely

judicial means to keep their clerk within the Establishment, for on the 1st of July the following letter was received from a neighbouring minister :—

“ ——— *Manse, 1st July 1843.*

“ MY DEAR MR. LEITCH—Will you favour Messrs. Brotherston and Balfour, and myself, with an interview, on Tuesday next, at 11 o'clock, within the Royal Hotel, or elsewhere? We propose that Mr. Greig and Mr. Mackray be invited to attend the meeting, and I shall request them to do so.

“ I do not think that the amendments proposed in the Bill, and the Lord Chancellor's explanation of them, affect its general character. It is quite clear to me, that all possible objections on the part of the people to the settlement of any presentee, with the exception that they have fixed their minds upon another, must be personal to him, and refer to his gifts and qualities, or to his suitableness for the particular parish.

“ With regard to the interference of the civil courts, it amounts to nothing but the control necessary to keep Presbyteries within their own spiritual province, and to the provisions of the Bill. This seems to me quite fair, and I believe such a form would not be found in practice to be any restraint upon perfect freedom of judgment.

“ Excuse these hasty remarks, and believe me to be very sincerely yours, _____.”

Mr. Leitch naturally preserved a copy of the letter which he sent in reply to this communication. It is as follows :—

“ Stirling, 1st July 1843.

“ MY DEAR SIR—I beg to acknowledge receipt of your kind note of this day, requesting me to meet with yourself and Messrs. Brotherston and Balfour, on Tuesday next, in reference to my present situation in connection with the Established Church. I feel very much obliged to you and them for offering this friendly conference; but I think it unnecessary to hold it. I have seen no reason to change the position I have taken. I sincerely thank the committee for their kindness to me, and regret that anything should have occurred to produce the separation as to church communion which now exists. With kindest regards to yourself and my dear friends, I am, my dear Sir, yours truly,

ALEXR. LEITCH.”

Those who recollect the keenness of feeling which prevailed at the time this letter was written, especially with reference to those who not only turned back themselves, but did their best to shake the fidelity of others, will be able to appreciate the mingled firmness and sweetness which characterised Mr. Leitch's reply. He has no doubt about his own line of duty, but he has no bitterness toward any who may not agree with him. The very attempt to induce him to take a step which would have tarnished his reputation in the eye of the world, he is able to regard as the generous act of friends who have no thought but for his wellbeing.

Another letter, written by one of his oldest and dearest friends—Mr. William Munsie of Glasgow—also reached him on one of these days, and must have greatly strengthened him in his purpose. It has been mentioned already that the man, above all others, whom

Mr. Leitch had most cause to regard as a father—Dr. John Muir of Glasgow—did not see his way to leave the Establishment at the Disruption. The explanation of this does not seem to us far to seek. He had thoroughly persuaded himself that the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act had unchristianised the Government of this country, and vitiated the entire relations of the Church to the State. After that event, therefore, he seemed very much to lose interest in all the Church's contendings; and although a good man and an evangelical, whose whole sympathies were naturally with the Non-Intrusion side, his views grew distorted as the bitterness and disappointment of his heart increased. So warm, however, was the attachment to his person and ministry of those who knew him best, that some were placed, by his resolution to remain, in an exceedingly painful and perplexing position. They did not appreciate his difficulties about Catholic Emancipation—they had been taught by himself to love the gospel—and all their leanings were in favour of the cause which came to be represented by the Free Church. And yet they shrunk from breaking a tie which had been, in the best and truest sense, a bond of love. In this view the following letter seems to us an exceedingly affecting one. We quote it for various reasons. For one thing, we regard it as a most interesting illustrative memorial of Disruption times. But, besides that, it at once throws a side-light on one who was more intimately associated than any other with the subject of these notices, and enables us to realise what was probably one of Mr. Leitch's intensest personal trials in connection with his retirement from the Establishment. Mr. Munsie was one of Dr. Muir's elders; and, from the

pain of parting experienced by him, we may guess how keenly Mr. Leitch felt the severance of communion and church-fellowship with his early friend :— .

“*Dunoon, 26th June 1843.*”

“MY VERY DEAR FRIEND—I owe you a long apology for permitting your kind note to remain unnoticed. The truth is, at the time I received it, and till last week, my mind has been quite unhinged and beyond measure distressed by the posture of Church affairs, and especially from the necessity of separating myself officially from Dr. Muir. Now that that trial is over, my mind is comparatively tranquil. Indeed, I was glad to escape to a retired cottage here from the many meetings and harassing conferences of the city. Although there were no pecuniary considerations connected with myself and my dear brethren of the eldership, the struggle of leaving a man so long so valued as Dr. Muir was not little. Many of us tried to make it consistent with our principles to remain, and all of us postponed the catastrophe to the last. The disruption of our Session took place on the 13th, and I came here on the 19th. Mr. ——— alone remained. . . . We were, contrary to our own desire and will, shut up to the course we took. I would like to read to you the short correspondence of the Session with Dr. M. This I will do some day. It will amaze you not a little. And I was truly refreshed when I saw *your* name, my dear friend, among the list of witnessing ministers. I trust that, since that time, the light of the Divine countenance has peculiarly shone on you. His presence gives consolation in the midst of the most painful circumstances. I wish I could indulge the hope of coming to see you ;

it would be refreshing to me. . . . A few short years—it may be very few—and this vain world will pass away. Let us live by the faith of Christ, that when the period of our dismissal shall arrive, we may enter into the joy of our Lord.—I am ever, my very dear friend, yours most truly,
WM. MUNSIE.”

Of the four Stirling ministers who joined the Free Church in 1843, one, Mr. Mackray, had belonged to that section of the Old Light Seceders who conformed to the Establishment a short while before the Disruption. Mr. Mackray and his congregation had brought a place of worship with them, when they united their interest with what at the time promised to fulfil the aspirations of their fathers, and become the Free Reformed and really National Church of Scotland; and when this hope was blasted, and they found themselves once more in a condition of nonconformity, they were better prepared than many to meet the crisis, for they had still uncontrolled authority over their church, which had never been allowed to go out of their own possession. The circumstances of the time, however, were not favourable to the growth of congregations of this particular description; and when the minister accepted a call to another charge, the people wisely resolved that they would not attempt to maintain a position of ecclesiastical isolation. They accordingly offered to sell their church to the congregation which had been formed in the Guild Hall under the ministry of Mr. Leitch.

It may well be questioned whether it was altogether a fortunate thing that this offer was ultimately accepted. No doubt it was an advantage to be early housed, but the building was not architecturally attractive; it was,

besides, in a bad situation, being too high up the hill, and otherwise out of the way ; and, apart from all that, as an old church with traditions of its own, it wanted the prestige which would certainly have belonged to it if it had been a new place, erected in connection with the associations and under the impulses of the Disruption.

On the whole, however, it was judged best to fall in with the arrangement. The plan which had been formed, and the execution of which had actually been commenced, of building a new church in Queen Street, was abandoned ; and, on the 26th of November 1843, Mr. Leitch and his people took formal possession of the old Secession Meeting-house in Spittal Square, bestowing upon it at the same time the designation by which it has been known ever since, that of the *South Church*. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed on the following Sabbath, the first time that an opportunity had occurred for doing so since the exodus from the Establishment ; and there can be no doubt that the minister meant, on both occasions, to define his position in the new circumstances under which he found himself placed, when, in the former case, he preached on Moses "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt," and in the latter selected as his text that grand evangelical declaration of Paul to the Galatians, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Mr. Leitch's work in these years was very similar to that which of necessity engaged the attention of the great majority of his brethren. The Free Church had to be organised—that is to say, new buildings had to be erected, or procured in room of those that had been left behind ; a sustentation fund had to be established, suffi-

cient not merely to meet the wants of the outed ministers for one year, but to supply the means of support to a standing ministry which promised to be for ever increasing ; and, beyond these, great missionary and educational agencies demanded attention, which a generation before would have seemed more than enough of themselves to tax the whole strength of the undivided Church of Scotland. Much of the labour in these connections necessarily fell upon the ministers, and Mr. Leitch had his own share of it. The Spittal Square Church, for example, did not cost much, but his congregation consisted mostly of the humble classes of society ; and, even with such help as was got from the Central Building Fund in Edinburgh, they were not able all at once to clear their way. An appeal, therefore, required to be made to the richer friends of the Church outside ; and that appeal now lies before us, modest and unobtrusive, like himself, in the handwriting of Mr. Leitch. What else was needed in the same line of things he did cheerfully. Under his superintendence, the whole machinery of a Free Church congregation was established ; and there is abundant evidence to show that the various schemes which he organised were worked from year to year with energy and success.

Such a life was, of course, an extremely busy one, but the incidents which happened in it were, generally speaking, of quite an ordinary description. He has left behind him memorials of all, or almost all, that occurred in these days—the correspondence which he carried on with the authorities in Edinburgh with reference to a new church and manse ; annual abstracts, showing what his congregation contributed from year to year ; copies of bills announcing sermons or lectures on special occa-

sions ; and registers, containing all manner of information about his flock and his labours among them. All this, however, has little public interest, and we need not go into detail. But the usually even tenor of his career was occasionally broken by events of a more stirring kind, and we may notice one or two of these.

In the autumn of 1843 he had, for the second time in his life, to perform a service for which he must have been well fitted, but which could not but have been to him extremely painful. This was to offer the consolations of the gospel to a criminal on the eve of his execution. In 1837, he had for this end attended a young man, Alexander Millar, on the very scaffold, and had the satisfaction of seeing the wretched youth join interestedly in his prayers. But the second case was a sadder one. Allan Mair was a very aged man. The crime he was charged with was brought so conclusively home that all hope of mercy was denied to him, but he utterly refused to admit his guilt. He was thus in a very unfavourable state for receiving religious impressions, and the closing scene was as dark as could be. The following, from the *Stirling Observer* of October 12, 1843, will be read with painful interest :—

“ In the room in which the condemned man had been confined, the Rev. Messrs. Leitch and Stark had been labouring, but without effect, to fix his mind upon the awful circumstances in which he was placed. At twelve minutes past eight o'clock, the Rev. Mr. Leitch came into the Court-room, and was followed by the prisoner, half carried by the Rev. Mr. Stark and the man who had been guarding him all night. At this moment the spectacle was most humiliating—a hoary old man, in his eighty-third or eighty-fourth year, bent together

with age and mental suffering, and oppressed with a five-months' imprisonment, his whole appearance indicating the utmost degree of human frailty, borne down with the intense idea of grief, struggling to bear up against what he considered the greatest injustice. The prisoner having been seated, the Rev. Mr. Leitch, animated with a depth of feeling which could not be concealed, read and sung the two first stanzas of the 51st Psalm, dwelling, with lingering fondness, on 'After thy loving-kindness, Lord,' and then 'For thy compassions great, blot out all mine iniquities.' He then read from the 11th chapter of Matthew the words, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' 'Now, Allan,' said he, 'this is the Lord Jesus Christ that is speaking to you. He says, Come; come now, with all your sins upon your head, and just when you are going to step into eternity, and you shall have rest. He stands with outstretched arms to receive you; only come.' Again he read from the 1st chapter of 1st Timothy, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief.' 'Here, Allan, you are told that no amount of sin can stand between you and salvation, for Christ is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, and He is as willing as He is able. O, Allan, come to Him even now, and you will be accepted, justified, sanctified, just as the thief upon the cross was when he sought His mercy. Today, said Christ, thou shalt be with me in Paradise. So may you, Allan, as says the Gospel invitation.' Surely this, we thought, is the triumph of the Gospel, and of the Gospel ministry, holding forth life—immortal life—within one minute of temporal life—'Death is swallowed up

in victory.' The Rev. Mr. Stark (the chaplain of the prison) then prayed in a most appropriate manner. . . . After the condemned had delivered a speech, the Rev. Mr. Leitch engaged in prayer, with a pious eloquence and fervour properly adapted to the occasion, and towards the conclusion his whole soul was engaged with an earnestness which the truth and mercy of heaven, whose minister he was, could alone have inspired. Verily, this good man and zealous minister of Christ has his reward in the approval of a good conscience, and in that of the immense multitude assembled, who heard with pleasure the pleadings of goodness, after the pouring forth of such language as the culprit himself had uttered."

One year later Mr. Leitch sustained one of the very greatest trials that could have befallen him. In the beginning of 1845 his wife was seized with typhus fever, and died after a few days' illness. "My very dear friend," wrote Dr. Muir, on receiving the sad intelligence, "I sympathise with you from the bottom of my heart, under your present affliction. The announcement conveyed to me this day of your dear wife's departure yesterday out of our fallen world so completely unmanned me that I could not articulate my words in reporting the event to my family. We knelt down together and prayed for you and yours, to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, asking that He would comfort you again in due time. Your case is not unlike what my own was in 1812, now three-and-thirty years ago. Be not afraid with any amazement. Man's extremity is God's opportunity, as Elisha found in his day, according as it is written in 2 Kings vi. 33, compared with chapter vii. ver. 1, etc. But I stop, for I know that your

grief is very great." The following year, in June 1846, a second bereavement befell him. One of his children, a boy of seven, was removed. "Jacob of old," again wrote his faithful friend of many years, Dr. Muir, "Jacob of old spoke the language and expressed the feelings of every right-minded parent, when he said, 'If I be bereaved of my *children*, I am *bereaved*,' for bereavement of children is a bereavement indeed. Your little boy has had but a short respite, as we speak, from the execution of that sentence under which we all of us come into the world. But the race is long enough when the prize is won; and his connection with believing parents fully warrants the conclusion, according to 1 Cor. vii. 14, that in *his* case the prize is won." Looking into Mr. Leitch's Sermon Register, we find that he preached once in his own church on the Sabbath after his child died, and the text chosen by him is the last verse of the 46th Psalm: "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." We can have no doubt that these words indicated his state of mind. The affliction touched him keenly; but he was enabled to feel a quiet confidence, trusting in the Lord.

As all the world knows, there is a castle in Stirling with a garrison. This circumstance tends to give occasionally a special aspect, even in a religious connection, to the town. For not only do red coats appear not infrequently among the civilian worshippers in the churches, but sometimes very earnest Christians happen to be stationed on the spot, who are to be found almost more in the military than in any other profession. It fell to Mr. Leitch to be brought into contact with the piety of the army, under very pleasant conditions, in 1848. In that year the 93d Regiment arrived at Stirling from

Canada. This is distinctively a Scotch regiment, and a considerable number of the men had followed intelligently the course of the Ten Years' Conflict, and were keen Free Churchmen. They had, in fact, testified for their principles rather emphatically in Quebec, having refused to enter the door of an Established Church in that city, after having been marched to it by their officers. On reaching home, therefore, one of the first things they sought after was a place of worship belonging to their own communion, and this they found conveniently in Spittal Square. Mr. Leitch and his people gave to the soldiers a very hearty welcome, and we have reason to believe that the time during which they worshipped in his church made one of the sunniest eras in his whole ministry. Here is some account of the episode, supplied by one of the men themselves, Mr. William Bell, late a sergeant in the 93d.

“The 93d Regiment landed at Granton from Quebec on the 31st August 1848, and came to Stirling the same day. They remained in Stirling until the 5th of April 1850, a period of nineteen months and five days. What made our case somewhat interesting was, that at that time we had a good number of pious men who had just returned from the wars—I mean the Church wars. Perhaps it has gone out of memory in the course of twenty years; but not long before we left Quebec, it happened one day when there was no service in the Free Church, the commanding officer marched the whole of the Free Church men to the Parish Church. Of course they went to the church door, but to go inside of the church they would not, consequently the commanding officer had just to march them home again.

Meantime the occurrence appeared in the Quebec newspapers, and from them found its way to the *Edinburgh Witness*, where a full account of the whole thing appeared ; also a sketch of some of the petty persecutions we had been subject to for a considerable period before. This was all fresh when we came to Stirling, and I suppose it was this that was the cause of the 93d being taken so much notice of, for many of the good people of Stirling were like to kill us with kindness. After these events our liberty was secured to us ; we were troubled no more after coming home. In connection with this, I remember an incident that happened between Mr. Leitch and our commanding officer, Colonel Spark. The different ministers were allowed to visit their own people who were in the hospital, at proper hours : there was a visitation-book in the hospital, where the chaplain recorded his visits, but other ministers were not allowed to record their visits there. Mr. Leitch could not understand why he should not be allowed to record his visits as well as the chaplain or parish minister. He therefore wrote immediately to the Duke of Wellington, who was then Commander-in-chief, giving the Duke an account of the matter. Down comes a letter from the Duke by return of post to Colonel Spark, with a copy of Mr. Leitch's letter enclosed, demanding an explanation. This of course the Colonel had to give without delay ; and that explanation was sent down to Mr. Leitch with a letter from the Duke himself, if I remember right. The explanation ran thus : 'That the hospital-book was kept for the chaplains only, to show how they did their duty.' The Duke was satisfied with the explanation, and informed Mr. Leitch in his letter that no slight was intended to be shown him on

account of his not being permitted to record his visits in the hospital-book, and thanked him for his zeal in attending to the men of his persuasion.

“When the regiment came to Stirling they were nearly divided; one half went to the Establishment, and the other half went to the Free Church. During the first six weeks after we came, there would be about 350 attending every Sabbath; but afterwards, when the service companies were broken up, and numbers went away to Perth and Dundee, the attendance every Sabbath would be from 150 to 200. Of course numbers attended the prayer meetings, and a few occasionally conducted them. It was a great triumph to Mr. Leitch when he got a few red coats to assist, because he had some difficulty with some of his session: he could not get them to take part in these meetings, and he tried to stir them up by means of the soldiers. I remember an incident that happened with a person in Stirling. I was one day transacting some business with him, when he made use of a good deal of profane language. Some days after I was down in Mr. Leitch’s house with a few of our brethren, and mentioned this circumstance to Mr. Leitch, and how I was annoyed at it. He lost no time in calling upon the man, and soundly reprov’d him, adding that it was a man who wore a red coat that had taken notice of his language, for which he ought to be ashamed. Some time after we came, I wrote a tract against the horse-races, which was revised by Mr. Leitch, printed and distributed in the seats of the church and elsewhere. This is a public nuisance you are happily rid of long ago. Then again, there was the presentation of a handsome Bible from the congregation to the brethren in the 93d. This was presented shortly

before we left. I believe it is in the regiment still. The church was pretty well filled with soldiers and people the evening it was presented. It was a happy meeting, and we lingered so long that the bugles were calling us home from the castle when we separated. I could not say anything about the fruits of Mr. Leitch's ministry among the military, as I left the regiment about two months after leaving Stirling.

“ I don't think there is a place in all my wanderings over the world that I have so many pleasing recollections of as Stirling.”

There was another thing which helped to complexion Mr. Leitch's ministry in Stirling at a later date. This was the establishment in the town of a religious enterprise, which exercised a very considerable influence over the whole country. Of this enterprise Mr. Peter Drummond was the originator, and the chief agency at first employed was the publication and circulation of awakening tracts ; but the circle of interest gradually widened, and Stirling became the centre of a great revival movement. It need scarcely be said that in such a movement Mr. Leitch took the deepest interest. He opened his church freely to the strangers, who were brought from a distance to address meetings in the town, and at a time when the churches in general were much less disposed than they are now to recognise and welcome the services of lay evangelists. He acted without hesitation on the principle, that under abnormal circumstances it is folly to stickle, in a red-tapeist spirit, for mere points of order. He had his own high notions of the excellence of Presbyterian rule, and he was quite prepared in season to maintain it in its rigidity ; but if such as he had lived in

the days of the Haldanes, there would probably have been no Congregational Church of Scotland existing at this hour. For, recognising in these men the presence of the Spirit of God, and admitting their call, as Christian men, to invite others to the Saviour, he would not only have placed no bar in their way when they sought opportunities of carrying the Gospel into districts which were notoriously unenlightened, but would have facilitated their labours in every way in his power, and would have bid them most heartily God speed. This readiness to countenance and encourage all well-intentioned efforts to save souls and further the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, was one of the most conspicuous features in his character; and there can be little doubt that his sustained loyalty of spirit to the Master contributed much toward securing a blessing for himself and for his congregation.

It need scarcely be said that Mr. Leitch, like other ministers, had his own public trials and anxieties. But it would serve no useful purpose to refer to these here. It is enough to say that, as his private papers abundantly show, he bore these in the spirit of Christian meekness, and was far more anxious to get spiritual good out of them for himself, than to achieve triumphs in connection with them over other men. Passing these by, then, there is only one thing more which we shall notice before proceeding to speak of what we may call the interior history of Mr. Leitch's ministry. What we allude to is the fact, that both before the Disruption and after it, he held the office of Clerk of Presbytery. Somehow, we hardly look, as a rule, for the kind of gifts required for such an office in men of the class to which Mr. Leitch belonged. But, as we shall have occasion to see, the possession of

“business habits” was one of his most distinguishing characteristics. Punctuality, carefulness about details, accuracy of statement, method,—these, and all the other features which are usually understood to mark a man of affairs, appear on the very face of his private books; and we may say at once, that it is here, as it seems to us, that the special or distinctive element in his life is mainly to be sought for. Multitudes of good men happily have lived among us—multitudes of spiritual men and of earnest ministers. But, so far as we have observed, it is not a very usual combination, that which we find in this case—a combination in a remarkable degree of the spiritual and the practical—of eminent personal piety on the one hand, and on the other of remarkably methodical and businesslike habits of mind. And we hope to be able to show that something is to be learned from the records of such an experience.





CHAPTER FIFTH.

IN HIS CLOSET.

Notices by Mr. Goldie—Early Family Worship—Books of Devotion—Preparations for Prayer—Substitute for Liturgies—Breathings.

HITHERTO we have followed the outline of Mr. Leitch's public life. We propose now to draw closer to him, and mark the character of his pastorate, from, so to speak, the interior. And as the "basis of operations" in this warfare is the closet, we begin by supplying some illustrations of what manner of man he was in his private intercourse with God. Here we are glad to avail ourselves of the kind help of Mr. Goldie, his successor in Stirling, who has looked through some of his diaries, and, as the result, has drawn up the following :—

Some men write diaries for publication. That idea is present in every sentence. Hence it is not so much the men before God as before their fellows—not so much what they were as what they wished others to think of them. The record is unreal if not untrue, and we turn from it with the feeling that we have been imposed upon by the portrait of a semi-angelic creature for that of a crafty sinner.

But no one who knew Mr. Leitch, and no one who has perused his private diaries, can for a moment suppose that he was limning himself for public exhibition.

In these artless records of his inner life we have his true self—a humble and devout child in the presence of the “Father in secret.” His beautiful love to his children—his ardent attachment to his people, and prayerful earnestness, almost agony, for their spiritual welfare—his sympathy with the afflicted—his Christian sociableness—his brotherly regard for the members of his Presbytery—his panting after God and personal holiness—his single-eyed aim to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things—are manifested with a genuine simplicity and transparency.

What is here published may help to preserve his image to his friends as one they are already familiar with, and may give to strangers some idea of a man who was worth knowing. The selections, as will be seen, are so brought together and arranged as to bring out distinctive personal characteristics. Hence dates are dispensed with as unnecessary for this purpose.

“Subject my wishes and desires, my whole soul, to thy law. Give me victory over the lusts which war against the soul.”

“Arrested and somewhat humbled by that Scripture this evening—James iii. 14, 15. O enable me to look at myself in the light of this Scripture! O fill my heart with love to the Saviour and to souls!”

“Little spiritual feeling throughout this day. O Lord, give me fixedness of heart on thine own self! May my soul follow hard after thee. Lord, give me the wisdom which is profitable to direct. May I ever be occupied in working out my salvation with fear and trembling.”

“Miserably little done this day. Little thought of

God. How little have I walked with Him this day or any day!"

"Can't get that realising abiding sense of the Divine presence which I know it is my duty and privilege to possess."

"O thou God of all grace! pardon the shortcomings and iniquities of this day. Enable me to use for my soul's comfort and satisfaction that infinitely precious blood which cleanseth from all sin."

"Accept the confessions made by the officiating minister last night as my confessions. O Lord! cancel my guilt."

"How much thou art out of my thoughts when I am out of doors, as has been the case this day. Lord, I lament it."

"O my leanness! May the zeal of thine house consume me."

"Want of proper affection of mind and heart towards Christ. Ill treatment of the gracious spirit."

Mr. Leitch had great regard for the feelings of others, and great sympathy with the afflicted. In this, as in other respects, he was so sincere and artless that he thought he greatly failed. Hence such records as these, "I could weep with the afflicted family. O sustain and comfort them. Let their trials be of much benefit to them." "In visitation to-day witnessed various cases of distress. Lord, give me a real, a lively, an affectionate sympathy with the afflicted, for in this I acknowledge myself to be sadly deficient. May I indeed weep with those who weep." "Unto any whom I have offended I ask thee to show mercy. Givet hem a right state of mind. May offended feelings pass away, be extinguished.

May I have a place in their love. Keep me from giving offence. Pardon wherein I have wrongously offended." "How egregiously and constantly I sin against others!"

"Going to drink tea with ——. Keep me in thy fear. Enable me to give the conversation a profitable turn. Enable me to demean myself as a Christian and Christian minister. Let me not forget Thee. May I ever seek the good of those with whom I am brought into conversation. My mind seldom took the direction of God when in company this evening. Little prayer intermixed for direction and guidance."

"Do not turn intercourse with others to such good account as might be done. Would that I were more the Christian than I am!"

"O Lord! I regret that I have not conducted myself better when out of doors to-day, that I have not acted and spoken with more wisdom, that I have not realised a more Christian frame of mind, been more in fellowship with God, have not noticed several opportunities of usefulness, and have lost them now for ever. Have not regarded as I ought to have done the persons with whom I have been brought into contact, casually or otherwise. Enable me to spend the evening profitably."

"Increase my gift of conversing with the sick to their edification; furnish me with suitable matter for conversation. Enable me better to improve funeral occasions. May my mind be ever exercised about Christ."

"About to proceed to ministerial visitation. Lord, let this work be done properly by me. Enable me to speak to each person I visit as I ought, seeking thy glory and the person's good. Make me grave yet affable, dignified yet courteous. Keep me from doing the work

carelessly and negligently, reproving, rebuking, exhorting, with all long-suffering and doctrine."

"Preparing this day for the forenoon of Sabbath next. Lord, give me suitable matter, give me the word needful in the preparation of my discourses. I would seek to make full proof of my ministry. O Lord! spiritualise the congregation. May the word I am preparing for them be spirit and life to them. Arouse them from apathy."

"Finished my discourse for the forenoon. The Lord use it for His glory and the people's good! Discourses finished. O Lord! let the delivery of them be accompanied with power. O Divine Spirit! impress.—O impress every soul!"

"Public work of the day over. Some measure of comfort experienced. Lord, blessed be Thou that Thou dost not confound me! O carry home to the hearts of the people the word spoken to them, though in much weakness! O make them wise! May they, in the language of one of the passages handled this day, attain unto wise counsels, and manifest that they have done so."

The diary manifests much anxiety and much prayer at communion seasons, *e.g.*, "May this communion week prove edifying to myself, to my family, and to all connected. O direct them [the ministers assisting] to use their services for the good of the people! Prepare the people for receiving the truth to be addressed to them. May the ministers have their own souls refreshed and edified. May there be much searching of heart on the part of the people. Let none come to the holy table with sin unforgiven, unrepented of." "Give the minister who is to preach this evening much grace, compassion for perishing souls. Give the Spirit largely.

Honour this first day of the communion season. Let conversions be made." "The preparation of the heart cometh from Thee; give it very largely to minister, office-bearers, and people."

The following seems to indicate special prayer for the parties mentioned:—"Special donors and benefactors, beadle, the sick of the congregation, bereaved in the congregation, workers, non-workers, the concerned, the careless, the collectors—may they be received kindly. May the people consider that they are doing a great work for the congregation."

"About to go to my classes for Bible-reading. Lord, let Thy presence go with me. Let me be a blessing to each of the young people. Give me affection for them, and them affection for me. Enable me to deal closely and kindly with them." "Was with the class for young people this evening; pleased to be with them. O that I may be a spiritual father unto them! Give me access to their minds and hearts."

"Got some freedom and some measure of comfort in dealing with ——, with reference to the baptism of his infant child. The Lord bless the conversation."

The following is evidently a prayer—"My ministry and all connected with it—a pure ministry—a zealous ministry—a faithful ministry." On this subject, and just because of his earnestness and faithfulness, Mr. Leitch writes hard things against himself—"A careless ministry—an unblest ministry—a profitless ministry. The ends and objects of the ministry not kept in view—not sought after. Not impressed with the dead state of the congregation. Not laying to heart their irreligion, their worldliness. Unimpressed myself by the holiness of God, by the consideration of His dreadful majesty. Thought-

lessness with reference to my spiritual interests." Years after he prays—"O Lord God! I mourn over an apparently unblessed and unprofitable ministry. O God! whatever hinders the ministry from producing those glorious results which the gospel ministry is designed to effect, let it be forthwith removed."

Mr. Leitch, as Clerk of the Presbytery, was never absent from his place, and always took more than a formal part in the proceedings of the court. Not unfrequently there were sharp discussions, and though he generally took a firm and decided stand on debated questions, he never did or said anything that for any length of time lessened in the least degree the brethren's deep affection for him. The following entry reveals the exercises of his spirit regarding the Presbytery:—

"Meeting of Presbytery to-day. Let the spirit of understanding and wisdom rest on it. Let love be among the brethren. Enable me to conduct myself properly—to exemplify the gentleness of Christ—which He exhibited and which He enjoins. Lord, give me calmness. Let me ever have and manifest Christian dignity, and gravity, and amiableness, in union. Enable me, O Lord! to set thee always before me this day; and may I be kept from being moved, by the consideration that Thou art at my right hand. 10 P.M.—Lost that calmness and self-possession at the Presbytery to-day which I am so anxious to realise; Lord forgive. A believing look, given to Thee, O Jesus! might have made all right as to state of mind. How few of these looks were given! How sad it is that I won't hold communion with thee!"

“The brethren of the Presbytery, may they be personally holy—grow in holiness. May they be remarkably successful in bringing souls to Christ. Revive Thy work in all their congregations.”

“May guilt contracted at the Presbytery on Tuesday be cancelled—O remove it! What was amiss in speaking and temper forgive.”

These breathings, which Mr. Goldie has gleaned from Mr. Leitch's ordinary diaries, exhibit the good man as bearing about with him everywhere a habitual sense of the Divine Presence. And no one could cross his path at almost any point without being made to feel that in very deed God was in all his thoughts. The writer did not himself become acquainted with Mr. Leitch till after he was well stricken in years, and not knowing him, therefore, at his best, he is unable to speak of the intellectual gifts which he possessed in his prime. But age had only mellowed his spiritual nature, and rendered it more attractive; and the one thing above all others which impressed us most was just this, that he was, *par excellence*, a man of prayer. There was apparent in all his own approaches to the mercy-seat an unmistakable familiarity with the exercise—a tender, filial, trustful pleading with a living God—and a wonderful fulness and variety in the matter of the supplications. One thing in particular struck us the very first time we spent a night under his roof. It was that he had family worship at as early an hour in the evening as possible, in order, as he explained to us, that the children might not only be able to join in it, but that they might do so before the period of weariness had arrived. The plan, as we have always thought since, is well worthy imitation. In many

families early evening worship is simply impossible. But in many cases where it is possible, the arrangement actually made is such that either the children are in bed before the hour for service arrives, or are half-asleep while the service is proceeding. We refer, however, to Mr. Leitch's system chiefly to show how real and all-pervading was his belief in the preciousness and power of prayer.

It has been said that Mr. Goldie gleaned the utterances quoted above from Mr. Leitch's ordinary diaries. These diaries contain, scattered over them here and there, a good many such outbreakings of the soul, seeking relief for itself in lamentations for sin, and cries for grace and deliverance. But, as a general rule, they do not say much about spiritual exercises. Usually they are very short, and note only the common incidents that were happening to him or his household in the course of their outward and everyday experience. It is only in special circumstances that, in this connection, he reveals his feelings at all. The Sabbath, for example, frequently calls forth some word indicative of the working of his mind; or if even the Sabbath is sometimes allowed to pass without particular notice, he seems seldom or never to have been able to remain silent under the spiritual pressure of an approaching communion season. We do not think it necessary to go farther into this field than Mr. Goldie has done, for he has given illustrations enough of how, on this side, an earnest pastorate was carried on; but it will not, we hope, be regarded as superfluous if we quote more entries—showing how a conscientious gospel-minister feels on those days which the church has wisely set apart at sacramental occasions for humiliation, confession of sin, and prayer:—

“ Thursday, 16th June 1859.

“ First day of this Communion season.—Lord, make thyself known to the people as the God of grace. Bless the minister to preach to-day; qualify him for his work. May the word of the truth of the gospel be accompanied with power. May there be much experience of the power of the truth.

“ Lord, prosper my own soul. May the graces of holiness prosper in my soul.

“ Lord, forgive me. Hide thy face from my sin. Blot out mine iniquities. Come to us graciously at this time. Come to pardon; come to quicken; come to strengthen.

“ May we look upon Him whom we have pierced, and mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.”

“ Thursday, 1st December 1859.

“ Communion Fast-day.—In the review of the past may I be deeply humbled. Shortcomings—deficiencies—failures—open acts of transgression—self-seeking—keeping aloof from God—cherishing evil thoughts—little true love—impure—defiled—not seeking the good of the people—want of earnestness in the ministry—blind to the Lord’s dealings with me in providence—want of attention to the family—failing to attend to their spiritual interests—not seeking their good.

“ I commend to Thee the ministers who are to preach to-day. Strengthen, direct, be very gracious unto them.”

Such outpourings as these, although they had occurred only very occasionally in an otherwise commonplace record of the day’s doings, would, of course, have

been enough to show what manner of man Mr. Leitch was. But, knowing how habitually spiritually-minded he was, we confess that we felt not a little surprise at first when we glanced through his diaries and found comparatively so few references to Divine things. A further examination of his papers, however, soon and most satisfactorily relieved us of all perplexity. Simultaneously with his ordinary diary he was carrying on a very different kind of record—a record devoted exclusively to the communings of his soul with God.

We have by us now several entire books in which there is nothing whatever but prayer—books, however, in which the method pursued is so peculiar, that, before quoting from them, we must say a word about their nature and construction. In the first place, then, these books are not of the class with which we are all familiar—mere collections of pious meditations. There are pious meditations in them. The writer, you can see, is often thinking aloud; and you can gather from what he utters what is the actual state of his mind—his fears, his hopes, his sorrows, his aspirations. But they differ from ordinary experimental compositions in this respect, that the main object which their author has in view is something more than the mere furtherance of his own sanctification. Hence we don't see the process of self-dissection going on, nor are we enabled to follow with any minuteness the fluctuations, the ups and downs, the triumphs and backthrows, of the individual Christian life. The truth rather is, that the books are the gathered aspirations of one who never for a moment forgot that he was a pastor. We fancy the writer sitting daily down with a blank page of this record before him, and asking himself such questions as these—"What do I need this

day? What do my people need? What ought I to pray for in view of such or such circumstances?" These inquiries will be often made by all earnest ministers. But here was a peculiarity in the case of Mr. Leitch.—He wrote the aspirations down. In the closet, before going to the pulpit, he prayed the prayers for himself, and having deliberately made up his own mind as to what it was right and necessary to ask, he was able to spread out his requests before the Lord, not in that blind haphazard way which, we fear, is too common among us, but with the precision and collectedness of one who knows what he is going to say, and fully understands the terms of the petitions which he has taken it upon him to present.

Let us not be misunderstood here. If we were to say that Mr. Leitch prepared his prayers as well as his sermons, there are some who would not think the better of him on that account. They would immediately recall to their recollection stories they had heard of ministers who were so deficient at once in talent and spirituality as to be afraid to trust themselves to the inspiration of the moment. We do not stay to consider whether it is altogether wise this tendency to suspect prayers that have been carefully prepared beforehand. It is open to question whether such prayers may not be more honouring to God, and more profitable to congregations, than incoherent utterances, which have nothing at all to recommend them but that they are fresh from the speaker's mind. In any case, however, we are not dealing at present with a man who felt any intellectual or spiritual necessity requiring him to write out this part of the service. As has already been indicated, Mr. Leitch, if he had any gift, had the gift of prayer; and hence no

minister could with more reason have left himself to be guided in his public supplications by the feelings and thoughts which were suggested to him at the time. And Mr. Leitch did not prepare his prayers in the ordinary sense of the word. But just because prayer was in his eyes so great an instrument, he sought to make more of the instrument than many believed to be necessary. These books of his contain no prayers cast into completed forms ; but they are full of materials for prayer, and exhibit very much the kind and degree of preparation which it would be desirable to see becoming general. For those churches in which liturgies are not allowed, ought not to be shutting their eyes to the tendencies of events. The increasing wealth of the country is bringing about changes of various kinds. Cultivation and refinement are becoming more general. Slovenliness in the performance of the services of the sanctuary will be less and less tolerated. Men will come to bear as impatiently an ill-considered prayer, as they now listen to an undigested sermon. And even were there no higher motive than this, it would be very well if ministers were to reflect beforehand how they are to order their speech at the footstool. That, however, is a very low consideration, compared with that which presses always—the consideration that our prayers are addressed to God, and that, therefore, the words we use should be well chosen. If this were more constantly realised, we should certainly feel that (speaking in the most literal way) a good part of ministerial preparation for the pulpit ought to be made “in the closet.”

Turning to the papers before us, here are such a number of extracts as will sufficiently exhibit the nature of Mr. Leitch's system in this connection :—

1. Give us to experience Thy presence — not the presence of superintendence merely—but the presence of fellowship.

2. If we be not the death of our lusts, our lusts will be the death of our souls. That which we are willing should tempt us, we shall find will vex us.

3. The people are gathered together ; oh ! give them water.

4. Oh ! we thank Thee, that death is gain to the believer ; that it is gain as putting a final termination to all sorrow and trial ; as perfecting holiness in Him ; that it is gain in respect of increase of knowledge, increase of felicity ; that it is gain as uniting to an innumerable company of angels, and the “general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven.”

5. ARISE (Ps. cii. 13)—arise in Thy power—in Thy love—in Thy mercy. Arise not in judgment. Arise *now*. It is time for Thee to arise. Thou shalt arise. We believe that Thou wilt arise. Thou hast arisen. It will be for Thy glory—the glory of Thy grace, of Thy faithfulness. Christ will see of the travail of His soul. Arise to convert the people—to deliver the people—to establish the reign of righteousness—to accomplish a spiritual creation. Let *this* be the time to favour Zion. Let not the time be postponed. Have respect unto the prayers of Thy people.

6. (*April* 1868.)—It was never so seen in Israel—in Stirling—in this place ; such seriousness, such love, such zeal, such melting of heart.

7. May I rise each morning with an active and steady purpose to do something for God.

8. May this be indeed *Sun*-day to all of us.

9. Let there be growing seriousness among the

people witnessed—deepening interest in religion felt—intenser earnestness—fresh light given to Thy people. May I preach with greater *point* and *power*, with more fervour and earnestness, more faith, more expectation.

10. *Thou hearest prayer*—We bless Thee that Thou dost—bless Thee for experience of this which we have had, and for the experience which the Church has had of it in all ages. Save us from asking amiss—as to matter—as to manner—as to motive; may our asking be believing asking; may it be earnest, continued, united, *successful*.

11. May the Bread which we have brought to feed the people to-day be made Living Bread. As we break it, let it be multiplied to them. May the water which we have to-day brought to them to drink, prove living water. Yea, turn the water into wine.

12. May the river of my existence flow evermore in the channel of Thy Will.

13. *Sabbath*.—Bless Thee for the calm of the Sabbath—so sweet, so delightful. Make us to experience and to rejoice in the spiritual brightness of this day—a day so bright in promises, so bright in associations—the richest fruit this world yields, and the bud of still richer and more precious fruit to be produced in the world to come.

14. Whilst we spread the net of Thy love—the net of gospel truth—may souls not a few be enclosed therein. Help me to make it my aim to convert fellow-men. May I “occupy myself” at this work.

15. May our closets be very dear to us. May we *enter* into our closets, enter them eagerly. May we enter them frequently—in the morning—in the evening—as often during the day as we have opportunity.

Times of entrance ; manner of entrance ; purpose of entrance.

16. Deliver us from all unbelieving fears relative to the fulfilment of Thine own promises, or as to Thy grace being sufficient for us in respect of any duty or service to which we are called. Deliver us from all unbelieving fears in respect of present suffering, or suffering in future days, as to the issue of it, or ability to bear it.

17. O Jesus! we bless Thee that sayest to us—let all thy wants lie upon Me. Let us not make ourselves strange unto Thee.

18. In Thy mercy, slay our foes, slay our lusts, our corruptions, evil dispositions, vain thoughts, unbelief, pride.

19. Remember young people not walking in the ways of their pious parents, young people from home, or going from home. May they be effectually dealt with by Thy Holy Spirit.

20. Keep back souls from the pit.

Lord ! Thou seest people going towards the pit.
Deliver from going into it.

21. *Home Missions.*—Lord, employ this instrumentality ; by means of it awaken and diffuse an interest in religion. For good done by it we thank Thee ; for souls converted, edified, or any way benefited. May the operations of this scheme be extended and maintained in vigour. May the Church at large take a deep interest in it, and show much liberality in its support.

22. Triumph gloriously this day. Get thee a name this day—a name for compassion, for power. Get thee a Name—a Saviour. Let no soul be hid from the heat or light of the Sun of Righteousness.

23. Let these Scriptures be verified this day among us : " A people which I knew not shall serve me "— " Strangers shall submit themselves unto me "—" As soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me."

24. Enable us to distinguish between the precious and the vile—precious and vile as to persons, as to sentiment, as to practice, as to speech, as to desires, as to principles, as to motives.

25. May afflictions convince of sin, humble the soul, wean from the world, make serious, teach to pray, turn from iniquity.

26. We praise Thee for the sweet Psalms, that they are so sweet in their references to Christ, in descriptive experience, in the views of God they set before us.

27. Keep me from wasting Sabbath time. Let it be impressed on my mind that Sabbath time is peculiarly precious.

28. May we have a right state of mind in regard to those who have treated us injuriously.

29. O eternal Son of God! help us to admire Thy condescension and love in submitting for us to be mocked and insulted, to have that crown of thorns which they platted put upon Thy sacred head, and to be spit upon!

30. *Show me a token for good.* Tokens for good, what might they be? Delight in the Word—desire to obtain good—prayerfulness—thoughtfulness about spiritual things—convictions of sin—disposition to wait on the ordinances of religion.

31. The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. May this be that hour. Thou who art both Son of God and Son of Man, be glorified this day among us. Great Immanuel! let there not be occa-

sion to say—"Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

32. Give us a feeling of humiliation that we have done so little in a cause that demands so much.

33. May we perceive a "religious meaning" in the events of life, and in all the objects about us. May we make a religious use of them all.

34. Thou God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob,—the God of our Fathers! glorify thy Son Jesus! Stretch forth Thy hand to heal—let signs and wonders be done by the name of thy Holy Child Jesus.

35. "For God is with us." O God, be with us during this communion season; be with us on each day of it; be with us as the God of grace—as the God of salvation; grant us more grace, and further experience of thy salvation.

36. Careless families do Thou reclaim—may parents give an example to their children of reverencing God's sanctuary, of hallowing God's Sabbath, of attending on divine ordinances. Spare us the pain of having to deal with careless families.

We have no doubt that many of these ejaculatory petitions were used by Mr. Leitch in the public prayers which he offered in his congregation, and we have as little doubt that these were frequently written down beforehand by himself, for the purpose of being so used. But their broken and fragmentary style sufficiently shows that in no case was it his aim to provide himself simply with set forms or "Collects," and that in fact what he did contemplate was just the opening out of so many channels through which his thoughts might properly and profitably flow. It often happens, indeed,

that he altogether loses sight of the public purpose to which so much of the book is devoted, and we have only his own quiet musings upon his Scripture readings, the events which were daily happening in his social circle or in the world. Yet even then it is always assumed that God is a listener, and those passages which look most like soliloquies are uttered under an evident consciousness of the Divine presence. On the whole, these papers have impressed us greatly, as revealing to us more distinctly the nature of the springs at which this good man sought habitually to refresh his spirit, and as suggesting a ministerial "method" which it might be worth while to imitate.





CHAPTER SIXTH.

OVER HIS OWN HOUSE.

Significance of the Home Life of a Public Man—A Minister's Family—Testimony to Mr. Leitch—Sons out in the World—An unprecedented Correspondence—Fatherly Counsels—Extracts from Letters.

A BISHOP, we are told, must be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity ; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God ?" What the subject of it, then, was to his family is not a question which is at all irrelevant, when we are telling the story of an Earnest Pastorate. On the contrary, we have this feeling very deeply, that just as we very properly tend to suspect that there is something hollow about a ministry which is influential abroad, but nearly ineffective at home ; so it is quite natural to be more fully persuaded of the sincerity and real value of a ministry, when you see it telling upon those who come close to it within the family circle, as well as upon those whom it touches in what we may call a more strictly professional way.

It is but too true, indeed, that grace is not necessarily hereditary, and it is also important to bear in mind that there are men whom God in His providence calls forth so manifestly into public life, that it is simply impossible for them to give the attention which others do to their

more private or domestic interests. We must be very slow to judge, therefore, in particular instances. The child of a well-cared-for household may disappoint all reasonable hopes and turn out a prodigal ; and if the sons of busy men, whose duty calls them much from home, give sometimes after-proofs of manifest want of training, it may be right to attribute that result, not to the fault so much as to the misfortune of the parents. At the same time, it is a just instinct which leads the world to draw general conclusions. If home is not made attractive to children—if the atmosphere is not pure and genial and sweet, and when the younger members go out in life you see not only no centripetal force tending to draw their hearts back to the old roof-tree, but a disposition to choose new ways, and new principles, and new connections, you cannot wonder if onlookers should say that there must have been something amiss to begin with in the parents themselves. On the other hand, if, wherever a young man goes, he carries a pleasant remembrance of home along with him, if the tie of filial affection is strengthened instead of being weakened by time and distance, and if he is seen, not flying after novelties, but solidly and steadily cleaving to the old ways in which he was brought up—then you cannot be far wrong in inferring that here is a family certificate. Depend upon it there was a pleasant fountain to send forth so wholesome a stream.

These general conclusions, we repeat, are in themselves just and natural, and nobody need be surprised if the principle in them is especially applied to ministers. We must all heartily sympathise with those who incline to stand in doubt of a man who is very loud in his professions of zeal and orthodoxy, but whose family circle cannot bear

inspection, and we must allow that those have a good deal to say for their position who affirm that he, on the contrary, cannot be very far from the centre, who, though he does not conform altogether to our standard, is yet able to exhibit the spectacle of a loving Christian home, and of sons and daughters growing up in the fear of God and the love of the Gospel.

At any rate, it is something to be able to say of the subject of this biography, that as he could well bear to be looked at "in his closet," so he could well bear to be looked at as "ruler over his own house." His was not a mere professional religion—a religion which concerned itself about the pulpit, and church-courts, and pastoral visitation, but which was cast off on crossing the threshold of his own door. What he professed to be outside he saw within, and certainly his people on the Sabbath would not have listened to him with a less assured conviction that he profoundly believed all that he said to to them, if they had overheard his communings with God and his conversations with his children.

This sketch of his life is in effect a filial tribute to his memory. His sons have, by a stedfast adherence to those principles which he instilled into them, already attained to positions of trust, and they loyally desire to preserve a distinct recollection of one to whose counsels they owe so much. These facts constitute in themselves a testimony to this side of Mr. Leitch's character. But what he was as the head of a household will be best seen in the light of a particular illustration.

It has happened to not a few Christian parents that they have been obliged to send their children from home at a very early period of their lives. Many of these have necessarily been located in large towns, and been

exposed to such temptations as usually attend young men from the country, living, with few acquaintances, in solitary lodgings. Everywhere, therefore, there will be persons who will fully understand the nature of Mr. Leitch's anxiety when sons began to leave his home-circle to engage in business in distant cities. What fathers in such circumstances are most in the habit of doing we do not know. One, no doubt, will try one plan, another another. But we venture to think that not a great number will be able to say for themselves what can be said for Mr. Leitch—viz. that in the case of a son of his who went early to London, *he wrote to him every day without intermission for seven or eight years*, his own death alone interrupting the correspondence. If this is not an absolutely unparalleled incident, it is an incident the like of which has occurred so seldom that we have never met anything resembling it in any biography which has crossed our path. A mother's patient and persevering love may have occasionally found expression in such like unwearied watching, but one certainly does not look for oversight so assiduous and tender in the sterner nature of a man. The young man had no mother, and it was evidently the father's wish to be mother and father in one.

A sheaf of the letters, written under these circumstances, now lies beside us, and, in looking through them, we have found their contents to be just such as one might have expected. They are of course short, but no space is wasted in superfluous introductions. Whatever is meant to be communicated is said out at once, in plain, and loving and familiar language; and in fact the whole series reads like so many broken sentences in a continuous conversation. It seems evident, indeed, that to realise that was the writer's distinct

intention. He wished to make his son feel that he was linked to home as closely as ever, that he was still under a father's eye, and within hearing of a father's voice; and the talk that went on so ceaselessly during all these years between Stirling and London was just such talk as would have taken place had there been no separation. The incidents that were happening around of family or local interest—the sermons that were preached, and the prayer-meeting addresses that were delivered—the new books that were read, and the subjects discussed in newspaper leaders, or articles in reviews—church politics—young men's temptations, trials, and encouragements; these were the sort of topics which furnished unfailing material for this daily correspondence between father and son. And we are bound to add that throughout it exhibits no tendency to degenerate into mere unprofitable gossip. One worthy purpose sustains the correspondence throughout—to form, in all respects, good habits in the person addressed—to increase his knowledge—to stimulate his powers of observation—to strengthen his religious principles, and to make him a useful member of the church and of society, and a fellow-heir with himself of eternal life.

The following are some extracts from these letters. They are not taken in any order from the series, but just as they happen to turn up as we glance through the mass :—

1. "I have been reading this evening an account of the late Rev. Alexander M'Callum, missionary at Madras, and have been much impressed with the singular excellence of his character. I greatly wish mine was anything like it. He is described as one, pure and elevated in his motives, honest in all his doings, laborious and self-

denying in his labours, generous and kind to all around him. One expression of his I like greatly—viz. ‘ Firm in Jesus.’ Oh! to be firm in Jesus—then we are truly safe. One says that ‘ the leading features in Mr. M‘Callum’s character were great simplicity, integrity, love, and unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus.’ It is added that ‘ he scorned all that was mean and deceitful, and that he was singularly open, manly, and true in all his ways.’ It was in June 1862 that this good man died. Previous to his going to India he was missionary to the late Dr. Tweedie’s congregation, Edinburgh, and while thus employed, he wrote to a friend saying, ‘ I go to my work, I am sure, as joyously as the Australians to the diggings. I like my Master, and I like my work.’ ”

2. “ There is something affecting in the *Monthly Visitor* for this month. There is one point in which the narrative it contains fails in application to you, and that is the ‘ Mother ’ part of it. You have not a mother’s image imprinted on your mind. You have no hallowed recollections of a mother, or of a mother’s counsels and sympathies to cheer you amidst difficulties, and to confirm you in right acting. The Lord has been pleased thus to order it. Still you will always have home recollections, recollections of home lessons, home counsels, and home training ; and these, I trust, will powerfully contribute, along with other favouring influences, to keep you always on the proper side of the line which divides sin and holiness, truth and error, right and wrong. I suppose the railway accident alluded to in the tract is that which occurred two or three years ago, on a Lord’s Day, between London and Brighton.

“ The lesson taught in the tract relative to the Sabbath is an important one.

“ We are specially to remember this, that the Sabbath is not an obnoxious tax the Lord has imposed upon us, but an immense boon which he has conferred upon us.”

3. “ You mingle, I see, a good deal with others. Have a care of your words, your temper, and your acts. The Keeper of Israel keep you.”

4. “ I suppose there would be a good deal of commotion in London yesterday on account of Palmerston’s funeral.

“ Is it not strange that the Queen would decline to travel yesterday, from respect to the late Premier, and travel on Sabbath, to-morrow ; thereby, apparently, showing more respect to him than to the Lord and His day ? ”

5. “ I was told yesterday that Mr. Matheson, parochial minister, Kippen, when ascending the pulpit stair last Sabbath morning, of his own church, was struck by some illness which caused immediate death.

“ An awful dispensation of Providence, teaching most solemn and important lessons. Many are the ministers whom God might justly arrest as they are about to enter the pulpit, and say, What have you to do to enter that holy place ? You have no call from me to occupy it. You have hitherto been profaning it.”

6. “ ‘ Justifieth the ungodly ’ is a strange, and an apparently inconsistent expression. It is true, however, the ungodly are justified ; the ground of justification being a righteousness imputed. That is a distinctive and glorious truth of the Gospel.”

7. “ I have so little to do with Good-Friday that I was not thinking of it till your note brought it to my mind, and I have just looked into the almanac to ascertain when it is. I find that to-morrow is the day.

Well, I hope it will be a Good-Friday to you—good in all respects, good as to mind, as to body, good as to weather.”

8. “The Earl of Aberdeen died yesterday. He was only in his forty-eighth year. It is only a few years since his father died. The father was a leading statesman in his day. He could have prevented the Disruption of the Scottish Church. Dr. Chalmers carried on a long correspondence with him on the subject. But the Earl allowed himself to be influenced in his action in the matter by the chiefs of the party known by the designation ‘Moderates,’—Moderates not in a good sense, but the opposite; for they are those described in Scripture as ‘at ease in Zion,’ who base justification on personal righteousness, and not on Christ’s, and who reduce sanctification to respectability of character, with a modicum of benevolence. The Earl who died yesterday has, for a number of years past, been a thoughtful, serious, religious man. May the hand of God be always upon you for good.”

9. “I recollected that this was your Communion Sabbath. May you find Sacramental bread and wine to be indeed fellowship with the Lord Jesus.”

10. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? I wish you understood the passage. It is an important one. Generally, it expresses the idea that the right-minded communicant, in partaking of the Holy Supper, holds communion with Christ, in respect of Christ’s sufferings and death, and in all the good which Christ by His obedience unto death has obtained. The believer may say, Christ’s death is regarded as mine; the

blessings, of which that death was the purchase, are mine.

“The sacrament helps to the realisation of this blessed communion.

“The fulness of the realisation of this communion constitutes heaven. Next Sabbath is the Communion Sabbath here. Remember to pray for us, that God would largely bless us by the communication of His Spirit.”

11. “Mr. Blaikie, a Free Church minister in Edinburgh, delivered last night a lecture there, to young men, an abstract of which I have been reading this morning with much pleasure. His subject was, ‘The importance of *fixed* principles and *high aims* for young men.’ Among such principles he mentioned particularly the following, viz.—The will of God must always be regarded as supreme, never doing that which will have to be repented of; regarding this present life mainly as a great training-school for the soul, the mind, the whole inner being; the value of labour, the benefit of self-denial, and kindred virtues; the advantage of looking at the future more than at the present.

“Adverting to the passage (Tit. ii. 6), ‘young men exhort to be sober-minded,’ Mr. Blaikie remarked that the word ‘sober-minded,’ in the original Greek, corresponded with the words, self-government, self-control, self-restraint.”

12. “I wish that you were in circumstances to have a house of your own to which [his sister] could go—Patience! and this may be—work on; do present duty well—acquire a good character for yourself. It is after many days of diversified and hard labour, that the husbandman reaps his harvest. Control your wishes and

desires. Reason and Religion must rule, and rule firmly. Wishes, and anticipations, and feelings, must obey. Direful results take place, when these succeed in getting possession of the throne. 'Thou,' *i.e.* the Lord, 'hast a mighty arm.' The Lord will be our strength."

13. "When you get an article of clothing, you should pay it at the time. It is easy to get things, unpaid for at the time—the ease with which they are got is a snare; but the day of reckoning comes at last, and there is experienced the mortification of having to pay, it may be with difficulty, for an article now far gone in the wearing. For myself, I have no pleasure in using what is unpaid. I always fancy I hear it chiding me, saying, You are using what is not yours, it is another's. My principle through life has been to pay at the time what was purchased, and the circumstance of its being *really* my own out and out, greatly increased my comfort in the use of it. The pen of inspiration has written the direction, 'Owe *no man* anything.'"

14. "Study the best forms of expression; yet the extreme of finical and pedantic niceness is to be avoided.

"Wisdom [in this too] is profitable to direct."

15. "I could not but notice in reading at household worship this morning, in regard to the barren fig-tree (Matt. 21), that after the Lord said, 'Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever,' *presently* the fig-tree withered away. May we be kept from the withering influence of divine judgment."

16. "Have you considered the import of the declaration of the Saviour, read at worship here this morning (John iii. 3), 'Except a man be born again, he CANNOT

see the Kingdom of God?' The statement is clear and unambiguous. The great spiritual change to which it refers must be undergone in order to one's entering into the Kingdom of God, even as it exists on earth. The change is no slight one. It is deep, thorough, influential, and abiding—a change which human power cannot produce—a change, which, by whomsoever felt, is effected by the Divine Spirit.

“It should concern us greatly to know whether that change has been experienced by us.”

17. “Very dear Robert—I have been recollecting that this is your communion Sabbath. It has been a day of storm here. I hope that it has been otherwise with you, and that the weather has not interfered with your comfort and edification. I hope also, that the Lord's table has proved a meeting-place between Him and your soul.

“A tremendous blast blew here just when the people were leaving church in the afternoon. The lecture was on Psalm lxxxvi. 11, 12, 13 verses. The passage supplies much matter for meditation. ‘Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth; unite my heart to fear thy name.’ UNITE—sin divided the powers of the heart. The prayer is, Let them be united in the fear or reverence of God. Let these powers converge in this.

“We should have a holy dread of the Lord. His greatness, His supremacy, His holiness, and even His goodness should inspire us, with this blessed fear. Unite my heart, then, to fear thy name. Fear of God, not exclusive of love, is the right condition of heart. May we realise it.”

18. “The first day of October; well, only one

quarter of the year now remains, let us redeem the time. Let us turn it to the best account. It is not a thing to be lost, even a lost day is a serious matter. It is a loss through eternity, even though we obtain a place in heaven. We will not have such a large amount of happiness there as we would have had, had the day not been lost."

19. "It is an affecting question. I came to it in reading this morning (Zech. i. 5)—Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever? They are gone, into the unseen world; and we are following. God of our fathers! be the God of their succeeding race."

20. "Will you have the kindness to say to John that Professor Binnie called yesterday here (I was not within at the time), and left the second volume of Hengstenberg on John's Gospel. John's kindness, to me at least, is in excess. I don't wish him to be at expense on my account, though I feel grateful to him for his kindly disposition towards me. The maintenance of his family must be getting annually more costly, and he has church and other claims, not a few, to meet. I am perfectly satisfied with manifestations of his kindness in inexpensive forms. Some of the most valuable books in my possession are gifts from J. The one you spoke of as forwarded in Mr. Henderson's parcel has not yet come to hand."

21. "I fell in with a passage of Scripture last night, which Dr. Chalmers frequently quotes as containing a guiding principle—'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children' (Deut. xxix. 29). There is a tendency in us to pry into, and speculate on,

things as to which the Lord has given us no information, and on which human reason can throw no light; while what is revealed is not used and improved by us so much as it ought. It is surely the most unprofitable employment to which we can betake ourselves, to endeavour to find out the unrevealed, and what was designed should continue unknown to us in our present condition."

22. "Our Lord, speaking of His kingdom, says (Luke xiii.), 'Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.' And why are they not able to enter in? Because they are under mistake in regard to the manner of entrance. But the fact that many seek to enter in, and are not able, should make us all the more anxious to secure for ourselves, and to enjoy, eternal life. May we be among the saved."

23. "The following remarks of Scott the commentator, on the case of Achan (Josh. vii.) are excellent and most just:—'We must repress the first movings of evil desire, and pray earnestly not to be led into temptation. We must habituate ourselves to meditate on the future consequences of sinful gratifications to our characters, families, connections, and temporal interests; to our conscience, peace, and eternal concerns; to the Church of God, and the world around us; and to place ourselves, by an effort of the imagination, in those very circumstances in which we should be were the sin committed, and the infatuation vanished; and to consider what our judgment and feelings in that case would be. We should also treat all expectations of secrecy and impunity as the delusions of Satan. We should also accustom ourselves to self-denial and patient waiting; for the blessings that God reserves for his people are

like fruit, which will be wholesome when it has had time to ripen, but will certainly be noxious if greedily and prematurely gathered.'

"These are words of wisdom. To ponder them must be profitable."

24. "I have read the article in the current number of *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, on *Historiography*, with considerable interest. There is a difference between history and historiography, the latter word referring more particularly to the mode in which history is written. The author of the article speaks of the chronicle mode—or the bare statement of facts—the annalistic mode, the pragmatic, and the philosophical. Discussion has been raised on the point whether history-writing be an art or a science. The writer of the article says that, in his opinion, it partakes more of a science than of an art. Have you read the article?"

25. "I have been reading Henry's *Commentary* this evening. He is fond of introducing some Latin proverbial expressions—and this he does very deftly and appropriately. In regard to Abimelech's death (*Judges ix.*), Henry very pithily says—*qualis vita, finis ita*. The termination of life is of a piece with the character of life itself. As one lives, so, usually at least, he dies. *Qualis vita, finis ita*. Let us live well, and we will die well. To me to live is Christ, to me to die is gain. One Gaal is spoken of in that same chapter, but he is not again mentioned in the subsequent history of Israel, and Henry somewhat ludicrously closes his remarks on him by saying—*exit Gaal*. Gaal now goes off the stage. Gaal disappears, and does not re-appear. This, alas! will be true of each of us ere long in respect of the stage of life. Let us act our part well whilst we are on it;

until the 'exit' come. 'As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance ; but as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.' "

26. "How have you got on to-day ? got on, in the spending of the blessed, precious Sabbath ?

"What spiritual thoughts have occupied your mind ? What have been your impressions and desires ? What the results of the exercises in which you have been engaged ? What books have you been reading ? Have you got new views on any religious topic ? or former views enlarged or corrected ?

"Have you been able to speak wisely, affectionately, and intelligibly to the children of your class ? Did you succeed in arresting their attention, and interesting them in the truth in regard to which you spoke to them ? "

27. "Denny and Mr. Dempster are intimately connected in my mind. He was for a long period minister there. He was as spiritually-minded as any person ever I knew. However short the time might be you were in his company, you felt yourself in the presence of a holy man. I often felt myself quickened both by his preaching and his conversation.

"He was withal a polite man, and he liked to see politeness in others ; and who does not like to see this ? Good breeding and polished manners are, I should suppose, agreeable to every one. The gospel is a great polisher of the mind and the conduct, though its main design is to save and to restore to men the lost image of God."

28. "Have you looked into the new number of the British and Foreign ? The first article is on Strauss, Schleiermacher, and Renan. - Three heretics—Schleier-

macher not so great as the other two. Each has acquired great notoriety.

“The article on Bushnell gives a very good account of his recent work on ‘Vicarious Sacrifice.’ Bushnell is also a heretic, inasmuch as he does not hold the doctrine of atonement, at least in the orthodox sense of that term.

“Bushnell’s sentiments on vicarious sacrifice are exceedingly absurd and wild.

“The atonement is the grand outstanding doctrine of the gospel. If satisfaction has not been made to justice for our sin, we are for ever undone. We are utterly hopeless. Apart from the atonement, there is no ground on which we can find acceptance with God. But Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. He suffered, the just for the unjust. Bushnell’s composition is, it seems, very attractive. This makes his publications all the more dangerous.

‘Hold up my goings, Lord, me guide
In those Thy paths divine ;
So that my footsteps may not slide
Out of those ways of Thine.’”

29. “You ought to be now saving money. Emergencies may be expected to arise in the course of providence requiring you to fall back on a reserved fund. And when they do so, it is sad when nothing has been provided to meet them. Borrowing makes the evil worse, and to beg, though not so bad as borrowing, is somewhat humiliating. It was once a common thing in this country among poor people, not so common, I fear, now as formerly, to lay aside, and regard as sacred and inviolable, as much money as would secure them a decent interment.

“Many now are satisfied with the prospect of being interred at the expense of the Parochial Board.

“Life on earth is a noble thing. The great purpose of it should be kept in view, and it should be our constant aim to fulfil it. Let us realise, as vividly as we can, our relationship to God and to Christ Jesus.”

30. “Scott, the commentator, says, ‘May the Lord teach us to repress all our earthly desires, to govern our appetites, to acknowledge candidly our mistakes, and completely to rectify them when discovered ; and to be gentle and tender to others, and only severe against our own sins.’

“So I pray for you ; so likewise I pray for myself.

“Enoch had this testimony (Heb. xi. 5), that he pleased God.

“May we make it our constant aim to please God.”

31. “Neatness in writing—indeed, neatness in all things—is desirable. Neatness pleases the eye, while the want of it is disagreeable to the sight.”

32. “The first letter of this year which I write, I write to you. This, however, is not the result of any special intention or arrangement. It is a merely accidental circumstance. But it is just as well that it is so. You have entered on the great battle of life, and are fighting your way through the world, and need a word of encouragement from your friends, and specially from your father, who, at least, should be the most loving to you of these.

“I would like you to fight your battle better than I have fought mine, to fight it with more skill, and also with more success.

“It is of vast importance to have a proper idea of what the battle is, and, of course, how it is to be fought.

To find one's-self in the heat of conflict without correct notions of these points is a terrible evil.

“It is, moreover, a great evil to fight this battle irregularly ; the mode of procedure should be determined upon, and adhered to as far as circumstances will permit.

“One great means of getting on satisfactorily, is, realising the Lord's gracious presence, and committing our way unto Him continually, seeking His guidance and blessing.”

33. “The thaw is very agreeable after such a lengthened period of frost and snow.

“We speak of the weather, without adverting to Him by whom it is produced and regulated—in whose power, it wholly is. Elihu asks (Job xxxvii. 16), Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge? How are thy garments warm, when He quieteth the earth by the south wind?”

34. “I have been reading the article in the current number of the British and Foreign Evangelical Review, on ‘human responsibility as related to divine agency in conversion.’ It is racy and forcible ; indeed, I felt it to be very impressive ; but the language employed as to human moral ability, seemed to me vague. I have no doubt the author is orthodox, but the language employed may be interpreted in a sense not orthodox, in a sense different from Rom. viii. 7. The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

“Have you perused the article? It engaged my attention very much, especially that part of it which refers to human responsibility, a subject of momentous importance to each of us.”

35. "The text yesterday afternoon was Acts xx. 32—'And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.'

"The words occur in an address by Paul to the elders of the Ephesian Church, whom he met, at his own request, at Miletus, on one of his journeys to Jerusalem.

"The mention of the words at this time reminds me of my duty and privilege to commend you, as I now do, to God, to His protection and guidance. I commend you to Him, in whom all fulness dwells. I commend you to Him as the God of salvation, entreating that He may bless you with all blessings, temporal and spiritual. Further, I commend you to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

"The word of God's grace is the Bible. Sanctification is the grand qualification for the heavenly inheritance, as the vicarious righteousness of Christ is the only title."

36. "What a precious blessed day is the Sabbath. When it comes, well may we exclaim,

'Blest morning, whose first dawning rays
Beheld the Son of God
Arise triumphant from the dead,
And leave his dark abode.'

"The Sabbath comes with inexpressible and inexhaustible good to the children of men. What a pity they should not be sensible of the benefit of the Sabbath, grateful for it, and not spend it so as to derive the greatest amount of good from it!

“The earthly Sabbath is a delightful type of the heavenly, and the former is a grand means of preparing for the latter. One of the subjects of discourse here to-day was (Isaiah lii. 7)—‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!’

“I hope that you have had much delightful converse with God this day, and that it has been a sweet day spiritually to you.”

37. “I hope that your business and other engagements don’t prevent you from carrying on your reading of standard books—books, by the perusal of which your mind will be instructed and cultured. I have not heard anything of late as to your reading, but I hope that it is not neglected.

“You must now be left very much to your own judgment, and to your own sense of responsibility.”

38. “The *Times* received this morning; but I don’t wish you to expend money on my account. Save your money; it will be needed when I come to spend my last days with you. But I am obliged to you for kindness evinced in sending the paper.”

39. “Notice is taken in the *Review* to-day of a lecture on the subject of the law of compensation prevailing in the natural world. Have you paid any attention to that subject? It is an interesting one, and manifestive of the wisdom and goodness of God.”

40. “This is the day of J. O.’s funeral. I intend being present. He was seventy-two years of age. Thus we pass, each one at his own appointed time, into the unseen world—none being allowed to remain on the

earth. Here, there is none abiding ; there is a continuing city elsewhere, where perpetual sunshine and happiness are enjoyed. To that glorious city let us uninterruptedly march onward, under the guidance of our gracious and condescending Saviour. 'He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation' (Ps. cvii. 7)."

41. "This is the concluding day of our communion season. But I write this in the morning, previous to church time. Mr. Robertson of Dunipace is to preach to-day, but he has not yet arrived. The morning is fearfully stormy ; dashing rain and high winds. In the celestial Canaan no storm ever arises ; its atmosphere is always calm ; its sky is always clear. There, no vestige of the curse shall ever be seen or felt. May that happy land bē the place of our final and everlasting abode. —With best love to you, I am always, your very affect. father,

ALEX. LEITCH."

Nothing needs to be said by way of indicating the significance of these sentences. Their good sense—the Christian spirit which breathes through them—the wise counsels which they inculcate—the fatherly love and care which they reveal, exhibit unmistakably the character of their author. Whatever may be said in other connections about Mr. Leitch, this cannot but be affirmed regarding him, that he sought, in a very honest, earnest, and persevering way, to command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment. Nor was his anxiety confined to his own immediate descendants. By-and-by there were grandchildren born within the circle of his family. It was his uniform custom to take them, when they visited

him for the first time, into his study, and there formally dedicate them to the Lord; and a number of letters now before us addressed to the little ones, who thus came to have claims upon his attention, speak very touchingly for his longing to see them brought under the saving influence of the gospel. There was clearly nothing hollow or unreal about his ministry. Wherever you come upon him who exercised it, you find him engaged in his Master's work.*

* Special mention is made in the text of Mr. Leitch's letters to one of his sons; but his care for all his children was equally tender and assiduous. "During twenty years in my case," says another of his sons, "and not much less in my brother A.'s, he once a week wrote to each of us, even when he himself was from home, and he fixed stated separate days weekly for hearing from us. When we had occasion to be absent from our usual place of residence, he followed our movements on the map; and, as if to have us in his mind continually, he had marks on the map indicating the spot where our house was situated. For those we came in contact with, and about whom he heard from us, he offered special prayer—particularly for our employers, and others who showed us kindness."





CHAPTER SEVENTH.

PASTORAL METHODS.

Free use of the Pen—Its Advantages—Business Books—Sermon Journal—Memorandum of Scriptures read—Register of Baptisms—Sick List—Roman Catholic Priest—Household Visitation—Sabbath Schools and Bible Class—Passing Words.

IF ever there was a man who made an honest, conscientious, and painstaking effort to discharge wisely all the duties of his stewardship, that man was Mr. Leitch. In the most literal sense of the word, he made a *business* of his ministry. There are some, as we all know, who take their work just as it comes. They preach regularly on the Sabbath, because this is an arrangement that is made for them ; and they visit the sick when they are expressly invited to do so. But they have no method, no plans, no system ; and hence their labours too often fail in producing those lasting effects at which a settled pastorate chiefly aims. Mr. Leitch was not one of this class. He kept a set of books as carefully as a merchant keeps his day-book and ledger, and in these we find not only a perfect record of all his professional work, but what helps us also to form a clear idea of his pastoral methods, the kind of organisation which he employed for making full proof of his ministry.

It is said of Jonathan Edwards, that even while a boy he began to study *with a pen in his hand*, and this most useful practice was steadily pursued by him all his

life through. The result of that is well known. He became distinguished above most others for the exactness of his thoughts and the precision of his statements. Now there are few who can ever hope to approach the great President in vigour and acuteness of mind. But the habit which he so early formed is beyond the reach of no one, and there can be no question about the benefits which would flow from it, if it were more generally adopted. This habit was evidently soon formed by Mr. Leitch. His commonest attitude in his study must have been with a pen in his hand; and, using writing material thus freely, he speedily got beyond the narrowness of those who, because they write so little, are of opinion apparently that paper is gold-leaf, and that they are exercising a praiseworthy thriftiness in covering with nearly invisible manuscript the blank pages of circulars or the backs of letters. On good-sized sheets, with open margins, and plenty of space between the lines, Mr. Leitch recorded with a free pen the incidents of his ministry, his own passing thoughts, and his earnest aspirations; so that it has cost his surviving friends as little labour to decipher these memorials as it must have cost himself to go back upon them in his lifetime.

We have a motive for dwelling upon this point. After ten or twenty years' experience, one does not easily get out of ruts; and many a minister of so long a standing can only look at plans and admire them with a feeling of helplessness. If they had been suggested to him at the outset of his career he would have accepted them as a matter of course. But now he cannot make them fit into the system he has actually adopted; and all he can do is to hope that others who are beginning life will be more fortunate than himself. But there are young

ministers who have still their plans to make, and to them we would venture very earnestly to commend the practice of a constant and liberal use of the pen—not simply in the way of writing sermons, but in compiling statistics, preserving memorials of passing events in their ministry, and giving definite expression to ideas and impressions, hopes and fears.

The advantages of the method are manifold and obvious. One use of it has been referred to already—it tends to promote exactness in thinking. But two other benefits may also be named. In the first place, it helps to the formation of business habits, and the times are such as more and more to require that as a ministerial qualification. But secondly, and chiefly, the writing down, and thus putting into an objective form the aims of a ministry, and its actual achievements, is well fitted to have a stimulating effect upon the conscience. It is frequently said that after a while ministers tend to fall into a routine. They honestly seek to do all their duty, and there is probably no one part of it which they can be said to neglect. But there is no stir in their congregations, no visible sign of an intense or earnest life; and when all things this year continue just as they were during the last, they themselves begin to feel the soporific influence, and to work in a sort of heartless, mechanical way, as from the force of habit only. Now one preservative against this paralysis is the putting down upon paper what you have attempted to do, how you have done it, and what has been the result. Such a thing is equivalent to a process of sustained self-examination. And the natural issues of both are the same. If a man pursues a certain course without ever looking around him, there is no telling how far

he may proceed in it. But if he pauses now and again, looks before and behind and on each side of him, thereby marking the direction in which he is tending, the chances are certainly less that he will go very far astray. So with the exercise of the Christian ministry. The more carefully a man takes conscious note of all his efforts, failures and successes, the less likely is he to do things in a spirit of routine, or to sink into indifference or self-complacency.

We have spoken of Mr. Leitch's business books. They are numerous and complete, and, as we have said, they bear marks of having been kept with as much care and exactness as the ledger in a counting-house. One series of volumes describes, in orderly fashion, the whole course of his life as a preacher of the gospel. He never on any occasion entered a pulpit without recording when he went home where he had spoken, and on what theme he had discoursed. From his first essays as a probationer down to his last utterances at the communion in Glasgow, there is nothing omitted; and, as we glance through these journals, one thing strikes us exceedingly,—the amount of preaching which he undertook, and the extraordinary infrequency with which his labours were interrupted. As a specimen of one of his methods, and also as supplying a sample of his preaching engagements, we extract a single page from his sermon journal for 1849. We select it entirely at hazard. Preaching so often as he did, his rule was to use the sermons last delivered to his own congregation, these being fresher in his mind.

1849.

June 24.	South Church,	.	Fore.	Eph. ii. 1.
„ „	Do.	After.	Song. viii. 6 v.

June 28.	Tillicoultry (Fast),	.	Fore.	Eph. ii. 1.
”	”	Do.	.	After. Song. viii. 6 v.
”	”	Do.	.	Even. Isai. liii. 6.
July 1.	South Church,	.	Fore.	Eph. ii. 2.
”	”	Do.	.	After. Gen. xxv. 28.
”	”	Do.	.	Even. Rom. xvi. 17-25.
”	8.	South Church,	.	Fore. Eph. ii. 3.
”	”	Do.	.	After. Gen. xxv. 29, etc.
”	”	Do.	.	Even. Rom. xvi. etc.
”	9.	Dunning (Monday),		Eph. ii. 3. Gen. xxv. 29, etc.
”	11.	Slamanan (Fast Day),		Eph. ii. 3. Gen. xxv. 29.
”	15.	South Church,	.	Fore. Eph. ii. 3.
”	”	Dunblane, Com. Sab.	Ev.	Gen. xxv. 29.

Another book kept by Mr. Leitch contained a memorandum of the Scriptures read by him in public worship. It was begun on the 23d of June 1839, when he was preaching as a parish minister in the East and West Churches alternately, and was certainly continued by him down to the time of the Disruption, in May 1843. It is not likely that he then gave up the practice of keeping such a record, but we do not happen to have fallen upon any later among his papers. We observe that he commenced in 1839 with Isaiah and Hebrews, and that he thereafter read every day consecutive portions out of both Testaments. From the circumstance that he did not always read a whole chapter, and that he sometimes began towards the end of one and read into that which followed, we infer that he aimed not merely at formally going over a certain part of the Word every day, but at giving the people an intelligent interest in what was presented. And we

have no doubt he was right in this. For the public solemn reading of the Scriptures in the congregation, without a single note or comment, a good deal may be said, looking at the matter theoretically; but if the intention is not to go through a form, but to produce an impression, we are quite sure that it is a wise thing to interject in the course of the reading an occasional remark, or adopt other means of a similar kind, to stimulate attention and help to the intelligent apprehension of the passage.

It need scarcely be said that Mr. Leitch kept a register of baptisms, but his register is fuller than any we have seen. It tells the name of the child, the names of its parents, and the day on which it was baptized; but it does more than this. It mentions the place where the baptism occurred—whether in church, in the vestry, or in a private house, and preserves also (for the private information of the minister) a record of the circumstances, if there was anything peculiar in them, under which the ordinance was administered. He thus kept a more perfect list of the baptized than is, we believe, at all usual in Presbyterian hands, although it is probable that even he failed to carry out the plan which our theory of the church seems really to require. We keep, in our several congregations, an exact roll of communicants,—adding from time to time the names of new members, and removing also the names of those who, by death, or change of residence, or discipline, have ceased to have places in the record. But we are apt to forget that the church recognises the possession of certain hereditary rights by the children of those who are members in full communion. The church itself is composed of “those who profess the true religion, *with*

their children." And "the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptized." Hence, when the baptism of a child takes place, this is what, among other things is done; *its standing in the visible church is taken formal notice of and acknowledged.* It has thereafter as good a title to have its name registered in the church books as any member in full communion; not, indeed, as having attained to the enjoyment of all the privileges of the church, for it has after that to be admitted to partake of the other sacrament, but as having a special right to such care and oversight on the part of the church as its condition allows. On this account, there is a growing conviction in the minds of many that in every congregation there ought to be another carefully kept roll—*the roll of the baptized*; one which should contain the names of all to whom the initiatory ordinance had been administered, and which should be as assiduously "purged" as the register of the communicants. If this arrangement were attended to, so that names should be dropped out of it only when their bearers died, or became members in full communion, or removed (with certificate of some form, if possible) to another locality, it is easy to see how greatly the superintending power of the church would be increased, and the risk of lapsing into home heathenism would be diminished. It seems to us that we very inadequately realise the advantage of infant baptism, and make far too little use of it as a means of grace; and although a good deal of what we have been saying now is slightly irrelevant, we hope that, in a chapter on Pastoral Methods, we may be excused for expanding a little the idea which we cannot but think was in its germ in Mr. Leitch's mind.

Of course Mr. Leitch kept a *Sick List*.* It was indeed in this connection that his labours were most abundant. Many outside his own congregation prayed him to visit themselves or their friends when illness entered their households; and multitudes of persons in Stirling and the neighbourhood are ready to testify how assiduously he waited on the afflicted, and with what kindness and fidelity he sought to comfort and direct them. Quite a number of books are now beside us, in which are noted down, with characteristic carefulness, the sick visits which he paid from day to day through a long succession of years. The number of these visits is extraordinary. Not a single day of the week—not even Saturday—is reserved entirely to himself. Not unfrequently even the Sabbath is trenched upon; perhaps when he wished to see for the last time one who was not likely to survive till another morning. Opening, for example, at random, the volume for the summer of 1857, and taking the first week of June, we find notes of the following visits:—*Sabbath*, one visit; *Monday*, three; *Tuesday*, four; *Wednesday*, four; *Thursday*, four; *Friday*, three; *Saturday*, four—twenty-three visits in one week. If this were a singular instance there might be no great cause to remark upon it. Many ministers of large congregations have occasionally as large a sick list, and go over it faithfully every week. But there was nothing exceptional about that week in the case of Mr. Leitch. He *habitually* visited as largely. There were times when the demands upon him were far more nume-

* Other business books kept by him were a *Marriage Register*, *Communion Roll*, *Record of Annual Visitations* of his congregation (containing, besides other things, the names and ages of the children of each family, with notes of whether they were residing at home or elsewhere), and a *List of the Poor* he cared for.

rous ; and when we repeat that this went on year after year with unvarying zeal, we cannot wonder that he came to establish for himself so warm a place in the affectionate recollections of his fellow-townsmen. Mr. Goldie, his successor, tells us that when his coffin was being lowered into the grave, many pressed forward to have a last look of that which contained his remains ; and conspicuous among these was the minister of a church the furthest possible removed in doctrine, worship, and sympathy, from his own — the Roman Catholic priest. The flock of the priest was chiefly among the poor of Stirling, and their minister required, therefore, to be often moving through the most destitute districts of the town. There he constantly encountered Mr. Leitch. The position of the two men was widely different, and their teaching utterly discordant, but to one thing even a Popish priest could not remain insensible — that was, to the honesty, kindness, and beneficence which distinguished the Protestant pastor, on whose track he so often came. These features in his character so impressed themselves on his mind that he was led to entertain for him a feeling of almost affectionate respect, and while on the Sabbath after the death he paid a tribute to his memory from within his own altar-rails, calling him “*the Minister of Stirling,*” he became one of the mourners at his funeral, and, as has been said, pressed forward to catch a last glimpse of his coffin as it was lowered into the grave. The testimony thus borne to Mr. Leitch was, in its own way, not a little significant, and was, we have no doubt, in a great measure called forth by his gracious and assiduous visitation of the sick. For it is at those seasons, when trouble presses, that words of kindness go most direct to the

heart, and leave behind them the deepest and most abiding impressions.

But Mr. Leitch did not confine his visitations to the sick and sorrowful. He systematically, once a year, visited the families of his own congregation also (comprising 300 or 400 communicants), and there are proofs by us in plenty that he frequently singled out neglected districts, and visited in them from house to house. In the notes which he took on these occasions, the ecclesiastical condition of each family is mentioned—whether it was church-going at all, and whether the children had been baptized; but when he refers to their spiritual state, he resorts generally to his short hand, under the veil of which, we do not doubt, many an earnest aspiration is concealed. Altogether, the impression we get from an examination of his papers is this,—that he came much into personal contact with the people whose enlightenment he sought; that he attached great and just importance to the influence which he exercised in this connection; and that, as a matter of fact, he did accomplish, through his visitations, an amount of good which it is impossible to calculate, but whose greatness the day will declare.

It may well be supposed that in his pastoral system he gave a very prominent place to the oversight of the young. He took, as a matter of course, a warm interest in the Sabbath Schools; but he did more. From the commencement of his ministry to near its end he never was any year without a Bible class of his own, in which he personally instructed the young men and young women of his congregation, and any others who chose to attend. These classes were often very largely attended, as we see from the lists which he has himself

preserved, and we have letters from old scholars, now occupying good positions in society, who still look back with pleasure and gratitude to the lessons which they received in earlier days.

There is only one other feature of Mr. Leitch's ministry which may be referred to here. It is, that it was part of his plan, as a minister of the gospel, to utilise even those chance encounters which he had with people in houses or in the street. Many of the private letters received by his surviving relatives speak of words dropped by him in their hearing in this accidental way ; and as this kind of work had daily a distinct place in his prayers in the morning ere setting out, and in the evening, we cannot doubt that now and again the arrow went home, and became the precursor of a blessing. " I never heard anything out of place attributed to him," writes one, " or anything of a kind to give offence. The occasion furnished him with the word in season ; his beneficence, or his guilelessness, or his consideration of others' feelings (a very characteristic quality) made it acceptable ; and a certain kind of quaintness rendered it often memorable." Always bearing about with him the dying of the Lord Jesus—ever on the watch for opportunities to commend his Master to those who despised or neglected Him—he carried on his ministerial work not in a rigid professional way, as having exclusive regard to times, and places, and seasons, but as one who could never forget that wherever he was he was an ambassador for Christ, commissioned to beseech men, everywhere, to be reconciled to God.



CHAPTER EIGHTH.

THE PRAYER MEETING.

Its Theory—Fluctuations in Attendance—Causes of its Neglect—
Means of Revival—Consideration of its Importance—Prepara-
tion—Devotional Variety—Young Men's Fellowship Meetings
—Experience of Mr. Leitch—Volume of "Brief Notes."

THE theory of what is called in Scotland the Weekly Prayer Meeting, and what is best known in England by the name of the Weekly Lecture, is a very excellent one. Its chief aim is to give, in each locality where it is held, an opportunity to the neighbouring people of God to step aside together, on one of the working-days of the week, into one of the refreshment places planted by the King on the way to the Celestial City, and there to speak to one another of the trials, and difficulties, and encouragements of the road, and by their united supplications to stir up the grace that is in them, and to seek the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom all over the earth. It is, however, a sad fact that this institution, which might obviously be of unspeakable advantage to the Church, has not, as a general rule, received the hearty and sustained support which it was entitled to expect. During seasons of revival these meetings invariably grow, and for a time after the excitement is over they continue to maintain their ground. But they begin to show a tendency to subside the moment the high pressure is removed, and by-and-by it often happens that there are

no places in which the attendance is so low as in those which have had their times of refreshing. Apart from that, however, the complaint is almost universal that comparatively few avail themselves of the Week Evening Service ; and if it is right to maintain such a thing, it is certainly right that people should be asking why it is so ineffective, and if there is nothing that could be done to increase its force as a means of grace.

We all know how the neglect is usually accounted for. The prayer meeting, it is often said, is the thermometer of the church, and from its condition you may judge of the state of spiritual religion. But while we must admit that there is a considerable amount of truth in this, we do not believe that we have here the whole truth, or anything like it. We must make some allowance for changes in our social habits, and some also for local circumstances, of which no general law can properly take account. Besides, we have no doubt whatever that there is religion enough among us to revive the institution, if only two things were done : *First*, if thoughtful Christian people would really reflect on its utility, and give their hearty help to make it attractive ; and, *Second*, if very much more pains were expended on the manner of its conduct.

It is very certain that the addresses given at prayer meetings are often extremely raw, and that the supplications offered there are sometimes cold, formal, and uninteresting. We cannot wonder then, that a person going fortuitously into one, and finding nothing either to edify or warm, should not much care (if he considered himself alone) to come again. Well, it will perhaps be said that the remedy is plain. Let the ministers, and other conductors of the meetings, whose heartless services repel

—let them turn over a new leaf, and the face of things may alter for the better. So say we. But let those who are ready with this simple counsel look a little round the subject. Ministers are but men—men of like passions with others ; the same east wind chills them—the same causes make them depressed—the same influences tend to paralyse their mental efforts. It is very wrong no doubt to let the quality of your preparations be affected by the number of your audience, and to suffer your soul to be cooled by the atmosphere of other men. Still, it cannot be denied that both things are so very natural, that in the ordinary course of events you must lay your account with their constant recurrence. Grace can do anything. It can make a man prepare as conscientiously and elaborately to speak to a few ignorant old women as to a large and intelligent crowd, and it can keep a heart burning even in a cave. But we must not expect miracles ; and if, therefore, the institution of the prayer meeting is to be made to tell through its increasing attractions, this result must be brought about by the hearty co-operation of the Christian people. Let them allow themselves to appreciate the excellence of the ordinance—let them consider the benefits that would result from an increase to its power on the life of our congregations and the propagation of the Gospel—and let them, as the result of this wise review of its capabilities, not stand aloof from it, but countenance it by their presence, and help it by their prayers, and give spirit to it by their fervour, and we venture to predict that few will by-and-by have any cause to complain either of undigested addresses or of devotions in which there is no soul.

With all that, however, the conductors of prayer meetings cannot claim to be entirely free from blame in

this connection. It will be readily acknowledged by all of them who are very much in earnest, that more might conceivably be done to render their services interesting and effective, and few will be so unreasonable as to insist that the whole burden of beginning a better state of matters must rest with the people, or their coming to see their duty more clearly and carrying it out more thoroughly, by attending in increasing numbers upon the ordinance. As to possible improvements, one of course is this: that, without waiting for a larger audience or a warmer atmosphere, they should prepare more carefully themselves—prepare, that is, not only by having something more worth listening to to say, but by having also their own spirits made more fervent by spending a larger space of time previously in secret communion with God. But there is another thing. It is well known that in America the prayer meeting is almost universally conducted in a manner different from that which obtains among ourselves. There is seldom a formal, and never a lengthened address, but in place of this there is greater variety in the devotions; a larger number of persons being usually present than we can prevail upon to take part in our social worship. It is probable that the American churches owe their greater command of such persons to the frequency of their Revivals, and it is no doubt from our having had experiences similar to theirs that our deficiency in this respect has of late years become so far made up, at least in Scotland. However that may be, we are quite sure that it would add greatly to the attractiveness of our prayer meetings if (retaining their well-considered addresses, which we would by no means abandon) they had more of the American characteristic of devotional variety. How we are to secure a

larger number of persons capable of taking part in them is another question, but in view of the want which is felt in this connection, and in view also of what is even a more serious consideration, the maintenance of the habit of family worship, it appears to us that there are few congregational adjuncts which better deserve encouragement than *Young Men's Fellowship Meetings*. In these more is accomplished than the quickening of the devotional feelings. The habit is formed of expressing the desires of the heart in vocal prayer, and thus a training is carried on, the good fruit of which will appear in very many different ways. One chief cause of the neglect of family worship has certainly been this, that heads of households were never taught to pray aloud in their youth. Let care be taken to correct this evil, and we may see a change for the better in the place, of all others, where it is most desirable to see religion flourishing; and if there is improvement there, the influence may be confidently expected to extend—those who are accustomed to lead the devotions of a family circle coming naturally to take a part likewise in the devotions of the prayer meeting.

We have been led into making these remarks by finding how much prominence was given by Mr. Leitch to this particular department of his ministry. The prayer meeting was not something which was attended to by him only in an incidental way, and in a perfunctory manner. It was far from always realising his expectations. He, like others, had to complain often of a deficient interest in it; and he, too, failed to find at all times laymen able and willing to unite with him in taking part in its services; but he never wearied of the agency for himself, nor does he appear to have attempted to serve God through it with that which cost him nothing. There

were seasons (as for example when so many soldiers sat in his church, and also when the wave of revival passed over the town in which he lived)—there were such seasons when his meetings almost satisfied his aspirations, and were really sources of the highest possible enjoyment to himself. There were other times when the tide of feeling receded, and he was left with a comparatively small number of faithful associates to seek and abide the return of the blessing. But whatever were his surroundings he held on his way—looking to the weekly meeting as an established means of grace, and most conscientiously preparing for it both in mind and spirit. How many importunate prayers were offered up in anticipation by him in his own closet may be guessed; but no one who has not examined his papers can have any idea of his diligence and fidelity in providing himself with materials for appropriate and edifying addresses. It was not a few off-hand remarks which he was in the habit of arranging to make. He wrote down his thoughts in a careful and thoughtful way; and so excellent and suggestive are many of these so far fragmentary utterances that we can well imagine they were frequently more useful than even the elaborate pulpit discourses of the Sabbath.

A whole volume of *Brief Notes* used at prayer meetings is now beside us. We say *a volume*, for it was another of Mr. Leitch's business habits that he did not suffer his notes to be scattered abroad, to find their way into the waste-paper basket, or sink into chaos at the bottom of his sermon chest! He wrote them on sheets of paper of uniform size, he laid them in their disconnected state in some secure but accessible corner, and in due time, when they had accumulated sufficiently, he bound them together for convenient reference. How

many ministers there are who would have been thankful if they had been put up to this plan at the outset of their pastorate. Some of our best thoughts, as is well known, occur to us at informal gatherings—some of the fittest materials for sermons take shape first in prayer meeting addresses—and, in the absence of any means for saving these, an inexcusable waste is taking place continually. The following are a specimen of Mr. Leitch's notes. The whole volume is, of course, but a basket of fragments. But the examples given may be of use two ways : They may suggest to some a method of prayer meeting preparation ; and they will, we are sure, furnish to the thoughtful reader some matter for personal,—profitable meditation :—

I. THE CROSS AND THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

John iii. 14, 15.—“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up ; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

I. The lifting up of the Son of Man.

1. Jesus the Son of Man.

Truly man—clothed with humanity ; yet something in his humanity peculiar—no earthly father—“a body hast THOU prepared me”—the Word “made” flesh, not flesh originally ; his humanity did not exist by itself—always subsisted in connection with his divinity ; not included in the covenant of works—all mankind were comprehended in that covenant ; that Jesus, being God, should be the Son of Man is exceeding strange (Philip. ii. 6)—*the Son of Man* by eminence, not *a* Son of Man, as every one of us is, but “*the*” Son of Man—Son of Man in a sense peculiar to himself—the Son of Man as there is no Son of Man like him, pure, divine, etc.

2. The lifting up of the Son of Man.

(1.) He is lifted up on the cross—why lifted up?—to suffer as a sacrifice—the cross the altar. (2.) Many were concerned in this lifting up—the Father was concerned in it, “it pleased the Lord to bruise him;” Jesus himself was concerned in it,—it was a voluntary surrender of himself; wicked men had a hand in this lifting up (Acts ii. 23)—by wicked hands ye have crucified and slain; devils had a hand in this lifting up of the Son of Man,—instigated Judas to betray, etc. (3.) The Son of Man *must* be lifted up; the purpose and plan of God make it necessary; the character of the sinner’s Surety assumed by Christ—fulfilment of prediction. (4.) There has been a lifting up of the Son of Man into Heaven—to the right hand of the Majesty in the Heaven.

II. The object for which the Son of Man was lifted up. It was to prevent perdition, to obtain everlasting life—life, felicity, glory. For whom? Who are to be benefited? *Believers. Whosoever believeth.* It was a glorious object.

III. The correspondence between Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness, and the Son of Man being lifted up.

1. The correspondence consists in the Divine ordering of both. It was the Lord who commanded Moses to erect the pole on which the serpent of brass was placed.

2. The correspondence consists in similarity of object contemplated to be gained—cure and deliverance.

3. The correspondence consists in the strangeness of the means in both cases.

4. Also, in the simplicity of the means employed—no complication or involution in the means—no intricacy or complexity—what simpler than *looking*.

5. The correspondence consists in the efficacy of the means in both instances ; in the case of the brazen serpent the cure was thorough (whosoever looked was healed). So every one who beholds the Lamb of God has salvation conferred upon him.

Conclusion.—If you perish, it is owing to your disregarding the means of salvation. Salvation ! if not saved in this way, not in any other. Whosoever ! No case so desperate as to be incurable ; if there be a looking to the right object, there can be no failure.

II. THE MYSTERY OF THE FAITH.

1 Tim. iii. 9.—“ Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.”

I. The Gospel a mystery ; much in it that cannot be known.

1. Much can be known by study of the Scriptures and prayer. We know, for example (Matt. i. 21), “ He shall save his people from their sins ;” (Matt. vi. 9-14) some of the leading things for which we ought to pray ; (Mark xvi. 16) “ He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ;” (John iii. 3) the fact of the necessity of regeneration, etc. etc.

2. Much is unfathomable, as for instance regeneration, as to *the mode of its operation* ; union to Jesus, the formation of it and its maintenance ; the blessedness of the righteous in Heaven, in what it consists—the misery of the lost in Hell, in what it consists ; the Gospel being sent to some of mankind and not to others ; resurrec-

tion, what sort of body the righteous shall have, what sort of body shall be provided for the wicked ; the person of Christ,—the subsistence of his human nature in union with the Divine ; the exercise of Divine sovereignty as seen in things innumerable. Rom. xi. 33. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !

II. The Gospel has respect to things which are to be believed—"mystery" of "*the faith*"—"believed" in the meantime. They cannot be *seen*, at least many of the things connected with the Gospel.

1. But though matters only of belief at present, they are of such a nature as powerfully to influence our practice, concerning as they do such objects as the following—God the self-existing one—Christ, the Son of the Father—the Spirit, applying redemption—Heaven, the dwelling-place of God, and the home of the Redeemer—Hell, with its fearful and never-ending wretchedness—Judgment, the account taken by the Lord God in the end. These are matters which appertain to our highest interests, to our salvation.

2. For reality of the things we are to believe there is abundant proof. We have a sure basis for our faith.

3. Much stress is laid in Scripture on the exercise of faith. There is much scope for its exercise. May we have this faith in the things of the Gospel.

III. The mystery of faith must be *held*. "Holding the mystery."

1. The knowledge of it must be possessed. Don't be ignorant of it, let your knowledge of this mystery be constantly on the increase, "to you it is given to know the mystery."

2. Profess the reception of it. Do not be ashamed of it.

3. Hold it—intelligently—professedly (not secretly but openly)—constantly (not intermittently)—everywhere (not merely in certain places)—firmly (not loosely)—practically, as affecting our life—hold it up to the view of others—hold it in spite of all temptations to abandon it, even under the persecution and suffering which may come on you for its sake.

IV. The mystery of the faith must be held in a pure conscience;—a conscience purified by the gospel, enlightened, quickened, pacified, made tender—indeed the mystery of the faith will not benefit us unless it be held, believed, and maintained conscientiously.

It is implied that the mystery of the faith may be held in an impure conscience. A pure conscience is a conscience purified from guilt by the sprinkling on it of the blood of Jesus—a conscience which will not suffer impurity, like the bird of Paradise which will not suffer dust to remain upon its wings.

In one important sense the gospel is no longer a mystery. At one time it was, under a former dispensation—a dispensation of darkness. But the darkness is past and the true light now shineth. Let us remember that it is not for ourselves alone that the mystery is held; but for the good of the world.

III. THE GREAT DAY.

Acts xvii. 31.—“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

I. *The Great Fact—that the World is to be Judged.*

1. It is *the world* that is to be judged—the world comprehending all mankind, not collectively, but individually, every person—all generations, from the beginning of time to the end of the world—*you*, men, women, children ; not one of you passed over, not one forgotten, not be able to hide yourselves. (Amos ix. 2.)

2. What it is that is to be done with you—*judged*—called to account—reckoned with ; your life reviewed, and every part of your life, period of youth, manhood, and more advanced age ; this review will embrace everything connected with you, your thoughts, your emotions, your desires, imaginations, dispositions, your temper, your speech (Eccl. xii. 14 ; Rom. ii. 14 ; Matt. xii. 37), deeds done in the body ; as to the use of privileges—Bible—offers of the Gospel—time.

3. The judgment described, in Matt. xxv. 31-46 ; Rev. xx. 12.

4. Remember then that you are to be judged ; it is a serious thing to be subjected to earthly judicial processes, how much more serious is it to think of the last assize.

II. *Judgment shall be conducted in Righteousness.*

1. This cannot always be said of the judicial proceedings of men. Solomon says (Eccl. iii. 16) “ And, moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there ; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.” What unrighteousness did Jesus Christ experience at Pilate’s tribunal ! What unrighteousness did the Apostles experience from the Sanhedrim !

2. It is different with the judgment here referred to. It will be impartial (Isaiah xi. 3), “ He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hear-

ing of his ears. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor."

3. The inflexible justice of the Divine procedure is secured by two things—his omniscience securing a knowledge of all the facts—and his moral character ensuring a just estimate of them.

4. This consideration fitted to impress people differently according to their character. It is satisfying to some, it is matter of joy and comfort to those who have obtained the answer of a good conscience toward God. It is the reverse to those who are still impenitent and under guilt, for they have in this connection everything to fear and nothing to hope for.

III. *God will Judge the World by Jesus Christ.*

1. God the Father will not judge the world personally (John v. 22), "The Father judgeth no man."

2. He hath committed all judgment to the Son (John v. 22 ; Rom. ii. 16), "The day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ." It is essentially the Father's judgment. God will judge the world, but it is *by the Son* (Acts x. 42), "He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead."

3. It is expressly said that *the Son was specially ordained* to the office of judge—why this ordination ?

(1.) Being man, he will be seen by those who are to be judged.

(2.) It is the reward of his humiliation, his obedience, sufferings, and death.

(3.) It is an expression of the Father's delight in the Son—he "honoureth the Son."

(4.) The arrangement is made on the ground of

congruity. Christ's relations to the world were very intimate. He created it—he tabernacled in it—he was crucified there—the government of it had been upon his shoulders.

(5.) The appointment of the Son to this work is also for the comfort of the elect. Happy they, who being one with Christ are able to recognise their friend and surety in the person of their judge.

IV. *The Time of the Judgment.*

1. It is *fixed*. It is not uncertain. The day is "appointed"—fixed—unalterably fixed. *God* has appointed it, and Divine appointments cannot become effete.

2. Some things relative to the day. What a day! Consider its solemnity—its eventfulness—the mystery attending it ("that day knoweth no man"). Many remarkable days have occurred in your history, but this will be the most remarkable, and the most important of them all. Do not forget then that there is no dubiety about its coming.

V. *The Assurance which has been given that God will Judge the World.*—"He hath raised Jesus Christ from the dead." The resurrection of Christ is ascribed to the Father (Acts ii. 24-32). This, generally, is the assurance that he hath appointed Christ to be judge. But how is this?

1. The resurrection of Christ proves the truth of his teaching, and the truth also of the Scriptures at large.

2. It assures that all the arrangements of the covenant of redemption shall be fulfilled, and Christ's judging the world is one of these.

3. Christ's resurrection was the first step in his pre-

dicted and promised exaltation ; and the first fruits are an earnest of the entire harvest. As surely as Christ was raised from the dead so surely will he proceed to the further work of judging the world.

This is God's assurance. It is neither defective nor vague ; does it satisfy you ? God does not force the conviction on you of the judgment to come, but he gives, or affords, an assurance that it is approaching.

Conclusion.

1. How is it likely to fare with you in the judgment ? What is the issue likely to be in your case ? Judgment will, unquestionably, be pronounced upon you—and upon you, each of you, individually. O ! shall it be—“Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter into the joy of thy Lord ?” or “Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth ?”

2. Does the consideration of the judgment exert any conscious influence upon you ? Has it a restraining influence—does it restrain you from evil—from entertaining evil in the mind—from evil speech—from evil conduct ? Has the consideration of the coming judgment a stimulating effect upon you ?—urging you to *do* what the Lord requires at your hands ?

3. Do you pray in reference to the judgment ?—pray that you may find *mercy* of the Lord on that day ? So Paul prayed for Onesiphorus (2 Tim. i. 18). It is certain that you will find either mercy or vengeance. You deserve vengeance. Let it be your prayer while you are on earth—your daily prayer, that you may find mercy on that eventful day ; accepting mercy, delivering mercy,

commending mercy, rewarding mercy. Prayer for mercy on the day itself (if never offered before) will be altogether unavailing.

4. See the necessity of an interest in the righteousness of Christ. Put on Christ; and then you will secure the friendship of the Judge. Is unrighteous judgment now meted out unto you by man? Be patient. You will have righteous judgment done you by-and-by. Those who execute unrighteous judgment upon you will themselves ere long be judged by the righteous Judge. Nor will it be without comfort to you to think that you will be individually dealt with by the Judge. Each man's case will be fully investigated. Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire. The fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is.

Imagine the great white throne set—the Judge in his seat—the books opened—you called, summoned—standing before the throne, and in the presence of the judge—close, personal dealing with you begun—searching examination instituted and carried on; ah! me—what will become of you who have no part in Christ—no part in his law-magnifying righteousness.

Repent! God commandeth all men to repent (Acts xvii. 30). He commands *you* to repent—to repent of your thoughtlessness, your slighting of Christ. The Lord give you to repent, and to turn to him, that you may find mercy in that great and terrible day when God will determine the final destinies of men.

These are fair specimens of the kind of prayer meeting addresses with which a whole volume is filled. We

make no comment upon them, except so far as to say this—that their author was most manifestly not one of those who thought lightly of the week evening opportunities afforded to him for preaching the Word. There is a fulness, an elaboration, about these addresses which is very remarkable, and which show that even on what seemed unimportant occasions he did not serve the Lord with that which cost him nothing.





CHAPTER NINTH.

THE PULPIT.

A Sabbath-Day's Work—Mr. Leitch as a Preacher—Preparatory Prayer—Selection of Texts—Composition of Sermons—Two Discourses—Communion Address.

THE description given of the manner in which Mr. Leitch usually spent his Sabbaths, is strongly confirmatory of all that has been already said in illustration of the earnestness of his pastorate. He rose at seven, and went direct to his study, in which, with a short interval for worship and breakfast, he remained until the hour approached for going up to the house of God. His manner throughout was serious and absorbed, but there was no hurry or confusion in his arrangements for leaving home, and he was punctual to a minute in entering the pulpit. "His love for the Sabbath, we are told, was intense." His anxiety for the welfare of his congregation was very great, and towards the close of his ministry it was overwhelming. He looked forward to meeting with his people on the holy day with love and fear. His heart yearned for the flock. Every member of it seemed to be upon his mind; and never a Sabbath passed without his feeling, with a fresh keenness, the responsibility of meeting them in the Sanctuary. At the close of the afternoon service he invariably remained to open the congregational sabbath school

which met in the church, and, before leaving, went round all the classes, speaking words of cheer or counsel to superintendent and teachers, and showing a personal interest also in all the scholars. He then looked in upon the Mission school, which met at the same hour in the High School, exhibiting the same kindly interest in its affairs, and on his way home he visited, if there was a call for it, any special case of sickness or sorrow which had been brought under his notice. Even after he had reached his own house, and seemed to be settled down for the evening, there was always a chance of his being summoned to pay a pastoral visit to a family in distress. He was, *par excellence*, the visiting minister in the town, and he was sometimes called out of his bed at midnight to direct or comfort. But if nothing of this sort occurred, he spent the last hours of the Sabbath partly in conversation with his own family, in the course of which he would often break out into such an exclamation as — “Oh that I could do these people good!” and partly in his study, where it was his custom to commence at once his preparations for the succeeding Sabbath.

Mr. Leitch was not in the popular, or in the merely intellectual sense, a great or remarkable preacher. We cannot claim for him that he was endowed with the gift of original genius, or that he was possessed of profound and extensive learning, or that he had, in any great degree, those graces of manner which sometimes make up for the lack of almost everything else. But this is what we can say of him, with the utmost confidence, that he possessed the one altogether indispensable qualification of a gospel minister, a thorough personal acquaintance with evangelical truth; that he usually

preached with an unction and a fullness of Christian experience, for which eloquence alone would have been a miserable substitute ; and that his discourses were often so well put, and delivered with so much force and fervour, as deeply to interest many even who had no particular relish for his doctrine. Besides, and this after all is the principal thing, his labours in the pulpit were notably blessed to the conversion of souls. In the exercise of this part of the ministry he had this distinct testimony,—that he pleased God.

People are so little in the habit now-a-days of reading sermons of any sort, that we do not think it would serve any good purpose to burden this memorial with many “remains.” But following the plan we have had in our eye throughout, we propose to give here three specimens of his work in this connection—two sermons, and a closing communion address. These will show, better than any number of explanatory words, what was the general style of his pulpit ministrations. Before quoting these, however, we wish to indicate one or two things we have noticed in looking through his papers in reference to this department of his labours.

Once more, we must say that we have been greatly affected to find how much of his time apparently was given to prayer. Since speaking of this part expressly, in a former chapter, we have discovered several additional books, wholly filled with spiritual reflections, aspirations, and intercessions ; and not a few of these groanings have reference to the public preaching of the word. “Lord !” he pleads, “thou hast told us that hope deferred maketh the heart sick,—let not our hope as to the outpouring of the Spirit be further deferred.” “May we *so* speak to the people—*so* present the truth

of the gospel to them—*so* reason with them—*so* appeal to their minds and consciences, that they will not be able to resist.” “More conversions, Lord! Oh! how few they have been!” “O Lord! why hast thou connected me with this people, many of whom constantly resist the truth, yield not to thine authority, receive not the message of peace? Wilt thou not hear us on their behalf?” “If we have been deficient in the right warning of the people—forgive. If there is anything wrong with my teaching or my example—forgive. Let not the people suffer!” Breathing a spirit like this, Mr. Leitch habitually preached, and his words could not but have often come home to his hearers in power.

We notice too, in Mr. Leitch, what we have frequently observed as a characteristic of a certain class of men, those namely, who read the Bible much and have their hearts devoutly open to receive ever fresh impressions from it,—a happy faculty for finding and setting forth the gems with which the whole of Scripture glistens. Many of his sermons are upon texts, the simple utterance of which is arresting—as for example “While I was musing, the fire burned.” “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.” “Afterwards shall they come out with great substance.” “Salvation is of the Jews.” “The God of Jacob is our refuge.” “The beauties of holiness.” “For God is able to graff them in again.” “The members should have the same care one for another.” “Behold I am vile.” “For all this his anger is not turned away.” “The Lord hath been mindful of us.” “He thanked God, and took courage.” “A wise son maketh a glad father.” “I beheld the transgressors and was grieved.” “The day-spring from on high hath visited us.” “Make known His deeds

among the people." "The things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." "By Him actions are weighed." "Worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff." "Our conversation is in heaven." "Mercy shall be built up for ever." "Thou fool!" "Mnason, an aged disciple." "Thou, O Man of God." "Saviour of the world." "The king hath brought me into his chambers." "I will allure her into the wilderness." "That great sight." "The precious sons of Zion." "When once the master of the house hath risen up and hath shut to the door." "Certain questions . . . of one Jesus." "Ye fools, when will ye be wise?" "Bless the lads" (addressed to young men). "They saw no man save Jesus only." "This man receiveth sinners." "Compel them to come in." The peculiarity in these texts is this, that while they are all so short as to be easily remembered, there is not one of them which does not contain an important principle, and which does not present that principle in a striking and suggestive way. It may be taken for granted that the man who, while not allowing himself to be led away by mere conceits, is often arrested by such single sayings of Scripture—finding "hid treasure" in parts of the field which are to others almost wholly unproductive—is not only a careful student of Holy Writ, but is one whose senses have been exercised to discern spiritual realities. He may not have what the world calls genius; but he has what is better, powers of spiritual perception, in virtue of which he is enabled to see what to the natural man, however highly advanced, is hidden by a veil.

It need not be said, however, that Mr. Leitch was not content with bringing before his people any such fragments of the Word as we have indicated. These

furnished topics for many of his sermons ; but besides sermons, his stated pulpit ministrations embraced also systematic expositions of the several books of Scripture. We do not know how much of the Bible was overtaken by him during his ministry of forty years, but we can see from the numerous volumes of his MSS. lectures, which, with his accustomed carefulness, he got bound and lettered, that he opened up to his people the greater part at least of the New Testament. These expositions are not fully written out, but the preparation made by him for their delivery seems to have been very careful and elaborate. He began his lecture for the following Sabbath on the evening of the Sabbath which preceded it, and often on every day of the succeeding week he added something more or less to his accumulating mass of material. The advantage of this plan was, that his subject had time to steep in his mind—he had a fair opportunity for seeing all round it—and when the day arrived for its delivery, this was secured, not only that the passage was thoroughly well considered, but that he had usually ideas enough to make his discourse substantial in structure. As this particular method may be new to some, we may give an illustration of it.

Towards the end of 1860 Mr. Leitch began to lecture through the First Epistle of John, and we find that, on the evening of Sabbath 23d December, he contemplated expounding, on the succeeding Sabbath, the passage 1 John i. 8. ad finem. On the first page therefore of his paper he put down, to begin with, the date, "So. Church, 30th December 1860." This was not the day on which he was then writing, but the day on which he expected to deliver the discourse, which he was at the moment commencing. The real date was

the 23d, and under it (which is also given at the head of the following page) there appear the introductory remarks with which he proposed to himself to open the lecture. On Monday the 24th nothing was added to the discourse. He was resting or busy, and the manuscript remained the same as on Sabbath night. But upon Tuesday the 25th, the pen was resumed and no fewer than five new pages appended to the preface. This however, was nothing to what was accomplished on the 26th (Wednesday.) Then the strength of the day must have been given to the lecture, for as many as *nineteen* pages were added. Yet still the work was not complete. He took up his pen once more on the 27th (Thursday), and in six more pages he at last finished what he preached on the 30th. Of course the handwriting is large, and the mass is not actually so extensive as one might be apt to suppose from hearing of so many pages. But, with every allowance for that, there is unmistakable evidence of elaborate preparation; and it is worth while to note that all was done so early in the week as Thursday, leaving thus two free days for what yet remained to be achieved,—the composition of the weekly sermon. We are responsible only for the right use of what we actually possess, and hence no man will be condemned for not being an eloquent, learned, or intellectual preacher, if God has not bestowed upon him the gifts, or afforded him the opportunities to become any of the three. One cannot help, however, being persuaded that the pulpit might be everywhere a greater power for good, if all those who are called to occupy it would, without reference to their natural endowments, make as diligent and business-like a use of their time in preparation, as was made by Mr. Leitch.

I. A KNOCKING SAVIOUR.

Rev. iii. 20. first clause.—“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.”

It is Christ Jesus, the Lord, who thus speaks.

The door, at which he represents himself as standing, is the door of entrance into the human soul.

And the first remark, which it occurs to us to make, in commenting on the text is, that Jesus has *originally—natively*—no place in our soul; for, if he had, it would not be necessary for him to seek admission. The text represents him as being *without*—not *within*.

Whoever are the occupants of the soul at first, *Christ* is not one of them. Whoever may be inside, *he* is not—the text represents him as *outside the door*. And who are they that are in possession of the soul? *Satan* has a place there. Nay, the soul is spoken of (Luke xi. 21) as Satan’s palace, which he not only occupies, but in which he has much goods—where he has both *armour* and *spoils*. He himself is spoken of as a *strong man*, armed, keeping this noble, but impaired and usurped palace. Satan, then, is an occupant of the human soul—and his name is legion—for unclean spirits go in bands—they are associated in companies—and, as thus associated, they occupy men’s souls.

There dwell also in the human soul numberless foul lusts, and corrupt desires and dispositions; the soul is crowded with these—such as envy, jealousy, malice, deceitfulness, covetousness, pride, ambition, revenge, ungodliness.

These are the *native* occupants of the soul—the aborigines of that land. The soul may be described in the language in which fallen mystical Babylon is, Rev.

xviii. 2—"the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

Has this fearful state of soul ever been seriously considered by you?—has it ever truly impressed you? Remember that it is the natural state of your soul. Christ *without*—*outside*,—and *within* these unclean spirits, and loathsome feelings and dispositions. It is a most lamentable and melancholy condition of soul. But such is the true state. Oh! know that it is so. Oh! consider that this is the case. *Your* case, O hearer!—the soul full of all unrighteousness—like *the sepulchre*, full of rottenness and dead men's bones—Christ seeking entrance to purify the soul, but not suffered by you to obtain it.

II. Consider Christ's knocking. He *knocks at the door*—at *your* door—and why? that he may be permitted to enter.

I. The door is shut—he finds it so—therefore he knocks—knocks, that it may be opened. And here appears a fearful feature of your ungodliness. Other parties do not find the door shut: when Satan comes, he does not need to knock, he finds the door open—yea, *wide* open. When lust cometh, it finds the door open—it does not need to knock; or, should the door be closed, lust's knock is at once recognised, and the door is forthwith opened. When the world comes, it finds easy and immediate admission. When vain and sinful thoughts come—they have no difficulty in obtaining entrance—the door is open for them—they don't need to wait ordinarily at the door previous to their admission.

But when *Christ* comes to the door, he finds it shut—he finds it firmly closed against him—not only shut, but barred and bolted. There is no access for him—he is not

welcome—he is regarded and treated as an intruder. How shameful—how criminal your conduct ! It is virtually the same awful conduct which the Jews of old exemplified when they preferred the infamous Barabbas to the ever-blessed Jesus.

2. Jesus knocks to *obtain admission*. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. In what manner does he knock ?

He knocks in the *calls* and *invitations* of the gospel, which he addresses to you. He knocks, for example, when he says (Isaiah lv. 1), “ Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money : come ye, buy and eat : yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.” (Ezek. xxxiii. 11), “ Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel ? ” Jesus knocks when he says (John vii. 37), “ If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” Jesus knocks at your door in the *representations*, *arguments*, *expostulations*, and *warnings*, which he addresses to you with reference to your spiritual interests ; he knocks, for example, when he speaks to you, saying, “ Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” (Isaiah lv. 2). “ What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? ” (Matt. xvi. 26).

Jesus knocks at your door in the *threatenings* which he addresses to you on account of disobedience persevered in and unrepented of : (Rom. ii. 5), “ After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” (v. 8), “ But unto them that

are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." All these invitations, and exhortations, and threatenings, are knockings of Jesus at our door. They are *real* and *distinct* knocks—knocks, given by the infinitely gracious Saviour.

Jesus also knocks at your door by the *suggestions* and *strivings* of his Spirit—his Spirit often suggests to you what you ought to do—suggests to you that the things which belong to your salvation demand your immediate and most careful attention.

The Spirit of Christ strives with you by inward and frequent promptings to the doing of what is obligatory upon you.

The Spirit of Christ strives with you by producing in you *convictions*, more or less strong, more or less abiding, of what is right, what is needful to be done. These promptings and convictions are Christ's knocks at your door—for he gives you the Spirit to produce them.

Christ thus knocks by his *Word* and *Spirit*.

He knocks also by the *religious ordinances* which he has instituted: every time that any of these ordinances are administered to you, Christ knocks at your door—every sermon preached to you is Christ's knock—every prayer you hear is Christ's knock—every time you witness the dispensation of the simple but most instructive sacrament of baptism, Christ knocks at your door—every communion season which comes round to you is Christ's knock at your door. Every Sabbath with which you are favoured is, on account of the design of its institution, Christ's knock.

Christ knocks at your door in his *providence* too, as well as in those ways to which we have been adverting.

When he visits you with personal affliction—affliction

of a bodily or mental kind—*that* affliction is Christ's knock at the door.

In the death of a member of your household, or of a friend or neighbour, Christ knocks ; and some of these knocks are peculiarly loud, solemn, and impressive. Hezekiah's sickness, so alarming and threatening, was a loud knock at his door. Rachel's death, near Bethlehem, was a loud knock at Jacob's door (Gen. xxxv). Lazarus' death was a loud knock at the door of his surviving sisters Martha and Mary.

Jesus knocks by blessings bestowed on us in providence, as well as by afflictions with which he visits us. Every new mercy which he sends, whether of a temporal or spiritual character, is an additional knock which he gives at the door of our souls.

3. Christ's knocking at our door is a *very serious matter* to us ; it places us in circumstances of great responsibility.

The consequences of disregarding Christ's knocking must be fearful indeed. Oh! don't think it is a light thing that Christ knocks at your door. Don't regard these knocks as *unimportant*. I warn you that they are not. *Don't trifle* with them ; every knock will terribly aggravate your condemnation in the world of retribution. In this point of view there is something peculiarly solemn in every knock which Jesus gives.

III. It is to be observed, in the next place, that Christ STANDS at the door and knocks.

He *stands* at the door—he does not come to the door and give *one knock or two*, and on the door not being opened turn and go away, and knock no more. He does not take the first refusal. He might do so. Having been extruded from the soul at the fall, he might remain away altogether. Why should he return at all.

and seek a habitation in the soul from which he has been banished? He is not dependent in any way on the creature man, or on any creature. It is wonderful to see him at all at the door of the soul, from which he has been expelled. But coming back and giving one knock, and the door not being opened, he might forthwith go away, declaring that he would never return.

That, however, is not the method of his procedure. He does not go away, though at first, when he knocks, the door is kept shut against him.

He *stands* at the closed door, and continues his knocking. He perseveres in the exercise of his mercy and compassion, while the poor infatuated sinner is persevering in awful and foolhardy opposition to the Lord Jesus. And he may stand *long*. How long, O hearer! has Jesus stood at your door? Still *outside*—the door not being yet opened for his admission. How true is it that the Lord has no pleasure in the death of the sinner! Jesus *stands—continues*—day after day, and night after night, at the sinner's door.

It may be that the thoughtless, careless sinner, may yet be prevailed upon to open the door. Therefore, Jesus does not take the sinner's first repulse; he *bears* with him. He is unwilling to give up the sinner to the damnation of hell—unwilling to inflict upon him merited punishment. And therefore he *stands*—and knocks. Truly may the Lord say, for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah lv. 8). Would *you* stand long at a neighbour's door which was not opened to your knocking? Would you not consider the refusal of the inmates to open the door insulting? and, incensed by the contemptuous treat-

ment given you, you would turn away. But thus does not act the compassionate and merciful Saviour. He *stands* at the door, and knocks.

IV. Let it be further observed that Jesus does *not force* an entrance into the soul. Jesus is not like the thief and robber he himself describes (John x.), who enters not by *the door* into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way.

If Jesus enters into the soul it must be by *the door*. The door must be *opened*. If he enter, it must be through the door of the sinner's own consent—the door of the sinner's *own free will*. O hearer, know this, that Jesus will not come into your soul in opposition to your wishes and desires—in opposition to your will. You must *consent* to his admission.

The *indwelling* in your soul, which he seeks, is not an indwelling to which you are opposed—against which your will rebels. He must come in by the door of *your own will*. And, unless you open this door for him, he will never come in. You must consent to his entrance; otherwise, he will not come in. This door is your consent.

V. Consider *who* it is that knocks for admission at your door.

The text says, “Behold, *I* stand at the door, and knock.” *Who* is it?

It is a *glorious personage* truly. It is the Son of God. It is God in the person of the Son. Who is it? It is he whom Isaiah describes (ch. ix. 6) as the Child born, the Son given, on whose shoulder is the government, whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. It is he, whom the same prophet further describes (ch. xxxii.) as the “King who reigns in righteousness—the man who is the hiding-place from the wind, and a covert

from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place ; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." *Who* is it that speaks, saying, Behold I stand at the door, and knock ? It is the Word, who was in the beginning—the Word that was with God—the Word which is God ; by whom all things were made, and without whom was not anything made that was made ; in whom is life ; that life which is the light of men (John i. 4).

It is *this glorious personage* who desires entrance into your souls. And from the admission of Jesus nothing but good can flow. It is to bless, that he asks admission into your soul—it is to do you good. It is to communicate to you the best, the richest blessings.

Do you ask why he seeks admission ? It is not that *he needs you*, but because *you need him*. He asks admission into your heart because *it* is rightfully his. He is your creator and proprietor. He asks admission into your heart, to purify it—to fill it with holy light and holy life. He asks admission into your soul, to fill it with hope, comfort, and joy. He asks admission into your soul, to make it the honoured temple of his perpetual residence. As it is written (1 Cor. iii. 16), " Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ? "

VI. There is a peculiar force in the word *Behold*, as used in the text, to which we would now call your attention.

1. We are to *behold* Christ standing at the sinner's door knocking, in order *that we may be impressed with the condescension of Jesus*. Oh, what an attitude of condescension this !—Jesus standing, and standing in the humble position of a supplicant, at the sinner's door. *Earthly* Majesty, standing at the cottager's door, desiring admission, is nothing. That is but one fellow-creature coming into contact with another.

But the text shows us *Divine* Majesty, not only at the creature's door, but at the sinner's door. Here is condescension without a parallel. Admire that condescension. Be astonished at it. Let it deeply impress your minds.

2. Behold Jesus standing at the door and knocking, *that you may see the greatness of Divine love.*

What induces Jesus to come to the sinner's door, and stand there and knock? It is LOVE. God is love. See, here, its wondrous manifestation.

God seeking admission into the sinner's soul, to fill it with light, purity, and joy. Herein, indeed, is love. And if we are not impressed by it, it shows how dreadfully hardened our hearts are.

3. Behold Jesus standing at the door knocking, *that you may see an amazing instance of human wickedness and folly. Jesus refused admittance; the door shut against him.* His knocks, however loud and solemn, utterly disregarded.

And who is it that is guilty of this fearful wickedness — of this consummate folly? It is YOU, O hearer! This egregious wickedness is manifested by *you*. Oh! be guilty of it no more. Cease to act such an unwise and culpable part. How strange your conduct—admitting your enemies, and excluding him who comes to bless you. Oh! do you not see what a shameful and blameworthy part you are acting?

4. Behold Jesus standing at the door knocking, *that you may see an astonishing instance of patience and forbearance.* Such an instance there is in the conduct of the Lord Jesus towards the sinner—continuing to maintain this position—*standing* at the sinner's door—seeing the vilest and the most abominable admitted freely, and at once, whilst the door is shut against him.

But the exercise of his patience towards you will

come to an end. He will not stand there always. The time will come when he will turn away—when he will depart. Though he wait long, he will not wait always. The last knock shall be given ; don't abuse the patience of Jesus. Patience abused becomes fury in the end.

5. Behold Jesus standing at the door knocking, *that you may be induced to open to him.* Behold it is Jesus that stands and knocks. It is Jesus—the Saviour. It is he who is full of grace and truth—he who has the keys of hell and of death—who has all power in heaven and in earth. Will you not open to him ? Behold who it is. It is the best of friends—the most bountiful and untiring of benefactors. Let the consideration that it is Jesus persuade you to open unto him.

6. Behold Jesus standing at the door knocking, and *learn that measures and means for reconciliation originate with the Lord.* The sinner does not first knock at Jesus' door, but Jesus knocks first at the sinner's door : (Luke xix. 10), "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Have any of you given admission to Jesus into your hearts ? Oh ! I beseech you, retain him. Don't provoke him to leave you—be jealous over yourselves lest you do anything whereby you may provoke him to depart from you. See what care the Spouse in the Song of Solomon evinced regarding this very point ; enjoying the presence and fellowship of Jesus, how great was her anxiety that her high and spiritual enjoyment might not be *interrupted* ! and, accordingly, you find her saying (ch. iii. 5), "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awakè my love, till he please." Constrain him, as did the disciples with whom he walked to Emmaus, to abide with you.

But I would feel deeply concerned regarding you who are still keeping Jesus *outside* the door of your hearts and souls. Oh! think of the deep dishonour you are offering to the Lord Jesus. What does he seek?—admission into your souls. He knocks to obtain that admission—you deny him that which he condescendingly and earnestly asks. Does not that denial dishonour him?

Think of the injury you are doing yourselves by your conduct? By refusing admission to Christ you are refusing *salvation*—you are refusing all the blessings, unspeakably precious, which Christ brings along with him into souls into which he gets entrance. Oh! how unreasonable to act the part which you are now doing. This day then, open the door to the all-loving, all-gracious Redeemer. Be ashamed and confounded, that you have treated him so insultingly as you have done.

Let his importunity prevail with you: *importunity* prevailed in the case of the man who would not, at first, on being applied to, rise and let in his friend at midnight (Luke xi. 8). Oh! why is it that the importunity of Jesus does not prevail with you? Not the importunity of man, but of Jesus.

But hark! *there* is another knock—the knock of the gospel preached at this time. Is *that* knock to prevail? Who knows but it may be the last? Oh! do you not hear the gracious, entreating voice of Jesus?—"Open unto me: my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night" (Song v. 2). What a cutting, terrible reflection hereafter, that you did not open to Jesus. Are you to be given up to that imperishably bitter and poignant reflection? God forbid! (Acts xvi. 14).

II. FOUR SORTS OF MEN.

1 Tim. v. 24, 25.—“Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.”

THERE are four sorts of people described in this passage, though they range themselves under two general classes. These classes are, the unregenerated on the one hand, and on the other those who have experienced the new birth. Each of these classes is subdivided into two different kinds of individuals: of the unconverted, two kinds of persons are described, and of the converted, two kinds also.

In directing our attention to these several sorts of persons, we shall take them up in the order in which they are mentioned in the passage.

I. Let us consider the two sorts of persons into which the unconverted are divided. The two are, 1st, those whose sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and 2d, those whose sins follow after.

1. Those whose sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment.

The persons referred to under this head are those whose sins are quite patent, and of that description which unquestionably indicate that they are in an ungodly condition. It is not merely that they do sinful things which are open to observation—for that is the case with the best of men; but such sins are done by them, and done in such circumstances, as to leave no room for doubt that they are unregenerated. God’s saints, while on earth, are not free from sins—sins, many of which cannot be concealed; but persons be-

longing to the class of which we now speak, show most distinctly that they are so—their sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment. There cannot be the least uncertainty what the judgment shall be that shall be pronounced upon them. We shall now mention some things, in regard to persons of this class, which make their sins declarative of their being in an unconverted state; or what sins prove people to be in that condition.

Their sins are *wilful*. It is with their full consent that they do evil. There are sins which are committed by reason of sudden and powerful temptation—sins, into which one may fall in consequence of surprise which has taken hold of one at the time,—sins, which are not the result of purpose and deliberation; but wilful sins are those which are committed with full consent—which are the fruit of purpose and determination. In regard to sin of this description, it is said (Heb. x. 26), “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

Again, *presumptuous sins* are sins which are open beforehand, going before to judgment. Sins characterised by arrogance and boldness; sins which are of a high-handed and daring description. What a presumptuous sinner was Pharaoh, king of Egypt, as shown by his own insolent and profane language (Exod. v. 2), “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.” Let us make it our prayer, as the Psalmist does (Ps. xix. 13), “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.”

Again, sins *connected with persecution* are sins which are open beforehand, going before to judgment—the sin of oppressing, or otherwise injuring the people of God on account of their religion, on account of their holding and professing the truth as it is in Christ Jesus—sin like that of Herod the king, when he stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church, and killed James the brother of John, with the sword; and because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.

Again, sins betokening *hardness* of heart and *impenitence*, are sins which are open beforehand, going before to judgment—sins which betoken searedness of conscience and insensibility of soul to religious impressions, as it is said (Rom. ii. 5), “After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

Further, *perseverance* in wickedness shows one’s state to be unconverted. The judgment is manifest beforehand which shall be pronounced on those who persevere in striving with their Maker—who persevere in their unbelief and disobedience—persons who continue in their evil courses, notwithstanding all the admonitions and remonstrances which are addressed to them.

Those whose sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, are those who have *no fear of God* before their eyes, who unblushingly avow their sinful principles and practices, who avow and proclaim the erroneous sentiments which they hold, and the evil actions which they perform; who glory in their shame.

All persons such as we have been describing belong to the first of the classes specified in our text; their sins

are open, they are patent to observation ; there is no covering thrown over many of them. At least the swearer throws no covering over his profane language ; the intemperate man throws no covering over his insobriety ; the Sabbath-breaker throws no covering over his desecration of the Lord's day.

The sins of persons of this class are *open beforehand* ; no inquiry needs to be instituted regarding them, as to what manner of persons they are. Their evil actions supersede all inquiry, and render it unnecessary ; their sins go before to judgment ; their sins foretell what their judgment shall be. We don't need to wait to know the judgment that shall be *pronounced* upon them ; their sins go before to judgment. Their judgment is anticipated and foreshown by their course of life—by the habits which they follow—and the actions which are done by them.

The works of the flesh, it is said (Gal. v. 19), are *manifest* : the works which declare a person to be in a carnal state,—“uncleanness, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and suchlike ; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

2. The second sort of persons, into which the unconverted are here divided, are those whose sins are said to follow after. In regard to persons of the former class, their sins are so open and undisguised, as manifestly to go before to judgment. It is quite evident beforehand what the judgment shall be that shall be pronounced upon them ; but in regard to persons of this second class, their sins don't so obviously go before to judgment,

but they follow after—that is, so far as the view of men is concerned. It is quite a different thing in regard to the view of God. In his view the sins of men go before to judgment. As soon as a sin is committed, it, in the view of God, whether men are cognisant of it or no, speeds on its unfailing course to the judgment.

But unconverted men may conceal their more flagrant sins from the view of their fellow-men; they may succeed in hiding their more odious offences from public observation; and thus, so far as the notice of fellow-men is concerned, the sins of such persons follow after to the judgment. Men cannot say, in regard of persons of this class, what the judgment shall be which shall be pronounced upon them, for their sins are concealed. But this is certain, that their sins follow after them, and that ultimately they shall be divulged.

Sins hid from the public eyes are nevertheless following most surely the perpetrators of them. The sins which are not open beforehand, going before to judgment, are yet following after the doers of them. Men may not indeed see this following-after—this pursuit,—still it is rigidly going on. Judas Iscariot contrived to hide his covetousness, his carnality, his want of love to Jesus, and his unbelief, even from his fellow-disciples with whom he was daily associating. These, his sins, were not for many a day open beforehand, going before to judgment; nevertheless, notwithstanding their being concealed, they followed after to judgment him who was guilty of them.

There are unconverted men whose unregeneracy is concealed. The proof of it is not so apparent as in the case of those composing the former class. There is abundant proof of it in reality, but it is very much hid

from public view : a covering is thrown over it, and not unfrequently that covering is professed religion.

Oh ! how much concealed sin is there in the world—concealed selfishness—concealed fraud—concealed falsehood—concealed malice—concealed impurity—concealed corruption of every sort. But sin, however successfully it may be concealed, is following, and following closely, the doers of it. It is all open to the observation of the omniscient eye of Jehovah ; it is all recorded in his book of remembrance, and will be fully disclosed in the judgment of the great day.

The difference, then, between these two classes of unconverted persons is, that in regard to the former their sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment ; while in regard to the latter, their sins, at least those which decidedly show them to be in an unconverted state, are not, in the meantime, visible to men, but follow after them, to be revealed and declared. Their sins do not now proclaim themselves, but they are following their perpetrators, to be publicly divulged. The concealment of sin is not the putting of it out of sight for ever. It is merely the hiding of it for a time : the covering will be ere long taken off, and the sin fully exposed.

II. Let us now consider the two sorts of persons into which the converted are divided in our text.

The two are—*I.* Those whose good works are manifest beforehand ; and *II.* Those in regard to whom it is otherwise.

I. Those whose good works are manifest beforehand.

And here let me request you to notice (*I.*) That good works are characteristic of converted persons.

Works which are really good spring from love to God and love to men ; love is the grand principle of all good works. So much so, that if love be wanting, there cannot be any good works whatsoever. Love is the foundation of all good action ; it constrains to the keeping of the commandments generally, as Jesus declares, saying (John xiv. 23), " If a man love me, he will keep my words."

In another point of view, good works are the effect of the indwelling Spirit. It is he who sheds abroad love in the heart ; it is he who disposes and enables to the performance of good works. The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.

Good works are characteristic of converted persons. In conversion we receive a new nature, which, being holy, inclines to the doing of good.

Unconverted men may do works which are apparently good ; but the apparent goodness is not real, for that which is born of the flesh cannot be anything else than flesh. However seemingly good the works of any unregenerated man may be at any time, the Scriptures call them "dead works,"—because they are the works of those who are spiritually dead—the works of persons devoid of spiritual life.

(2.) The characteristic feature of this first class of converted persons is, that their good works are manifest beforehand.

Their good works are manifestive of the judgment which shall be pronounced upon them. Persons of this class are shown to be regenerated by (*a.*) the abundance of their good works. Like the saint Dorcas, of whom we read, Acts ix., they are full of good works. It is not an occasional good deed which is done by them, but they

abound in such deeds. They are not weary in well-doing, but do good to all as they get opportunity.

(*b.*) Persons of this class are shown to be regenerated by the zeal which they exhibit in the good works done by them; for they are neither cold nor lukewarm, but hearty and energetic in doing good. They seek to realise the spirit of Christ, as evinced by him when he said, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and, I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. The things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, are the things which they delight in and are anxious to do.

(*c.*) Persons of this class are shown to be regenerated by their continuance in good works; for they persevere in the doing of them, in spite of all the obloquy and opposition which they may experience. They are steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. The good works of such persons tell beforehand what the judgment shall be which shall be pronounced upon them. We don't require to wait till it be pronounced, to know what it shall be. Their works anticipate the judgment, and foretell what it is to be. The good works of some are manifest beforehand.

II. The second class of converted persons mentioned in the text consists of those whose good works are not manifest beforehand.

They do good works too; as converted persons, they must do good works; the new nature, of which they are the happy partakers, must act in the way of doing good; goodness of soul, which all of them possess more or less, must regulate, necessarily, the outward life. But various circumstances may prevent the good works from

being so manifest as in the case of the persons composing the former class. They may not have the ability of the others—nor the means. They may not occupy so conspicuous a situation as the others; theirs may be a situation which does not bring them prominently before the public. The principal cause is, that grace itself is weaker in them than in the others. Still, in their own place, and in their own sphere, they do good works. Their good works for a time may be concealed, but they shall not always be so. Just as the hidden sins of a former class of persons, it is declared, shall be brought to light; so, in regard to concealed good works, it is here declared that they shall be brought to light too. They cannot be hid; the Lord has them all registered, and will publish them on the great day of reckoning.

The conversion of some men cannot be positively ascertained just now. Their good works, owing to particular circumstances, don't unquestionably prove their conversion to their fellow-men. They are converted, but there is a defect in the evidence of that being the fact, so far as fellow-men can take cognisance of the evidence; but the Lord will yet make the evidence visible—he will cause it to appear.

This second class of converted persons are, speaking of them generally, and without reference to exceptional cases, not so worthy as the former; for surely *they* excel whose good works are manifest beforehand, and the light of whose holiness shines clearly and steadily before their fellow-men. Still, no converted man shall, in regard to his being such, be ultimately hid; but surely it is, in every view, better that that fact appear now.

In conclusion, we shall briefly remark—I. That everything done by us comes under the head either of sin or

good work. That which is not good work, is sin. Avoid sin ; let that which you do be good.

2. Our conduct now is proving us either to be Christ's or Satan's. He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.

3. Amazing disclosures will be made on the last day—disclosures of hidden good—disclosures of hidden evil. Oh ! live, then, in view of the judgment, and act for the judgment.

4. Oh ! be converted ; and let your life plainly show that this is the case.

III. CONCLUDING COMMUNION EXHORTATION.

HAVING declared yourselves the friends of Jesus, communicants, you must feel yourselves bound to keep his commandments. You cannot be his real friends unless you do so. And all the commandments are summed up into two, which are these—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind ; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Cherish, then, love to God. This is your great and primary duty, and is inclusive of all others : love him sincerely—love him with all your heart. What can be more odious to God than a profession of love which is not founded upon genuine affection ? Will it not provoke his displeasure, and expose those who are guilty of making such a profession to the direful expressions of his indignation ? Absalom pretended to feel a great affection for his father David, the king, when, after

having returned to Jerusalem, he said, Now let me see the king's face,—and when he bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king ; but it was all pretence, for shortly after, in direct opposition to every sentiment and feeling of affection, he usurped the throne, and eagerly endeavoured to slay his father. So there are many who profess to love God while they feel no affection to him. They profess to love him, but in works they deny him. They draw near to him with their bodies, saying, Lord, Lord, whilst he is not in all their thoughts ; yea, whilst their hearts are far from him. The law requires us not only to give to God the outward profession of love, but to yield him our very hearts. My son, he says to each one of us, give me your heart. The affections must be placed on some object, and the law requires that God should be that object. And he is an accurate and infallible judge of the sincerity of our love to him. For all things, even the secret recesses of our souls, are fully exposed to his view. Darkness hideth not from him, but the darkness and the light are both alike unto him. Cherish holy and intelligent love to God. It is not a blind or superstitious affection which the law requires, but an affection arising from a knowledge of the love-inspiring excellences of the nature and character of Jehovah. Love is holy and intelligent when it arises from the knowledge and esteem of moral qualities in the object of it. The love of God, which the law requires, is founded on the perception of the glory of the Divine nature, and the excellence of the character of God—on the knowledge of his unspotted righteousness, his inflexible justice, his infinite wisdom, his unbounded goodness and rich grace. It arises from the knowledge of the relations in which he stands to us. He is our

God, as he created, and as he preserves us, and supplies all our wants, and in Christ engages to be our everlasting friend and benefactor. Such undeserved kindness, such matchless grace, should kindle an unextinguishable flame of love in our souls. Your love to God must be supreme. He must be loved above every other object; above those of your fellow-men who are most nearly related to us; above father and mother, brother and sister, wife and children, yea, and your own life also. The law enjoins us to love God supremely—to give him the chief place in our affections. The language of such love is, Whom have I in heaven but God? and there is none on all the earth whom I desire besides him: he is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Your love to God must be *practical*. It must not be confined to feeling or sentiment, but must be the governing principle of the life and conduct. This is love of the right kind, that we walk after his commandments. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected. This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. We read also of the labour of love; from all which expressions of the inspired writings it is evident that the true love of God is of a practical nature, constitutes an active principle, and disposes all who feel it to keep his commandments. Your love of God must likewise be constant. It is not sufficient that the love of God be maintained for a day, or a month, or a year, or any specified time; or that it continue only whilst you are in the sanctuary, or seated at the communion table. The law commands that it shall be perpetual. The reason of this is obvious. The attributes and perfections of the Divine nature—the ground of love—being unchangeable, it must always be

incumbent on those who are capable of knowing and appreciating them, to love him on account of them. As God is always amiable and lovely, so it must be always a duty to love him.

This love of God *will express itself in praising him.* Perceiving somewhat of the excellence of the character and nature of God, and admiring and loving it, we will naturally be led to praise him on account of it. "I will praise thee" (says the Psalmist), "with my whole heart : before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth : for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. O give thanks unto the Lord ; for he is good : for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods : for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords : for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who alone doeth great wonders : for his mercy endureth for ever. I will extol thee, my God, O King : and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee ; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised ; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts." It is natural to praise those whom we love : love is frequent and abundant in the commendation of its objects, whether God or any other being.

True love of God will dispose those who feel it *to meditate upon him.* It is natural to think frequently of those to whom we are sincerely and warmly attached. And if we love God, he will be frequently in our thoughts. We will think of him when we walk by the way, when we are in the field, when we sit in the

house, when we lie down and rise up. He who loves God will delight in meditating upon him as he is revealed by the works which he hath made, and on those views of his character particularly which are exhibited in the Scriptures,—as God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses—as the God of all grace and the Father of consolation—as the fountain of living waters, and the source of all enjoyment.

Your love of God, if it be sincere, will incline you *to seek much intercourse with him*. The natural operation of love is to seek frequent intercourse with its objects, and those who feel the love of God will be constrained thereby to cultivate much communion with him, particularly through the medium of the public and private ordinances of worship. It may be seen from the case of the Spouse who personates believers in the Song of Solomon, how ardently they who feel the love of God desire communion with him. “By night” (says she), “on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me, to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him,” etc.

The love of God is *the fulfilling of the law*; it makes obedience to all the commandments easy and delightful. It sweetly constrains those who feel it to live unto him in whom they live, and by whom they are preserved. You may then leave this communion table for the present, rejoicing in the thought that Jehovah, whom you love, is your God—that he will be your God for evermore, and your guide unto death.



CHAPTER TENTH.

HIS FRIENDS.

Remark by Mr. Harper—Mr. Muirhead's Sketch—Letter from Mr. Yellowlees—Mr. Leitch's Catholicity—His interest in Students—Mr. E. Hill and Mr. Carmichael—Funeral Sermon by Mr. Wilson—Testimonies from Mr. Stevenson, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Nixon.

“ I NEVER knew a man,” writes the Rev. John Harper of Bothwell, who for a long time was one of Mr. Leitch's near neighbours, “ I never knew a man who had fewer enemies and more friends.” And nobody can glance through the letters which he received, or which were sent to his relatives after his decease, without at once observing the reason of this. “ A man that would have friends must show himself friendly ;” and if ever a man showed himself “ friendly,” it was the kindly pastor of the South Church, Stirling. In his own house he was eminently hospitable ; his quiet charities bestowed upon the poor were such as constantly to exemplify his self-denying benevolence ; and the cases are very numerous in which, visiting without regard to sectarian distinctions, he earned the lasting gratitude of families whom he comforted in their affliction. We notice this also as a distinctive feature in his character, that while he attached to him, and always actually enjoyed, the affectionate regard of an unusually large number of his brethren, he was constantly laying fresh foundations for after friendships by his

special and fatherly kindness to young men. He was not one of those men who lose all interest in those who have sat under them, the moment such persons have removed beyond the bounds of their congregations. He kept, as far as he could, a watch over such as had gone out into the world; and letters are now beside us, not only from students who speak of his exceeding anxiety about their welfare, but from men in distant colonies of the empire, who had carried to their far-away homes a grateful recollection of his love and care.

We have, of course, no intention of giving here merely a series of extracts from complimentary letters. These might be read with interest by friends, but they could have little value in the eyes of the general public. Our endeavour, however, to present the portrait of an Earnest Pastor would on one side be very defective if we did not supply, out of the materials in our possession, some illustrations of what manner of man Mr. Leitch was in his intercourse with society and in the estimation of his friends; and we have this object constantly in view in the following paragraphs.

Here is first an admirably drawn up sketch, and one, the fidelity of which all will recognise who knew Mr. Leitch, written by his neighbour, the Rev. P. Muirhead of Kippen:—

“I was long permitted to enjoy the friendship of Mr. Leitch. Having been previously acquainted with him, when, twenty-two years ago, I was settled in the neighbourhood I was at once met as an old friend; and from that time I felt I could look on him as one of the kindest and most trusty of friends, and could always count on a hearty and joyful welcome in his hospitable house. In looking back on these years, many of my

pleasantest recollections are connected with hours passed in his society. I am well assured, for instance, that many of the brethren of his own and neighbouring presbyteries will sympathise with me in looking back with fond recollection on the reunions in his house on the evenings of the Synod Meetings in Stirling, when his hearty unfeigned kindness and quiet cheerfulness seemed to diffuse a spirit of mutual confidence, and the pleasant interchange of opinions and friendly discussions of the Synod matters tended, I am sure, much to cement the bonds of brotherly love.

“What, above everything else, struck me in coming into close intercourse with Mr. Leitch was, I think, this, that in him you had to do with a thorough Christian, a truly godly man. What you met was a Christian spirit—a leaven of true godliness pervading his whole life, walk, and conversation. It was not that religious conversation was brought in, as if it were necessary to keep up the ministerial character; not that religion was in any way thrust upon you; not with him again as with some who seem to move in two different spheres, now in the one, again in the other—the one religious, the other worldly; nor yet was it that his godliness ever assumed an aspect approaching in the remotest degree to sternness or severity, or that it in any degree crushed or stunted the growth of any purely human affection or sympathy. In the society of some good men you feel as if the very atmosphere were oppressive. In your intercourse with them you feel restrained, not to say chilled, by the air of unbending severity which they seem to think it necessary to assume towards the outer world, in all their intercourse with it; and while you cannot doubt the reality of their worth and godliness, you cannot help regretting that true

religion should be presented to those without in an aspect so unattractive, or even so repulsive. With our lamented friend it was far otherwise. With him, while on the one hand there was that in his whole demeanour which was indeed a rebuke to anything like baseness or unbecoming levity and frivolousness; on the other hand, his cheerful temperament, the benignity of his very aspect, his ready sympathy with all innocent mirth and joyousness, seemed to give a most emphatic contradiction to the notion that there is any necessary connection between true religion and gloom or austerity. Mr. Leitch was naturally a man of singularly warm affections and sympathies, of a cheerful temperament, with keen appreciation of humour, showing itself frequently in a happy playfulness of manner; and all this you found in him not at all weakened, but only purified, by the spirit of true godliness with which all was blended. Seeing him in his most cheerful moods, you saw in him nothing of levity, but felt still you were with an earnest Christian man. While, in his gravest moods, you met with nothing that approached to moroseness or severity. Were I in a single word to attempt to name his most characteristic feature, I should be disposed to say it was godly sincerity and truthfulness. One admirable peculiarity or gift that he had, can scarcely fail to have been noticed by any one who was much in his society—I mean the singularly happy power he had of giving, in the most natural way, a serious turn to conversation, and leading it to what was profitable and edifying. It is well known to all his friends that Mr. Leitch spent much time in pastoral visitation, and that these visitations were highly valued. I well believe that, very much owing to this gift, as I may call it, these visits were singularly profitable to many. In the minis-

ter thus going in and out among them, his flock—and the many outside his congregation who always welcomed his kind visitations—saw not the mere professional man going through a certain round of duty, but the true, warm friend, ever seeking their best interests, having a word to encourage, strengthen, cheer, comfort, warn, or mildly reprove, as need might require. In him they could not but see the man of God, who, having himself tasted that the Lord is good, and so himself knowing the blessedness of being reconciled to God, felt ever animated by the earnest desire that all around him should be brought to partake of the same blessings which he felt so precious to himself.

“It is superfluous to say that his house was a singularly happy home. Even a stranger passing but a few hours under his roof must have felt that it was so. The portrait that forced itself on one’s attention, in seeing him thus in the midst of his family, was that of a father as tender, loving, and indulgent, as he was strictly conscientious and faithful, and therefore alike beloved and revered.

“To refer to his business habits and attainments lies perhaps rather beyond the limits of what has been assigned to me, still I may be allowed to say that, as clerk of a neighbouring presbytery, I had frequent occasion to consult him on matters of ecclesiastical business, and always found the stores of his long experience most readily made available. His advice was always characterised by great good sense, and evinced extensive acquaintance with church law and practice.

“I have often enjoyed the privilege of ministerial intercourse with him on Sacramental occasions, as indeed, long before my connection with Kippen, he had been in

the habit of frequently taking part in the communion services. His ministrations were always highly appreciated. On one of the last occasions, a Sacrament Sabbath evening, I well remember his referring to old recollections of communions at Kippen, and of the many faithful sermons that had been heard there in former days, pressing on the attention of the congregation their deep responsibility in a way that was felt to be most solemn and impressive, leaving, I trust, a lasting impression on not a few. My remembrance of Communion Sabbaths in the South Church of Stirling will always be cherished. His grand theme then, as in all his ministrations, was Christ and Christ crucified; and, in connection with the peculiar services of the day, the joyful anticipation of higher communion above. Often, since he has been removed from among us, have I thought of the words of the paraphrase which used to be the closing hymn on these occasions, with the feeling that he who used to read out the words with such heart and emphasis is now himself with that blessed company—

“ ‘ Now with triumphal palms they stand
Before the throne on high,
And serve the God they love amidst
The glories of the sky.’ ”

So writes Mr. Muirhead. We may add that Mr. Leitch's kindness of nature and willingness to co-operate with all good men, whatever happened to be their church connection, as well as his readiness to minister comfort to the afflicted of whatever name, are referred to constantly.

One of the magistrates of Stirling, Mr. Yellowlees, himself a Dissenter, mentions that Mr. Leitch, having been acquainted with his wife before their marriage

made it his custom to pay a visit to the house on the birth of each child, and to offer prayer for the bestowal of the promised blessing. Mr. Yellowlees, after stating that these visits were always highly prized, goes on to say—

“At a later period I was one of a deputation appointed to wait on him, the express object of which I have forgotten, but we did not find him at home. As I was going a little farther in the same direction, I said to those associated with me that if they intrusted the matter to me I would call on my return, and if Mr. Leitch had come home I would state the object we had in view. They all agreed to my doing so, and on my return I found him in his own house. I told him the object of the deputation’s visit, and after talking over it, and engaging in some general conversation, I rose to go away, when he gently laid his hand on my shoulder, and said, ‘Let us have a word of prayer before you go;’ and so he offered up a very fervent prayer. I took it as exceedingly kind, and thought if ministers generally would act the part he had done, how much it would commend religion and endear them to all around. I may mention also, as an evidence of the great interest he took in his Master’s work, and of the desire he had to turn the attention of others to a concern about the things that belong to their eternal peace, that one could scarcely meet him at a funeral, or in any other casual way, but he had some suitable word to say, such as ‘Time is short;’ ‘How necessary is it that we be interested in Christ!’ This is just a specimen of his way, which I know very many can attest; and thus, though he is dead, he yet liveth by his fitly-spoken words in the hearts of multitudes who were not connected with his congregation; and his own people

can tell how incessantly he laboured by night and by day, in season and out of season, for their spiritual welfare. So much did he do so, that I almost despair of his congregation finding one that will so unweariedly fill his place. The consolation is that the grace that made him what he was can make others. He long acted as chaplain to the Stirling High Constables ; and being long connected with that body myself, I can attest how well and acceptably he performed the duties of the office. He was always ready at the call of duty ; and at all their meetings, whether ordinary or special, when an opportunity was afforded to address them, while he pointed out the necessary, important, and honourable position they occupied, he never failed to express his opinion that their actings and influence in the community were more of a moral than of a physical kind ; and would sometimes descant largely on the influence for good which forty gentlemen (for that was their number) spread throughout the town, and countenanced by the Provost and Magistrates, must necessarily have. As they highly appreciated both the man and his services, he was always listened to with attention. When his death occurred a gloom of sorrow spread over their whole number ; and when his funeral took place every one that was able attended in full High Constable's dress, thus testifying their great respect for one who had so long and so well discharged the duties of chaplaincy ; and at their first ordinary meeting thereafter it was proposed and unani- mously agreed that two or three of their number should meet and draw up a letter of condolence to the bereaved family, expressing how much his services had been appreciated by their body, and the deep sense they entertained of the great loss they had sustained by his removal.

When the above proposal was made, one of their number, a much respected merchant and Roman Catholic, rose and said he very cordially agreed to it, as he held their late chaplain in very high esteem, not only on account of his public services but also on account of his private attentions; and mentioned that when his wife died, Mr. Leitch very soon thereafter called at his house to express his sympathy with himself and bereaved family, adding, 'I made him very welcome, and regarded it as a very kind visit.' Mr. Leitch thus gave another evidence of his large-heartedness and earnest desire to do good to all within his reach."

These are not the only testimonies which are by us to Mr. Leitch's catholicity. "Few," writes the Rev. Andrew Russell of Bradford, a Congregational minister, who for some time was a fellow-labourer with Mr. Leitch in Stirling, "few laboured so faithfully as he did during a lengthened ministry, and few were more ready to co-operate with all good men in advancing the interests of the Saviour's kingdom." And, probably, not very many instances, such as the following, have anywhere occurred: "I have always admired," writes Mr. Reid of Woodville, Stirling, "Mr. Leitch's true catholicity, which, notwithstanding our remaining attached to the Established Church, never prevented him from visiting us regularly, showing that his desire to bring souls to Christ was his highest object. I knew that he never spared himself, whether in public or private, and was always ready to visit rich and poor ministerially. In the beginning of 1854, my wife became a great invalid, and he took such an interest in her spiritual welfare as to visit her *every day*, with the exception of Sabbath, for twelve months, although several weeks were spent by her at the Bridge of Allan."

Reference has been made to his interest in students. In illustration of this we extract some passages from two letters, the writers of which are now both ministers of the Free Church.

The Rev. Ebenezer Hill of Lochmaben, sending to Mr. Leitch's son some recollections of his father, says:—

“ He had a wonderful power in gaining the affections of the young, and in suiting his instructions to the capacities of all. And this last was a prominent characteristic of his more public teaching likewise ; and he was not one man in the pulpit and another man out of it. For who that knew him and met him in the ordinary intercourse of life ever left his company without listening to some word of counsel or comfort spoken ? It is recorded of the saintly Ussher that when in conversation with friends he was wont to say ‘ A word of Christ before we part.’ Your father seemed invariably to act upon this rule. This indeed was a marked feature in his daily walk. May we try to follow his example in thus availing ourselves of opportunities of doing good to others. I remember so well, after returning to Stirling from my first session at college, meeting him on the street. He seemed in a hurry—but there was the friendly grasp of the hand, and the kindly look, as he said, ‘ Ebenezer, hitherto hath the Lord helped you, may He bless you still ; good-bye.’

“ When a student, I frequently visited him, and never failed to receive a hearty welcome. He was a faithful counsellor, and a warm well-wisher. Our interviews at such times usually terminated with his offering up a few words of earnest prayer. He was indeed a man of prayer, else he could not have been the man he was.”

Even more closely connected with Mr. Leitch was

the Rev. Henry Carmichael, now minister at Peebles. His own family belonged to the South Church, and he thus grew up from infancy under Mr. Leitch's eye. In the communication which he sends there is a great deal of interesting information given as to Mr. Leitch's ministry at large. We would gladly have availed ourselves of this had space permitted. But in a brief memorial like the present minute details are impossible. One paragraph, however, we must quote, as it throws so pleasant a light on the character of Mr. Leitch's pastoral life.

“ He kept an eye on every member of each family,—watched each with interest and prayerfulness. He did not visit a household *en masse*, but acquainted himself with all the individuals in it, even to the youngest. He had a marvellous facility of recognising faces in the street, even of the boys and girls, and of remembering their names when calling on their parents. He inquired after their lessons and pursuits—showed them an attention most flattering to their youthful notions, and thus endeared himself to both old and young. Long even after certain members of a family had left the parental home, he would ask after their welfare, and remember them in his prayers with the rest. The children, and the absent ones, are too often forgotten by ministers, but Mr. Leitch's mindfulness of such was really singular and admirable. One introduction to him was tantamount to a place henceforth in his mind and heart. He seemed to feel that in a sense he had a care of every immortal who was once brought under his notice.

“ And then what an extraordinary power he possessed of giving excellent advice everywhere. And yet, withal,

it was seldom that one missed him when calling at his house. He possessed that marvellous ubiquity which often strikes one in a laborious energetic man—that Herculean enterprise and industry that enable them to economise time with consummate and enviable skill. Always on foot, yet always among his books and papers, he impressed one as being a man who *lived earnestly*, who wrought perpetually, and whose exalted object it was to fill up the hours of life with labour that could bear strict scrutiny, and result in permanent good to the world.”

Mr. Carmichael thus speaks of his student recollections :—

“When I visited him in his study, the pleased smile that suffused his features, and the warm human grasp with which he welcomed me, were really worth living for. I know not a man whose bare presence ever made me so happy, or threw around life so genial and inspiring a glow. Then he would inquire, interrogate, and cross-question me in his own peculiar way, known so well to all his friends, on the latest college news, the subjects engrossing my attention, the books that were being read, the progress that was being made. Directions, cautions, and admonitions followed,—seasonable, precious counsels,—soul-stirring words that nerved one for the toil and the trial. And then the petitions—especially in the earlier years of my course—the simple and touching prayers offered on my behalf, for my health, my prosperity, and my protection, amid the temptations and dangers of studies, and of the great world—*these* I can never forget. They still ring in my ears, and bring tears to my eyes, and involuntarily prompt the sad question, Is this

precious intercourse also never again to be renewed on earth? 'Even so Father: Thy will be done.'

Mr. Leitch's funeral sermon was preached by the son-in-law of his oldest friend (Dr. Muir of St. James's),—Mr. Wilson of Maryhill. That sermon is now before us, and contains a very touching tribute to the manifold excellences of the departed. Among other things, Mr. Wilson makes this most true remark—

“His pastorate extended over a period of forty-three years, and *truly it was a pastorate*. The pulpit, not the platform, was his favourite sphere. To prepare for it, and when in it to serve his Master in faithfully dealing with souls, was his great aim.”

“But,” Mr. Wilson goes on to say, “a minister may preach earnestly and eloquently, may be diligent in his ministerial visitations, and skilled in church law and procedure, but if his conduct when out of the pulpit does not correspond with his appearances when in it, he will fail to impress our minds with a sense of his consistency. And, accordingly, it has been said of some ministers, that either they should never have entered the pulpit, or, having entered it, they should never have left it. But how was it with your minister? ‘Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably he behaved himself among you that believe.’ You knew him to be a man of God. You have no doubt upon that point; but to know how much he was a man of God you must follow him to his closet. I have observed, with regard to persons who made a figure in the world, that, if lacking the main thing, that is, if unconverted persons, the less minutely you scrutinise their private life the better. Your admiration of them, generally speaking, will not be increased by a minute acquaintance. As

poets, or orators, or statesmen, or philosophers, you may admire them in public life ; but I say that, if unconverted persons, you must not watch them too narrowly in private. But God's works admit of the minutest scrutiny. God's works in nature admit of this—the minutest insect, the more that it is examined, commands our wonder the more. Now, the believer is God's workmanship, and the more narrowly you examine him, the better he too in public life may command our admiration. He may fill a large space in the eye of the world, but, follow him to his closet, and you will admire him the more. You will there see the close communion which he maintained with God. You will see that the fire was there kindled which he carried with him into public, and with which he inflamed the hearts of those whom he addressed.

“ How truly your minister was a man of God you all know ; but you have no idea how closely he walked with God till you follow him to his closet. He was truly a man of prayer. Everything was matter of prayer, even the least. And much did he pray for you. Listen to some of the breathings of his soul on your account : ‘ Lord, increase my gift of conversing with the sick to their edification.’ ‘ Lord, increase my diligence and faithfulness. About to proceed to ministerial visitation, enable me to perform this duty wisely, skilfully, affectionately, effectively.’ ‘ Preparing to-day for the forenoon of Sabbath next. Lord, give me suitable matter, give the word needful. In the preparation of my discourse I would seek to make full proof of my ministry. O Lord ! spiritualise the congregation ; may the word I am preparing for them this day be spirit and life to them. Arouse them from apathy.’ ‘ About to go to my classes

for Bible-reading, Lord, let thy presence go with me ; let me take a blessing to each of the young people ; give me affection for them, and them affection for me. Enable me to deal closely and kindly with them this evening.’ ‘ Lord God, enable me to make this day preparation for preaching in the afternoon to-morrow ; give me understanding of the passage to be handled ; suggest to me the thoughts and views thereon which thou wilt bless to the people when spoken. Holy Spirit, I crave thine aid. Oh ! send forth thy light and thy truth. O Divine Spirit, impress—oh ! impress deeply every soul.’

“ You see how truly, from these extracts, he was a man of God. You can now understand the earnestness with which he addressed you from the pulpit.”

Among all the testimonies, however, to Mr. Leitch’s worth, few have seemed to us at once more true and beautiful than those which follow, one contained in a letter from Mr. Smith, minister at Greenock (formerly of Alva) ; another in a note from Mr. Stevenson of Pulteneytown, formerly minister of Tullibody ; and the last in the address delivered by Mr. Nixon, of Montrose, from the chair of the General Assembly. Says Mr. Smith—

“ My lamented friend did not, as you know, take a prominent part in the public controversies of the Church, nor was he among the bustling spirits who are ever on the move—never less at home than when at home, and catching, wherever they go, the breath of popular applause. On the contrary, he ‘ dwelt among his own people.’ His claims to be embalmed, as he is, in their hearts, do not rest on isolated and ill-sustained, though dazzling efforts, but on a modest, sincere, affectionate, assiduous, and uniform course of action, directed to the promotion of

their highest well-being. Perhaps this may be thought 'faint praise' in an age of feverish excitement. But it will be well to remember what has been beautifully said, that 'we do not estimate the character of the Saviour himself so much from his having given sight to the blind, or restored Lazarus from the grave, as from his *going about continually doing good.*'"

Mr. Stevenson's letter is addressed to one of the members of Mr. Leitch's family. In it he says—

"During these early years of my ministry I had frequent intercourse with your father, and was always struck with his devout spirit, and his habit of turning the conversation into a channel bearing on personal religion, and the life of God in the soul. He appeared to me to be always breathing a heavenly atmosphere, and I ever found him ready to converse with me on the difficulties of the Christian life, and to encourage me in aiming at the glory of God in all the trials and perplexities of my ministerial work. It was his usual way, when we met together, to engage in prayer; and, when the visit was in his own house, he would gather his children into the room, and propose to me to remember them all in prayer. This is one of my special reminiscences of your beloved father. He had the spiritual welfare of his family deeply at heart. He longed to see them all devoted followers of the Lord Jesus. Your father was pre-eminently a man of prayer; and now that he is gone from you, and you will have no more *him* to pray for you, surely the sacred duty lies on *you* to pray the more for one another."

But more touching even than anything that has yet been quoted, were the words of the Moderator of the General Assembly. It is the custom for those who are called to preside over the supreme courts of the Church

to take notice of the changes which have occurred in the ministry during the previous year; and it fell to Mr. Nixon, an early fellow-student of Mr. Leitch, to mention his removal. The allusion to him was necessarily brief; but what more true or worthy could have been said in the course of an hour's panegyric? In the hearing of the whole Church, this was the eulogium pronounced over his grave:—"HE WORE OUT HIS LIFE IN QUIET WORK, BENEATH HIS MASTER'S EYE."





CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

THE END.

Communion at Maryhill—Return from Glasgow—His last Illness and Death—His Funeral—Final Judgment of his Presbytery.

A FAITHFUL servant of Christ will be content to end his labours as the Master wills, either by the quiet witness-bearing of a serene though comparatively inactive old age, or by working with unremitting diligence to the very last. We are very sure that in either appointment Mr. Leitch would have been able to acquiesce. At the same time we can well believe that one who could scarcely be restrained from conducting his weekly prayer meeting while labouring under fever, and who strenuously opposed the engaging of an assistant even for six weeks when he was on his deathbed, would have reconciled himself with difficulty to a long evening of enforced idleness in the vineyard. And happily this trial was one to which he was not subjected. On Sabbath, the 5th of April 1868, he appeared for the last time in his own pulpit, but he discharged a still later ministerial duty in the Free Church of Maryhill. The 12th of the month was the day of the Glasgow communion, and he had engaged to assist on that occasion, as for more than thirty years he had annually done, his friend of very many years, the Rev. R. M. Wilson. At the beginning of the week preceding he caught a cold, to which at first he paid very

little attention—visiting, and attending meetings, as if it were too trifling an affair to be allowed to interfere with any of his engagements. The consequence was that the burden grew upon him, and on Thursday and Friday he was so ill that he was compelled to try some remedial measures. These so far succeeded. On Saturday he felt better, and as he had set his heart on going to Glasgow he was allowed to leave home by a forenoon train ; but his daughter (who writes a most touching account of these last days) says that she saw him depart with “fearful misgivings ;” and her worst fears were realised.

He arrived at Maryhill, and preached on the Saturday afternoon with considerable animation. On the Sabbath also, he was able to perform all his forenoon duty, serving two tables ; but he was so manifestly labouring under illness that Mr. Wilson sought medical advice. The doctor came in as Mr. Leitch was preparing for the evening service, and having ascertained that he was in a high fever, interdicted him on the spot from attempting to preach. He consented, reluctantly, to abandon what had been previously a fixed purpose, and also to give over all thoughts of fulfilling an engagement of a similar kind for next day, which he had come under to the Rev. Hugh Macdougall of Milton Church. But no amount of kind persuasion would induce him to remain in Glasgow over Monday, in the hope that a few days’ nursing would see him better. A premonition of approaching dissolution seems to have been upon him. At the communion table he read with a strange emphasis, which appears to have been noticed by all who heard him, the words of the hymn—

“ But oh ! eternity’s too short
To utter all thy praise.”

and when he took farewell of Mr. Wilson on the Monday, he said to him significantly, "My work is done." He was eager, therefore, to be home; and when, at eleven o'clock in the day, instead of at eleven at night, as was expected, he found himself under his own roof, and in the quiet of his own apartment, he uttered a sigh of thankfulness and relief, as if he were now in circumstances to meet the end in the place of all others, where the parting, when it came, would be the least painful.

A doctor was immediately sent for, and he pronounced his ailment to be erysipelas, of a mild type; but the trouble was more serious than at first appeared. The bad symptoms, instead of giving way to treatment, became more aggravated; a painful restlessness, which sometimes approached delirium, took possession of him; and although, even at such times, his heart unmistakably revealed itself in praising God and prayer, and in expressions of affection, especially for the daughter who had long been his chief stay and comfort, and who waited on him till the end with a sleepless and unwearying love, there was little opportunity offered for such quiet conversations as might have furnished the basis of a dying testimony. But what needed such a man to say on his deathbed that he loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and put his whole trust in His blood and righteousness? His entire life was a proclamation of that fact, and nobody needed better evidence than it supplied! When the time came for him to die, therefore, nothing but that single work remained to be transacted. And, happily, his sufferings were not prolonged. He returned from Glasgow on Monday the 13th April, and on the Friday following the news spread swiftly through the town and neighbourhood that he was dead.

The sensation produced by his sudden removal has been already referred to, and was in itself a telling testimony to the influence of his blameless life and his faithful ministry. The hurricane is more noticed than the quiet breeze, and the flood than the steady flow of the peaceful river, and so those lives often awaken most attention in which there is most noise. But the world, for all that, never fails to learn in the long run what acts upon it most beneficially. Many may have failed to appreciate the full value of Mr. Leitch's unobtrusive labours while they were yet in active operation, but their cessation made them appear in a new and more real light. People became aware of the importance of the place which he filled, when they realised the blank which had been caused by his removal, and the concourse of mourning spectators which gathered on his funeral day plainly enough announced that the town was already conscious of its loss. The coffin which contained his remains was carried first to the church in which for so many years he had ministered, and it lay before the pulpit, while, in the presence of the bereaved congregation, the usual services for such occasions were performed. A procession was then formed, embracing the High Constables, whose chaplain he had been, the Provost and Magistrates of the town, the Presbytery of which he had been a member, the Sheriff, many Ministers of all denominations, including the Roman Catholic Priest, and a very large body of personal friends and fellow-townsmen. As the cortège passed to the cemetery every shop was shut, the side walks of the streets were crowded with sympathising onlookers, and the bell of the town-house was tolled in recognition of the public loss. Yet with all this sorrow there could happily mingle

no bitterness. Not one in all that company had the faintest doubt about the fact that when they were committing to its last resting-place—"dust to dust, ashes to ashes"—all that was mortal of him who had been so lately in the midst of them, they were sowing in "God's acre" seed which would certainly appear again, and be gathered in the end into the garner at Christ's Harvest Home. The following words form the answer to a question in a catechism so condensed that it is often spoken of as containing only the bones of a theological system—but to one bereaved of beloved friends, who have fallen asleep in Christ, no words, it seems to us, could be more sensibly clothed with flesh and blood—more warm and tender—more touchingly full of life and heart cheer; and how pleasantly they read in looking back on such a life as has been surveyed:—

"THE SOULS of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory, and THEIR BODIES, BEING STILL UNITED TO CHRIST, do REST in their graves till the Resurrection."

From very many quarters there came, as might have been expected, to Mr. Leitch's family, testimonies to the worth of him who had been taken from their head. It would serve little purpose of course to give these here. But there is one with which it seems only reasonable that we should end. It is the deliberate judgment of those who, under our Presbyterian government, held towards him the relation of the Episcopate. We have been trying to show, from what may be called internal sources, that Mr. Leitch was one who well deserved the title of *an Earnest Pastor*. Here is the opinion of the church court which superintended his labours, and to which he was immediately in ecclesiastical subjection:—

At Stirling, the 9th day of June 1868 :—Which day the Free Presbytery of Stirling met and was constituted :

The Presbytery desire to record their deep sense of the great loss they have sustained by the death of their lamented brother, the late Rev. Alexander Leitch. During a long period of labour in the office of the ministry, Mr. Leitch proved himself to be a faithful and devoted pastor, and was ever active and assiduous in his Master's work. He commended the gospel which he preached by a life of consistent godliness, and attained to a high place of esteem and favour in the general community. To his brethren in the Presbytery he greatly endeared himself by his kindness and courtesy and brotherly forbearance, while his whole conduct was characterised by Christian simplicity and humility. The Presbytery would especially record their great sense of the loss of the services which he rendered as their clerk ; an office he continued to fill with unusual acceptance and success from the time of the Disruption. They feel that they are deeply indebted to their late co-presbyter for the valuable aid so long afforded by him as Clerk of the Presbytery, and also in connection with the ordinary business of the court. And considering God's dealings in the sudden departure of their beloved brother from the midst of them, they would seek, by the help of divine grace, to be stirred up to greater zeal, diligence, and prayerfulness, in the discharge of those solemn duties in which they have been called to engage.

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