



With sincere yours  
John Cairns

LIFE AND LETTERS  
OF  
JOHN CAIRNS  
D.D., LL.D.

BY  
ALEXANDER R. MACEWEN, D.D.

*“Aliquid inconcussum”*

*“You may hope not to labour in vain”*

WORDSWORTH TO CAIRNS

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## PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

DR. CAIRNS' surviving contemporaries had, at the time of his death, reached an age at which men cannot reasonably be asked to face the labour involved in biography. Having learned from boyhood to revere Dr. Cairns as one of my father's friends, and having come, as years passed, to regard him with personal affection and gratitude, I could not but comply with the request of his brothers that I should endeavour to frame a record of his life. The duty could not in any case have been quickly discharged, and there has been incidental delay owing to an illness which occurred when the work had proceeded too far to be transferred to other hands.

I undertook the responsibility, knowing that those who had done me the honour of laying it upon me would assist me to bear it, and they have more than fulfilled this expectation. Mr. William Cairns has not only furnished a detailed narrative of the life of the family, which forms the ground-work of the early chapters, but has, with Mr. David Cairns, given constant guidance and encouragement during the last two years. I have also been kindly aided by the sons and daughter of the latter.

Those whom I have consulted at various stages have shown much helpfulness. Special thanks are due to

Rev. Professor Blaikie, Sir G. B. Bruce, Revs. G. B. Carr and Principal Fairbairn, Professor Campbell Fraser, Dr. James Hardy, Messrs. George Hunter, William Johnstone and Thomas Kirkup, Revs. J. H. Leckie, Richard Leitch, Dr. David MacEwan and J. Meiklejohn, Miss Nairn, Revs. Professor Orr, John Polson, Principal Rainy, J. G. Rowe, Dr. John Smith and John Young. Four others who have given help have been removed by death, viz. :— Revs. Principal Cunningham, R. Rutherford, Dr. Philip Schaff and Dr. W. M. Taylor. It would be difficult to specify the members of Dr. Cairns' congregation at Berwick to whom I am most indebted. Mrs. Sime has made an unique contribution by allowing me to use correspondence which casts peculiar light on Dr. Cairns' private life.

All the proof-sheets have been read by the Rev. James Kidd, D.D., who has also given valuable help as a counsellor. In the latter part of the volume, Mr. J. R. Anderson has rendered similar assistance.

Those who knew Dr. Cairns intimately cannot fail to consider this Memoir inadequate, but I reckon upon their indulgence. My hope is that, with the facts of his life, something of the spirit of it may reach readers to whom he was partially or entirely a stranger.

A. R. M.

GLASGOW, *April* 25, 1895.



## PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

IN this Edition, a few words have been changed, in accordance with friendly suggestions, for which thanks are now tendered. Two personal references have been omitted, as provocative of uninteresting controversy. Otherwise there is no alteration.

Five months after the publication of the First Edition, a peaceful close came to the noble and beautiful life of the invalid brother, whose name appears so frequently in the following pages. With simplicity, moral dignity and courage Mr. William Cairns combined mental qualities—alertness, insight, retentiveness and humour—which gave him a potent influence over all who had the honour of his friendship, and which contributed largely to the brightness and geniality of his brother's life, especially in later years. His death leaves me free to say that this book could not have been written without his self-concealing assistance and guidance. The reception accorded to it by readers gave him pleasure in his last days on earth.

A. R. M.

*November 15, 1897*

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## CHAPTER I

### ANCESTRY, PARENTAGE, AND CHILDHOOD

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JOHN CAIRNS was born at Ayton Hill, Berwickshire, on the 23rd of August 1818; but the roots of his life were brought from another soil.

From the slopes of Criffel in Galloway, through the higher regions of Dumfriesshire and on through Peebles, Selkirk and Roxburgh to the base of the Cheviots, families of the name of Cairns are to be found. The name may be read above some shop-window in almost every town and village, and among the farmers and shepherds it is nearly as common as is the name Johnston in Annandale. But the name is not that of a clan. On most of the hill-tops of those same districts, 'cairns' or heaps of stones are conspicuous. These originally served some public purpose, monumental, military or religious, and it seems likely that in lack of patronymics the name Tam o' the Cairns, John o' the Cairns, Wull o' the Cairns, was given in each district to the man who was intrusted with the keeping of them up to the proper size.

Exactly a hundred years ago a penniless widow with five young children at her skirts buried one Thomas Cairns, the grandfather of the subject of this memoir, in the lonely churchyard of Bunkle, which lies on the eastern edge of the Lammermoor Hills, within the borders of Berwickshire. Thomas was come of a good stock—farmers of Byre

Cleuch and Handie's Land, near the headwaters of the Whitadder, an affluent of the Tweed, and most of his kindred belonged to the same class;<sup>1</sup> but he himself, being one of a large family, was a wandering shepherd, and his health had given way under the strenuous labours of the Lammermoors. His widow, whose maiden name was Janet Geggie, came from a reputable family of brewers and millers on the lower reaches of the Whitadder, and can have little reckoned in her girlhood how rough a life lay before her. But she was of the stout Cameronian stuff which religious persecution had inured to bear disaster, and, like her husband, she had been trained in that strong evangelicalism which Henry Erskine found and fostered in those parts. Through the help of God she bore her burden bravely, and worked from place to place as a farm-helper, carrying her children to school on her back across the dangerous streams, and hurrying home to discharge her full day's duties. With the growth of the children her burden was lightened, and when in 1796 she found a permanent settlement as keeper of pigs and poultry at the farm of Ayton Hill, her elder son was installed as shepherd, her daughters got employment about the farm-steading, and her younger son, John, was hired out as a herd boy on the neighbouring farm of Greystonelees, which stretched eastwards towards the German Ocean, his wage for the half year being a pair of shoes, with food in the farm kitchen and a bed in the stable loft. It is in this younger son, as the father of Dr. Cairns, that we are concerned. He was a staid, undemonstrative boy, with a thirst for books not easy for him to gratify. Though his education had been fitful, he had picked up the art of reading, and now he learned arithmetic at an evening school and taught himself to write. Bibles were too

<sup>1</sup> Among Dr. Cairns' papers there is a 'Pedigree of the Cairns family,' going back to the sixth or seventh generation, and connecting the family with several lines of well-known Berwickshire and Haddington farmers.

high-priced for a parent to provide a copy for each child who left home, and John's equipment in this department was a copy of John Brown of Haddington's Psalm-Book, with preface and notes to each psalm, which was long kept as a precious relic—weather-worn and thumb-worn, but without a loose leaf. This was the strong meat with which the thoughtful lad fed his soul on the wild and stormy coast. On the Sabbath-days he joined his mother at worship in the Burgher Church at Ayton, and attended the Bible-class of the minister, Rev. David Ure, a shrewd and kindly man who showed deep interest in the brave widow and her children, rather as a friend than as a patron; for although their station was lowly, they belonged by birth to a class which in Scotland has always followed its own paths without fear or favour.

Ere long the lad's character was brought out by an unexpected shadow which fell on the family. Napoleonic wars and threats of invasion had roused much patriotic feeling in Berwickshire, and the elder son first joined a local volunteer force, and then, being of a restless spirit, enlisted as a 'seven years' man' in the regular army. This threw the responsibilities of the household upon his younger brother, who was little more than a boy. He showed himself quite fit for a man's work, not only steady and careful, but apt and dexterous in all farming operations—the care of sheep and cattle, barn work in its various processes and the use of scythe, hook and spade. Presently his elder sisters went forth to serve in other households, and ere long to find homes of their own. The old mother found her strength failing, and as the only daughter left with her did not take to field-work, the time came for the young man to look out for a helpmeet, and the Good Hand that guides when such help is sought did not fail to provide.

About this time there arrived at the neighbouring farm of Bastleridge a certain John Murray and his wife, Jean



Porteous, farm servants from the neighbourhood of Duns, with four sons and one daughter. Murray had been left early to shift for himself, with little if any school education; but he was a man of no common vigour and energy, and he had an excellent wife. All four sons rose in the world, two becoming extensive farmers, and two carriers—a responsible position before railway days. The family were Burghers, and ere long, in the church or in the fields, the only daughter, Alison, won the heart of her young neighbour, John Cairns, and was united to him in marriage on June 10, 1814, he being in his twenty-fifth year, and she two years older. Although they were of different temperaments, they were well suited to one another, and their union of twenty-seven years was a singularly happy one. The husband's character was grave and quiet, though not without an edge of humour. Perhaps from some constitutional weakness, his views of men and things were apt to be sombre, and in matters of responsibility a little nervous and apprehensive. Alison Murray, on the other hand, was sanguine and hopeful, with a practical habit of making light of difficulties and getting all possible good out of unpromising circumstances. She had a notable command of vigorous and expressive Scotch, and her stock of national and local proverbs was in constant requisition. She was fond of reading, but in her early married life had but little opportunity for it, while her husband in one way or other had got hold of some books and digested their contents. Both of them were well read in the Bible, and their views of the main aims of life were identical.

Scarcely were they married when their religion was put to a good test. The soldier brother, having passed through much of the Peninsular War, returned to Ayton Hill with a Portuguese wife. Of course he was gladly welcomed, and the poor forlorn stranger, so incongruous with her new surroundings, was an object of kind pity. The farmers were naturally chary about employing a soldier; but it happened



that John was offered at this time the post of shepherd on the Ayton home-farm. With the full consent of his wife he asked the laird to give the situation to his brother, and remained for six years at his own less lucrative and less stable post, while continuing to contribute to the support of his mother, who had removed with her unmarried daughter to the village of Ayton.

Of three children born to them at Ayton Hill, JOHN CAIRNS was the youngest. Few men of widespread fame have spent their lives within so narrow a geographical limit. Ayton Hill is fourteen miles from the glen where he spent his early youth, two miles from the village school where he first undertook a man's work, and seven miles from the scene of his thirty-one years' ministry. Indeed, till he was nearly sixty years of age, the local background of his life was within a radius of fifteen miles—not an unfit emblem of that unswerving adherence to early vows which was to give his inward life its strength.

The cottage of his birth has now disappeared, but its site may be seen from the North British Railway as it sweeps round the low hills which separate the valley of the Tweed from the valley of the Ay or Eye. Lying in a wooded hollow between two knolls, it overlooked the Merse, one of the most fertile and beautiful districts of southern Scotland. In olden times, according to Bishop Leslie, the Mersemen had been notable warriors and given 'to manure (cultivate) justice and studie to politike effeirs,' and their soil had been well watered, during the Border Wars, with the blood of Northumbrian squires. Withal they were a religious people. In the days of the undivided Church, they had supported many holy men and women besides Duns Scotus, being subject in the Ayton district to the famous Priory of Coldingham. When division came, they chose the side of spiritual liberty. In few parts of Scotland had gentle and simple been stauncher to Presbyterianism, and the dark years which preceded the Revolution had seen many a hair-

breadth escape, riveting them, as is the wont of persecution, to the persecuted cause.

The village of Ayton, with 700 inhabitants, lies on the left bank of the Eye, two miles from Eyemouth, where the little river reaches the sea-coast. Besides being a market for cattle and corn, it was the first coach stage on the road from Berwick to Edinburgh, which is fifty miles distant. But like most of the towns in the district, it owed its origin to weaving, and the Aytonians had the shrewdness and independence which that trade fosters. In spite of the kindness of their good laird, Right Hon. John Fordyce, whose mansion lay close to the village, they followed their own sense of duty both as to religion and as to education; and at that time the majority of them, like the Ayton Hill shepherd, neither attended the parish church nor sent their children to the parish school.

Before John's school-days arrived, however, his father removed to a situation on a farm at Oldcambus, West Mains. Oldcambus is a hamlet at the east of the parish of Cockburnspath and on the estate of Dunglass. It stands upon an old coast-road now little frequented, on the face of bare hills looking straight out upon the North Sea. On the shore right below lies a lonely coastguard station, while Fast Castle, the Wolf's Crag of the *Bride of Lammermoor*,<sup>1</sup> rises on a promontory a few miles eastward. The sea views are grand, and in summer weather there is a quiet beauty in the rolling slopes of the green hills; but altogether it is a weird and serious landscape, with special perils for young children. It has its historical associations both military and religious. At the foot of the slope on which the West Mains farmhouse stands, lie the ruins of St. Helen's Chapel, within a few hundred yards of which John Wesley preached in the year 1751. Here, too, Robert the Bruce in 1317 prepared engines for the siege of Berwick. But the small child now being

<sup>1</sup> Scott disclaims special identification: 'That coast affords fifty such castles.'

prepared to conquer Berwick can have been little affected at this stage by those associations, or by the Stockbridge Church with which the family here made their first connection. What more concerns us is, that at the very door of the two-storey tenement which the family occupied there was a precipitous hill, and that John, now in his fourth year, caused his busy mother great anxiety. She therefore gladly yielded to his petition that he might accompany his elder brother and sister to the school, which was barely a mile distant. Of course he could have no lesson, but the kindly schoolmaster permitted him to enter, and the dignity of being among elder children usually sufficed to keep him quiet. Sometimes, however, the little fellow, when the monotony of sitting still was too much for him, would assume the discipline-cap on which was inscribed, 'For my bad conduct I stand here, and take his place unwittingly on the pinnacle of shame.'

This beginning of school-days was very brief, for in 1823 the farm was let, and the family, now including six children, returned to the Ayton district, where the father secured a situation as shepherd on the farm of Whitrigg, about two miles from Ayton in the Chirnside direction. The shepherd's cottage still stands, although it has been enlarged. It is the uppermost of a little row of cottages on the roadside, occupied by the servants of the farm. It is an entirely humble dwelling: there is no humbler in the parish; but the stout yeoman tenant, although a newcomer, tells the inquiring traveller with pride that it was far lowlier seventy years ago, 'when the Principal was there,' for the Aytonians are proud of their biggest nursling.

From his fifth to his eighth year John made his way daily, save in the storms of winter, to school at Ayton with the other children. They attended a relief school, which the Aytonians had established owing to the refusal of the Presbytery to deal with the inefficiency of the parish schoolmaster. The teacher, John Trotter, whose name will occur

afterwards, was another shepherd's son. He had been trained by an educationist of high fame in the South of Scotland at the beginning of this century, Tommy Maule of Duns, and his subsequent career at the Musselburgh Academy and the Edinburgh Academy<sup>1</sup> proved him to be both a sound scholar and an excellent teacher; but at this stage his personal influence over the little boy must have been limited, for among other innovations he had introduced a system of pupil-teacherships; and an old lady still alive claims the credit of having taught John Cairns his alphabet.

Many south country proverbs deal with the frequency of hinds' flittings, and the migrations of the Cairns family illustrate them. Within eight years there were no fewer than six changes of home, with some slight alteration of the father's occupation. From Whitrigg they moved to the forester's cottage of Aikieside, in the Penmanshiel woods, facing the last spur of the Lammermoors. Close to the cottage is the wild pass where General Leslie hemmed in Cromwell before the battle of Dunbar; a pass where, in Cromwell's words, 'ten men to hinder are better than forty to make their way'—one of the grandest ravines in Scotland, now crossed by a beautiful bridge and visited by tourists, though not in proportion to its claims. From this cottage John again attended the Oldcambus school two miles distant. He was more fit now than in the discipline-cap days to profit by school teaching. The oldest tradition, however, of this period is in other lines. Oldcambus was a fighting school, the 'Boneys' and the 'Wellingtons' having daily battles in the play hour. John was too young to be allowed to fight, but he was full of the fighting spirit. Dr. James Hardy, the well-known Berwickshire naturalist, who was then his class-fellow, tells how 'wee Cairns' used to clench his fists during

<sup>1</sup> That brilliant but brief-lived scholar, George Rankine Luke, who was one of Trotter's pupils at the Edinburgh Academy, was wont to say with pride that he had been trained by 'Dr. Cairns' first schoolmaster.'



the lesson hours to the amusement of the older boys. Those who knew Dr. Cairns only in his old age may be surprised at such evidence of native pugnacity, but this was the very man who in his maturity squared up persistently at the devil and all his works.

Aikieside was on the estate of Dunglass, and at the close of 1826 the working of the estate led to other changes of residence, first to the village of Cockburnspath, then to Dunglass Mill, and finally to a cottage close to the Dunglass mansion-house, where the family at last found a resting-place, the father receiving the appointment of shepherd, which he held for the rest of his life.

While they were still living at Aikieside, Dr. Thomas Chalmers, then Professor of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews, made a driving tour through those parts, passing close to the forester's cottage. 'A carter,' he writes in his journal, 'held our gig while we visited this scene of romantic grandeur.' Thence he drove to Kelloe and visited Ayton House, where he addressed a large company, assembled through the zeal of his host. Both there and in the rest of the Merse he was impressed by the devoutness of the population. 'A good deal embarrassed,' he writes, 'by the high imagination which the people have of me. O that the spirit which reigns at Kelloe and is so active at Ayton were transferred to my own family!' Little did Chalmers think that in the forester's cot which he had just passed there was a seven years' old child who would carry the spirit of Ayton and Kelloe over the length and breadth of the land.

## CHAPTER II

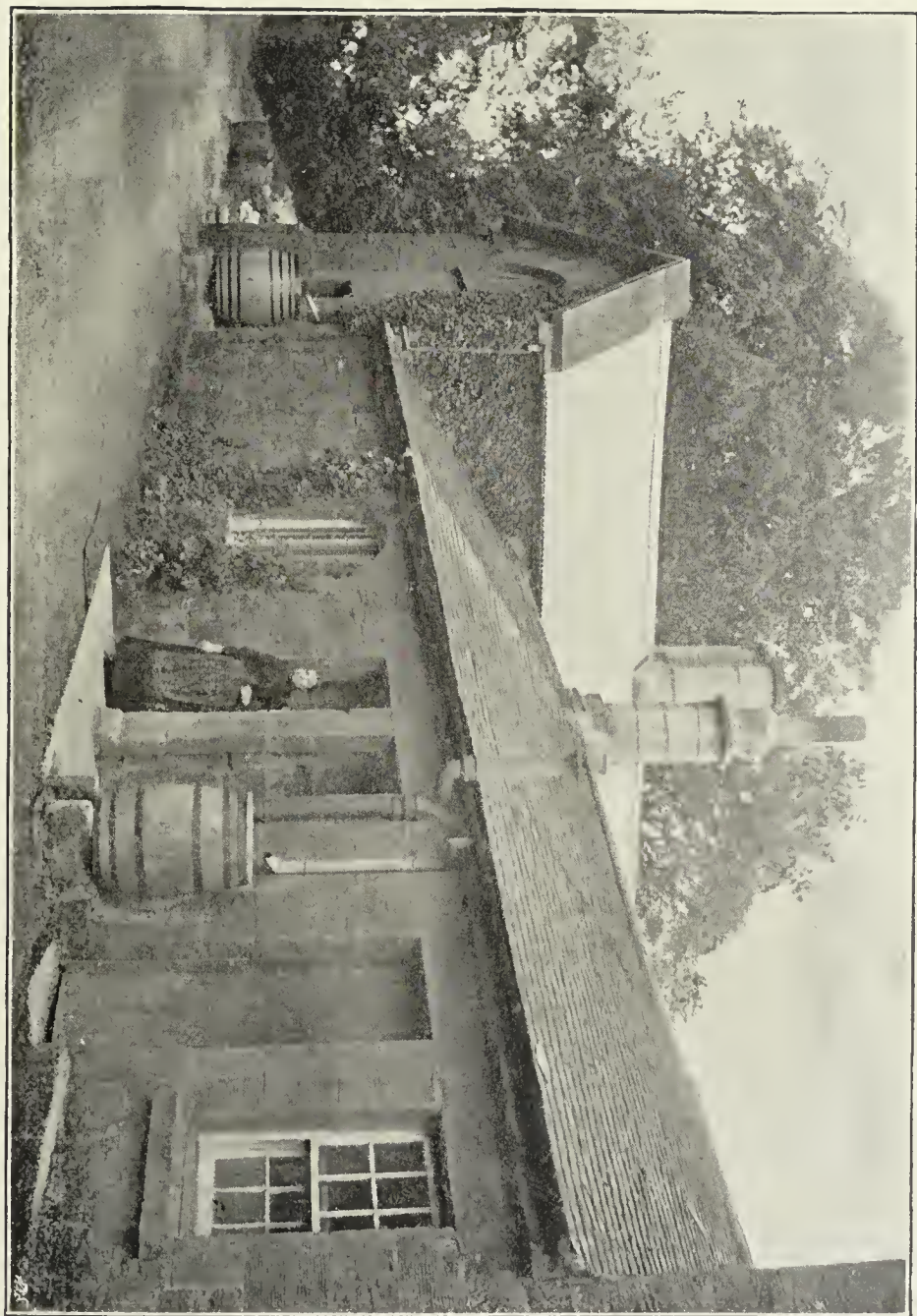
### THE HERD BOY

1826-34

Dunglass—The shepherd's cottage—The Hall family—Cockburnspath schoolmaster  
—Early lessons—The shepherd boy at study—Home life in the cottage—John's  
character and habits.

NOTHING could be more unlike the gentle valley of the Eye than the wild strip of coast which runs from St. Abb's Head towards Dunbar. The Lammermoor range of hills, that dusky continent of barren heath where only sheep can be at home, stops short of the sea-coast, being fenced in as it were by a steep whinstone ridge of notable geological formation. The high road runs on the top of the ridge, leaving the seaward slopes as browsing land for sheep when snow drives them from the uplands. Here and there, a rock with ruined castle juts out into the ocean, and there are coves where little colonies of fisher-folk earn their hard sustenance and bewail their dead. But the chief feature of the district, distinguishing it from the rest of the east coast, is that every few miles a mountain stream rising amidst the Lammermoor mists has worn its way through the coast ridge and formed a deep dene or dell, with steep banks and splendid growth of trees, running from the very roots of the heather-covered hills to the open sea. In one of those denes, seven miles from Dunbar, there stands on the dene's edge, a short mile from the sea, the mansion-house of Dunglass, a handsome Renaissance building. The ground on the east falls straight down into





*Jas. Pringle—Photo.*

THE SHEPHERD'S COTTAGE, DUNGLASS.

[See page 11



a rocky wooded glen, which separates the counties of Haddington and Berwick. On the three other sides there are noble sheltered parks, soft and sequestered like the best in southern England. The lawns round the mansion are smooth as velvet, and the more distant parts of the policies are as peaceful and silent as if the German Ocean's waves were breaking on a coast a hundred miles away. Robert Burns, who was there in 1787, called it 'the most romantic sweet place he ever saw.' In olden time there was a village of Dunglass, or rather a town—one of the chief towns in East Lothian; but it has disappeared. Fifty or sixty yards from the house are the ivy-covered ruins of a church which in Leslie's time was 'a faire collegiat kirke weil decorat,' and is still used as the family burying-place. Otherwise the only buildings are the offices, which consist of a square of low buildings, built round an ordinary paved yard, nearer the mansion than seems convenient. The coachman's house is on one side of the square and the shepherd's opposite. The latter, although neat and orderly, is very small—13 feet by 12 feet. It consists, or rather consisted at the time of which we speak, of a single room with bed recesses and a milk closet 6 feet broad. When you enter you look about to see where father and mother Cairns, with Jean, Thomas, John, James, Janet, William, David, Agnes, big people all—parents, boys and girls, they were all big—could bestow themselves by night or day. But it was here, not in the roomy mansion-house, that John Cairns grew to manhood.

'The one-room dwelling,' says Mr. William Cairns, 'was the only sort of which we had experience; and with a family of ten all on the floor at once, it can be imagined what confusion and crowding there was and how unadapted it was for even ordinary lesson learning, much more for subjects requiring close attention. It is true that in the narrow closet one bed might be placed, or, with very close packing, two, and when the children approached man-

hood and womanhood another room was made available ; but all the household operations were in the main room with its two box-beds for stowing away the children at night. The one redeeming circumstance was that you could not step out of doors but you were in the midst of the leafy shade in summer or some sheltered grot in winter, a resource not open to one-room "dwellers in close city pent."

Yet we must not depreciate the inhabitants of the mansion-house. Famous people they have been with fame of the right sort, both in ancient and in modern days. In almost prehistoric times Dunglass belonged to the celebrated Papedies of Norham, and thereafter passed by marriage, by conquest and by royal gift, from one noble family to another, until about 1687 it was purchased by an Edinburgh wine-merchant, Mr. John Hall, the founder of a family which proved itself well worthy to live in a noble place. Sir James Hall, who was laird of Dunglass from the beginning of this century till 1832, was a man of the highest social and intellectual distinction. As a geologist, he was led by the remarkable formation of his own sea-coast into acute and original investigations, by which he vindicated and developed the theories of his great master, James Hutton. He further published an ingenious and useful treatise on Gothic architecture, and during his winters' residences in Edinburgh, where with his wife, Lady Helen Douglas, a daughter of the fourth Earl of Selkirk, he kept open house, he formed one of a brilliant circle which included Dugald Stewart, Walter Scott, Sydney Smith, Brougham and Jeffrey. His younger son, Captain Basil Hall, R.N., the traveller, had something of his father's genius. Altogether the traditions of Dunglass were elevating. Names of noble men recalling good deeds were carved on tablets in the ruined church, and many great Scotchmen paced the gravel walks within full view of the shepherd's children.

The shepherd's earnings being never more than £30 a





*Jas. Frazer—Photo.*

OLD SCHOOL, AND SCHOOL-HOUSE, COCKBURNSPATH,  
THE LOW TILED PORTION BEING THE SCHOOL.

*See page 13.*





year, the elder children were set to work in the fields with wages beginning at sixpence a day, although they continued their schooling at a night-school. John and his younger brother James attended a day-school at the village of Cockburnspath, which lay about a mile eastwards from Dunglass.

Cockburnspath, Coldbrandspath, or Copperspath, is the northernmost parish in Berwickshire, and the easternmost parish in Scotland.<sup>1</sup> The name, which originally belonged to the pass or path at Pease Bridge described in last chapter, is connected by one legend with Cockburn, a Border reiver, and by another with Colbrand, a Danish giant. On the north and west the parish marches with Oldhamstocks, which is in East Lothian, and on the south with Coldingham, from which it was disjoined after the Reformation. The village stands one hundred yards from the highway, built in an irregular square on an old road which was formerly the coach road. It consists of red-tiled, once thatched cottages, and has perhaps 250 inhabitants, chiefly employed on the neighbouring estates and in such stray traffic as the scattered population of the parish requires. In the centre of the street rises an ancient cross marked with the Scottish thistle, an indication that Cockburnspath was in the sixteenth century an annexe of the Crown. The old parish church, with a round, notched tower, stands in the graveyard at the east side of the village, while the schoolhouse and the village library, our two chief interests, are on the south of the cross. At a public demonstration in 1850, Dr. Cairns stood with bare head beside the cross where he had played as a child, and paid an eloquent tribute of honour to John M'Gregor, the schoolmaster, whose learning and ability had made the sleepy hamlet a source of intellectual life.

John M'Gregor, the son of a Perthshire farmer, had passed

<sup>1</sup> Sir W. Scott quotes in the *Lord of the Isles* the following line ;

' From Islay's rinns to Coldbrandspath.'

through a full course of training for the Church at St. Andrews University, but had adopted the teaching profession through preference for it, declining repeatedly presentations to vacant parishes. Amidst the routine of his daily teaching he had extended the range of his own reading in philology, mathematics, metaphysics and theology; and a recast of the first book of Euclid, published in his later years, shows that he possessed a mind ingenious as well as strong. An independent man, who flattered no one and punished severely, he was viewed with some awe both by his pupils and by their parents. In the tribute above referred to, Dr. Cairns speaks of 'the impartial and even-handed justice which he dealt out to each and all of us; the children of the rich and the children of the poor were on a footing of equality, and the only rank was that of merit.' The upper classes, reckoning him not sufficiently deferential, had set up a rival school for their children; but the common people believed in him as 'a grand teacher,' although they dared scarcely bow when they passed him. The lamp of the house where he lived with his aged mother was reported to burn all night, and tales of his marvellous lore were quoted in every cottage. Most awful was he when he stalked into the parish church with blue cloak and scarlet collar to proclaim the banns of marriage. Except on those 'crying days' he gave the church a wide berth, from dislike of the intolerant spirit in which the clergy, with the heritors at their back, were wont to lord it over parish schools,—not from any alienation from the doctrines of the Church, for his reverent feeling showed itself in discreet and careful teaching of the Bible. Already he had sent six or eight students out of this little village direct to the universities, where they had more than held their own in languages and literature with town-bred undergraduates. A born teacher he was, who awakened a thirst for knowledge and, with all his sternness, enlivened the school hours with many touches of

humour and genuine kindness. Note must be taken of this man, for John Cairns was under his charge for nearly ten years, and imbibed from him that patient and enthusiastic love for scholarship which brought him his first distinctions, and asserted itself as a source of happiness and relaxation in old age.

'Before my brother came to Cockburnspath,' writes Mr. William Cairns, 'he had been thoroughly trained in ordinary English branches and in arithmetic, and well exercised in repetition of the Bible, the Shorter Catechism, the Psalms and Paraphrases. Even then he had the reputation of a "grand learner," who read everything that came in his way. During his three or four years of constant attendance at Mr. M'Gregor's day-school, he made considerable progress in Latin, some progress also in Greek, had worked his way pretty well through Euclid, as well as practical geometry, and was well advanced in Algebra. When he was about ten, Mr. M'Gregor expressed a wish that he should join a Latin class that was then being formed. The propriety of this step was eagerly discussed. Father, with his anxious turn of mind and severe conscientiousness, was doubtful as to the wisdom of setting one of the family before the others, and obviously all could not be put through such a course. The usual fees of 3s. or 4s. per quarter were raised to 7s. 6d. when Latin was taken. I think that the schoolmaster offered that in this case there should be no addition. Our mother was all for "John going on"; and, while grateful to Mr. M'Gregor, she was sure that the fees could be furnished by some economy. Small as was our father's wage, it was generally paid in kind—so much grain annually, with house, firing and the keep of a cow and pig, so that the actual value of wages could be enlarged by the housekeeper's carefulness. Our mother's fine management, without being painful or sordid in its thrift, I have never seen surpassed. The minister, too, who was taken into counsel, was clear for the classics, and so a beginning was made. The Latin class met an hour before the rest of the school, and having now joined the school contingent with my twin sister, I remember the great terror which fell on me when I was left outside, amid what seemed an innumerable throng of curious savages, and the relief that came when John appeared to lead us into the awful presence. Day by day for the next few years he watched over us younger ones while drinking his deeper draughts of the sacred stream. In no respect a leader in mischief or goer

in doubtful ways, he was not a moping or sitting-apart boy, and could be as energetic in the playground, at shinty or football or other game, as the veriest dunce. Marbles he would play, when the game was against him, till his very last stake was gone.

'When Greek was added to his other school lessons, the evening stir and bustle of the small though lightsome house hindered his preparation; and he used to stipulate with our mother that she would call him in the morning when she rose to prepare breakfast for those who had to go out at six o'clock. He would be heard conjugating his verbs by the solitary oil lamp, or in the dim twilight of the early morning, while we were still snug in bed. In this way he saw more or thought more of the devoted mother's constant toiling and moiling, and was ever eager to find ways in which he could lighten her burdens, by cutting firewood, carrying water and such services; and he was sometimes quoted against those of us who were not quite so helpful.

'He was twelve years of age when the day-school days ended. Although my father was nominally shepherd, his duties were very multifarious, and the charge of the sheep had principally fallen upon our oldest brother Thomas. But the time came when Thomas could earn a larger wage than was allowed for the shepherd's boy, and so it was John's turn and time to take the place. When father spoke to Mr. M'Gregor about this, the old man was moved with regret at the prospect of losing his favourite pupil, and proposed that if John would find time to carry on his studies during the day, he should come to him two or three nights a week that they might read together. Such a proposal from such a quarter was thought a marvellous testimony, for the old teacher had got into habits of isolation. Yet his pupils stood in such awe of him, that few would have looked forward with pleasure to hours of private intercourse. But to John it seemed a great opportunity, and the closer he came into contact with the grim old man, the more he liked and respected him.

'It was in 1831 that he began his course as "herd laddie." Hitherto he had done nothing at field-work, save occasional days at harvest time. But he had the hereditary instinct for sheep; so that the responsible care of them came easily to him. This was something like his daily course for the next three years. There were two parts of his office, "looking" and "herding." Starting by 6 A.M. at the latest, he made a circuit of three or four miles, counting the sheep to see that all were afoot. If there were cattle in some of the parks they also had to be "looked." When the last



field was reached, the sheep that were to be taken out for the day and "herded" in the unfenced lawns would generally be found lying near the gate, waiting to go forth to the better pasture. This flock at the time of John's herding—should I anticipate by calling it "pastorate"—generally consisted of about fifty or sixty well-bred Leicester ewes, solid sponable sheep, which knew exactly the road to take down the brae to their feeding-grounds, and the shepherd might leave them, while he hurried home for his own breakfast of porridge and milk, for which his two hours' round had fully prepared him. Then books for the forenoon's reading were slung into the plaid-neuk with a hunch of bannock, and he rejoined the flock. There were certain bits where the sheep could scarcely go wrong, but others more delicately situated required a constant eye. These were the nice sweet lawns around the Big House, bordered with ornamental shrubberies, which the sheep must not be allowed to invade. A bitten leaf or branch, a tuft of wool or a footmark on the clean soil would tell its own tale, and bring down a rebuke if not something more. A place therefore would be chosen—some sunny knoll with a clear outlook on the salient points, and if there was no hurry-scurrying of dogs or other disturbing force, the sheep would feed very quietly, and a long spell of reading might be indulged in, or even a process of abstract thinking, with open eye, however, all the while. Or if danger of too near proximity to forbidden fruits threatened, a quiet stroll, book in hand, to the point of attack would turn back the sheep, and a sheep once turned when feeding will lead a whole flock to change their line of grazing. A good dog, if rightly trained, will do it very delicately, and "Cheviot" was a dog of that temper who knew his business thoroughly. About four o'clock, or earlier in the short days, the well-filled flock would be shut into the fold-field for the night, and then the fields must be "looked" again in the reverse order, home being reached before the dark set in.

'Of course it was very different in stormy and wet weather. At all hazards the sheep had to be "looked," and those in the fold-field, where the grass was pretty bare, must be taken out for their full food. Then haps and wraps were needed, and reading out of doors was well-nigh impossible. But even in this emergency there was a resource, for the ruins of the old church stood in the herding-ground, with roof intact in portions and quite waterproof, and through the doors and window, all woodless and glassless, there were good views of the lawn, so that shelter was provided both for book and boy, and on the sandy floor Euclid could be demonstrated.

'The old people still tell how surprised Sir John Hall was to discover the sort of books the herd-boy was reading, and how Professor Hope of Edinburgh, Lady Hall's uncle, came upon him buried in Greek in the old church ruins, and was "rale taen-up wi' him"; but although my father was deeply respected in his services, Sir John Hall, with great good taste, forbore to make a show of John or lift him out of his place. Indeed, all the Greek he was master of would have availed in no degree, had the woolly charge been permitted to make havoc of the shrubs. I may anticipate by saying that the same kind interest continued all through my brother's course of study, and that when he came home in after years for a few days, a room in the buildings adjoining our cottage was always set apart for his use.

'Three nights in the week he went to Cockburnspath to Mr. M'Gregor and rehearsed what he had learned. The old man never limited the quantity to be studied, and as he was at all times niggard of praise, John had little notion of the progress he was making. A grin of satisfaction on the teacher's face or a rare "very well, sir," was ample recompense. If it came out that in a moment of unwonted confidence he had been heard to say, "I have missed my own way, but Cairns will flourish yet," it was set down to idle gossip.

'While this formal teaching was going on, there was another process of education. Now that John was bringing in eightpence or tenpence a day, he could without scruple ask for an occasional sixpence, and for this sum a month's reading could be had from the village subscription-library. He would choose his months at seasons when there was most time for reading, and on the nights of his visits to Mr. M'Gregor would come home laden with books. There were nominal restrictions as to the number of volumes, but John had ingratiated himself with the good lady who kept the books, and found her liberal in interpreting the rules. Our mother, also, would ask him to carry over her basket of butter to the grocer's, and the empty basket was a finely capacious vehicle for conveying the library stores. On one occasion I remember he came home laden with the six volumes of Russell's *Modern Europe*, and many tomes he lifted whose dust was seldom disturbed. There was a complete set of the *Waverley Novels* in the fine, three-volume edition, and they in turn were greedily devoured.'

This village library, through which he worked his way, was a good one of its kind. Although biography and



romance were meagrely represented, there was solid supply of history—Gibbon, Mitford, Robertson, and of course Rollin, while the theological department was far above the ordinary, Butler and Paley being supported by other well-selected apologists. Such literature not only furnished stores produced in after years, but fixed an early mark on his way of thinking.

‘Our family had always been a self-contained one, and at Dunglass the shepherd’s house was some distance from the houses of the other farm-servants. We were not allowed to go out at night, and, as there was small enough space for ourselves, we were not encouraged to bring home any cronies. But a busy and cheerful home it was of a winter night—the young ones conning their lessons for the morrow or the coming Sabbath-school, those more advanced engaged in some handicraft, the father himself with his cobbler’s box, at which he was very dexterous, making a general survey of the family shoes, and the mother plying her wheel, whose cheery *birr* was not so loud as to interrupt the others. What chiefly drew us together was the reading aloud of some book or paper. From the days of his brother’s perils in the Peninsular War, my father always managed to have sight of a newspaper once a week, even when the cheapest cost 6½d. Some six or eight readers clubbed together, each having it for a night, and household matters were so arranged that nothing should come in the way on newspaper night. When it arrived, the best reader in the family, and one capable of giving explanations, was duly installed near the one light, a somewhat scanty, flickering oil-light or *crusie*. All ears were attent, and curious questions were started and opinions expressed as the reading went on. As a rule, John did the reading, though others might claim their turn. We had also the use of *Chambers’s Journal*, and by-and-by the most popular of all our readings came to be Wilson’s *Tales of the Borders*. These were loans from neighbours; for though they cost but three half-pence, that was beyond our means. As a permanent stock, we had in the bookcase—casarto, we called it—some of the usual Secession literature, Boston’s *Fourfold State*, *The Crook in the Lot*, Baxter’s *Saints’ Rest*, Doddridge’s *Rise and Progress*, Jonathan Edwards’ *History of Redemption*, a volume of Josephus, *The Confession of Faith* and the *Larger Catechism*—all these browned with age and flavoured with peat-reek—a much-worn copy of *The*

*Pilgrim's Progress*, with a fragmentary *Burns*. There was also a large assortment of Cameronian and Covenanting publications, Protests, Dissents, etc., Brown's *Dictionary of the Bible*, Hervey's *Meditations*, *Theron and Aspasia*, Erskine's *Sermons*, M'Ewen on *The Types*, Willison's *Afflicted Man's Companion*, Guthrie's *Trial of a Saving Interest*, Sturm's *Reflections*, which was my mother's favourite until she took up with Hawker's *Morning Portion*, and Bogatzky's *Treasury*. Above all, there was the large family Bible, issued in parts by Lochhead of Berwick, but solidly bound and covered with a hairy calf-skin of father's own tanning. It had graphic pictures, not of the highest style, but more to us boys than Martin or Doré is to children now, and above all it had the Apocrypha.

'Once a year there was an opportunity of increasing the stock, when there came into our regions a Dunbar bookseller, who himself conducted, before the days of Chambers and of Knight, a penny magazine for the people. His habit was to get hold of cheap remainder lots and dispose of them by auction peripatetically. The sale was held in the schoolhouse, and it was a great occasion, for he was glib in setting forth his wares. Father was always at the annual sale; indeed, but for his limited means, he would have been a bibliomaniac. In this way Brown's *Dictionary* and Smith's *Wealth of Nations* were procured at wonderfully low prices. Each of us boys saved coppers for the book sale, and on one occasion John astonished the company by bidding as high as fifteen pence for a very thin volume, which was indeed his earliest purchase on his own account. It was Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

'Once father and mother detected too many "no-vél" books and made remonstrance, which no doubt was received with all meekness and docility. Yet the numerous stories which have been told, in a strain of admiration, about John's having been at times so absorbed with his books as to forget his shepherding duties are almost wholly mythical. He was as shrewdly observant as any one could be, so much so that in the evening, when father would inquire about the sheep in the different fields, John could minutely describe the leading sheep in each "hirsle"; and as for the threescore that were daily herded, each bore a name which he had given it, and to which, if it had been hand-fed, it answered readily. He never indeed manifested much dexterity of hand; and in certain operations, where two were better than one, he would entice me to assist him. If I sometimes pled the exigencies of the grammar lesson, he would

promise to help me as we went on ; but he always took care that I did not get the final "tips" till we reached the last field at which assistance was needed. Then I hurried away to distribute my borrowed light among my classmates at the village cross.

'One other enticement, by which he got me up in the morning, was the making of bows and arrows, in which he excelled. A stick for the bow was taken from the thinnings of the yew-trees, or from the larger wild-briar stems, while a reed of straight growth, tipped with an "ousel," or horse-shoe nail, furnished an arrow of cloth-yard length. In our "Ivanhoe" days this primitive weapon had fascination for us all, and there was an endless interest in crossing the fields to see over how many riggs we could shoot an arrow. There was one other pastime in which John gained a skill which he kept in later years. We youngsters had access to a quoiting ground which was kept for the Dunglass servants, and there he learned to make the discs fly. This will explain how, at the annual excursions of the Trustees of his congregation thirty years afterwards, he used to take off his coat eagerly, and show those who were on his side that in "our doctor" they had no merely honorary partner.

'My first recollections of John are of a bright and cheerful boy, even-tempered, kindly and ready always to do a helpful turn for any one. Though somewhat loose-jointed and raw-boned, he was well grown for his years, with an eager face, ruddy and healthy, tanned by exposure, and hair less dark than afterwards. The regulation dress for boys in our position was velveteen jacket and vest with corduroy trousers. Mother always contrived that, when the suit she had diligently patched and mended failed, a new suit should be ready, fit to wear in church. But this brings us round to the church, the minister, and the Sabbath-school, so powerful an influence upon our early life that they must be spoken about separately.'

The above graphic narrative is fully borne out by reminiscences which survive in the locality. Aged people, who were pupils with John at the village school, preserve memories of his incessant study, and describe him as wandering over the fields book in hand, with a pease bannock sticking out of his pocket. One old woman tells how the grim Mr. M'Gregor was actually seen to laugh as he left school one day, and explained the laugh by saying that he

had given John Cairns an exercise 'that wad gar him los' his sleep the nicht.' The same informant, when asked if he was a boy beyond the common, replied: 'I wudna say that he was awfu' smairt, but we aye reckoned him a rale dungeon o' wut.'

So he grew towards manhood, impressing every one by his robust strength, his unfailing pertinacity, his open, kindly temper. But, as we shall see, there were other forces at work, stronger even and deeper than Mr. M'Gregor's teaching, and turning all the 'wut' which the village library furnished towards eternal issues.

## CHAPTER III

### EARLY RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES

The Secession—Character and growth of Secession Church—The Secession ministers—Burghers and Anti-burghers—The United Church—Stockbridge Church and minister—Family religion—Hesitation about John—Departure for college.

THE reader will not complain if a few pages are given to explaining the religious atmosphere which John Cairns breathed in childhood. To ninety-nine people out of a hundred it conveys no knowledge to say that he was baptized as a Burgher and brought up in the United Secession Church; and yet these facts not only regulated his early training, but reasserted themselves when his influence was at its height, determining both consciously and unconsciously his convictions and his sympathies upon the deepest matters.

In the year 1733, four ordained ministers of the Church of Scotland, having been deposed by the General Assembly for alleged contumacy, constituted themselves as a Presbytery under Jesus Christ the alone Head of the Church, and formulated an appeal to 'the first free, faithful and reformed Assembly of the National Church.' This movement, which is known as the Secession, was entirely different in its character from the Disruption, in which 110 years later the Free Church originated. It sprang, not as the latter did from a conflict between Church and State, but from the conduct of Church Courts in dealing with Church affairs. The 'contumacious' ministers had protested against the toleration of doctrinal error by the General Assembly and the enforcement upon presbyteries and congregations of ministers



appointed by lay-patrons ; and they had openly condemned the general policy then prevailing in the Church. Although the Assembly, startled by their calm and measured procedure, recalled the deposition, this step was of no avail. The Seceders felt the strength of their new position, and they reckoned that they could justify it not only before God, but in sight of their fellow-countrymen. Apart from lay-patronage, it seemed to them that the religion of the Bible and the Covenants could not live in the atmosphere of the Established Church Courts, and in order to preserve that religion, they accepted the position—at first thrust upon them involuntarily—of being a disestablished Church. The event showed that, as far as the people of Scotland were concerned, they had rightly gauged the situation. Behind the immediate occasion of the Secession, which, outside the Assembly walls and the parishes of which the deposed men were ministers, created no great stir, there were permanent grounds for dissent from the Established Church of the eighteenth century. Throughout the country there was the desire for a more earnest presentation of Christian doctrine than the so-called Moderates furnished or encouraged, and among the thoughtful people of the land there was the growing conviction that the Church of Christ should be free from non-religious influences in matters ecclesiastical. Time after time Dr. Cairns himself reverted to this aspect of the Secession. ‘Its foundation,’ he said, ‘was laid in homage to Christian truth : it was a contention for something deeper than liberty of jurisdiction . . . for the Word of God, for the divinity of Christ, for the reality and sufficiency of the atonement, for the renewing grace of the Holy Ghost. . . . In keeping the patron out of the parish their aim was to keep error out of the pulpit. They would of all men have repudiated a popular franchise which made the liberty of teaching as multitudinous and various as the tastes of the electors.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gairney Bridge Celebration on December 5, 1883.

Unlike as the Secession and the Disruption were in their origin, they were still more unlike in their growth. There was no organising of schemes nor institution of central funds. No systematic attempt was made to diffuse distinctive principles. Indeed, when asked to specify their distinctive principle, the Seceders replied that their principle was to protest against the distinctive errors of the Established Church or rather of the General Assembly. As to doctrine, worship, organisation, and the ethics of religion, their attitude was intensely conservative. Their growth was due to the fact that in highlands and lowlands those errors were pressing hard upon the people in different shapes and from different causes. There was no propagandism, no promulgation of new doctrine, no fresh theory of Church and State, nor even any sweeping revivalism. It was not as when Chalmers, Guthrie, Cunningham and Begg traversed Scotland with the banners of the Free Church, still less as when Wesley and Whitefield kindled a flame throughout England. It was simply the discovery by Christian people here and there that if an Established and Endowed Church failed to supply their spiritual needs, they could secure 'supply' elsewhere, and that the sacramental, ecclesiastical, doctrinal precision which is essential to the religious happiness of every Scotchman was duly maintained by the 'Associate Presbytery,' which the Secession fathers were discreet enough to organise and to keep within the lines of the Church of the Reformation.

Of course such progress, depending mainly upon local causes, was slow; rarely more than five or six congregations were added in a year. But it was steady; never a year passed without some addition. It was not in the centres of population that these congregations rose. Recently, Scottish dissent has flourished in cities; but this was not so at first. In Glasgow, for instance, which in 1818 had 147,000 inhabitants, there were at that date only four

Secession congregations. As a rule, it was among shepherds and small farmers, in districts which more than others might have been supposed to depend for religious ordinances upon endowment or other extraneous aid, and among the tradesmen of little towns, that the men were found who discovered by experiment the freedom and independence of Christ's Church.

Strange as it may seem, the question of finance was entirely subordinate. Never a penny during those years from Sustentation or Augmentation or Home Mission Fund. To men who were so eager for their souls' welfare as to ask for 'supply of sermon,' it seemed obvious that they should furnish a living to the man who preached the sermon. A very modest contribution—quite within the means of half-a-dozen farmers and a score of shepherds—met a pastor's simple wants. If the small stipend was supplemented by gifts of farm produce, the gifts were tendered as a duty and accepted as a right; and the extreme rigour of church discipline shows that those relations led to no undue dependence of the pastor upon the will of his flock. No doubt in many parishes the number of Seceders was too small to justify a call to a minister; but where this was so, a 'praying society' was formed, and, perhaps twice a year, a journey was made to the nearest church, when the Lord's Supper was observed. The sacraments were held in the utmost reverence, and the official authority of the ordained minister was rigidly maintained. Trained at school and college side by side with the parish minister, he had been ordained by the same rites, and there was not in the Established Church any claim to apostolical succession casting a slur upon dissenting orders. Nor was there any tendency such as has prevailed in other denominations to raise laymen to a place of equal influence on the grounds of their wealth or their supposed spiritual attainments.

Yet in one respect the Secession minister was very closely

limited, a respect which definitely affected the ministry of Dr. Cairns. He was bound, devoted, consecrated to his charge. It was by the concurrence of the presbytery's authority, the people's choice and the providence of God that he had reached his sacred office, and he dared not move in obedience to his own likings. Did another congregation 'call' him, he must not accept the call save for the greater good of the Church as interpreted by Church Court. This was no formal matter, but one which the Court must debate carefully, and decide without more regard to the minister's inclination than Roman Catholic authorities show in the transference of priests. Then, within the ministry, he must be a minister and nothing more. Preparing sermons and visiting his flock, these were his two offices. Time spent otherwise was a violation of his vows. He was the servant of his people for Christ's sake. Writers who have known the strong intellect and the thorough education of the Secession ministry have commented with surprise upon the meagreness of its literary performances. But in truth such performances were not held desirable. 'Oor minister,' was the man chosen and called of God to do this one thing, and to hold all else but loss. Had he learning, it was consecrated to the discovery of the deep things of God's Word with a view to exposition. Had he eloquence, the channel for sacred eloquence was preaching. Had he practical or argumentative gifts, let him show them in the presbytery. The one outlet, the one byplay, in which he indulged without a twinge of conscience was the preparation of the boys and students of his flock for the office of the ministry. A narrow ideal, no doubt, defrauding literature and confining talents which would have won fame in wider circles, but it was an apostolic narrowness, and not the narrowness of ignorance or pride.

The influence of the Secession had been lessened and its growth to some extent hindered by bigotry and schism.



The bigotry was in ethics, not in doctrine. The doctrine of the Seceders was that of the Catholic Church, hardened and edged, no doubt, against all Arminianism and Pelagianism, but entirely free from Antinomianism and from polytheistic presentment of the Trinity. It was the theology of St. Augustine and St. Ambrose rather than that of Luther and Wesley—the theology of the Augsburg Confession and the great English divines, excepting always its sabbatarianism. But on the ethical side it was very different—narrow, stern, imperious, with something of that return to legalism against which St. Paul contended—unintelligible to the Scottish nobility, and intolerable to persons of any class who claimed some social liberty. It supplied no easy method of salvation, such as crowds welcome with enthusiasm, but a strait and narrow way. Sacrifice lay at the root of it—the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifices of His people. If its strength lay in the former, its weakness as a popular religion lay in the latter; for the sacrifices on which it insisted were not always after the mind of Christ.

It was further hindered by schism. But here, too, the weakness was neither doctrinal nor ritualistic. Twice or thrice ministers with Arminian leanings were deposed, and one minister seceded on a question of sacramental ritual as important as those which have recently threatened the unity of the Church of England. But the only real schisms arose in the adjustment of the new ecclesiastical position, and one of these alone was of consequence. While the Secession fathers were still alive, a difference appeared as to the extent to which their condemnation of the Established Church should be carried. It concentrated upon an oath which was required of the burgesses of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Perth. The oath included a pledge to ‘profess and allow with the whole heart the true religion professed within this realm and authorised by the laws thereof.’ All the Seceders held that it was undesirable to take the oath; but some main-



tained that those who took it should be excluded from communion. This strife—a bitter and personal one—led, in 1747, to a rupture, commonly called the Breach, between Burghers and Antiburghers, the Antiburghers being those who excluded, and the Burghers those who declined to exclude participants in the burgess-oath from communion. They formed into separate Churches, and developed separately. Within each of them other controversies arose as to the view to be taken of Established Churches in the abstract; but in every case the New Light prevailed—that is to say, the churches accepted the new position and declined to be bound by the views of the first Seceders. The small schismatic churches which were formed under the title of Old Light have had little influence on Scottish religious life. The controversies cost the Secession only one man of outstanding mark, Thomas M'Crie, the historian; and they were useful not only in defining the ecclesiastical position, but in bringing the two branches of the Secession more closely together. Upon the whole, the Burghers represented the more tolerant view. They did not expect their ministers to take the Covenant publicly, nor did they regard 'occasional hearing'—*i.e.* worshipping occasionally with other denominations—as a sin: they gave women a vote in church matters, and they allowed the singing of certain paraphrases of Scripture as a supplement to the metrical psalms. But when, at the beginning of this century, union was seriously mooted, it was found that upon these points they were willing to bear with one another, and that they were at one on far weightier matters:—'evangelical doctrine, church government and dissent from the Established Church on the grounds of patronage, error in doctrine and lax communion.'

In 1820, when union was effected, the United Secession Church included 280 congregations, scattered over all parts of Scotland except the western and north-western Highlands.

It may be stated at this point, that in its constitution the Secession Church differs in some respects from the other presbyterian churches of Scotland. The affairs of each congregation are directed by the Session or corporation of elders, who are elected by the communicants out of their own number ; the finance being in the hands of managers, who have no ecclesiastical status. The Session is subject to the Presbytery, a local court consisting of the clergy of the district, with an elder from each Session. Presbyteries are subject to the Synod or supreme court, which includes all members of presbytery, clerical and lay, and meets once a year in Edinburgh.<sup>1</sup>

Although the ecclesiastical distinction between Burghers and Antiburghers disappeared when Dr. Cairns was a little child, the religious habits of his home were those of the Burghers—the less rigid body of Dissenters, to which both of his parents belonged. Throughout his childhood and youth he worshipped in churches which had belonged to the Burgher communion, and the congregation of which he ultimately became minister had Burgher traditions.

The Secession had much strength in the Border country, and it found an early foothold in Cockburnspath, the incumbent of the parish being an invalid, and the parochial organisations neglected. But many years passed before the Burgher flock could find either fold or pastor, as the laird declined to let them build a place of worship. At last, in 1793, a neighbour forced his hand by inviting the Burghers to build their church on his estate ; and so a site was granted, as inconvenient as possible, a mile and a half from the village, with no dwellings near. But this niggard kindness proved to be a real boon, for the church was within reach of the farmers and shepherds of the Lammermoor Hills, who were attracted by the vigour of the first minister, and the villagers did not

<sup>1</sup> These Rules have recently been modified, so as to secure a larger representation of the laity in Presbyteries. As to further changes, see page 251.

grudge half-an-hour's walk when they found the church filled to the door. Scotch people will walk a long distance to reach a 'full church.' To show that the church was not meant only for one parish, it was called not Cockburnspath but Stockbridge. It was a square, thatched building holding 500 people, with a respectable manse, a stable for the farmers' ponies, and a cottage for the beadle close at hand.<sup>1</sup> The second minister, Rev. D. M. Inglis, who began his ministry in 1819, brought the Burghers to such a state of prosperity, that they included more than half of the parishioners. The parish minister of that date, who became a non-intrusionist, and figured frequently in Dr. Guthrie's speeches as a man who suffered specially after the Disruption, was then hostile to dissent. But he had incurred the displeasure of the Dunglass family by appointing a session without consulting the heritors, so that his hostility did not act as a hindrance; and when the Cairns family came to the parish, the factor and most of those who were employed on the estate worshipped at Stockbridge.

At that time the minister, Mr. Inglis, a man of intellectual strength and scholarly attainment, was in his prime. During his university course he had been proficient in Greek and Philosophy, and after his ordination he deepened those studies and broadened them by adding natural science and modern languages. As a preacher, he was massive, argumentative and precise. Strongly and pointedly evangelical, he rested his weekly appeals upon the conscience and intelligence of his hearers. In preaching his funeral sermon in 1867, Dr. Cairns spoke of the 'unaffected simplicity of his character, his masculine shrewdness and humour, and his Christian liberality. I have heard many preachers, but I have heard few whose sermons, at their best, were better than

<sup>1</sup> Only in a footnote can the fact be recorded that the beadle was licensed to sell ale. 'Ay,' said our old informant, 'what for no? They sang'd like Turks aifter it.'

the best of his, and his every-day ones had a strength, a simplicity and an unaffected earnestness which excited both thought and Christian feeling.' With a personal appearance not unlike that of Thomas Carlyle, but of larger build, he had all the rugged grandeur of an Old Testament prophet. Indefatigable as a pastor, he made his visits occasions for searching catechetics, and yet at every family crisis showed himself to be a tender and considerate friend. The somewhat grim and exclusive tendency of a scholar and a thinker was toned down into humanity by personal experiences of the deepest sorrow. Altogether, his personality was of a kind fitted to impress the studious boy, with whose father, as an elder in the congregation, he had intimate acquaintance.

'The church and congregation,' says Mr. William Cairns, 'were always a living influence in our family. Before we could fully understand the meaning of religious questions, we heard our parents discussing them with the deepest interest. We were taken to church from the time we were seven or eight, though the distance was quite two miles. On Sabbath it was not required that the sheep should be "herded," and father himself always "looked" them on that day, that the herd laddie might have a longer rest and not bring a slur on the family by falling asleep in church. By the time he came in from his round, all was ready for family worship, this being the only morning in the week when it could be observed, though it never was omitted in the evening. On the Sabbath evening, worship was preceded by the repetition of the Shorter Catechism.

'In the summer months there was an interval of half-an-hour between the forenoon lecture and the afternoon sermon, a delightful breathing time, when the lads who were swift of foot could just reach the bottom of a hill whereon were plenteous blaeberrys, and snatch a fearful joy, if they could swallow without leaving tell-tale marks on lips and tongue. The Sabbath-school met at the close of the services, which began at eleven and lasted till half-past two. It was there that the minister began to take measure of John. One of the school exercises was to rehearse the divisions and illustrations of the sermon, and he attempted to distribute his questions im-



partially. But in the end it generally came to be a dialogue between John and himself. The good man has sometimes told in my hearing how puzzled as well as delighted he used to be with the fulness and aptness of John's answers.'

These were strong forces, which left their own mark. But there was a deeper religious influence at home. In a later chapter, some fragments of letters written when death was near will show what manner of man Dr. Cairns had for a father. He was a noble soul, humble and single-eyed, but filled with the highest wisdom, and touched at every point of life, even in things which to most men are secular, by the consciousness of God. If out of that lowly cottage there came one at whose simplicity of heart and breadth of nature and obvious communion with the living God his countrymen have wondered, he did not excel in those high graces the man to whom he owed his birth and the pure, godly surroundings of his early days.

Mr. William Cairns has spoken of the family as being a 'self-contained' one; but it was something more. Parents and children were bound together by strong and deep affection, which lasted as long as life. Not many households which are broken up early, and send out their members into diverse lines of work, are entirely preserved from misunderstanding, coldness and jealousy. In this case it was so. The fact that two of them are still in life imposes some restraint in speaking of the inward bond by which they have been united. Yet this account of their home would be incomplete without the statement that all the children who one after another left the Dunglass cottage showed traces of their early upbringing, and that none of them disgraced it.<sup>1</sup> They did not all rise in the world, as the world's

<sup>1</sup> The children were Jean, born 1815, died 1875; Thomas, born 1816, died 1856; JOHN, born 1818, died 1892; James, born 1821, died 1845; Janet and William, twins, born 1823, William died 1895; David, born 1825, minister of Stichel, near Kelso; Agnes, born 1828, married to Rev. J. C. Meiklejohn, of Chapelknowe, died 1887.



reckoning goes, and they all were debtors to their distinguished brother. But he was debtor to them—for affection, for respect, for loyal goodness and for kindred helpfulness, of which he knew the worth.

The first to leave home was the eldest daughter, a warm-hearted, keenly sensitive girl, who went to serve in households where she showed a singularly unselfish nature in various positions of trust. The eldest son, Thomas, found employment under his father, whom he afterwards succeeded. The next to leave was James, a thoughtful lad, of whom we shall hear afterwards, and who chose tailoring as his trade, having been incapacitated by an accident for out-door occupation.

‘In the summer of 1834 it became manifest that a new departure would be needed for John, and the question of his going to college arose. With his father the question was, ‘Should it be done?’ with his mother the question was, ‘Could it be done?’ The old scruples as to setting one son of the family before the others came back on my father, and had to be struggled with anew, and the ways and means had afresh to be considered. Though several of the family were now earning wages, the difficulty of getting ends to meet was still formidable. My mother, on the other hand, was more hopeful that a way might be opened up. Mr. M‘Gregor was clear that the foundation he had helped to lay should have some larger structure put upon it. The minister was not less decided in the same direction, and so in the course of the summer it came to be an almost settled matter that John should go to college for the ensuing winter session. As one step towards carrying out the plan, my mother resolved to pay a visit to her youngest brother, who with his family had been resident in Edinburgh for a good many years. There was a daily “pair-coach” passing the Dunglass gates, but from something of the same motive as induced Mrs. John Gilpin to refrain from having the chaise brought up to her own door, she walked on foot most of the way; and from Musselburgh there was that wonderful railway, the “Innocent,” which, as we had all heard, carried passengers for a penny a mile. She had a most cordial reception, and on her inquiring as to the cost of lodgings, uncle and aunt made offer to take John into their own family. There was a room in their as yet humble home which he could share at night with one of their own boys, and use in daytime

for study. Mother was greatly relieved by the proposal, especially when they acquiesced in her purposings as to "board," and having thus secured that the lad, on leaving the shelter of home to face unknown and therefore magnified dangers and temptations with his peculiarly unworldly nature, would have kindly guidance and guardianship, she returned from a visit which was memorable to us all, for our juvenile views regarding Edinburgh were of the most primitive kind.

'John continued at his work till the day before the opening of the college. I well remember his last day in the field. Father and he and I had been engaged in shifting the sheep-nets in the turnip field. The short wintry afternoon drew to a close ere the work was finished. I was sent round by the farm to get a box which the factor had promised John for his books, while father and he proceeded homeward by a more direct route. They must have lingered by the way, for I was first to reach home with the box on my shoulders. The books—they were not many—were soon packed along with part of the stock of clothing. Into another box, which was to be a migratory one, with hinges and padlock—I have it still—the rest of the simple outfit was carefully stowed away, and all was ready for the carrier, who came at eight o'clock to gather his parcels. He did not start from his own home, where John was to join him, till two or three o'clock in the morning. It was a solemn Monday night—a new departure in our family history, which influenced the future life of each of us. But the details have faded from my mind, for it wants but two years of being sixty years since.'

A student from the same parish, some years his senior, passed him on the mail-coach near Haddington, as he trudged along resolutely behind the carrier's van, and noticed his strong, keen, purposeful look. But he himself was unconscious of his strength, having hitherto only been matched against the few boys of his own parish who were with him in the Latin class—the sons of the factor, the village shopkeeper and so forth. Nor had he any clear thought of his life-work. It may be that his parents or his minister foresaw whereunto these things would grow; but in his own heart there was only an eager wish for learning, with thankfulness to God who led him forwards.

## CHAPTER IV

### STUDENT AND SCHOOLMASTER

1834-38

Edinburgh in 1834—Cairns' interest in public questions—Edinburgh University—Classes and class-work—Other interests—Tutor at Longyester—The Darling family—Schoolmaster at Ayton—Studious habits—Interest in theology—Religious crisis—Return to college—Student life—Class distinctions—Views of church affairs—Permanent tutorship.

THE Edinburgh of 1834, although but a small city as far as population goes, was still the centre of Scottish life. Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen were rapidly rising, but made no claim to rival the metropolis ; and there was no penny postage, no electric telegraph, no railway train, no screw-propeller to convey the overbearing influences of London northwards. The literary independence of Edinburgh had indeed all but vanished. Sir Walter Scott had been two years dead. Thomas Carlyle no longer reckoned Edinburgh even as his temporary home. Lady Nairne had left the city, and was on the point of leaving her native land. Lord Jeffrey was past the spring of his full manhood. Although Christopher North, John Brown, De Quincey, Hill Burton, Hugh Miller and other distinctively Scottish writers frequented its streets, these were but the afterglow of its literary brilliancy. Literary epochs, however brilliant, cannot be permanent. They spring out of the coincidence of historical forces with individual genius, and they pass away when the forces change their current, even though some genius survives. If during the generation which succeeded Scott, Scotland maintained its national life, and Edinburgh, so far, its metropolitan

character, this was because the interests of the nation and of the city flowed into new channels. Science, philosophy and religion took the place which had been occupied by literature. Already a band of young experimenters and practitioners, responding to the birth-cries of modern science, were laying the foundation on which an important school of medicine would be built. Those religious and speculative questions which had been dormant during the Scott period, and which each nation, if it is really a nation, must ask and answer independently, were asserting their authority with such force as to secure the independence of Scotland both in religion and in speculation for at least half a century. The Scottish Philosophy was preparing to throw off its provincialism, and to claim the attention of Europe; while the Church of Christ, after strong strivings, was about to evolve a liberty, a liberalism and a practical philanthropy far more distinctive of the Scottish temperament than the bigotries of the eighteenth century, the platitudes of Blair and Campbell or the evangelicalism of Dr. Andrew Thomson and his followers. It was in this last channel that the current would flow most strongly. Few will care to deny that, with two or three exceptions, the best Scottish minds during the next quarter of a century were absorbed by the Church. But in 1834 all was in uncertainty and confusion. Politically the people were feeling their strength in the first 'reformed' elections. Within a fortnight of young Cairns' arrival in Edinburgh, the citizens, assembled in tens of thousands, 'earnestly entreated His Majesty to admit none to his counsels but those who are determined to carry into full effect the principles of Reform.' It was evident that Scotland, hitherto little more politically than a pocketful of easily managed nominees, would be a strong and definite Liberal force. It was also evident, both among Churchmen and among Dissenters, that political freedom would carry with it an overbearing claim for religious freedom. Yielding at last to the



popular outcry against lay-patronage, the General Assembly of the Church had passed what is known as the Veto Act—an extraordinary resolution, the rationale of which no one has attempted to give. It neither removed any evil nor asserted any principle, but declared that a majority of the male heads of families in each parish were entitled to prevent the settlement of a presentee without giving any reason for so doing.<sup>1</sup> Within a few months difficulties emerged which ended in the Disruption; but only the shrewdest minds foresaw the drift of a policy to which Chalmers had lent the lustre of his name and the stimulus of his oratory. Meanwhile the Dissenters had roused the country by a demand for complete separation between Church and State. In Edinburgh, Glasgow, Greenock and other centres they had formed Voluntary Associations united under a Central Board. Their note was clear: 'a compulsory support of religious institutions is inconsistent with the nature of religion, the spirit of the Gospel, the express appointment of Jesus Christ, and the civil rights of man; its tendency as exhibited by its effects is to secularise religion, promote hypocrisy, perpetuate error, produce infidelity, destroy the unity and purity of the Church, and disturb the peace and order of civil society.' Those principles were advocated on platform and in the press by men of acknowledged weight in their respective communities—Marshall, Wardlaw, King, Heugh, Peddie, Brown, Harper and others. Edinburgh was the centre of the turmoil, in which politics and religion were blended, as they must needs be so long as the State is sponsor for the Church. Churchmen were alarmed, and put forward their strongest champions. Candlish, Cunningham, Guthrie, Charles Brown, Murray Dunlop, Buchanan, Inglis and even M'Cheyne outdid one another in their denunciations

<sup>1</sup> It is singular to reflect that the excellent men who drafted this resolution charged those Liberals of other Churches who declined to countenance it with political and religious inconsistency.



of an 'apostate and perjured Secession,' the 'tide of atheism, infidelity, popery, voluntaryism,' and so forth. But on the other side, too, there was plain speaking. Meanwhile Chalmers had thrown fuel into the flame by combining a noble scheme of Church Extension with a less noble attempt to secure public funds for its support—an attempt which the Dissenters felt bound to resist. Deputations hurried to and from London, seeking to checkmate one another by interviewing Ministers of State and making the usual promises of political support. Throughout Scotland there was keen tension and great excitement, with the expectation on both sides of a speedy settlement—among Churchmen through the annihilation of dissent, and among Dissenters through disestablishment. None of the combatants can have dreamed that eventually they would fall affectionately into one another's arms, and that sixty years afterwards the Church question in Scotland would be still unsettled.

Cairns was full of boyish interest in those movements. He was an enthusiastic politician on the Whig side. He first let his voice be heard in public at the Parliamentary election on Jan. 14th, 1835, when the Right Hon. James Abercromby and Sir John Campbell were returned as supporters of Lord Melbourne, and his extraordinary strength of lung, not without value at the hustings even when inarticulate, was exercised without restraint, for next morning at college it was noted that he could not speak above a whisper, nor take his usual part in those juvenile controversies with which the quadrangles and classrooms were ringing. The testimony of his fellow-students proves that even at this stage he was a keen opponent of State-churchism, keener or at least more vehement than in later student life. 'From the first,' writes Dr. James Hardy, 'he was great in controversy. He sat behind me, and during the ten minutes before the appearance of the professor he was always the centre of a knot of disputants upon the Church question or some question of politics.

Every one knew him ; he was willing to argue with any one, and seemed to thirst for antagonists. Yet the antagonism never caused strife.'

The University of Edinburgh, like the city and the nation, was in a transition stage. It no longer served to any extent as a finishing school for young English noblemen ; and instead of adaptation to the new claims of the time, there was a ceaseless guerilla rebellion of the professors against the Town Council, with whom lay not only university patronage but control of the internal economy of the university. No doubt there was distinction about a college which included in its teaching staff Chalmers and Welsh, Christopher North and James Forbes, Macvey Napier, Christison, Hope, Syme, Alison and Ballingall ; but few of those distinguished men were attractive as teachers. The clinical method had not yet made its way into the Medical Faculty ; and the Arts Faculty was a close corporation, in which the personal interests of the professors often outweighed the interests of learning. Between 1825 and 1834, the number of students declined steadily from 2260 to 1662, of whom 529 were students of Arts. The condition of the Arts Faculty may be inferred from the fact that in 1835 it was necessary to enact that Degrees should not be conferred without proper examination, an enactment which reduced the average annual number of graduates from 22 to 12. There was at least one of the classes in which it was common for students to matriculate in November, to spend the winter in England and to receive certificates of class attendance in March. The tone of the governing body in 1834 may be gathered from the opening address of the Reverend Principal :—

'Young gentlemen, there is one practice which I feel it my duty to check—a practice which is very improper in itself, and which I am assured you only follow because too little attention is paid to it in preparatory schools ; it is that of making balls of snow.'

Yet among the students there was keen intellectual life. The younger scientific school were gathering under the title of the Friends of Truth round *Maga*, a magazine of which Edward Forbes was editor; and an equally notable group of men—M'Cheyne, Bonar, A. N. Somerville, W. Wilson and Henry Moncreiff—met on Saturdays for study of the Scriptures. But from the latter circle Cairns was excluded by his youthfulness, and from the former on social grounds. The Scottish universities are democratic, but with the democracy of intellect. The rustic student, during his first session, is as rigidly shut out from the better circles of student-life as was the Oxford servitor in Dr. Johnson's time. It is only after he has fought his way to the front rank in the classroom that the gates of friendship with the best men of his year are thrown freely open to him. So it was that the only society in which Cairns took part during this session was a friendly meeting on the Friday evenings with two other Berwickshire students, when the class difficulties were discussed, and the sederunt was closed by 'a turn at sacred music.'

In the classroom he was at once conspicuous, although he had enrolled in classes usually attended by students in their second year. The Latin professor, James Pillans, once a tutor at Eton and thereafter Rector of the Edinburgh High School, was a thorough scholar, who combined appreciation of the niceties of language with a genial, if somewhat discursive attention to general literature and antiquities. His senior class of 120 students included many who subsequently reached distinction—Sir Robert Menzies, Sheriff Cleghorn, Dr. J. R. M'Duff, Professors Campbell Fraser, Patrick Muirhead and Maxwell Nicholson—but in two or three months Cairns had secured a place among the foremost. His class exercises, the earliest surviving specimens of his composition, are marked by steady care and clear judgment. Even on the purely linguistic side they are remarkable pro-



ductions for a boy of sixteen trained in evening classes at a parish school, having a rhythm of pure Latinity such as can be gained only by close and wide reading. They have one characteristic feature. The Professor intrusted the correction of exercises to senior students, styled 'inspectors,' against whose corrections there was a right of appeal. In Cairns' exercises the inspectors' corrections are few, but in the combative spirit of the Oldcambus school every doubtful correction has been 'appealed,' and in every case the appeal has been sustained by the Professor.

The Greek class was in different hands. Professor George Dunbar, although the author of a respectable lexicon, was in no sense a teacher, and his classroom was devoid of interest. One prize-essay written for this class survives, a translation of the latter part of the *Phaedo* of Plato. From beginning to end there is only one error, and the introduction shows an almost precocious maturity in its criticisms:—

'The style of Plato is in many places strongly tinctured with the poetical spirit by which he was led to engage with such eagerness in the noble art. Aristotle has characterised it as a middle species of diction between poetry and prose. . . . The opinions of *Phaedo*, although delivered under the name of Socrates, are really those of Plato embellished, and in some places obscured, by the subtle reasoning and metaphysical nicety of that philosopher. But in the end of the dialogue, when he descends from his lofty eminence and proceeds to relate the circumstances attending the death of Socrates, the style is changed; the language becomes plain, simple, and elegant, and has an expression of subdued grief which renders the account of an event, extremely mournful in itself, so exquisitely pathetic that one who reads it can, like Cicero, scarcely refrain from tears.'

The house of his mother's brother in Charles or Crichton Street, in which he was domiciled, was one in which the simplicity of country habits and manners was preserved, and in which he found a real home. The eldest son, John Murray, whose room he shared, was of his own age, and

acted as a kind of mentor to him, preventing him from the blunders usual in the case of raw lads, and even assisting him in such trifles as the tie of his neckerchief. A steady, high-toned youth he was, who rose afterwards by energy and enterprise to be a pioneer in the industries of Galashiels, and for whom Cairns retained feelings of affection and gratitude until his death half a century later.

On the Sundays he worshipped with his relatives in the Portsburgh Secession Meeting-house, a church which has a place in literature through the friendship of one of its ministers, 'guid Andra Louden,' with Henry Erskine. In 1834 the minister was the Rev. James Robertson, an author of some repute, who played a useful part in later theological debate. Dr. Cairns recalled afterwards 'happy hours spent in his house, when he mingled with young students as their equal.'

His home letters of this date have been destroyed; but Mr. William Cairns recollects the eagerness with which their careful descriptions of his experiences were perused, and the family pride in the new share possessed in the mysterious grandeur of the metropolis.

'He had a commission to keep his eye on the cheap bookstalls, and the box which took to Edinburgh supplies from the cottage garden and dairy rarely returned empty. There would be some odd pamphlets or stray numbers of magazines, or tattered volumes bought at astonishing cheapness, and, best of all, an occasional Bible, so that, before the session ended, each of us could take a separate Bible to church and Sunday-school.'

Very grateful was the good mother for tidings which arrived in February. Through the influence of the father of a classmate, he was recommended for a presentation bursary, and could report that the Town Council had made payment to him of £3, 10s. 4d.

The close of the session brought self-won distinction. In Latin he was out-distanced by a student of brilliant promise,



six years his senior, William Hewitson, afterwards minister at Dirleton; but he was first in private Latin studies and in Greek prose. He had, however, gained something better than prizes, having measured his brains against the best in the university, and learnt his capabilities. He had also left his mark. When he returned to the university two and a half years later, he was welcomed both by professors and by students as 'the rising man.'

The library record of his reading bears no trace of an inclination towards religious literature. During term time he confined himself to books bearing on his class studies, and when the strain of competition was over, betook himself to Histories of Scotland and England, Coleridge, Byron, *Wild Sports in the West*, and the *Edinburgh Review*. The only book he read with any special bearing upon religion was the *Scots Worthies*.

When the long vacation began, another of his mother's brothers, with that strong clan feeling which marked the whole connection, invited him to be resident tutor to his three boys at the farmhouse of Longyester in the parish of Gifford. There he spent four pleasant months in teaching and study, winning the hearts of his pupils, whom he accompanied in long afternoon rides over the hills. On some Saturdays he rode across to Dunglass, full twenty miles away, to spend the Sabbath with his parents; but his usual place of worship was the East Church of Haddington, once the scene of the ministry of the author of the *Self-interpreting Bible*. The seven miles' trudge was lightened by the company of the farm steward, Robert Leitch, a man of high intelligence, noteworthy as one of his early correspondents.

While living at Longyester, he formed another friendship which furnished him with a second home and exercised a strong influence upon his early manhood. At Millknowe, a few miles distant, there lived a family of his own relatives,

three brothers and two sisters of the name of Darling, who represented a type of Scottish farmer now almost extinct. Refined, cultured and artistic in their attainments and their tastes, they pursued their calling with a simplicity and dignity which secured for them both the confiding respect of the poor and the equal friendship of the rich. Their hospitality, freely extended to the poorest vagrant who would conduct himself with decency, was cordially sought for by the gentle folk of the neighbourhood without any sense of patronage. While the recognised authorities of a wide district upon all farming matters, they were equally conversant with local antiquities and geology, and gathered around them such of their neighbours as had musical and literary tastes. The farmhouse, which lay midway between Haddington and Duns, was the welcome resting-place not only for their countless friends but for tired strangers, so that at certain seasons there was no reckoning the number of guests, who varied indefinitely in political and religious opinion as well as in social grade. The moving spirit of the household was Miss Jean Darling, to whom many of the letters in this volume are addressed. She had read widely, and had strong literary sympathies, with a shrewd critical sense balanced by a quiet winsomeness and by the tenderest charity. Wherever there was trouble or anxiety in the district, consultation with 'Miss Jean' was imperative—her plain remedies for sickness being usually sufficient for the sound constitutions of the shepherds and farmers, and her sagacity as an adviser in family affairs undisputed. Her genial and motherly heart turned warmly towards the boy student as one of her own kindred, and she saw at once the growing reach of his powers. To him, this friendship was the opening of a new aspect of life,—his introduction to those social relations with educated women which marked every stage of his later career; and he entered into it with a simplicity and cordiality possible only to an entirely unconscious lad. Even at this

early age—he was only seventeen—there was a freedom and cheerfulness in his manner which the ungainliness and shyness of a humble upbringing did not check. He moved about among his new friends, as afterwards among people of higher rank, without a touch of constraint, and spoke and wrote to them about his plans and his tastes with a trustfulness of which they were well worthy.

As the summer advanced, unforeseen obstacles arose in the way of a return to college. His father had a long illness, requiring more than ordinary care and nourishment and leaving a doctor's bill behind it, and the family resources could not bear the strain of another winter in Edinburgh. In this crisis there seemed a providence—all things were to them providential—in a request from Mr. Trotter, who had by this time become parish schoolmaster at Ayton, that John would assist him for a year. The offer was in the line of his aspirations, which, meantime, pointed towards the teaching profession; and in the early autumn he entered upon the assistantship, finding a home with his aunt, who still lived in the village of Ayton. The school was a large one, with 150 or 200 scholars, and the new assistant, an awkward-looking boy of seventeen, dressed in a jacket and trousers which he had far outgrown, found his task troublesome at first, and had often to appeal to his chief, who alone administered 'the tawse.' But before two months had passed, a heavier burden was laid upon him. Mr. Trotter resigned his office, and owing to local disputes there was an interregnum of several months, during which the sole charge of the school devolved upon the assistant. But, with a faculty for dealing with emergencies which marked him from the first, he rose to the occasion. When the children entered school upon the first day of his incumbency, hopeful of a respite from Trotter's stern discipline, the gawky boy in jacket had vanished, and they were faced by an erect and solemn figure dressed in a wonderful blue swallow-tail coat with brass buttons and armed



with a thick cane. Several of his pupils survive, and they are unanimous in attesting him not only as a careful teacher but as a somewhat stern disciplinarian, slightly imperious in manner and unsparing in the use of the rod. According to modern ideas of schoolmastering, it is all but incredible that a boy of seventeen, without any experience, should teach 150 children at different stages efficiently. But education was a simpler matter in those days. First came the long Bible lesson and the metrical psalm or paraphrase for the day, followed by the Shorter Catechism, with 'proofs' in the case of the older children; then sums were worked out by the advanced classes while the juniors repeated their lessons; and so on by turns, order being preserved only by versatility and physical activity on the teacher's part. There were no primers or grammars or brevities of any sort. The text-books were *Scotch Beauties*, Barrie's *Collection*, and Ewing's *Elocution*, which consisted of extracts from Shakespeare, Addison, Hooke, Livy and other classics, with an appendix containing the Principles of English Grammar, into which the older pupils were initiated. Possibly the children learned as much from the repetition of 'The quality of mercy is not strained,' or 'Twas now the dead of night when sleep repairs', as children of the same grade learn now from grammatical analysis and commercial geography. The work at least was more pleasant for the teacher, and Cairns was thoroughly happy in it, both during the interregnum, and when, on the appointment of a schoolmaster, he resumed the position of assistant.

He had a few friends at Ayton. A college class-fellow, Henry Weir, spent his holidays at Berwick, and during the summer the two boys used to meet half-way between Berwick and Ayton, and spend an hour chatting on the roadside bank. He also became intimate with a Baptist family of the name of Smith, two members of which rose to some distinction, the one as a temperance lecturer, the other as the authoress of the *Pearl of Days*. His intercourse

with them was prompted at first by generosity, the Aytonians being intolerant of Baptist views; but it proved to be of value to him, strengthening religious convictions which were being formed under other influences. Besides these, and his elderly aunt, who grew so warmly attached to him that she set herself to learn the art of writing in order that they might correspond when separated, he had valued friends in the two Secession ministers—the genial Mr. Ure, who has been already mentioned, and his Anti-burgher neighbour, Rev. James Stark, a sound scholar and a robust theologian. Both manse with their libraries were thrown open to the young teacher, and good guidance was given in the choice of books.

During those two years, however, he was above all else a student. The whole day except school hours was given to study. In the early morning he was seen making his way to the river-side with eyes fixed upon some musty volume. He read during his meals, and so late into the night that his good aunt was distressed about his health and lodged complaints with his parents. He not only read but mastered what he read, beginning with such Latin and Greek classics as the ministers' libraries furnished. Homer, Demosthenes, Aeschines, Livy, Tacitus, Horace and Lucan, he read straight through, analysing everything, making annotations of his own, and so arranging his papers that after sixty years the course of his study can be followed as clearly as though it had been recorded yesterday. His criticisms on syntax and grammar are shrewd, incisive, and minutely accurate, suggesting rather the mature scholarship of a man of thirty than the experimental efforts of a boy student. He revels in delicacies of language and subtle literary distinctions, while the precision and adequacy of his own phrases are so combined with a faculty of appreciation as to convey the idea that he would have reached eminence in scholarship, had not the



claims of thought and life dwarfed those of language and literature. It is significant that his first surviving letter, which is addressed to Henry Weir, is written in vigorous Latin and closes with a postscript in idiomatic French.

His intention was to return to Edinburgh in November 1836, and his studies were directed to preparation for the university classes; but when that date approached, the way was not yet clear financially, and his engagement at Ayton was extended for twelve months. The following letter shows the beginning of a change in the direction of his thoughts:—

TO ROBERT LEITCH, LONGYESTER

AYTON, Dec. 12, 1836.

‘. . . I am in the enjoyment of excellent health of body and tolerable soundness of mind. Everything in the school goes on as well as can be expected. Doubtless there are many vexations in a teacher’s life arising from the heaviness of the children’s heads, and the foolish prejudices of parents; and yet these are more than counterbalanced by the pleasure of communicating knowledge, the satisfaction of seeing the children’s minds open and expand, and, though last not least, the consciousness of possessing magisterial and almost despotic authority, a consideration which has great influence in some minds and from which, I am forced to confess, my own is not free.

‘Besides the daily labours of the school, I have procured an hour’s private teaching, for which I am remunerated at the rate of one guinea per quarter. This is an addition to my earnings by no means despicable, for I value money as an instrument of great power in the procuring of knowledge, while I trust I shall be kept from the sordid passion of avarice, or regard to money for its own sake.

‘In my private studies I am just now very busy—principally with the classics. By the kindness of Mr. Ure, I am reading Dr. Dick’s *Lectures on Systematic Theology*, a subject of which I am very fond, and of which this most admirable work gives the fullest and most satisfactory exposition. The information to be derived from it on the deep subjects of the divine decrees, free-will, original sin,

and indeed every point in divinity, is most astonishing and conveyed with wonderful clearness. From the reading of it I feel already, and will feel to a much greater degree, an enlargement of my conceptions of speculative divinity. . . . Give my most hearty good wishes to your wife and children, nor forgetting that chubby, curly-headed girl whose bashfulness did not permit her to take a lesson from me, nor indeed any one who in your opinion cares a straw about me.'

During the spring of 1837 the attraction of theology became stronger and stronger. His note-books abound in quotations from Butler, Jeremy Taylor, Robert Hall, and Richard Baxter. There are careful analyses of Keith's *Evidences from Prophecy*, Chalmers' *Evidences*, Brown's *Religion and the Means of its Attainment*, and other apologetic works of the same school. Above all, there is a clear abstract of the Pauline Epistles, not slavish, but free and fresh in its criticism, more appreciative perhaps of the intellectual than of the devotional, but earnest and admiring as of one whose mind is gradually yielding to argument. At midsummer came a crisis.

#### TO HENRY WEIR

AYTON, July 7, 1837.

'Do not be alarmed if I address you in a tone somewhat graver than that which characterises your epistle. Were I to counterfeit sprightliness and gaiety, the feelings of my heart would belie the language of my lips. Upon many subjects, since our last interview, my sentiments have undergone a decided and, I trust, a permanent change. You will guess that I allude to the subject of religion, the most important which can attract the attention of man. Upon this point, unfortunately, in the multiplicity of our personal communications, we either forbore to touch, or we dismissed it after a slight and cursory notice. It is impossible but that young men like you and me, who have in some degree been taught to exercise our rational faculties, should form in our own minds a sort of plan, indefinite perhaps but yet conceived, according to which we resolve as far as depends upon ourselves, to regulate our conduct in after life. Making our peculiar capacities and temper, our situation

and prospects in life the basis of our calculation, we sketch out an outline of our future lives, the filling up of which we leave to circumstances. But there are certain principles to which we resolve fixedly to adhere, certain objects to which we give prominence, and to which we are determined to make others subordinate. Such a process, I am convinced, must have taken place in the mind of every one who had any conception that life was given for a definite purpose, or who had in any degree been accustomed to reflection on his own nature or surrounding objects. Now, in planning such an institution of life, how irrational is it to neglect futurity, how foolish, as well as criminal, to leave out of the calculation that element which of all others ought to exercise the greatest influence, by which the whole scheme should be modified, to a regard for which everything else in the system ought to be sacrificed! Of what consequence are riches, honours, learning or intellectual pleasures, in comparison with the enjoyments of religion, the restoration of the deadened moral feelings to susceptibility, the rescue from a state of disconformity to the will and nature of the Eternal, and the elevation of the immortal spirit to the highest degree of spiritual excellence? Can the fruition of all those earthly blessings which may be compressed within the brief span of human existence be put in competition with the exceeding and eternal weight of glory reserved in heaven for the people of God? Or can the remembrance of their vanished sweetness alleviate the unmingled woe of their self-destroyed votaries? In short, is any of the things of time worthy to divert the attention of an immortal being from the inquiry, How he may escape the misery due to transgressions which it required the atonement of an Incarnate God to expiate, and secure an interest in those blessings which the mediation of a Divine Redeemer has made attainable by our fallen race?

‘Perhaps you may feel inclined to smile at my sermonising, and to regard with surprise a strain of language so different from what I used to hold. Such, however, are the sober and serious convictions of my heart. In prosecuting a course of religious inquiry for several months past, my attention has been in a great degree directed to the speculative difficulties of religion. These have been a cause of perplexity and disquietude; but with regard to the paramount importance of the subject and the duty and advantages of understanding and believing the Gospel, my mind has never wavered.

‘Some of the causes which prejudiced me formerly against religion



I shall mention, as they may perhaps exert the same injurious influence on your mind, and as I have learned their groundlessness.

‘First, there was the supposition that religion suspended or destroyed the exercise of the intellectual powers. The closeness, precision and depth of thought of which I was formerly ignorant, and which I now in some measure possess, are the product of attention to religion. . . .

‘Thus far I wrote on Saturday. I now on Monday resume the subject. . . . An attentive consideration of the Epistles of St. Paul is the best way to get rid of this objection. This wisest of men, in writings which form part of a divinely attested revelation, exhorts to the attainment of true religion under the name of wisdom, and represents irreligion as folly. How can that be irrational or suspensive of the intellect which has emanated from the Omniscient, and how can any rational being exclude from his thoughts, on this pretence, a subject which has occupied the divine mind and directed the divine counsels from the unbeginning ages of eternity to the present hour? I would not therefore have you affrighted by those denunciations of “carnal reason” in which some parties are so prone to indulge. True religion is in every part consistent with the dictates of sound reason, and all apparent diversities arise from an abandonment of the principles of just reasoning.

‘Another stumbling-block in the way of young men is the grossness of conception on religious matters, frequently apparent in uncultivated minds, and shown by the iteration of cant phrases which they, though pious and well-intentioned, are always apt to use. The Christian religion, if we wish to attain an accurate conception of it as a system, must be learned not from the mouths of its professors nor the cumbrous heaviness of creeds and confessions, but from the Scriptures of truth, in which, without didactic formality, the principles and objects of the restorative dispensation, and the method of our being benefited by it, are stated in such a manner as to convince the understanding and impress the heart. . . . Before it is possible for any thinking being, in consistency with his character as a rational agent, to neglect religion and discard it from his thoughts as a matter of personal concern, he must by conclusive reasoning overthrow that array of evidences by which the original of Christianity is established; he must refute all the arguments for the existence of a Deity; he must subvert the foundations of morality by disproving the immortality of the soul and by showing that right and wrong, vice and virtue, are ideal distinctions, that conscience is a nonentity and responsibility a

dream. When he shall have accomplished this herculean task, he may rejoice in emancipation from restraints; he may, with a nature degraded in theory to the level of brutality, enjoy without dread of future reckoning the pleasures of sense; but never can he feel the elevating consciousness of pursuing a path sanctioned by the approval of Divinity and conducting to glory, honour, and immortality. My dear Henry, I most earnestly wish that you would devote the energies of your mind to the attentive consideration of religion, and I have no doubt that, through the tuition of the Divine Spirit, you would speedily arrive at the same conviction of the importance of the subject with myself, and then our friendship would, by the influence of those feelings which religion implants, be more hallowed and intimate than before. I long ardently to see you.'

There is a tradition in the family that about the same date a letter reached Dunglass containing a more intimate record of the same crisis; but no supplement to the above clear statement is needed. The supernatural had laid hold upon him in the most natural of ways—through the steady growth of a strong, pure and entirely honest mind, which was bound to take its own reckoning with the truths received in childhood. A week later, he and Weir met at their trysting-place under the hedgerows, and there was a still fuller interchange of thought. A letter written when his stay at Ayton was drawing to a close shows how the change affected his lines of study:—

TO HENRY WEIR

AYTON, *Aug. 13, 1837.*

'I have applied myself to the compiling of a vocabulary or lexicon of the New Testament, and have already in the course of two weeks selected and arranged alphabetically all the vocables in Matthew as far as the verbs. I am deeply sensible that without a thorough and critical knowledge of the original language of the Christian revelation one must be in a manner unqualified to appreciate the correctness, or discover the falsity, of the doctrines held by those denominations of Christians who, by the aid of criticism, would assail and overturn the views of Scriptural truth which generally



prevail in the Church. To the acquisition of such a knowledge I cannot think of any less laborious or more certain road than that which I have begun to follow. Besides being urged by the desire not to disgrace myself at college by unpardonable deficiency in Greek, I have been led to select as a text-book the New Testament in preference to any other classic, not only by the unspeakably more momentous importance of the knowledge to be thus attained, but also by the consideration that although deficient in Attic purity, the vocables, the construction, and the grand outlines of the language may be acquired from it as well as from Thucydides, Plato or Xenophon. I do not think that I can again be deluded into admiration or earnest study of that mass of disgusting indecency and debasing, and at the same time ridiculous, idolatry misnamed "the elegant and beautiful mythology of the Greeks."

Yet there was no complete revolution. Before two months had passed he was again immersed in 'the elegant and beautiful mythology of the Greeks.' He did not change his friendships. He did not consecrate himself to the ministry. There is no trace of any connection between this crisis and his becoming a church communicant.<sup>1</sup> Inward changes of a more emotional character and with more practical bearings awaited him. But they came gradually and silently, and they never caused a cleavage between his intellectual and his spiritual life. It was at this stage that the foundation stone of his faith was laid. In a paper written two or three years later he says: 'The greatest of all discoveries is when a man finds God.' He had found God, had looked upon human sinfulness and upon all things mortal in the light of eternity, and had welcomed the light of revelation. Although spiritual perplexities came upon him afterwards, he never ceased to believe with mind as well as heart in Jesus Christ as Saviour and in the Bible as an authentic record of God's will.

In November 1837 he returned to Edinburgh and enrolled in the Latin, Greek, and Logic classes. Although still in

<sup>1</sup> Careful inquiry has not disclosed more than this as to the date of his first communion.

constant intercourse with his uncle's family, he now lived in lodgings, which he shared with William Inglis, son of the Stockbridge minister, who was a pupil at the Royal High School. The domestic side of his life is disclosed in letters to his parents.

6 WEST RICHMOND STREET, *Nov. 7, 1837.*

' . . . The lodging which we occupy is a very good room, measuring 18 by 16 feet, in every way neat and comfortable. The walls are hung with pictures and the windows adorned with flowers. The rent is 3s. 6d., with a promise of abatement when the price of coals is lowered. This is no doubt a great sum of money, but I trust that it will be amply compensated by the honesty, cleanliness, economy and good temper of our landlady. By the blessing of God, William and I are in excellent health and in fine working order.'

6 WEST RICHMOND STREET, *Nov. 21, 1837.*

' . . . In regard to studies, I have made a very fair start, and if God grant me health, with ordinary diligence, which, in such a case, it would be most disgraceful to withhold, I have no doubt that in the acquisition of all those branches of knowledge for the attainment of which a session at college is so desirable, I shall make such progress as, to myself at least, will counterbalance all expense. I have taken a seat in Dr. Peddie's Chapel, Bristo Street, and I hope not to be more remiss in the pursuit of divine than of human wisdom. I shall give you the details of my daily life :—

' Rise at 8 ; 8.30–10 Latin class ; 10–1 private study ; 1–2 Logic class ; 2–3 Greek class ; 4–12.30 private study.

' As to meals—breakfast on porridge and treacle at 8.15 ; dine on broth and mutton or varieties of potatoes with beef or fish at 3.15 ; coffee at 7 : if hungry, a little bread before bed. I can live quite easily and comfortably on 3s. or 3s. 6d. per week, and when you see me you will find that I have grown fat on student's fare.

' I have just received the numerous and useful articles which your kindness has prompted you to send, and I certainly feel that ingratitude to the great Giver of all good, or to you, would in the present circumstances be a sin and disgrace of the blackest character. Here am I placed by providence in circumstances the most congenial to my disposition, with every facility for the pursuit

of knowledge, blessed with kind relatives who study my comfort and aid my endeavours, while I possess mental sanity and bodily health in great measure. I feel that if in this case I should violate the laws of God and the obligations of humanity by deserting the path of diligence and virtue, my conduct would be something too base to name. . . . I have, shall I say, the sorrow or the gratification to inform you that the name of a certain fair maid of Duns is about to perish from the earth and to be merged in that of Mr. D——, who on Friday will lose his personal individuality by becoming one flesh with the woman of his choice. I was urged to accept the conspicuous part of bridesman, but from my unacquaintance with such rites I most strenuously declined the honour. . . .’

6 WEST RICHMOND STREET, *Nov.* 28, 1837.

‘I have been introduced to Mrs. L——, and urgently requested by her to call often; but I gave a sort of civil denial by saying that I would call when I had time; not that I mean never to see the hospitable woman, but time is too valuable to be frittered away in needless calls . . . .’

6 WEST RICHMOND STREET, *Dec.* 26, 1837.

‘I hope that by the favour of the Most High you are all in the possession of good health. I have procured a copy of Baxter’s *Saints’ Rest*, which I send with another treatise of one of the great divines of the seventeenth century. These did not cost me more than 2s. I have also sent for David’s use an atlas, which cannot fail to be of the greatest service to him, and indeed to you all, as a work of reference in reading history, travels, newspapers, etc. I trust he will make good use of it. At his time of life I would have considered such a work an invaluable gift, and would have gained from it that knowledge of geography which, if I have acquired it at all, has been acquired when it was felt a much greater task. I trust that you will not consider 5s. as an extravagant price for it. The auctioneer warranted it quite correct, and offered, if a mistake should be discovered within a twelvemonth, to take it back. I bought at the same time the whole works of Cowper and Milton, with Young’s *Night Thoughts* for the sum of 2s. 6d.—in boards to be sure, yet pretty firm and very clearly printed. I am sensible that money is not to be thrown away on books, though ever so cheap, if they are not needed or if more pressing exigencies demand economy; yet these works are of such sterling merit, that they are to be procured at almost any hazard. Do not think of looking upon

these as debts, as in present circumstances, by the goodness of God, I can easily afford to give them. The presentation to the Mortonhall Bursary only awaits the sanction of the Town Council, and this with the other bursary will yield nearly £11 per annum. You see what grounds I have for thankfulness to God for the comfortable circumstances in which I now pursue my studies, and to Bailie Donaldson<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Trotter as the instruments of His benevolence. May I be enabled to demonstrate my gratitude by conduct void of offence towards God and man! W. Inglis has gone to inhale from the refreshing breezes that blow from Ewieside's fern-clad slopes as much health and rosy colour as will stand the tear and wear of Edinburgh. I know very well where inclination would prompt myself to behold the slow exhaustion of the lingering relics of the departing year . . . but I have three essays to write within nine days, and duty proclaims the necessity of Christmasising here. . . . I request in the box a snack of your Hogmanay cakes, and I conclude, dear parents, with wishing that the ensuing year, should we see its close, may leave us happier, wiser and better, or that, if taken from this world, we may be removed to the world of bliss. . . .'

6 WEST RICHMOND STREET, *Feb.* 14, 1838.

' . . . Nothing could more clearly manifest my little interest in the students' riot than that I should have forgot to mention it. Fortunately both days I happened to be busy in a class ; otherwise there is no saying but I might have found quarters for the night in the den of the police. I strictly abstained from interfering in the subsequent proceedings, being convinced that the students, although irritated by unfair treatment, were guilty of an unjustifiable outrage. In my personal studies I feel much pleasure, and exercise, I daresay, a moderate degree of application. . . . I am a good deal engaged in writing, and of this the result will be known at the end of the session. Health and other blessings afford great room for thankfulness to the Father of Mercies, nor is mental cultivation the least of these. . . . I wish the session were done, and I wish it would last other six months, the former from my strong desire to see you all, the latter from the beneficial effects which I feel to result from a winter in Edinburgh. . . .'

<sup>1</sup> Bailie Donaldson, an enlightened citizen repeatedly named in Lord Cockburn's *Memoirs*, had recommended him to Mr. Trotter of Mortonhall for a bursary.



6 WEST RICHMOND STREET, *March 7, 1838.*

'There is a circumstance which, but for its connection with the subject of clothes, I should not now mention. You are aware that a gold medal is given yearly by the Society of Writers to the Signet to the best scholar in the Latin Class. Five are selected to compete for it by the votes of their fellow-students. Having been placed in the number a fortnight ago, I have, after a pretty close trial, been declared the successful competitor. The grand sequence is this, that at the end of the session I must come forward in the presence of many of the Edinburgh grandees and deliver a Latin oration as a prelude to receiving the medal. Although I have little fear that an oration will be forthcoming of the ordinary length and quality, I doubt that the trepidation of so unusual a position will cause me to break down in the delivery of it; but we shall see. The reference of this subject to the clothes you will at once discern. The trousers are too tight, and an addition must be made to their length. The coat is too wide in the body, too short and tight in the sleeves, and too spare in the skirt. . . . As to my feelings, I shall say nothing, because I do not look upon the honour as one of a kind that ought to excite the least elation. Besides, I am very busy with writing for prizes, and I shall account rewards in that department more valuable as being attained with greater labour. I have an immense volume of paper to transcribe before a not distant day. I cannot conclude without expressing the earnest desire that this honour may be overruled by divine providence for my ultimate and greatest good. I would not wish you to blazon it, nor would I, but for the cause mentioned, have taken any notice of it. . . .'

Behind this homely record of a winter's diligence, a beginning had been made of a career of distinction in which he completely eclipsed all his contemporaries.<sup>1</sup> He no longer, as in his first session, was a raw boy feeling his way, but had discovered a rare faculty for continuous and concentrated study. Nature had endowed him with an iron constitution, hardened by the healthy exposure of his boyhood and sharpened by his regular and sparing diet; so that, although he was growing rapidly, the twelve or thirteen hours which

<sup>1</sup> Only once did he stand second. The first prizeman, John Andrew Wood, had the distinction in the same year of beating John Ker in the Moral Philosophy class.

he gave daily to study had no effect upon him, and his passionate desire for knowledge carried him through the strain with that gleeful exultation which even strong minds experience only in the years of their most rapid growth. His minute carefulness and relentless energy freed his class essays and exercises from the ordinary blunders of students, and gave them an exhaustive character against which occasionally the professors mildly protested, even when awarding him the first place.

Throughout the winter he was entirely occupied with his college studies. On Sundays he attended Bristo Church, of which the Revs. James Peddie, D.D., and William Peddie, D.D., were then ministers, assisted at mission-meetings, and taught in a ragged school at the foot of the Causewayside. He joined in the enormous crowds which listened on Sabbath evenings to the Rev. Dr. Brown's vigorous protest against the Annuity Tax, and twenty years afterwards he recalled 'the vivid sense of exhilaration with which he had heard Christianity purged from affinity with slavish principles and tendencies.' But such occupations were confined to the Day of Rest. In the approaching ecclesiastical crisis he was deeply interested, but not so deeply as to intermit his studies. 'Weeks have passed,' he writes to his parents, 'since I saw a newspaper.' Even of his own future he had not, as the following letter shows, formed any definite idea. It is a reply to a suggestion that he should apply for a vacancy in a parish school. His correspondent, it should be explained, was a member of the Established Church.

#### TO MISS JEAN DARLING

6 WEST RICHMOND STREET, *March 20, 1838.*

'I cannot but express my sincere pleasure in finding that I have such well-wishers, and my heartfelt thanks for this strong proof of your kindness. . . . But there are insuperable barriers in the way. I would not be prevented from accepting the situation by a

contempt of it as inadequate to my pretensions. On the contrary, the life of a parish schoolmaster appears to me to combine a reasonable proportion of an occupation of which I am fond, with a large measure of time for study and reflection. From the time when I was introduced into the snug parlour of Mr. M<sup>c</sup>Gregor, with its cheerful fire and well-stocked library, I have cherished the persuasion that such a life includes the principal elements of retired and tranquil happiness. Nor would I be deterred by a distrust of requisite acquirements, for having been engaged in the most difficult part of country school teaching, I think I may say without vanity that I did not feel myself unqualified for the pursuit. Nor am I restrained by the apprehension that all exertion to gain the situation would be unsuccessful, since nothing is to be got without effort, and I might, were I a candidate, have as likely a hope as others. What, then, you may ask, does prevent me? First, I am a dissenter from the Church of Scotland, and, as such, ineligible to any office at her disposal. My opinions I have not lightly adopted, and while I most cordially condemn all bigotry on this point, and cannot but deplore the violence to which many who oppose the Church of Scotland as a State church display in the prosecution of their dissent, I yet believe that their principle is fundamentally just, and consequently, with the highest regard for a multitude of her members as Christians, and the most ardent admiration of many of her ministers as men of learning and piety, I yet cannot conscientiously join her communion. The subject perhaps requires a more persevering and thorough-going investigation, and this I am resolved seriously to give it. In the meantime I must and do willingly continue in the ranks of dissent. There is another consideration which at the present time would weigh with me to decline the situation, even were no such obstruction in the way—the incompleteness of my education. I have as yet hardly entered the vestibule of knowledge, having with many of the most valuable subjects of inquiry no acquaintance at all, with others a mere rudimental acquaintance; while even that which I have studied longest and most ardently is but partially and imperfectly understood. Now I could not think, with the facilities for mental improvement which a university affords, of sacrificing these and of regarding my public education as closed. I would like to remain in Edinburgh during the summer to attend classes, Professor Pillans having promised to use his influence to procure me private teaching. In winter I would wish to attend the college classes till I finish the usual course, to which end I still want two years.



What my destination may then be, Providence and the exercise of judgment must determine. I think that I have said enough, and that you will concur with me in believing that I can take no step in the present matter.

‘I don’t think I shall say anything about study or classes, for in paying a visit to home, which I shall soon do, I shall leave for the gratification of the race of crows the mathematician’s maxim that a straight line is the nearest distance between two points, and include Millknowe in my journey. I need only state that I am getting on well in every point of view but one, and that is my dissatisfaction that where there is so much valuable and inviting ground to be possessed, there should be so little zeal in occupying and so much slothfulness in bestowing on it the proper cultivation.

‘I hope the shrubs on the “old howlet-haunted biggin” have stood the pelting of the pitiless storm, and are now feeling the influence of the vernal hour and preparing a picturesque and pleasing covering for the ruined mansion. Very often when stepping out in a snowy, sleety, drifty morning, did I think how hard this must be upon Lammermoor friends. But I must curb with the rein of consideration the impetuous pace of galloping fancy. I have been incessantly busy, and this is the first free day I have enjoyed for many weeks. When your letter appeared, I had just determined to have some recreation by taking up a book on metaphysics.’

The close of the session brought anxieties as well as distinctions. Six or seven weeks passed before any means of livelihood presented itself, and in May, feeling for the first and probably for the last time in life the pinch of poverty, he undertook some unpleasant elementary teaching, receiving five shillings per week for two hours’ daily work. Meanwhile he occupied himself in a searching review of the lectures of the past session, and in committing his criticisms to writing.

May 1838 was an important month in the Church history of Scotland. In the face of the decision of the law-courts, the General Assembly declared, by a majority of forty-one, that ‘in all matters touching the doctrine, government, or discipline of the Church, her judicatories possess an exclusive



jurisdiction founded on the Word of God,' and resolved to enforce submission upon her office-bearers and members. The following letter refers to the debate :—

'I have availed myself of the opportunity of attending the two most important ecclesiastical courts in the country, the General Assembly and the Secession Synod. The one is more formal and imposing, the other more free and simple. As to eloquence and business habits, the Assembly, I think, deserves, though not a decided, yet a real preference. This may be owing to the troops of lawyers with which it is supplied. I felt greatly interested in the procedure of the Assembly, and though the position was very difficult, yet I think in the endeavour to purify and maintain the independence of their church, the majority acted at once firmly and prudently. Whatever may be the result of their apparent collision with the State, every true son of the Reformers of olden time must wish them a safe extrication from their perplexing situation. By far the most interesting man in the Assembly is Dr. Cook. I do not think I ever heard a more clear, forcible, animated and apparently honest, though homely speaker.'

It is characteristic that he should single out the leader of the Moderate party for praise, saying nothing of his future friend and ally, Dr. Robert Buchanan, the leader of the party whose policy he commends. In a lecture delivered in 1872 he refers thus to the debate :—

'It is nearly thirty-four years since a college friend and myself, seated in the students' gallery, watched far into morning the course of the first debate on Non-intrusion which was to be followed by such momentous issues. Though neither of us belonged to the Established Church, the interest of hardly any debater in that great encounter could have been more excited. When the taking of the vote was at length ended, and the motion of Dr. Robert Buchanan, of which every one felt the significance, was declared carried by a decisive majority, my friend, unable to restrain himself, grasped my hand and said, "It is a night much to be remembered."'

As the summer advanced he secured permanent employment as private tutor in the family of Mr. John Donaldson, W.S., of whose house, 124 Princes Street, he became an

inmate. The appointment, which lasted till the close of his university course, was of a most suitable and agreeable kind. The salary, when added to his bursaries, now amounting to £25, more than sufficed for his modest wants. His special duty, the tutoring of a bright, frank schoolboy, left him plenty of time for study, and he was at liberty to attend classes during the college session. By his young pupil he was regarded with a respect bordering on veneration; and the simplicity of his nature, with his eager loyalty to duty, soon secured for him the position of a valued friend of the whole household. In later years he had the opportunity, as family confidant and counsellor, of repaying these obligations. Nor did he forget, as will be seen afterwards, his obligation to one of the masters of the Academy, Mr. P. H. Macdougall, through whom the tutorship had been secured. In announcing the engagement to his father he writes:—

‘Is not this a striking addition to that series of acts of divine goodness which I have experienced? May God give us grateful hearts for all displays of His benignity, and let us beware of converting by ingratitude or disobedience the means of personal happiness and the occasions of promoting His glory into the instruments of selfish enjoyment or the foundations of irreligious confidence! I have also felt exceedingly honoured and gratified by receiving a personal call at my lodgings from Captain Basil Hall, and by his promise to do everything in his power to promote my interests.’

The direction of his private studies is made apparent by the pedantic and involved style of the following letter:—

#### TO MISS JEAN DARLING

124 PRINCES STREET, *Oct. 20, 1838.*

‘. . . I am in the attitude of preparation for the coming course, girding up my loins and waiting for the signal for the commencement of the race. It is a somewhat humbling reflection, that the desire for honour should excite a more intense anxiety and a more vigorous effort than the thirst for knowledge, and that the principle of emulation should sway the mind, control its movements and

direct its exertions with a more powerful and energetic authority than the simple love of truth. But perhaps the constitution of our nature, except in some noble specimens of humanity, will not allow it to be otherwise; and we ought to be thankful that a principle, which, if not of the brightest and purest kind, is at least not vicious and blameworthy, has been provided by our benevolent Creator to rouse man from the dormancy of inactivity, and to dispel that intellectual indolence which has all the misery and degradation, without the blamelessness, of idiocy. I take during the winter three classes—Metaphysics, Second Mathematics, and Moral Philosophy. I have before me a session of assiduous labour, of vigorous and protracted mental exertion and of determined and unwearying competition. There is an absolute necessity for a higher exercise of the faculties; but there is also the certainty that by well-directed activity I shall reap a richer harvest of knowledge than ever before. . . . The subjects of study are congenial to my taste and mental habits, none of them so easy as to permit a partial and desultory attention, and all of them intensely interesting from their native importance and their connection with the highest speculative faculties and practical powers.'

## CHAPTER V

### UNIVERSITY INFLUENCES

1838-39

Sir W. Hamilton—His influence on Cairns defined—Christopher North—Metaphysical Society—Delight in speculation—Its influence on faith—Rev. Dr. Brown—University distinctions—Mental depression—Hesitation as to ministry—Decision delayed.

IN 1849 Dr. Cairns wrote to Sir William Hamilton: 'I am more indebted to you for the formation of my intellectual habits and tastes than to any other person; and I shall bear, by the will of the Almighty, the impress of your hand through any future state of existence.' When a man uses such language after his faculties have been tested in the work of his life, his biographer is bound to seek to define the personal influence so indicated.

Professor Masson, who came to Edinburgh from another university in 1839, has given a witty account<sup>1</sup> of the way in which Edinburgh students of that generation mouthed such phrases as, 'the thinkable in space and time,' 'the absolute,' 'the laws of thought as thought.' 'At first,' he says, 'it seemed to be uncouth and pretentious talk, but one soon learned that the phrases had a real meaning, and that the system which they represented had taken possession of the ablest young minds.' When Cairns entered the Logic class in 1838, he yielded only partially to Hamilton's influence, being in his own language 'but indifferently prepared for such instruction.'

<sup>1</sup> *Macmillan's Magazine*, May 1864.



'I had struggled through Butler's *Analogy* and other less difficult books on the evidences of Christianity, and had read some systems of divinity ; but I had not taken up the study of mind with any warmth or deep interest, the only works that I had gone through having any express connection with it being Watts on the *Improvement of the Mind*, and Reid's *Enquiry*. As for logic, all that I knew was gathered from Duncan's and a hasty perusal of Whately, sufficient only to make me see that they contradicted each other, and that the latter gave a place to the Aristotelian scheme which the former denied.'

During that session his chief energies were given to other studies. But in the summer his review of the ground he had already covered led him into independent reading of Bacon, Descartes, and Leibnitz. The interests of mental philosophy became supreme, and when November came round he was prepared to surrender himself to the great teacher, who at that time was moulding minds which were too eager, analytical and intense to yield more than admiration to the eloquence of Chalmers or of Christopher North.

Hamilton<sup>1</sup> was then in the fifty-first year of his age, and the third year of his professoriate. It was only eight years since his examination of Cousin's philosophy had aroused the attention of Europe, and had shown that Scottish speculation had not been completely swamped by the easy flow of Dr. Thomas Brown's empiricism. Since the appearance of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, German and French thinkers had been occupied in seeking for a groundwork of philosophy by minute analysis of the laws which guide the human mind ; but as yet Great Britain stood outside this line of progress. Reid and Stewart had indeed gone beyond the narrow limits of the Sensational school which held the field ; but their basis was observational psychology, and it was rather negatively than positively that their work fell into line with Continental philosophy. As a rule, Scottish

<sup>1</sup> The writer is indebted to Professor Veitch's admirable *Memoir*, and to Professor Spencer Baynes' sketch of Hamilton in the *Edinburgh Essays*, 1856.

and English writers were ignorant of the trend of thought abroad. In the Scottish universities the educational value of philosophy had been reduced to a minimum, the professors being mainly occupied with English composition, comparative grammar, and empirical rules of thinking. Most of the vigorous intellects which grew to manhood in Scotland during the first thirty years of this century found their training in science or in general literature ; scarcely one was developed or strengthened by the study of philosophy. No doubt a change was bound to come. The metaphysical bent of the Scottish mind could not but assert itself. But this necessity does not lessen the honour of the man whose teaching was the efficient cause. In a review written for the *Scotsman* in 1859, Dr. Cairns summarises the results of Hamilton's speculation under three heads: 'his profound vindication of the doctrine of Common-sense, his elaborate discussion of the theory of Perception in relation to our belief in an external world, and his enunciation of the Law of the Conditioned as bearing on our knowledge of the absolute and infinite'; and he indicates what will now be generally accepted, that the impulse which he gave under the third of these heads was the most powerful, and, indeed, 'if less marked by agreement among his followers, served as the next starting-point for British philosophy.' The historical importance of the controversies which for thirty years divided young Scottish philosophers into Hamiltonians and Hegelians, and appeared across the Border in the contentions of Mill and Mansel, is indisputable. Yet Hamilton's most faithful disciples admit that the form in which he presented philosophy was not final, and they unite with those who disparage his system in holding that his distinction lay not in the positive doctrines which he propounded, but in calling attention to questions hitherto ignored, in stating problems rather than in answering them, and in assuming a standpoint of such speculative importance 'that subsequent

thinkers were forced to deal with his position before they could make further progress.'

In 1838 his philosophy was not maturely formulated, and his lectures were largely tentative; but as a teacher he was at the height of his renown. The number of students had risen in a single year from 117 to 172, and the crowded lecture-room was a scene of daily excitement, shared even by those who were incompetent to measure his prodigious learning or to follow the trend of his reasoning.

In a contribution to *Hamilton's Life*, Dr. Cairns has graphically recorded the nature of his influence:—

'The fascination of his commanding personality for young and susceptible minds was assisted by the novelty of the lectures, and by the sense of novelty even on the part of the lecturer, which had its stimulating effect on the audience as they strove to march with him through the unexplored regions of a first course. If I may judge from myself, it must have cost those who at all succeeded a great effort. The style was wholly new in our philosophical literature. It was replete with technical terms and bristled with Latin and Greek words and quotations. It carried with it a constant load of definitions and distinctions, and involved, even in its elementary statements, difficult processes of analysis and criticism which could only be fully mastered at an advanced stage. It was liker stretches of Aristotle and steppes of Kant than the flowery field opened out in Stewart and Brown. After the border of the wilderness was passed in the introductory lectures, I well remember the sense of difficulty and even desperation that seemed to fall upon the class as the definition of Logic was unrolled in all its formidable proportions—"the science of the laws of thought as thought, or of the forms of thought, or of the formal laws of thought." Another slough of despond was the enunciation of the fundamental laws of thought; and many a shuffle of the feet entreated the lecturer to pause upon and repeat, for the enlightenment of a wholly bewildered audience, such dark formulas as that of the law of contradiction, " $A - A = O$ ." I do not think, indeed, that I ever saw more blank dismay upon any countenances than that which sat upon the majority of the class during this lecture. Some, perhaps many, abandoned the effort henceforth; but to a select minority, and that by no means inconsiderable, the sense of difficulty acted

with the force of inspiration. In the throes and struggles of the unwonted exercise, an altogether new power of thought was created, and the frowning and rugged cliffs, at the base of which some sank to rise no more, became to others the means of ascent to the command of a wide and unsuspected horizon of land and sea. Gradually, to those who waited for it, day broke upon the extensive prospect, and the toil of climbing with the horror of darkness gave place to exhilaration. . . . His lectures on Metaphysics, delivered in 1838-39, were to me still more interesting than the Logic course, as they were attended only by those who were attracted by the love of the study, not being required for graduation. In connection with them there arose an unwelcome controversy with the Town Council. . . . But this had no disturbing influence on the class. We were quietly engaged in our discussions as to the existence of the external world, while the storm was raging without, and only felt it to be another form of the *non-ego*; while the contrast between the singular gentleness and simplicity of our teacher in his dealings with his pupils, and his impassioned qualities in controversy, became more remarkable. In addition to his other labours, Sir William throughout this winter held meetings with a voluntary class for reading in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* . . . at which private discussions between him and his more advanced students took a larger compass. When some difficulties in regard to his philosophy, which have since been abundantly urged, were proposed, he endeavoured to meet them with the greatest candour and fairness.'

Although Hamilton had no gift of teaching in the ordinary sense, his method of examining students was full of stimulus to strong minds. In place of asking specific questions, he invited them to volunteer an account of his lectures on a special subject, and the volunteers were allowed to proceed for ten or fifteen minutes without interruption or correction, until memory was exhausted. Then a request was made for 'additional information,' when students would rise and give an epitome of some book which they had been reading, or of the bearing of several books upon the topic in hand. In such exercises Cairns became at once conspicuous, and it was in them that his mind developed most rapidly. With unlimited patience in mastering details, he had a broad and



strong grasp of principles and a habit of sober judgment, in virtue of which he was recognised as an independent thinker. In truth he was the student in whom Hamilton first discovered an adequate response to his ideal of the teaching of philosophy. The difficulties and objections which he urged are, at more than one point in Hamilton's published Lectures, recognised as of philosophical importance, and the respect which the vigour and activity of his powers awakened soon led to a personal intimacy, through which Hamilton's influence over his foremost pupil was greatly increased.

Hamilton was at that time surrounded in his home by a circle of young Scotchmen destined for distinction—James Ferrier, Hill Burton, Semple and others; and Cairns was admitted to the circle when he was barely twenty years of age. Hamilton was not exactly a conversationalist; but in the privacy of his noble library in Great King Street, the enormous resources of his learning and the versatility of his polished intellect were displayed with frank simplicity in conveying information or in defending paradoxes upon almost every subject under the sun. It is on record that he surprised Dr. Parr by his familiarity with modern Latin poetry, and Archdeacon Sinclair by his acquaintance with Semler, Paulus and Wegscheider. He was deeply interested in the ecclesiastical controversies of the day and in the growth of physical science, and upon all topics he impressed his friends and pupils with the absolute need for detailed information. To have exhausted the literature of a subject appeared to him the natural pre-requisite to an expression of opinion, and he spoke with a pity verging upon contempt of all that was superficial.

It was in this way, more than in any other, that he moulded the mind of his favourite student already disposed towards scholasticism. There was no influence exercised of a religious or spiritual kind. In Church matters Cairns recognised respectfully that Hamilton's view was entirely out of

line with his own. As to personal religion, while honouring Hamilton's nobility of character, he cherished a deep regret which burdened his soul, until ten years afterwards he felt that he was old enough to give it expression without impertinence or offence.<sup>1</sup> Nor did he owe much to the Hamiltonian philosophy. In the case of vigorous minds, the influence of particular opinions and even of philosophical systems vanishes with years. But intellectual habits formed in the first glow of manhood are abiding; and Hamilton caught, stamped and sealed Cairns' greed for knowledge, his delight in details and in principles, his eagerness to master truth apart from any use to which truth may be put, and his sense that it is a shameful thing to speak on any subject without exhaustive knowledge. Even in the case of Hamilton, whose intellectual life had full scope, this disposition was to some extent a hindrance; and we shall see how prejudicially it operated upon one whose leisure was limited by the manifold and pressing occupations of practical life. In student days, however, the benefit appeared to be unqualified, and the delight was undimmed. Author after author was approached, analysed, criticised and grasped—not audaciously, but as truth loves to be treated by her votaries, and the mind of the young man seemed to be gaining wings capable of any flight.

His rapid growth of intellect took him at once to the first place in the Moral Philosophy class, then under the brilliant guidance of Professor John Wilson. Although Wilson did not teach systematically, his glowing rhetoric and his delightful personality had their own inspiring power. Cairns, who went through the class work with his unflinching thoroughness, habitually spoke with gratitude of personal kindness which he had received from Wilson, and recalled appreciatively many of his healthy criticisms; while Wilson four years afterwards wrote thus:—‘Of the many hundreds of students

<sup>1</sup> See pages 291 and 292.

whose career I have watched during the last twenty years, not one has given higher promise of excellence than John Cairns ; his talents are of the highest order ; his attainments in literature, philosophy, and science rare indeed ; and his character such as to command universal respect.'

In the mathematical class his experience was similar. He disliked the subject, and shared Hamilton's depreciatory estimate of its educational value. None the less did he toil laboriously through all the class work, and at the end of the session his name appeared in the very front of the list of prizemen.

In leisure hours, however, his mind craved for philosophy and for philosophical discussion, and at the close of 1838 he joined with a knot of Hamilton's distinguished students, who were never more numerous than at that date, in organising the Metaphysical Society, which met weekly for the discussion of philosophical questions. Among the first members were Alexander Campbell Fraser, David Masson and Patrick Macdougall, afterwards Professors in the University, John Andrew Wood, James Walker, Andrew Wilson, John Clark, Charles Ferguson and James Russell,—all men of mark, although the last three died before their reputation passed beyond the university. Dr. Cairns has sketched in language of great power and beauty the influence of the Society :<sup>1</sup>—

'Willingly do I recal and linger upon these days and months, extending even to years, in which common studies of this abstract nature bound us together. It was the romance—the poetry of speculation and friendship. All the vexed questions of the schools were attempted by our united strength, after our higher guide had set the example. The thorny wilds of logic were pleasant as enchanted ground, its driest technicalities treasured up as unspeakably rare and precious. We stumbled on, making discoveries at every step, and had all things common. Each lesson in mental philosophy opened up some mystery of our immortal nature, and

<sup>1</sup> *Fragments of College and Pastoral Life* of the late Rev. John Clark of Glasgow : Edinburgh, 1851.

seemed to bring us nearer the horizon of absolute truth, which again receded as we advanced and left us, like children pursuing the rainbow, to resume the chase. In truth, we had much of the character of childhood in these pursuits,—light-heartedness, wonder, boundless hope, engrossment with the present, carelessness of the future. Our old world daily became new; and the real world of the multitude to us was but a shadow. It was but the outer world, the *non-ego*, standing at the mercy of speculation, waiting to be confirmed or abolished in the next debate; while the inner world, in which truth, beauty and goodness had their eternal seat, should still survive and be all in all. The play of the intellect with these subtle and unworldly questions was, to our minds, as inevitable as the stages of our bodily growth. Happy was it for us that the play of affection was also active,—nay, by sympathy excited to still greater liveliness; and that a higher wisdom suffered us not, in all these flowery mazes, to go astray. . . . It is possible, indeed, that Clark and his companions over-estimated the part which philosophy at any time can play in the world, and especially the influence which a society like theirs was destined to exert on the character of the university and the mental development of its future students. Probably all of them moved about at that time “in worlds not realised,” and destined never to be realised. But the sanguine expectations of young men, secluded from the great scenes of human contention, and even of ordinary human interest—living in a cloister within a cloister—the deepest and shadiest recess of the academic grove—will not be too sternly judged in any quarter; and to their own minds the recollection of the intellectual activity and effervescence of these days must come back with a charm which time cannot abate, and which the harder lessons of experience only exalt by contrast.’

In the course of the same reminiscences, he deals with the bearings of such pursuits upon personal religion in a way which is clearly autobiographical. He discards the idea that ‘young men of an inquiring turn’ should dismiss philosophical doubts on the ground that they militate against the creeds which they have been taught to regard as divine, and points out that in any walk of mental culture such discord is likely to arise. Periods of hesitation will come; but the Christian student ought not to flinch. He



must continue his investigations patiently, candidly and humbly, convinced that ultimately his philosophy and his faith will coincide, and meanwhile adhere to the usual appliances of self-discipline—‘the observance of the Lord’s day, the reading of Christian literature, the frequenting of pious company, and the practice of such good works as especially foster the sentiment of communion with the great Christian body.’ He proceeds to admit that the philosophical sciences may lead to conclusions adverse to the positive doctrines of Christianity:—

‘The metaphysical doubt which visits most minds at a certain stage of progress, generally during the years coincident with college life, and which sends some minds at that period into the very depths of speculation, is not a disease but a healthy symptom. It is similar to the growing pains of the body, and is indicative of the approach of maturity. The soul, feeling itself endowed with new powers, naturally and justly exerts them upon the objects of greatest interest—its belief in general and its moral and spiritual convictions in particular—and is uneasy until its past reasons of faith have satisfied its higher faculties, or been supplanted by others that admit of no questioning. The faith of an educated man must go through this transition process to a greater or less degree; and it would be unnatural and unhealthy to suppress it. . . .’

After comparing the value of external and internal evidences for those who are in such perplexities, he continues:—

‘The Christian student is as conscious of direct intercourse with Jesus Christ as with the external world, or with other minds. This is the very postulate of living Christianity. It is a datum or revelation made to a spiritual faculty in the soul, as real as the external senses or any of the mental or moral faculties, and far more exalted. This living contact with a living person by faith and prayer is, like all other life, ultimate and mysterious, and must be accepted by him in whom it exists as its own sufficient explanation and reason, just as the principles of natural intelligence and conscience, to which it is something superadded and with which, in this point of view, though in other respects higher, it is co-ordinate. No one who is living in communion with Jesus Christ, and exercising that series of affections towards Him which

Christianity at once prescribes and creates, can doubt the reality of that supernatural system to which he has thus been introduced ; and nothing more is necessary than to appeal to his own experience and belief, which is here as valid and irresistible as in regard to the existence of God, of moral distinctions or of the material world. He has no reason for trusting the one class of beliefs which he has not for trusting the other. . . . To minds thus favoured, this forms a *point d'appui* which can never be overturned,—an *aliquid inconcussum*, corresponding to the “*cogito, ergo sum*” of Augustine and Descartes. Their faith bears its own signature, and they have only to look within to discover its authenticity. Philosophy must be guided by experience, and must rank the characters inscribed on the soul by grace as at least as sacred as those inscribed by nature. Such persons need not that any man should teach them, for they have an unction from the Holy One ; and to them applies the highest of all congratulations, “Blessed art thou : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven.” . . .

‘The path by which Clark and others were led, by the hand of God, through this whole region, is fitted, the longer it is reflected on, to awaken the deeper feelings of gratitude. Without being probably aware, to any material extent, of their common hazard on the side of speculation, they were directed to use the very counteractives which, of all others, were the most needful and seasonable. It would, perhaps, not occur to many persons as a likely thing, that the same young men who gave themselves earnestly to metaphysical researches, and were seen regularly, one evening every week, engaged in the warmth of debate respecting the first principles of all things, should be found, on another evening of the week, as constantly and with as much interest, united in the exercise of private Christian devotion. This, however, was the case ; for it was the custom of most of the leading members of the Metaphysical Society to meet for at least two successive winters for this purpose. . . . I well remember that at one such meeting Clark complained that, while he had heard much abstract discussion of Christian truth, he had heard little direct confession of love to God or faith in the Redeemer. The charge might be partially true ; for there is no class of persons more reserved than students in the expression of the deeper religious feelings ; and yet it is easy to see how wholesome an influence such meetings, with all their imperfections, were fitted to exert, both in preserving and cherishing earlier Christian impressions.’

Few will read the above passages without concluding that he himself passed at this period through a spiritual strain. His reference to the 'reserve of students in the expression of the deeper religious feelings' is significant. Self-scrutiny, although an inherent habit of his nature, was to him a moral exercise for private profit, and he had a native distaste for that self-analytic type of pietism which was asserting itself among the senior students of the university. He had no capacity for trafficking in spiritual experiences, nor did he, excepting in rare moments when physical depression or mental exhaustion was excessive, give voice to the tumult which surged within him. Loyalty was the groundwork of his character, and the expression of dubiety seemed to savour of disloyalty to those truths of Christianity which were the objects of his faith, and to the living God whose clear voice he heard from day to day. To the outward eye he never appeared to lose the calm, deep conviction that the creed of the Catholic Church is reasonable; and if now and then one caught a glimpse of lurid, stormy flame within, there was as much dignity as humility in the rapid drawing of the veil.

This mode of religious thought and feeling was both defined and confirmed by another influence under which he came during this winter, that of the Rev. Dr. John Brown. A year before, he had been impressed by Dr. Brown's platform eloquence, and now he became a regular frequenter of his ministry in Broughton Place Church, of which he soon became a communicant. As yet Dr. Brown's influence over him was entirely that of a preacher, the friendly relations which were destined to be so important at a later stage not having yet begun; but in this respect it was distinctive. To Dr. Brown faith was an act of belief, and the one grand obstacle to reception of the Gospel was disinclination to attend to truth. In later years Dr. Cairns acknowledged that this view of Christianity is one-sided and ignores the



emotional and instinctive elements of faith ; but in student days he acquiesced in it, and reckoned the rational and argumentative presentment of doctrine as the chief force to be used in support of the Gospel. Yet the following letter, one of many in which he dealt with his closest friends about their souls, shows how much tenderness and how little dogmatism there was in his use of argument. It is addressed to his pure-hearted, strong-minded brother James :—

124 PRINCES STREET, *Dec.* 30, 1838.

‘ . . . Suffer me, my dear brother, in a spirit of the most sincere and ardent regard, and with earnestness and plainness, to solicit your attention to the subject of religion. What may be the private opinion which you entertain and avow in that secret chamber of the spirit where your sentiments and plans are passed in silent review, I cannot venture to declare ; but either your thoughts of religion are such as they ought to be—and in that case you will thank me for my solicitude—or they are the reverse of what duty and happiness require, and in that case there is a melancholy necessity for the employment of means to recall you from error and to lead you to estimate the worth of your immortal nature. Immortality ! Have you ever given serious and protracted reflection to the meaning of that singular word ? When it occasionally comes into your mind, or when it is presented to your thoughts just now, can you entertain it without secret awe and apprehension, or dare you dismiss it at once without self-condemnation ? Can you boldly call up to view the unspeakable amount of meaning it contains, and examine without dread your own relation to its astonishing reality ? Yes, you are immortal, and that spirit which makes you what you are, and raises you above inanimate and irrational matter to a community with higher beings, is destined, whether you desire it or not, nay, though you should utter every wish and exert every energy to oppose it, to pass an endless life in the perfect knowledge of all its bygone history. I know that you have been instructed in the doctrines of the only true religion ; but there are in the mind of man a multitude of the most absurd and foolish prejudices which cause him to regard that which is the only system of truth and the only instrument of happiness as a rigid and relentless yoke by which his natural tendencies are kept in restraint. Perhaps you



may look on the Gospel with some such eye as this, and be inclined to suppose that you would renounce happiness by following its precepts. If such be your secret thoughts, I most earnestly request you to consider that the whole spirit of the Gospel morality, the whole mental state of the believer in Christianity is expressed in one word, and that word is Love. Now love is the very essence of happiness. Wherever it exists between one human being and another it is productive of nothing else. How much more strongly does this hold true in regard to that moral approbation and benevolent regard with which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ looks upon His children, and the love and gratitude with which they contemplate His excellencies, as well as the benevolence and sympathy which they exercise towards all men! Be assured of it, every Christian sentiment and feeling is attended with the most exalted and genuine pleasure. . . . It is the great misery or curse of the immortal spirit of man that it is, though continually in the presence of the Eternal, averse to all communication with the Blessed and Perfect One, and rejects all attempts to restore it to true and complete felicity. . . . The unenlightened mind, disgusted with the unrestricted condemnation of human guilt and the absolute denial of human merit, does not perceive that the great pervading principle of the Bible, to which every portion is subservient, is the love of God in Christ and His desire that all should be saved. Salvation includes the deliverance from all that the Only Wise God judges evil, and the communication of all that can make a rational and moral being happy. Keep this principle firmly in your mind, that God is well disposed towards you, that Christ is desirous to save you, that the Holy Spirit is ready to communicate the most exalted and glorious revelations to your mind, to bless your moral nature with the endowments of moral excellence and to prepare you for a happiness which is as inconceivable in vastness as in duration. These blessings may be yours; but you must seek, if you expect to find; you must enter into an intercourse with God by prayer; you must earnestly and fervently implore the assistance of the good Spirit, you must carefully peruse the Christian volume, and thus you will find a light diffused around your path and a glory arise upon your spirit and an internal satisfaction and tranquillity of which you have hitherto been without experience.

‘Do, my dear brother, seriously consider these solemn matters, and let the entrance of a new year witness your introduction into a course of life so safe and so delightful. . . .’

In his letters to his parents the ponderous and analytical language in which his warm and simple affections clothe themselves betrays the character of his college studies:—

## TO HIS PARENTS

124 PRINCES STREET, *Jan. 8, 1839.*

‘So a week of 1839 is gone! I most cordially wish you all a happy New Year. And what, one naturally asks, may be the import of such a wish? Not merely that you may feel an elation of spirits, that the consciousness of life, and of healthy and vigorous life, may inspire you with animal festivity, nor merely the possession of external means of happiness. All these I most sincerely wish you, and I desire that there may be superadded the pleasures of knowledge and of instructed and cultivated understandings. These things are good; they are in different ways and degrees fragments and sections of human happiness, and they might be sufficient if man were altogether of the earth, and if, after a few more “Good New Years,” he were to disappear from existence like the summer’s vegetation in the blasts of winter. But he has a higher nature,—rational, moral, immortal, with good to pursue, evil to avoid, happiness to attain. . . . My dear parents and brothers and sisters, I earnestly desire that this year, with peace and tranquillity and contentment and honourable reputation and usefulness in life, you may enjoy everything that may purify and exalt and ennoble the immortal spirit and prepare it for endless happiness; and I pray that as the only means of realising this, we may all be led to enter on and find that aim and end of our being.

‘Through the goodness of God I am in excellent health, and my teaching and studies go on reasonably well. I am as busy as possible, with an enormous mass of work to get through before the end of March. However, if God grant me health, and I can overcome this inclination to listlessness and sleep, I have no fears. Do not be apprehensive. I am not studying quite so much as I did last winter. It is just now three o’clock in the morning, but this is beyond my usual hour. You will think from the way in which these sentences are tagged together that I am half asleep, but I assure you I was never more awake in my life. I am three hours engaged at college and two and a half with my pupil. The students were the other day magisterially forbidden to indulge in snowballs. I cannot say that I feel this a fetter on my personal liberty or a

diminution of my means of recreation. Professor Wilson read the regulation with a gravity a hundred-fold more comic than the most jocular ridicule could have been. We have little chance this winter of seeing an insulted potentate call in the regular forces in Her Majesty's service to avenge his injured dignity. But it is every way better. . . .'

TO THE SAME

124 PRINCES STREET, *April 9, 1839.*

'The labour here is over, and I feel like a stream that has been foaming down a steep and has not altogether lost its impetus and agitation in the plain below. In the distribution of prizes I have no cause to complain. It is not very compatible with modesty to utter one's own good fortune in that respect; but I am aware that the pleasure which my success will give to all my dear friends ought to induce me to let them hear of it from my own hand. Well then, on Saturday I was declared the successful competitor for the highest prize in the Moral Philosophy class. This I cannot bring myself to believe that I deserved. On Thursday I was, by the votes of the students, placed at the head of the class of Metaphysics, and received from the Professor a prize of books. I have also gained three other first prizes for summer reading in Greek and Latin Philosophy. One prize only which I competed for I did not obtain, viz., one for an essay on Language. By all this I am bound on the one hand to the deepest gratitude to God, and on the other to the more zealous and persevering pursuit of knowledge and truth. The pleasure and honour of gaining prizes is no doubt great, but the happiness and blessings of mental cultivation are far greater. The one are perishable enjoyments; the other exalt and ennoble the mind for ever. . . . I look forward, if health is spared, to a summer of mingled repose and exertion. I have very much to study, and not a little to begin for the first time, and I would rather pursue truth laboriously for its own sake than strive to make advance in knowledge for all the honours in the world.'

The particulars of this session are given minutely, because the close of it brought a crisis, the gravest crisis of his life. No one would think that the writer of the above cheerful and hopeful letter was in a state of despondency and perplexity. But although he could not let a single cloud or

shade from his career settle upon the cottage at Dunglass, uncertainties had arisen about the future. He was now in his twenty-first year, and had reached the stage at which students preparing for the ministry began their theological course. Hitherto his plans had pointed in another direction ; but his philosophical studies, far from lessening his faith and devoutness, had deepened them and turned his thoughts towards the Church. Yet hindrances arose, not sceptical but personal. They sprang partly from a self-distrust rare in so bold and strong a mind, and partly from his profound reverence for the sacred office. The working of those two influences discloses itself in the following letters. In the first the laborious pleasantry with which the letter begins is obviously a prelude to the last paragraph, which withdraws the veil :—

TO MISS JEAN DARLING

EDINBURGH, *May 10, 1839.*

‘I can transport myself in thought to your comfortable and delightful parlour, lay myself down on the end of the sofa, and listen and reply to the many questions to which a long absence gives rise. I can imagine the joy which the statement that you are all in health would inspire, and the condolences on last year’s unfavourable crop and the unpropitiousness of the present spring. Mr. Adam drops in from the bustle of the lambing season ; Agnes returns from school ; and then, with the whole family assembled, there are questions and replies and remarks and jokes and good humour without end. What shall I say of the fishing, the reading of poetry, your attempts to please my unscientific eyes with geological specimens, and the hopeless efforts of Mrs. Service to beat into my unremembering head the genealogy of our common forebears ?

‘As I have been exercising my own fancy, I will put yours to a more severe exercise by asking you to imagine my present domicile. Think of a room about 15 feet square and 12 high, covered with a yellow and green paper, variegated, if not ornamented, with a flower which bears a strong resemblance to full-blown red clover, the ceiling tarnished with smoke and having a long gas tube depending from it. A large book-case occupies one side of the square, filled



with volumes arranged with the most student-like slovenliness. Over the fireplace there is hung a very elaborate and, I am bound to suppose, elegant specimen of pictured needle-work, the youthful task of the lady of the house. The principal figure in the design is a beautiful female entwining a garland of flowers around an antique vase, placed at the top of a marble fountain beneath an ivy-bound tree. She is not simple enough for a shepherdess, and rather too simple for a goddess, so I believe she must be a nymph. Her auburn hair floats gracefully over her uncovered shoulders, and her feet, unconcealed by shoe or sandal, are partially descried through the luxuriant verdure of flowers. Your humble servant sits at a mahogany table covered with ink-stained green. From the high window the Firth of Forth is most maliciously excluded from view by the ugly back of a street, and . . . the only thing which reminds me of the free, open beauties of country scenery is a few gowans, springing up in simple loveliness on the grass plot under my eye. Nature is rigorously excluded, and I have to extract this comfort out of the evil that thus the mind is entirely thrown back upon itself. . . .

‘As to the result of my academical exertions, I should belie my convictions of the importance of the approbation of competent judges if I should say that I was not gratified. . . . But when I compare what I know with what I might have known and ought to know, I am more ready to be filled with shame than to give place to flattering ideas of my own attainments. I am but a beginner, a mere novice, and feel deeply that valuable knowledge is not to be gained by a few boyish exertions, but requires the labour of many a year.

‘I am just now, and I have been for some time, more inclined to melancholy than ever before. Human life appears to me an exceedingly grave and serious thing, and I am just beginning to take an independent part in it. Then I must make up my mind very soon as to what profession I shall ultimately choose, and I am beset with a great many perplexities and apprehensions. Hitherto I have just been tossed and whirled about by the current of circumstances, but now I must select some point to be gained and struggle manfully against the stream. This is painful, but I have no doubt it is salutary; and perhaps in every case the seed of youthful easiness and pliancy of disposition must be buried and perish under the weight of the exigencies and duties of real life, before the plant of a vigorous and energetic character can spring up. . . . Perhaps you may think that I am of a cheerful, or even

gay and buoyant temperament. This is not the case. The ground of my thought and feeling is dark. The gloomy, moody and perturbed predominate in my constitution over the clear, lively and placid. In company, I know there is about me a semblance of animation, a dash of sarcastic levity, an apparent eagerness to enter into the spirit and raillery of flowing conversation. This is all superficial. There is beneath a restlessness and an unsatisfiedness, and a quarrelling with what I am and with what the world is, and a painful sense of ignorance and of moral deficiency and wrongness,—an unpleasant reviewing of the past and dim and indistinct forebodings of evil for the future. Nothing, as you know, is more fallacious as a test of true satisfaction and tranquillity than the flash of joy or jocularly which blazes forth in common society. There is the sparkling froth, to be sure, which dances on the surface of the gay mountain stream, but there is also the wreath of foam which bubbles on the crest of the storm-tossed wave. Never before had I an idea of the meaning of the words, “he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.” Were it not for the light and the hopes of Christianity, I really do not see how I could avoid absolute despondency when I contemplate human nature and human life. . . . I am afraid that the revelation of myself will show me in a different light from what you would have anticipated. I am quite sure of your sympathy and kind advice, if indeed I have not somewhat exaggerated through a desire to make myself understood and in a fit of depression. My studies must be taken up and vigorously prosecuted. I must work with a steadiness and resolution proportioned to the difficulty of next winter’s classes and to the increasing length of my life of study. Books are always a delight, and I only tire of them when I get out of humour with everything. . . . I had almost forgot to mention that I have heard Dr. Alexander Duff, and fully concur in your very warm admiration of him. . . . How much I long for the weeks of harvest when I shall again roam over the heather and enjoy the beauty of Nature in her unperverted simplicity and wild freedom !

## TO HIS FATHER

124 PRINCES STREET, *May 28, 1839.*

‘I am not aware that this letter will contain anything which might not be made known to all of you, and yet I should rather wish that it would meet your eyes alone. . . . There is one

circumstance on which I would request the favour of your advice, although the decision necessarily devolves upon myself independently of all communications from friends, however closely related and dear. You are aware of a purpose formed by me some years ago to choose as my profession the functions of a teacher of some kind or other. To that vocation I have been all my life favourably disposed, and I ventured to expect, apart from the delusive influence of self-love, that I should discharge its duties at least respectably. Subsequently, however, external occurrences and a good deal of reflection on the subject have suggested to me the duty of weighing very carefully the claims of another and higher calling, that of the Christian ministry. . . . There is not the shadow of a doubt in my mind as to the vast and incomparable superiority of this latter vocation in itself to any other which can be held by mortal; but there are circumstances in my case which appear to preclude any present step, and I am inclined to postpone a practical decision for another year, employing in the interval every means by which, under the direction of God, I may arrive at a right and salutary conclusion. A year certainly is of great consequence, and may appear of more advantage afterwards than it does now. Yet the evils that might result from a precipitate and half-satisfying choice, which might commit me for life, would greatly counterbalance the advantage of an earlier completion of my course. Then, some time ago, Mr. Donaldson expressed the desire that I should continue with him to superintend the studies of his son at the university, and that for the present summer I should go with the family to Ayrshire as tutor. . . . The existence of the difficulties to which I have alluded, together with a wish to survey the subject on all sides, inclines me to close with his proposal.

‘You will naturally expect me to state the nature of these difficulties, although I doubt if I can make them fully understood or at all felt as they press upon my mind. They do not consist so much in any overwhelming apprehension of the inherent awfulness and responsibility of the charge of immortal souls, though that is very, very striking and affecting, or in any disheartening estimate of the amount and variety of intellectual exertion which a minister of the Gospel must put forth in the right discharge of his duties. The first of these reasons, if acted upon, would prevent any human being from entering the ministry, and the second objection is one which my habits of study teach me to regard as not irresistible. But then there should be a degree of elevation and ardour and



maturity in the religious character of a minister, to which I am painfully conscious that I can make no claim; and though the supernatural influence of the Great Author of spiritual life might remedy this deficiency, yet I am not free to make even an approach to that sacred eminence, with a state of practical Christianity which might reflect discredit on it. Besides, there is one most formidable obstacle, not the less difficult to be overcome that it may not at first be appreciated in all its force. You know that in common affairs of life I am intolerably awkward, and in the practical management of business and intercourse with society, where prudence and dexterity are required, a very simpleton. Now, how would such a disposition suit a minister of the Gospel, who requires, if any man does, a singular degree of delicacy and firmness, of engaging freeness and unrepulsive dignity, and a power of accommodating himself, in his intercourse with his people and the world at large, to their habits and feelings, without compromising the sacredness of his character? These, I am persuaded, are qualifications the want of which will seriously injure, if not fatally obstruct, the usefulness of any minister, and I fear much that I am incurably past the hope of acquiring them. I speak plainly, because it would never do to allow a blindness to my own disqualifications to hurry me into a situation where I might bring dishonour on the Gospel of Christ.

‘I shall feel very grateful for a letter containing your thoughts on this matter . . .’

There is no record of his father’s reply; but the latter part of the following letter shows that he left his son to conscience and to God.

#### TO HIS FATHER.

124 PRINCES STREET, *June 12, 1839.*

‘I never wrote in such a poverty of news, notwithstanding the election of a Member for the city of Edinburgh, the meeting of our Synod, and the appearance of a reverend presbytery of the Church of Scotland before the Court of Session to answer for contempt of authority. Next week there is to be what the Chartists call a ‘glorious demonstration,’ *i.e.* a meeting of the simple-minded working men of this city to gaze at and applaud the selfish gang of English democrats who, under the lure of universal suffrage, are seeking to establish a community of property and to revolutionise



the existing state of society. The people of Scotland appear as yet to have too much sense and education to go into so pernicious a scheme, which has been eagerly adopted by multitudes of the ignorant and half-blackguard English working-people. In Edinburgh, at all events, as the late election showed, the party is as small in numbers as it is contemptible in point of respectability and talent, and its whole secret lies in frequent meetings and blustering placards couched in a style as pompous and magniloquent as if they meant, by giving every one a vote, to alter the nature of human life, and free the whole kingdom in all time to come from "all the ills that flesh is heir to." I am truly sorry to see any well-meaning people deceived by their ridiculous promises, and the more so that they bring a scandal on the cause of true reform.

'I have now almost decided to take no steps this year in the matter formerly referred to, but to go with Mr. Donaldson to the country. I would do nothing else, I think, with a safe conscience, although even now I am not quite free from doubt. This will delay my time of seeing you. However, I must struggle with the home-sickness to the best of my ability. Once we get the penny postage I don't know but I shall write a sheet every week, with one piece of news stuck in the midst of sixty lines of fairly written words signifying nothing. But a penny is a penny, and it would be a pity to waste it, although the article got in exchange were a piece of stamped paper that would fly through the land from one extremity to the other. By the goodness of God I find my strength quite equal to the moderate labours of the summer's studies. . . .'

#### TO MISS JEAN DARLING

124 PRINCES STREET, *July 31, 1839.*

' . . . You make three requests: first, that I should study less; secondly, that I should give a very careful attention to the claims of the Established Church, if I decided to study for the ministry; and thirdly, that I should visit the Rev. Mr. ——. You will not deem it a want of due respect if I have only partially complied with the first and second, and have neglected the last altogether. . . . As to my efforts in study, I was of opinion before you wrote that instead of being relaxed they ought to be tightened, for I appeared to be doing nothing, or nothing to the purpose. However, you will rejoice to learn that the cause for your recommending a relaxation no longer exists, and that I feel in as good spirits and working trim as ever. You are perhaps right in attributing to

bodily exhaustion the degree of gloom in which I wrote my last letter. I am sensible it was very much overcharged. But it arose from my inability at the time to get myself out of some speculation of a rather intricate nature, which appeared to bear unfavourably on religion and human happiness. I am disentangled, and the depression is gone.

‘And now for your second request. I have long been seeking for the truth between the Church of Scotland and the Dissenters, and I am as free from prejudice on this as on any question I ever studied. I own that I do not see my way through the controversy, and that it is more difficult to determine than I at first imagined. However, I am resolved to go through with it, and nothing but a clear and conscientious conviction will sway my practical decision as to the Church I enter. At the same time, I must tell you that I am in very great doubt with respect to the selection of the ministerial profession, and that I am at present rather inclined to pass it by. I have very many reasons, all resting, I think, on some want of qualification. But these I shall keep till we meet. I do assure you that nothing gives me greater pain than the hostility, or something like it, which prevails between the two great religious parties in our country. The proper state of the Church of Christ is union, and if conviction leads me to continue my connection with the Secession Church, it will only be from the necessity of preferring purity and freedom to external harmony without them. I don’t mean to say that it is not possible for these to flourish in an Established Church; but at present I cannot see that they have so much scope. . . .’

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## CHAPTER VI

### ON THE THRESHOLD

1839-40

Auchairne—Back to Edinburgh—Friendship with Wilsons—Mesmerism—Diagnostic Society—Sketches of him by Mr. Rutherford and Professor Masson—Father's illness—Father and son—Consecration to ministry.

A JOURNEY from Edinburgh to the Ayrshire coast was a modest beginning of travel; but it had a serious aspect for Cairns. The cost of postage would prevent him from corresponding with home, Rowland Hill's work not having yet been accomplished. The 'demon of sea-sickness,' too, 'stared him in the face.' Hitherto his sole navigation had been on the Dunglass pond, and he looked forward to the risks of a sail on the Clyde with a real anxiety justified not only by that experience, but by every subsequent sea voyage. Yet he was eager 'to see something more of the surface of his dear native land, and especially of a district renowned for its romantic boldness in the cause of civil and religious freedom. It will be delightful to see the classic ground where Wallace fought, the Covenanters bled, and Robert Burns sang.'

Auchairne, where he spent the summer, is an old country house beautifully situated on the Ayrshire coast, about two miles south-east of Ballantrae. On the one side stretches the valley of the Stinchar, with the striking hill of Knockdolian close at hand, while the view seawards commands on a clear day the whole Firth of Clyde, Ailsa Craig, the Isle of Arran, the Mull of Kintyre and the North of Ireland. He had two young pupils, a little girl being now intrusted to his charge, and when the day's lessons were over he

accompanied them in walks and drives through a district fruitful in subjects of historical and antiquarian interest, including several old castles belonging to the famous Kennedys, and Peden's Pulpit, a stone celebrated in the records of the Scottish Church. Among the Ballantrae people he made several close friends, especially the parish minister, Mr. Milroy, a scholarly preacher, whose ministry he attended; while his intimacy with the Donaldson family deepened from day to day. But there was none of his Ayrshire friends whom he valued more than the family coachman and gardener, John M'Ewan, with whom he had sleeping quarters—a man of sterling character and devout habits. This intimacy, which continued for life, was the first token of a habit of cultivating friendships in humble rank with special sedulousness when his occupations took him into society of a higher grade.

The summer evenings were given to the uncongenial study of mathematics. A few lines prefixed to his Natural Philosophy note-book tell their own tale:—

Sept. 16, 1839.

'I do hereby put on record my most anxious wish to accomplish the remainder of Whewell's *Mechanical Euclid*, being from page 27 to 165, before the end of this month, my deep regret that I have given so little attention to it for many months past, my unfeigned self-crimination for this culpable neglect, and my firm determination to use every effort in my power to have it finished within the time specified. And now, in pursuance of this end, I am resolved to give preference in every hour of leisure to the study of this work, and to exercise my thoughts about nothing else that I can possibly avoid in every such portion of my time till the period embraced in this resolution has expired. And knowing my inveterate tendency to dissipated reading, and how strongly I shall be tempted to depart from the course hereby resolved upon, I implore the assistance of God to confirm my purpose, and to secure me against the violation of this solemn engagement.'

'P.S.—The completion of this task was delayed through circumstances till 5th October 1839.'

Yet the summer was a happy one. When he returned to



Edinburgh all gloom had disappeared, and although the choice of a profession had not yet been made, he entered with full vigour not only into the winter's study, but into social relations which were becoming more and more important to him.

During this year one friendship was matured which affected his character more than any other outside his own kindred. Earlier in his university course he had become intimate with a fellow-student, James Russell, the orphan son of the minister of Muthill. Russell, whose untimely death will fall to be recorded, had been adopted by his mother's sister, the wife of Mr. Archibald Wilson, who resided in Gayfield Square. In the year 1838 Cairns was introduced to the Wilsons by Russell. One of the family writes:—

‘From time to time James Russell brought home rumours of a wonderful student who had been a shepherd on the Lammermoor Hills, and was carrying all before him at college. Young and old were much interested; and when James asked if he might bring him to the house a hearty welcome was promised. When he came the wonder did not cease, for it was no common man who appeared, but one tall and grand-looking, as a son of the gods. From the first all of us loved him, and thus began a lifelong friendship in which he was as a son and a brother beloved beyond words and cherished as a priceless treasure.’

The household, which at that time included two sons and three daughters,<sup>1</sup> was presided over by a lady of earnest, thoughtful and cultivated character. The elder son, Daniel, ultimately threw himself into antiquarian pursuits, and gained distinction on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>2</sup> His brother George, whose relations to Dr. Cairns will bulk

<sup>1</sup> At the time of Dr. Cairns' death several newspapers repeated a report that during his student days he was engaged to be married to one of the daughters, who died in 1847. The report has no foundation; the young lady was betrothed at the time of her death to another.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Daniel Wilson, author of *Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time*, the *Archæology and Prehistoric Annals of Scotland*, etc.; Professor of History and English Literature and afterwards President in the University of Toronto; died August 8, 1892.

largely in subsequent chapters, was a man of even more striking and attractive personality. Indeed, no more beautiful or brilliant character flashed upon the monotony which ecclesiasticism and medicine imparted to Scottish thought in the middle of this century. He was a poet of no mean order, a discoverer and an organiser in science, an educational reformer and an admirable biographer. But, beyond these, he was the possessor of the light of genius.

‘Within his delicate being,  
Like light and wind within a summer cloud,  
Genius and death contended.’

At the period of which we are writing he had not yet learned those deep lessons which physical pain afterwards impressed upon his character, and his buoyant, mobile spirit was darting from flower to flower in the gardens of art, literature and science. His chosen comrades, John Goodsir, George Day, David Skae, Edward Forbes, Samuel Brown and Daniel Macmillan lived in an atmosphere of light and truth and kindly chivalry, and in intercourse with them Cairns acquired a hearty respect for all workers in science and all honest craftsmen in general literature, which the divergent course of his own later life never modified.

The Wilson family themselves, who were connected with the congregation of Dr. Lindsay Alexander, were deeply religious, and their private gatherings were much occupied with religious topics. Simplicity of manner, freedom in discussion and gentle refinement were the reigning features, and they not only attracted Cairns, but drew out social resources and habits of free conversation on the deepest subjects for which previously he had had but limited scope. Gayfield Square became his second home, and its genial air, its literary interests and its harmless pleasantries silently rounded off angularities, and defined that broad tolerance which he already possessed in embryo.

He was also much at this time in the company of Sir

William Hamilton, not only attending his private classes but visiting him frequently. Hamilton was to some extent a believer in mesmerism, and the brain of his giant pupil proved to be phenomenally sensitive to mesmeric influences. When Cairns fell into a coma, he not only lost power of will but seemed to part with the moral faculty, while his intellectual acumen remained and was even intensified. In such a state he would answer any question or express his opinion about any person without the slightest reserve. It was a tempting joke to take advantage of so big an intellect, a joke which the clever men who frequented Hamilton's house heartily enjoyed; for they discovered that underneath his guileless and almost childlike simplicity there was a keen critical faculty forming quaintly severe judgments upon them and their ways. Upon one occasion James Ferrier came under the lash, and is said to have winced so keenly that Cairns, discovering what he had said when in the trance, forswore the exercise. Either for this reason or because of the great mental exhaustion which it caused, he thenceforward declined to be mesmerised, recognising that those unexplored lines of psychological and intellectual influence led him into special risk. Long afterwards, when he was past threescore and ten, close observers could catch a flash of the eye or a knitting of the brows which revealed again the secret disclosed in mesmeric trance, that his moral as well as his intellectual energy might have run in dangerous channels and done destructive work but for self-control.

Meantime his powers of reasoning and debate were being sharpened in another school. Edinburgh differs from the other Scottish universities in the variety and the importance of its students' debating societies, and fifty years ago these were to some extent the equivalents of the junior common-rooms and Hall dinner-tables of Oxford and Cambridge.

Besides being one of the founders of the Metaphysical Society, Cairns was enrolled in the spring of 1839 in an older Society, the Diagnostic, which was chiefly occupied with literary and political questions, and which at the time included many students of mark—Enoch Mellor, Andrew Wilson, Maclagan and Dick Peddie, as well as Campbell Fraser, Masson and other members of the Metaphysical. The minutes of the Society give an interesting forecast of his later opinions. We find him vindicating the execution of Queen Mary, but condemning that of Charles I., and contending that Cromwell was not justified in assuming sovereign power. When the young debaters turn to questions of the day, he appears as a rule on the Liberal side, advocating Catholic Emancipation, the Abolition of the Corn Laws, Election by Ballot, and the exclusion of Bishops from the House of Lords. On the other hand he forms a 'cave,' which declines to vote upon such subjects as these: Ought Great Britain to relinquish her Canadian Colonies? Should the House of Peers be elective? Ought Capital Punishment to be abolished? Ought Representation to be co-extensive with Taxation? Similarly, he who had never entered a theatre maintains that the Stage is not necessarily injurious to public morality, and, against a large majority of young patriots, that British Literature owes more to England than to Scotland. He holds that the Government ought not to suppress blasphemous or seditious writing, and declines to say that the Legislature should interfere to procure the better observance of the Sabbath. In view of his personal devoutness, one smiles on discovering his strong antagonism to a proposal which nearly wrecked the Society—that the proceedings should be opened by prayer. The same tendency reappeared when the Society was drawn into the ecclesiastical turmoil which preceded the Disruption. Although advocating the Abolition of Patronage, he does



not admit that the Veto Act was legal or that the claims of the Church of Scotland to co-ordinate jurisdiction with the State could be vindicated, and in debate after debate he maintains that 'civil establishments of religion are opposed to the spirit of religious liberty,' and are 'not conducive to the political well-being of a country.'

In all these debates he was the ruling spirit. One of his contemporaries, the Rev. R. Rutherford, has furnished the following interesting reminiscences:—

'Cairns, who was far the most striking personality in the university, was the soul of the Diagnostic. Intellectually his chief mark was precocity. While others were searching, he had found his standpoint; and when a difficulty arose in debate or in reading, he seemed to see its bearing and its relations. I attribute this partly to his having followed Sir William Hamilton's plan of mastering philosophical systems one by one, giving weeks or even months to the sole study of each. He was the man to whom we all went in difficulties, and none went in vain. There was no reticence, no absorption in his own studies, no assumption, but on the contrary rare modesty and gentleness. In the Diagnostic there was little bitterness of feeling between Dissenting and Established Church students, and this was unquestionably due in great measure to the genial friendliness of Cairns, which disarmed hostility. He had extraordinary debating power. I can see his great angular figure crouching in the corner until he rose to speak, with deep-set eyes flashing beneath heavy jet-black hair, and his long limbs, which seemed to grow as his argument advanced, straightening themselves for combat. There was a mastery of philosophical and theological terms and ideas, an impression of oracular depth, and an air of profound conviction which lifted the subject into a new atmosphere. I remember one debate in 1839 or 1840 on the Spiritual Independence of the Church, when he and his friend Clark, who had Covenanting sympathies, were matched against one another. It was a large meeting, and Clark, seeing that the vote was likely to go against him, claimed an adjournment, in which Cairns at once acquiesced. Next night the crowd was greater; but Cairns in reply swept all before him, winning a vote from those who had come in curiosity and securing a large Liberal majority. Amidst a scene of wild enthusiasm we hoisted his big form upon

our shoulders and careered round the old quadrangle in triumph. Indeed he was the hero of our college life, leaving all others far behind, and impressing us with the idea that he had a boundless future before him.'

No less characteristic is a reminiscence by Professor Masson:<sup>1</sup>—

'O what essays on all things human and divine we read and heard; what criticisms complimentary or sarcastic we pronounced on the essays; what traits of character, what comicalities, what revelations of unfledged power came forth in our debates! . . . And then when we turned out late at night, flushed with our oratory, to take our several ways homewards in groups, how the rhetorical mood and the nimbleness of invention would last, and what laughs and flashes of wit there would be along the lines of the lamp-posts! I remember the going home of one such group. We had passed the South Bridge, and had entered Princes Street and turned westward. There was among us one whom we all respected in a similar degree. Tall, strong-boned and granite-headed, he was the student whom Sir William Hamilton himself had signalled and honoured as already a sterling thinker, and the strength of whose logic, when you grappled with him in argument, seemed equalled only by the strength of his hand-grip when you met him or bade him good-bye, or by the manly integrity and nobleness of his character. He was also the gentlest and kindest of human beings. But, suddenly, when we were in that part of Princes Street pavement which is nearly opposite to the site of the Scott monument, there appeared before us, in the dim light of the approaching midnight, a spectacle which strangely moved him. It was one of those rotatory imps—the first of his order, I should think, in Edinburgh—who earn pennies by tumbling head over heels five or six times continuously. To discern precisely what it was at that time of night was exceedingly difficult. Maddened, as it appeared, by the sight of the revolving creature, our friend rushed at him, hitting at him with his umbrella, and sternly interrogating, "What are you?" Calling up from the pavement, "I'm a wheel, I'm a wheel," the thing continued to revolve, fast as the Manx Arms set a-whirling. Unsatisfied by the information, and still pursuing the thing, and striking at it with the hook of his umbrella, ran our friend, while we gazed on with amazement. A great awe fell upon

<sup>1</sup> *Macmillan's Magazine*, December 1864.

us; and even now, when I think of debating societies or of life itself, I seem to see the rotatory imp in the lamp-lit darkness of Princes Street, pursued by the phrensiéd metaphysician.'

A few extracts from a paper read at the Diagnostic will serve to show that he had already reached the moral, if not the intellectual or spiritual platform on which his life was built. The subject of the paper is 'Humility.'

'It is a curious inquiry whether in addition to the intellectual source of the intensity of humility, which we hold in all cases to be its primary spring, there be not also in some men an independent constitutional tendency to experience the feeling in a higher degree than others. . . . We state our conviction that the diversity of feeling among men in this respect does not arise from any blind, native impulse apart from the exercise of intellect, but from an original inclination to scrutinise self and to familiarise the mind with the highest forms of excellence. The purely intellectual origin of humility distinguishes it from such partial effects of impulse as timidity or bashfulness. . . . Nothing can be more short-sighted than the idea that humility corrodes the sinews of noble exertion by fostering a mean contractedness of desire and an abject feebleness of purpose. The assumption that a magnificent idea of self is necessary to high efforts of intellect, or to the performance of glorious virtue, involves the twofold mistake that humility is incompatible with hope, and that the desire to support dignity is a more powerful incentive to action than the wish to acquire it.

'Casting our eye next on those desires and dispositions which have a more especial reference to others, we find that humility checks or modifies those that are morally reprehensible, and inspires or encourages those which are virtuous and praiseworthy. It moderates the excessive desire of fame; for the loud acclamations of our fellow-men would be in unwelcome dissonance to the solemn whisper of imperfection and unworthiness which rises from the secret chambers of the mind. It tears up by the roots vanity and arrogance, those monstrous growths of ignorance and self-love, since how can we parade before the gaze of others, a character marked with such a preponderance of blemishes, whose brightest features are continually eclipsed by the glorious standard which rises before our mental vision, or how can we presume with this scarred and unshapely figure full in view, to look with disdainful self-complacency on the slightly more defective forms of others? Thus



humility purifies the mind from every feeling and desire incongruous with a right estimate of our own character, and with moral perspicacity. Modesty is her legitimate offspring and Candour her natural and faithful companion. The humble man walks among his inferiors as his natural equals, whose characters are diversified only by slighter degrees of approach than his own to an infinitely distant excellence, wounding none by the presumptuousness of his claims, and disposed to judge more favourably of every one than himself, by his more extensive acquaintance with his own deficiencies and his habit of testing himself by a higher standard than he ventures to apply to them. And as he thus tries himself by the highest and purest standard of excellence, he is unlearning that deference to the arbitrary laws of custom and opinion which, but for this practice of self-knowledge, might otherwise have moulded his whole nature into a pernicious conformity with their maxims. Thus it is that in the lowly soil of humility the virtue of moral courage fixes its roots, and is supported unshaken amidst the blasts of ridicule and persecution.

‘Here, then, we have an instance of that harmony which obtains between the right exercises of intellect, of feeling and of desire. Humility, the daughter of Truth, is discovered to be the parent of Virtue. Let us rear altars to Humility, and her divine afflatus, with that of the other heavenly virtues, will shed an auspicious influence over our whole soul and promote our success in every noble enterprise to which she herself inspires us.’

The interest of those societies, which continued for four years, served as a vent to his energies amidst less congenial studies; but his letters show that it did not absorb his attention nor lessen his determination to become master of whatever was laid to his hands.

During the winter of 1839 his father, now fifty years of age, was seized by an illness which was destined to be fatal. The following correspondence, especially the letters between father and son which tell their own story of love and faith, disclose the course of feeling which led to the final choice of a profession and to the wonderful vow of consecration with which this chapter will close.



## TO HIS FATHER

124 PRINCES STREET, *Dec.* 17, 1839.

'I need not say how deeply I was pained by the perusal of your letter. Hope deferred is painful enough, but hope disappointed is far more severe. All the quarters to which I looked for relief are now barren of comfort—medical treatment, exercise, the weather, etc. There is nothing to look to but the mercy of God, and upon this it would have been wiser for me to have placed more dependence at the first. I hope and pray that by His goodness you may speedily be brought out of His prison-house. Was there ever anything so mysteriously and overpoweringly grand as the existence of a scheme in the mind of the Divinity, adapted specially to each of us insignificant and worthless individuals, developed by the co-operation of the three Persons of the Trinity, and attaining its end by means apparently the most repugnant and unlikely? We never feel the right practical consequences of the Christian faith until we have assigned in our minds a separate individuality to each of the three Persons, and become conscious of sympathies and common intercourse with each of them. . . . This idea, I cannot help thinking, is not sufficiently explained from the pulpit. Men are told that they have free access to God through Jesus Christ, and that they should go to Him; but the very perfection which is ascribed to Him has so much that is mysterious and intangible that the instruction does not take a deep hold of the mind. Let us once firmly believe that the Son of God really feels for us in every difficulty and trouble, and we shall have not merely a greater love to Him, but a source of the most abundant and delightful comfort. So when the Bible says that God pities those who fear Him as a father pitieth his children, the nice distinctions which divines draw between the modes of thought and feeling in God and in man have in effect denied this delightful truth and substituted a dim phantom of their own creation. Perhaps, after all, such a false way of thinking is most common amongst students, and you may not have been hampered with the difficulty as I have often been. If so, you will excuse anything that seems forward or hasty in what I have written, and, if you please, let me have your sentiments on the subject when you write. . . .'

## FROM HIS FATHER

DUNGLASS, *Dec. 23, 1839.*

‘. . . I would not have you think that I am overlooking the divine agency in what has befallen me. I desire to ascribe all to His glory and praise, who can bring order out of confusion and light out of darkness ; and I desire to look away from human means to Him who is able to kill and to make alive, knowing that He doth not grieve willingly nor afflict the children of men. I was much satisfied with the contents of your letter. Although the subject is involved in a good deal of mystery, the view you take of it is, I believe, plainly taught in the Scriptures and, when faith is rightly exercised, must prove comforting to the saints under all their trials and afflictions. . . .’

## FROM THE SAME

DUNGLASS, *Jan. 5, 1840.*

‘As I have no great pain except what arises from coughing, I have reason to bless the Lord who is dealing so bountifully with me. . . . It would be unpardonable in me were I not endeavouring to make myself familiar with death in the forms and aspects in which he presents himself to the mind. Doubts and fears sometimes arise lest I should be indulging in a false and presumptuous hope, and as there is great danger lest we should be deceived in this momentous concern, we cannot be too anxious in ascertaining whether our hope be that of the Gospel as set forth in His Word of truth. Still, through the grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ whom, I trust upon Scriptural grounds, I can call my Saviour, I am enabled to view death as a friend and as deprived of its sting, and this is a source of great comfort to me and cheers my drooping mind. I can say that my Beloved is mine and I am His, and that He will make all things to work together for His own glory and my eternal good. Dear son, I have thus opened my mind to you, and I trust that your prayers will not be wanting that my faith may be strengthened and that all the graces of the Holy Spirit may abound in me to the glory of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’

## TO HIS FATHER.

124 PRINCES STREET, *Jan. 8, 1840.*

‘It gave me extreme pleasure to read your expressions of submission to the divine will, and of trust in Him who is bringing

about the beautiful and harmonious issues of His own all-wise and benignant plans, through means of that pain and suffering which seems to our shortened minds unmixed evil. How delightful is it further to think that, while the present system of the divine administration will be productive of the greatest good in the whole, and display the glories of the divine character, we, if reconciled to God in Christ, are, by our doing or suffering, helping on its glorious results and destined to partake of them! I earnestly pray and hope that God will not visit you with severe pain, and desire that, if in accordance with His holy will, He will bless the means still to be adopted for your recovery.

‘ . . . After Friday, when the penny postage comes into operation, we shall no longer be restricted to writing on one day of the week. . . .

‘ You allude to the commencement of another year. I cannot depart from the wonted form of 1839 without regret. . . . Is this a manifestation of that tenacious clinging to life which belongs to our sentient nature—a desire to put forth the hand to check the flow of sand from the hour-glass, and to arrest the mighty stream of time which sweeps resistlessly by, or does it not proceed from a higher principle of our nature, which holds up before us the comprehensive course of duty which lay within the circle of the year, and then points us to the miserably imperfect progress we have made? I feel little heart to engage in the reasonable hilarity, and far less in the thoughtless and extravagant merriment of the season. I am almost disposed to think that, as it is amidst the desolation and sterility of external nature that the new year, cradled in gloom and storms, comes upon the scene of life—while it is yet afterwards to blossom forth into the fresh beauties of spring, the full-blown loveliness of summer and the matured exuberance of autumn,—so the heart which has been penetrated with the bitterness of regret for misspent time, and weighed down with the consciousness of immense duty and responsibility in the year which has just begun, at a season when joviality and mirth reign around, is more likely “to bring forth fruit to perfection,” and to be afterwards surrounded with the serene and imperturbable calm of peace, when the levity and giddy joys of others have passed away and left no pleasing trace behind.’

## TO THE SAME

124 PRINCES STREET, *Jan. 31, 1840.*

'I have felt much sorrow indeed to hear that you are not in any respect improving. I do not well know how to sympathise with your distress, never having experienced, from the time when I could attend to my sensations, anything like what you must be undergoing. Yet it is not very difficult to picture to the mind some of the principal circumstances—the confinement, the almost inevitable sinking of spirits, the positive pain, the lassitude, the mental uneasiness which the prospect of the possible issue cannot fail to excite. It is because we do not attend to the varied causes of unhappiness which mingle in some states of suffering that we feel so little sympathy. Although hard-hearted and unfeeling enough, man cannot avoid sympathy when the circumstances of the cases are fairly before him. Perhaps it is a beneficial provision of the All-wise Author of our nature that the mind is repelled from scenes of distress. We are so constituted as to forget the misery that is in the world, that the spirits may be buoyant enough for ordinary duties. The thought of you is never long absent from my mind, and yet I sometimes feel as if it were in a manner undutiful to engage in trains of thinking, or study of any kind, that may prevent the remembrance from being constant. This, I know, is required neither by the laws of filial duty nor by the precepts of God, and yet I feel often as if I were breaking both when going about my studies with something like my usual closeness and interest. . . .

'My dear father, while I rejoice to be assured of your preparation for the issue of your disease, I trust that God may give you that confidence in His grace and hope in His salvation, which are sometimes denied to those who have proved by the whole tenor of their lives that they are His genuine servants. The Christian is not called upon, in the prospect of death as possibly at hand, to assure himself of readiness for it in any other way than when the hour is apparently far distant. He is merely to perform those exercises of faith and trust and love and resignation in a greater degree. I trust, however, my dear father, that the Almighty will yet raise you up from this affliction, and call you to further usefulness in His service and enjoyment of happiness in this life. . . .'



## FROM HIS FATHER

DUNGLASS, *Feb. 24, 1840.*

'Thanks to our Heavenly Father's goodness, I have again the pleasure of writing to you with mine own hand. My complaints are still the same, and I feel rather weaker. I have great reason to bless the Lord my God for that peace of mind which I am permitted to enjoy, and which I trust His abundant mercy will enable me to possess so long as I am in this tabernacle of clay. Dear son, I hope you will write soon, as I am longing to hear from you. . . .'

## TO HIS FATHER

124 PRINCES STREET, *Feb. 29, 1840.*

'I rejoice to hear that you are so strengthened and upheld in mind, and I still hope that through the tender mercy of our God the Spring will restore you to health and to your usefulness among us. It is a large portion of life to pass amidst the visitations of pain, the languor of disease and the natural depression of spirit. The Gospel speaks of "glorying in tribulations." This is infinitely beyond the reach of unaided human thought; for the heathen considered that a wise man did worthily if he merely submitted to evil with unrepining and unyielding fortitude. The difficulty in the way of attaining this state of mind arises from our inveterate disposition to make our own feelings and the superficial appearances of things weigh more in our minds than the statements of the Word. Before the marvellous disclosures regarding the uses of pain, disease and sorrow can have their proper influence, a certain mental habit has to be created in the soul, and that habit, as you know, is faith. It is as impossible for a person believing that the final designs of God are merciful towards him to be greatly discouraged as it was for the Saviour, with the prospect of the joy set before Him, to turn back from His enterprise of mercy, and to forego the purposes of His incomprehensible love. . . .'

## TO THE SAME

124 PRINCES STREET, *March 13, 1840.*

'I find that I must often put the remembrance of home away, and engage the mind in a multitude of contemplations quite unconnected with it. Yet there is a time when we remember friends that are

distant in a different way from what we do in the incidental occurrence of thoughts about them. When, as members of a higher family, we appear before our great Father to supplicate His mercies, then the feelings of domestic affection have their full ascendancy; we think of the peculiar circumstances of our parents and brethren according to the flesh, and we fervently implore that we may be all "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty," and that the Good Shepherd may lead us into the safe and happy fold, to which there are entrances prepared in the darkest thickets and most rugged tracks of this dangerous world.

'Last Sabbath Dr. Brown, who is as a rule distinguished more for clear-headedness and sagacity, with strength of thought, than for any striking richness of imagination or enthusiasm of feeling, rose far above his ordinary style in explaining the verse, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and was glad." . . . The general doctrine he illustrated was the intimacy of the connection between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven, the depth of interest which the one takes in the minutest events in the history of the other, and the familiarity of the intercourse with the things of the world which they have left that is enjoyed by departed saints. . . .

'I trust God will spare you for a time to us; for the very thought of your unlikelihood to be restored I dare not revolve in my mind, and cannot bring myself to adopt.'

#### TO MISS JEAN DARLING

124 PRINCES STREET, *March 17, 1840.*

'Since the beginning of January I have been struggling in a sea of troubles, from which I have not even yet emerged. I may almost say I did not know what study was till this year. Not that I did not work as long, or cover as many books and subjects. But it was then delightful, even when it required most application, and the effort left me consciously invigorated and in high spirits. This winter Natural Philosophy studies have bound me down to incessant and monotonous plodding. I cannot say that my dislike of them is gone, but I encourage myself with the hope that my power of apprehending them is increased. I don't know if any other consideration would have kept me so close to them. You know, too, my inability to resist the desire of successful competition in almost any subject. Yet it was not for these reasons alone that I set myself to work in good earnest. I was very sensible of the great im-

portance of the subject, and that, in the present day, no man can pretend to a complete education who is not tolerably versed in the physical sciences. I wish to make a great pull once for all at the end of the rope, and let the bucket rest thereafter at the bottom of the well. But Mechanics, Electricity, Meteorology, Astronomy, etc., have enough of my thoughts without getting more of this letter.

'February was something like my old course of steady but agreeable exertion. I was engaged in studying the life, works and poetical character of Cowper, with a view to an essay for the Rhetoric class. I could write a long letter on the delight and instruction which I have received from this singularly interesting study. . . One feature of his poetry I cannot help noticing—his admiring but not exaggerated estimate of the dignity and manifold excellencies of the female character. He himself had a series of women friends like guardian angels, one after another, as his overwhelming necessities required sympathy and succour. The name of Mary Unwin alone would counterweigh the infamy of a Herodias, a Messalina, a Catherine the Great.

'I have taken up my pen to write between the conclusion of one work on Astronomy and the commencement of another, as the swimmer lifts his head when one wave has passed over and another billow is about to engulf him. Seriously, I like Astronomy better than anything else I have been put to. It has come late, however, and has a long series of impressions of weariness, straining and disgust to remove before it can altogether dissipate my dislike to the class of studies to which it belongs. . . .

'You will believe me, my dear friend, that, notwithstanding an apparent sprightliness, I write this letter with a very sad heart, when I inform you that my dear father is, I fear, beyond hope of recovery. This has been a source of depression to me during the winter, and has contributed to make my studies less agreeable than before. He is, I rejoice to think, prepared to die; but it is hard for us to resign his presence and paternal direction. . . . I feel just now the value of the Gospel to an extent which such circumstances can alone acquaint us with. My heart is heavy enough with all its alleviations, and I do not know how I should subsist in the gloom which the withdrawal of light from heaven would leave. . . .'

## TO HIS FATHER

124 PRINCES STREET, *April 1, 1840.*

' . . . As I am speaking of myself, I may mention that the essay on Cowper has been successful beyond my expectations, and very much beyond its deserts, having gained the first prize—thirty volumes of the *British Essayists*. I had read little of poetry, and thought perhaps still less of its nature and the marks of its excellence, so that the essay was anything but what one would suppose from hearing that it drew after it such a tail of books.

' . . . I have been very sad all winter, and nothing but the hope of your recovery appears sufficient to alter my feelings of depression. But I am not unhappy. I believe that your affliction is the result of a divine dispensation of the purest goodness and the highest wisdom, and that its issue will, in the end, be the glory of God and your own ultimate happiness. If we saw things in their true shapes and relations, we would no doubt select ourselves the very course of fortune which the divine Being chooses for us. . . . This consideration is sufficient to convince the understanding; but it is one thing to satisfy the understanding, and another to compose the inquietude of the feelings. May the Spirit of God, who alone can do it, support you with His cheering influence, and enable all of us to bear the interval of suspense with calmness, and to receive the issue with hearty thankfulness or humble resignation !'

## FROM HIS FATHER

DUNGLASS, *April 8, 1840.*

' We are happy to hear of your welfare and success. Your diligence has always told for itself in the end. . . . I am glad that you are coming out soon, so that, if it please our Heavenly Father to spare me till then, I may have the pleasure of seeing you once more.'

## TO REV. DAVID URE, AYTON

124 PRINCES STREET, *April 18, 1840.*

' I can no longer maintain anything like hope of my father's recovery. To be driven to and fro by suspense is painful indeed, and yet the alternation of lightsome hope relieves the gloom of apprehension. But to walk about on the earth in the perfect



possession of health, to exercise mental activity in solitude and company, and to be obliged to be all that one used to be, with the unresisted conviction that a father, and such a father, is gradually sinking under wasting disease, this, my dear sir, is a new thing to me. Yet all the evils of death are for my father done away, . . . and although I feel at times very sad, I cannot call myself unhappy. There is something in the holding fast of the faith, and drawing on the consolations of the Gospel, which will not admit of positive unhappiness. Possibly sadness itself might be destroyed by a more enlarged and steadfast apprehension and appropriation of the blessings of the salvation of Christ.

‘ . . . You wished to know what prey I have taken in that general hunting after prizes, in which, like others, I have been engaged. Well then, in the Natural Philosophy class, where I wrought very hard for the limited time I could command among levers and pulleys and projectiles and central forces and eclipses and planetary perturbations, I found myself second and nearly equal to the first. However, I like the study not quite so ill now, and my conviction of its value has also increased. We make our personal dislike the ground of condemnation or depreciation, and this dislike is generally founded in ignorance and fortified by incapacity to learn. I gained a prize for the study of Locke’s *Essay on the Human Understanding*, as prescribed by Sir W. Hamilton to his students of last year. But the pleasantest course was that of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. Our Professor, George Moir, passed in review the literature of antiquity and modern times with a comprehensiveness and vigour of mind, a discrimination and delicacy of taste, and an elegance and a liveliness of style which made his lectures the most delightful, I may almost say, I ever attended. . . .

‘ You are perhaps aware of the great interest which the subject of revivals of religion is at present exciting in the minds of the people of Edinburgh. Every night this week there have been meetings in Rose Street and Nicholson Street chapels. There are also prayer-meetings in the same places every morning. A great number of ministers are present, and two or three conduct the exercises. There are no attempts to work on the animal feelings and sympathies, but plain, forcible and deeply solemn statements of the great truths of the Gospel, the process which Dr. Brown calls spiritual galvanism being universally reprobated. . . .’

## TO HIS FATHER

124 PRINCES STREET, *May 11, 1840.*

‘ . . . A student of divinity, a dear and valued friend of the fairest promise, Charles Ferguson, was removed by consumption on Saturday, just four hours after I had conversed with him. He was, I think, the most amiable person I ever knew, and his abilities were beyond his years. But he is now among the redeemed. . . . Poor Mrs. M—— is in great suffering, and her death is expected every day. She, too, amidst bodily agonies, is supported by a strong inward hope. If I do not learn wisdom in the house of mourning, it is not that I am not supplied with enough of these painful but salutary lessons. . . . My dear father, I close with an assurance of my strong sympathy with your distress, and an expression of my most fervent desire that God may, for Christ’s sake, support you in your coming trial, upholding you with the right hand of His righteousness. Write soon, if you please; I weary much.’

## TO THE SAME

124 PRINCES STREET, *June 13, 1840.*

‘ I have, after much serious deliberation and prayer to God for direction, made up my mind to commence this year the study of divinity, with a view to the office of the ministry of the Gospel. I pray you do implore the grace of God on my behalf after this very grave and solemn determination. . . .’

## TO MISS JEAN DARLING

124 PRINCES STREET, *June 27, 1840.*

‘ I am going to tell you a piece of news, as important and grave as ever I will write to you on any future occasion. I have made up my mind to study for the ministry, and to do so in connection with the Secession Church. I believe that you have expected this for some time, and that you were inclined to look with a shade of incredulity on my former affirmations that I had no such intention. I was always serious, however, although I do not think I weighed the matter with sufficient circumspection and enlargement of apprehension. Well, I have attempted to give the subject a final consideration as careful and dispassionate as I could, and, I trust, with due

dependence on the direction of the Spirit of God. The result is as I have stated. I had little difficulty in selecting between the Secession Church and every other. I have never disguised my objections to the Church of Scotland, and they are not weakened. At the same time I believe that no very long time will elapse before the Church of Scotland will be in a condition to make the hope of re-union of all orthodox Presbyterians in this country to her not so distant as at present it appears. One thing I am convinced of more thoroughly than ever, that there is a most unseemly mistaking of the means for the end in many of the sects of the Christian Church, and a disposition to view every little triumph of their own party as so much done for the multiplication of the faithful and the spread of the truth of God. I would abjure such a spirit, and seek to be preserved from it. But the great difficulty was, whether I should fix on the ministry at all or not. I have a great fondness for teaching, and a strong partiality for those courses of study in which I have hitherto been engaged. And I sometimes thought that I might fill a place in the great field of human duty in this capacity, possibly not with dishonour to myself, and with some good to my fellow-creatures. But, after all, these beneficial consequences appeared to be at best secondary and collateral; and I felt that if I were not positively disqualified, a regard to the glory of our common Lord and to the highest good of men demanded that I should enter that sphere of exertion where the glory of God is most prominently kept in view, and the good of men in the noblest aspect is regarded as the end. Some disqualifications, which I had feared lay against me, I found to attach to almost every human being, and others, which I cannot but lament as still existing, will, I hope, by the grace of God and the use of suitable means, be removed before I can enter upon the sacred office.

‘And now, my dear friend, I feel that I am, in a manner, to become another person, not by casting off anything that is justly esteemed among men, or assuming a demure and Pharisaical sanctimoniousness and austerity, but by abjuring every remnant of worldly distinction, and by aspiring, through the grace of God, after the attainment of a character which, in heavenly-mindedness and simplicity of devotion and zeal for the divine service, may not suffer by a comparison with the unofficial members of the Christian Church, nor stand exposed to the scorn or condemnation of men, an inconsistency and a scandal in the brightness of that light which surrounds the eminent station of the minister of the Gospel.’

## CHAPTER VII

### PREPARING FOR THE MINISTRY

1840-44

The Secession Hall and Professors—Relation to fellow-students—University honours—Private studies—Atonement Controversy—Disruption—Personal appearance and reputation—Father's death—William's illness—George Wilson's illness—Letters.

THE next four years are so fully recorded in Dr. Cairns' letters that only a brief introductory statement is required.

The Seceders from the beginning had been liberal and discriminating in the education of their ministers.<sup>1</sup> The idea which governed them was that students should attend the universities with those preparing for the other learned professions, and that towards the end of their university course their studies in theology should be directed partly by presbyteries and partly by special lectures given by ministers appointed for the purpose. As the Church grew and the number of students increased, the latter part of this training took a more systematic form. In 1840, when Cairns began to study for the ministry, the students met annually for seven weeks, sometimes in Glasgow and sometimes in Edinburgh, under four professors. The curriculum extended over five years; but during ten months of each year the professors were engaged in pastoral work, and the students, except for the general supervision of presbyteries before which they appeared at intervals for examination, were their own masters. Some attended university lectures on theology side by side with the Established Church students. Some found

<sup>1</sup> William Wilson, the first professor of the Secession Church, lectured in Latin; Alexander Moncrieff, who succeeded him, had studied with distinction at Leyden under Markius.



employment in public or private teaching. Some developed their individual tastes in philosophy, literature or science. Some made their way to Continental universities. It was a bold system of eclectic training which gave scope to specialism and fostered individuality.

During the short autumn term they listened to lectures on the recognised branches of theology, and preached sermons in the lecture-room to imaginary congregations; but behind this, and equally important to the students as a discipline, were the interchange of the year's experience, the comparison of difficulties, the discussion of current topics and the measurement of one another's progress. At this time the Professors—Dr. John Mitchell of Glasgow, Dr. Robert Balmer of Berwick, Mr. Alexander Duncan of Mid-Calder, and Dr. John Brown of Edinburgh—were all men of ability, but towards two of them Cairns was especially attracted. Dr. Balmer, the Professor of Systematic Theology, was an acute and skilful theologian of a type not too common in theological colleges. Dignified and reserved in manner, careful and courteous in style, he was fair to a fault as a controversialist, and so much inclined to liberal appreciation of heretical doctrines that he repeatedly roused the suspicions of the vigorously orthodox, and once, at least, was impeached as himself a heretic. In a brief sketch which Cairns contributed to his biography, attention is called to his 'sobriety in speculation, his candour and universal charity, his habit of looking at systems in their affinities rather than in their discrepancies, his reduction of evangelical truth to a few great principles without scholastic distinctions, and the simple but dignified purity of his moral character.' There are many indications of the affection which he awakened in Cairns, who was destined to occupy both his pulpit and his Chair. Deeper and fuller, however, was the influence of the Professor of Exegetical Theology, Dr. John Brown, whose strong and tender character has been depicted

by his brilliant son in words which are likely to last with the English language. As a scholar, Dr. Brown was the first Biblical theologian of his day in Scotland. If his numerous commentaries have to a large extent passed out of use, this is because other writers have entered by the door which he helped to open. Laden but not overburdened with learning, he showed a disregard of traditional methods and a frank candour in doctrine which repeatedly involved him in controversy, and would have exposed him to more serious troubles but for the outstanding dignity of his character and the unfaltering devoutness of his public and private life. 'At that time,' writes Professor Masson, 'there was no more venerable man in Edinburgh. People turned in the streets to observe his dignified figure as he passed, and strangers who went to hear him were struck no less by the beauty of his appearance, the graceful fall of the silver locks round his fine head and sensitive face, than by his Pauline earnestness.' In 1839 Cairns had placed himself under Dr. Brown's pastoral care. But it was when he entered the Hall that he first learned the impressiveness of Dr. Brown's mental and moral character, and was admitted to an intimate friendship which became more and more to him every year. It was not possible for him to follow any man blindly. He soon diverged in ecclesiastical and theological opinion from Dr. Brown, as he diverged in speculative matters from Sir William Hamilton. Yet the lines of his future labours were largely determined by the tone and temper of Dr. Brown's ministry and professorship.

Among his fellow-students in divinity he had William B. Robertson, John Ker, James Clyde, James Knox, Andrew Shoolbred, Alexander MacEwen, Joseph Leckie and others with whom he formed friendships of the kind which grow with years. He took an active share with them in various extra-academical activities, especially in the Students' Missionary Society, to which was addressed his first published composi-

tion—a vigorous and florid advocacy of the claims of foreign missions. His chief intimate was William Graham, a bright-minded, genial, versatile and erratic youth, whose doctrinal views brought him into difficulties at an early stage. They two were much together in their lodgings during the Hall sessions, discussing matters theological and literary, and rehearsing to each other their exercises and sermons with a freedom which their correspondence illustrates. But with this exception his intercourse was with students of another sort. As at the university, he was the recognised counsellor of the bewildered and perplexed. Coming to the Hall with an unrivalled reputation for intellectual power, he was discovered to be the most considerate and tolerant of men, a strong swimmer, to whom struggling lads could call for help. Throughout the year he was followed by letters pouring out anguish of soul or overflowing with gratitude for good cheer already given. To a developed and well-balanced mind like his, much of their contents must have seemed boyish; but he would sit down without a touch of conscious superiority to write page after page of counsel, wise, liberal and tender, securing from the recipients an enthusiastic devotedness which bordered upon adoration.

During those years his home was in Edinburgh, where he lived with the Donaldson family till his pupil outgrew his care. Thereafter he maintained himself by private tutoring, living in lodgings in St. Cuthbert's Glebe. Until April 1841 his leisure was occupied in preparation for graduation in Arts. No one but himself was surprised when the examination showed him to be *facile princeps* in Classics and in Philosophy, and bracketed first in the distasteful department of Mathematics. At the same time he won the Students' prize open to the whole Faculty, and a place in another list, which shows how far he had outdistanced his fellow-students. Sir William Hamilton, reckoning that the method of graduation did not give sufficient prominence to speculative

philosophy, had instituted a separate and higher examination. The first published list was this :—

First Class.—JOHN CAIRNS, M.A., Berwickshire.

Second Class.—*Vacant*.

Third Class.—*Vacant*.

Fourth Class.—Will receive testimonials of extra proficiency.

When free from college task-work, Cairns dived into reading of all sorts—historical, biographical and philosophical. The entries of the university librarian show that in a single month he was busy with Hobbes and Spinoza, with Aristophanes and Theocritus, with Ranke and Hallam. But it was not desultory reading. All was scrutinised, searched out and estimated. His abstract of Calvin's Institutes would stand public scrutiny to-day without a word of correction, and yet his letters make it clear that his attitude towards Calvin was not one of worship. Notes of his occasional reading are recorded on sheets of paper headed 'Chaos,' which, in punctilious precision, would compare favourably with the 'Cosmos' of most students. He plunged into Hebrew, and emerged with a thoroughness of scholarship to which few attain in a lifetime. German he picked up as a plaything, and then turned aside to study chemistry under George Wilson's guidance. But he still found his chief delight in philosophy, throwing himself into system after system, and working his way down the centuries until the need for grasping Fichte and Hegel pointed him with a clear finger to Germany.

Yet he was no recluse. The firesides as well as the libraries of Sir William Hamilton and Dr. Brown were open to him. With the Wilsons and the family of Mr. Rattray of Rattray, to whom several of his letters are addressed, he was a constant guest. For at this stage he was essentially social and conversational, with a fresh glee and confiding simplicity which are rarely combined with an argumentative disposition, and which endeared him specially to good



women. Of that brooding habit to which his letters repeatedly refer he showed no trace in society. On the contrary, invariable good temper, self-restraint and a serene trustfulness in God and man are the features which the memories and the letters of his friends preserve.

The air was then thick with controversy both theological and ecclesiastical. The Secession Church was occupied with the Atonement Controversy, which began in 1841 with the impeachment and 'suspension' of James Morison, the well-known commentator and the founder of the Evangelical Union Church, and continued till 1845, being maintained with a personal bitterness which occasionally threatened the unity of the denomination. In a book<sup>1</sup> published twenty years afterwards, to which the reader is referred for a calm survey of the issues at stake, Dr. Cairns expresses the opinion that the sentence passed upon Morison was justified by his subsequent development of Arminian tenets. During the controversy, however, his sympathies were, if not with Morison, with those who defended him in the Church Courts, and the later stages of the discussion intensified his sympathies. The victorious champions of orthodoxy, headed by men who had sharpened their debating powers as protagonists in the Voluntary Controversy, and who were samples of the not infrequent blend between Radicalism in politics and Toryism in theology, indulged in a series of raids upon ministers suspected of Arminian tendencies, and finally aimed at higher game by seeking to 'libel' Professors Brown and Balmer. Meanwhile the Secession students were from time to time exhorted to be 'discreet' and 'cautious' in their studies, and candidates for the ministry were subjected to the closest cross-examination as to the 'particular and general references' of the Atonement. Although in retrospect Dr. Cairns reckoned that the con-

<sup>1</sup> *Memoir of John Brown, D.D.*, chap. vii. : Edinburgh, 1860. Morison was 'declared to be no longer connected with the Secession Church,' and ministers were prohibited from interchange of public services with him.

trovcrsy did something to 'liberalise Scottish theology without deranging its equilibrium,' he recognised that its later phases had little novelty or interest and turned upon verbal differences when the really vital question had been exhausted. 'Happily,' he says, 'I had no part or lot in the matter.' Indeed, his letters show that he stood outside the denominational excitement, and was half ashamed of its petty personalities. The only stage at which it touched him was when his favourite professors were charged with heresy, and then his chivalrous nature was roused to indignation.

It was different with the Disruption Controversy. As it reached its height, he saw its consequence more clearly than did most of the Seceders. It is well known that the party in the Church of Scotland which had unfurled the flag of spiritual independence had no friendly words to spare for the older dissenters, with whom a few years before they had been at daggers drawn. The Seceders, on their part, reckoning that the Church had no right to independence as long as she was connected with the State, declined to support the claim made, and very much underestimated the strength of the whole movement. Till a few months before the Disruption occurred, they freely prophesied that it would end in smoke, and the tension was increased by the emphatic declarations of Chalmers and Cunningham that *they* were not 'Voluntaries.' Cairns, however, the champion Liberal of the students, was not only wiser than the leaders of his Church but more sympathetic and appreciative. His sympathy with the Independence party, which Welsh, Walker, Nelson, Campbell Fraser and most of his college friends had joined, was unhesitating, and his correspondence on the subject, although tempered by the deference due to an elderly lady who was devoted to the Established Church, shows that he saw from the first the lasting consequence of the movement and its inevitable tendency. On the day of the Disruption, while Dr. John Brown sat in the Canonmills Hall quietly

awaiting the arrival of the 'now free' Church, Cairns was seen by his amazed fellow-students tossing his cap in the air at the head of the great procession which left the Assembly Hall, and roaring out his applause with the full strength of his capacious lungs.

A strange, ungainly figure-head he must have been. Broad-shouldered, growing so that George Wilson said an Act of Parliament would be required to stop him, outgrowing both in latitude and in longitude his carefully kept clothes, swinging his arms as a mower swings his scythe, holding himself in restraint as though afraid to injure mother earth, he towered with his huge shoulders above the densest crowd. A large head that seemed not too large by reason of its setting, strong chin, big loose jaws, with full open lips that closed only when speech was needed; and such an eye—light blue, transparent, soft as a poet's, but gleaming almost fiercely from beneath its jet-black penthouse when roused by passion! His bodily strength was enormous—unproved, indeed, but obvious at a glance. Once at least, when a visit to Dunglass was required, he set out from Edinburgh at 8 A.M. and covered the 35½ miles before 3.50 P.M., pausing only to buy some biscuits at Haddington and to quench his thirst at a wayside watering-trough. During one of George Wilson's illnesses he slipped away from a party of students who were hurrying to a Non-intrusion meeting, saying that he wished to fetch a friend, and presently he appeared at the door of the Assembly Hall bearing Wilson high upon his shoulders. He had carried him by back streets, as easily as a child. 'Never,' writes James Russell, 'was there your equal among students for physical endowment or iron health. There is J——, with a frame of granite apparently, broken down to infinite puniness, but you tower sublime above the crash of nature and the wreck of worlds.' A giant he was in every way—body, mind and heart, giving every one who met him a sense



of unlimited capacity. Yet he published next to nothing. Two closely reasoned articles, with the signature 'K.,' appeared in the *Secession Magazine*, proving with grave force that 'the use of the Lot is permissible,' and tearing to pieces the popular fallacies on the subject; and his friends declared truthfully that no Seceder could have written so boldly or argued so keenly but John Cairns. In the same quiet organ he wrote a review which led Chalmers to seek out the author. But his reputation was a personal one. Edinburgh was then but a small city, and Scotland was more centralised than now. Students drawn from all parts of the country by the fame of Hamilton and Chalmers carried home the name of the big Berwickshire man who was first in everything. Had not Sir William given several sections of his lectures to discussing Cairns' opinions? Had not Christopher North, when a poor lad made too free a use of his friend's essay, caught up the offender in a moment, and declared that no reasonable man could forget anything John Cairns had written? Had he not, in a semi-private gathering of notable philosophers, put James Ferrier and George Combe to rout after a four hours' disputation? Above all, had he not, by dint of argument, persuaded those arbiters of the future, the university students, to record their votes for the Freedom of the Church? So it was that the idea spread that Cairns was bound to do something great in the world of thought, and anxious parents, when sending their boys to the perils of the city and the college, hunted about for introductions to him. It was not a hard search, for 'everybody,' as the late Principal Cunningham of St. Andrews has written, 'knew Cairns; every one loved him; he was so gentle, so unconscious, so eager to give help and guidance.'

Yet it was not, to speak strictly, unconscious goodness. He was deliberately seeking the glory of God, and training himself in Christian virtues. His note-books



give evidence of chapters of the Bible committed to memory, and of deeper exercises of devotion, showing that from day to day the vow recorded at the end of last chapter was carefully discharged. 'It is a great thing, the greatest thing about him,' wrote Graham, 'to see his spirit so pillared up above the ugly haze that clouds and chokes us to a high and calm beatitude.'

But the most striking feature of his outward life during those years was his singular experience of death and sickness. On January 3, 1841, the protracted sufferings of his noble father came to an end. The death-scene, as one of the children has described it in simple outline, was one that revealed the fibre of the family.

'None of us except mother had looked before on the face of a dead man, and there our father lay dead. After a short pause, when each one had realised what had happened, mother in a broken voice asked that "the Books" might be laid on the table, and gave out the verse :

"The storm is changed into a calm  
At His command and will ;  
So that the waves that raged before  
Now quiet are and still."

'It was her voice that raised the tune. Then she asked Thomas, the eldest of us, to read a chapter of the Bible and afterwards to pray. When we knelt down, Thomas made strong effort to steady his voice, but failed utterly ; and our dear mother herself lifted up the voice of thanksgiving for the victory that had been won.'

Although not the eldest, John at once took upon himself all the arrangements for the funeral, and guided the plans of the family calmly, tenderly and prudently. Ere a year had passed another sorrow fell. His brother William, then working as a mason in Berwickshire, was seized with inflammation, which kept him for many weeks on the verge of the grave. John hastened at once to the scene, and, as soon as the invalid could be removed, made all arrangements for having him conveyed to the Edinburgh Infirmary, where for

four months he watched over him as a mother over her sick child.

'He was fertile in little plans for alleviating pain and bringing cheerfulness, and acquired skill in applying galvanism, which was one of the attempted processes of cure. As he visited me day after day, usually twice a day, bringing books and cakes and biscuits, even a pipe to provide for my infirmity, all the inmates came to know him, and for every patient in the ward he had a kindly cheering word. He was very busy at that time with his studies, but he never missed a day.'

His letters show how these experiences and the death of several student friends set a stamp of seriousness and solemnity upon his naturally buoyant character. The brevity and uncertainty of life, the need for submissiveness to God and the consoling power of the Gospel, were forced upon him by Providence. If he grew into a singularly serious man, who seemed to be bending beneath a great weight and to be checking tendencies which might have been indulged without harm, it was not his own doing, but the teaching of Him who guides every consecrated soul into the best paths of service.

One special tale of suffering and struggle which was spread over those years influenced his future so strongly that it must be recorded with some precision. During the early years of his visits to Gayfield Square, George Wilson remained to some extent outside the circle of religious discussion in which the rest of the family frequently engaged. From boyhood he had lived a pure and gentle life, marked by a deep vein of unworldly charity. But his friendships and his interests had been miscellaneous. The leading spirit of a club whose motto was 'Wine, Love, and Learning,' a passionate admirer of pretty faces, and a dilettante critic in literature and art, he was but slightly concerned in the more serious topics which absorbed his cousin James Russell and Cairns. Gradually, however, he began to feel interested, and had many long private discussions with Cairns as to the

compatibility of the miraculous elements of the Gospel with the uniformity of nature. 'He was also,' says Dr. Cairns, 'disturbed as to the doctrine of the Atonement. But his great want was the power to realise the value of the Gospel remedy, from his heart having been greatly set on literary and scientific eminence.' In 1840, however, the current of his life was changed by a serious illness, which developed into a long struggle to ward off death. He had to abandon the brilliant beginning which he had made as a lecturer and demonstrator in chemistry, and, with intervals of partial recovery, was for many months confined to bed. During this period, when he was shut off from his scientific and literary friends, Cairns gradually drew closer to him, and with that spiritual skill which is possible only to those who have sat in the school of the good Physician, confirmed and deepened the foundations of his faith. Sunday after Sunday he made his way from Broughton Place Church to Gayfield Square, and repeated to the invalid the substance of Dr. Brown's sermons, expanding and enforcing the most needed aspects of them. The Saturday afternoons, too, were always given to the same ministering office. 'Visits they were,' Wilson's biographer says, 'as of an angel of comfort and strength.' The good work of grace progressed while the illness increased. At last, in January 1843, Wilson was told by Professor Syme that he must choose between certain death from the progress of the disease and the sacrifice of one foot by a novel operation which might prove fatal. He chose the latter at once, but asked for a week's respite, wishing to prepare for death and what lies beyond it while his faculties were clear. Then he fell back for guidance on his strong friend, and they two passed together into the secret places of the Most High. Before the week closed, a day came when Wilson gained a clear faith in God, which remained with him till the hour of his death. When Cairns rose from his knees and rejoined the trembling

mother and sisters, they saw that the good work was done ; but he stole out of the house knowing not that his face shone, and blending his thankfulness to God with reproaches on himself as a thoughtless intruder.

The operation was successful. Wilson recovered to live for sixteen years in a new spirit and with a new reason for living. The writer of this Memoir cannot pause to indicate how deeply the author of the *Five Gateways of Knowledge* and *Counsels of an Invalid* had drunk from an eternal spring, or to show from *Wilson's Life*, which his sister has so beautifully written, how from month to month his debt to Cairns increased. The friendship between the two men became the chief private feature in the life of each. Passing the love of women was the clinging, reverential gratitude of the frail but fearless sufferer, and it was repaid by a passionate and almost proud delight on Cairns' part in his friend's lovely character and rare gifts. They knew one another as men rarely do. They spoke and wrote to one another with absolute freedom. The only reserve which Wilson showed was that he rarely hinted, in writing to Cairns, how much he owed him, and the only point in Wilson's life which Cairns never clearly understood was that under God he had been the saviour of Wilson's soul.

#### TO HIS PARENTS

35 HUTCHISON ST., GLASGOW,<sup>1</sup> Aug. 3, 1840.

'Here I am, up two stairs in a room 12 feet square,—a nest of study and solitude worth far more than 3s. 6d. a week, for there is room enough to think and read and write and sleep in, and also to walk in if you keep your eyes open and take care of turnings. I am in good health, in good temper for study and well pleased with the kind of exercises in which I am engaged, which indeed are exceedingly slight. Yet I weary for all to be over, that I may see you again and return to Edinburgh, where all those fellow-students are whose society is most valuable.'

<sup>1</sup> The Secession Hall met this year in Glasgow.



## TO MISS JEAN DARLING

GLASGOW, *Sept.* 5, 1840.

‘Oh the monotony of everything out of doors and within, of things in class-room and things in this solitary place of study! Five weeks have gone, and they have passed like the rapid but noiseless current of a stream over a vessel engulfed in its depths. I have everything to make me comfortable—easy and pleasant studies; the society of the Hall, excellent in intelligence and piety; the daily exercises, none worse than tolerable, and some delightful. Yet all these agreeable ingredients make a very so-so compound, not positively unpalatable, but dull, insipid and somniferous. Perhaps my father’s illness, with my strong desire to return to Dunglass, does not give Glasgow fair play. . . .’

## TO THE SAME

124 PRINCES STREET, EDINBURGH, *Dec.* 31, 1840.

‘I cannot say that depression of spirits was the only, or even the chief emotion with which I bade farewell to my father. There was something so touching in his patience and resignation, so calm and inwrought in his meek submission to the divine will, that it affected me more strongly than raptures of religious joy could have done. He displays the same evenness of temper in the sight of death as has marked his equable and consistent life. . . .’

‘I am over head and ears in study, and the artist, be he regular practitioner or quack, who should advertise a substitute for sleep would have some chance of finding your humble servant among his devoted and sanguine admirers. My aunt at Ayton used to be scandalised at my assertion that the necessity of taking food is a great weakness of humanity, and a mighty hindrance to large enterprises. But I appeal from both of you as incompetent to decide, and before a jury of ardent students I would gain my case in ten minutes.

‘This is too light a strain for the last day of the year. But somehow melancholy and gaiety seem in my mind most unnaturally confounded, and when I am sad and mean to say so, I complain with so much levity that I cannot help smiling at my own parti-coloured language. Is not time flying and duty left behind? Has not repentance a wide field in twelve months’ recollections, and foreboding a rich harvest of uneasiness and calamity in a twelve months’ prospect? But I will frame no more gloomy questions, at

least I will not utter them, lest I appear a votary of those weeping philosophers, Drs. Young and Johnson, and not the disciple of a nobler school which has the salve of forgiveness and consolation for the errors and misfortunes of the past, and the cordials of hope and strength for the duties and trials of the future. . . .'

## TO JOHN CLARK

124 PRINCES STREET, *Jan. 7, 1841.*

'I have just come from my father's funeral. It was attended with a deep current of strange feelings, which I would fear, even if I were able, to put on paper. The fall of the first shovelful of earth upon the coffin lid was like the dizziness of a stunning blow and the rending of the nervous system to pieces. I shall never forget it. Well, the grassy mound of Cockburnspath churchyard is all the local memorial that is left of my father. My dear friend, what an inextricable maze for the intellect and dismal grave for all the nobler sentiments of our nature, were death the extinction of the whole man! Can a man who has breathed this air of immortality return to the dungeon-damp of annihilation or the dubious glimmer of universal mythology or the dreary polar atmosphere of semi-heathenish philosophy? My dear sir, if this affliction does not make me cleave closer to the Gospel and interweave it more sedulously with all my pursuits and speculations, I deserve to have the lesson repeated and with redoubled impressiveness. . . .'

## TO THE SAME

124 PRINCES STREET, *Jan. 12, 1841.*

'I cannot think of your wearing mourning. Don't I know your heart? And as to an exhibition to the world, I will be free to confess to you that I wear my own with a most unaccountable and improper feeling of dissatisfaction. . . . You see I am now calm and speculative, and the bitterness of grief is past. How happy it is for us when the confusion of mind, vaguely conscious of some great loss but uncertain as to its extent, discerns the very elements which the divine goodness still leaves us! How much happier still when the event, which seemed at first a grand catastrophe of loss, appears when analysed to be itself a gain, or capable of being made so! My disposition, naturally, I believe like your own, intermittent in strong emotions, has perhaps helped me in this state, somewhat speedily. . . .'

## TO MISS JEAN DARLING

124 PRINCES STREET, *February 20, 1841.*

' . . . I feel as if these events were spread over years, so great an increase has been made to my knowledge of human life. I have learned more than a lifetime of mere study could have taught me, for I dare not look upon affliction as just so much painful emotion which a person is to endure as best he can, and then return to his ordinary ways, with no other addition to his stock of experience than merely that he has submitted to the suffering. How much better should it make us ourselves! How much fitter to soothe the woes of others! How deep and firm it should lead us to lay the foundations of our own happiness! And how should the views of another life, which the mind in the presence of dissolution is preternaturally invigorated to take, be carefully caught up and treasured so as ever to control the principles of our future action, and to tinge all scenes and prospects with the solemn hues of immortality. . . . I am busy, very busy, but free from Cold, whose genius in his midnight rounds is peculiarly likely to take prisoner one who is trespassing on the domains of his father Darkness, and threatening to escape across them into the country of his enemy Day. . . .'

## TO THE SAME

124 PRINCES STREET, *April 24, 1841.*

'You won't know me when you see me again, so greatly has my head been elevated. The whole aspect of my face has become more dignified and intellectual. As if it were not enough to have one's name disfigured and its identity destroyed by the addition of letters to it, a certain substance torn from the bowels of the harmless earth has been hammered in the forge and melted in the crucible and fashioned into roundness and plastered over with barbaric characters and twisted about my neck, making me a gazing-stock to my fellow-students and an astonishment to myself. . . . But enough of this foolery. I am ashamed to have gone into such a matter even in jest. But I know it will give you pleasure, and by far the greatest and purest satisfaction which such things afford me is the assurance that those whom I love and esteem are gratified by them. There is, alas! one less to please in this way and to rejoice in my good fortune. . . . This time is the emptiest to me of all the year. I am like a man come out of battle, breathless and worn out, his head reeling with many a sturdy

thwack and many a bang, and his legs tottering beneath him as he leans on his sword for support. I am by the kindness of Providence in famous health. You would think I had been living in a meal-bag all winter. . . . My head, you see, is plainly cracked through the excessive favours of fortune. I meant to be very serious, as this is Sacrament Saturday. But in my case, when the pen's in hand, wit is out of my head. I never was happier, and I look forward with great pleasure to the summer, which, to the student, is a little eternity, so many things is he going to do in it.'

FROM WILLIAM GRAHAM

PAISLEY, *May 4, 1841.*

'From the bottom of my heart, warm thanks. A year ago I looked up to you as a being who dwelt in the regions of cold abstractions; but now I will love you as one who can give comfort to a doubting mind. I have not hesitated to tell you the real state of my feelings, and you have applied the balm. Though with trembling and great fears, I will proceed to my Hall studies. . . . This reminds me of your inquiry as to what kind of a preacher you will make. I never was in the habit of flattering you, and I will tell you honestly what I think. I was very seldom more impressed and convinced than by your valedictory address to the Diagnostic Society. You have not a clear, but a strong, nervous voice, which you can modulate often with great effect. There is one thing I would like you to study, and that is your gestures. I must say they are not graceful, but they can easily be mended. When I heard you speaking in an excited state of feeling on the position of the Church in Scotland—a speech which must have been greatly extempore, and therefore not a fair test of what you could do—you spoke very clearly and with great effect. That you have not the same style of eloquence as D—— and L——, I certainly will not conceal. But you could write a sermon giving a clear and great view of your subject with warm appeals to the feelings. In fact, you have two styles—the one technical, the other popular, and by cultivating the latter more you could excel in it. If you gave your voice fuller play and waved your hands a little more elegantly, you have feeling enough in your productions to produce, if not a glittering, a very powerful impression on the mind. My dear Cairns, practise elocution, read stirring pieces of poetry and orations in your room with as much energy as you can, and I think your objection will disappear. . . .'



## TO JOHN CLARK

124 PRINCES STREET, *May 18, 1841.*

‘Why should we not indulge our humour of writing fast or slow, long or short? There is a selfishness in lamentations about the silence of correspondents which I am going to conquer in the case of others as I have got quit of it in your case.

‘Let me hear of your intellectual operations. Make an onset on the “Address” and “Reply,” both of which I greatly admire, and I will see what is to be said by way of consent, comment or refutation. Before you write, the General Assembly will have decided the fate of the Church of Scotland.

‘I am doing something to Hebrew, and I have begun German. In one week I have contrived to get through the grammar, and I am beginning to translate. It is far easier than French. Don’t be afraid of it. Its difficulty is immensely exaggerated by young ladies, both male and female, whose minds have not been strengthened by the classics. A month of continuous learning will make me translate anything. The battle is not with the grammar, but with the dictionary; and a hard head will soon beat a way through it. I grow fonder of theological studies than ever. . . .’

## FROM JOHN CLARK

CLELAND, *June 14, 1841.*

‘I write to you in great concern. . . . Our Synod (Original Secession) has directed the preachers, students and elders of the Church who have not yet renewed the Covenants to do so. This startling proposal I cannot accept. It seems to me to anticipate the results of my studies, which have still two years to go. . . . Let me look which way I will, I am in a most distressing situation. . . .’

## TO JOHN CLARK

124 PRINCES STREET, *June 16, 1841.*

‘Since receiving your letter, my mind has been agitated with some of your anxiety and perplexity. . . . Would your subscription of the Covenant imply what you suggest, viz., that the conclusions of your future studies are already foreclosed? . . . The grand work of the student is only to systematise and to defend the doctrines which he as a Christian holds in common with all

Christians, and therefore he is not to seek distinct evidence for believing as a student from that which satisfied him as a Christian. There are not two sorts of positive evidence for belief; but the same evidence is to be discerned by the one more brightly, and to be freed from objections which only appear to him because he is a student. The student in a man has merely a veto upon the Christian in him, not a concurrent or co-ordinate vote. You have rather to ask whether you have been released by your inquiries from a bond fastened on you as a Christian, than whether or not you find a distinct chain superadded. If you have been in the way of objections, if you have not declined them, if in the work of revision of which you speak you have investigated them as befits the present stage of your inquiries, then I do not see why you as a student should object to this additional ratification of your Christian profession, provided that it involves nothing more than is exacted from a private Christian. . . . I agree with you that it would be better if the Synod had left the matter till the close of your studies, but is the obligation so irrevocable, so unique in its character, that the law which applies to all obligations—that they are entered into by our present selves with our present light—should in this case be set aside? Or rather, it being understood that you have no present scruples, should not the unanimous call of your Church weigh more than the chance of future difficulties and doubts? . . . You know my opinions of the Covenants, so that you will not ascribe the tendency of my advice to partiality or prejudice. . . .’

TO MISS JEAN DARLING

4 MELVILLE PLACE, *Oct.* 30, 1841.

‘Your humble servant has been domiciled in the aforesaid quarters for the space of one week, having made such engagements as made his removal hither necessary. From the room wherein he now sits, which commands a view of the back of St. George’s Church and a colony of rooks in Randolph Place, he issued at 9 A.M. to the pleasant work of instructing for three hours a right hopeful and docile grandson of Lord Glenlee, and likewise at 6 P.M. to a similar pedagogy of the sons of Messrs. Burn Murdoch, Raikes and Donaldson, for a like period of time; whereby, without sweat of his brow or dependence on the state of the weather, he is enabled to eat his bread and butter, drink his tea and coffee, keep

a house-roof over his head and thatch himself in garments becoming a tutor of young gentlemen of fortune, a graduate of an ancient and celebrated university, and a student of divinity in the Secession Church. In fine, though his hours are longer than formerly, his emoluments are much greater, and if no class fees rise up to diminish his revenues, he is in a fair way of wrapping together the nucleus of a little fortune.

‘All this is great nonsense. Truly I have no skill in preaching out of the pulpit, and make a point of writing no sermons and as little sense as I can go through with in my letters. . . . I believe I will be as happy this winter as ever before; perhaps more so, as my secular studies are now formally ended and I have more leisure for those strictly theological. The Hall passed like a bright dream. I wish it were come round again, though I could not go so far as the Teviotdale farmer, who, on reeling home to his spouse after the Abbotsford hunt, told her that he wished he could sleep now a year all but a day, as the only thing worth living for was the sport and the whisky-toddy and dancing of that day. I was very hard-worked; but a fortnight of idleness has worked like a draught of the waters of Lethe, and I am awake once more with spade and shovel over my shoulder in a fine frosty morning and plenty of work to do.

‘Well, I can do no more just now, but shake hands with you all in imagination, and take a ramble down the Fasney or up the side of the hill or into the garden, or lounge over the sofa with a book in my hand, answering “Yes,” or “No” at random to all manner of questions. All this, I trust, will come again, by the kindness of Providence, in reality. . . .’

FROM JAMES RUSSELL

GLASGOW, *Nov.* 30, 1841.

‘I write in the emergency of a very distressing doubt. . . . I have lately been led into reflection upon law, especially the moral law, which originated in statements in your own essays. . . . In the notion of law there is implied a notion of punishment for the violation of its requirements, and likewise of good consequent upon their observance. Now, as all violations of God’s law are partial, there seems to be a balance of evil and of blessing. But in the common notion of the Atonement the better element seems to me left out, and I cannot reduce to perfect reconciliation the

notion of there being any punishment for evil deeds which should not find something to counterbalance in the other scale, or of the necessity of the perfect righteousness of another, as if our own moral nature had been absolutely and completely defiled. I hope you may be able to give me a satisfactory reply on these questions. . . .’

TO JAMES RUSSELL

4 MELVILLE PLACE, Dec. 2, 1841.

‘Your difficulty is not quite new to myself, and after thinking and sleeping over it I give you the result of my reflections.

‘There are two questions:—(1) Whether your fundamental ideas of law are correct, and (2) Whether, granting their soundness, there is no principle overlooked by you which, if taken into account, will alter your conclusion.

‘Let it be admitted that the divine law is ready to extend happiness, *i.e.* such good above their original enjoyment as deserves to be called reward, to those who keep its requirements; and also that men are able partially to observe these and so to bring themselves within the operation of the rewarding tendency of law. Grant all this, and I do not see that your conclusions as to the neutralisation of evil by good and the consequent non-necessity of a perfect atonement are justified. You have overlooked the great doctrine of the unity or totality of a moral life and the consequent unity of desert, good or bad, or at least you have recognised this in an erroneous form. Say we start from the view of a man’s moral history as a succession of units of action. How is the moral character of the whole, as resting on the individuality of the moral agent, to be determined, and how is the moral desert, which must also be one, . . . to be decided? You say, by striking a balance, debtor or creditor, which determines the net merit or demerit of the individual. I say, by letting the obedience go for nothing in the way of reward except it is perfect and unbroken, and by leaving disobedience to draw down its doom, only mitigated from what it would otherwise have been if these acts of obedience had been acts of disobedience, but not at all abated by the subtraction of them as acts of merit. There is no “rewardableness” in the fractional parts of obedience unless they complete an integer of duty; and obedience and disobedience are so incommensurable that they cannot, by comparison, yield a surplus or deficit of moral worth. . . . Obedience cannot, as a positive quantity, cancel disobedience, but



can only in the negative shape of non-disobedience plead exemption *pro tanto* from punishment.

‘Why, you may ask, should there not be a positive merit in a unit of obedience, as there is a positive demerit in a unit of transgression; or *vice versâ*, Why should the unity of moral life require totality of obedience as the ground of reward and not also totality of disobedience as the ground of punishment? This, I think, arises from the adaptation of our nature to law, as capable of perfectly obeying it (otherwise it is no law to us) and as bound to render such obedience if any at all. . . . The Scripture language, “If a man keep the whole law,” etc., I understand to mean not that he is liable to the punishment of universal disobedience, but that he fails of reward and is punishable. Horace expresses pithily this whole doctrine:—

“Non hominem occidi : non pasces in cruce corvos.”

‘But it may be questioned whether law guarantees any other objective reward to the obedience of its subjects than the privilege of remaining *in statu quo*, the subjective satisfaction of conscience being of course always included; and whether the divine law in particular can ever make over to any of its subjects the right of obtaining some positive good as the meed of perfect conformity. . . .

‘As to Human Ability, the obstinate theological controversy whether the unrenewed man can prefer any act of obedience is to me a *terra incognita* which I despair of ever exploring; but I have no doubt that whether there be a positive good in man antecedently to conversion, there is a vast remove from the extreme of evil, and this so effected by the will as to be in a certain sense obedience. This, however, even if allowed to stand as fulfilment of the Moral Law (of which I am not certain), must, from its defectiveness, go for nothing, and can only, in the character of non-disobedience, escape a separate punishment. The necessity of atonement and perfect righteousness—both, however, quite conventionally and anomalously—to expiate guilt and secure everlasting happiness, easily follows from these principles.

‘Excuse the crudeness and imperfection of these remarks. I hope they may throw some light on your theme of speculation, which is one of the darkest in some points, though the most momentous upon the whole, which our minds can contemplate. . . .’

## TO THE SAME

ST. CUTHBERT'S GLEBE, *Jan. 4, 1842.*

'I am glad we understand each other so well, and that the grounds of difference are narrowing. There are two questions discussed in your reply, radically one yet capable of separate consideration: (1) Can man have merit in the proper sense of the word towards his moral Lawgiver? (2) What is the proper opposite of demerit,—merit or impunity?

(1) A positive definition of merit is impossible, as it is a primitive moral idea; but we can ascertain what it is not. . . . It is something different from the idea of a ground of secure connection between obedience and positive, objective, superadded enjoyment. Again, it is something different from the congruity of the happiness of the obedient to the attributes of the legislating Deity taken as a whole. God is not a bare personification of justice, or justice personalised. It is the complexity of His character which has afforded ground for human hope. . . . His justice can have merely a veto or negative voice. . . . I differ from you *toto cœlo* in your supposition that merit, or a peculiar relation of the obedient to objective reward, is implied in the idea of a Lawgiver. So far from it that, where there is a Lawgiver, a law and duty, the idea of merit is absolutely excluded. Law supposes a right to command and demand, and what may be commanded or demanded only satisfies the requirements of Law; its whole force or efficacy is exhausted by obedience. The very fitness to be commanded, which is the human counterpart of the divine right to command, excludes all claim to reward, so that human obedience can never reach that supererogatory character which is an inseparable condition of merit. Further, independence of the Legislator, both as a source of obligation and as a source of power to obey, is a condition of merit. . . . These conditions belong exclusively, so far as we know, to the only truly meritorious Being, the independent Logos of God, who voluntarily subjected Himself to the divine law and with self-derived power obeyed all its precepts. . . . You say I am inconsistent in allowing subjective reward, while I deny objective. But subjective reward is not a merited appendage or consequence of obedience, but a compound of satisfaction with the rightness and beauty of our good actions arising from the organic structure of our moral faculty, and of a sense of security and confidence in the protection of the divine Lawgiver. To the testing question—Can we suppose

this withheld without impeaching the divine justice?—I reply, not the part of it which consists in consciousness of impunity; but we can think away the other element, without injury to the divine character as that of a Judge, though not of a Creator of a perfect and harmonious moral being. This may seem subtle; but I think it is sound.

(2) It follows that impunity, not merit, is the proper opposite of demerit—not absolutely, but in the circumstances of such a being as man. A perfectly independent and self-supported being, placed if conceivable under a law, would alone realise your theory of the co-ordinateness of good and evil action. He would stand naturally on the level of impunity, and all his good acts would be so much *plus* while his bad acts would be so much *minus*, and these might fairly be set to neutralise each other. Is not some vague idea of human independence mysteriously accorded by the Author of our Nature in the shape of free-will the starting-point of all your difficulties? I suspect that if you analyse your feelings you will discover something like this at the bottom. . . .’

#### TO THE SAME

ST. CUTHBERT'S GLEBE, *Jan.* 18, 1842.

‘I feel very glad that the plaguy discussion is laid on the shelf. Yet I rejoice that you gave birth to it, as it has greatly enlightened my own mind. Possibly I may string together a few thoughts on the subject for the Metaphysical. You are put down for the Valedictory, so you must study all the *vales* from Orpheus down to Lord Byron, including M‘Pherson and Johnny Armstrong. We are going on right prosperously. Fraser opened on “Space and Time.” John Cunningham promises very fair indeed. I write in a fortnight on the “Measure of Duration.” . . .’

‘No thoughts worth mentioning occur to me on the subject of your exposition. Your division appears excellent. You will probably be told that it is too refined, too philosophical, too profound, too high-flown for the edification of a popular audience. This is all talk. The people are made in a great measure by their minister: the stimulus of vigorous and fresh thinking in him raises them above the everyday hum-drum level. Earnestness is everything, and that *you* cannot want. Like a more violent heat than usual putting a thicker than ordinary mass of metal in a glow, so is earnest sympathy to deep and strong thinking. But you must put the imaginary popular audience altogether out of view, and either compose for your own satisfaction or for those to whom you are to



preach. By the way . . . do you approve of the Anti-Corn-Law Clerical-Conference? If you do, I will open another controversy with you. . . .'

## TO THE SAME

ST. CUTHBERT'S GLEBE, *Feb. 7, 1842.*

'I rejoice in your evident good spirits. There is a gaiety which sparkles like a lump of oily coal in the violent heat of internal commotion. . . . I believe you have this in some measure, as I have myself. But the symptoms in the present case are specifically distinct. It is the natural effervescence of a mind constantly active and advancing. I am glad to hear that you are realising the *neque semper arcum* in the society of a fair "blue," the correction of whose luxurious metaphors and staggering iambs must be a soothing alternation from Hebrew parallelism and transcendental metaphysics.

'My unhappy essay on Duration requires long thought. As for your tirade against the various chronometrical instruments of past and present ages, you may rail at them if you please, with all the personal malignity of a procrastinator, and I will join in the anathemas. But I have nothing to do with the physics of the thing. I look under the dial-plate of Time and wish to investigate the hidden relations of the wheels and springs. Have we an absolute measure of time? What is the relation between subjective and objective measures in general and the several species of each kind? Is all creation going by the same clock, etc. etc. There is a transcendentalism in the matter, begging Kant's pardon, and I wish I may not lose myself in the clouds, or fall from the precipices which its mists surround.

'By the way, I am doubtful of your critique on Shelley. Passivity is the grand characteristic of physical beauty. It cannot in the nature of things suffer from the existence of deformity not accidentally in contact and juxtaposition with it. If your criticism rests on the alleged infinitude of such beauty, it is quite fatal; but I am not aware that beauty is either held to exist without exception by Shelley or that the spirit of beauty is omnipotent. . . .'

## TO MISS JEAN DARLING

ST. CUTHBERT'S GLEBE, *Feb. 11, 1842.*

'My present happiness is in a great measure of a religious origin. I am quite in my place and consciously, however imperfectly, in the discharge of duty. Though obedience to the moral law is not



the ground of the Christian's future hope, it is most materially the keystone of his present comfort and tranquillity. I am not now, as formerly, exposed to gusts of speculative anxiety and unaccountable melancholy in moral and religious meditations, and I have more hopes of being useful in the world, at least a more confirmed purpose of striving to be so. Justification by faith and the glory of Christ are the topics of my most frequent religious thoughts. But I have said enough. I abominate confessions and recitals of religious experience, and wish the great mass of this part of Christian literature were in the depths of the Dead Sea. . . .'

#### TO JAMES RUSSELL

ST. CUTHBERT'S GLEBE, *May 21, 1842.*

'An untoward event has ruffled my mind and led me to seek your sympathy. A friend of long standing has suddenly taken up an evil impression against me, and has sought to loosen my hold over the affection and esteem of others. From an accidental misunderstanding he has drawn the most portentous inferences regarding my unreasonableness and ingratitude, and has made a lady the medium of conveying to me something in the shape of a last malediction. . . . This incident has greatly impeded my studies, and taken away a good deal of the charm of life and the romance of friendship. The wound bleeds freshly. But I will summon up courage and, though with grieving heart, give you the broken detail of the last few weeks.

'First came the Secession Synod to agitate and alarm me by the prospect of more opposition to independence of thought than the necessities of an organised communion required; but they have escaped the danger, and all the bustle, confusion and revolutionary-like activity of these few days have ended in peace and harmony. Next has come the General Assembly to claim a patriotic interest and sympathy, and to suspend all serious study, if I give way to the temptation, till the decade of wrangling and mutual accusation is over. But I am resolved to struggle against the seductive voices of the Rev. Drs. Cook, Candlish, Grant, etc., and other syrens of the Assembly (pardon the imputation), and to sail right onwards in the gulf of metaphysical theology, where I am threatened just now to be dashed either on the Scylla of Spinoza or the Charybdis of Calvin. You will admire Calvin. The Latin admirably suits his massive and dictatorial mind, and he handles it liker a classic than a scholastic reformer. One great fault amidst all his excellencies

(and they are very wonderful in a young man of twenty-seven) is what I would call his *Judaism*. The intolerance of a corrupted or inapplicable theocracy marks every discussion. His opponents are "canes," "phrenetici," "furiosi," "furibundi," "latrant," "blaterant," "delirant," "insaniunt." The Calvinism of Calvin I do not greatly admire (though in substance I believe it scriptural), nor can I join in the laudations of the consummate art with which his system is compacted. The synthetic power appears greater in the rude outlines than in the less prominent strokes, and his talent for details is rather second-rate. It must have often struck you that Calvinism saves the logical difficulties of Christianity at the expense of the moral; or perhaps, rather, tends to do so. Not that the other systems are not all clearly resolvable into Calvinism; but they throw at least some guise of delicacy and concealment over the naked and startling interpretation of Scripture on which it rests. You will be surprised at the manliness and nerve of his piety; it is as remote as possible from the simpering and whining of evangelicism of the lower order, and marked by great good sense and elevation, as became a great practical man and a scholar. But enough of the Father of Presbytery and Calvinism for the present; too much, perhaps, for one who has only as yet read the first and part of the second of his four books. I must adjourn Spinoza *sine die*.

' . . . I understand you are writing poetry and studying Greek—"changed to a worsè shape thou canst not be." Let me see some specimens of the former manufacture or, if you will, some of both in the way of translation from the Anthology or Aristophanes.

' . . . I am going now to Gayfield Square. . . . The poor doctor has the patience of a hermit and a philosopher, and, let me add with genuine and unspeakable pleasure, of a Christian. I never admired anything more than his firmness in writing down the agonies of pain. I heard his opening lecture on Animal Chemistry with great interest and instruction. He has a very fine and penetrating mind, and is marked out for eminence. We are getting wonderfully familiar, and I enjoy nobody's society more. . . .'

#### TO THE SAME

ST. CUTHBERT'S GLEBE, *June 11, 1842.*

'I hope we are now upon the old footing, my grief being almost counterbalanced by the weight of sympathy you have thrown into the opposite scale. I still discover your ancient tendency to misconception, as if a sigh of sorrow required a counterblast of re-

monstrance to lull its murmurs. Many thanks for your letter, though in truth I have quite forgotten its contents, and am too lazy to re-peruse it. I hate answering letters. Answer the writer. These correspondents remind you of the old logicians—*Responsio prima*, etc., *In quintam objectionem*, etc. They make every sentence of your note a field of battle, wherein every discharge of sentiment is to be met by a counter-demonstration of artillery. This would appear to arise from the poverty of their own minds, which casts them upon the mercy of external suggestion, or possibly from great respect to the writer, whose order, like that of a Queen's speech, cannot be departed from without *lese majesty* of friendship. By the way, would not a Theory of Letter-Writing be a grand achievement of a psychologist? Chap. 1. Introductory view of former germs of Theories, with examples from all kinds of correspondence. 2. Analysis of the Epistolographical Faculty. 3. Development of the extension and comprehension of a Letter. 4. Inductive Formulas or Laws of Correspondence. 5. Skeleton forms for practice. This would be an application of science to the arts worthy of the loftiest admiration. It would for ever silence the clamours of anti-metaphysicians. It would greatly conciliate the favour of this utilitarian age, and might lift palsied sentimentalism again upon crutches. It would make the spirit of Bacon rejoice in his grave, and supersede all the complete Letter-Writers in existence. Alas! how easy to conceive great things! how hard to execute them in an age like this!

'I hear that you are absorbed in study, and that your dislike of Glasgow is gradually yielding to the attraction of these literary associations. There is τὸ μισητόν in the system of nature here and there, and why should we not give it its due? I hope you are not an admirer of that sentiment, worthy of its author, "The mind is its own place." Such self-denyng bluster of indifference is very good for a Lake poet, or an Edinburgh professor in the city of palaces, after dinner, comfortably married, and in the regular receipt of £600 per annum. But you are to be here in a fortnight, and we will restore your ancient horror of the Duessa of the West. How do you feel your love of study stand this sultry weather? The finer particles of the soul are quite crystallised in these hot days by the evaporation of all animal spirits and ethereal quintessences. I am, to use an elegant phrase of an Edinburgh orator at a great Non-intrusion meeting, "as flat as a flounder." Philology and Metaphysics flourish best in a Boeotian or Batavian air. I wish I were an amphibious *ens rationalis*, to speculate at the bottom of a pond,



or now read on the dry beach, now ruminates in the pale green waters. But really I am working harder this summer than for some time past. I almost lost the winter with excess of teaching. I am very unhappy in my temperament. The muscles of the mind (by the way, it must have muscles, if it act through the brain, for is not all physiological motion propagated through nerves acting on muscles) are rigidified by frost and unstrung by heat. I often long for the clime of India in January; but now my thoughts revert with involuntary longings to Nova Zembla and Cape Horn. How do you like Montfaucon? It must gratify your very absurd monomania for old forms of printing and other contingent attractions of a book. Now, my dear sir, would this taste be a bit better than tulip fancying or other irrational crotchet, if it were not sanctioned by high authority? Give me the substance of knowledge and let others seek the painted show. I am a most unromantic mortal, you will say, a psychological *lusus*, without the antiquarian instinct which makes a man a judge of the matter at all. But I denounce and condemn this instinct except it be made a means to an end, whereas you throw yourself into its arms and make yourself its slave. Next to your smoking tobacco, there is nothing in your habits that appears less worthy of its place in your system of life than this. Forgive my freedom. All generous emotions border upon licence.

‘Calvin gains upon me. His theology as an evolution of Scripture texts is far more masterly than as a set of inferences from philosophical principles. This latter service is what Edwards did for Calvinism—in many points, I think, with little felicity. But speculation was only beginning in the first part of the sixteenth century; and we are constantly reminded, in the philosophical aspect of all works of that period, that the age of Descartes and Hobbes was not yet come. Nevertheless, I am quite amazed at the firm and manly texture of Calvin’s mind, and the prodigious extent of his knowledge of Scripture—more wonderful still when one thinks that it was only eighteen years after the Reformation, and in his own twenty-seventh year, that his work was written.

‘Spinoza is going on. I am getting deeper into his system and acquiring power to prosecute its history and its present modifications. What a reflection, that a mere knowledge of error is a storing of the mind with a cargo which must be all cleared out and thrust into the depths of inanity and chaos at the Last Day! But time is time, and it is a mixed world, and there is a season not only to plant but to root up that which is planted. . . .’



TO JAMES CAIRNS, LONDON.

ST. CUTHBERT'S GLEBE, *July 15, 1842.*

' . . . In Edinburgh there is nothing stirring. Mr. Vincent, as announced in large green and yellow placards, has made "his first appearance in Edinburgh" as advocate of complete suffrage, and has converted all the Chartists from universal to complete. What's in a name? . . . I rather fear, like other aliases, this has been taken up to escape conviction and bury the past misdeeds of the body in eternal silence. I have a great respect for Mr. Sturge, and a far greater for the sensible working-men of this country; but I have thought all along that their leaders have miserably ill-represented the honesty, sense and moderation of the people in the past history of the Charter. But enough of this. We will trust in Providence to give our rulers more light and to give the people more patience and virtuous energy. . . .'

TO JOHN RATTRAY

ST. CUTHBERT'S GLEBE, *Jan. 22, 1843.*

'I know you too well to apprehend any recoil from religious topics as unwelcome or obtrusive; and while I deeply respect the reserve and spiritual modesty which in many cultivated minds veils all the reflections, struggles and yearnings of the soul, I am not aware that sincere friendship may not pass occasionally, even unbidden, within the precincts of personal religious experience and suggest counsels. . . . Hardly any mind of strength can rest in evangelical Christianity without previous struggle and difficulty, and your trials, I take it for granted, will be chiefly intellectual. I should apprehend in you rather a vagueness of faith than a want of serious temper and honest purpose, and you will allow me to state to you one or two grand ideas which make up the essence of Christianity, and which must be incorporated into the soul as regulative and formative principles before faith can be considered sound and established. I seem to be launching on the boundless ocean of truth, but I confine myself to three ideas—God, Sin, and Christ:—GOD as the infinite yet personal life in union of mind and affection and activity with whom, or (which is the same thing) in concentration of intellect and feeling and energy upon whom, as its true and final object, consists that normal state of a finite spirit which we call spiritual life:—SIN, as the negation and opposite

of this state, the voluntary disruption of the finite spirit from, and its antagonism to, the Infinite, manifesting itself in aversion to the divine society and contempt of the indwelling divine law, in idolising of self and deification of the world, and involving the double curse of unlimited demerit and progressive corruption with their collateral misery:—CHRIST, as the grand peculiarity of our moral system, the finite revelation of the absolute Godhead in a Person at once divine and human, and in a life and death of boundless perfection and vicarious suffering for sin, the head of a great economy of forgiveness and sanctification through Spiritual influence based on His own incarnate humiliation as the necessary and complete atonement for evil—the Way to the Father by propitiating His justice, revealing His benignity and, through faith of both attributes in harmony, re-uniting the soul to the Infinite—the personal friend and lord and inhabitant by His Spirit of every one who renounces his own righteousness and will and strength. I might add as a fourth great idea, that of the Holy Ghost as the immediate agent in restoring the soul, a most divine and truly wonderful idea without which the redemptive system would be an abortion and spiritual life a blank; but as the Spirit's agency consists rather in brightening and enforcing the other three ideas than in obtruding itself, I do not raise it to the same prominence.

‘My dear sir, these ideas will reward your most laborious meditation, not as feebly and scantily stated here, but as scattered with prodigal richness over the whole of the Christian revelation. To me they have been the source of a spiritual life compared with which I feel that all the material resources of a finite universe and all the treasures of unsanctified intellect are too poor for utterance. But remember, they are not to be merely selected and assorted and laid up in the storehouse of your learning as a theory of the universe and of human destiny. They must be believed and adopted as your own theory of your relation to God, and reflected in your own understanding and heart and life. . . . What pure and unspeakable happiness lies in the experiences begotten by Christian faith, they only can tell in whom Christianity is a life. To have the incubus of horrid guilt rolled off from our souls—to stand before God in conscious security through the righteousness of Christ—to feel the plastic energy of a divine Spirit transforming and exalting this perverted and sunken, but still capacious and noble nature—to gaze upon ever brightening luminaries in an ever widening horizon of faith—to feel the play of new-born and absorbing sympathies between these individual souls of ours and the

Infinite Trinity, specially that wonderful Person towards whom emotions of tragic interest and fervent gratitude and devout joy and prostrate veneration and confiding affection mingle in strange harmony—to put forth the energies of renovated life with the conviction that we are no longer a nuisance and blot upon creation—to know by evidence surer than reasoning that we have at last fathomed the deep and perplexing secret of our being—to lay hold on the guidance and strength of Omnipotence, to make up for the infirmities of mortality—to borrow from the wealth of immortal prospects to enrich the poorness of time—these, my dearest friend, are the elements of Christian happiness of which I hope and earnestly pray that you may not be long destitute. I do not ask you to forgive the novelty and forwardness of this communication. Might I request the favour of a reply to tell me whether you take it in good part? . . .’

TO JAMES RUSSELL

ST. CUTHBERT'S GLEBE, *Feb.* 13, 1843.

‘I am glad you like Moses Stuart. He is a very reserved Christian, but sound and true to the extent of his profession, and a great deal further. His candour, honesty and research are beyond all praise. Is there not too much refractiveness in his exegetical atmosphere for a perfectly straight transmission of Christian rays—too much method and formal tool-handling, too much German polarity, too much cut-and-dry *a priori* American-New-School Ethics? He has sobriety, discrimination, liberality and solid Christian sentiment. I like nothing of his so well as his letters to Channing, which display tact, learning and controversial novelty. Is not the Epistle a magnificent one? It is surely Paul—the same thorough critical insight into Judaism as is seen in Romans, 1 Corinthians x., and still more in Galatians—the same largeness of circumference—the same secret depth and order under apparent abruptness and discontinuity—the same minute or sublime digressiveness—the same power of touching things recondite into pregnant life—the same glowing vigour of Christian life blazing and lightening round a thoroughly ratiocinative faith. These things are hard to suppose in any other disciple. Tholuck, who takes an opposite view, has by the way more original reconstructiveness in his Commentary than Stuart, as having had to fight his way morally out of chaos. . . . Tholuck suggests Germany and our expedition, to me a most Elysian prospect amidst the distraction of teaching



and a growing appetite for unbroken meditation and deep research. I feel as if I could devour whole libraries if I were let loose upon them with a *mens conscia recti* and fourteen hours a day. I am busy with Hebrew. I wish to get it up before resuming German, which I shall soon master. I am taking to Campbell's Dissertations, as about the best thing we can show of native growth, for Marsh, Davidson, etc., are half Teutons. I never will be a minute critic; but may learn great outlines and laws of method with some completeness. The want of exact verbal memory is as great an impediment here to me as the want of graphic imagination in the historical sciences, and figurative imagination in the mathematical.

'I have written lately an essay for the Diagnostic on the "Use of Literary Models," which is vague and pompous and but little suggestive of subordinate laws or critical axioms. However, it brought me acquaintance with two valuable books, Reynolds' *Discourses* and De Quincey on *Imitation in the Fine Arts*. De Quincey has a good deal of Gallic vagueness and prim classicism, but is upon the whole a vigorous and enlarged thinker. This is a considerable extension to my mental horizon. I wish to find time to read Blackstone's *Commentaries*. They are very popular and abound in valuable moral applications. Jahn's *Hebrew Commonwealth* I am reading with pleasure. Have you read Michaelis' *Commentaries on the Laws of Moses*? He is a filthy and secular dog, but his enormous learning and worldly shrewdness, together with something of a Niebuhrian political eye, make him very instructive. Last week I wrote an essay for the University Missionary Association on the dependence of the missionary principle on personal holiness. It is about the simplest thing I have written and was done *con amore*. Poor I——, who has just left for Africa, was very much in my mind when I wrote it. . . . You ought not to raise a Metaphysical Society in Glasgow, upon the same principle as ought to keep consumptive people from marrying and honest men from sending out their sons to the Bay of Campeachy. If you followed out the spirit of Shaw's Inaugural and made it "practically interesting," you would have to discuss Equivalence in the shape of wages and exchange, Causation in regard to railways and power-looms, and Ethics in relation to complete suffrage and clerical conferences for the abolition of the corn laws.

'Your account of the Lord Rector's address diverted me. Were you not too severe? He deserved your lash for his clumsy compliments to the Scriptures if they were indeed feigned. If



they were, what a spectacle does the Church of Scotland present, depending as for life upon the exertions of such men in Parliament! They should be made by the Christian body to know their place and come down from their chair of patronage. There is something in the present attitude of the Church very mortifying and humbling—a great spiritual community asking leave to dwell in pupilage under parents and pedagogues like Sir R. Peel, Sir J. Graham and Lord Aberdeen, and clinging to the knees of these rude nursing-fathers when they would drive it with the rod and the scourge out of doors into majority and independence. This is one-sided, you will say. So it is, and so are all figures of speech. I have no time to give the other aspects. . . .’

TO JOHN RATTRAY

ST. CUTHBERT'S GLEBE, *March 4, 1843.*

‘I read your letter with profound thankfulness. . . . Nothing is to me more delightful than to draw close the bonds of Christian sympathies, and to dwell upon the all-compelling force of truth as exhibited in the radical identity of Christians of all ages, ranks, sects, and countries. But there is great room, even within this circle, for congeniality of a constitutional kind to draw minds together, and I deeply rejoice that between us this condition is fulfilled. . . . I am much interested in your account of the moral influence of business habits. To see men drudging at work not one whit more intellectual than stone-breaking, as if it were the natural field of an immortal spirit's energies, without one single aspiration after mental and moral culture, spending Sunday in dreary formal tedium only relieved by the newspaper and occasionally relaxing in a hollow show of splendour and gaiety, is one of the saddest spectacles to a reflective mind. What a thought—that the real soul of such men is dead, and only the business soul with its matter-of-fact and slightly discursive intellect, its mechanical sentiment and conventional conscience is alive! I rejoice to see you come to a life of business in another spirit. The Christian man of business has a noble sphere both in his profession and out of it. . . .’

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

23 DOWNIE PLACE, *May 19, 1843.*

‘Yesterday was a very busy day with me in following the movements of the General Assembly or rather Assemblies, for

they yesterday became two. The crisis is indeed past. More than 400 ministers have left the Establishment, nearly 150 of these being members of Assembly. It was truly a noble sacrifice; and the very best results may be expected to the cause of true religion in our country. Men were beginning to forget that there was such a thing as soundness of conscience or strength of faith to grasp invisible blessings and sacrifice earthly good for their sake. Hence the party were scoffed at, traduced and maligned in a way which nothing could justify but the supposition that they were enthusiasts or knaves. This indeed their opponents did not scruple to assert, though they took care to hint that their enthusiasm was only a superficial growth of weak intellect and drivelling pietism which would be sure to perish in the hour of trial. . . . I was present in the New Assembly. I can hardly expect to see a similar scene again, though the times are so strange and full of great events that one is loth to prophesy.

‘Our own Synod was very interesting. The cry is still Heresy, Heresy, though for my part I cannot see in what the two parties materially differ. They both hold to an atonement of unlimited efficacy, designed with special reference ultimately to the elect, but open to all and offered sincerely to all, though applied by special grace only to God’s chosen people, while the rest reject it through their own criminality. The difference between them I could not make any but a professed theologian understand. The body of the hearers of the Gospel would be much better employed in studying the nature of the atonement and making sure of their interest in its momentous blessings than in enviously prying into its relation to the unrevealed purposes of God, and attempting to settle the dependence of its parts as these appear to the Infinite mind. I think, however, those who were cut off could expect nothing else from their gross imprudence and the extravagance with which they expressed their views, not to say the confusion of their ideas, which simple-minded people might well mistake for something worse. . . .’

#### TO MISS JEAN DARLING

23 DOWNIE PLACE, *June 1*, 1843.

‘. . . In writing to you, my dear friend, I am disposed to fall into a mood peculiarly pensive, though not downcast or gloomy, and inclined to a sadness that pleases more than it pains. I used to ascribe this to mere youth, to ignorance of the world, to the

want of hard and stern trials and to the ascendancy for the time being of distrust in my own capacities. But it still continues; and the gathering of experience, the struggle with sorer griefs, and the ease and self-possession consequent on finding and knowing my own place in society and working away steadily at a plan of life have increased rather than abated it.

I cannot look with perfect composure upon my contemplated exile of nearly a year, yet my whole heart is in the scheme. It will do me more good than three years' study at home in such circumstances as I have been in for some time. My whole desire is to be useful in the ministry—not so much in preaching and visiting, though that must not be neglected, as in throwing light by writing and otherwise upon the Word of God and the peculiarities of our blessed religion. Now Germany is the most learned country in the world, and the most speculative. It is not the most orthodox, yet it contains much to lead to deeper views of orthodoxy. Above all, there is something most stimulating in the idea of an almost monastic seclusion there for the sole purpose of acquiring knowledge. Only one who has felt the irksomeness of treading the same ground with dull or wayward pupils, of finding his moments of freshest energy sacrificed upon barren writers and dry exercises, of looking in longing agony upon worlds of thought cut off from his excursions only by the barrier of time, can sympathise with my feelings in the prospect of so long a period of fresh, unfettered, buoyant and fruitful activity. My friends of all descriptions highly approve of my design, and this is much in the perfect satisfaction of my own conscience on independent grounds. There is something noble in the prospect of *education*—something far more so, and always to my mind sublime, in what has become a very common and unmeaning phrase, *educating for the Church*.

'This brings me to the great Secession. I know our difference of opinion here. But you will pardon me for saying that I have never felt more profound emotions of gratitude to God, of reverence for Christianity, of admiration of moral principle and of pride in the honesty and courage of Scotsmen than I did on that memorable day. I regard the movement as a great testimony to the moral power of our religion and as a vast step in the progress of truth. You of course cannot view it in the latter light, but I am sure you admire it in the former. Its consequences, which time only can unfold, will be great and manifold. One thing we will rejoice at in common. There has been great charity and forbearance between the two Assemblies. You are still in a Christian Church, though I



think a more imperfect one; and Christian love is not so superabundant that it should be discouraged where it makes any manifestation of its graces. . . .’

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

23 DOWNIE PLACE, *July 6, 1843.*

‘Since I last wrote there has occurred a little episode in my very quiet and staid life—quite romantic in its way, though not quite with a romantic end—nothing less than a journey to London. I went in quest of money, and I have been disappointed; yet I can tell it with a very light and cheerful air. A London friend urged me to become a candidate for the Williams Scholarship, which is open to graduates of any Scottish university, and is decided by competition. I made preparations, collected testimonials, secured lodgings and did all that a raw Scot should do to prepare for the perplexities of the modern Babel and the greater difficulties of a Board of Examination, when, behold, on reaching London, I found that the advertisement had omitted one material qualification, viz., a resolution to prosecute the ministry in England. If I had known of this, I should as soon have thought of going to Japan. However, the trouble to me was not great, the expense very moderate and the ultimate advantage more than adequate to counterbalance it. I saw more of the world in six days than in all my former life, and have got quite over the uneasiness of an untravelled person about my coming struggle with strange customs and people. London is indescribable, uncouth, gigantic, shapeless, magnificent, tremendous, a county of buildings, a kingdom of men, a leviathan among cities. . . . I shall never forget the first impression. . . . My pocket was not picked, nor did I hear a word of Cockney English, though within hearing of Bow Bells in my bedroom in Bow Lane. . . .’

## TO MISS JEAN DARLING

23 DOWNIE PLACE, *July 7, 1843.*

‘Your news is upon the whole fitted to inspire joy, yet a joy mixed with trembling, like most joy of this kind. Your account of your sister-in-law’s last moments made me feel a higher admiration of the two best of Heaven’s gifts to man—the inexpressibly sacred depths of a woman’s affection and the clear light of Christian faith. When these are joined in one character, and hallow the



nearest and most peculiar relation of life, they shed comfort over every troubled feeling and vexed path and enable man to bear everything but their own loss. Even there the soul is not left comfortless, for after the resurrection there is a life where, I firmly believe, the separated on earth will resume somewhat of their peculiar intimacy of soul, and the soft and pure graces of female love and holiness will constitute a material element of blessedness. . . .

‘I have very much to say before going abroad. Your hint about independence is entirely after my own heart. I trust it is no unworthy feeling of pride, but one of thankfulness to God and to my dear natural helpers, when I say that hitherto I have lived in honest self-dependence, beholden to no man who would grudge his benefactions and gaining assistance here and there (as I gratefully acknowledge and will proclaim to the end of my life) not by unworthy compliances or unwarrantable shifts, but in the fair field of competition and by the exertion of legitimate influence. To take me to Germany in all respectability, I have enough and to spare. A scholar could profitably spend a larger sum than I have at my disposal; but as I have never envied those who were more fortunate as regards the means of education at home, I will not, through God’s blessing, do so now, when I am going to a country where learning and poverty go hand in hand.’

#### TO JOHN RATTRAY

23 DOWNIE PLACE, *Sept. 9, 1843.*

‘The Free Church is moving on steadily. I hear in some quarters complaints of the want of money, but these reports are contradicted. Dr. Chalmers, you may be interested to hear, spent an evening lately with Dr. Brown and Dr. Balmer, when the settling of the marches between the two denominations was talked over freely and with a general agreement. You would see Dr. Candlish’s speech in the Edinburgh Presbytery. There is still enough of the old shyness of Voluntarism and enough of severity in speaking of the old Establishment. Still I quite agree with their practical course—not to make its existence anywhere a bar to the erection of a Free Church. This is what Dissenters, in all circumstances not peculiar, have formerly done and ought still to do. You will have seen the shilly-shallying letter of Lord ——. It is full enough of self-confidence and of the same tame charity.

Place a long-legged spinner on a globe which is just in the act of being cleft asunder upwards, and let it exert all the power of its tiny limbs extended a-straddle over the two segments to hold them together, and you have an emblem of the Right Honourable the Marquis.

‘Our Hall has entered into a friendly correspondence with the students of the Free Church. The letter, which it has devolved upon me to write, I have tried to make as charitable and conciliatory as possible, and I hope that through the grace of God it may be the beginning of good to us both.’

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

HULL, Oct. 10, 1843.

‘I came here on Sunday by steamer from Leith and sail this afternoon. . . . You will get a parcel by the carrier containing a volume of the *Spectator*, Hawker’s *Portion*, and Johnson’s *Rasselas*. You and Thomas may divide Crabbe’s *Poems* and Johnson between you. . . . My dear William, let me again beg you to attend to religion. Embrace the gospel of Christ and study His Word, and your happiness is secure. As to this life, I consider you as fallen into my hands to provide for, and while I have anything, you shall not be at a loss. But it is only God who can provide for you for eternity.

‘God bless and help you now and for ever!’

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BERLIN STUDENT

1843-1844

Scottish theology awakening—Secession students go abroad—Influence on Church—Cairns' visit to Germany—Effect upon him—Letters about Hamburg, Berlin University, Neander, Ranke, Schelling, German speculation and religion, etc.

IT would be difficult to exaggerate the isolation and insularity of British theology during the first half of this century. The dominant systems of doctrine were those which had been formulated prior to the great intellectual movement which revolutionised European thought before the eighteenth century closed, and such treatises on dogmatics and exegesis as were produced bore no relation to the currents of speculation and criticism then prevalent on the Continent. As a rule, German and French thinkers were either completely ignored or passed by with unintelligent denunciation. The Lives of Pusey and Stanley have made this clear with regard to England,<sup>1</sup> and the best that can be said for Scotland is that she was slightly in advance of the sister country. Even Chalmers, writing in 1834 to his friend Welsh, asks him to ascertain 'whether Turretin, Markius and Alstedius still are held in estimation and studied in Germany,' and couples the inquiry with a dictum that 'Scotland is ahead of Germany both in apologetics and dogmatics.' Probably the only Scottish theologian of note who was aware of the situation was Dr. John

<sup>1</sup> When Pusey went to Germany in 1825, only two persons in Oxford were said to know German.

Brown, and his knowledge was limited by his want of acquaintance with German.

The reason for this backwardness is not far to seek. The negative and sceptical philosophy which prevailed in both countries had withdrawn speculative interest from theology, and the current tone of literature was rather anti-theological than theologically liberal. The evangelical revival can scarcely be said to have had a literary or speculative side, having given all its energies to devotional and missionary activity. In Scotland that revival was represented by the school of Dr. Andrew Thomson. The followers of that great ecclesiastic, known throughout the country as 'Thomson's Men,' were chiefly noted for their rude vigour, and contributed as little to theological thought as did the school of Charles Simeon in the south, which was to some extent their counterpart. The highest level of production reached was that of Campbell's *Dissertation on the Gospels* and Dick's *Lectures on Theology*—pleasing, popular productions, which bore much the same relation to the progress of theology as Dr. Thomas Brown's *Lectures* bore to the progress of philosophy.

But in the fourth decade of the century the eyes of young Scottish theologians began to open, partly through the inevitable influence of the secular upon the religious mind, and partly through the strong personal force of Hamilton and of Chalmers. The latter, however one may estimate his learning, was essentially modern, acquisitive and eclectic in his theological tendency. If his quick and massive mind had not been absorbed in practical affairs, he would undoubtedly have been a creative theologian, and his influence in theology was in the direction of free inquiry. But from 1834 the young men whom he influenced in the Established Church were, with the exception of the M'Cheyne school, occupied with the movements which led to the Disruption and with the ecclesiastical fortunes of the Church of Scot-



land. So it was that when the young intellect of Scotland became aware that German theology was something more than a wilderness of infidelity, it was chiefly among the students of the dissenting churches, who had no Veto Act to absorb their minds, that there was a movement towards Germany. Most of the foremost Secession students of the period spent part of their ten months' vacation at Halle, Berlin, or Bonn. In spite of a few murmurs from the more conservative school, the Church authorities encouraged this movement, and their liberality in so doing was one of the chief causes of the progress made by dissent in Scotland during the next twenty years. For the intelligent presentation of Christian doctrine, which was the note of the generation of United Presbyterian preachers now all but passed away, Scotland was indebted to the band of 'landlouping students of divinity' who studied progressive theology at its headquarters between the years 1840 and 1850. The recent strides of liberal opinion in Scotland have been so rapid that the actual views cherished by those men are now thought to be conservative. But in their day they were instrumental in rescuing the Christianity of the country from the blindness of religious provincialism.

Cairns had reached the last year of his theological course before he was able to join the number. It required years of frugal living, with incessant private teaching, to yield savings sufficient to defray the cost of a winter in Germany and of the tour that was to follow. On the eve of his departure he was delayed by the illness of James Russell, his intended companion; and there was further delay through an invitation, which he accepted, to act as *locum tenens* for a month in the English Independent Chapel at Hamburg. His preaching in this his first charge made so much impression upon the little congregation, which was composed of Yorkshire and Scottish merchants, that a vacancy

having occurred, a fruitless effort was made to detain him as the permanent pastor. At Berlin he had the occasional company of several Scottish students, including John Nelson, William Graham, Alexander Wallace and J. Logan Aikman. His letters show the unflagging zeal with which he threw himself into study, the shrewd and comprehensive judgment which he passed upon the religious life of Germany and the tenderness of his thoughts about home. While the lectures which he attended were mainly theological, his private studies were in philosophy.

In one letter he refers to the influence of the German language upon his literary style. That influence was permanent. Already he tended towards Johnsonian English, and this tendency hardened into a habit of expressing himself in sentences of great length, abounding in parentheses, yet cogent and impressive by their logical completeness and unflinching accuracy. But the influence of German went deeper than his style. He became a master not only of the German language but of German modes of thought. Even when old age had crept upon him he retained a deep and living interest both in the speculative and in the ecclesiastical movements of the German Church, and maintained friendly correspondence with Germans in various grades of life. Beyond this, his inclination towards laborious research and towards the amassing of knowledge was strongly developed.

The only parts of his record which fall short of the truth are those which refer to himself. Reading his letters, one would reckon him an unnoticed and insignificant foreign student; but in Berlin, as in Edinburgh, he left the impression of a man who was destined to influence his generation. His encyclopædic knowledge, his untiring vigour and consistency in thinking, and his transparent purity of character were remembered quarter of a century afterwards by dry-as-dust Germans, who had no knowledge of the life

into which he had then passed. It is indicative of the thoroughness and distinction of his work, that attempts were made to detain him at Halle as a lecturer on philosophy at the very time when he was being urged to become the minister of a dissenting chapel at Hamburg.

The later part of his stay at Berlin was saddened by tidings from Scotland of the death of his friend James Russell. Russell had been his closest intimate, his partner in private study and his confidant in speculative difficulties, and the shock of his untimely death was great. It had, however, one influence which was permanently beneficial, in drawing him closer to Russell's cousins, the Wilsons. Of this and other matters the letters which follow give a sufficient record.

#### TO GEORGE WILSON

ENGLISCHE KIRCH-HAUS,  
HAMBURG, *Oct.* 30, 1843.

'All things, according to my Russian expositor of Hegel, are made up of motion and rest; so must be the life of a poor land-louping student of theology. . . .

'I cannot easily describe the sense of strangeness with which, on arriving here, I looked up from the narrow gloomy streets to the lofty houses covered over with unintelligible signs and filled with a life which centuries had been carrying apart from ours. I felt as if I had to begin the world anew, and I should like to preserve the feeling. . . .

'The members of the Independent Chapel received me with unbounded kindness, and my public introduction followed in due course. I got on better than I expected—some stiffness and constraint, but no dead halt or misadventure, nay, considerable self-possession and forgetfulness of the hearers. My sermons, as you know, had little adaptation to a popular audience; and if a stiff, metaphysical, unpractical style, with a very unformed or rather misformed delivery, has been in some measure acceptable, you may judge that my greatest anxiety is over. . . . The Hamburgers certainly take things easier than the mercantile world at home, have shorter hours in the counting-house, enjoy

more of domestic life and are more given to light relaxations. . . . They are a boisterous people, not having learned the oracular Thomas's "great mystery of silence." . . . There seems to be a good bottom of character, but it is neither developed by enterprise in the lower classes nor purified by moral education. They are not ignorant and they are not brutish; but slow work, animal enjoyment and frivolous relaxation seem to consume their whole days. . . . As to the political state of the city, *Bürgerschaft* is purchased for £50 or so, and is essential to the exercise of trade in the city. . . . The supreme legislative and executive power rests with the Senate, a body composed of twenty-four senators, four syndics and four burgomasters. This body is self-perpetuated and irresponsible, though in fiscal and political matters it must refer to the citizens. . . . It is a free city, and consequently not unlike our rotten boroughs: quite intolerant, and in all religious matters at the beck of the clergy. As to religion there are, or were before the fire, six churches accommodating 8000 to 10,000 out of a population of 150,000. The Senate refuse either to make additions or to permit them to be made. Rationalism is here in all its putrescence, or rather skeleton nakedness, the pleasure-loving citizens having deserted the churches, as flesh-flies the bleached bones of the dead: congregations of thirty or so in the great St. Michael's. Many of the ministers are drunkards or worldlings. The younger *Candidats*, who are starved by a vile system of consistorial patronage and condemned to school-keeping, etc., are more evangelical; but they are confined in their whole movements by an odious inquisitorial intolerance. On Sabbath I went through the Hamburger Berg . . . a large esplanade covered with stalls, and crowds admiring frivolities so weak and pitiful that an English mob would not have stood to look at them on a week-day. Dancing saloons, crowded with sailors, hired prostitutes and gaping spectators, stood wide open to admit the entering crowds, each looking like a colony from the bottomless pit. . . . No one is allowed to preach to the people. The devil keeps his dominion in peace, and has perverted this best of God's institutions into the very nursery of perdition. My whole soul rose in vehement indignation against the base traitors who have so robbed the salt of the Gospel of its savour that it loses all power of arresting this wholesale corruption. My dear sir, pray for this guilty and benighted city.'



## TO GEORGE WILSON

17 LOUISEN STRASSE, BERLIN, Dec. 15, 1843.

‘ . . . It is five weeks to-day since I commenced study in Berlin. Two have been spent in general preparatory reading and lecture-hearing, and three in the close study of the last three systems of German speculation, each philosopher having a week to himself. Hegel is on his last legs, and will be overthrown by to-morrow. . . .

‘Nelson and I are settled in the same room. . . . We rise with the sun, to make our own coffee with spirits of wine (let chemistry startle) at 2½d. per bottle, and return at dewy eve to repeat the process, while the intervening hours are filled up with lectures, and the evening with pleasant grinding at Fichte and Hegel. Is not this a life to make Russell’s heart beat high with anticipation? . . . The day, however, would be incomplete, even to a poet or metaphysician, without dinner. Here man dines, as a social animal should, at a common table, where in any restaurant the stores of Neander’s wisdom are mixed and consolidated with more earthly materials—soup, meat, vegetables and *Schwarz-Brod*, at the cost of 3d., making one forget the land of his birth and abjure the reign of Corn and Provision Laws. Then you may have student beer, a horrible stuff, for 1½d. a *noggin*, and a peep of the *Königliche Zeitung* announcing the postponement of O’Connell’s trial or the accession of Earl Spencer to the No-monopoly League. . . .

‘The university is thoroughly organised and magnificently appointed. . . . In Theology there are fifteen professors; in Law, eighteen; in Medicine, thirty-eight; in Philosophy, eighty-six; while Schelling comes in at the end with a majestic codicil to himself. . . . Of course there is great diversity of popularity and success, and as no class is imperative, this shows itself in the miserably empty rooms of many professors. Yesterday I twice heard a *Privat* in philosophy who had only one hearer besides myself. There are twenty-two class-rooms, each of which is occupied from 8 A.M. till 6 P.M. by one or other of the multifarious herd of lecturers. Few professors have less than three or four courses in each term. The fee for each private course of five months is a thaler; but almost every professor has a public lecture once a week or so. I attend three private courses—Neander on Christian Dogmatics, Trendelenburg on the History of Philosophy, and Schelling on Introduction to Philosophy; and public courses by Neander on the History of Christian Ethics, by Twesten on the

Church, by Neuwerk on Systems of Politics, and by Vatke on Dogmatics. My whole university expenses amount to £3. The very worst of the professors are intelligent men, and it is really animating to study amidst such a superfluity of instruction. I shall try to describe three men, perhaps the greatest on the list, at least of more reputation than any others. Setting your physical prejudices at defiance, I select Neander, Ranke, and Schelling. . . .

‘Suppose yourself in a large square room filled with *Studiosi*, each with his inkstand and immense *Heft* before him and ready to begin, when precisely at 11.15 A.M. in shuffles a little black Jew, without hat in hand or a scrap of paper, and strides up to a high desk, where he stands the whole time, resting his elbows upon it, and never once opening his eyes or looking his class in the face: the worst type of Jewish physiognomy in point of intellect, though without its cunning or sensuality: the face meaningless, pale and sallow, with low forehead and nothing striking but a pair of enormous black eye-brows. The figure is dressed in a dirty brown surtout, blue plush trousers and dirty top-boots. It begins to speak. The voice is loud and clear, and marches on with academic stateliness and gravity, and even something of musical softness mixes with its notes. Suddenly the speaker turns to a side. It is to spit, which act is repeated every second sentence. You now see in his hands a twisted pen, which is gradually stripped of every hair and then torn to pieces in the course of his mental working. His feet, too, begin to turn. The left pirouettes round and round, and at the close of an emphatic period strikes violently against the wall. When he has finished his lecture, you see only a mass of saliva and the rags of his pen. Neander is out of all sight the most wonderful being in the university. For knowledge, spirituality, good sense and indomitable spirit of the finest discretion on moral subjects the old man is a real marvel every way. In private he is the kindest but also the most awkward of mortals, and, although a *Consistorial-Rath*, is scarcely able to give directions to his own *Stiefer*. His lectures on *Dogmatik* and *Sitten-Lehre* I value beyond all others, and I would gladly have come to Berlin to hear him alone.

‘Ranke is nearly as great a curiosity; but it is liker the oddity of caprice than of simplicity or intractable ignorance: a little, bustling, smirking man with red cheeks, goodish forehead, small chin, clear blue eyes and oval pock-pitted face, such as I have seen upon the shoulders of not a few tradesmen. His dress is miserably assorted, brown, black and grey, and he appears almost as much

raised above these common accidents of humanity as Neander. But the keen, worldly eye, and the lively, almost coxcombical smirk show the historian of politics and State mechanism, who is sufficiently satisfied with his own extraction of the spirit of those ponderous documents and memorials to which he has had such wonderful access. He is a most interesting lecturer. Back he throws himself in his chair, looking to the ceiling; then twirls his fingers in thought and struggles for a few sentences onward till a sudden rush of words completely overpowers you. Then he sinks again, mentally toiling but rising more rapidly above his hesitation, and this flux and reflux continues through the whole lecture; while his intense interest in his theme and his delight in rising above his own perplexities, marked by a most glowing face and sudden darts of gesticulation, completely enchain his hearers. . . .

'Schelling remains, as he did in the academic theatre itself, the last actor on the stage. Though the classes opened at the beginning of November, he did not make his appearance till the 22nd. A magnificent scene it was, a thundering crowd, tremendous noise before his appearance, and by far the most excited interest I have yet seen among German students. Then, long after the hour, came in the philosopher himself, a venerable, grey-haired man, but stout, almost ruddy, with a great deal of plainness in his appearance, and a face as like as you can conceive to that of a decent Scotch tradesman in his Sunday dress. The physiognomy—high cheek-bones, mouth, chin and temples—is thoroughly Scottish. The forehead is not fine. The aspect is ordinarily intelligent, but is injured by a projecting, satyr-like mouth. He is a cheerfully sedate old man, and might stand with great credit at the "plate" of a Secession church. His voice is firm and loud, and he lectures with the tone of quiet decision which becomes the head of a great school. His first lecture was mediocre, good in another man, so-so to my excited expectations; and I was almost ready to go to excesses of evil-speaking through chagrin. However, his later lectures, if not more solid, have been at least more mysterious. He is dealing with the highest categories of the Absolute, . . . but the edge of my curiosity as to his system is greatly blunted by the younger Fichte's full and solid history of recent philosophy, which has been my recent reading, and he is now likely to be to me a phenomenon rather than an authority. . . .

'You are all often in my thoughts, and why should I not add, in my prayers. I often wonder whether the clouds which, on my departure, were beginning to break up are now thoroughly cleared away.



Let me hear as to your schemes and employments, as to the progress of the chemistry canvass and the essay on pantheism. If Russell does not write soon, I shall transmit so much pantheism from headquarters as to spoil for ever his claim to originality. Assure Campbell Fraser that I shall write to him when I have something digested worthy of his reception as a specimen of theories which are either below common-sense or above philosophy.

## TO JOHN RATTRAY

BERLIN, *Jan. 22, 1844.*

‘ . . . I can now speak German with some fluency, and can read tolerably all that comes in my way, though I have avoided rather than sought for the company of students, as likely to distract me from valuable reading, by which alone a language can be fundamentally learned. Now I mean to be freer on this point, and I begin to enjoy this kind of relaxation.

‘ Neither my theology nor my philosophical creed is giving way before rationalism and German metaphysics. I admire and revere Neander rather than regard him as an authority, and the notions of Schelling are so obscure, capricious and rhapsodical that it would not be easy, were one disposed to it, to build on his foundation. Yet his genius should have its praise; and he is now not only reclaimed from the pantheism of his earlier philosophy but united to the orthodox party in the Church, being a personal friend of Neander, and, by the report of the latter, a sincere and earnest believer in the evangelical doctrines. The Hegelian direction is still the prevailing one in the university. Nothing worse in point of philosophical solidity or theological purity could possibly be conceived. The fundamental identity of the world, the human soul and God—which this system works out by a miserable process of logical jugglery—of course cuts up Christianity by the roots, though there have not been wanting theologians who have struggled to ingraft the Christian peculiarities on this barren and poisonous stock, or still worse, who have made the essence of Christianity consist in being an historical anticipation of the Hegelian philosophy in a crude and popular form. The former is the tendency of the one of the Hegelian theologians in Berlin, Marheineke, the latter of the other, Vatke, who is a coadjutor of Strauss.

‘ . . . The old Rationalism of the school of Paulus, Ammon, Wegscheider and Gesenius is here decidedly antiquated. It was



an *outré* and degenerated Unitarianism, which is abjured and ridiculed as much by the Hegelian rationalism as is the evangelical orthodoxy. The latter is beyond all question gaining ground over Germany, especially in Prussia where it is supported by the whole weight of Court and State influence, a feature in its position which is the ground of bitter complaint and ridicule to the rationalist, Hegelian and liberal parties, who are generally united in theological and political doctrines. This connection of the reviving evangelism with a conservative spirit in politics, and the not very scrupulous influence of a semi-despotic government, is the only dark cloud in the present religious prospects of Germany. Yet the King of Prussia is said to be a pious man, and the Court-preachers and popular ministers of Berlin are men of too much devotion and spirit to make the Church the tool of a semi-autocratic Holy Alliance monarchy. It should also be borne in mind that the orthodox party, with all its shades of difference represented by Hengstenberg, Tholuck and Neander, had taken its ground under the late Government, which was not so decidedly favourable to evangelism, and that the ruling power has come to it and not it to the ruling power. This view of the present relations of orthodoxy and heresy in Germany makes me rejoice over the spiritual progress of Prussia with trembling. One thing is evident; the excesses of the extreme Hegelian party have brought it into just discredit with the more respectable men of the same school, and it seems impossible that the fundamental doctrines of that party, which are now so much employed as an antagonist force to the Gospel, should long stand firm against the assaults which are being made on them from all sides, both by theologians and by independent philosophical adventurers, who are all eager to outflank the last great system-maker. With the organic unsoundness of the German speculative intellect, the wild fearlessness and heated love of novelty which have marked its course since Fichte, what may be hoped for from their future philosophy as an ally to Christianity is hard to say. Certain it is that the vital strength of evangelical doctrine is becoming more and more felt, and a general practical independence of the strifes of the schools is marking its efforts. Our trust is in the Living God, who has already brought his Church in this land through the worst of the dark and stormy night, and who can scatter, in His own almighty way, the clouds and gusty blasts which still darken over the new dawn. I often sigh for the religion of home, the solid, practical, fruitful religion which is marked by no fundamental disputes or deadly strifes, and which needs only union and a

missionary impulse of a more vigorous kind to make our dear old land the scene of a new and blessed era. Nothing can be more interesting in respect of study than the universal bustle and cry for progress that marks the many-sided Germans. A speculative man might very well wish to end his days here, if speculation were the business of life, or if such speculation as is here the most prevalent were as much distinguished by solidity and fairness as it is by extravagance and party spirit. The ideal of philosophy is no more to be met on earth than that of theology, and the *odium theologicum* is here outdone, if that be possible, by philosophical vanity and mutual jealousy. My reading has been tolerably limited, though I have got through some rather tough books. . . . Now comes more fruitful study—Jacobi, Schleiermacher, Ranke, with the chief dogmatic systems of the old Rationalist, Straussian and Orthodox schools.

‘I was greatly delighted with the proceedings of the General Assembly, and with the recent effort of the Secession to rival the liberality of the Free Church. I hope yet to see your father, mother, sister, yourself and me all in one visible Church, as I trust we are all in one invisible. Good news from a far country is doubly dear if that country be your own. I hardly knew before that I had in me such a capacity of patriotic enjoyment. . . .’

#### TO MISS JEAN DARLING

BERLIN, *Jan.* 23, 1844.

‘. . . When the first rage of sight-seeing was over, I very coolly sat down to study from morning to night, hearing four or five lectures daily and reading nine or ten hours besides. . . . I am far from lonely. An intimate friend lodges with me, and there are other five Scottish students, all theological, attending the university. We do not see very much of each other, our great work being at home and alone. Yet we see enough and feel happy enough together to make a sort of emigrant colony with its common sympathies, efforts, plans, social enjoyments and religious worship.

‘. . . Berlin is the most evangelical place on the Continent, the ministers of the right sort are attended by crowds, and are zealous, eloquent, believing men. Yet we miss the simple worship and earnest doctrinal preaching of our own land in the rather studied and declamatory sermons of a Church with which from its descent from the Reformers and many excellencies we have otherwise great sympathy. Sabbath observance is very imperfect, and could hardly

be otherwise, considering the lax notions which have been held by the most pious from the days of Luther himself. I shall return to Scotland, as in most things so assuredly in this, more a Scotchman than I left it. Indeed, I have become wonderfully patriotic, and have sung more Scotch songs and talked more broad Scotch in Berlin than for many years before. I do not wish to shut myself up from unprejudiced observation, and I really admire and love many points about the Germans. Yet in real liberty—in solid religion—in practical seriousness and energy of character—in unconstrainedness of social intercourse, especially between the young of both sexes—and in the general diffusion of information, we are so far before them, that I cannot but feel proud of old Scotland. On the other side, you have to set our national reserve and perhaps avarice, our comparative coldness of feeling, and, worst of all, our intemperance and pauperism. Yet the former are rather the excess of self-command and love of independence, and the latter accidental excrescences, than radical evils of our national temper, and I cannot but cling to the rugged land of hills and lakes, with its brave, industrious, shrewd, reflective, decent and godly people. Pardon this outbreak. I fear I will lose my sense of Scottish privileges when I again enjoy them. The best way to show this patriotism here is to carry off, like our fathers of old, as much plunder as can be driven across the border. . . .'

TO JAMES RUSSELL

BERLIN, *Jan. 26, 1844.*

' . . . Since your promised effusion on what Schelling calls the "Summa Principia" has not come to hand, I must even treat you like a *ghaist* and have the first word. How much have I to say to you that paper won't bear—condolence, expostulation, advice, hope and, though last not least, information in German metaphysics. On this last point I fear to exhaust the English language sooner than your patience or my stock of hard-won concepts.

'At the outset you must dismiss all your Scotch, narrow-minded notions of the limits of human knowledge, more particularly of the limits of philosophy, and look upon the assumption of omniscience *in posse* as the proper starting-point of the mind, and consider it the business of philosophy to embrace the highest principles of all other knowledge, physical, mental and theological, and to resolve into a radical unity the objects of all the sciences. This has become ever more distinct since Kant and Fichte, and is now the



trivial definition and ground principle. Kant completed no philosophy; he merely gave a *Kritik* of the powers of philosophising, and thought to abolish for ever what now glories exclusively in that name. His *Speculative Kritik* is a deep and elaborate proof of the incapacity of the mind for aught but empirical certainty, a certainty resting indeed on *a priori* principles, which, however, lose all application to supersensible objects, and which merely end in the idea of such as regulative principles of knowledge without warranting us to infer their transcendental existence. This, to all moral intents and purposes, is the scepticism of Hume more deeply grounded; this, indeed, is what Kant glories to have accomplished. Cosmothetic idealism in sense, transcendental scepticism in ethics and theology, are written on every page of his *Kritik*. His last effort to restore God, Freedom and Immortality by Practical Reason must be pronounced a failure, if the principles of his Speculative Reason are valid, since his practical postulates appear to me to be quite in contradiction to them. The *Kritik* is, however, a great book, and is enough to save the reputation of Germany, though there were a dozen of his successors in the opposite scale. Jacobi conceded all Kant's speculative results, but claimed for the *Vernunft* an intuitive knowledge of the highest truths raised above all such contradictions, and for Sense an immediate cognition of the transcendent outer world. Between these stood *Verstand*—of use to arrange and generalise, but the source of all error if it added or rejected and reasoned from its own imperfect formulas as vehicles of the truths of the transcendent and absolute sphere.

'Next appeared Fichte with his demolition of Kant's hypothetised world, as well as of his transcendent "*Ding an sich*," though the process had been begun by Jacobi, and indeed requires no great effort to one versed in the dialectics of perception. This is, however, the mere negative side of Fichte. Philosophy begins in him to assume her positive honours and to fulfil her great commission of explaining all things out of one. Having so little left to give him trouble, only the *Ich*—could this *Ich* which contained the representations of all things not be made all, and the *Nicht-Ich* and individual *Iche* be explained as necessary illusions, while God became the One Infinite *Ich* that either realised self-consciousness in all the forms of the finite *Ich* or retired into the background as an Ideal Absolute from whom a certain fall was postulated, involving the restrictions of space and time and the *Nicht-Ich*, the rising above which, with destruction by blind practice of duality in consciousness, was the fulfilment of the moral law and return to



God? It would be tedious to dwell upon the assumptions, straits and contradictions of this doctrine, all of which are faithfully imaged in the theology, ethik and aesthetik of Thomas Carlyle, whose at-length-discovered fountain Fichte is. The system is called in Germany the *Wissenschaft's Lehre*. This is Schelling's seventieth birthday; so I must spare my report and criticisms till to-morrow.

'Schelling's system differs from Spinoza's in being not a mechanical but a dynamical philosophy. Add to Fichte the domain of *Natur*, which is no longer a tissue of subjectivities but a real counterpart of the *Ich*, and modify Spinozism by a process not of contemporaneous, extended and cogitative modifications of the One and the Absolute, but of successive gradations from the lowest potency of matter to the infinite consciousness by the Absolute of itself, which closes the series, and you have the ground principle of Schelling—at least in his two earlier systems. . . .

'Thus has Schelling fought his way out to a Gnostic Christianity, a point Hegel never reached. Little as is my confidence in the soundness of his reasoning, the result is gratifying in itself. As to his lectures, they are an endless gyration round a few first points, with a great deal of seeming-deep dialectic development, which comes to nothing or is cut short by begging the point in question, and interspersed with interesting though unconnected historical episodes, polemic against Hegel, and large strata of chaotic matter which have given me my first clear concept of unintelligibility. Such is the criticism which my dogged Scotch *Eigenthumlichkeit* is apt to pass upon them.

'Hegel is still the reigning philosopher in Berlin, and round his shade gather the new rationalists and the liberals, whom I grieve to see in such connection. His system is but a more rigorous and expanded development of the earlier doctrines of Schelling. There is the Infinite Subject-Object yet unconscious, which, by a similar act of self-intuition, passes into objectivity, and, being actuated by a blind *Vernunft*, struggles after the ideal of its first form, passes through all the forms of matter, by the same act negating the lower and positing the higher as better representing the desired ideal, till it reaches the world of finite consciousness, each of whose differences in knowledge and practice is in like manner negated, till at length in art, in science, in religion and, above all, in philosophy (the essence of which consists in the absorption of the individual in the ideal), finite mind discovers its identity with the first Absolute, or rather, that Absolute by a comprehensive act

of negation recoils upon itself in the consciousness of its own identity, and so remains ever *in* and *for* itself. So much for the historical process, which, however, is imaged in the constitution of Absolute Thought, so that a development of categories is really one and the same thing with the history of Absolute Being, and thus all science and philosophy is absorbed in *Logik*. History is the biography of the Absolute; science the natural history of the Absolute; philosophy the self-consciousness of the Absolute, recalling and arranging its past being in unconsciousness, and discovering thereby the laws of its own thought.

'You will see in both this scheme and that of Schelling the source of Cousin's three ideas, . . . and you can perceive how short a step it was for Strauss to put a mythical construction on the life of Jesus, as a fiction with more or less historical foundation designed by some deep and prophetic *Geist* to shadow forth the relations of the Absolute. Alas for this blasphemous absurdity! Alas for the philosophic genius of this country! I have studied with great interest, curiosity always overcoming amazement and disgust, till at last I am almost disposed to cry out, "All is barren." But the whole is a memorable chapter in the history of speculation, and very much may be learned in a negative way from the study. I am as persuaded of the value and dignity of mental philosophy as ever, and strongly urge you to come and pass through the same process of moral enlargement of view and dialectical invigoration. Truly, the Christianity of Germany has a strange theatre to display itself upon, and it is as great a glory of our faith to conquer the perversity of the schools as to conquer the raw worldliness and selfish ungodliness of the masses. My heart becomes more and more interested in the advancing school and its leaders, whose struggles with philosophy from Kant downwards I am now, after closing the study of the philosophy itself, beginning to review. . . .

'Try to come before I leave. You are assured of my sympathy with you in your imperfect health, and of my intercession for you before the true Comforter. . . . Let the doctor take courage and fight with the elements; let Miss Wilson extend the boundaries of geology; let your aunt gain the victory over your dietetic theories and physical penances, and do you put pantheism and all the isms, subjective and objective, to a final rout. . . .'

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERLIN, *Feb. 8, 1844.*

‘. . . Nothing else could be desired about the tombstone. It is very gratifying to think of this mark of respect for our dear father’s memory.<sup>1</sup> He, at least, is not more distant from me in my remembrance of him, nor, perhaps, in his remembrance of me. . . .

‘The dispensation of the Lord’s Supper in the Lutheran Church is peculiar. . . . Although their forms are very different from ours, there is the same spirit; and I have seen too many evidences of Christian faith and devotion to be at all troubled about the difference. I have also attended Mass in the Roman Catholic Chapel. It had the interest of novelty, and the music was magnificent; but what a deplorable lack of sense and instruction in the round of pompous ceremonies! . . .’

## TO MRS. RATTRAY

BERLIN, *Feb. 22, 1844.*

‘I have read your letter with unspeakable sadness, and can think of nothing else. Would that I could be with you, were it but for an hour! . . . Poor John! Alas for his sufferings! Alas for his amiable, pious and hopeful youth, so drearily overcast by the shadows of the dark valley! Yet I rejoice in what you write of his calmness. . . . I am by the grace of God rich in friends of the highest order, whose natural beauties and powers of soul are sanctified by Christ’s spirit. None of them has ever seemed to me lovelier and purer in character than your dear son. To my suffering friend I can only say again: “None but Christ.” Communion with Him, in the felt sense of His presence and the realising belief of His miraculous nature and history, and apprehension of His offices according to His word will make up for the incompetency of all human sympathy, which indeed only fulfils its end when it points exclusively to this. . . . I am greatly pleased to hear of the attention of John Ker, who has, I know, far more than supplied my place. . . .’

<sup>1</sup> The erection of a tombstone in Cockburnspath churchyard.

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERLIN, *Feb. 29, 1844.*

‘I read incessantly, and see almost no company. Last Saturday, however, I attended a birthday festival, in honour of the brothers Grimm, the philologists. The students assembled in the university on a dark, windy night, with snow deep on the ground, and marched in double row, carrying torches behind a band of music and guarded by the police, through the crowded streets to a solitary suburb amidst a desolate monotonous mass of plantation. Here Grimm appeared at his window and delivered a speech which was lost amid the howling of the wind. This was followed by the singing of some of those airs in which the Germans habitually mix melancholy with gladness; and then the procession wheeled round and struggled through the snow to an open square in the wood, where the torches were flung into a heap, and the students, like a tribe of wild Indians amidst the smoke and glare, sang the *Gaudeamus*, and, after a cheer for “*Akademische Freiheit*,” dispersed to various coffee-houses, where the night was closed in smoke, singing, noisy talk and the clanging of rapidly emptied beer-jugs. . . .’

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERLIN, *March 9, 1844.*

‘If you catch my English tripping, attribute it to the growing ascendancy of German, which often comes first to my pen and, even when repelled, twists the vernacular into its own shape. My *Sprach-Gefühl* develops, and I can fight my way through interrogations, descriptions and even debates on the Absolute, Supernaturalism and Calvinistic Dogmatic sufficiently well to bring down denunciations on the practical, unphilosophical genius of “*Engländer*” and the harshness and ignorant confidence of Scottish orthodoxy. The arrogance of the Germans on these points is beyond expression. It is well that one can look upon their boasted productions with a feeling of calm satisfaction in his own creed and with thankfulness that there is a country where it has in a manner become indigenou. . . . I have learned much and will learn more from the crudition and speculation, abortive or otherwise, of the Germans; but my system of doctrine and plans of active and spiritual life are, and are likely to be in all



essentials, perhaps in all particulars, unchanged. The more I see the historical basis of evangelical Christianity assaulted, the more impotent do the mining and storming implements and devices of old and new rationalism appear; and the more the proportions of the newly awakened evangelism come into view, the more do I trace its comparative feebleness to its own inconsequences and its defalcations from apostolical and especially Pauline orthodoxy. But the outline is filling up apace, and the grand difficulty of the Church is to purify itself by the union of the truly faithful, which can alone, by diffusing a practical spirit of piety, react on diseased speculation, and to avoid the use of Court and State influence to produce hypocritical or compulsory orthodoxy.

'The university rises on the 20th. It must be a great relief to the professors. What a mass of struggling intellectual life in these *Kampffplätze*, in which over all Germany there may be 3000 of the most learned and speculative spirits of the nation! Add the students, and you have a great literary public ready to entertain anything, however abstruse or paradoxical, if it but bear the magic pass-word, *Dahinausübergehen*. I do not love to dwell on the enormous development of jealousy, party spirit, ambition, caprice and refinement which result from this system. Truth will make itself heard in the end; and for its interests, if not for those of the individual, it cannot but be advantageous that every possible error has its zealous representative, who ultimately falls at the point of divergence from the right path or is hung there in chains to keep others from entering the wrong path. This, however, supposes a central executive of criticism—a tribunal of which I am often disposed to doubt the existence when particularly teased with some hitherto ungibbeted absurdity. You would be amazed at the ignorance of English speculation even among professors of philosophy. A professor of Ethics, in recommending English authors to his many-volumed auditors, chose to select not Clarke or Butler or Adam Smith, but Richard Baxter and Stackhouse! Another, a Hegelian professor of Metaphysics, who has written a history of recent philosophy, in giving an account of the Scottish School placed Berkeley at the head, and, omitting all after Beattie, placed the latter in a Chair in Edinburgh! These things should be judged of with charity, however, when one considers the bewildering statistics of German university literature, and the mechanical book-making, or rather book-quoting habit which has for generations infected German literature. Thinkers there have been, not a few, yet not of more gigantic dimensions than other

countries of Europe have in turn produced, and certainly not more than the mass of intellectual cultivation might lead one to expect.

‘There is a great deal of dissatisfaction at present in the universities. Almost every newspaper records investigations, rustications, and prohibitions of lectures on political grounds. Not only secret societies but large social meetings are forbidden. So was the opening of a reading-room here, because the Government feared the influence of obnoxious newspapers. So was a torch-procession in honour of Boeckh, partly because “demagogues” were likely to take part in it, and partly because the old man was lecturing on Plato’s *Republic*. The joy of our recent demonstration in honour of Grimm was embittered by an official investigation as to the criminal authors of one cheer for a brother philologue who is in bad odour, and of another cheer for the seven Göttingen professors exiled by his blessed Majesty Ernest I. . . . The present central powers have resolved to support the Throne by forming a strong Church party, for which purpose the Evangelical section of the many-coloured Prussian Church has been selected. Its most orthodox and symbolical leaders are inflamed with an unhappy zeal. Conservative and supernaturalist, liberal and rationalist, threaten to become identified; and the cause of pure Christianity, if it does not actually degrade itself by a secondary preaching of divine right, affords colour to the reproach that pietism, to gratify its own intolerance, is willing to become the slave of despotism. Would that the Church would stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made her free! But Church independence and toleration as understood and practised in Scotland are here unknown. Some months ago, a Lutheran pastor was imprisoned for making proselytes from the Established Church, and one of the most pious and popular ministers in Berlin expressed regret that this had not been done years earlier. The Baptists are objects of special jealousy, a certificate of baptism being indispensable to marriage and to several professions. Nevertheless I heard from Neander the other day a zealous protest against the zeal of pædo-baptists, and a good deal more as to the doubtfulness of the practice from Scriptural and Apostolic usage than with the pardon of your seducers<sup>1</sup> I was disposed to agree to.

‘I am truly happy to hear of your inward peace and calm activity. This is the fruit of new life and of bearing the Cross.

<sup>1</sup> George Wilson had recently adopted Baptist views.

What steadiness the firm grasp of faith gives the mind amid the shock of outward trials and the agitations of eager inquiry and speculation! We may put a little to the account of natural fixity and orderliness of character as well as of the ripening of years. But this is the great anchor of the soul. The majestic calmness of our Saviour's life, and the felt identity of affection and effort with the ultimate issues of His providence—how can we fret and struggle with these new elements in our calculations! . . . What would I not give for a whole week's talk, with the Sunday evening to close!'

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERLIN, *April 5, 1844.*

'I rejoice to hear of your progress with Latin, and of those other pursuits which diversify your monotony. I have always admired your cheerfulness and submission, as well as the discretion and tact with which you turn everything to service that may improve your mind, and make the time pass pleasantly and usefully. Go on, my dear brother, in this course, and you will secure for yourself respect and tranquillity such as few in your situation attain. Next to the soothing and strengthening influence of Christian faith, nothing is so conducive to happiness as regular and cheerful industry. . . .

'James asked about Laing's account of Prussian politics. His book is quite just in its main outline, but the author has mistaken the nature of the Evangelical Church of Prussia, and has rated Berlin too low. This is a despotic country, in which the will of the King is law and there is no constitutional channel of national opinion. The press is subjected to a censorship. There is no trial by jury, no open administration of justice, no passing from place to place, even on business or pleasure, without passports and constant surveillance. . . . The King is only tolerably popular, and grows less so in consequence of his severe measures against the press and the universities, and his delay to fulfil a pledge to give the people a constitutional government. Of course, where there is no political life there can be no politics, and we Scotsmen sometimes amuse ourselves with the idea of Chartist meetings, hustings and Free Church Assemblies in Berlin. . . .'

## TO JOHN NELSON, LEIPZIG

BERLIN, *April 22, 1844.*

'This letter must make you a partaker of the deep sadness in which I write. James Russell is no more! . . . Would that I could press the whole stream of grief into the channel of thankfulness for the spiritual grace given to my departed friend, and of higher devotion to the service of that glorious Saviour who will thus concentrate our scattered affections around His cause in the world by withdrawing our friends from the earth, and around His presence in heaven by gathering them together there!

'I am in the state of transition between the confusion of this stroke and the preparations which are necessary for my journey. . . . I had been reading Strauss' *Leben Jesu*. It was inconceivably strange to be so interrupted—reading such a book. The soullessness of rationalism could not have been more strikingly shown by any coincidence of Providence. You must read the book that you may be strengthened in the faith. It is true the wonderful acuteness, the uncommon learning and masterly power of representation, working upon old harmonistic difficulties and supported by the anti-supernaturalistic temper of the whole age, could make, as they have made, the book seductive in Germany. I have only felt throughout the spellbound naturalism of the German theology, and been made to see more clearly how the free personal life of the Evangelists, reflected from a necessarily half incomprehensible Saviour, must make the complete conciliation and harmony of the Gospels an unattainable limit of exegesis and scientific reconstruction. Hegelianism appears in it as a temper and not as a doctrine. The confining of free personality within the limits of the *Begriff*, or the probable, as a criterion of what has been, is the whole Hegelian influence. The rest is the natural product of Semler, De Wette, Schleiermacher and criticism in general. I have not before done the critical (as opposed to philosophical) position of Strauss justice, still less had right in making him a scapegoat for the sins of a less consequent and outspoken generation. You will be amazed at what he takes as proved about the whole supernaturalistic school. Their own "halfness" makes with them the melancholy weakness. His exposure of rationalistic *Aufklärung* is throughout masterly and withering. You will find the book, too, bring you up to the last results of Exegesis and *Einleitung*, as he is very honest in



reporting. You will not be disgusted, as by the slanderousness of the English Deists or the Wolfenbüttel Fragments. He holds Jesus a religious prodigy and the greatest of men, and though what it all comes to is only a polemical heartiness against the baseness of the old humanistic rationalism and a tolerable neutrality of style, I pity the man and heartily pray for him. He is by all accounts the best of his party. . . . Our Heavenly Father bless and guide us in our studies and wanderings, and grant us a happy meeting.'

TO MISS JEAN DARLING

BERLIN, *April 24, 1844.*

'James Russell and I had known each other almost from the beginning of my college life; we had studied together, felt together and planned together with the most unbounded mutual interest, every year binding us closer in a common scheme of efforts and hopes for life. He had in him depths of poetry and philosophy and tender affection which would have made his friendship a treasure for the oldest and the wisest. . . . It is singular that, amid the anxiety and depression attending the illness and death of friends, we should be able through divine discipline to work and struggle at the plain duties of life. It is almost against nature; but this winter I have been forced to make some steps in the progress. Ah! it is a hard thing to hit the medium between the engrossment that withdraws us from sympathy and tender remembrance, and the grief that folds the hands together and devours its own flesh. Let us do our work in the world, say reason and Scripture, and wrap our minds in the shroud of our departed friends to keep ourselves unspotted by its frivolities and corruptions. I am endeavouring to finish my stay in Berlin in this spirit. . . .'

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERLIN, *April 25, 1844.*

'My stockings are in good order, and my shoes do not pinch; so with a knapsack, a student cap and a bag of good dollars and florins in my pocket, I shall whistle my way almost as fast as the lazy *Eilwagen* or *Gelegenheit*, which I may have occasion to use. I might have liked a comrade, but there are charms in travelling alone. . . . I can understand any German that is not very corrupt,

and in Switzerland I shall draw upon my stored-up French. Italy, too, is accessible to French, and I shall learn the native language in a twinkling. Here there is no more romance than just to give edge and interest to enjoyment. My mind is absolutely free of anxiety; and I commit myself to the blessed guidance of the ever present God, in the full hope of a rich and profitable course of experience. Let us not forget each other in our prayers. . . .'

## CHAPTER IX

### WANDERJAHR

1844

The student's tour—Its spirit and method—Wittenberg—Erdmann, Tholuck and Müller—Dresden—Herrnhut—Prague—Vienna—Munich—Venice—Florence—Rome, Farewell to Rome—Milan—Chamonix, the Alps, etc.

HE had little more than £20 at his command when, on May 1, he started on a three months' tour, which was to include the chief cities and the finest scenery of Europe. Of course this involved strict economy. As much of the journey as possible must be made on foot. The cheapest method of conveyance must be chosen. Lodgings must be preferred to hotels. In ordering dinner and supper, and even in sight-seeing, every *silber-groschen* and half-franc must be watched. But he had been trained in economy from childhood, and felt no hardship in walking over the Lombard Plain or across the Alps at the rate of forty miles a day, with a hunch of *Schwarz-Brod* and a drink from the brook for dinner. He was alone, except when he picked up a stray comrade for a few days, and both in the country and in cities he had inconveniences and risks. But to a cheerful spirit and a hardy body these served as a stimulus, and they brought him into closer contact with foreign life than is open to the ordinary tourist. Never a boy set out for holidays more cheerily than this big, breezy, buoyant adventurer when he cast aside all thoughts of Fichte and Schleiermacher, stuffed a few changes of linen into his knapsack, donned his student cap and blouse and waved

farewell to a crowd of Scotch and German friends at the Berlin station.

Yet it was no holiday tour. He was bent on learning—on learning everything that could be learnt. His mind was stored to overflowing with European history. In early as in later life he was reticent as to his miscellaneous reading, but the extent and variety of it were shown by the way in which historical associations accompanied him on each day's march. Though he carried no books of reference, the great battle-fields and council chambers and churches of the Continent presented themselves to him in their exact historical place, and he turned aside to visit many a spot which has interest only for a scholar, eager to define and localise every notable event. He was set upon gaining some familiarity with art, and the sober discrimination of his art criticisms, with his quick perception of the distinctions between the different schools, is remarkable when one thinks that before he reached Berlin he had seen few pictures outside the Edinburgh galleries. No information, however, came amiss. Language, social usages, the theatre, the markets, varieties of agriculture were within his purview and increased his store. And all were bound together by his unflinching belief in the divine control of history, and by his deliberate intention to educate himself for the ministry. The worship of the Synagogue and of the Eastern Church, the various types of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism were keenly observed and treasured in their minutest detail.

He was too busy to write many letters; but in the last fatigue of evening, or while dining, he made pencil jottings in a little notebook ('my higgledy-piggledy book,' he called it) which has fortunately been preserved. The dust of half a century has rendered the handwriting barely legible; but the following extracts, especially such passages as the apostrophe which closes the record of his visit to Rome, will explain to readers of the younger generation the estimate in which he was held by his contemporaries.



WITTENBERG, *May 1.*

‘The shadow of Luther’s desolate room in the Augustine Cloister will haunt my mind for ever, with its thick-ribbed oak roof, bare walls scratched with names and time-worn articles of furniture. There is an ante-room with a long bench, where those sat who had to wait to see the ever busy reformer. . . . Outside the gate is the oak at the foot of which he burned the Bull in 1520—by no means a majestic tree. It is smooth a long way up, and then breaks out on all sides into short knobby branches. It was beginning to bud, with a cold wind rushing through it, and seemed a fit emblem of the present religious revival. . . . His grave is the most interesting standpoint in Germany. It required no play of fancy to connect my own presence there with the life and working of the man whose body lay below as its indispensable cause. But for him, there had neither been a Scotland to send out pilgrim students of theology nor a Germany to receive them. I walked through the town and crossed the Elbe bridge. All around are scattered clumps of trees. Far up the river they look like forests, and one can imagine the rambles of Luther there as well as on the forty-five battlements, though, to speak the truth, so keen a lover of nature must have felt a good deal of bleakness and poverty of beauty in his outward habitation. I spent a long time rambling up and down the dusty roads and pondering all the defects of Luther’s character and the evils of the Reformation. It was an odd mood, but the capricious objections in such a neighbourhood were very easily and calmly chased away.’

HALLE, *May 3.*

‘I have had a very interesting talk with Erdmann on English and German metaphysics. He knew nothing, he said, of Priestley, but had studied the Scotch writers. He seemed ignorant of the influence of Scottish metaphysics on France, but had some knowledge of Hamilton’s *Essays* through a Parisian lecturer. He talked a good deal of Schelling, whose essay on Kant he recommended to me. My dissatisfaction with Schelling’s lectures seemed to gratify him. He inquired about the state of the Scottish universities, and contrasted them with his own. He made me speak English, and spoke it himself a little lamely but intelligibly. He is a deep, granite-faced fellow, very polite and a good deal a man of the world. A playbill lay on his table. . . . Then followed a long walk with Tholuck, whom I found as exciting and original as I had

expected, yet altogether different in look and manner. He passed from grave to gay in the most natural way—from questions as to the right pronunciation of an English word, or the entomology of ripe seed, to the proof for the personality of God. He was particularly attentive, and in the evening we spent two animated and happy hours discussing Catholicism, Hegelianism, Scottish universities, American character, etc. A most odd part of his demcanour was a serious proposal that I should stay in Germany as a *Privat-Docent*. I answered more than half humorously, but the thing was discussed with a growing gravity which I did not deserve. We parted most affectionately, and I left convinced of his genuine solidity and genius in spite of the manifold opinions to the contrary which are fashionable in Berlin.

‘Julius Müller is a grand *tüchtiger Mann*. He was uncommonly polite. I felt at liberty to give a sort of narrative of my winter’s studies, on which he commented. He seemed to be surprised at my disappointment with Schelling, and recommended his book on Liberty. I thanked him for the instruction derived from his review of Strauss. He spoke severely of the contemptuous and polemical tone of the *Glaubens Lehre*. He has a fine, large, thoughtful head, though somewhat sickly in expression from his immense labours in preparing the second part of his book on Sin. . . .’

DRESDEN, May 5.

‘This morning I heard Mass in the Court Chapel. The sermon was vigorous and earnest, and the preacher appeared to be a man of serious thought and evangelic feeling. Mass proper, which was accompanied by the celebrated band of the Chapel, was certainly splendid; but apart from my general dislike to such application of music, the character of the music was more operatic than oratorical. Still I have heard nothing finer except Handel’s “Israel in Egypt” as performed by Mendelssohn. The prayers were unintelligible, even to those who understood Latin. I was greatly struck to see, for the first time in its purity, the devotion of the Romanists to paintings. People of all classes were kneeling here and there before them. It was indescribably painful to see their abrupt and continued kneeling up and down the church on the coarsest steps, behind and quite out of sight of the altar. . . . The apparent devotion of the congregation was oddly contrasted with the theatrical nonchalance of the orchestra. The music after the first became tedious, which is the inherent evil of Mass as an artistic exhibition.

'In the afternoon in the *Kreuz Kirche* I heard the very worst type of rationalism: a rather smart, middle-aged preacher, with a good appearance and an imposing showman-like air of conducting devotion, besides a dash of *Geistlichkeit*, which was like new finery on old rotten garments. The text was, "Go ye into all the world, etc.," the preacher dwelling especially on the last part of the Saviour's promise. As he believed neither in His divinity nor in His continued human life, the promise shrank into a prophetic anticipation of the felt superiority of His religion in the experience of its disciples. It was the boldest *Tugend-Lehre* coloured with some flash about philanthropy. Christ was always spoken of as the *göttliche Gesandte*. . . . The last prayer was a continued blasphemy delivered in a theatrical style. The worshippers on the steps of the Romish altar had infinitely the best of it. The church was very poorly attended, and I was reminded of Neander's remark that such preaching, besides being too dull to draw an audience, is really of a kind which people need not go to church to hear, and that the universal diffusion of it in the community would be the extinction of the Church itself. . . .'

DRESDEN, *May 10.*

'I was all anxiety to see the Madonna of Raphael. My first feeling, I must confess, was disappointment. The Virgin's face especially fell short of my ideas of his power to paint a female face, gained from the exquisite head in the Berlin gallery. The expression indeed is incomparable in wonder, humility, devotion, rapture; but the basis of the face is somewhat effeminate. The St. Barbara figure is beautiful, and in a most expressive attitude. May I be forgiven when I say that the chin and mouth have something of pertness? To me the children are the most wonderful—not so much the child Jesus as the cherubs below. . . . The Correggios impressed me beyond measure—*La Notte* and the *Magdalene* most. The light in the former is something that will haunt one. A thing that charmed me was a head of St. Cecilia by Carlo Dolci. . . . Of the German and Flemish Schools, I was most impressed by Holbein's *Family of the Basel Burgomeister*. Lucas Cranach is as stiff, quaint and expressive, Teniers as redundant in comedy as ever. I like the great works of Rubens less and less, his portraits more and more. Some of the latter are wonderful in freedom and life as well as in bold naturalness of colouring. Vandyck so-so; inferior in larger works, in portraits unfailing. . . .'

‘In the *Antiken Sammlung* . . . the head of Raphael’s Fore-runner moved me almost to tears. . . . In the theatre, where I went as a point of duty, I found things much as in Berlin. An opera of Mozart’s was well sung and played, without being superior. . . . Upon the whole, Dresden, though incontestably fine, has not equalled my anticipations, and I hope to find in Prague or Venice a better ideal of what constitutes a grand and beautiful city. . . .’

BASTEI, May 13.

‘. . . We reached Herrnhut late, at night, and took up our quarters in the *Gemeinde Logis*. About 6.30 next morning (Sabbath) we were awakened by the sweetest music from a female voice, giving to the monotonous but solemn Lutheran chorals more of a deep and heavenly swell than I had ever heard in the crowded churches of Berlin. Fortunately we had come on a most important day, the anniversary of three great events in the history of the *Brüder Gemeinde*. . . . There was also celebrated the ordination of a missionary to the West Indies.

‘The first appearance of the people coming in from the country was striking and agreeable. They were admirably dressed, the women in white shawls, with picturesque hoods, while the poor wore the ordinary Saxon head-dress of handkerchiefs. The men, chiefly in black with white neckcloths, looked very like Scots mechanics of a Sunday morning. A great serenity reigned on every face, affecting even the children. We entered the chapel, an oblong with two galleries and flanked with bastion-like side apartments. In the centre at one side ran a platform with a pulpit, before which the Bishop sat in a white cassock and delivered an address to the deacons and deaconesses. Everything was neat and orderly, and the devotion of the worshippers crowned all. The address concluded, the Bishop rose and, after prayer, consecrated the candidates by laying-on of hands. Then followed a hymn, “In name of the Father,” etc., sung most touchingly by the congregation, and a prayer—during which all kneeled and the missionary threw himself on his face—recited by the choir, after which the members rose and dispersed.

‘In the afternoon, by far the most interesting ceremony, a very rare one, took place in the church—the Agape. It was like a Quaker soir e, if such a thing be conceivable. Tea and cake were handed round, with a programme of most affecting music and liturgies sung by the choir—now the male and now the female



members. We participated, and I never in my life felt more overpowered. Simplicity, staid devoutness, chastened gladness and holy Christian energy were marked in the faces and actions of all. The songs of the children and women I shall never forget.

‘The whole neighbourhood belongs to the *Gemeinde*, having been made over to them by Zinzendorff. The village is made up of little more than one street, and the surrounding slopes of forest are most romantic. . . .’

PRAGUE, *May 16.*

‘I was very desirous to see Prague by sunset, and by running for about a mile I reached the summit which commands the city as the sun was just sinking, and stood gazing with unspeakable interest upon it long after the last short gleam had passed away. How unlike what I had expected, and yet all its praises were not too high. It seemed inconveniently crowded together at the bottom of hills, and presented no great point of interest within. . . . But the strange grouping, the multitude of black spires, the gleaming of the grey-red roofs and the confiding majesty with which the city seemed to descend from its mountainous position and offer itself to view in compact irregularity, had something altogether foreign and Oriental, and I felt that a closer survey would not disappoint me.’

PRAGUE, *May 19.*

‘Suppose a distant amphitheatre of not very elevated mountains, contracted by table-land to the basin of the river. Then let the river have a broad current, rapid and clear, and a wide sweep around which the houses of the old city are built, fenced in and winged by those of the new—then a parallel sweep of houses on the other side of the stream, backed by grander heights, the Laurenzenberg and Hradschin, the former romantically formed and clothed with wood, the latter barer, but covered with the majestic palaces of the old Bohemian kings, within which rises the gorgeous *Dom*, while between these heights a tongue of building is projected almost into the other side of the ridge. Cover the blank space over with streets of all sorts and angles as bad as Hamburg, and with all the attractions of its antiquity and modern wealth but, besides, with the fantastic façades, colonnades and minarets of early history, the Gothic splendour of Romish edifices, the ultra-economic prosiness and dinginess of Jewish houses and the stiffness and showy formality of Austrian military authority, and you have the materials of endless and

picturesque contrasts. Whatever is interesting in the early national history of Germany, in the first fortunes of the Reformation, in the great struggle of secular Protestantism and Popery of the seventeenth century, in the modern aspects of uncorrupted Romanism and still more faithful Judaism, is to be found here, engrafted on a people of distant blood and only modified from without by Austrian influences. The three grand materials of interest in travelling—nature, history, character—are here almost at a maximum, and I feel as if the place were inexhaustible. . . .

‘In the afternoon I saw the Theinkirche, where Tycho Brahe is buried, a fine old building crowned with spires and noted as the chief church—after St. Gallus—in which the Hussite doctrines were preached. The interior gave me a more revolting idea of Popery than I had ever had before. It is the church of the vulgar, prayers being said in Bohemian, and everything was adapted to strike with a debasing effect on the rude mind. Besides the usual glare of the altar, fantastic carvings of saints, angels, crucifixes, mailed hands of one colour, there was a profusion of half-naked daubed statues ornamented with crowns, crosses, instruments of torture, etc., and intermixed with trinkets and relics in cases of showy glass and precious stones, chaplets of real and artificial roses, garlands and flowing drapery. It was a perfect fancy-bazaar of image work, while the solid, thick wax lights stuck into every disposable space, and varied with lamps of red Bohemian glass trailing from aloft, showed the apparatus by which the whole exhibition was set off. The sweep of the building was great, and the pillars were lost in the height, the aisles numerous and grey with time, the oaken seats venerably rude, and the lofty walls and roof garnished on every possible space with legends of Bohemian saints and martyrs. . . . The outward devotion of the native Bohemians could not be surpassed. It is melancholy to think what the Reformation might have made of such a nation. They are now sunk and dull, and devotion of this kind and loose Austrian pleasure-seeking seemed their chief employments. I went to an afternoon military concert but the exquisitism of Prague is an unsuccessful imitation of higher models.

‘The most interesting sight of Prague is the burying-ground and synagogue of the Jews. Through winding, filthy, pent-up and over-peopled lanes in the part of the old town next the river, heaped up with old clothes, trinket ware, villainous-looking bread and horrid sausages, one attains to an open space, irregularly and rudely walled in and full of graves. The monuments date from

the tenth century. No language can give an idea of its first impression. At one end, one sees innumerable masses of grey, weather-beaten stones, in every grotesque angle of incidence and co-incidence, but all rude and mean, covered with mystic Hebrew letters and half buried amid long grass, nettles and weeds. The place looks exactly as if originally a collection of dunghills, or, perhaps, of excavated earth left to its natural course after the corpses had been thrown in and the rude billets set over them. The economy of the race is visible in their measure for the dead, and contrasts wonderfully with the roominess and delicate adornment of German churchyards in general. The hoar antiquity of the place is increased by a wilderness of alders, which grow up around the walls and amidst the stones, twisted, tangled, stunted, desolately old and yet renewing their youth, a true type of the scattered, bruised and peeled, yet ineradicable Israel itself.

‘The synagogue, which is near the churchyard, is a ragged, smiddy-looking, dungeon-dark old building, of very small dimensions, below the level of the street—a simple square, with roof of Gothic work, supported on two pointed arches in the centre, whose summits are lost amid the gloom above, which a few scattered chandeliers, including two lamps of red glass, do not dissipate. Three or four high and narrow slits in the wall, of thick and dingy glass, let in a gleam of twilight to confuse the rays of the artificial light. The natural grey of the high prison-like walls is blackened with smoke, thickly covered with dust and cobwebs, and only relieved by rude patches of lime and white where there has been a break in the plaster, which is itself allowed to lie undisturbed in nooks and crevices, accumulating there for centuries. A rude and scanty collection of benches ran round the walls; the Rabbis on duty sitting at the head, two on the left and one (a man of great learning, Rabbi Rappopat) on the right of the officiating reader. They were venerable-looking men; one had a good deal of the jolly old priest about him. The women were in a separate apartment, where they could neither be seen nor heard. All sat with covered heads and talked as irreverently before service and in intervals of devotion as if they had been on ‘Change or behind the stall. A sturdy, coarse, Henry-the-Eighth-looking man stood before the tables of the Law, surrounded by ministering boys. Most of the congregation had old and tattered prayer-books, which they seemed to know by heart. Suddenly a cry, half groan, half howl, from the minister set every mouth in motion, and with a rapid, unmusical mumble that could not be called chanting, and many



bowings of the head, the first prayer was finished. The service then continued for about half an hour, the minister now leading, now performing the devotions alone. The word "Elohim" occurred very frequently, and once, amid a most violent howl, I could distinguish something like "Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah," uttered with expressions of aversion and horror. The solos of the minister ran through every unnatural key of the gamut, and seemed to imitate now the lullaby of a nurse, now the canter of a dance, now the wailing of pain and now the unearthly howling of fiends. It had something indescribably ludicrous and disgusting, yet from the seriousness of the hearers and the enthusiasm of the minister something Orientally wild and superstitiously awful. This could not be the "grave sweet melody" of David. I wondered whether our Saviour had heard such sounds in the corrupted worship of His age, and whether this were not the limit of a different type of that formalism of which a more delicate one is exhibited in the perfected formalism of the chanted Romish mass. This at least is a curious point of affinity to be added to many others. The priest was simply dressed, with a white surplice over a dark cassock. When the meeting broke up, a Rabbi, who was to preach the next day, as he told us, against the neological Jews, made up to us and engaged in a most interesting conversation. He was intelligent and liberal, had read the New Testament, was sufficiently acquainted with Church history to be deeply revolted by the persecutions and schisms of Christendom (though he confessed that these had no ground in the doctrine of Jesus), and was not unversed in the scheming of the nation to regain a temporal seat in Palestine through diplomacy and political influence. He hoped for it himself, when the Greek power in the East should be more mature as a counterpoise to the Ottoman, and when the jealousy of the English should lead them to countenance the Jews as a *contre coup* to the patronage of the Syrian Christians by France. He thought that then the Messiah would come, though he ridiculed the idea of atonement as absurd in itself and founded on a misinterpretation of the Old Testament economy by the Apostles. Poor man! We spoke earnestly but charitably to him, and expressed our hope that the day was not distant when, through the Spirit of God, we would be made to rejoice together in the finished work of an already incarnated Messiah! Altogether I went home haunted by the scenes of the evening, and earnestly desirous to know more of the present opinions of the Jews as well as to use any opening for their spiritual advantage. . . .'



VIENNA, *May 22.*

'I am lost in amazement at the variety and grandeur of the architecture of St. Stephen's. . . . There are, to be sure, the defacements of Romanism . . . but the chasteness and solemn grandeur, with the adaptation of the ornaments to intellectual effect, are in refined contrast to the abominable caricatures and puerilities of Prague. . . . I would not qualify the concession by the appendage that Romanism can suit itself to every taste, but rather urge that the danger of abuse is such as to justify the abolition of all such ornaments, since those to whom they can be of no evil influence can be better reached by more purely intellectual means. . . .

'Canova's . . . Theseus killing the Centaur in the *Volksgarten* is pervaded by a grand poetical idea—the superiority of the normal human form in strength of will and energy of body over all abortions or unnatural mixtures. It is even happier than the Grecian Hercules, who is an abnormal man, while in Theseus, even in Grecian mythology, the demigod retires into the shade. This distinction it required genius to observe and to develop, and it is done magnificently. The pure humanity of the figure in its unrestrained might, its splendid harmony of proportion and muscle, contrasted with the semi-brutal strength and universal quiver of almost relaxing despair that struggle in the convulsed centaur, are truly masterly. The blow about to be dealt seems almost needless, as if the first grasp of human energy without weapon were enough.

' . . . I went with the multitude to see the performance of Fanny Ellsler, who is exciting greater admiration than ever. The theatre was crowded to the ceiling. An opera of Donizetti, who is here Court composer, preceded; so that I had a specimen of the opera as well as the ballet. The profusion and warmth of excitement and admiration were not a little surprising to me who had come from the chilliness and cold taste of Berlin. The dancing of the famous artiste was certainly very wonderful, but I abominated the posture-making with all its distortion and indelicacy, though there was as much grace and modesty as there can be in what is so incurably unnatural and immodest. Although the orchestral music was fine, the noisy and pertinacious enthusiasm had something oppressive.

'Next afternoon I heard Strauss directing his own band. He is a little man, above forty apparently, and swarthy, with round face, nothing elevated or affected, and great animation of manner in his own playing as well as in his leading. I was not spellbound by the strains. . . . Austrian character is very remarkable—the self-

composure and conservatism of conscious wealth and power, with the restlessness and versatility of sensual and æsthetic pleasure. In a moral point of view the consequences are deplorable. The social graces, perhaps the virtues, may exist . . . with a certain good-tempered patriotism which is the reflex of selfish and easy enjoyment ; but liberty of soul, the highest art, abstract knowledge, self-denying virtue and, above all, religion with its unworldliness languish. The overstrained devotion of Romanism, which lets go the great principle of the consecration of all things by the regenerated soul, because it teaches no true regeneration, is at best a poor counteractive. The unbounded political and literary energy of Paris, and much more the philosophy, learning and struggling evangelism of Berlin have no parallel here. Accomplishment and enjoyment are everything : these are but an element amid a distracted chaos of worse and better influences.

## TO GEORGE WILSON

VIENNA, *May 24, 1844.*

‘ . . . One deeply sad thought must mingle itself with all my correspondence with you—the thought of him whose career of worldly experience and enjoyment so closely interwoven with my own, and so associated with all my purposes of study and travel, is now closed. Often I think of him, and always when any object especially interesting to me presents itself. What would our travelling together, as our studying together, not have been ! There is no repining in these thoughts. I know it is better that it should be otherwise—that he should continue his service within a sphere where all the imperfections of human excitement and enlargement of knowledge by painful struggle are done away, while we must still amid manifold agitation and change of scene and temperament continue our privilege. . . .

‘ . . . I have seen galleries and collections of all kinds with the most abundant admiration, but with a lamentable degree of ignorance. Would that I had your knowledge of science and music and your brother’s of painting and architecture ! . . . ’

VIENNA, *May 24.*

‘ In the Picture Gallery there is a profusion of portraits by most distinguished men, with great stores of the Netherlands school of the lower order, and a multitude of paintings by Guido, Guercino, Mengo, Maratta, etc. : two exquisite things of Raphael’s—the

Repose in Egypt, and the Virgin with the Child and St. John. But the great novelty to me was in the paintings of Rubens, whom I could not believe to be the same artist. His Ignatius Loyola casting out Devils is overwhelmingly grand. The commanding figure of the saint, with the group below writhing, foaming, agonising, with horrid features and tears like blood rolling down their cheeks, while the demons are seen escaping in unclean forms of reptiles and monsters, and another group lift up their exhausted hands and speak a peace and thankfulness which they cannot utter—all is indescribably affecting. . . .

‘Delighted with the suburbs of Vienna, rich in the flush of May vegetation.’

VIENNA, *May 26.*

‘To-day being Pentecost, I attended both the Greek Catholic and the Greek Orthodox services. . . . They were radically the same, though the former was perhaps a little Romanised. . . . In both there was the same construction of the building, oblong with arched roof, and at the further end a sanctum separated by a partition glistening with ornaments and covered with paintings . . . while in the sanctum itself appeared only the sign of the Cross and a crucifix—in the old church, under a gorgeous canopy. Within the sanctum, in front of the partition, and at the verge of a platform where the audience and the priestly order were separated, the service was carried on with many shiftings, kneelings, bowings and comings forth to chant, to bless the people and to scatter incense. In both was a gallery—filled with females alone in the old church—and also a seat on each side of the altar for the chorus and antichorus who led the chanting. Nearer the door was on one side a pulpit of spotted marble, and opposite it a raised archiepiscopal throne. On the verge aforesaid stood a desk with a painting in glass reposing on it, which each officiating priest devoutly kissed as he passed. . . . The service in the Orthodox Church immeasurably exceeded that of the neological worship in splendour. . . . Before the altar stood the Archbishop of Carlowitz, surrounded by a body of dignitaries and a troop of ministering boys bearing candles and serving as a guard to keep off the crowd. The blaze of candles surpassed anything I had seen in a Romish church. They were literally a forest in their irregularity of size and juxtaposition. The dresses of the priests were white, flowered and laced with gold. They were fine-looking men with high Grecian faces and long hair. The Archbishop is a most venerable man with a long beard. His

mitre, staff and crosier were borne alternately by him, alternately by his attendants during the varying parts of the worship. I shall never forget the ludicrous effect as he sat with face towards the altar while one of the functionaries from a double censer enclouded him with jets of smoke of incense. The shiftings of place, of books, of pontifical badges, as well as the style of chanting and reading, had great resemblance to the Romish worship, although there was also something of Prague Judaism. Endless lifting and replacing of mitres, the sweep of processions with flowing stoles, the chanting of ill-heard liturgies, the waving of incense, the kissings, crossings, studied genuflections, chilled all my recollections of the glory of the Oriental Church, and I could have wept to think what the pompous effeminacy of Byzantine princes, the ambition and worldliness of degenerate Patriarchs and the superstition and vanity of a spectacle-loving people had made of it, in the faith of other races and in other generations. . . .

‘In the evening I visited the Prater, and was deeply impressed with the spectacle. Who could deny, one might say, the enjoyment of a summer’s eve to those who can afford to drive? Are they to be tested by Anti-Romish notions of the Sabbath? The difference is certainly fundamental, and I return with more firmness than ever to the positive obligation of the Sabbath, and the utter opposition between such a display of fashion and anything in any religion that can be called unworldly. Alas! for the envy, the jealousy, the meanness, the extortion, the impurity which the possibility of such a spectacle implies, to say nothing of the forgetfulness of God! Who would not blush for London if its high life were all its praise? The amusements of the vulgar had the same childishness as struck me at Hamburg. Yet the people, who were in general respectably dressed, were in great good humour and free from intemperance. The time to favour Austria will come, and the undoubted good qualities of the people will be caught up and refined into Christian virtues.’

At Salzburg he sought out the houses of Mozart and of Paracelsus, the latter, to him, vastly the more interesting. ‘I gazed at it with wonderful interest, and thought very naturally of dear George Wilson.’ A shrewd waiter at Salzburg was the first, in the course of this tour, to discover that he was not a German, so thoroughly had he mastered the idiom of the language. From Salzburg he walked by Rosenheim to



Munich, a distance of one hundred miles, in two days, and not unnaturally was scarcely able to 'draw leg to himself' when he entered the Bavarian capital, where the main attraction for him was the artistic renaissance, then at its zenith under royal patronage.

MUNICH, *June 3.*

'This Gallery sustained my new idea of Rubens as a genius whose province was to labour in the demonic element of human nature. The ordinary rules of harmony and simple taste are not to be insisted upon. I had formerly challenged his right to be *outré* because he did not seem to vindicate his aberrations by his triumphs.

The room which contains all the really fine Italian paintings is a very *sanctum sanctorum* of genius and devotion. I can never sufficiently admire these men; they seem to have had other souls and hands than the artists of all other nations. After the struggle and fatigue of mastering the elaborate or forced efforts of their successors, it was a great refreshment to the soul to stand and gaze upon their paintings.

'In the *Glyptothek* I expected to find something that would excite a livelier admiration than I had yet felt for works of sculpture, but I was again disappointed, although the Antinous is certainly a wonderful work to be Egyptian. Canova's Paris and Venus pleased me much, and I was interested by the contrast with Thorwaldsen's Adonis, the Italian clearness and delicacy being stamped on every line, and in clear yet not unjust relief against the more masculine beauty of the Scandinavian chisel, which yet has produced a fine work. . . . The frescoes of the history of the gods and the Trojan War by Cornelius and his scholars I did not like. There is an attempt to describe something between heaven and earth which, where the ancient models fail, becomes unnatural; and hence a rigid reproduction of much of the classical heathenism in all its purity is necessary to a degree which appears neither consistent with the genius of Christian faith, even nominal, nor required by that conventional dependence of art, in every province except the strictly religious, upon heathen symbols, from which it has not been able to free itself. This spurious reviviscence of paganism is a blot upon the whole Munich School of Art, which the Christian mind of Germany ought not to overlook. . . . The Munich people, as the Bavarians in general, are a frank, civil, good-tempered race, more devout than the Austrians, and less distracted by the racket of

pleasure-hunting. Yet I should not suppose the basis of Bavarian character the best for artistic greatness. In fact the whole matter, notwithstanding the well-known skill of the Nürnbergers and other Bavarians, appears an importation of his present Majesty. Whether it will affect the national character remains to be seen. I have now seen all the capitals of Germany, and if I were condemned to choose one of them to live in, I should, notwithstanding its many drawbacks, prefer Berlin—Munich next for its present and onward literary life—Dresden almost as readily, though it hangs entirely by the past—Prague for six months' sojourn among a curious people—Vienna for a week as a place of exile.'

From Munich he travelled by *Stellwagen* in the company of two devout pilgrims to Innsbruck, driving the rickety vehicle himself while the post-boy slept, and halting before ascending into Italy to place on record in patriarchal fashion his 'unfeigned gratitude for the mercies and enjoyments of the past weeks, and his unabated confidence in the protection and enlightenment of the Divine Author of life and salvation.'

From Innsbruck he made his way across the Brenner to Trent, and visited the church of S. Maria Maggiore, the meeting-place of the great Council, eager to catch the spirit of the last dogmatic effort of Romanism against the Reformation. Thence he walked through the romantic Val Sugana to Bassano, at the rate of forty-five miles a day, in fierce heat, but with unfailing cheerfulness, charmed by the tinkling of the herds of kine, the musical calls of the peasants among the mulberry trees, and still more by their notable industry. Driving across the Lombard Plain *via* Padua, he reached Venice on June 12.

'Venice is quite unparalleled—nothing is like or next to it. . . . The first impression of St. Mark's Place, especially of the Basilica, and in a secondary degree of the Palazzo, is never to be forgotten. I know nothing of architectural language or history, but the idea of these buildings is above such conditions—the five hundred pillars, the five domes, the luxuriant pinnacles, the multiformity of material structure, ornament and gorgeous association. There is nothing

grand or overwhelming in any one work of art ; the wonder is the whole, so un-German, so un-Italian, so superhuman. . . . This church raised multitudes of questions as to the relation of architecture to Christianity, and the nationalising of Christian monuments by patriotic pride and aspiration, such as I had not before thought of. . . . It was an endless pleasure to stand upon the Ponte Rialto and watch the noiseless sweeps of the gondola, one of the few poetical things which have not disappointed me. . . . The view from the Campanile leaves everything that I had seen, read of, or dreamt of, far behind, and came upon me with all the force of novelty, after the disagreeable impression produced by the intricacies and meanness of the common lanes, and the disappointment with the Rialto. There lay the glorious city, measureless, dense, venerable, time-worn in colour (the redness of the roofs being thoroughly chastened and lost in the masses of other light), shooting up into spires and domes of every shape and complication, presenting no avenue or breadth in its own compactness but the gorgeous square beneath, which gained in grandeur by being thus commanded, while the eye, travelling to the utmost horizon, found only the distant Alps gleaming white in the morning sun on the one hand, and the blue Adriatic, with many spread sails, on the other. Nowhere was there a point of contact with land ; the long strip of the Lido which shuts out the Adriatic, the Murazzi and the skirting shores of Mestre appeared themselves to sink in a farther ocean behind. This floating, invincible, uncompassable majesty is the highest charm in the wonderful vista. The dark foliage of the utmost border of the Lagune, and the verdure of the islands dotted around completed the smaller outlines of the prospect. I recalled in sad contrast the poverty of Vienna, dropping off in its outskirts into the brown dull plain, and even Prague, Salzburg and Innsbruck, with their mountain background, could not abide the comparison. I was fairly drunk with the exciting influence of the scene. . . .

As to the paintings, I do not admire the Venetian School with all my heart as I do Raphael, Correggio and the Schools of Florence and Bologna, yet my opinion of its solidity and spiritual genius has risen greatly. . . . Titian's Assumption of the Virgin and his John in the Wilderness are almost worthy to stand beside Raphael. . . . On St. Anthony's Day I heard service in St. Mark's, and saw the great procession out of the church into the square and back again by another door. The mummerly was affecting when I regarded it, like the splendour of Rome itself, as a spiritual channel for the efflux of that temporal pomp which once distinguished both cities.

Candles innumerable (the more imposing set in waxen sockets four inches in diameter), gonfalons rustling with gilded silk, a splendid silver crucifix, troops of chanting priests lusty and good-looking, crowds of candle- and banner-bearers more troubled by the wind than by the majesty of the occasion, while in great pomp, surrounded by high dignitaries, walked an archbishop or a cardinal, crosier in hand, in cloth of gold, and canopy borne over his head amid the bending multitudes. I have no patience with this monstrous mediæval farcical puerility, and few judicious Romanists could stoutly defend the exhibition. . . .

‘On the 15th I tore myself away from Venice with a feeling of deep and pathetic interest such as I had never before experienced in quitting any city. Prague astonished, confounded and grieved me; but Venice, with all its wonder and fascination, has called up a deeper and more romantic regret belonging to another order of emotion. . . . At Padua I was most interested in the university. The arcades are covered with the names, countries and armorial bearings of graduates or fellows (?) from the earliest period. Rarely has any labour been more touching than the deciphering of these brown and time-worn records with their mystic heraldry and faded gilding. Here were names from all parts of Europe—Italians of every race, Swiss, Germans, Poles, Canadians, Greeks and, I rejoice to add, a large proportion of English and not less of Scotch. It was affecting to see the name of a student from Edinburgh, stuck up amid Venetians and Cephallenians. The cosmopolitanism of learning is nowhere more strongly exemplified than in these majestic literary institutions.

‘The Euganean Hills are charming wolds, infinite in shape and angular relation, but all verdant and woody and *heimlich* as the guardian boundaries of a paradise. . . . Nothing has vexed me more than my not having thoroughly seen Ferrara, the birthplace of Ariosto, the prison of Tasso, the headquarters of the Reformation in Italy and the temporary residence of Calvin; but I could not degrade the Sabbath into a day of sight-seeing. . . .

‘Few cities have pleased me more than Bologna, with its air of elegant yet sedate cultivation and prosperity. It has all that is imposing in the monastic arcades of Padua, with a degree of solidity and good-keeping in its edifices and an exquisite look of comfort which Padua wholly wants—half of the world, half of the cloister, without the one-sidedness of either.’



FLORENCE, *June 18.*

'Would that I could spend weeks in feasting on those precious pictures! Here are the master-hands in full strength, while the native schools are, for their clearness, intellectuality and devoutness, far dearer to me than the manifold masterpieces of Venice. What a splendid store of Raphaels, each a treasure and a study! I like his groups better than his portraits, although a figure by him is worth endless masses painted by other great men. Michael Angelo's statuary I do not understand. In his Madonna in the Tribune I saw neither idea nor story, but an anatomical *tour de force*. The only great thing is his painting of the Fates, which has a whole mythology in it, and is as terrific and real as Shakespeare's Witches, where much tends to materialise the grandest idea of the believed heathen religion of Greece and Rome. Correggio is grander in Dresden. . . . In the Florentine School itself, what a profusion of heavenliness and beauty as well as power! Andrea del Sarto and Fra Bartolommeo are wonderfully rich, as are the older masters, Lippi, Credi, etc. But nothing in the Tuscan School struck me more than the glorious painting by Ghirlandajo of St. Zenobius raising a dead child to life, which combines the marvellous expression and power of grouping of Holbein's Burgomeister's Family with the awful majesty and supernatural horror of the never-to-be-forgotten St. Ignatius of Rubens. My other great remembrance of previously unknown masters is Bronzino's Descent of the Saviour into Hades, full of the most self-governing and creative genius. Angelico da Fiesole did not seem to me to deserve the canonisation he has obtained from the Munich School. He is wonderfully sweet and pious, but wants grasp and invention.

'The sculptures are rich beyond precedent. Michael Angelo's Fawn is fine but not wonderful. The Niobe group is the first collection of sculptures called a group, though it is scattered and torn out of all connection, which has moved me as deeply as the great paintings. It is indeed a marvel. The fearful variety of attitudes reminded me of the individuality of gesticulation brought out by intemperance, nitrous oxide, or any crisis in which the mere animal tendency is released from the sway of reason. The adoption of this idea by the sculptor and the transference of it to the parallel influence of fear and despair, now stupefying, now over-maddening their subjects, is most impressive. Nothing can be more absurd than the objection that the attitudes are too theatrical. The licence of art, working out such a grand idea as this, could not have left room for a monotonous

resignation and cowering fear like that of the 1000 sheep slain by Ajax. To say that I admired the Venus dei Medici would be merely to say that I was not yet beyond all hope of influence from sculpture. Nothing could make me admire a mere Venus, and I have turned away from Titians, which are merely such, with disgust. But this might be an Eve, the mother of all living, concentrating in herself all the proportions and features of the female sex. This chaste elevation was to me the grand charm of the statue. In its living and almost breathing reality, it has none of that crampedness and under-size which has disappointed me in all cast objects. It is of full-grown, naturally developed flesh and blood, and in this sense it is equally Grecian and human. The nobleness of the figure culminates in the head, which yet has been deprecated and condemned as tame. This is the wonder of the countenance that it is neither one nor other of the varieties of female faces, pensive or lively, intellectual or sentimental, but all at once and in the germ, yet retaining the loveliness and interest of individuality. Well, I *do* understand this famous statue: I feel that I see *through* it, and that it has given me a higher idea of the form in which humanity is cast, and of the perfection and goodness of its creative Sculptor. . . .

‘Next to the Galleries the *Duomo* is the glory of Florence. It is a grand specimen of effect produced by the most scientific mastery of a simple style of material on a great scale. No Gothic that retained its elementary type could well be plainer. Yet how majestic and imposingly solemn!’

At every stage of the southward journey the Journal shows the same blending of classical, mediæval and Protestant sympathies. At Viterbo he visited reverentially the Square where Barbarossa humbled himself before Adrian, and he turned aside at the Ciminian Hill to search for the spot where Fabius annihilated Etruscan independence. When Soracte came in sight he poured out lines of Horace. The distinctive features of Tuscan agriculture did not escape his quick eye, and he rejoiced to note how the tawdry paintings of northern Italy gave way to the simple symbol of the Cross.

Fifty years have made so vast a change in Rome that the record of a visit paid in 1844 is like a glimpse into a distant past.

‘The panorama from the Capitol filled me with the most gloomy feeling. I was not prepared for the completeness of desolation, the unretarded waste of time or the natural growths and careless vineyards amidst which the ruins were scattered. I had looked for something more perfect in its preservation, at least made to look so for a show, and the irremediable progress of the great catastrophe of time touched me very deeply. . . . The Forum is now a cattle market, dusty, deserted and plebeian ; and it is amidst crowds of cattle, files of empty carts and troops of squalid and importunate beggars that you have to decipher its monuments and recall its glory. Yet these great localities are now fixed for ever in my imagination. The circuit of the palaces of the Caesars is striking in its confusion as ever the work of mortal man can become. But the sight of sights is the amazing Coliseum. Its stupendous vastness, forming as it were another horizon, its towering altitude, so solid, orderly and as it were imperishable, yet beaten down on two sides by time, its huge thickness broken up into three dense and gloomy arcades, its massive storied arches and pillars erect without, but shattered in their slopes and tangled with waving trees and brushwood within, its dull weather-beaten but grand colours—these are worthy of its mighty associations, the true type of the iron strength and savage heart of the Roman people, the scene of victorious martyrdoms of the faithful in the first bloody struggle of faith with the wolfish ferocity and lion strength of Paganism. This is the grand interest of Rome to a Christian. It is the theatre of the great contest, the captured citadel of classical heathenism. The interest is wofully dashed by the trophies of the victory having all fallen into the hands of modern Rome. But here, if anywhere, I can forgive the mutilation and forget—even before the central Cross which imparts when kissed 200 days’ indulgence, and the superstitious paintings which surround the whole arena—that Romanism is other than a common section of the church militant. . . . The Moses of Michael Angelo is indeed great ; it will haunt me like an appearance from the other world. Out upon the puny criticism which condemns the horns and the beard ! They are the very Hebrew impersonation of might and venerable dignity. This is to me quite a new type of head—higher than classical. The exalted intelligence has a purity, the majesty has an inclination to holy and commanding impetuosity, which are quite above the Grecian Jupiter. This may not suit the meekness of Moses, but it is the Moses of the Mount and of the Law. . . .

‘As to St. Peter’s, I have been overwhelmed by nothing but the first view from below. I appreciate the majestic simplicity, but the



soul longs rather to be borne down than lifted up, and would like to feel its own weakness and nothingness amid the stupendous and uncompassable grandeur and mystery of a cathedral. I particularly dislike the colossal statues and monuments, the more recent ones not excepted. Canova's Tomb of the Stuarts is miserable; so is the design and Christian significance of that of Clement, though the tomb of a pope is as bare a subject as ever fell into the hands of an artist. I am tired of his dull mausoleum doors, sleeping genii and whimpering lions. Thorwaldsen's Pius VII. is heavy and commonplace, and the other works of obscure men are below condemnation. . . . The whole certainly produces a wonderful impression; but the deepest ideas associated with Romanism in the minds of its votaries, as the ancient, universal, all-adaptive, all-appropriative spiritual conservator of the old world and creator of the new, will hardly be excited to advantage there. . . .

‘. . . I must add an insignificant unit to the multitude who have regarded the “Last Judgment” with astonishment nearer to disappointment than to admiration. I have got the length of an extraordinary feeling of greatness and awfulness; but it will not work itself out into clear and unbroken homage. In what I am going to say I speak as a fool, but at least as an honest and outspoken one. Angels in two groups bearing the instruments of Christ's Passion—the Saviour Himself with His mother on His right, a crowd of saints and confessors on the same side, and a parallel crowd of reprobates on the left—a host of cherubs calling to awake and come to judgment below—at the bottom, on the one side, half-clothed skeletons and heads struggling out of the tombs and the disengaged helped up into the air by saints and angels, and on the other side, tiger-like or crocodile-like demons grasping the confused, agonised and huddled mass, just as it bursts into individuality of form and moral consciousness, while Charon ferries a crowd of squalid and crouching outcasts to their prison-house over a mass of blue lake that is not unlike the parallel dividing stripes of æther above—how can all this be reduced to moral unity or reconciled with ideas of the Christian judgment? Romish art can admit much of paganism, but Charon has not been canonised, and the ferry, implying the idea of a judgment in groups, is neither Christian nor classical. The instruments of the Passion are also out of place. How unworthy this clumsy machinery of the sublime Christian idea, “They shall look on Him whom they have pierced!” The want of expression in the redeemed is very extraordinary. It is rather confusion and awe than recognition and triumph with the



Redeemer; and the marvellously managed attitudes, in which the naked muscles in their distortions and complicated groupings tell more than the features of the faces, give the idea of a multitude arrested at once by a tremendous portent. The group on the left is more awake. Neither the Saviour nor the Madonna is of the usual type. He is in the fulness and energy of rejection without calmness or love. She is colossally resigned without radical beauty, though exquisitely sculpturesque, and insufficiently interested in anything but her place at the right hand of the Son. The demons are fearful but too little Miltonic, and the Scripture plan is here again departed from in their exclusion from an absorbing and awful personal interest in the catastrophe. The grandeur and terror of the whole every one must feel. I can say nothing of its success as an overcoming of anatomical and other difficulties, though the display of anatomy is more profuse than its symbolic and unobtrusive action in the imitative arts would seem to warrant. Notwithstanding, it is mightily expressive. I was strongly reminded at first of the immense red naked figures sprawling on the canvas of the similar works by Rubens in the Munich Gallery; but the comparative want of living and mighty struggle of passion in the latter was soon apparent. I must still hold by Raphael as the highest union of the sublime and beautiful in a natural and self-interpreting imitation. If Michael Angelo is the stronger spirit of the two, it were to be wished that he had not thrown his works from him so deeply marked and scarred with the grasp of his granite strength. . . . The Loggie of Raphael are the finest of all the settings and adornments of Scripture history by this kind of art. . . . The Vatican Galleries of ancient sculpture throw all, Florence not excepted, into the shade. Ah, these strange Popes! If they neglected to feed the living Church of God in their search after the scattered relics of Paganism, it must be admitted that they searched to purpose, and had they done nothing worse, their condemnation might be mitigated. . . .'

ROME, *June 28.*

' . . . The Stanze of Raphael again. Never was there a more glowing display of the genius of painting. Matchless dignity, honesty, ease and celestial purity beam from every corner and feature of these immortal works. The power and variety are not less striking. I had no idea before of the boundless fertility of invention which shines in the School of Athens and in Apollo and the Muses. . . . It is an infinite luxury to expatiate over the glowing

groups and to feel the inspiring idea with which each face and gesture, however secondary, is transparent. What must these frescoes have been in all the splendour of their first colouring, and in an age when painting was a heavenly instructor rather than a mere fine art which can hardly keep its place amid the stern encroachments of imitative literature and rigorous speculation !'

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

ROME, *June 29.*

' . . . It will be an interesting moment when I turn my wandering footsteps again northward, with the hope of finding you all, through the goodness of our Father in heaven, in health and peace, and of resuming my own quiet labours of study and preparation for the work of life. Goodness and mercy have followed me up to this hour. Many singular points of direction by which I escaped much and secured much occur to my mind. My health has been unbroken, and is now as robust as constant exercise, abundant food and sleep and unflagging spirits can make it. I am as brown as a haymaker—my clothes are thread-bare—my shirts are not beyond the risk of utter dilapidation. I have worn out my first shoes, and wander about, a strange Johnson, amid gay throngs and polished galleries. What boots it? I could easily procure new suits—for my money would carry me to Constantinople—but the old has become dear to me. I would fain bring it home as a relic of adventures. I am long past all delicacy on this point, and except among Englishmen, of whom I have seen very few, am not out of keeping.

' I have not lost my reckoning of English affairs. I can read Italian journals with understanding. Here and there I have found Latin of use in talking with a Brother of some order, and I find that the Swiss guards of the Pope are an unexpected means of communication in German.'

## TO GEORGE WILSON

ROME, *June 29.*

' . . . How much experience has been crowded into the short month since I last wrote you ! From the Danube to the Tiber is a great leap, and though made hastily it has been most important in its impressions. I am almost overwhelmed by the variety of objects I have seen, and engrossed myself with for the passing day, and sometimes I am as in a grand ethereal dream that I would not wish

to break. I do feel a great enlargement of mind. It is hard study, and it is impossible that it should not bring forth fruits. . . .

‘I have been a week in Rome, intensely busy, over-excited, running to and fro, disdaining all help of ciceroni and trusting only to the naked eye and my faithful guidebook. I could not have believed that in such a time I could have become so familiar with it. Every ruin almost has now its locality, and every broken pillar and crumbling wall its name and its association. It has been delightful though melancholy labour. Now that the hills, the gates, the bridges, the temples, the Fora and all the departed glory of the eternal city live in my imagination, I cannot conceive with what pleasure I shall re-read the classics which, amid the dust of metaphysics and school divinity, I have almost forgotten. . . . In regard to Romanism, I have profited much by wider observation. I was formerly too much inclined to a spurious toleration of the system. I now abominate it with an energy and repugnance which I might before have called asperity if not bigotry. It is utterly incurable, and it can only be the ignorance of it which would attempt any compromise or modification of Protestantism to give a larger catholicity to the visible Church. . . .

‘I am already casting longing thoughts homewards. . . . We will take up anew the dropt threads of our social life in all its intellectual relations, and will gather up and piece in the fragments of that precious portion which has been rent away. We will try to work the materials which time has added into the compact and unbroken tissue; and shall not our common Master bless the labour of our hands as we strive together for the adornment and glory of His temple on earth?’ . . .

*July 6.*<sup>1</sup>

‘My last look of Rome, with the yellow Tiber silvered in the lovely moonlight, the grim pile of St. Angelo and the softened grandeur of St. Peter’s, is again restored, and I almost wish that I were still within the eternal gates. Farewell, immortal city, already sinking into distant remembrance! I have seen thee neither as poet, nor artist, nor antiquarian, nor scholar, and thy treasures must be much to better-furnished minds which they could not be to mine. I have seen thee as a wandering note-taker of the surface of nature and human life, yet with earnest longings and honest efforts to penetrate beneath it, to gather, from Time’s mingled heap of past and present, stable and transitory truths of eternal import

<sup>1</sup> Written on northward journey, a few days after leaving Rome.

and application for my own life and the spiritual guidance of others. Thou hast been to me a means of great trial, and I feel the responsibility and strive after the profit of thy lesson. Farewell, ye vanished and crumbling monuments of an all-absorbing, all-fashioning, self-glorifying Empire! Ye are the trophies of a conquered world, the memorials of a chaos compacted into order and vanquished into fertility by giant forms, cast down at length to enrich the soil they made by a new culture, even as ye have sunk and crumbled down into the vineyards and cornfields of another Rome! Ye temples, foul with idolatry and plundered sacrifices, ye have moulded our worship and our art, but ye have been smitten by the lightnings of a Mightier than your Jove. Ye palaces, heaped up with luxurious splendour and spread with bloated pride and tyranny over the landmarks of the widow and the orphan, ye have striven and not in vain to form the architecture of the lordly and the great; but the curse of ravaged provinces was on your towers, and their cement has been loosened by the hand of Nemesis on the blood and sweat of the slaves that reared them. Farewell ye Forum, Senate Hall and Courts of Justice, we still live amid your rules of governing, your massive jurisprudence, your imperial language! But in you the voice of discord and of flattery has long been hushed, the responses of bribery and cowardice scattered to the winds, and the edicts of grasping aggression covered in the dust. Farewell, ye prostrate theatres, dismantled baths, and thou circus of blood that standest alone in naked exposure and monumental shame! Accursed levity obtained only by sight of blood, sunk for ever in the stern silence that has swallowed up your shouts of laughter! Farewell, ye rifled, obscure and nameless tombs, what are ye with your vain memorials of solitary fate amid the waste and gloom of one great cenotaph? Pass every vestige of glory away, without sigh or groan from posterity, only with sigh for the instability of our common works of time, only with groan for the crime that accelerates their ruin! Farewell, ye gathered fragments of classic art, perish your corrupting charms if the beauty of holiness cannot be made to ray forth from every stroke and outline of your magic workmanship! And ye choicest treasures of Christian genius, shine on in your own celestial purity and devout grace, till in the light of a purer faith every stain of sense and superstition be purged out, and a higher union of the flesh and of the spirit dawn, in the birth of a new and not in the revival of an antiquated art! Farewell, sanctuaries of Christian worship, great and small, old and new, won from pagan



abominations or reared by Christian bounty; mournful handiworks are ye, and works of defence of an erroneous and darkly-known creed, a debased worship and a government of priestly misrule! Would that from your mystic and heart-quelling depths the breath of the Lord would sweep away the idolatrous painting, the vain relic and shrine, the pillared lie, the touch of vice and tyranny, and call forth amid your storied roofs and high-sounding aisles—for the smoke of incense, the flow of vestments, the worthless picture, the vain repetition and blasphemous prayer—the note of intelligent praise, the cheerful lifting up of the devout heart in free and varied prayer, the word of rich instruction and converting influence, the communion of the body and blood of the Lord, delivered from its awfully irrational additions. Farewell, ye sepulchres of ancient martyrs, for ever hallowed in believing hearts, though the gaudy shrine, the forged relic, the superstitious petition, pilgrimage and festival deface your honour and obscure your transcendent merits as sufferers of like passions and conquerors through the same divine strength with ourselves! And farewell, thou grey and sombre pontiff, that exaltest thyself as their successor—as the conservator of their fame—nay, as the viceroy of the Great Sufferer and Lord himself! Thy pretensions I repel with horror. Thy right over the faith of the weakest of Christ's members I assail in His name. Thy motley power and barbaric state I regard with contempt and aversion. But most of all do I tremble at thy responsibility as working out thine own salvation amid such perils, and influencing the destinies of unnumbered millions by thy ratifications of error, thy resistance of the spread of divine knowledge, thy impious promulgations of unauthorised pardon, and as sitting in the seat of those who slew the martyrs and amid unparalleled lust, perfidy and ambition committed the greatest crime of modern history—the perversion of human tradition into a Word of Life—the exaltation of human mediation to a place beside the Divine—the diversion of Christian reliance from the work of Christ to an implicit confidence in the Church—the degradation of Christian worship into a magical performance and spectacle—the relaxation of Christian purity by cheap forgiveness, and the annihilation of Christian liberty by the multiplication of unscriptural restraints and the creation of a tyrannical hierarchy. Not upon thy withered head, thou poor old man, be avenged all this array of the guilt of ages! Rather upon the still living and expanded system let it fall ruinous and all-consuming, and mayest thou and thy mitred, hooded and gowned

fellows of every rank and order escape clean from the plague and be saved "though as by fire!" Scenes glorious, awful, hateful, deplorable—farewell! The world's history has not yet unwound all its revolutions around you. You cannot yet be cast by sovereign sentence, like a Babylon, on the shore of a tide that returns no more. Soon may thy moral place receive in the eyes of all a new illumination, the past reckoning close its mysterious delay to the glory of the Lord of Empires and the King of Zion, and, all the ravages and stains of two millennia of crime and trouble wiped away, mayst thou, imperial city, again exalt thy head in virgin purity and loveliness, and thou too, desolate Campagna, lift thy voice in gladness and praise!

Returning by Civita Vecchia and Leghorn, he had a pleasant meeting at Genoa with a student friend, John, afterwards Principal, Cunningham, of which the latter, shortly before his death in 1893, wrote as follows:—

'I had heard that Cairns was on the Continent, and had hoped that we might meet; but it was months since any news of him had reached our student circle. Arriving at Genoa on my way from Geneva to Florence, I hastened, as in duty bound, to the Cathedral of S. Lorenzo, where the saint is reputed to have undergone his culinary martyrdom. I had spent an hour or more in the really noble building, admiring all that was admirable in it, when a tall, quaint figure stalked into the sacred edifice, like some one I had seen and yet very unlike; for had he not a black moustache and a beard like a shoe-brush, and an aspect altogether different from that of any presbyterian minister hitherto seen in the world? And did he not carry in his hand, as he came along with long stride and solemn step, a Murray's Guide, which proved that he spoke the English language? After a moment's hesitation I boldly faced him, and Cairns was as much surprised to see the apparition of me in Northern Italy, as I was to meet the apparition of him in beard and moustache, for these appendages had not yet become known in clerical circles.

'All that day and evening we spent together; for it is sweet to meet a friend unexpectedly in a far-off land, and among strangers. The small hours came one on another; still we loitered in the street, still we talked of our adventures by the way, still the saint was allowed to continue simmcring on his gravy as if we minded him not, still Christopher Columbus and the new world were never

mentioned. We had met in Genoa, a strange thing ; and that one thought was enough ! But time will not wait : I must to bed in the Hotel Feder, the Hotel where Daniel O'Connell had died not very long before ; and early next morning I must go.'

The journey from Genoa to Milan is absolutely dull to the ordinary traveller ; but to Cairns, travelling by diligence, it was full of historical interest. Had not Hannibal been there ? And Napoleon ? There was Ciasteggio, the Clastidium of Punic fame, and Montebello and Pavia with its Certosa. Where history and architecture failed, there were the rude habits of agriculture and the manners of the peasants and the shapes of the ploughs. Even Novi, dreariest of all coach-stages, had its picturesque grace.

'I had strolled into a vineyard behind the town, quite lonely and crowned with one cottage. On one of the secluded paths I found a little girl lying on the grass with her face turned up to the sun, and fast asleep. The breeze played beautifully with her hair, and her dress fluttered and rustled, but there she lay, and nothing but the heaving of her frame, which could hardly be distinguished from the agitation of the wind, proved that she was only asleep. I stood gazing for a long while, thinking of the Providence that watched alike over the child in its slumberings and the pilgrim in his wanderings ; and as I saw her companions playing at no great distance, I left the spot without awakening the absent little one. As I was passing the cottage door, however, I was overtaken by the mother in evident agitation. She pointed along the path I had come by, as if she feared her child had wandered to the highway or been lost amid the wild brushwood that grew on that side of the vineyard. I soon made her understand that the piccolina was just behind her, and waited till she bounded away and returned with the crying thing in her arms, loading it with gentle reproaches and me with warm expressions of gratitude.'

MILAN, *June 8.*

'The greatness of Milan is the cathedral. Near the centre of a city not overstocked with other fine buildings than those of trade and merchandise, and poor in churches externally picturesque, amidst a dense but unimpressive forest of dingy, tiled and plainly faced houses of all sorts and sizes, this stupendous creation rises

liker a work of Paradise or antediluvian piety than a work of the present age of mortals. In size, labour, style, value of material, taste and finish, it is boundless, and is paralleled only by St. Peter's—though as a whole there was no comparison between the unity of the effect of the one on me, and the alloyed admiration of the other. Such glorious Gothic, and yet so true to the religious depth and awfulness of that momentous product of the north! When I first caught a view of the innumerable dazzling spires all governed by the finest order and yet looking the most lawless of the combinations of genius, my delight was of that exhilarating kind which borders on laughter; but when I entered, and saw only the naked floor and the lofty dark roof, traversed with rows of gigantic clustered columns and swelling arches, with nothing to distract or win the observer but their own great proportions, I was fairly overwhelmed into a flood of tears. . . . In the cloister of St. Ambrose I saw the famous cypress doors of the cathedral which the saint closed against Theodosius, time-worn but solid, the brazen serpent, the fine pulpit with the bas-relief of the Agape, and the veritable episcopal chair of marble, with solid back and sides and lions embossed at the corners, in which he sat in the councils of his presbyters. It is almost the only relic I have done any honour to. I knelt down and kissed it, and forgot for the time that I was both Protestant and Presbyterian. . . . As to Leonardo's Last Supper, I must again complain of engravings. The deplorably wasted state of the painting, which arose from painting in oil and not in fresco, is indeed filled up by these helps; but the design is in some places departed from, and the expression greatly altered. Every head is a statue, and the two figures next our Lord, especially the John, exceed all wonder. Venerable, lovely and touching as is the head of Christ, there is something about the configuration of the cheek-bones peculiar to the Milan School, which here gives an air of too much softness. The work is an incomparable ruin—it could be placed second to nothing if it were as left by its author.'

From Milan his route lay by Como, Lugano and Baveno to Domo d'Ossola.

LUINO, *July 10.*

'This morning I sailed across the silent lake with a pleasant and intelligent priest. We got into an interesting discussion in Latin over the classic associations of the lake, the education of the



Romish clergy and their celibacy and, most earnestly, the salvability of Protestants, which he firmly denied. He did not know much of Scotland, supposing it to be a part of Germany, and uncertain whether or not it were a republic. I did not undeceive him, partly because I did not care that he should know that I was English, and partly because I would not expose his ignorance. Perhaps not a few clergymen would be found among the wilds of Scotland who might not know the exact whereabouts of Sicily, or that it was united to the kingdom of Naples. No lake scenery can compete with this. . . . The breadth of the sheet, gloriously illuminated by the morning sun, under an enchanting sky, the fine blue, the white and picturesque towns and villages strewn along the coast, the verdure of the nearer banks garnished with an Oriental variety of products, the soft richness of an ascent of conical hills finely contrasting with the serrated ridges of a more distant range, behind which again rise the naked, craggy peaks of the higher Alps, often pyramidal and sometimes shattered into every form of picturesque grandeur:—these conspire to form a union of charms which can hardly be united elsewhere on so grand a scale. As the morning sun streamed over the blue undulating barrier, one could almost fancy that paradise lay beyond it. . . .

‘I could not have chosen my route better, so as to see everything in the shortest time and in the best order; yet it was selected almost at a venture and in great ignorance. Nothing has struck me more in my journey than these frequent indications of the special Providence that directs the wandering steps of those who trust it through Christ.’

CHAMONIX, *July 14.*

‘I took a leisurely walk up the steep of the Montanvert, rather more than a Sabbath-day’s journey; but for me there exists yet in Piedmont no church, and with my New Testament in my pocket I hoped to find time for something else than mere curious exploration. At a distance the Mer de Glace appears little more than a great flat of snow lying between the whole width of the intervening mountains; but as you descend its enormous waves and fissures, its bluish-green massive ice, curiously contrasting with great patches of real snow and of melted snow again superficially frozen, as well as its moraines below and at the sides, appear to extraordinary advantage. The Aiguille Verte rose on the other side of the sea, facing a less peaked aiguille, while far up the sides and on the white top of another giant lay the dense snows of Mont Blanc. I

returned with great leisure after having read over the first chapter of Colossians and got entangled in a long examination of the argument for the Being of God drawn from final causes—which I felt to be indeed tame amid such a spectacle. I am writing in full view of the whole range, Mont Blanc being gloriously illuminated from the shoulder upwards to the snowy round crest with the last redness of a summer sun, while the other peaks stand out grim, naked, or wrapped in the light flying clouds that shift slowly along. The village is almost quiet, the tinkling of the bells of the cattle and an occasional low alone breaking the Sabbath stillness, a dull rumble among the far up peaks sometimes also coming to the ear. The last tinge is fled, and the snowy crest now stands out against the melting purple and blue of the sky behind.

GENEVA, July 17.

‘. . . The house of Calvin is in a dingy row (Rue de Chaudines, 116); his tomb is unknown, and no church is consecrated by connection with him. . . . I saw the chapel of the Oratoire, the meeting-place of the Theological Institute conducted by Gausson, D’Aubigné, etc. It is a building somewhat of the Sabbath-school order, but deeply interesting from its connection with that important secession from the National Church of Geneva. I have liked Geneva as a whole, finding great civility and industry, a certain modesty and staid gracefulness in the female part of the population and much to remind one everywhere of the *douce* and *canny* Scotch.’

THUN, July 18.

‘At Lausanne the Rev. Mr. M—— of Manchester, who had introduced himself to me in the Geneva steamer, insisted on my going with him to see Vinet, who received us very kindly. Mr. M—— naturally talked on the Voluntary question, I acting as interpreter in German. Vinet is a fine, rude, grown-up *Bursch*, with the greatest kindness and apparent solidity. His look is one of rugged power and thoughtfulness, but he is sicklied o’er with something more serious than the pale cast of thought, his health growing always worse. His library is interesting. I observed Carlyle and Burke side by side, Coleridge, Taylor, Gladstone, Chalmers and Dr. John Brown. But this is rather intrusive.

‘. . . Proceeding on foot and by coach I reached the village of Morat this morning. . . . Amid the lower slopes of the environs the battle was fought in 1476, the Burgundians ascending from

below and being driven into the lake. I saw the enormous linden-tree under which the Swiss council of war is said to have been held, and the obelisk erected on the scene of the beginning of the action. I did not give way to those feelings of enthusiasm which the mere name of liberty excites in some, till I had weighed the whole question of the ethics of political independence, and fully satisfied myself that prescriptive resistance either to a beneficial incorporation or to an injurious one was a just cause of war. The casuistry came, to be sure, upon the back of the enthusiasm, and perhaps the Swiss would not thank one for the agitation of such a question upon such a spot. . . .'

LAUTERBRUNNEN, *July 20.*

'It was well that I was alone amid scenes where the feelings of the tourist most easily change into those of the worshipper. A walk of twelve hours brought before me one after another the marvels and splendours of the Bernese Alps. It was the Sabbath, and I sought out nothing that did not lie across my path. Mounting in face of the dazzling snows and stupendous height of the Jungfrau, I sat down in the clear morning sun, in solitude broken only by the bells of the cattle and the solemn thunder of the descending avalanches, and, gazing full upon the majestic peaks around, read some chapters of the New Testament and worshipped the God of salvation in this glorious and awful temple of nature. Mont Blanc made no greater impression upon my mind. . . .'

RIGI KULM, *July 22.*

'The general stir awaked me about 3.30. It was a fine promising morning, the stars still twinkling overhead, the grey Alps obscure from the remains of night but without a cloud, and in the far north-east a fine red streak down in that vast depression of the horizon which is formed by the void of mountains between the Albis and the higher Alps, and which looked almost as purposely made clear for the appearance of the sun. Lakes still dull and quiet slept below, and all was yet nocturnal in nature, contrasting singularly with the gathering crowds, the bustle in the inn and the sounding of the alpen-horn to summon the last slumberer forth. Half an hour of expectation passed away in the cool air—some pacing up and down with alpen-stock in hand; others comparing guidebooks and plans with the surrounding dim panorama; others sitting with philosophic calmness

on scattered benches, or perched on a high balcony raised on the topmost pinnacle of the mountain. The redness in the east spread, and it cast a fine orient light over the snowy peaks, one by one, in a glancing, flickering, changing radiance mellowed in the general break of day. This at last became most glorious, the colours from the east round being orange, crimson and deep blue almost in distinction. The glories of the surrounding coloured panorama every one seemed afraid to gaze on, as if the turning of an eye from the east might cause the loss of the greater sight that was at hand. Then one brighter yellow gleam appeared, and a general cry saluted it. It multiplied itself—two, three, four, in scattered brilliant points—it spread out, forming new light-centres as the old points ran into one glowing, living, glorious line, till at last the connection was fully formed. The gradual lifting up of that orb was most majestic; but the first moments were the most wonderful, and the new lights cast by the first yellow gleam on the snowy heights from the Sentis to the Jungfrau baffle all description. I literally trembled all the morning after with admiration, and felt as if the climax of natural wonder was now reached. Never . . . did I enjoy any sight more intently, delightedly, and, I may add, devoutly. . . .’

TO JOHN NELSON, BONN

BASEL, *July 24, 1844.*

‘ . . . You can have no idea of the distance into which philosophy, theology and even Berlin studies have been cast by the multitude and engrossing interest of interposed subjects. It is from such experiences that one gathers something like an idea of the overpowering sublimity of God’s omniscience. . . .’

‘ Alas for Dr. Balmer! . . . The news came upon me at Geneva like a thunderclap—an awful monitor amid the excitements and prevailing secularities of travelling. . . . Even yet I find myself unconsciously, in my thoughts of the Hall, piecing together the scattered fragments, and spreading over them the brightness of his mild and genial light, which is for ever departed. . . . I have indeed lost a friend and theological referent and literary counsellor of the highest order, and that the more when his regard for all honest students of theology was manifesting itself in particular marks of esteem and confidence. . . .’



HEIDELBERG, *July 25.*

'The Cathedral of Strasburg struck me rather as a great and rare curiosity than as embodying a great ideal of religious architecture. Yet it has interest of its own. The exquisitely delicate and rich complexity of its portal is unique, and the graceful rise of its spire (not to speak of its height, which is a more vulgar consideration) is truly masterly. The filigree work is perhaps carried to excess. The tabernacles, the statues, which partake of the pleasing and grave monotony of all old German religious painting, the pinnacles, are all singularly interesting, though inferior to Milan. The red time-worn sandstone contrasted in my mind most strongly but not disagreeably with the pure and sparkling marble of the other cathedral. Within, the impression is rather that of elegant seriousness than of overpowering solemnity. The single rows of smaller aisles on each side of the nave, the lightness of the columns, and the absence of the grand knotted archivolting of the Milan cathedral gave no impression like the crowded and awful masses of the latter. Paintings, statues and all within are meagre. There was one revolting Virgin with swaddling band and golden spore of which I had not seen the like since I left Vienna. Verily the Romanists subject their glorious legacy of architecture to the hardest of all trials when they associate it with the fancy bazaar and greenhouse ornaments which bedeck the niches and altars.'

MAINZ, *July 27.*

' . . . The most remarkable antiquity is the Eichelstein, a cylindrical tower of loose stones, raised by the Roman army to commemorate the death of Drusus, who was killed here by a fall from his horse. It is a strange-looking mass, rising up a little amid the dead walls and monotonous towers of the allied fortress like a thing of another age and world, and forcibly recalled to my mind the wild mutiny, the ardent attachment, the desperate struggles and indomitable genius of the Rhine. . . .'

At Bonn he was welcomed by his friend John Nelson, who had been studying there, and passed 'three days of exquisite repose spent in the services of the Sabbath and in hearing the Bonn professors.' With Nitzsch and Bleek he was specially delighted, and found Brandis to be 'a fine genial old man.'

AIX, *July 31.*

'This pleasant place has for me a deep and solemn interest as the last German city I shall visit, completing the cycle from Hamburg. What does not lie between them! How altered for the better ought the raw student to be, who now, by the good hand of God upon him, brings this series of manifold education from Germany and things German to a close!'

Although home was thus almost in sight, he was full of fresh vigour in passing through Belgium, and hunted out its chief historic sights, not omitting Waterloo.

'I have fixed every locality of the battlefield in my imagination. Patriotic satisfaction and hatred of war divided my feelings after the trouble of examination was over, though I can neither join in the blind, passionate gratitude of some nor affect the philanthropy which others (Byron, for example) have lavished on this occasion. God grant that this be the last of Europe's great battlefields! I was struck with the marvellous adaptation of the ground for a grand and not unfair combat. The all but unbroken level and wide expanse bring before one with horrible reality the even-handed struggle and immense mutual destruction by which the action was distinguished.'

ANTWERP, *Aug. 3.*

'Rubens' Descent from the Cross opened up new beauties at every angle. I have been more moved by his other paintings; but none so completely satisfied me as this, from the fineness and depth of all the figures and parts of the action, and the self-mastery and unity of the whole. The individuality of genius, which in Rubens is often painfully obtrusive, is here tempered by that repose and simplicity in delineation of great passion which marks all that is destined for immortality. . . . In the Museum, Rubens and Vandyck are the two lights. Vandyck is here great, but nowhere does one so feel his inferiority to Rubens, many of their subjects being common. Rubens' Adoration of the Magi is remarkable for unity of impression. The attraction of every object on the canvas to the Infant, amidst diversity of character and attitude, is worthy of the highest genius. It is even overdrawn, since a camel at the corner is gazing intently with a human expression of curiosity and reverence. His Crucifixion, too, has

tremendous energy. In his St. Francis, the figure of the saint, throwing himself forward with a convulsive effort prevailing over exhaustion, is too epileptic but awfully impressive; and the emotions of the holy brethren amid whom the saint falls are caught with the master's genius.'

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

NEWCASTLE, *Aug. 5, 1844.*

'I have arrived here in time to secure a place in the *Magnet* coach, which starts to-night for Edinburgh. Had it not been for my anxiety to be at the opening of the Hall to-morrow, which must have a peculiarly painful interest from the death of Dr. Balmer, I should have indulged my strong longings to see you all at once.

'You, my dear brother, and all of you will join with me in profound thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father for all the mercy and grace, all the safety and direction which He has extended to me during the past months, and your feelings will be peculiarly quickened when I inform you that to other mercies has been added that of deliverance from the fury of the deep. The passage was long, rough and by all confession dangerous. We encountered a terrible squall in the middle of the German Ocean, and for three or four hours I could not say but every plunge of the vessel might be the last. Ah, it is a serious thing to be called up at once from the full career of health, energy and excitement, with one's mind full of preparations, prospects and schemes, and summoned at a moment's warning to render up the immortal spirit into the hands of its Creator and Lord! Yet I bless God that He enabled me in that hour to fix my thoughts on the perfect redemption of His Son, to embrace death if it should be His holy pleasure, and to commit to Him the work of quieting the alarm and softening the grief of friends. My thankfulness was great when the danger was over. Yet I felt as if my life had been one great blank of religious usefulness, and I would wish in the future to live more to the glory and praise of the Saviour. I might have concealed from you this circumstance altogether, or softened its aspect; but I rather feel constrained to call upon you to give thanks with me for this deliverance, and to strive and pray that it may add something to the weight of those many warnings we have been recently receiving of the frailty of life, of the solemnity of death, and of the absolute impossibility of meeting it without peril and terror when

the conscience is not appeased by the application of the blood of Christ's sacrifice. Perhaps I needed this as a check to the corrupting influence of constant health and the feeling of self-confidence which a long series of strange adventures begun and prosecuted with such success was apt to inspire. May God preserve the lesson from being lost, and enable me to renew study and labour as in reality alive from the dead and raised with His Son to newness of life !'



## CHAPTER X

### THE PROBATIONER

1845

Hesitations—Licensed to preach—Confession of Faith—First sermon in Edinburgh—  
Accepts call to Berwick—Family affairs—Letters about preaching, etc.

ANOTHER autumn session brought him to the close of his theological curriculum. He emerged from it the 'first man of his year,' as clearly as when he graduated at the university. Some of his contemporaries—notably William Robertson and John Ker—had already laid the foundation of a high repute as thinkers and preachers. But the enormous and well-digested mass of his reading, the solid strength of his intellect and the mature dignity of his character had secured for him a place and a reputation in circles to which no other Secession student had access. There was general curiosity, not confined to Scotland, as to his choice of a career. Daniel Macmillan, in seeking through George Wilson to secure his judgment upon Maurice's and Coleridge's writings, wrote: 'What is Cairns himself going to do? In the present distracted state of Scotland a youth of genius and high culture will find it hard to get a spiritual resting-place in any of the Presbyterian systems.'

Indeed, throughout those four years of theological training two lines of thought and feeling had been maintained side by side. As a Secession student preparing for the ministry, he had attended lectures, busied himself with students' societies, practised himself in preaching, and other 'exercises'—all

with distinctive thoroughness. But his mind had also been working independently in the wider ranges of speculation and in branches of study which seemed alien to the practical work of the ministry. Hitherto those two lines had not diverged, being kept together by the thought that his vow of consecration to the service of Christ might be fulfilled either in the world of thought or in the world of action. But a conflict was bound to arise. While his simple-minded friends at home thought that nothing could be higher than the position of a Secession minister, and his comrades at the Hall were discussing how far he would be popular as a preacher, people outside those circles reckoned it a pity that he should so confine his scholarly and speculative powers; and he himself with all his modesty became conscious that the faculties by which he had gained distinction would not find vent in the normal duties of a Presbyterian minister. This forced itself upon him, and thus again a choice had to be made. It was made deliberately and quietly during his last Hall session and the two following months. It will be seen that the one friend whom he consulted gave advice such as most of his acquaintances would probably have given, reckoning that, while his qualifications for the ministry were uncertain, his abilities ensured distinction in other directions. But he decided otherwise. The hesitation was completely over in four months. In November he presented himself as a candidate to the Presbytery of Edinburgh, which, after the customary examination and sermon hearing, 'licensed' him as a Preacher of the Gospel on the 5th of February 1845.

On one point the Presbytery records are silent. Students, before being 'licensed,' were required to declare to Presbyteries their adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Although the Atonement Controversy was now all but ended, the effect of it had been to fix attention upon the Confessional doctrine. Presbyteries were on the alert, and

students were in anxiety and distress. It is true that Dr. John Brown had gone far to liberate the student conscience by stating publicly that, while there must be 'something above the dangerous laxness of a pledge to the scope of the Confession, something below the impracticable rigidity of adherence to every iota contained in it was sufficient.' But such a general statement could not free an independent mind from bearing its own burden. Accordingly, two months before applying for licence, Cairns settled down to close examination of the Confession, making full notes upon every Article. To those who are wont to identify the orthodoxy of Presbyterianism with an implicit acceptance of the Confession of Faith, those notes would be instructive, so free and pungent are they in their criticism. The inconsistencies and cross-divisions, the reduplication of epithets, the casual arrangement of topics are exposed with bold and ruthless logic. The Article on the internal evidence of Inspiration, so often nowadays quoted with approval, is said to be 'very confusedly and imperfectly stated,' and the definition of the Godhead to be 'very irregularly arranged and far inferior to the Shorter Catechism.' The statement that God made the world out of nothing is 'very doubtful so far as my knowledge of geology goes.' The doctrine of the Eternal Procession is regarded as 'open to discussion,' and the doctrine of the Infallible Assurance of faith is 'totally denied: I can conceive no proposition respecting either our own state of mind or objects of the spiritual world, involving a fact that may be conceived otherwise, of which we can have more than probable evidence.' He 'discards entirely' the teaching of the Confession as to the Civil Magistrate, and almost entirely its teaching with regard to Providence and the Freedom of the Will. As to the Eternal Decrees he stands by the opinions for which Drs. Brown and Balmer had secured tolerance. But the notable thing is not his dissent from any special doctrine but the directness with which he

lays finger on the points at which the composite origin of the Confession has introduced confusion into it, and falls back from its mixed metaphysics upon the statements contained in the evangelical Articles. To the Articles on Justification, Adoption, Sanctification, Mediation of Christ, Saving Faith, Repentance, Good Works, the Perseverance of Saints, the Law of God, he 'assents cordially and without reserve,' and in the case of those from which he dissents, his usual note is: 'dissent from this, but assent to doctrine as stated elsewhere in Confession.'

As the outcome of this scrutiny, he and William Graham agreed to make a statement to their respective presbyteries before declaring adherence. Graham's statement was reckoned so unsatisfactory that he was suspended for nine months; whereas Cairns received explanations from the metropolitan presbytery which removed his difficulties. Possibly this difference of treatment was due to the influence of Dr. Brown, and to troubles which had recently visited Edinburgh through the excessive orthodoxy of Dr. Guthrie's redoubtable opponent, Dr. John Ritchie;<sup>1</sup> but more probably it arose from the character of Cairns and the well-balanced force of his statement. To the end of his life he maintained a critical sobriety in regard to Church creeds, and it is notable that when thirty years later he presided over a Committee which relaxed the bonds of the Confession, the points upon which relaxation was accorded were those which had pressed upon his own conscience.

His first sermon had been preached in student days in the Free Church of Cramond, of which his friend Campbell Fraser had charge, and he began his probationer's career by preaching to rural congregations at Slateford and Duns. But the first great occasion was the last Sabbath of February 1845, when he preached in two Edinburgh churches, Portsburgh and Stockbridge, which were crowded with eager and

<sup>1</sup> See *Memoir of Thomas Guthrie, D.D.*, chap. iii.



curious listeners from the university, as well as from Secession circles. Never did a more unpromising form enter pulpit. Handsome, no doubt, yet awkwardly conscious of bigness—long arms fumbling for a resting-place, back bent as if waiting for a burden, neck swathed into stiffness by the coils of a black silk 'stock,' he hurried into the pulpit as into a hiding-place. His voice was strong and loud, not harsh, but reckless of all rules in its cadences, dropping hopelessly in the midst of long and involved sentences which seemed destined never to reach their end. Each period was accompanied by an unvarying sweep of the arms, which to his friends seemed certain to wreck his popularity. 'Oor John,' said his anxious mother, 'wull aye be wampishin' wi' his airms.' The framework, too, of the sermon was of a type familiar to Scottish ears—a lengthy introduction, three or four heads, and a twofold conclusion addressing Gospel invitations to the unconverted and Gospel assurances to the converted. All these were ordinary and unfavourable details. But behind them, and breaking through them at every point, there was the impression of rare strength, of profound and solemn conviction, of unwavering and mature faith. There was that respectful deference towards the auditors which marks all great orators, shown not only in manner but in the solid and worthy character of the argument, and in the complete absence of meretricious ornament and superfluous explanation. The sermon was an appeal made to reasonable and responsible beings by one who was possessed in all the height and breadth and depth of a strong spiritual and intellectual nature, with the desire to bring others into communion with the eternal God. Characteristically his text was: 'God is Love.' After carefully guarding his hearers against anthropomorphic ideas, he set forth the evidence of the love of God supplied by the Gospel under four heads:—the width of its range, the worthlessness of its objects, the magnitude

of its favours, the costliness of its sacrifices. It was a sermon of the puritanic type, with a certain want of directness of appeal and a dearth of illustration. Yet, as one traces the faded manuscript, it discloses the march of a master-mind fixed only on vital topics, relying upon the persuasive power of truth, and as convinced as any Hebrew prophet that he was the bearer of a message from God to man.

Long before this, important congregations had been discussing if they could hope to secure him as their pastor. It was a rule of the Secession Church that a probationer must be 'heard' before he was 'called,' and the committee who had charge of such arrangements were bewildered by the stream of requests which poured in upon them for a 'hearing of Cairns.' But his destination seemed to be fixed. Professor Balmer, who combined his professoriate with the ministry of Golden Square, Berwick-on-Tweed, had on his deathbed advised his congregation to wait for a year till Cairns should be ready to fill his place, and the advice was followed. No step was taken to fill the vacancy till Cairns was 'heard' at the end of March. The unruffled calmness of his so-called candidature shines through his letters, but it had one amusing episode which showed the character of the men to whom he was to minister. Usually candidates conducted service on two successive Sabbaths; but the demand for him was so great that orders were issued from headquarters that he should have only one Sabbath at Berwick. The cautious Berwick people, however were set upon having full proof of the stripling, and when he arrived on the Saturday night, a deputation waited upon him to explain the situation, and to ask him if he would conduct three services on Sunday and one on Monday evening, so that they might not be defrauded of any of the four sermons upon which they had been reckoning. Far from resenting the request, he assented to it as most natural, thinking himself bound to furnish all evidence that would lead to a right choice. At each of the four services the church was crowded

to the door, and the issue was an enthusiastic and unanimous Call. An attempt was made to divert him to the charge of Mount Pleasant, Liverpool, then the most important Secession congregation south of the Border. But after a few weeks' thought he resolved to go to Berwick, and on the 6th of August 1845 he was duly ordained by the Presbytery of Coldstream and Berwick. On the following Sunday, after being introduced to his charge by the Rev. Dr. Brown, he preached on the text: 'We also believe and therefore speak.' The details and the spirit of this brief period of probation are fully disclosed in his letters.

In other respects the year had not been lost. Besides assisting in the publication of Professor Balmer's Lectures, he wrote a sketch of him for a biographical preface, and prepared a brief memoir of a college friend, the Rev. George Robertson of Busby, brother of the better-known William Robertson of Irvine. The translation of Krummacher's *Elijah the Tishbite*, to which his letters refer, was finished in February 1845. In the main, however, he was occupied with the study of German theology and philosophy.

These occupations had a pathetic background of family life. His brother William, now beyond hope of recovering the use of his limbs, had given himself with singular assiduity to the cultivation of his mind, and was well able to accept the situation of schoolmaster at Oldcambus when it was tendered to him. 'Brother John' had been his loving guide in the work of self-education, and now, when a modest competency was provided, devoted himself enthusiastically to his equipment and instalment in office. He was fully rewarded. In 'that noble, patient man,' as the author of *Rab and his Friends* has termed William Cairns, he secured a friend who combined the natural respect for an older brother prominent in public life with a genial, playful, well-disciplined sympathy, which never faltered in its loyalty nor failed in its tender insight. Oldcambus was within sixteen miles of

Berwick, and ere long the widowed mother became mistress of the schoolhouse, so that throughout his ministry Dr. Cairns had his beloved kindred within easy reach.

Another of the brothers, James, fell at this time into fatal sickness. A keen and discreet reader of political economy and history, a devoted student of chemistry, and a man of strong Christian interests, he was ill suited physically and intellectually for a tailor's life, and in the spring of 1845, just when John, now secure of a permanent income, could hope to provide him with a more congenial occupation, his health yielded to the poisonous breath of Glasgow workshops, and he returned to the cottage at Dunglass, to fall there into rapid consumption, which carried him away a few weeks after his brother's Ordination. So it was that thoughts of parting and of loss blended with the calm cheerfulness of dedication to the ministry. Other men have had similar variety of experience, but the distinction of John Cairns was that his candid heart responded to every call upon it, and that instead of being torn in different directions and spiritually distressed, his strong, broad faith gathered his various experiences into one, while reckoning each as a separate lesson sent by God.

#### TO MRS. RATTRAY

EDINBURGH, *Aug. 13, 1844.*

' . . . I had no sooner left the lecture-room on Tuesday, after listening to Dr. Brown's address on the lamented death of Dr. Balmer, which I had hurried from Hull to hear, than I called at 19 India Street, anxious to settle my long and painful doubts whether John were still in life. . . . Alas! I have returned to many a green grave of intimate and valued friends. I am greatly sobered and solemnised by such lessons. God grant that the impression may be permanent and salutary! . . .'



## TO JOHN NELSON, GENEVA

MORNINGSIDE, Aug. 13, 1844.

‘. . . Here I am, comfortably settled in Dr. Wilson’s country quarters where I may remain *sine die*. . . . Graham is happy and generous as ever, but more serious and manly from day to day. Wallace has reached us with the best news of Neander and Müller. . . . We hear the lectures of Drs. Brown and Eadie. . . . Ah ! how we miss Dr. Balmer !

‘Edinburgh has grown quite foreign to me—with an ornate suggestiveness and a boundless novelty of interests. There is no denying that it is not so infinite as it once was ; but the old Castle, Arthur’s Seat, Salisbury Crags and even the new-fangled Assembly Hall comport themselves wonderfully. . . .

‘One awful fact I cannot keep back. Sir W. Hamilton has been seized with a paralytic affection, which not only obscures his great mind for the time, but threatens to prevent for ever the resumption of his labours. My grief and all but consternation on first hearing this you will now share. With what earnestness of soul should he not be prayed for, and how solemn the call to work while it is called to-day ! Incapacity of thought rather than derangement is the form of the disorder. This strikes down one’s whole soul. . . . But, my dearest friend, there is yet a source of strength, an *aliquid inconcussum* for our faith and hope—the Lord lives ; the Lord reigns ; He does all things well. . . . My spirit is with you in all your movements and struggles. There is no linking of hearts like that maintained by the Spirit of Christ. The God of Heaven bless you. . . .’

## TO WILLIAN CAIRNS

MORNINGSIDE, Aug. 27, 1844.

‘. . . I am sure of abundance of employment. I have received already the offer of £10 for a translation of Krummacher’s *Elijah the Tishbite* from the German, which I have accepted as pleasanter and not less lucrative labour than teaching. I may perhaps escape teaching in this way during the winter—for such work is more profitable in one sense, not to speak of the passive helplessness of foreign verbs and phrases which can show no obstinacy or stupid unwillingness to be conjugated into a better mood. . . .’

## TO THE SAME

MORNINGSIDE, *Sept. 21, 1844.*

‘. . . Few of my fellow-students are alike, and many are very interesting. There are differences in outward look according to the Saxon or Celtic blood of each. Then as to age, there are lads of sixteen and ripe men of two-and-thirty; some four or five are married, and a good many wait only the call of the people and of Providence to join their number. Dress is another great mark of difference. There are slovens of study and poor schoolmasters and tutors, whose well-brushed suits look rather seedy, mixed up with dandy Glaswegians and shining provincials who are evidently trained at female looking-glasses. Black is commonly thought to have little variety, but with us it shades into green and brown, and the reign of canonicals is not yet despotic. Tempers are as oddly mixed. From noisy to moody, from jocular to matter-of-fact, from glowing fancy to dull prose, you need but leap a bench or change a place. And then talent is equally capricious. There are sermons and essays, rich and poor, lean and solid, not to speak of ambitious emptiness, and soaring heaviness that soon finds its level. Yet a more pious, sober, well-meaning, kind-hearted and able body of young men is not to be found than this same motley collection. How soon will they be cast into the urn of popular election! some to be eagerly drawn and prove perhaps not prizes but blanks, others to escape all chance of shaking out to the last, but the most, I hope, to be well selected by a higher Hand that guides their movements. I did not mean to be serious, but I cannot think or speak of my fellow-students without affectionate interest. Another week will bring my last year of connection with them to a close. May every new relation and place in life be sanctified to me by faith in Christ and resignation to the will of God! . . . I am little desirous now of extra-ministerial work. There is no other Germany to visit, and if the probationer’s life cannot support itself, I hope it will not last long. But I have no fear. . . .’

FROM WILLIAM CAIRNS

DUNGLASS, *Oct. 15, 1844.*

‘I ask your advice and assistance in a very serious and important matter which has unexpectedly come upon me. Lady Hall called

yesterday to ask me to take charge of the Oldcambus School. . . . I am tremblingly alive to the responsibility, and fully sensible of my great inefficiency for many of the duties. . . . Yet I cannot hope for a more favourable opportunity of commencing a useful occupation . . . and I feel an anxious desire under the providence of God to do something for my own independence. . . . I trust you will give me your best advice. . . .'

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

35 LOTHIAN STREET, *Oct. 16, 1844.*

' . . . I do not wonder that the proposal threw you into some little perplexity. But I think the decision you are inclined to is quite right. . . . As to your qualification you may dismiss all apprehension. Your opportunities of personal improvement will not be contracted but extended ; and you will be able to bring all the habits of a self-taught person to bear upon those lower branches of knowledge which may be required. Your means of ensuring attention and discipline will of course be somewhat limited ; but the weight of superior knowledge and energy of character, and what I am sure you will have, the respect of the parents, will be far more than enough. I very heartily sympathise with your desire for independence, as I feel it and have felt it so strongly myself ; but you must not consider this change as at all diminishing your right to fall back on any resources that I or any of us may possess, or to look forward to anything better that we may procure for you. . . . At the same time, I believe that the exertion will be a wholesome means of strengthening your character, as well as making you truly useful to others. Write every detail as to the books and school apparatus which you need, and I will make use of my old experience and of my acquaintance with teachers in Edinburgh to put things right for you. It is really a very interesting enterprise, and I shall go into it with all my heart.'

TO THE SAME

35 LOTHIAN STREET, *Oct. 31, 1844.*

' . . . I rejoice in your energetic preparations. . . . I fully understand your theory of copy lines, and will send you a roll-book. Nothing else has occurred to me except a pair of tawse, which, if you like, I shall order from an Edinburgh saddler or shoemaker.

As to your keeping a Sabbath-school, I would not urge you if you do not feel fully persuaded in your own mind. But you should have no scruple in opening the school daily with prayer. . . . Perhaps you should at first write out a form or two till you acquire freedom and confidence. . . .'

TO REV. JOHN CLARK, GLASGOW

35 LOTHIAN STREET, Dec. 9, 1844.

' . . . I am affected at a thousand points by my last winter's study and the summer's travel. I am persuaded I have gained much in liberalising culture, while my relation to the whole spiritual world is more firmly settled on the basis of faith. . . . Perhaps you will have no objection to receive a series of letters explaining, to the best of my power, the present state of Continental philosophy and theology, on condition that you return me your full judgment on each system and author and the whole drift of things, as if we were transported back to the hallowed and ever-to-be-remembered disquisitions of former days. Something of this kind would suffice to stimulate active thought and generalising reflection, and yet would want the formal effort and responsibility of a more public exhibition, from which I strongly recoil, waiting till some worthier person subject the religion and the moral speculation of Germany to fair examination. . . .

'I am become more intimate than ever with your brother. . . . It is every day my more earnest prayer that something of the same spirit, in the sphere which is best for me, though it thwart all my tendencies and leanings, may be given to me also. The dignity and glory of being in the world as Christ was in the world was never so strongly before my mind, and if I were once sure of the sphere, I think, though the heart is very treacherous and wayward, that further grace would be given me in happily, or at least not altogether unhappily, working out the problem.

'This, however, is just the question which I am agitating with myself *in foro conscientiae*, not altogether without anxiety. Should I give myself soul and body to parochial duties (as I am sensible I should never be able to reconcile partial devotion to them with reason and conscience), or seek, in Christian contemplation and literary activity revolving around the Gospel of Christ as a centre, to make any little superiority of tendency in me to speculation and better opportunity of cultivating it than most, tell to perhaps greater



advantage on the state of religion? If I did not feel that I could do a little in either sphere, I should have no perplexity; and if I did not equally fear the dissipating influence of more practical ministerial labour on the one hand, and the chilling unchristianising influence of extra-scriptural inquiry on the other, my perplexities might be easier to resolve. I am really haunted by a double distrust of myself, on the one hand that I am secretly yielding to an imperceptible play of slothful or selfish desire in shrinking from the obscure, laborious and local activity of a minister, and on the other, that I may be resigning for ever, through false estimate of myself, a position of advocacy and investigation of truth, which, though less spiritual and hallowing in its immediate influences on myself or others, needs to be taken by some one sound at heart in regard to the Christian system and would be profitable to not a few. These inquiries, which have haunted me during the last two months, grow more troublesome as the season for decision approaches, and make my prospect, though clear and exalted in regard to the one general certainty of faith and devotedness bringing its own reward with it, rather less distinctly bright and joyful than that of many at the close of theological studies has been. I have no counsellors but faith and prayer and much serious reflection, and I seek no other. The Lord will not leave any in darkness that commit their way to Him. Your advice and prayers in regard to this matter will be a service of friendship; and meanwhile you may, if you please, keep the matter to yourself. . . .'

FROM REV. JOHN CLARK

GLASGOW, *December 11, 1844.*

' . . . While I am grateful for your confidence, my grain of influence would be cast in favour of your selecting a public field. . . . I would feel exquisitely at your venturing on the field of mere pastoral labour. I shall tell you why. You will not be appreciated. I know how humbly and devotedly you would seek to be serviceable in this department, as well as in a more public one. But I do not believe there is one congregation out of fifty that will do you justice as a preacher. . . . You will say I am carried away by my fears, by my solicitude. Oh, but what have I not been made to feel within the last two years! E—— is a very great man now—E——, the slight and superficial. The popular preacher and the powerful essayist are almost incompatible. You yourself hint at a forcible consideration in favour of your taking up the pen. It is a

momentous matter to have ability and principle combined. You cannot but be aware that the range of your literary attainments is great; it was great before you left,—what must it now be and what may it be! And yet no external modification has affected your thoroughly Scottish evangelism; and both your religion and your literature are so admirably balanced by mother-wit and humility. . . .’

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

35 LOTHIAN STREET, Dec. 14, 1844.

‘My “trials” before the Presbytery, contrary to the Secession proverb, are proving to be in no sense tribulations. . . . Tell my mother, if she feels any anxiety respecting my getting licence, to dismiss all her fears and to think as little as possible about any of the foolish reports that are circulated about what comes after. I strive to banish such anxieties from my mind, and really they trouble me very little. . . .’

‘I hope to be long enough in Edinburgh to lay a nest-egg for you also. . . . *Elijah* has taken me more time and it will bring me more money than I at first expected. I took it up merely as a task-work, though it has sometimes been more interesting than this first aspect of it had promised. I write it in general about half as fast as an ordinary letter. The language causes no difficulty in the way of understanding, but Krummacher is a flighty man, and sometimes taxes my recollection for a suitable English rendering.

‘My other studies are chiefly a continuation of my German reading of last winter. I read very little English except newspapers. I know in general what is to be found in most authors, and though I project a course of English re-reading, yet my main bent just now is towards the yet unexhausted novelties of German, and towards thinking and original composition. I have no idea of writing books for a long while; but would certainly be sorry to dismiss that idea altogether from my plan of life. Yet our steps are ordered by a better wisdom than our own, and it is enough that we resolve to do all that we would like to do “in the Lord.” . . .’

## TO JAMES CAIRNS

35 LOTHIAN STREET, Dec. 14, 1844.

‘. . . Since receiving your letter I have been busy with translation, with presbytery work for licence, and with writing a sketch of

Dr. Balmer. These excuses may be eked out with the plea of private studies in German philosophy, of two hours' teaching daily, and of one hour's chemistry lecture from Dr. Wilson, in which I take very great interest. I do not wonder at your fondness for this study, and it is especially attractive when set forth by so clear a describer, elegant an experimenter and philosophical a theoriser. . . .

'Mr. MacDougall is lecturing with great attraction in the crowded New College. I expect something decisively valuable from his prelections, both as an addition to speculative ethics, which is far from prosperous at present, being overrun with all manner of popularising novelties when it is not quite fallen into neglect, and as a means of giving the Free Church students a more thorough cultivation in philosophy, which they might otherwise neglect in their zeal for immediate and practical usefulness. But on this I will not enlarge, as you have not yet developed any strong tendency towards moral science. Nothing but firm faith in Christianity joined to a naturally abstract turn of mind can make it very interesting or even very safe. Witness the vagaries of the utilitarians and the phrenologists.

'I rejoice in your cold-water movement, and hope that your Committee work is proceeding smoothly. How many evils, external and internal, might this best of solvents wash away! Dr. Wilson has promised me some statistical information for you. I am very ignorant of the whole subject, and not sorry during this cold weather that a theme so chilling to the imagination can be reserved for more genial days.

'The weather reminds me of Berlin, where my studies last winter were in full sweep at this time. I am working as hard; but in more desultory kinds of study, and with many interruptions. I could almost wish myself a recluse in the wilderness, that I might have entire leisure for the higher kinds of speculation, from which, however, I would not exclude all manner of religious service and devotion. This is no Puseyism or Romanism; both of which I despise as poor, formal, external mockeries of a living spiritual and proselyting Christianity. How does your reading come on? Have you read Foster's Contributions, or anything of Whately? Do you ever see the *North British Review*? The article on America by Dr. Cunningham in No. III. has excited a storm of displeasure. I think the Voluntaries have reason to be thankful for it, and may let the remarks on slavery pass. . . . Dr. Wilson is writing on Dalton for the *British Quarterly*, a new periodical in the hands of the English Independents, which will appear in January. . . .'

TO JOHN NELSON, ROME

35 LOTHIAN STREET, *Christmas*, 1844.

‘ . . . I have thought of you more than once every day for a long time, and I really long to see you, feeling in your absence a sort of sensible blank, which is unusual in a being so unduly self-contained and wrapt up in thoughts as I must confess myself to be. . . . The better acquaintance of your family has been a great acquisition to me, and I am deeply sensible of their kindness.

‘ I hope to receive licence in February, and am partly occupied with preparations. . . . I have been working daily at the draught translation for your brother, besides reading a good deal of Hegel, Schleiermacher, Neander, De Wette and old friends, and writing an occasional thing under compulsion. . . . I am well in body, cheerful in spirit, resolute in work, dissatisfied with performance and distraction in working, more given to musing on the past than to forecast of the future, and upon the whole religiously better, I think, than perhaps in any part of my Continental life. The influence of Germany and travel is still deeply felt; but I am conscious of a reaction of modifying and assimilating activity greater than in the first weeks after the reception of new stores. But enough of this *egoismus*, which I close by adding that I had the happiness of receiving a “Gruss” from Neander, and that the dear old man is well.

‘ Graham is well in Paisley, somewhat delayed in licence by a limitarian presbytery; Wallace is sound and snug in a family at Corstorphine. I have had some happy conversations with Fraser, who has stridden forward finely, and is doing parish work with the spirit of a Berkeley evangelised; so is Clark, who writes me in noble spirit, as genial and morally exalted as ever. Andrew Wilson I have written to; but the cares of a family in its *Grund Princip* would appear to be too much to warrant hope of speedy answer. Walker is thoroughly practicalised and in sound condition—more evangelically simple than heretofore, but really the old Diagnostic Vesuvius. . . . ‘ Dr. Wilson, who is now lecturing at the School of Arts, is rising rapidly. Hamilton is well again so far, and is writing a tract on Logical Conversion and the Figures of Syllogisms. Chalmers is busy with the *North British*, the Sustentation Fund and noble excavation of the West Port. Candlish has been writing with great one-sidedness on the Atonement; and matters portend a long delay on this score of hoped-for union among dissenters. It grieves



me. Our Church is tolerably quiet on the subject, though Dr. Marshall is expected to leave or be cut off. So much for statistics and biography. Come home and see. Edinburgh is still the finest of cities and Scott's monument is *aere perennius*.

'Again, my dearest Nelson, my best thanksgivings and wishes and prayers are with you. You should stay and see everything out now. You are indeed vehemently desired, but the difference of a month or two is trifling. Come home, when you do come, and help to support Fraser in his latent idea of a college preacher. There are vacancies innumerable far back among the Highland lakes and missionary outposts. Candlish is wanting help to reconcile the category of universality with that of limitation, and to open his new church on the first Sunday in January. Chalmers has got involved in an awkward, unintentional Pro-North-American slavery letter. Come and help him out. Come and have a victory over Puseyism and the Bishop of Exeter, over pantheism and its shadowy phalanx, over Miss Martineau and mesmerism, and over the solitude and single-bedded blessedness of your ever-affectionate and true friend. . . .'

#### TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

35 LOTHIAN STREET, *Feb. 6, 1845.*

' . . . I got licence yesterday. The excitement of it is hardly over; and I hope the solemn and deep feelings which preceded and followed it will never leave me. I owe you many thanks for the kind and sympathising tone of your letter, and hope you will give me the benefit of your prayers. You allude to my calmness in my studies and doings. I assure you this is not constitutional, but springs from an assured faith in Christ, and from the certain hope of divine succour in every trial. I wish I had more of it, based on these grounds; and I need it all just now. I had some scruples about assent to the Confession of Faith; but . . . the verbal statements of members of presbytery, on my expression of the only important difficulty, so far satisfied me that I took the formula without further exception. . . .'

#### TO MISS JEAN DARLING

35 LOTHIAN STREET, *Feb. 13, 1845.*

' . . . I do not like to encourage the state of mind which dwells exclusively upon the magnitude and solemnity of the preacher's

work, and the insufficiency of any one to discharge it rightly. This is solemnly true ; but it is not the whole truth ; and I rather take refuge in the clear conviction that I have followed an obvious call, that the work is the very highest to which man can look, and that the sympathy and grace of the Great Head of the Church are more than sufficient to perfect strength. In these happy and encouraging thoughts my mind is greatly fixed. I am fully persuaded that it is not by fitful excitements and depressions, but by a calm, cheerful, business-like spirit of labour, study and prayer that I shall be either happy or useful in my work, and I think that, as I grow older and more confirmed in Christian faith through the Spirit of Christ, I am always, however defectively, gaining more of the spirit of "power and of love and of a sound mind," which is the highest object of my desire, both as a Christian and as a minister. . . .'

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

35 LOTHIAN STREET, *Feb.* 26, 1845.

' . . . I feel that my life lies in the religion of Christ, that it meets all the wants, and calls forth to full and perfect exercise all the activities of my nature ; and therefore the exhibition of this religion to others in the same aspect is the very sphere of labour and employment which is congenial to me ; and though I do by no means assert that the preaching of the Gospel is the only such sphere in which, if it pleased God, I could be contented to labour, yet I go into it with my whole heart, and rejoice in its dignity and blessedness and, with all its solemn responsibilities, I am willing to choose it as not only the highest in itself, but the best for me. I write in all sobriety and earnestness, and with the firm conviction that, so far as any man can, in these last times, speak of a call of the Spirit of God to any work, I am blessed with such a call, resting, indeed, on no mysterious revelation, but on the assurance of Christian character, and on the conviction that I can in no other way so well discharge my duty as a believer to spread abroad the Gospel of Christ. Nothing appears to me so beautifully simple as the divine arrangement that men should "believe and therefore speak" ; and that, if found qualified to instruct and edify others, they should teach publicly in the great Christian society. . . .

'After the first dreary unconcern about spiritual things has passed away, what we should seek after is a teachable and inquiring spirit in the study of God's Word and an earnest desire, through

the leading of God's Spirit, to find the Christian system of grace to be a clear and reasonable system, to which we can assent with our whole hearts, and in which we may rejoice as the only true faith, and the only one worthy to form and govern our characters as rational and immortal beings. I am more and more persuaded that the children of Christian parents who have received a pious education greatly over-rate their own knowledge, and that when they are not savingly enlightened and made to feel the every-day reality of the Christian scheme, they do most egregiously err respecting it, and have towards it none of that feeling of distinctness and familiar confidence which every one connects with the idea of truth and knowledge as applied to worldly matters. . . . I never have addressed any of my friends on religious matters in the language of alarm and excitement. I feel so strongly the intellectual grandeur and the superiority of Christianity that I should like them too to approach it on that side, with calmness and simplicity and humble prayer. . . .

'You will be anxious to hear something from myself about my first "trials" in preaching. I got on wonderfully well at Slateford. Thomas will have told you his impressions of my appearance at Duns. I liked the day's services greatly, most of all on account of Janet and Nancy. I daresay they also were extremely happy at the meeting. Nothing could be kinder than Thomas coming over, and I felt it very deeply. . . . On Sabbath last I preached in Edinburgh in the presence of a great number of fellow-students and friends. . . . It was trying enough, but I feel as if the "horror of great darkness" had passed away. I was very glad that Dr. Brown had not asked me to preach in Broughton Place, as I should hardly have stood it in so large and formidable a church. . . .

'I rejoice to hear of the prosperity of your school. . . . You are right not to neglect Latin. You will find that without some liberalising study beyond the range of your  $a=b=ab$  you will not sustain your interest and energy even in that. What do you say to Cicero? You will find him a new world of Latin. Have you any care for particular books of English reading? I wish I had time to read Shakespeare through again. Really it is a duty to read only the greatest authors. I wish you were as well trained in verse as you are in English prose. There is no decent collection, all being either full of antiquarian lumber or of modern trash. . . .'

TO JAMES CAIRNS

35 LOTHIAN STREET, *March 25, 1845.*

' . . . Having now preached eight times in Edinburgh, I have fairly overcome all nervous feeling, and have much reason for gratitude. . . . I find the great thing is to be raised beyond the fear of man, and, in regard to the use of means, to be thoroughly prepared. But enough of this personal matter, in which I am at all times disposed to be sparing, and on so sacred a subject more so than on any other. I wish to look at the ministry just as the natural course of a Christian life, which is not to rise above the latter by any factitious effort, but to be the fair and sincere reflection of what an honest Christian man believes for himself, and thinks in the privacy of his own heart of the moral condition and prospects and wants of others. . . .

' . . . You gratify me much by the account of your studies. It is a base idea that such kinds of mental employment tend either to disqualification for business, or political unrest, or religious unsettledness of mind. The knowledge which you seek ought to be a great help to mental composure and religious light. I can speak far less than you of the relief of the mind by study, since it is my business. But I do deplore the cruelty and stupidity of those who would degrade the working-class into a mere force of mechanical production, or establish the order of things in Church and State on their traditional ignorance and devotion. Try to lay your hands on the *Life of Dr. Arnold*, and you will see real Christian liberalism united to the soundest love of order and true doctrine. . . .'

TO MRS. WILSON

BERWICK-ON-TWEED, *March 31, 1845.*

' . . . Though a stranger in a debatable land and a preacher in a vacant congregation, I have been very happy since I came here. I preached three times yesterday, and after some exploration of the banks of the Tweed, have preached again this evening.

'I write with a light and cheerful heart . . . having been saved from fear or regard of man, and from eyeing of consequence in regard to my present appointment. In looking into my Greek Testament last night, I fell upon 1 Thessalonians, ch. ii., and I could not help feeling that I had been enabled by the grace of God, amid a good deal of trial, to feel some faint sympathy with



the Apostle's spirit. What may come of this matter I do not care anxiously to inquire. Our lot is chosen out for us by a wiser judgment; and I would desire, whether called to labour here or elsewhere or nowhere, to feel that neither the Church of God nor myself will be ultimately affected for the worse by the arrangement. . . . The kindness of the people strongly reminds me of my dear and ever-to-be-remembered Hamburg experience. I really feel the work of preaching growing upon me; and I pray that the first feeling of freshness and of warmth may continue and increase. I should like "to forget the things that are behind."

' . . . Tell George that amid even the air of the Tweed and the great German Ocean I sigh for the fumes of antimony and arsenic, and thirst for a draught of salts of gold. . . . '

FROM GEORGE WILSON

EDINBURGH, *May 5, 1845.*

' There was a man ; he sometime was mesmeric :  
Some people would have sent him north to Lerwick,  
And others wished him minister at Berwick.  
Where is he now ?

' . . . You will write and tell us what you are to do. Meanwhile, when I contrast your profession with mine, I could envy you your glorious calling. I look back on last winter and its great deal to man and its little to God, so far as I have been concerned, with sad feelings of shame and sorrow; and forward to what other winters must be, with similar feelings of mournful anticipation. . . . I must find some way of serving Christ better and fuller than I have employed hitherto, or I shall truly be an unprofitable servant. On all this I want your advice, and also what I asked before—your recommendation of a book on the personality of the Spirit. I do not limit your recommendation to that, but to as many other things as you please. You are my father in Christ, my dear friend, and to you I look and turn for help in a way I can do to no other. . . . '

TO GEORGE WILSON

LIVERPOOL, *May 7, 1845.*

' So you are again at the symbols. . . . It is a favourable omen of your course that it opened the same day with the Secession

Synod, where there is likely to be the same display of strange lights and detonating gases with which you amuse beginners.

‘I have been very pleasantly engaged in Liverpool, though a little too much taken out for mental quiet and exertion. There is a vast deal of ephemeral cleverness and readiness about the people; but with exceptions the *mens divinior* is rather slow to manifest itself. I have seen chiefly Scotsmen, most of them steady to the national peculiarities; but some few loose to them and in very curious gradations of the process of being anglicised. The minister, Dr. Crichton, is a superior man, head and heart, and the congregation is more than considerable. I have seen Dr. Raffles, who is very pleasant and kind. . . .

‘I am agitating with myself the whole responsibilities of the Berwick call. . . . You know my feelings and can seek direction for me from the true source. . . .

‘The reference you make, my dear friend, to your religious disadvantages is very affecting to me, the more especially that it is coupled with an allusion to our first serious religious intercourse, in speaking of which I always feel deeply humbled when you adopt such language, and rather rejoice to join you in comparing our common Christian feelings and trials as Christian brethren, resolving all else into His infinite grace who has called us unto His kingdom and given us our several work to do in advancing it. I perhaps underestimate the spiritual advantages of my place, and you the spiritual opportunities of yours. The sad tendency to officialism and routine, and the reference of religious truth to the case of others, as a mere instrument of a calculable efficiency, amid which the personality of the whole is forgotten, are the great trials of ministers, and perhaps there is greater pain in this Tantalus-like starvation of the soul than there is where the truth does not come in contact with us at all. Besides, granting the inferiority of a secular calling, it is to be looked upon as a trial of faith and an encouragement to high devotion to God to have a post of this kind, which is not of our seeking, committed to us, to be garrisoned for Christianity and kept from falling into the enemies’ hands. You are not insensible of the great influence of the silent religion of men of science on men inaccessible not only to the religion of the pulpit, but even to the religion of the lecturer who makes science *ex cathedra* go out of her way to teach religion. It is hard, we think, to be martyred in secular things, and that, too, in secret, when we see nothing of the fruits of our self-sacrifice. But faith will make Christ’s yoke easy in this also, where indeed it is His,

and not mere drudgery after wealth or fame or official influence. No doubt it is a morbid form of Christian submission to yield ourselves up to the spiritual deficiencies of our position without seeking to mitigate them and, if possible, escape from them. But submission is consistent with this endeavour, which, indeed, is its equipoise, and must be our duty and happiness so long as evil lasts, and even finite perfection. Your great refuge is spirituality of mind ; and really on this point there is no other road for one in the Christian life than for another. The right use of the Sabbath, the adherence to regular seasons of daily devotion, the frequent recurrence to Scripture and, above all, that effort to call up in all things the peculiar feeling of reality which is just faith, and which cannot be made without forcing the mind, by the consciousness of its own backwardness, to prayer for the Spirit, must be the means of grace with all of us. The perpetuation of this feeling of spirituality from morning to night can hardly be attained except by the faithful adherence to stated devotion. I do not think with some writers that frequent short prayer should be recommended as an exercise, for prayer is rather a fruit than a cause and cultivating agent of the right spirit, and should be welcomed and rejoiced in rather than enforced on the mind. No man can live on another man's views of religion ; and his own can only come to him by prayer, which, as the individual spontaneous reflection of Scripture truth, is naturally as well as graciously the great strengthener of the whole Christian life. To review the whole of Scripture truth as embraced by us and as bearing on our place in the world, in that half-praying, half-reflecting mood in which the consciousness of personal contact with God both solemnises and excites the mind, is, I think, the highest and most salutary of all Christian exercises.

'The doctrine of the Spirit is the preface to prayer and to all religious acts, and comes in as the doxology at the end of them. But His influence being mysterious and subjective, our highest reverence for the Spirit is not so much to seek personal communion with Him, as to look at truth with the knowledge that He will enlighten us, and at duty with the certainty that He will strengthen us. The whole style of religious experience which dwells on His presence and work as immediately recognisable facts of consciousness is vanity and vexation of spirit. He is to be worshipped and approached like the Father by faith ; and His personality is rather set before us as implied in and necessary to His work in the soul than as an object of study to the mind or of interest in itself apart from His work through the truth, though in the latter view

it is all-impor'tant and most practical. Our true recognition and worship of the Spirit is prayer to Himself as also to Father and Son for His influence.

'I know no good book on the personality of the Holy Spirit. You will find a beautiful discussion of the subject in Dr. Balmer's *Lectures*. I know nothing nearly so good, though the subject is treated more doctrinally than "ascetically," as a German would say.

'I have gone into this long excursus partly to relieve my own mind, which has missed greatly our Sabbath evening disquisitions, and partly because I could not stop myself. It is my great aim in preaching to represent religion in as distinct and business-like a way as possible, without running into mechanism and abjuration of mystery. The doctrine of regularity in the influences of the Spirit is one I cannot let go; and I believe that it is now almost universally held by our Church in opposition to the doctrine of sovereign withdrawal and overclouding by way of trial, where there is no special failure on our part. I am really happy in preaching; and I think I shall succeed better in other parts of the office, such as exhortation and catechising, as well as official visitation, than I once feared.

'It is vain for me to speculate on my future course of life if I accept the Berwick call. I have a great jealousy of myself. The same post which brought me the report of my election brought also word of the death of my friend, George Robertson, lately ordained at Busby. It was a very affecting and warning coincidence. Really, if our life is not built on habitual readiness for death, I do not see how we can get on at all without being quite thrown out of harness by such visitations. . . .'

#### TO MISS JEAN DARLING

LIVERPOOL, *May 9, 1845.*

' . . . Truly a probationer's life, with all its uncertainties and irregularities, has many enjoyments and means of profitable intercourse with the Church and with the world; and I shall almost regret when my time of it is closed. It sometimes strikes me as a good project to make the tour of the Church and preach in every minister's pulpit, upon condition that each of them should give, instead of the regular guinea, an honest account of his ministerial life, with its aims and endeavours, its trials and encouragements, its successes and failures, and the whole gathered stock of his experience



for the benefit of this knight-errant of probationerhood. If it were told faithfully, without vanity or humble reserve, it would do a preacher more good than volumes of solid theology. I have been greatly touched with what I have heard already of the troubles of strong-minded and tender-hearted men, placed in spheres partially unsuitable to them, and struggling with true Christian devotion to bring good out of evil, and to keep their post in the spirit of their great Master. It is pleasant to think of the reward of such men—of whom the world is not worthy, and whose worth the Church, too, hardly seems to estimate—being given them in that state which will make everything crooked straight, and number everything that is now wanting. . . .’

TO MRS. RATTRAY

24 BROWN SQUARE, EDINBURGH, *June 9, 1845.*

‘. . . I did not learn whether you were present at the meetings of Synod. . . . To my mind, judging afar off, the chief points of interest appeared to be the coalescence of the Middle and New View parties, and the assumption of an offensive position by the united body to condemn the doctrine, procedure and personal conduct of the Old View parties and individuals, and to vindicate their own. I trust there will now be peace, else our Church cannot long stand. I had almost said, in the bitterness of my dissatisfaction with these bickerings of personal quarrel and strifes of words, she will deserve to fall. But I hope better things; and even the withdrawal of the dissentients altogether, however much to be deplored, would not be an irreparable loss.

‘You are probably aware of my acceptance of the call to Berwick. It brings a great responsibility. I think, however, that no stress is to be laid on succession to Dr. Balmer, either as a mere honour or as a difficulty of a worldly kind; but only in so far as it is likely to be a higher incentive to spiritual effort. . . . We can go nowhere but we are within the reach of bright examples—One at least which may make us sufficiently ashamed of ourselves as well as better us by quickening us to effort. I go with my whole heart, believing that I cannot find a more congenial sphere of labour in our Church, nor one where I am more likely to be useful in any measure in which I can ever hope to be so. . . . I would wish to begin calmly, to go on calmly and to end calmly, with a full view of the whole difficulties, and an equally full reliance on the grace of the Head of the Church. . . .’

## TO GEORGE WILSON

COCKBURNSPATH, *June 10, 1845.*

‘. . . My brother James is worse than I had hoped. . . . The disease is chronic bronchitis. . . . He may linger a good while, as my father’s disease was the same, and he passed to the last stage of weakness and emaciation before he was mastered by it. . . .’

‘I have written down these details with as much calmness and distinctness as possible, though with a very heavy heart. It is oppressively sad to see a dear relative doomed to waste by inches—a feeling which is mournfully heightened in dreariness by the glory and freshness of nature in this season, which seems hardly to admit of such a thing as death. The bitterness of the curse was never felt more by me in life. But I strive to be resigned, and I have good hope of James as a Christian sufferer. . . . He is patient and even cheerful. My mother is wonderfully calm, and expects the worst with Christian submission. . . .’

## TO MRS. RATTRAY

OLDCAMBUS, *July 9, 1845.*

‘. . . On the 1st of July I delivered my “Trials.” . . . I must now prepare for Ordination, and for the severe work that follows it. . . . I am to be in lodgings for a twelvemonth or so, the manse needing repairs. This will give me time to look around me, and also to clear my feet for setting a house in order, which, indeed, I could do through the kindness of friends at the beginning; but I prefer adhering to my old notions of independence. . . . Study, visiting, lecturing and preaching stretch before me in long array, and I welcome them one and all. I mean to rise in the morning, to wear flannels, to take long walks and not to sit longer up at night than is usual among decent men and regular-lived ministers. I mean to cast aside all the eccentricities and wilfulness of student life, and never again to disregard the advice of friends respecting the means of health—when it seems reasonable to follow it. You have my word for it; and I will also attend to exchanges with neighbour ministers, so far as the respective peoples will suffer us to be torn from them, even for a day. Forgive my apparent levity. Somehow or other I cannot keep from banter with you on this topic. Rest assured that I have no wish but to work as long and as efficiently in the

cause of our Master as the human system can be made to do; and if the night cometh ere the work is done, I shall not have the reflection that I hastened its approach. . . .'

TO MISS JEAN DARLING

OLDCAMBUS, *July 9, 1845.*

' . . . I have often thought of your late bereavements. . . . I covet no ministerial gift more than that of consoling the mourner and binding up the broken-hearted. It is a happy and glorious thing to live solely for the diminution of sin and misery, which is the sum and substance in all its parts of the office of the minister of the Gospel. . . .'

TO MRS. WILSON

BLAIRGOWRIE, *July 18, 1845.*

' . . . James is beyond all question sinking. I hardly felt justified in coming to this distance . . . while he lies in such distress. But it seemed a duty to come. . . . How great a blessing is it that by sanctified affliction one can be brought to die daily! Much is needed to bring me to this point. I have so much health of constitution, and so decided a mental turn to work in the present and to forget all in that, that selfish hardness of feeling and oblivion of death are almost native to my temperament. Not that I am sanguine in the sense of hopeful anticipation—the very reverse—and when I anticipate I see rather the dark than the bright side. But I do not look forward at all, and take in a very exaggerated sense the principle that the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. . . . It is a great blessing of my connection with a family so tried as yours, that it has taught me something of the virtue of sympathy. . . .'

TO MRS. RATTRAY

24 BROWN SQUARE, *July 23, 1845.*

' . . . The Synod met on Monday. Dr. Marshall wants to libel, but wishes either to throw the onus on the Synod or hang it up for ten months that he may distract the Church in the meantime. A very strong and determined majority will compel him to carry matters through at this meeting, though it is deeply to be deplored that he should have come forward after his long silence without the

courtesy of giving Dr. Brown a single hint beforehand. . . . Would that war and contention were made to cease! . . .

‘I have delighted to keep my intimacy with you fresh, as it is one of my greatest blessings, and I hope that soon we shall see each other again. Meanwhile we have in prayer an instrument of real and incalculable benefit. . . . May we be more stirred up to employ it, and then we shall find its true worth. . . .’

TO MRS. WILSON

OLDCAMBUS, *July 31, 1845.*

‘. . . How sad was it in one sense to leave Edinburgh as I have now done permanently—especially your house! I would break out into thanks if it were needful. Your heart is fixed on a better home; and it will be yours ere long; only, if there is anything like heaven upon earth, I have felt it under your roof. . . . I hope to have much of your advice in my work as a minister. It will be long ere I can be on such terms with friends on the spot; and female friends only can advise to purpose in many things where I shall need advice most. The trials before me are not small. I do not exaggerate them. But they will need counsel, sympathy and prayer; and I can safely trust in you and Miss Wilson for them all. I would make no difference between you in this matter, for your experience has attained to “something like prophetic strain.”

‘I am a deplorable correspondent; but will try to amend, and hope to leave off all my bad habits at one stroke.

‘My best wishes with the Doctor in his London journey. Let him avoid too much excitement and keep from overdone literary-party-going. I hope to recruit him with calm meditation on the backs of theological books and with sober metaphysical discourse. No man who has seen the United Kingdom of England and Scotland should omit to see Berwick-on-Tweed. Tell Jeanie to remember her promise to botanise on Berwick sea-weed, which is better than can be had in the adjacent kingdoms. . . .’

FROM JOHN BROWN, M.D.

EDINBURGH, *August 4, 1845.*

‘. . . I had some hopes of making the circuit with my father and hearing your first sermon; but there is little chance of this. I have, besides my love for its inhabitants, a very peculiar love for



Berwick. It was the place I took my wife to on our marriage journey, and it will ever have to me a tint of "the glory and the freshness of a dream. . . ."

'You must take care of your health. You are a big and powerful fellow, but you have a strong and relentless engine at work inside of you. You must have a care. May God keep you long in this world for His service and for speaking His truth in its fulness and symmetry and power! . . . !'

## CHAPTER XI

### MINISTER AT BERWICK

1845-1849

Berwick—Its political character—Its religious position—Its people—Golden Square congregation—Cairns' mode of life—Call to Edinburgh—Calls set aside—United Presbyterian Church—Letters.

NO town in the United Kingdom could have been better fitted for the independent growth of a strong character than Berwick-on-Tweed. Its history, its locality, its inhabitants, its relations to England and to Scotland and its ecclesiastical condition were unique.

Beruuic, Barwhek, or Berwugca, 'the town of the borders' or 'the town of the river,'<sup>1</sup> is mentioned as early as the ninth century, and at the close of the eleventh century it emerges from the early chronicles as a town of great importance to begin a career of prosperity which came to a climax under Alexander III. It owed its importance partly to its being the southmost and border town of Scotland, partly to its connection with the great Monastery of Coldingham, and partly to its being the natural outlet for the trade of the rich valley of the Tweed. Once during the twelfth century it was held for fifteen years by the English, but it was restored to Scotland by Richard I., and the frequent sieges to which it was exposed did not check its commercial growth or its

<sup>1</sup> The etymology of the name is unsettled. A Bear appears upon the Berwick Arms in 1250 A.D., but the sign was probably suggested by the sound. Upon this and other matters connected with Berwick, the curious reader is referred to Mr. John Scott's *Berwick-upon-Tweed*: Elliot Stock, 1888.

historical eminence. It was the greatest of the four Royal Scottish Burghs, possessing a palace which was often graced by Royalty. Its shipping trade in wool and hides from the monasteries of Melrose, Kelso, Dryburgh and Jedburgh, its salmon trade, its mills and breweries, developed by an industrious colony of Flemings, won for it the proud title of 'the second Alexandria.' In 1286, when it touched its highest point, it actually paid into the Scotch Exchequer a sum equivalent to one-fourth of the whole customs of England. Its busy streets swarmed with monks and nuns of every order, and its citizens were notable for their religious and charitable character. It was mainly in the Dominican Chapel at Berwick that the claims of Baliol and Bruce were argued before King Edward.

At the end of the thirteenth century, having headed the Burghs which formed alliance with France against England, it fell before the vengeance of Edward, who slaughtered 8000 citizens in its streets, and fortified it with a great moat as the basis of his subsequent operations against Scotland. During the following thirty-seven years it was the chief point of interest to both nations, being held in turn by Wallace and by Bruce, who left signs of their brief tenancy which still survive. The battle of Halidon Hill, however, which was followed immediately by the fall of Berwick, sealed the fate of the town. Edward indeed designed to give it a still greater future as the capital of conquered Scotland, and equipped it accordingly, appointing a Lord Chancellor, a Lord Chamberlain and other high officers, and giving the district a separate Domesday Book upon the English model. But with the collapse of the scheme of conquest, the glory of Berwick waned. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it repeatedly changed hands, and it was specially protected in all international treaties. Massive fortifications were erected, the remains of which Hill Burton compares to the relics of some great Continental military city. It was frequently the

scene of Royal State functions, and the head-quarters of military enterprises. At one time in the course of the Lancaster Wars rumour reported it as 'full of Scots.' But in 1482 it was finally reduced by England, and thus became England's one permanent trophy of the international wars. Although the centre both of the major and of the minor Border wars in the sixteenth century, and involved directly or indirectly in most national movements, it had lost its chief consequence and rarely rose above the level of an ordinary provincial town. Its trade was interrupted and crushed by frequent sieges, and straitened by clumsy protectionist regulations; and although it gained outward beauty and strength by renewed fortification, it had little distinction at the date of the Union beyond the fact that, as the only English town in Scotland, it required to be specially named in all Acts of Parliament.

When the political and military distinction of Berwick disappeared, it developed a somewhat singular type of religious life, as the outcome of its half English, half Scottish history. The Episcopal Church was established by law, but the inhabitants showed strong sympathy with the Reformed Faith in its Presbyterian shape, and this sympathy was developed by visits from most of the notable reformers, including John Knox. When Knox was set free from the galleys in 1549, he was sent by Cranmer and the Privy Council to preach in Berwick, and during the two years of his ministry effected a visible improvement upon the morals of the soldiers of the garrison. He offended his superior, Bishop Tonsal of Durham, and was arraigned before an Assembly at Newcastle for teaching that the Mass was idolatrous. He was, however, acquitted, and continued his Berwick ministry till 1551, securing in its course the affection of his future wife Marjory Bowes. Dr. Cairns was wont to refer publicly to the curious fact that the ministry of Knox at Berwick was the ministry of a Church of England clergyman, under the protection of



the State and salaried by the Privy Council. Twenty years later James Melville also laboured there as parish minister. Such influences, acting upon a population partially Scottish, led to a notable development of Puritanic feeling at the beginning of the seventeenth century. There was a long series of Puritanic vicars,<sup>1</sup> and the old Parish Church saw at least one great occasion; for on July 22, 1650, John Owen, accompanying Oliver Cromwell into Scotland as his chaplain, preached there, probably in the hearing of the Protector, his celebrated sermon on, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.' During Covenanting times the citizens, with the connivance of the Corporation, sheltered many a refugee from the Merse, and at the Restoration the vicar of Berwick himself was deposed for non-conformity and became a Presbyterian minister.

This epoch marked the beginning of Dissent at Berwick. In 1719 and 1724, two churches, called respectively the High Meeting and the Low Meeting, were erected in connection with the Established Church of Scotland, and were soon crowded with worshippers; but when dissent took a corporate form in Scotland, the various branches of the Scots Dissenters—Burghers, Anti-Burghers and Relief—organised congregations which speedily outstripped the High Meeting and the Low Meeting as well as the Episcopalian Church both in numbers and in influence. The Baptists and the Methodists had but a slight hold of the population. At the beginning of this century, while the single Parish Church was comparatively empty, there were five or six large Presbyterian congregations, including most of the leading townspeople. Of these the largest and most important was the Golden Square congregation, of which John Cairns was the fourth minister. There was thus in his position little of the social inferiority and none of the financial

<sup>1</sup> Such as Oxenbridge.

difficulty to which Nonconformists are often exposed in county towns. He stepped at once upon the most commanding platform in the community.

The population of Berwick, which in 1845 was between 8000 and 9000, included some curious elements. There were, as in other county towns, the landed gentry, who attended public dinners, county balls and the Episcopal Church, appearing more frequently with the approach of parliamentary elections. There was the petty aristocracy of the town, including half-pay officers, county officials and others reckoned a hair's-breadth above the ordinary townspeople. There were the stout farmers from both sides of the Tweed, who made their visits on market-days and Sundays. But besides, there was a sort of literary or scientific circle which brought town and country together—men like David Milne Home, the Convener of Berwickshire, Dr. George Johnstone, the zoologist, and Robert Home, the Town Clerk, with some young men employed in the local press, such as Alexander Russel, afterwards of the *Scotsman*, and John Taylor Brown. These men, who formed the nucleus of the Berwickshire Naturalist Club, were not only men of culture, but had close ties to literary circles both in Edinburgh and London. Dr. Robert Lee, himself a Berwick man, described them as 'men of great knowledge and intelligence, full of fine social qualities, capital whist-players, generous-tempered, refined and courteous in manners, hospitable in the highest degree, who for many years sweetened the breath of the place and gave a charm to its society of a kind almost unexampled in a small provincial town.' Then the municipal dignitaries, although by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 they had lost certain old privileges, retained some grandeur and independence symbolised by the insignia worn by the Mayor at public functions. Some were shopkeepers and some 'merchants,' the dividing line being indistinct, and they lived not as now in

suburban villas, but as a rule above their shops and places of business, in great comfort and without any undue dependence upon the county magnates. These, with the fisherfolk—*douce*, decent and industrious—who lived in a separate quarter of the town, and the Freemen, to whose notorious venality reference will be made later, constituted the population of Berwick. There was considerable shipping traffic with London, Newcastle and Leith; but its days were numbered, for the North British Railway Company had in 1843 bought and partially destroyed the old Castle, and at the time of Dr. Cairns' Induction were constructing the Berwick and Edinburgh line. When the line was opened in June 1846, the shipmasters hoisted their flags half-mast high, and the driver of the *Magnet* coach trimmed his Union Jack with crape, as they well might do, for the railway dealt a fatal blow to hopes of increasing prosperity, which were at that time generally cherished.

The Golden Square congregation was distinctly Scottish in origin, having been founded in 1771 by the Edinburgh presbytery of the Burgher Secession Church. Indeed the minister who officiated at the founding of it was none other than John Brown of Haddington. But it soon took hold of the general population, and so increased in size that in 1796 the church was enlarged to hold 800 or 900 persons. Professor Balmer, Dr. Cairns' immediate predecessor, had, during a thirty years' ministry, exercised an influence of unusual intelligence and catholicity. It was characteristic of him that on his deathbed he said that he had no regret for the theological controversy of which he had been the centre.<sup>1</sup> 'It cost me much pain; but it served to throw light on some important subjects, and will be of still greater benefit to the next generation.' Awkward in appearance and in gesture, he was reserved and distant in personal intercourse, but by thoughtful and somewhat argumenta-

<sup>1</sup> See pages 110 and 114.

tive preaching, combined with pastoral assiduity, he had deepened the Christian life and broadened the outlook of his flock. Literary societies, a congregational library, a home-mission, and other such agencies, which were exceptional at the beginning of this century, had sprung into existence, and his liberal sympathies had told upon the whole community. It was said that when he came to Berwick no two of the ministers of the town were on speaking terms, and that when he died they all were intimate friends. In these respects Cairns found the way prepared for him; and if in outward matters he worked within lines laid down by his predecessor, his exuberant frankness, contrasting with Dr. Balmer's personal reserve, drew out the hearts of the people to him with special warmth.

For five years he gave himself to the care of his congregation without taking any considerable share in the social life or general activity of the town, beyond such interchange of services and civilities as devolves upon popular young ministers in friendly communities. Although he was welcomed to the literary circle above described, he remained to some extent outside it. It was not a specially religious circle, and religion so pervaded his character that he could not enjoy, except in a passing way, any society in which his tongue was tied on the subjects that concerned him most. Several of the following letters show his anxiety to give a Christian foundation to every personal relationship.

In the general work of the Secession Church he as yet took little part. As a young minister of distinction, he was placed upon the most important Church Committees, but beyond examining students in philosophy, he was a silent member. All attempts to draw him into literature he steadily resisted, although such attempts began with, indeed preceded, the beginning of his ministry. Mr. E. F. Maitland and Dr. William Hanna, who in turn succeeded



Dr. Welsh in the editorship of the *North British Review*, urged him to join their staff in order to carry out a series of philosophical articles which Chalmers had initiated. He was invited to be joint-editor with Dr. William Cunningham of the *Edinburgh Magazine*. Dr. Vaughan, the first editor of the *British Quarterly*, was eager for his help; and John Brown, George Wilson and Alexander Macmillan pleaded with him from month to month to contribute to the religious and speculative controversies which were being raised by the Tractarian movement and by the writings of Maurice, Kingsley and the Hares. But during this period his only publication of any consequence was an article in the *North British* on one of Dr. Brown's Commentaries, in which he pleads for an unbiassed study of the Bible as against a mere reassertion of Confessional theology, and indicates the belief that the coming struggle with infidelity will be fought out on the field of Biblical theology. He laments the literary barrenness of Scottish theology, and maintains that 'the working clergy are not entitled to excuse their unproductiveness on the plea of absorbing pastoral duty.' He himself, although 'unproductive' in literature, was by no means absorbed in his pastorate. After the first year he confined his preparation for the pulpit to the last three days of the week, reading voraciously on the earlier days, chiefly in history and patristic literature. Even his preparation for the pulpit was an amassing of knowledge, for it consisted in sweeping the whole field of the literature of the subject he had in hand, in seizing central principles with careful measurement of their relation to the Gospel, and then reducing his thoughts to writing with partial indifference to style. This, of course, applies chiefly to the exposition of Scripture which always constituted one of his two weekly sermons. Yet as the other rarely occupied him more than a day, it may be said that he spent five days of the week in accumulating positive knowledge.

During those years he lived in lodgings—first, above a shop in Bridge Street, and then in the manse, of which his landlady became tenant. He prized the freedom from the cares of a household which this arrangement secured, and his lodgings were large enough to house a brother or a friend or, still better, his venerable mother. There, when his day's work was done, he poured out his heart in long and minute correspondence—tender and considerate letters to his kinsfolk, interchange of pastoral experience with John Clark, William Graham and John Nelson, and free discussion of all things under the sun with George Wilson, whose sufferings were rarely out of his mind, and were usually kept in view in preparing for the pulpit.

Although his letters are confiding, they seldom refer, except in an external way, to that hidden life which was the cause of his continual happiness. There are numerous indications that, besides daily committing passages of the Bible to memory, he steadily pursued his course of private devotion. The midnight straggler through Bridge Street would pause sometimes at the sound of a strong voice carolling Greek and Latin hymns to the air of some Scottish psalm tune; and those who met him striding along the country roads would turn aside as they saw that he was absorbed in meditation. The unexpected visitor to his lodgings would find him bending forward in his chair, his elbows on his knees, his hands clasped and his eyes fixed on the carpet. These things were all private, secluded and, as he thought, unnoticed. But they were the backbone of his life. Some critic has said of him lately, that in his character the spiritual crushed the intellectual, and the remark is so far true. Personal intercourse with a living God was worth more to him than argument or knowledge or attainment of any sort; and it was during those first years of his ministry that this force, with its unlimited effects upon the course of his later life, became dominant, not

narrowing his interests but checking his speculative tendency and the freedom of his criticism. The gradual change is apparent in his letters ; but a crisis was reached in 1849 during a pedestrian tour in the Lake district. His interview with Wordsworth, described with such picturesque reality, has literary interest ; but there was another meeting among the Borrowdale Hills which left an eternal record. Thirty years afterwards, when visiting the Lakes, he speaks of the district as 'consecrated to him for ever by its memories of God.'

This experience determined his habits in one important particular. Thenceforward during his wide-ranging journeys he travelled alone. Never was man more companionable or possessed of a larger number of devoted friends. But, excepting twice, his holiday excursions were always solitary. Most devout men have reckoned God as nearest them in wilderness or cloister, or in some sacred corner of their homes. He found his Mount Hermon after happy days of eager sight-seeing and cheery talk with unknown foreigners. The origin of this must be found in the Westmoreland tour of 1849.

During this period he had his first experience of a process through which he had to pass more frequently than almost any man. Three or four months after his settlement at Berwick the congregation of Rose Street, then one of the most important in Edinburgh, resolved to invite him to be their minister, and began the cumbrous procedure which Presbyterian rules prescribe. The method is both tedious and provoking. Vague rumours reach a man, usually through the daily press, that he is 'going to be called,' but months pass before the Call becomes a reality, and the time which he then has at his disposal for considering it is only a few weeks. Cairns had a quaintly classical regard for the letter of Church Rules, and an innate reluctance to assume that any honour was approaching him ; and in this instance he made no attempt to interrupt procedure, though

he let it be known at once that he intended to decline the Call. Part of his reply, given to the Presbytery on July 14, 1846, indicates his views of his own future and of his capacities.

‘My first reason for declining this Call is a very strong aversion to the life of a city minister and a decided conviction that I am not qualified for that kind of usefulness. With my repugnance to perpetual excitement and multifarious engagements, I should be thrown into an element very uncongenial to the natural and healthy working of my mind. Neither my turn of mind nor my previous habits qualify me for public speaking and the superintendence of religious business. A city minister who has not talents for the platform and the committee-room must be almost entirely confined to his own congregation, and without reflecting upon those excellent men in our metropolis who confine themselves to congregational duties, I must take the liberty to say that I could not with a safe conscience add myself to their number. . . .

‘Further, the change would remove me from a sphere which I feel myself in some humble measure adapted to fill. I am grateful for the degree of acceptance, so far beyond my expectations and my deserts, with which my labours in this place have been welcomed, and I trust that, however unworthy, they have been honoured by the great Head of the Church as a means of some spiritual good. . . . One great excellence of my present charge is the opportunity which it affords of combining the discharge of pastoral duty with personal improvement in literature and theology, for nothing can lay the foundation of a permanently solid and useful ministry but painstaking and extensive study. I am only beginning to emerge from the engrossing duties and cares of my first year so as to find a little time for old and favourite studies eminently conducive to the furnishing of the mind and the securing of permanent usefulness, and, in my own case, bound up with the happiness of life. I trust that by and by, without encroaching on the time which must be kept sacred for pastoral duty, I may secure considerable leisure for mental cultivation. Were I removed to a city, I should be compelled to look upon my education as at an end, and to depend in future upon the acquisitions of the past. This I should regard as a sore hardship and calamity. . . . Far be it from me to sacrifice to a selfish love of mental improvement the public interests of the cause of Christ. I wish to study solely with



a view to the defence and extension of His truth, and it is my humble hope that I may in this manner be enabled at some future time to benefit the Church in a more befitting way than by taking up my position now in the forefront of public life.'

The worry and excitement connected with those proceedings taught him a lesson which served him well for the next ten years. Scarcely a year passed without several overtures from vacant congregations reaching him. But in every case his reply was a prompt negative. Without making any inquiries and without fear of unconstitutional action, he assured his correspondents that his roots were fixed at Berwick, and begged them to stop procedure. His habitual reserve as to anything which might seem to reflect credit upon himself prevented him from mentioning those overtures to any one, but his habitual caution led him to keep copies of most of his replies, so that only after his death was it discovered that he was invited to occupy almost every important charge which fell vacant during his early ministry. One item in the list calls for mention as illustrating his future relations with the Free Church. In its first zeal that denomination resolved to equip its theological college with professorships of logic and moral philosophy, and its leaders approached him with regard to both. While declining the proposal, he cordially supported the candidatures of his two friends, A. Campbell Fraser and P. C. Macdougall.

In Scottish ecclesiastical affairs those were quiet years. The Established Church was seeking to fill the gaps which the Disruption had left, and developing an endowment scheme under the skilful guidance of Professor Robertson. The Free Church was fully occupied in the work of organisation, church - planting and manse - building, although it staggered at the death of Chalmers (May 31, 1847). Chalmers had been specially anxious to secure 'young Cairns' for the Free Church. He was sitting with Dr. Hanna and Dr. David Smith in the Biggar manse when the news arrived

that Cairns had accepted the Call to Berwick. Looking to Dr. Hanna with unconcealed vexation, he said, 'There's an end to our business,' referring to the Free Church professorship. The admiration for Chalmers which Cairns expresses in his letter of that date with characteristic discrimination is still more clearly defined in a Lecture on Chalmers which he delivered in Exeter Hall in 1864.

The word Secession must now disappear from this volume. In 1847 the Secession and Relief Churches were united under the title of the United Presbyterian Church. The Relief had, since its origin in 1752, represented a different type of Scottish religion from the Secession. It had fewer of the marks of a dissenting church, was in more friendly relations with the Established Church, and was somewhat laxer in its discipline and terms of communion. Although the smaller Church of the two, it had as a rule larger congregations, and its ministers were more rhetorical and less doctrinal in their style of preaching. But these differences had gradually been lessened, and the Union was a natural if not an enthusiastic one. Its influence upon both churches was in all respects beneficial, resulting not only in greater corporate strength but in the removal of tendencies which had limited the work of each when separate. Although Dr. Cairns took no active part in this union movement, it obviously affected his surroundings and his position. The United Church included 518 congregations, and was thus as large as the Free Church of the day, and little smaller than the Established Church. Henceforward it was one of three Scottish Churches, each of which, amidst varying relations, has been entitled to claim the consideration of the others for its work and for its policy. The following pages show that he measured the meaning of those changes, while he was alive to the greater consequence of the political unrest of the Continent and of the religious movements by which the Church of England was then distracted.

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, Aug. 7, 1845.

' . . . By the good hand of God upon us the solemn services of yesterday were got over with comfort and peace; and I am this morning recovered somewhat from my confusion and agitation. I need say nothing of the solemnity of the scene or the nature of my feelings. I wish and pray only that I may be enabled to keep both ever before me, and to live under the influence of the truth presented to my mind. Mr. Inglis will have informed you of the particulars, which indeed I could not well detail, as I was very much insensible to them. . . .'

## TO REV. JOHN NELSON

BERWICK, Aug. 18, 1845.

'I am very cheerful and in good trim for work, though much is yet tentative, and all attended by a sad consciousness of unprofitable service. Really life rolls out before one like a long scroll or map with a roller at the bottom: you have only to unloosen the top, and fold after fold disentangles itself by the natural law of gravitation. My life has been but a few great steps: every one determining all that was to follow for a long time to come, and so it is now. Schleiermacher distinguishes between the *Lehrespflcht* and the *Berufspflcht*. My life has naturally run more in the channel of the one than of the other; not that the duty of the day has not been my happiness, but it has been my constitution or providential lot to look at life as a work rather than as an exercise of the virtuous affections.

'This is very *egoistisch*; but a man must understand his own character in order to do his duty, and if he utters it to a friend the scandal is not unpardonable. I shall strive to go on system with my ministerial work. The end, as Sir W. H. would say, conditions the means, and when I once know the end by close intercourse with the people, I shall seek light and guidance from above in adapting the means. Meanwhile I am about to begin a course of sermons on Sin, which is beginning at the beginning—on a subject where no man can say that the matter does not come home to his business and bosom, as our good friend Welsh would

say. Two days to lecture and two to sermon are my present measure; the Saturday is devoted to committing, and the surplus (if any, and not rather a bottomless deficiency) is given to rest. My dear friend, you will rejoice in the labours of the ministry. The world was made for work and stands by work: and there is no work like that of rooting out evil from the earth. The Devil, the World and the Flesh are at work, as if their wisdom did not lie rather in self-repression, and though it is a black and disgusting business to meet them on their own ground, we know who helped to make matters worse, and who will be benefited by our making them better, and know, if we know anything, that nuisance exists, not to be speculated about and laid at this or that man's door, but to be abated. Wherefore *Ad arma, Ad arma*, and God defend the right! Amen.

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Sept. 8, 1845.*

' . . . You excuse yourself from opening up outward experiences, and I may make the same apology for my silence regarding inward ones, which since I saw you have been not the least interesting and remarkable of my life. The solemnities and agitations of settlement are now over, though a certain ground-swell remains behind. My brother's distressing suffering is the only cloud; and there is light shining through even that from the true sun behind. The "Lord has been mindful of us and He will bless us still" is my permanent temper. I am truly, deeply and soberly happy, with enough of regular and not light work; but with good health, settled spirits and, I think, a more inward and vital apprehension of the realities of the Christian religion.

'I am astounded at what you say of the religious state of England. Have you really had time and opportunity to get a full insight? . . . But it is vain to oppose my *Standpunkt* to yours. We shall try to make a theory when we meet which will, like a campstool or a theodolite, rest upon both our standpoints.

'Remember me most kindly to ——. There is a seed of good about him, which the cold haar of Puseyism will not kill. I am reading just now a very matter-of-fact man—Andrew Fuller (*Hæu furiosae belluæ!*). It is a strange contrast that England should breed such men on the one hand, and air-grasping specialists like Maurice, and earth-treading sophists like Newman,



on the other. I wondered at Puseyism before I saw Romanism; and after that I despised it as the weakest, pitifullest, wrong-headedest and faint-heartedest of all ecclesiastical abortions. Do not say this to worthy D. Macmillan, or he will set me down as a cold, hard, narrow dogmatist, of a more ingrained perverseness than even you. Seriously, was ever such intellectual weakness combined with such moral unmanliness before? Do not judge of England by such malformations.

‘But I must close. One is our Master in speculation and in practice: and surely His spirit is that of simplicity and godly sincerity in ourselves; tenderest sympathy with all humble, honest, reverential approaches of the heart to Him, with however much error mixed; and invincible hostility to all self-worship, whether in the form of dead worldly-mindedness, arrogant philosophy or noisy church-formalism, which make up, in fact, my practical antichrist. . . .’

#### TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *Sept.* 1845.

‘. . . I have been preaching a doleful course of sermons on “Sin.” It has been dreary work to myself, and I daresay the people are half-tired, half-ashamed, half-frightened by the doctrine. Suppose you were lecturing half a session on “Poisons,” while the one-half or more of the class supplied you with subjects in every variety of stupor, delirium and convulsion *gratis*! It wears out the soul in a way I had no conception of, to deal with such themes earnestly and faithfully. But I shall soon escape into happier regions. I am satisfied with the aspect of things upon the whole and leave the issues in another hand. . . .’

‘. . . I have been applied to on behalf of the *North British* and that “Protestant Journal,” but have summarily declined, being determined to “keep the house and birl at the wheel.”

‘Admirable Inglis has returned from the discovery of a station to which he proposes to migrate if the war between the Boors and the Griquas will but let him. . . . His wife is well; his bantling running about; his head full of lexicography and the exaggerations of Moffat’s statistics and the ignorance of the natives. His letter is pleasant and devout withal. . . .’

TO MRS. RATTRAY

BERWICK, Oct. 21, 1845.

' . . . I think we have conversed on the mitigating influence of religious engagements on grief. I have felt it very strikingly, especially as the latter end of my brother was full of peace and hope.<sup>1</sup> . . . I was strongly attached to him. We had much congeniality of mind, and he had talents which would have ultimately raised him above all the disadvantages of his position. But he has found, I trust, a happier sphere than the uncongenial one of earth. . . . Our whole family feel much a stroke which is the first of the kind. We must learn to "die daily" and then the last instalment will not be so heavy.

' . . . I find my meeting-house quite easy to speak in ; indeed I am in danger of contracting a habit of impetuosity and vociferation which you would hardly have expected from the tremulous strain of my first attempts. . . . '

FROM GEORGE WILSON

SCHOOL OF ARTS, Nov. 11, 1845.

' . . . I want, in the first place, to crave you to send us some sermons for our Sabbath perusal. Think, my dear friend, of my poor mother, cut off from all hearing of sermons. . . . I rejoice that in spite of many distractions I experience some realisation of peace and even joy and rest in Christ. I have now got the length of the Epistle to the Romans, which I can read with a relish which before I could never reach. I take to Butler's *Analogy* also with a lower—far lower, but great delight. Let not a sermon or a hint from you be wanting to stir me on. . . . '

TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, Nov. 14, 1845.

' . . . It is not altogether welcome to me to send hasty messes of writing all the way to Edinburgh. . . . But you shall have your own way and I shall send some farrago next week. . . . Did I tell you how greatly I was pleased with your article in the *British Quarterly*?

<sup>1</sup> James Cairns died on September 27.

I even stole a simile for my next sermon from it, and think seriously of amputating the last two or three joints of the tail and giving them as the remarks of a "learned and eloquent commentator."

'Have you tried your hand on the theology of Andrew Fuller? It is worthy even of a non-professional man's dipping into. Though of course not to be named in the same day with Butler as a philosopher, Andrew has quite the heels of him as a divine. And then he was a Baptist! You have got far in reading the Romans with genuine interest. The Gospel tide nowhere forms so many deep, dark pools where the neophyte may drown. My favourite parts are the sixth and the seventh chapters, though the end of the third and the whole of the eighth are more striking to the general reader. You have now to get into the spirit of the 1st Epistle of John and of the didactic parts of his gospel, and you will have something like a glimpse of the divine depth and richness of that despised old text-book, the New Testament. The greater the strain of mind put forth in reading Paul or John, the likelier is the blessing of the Spirit. But above all, there must be the pure mind, the humility and the prayer which science, though it cannot dispense with it, may want with less fatal injury. . . .'

FROM GEORGE WILSON

BROWN SQUARE, Dec. 22, 1845.

' . . . I find myself necessitated to give the Waterloo Rooms audience a Lecture on Chemistry as supplying an argument for the existence of a great Designer. . . .

'Could you send me a note, however brief, stating whether or not Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca and the other great writers of Bridgewater treatises of the olden time referred the evil in nature to an Evil Power working against a, or the, Good One? Did they acknowledge it a mystery? Did they speak of it as resisted or as permitted by the Good Power? Were they Manicheans, Optimists or what? . . . I am requested to address Mr. Lindsay Alexander's school next Sabbath evening from a chapter in Job. I wish I had clearer ideas concerning the extent to which the words of the different speakers are sanctioned by the Holy Spirit. Job, Elihu and the concluding chapters, I suppose, are to be believed in fully. What of the others? . . .'

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, Dec. 24, 1845.

‘It is now midnight, and I can only hastily and loosely answer your important question respecting the ancient Theists. Of course the imperfection of their natural theology prevented that urgent strain of difficulty which is felt in harmonising with a clearly-known Perfect a clearly-known antagonist to perfection. The difficulty was felt, however, in all schools. I have no time for references, and I hardly remember in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* any distinct passage. But the theism of Socrates was clearly an optimism in which evil was slurred over through our ignorance of what is best for us, or said to be an ingredient in an unknown system which God had ordained. Plato with the ante-Socratic schools resolved it into the incurable malignity of matter, with which we became connected, according to him, by a fall from the pre-mundane state. Matter, however, was subordinate to the eternal reason and kept in check as well as may be—which was a sort of optimism, one factor being physically, not as in the Leibnitzian optimism morally, necessary; for Plato held the eternity of matter independent of God’s will. Aristotle is the same with Plato, only with a considerable exaltation of the material necessity and degradation of the rational control. The Stoics, with whom on this subject we may rank Cicero and Seneca, looked upon the world as a self-developing organism which had not yet reached perfection, and of which therefore we are incompetent to judge, its perfection being a harmony of which we do not see the whole. Their laws of nature, according to which everything was governed, were neither the impressions of the will of a Being *ab extra*, as Plato held, nor the mechanical tendencies of Epicurus, but laws of an inward reason—a spirit of harmony that informed the system. This pantheistic turn of Stoicism neither Cicero nor Seneca seems to have understood, and hence they often speak in the more Christian style of Plato.

‘The question was as thoroughly explicated in the ancient schools as it can ever be, especially by the Academics of whose opinions Cicero has given a dialectical specimen in the third book of his *De Natura Deorum*, where almost all the difficulties in Hume’s *Natural Religion* (which is modelled after it) are stated, and generally in a way that is quite unanswerable. I need not go into detail. The difficulties were the same as now; and the only answer given was—the intractable evil of matter, or ignorance; in both cases



with an optimist spirit. Manicheism came out of the corrupt Zoroasterism of the East, in the *omnium-gatherum* of Alexandria, and was not known to the classical philosophy, except in a few dialectical flourishes of the Academics.

‘Job is very difficult to separate into Divine and Human. I apprehend that there is much in detail in the friends of Job that is right—though their main argument is rotten—and that Job’s main argument is rotten also, viz.: that he was *so* innocent, being innocent of the charges laid against him, that his suffering at all was a mystery—with a similar soundness in detail. Elihu and the close, I think with you to be warranted throughout, and with regard to the rest, we must hold to what divines call the analogy of faith, and use the Book only as corroboration or nervous expression of sacred doctrine, not as independent argument. . . .’

#### TO MISS JEAN DARLING

BERWICK, Dec. 29, 1845.

‘. . . You have had dark clouds lately, as our family also; but, blessed be God, they are not like the evening cloud which grows darker and darker, but like the morning cloud that waxes brighter and brighter, attending upon the sun and at length vanishing into perfect day. . . . I like your cheerfulness, which is so pensive, and your sadness, which has so much calm peace in it. I think this is the true Christian spirit. Our Master has left us an example, as of other things, so also of rejoicing with them that rejoice and weeping with them that weep; and yet there is no harsh contrast in His life between the two. . . . To find the balance, so as though sorrowful to be always rejoicing, and, though rejoicing evermore, to have also the blessing of them that mourn, is the great difficulty in the secret management of our hearts, and it has cost me great trouble. Women seem to attain this happy medium more easily than men; at least I have met three or four who seemed to have it almost in perfection. . . . In men there is far more of what is extreme. They are either quite cast down, or too easily restored to unqualified hilarity and spirits—both despising God’s chastening more when they do despise it, and fainting more when they do faint under it, than women do. For some months I have come almost every day into contact with scenes of suffering and death, and I find how profitably it curbs the mere riot of good health and activity. . . . I hope I never shall be hardened in visiting the sick.

It is often very affecting to hear their expressions of thankfulness for this office, and unspeakably more so to see the power of faith. . . . I feel solid happiness in living thus amid the realities of life and death and of daily religious contemplation. . . . Though conscious of much infirmity, I have, upon the whole, the testimony of a good conscience. I have every evidence of the attachment of the congregation, so far as it can display itself; and though I trust I should be strengthened to run counter to their general feelings or wishes where I thought these wrong, I have not yet had this kind of trial. If I were only useful, I could live joyfully all my days, contented with my present happiness, and I trust I shall not be without usefulness, though we must wait for the precious fruits of harvest and have long patience. . . .'

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Jan. 7, 1846.*

' . . . Your argument<sup>1</sup> from the atmosphere is as fine as anything you ever wrote, especially in imaginative illustration and moral eloquence. . . . I hope you will persevere in your application of the whole sphere of chemistry to this purpose. . . . I wish I had time to write out my thoughts on Natural Theology, which are growing upon me, and were all called into vivid life by your lecture. But I am happy in other work, and look for a blessing with it.

'I quite agree in your analysis of Job. Zophar means to say that the question has one side; Job answers that it has two, and by way of putting his friends to shame, enlarges first on the side they had denied, then agrees to their doctrine so far as it goes, and finally resolves all into the sovereignty of God.'

## TO MRS. RATTRAY

BERWICK, *Jan. 19, 1846.*

' . . . Poor John Ker was unable to preach a few Sabbaths ago, but is better again. I know the interest you take in him, as does every one that knows him. He is greatly beloved in Alnwick. . . .

' . . . If popularity were an object, I might be satisfied, because my wishes on that head, which were very moderate, have been much

<sup>1</sup> Lecture on the Alleged Antagonism between Chemistry and Poetry.

surpassed. But it is a very different thing to be useful; and though that is more occult, it is the only matter worth looking at. I have a good deal of doubt on this point. It is sad to think to how many you stretch out your hands in vain. The popular mind is deeply ignorant, and it is very disheartening to sound some of its depths. The congregation generally is above the average in intelligence; but I find sad enough disclosures, especially in examining applicants for membership. I have had some very pleasant interviews, however, of this kind with young people, and have the very greatest enjoyment in teaching a couple of classes of young men and women (I hate the words *male* and *female*) on Sabbath evenings. I could not be happy without teaching, more or less. If I do good any way, it will be in these classes.

'I generally preach courses of sermons, and am just waiting to begin a new course. I can now manage my preparation by beginning on Wednesday morning. I suppose the progress will continue till I begin on Friday or Saturday, or, as the Irishman said, "to-morrow," a date which all the great masters of extempore oratory reach in due time.

'I don't feel the labour of committing much, managing all on Saturday after 3 P.M. I have a good deal of visiting, and I now know my people tolerably, though, as a worthy old lady told me, I "know little about them, for they are all very good when the minister is calling. . . ."'

#### TO REV. JOHN NELSON

BERWICK, *Feb.* 16, 1846.

' . . . So you have been in Perth in a large congregation, and with hard work. It is no small trial at the beginning, without the delightful stimulus of the fact that you are ministering to your own flock. . . . Newport seems to combine many advantages. I feel deeply the importance of your having a sphere requiring not too wearing labour and admitting of your own mental development *in* your work; I say *in* and not *apart from* it. . . . We are very much alike in our needs as to the character of those to whom we minister (for as to health, I have not been tried as you have). I hope it is neither vanity nor flattery to say that something like attention and cultivation is necessary to get much good from either of us, and that whatever progress we may make into perfect sympathy with the popular mind, something also must be exacted on the other

side. Your adaptation for most audiences is greater than mine ; but you also have your *Bedingungen*. “Nil tentes invita Minerva.” My present plan is to treat the subjects of preaching from my own *Standpunkt* with earnestness and simplicity, hoping thereby to make it that of my people ; and though I have many misgivings, I trust that the effort is not in vain. I am sensible of much mental improvement from sermon-writing. I think every preacher is bound to strive forwards, and to tell his people in each sermon something that is nearly as new, at least in its form, to himself as to them, and I find the domain of theology in all its kinds constantly widening. The opposite plan of saying your say weekly—distinguishing between what is good for the people and what is good for you, and seeking the latter in totally distinct study, I would find a pillow of thorns to my ministerial conscience.

‘Visiting is a great refreshment to me. It promotes devotion wonderfully, and is so like the example of Christ that it does one’s heart good to be in the midst of it. My time has fled with amazing rapidity since I was ordained. The Berlin winter was the longest of my life, and not the least important. May it not be that eternity is realised by all-engrossing action, and thus the Kantian desideratum of a life out of the form of time is supplied. The impulse of working for an attached people, and with the far higher idea of the Saviour’s call and daily sympathy, is truly great. “There is that scattereth and yet increaseth” ; “Work while it is day” ; “He that loseth his life shall find it” ; “He went about doing good,” are texts that very much enter into my ideal at the present moment.’

TO MRS. WILSON

BERWICK, *Feb.* 16, 1846.

‘I return George’s MSS. I am sure the lectures must have done good ; and I look upon them as part payment of a large debt of instruction on the *morale* of science due from George to the literary, as well as to the Christian world. We quite agree as to the resources of Natural Theology, which has been as often foolishly cried up as down. What struck me most in the last paper was the organic misery of the pre-Adamite animal race, which is a poser, on every principle of Natural Religion, and seems hard to be reconciled with our common notion of Scripture that man is their representative and the determining cause of their lot, and with such detailed statements as that about the “creature” in Romans viii. How the not uncommon theory of compensation to the brute creation in a



future life could be made to accommodate all these monsters with seas to swim in and with appropriate *pabulum* it would be hard to say, except by supposing a Valhalla of Megatheriums, in which they eat each other up and immediately come alive again to renew the banquet *ad infinitum*. But I will not bore you with these speculations, knowing the dislike of ladies for the abstruser parts of metaphysics. . . .

‘I look forward to the meeting of the Synod with other feelings besides a pure Presbyterian wish to bring the united wisdom of the Church to bear on its recusants in doctrine and discipline, and to display that sublime harmony of freedom and unity which is found neither in the isolation of Independency nor the bondage of the Episcopal system. . . .

‘I am truly happy, with plenty of work, excellent health, prevailing good spirits and as great acceptableness as I believe is consistent with dependence on a higher blessing, far more than I ever anticipated or soberly can think deserved. Only there is a vast difference between outward tokens of prosperity and inward ; and I have often my fears. “Blessed is the man that feareth always.” I see that I am sometimes not understood by a portion of the audience ; and I am not without misgivings whether a greater simplicity—not so much of style as of thought—would not be a general improvement. But it is right for a man to bring out himself ; and if one cannot speak fervently except from being excited in his own way, I think, upon the whole, I am excused. . . . Thank uncle for those books of Miall’s, who is a better fellow than I thought him. . . .’

TO REV. JOHN BROWN, D.D.

BERWICK, *March 18*, 1846.

‘I can in some measure appreciate your loss from my vivid recollection of the engaging excellence of your child, and join humbly in the prayers of many that you may be strengthened, and that the design of Infinite wisdom and kindness in this painful trial may be fulfilled.

‘I have been led to think a good deal of late on the bearing of the life and work of the Second Adam on childhood, having just finished the exposition of the Saviour’s early life. I cannot help thinking that the Incarnation in infancy has a most benignant aspect towards the moral state of infants and children ; and that,

as the first Adam in manhood involved all in ruin, so the second Adam in childhood will much more rescue all. Is there not also something like a tender reminiscence of His own childhood in the affection of the Saviour towards children? The moral impression which this makes is much stronger than the logical argument in favour of the salvation of all? I should be happy to be able to urge this in the case of bereavement in my own congregation; for though the salvation of all the children of believing parents is a truth which no one has doubted, so far as I am aware, it wears a still more auspicious aspect when connected with a universal economy of infant salvation.

‘It would ill become me to offer consolation. In such a case, deep must call unto deep; and I have suffered nothing like. Only, one cannot get far in life without tasting something of the bitterness of death, nor far in Christian experience without being able to say that the Gospel which binds up the wounds of his own heart will not fail in any case. It is surely the greatest triumph of sin that it turns our most virtuous and tender affections into instruments of torture; but even here grace superabounds. For those we have loved to be with Christ, and for Christ to be still with us in the presence of the Comforter, is surely enough to comfort us against grief on every side.

‘I find a good many difficulties in the Gospel history, and enjoy all the discomforts of a very troublesome mentor in this department by having Strauss at my elbow. But the inward coherence of the whole is only more fixed upon me by his efforts to tear asunder the framework of the narrative, and the grandeur of the Saviour’s character, which is the main idea of my lecturing, and not the settlement of details in His life, comes out upon me more clearly from day to day. I find myself so much behind in historical knowledge in theology, that it takes me hard labour, and I have given up systematic divinity and other studies in the meantime, as less urgent. I have no other view than that of steady, sober and methodical labour in the cause of Christ, and no expectation of being of the slightest service by any other quality, and by that only through His blessing.

TO MRS. RATTRAY

BERWICK, *March 23*, 1846.

‘. . . Somehow I have already contracted a great dislike to going from home. I used to think that a Sunday’s absence would

be a very agreeable variety; but it is quite the reverse, and I am miserable the whole of the week. It is surely a strange proof of the flexibility of human nature that the weekly writing of a sermon and lecture comes to be essential to comfortable existence. It is on the same principle, I suppose, that the Musselburgh fisherwomen need to load their creels with stones in going home from market. . . . I enjoyed lately one absence, viz., at Stockbridge communion, in the congregation of which my mother and most of my nearest relatives are members, amongst whom I greatly delighted to spend a day or two.

‘I am glad to hear of James’s progress. . . . He is a spirited little fellow, and if he does himself justice will, as the Germans say, let some good be hoped of him. I have about forty lads in my Sabbath class, and it is the pleasantest teaching I ever had to do with. I tried the same thing in Broughton Place, but did not succeed from my non-adaptation to the continuous system of address employed there. The catechetical is the only efficient instrument in dealing with the young, and even with the old, as I notice in my examinations for the communion.

‘. . . My labours are pretty regular. I often think of the beginning of the 19th Psalm as suiting the certain recurrence of ministerial work: “Day unto day uttereth speech”; though I do not know if we can add in all cases, “Night unto night teacheth knowledge.” I could never have believed that I could have driven so much thought through my head in a single day as I have sometimes been obliged to do. . . . I have great reason to be thankful for the kind indulgence of the people; as a proof of which the trustees raised my stipend lately to £200—a much larger sum than I ever had at my disposal before—though a benevolent mind need not be at a loss with money. . . . There is more than the average of piety and intelligence in my congregation; and it is both an encouragement and a trial, for such people need to be carefully attended to, and I often feel doubtful of my mental adaptation to many, not to speak of the humbling inferiority in religious experience to advanced believers. . . .’

#### TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *April 7, 1846.*

‘. . . I have just got over my third communion with much comfort and increasing self-possession. Really, it marks a sort of era, and I do not know if, after all, your weekly communion is attended with

the same lawful excitement. At all events, I give my voice for church festivals of some kind or other; and I do not know a more harmless one than this.

‘I take the liberty of sending a batch of lectures on St. Luke. Perhaps they may interest a little; for I think them better, on the whole, than the series on Revelation, though *cheu!* how far below the subject. The people are pleased with my lecturing; but it is, perhaps, from the effort to keep to the spirit of the Bible rather than from any other quality. . . . I am very thankful to be understood, and it is a real pleasure not to fight as beating the air. I enclose a lecture on the Sabbath—one of a series delivered by the ministers of this place to young men—which endeavours to hold a medium between the Judaism of the Sabbath Protectionists and the laxity of Whately and Arnold. . . .’

TO MRS. WILSON

BERWICK, *April 15, 1846.*

‘. . . In regard to all the reports you mention, I have only to repeat the apostolic maxims: “Neither give heed to fables,” “Shun old wives’ babblings,” “Receive not an accusation against an elder but before two or three witnesses.” The report is from top to bottom a pure fabrication. The lady alluded to is, I believe, an excellent and praiseworthy individual, but known to me only in a distant and incidental manner, so that the origin of the rumour is like the origin of evil in general, an inscrutable mystery to me. Annoyance of this kind is, I suppose, a part of the common lot, though it gives me indeed very little trouble, except as compromising in some measure another and totally defenceless party. . . .’

TO REV. JOHN CLARK

BERWICK, *April 16, 1846.*

‘. . . I permit myself to extemporise only at a Wednesday prayer-meeting. . . . I am strongly convinced of the advantages of written preparation; and though I have sometimes felt after an extempore address more excitement, this, I am persuaded, is a pure delusion; for if you add to the excitement of writing a sermon that of preaching it from memory, the sum of excitement is much greater than in the other case; and this double excitement is the fair index of the feelings of the people in hearing what is totally new to them, if it be only warmly delivered. I know you advise me to speak extempore; but I dare not; and though I could without breaking down, I should



not for conscience sake. But I do not judge your liberty according to my conscience. . . . I rarely preach thrice, and it is not expected. The opposite plan is not to my taste, and I would beg leave to apply to it the language of Scripture, "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service."

'I have come now to know my 600 communicants pretty well, and am quite at home among them. Still, it will take a long time to make me acquainted with the dangers and frailties of all. I have never been so happy before. There is no work like this under the sun; and if I ever doubted my call to it, that time has long past. It is a great blessing to have both a sphere that suits one and a sphere that improves one; and I trust by the grace of Christ mine will combine both these advantages. "In all labour there is profit."

'As to public affairs, I suppose you are fond of the Evangelical Alliance, as I am; though you would not with Mr. M'Crie make the Solemn League the basis of union. I believe we do not differ on Covenanting after all. Nor on the extent of the Atonement, though we seem to do so. Why, then, should the Old Light lift up its testimony against the New; and the New Light seek to extinguish the Old? We are both of the light and of the day; we are not of the night nor of the darkness. . . .'

FROM GEORGE WILSON

MONDAY, *May 25*, 1846.

'Everything I see makes me glad that you have resolved to stick like a *bur*, or rather the burr, to Berwick. If you were here, they would have had you involved in that black and hopeless business about the Slave Money. You would have been holding an umbrella and making an affecting oration about John Knocks and the Reformation. All which, and the spoiling of your best hat, you have missed by staying where you are. Laying Foundation Stones; Blackening Blacks; Begging Money; Excommunicating Slanderers; Pointing out Prevalent Errors; Fraternalising with Baptists; Making Never-like-to-end Speeches on Platforms; Examining Deaf and Dumb Schools; Patronising Alphabets for the Blind; Hearing Singing for the Million, applied to the improvement of Psalmody; Manufacturing Hymn-books; and a thousand other unnatural ills that town ministers are heirs to, you have escaped, and like a Pure Spirit in Space, you can sit in Bridge Street and listen to the carts go rumbling by, and hear the coach-horn blow.

‘Well, my friend, you have chosen the better part. By and by, when you have matured your Theology, we shall be wanting you here as Professor.

‘I was Meta-physically better of my sojourn with you, but not physically. Let the Tweed be Anathema; it gave me an uncomfortable rheumatism, which, although this is the flitting season, has not thought fit to look out new tenements for itself. I have not, like some unhappy people, an Aching Void but an Aching Plenum, *i.e.* I am full of aches. I might quote the words of the beautiful Scotch song: “I leaned my back against an aik.”

‘I thought I had got hold of a Hymn by the tail, but the rheumatism banished it. If the wind will but veer round to the west, I’ll get it knocked off. And now what remains but to say we are all well. Seven Elijah the Tishbites visited us like Angels Unawares, but not having seven prophets’ chambers we are billeting six on our friends. . . . Please remember me to Editor Brown, Naturalist Johnstone and the Johnstoneesses, Engineer Bruce, News-vendor —; finally to that excellent “body” Miss —, and that interesting-looking lassie Miss —. Mother, Mary, Jessie, Jeanie, Uncle, Aunt, Daniel, Margaret, their two babies, the cat and Grim all send love, respects, remembrances, wags of tails, etc., as the case may be.’

#### TO MISS JEAN DARLING

BERWICK, *May 26, 1846.*

‘. . . I do not forget your counsels against personal preaching, which I have always regarded as mean and dastardly, since private faults should be reprehended in private, and not exposed under the thin covering of general reflection before a whole congregation. At the same time, it is as necessary not to be too general, but to present descriptions in which individuals may recognise themselves, though not their neighbours. If we could only get people to take offence at themselves and not at the preacher or their fellow-hearers, all would be well. But it is an incurable blindness that afflicts human nature, and no man will hear for his own good till a higher influence is brought to bear upon his mind. . . .’

#### TO REV. JOHN NELSON

BERWICK, *June 16, 1846.*

‘. . . I have no doubt that everything will grow easier upon your hands, and that you will find in the work, as it lengthens out, a

source of varied interest of which the beginner has little idea. The great fear I had was that of deadness and formality after the first excitement was over; but the grace of Christ has hitherto kept me from this, and though miserably far from realising my own idea of a living minister, I have found the work, instead of a substitute for personal religion, a great help to it. I feared also that I should soon exhaust myself, and after a few series of sermons find the circle of theology very much a beaten track. This has been quite otherwise. I find that I get new ideas myself in almost every sermon, and that it is quite possible to make even popular preaching a means of mental discipline. I have secured also more time for reading than I expected, though certainly this is still a great desideratum. . . .

'I was greatly delighted with Fraser's appointment to the Logic Chair in the New College, which seems to me full of promise in all directions. . . . Upon the whole I liked your Assembly proceedings, though your leaders were just chary enough about the Evangelical Alliance. On slavery, I think you could hardly have done otherwise, after being herded and bullied as you were, though I do hope the connection will soon be dropped if nothing decisive is done on the other side of the Atlantic.

'You might perhaps see the report of our German deputies. The King of Prussia is yielding about the constitution, and it seems that a synodal government is about to be conceded to the Church. Poor Hengstenberg is in a state of great weakness and nervous exhaustion. Neander is flourishing as ever.

'I hope you have got liberal-minded Secession neighbours, and that you will not suffer your testimony to be lifted too high against even the Erastian Establishment. Also look upon the Relief with an eye of forbearance, and remember the great Campbeltown case, which still sticks in their gizzard. Don't you know that we are soon to be united, and that we will be almost as formidable a body as yourselves—though, alas! without Sustentation Fund, College, General Assembly, Protest and Claim of Right and "historical character!"

'You may have heard of the proposal to translate a certain minister of a sister church from a humble corner to a conspicuous, extended and sublime sphere of usefulness; to all which the obscure individual in question, as I have occasion to know, has hitherto only been observed to lift up his hands in surprise and deprecation and resolutely to shake his head. . . .'

## FROM GEORGE WILSON

July 18, 1846.

‘. . . We have been in all the din of a bitter election : I am like to be torn in pieces by my dissenting brethren for not voting for Sir Culling Smith. He is a sincere, good man of the thorough Wilberforce stamp, but I do not hesitate for a moment to vote against him. . . . Is it not deplorable that worldly persons should be, as it were, compelled to believe that evangelical piety and common-sense cannot go together? . . .

‘I perceive that Strauss’s *Life* has been done into English. Who in this country is to reply to him? Does no Nathan lift the hospitable *sneck* of an unnumbered house in Bridge Street, glide noiselessly up the noise-echoing stair, and for a moment arresting the rapt and delighted attention with which you are poring over the *United Secession Magazine*, proclaim, “Thou art the man!” He is gone before Miss Reid can ask his name, terrified lest he be a seventh probationer come to squeeze the six already with you, and compel you to sleep in full canonicals on the floor. Oh! thou that hast heard Strauss of the musical bow, composer of Mahometan heavenly waltzes, and knowest still better Strauss of the blandly scoffing pen, who, like Corelli, has written a Devil’s sonata, what said the Trafalgar Flag? “England, including Berwick, expects every man to do his duty.” . . .’

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, July 29, 1846.

‘I was not a little saddened to hear that you were laid under medical arrest. Full of trouble for years past your life has been, and I very deeply sympathise with this last cloud, though I hope it is only a cloudlet. I have not had a spare hour—with three sermons a week, running off to preach fast-day sermons, examining schools, meetings for the deaf and dumb, etc. etc. etc. These were some of the delectable ingredients of a Metropolitan’s or Patriarch’s life, according to your sketch; and with the opening of the N. B. Railway they seem to have travelled into the provinces, along with Teetotal Excursions, Agricultural Youths’ Anniversaries, and a flood of metropolitan Sabbath-breaking and loose practices of every description. The truth is that town and country threaten speedily to swallow each other up like the Kilkenny cats, leaving nothing but some broken chemical apparatus and some rent and



dragged sets of gown and bands scattered along the line at irregular intervals to attest the catastrophe. . . . But all my movements just now are watched, chronicled, interpreted *in malam partem* by an Edinburgh circle, and I must be on my guard. Perhaps my shadow may pay you a visit, and I hereby commission it, if it does so in my absence, to bear all good and kindly messages, and to wrap itself well up, like Homer's heroes, in a travelling cap of mist, that it may not be laid hold of by female hands and burned in effigy or hung up over the new Synod House as a substitute for a new weather-cock.

'Your election business was a desperately "thrown" one. It is to be deplored that good and philanthropic men should bring the cause of religious liberty—not to say religion itself—into disrepute by indiscretions. What nincompoops they made of themselves! Macaulay, I think, is ingrainedly sophistical, and there was a large infusion of the old element in his speeches. But his pledge to do nothing offensive was surely enough; and it seemed liker a personal quarrel than anything else.

' . . . I expect to receive soon your *Vestiges Investigated*. Don't scourge it too much. The sarcasm, especially, will bear to be given with a little dilution or excision; and the moral indignation is too good to throw away.

'You should rest as much as possible during your vacation. If you are at a loss for quieting and soothing reading, I could send you a year's series of the *United Secession Magazine*, though gentle yet not dull. It is a pity that in science you have no such popularisers, no such marked line between the true and the edifying. Is not the *British Quarterly* just the *Secession Magazine* grown up to puberty and with its wisdom-teeth cut? Who knows but that it is a development, as from the reptile to the mammal—I will not say from the monkey to the man!

'My dear George, I wish I had anything to send you that would be readable. But my sermons, lectures, etc., it is enough to preach once, and I am getting more and more ashamed of them all. I often think it will be a feature of the Millennium that all preaching will be abolished, and the writings of apostles and prophets shall be read alone in churches, and, with grave Scriptural devotional services and hymns as literal as the Scots version, make up the whole of divine service. When the universal taste of men prefers this to the stimulus of contemporaneous teaching, the Church will have put away childish things and be wellnigh perfect. But the time is far; and all we can do is by God's blessing to make it nearer.'

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *Aug.* 18, 1846.

‘. . . Your letter was particularly welcome, as it removed my fear of danger. . . . It is a great matter to be found by trouble at our post working the work given us to do; and if we just return to it with a more spiritual aim and greater confidence in God’s strengthening grace, the delay will be far more than compensated. Poor creatures that we are! We think of our works being interrupted while the true work is going on, the building up of our eternal character, the conformation of our souls to the one perfect image. Who knoweth what is good for man in this vain life? . . .’

## TO REV. JOHN CLARK

BERWICK, *Aug.* 19, 1846.

‘. . . I suppose you are occupied like most at present with speculations on Christian Union. Do you expect the Millennial Church to be built up on the Old Light testimony, or have you any special recipe for the diminution of sects? I, for my part, never expect to see the Holy Catholic Secession Church, nor do I think the consummation greatly to be desired. If we could only unite with the Old Light, we might broaden our basis a little and have something more of accommodation both in the ground floor and in the attics for the universal Church when it came to knock at the door and seek admission and lodging. But this can be discussed at our meeting, and the basis of union drawn up, if we can only agree about the right fixing of the temporal arm upon the spiritual shoulder. . . .’

## TO MRS. RATTRAY

BERWICK, *Sept.* 22, 1846.

‘. . . . The Relief Union seems wellnigh accomplished. It is like the union, not of two globules of quicksilver which run together of themselves, but of two snowballs or cakes of mud that need in some way very tough outward pressure. I hope that the friction will elicit heat, since this neither cold nor hot spirit is not to edification. . . .’

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Nov.* 9, 1846.

‘. . . I read with interest the speeches at your Philosophical Meeting. . . . It seems to have been one of the greatest exhibitions of your self-renowned, world-renowned Athenian spirit of literature. . . . Macaulay was very Macaulayish, Samuel Brown more than Brunonian, and the Provost in his exalted key, though a note lower than at the Scott Monument affair. Whately I should have liked to see. As for his speaking, I should not have expected much from it; and it seems it was not heroic. Upon the whole, the world proceeds; and at this rate it may be hoped that philosophy will soon get out of its first quarter.

‘I got a request from the Dunbar secretary, which I felt it my duty to decline *sine die*. I have no popular resources of a scientific kind—for psychology and ethics never can be made popular—and as for theology, I have enough of it in my every-day duties. I do not approve of an ostentatious alliance between the spirit of religion and that of science, through the medium of clerical amateurs. . . .’

## TO MISS JEAN DARLING

BERWICK, *Nov.* 24, 1846.

‘. . . My own health is as good as usual, and I find it quite equal to all my present duties. Preaching is no exertion to me. . . . I find my disposition to get excited in manner wearing away, which is favourable, as mere animal violence can serve no good purpose. . . .’

## TO REV. JOHN NELSON

BERWICK, *Dec.* 14, 1846.

‘. . . I don’t know whether I ever told you that I had a great defect of the faculty of understanding description, so that I always skipped the finest passages in the *Waverley Novels* and supposed the action to be going on in pure space. So after all, I still conceive of you very much as in an undifferenced medium. . . .

‘. . . I find that it requires a rigid economy of time to keep an eye upon some hundreds of families and attend to all their necessities, besides spinning out of one’s head two fully-written discourses and an extempore one every week. Yet how many men do this

and far more! How many have piled up large folios besides by way of literary exercitation! There are great mammoth deposits beneath our feet, and it is no light task to keep our present formation from being shamed by these primeval ones.

‘It is often saddening, after preaching with all earnestness for weeks together sermons adapted to the case of the unregenerate, to find no perceptible effect upon their minds. I see abundant attention in a well-filled place of worship, and hear pious people speak of the discourses as adapted to rouse and convert; but the end itself seems as far off as ever. I cannot say that a single instance of direct conversion has come to my knowledge since I began my labours. This is humbling and trying in no small degree. I am depending on the aid of the Holy Spirit and regularly imploring it, but there must not be sufficient fervour and simplicity of dependence. This, however, is the dark side, and there is also a bright one. I think there is a perceptible quickening among the good people. There is great interest among the young in my Sabbath classes, and there is at almost every quarterly communion an accession of persons of whose sincere Christianity after very careful examination I hope well. Perhaps the course of the Spirit in this case is more gentle and progressive, and the result may be more permanent than if it were attained by a process of a more sudden and revivalist nature.

‘I find great pleasure in lecturing, and a large portion of my studies are conducted with a view to it. I have got to the end of the first ten chapters of Luke, and continue to like it more and more. Nothing has disabused my mind more of the first impressions made by Strauss than the regular and close examination of the Gospel history. The difficulties grow ever less and less the more one works into the substance of the history and applies to it the ordinary laws of historical evidence. In Germany the conflict about the Gospel of John is still going on. There is an interesting review by Kling in the last number of the *Studien*, which shows that that school, notwithstanding all the efforts of Baur and others, is going down the water.’

TO MRS. RATTRAY

BERWICK, *Jan.* 6, 1847.

‘. . . The new year makes us look round upon our friends and put ourselves right with them. . . . Few things affect me more than the retrospect of life; and I think I am becoming more pro-



foundly alive to the vanity of the world and, at the same time, less disheartened and disconsolate on the discovery. Some years ago it was a wonder to me how older people who had seen so much change, and gone through the scanty round of human joys, could move on so composedly. It is a wonder still, in so far as there is no religion in the case. But I experience in my own feelings so much more of the healing power of religion, that I do not wonder at the calmness and even cheerfulness with which the world is borne to the end by those who are above it and have a higher life hid with Christ in God. I think I could now bear old age myself with some equanimity; and the flight of time I now regard with concern, not so much because it is hastening on to age, as because it is hurrying away unimproved. You may think it strange in a person to be indulging in this strain, when yet some considerable space from thirty; but in truth I am older in feeling than in years, and have had always a curious interest in the progress of time, and the changes which it makes on the character. How little after all is the difference of the length of one Christian's life from that of his neighbour, if they all reach the same heaven, and have before them the same eternity! It is like the length of a ship to the whole ocean,—one plunging in from the prow, another from the centre, a third from the stern. I can hardly realise the degrees of glory in heaven as a motive to exertion and a reason why we should wish for long life. One would take so thankfully the lowest room; and the degree in which the common glory exceeds all the difference seems to me so great that it is like the penny in the parable given to all alike, while the differences are only like small fractions, not reaching up so high as a farthing. I would rather work because it is present duty and glorifying to God, than because it is likely to bring larger happiness in a future life. Not that we should not have respect to the recompense of the reward; but we should look at the common reward far more than at the surplus which may be realised. This should comfort us for the early dead; and should make us quite willing to follow if soon called, for though we reap as we sow, a long seed-time is not necessary to a large harvest. Pardon this little discussion, which grows naturally out of the time. Happy will it be for us if we are content to leave our days in God's hands, and only seek to number them that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

' . . . If you see Mr. G——, whom I met here, you will remember me. He is a fierce Churchman, and we had a spar. I hope to see him a Voluntary though involuntarily. . . . '

TO MRS. WILSON

BERWICK, *Jan. 13, 1847.*

‘ . . . I have no immediate prospect of getting to Edinburgh, where indeed it is not safe for me to be, in more senses than one; for not to speak of dangers from enemies, I am never in so immoral a state of mind, never so given to foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient, as when with you.

‘ Another year has come, full of duties, trials, joys and sorrows. You feel very lightly the lapse of time, for you are getting so much above it—like a ship out of deep waters and within the shelter of the heavenly shore. I think I also feel the concussion of life less. I am becoming more and more profoundly sensible how little is to be done in this world by any one person, and how vain are all the hopes and dreams of more ardent youth. And I think at the same time that with God’s blessing I am becoming more rationally enthusiastic, more alive to the value of fragments of labour and influence, and more resolved to make the little momentum for good which any one man can generate tell to the very utmost of its force. There is a romance in philanthropy as well as in worldliness which is weak and childish, and which cannot be the parent of sober, self-denying labour in the cause of God and his Son. It is a far greater thing after all, when selfishness and ambition are dispelled, *to have* the smallest place in the inconceivably grand result of Christian enterprise, and the lowest station in the agencies that are bringing it about, than *to wish to have* that wider room in the field, which Providence has denied to almost all, and to sit still because the romantic wish cannot be gratified. I never was greatly captivated by any visions of this kind, and see more and more reason to regard them as the lures of the devil to take men off the solid earth into the clouds.

‘ My work is in all its parts very interesting and congenial. Yet there is in some things a pleasing evidence of religious life; and I remark a growing liberality and kindness to the poor. On this point I lay great stress, preaching up very much the good Samaritan and the deadness of faith without works, not without some success. A very favourite motto is “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life.”

‘ I have an excellent, working Session which, though it does not square with the Congregationalist platform, is about as tolerable as any Presbyterian thing can be, and is really worthy of double honour.

Your very good friend Mr. Kirkwood is well, and we have always very pleasant intercourse, though we do not agree on the great and fundamental Article. There are some people in my own congregation more or less tinctured with Baptist scruples. But the Millennium is coming; and why should we root out what will die away in the ground?

'I wrote lately a review of a curious book by Harris on the Pre-Adamite Earth. But it was done to order, and is very short. I can live quite happily without writing. Had I only time to read and think, it would fill up a desideratum. I study nothing so much as our Saviour's life, which has never been done justice to, and never will. Nothing begets such a love to Him as a rational and sober contemplation of His character. It makes all the doctrines of theology wear a new face, and gives to heaven an air of familiarity which nothing else can. . . .'

#### TO DAVID CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Feby.* 9, 1847.

' . . . I have often talked with you on the subject of following some more liberal course of life, and now I submit a definite scheme.

'The trustees of my congregation have added to my stipend . . . and as my present income more than meets my liabilities, this affords an opportunity of carrying into effect a long-cherished desire. I mean to place the amount at your disposal till you have attained a liberal education.

'It appears to me that you possess abundant talents to qualify you to be a teacher; and if you incline to select that profession there is perhaps none in which the demand for educated men is likely to be greater, and none in which I could better advance your prospects.

'Here, then, is a distinct, tangible and serious proposal which will tend partly to your usefulness in the world, and I think also to your comfort, though I by no means undervalue the quiet happiness of rustic life. There are only two objections which I can anticipate—first, your age. But you are no older than very many, and may be an accomplished teacher by twenty-six. If you should afterwards think of studying for the ministry, which I think you should not look at without the most serious and searching inquiry into your personal religion and bent of mind, you may finish your course before thirty.

‘The other objection is—dependence. But then it is not on a stranger ; it is not greater than every one must incur on some near relative at starting ; it is not more contingent on the continuance of a life than almost all undertakings are ; and if the plan succeeds through the divine blessing, you may have an opportunity of clearing off the debt by repayment, or, which is a far nobler way, by going and doing likewise.

‘I have made this the subject of serious reflection and prayer, and wish you to do the same ; for it is too grave to be entered on lightly and without seeking guidance from the Father of Lights. . . .’

## FROM GEORGE WILSON

*April 21, 1847.*

‘. . . I have the mournful news to communicate to you that Mary is gone to the world of spirits. . . . I loved her better than I loved anything else in the world. For the last six years we had been greatly together. We knew each other so well, and she was so fond, so kind, so self-denying, so generous, so noble in all respects. . . . I have leant so long on her that, now that her support is gone, I feel as lame in spirit as I am in body. Pray for me, my dear friend and her dear friend, pray for me. It seems but a black dream, and yet it is a reality to make dark a lifetime. . . .’

## TO GEORGE WILSON

*BERWICK, April 27, 1847.*

‘. . . I have just returned from a six days’ absence in Newcastle, and have read your letters with their astounding news. . . . In truth, I do not know what to say. I am confounded and struck dumb. You only can tell your loss ; but I have lost my best woman friend, the most kind, sympathising, congenial of all I ever knew, and only too good for this world—the gentlest, purest, heavenliest of women. I cannot write for the remembrances that come back—for the image of peace and holiness and love, perfected through suffering, that looks as if it were still living and blessing every one, like an angel of mercy—the servant of all. O Death, Death, so sudden and overwhelming ! . . . My first impulse was to write, but I can only try to say : “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away.” “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.”



She is in heaven, and heaven is now more desirable. May the Lord have mercy upon us, and grant us sooner or later to end our sorrows there. . . .’

TO REV. JOHN CLARK

BERWICK, *May 26, 1847.*

‘. . . You will have read all about our Union. Dr. M’Kelvie never was greater than on the Union Day, though he had no other part than the prompter behind the scenes. I trust that his next sphere of usefulness will be a conciliation of the Old and New Lights, which it is to be hoped he will effect in less than the time taken to cement the Relief and Secession. If you could only gather up the Cameronians, it would bring all the unendowed Presbyterians into three bodies, bating the Calvinistic Secession, which would then be on a fair footing for a junction.

‘. . . You will see, perhaps, something of a stormy controversy between Sir W. Hamilton and De Morgan on the discovery of a new theory of syllogism. I have read Sir W.’s pamphlet, which he sent me. He is, I think, in the right, though he might have left the other the shadow of secondary originality which he claimed, and saved the public the unhappy spectacle, and himself the vexation, of the controversy. The whole turns on the quantification of the predicate, “All controversialists are some fools,” which of course is simply converted, “Some fools,” etc., and introduces the same simplicity into all the figures and moods of the syllogism. It is a great discovery! made by Sir William a year or so after we had left him, and taught in his class ever since, though the germ of it was found in his earliest lectures. The controversy is maintained by him in the usual bludgeon style, and I heartily wish that somebody could discover a law for the conversion of his categorical violence into hypothetical mildness. . . .’

TO REV. JOHN NELSON

BERWICK, *June 10, 1847.*

‘. . . I should probably not have written but for the death of Dr. Chalmers. It would be a sort of moral wrong to let such an event pass without some notice. I think if, in the heat of action, some revered person were carried off by a ball, two friends standing side by side on deck would break out into some exclamation after

holding in their breath for a while. I feel in this position ; and I never think of the subject without having the shock renewed. I did not know how much I thought of Chalmers before. It is such a gap. You look round and round, and the central spire is gone—the highest peak shattered into dust. Was there ever anything more astounding than such a death of such a man? Foster died alone at midnight, but with mind filled with the anticipation. The missionary Williams and poor Mackenzie died in such a way as greatly to agitate religious society within our own memory ; but both with their eyes open and in company, and both quite different men. I remember nothing like it ; and as the close of so fervid, tempestuous and unique a life it seems to me one of the greatest and most terrible works of God, and yet of a merciful kind, that can be conceived of. It is an awful thing to follow such a spirit to the foot of the throne ; to think how different the naked reality would be even from his vivid images, and how stupendous the abrupt transition, were it not for Him who is the Way.

‘I was present at the funeral in spirit ; but congregational duties and a foolish prejudice against public funerals, of which I have become heartily ashamed, kept me at home. It seemed truly a national act, and the holy Catholic Church might be said to follow in the train. What would the Israelites have done with Moses had they been able to find his body, or, if Paul had died only yesterday, how would the heart of Christendom have leapt up over his grave ! The tears of the universal Church over such an occasion as this are a delightful evidence of the change since the days of the Apostles ; and surely also the grief of Scotland, for who has done so much for generations to make it what it is as a Christian land !

‘We have often admired together his genius, and freely debated his theology and his merits as a thinker. Of these I have thought little—far more of his noble Christian life, his absorbing devotion to the cause of Christ, his faithfulness in testifying to the great, the simple doctrines of the Gospel, and, most of all, his self-denying labours among the poor as a city missionary and Bible-reader. I never have been able to think of these without deep emotion ; and now, seen in the light of death, they have in them most of the spirit of the Cross and of heaven. Surely it is good for us to be so reminded of the unspeakable disparity between intellectual and moral greatness—of the comforting saying of our Great Example, “He that is greatest among you let him be your servant.” . . . As for his fame, he need not mind it, and I am sure would wish more that his death might be blessed than that it should draw forth

notices and characters of just appreciation. I have thought of the intense sensation of this catastrophe among many of our friends, and cannot doubt that it will be a great means of grace to them as it has been to me. . . .

‘The death of Vinet affected me much. I had written in company with Graham and MacEwen in January, and had not received an answer. It is a year fatal to great men as well as very portentous to our country. I am busy and happy—health good and many things to cheer me, with a fair portion of a minister’s cares and depressions. “So glide my life away!”’

TO MRS. RATTRAY

BERWICK, *July 20, 1847.*

‘I am glad that you have at last got a minister, and one so likely to be a blessing to the place. Remember me to him, and also to his parochial brother. The Church of Scotland seems as if it would again exalt its horn, I hope not to gore and toss poor Dissenters, but to contend with the common enemy and do some service to the country. . . .’

TO DAVID CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Sept. 17, 1847.*

‘Per has literas certior fies sarcinam depositam esse in tabernis quae ad ferram viam pertinent, matri designatam, a me autem relictam in itinere ad Lassarum Vadum, quam si placet auferes et in reditum ejus servabis.

‘Hodie abiit mater, post hebdomadem feliciter peractam curru ad vicum Paxtonensem abducta.’

TO MRS. RATTRAY

BERWICK, *Nov. 3, 1847.*

‘. . . I have been reading the *Life of Foster*, which a man must be very good or very bad, an angel or a beast, not to profit by. . . . Last Sabbath I preached an old sermon at the request of an anonymous person, who had been greatly and, I hope, savingly impressed by its first delivery. The person is quite unknown to me, though the letter, which is very ill written and spelt, contains a promise of discovery. I hope I have a share in your prayers for ministerial success. Nothing *tells* but prayer. . . .’

TO REV. JOHN CLARK

BERWICK, *Dec. 14, 1847.*

‘ . . . I am happy that you propose to join the Free Church. I considered you as just in that stage of development in which it is, and I hope that you will neither of you stop at your present position. . . . ’

TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Dec. 14, 1847.*

‘ . . . I am slowly working my way through the last scenes of the Saviour’s life, which require unusual meditation and preparation, being full of controverted details, and each touch of the painting being a master-stroke. I have got the length of Herod’s mockery, one of the most characteristic things ever recorded of any human being, and the *ne plus ultra* of disappointed religious *quid-nunc-ism*. Nothing can be more grandly hit off than the deep-throated bigotry of the chief priests, the worldly nonchalance of Pilate, and the mortified dilettantism of Herod, all terminating, though in different degrees, in ignoring and rejecting the Godlike. On some earlier points I have departed from the common strain of interpretation. The prayer in the Garden, for example, is usually regarded as consisting of a petition and its retraction. I consider it as a double petition, an actual and repeated request for the removal of the necessity of suffering, which I suppose proceeded from temporary oblivion of the divine purpose, caused by bodily and mental agony. The Saviour could not have twice over repeated a retracted prayer. In the trial before the Sanhedrim there is commonly supposed to have been an indictment of blasphemy laid from the beginning. I rather think there was a running indictment, which admitted of any charge whatever, depending on any evidence that might turn up. As to Pilate, he has both been blackened and whitewashed too much. He was just a Bengal or Bombay President of other days, without their talents, and caring as little about religion as they about Shakers, Brahmins or Fakirs; while he seems to have had a conscience at times a little more given to fits of resistance than theirs, of which this was the greatest in his life, though acting now, as always, more as a drag than an impelling force—a very ordinary character of Roman clay, neither the bravo nor the struggling sceptic that some make him.

‘ I have found great interest in dramatically realising the whole



of the mighty crisis. I shall soon be done with the Gospel history, which is the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Bible. Had I thought a little, I should not have entered it in such a hurry. But I have got much good, and I hope have done a little. I look down more and more with a sublime contempt on all sceptical criticism of this series of narratives. It is the old Eleatics disproving the possibility of motion; or atheism piling up its syllogisms (Ossa upon Pelion) against the being of God.

‘As to other studies, I have a more voracious appetite than ever for books of biography and travels, especially illustrative of geography, morals and Christianity. I find a new taste of this kind developed in me; and I read them with more avidity than ever I read novels. I feel somehow also a keener relish for the historic and poetic parts of Scripture, and a greater power of incorporating them with the substance of my thoughts. Altogether, the world has not lost any of its novelty as a thing to be studied. It is a grand world if it were only made over again; and nothing awakens a keener interest than to see this going on. I do think the devil is losing his hold of it, though the extrication is dreadfully slow. I don’t wonder that in the reign of Anti-Christ a day is put for a year; for really it takes a year to do the work of a day against him.’

#### TO MISS JEAN DARLING

BERWICK, Dec. 21, 1847.

‘. . . I was greatly pleased to hear definite word about you, and that not unfavourable, though there are shades of darkness. What indeed is our life other than a parti-coloured web, woven by Infinite Wisdom in the loom of providence, with quite enough of dark threads to take away that glaring and garish look which this state of being ought not to wear, as being a state of trial and sinfulness. All the best people I know have had their share of affliction; and those that I love best have all grown better by it. It is so with myself too. Though I do not compare my experience with that of others who have gone far deeper into the furnace, yet I have always found that the more I had of trial the better it was for me; and that the trials of my friends and of my congregation, as well as my own, exercise a very salutary effect on my own mind. This is one way in which we bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. We are liker in this to the Man of Sorrows; and it is better to be like Him even in bearing the cross than to want the

resemblance. It was once said very improperly by a philosopher that he had rather be wrong with Plato than right with all the world; but we may apply this to our afflictions and say that we had rather suffer with Christ than be at ease in the world. We do not make enough of the example of Christ, and think more of His death as our sacrifice than of His life as our model. Both are indispensable if we would rise to any degree of Christian attainment in peace and holiness; and the more we think of His sufferings, the less we shall think of our own. I think more of this subject than ever I did, and hope I understand it better; and the more I ponder it, the more overwhelming does it seem that we have a divine High Priest who has passed as a man through the very depths of our lot and has a fellow-feeling with our infirmities.

‘You make an allusion to the small blank that you anticipate your removal from the world will make. In this I deeply sympathise with you. It is pleasing to me to think, not that the world will not miss us, but that God will not miss us—that His work will just go on as before, by other and proper instruments; and that we shall calmly, quietly and unobtrusively slip away and let the scene go on under His guidance just as it used to do, and better (I speak only for myself) than it could otherwise have done. All Christians die at the right time; and though we are not required to wish that our friends may not regret us, or that we may disappear without any sense of loss to our own little spheres (which would be both unnatural and sinful); yet it is delightful to think that there is no real want of us when God calls us away, and that to abide in the flesh is then not more needful. This world is a great sphere for our own preparation and for action which tends to prepare others; but there is nothing solid, final and satisfying about it; and the sooner and more thoroughly we learn this lesson the better. It is my daily prayer for you all that you may live more under the powers of the world to come, and catch more and more of the brightness of the next scene as the lights of this are fading and waning into darkness. Oh, it is a great and glorious revelation that is to be made—all summed up in the presence of the Saviour and the absence of sin! We should be looking out for it, as Baxter says, with our face like Daniel turned toward Jerusalem; and the oftener we can do so, whether it be three or seven or more times a day, so much the happier. May God grant it to you and to us all! I am well in health, very cheerful and comfortable in mind, and very much engaged: . . .’

## CHAPTER XII

### MINISTER AT BERWICK

1845-1849—*continued*

Letters about : Scottish Churches, Virgil, Horace, the Revolution, Latin hymns and language, Personal religion, Biblical study, Speculative doubt, Death of Clark, English Lakes, Literary ministers, etc.—Meeting with William Wordsworth—Reminiscences of early ministry by Sir G. B. Bruce and Rev. Dr. David MacEwan.

TO REV. JOHN CLARK

BERWICK, *March 1, 1848.*

‘I HOPE your exodus out of the Old Light and your present wilderness state of transition will soon be followed by a permanent settlement in some fertile plain or watered valley or laughing sea-coast of that large and good land which the Free Church believes itself commissioned almost Israel-like to occupy. There is One who chooses out the lot of our inheritance, and gives a home to all the many-tribed body—to all the thousands of Israel.

‘I feel my attachment to the Free Church now greatly strengthened—one cable more to bind my sympathies and affections to the large and solid mass, even though the ecclesiastical winds and currents should move, as they are too apt to do, in the opposite direction. There is one Free Churchman added to the list—not *very* large—of those to whom I can tell a little of my own private mind respecting that body, and who will not resent the mitigations with which impartial or, if you will, rival parties abate the heroics of that mighty representative of the Reformation Church of Scotland. You have not the spirit of a partisan, and you will now have less of it than ever, one great good of your trial being the complete expurgation of all Utopian ideas about Church institutions, and the enforcement of the humbling truth that Churches are but imperfect fields of action in which very imperfect men work, ourselves among them, and that the fairest theories are but slender coverings, often of

very dangerous or doubtful practical materials, like water-flowers above a marsh or thin filigree ice above a stagnant bog. Far be it from me to apply the comparison either to the past or the present Communion of your choice. I would include my own in the general caution, and only mean to say that it is well to get rid of all partisan fervour, if only we do not go to the opposite extreme—a morbid disgust with all sections of the Church, to which — has somewhat approximated. I am more and more convinced that the quiet, unobtrusive discharge of the little work of one's own locality—the humble and homely process of making bad men good and good men better—is far before all noisy or ostentatious display of Church pretensions, and is the best antidote for the over-sensitive spirit which looks at a Church system as a faultless piece of mechanism to be gazed at, and not as a hasty scaffolding to be merely trod on in building up the Church of God.

‘I am glad to hear of your reviving classical interest. I have long neglected the classics, my chief use of Latin being in reading commentaries, and of Greek in fighting away with the Fathers. I am busy just now with Origen. I quite accord with your estimate of Virgil. He is only great in episodes. Even his nature, though true, wants the exquisite freshness and breathing life of Homer. His pathos, his taste, his inimitable numbers and, I may add, his moral purity and sense of religion, are his great charms. Æneas totally fails as an example of religion controlling passion, the ideal evidently aimed at, but missed through the reversal of the Greek tragic rule in which religion or Fate always contended against the *dramatis personæ* and not, as in the *Æneid*, in their favour. He is thus degraded to the rank of a selfish rascal, with the gods for his accomplices, instead of standing up a hero in defiance of their decrees. Horace you will like more and more. He is the ideal *littérateur* of the Augustan age—the poet of the Court, with enough of nature and philosophy to grace this region, while they did not raise him into a more empyrean atmosphere. His style is still more wonderful than Virgil's, and he has many more strings to his bow. He is a sensualist and almost a parasite, with a great affectation of patriotism—his only affectation; but from his honesty in self-disclosure, nonchalance, liveliness and turn for moralising of a manly strain, he is worthy of close study.

‘. . . God is about to work great things in the earth; and the day of Absolutism is ended. . . .’



TO REV. JOHN NELSON

BERWICK, *April 12, 1848.*

‘I have often of late had compunctious visitings about not writing you; and the Revolution has reached a crisis. By the way, it would be a strange turn in history if we could out-barricade conscience and set up a republic with liberty, equality and fraternity of all thoughts, feelings, impulses and passions—sworn to keep out the grim tyrant. How have you taken these stupendous, heaven-darkening, earth-shaking events? One can hardly speak of them without rhapsody, or think of them without something like mania. Often, often have I thought of you, especially since the Berlin sublimity, and wondered how we should have felt on the spot. It would have ruined our studies, to be sure; but one would have liked so much to have been present at the development of a new era, even amid the thunderings of artillery and the showers of grape. It is the true *Liberationskrieg* of Germany, and has rescued the 1813 one from the charge of humbug and regal quackery. The Germans will now be at liberty to worship their great goddess *Einheit*, and will have their adored *Freiheit* in all its dimensions. Seriously, the Prussians, after the Viennese, have acted with infinite spirit; and the King—good, worthy, dilatory hero as he is—has been taught that his paternal majesty is but an organ after all of the many other fathers of his country, and that a constitution is really a second Providence and higher than a king. It was a pity that blood was necessary; but it is mere affectation to grieve over this, when many brave men are annually sacrificed in every army to unhealthy climates and wars of ports—as if this counterbalanced the inestimable benefits of such a revolution. Vienna was as grand in its way, or even grander; but it did not excite in me the same associations as did the well-remembered streets of Berlin and the old *Herren Commilitonen*. I think an immense way will be gained for reforms in the German Church, though all is still smoke and confusion there. The false alliance between conservatism and evangelism is cut in twain: and I pray that the sword may not have gone too near the flesh of the latter in the separation. We shall have, I hope, every man his own *Consistorial Rath* and the trumpety of Court Patronage swept aside. Bunsen did not expect such a development of the Church of the future a year ago.

‘I dare not trust myself to speak of France. There I fear and tremble. They want, alas! the *Biederkeit* of the Germans, and the religious leaven. It is a terrific problem, and though Louis deserves

a packing, I have had sad "switherings" as to what will come of it. The papal system has, I hope, got a mortal downfall; but the execrable monster seems incapable of strangulation either on earth or in air. Poor Pio Nono has given the Jesuits their *cong * from Rome. I suppose they have gone to Mecca, or perhaps to the Grand Lama, to wait the march of Revolution in the Thermopyl  of the Universe. How wonderful is the movement in Italy, and how joyful! To think of these noble old cities renewing their youth—Florence, Venice, Milan, Genoa and Rome itself all but opened for the Gospel! Really, we may live to see the Bible read in Italian beneath the dome of St. Peter's, and the Pope expounding it—then the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Italy. "All old things now are passed away and a new world begun."

'But it is well to rejoice with trembling. Nothing but the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on all flesh will accomplish the work, and without it we may see signs in the heaven above and earth beneath, blood and fire and vapour of smoke, in vain. I never felt so much disposed to pray for the great essential influence, and to do all I can to resist the impulse that would sink the Christian in the politician. We may yet be disappointed, and the devil with all deceivableness of unrighteousness may keep his hold over the nations. Ireland and our own country are dark spots; though I hope God will spare us civil war, without which revolution could be accomplished in neither. If we only get progressive reform, we may be deeply thankful to escape revolution, which would only carry away minor grievances, and leave the great master-grievance, the fall of Adam, where it was before.

'I hope you are prospering in your ministry. I see more fruit than when I visited you; but I still have much to lament. I think I preach more simply, and trust more to the grace of the Spirit. I am very happy.'

TO —

BERWICK, April 17, 1848.

'After I had bid you good-bye to-night, a rather unpleasant thought came across my mind which you will not be offended with me if I mention in confidence. It came in the shape of an accusation of my own conscience: "Why! how often have you bantered and joked with — on subjects connected with religion, and you have never yet spoken with him one serious word upon

the subject—the great subject itself.” Will you not count it presumptuous and intrusive, my deeply-respected friend, if I now say just one word so that I may have the consolation: “*Liberavi animam meam*”?

‘I hope I know that when the Great Arbiter makes a difference between one man and another in regard to spiritual light, it is not the duty of the favoured party to take airs of superiority. I would be glad on a thousand points to be your debtor, and would greatly prefer receiving suggestions as a junior to having even the appearance of giving them to one so much older and abler and wiser. But I think that here God has made a difference between us, and if I mention it in the way of grateful acknowledgment, I do not think you will regard my thankfulness as pride and assumption.

‘Well, then, I venture to say that it has pleased the Father of Lights to reveal to me the great secret of happiness and to open up to me a way of escape out of the formidable moral difficulties of this present state which many seek but few find. How to obtain a counterpoise to the overwhelming feeling of worthlessness in the Light of the Eternal—how to acquire the elements of a character that He can look on with satisfaction—how to lay hold of a permanent, immutable, immaterial object of interest, that may be the same to us amid the changes of the world, and may outlast the present and run parallel with an everlasting futurity—these dark problems that haunt, perplex and disquiet all thinking men that have any conscience in them, or any apprehension of things spiritual and invisible, the Almighty Father has made me truly happy by settling and solving for me now and for ever. I have found the answer in the life and death of that great, wonderful, incomparable and ever-blessed Being who is the mediator between God and man. The counterpoise to the sense of guilt is His atonement: the right moral character well-pleasing to God is His example imitated by the help of His grace: the permanent, sufficient, indestructible, inexhaustible good is His favour and society, enjoyed in this and the coming world, and in the dark mysterious passage that lies between. You know that if the Bible teaches any system it teaches this; and I have so deep, inward and immovable a conviction of its reality that the sense of truth desires nothing more to be satisfied. The right position, then, for such creatures as we are to be in towards the supreme God is to be counter-balancing our sense of worthlessness by looking to the great Sacrifice—struggling after the true character by following with divine help the great Example, and realising the chief good by maintaining a mysterious intercourse of



faith with the great Unseen Friend. It is because I feel that I am doing this that I am happy; and the more I do it the happier I am. If I could do it perfectly, it would be heaven upon earth.

‘Is it an unpardonable wish, my dear sir, that you too were happy in the Christian sense and that God would remove the difference I spoke of, and make us one in a higher communion than we can ever have so long as we thus differ? You will not think the worse of me when I say that I often wish for it, habitually wish for it when I think of you, and frequently express that wish to the only Being who can turn it into a reality. May the day come! It only can by submitting the mind to that heavenly influence which is ever ready to take possession of it, and by opening the heart to the impression of the living Word with the simplicity of little children. May He who is the light of the world Himself enlighten us,—that following Him we may not walk in darkness but have the light of life!

‘My dear good friend, forgive me. Had I not known your kindness, I could not have trespassed thus far. I expect no notice to be taken of this; and could not have ventured on such a liberty in any other form.’

#### TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *July 10, 1848.*

‘. . . I am grieved to hear of your rheumatic and other pains. “Crucifixo condolere” must still be your motto, and I hope you are quite of the Apostle’s mind in regard to your thorn in the flesh, or rather your bed of thorns. I have just been looking over the “Stabat Mater,” the “Dies Irae,” and some other Latin hymns in a collection lately sent me from Germany. I am more than ever struck with the amazing adaptation of that language to be the language of devotion. In fact, I get more pleasure from these hymns and from the “Te Deum” than I ever got from Cicero or Tacitus. It is equally the language of empire and of supplication—equally fitted for the Deity on the throne and the suppliant at the foot of it. I should give my vote for it without hesitation, if we were only to have one universal language for the Holy Catholic Church. All modern tongues are but jargon; and even Greek, otherwise so incomparably superior, wants that divine brevity and emphasis, which is the soul both of God’s promises and of man’s prayers. Perhaps you have not seen an exquisite hymn on John the Evangelist by an unknown author of the thirteenth century. It quite transports me, and if you can



give me a good version of it you shall be the great Apollo.<sup>1</sup> It will give you some little exercise for your waking thoughts at night. Or try "Veni Creator Spiritus." I discovered yesterday to my very great delight that this last would sing to Old Hundred, the only long-metre tune I am in command of. I hope your religious feelings are growing in depth and power, and that your peace is multiplied like a river. I cannot tell when I was more happy than I am at present. I am more so than at last Synod, having gained a little more of that disposition to bear and do all things for Christ, which is the beginning, middle and end of sanctification. I have begun to lecture on Isaiah—a stupendous work, with my scanty Hebrew and unoriental turn of mind. But I am working hard at it, and hope to catch a little of his empyrean spirit. I have just got a package of helps from Germany. We are really far behind in native products on every plot of theology except the Surplice, Water, and Church Court controversies. Happily we have better fruits of theology than books. I hope multitudes can say of the past divines of all sections "We are your epistle," etc., and this is after all the great business. I am more and more sick of the intellectual arrogance of our literary gnosticism, which quarrels with the plain fare of evangelical orthodoxy; though if better can be had, by all means let it be produced. My dear friend, I hope soon to pass a little time with you; and then we may like Milton's bees "expatiate and confer on state affairs."

#### TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *July 25, 1848.*

' . . . On Sabbath last I was so overcome with the heat that my throat became dry. My mind seemed to resemble an engine with the steam exhausted, and I was on the very eve of sticking. It was a very curious feeling, and has taught me a little of the vicissitudes of ministerial life, to which with good health and unflagging spirits I have been hitherto a stranger. I am perfectly well again, and the incident did not, I believe, make any more impression on the hearers than just that I was a little more tame at the close of the sermon than usual. . . . I am glad to hear of David's progress. There is much land yet to be possessed, and the classics are but the porch to encyclopædic knowledge. . . .'

<sup>1</sup> ' Verbum Dei, Deo natum  
Quod nec factum, nec creatum,' etc.

TO REV. JOHN NELSON

BERWICK, *Aug. 22, 1848.*

‘I do not mean in this scrawl to enter into public matters,—domestic, French or German. There is truly an *ungeheure Bewegung*. It will be contrary to the analogy of all past history if the world settles down to tranquillity for twenty or thirty years to come. Think of the Reformation not being a *fait accompli* till the Peace of Westphalia, and of the last great Revolution not being incorporated into the European system till 1815. The Lord grant it may be otherwise, but every symptom betokens that we are not yet out of the whirlpool. I had thought differently at first—that the reactionary element was completely annihilated all over the field of revolution; but these victories of the Austrians in Italy are a proof to the contrary, and show the danger of crying Peace, Peace, when there is no peace.

‘I got a delightful letter from our old landlady in Berlin some weeks ago. I wrote also to Tholuck, Neander and Rauch. Neander has not forgotten us. Have you seen any of Schleiermacher’s *Fest-Predigten*? I find more of the fervour of Christianity in them than in any other of his writings. I have a large supply of theology for the winter, including Lücke, Müller, Herder, Umbreit and Ewald. I am lecturing on Isaiah, and, by the strangest luck, a friend bought for me Gesenius’s own copy of Vitringa, with his seal, in an old bookshop in Hamburg.’

TO SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON

BERWICK, *Nov. 16, 1848.*

‘I herewith enclose the statement respecting the Calabar Mission of our Church, which I take blame to myself for having so long delayed to send. My avocations are very numerous, and a habit of procrastination, where anything is to be written, has sadly grown on me with time.

‘I cannot even send you this brief note without testifying, what I could not so well utter in your presence, my unabated admiration of your philosophical genius and learning, and my profoundly grateful sense of the important benefits received by me both from your instructions and private friendship. I am more indebted to you for the foundation of my intellectual habits and tastes than to any other person, and shall bear, by the will of the Almighty, the

impress of your hand through any future stage of existence. It is a relief to my own feelings to speak in this manner, and you will forgive one of the most favoured of your pupils if he seeks another kind of relief—a relief which he has long sought an opportunity to obtain—the expression of a wish that his honoured master were one with him in the exercise of the convictions and the enjoyment of the comforts of living Christianity, or as far before him in this as in all other particulars. This is a wish, a prayer, a fervent desire often expressed to the Almighty Former and Guide of the spirits of men, mingled with the hope that, if not already, at least some time, this accordance of faith will be attained, this living union realised with the great Teacher, Sacrifice and Restorer of our fallen race. You will pardon this manifestation of the gratitude and affection of your pupil and friend, who, if he knew a higher, would gladly give it as the payment of a debt too great to be expressed. I have long ago been taught to feel the vanity of the world in all its forms, to renounce the hope of intellectual distinction and to exalt love above knowledge. Philosophy has been to me much, but it can never be all, never the most; and I have found, and know that I have found, the true good in another quarter. This is mysticism—the mysticism of the Bible—the mysticism of conscious reconciliation and intimacy with the living Persons of the Godhead—a mysticism which is not, like that of philosophy, an irregular and incommunicable intuition, but open to all, wise and unwise, who take the highway of humility and prayer. If I were not truly and profoundly happy in my faith—the faith of the universal Church—I would not speak of it. The greatest increase which it admits of is its sympathetic kindling in the breasts of others, not least of those who know by experience the pain of speculation, the truth that he who increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. I know you will indulge these expressions to one more in earnest than in former years, more philanthropic, more confident that he knows in whom he has believed, more impressed with the duty of bearing everywhere a testimony to the convictions which have given him a positive hold at once of truth and happiness.

‘But I check myself in this unwonted strain, which only your long continued and singular kindness could have emboldened me to attempt; and with the utterance of the most fervent wishes for your health, academical success and inward light and peace, I remain, your obliged friend and grateful pupil.’

FROM SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON

EDINBURGH, *Dec. 4, 1848.*

‘I feel deeply obliged to you for the kindness of your letter, and trust that I shall not prove wholly unworthy of the interest you take in me. There is indeed no one with whom I am acquainted whose sentiments on such matters I esteem more highly, for there is no one who, I am sure, is more earnest for the truth, and no one who pursues it with more independence and, at the same time, with greater confidence in the promised aid of God. May this promised aid be vouchsafed to me !

‘Your brother stood up on last examination day for the first time. If I had looked a moment, far less heard him speak, I would at once have recognised him. There is a strong family likeness, and I could not wish him better than to resemble you in the zeal and ability with which he pursues his studies.’

TO REV. JOHN NELSON

BERWICK, *Nov. 21, 1848.*

‘I have been fighting away since I saw you last, chiefly with theology, other studies being in a great measure left to fight for themselves, in which case they have become fitter for a Ragged School than any other place. I have made some proficiency in the Old Testament—its Hebrew, its poetry, its prophecy, its direful earnestness against sin, its spirit-stirring gleams of coming glory, and so on. I love it more, and adore more the manifold wisdom of God in it, and wonder more at the strange blindness of Schleiermacher, and even the dimness of our good Neander in regard to it. I have got the length of the seventh chapter of Isaiah. It is good for one to be in company with that eagle spirit. You perhaps remember a painting in the Berlin gallery, after Michael Angelo, of the Baptist carried up to heaven on an eagle’s pinions. I would this were my case. It sometimes is not altogether unlike it, though the dead weight to be lifted is very great. If I am only able to master Isaiah, I shall find little hard in any of the other prophets ; and I shall rejoice as one who has found great spoil. Hebrew is a world by itself. I wish it would master me as German does. It is a delightful thing for a grown man to become again a little child in the mastery, by groping and discovery, of the wonders of a new region of knowledge, especially spiritual knowledge. I had



feared the Bible would become after a time a worn book ; but it is still renewing its youth, especially when seen through the prismatic light of prayer. I am happier in the study of the Word of God than I can express, and I could almost give up preaching to separate myself to that end, were not the selfish seclusion sure to provoke a great retributive darkness. I am quite engrossed, too, with congregational work. It is pleasant and, I hope, not altogether unprofitable. I have long ago learned the stupidity of generalities, to which you advert, and found that, as the minute and individual is the most interesting in the mastery of nature by art, so is it likewise by philanthropy and Christian effort. This lesson I learned with some others from the great practical model of Chalmers, and I hardly think he taught a nobler and better. Look, too, to the great Being who is our exemplar. He did not declaim general principles, or cast abroad merely what may be called fontal truths. His philanthropy was in detail, for the most part upon obscure individuals—a kind of walk of unostentatious benevolence through the Grass-markets and West Ports of the country. In fact, the lesson of the Church to the world is only taught by the sacrifice of show and glare and misty grandeur in benevolent enterprise. God brings out the greatness afterwards for His own glory ; the world must see only the meanness in the first instance that it may understand the depths to which Christians cheerfully and lovingly for their Master's sake descend. This is a part of the victory which overcometh the world ; and it is by love and not by knowledge that the world in our age is to be subdued to Christ.

‘I hope to get through Müller on Sin and Nitzsch's Dogmatik this winter, as well as something more of Origen against Celsus. I am contented to be *emeritus* in literature. My turn that way is much abated, and I quite subscribe to the snarling remark of Sallust about action and eloquence: “Magnum est prodesse reipublicae et bene dicere haud absurdum est.” I would put literature even lower. A cup of cold water given for Christ's sake to a disciple is worth more than all the fame of some that hold their heads high enough.

‘I am glad to hear from good sources of your health and success in the ministry. May the Lord Jesus be with thy spirit ! The world is a shadow—the square root of a phantom—or whatever is more hollow and transient. There is nothing real but faith and prayer, their grand objects and eternal results. This does not hinder me from being deeply engrossed with the revolutions on the Continent, and especially the Machiavellianism of the King of

Prussia, who will make the Gospel stink in the nostrils of all Europe by his hollow-hearted policy. I wish him repentance and his people the mastery. But it does not become poor creatures like us to take up the rod of judgment.'

## TO DAVID CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Nov.* 27, 1848.

'I am pleased to hear that you are beginning to doubt all things. I am not certain that you will recognise this letter as sent to the same person who wrote me about ten days ago.

'If you still retain your faith in the non-ego, you may regard this letter as sent to assure you that an external phenomenon at some fifty miles distance from the conscious subject was exceedingly gratified to learn of your success. If you become a metaphysician, it will give me unfeigned delight. You will be the only one of the family besides myself who has the slightest turn that way, and it will form a new bond of sympathy between us. I cannot describe to you the passionate interest which I once took in these studies. They come back upon me at times with all the charms of a first love, and I sometimes wonder how I could ever tear myself from them for the more sober and, to my more matured judgment, more influential pursuits of practical life. However, I would have you yield yourself up to the spell. It can do no harm if you only bear in mind that doubt ought to be impartial, and that the certainty of the most valuable objects of human belief is established by the same considerations that rescue the facts of consciousness and testimony from indiscriminate scepticism. Pray to God for light in your exploration of the structure of the mind and the laws of belief, and imitate in this Descartes, who, amidst his fundamental doubts, acted as if the convictions of earlier years had been true.

'Philology is indeed child's play to metaphysics. You pass into a totally new region, and the earnest and stern realities of conviction move quite different and more manly feelings than the traditional acceptance of signs and terms for ideas. I never found my religious sensibilities injured by metaphysical inquiries. Whether this was a singular felicity I do not know; but I have heard others complain. The best preservative against this is the frequent perusal of the Word of God, and the attempt to realise by intuition your relations to the Divine Persons, which carries with it such light as scatters all the doubts and negations of the understanding. . . .'

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Dec. 19, 1848.*

‘Mrs. Reid, my landlady, goes up to the Golden Square Manse in a few days, and I go in the meantime with her, not being willing to part, though I have no love for that locality, and would never wish to make it my permanent abode. I owe much to this kind family, and I have no doubt I shall be quite comfortable; but it is to me a matter of supreme indifference. . . .’

## FROM REV. WILLIAM GRAHAM

LIVERPOOL, *Dec. 31, 1848.*

‘. . . I find I do injury to myself in not having more intercourse with the present Cairns in the present stadium of his thoughts, for really my image of you is still the student one, and even yet, in my reading and reflecting, I seem often to be only coming up to the point at which you were years ago. What interests me now had then its epoch in you, and now you are past it. . . . I see that you are still holding on in your way, reading, reflecting, rejoicing—building yourself up on all sides and spreading forth your arms to take hold of the ends of the *Orbis Intellectualis*. . . .’

‘What do you think of my syllabus of reading? . . . I am afraid, were you giving me an account of your work, I would feel that I had made my minnows like your whale. . . .’

‘I thank God for what good He has done me through you. May He return the blessing to your own bosom! . . .’

## TO MRS. RATTRAY

BERWICK, *Jan. 23, 1849.*

‘. . . As days and weeks pass, I am led seriously to meditate an entire cessation of all correspondence but on business, so much do my avocations grow and my studies press. You will be one of the last to be retrenched. . . .’

‘We have had cholera here, but on a very moderate scale. I have lost one of the earliest and best of my friends, the Rev. John Clark, by this distemper. He has closed a life of trial nobly borne by a sudden but happy death. Death is truly a great thought—as great as humanity itself—and it is a sad token of man’s contempt for his own destiny and his dulness to the wonders of immortality

that it makes so little impression. I have felt this the more that my deceased friend, like myself, was much given to contemplate the moral contrasts and difficulties of this strange world, and to attempt in vain their reduction to order. I think he was the most majestically-chiselled piece of human marble I ever knew, so far as moral sentiment was concerned. A native greatness and harmony distinguished the whole expression of his spiritual character, and this imposing moral image lived and moved about at the impulse of the warmest and truest human heart. Soberly, I feel the world is less worthy since he has gone out of it; and my world has suffered a most serious deduction from its riches. He died happily—he could not have died otherwise; and I almost venture to think that heaven had little else to do than to set its seal on graces that had almost reached perfection. Such deaths bring one mightily nearer the better country; they give it a home feeling and interest. You know whom you have to meet in it, and what materials of character are to be wrought up into new combinations, and you can almost think of joining the company as you would of mingling in some earthly circle. My heaven is little more than a concentration of the good people I have known on earth, decidedly bettered by the change and presided over by their Great Leader. I do not want a more romantic paradise. I care little about harps and crowns and palm branches, and never think of the realities which these figures foreshadow without putting down Christian love as the groundwork of the picture. May we be daily more ready for the great disclosures that are soon to burst upon us. . . .’

## TO DAVID CAIRNS

BERWICK, *March 1, 1849.*

‘. . . I am much gratified by the accounts of your health and progress in study; not least with your interest in the Missionary Society. My associations with a similar one are of the most pleasing kind, and I only wish my college life had been diversified and hallowed by more of such devotional engagements. I hope you will not be unsuccessful in the prize-hunt, which, however, is rather good for exercise than for the value of the game. Knowledge is inestimable. I daily wish I had more and of more kinds, and if you only take care of your health you cannot thirst too much for information. Your speculative turn is now in the course of being exercised, and it is well; only, I have sometimes thought there is a



danger of neglecting positive knowledge while inquiring into the grounds of what we do know or suppose we know. Sir W. Hamilton, with all his admirable qualities, sometimes errs in depreciating information out of his own track, though few have so much of it as himself. Don't forget facts in search after principles. Scotch metaphysics, and German too, have often the appearance of a thin broth, boiled down and diluted out of a very small portion of animal and vegetable matter. Observe as well as analyse, and don't mistake new words and phrases for new things. But I do not fear for you. . . .'

#### TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *March 2, 1849.*

' . . . I am glad to hear of your Logical studies. The aim of Metaphysics may be popularly expressed to be this—to satisfy ourselves of what we already know, and to separate the knowable from the unknowable. The aim of Mental Philosophy is to open up the domain of our own minds, and to make us as well acquainted with them as with outward nature. And the aim of Logic is to guide us in opening out our knowledge, so that what is possessed virtually may be possessed actually, and the reasons seen why we assent to it. These three things are often confounded, but are as distinct as things can be. Mental Philosophy comes first, with its new facts and laws; Logic comes next, with its rules for inferring, arranging, and so on; Metaphysics last, with its settlement of the grounds of all our highest beliefs. The mental philosopher is a mere knower; the logician a conditional knower of what comes from what, the data being assured; the metaphysician a critical knower in regard to all things that lie beyond the region of sense and the range of demonstration. But I did not intend this essay, and it shows the incurable evil of early bad habits, contracted in a philosophical class. David seems to have recovered the belief in his own existence—at least, to be willing to take it for granted, until he finds a more likely hypothesis.

'I am engaged with Hades and the King of Babylon, and have much Latin to read this morning on the subject, not to say German. Last week I was on the 13th chapter of Isaiah. It was a hard task to search out all the history and travels bearing on the subject—to me, in a sense, the Burden of Babylon. But, by God's blessing, I am well and happy. . . .'

TO —

BERWICK, *April 17, 1849.*

‘Will you not be angry if I renew a testimony I took the liberty to offer some months ago as to the desirableness of serious religion? I really cannot resist the impulse I feel to do it, for there is nobody I habitually think of with greater anxiety in regard to that vital concern. I often think how much happier it would be if so many other talents and virtues were crowned by those Christian excellencies and enjoyments which make the difference between grace and nature, and which require a higher divine energy to produce them in the soul. I seriously believe that no man, however accomplished or virtuous in the worldly sense, can be safe in the eye of God or at peace with himself until this heavenly change has been wrought. I do not need to state doctrines to you. You are better versed in theology than most educated laymen, and I could not say anything new to one so well-informed.

‘But, my dear sir, there is a mighty, a world-wide difference between knowledge and faith, between discernment of the meaning of the propositions of the Bible and that living contact of the soul with the Redeemer to which it ought to lead. I long to see you live in a religious element, take up the great ideas of man’s relation to God and to eternity in all their magnitude, come to a right conception of sin and of Christ’s great sacrifice, and connect yourself with the Saviour of guilty men by those exercises of penitence, love and devotion which make up the Christian character. You cannot but see that if there is any truth at all in the Christian scheme of things, it should go the length of revolutionising the character and laying such a hold on the mind that all things become new.

‘I do hope you will deal as fairly with the exalted Being who seeks to re-attach us all to His love, as the generosity of your character would lead you to deal with a party in a human transaction. You would settle any personal question involving serious interests deliberately and considerately; and this is a personal question between our Saviour and our souls, not the less momentous because He is God and we are creatures—we the offenders and He the proposer of merciful terms of reconciliation. May I hope, too, that you will endeavour to work your mind into this serious mood by the reading of the Bible, and that you will reverently ask from God that sacred influence without which no human being can find the way back to His favour?

‘Perhaps I may offend you by repeating this strain. I really cannot help it, though I should deeply regret it; for then I should miss my aim, and in seeking to bring you to sympathy with my own views and feelings I should aggravate the difference. I do love you in the bottom of my heart and desire your highest welfare, and I never lose the hope that what I desire may come to pass. Perhaps I may not see it. The sudden removal of the Rev. — has made a deep impression on my mind of the possibility of others as young and as publicly engaged being called away. At any rate, I shall not repent of having said this little word, and I pray the great Being who has our hearts and our lives in His hand, that we two, who are united by many other considerations, may live in secure dependence on the same Almighty Redeemer, and leave the world in the same humble hope of finding mercy at a coming day. . . .’

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *April 19, 1849.*

‘. . . I am busy studying Ancient Egypt in connection with my Sabbath lectures. I have not met anything that has pleased me more than this study for a long while. I have a growing fondness for antiquities and history, especially all that bears on and illustrates the progress of religion. I think there are three stages in human life:—blind reception of facts from the dawn of reason till twenty—speculative doubts about principles from twenty to thirty—and harmony of principles and facts from thirty *ad infinitum*. I have got past the stage of metaphysics and am seeking now to fill myself with something more substantial than the east wind. David is deep in the metaphysical crisis, and it is well that he should be, for there must be a harrowing up before the seed can be cast and germinate. . . .’

TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *June 19, 1849.*

‘. . . I hope you are permanently a-foot and on very distant terms of acquaintance with that rather disagreeable thing which you described so justly in your Lay-sermon—a sick-room. I frequently think how blessed I have been in this particular—if, indeed, I may not have lost as much as I have gained by the diversity of our training. I could not have written your description of the experience of an invalid. I gave your sermons to —, but he has never broached

the subject. He and I have a kind of quiet understanding on the subject of personal religion. He knows my views of his duty in regard to it; and it is not for me to break the silence. Few men I more wish to see what we wish all men and especially educated and amiable men to be; and I hope your sermon may do its part.

‘Since I saw you we had a visit here from Mr. Morell, who is Government Inspector for the northern half of England. I had a great deal of very interesting and kindly talk with him about his views and feelings, and his special relation to the anti-German orthodox party. I stood up for Inspiration and dogmas, and we got once and again into amicable debate. Between ourselves, our own definite and settled estimate of God and Christ and all divine objects and relations is a far more certain and sufficient groundwork of devotion and philanthropy than those etherealised and shadowy conceptions. I will back the school of Bibliolatry against that whole party, and take my stand with it as the only school that has leverage to move society and to bring the world back to God. I have been led to think much of the difficulties and inconsistencies of the subjective school, and feel that the old wine is the better. The intuitional party is not likely to work any deliverance on the earth. . . .’

## FROM GEORGE WILSON

*June 21, 1849.*

‘. . . A rumour has reached me that you are to write on Schleiermacher. I hope you will. At all events write on something which will reach a wider circle than your justly beloved Berwick one. . . . Say nothing about sickrooms. What is describing them compared with consoling them? To do the latter, a man must be unmorbid himself like you. . . .’

## TO GEORGE WILSON

*BERWICK, July 24, 1849.*

‘. . . Many thanks for your moralising, which is good, and for your puns, which are of the usual quality. I hope also I will not be without profit from the graver meditations you have favoured me with. I never like seriousness more than when, as Bacon says, it is the dark ground of a little fancy embroidery. . . .’

‘You will receive herewith a reference to you in a case of Life Assurance. . . . Be kind enough to answer the queries and give all



due weight to the considerations against me. I think nine years is the period of our acquaintance. I will never cease to bless the Great Disposer for the conjunction, and I wish I could profit more from it. I have sometimes such a feeling of the uncertainty of life that a case of conscience could almost be made out against a transaction of this kind as a swindle—a presenting of the note of a bank which is in the article of failing. . . .’

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BRADFORD, *Aug. 17, 1849.*

‘. . . I have come here to see an old and valued friend, Alexander Wallace, who has begun with great hopes of success to excavate the vicious masses of this stuff-manufacturing population. At Liverpool I was almost eaten up with the kindness of friends. I wish I were more worthy of it. . . . To-morrow I go to Windermere and shall probably pass the Sabbath in absolute seclusion, going to some little place and hearing the Church of England service. It is pleasing to be thus released, though my heart often goes back to my own flock, and I feel how blessed a thing it is to have a home for one’s affections, and a sphere in the wide world that may be called one’s own. . . .’

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Sept. 3, 1849.*

‘. . . I have been to Liverpool, passed through the vale of Todmorden, including Foster’s birthplace, roamed over the Lake country and talked with Wordsworth, not to speak of minor notorieties. . . . I have got much good out of the whole variety of experience, and have taken ten days to let my interest subside to a reasonable temperature before giving you some account of the *summa fastigia rerum*.

‘In going up to Liverpool I met on shipboard one of your Edinburgh notabilities, J. Y. Simpson, with whom I had an old mesmeric acquaintance. I learned from him some very astonishing facts about the non-voluntariness of many hitherto supposed voluntary motions, throwing much light on what metaphysicians have called instinctive principles of action. . . .’

‘A——’s wife is a simple, unaffected, lovable person, pretty and pleasing, and, I think, highly improvable in his hands. An affectionate man may love a doll or an automaton and be the better for

it. But I think he has got both heart and soul, and has doubled the Cape of Good Hope successfully.

‘Foster’s country is much finer than I had expected. The lovely swelling downs, exquisitely green about Rochdale, become bolder as you get north; masses of grey stone tower up, fringed and sometimes half hidden by brushwood and trees. In the vale of Todmorden these masses become overhanging cliffs, and the trees more wild and forest-looking, with a devious river struggling below, and here and there throwing out a fine haugh of sweet, wild beauty. The scenery at Hebden Bridge is picturesque—approaching to grand; but it is very lonely, and must have been much more so before it was covered with cotton and woollen factories. Foster’s type of natural imagery is very clearly seen in this region.

‘I saw Windermere, Grasmere, Derwentwater, and Ullswater, and I have carried away an unusually vivid impression, which is to be explained either on the hypothesis of a good frame, or on the more pleasing one of a greater susceptibility to natural beauty. I think the latter, for I see what I did not use to see, and admire more than I used to admire. The Lakes are exquisitely framed, the background of mountains and rich banks, running through every mood from Italian softness to Alpine desolation, being very wonderful and certainly superior to any of the Scots ones I have seen. In the Scots lakes there is a monotonous boldness, something like the high cheek-bones in the Scots face. In the English there is almost as much grandeur, while the scale of beauty has far more compass. Scotsmen generally have greatly depreciated the English lakes in point of majesty. They are large enough to fill the eye and the mind, and the mountains can hold up their heads beside Ben Lomond. There is awful solitude in some of the back parts of the mountain scenery. A difficult walk over a mountain shoulder, past a wild tarn covered with mist, and down a terrific ravine at the bottom of Helvellyn, has impressed me almost as much as anything out of Switzerland. It was like intruding upon nature in her night-gown and hair-papers, and was as unlike the full dress of the other side of the same mountain on which the lake lies as possible. . . .

‘. . . I was introduced to Wordsworth by Providence and my own forwardness, and received from him much kindness. I have noted down our conversation. I saw also Foxhow and Greta Hall, Southey’s workshop, and brought away from Grasmere a piece of the Wishing-gate, which I shall apply to when you don’t come to Berwick.

‘. . . I enjoyed this excursion devotionally more than any preceding.

. . . What indeed is nature but the shadow cast by God, and how can it be so well enjoyed as when He is seen in it? If we are not drawn by the sentiments of beauty, how can we by moral attractions? It exerts a wonderful influence on the moral feelings to partake the contagion of these emotions, which are more akin to them than any other part of our nature. But I am not going to dissertate, and hope to make a practice rather than a theory. . . .

‘As we get on in the world and see the realities of things in the daylight of manhood, what vanity and vexation of spirit does all appear, but the one grand relation that links us to Infinite Love and binds us to all good beings, dead and living, that hang around this centre! . . .’

TO MRS. RATTRAY

BERWICK, *Sept.* 17, 1849.

‘. . . I shall be glad to know Miss Rattray’s last German book. I hope Mr. Rattray is not only almost, but altogether, persuaded to be a Voluntary, though I would rather a great deal see him a good sound Christian, which I hope he is, than a mere Voluntary debater—a class of character for which I have uncommonly small respect.

‘. . . I do not know any period of my life that has been happier, or perhaps so happy, and that from causes which I think will last—the growth of Christian knowledge and faith and other good habits. Would that there were more of this! I should then be a greater blessing to others. It is one of my peculiar satisfactions in thinking of my friendships to be assured that they all lend so much help in the way of prayer to this result. What is life without these religious joys and exertions? I have known both sides, and can speak from the depth of experience. May I and all I love know the dark less and the light more! . . .’

TO REV. GEORGE GILFILLAN

*Nov.* 13, 1849.

‘. . . I have always continued to cherish friendly feelings towards you, but I am led to fear that some alteration of your feelings towards me has taken place, from the strain of a brief allusion in a recent article in an Edinburgh newspaper. I really did not wish to be spoken of at all, even in the complimentary strains you were pleased to employ. I had no hand in *Lowe’s Magazine*, and my name was put on the back of it without my knowledge. Besides, I cannot

but think that a person who had in no sense offered himself to public criticism might have been spared even by so keen a marksman and allowed to nestle in privacy undisturbed.

‘Of the other part of your notice I think I have cause to complain. . . . I have never affected any resemblance to John Foster, nor am I aware that the mistaken comparison is so prevalent as to need a summary correction. Nor do I know what you mean by “meekly running in the ruts of a Church system,” except that I sincerely prefer the doctrine and discipline of the Church of which I am a minister to those of every other, and lend a willing, however humble, aid to organised efforts to develop and apply them, believing that in this manner I shall best serve my day and generation. If you suppose that I am under any constraint or dictation, I can assure you that you are entirely mistaken; nor will those who know me best allege that I ever at any period signified dissatisfaction with anything to which I now assent, except the length and complexity of our symbolical books and the ambiguity of certain statements in them—evils which I still profess to desire to see removed. As to your assertion that I am “ready to do, if not the . . . at least the dubious work of our Church,” I am utterly at a loss to understand what you refer to, nor do I think it consistent with fair dealing, leaving friendship out of the question, to launch out such a vague charge without private communication, and without the slightest specification of the evil committed. . . . It might be enough to meet a vague charge with a general denial, yet I would not choose to adopt such a proceeding towards one who is not a stranger, much less an ill-designing accuser.

‘I am well aware that your ideal of the Christian ministry is very different from mine. And as, perhaps, your remarks have been occasioned by the consciousness of this discrepancy, it will do no harm to set down here some of the points in which I disagree with you and think you wrong. A frank explanation is a great deal better than the *concordia discors* of general commendation and general censure.

‘I will, at the risk of “running in the ruts of a Church system,” divide my differences into the two great heads of doctrinal and practical.

‘I differ greatly from you doctrinally respecting the merits of our recent literary philosophy and the antithesis you state between it and popular Christianity. For me the system of Carlyle and his followers has no allurements and no terrors. I have lived through it, and felt that it became shallower and shallower the further I



waded into it, that it was in fact rather the provocative to a system than a system itself, and that no man seeking a creed with life-and-death earnestness, as I humbly venture to hope I have done, could halt with his everlasting Yea, which is just his everlasting No, spoken in a whisper. I think I have read Carlyle with as much serious effort of attention and sympathy as most . . . ; and I do not deny his genius nor his great services to literature, but as a religious teacher, and teacher of a system worthy of incorporating with or colouring a Christian man's creed, I do greatly wonder that you should speak of him as you do, or that you, a Christian minister, should entertain such an apprehension of the preponderance of his doctrines by their own merits over the popular, or, if you will, the vulgar, Christianity. I wonder that you do not see that, with all his fine words about the "open secret," "the duty that lies next to us," "the two eternities and three immensities," he has neither a living God, a fixed moral law, a unique God-man, a renewing Spirit nor an individual immortality. I cannot follow you in the eclecticism which would bring the Christianity of the Bible under one category with his theory, and harmonise the transcendent glory of the Son of God with his scheme of Hero Worship. . . .

'I differ from you also greatly about the power and terror of Germanism. I think I know its worst, and reckon it, like its British reflections, to be more formidable from its darkness than its light. I admire much that is German, but not in the same plane with you ; nor do I entertain any distressing apprehensions that what Germany has begotten she will not herself be able to devour and help us to devour.

'Will you permit me to add a personal remark? I am disappointed that you so often refer to these dissolving forces without yourself attempting to supply a cementing principle. Why should you always preach of danger and never show the way of safety? I often long for some positive deliverance of your own, after you have set aside the vulgar scheme of things as too feeble, and the philosophic as too daring. You are surely as equal to the filling up of the breach as any of the Christian advocates whom you summon to the rescue. Why do you only sound the alarm, but rarely, if ever, show the new art of fence? If these systems were as formidable in my eyes as they are in yours, I could not sit still, far less blow the trumpet and yet make no sally.

'As to the practical difference between us, I cannot agree with you in the scheme of ministerial literary life which you pursue. I do not dissent from the very current adage respecting the duty of

the Church to employ the press. But I greatly differ in regard to the way it should be employed. You know much of a department of literature of which most ministers, myself included, are comparatively ignorant, and I have read with interest such of your contributions as have come in my way. . . . But I think you might have done more to accelerate that harmony of literature and the Gospel which you so earnestly desire. You will forgive me for saying it, and say anything equally frank in return, that in your case I have not infrequently lamented to see the minister and the literary man rather united than harmonised, the sermon issuing from one fountain and the brilliant essay from another, without any hidden or visible channel by which the one might pour its more sacred tide into the other. I have hailed every token of the opening up of such a passage, and am fully persuaded that your literature will lose nothing, even in the eyes of non-Christian literary men, and your religious influence gain much, by the commerce. You admire Coleridge, Chalmers and Vinet. I for one will rejoice to see you rival them in this unity of Christian aim.

‘If this letter seems long you must remember it is the first, and I must be able to say “*Liberavi animam meam.*” One remaining practical difference I strongly feel. You seem to me to attach far too much efficacy to mere genius and talent in the moral regeneration of the world. You judge of all works theological and otherwise by an intellectual standard, while the moral and spiritual qualities fall into the background. I wonder at this especially in one who admires so much practical earnestness. To me love seems infinitely higher than knowledge and the noblest distinction of humanity—the humble minister who wears himself out in labours of Christian love in an obscure retreat, a far more exalted person than the mere literary champion of Christianity or the recondite professor who is great in Fathers and Schoolmen. I really cannot share your longings for intellectual giants to confront the Goliaths of scepticism—not that I do not think such persons useful in their way, but because I think Christianity far more impressive as a life than as a speculation, and the West Port evangelism of Dr. Chalmers far more effective than his *Astronomical Discourses*. I think also that the literary ambition of ministers is one of the greatest excrescences upon our Christianity, and the confidence in men of intellectual prowess one of the most abnormal things in the present state of the Church. While I should wish to see all ministers accomplished men, and as many as possible men of genius, I am deeply persuaded that these qualities will not be the effective thing, but a mere condition and

basis on which the moral excellencies of Christianity, which are summed up in humility and charity, may find a well-protected soil and display their loveliness. This conviction grows every year; and hence I feel less confidence and less interest in merely literary exertions, which play generally with notions and abstractions, with the merits of this writer and the demerits of that, and contain little quickening element for the Christian life. Let the external evidences of Christianity by all means be repaired; but the grand evidence is "Christ in us."

'You see that I have written without scruple or ceremony. Had you spoken as plainly to me by letter, or even in a publication, I should have made no complaint, and I hope you will do so if you think it needful. Honestly, I think you would render as much service by doing well in Christian literature yourself, as by letting the public know whether other parties, prominent or obscure, have done or are doing well or ill. . . . I have heard with much pleasure that you are engaged on a work on the Hebrew prophets. There I will be able to accompany you with interest, as I have of late spent much time in studying them, and shall hail any accession to our British stores in that department, which, since the days of Lowth, though fruitful in mere learning, has lacked abundantly in secondary inspiration.

'I do not apologise for anything in this letter but its length. If you wish for satisfaction in any unexplained matter, let me know it. I have a clear conscience towards you and a feeling of kindly interest, which I do not want to have interrupted. It does not look well when old comrades and ministers of the same Church, not to say the great invisible Church, break their ties with each other. If it can be helped, let it not be. We may speak freely to, and about each other, and yet be friends.'

FROM REV. GEORGE GILFILLAN

*Nov. 17, 1849.*

'I am glad that you have written me, because it gives me an opportunity of explanation and apology. The article was written hastily, and had hardly been despatched till I regretted the sentence respecting yourself. I ought to have spoken in higher terms of you, and I ought not to have used the word . . . even in negation, of a person whose honour, candour and talents I have always equally admired. I knew that you were superior to the base jealousies and envies which too much distinguish the meaner members of our class.



But I had heard that your good-nature had been imposed on and yourself impelled by others, against your will, to apply the scalping-knife. . . . You may labour to prove our religion divine; I have devoted myself to a humbler but not less needful task, to prove it human or humane. . . . Carlyle I look on not as a prophet but as a pioneer to a coming age. He has taught us much, at least negatively, and both he and Emerson are trying to work out the pregnant experiment of living the Christian life without accepting the Christian belief. If you do not love, I wonder that you do not fear them. I know that both of them tremble at the power they are exerting. To true religion they can do and wish to do no harm, but they are shattering creeds and emptying churches and turning back the most gifted and eloquent spirits from the ministry. I do not regret your entire consecration to the work of the ministry for its own sake so much as for that of the Church. You have doubtless chosen a good part, but you might have chosen a better. . . . It remains to be seen at the close of the day or in the next age which of us has made the better choice. . . .’

TO REV. GEORGE GILFILLAN

BERWICK, *Nov.* 20, 1849.

‘I have every reason to be satisfied with the frank and kindly spirit of your letter, and I like it all the better for its plain speaking. As to the personal matter, you did not need to explain anything but the apparent moral insinuation, first, of undue ductility and, second, of dubious occupation. Our difference respecting Church systems must of course affect our judgments of each other in the former point, and as that difference is honest you may use what liberty you please in speaking of me in regard to it with my perfect goodwill.

‘. . . I will not say a word more about our self-direction in regard to philosophy, literature, and Christianity. We must just come back to Bacon’s saying, that “those persons cannot have the same taste who drink wine and who drink water.” You are at liberty to regard the more generous beverage as your own. I shall rejoice if you exceed your own expectations, and be satisfied if my labours are not altogether in vain. May each prove his own work, and may a higher grace preserve us from those evils and one-sidednesses to which all human and even Christian efforts, however well meant, are liable! I think I can answer satisfactorily to my own mind all that you say, as you answer all that I say satisfactorily to



yours. What we know not may we be taught, and may we be enabled to walk up to our own standard!

‘I shall be happy at any time to see you, and I hope we shall be kept from again jostling each other, much more from falling out by the way. . . .’

#### TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Nov.* 20, 1849.

‘. . . O you wicked and sacrilegious, atheistical villain, have you no conscience or lingering reverence for the Bible and the Shorter Catechism, that you wish to make the parish schools as profane and their teachers as infidel as yourself? Alack-a-day that it should come to this, and that I should live to see my own brother participating as a Member of the Educational Institute in this nefarious conspiracy! O tempora! O mores! O Johannes Knox! O Andrea Melville! Ichabod! Ichabod! Occidit Ilium! Fuimus Troes! Without a confession there is no absolution and no salvation, and the star of Scotland’s glory is set for ever! In deep distress, but still able to present kind love to the mother of such a son, I am, in common shame and guilt, . . .’

#### MEETING WITH WORDSWORTH

*August 23, 1849.*—I have resolved to put down here, while it is fresh in my memory, the account of an interview I had with Wordsworth at Rydal Mount on Monday. Being at Ambleside on the 19th, I went to Rydal Church, where the poet worshipped, both forenoon and afternoon. As he was returning with his wife and two grandchildren in the forenoon up the side road that leads to the door of his house, I followed, and could not help going up and, with hat in hand, thus addressing him—

‘May a Scots clergyman claim the honour of shaking your hand?’

He seemed a little surprised, but very good-humouredly replied, ‘Yes, surely, by all means,’ at the same time extending it.

‘I venerate your name and have derived much benefit from your writings. I am from Berwick-upon-Tweed.’

Then with a couple of low bows I hastily stepped away before any effort could be made to detain me, for I did not think it right to intrude further.

Next day, about noon, I walked up to gain a leisurely view of Rydal Mount, and had the good fortune to see Wordsworth and his

lady coming down the road. I passed them, merely bowing at a distance, and stood on the opposite side making my observations on the building and enclosure. Immediately Mrs. Wordsworth came running back and entered the gate; and her husband followed. I still stood on the other side and had no wish to be seen more near at hand. 'You had better enter,' said he, 'and see the grounds.' His manner was very polite, and he recognised me as I drew nearer; 'Oh, I saw *you* and spoke to you yesterday.' He then became still more cordial, pushed open the gate and led me up to the raised platform or terrace which fronts his house, commanding a fine peep of Windermere and planted with roses, laurels, myrtles and other shrubs—as the guide-books affirm—by his own hands. After letting me take a view for myself, he came forward and we walked seven or eight times round by a circular path that sweeps round the centre of the terrace, talking all the while.

'I am a Scotsman and a Dissenter, Mr. Wordsworth; but your poetry rises above all these distinctions.'

'I hope so,' was his reply.

'I was first induced to study your works by the ardent recommendation of Professor Wilson of Edinburgh, under whom I studied and from whom I have received much kindness.'

'I know John Wilson. He is an able man, but rather wild. I have not had so much intercourse with him for some years.'

I then asked liberty to pluck some sprigs of his plants, and selected a piece of laurel, a bit of a rose bush, and a branch of myrtle.

He began to speak of my position as a Scots Presbyterian, and we talked a little about the Scotch and English Church systems.

'I like where religious worship is defined, and not left to the will of the individual.'

'I have no objection myself,' I replied, 'to a liturgy, and I was able to join yesterday in all the responses of your service.'

He admitted that there might be a tendency to monotony from the same words being always repeated, and that this was the danger to be guarded against, as too great irregularity was on the other side.

'Some things I do not like in your Scottish Presbyterian Establishment (for you have an Establishment, have you not?). I was once in a parish church, Longtown<sup>1</sup> I think, and there was a person

<sup>1</sup> This was an error. Longtown is in Cumberland, and the parish church is Episcopalian, but there are two Presbyterian churches in the village.

preaching on trial, whether the people would have him for their minister or not: the people actually sat as judges upon the matter; and as you may suppose, he felt very uncomfortable. He durst not read his sermon: he could not repeat it well from memory: he could not trust himself to the impulse of the moment, and yet he was obliged to speak on, and he seemed all the while to be thinking of nothing but of the impression he was making on his critical judges.'

I admitted that this was a hard case; and that nobody would like to preach always under such disadvantages.

'At the close of the service, when the people were about to retire, a scene took place, which I never saw elsewhere in a church. A number of shepherds' dogs started up and began to yell and howl in chorus, leaping and scampering about, as if greatly delighted that the service was over. They danced and frisked about and barked with all their might and seemed much to enjoy it. I had seen no dogs all the while; but they started up from every corner. This did not prejudice me in favour of the Scotch worship.'

He told this incident with great animation, and it appeared to have had no good effect on his estimate of Scotch religion in general. I acknowledged that we might learn much in point of decorum from our Episcopal neighbours; but that I knew well how much of serious religion might co-exist with this outward rudeness. He did not deny it, and this subject dropped.

As he had spoken of Professor Wilson, I asked if he knew Sir W. Hamilton. He did not; but knew his brother, who had resided in the neighbourhood. He was, however, acquainted with Sir William's philosophical reputation. He had remarked before that I was much favoured with the weather, but that a few gleams of sunshine would be an improvement, and added that he liked to be in the open air, though he was now turned of eighty. I fervently wished that he might yet see a number of years of health; and indeed he might as well have passed for seventy as for eighty.

He then asked if I had seen the adjoining waterfall, and, as I had not, he very kindly offered to conduct me, and would take no denial. It is in the grounds of Lady le Fleming, on the other side of the lane, and he led me out of the garden, through the gate, a little below on the opposite side; then, scrambling and stooping among shrubs and branches of trees, we reached a walk which, after some turnings and windings, brought us to a little summer-house from which the fall is seen. The distance from his garden might be three hundred yards. He talked all the way, asked

about Berwick-upon-Tweed, and especially about Anna Maria Williams, who had once lived in it, then married and gone to Paris for cheapness of living, where her husband perished in the Reign of Terror. She had written, among other works, a volume of poems, and he inquired if I knew anything about them. I had to reply that I did not even know her name, and that her memory could not be very fresh in Berwick, as I had never once heard her alluded to in society. He remarked upon the independent place of Berwick as brought out in proclamations of forms of prayer; but I did not care to dwell on this subject further than to speak in general of its interesting feudal associations and its still extant fortifications. He had passed through Berwick, but had no very distinct remembrance of its aspect.

He then passed, as we went along, to the subject of Scottish literature:

‘Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* is a great work, though he appears to take too low a view of the design of society, and perhaps the same thing may be said of his *Moral Sentiments*.’

‘There appears,’ I rejoined, ‘to be a more elevated spirit in our own days in estimating the forces that move society; more is ascribed to directly moral, and less to economical and social principles.’

‘Yes; it is a pleasing change.’

‘There is certainly something very circuitous in Smith’s book on *Moral Sentiments*; and I presume you will not agree with any of those writers who have talked of the gradual formation or creation of conscience.’

‘Those who speak so,’ he said, ‘show that they know nothing at all of the matter.’

‘I have read Sir J. Mackintosh’s theory of the production of conscience; but I hardly think it better than any of them.’

‘I knew Sir James, and frequently (or sometimes) met him. He was a very pleasant man in company.’

By this time we had got within the summer-house, and he stood back for a minute or two, till I had obtained a full view. He remarked on the fine proportion of all the parts (by the way, he has a sonnet to the fall); and I ventured to observe that the pool below gave it a very different appearance from the Stock Gill Force, which I had seen in the morning. He assented, and spoke of the fine effect of the moss, the overhanging trees, the body of water, etc.; only, he found fault with the bridge above among the trees as being too heavy. I asked him—



‘Mr Wordsworth, can you carry away the whole of a scene like this by a single survey, or do you need to break it up into parts, as I find I must, and only carry away a detached feature here and there after all?’

‘Oh, yes. It all depends upon the study of nature or the having a painter’s eye.’ After gazing a little longer: ‘I must just leave it, for I should catch nothing more though I looked the whole day.’

We then walked slowly out by the same road, and the conversation turned on the sentiment of the beautiful.

‘Do you suppose,’ I asked, ‘that the finer kinds of association with natural objects can be acquired, or are they the gift of nature?’

‘Oh, I do not doubt that in most cases they are the effect of education.’

I was a little surprised at this, having generally found that persons who assert a primitive sense of moral distinctions assert a primitive sense of beauty also, and repeated the question in another form so as to make sure of his understanding me.

‘Yes,’ he repeated, ‘there is probably in all men some sense of the beauty of colours, and some delight at the change of the seasons, especially of spring, when the trees bud and the lambs frisk about, and some natural sentiments of that sort; but all the deeper and more refined associations are connected with the cultivation of the mind and the close study of nature.’

‘I think I can confirm what you say from my own experience; for having originally no great sensibility to natural scenery, I have found it growing with education and practice, and each year makes it more lively.’

‘It is a delightful thing that it is so, for one thus becomes so independent of artificial pleasures; all are put on a level, and there is everywhere something in nature to interest.’

He then grew animated and went on: ‘Many people say to me, “Mr. Wordsworth, you must be quite at a disadvantage when you go from home, from the fact of your living amid this splendid scenery”; but I find it quite otherwise, for I have now the taste and the eye, and am nowhere at a loss. I miss these grand objects for a day or two; but I begin again to be at home, and it is an advantage to have had my eyes thus accustomed to seek for beauty.’

I remarked that I had in a humble way passed through the same experience, having feared that after the north of Italy, the Alps and the Rhine, the ordinary scenery of home would be monotonous

and dull, but that I had learned to appreciate the little better, from having studied the great. I then mentioned that the poet Cowper seemed to be differently affected by change of scenery, since he complains that the larger views of nature increased his melancholy. I referred to his brief residence with Hayley at Streatham.

‘But Cowper was a peculiar man, and the ordinary scenery to which he had been familiarised was comparatively tame. He was an interesting being, and seems to have led a very innocent kind of life after his retirement from the world.’

‘Cowper seems,’ I said, ‘to have taken hold rather of the more commonplace than of the more recondite associations with natural objects.’

‘Yes, he was in no sense a profound thinker. There is nothing profound in Cowper’s religion.’

‘Did you ever hear how his mind first became affected? It is not mentioned in his biography, I believe.’

I listened with interest, expecting to hear something new, but received only the usual story about his appointment as reading-clerk to the House of Lords, which is given in all the biographies from Hayley downwards, and which Wordsworth must have for the moment forgotten.

‘He fell into the hands of a Methodistical friend, John Newton, who did him no good. He was also the worse, it appears, of Lady Austin, who came into the family of Mrs., Mrs., Mrs.— (I here helped him out with Mrs. Unwin), and excited her jealousy, being a person of greater accomplishments and having seen more of the world.’

I had expected to have heard a little more cordial admiration of Cowper, but did not feel entitled to take up his cause, the more especially that we had got upon the road or lane which leads from Rydal Mount down to the highway, past the church.

He insisted on going down to the public road with me, alleging that the walk would do him good, and we continued to talk. I said I had often remembered his last sonnet to the river Duddon, and repeated the two lines—

‘Enough, if something from our hand have power  
To live, and act, and serve the present hour.’

‘My sonnets to the river Duddon have been wonderfully popular. Properly speaking, nothing that ever I wrote has been popular, but they have been more warmly received.’

We then met a number of persons, chiefly girls of the humbler

class, who appeared to have come on some trip from a distance, and who were making their way from the highroad up the lane.

‘I believe they are going to see the waterfall. There is much more taste for natural beauty among all classes since I can remember. I like to see that’—repeating with an emphasis that reminded me of the racy energy of Dr. Chalmers in his private utterances—‘I like to see that.’

I hinted that probably no small portion of this increased taste might be traced to his writings, and that it was a great aim to have lived for this, and to have received such a reward. I ventured to add that it was the aim of ministers of the Gospel to open the eyes of men, by God’s grace, to a spiritual beauty, as it was of poets to open them to the beauties of nature. He very cordially assented, and with some solemnity added, ‘You may hope not to labour in vain.’

I had now reached the highroad, and thanked him profoundly for his kindness, which he could not but see how much I felt. He congratulated me on going the way of Grasmere, and shook me very warmly by the hand, wishing me a pleasant journey. I could not help wishing in turn every blessing to be with him; and so we parted, having met for the first and probably the last time in this world.

#### REMINISCENCES BY SIR GEORGE B. BRUCE, C.E.

‘I became a member of the Golden Square congregation in the autumn of 1845, and continued so during the first five years of Dr. Cairns’ ministry. My introduction to him, which took place on his first Communion Sunday, illustrates the discipline of the times. The Communion was observed as a distinct afternoon service, and after morning service I went to the vestry to ask for a “token” of admission, explaining why I did not present the customary certificate. The young minister questioned me as to whether I knew any of the elders or anybody connected with the church; but I was helpless, and though at last he took me at my word, he evidently felt that he was committing a somewhat grave irregularity. That was the first scene in a lifelong friendship.

‘In preaching he followed the plan usual in those days of committing his sermons to memory. But this was no great burden to him. I have often seen him writing his sermon on a Saturday afternoon, and he has told me that reading it over once or twice was all that he required in the way of further preparation. Yet



sometimes, when not feeling well, he would "stick," and when memory failed he took the manuscript from his pocket with apparent unconcern, placed it in the Bible and read it to the end. At that time he was not at all a ready speaker, and his extempore addresses at the prayer-meeting were far below the level of the Sunday sermons.

'His manner and the tones of his voice in preaching were against him, according to the rules of elocution. Yet his massive and cultured mind, linked to a heart full of love to God and man, seemed to thrill his very body, and conveyed its message with unhindered power. When, with hands clasped and eyes closed, he commended young communicants to "Him that was able to keep them from falling," his whole frame vibrated with emotion.

'In his illustrations there was a wonderful fitness and aptness. I speak from memory, after more than forty years. One day, in enforcing the truth that the weakest of us could not escape the responsibility of exerting some influence upon others, he brought it home to us by saying, "As well might a man expect to walk in sunshine and cast no shadow, as to live in the world without exerting influence." At another time, when speaking of the folly of rejecting God's revelation because of anything in it that was dark or mysterious, he appealed in illustration to nature, saying: "It were a poor ocean through which we could wade, and a miserable firmament in which we could count and measure all the stars." I remember one wonderful apostrophe with which he closed a description of the reason for the Agony in the Garden: "O Thou struggling, agonising and bleeding One! Henceforth would I struggle in Thy struggles, agonise in Thy agonies, and have every movement of my soul respond to the beatings of the heart which bled for me."

'His knowledge of German theology was looked upon with some misgiving by the older Seceder ministers. I remember calling upon him one day with the Rev. —, when a German book which happened to lie on the table served as the text for an exhortation from the older minister to the younger to beware of the leaven of heresy. Yet from the first there was nothing immature or 'prentice-like either in his preaching or his pastorate. The power and grasp of his mind were not less distinctly linked with wisdom and judgment when his locks were raven black than when time had changed them to silver. It would be impossible to exaggerate the esteem in which he was held at Berwick; it bordered upon worship. Yet one of the secrets of his power in private as in the pulpit was his



absolute self-abnegation—his constant aim and endeavour that Christ might be accepted and God glorified. Self was nowhere.’

REMINISCENCES BY THE REV. DAVID MACEWAN, D.D.,  
CLAPHAM.

‘During my second session at the Theological Hall, I accepted an appointment to be home missionary in connection with Golden Square Church, and in October 1847 I entered there upon one of the most memorable and profitable years of my life.

‘Mr. Cairns had then been only two years in Berwick, and the memory of his predecessor was still fragrant and powerful. Yet it was evident that already he was enthroned in the hearts of the people, and commanded an influence both intellectual and moral, which was simply supreme.

‘The house where he lodged, in one of the chief thoroughfares, was comfortably but plainly furnished. He occupied a large room and bedroom upstairs, where he wrote some of his most powerful and best-known sermons. I remember being struck with the smallness of his library, in which German theological books and the works of Richard Baxter, of whom he was a great admirer, occupied a conspicuous place. He had special hours set apart for sermon-writing, and if you called upon him then, he had a way of making you understand, without discourtesy, that he wished you to hasten your departure. Every Sabbath evening, however, I had the privilege of spending two or three hours with him. He was generally in the finest of spirits for a free talk. Before supper we descended to the room below to have family worship with his worthy landlady and her daughter, and I well remember how heartily he threw himself into that little service. I led the singing, but had often difficulty in holding to the tune from the overpowering energy with which he sang, without too much regard to the music. In the prayers which he offered, there was wonderful unction and impressiveness in his utterance of thanks for “all that our ears had heard and our eyes had seen and our hands had handled of the Word of Life.” When we returned to his room, and the simple supper was over, conversation flowed; but not seldom, when some question of doctrine or philosophy was started, it assumed the character of a monologue, his mind moving on and on in the discussion, balancing one argument against another, suggesting objections and replying to them, till one felt disposed simply to

listen in silent admiration. In the Mission of which I had charge he took a deep interest, entering heartily into individual cases; and his knowledge of the families was almost as complete and minute as my own. Everything approaching praise of his sermons he checked, and almost repelled. Once, however, on a day when his memory had partially failed him, he asked if I had noticed any abruptness or awkwardness. I once asked him what books he would recommend me to read on a particular subject, and he gave me the rather surprising answer: "I have always laid it down as a maxim that any one who can ask what books should be read on a given topic is quite able himself to find them." I did not quite see his meaning at the time, and I am not sure that I see it yet. The reply, however, indicated the high idea he had of individual and independent effort, and the principle on which he himself had acted.

'There is no doubt that occasionally he preached above the capacity of a number of his hearers. Still they felt the power of his reasoning even when unable to follow him. There was the tread of a giant in every discourse, and all had unbounded faith in him as their teacher. One Sunday, when commencing a series of lectures on Isaiah, he occupied the morning with a lecture on Hebrew poetry, and expatiated largely on Hebrew "parallelism," the word occurring very often in the course of the lecture. The same afternoon he had occasion to refer to the "Three that bear witness in heaven," and intimated with all faithfulness that he had come to the conclusion that that verse was not a portion of the Word of God. Next day I happened to visit a worthy old lady, and found her in great trouble of mind. "Oh, sir" she exclaimed, "what a day we had yesterday! If it hadn't been Mr. Cairins (pronounced with a strong Berwick burr), I don't know what I should have thought. Ah, me! When he spoke of the verse not being the Word of God, I thought of the text, 'If any man shall take away from the words of this book—'" The good woman did not venture to quote more, but added: "And what did he mean by these Hebrew 'parallelograms'? Oh, if it had been anybody but Mr. Cairins! But surely it must be right?" I soothed her to the best of my ability, but her great comfort and assurance lay in the fact that it was Mr. Cairns.'

## CHAPTER XIII

### MINISTER AT BERWICK

1850-1854

Golden Square Church—Mr. Cairns conducting service—His classes—His oratory—His pastorate—The new manse—Relation to local affairs and politics—Contributions to literature—Edinburgh Moral Philosophy Chair—His pleasure in friendship—Verses—Letters.

THE town of Berwick rises in picturesque irregularity on the north bank of the Tweed, less than half a mile from the German Ocean. The situation more than atones for the absence of any striking architecture. Seawards stretch open pasture lands separated from the town by old moats and ruined walls dating from almost every critical epoch of Scottish history; while landwards the bounds or 'liberties' of Berwick rise in well-rounded slopes towards Halidon Hill and Lamberton, the Gretna Green of the east coast. Below the town, the Tweed, which is a tidal river, steals with a wide sweep towards the sea, having on its south bank the fishing-villages of Tweedmouth and Spittal nestling underneath handsome spurs of the Northumberland hills. Its red-roofed, gabled houses suggest reminiscences of Kiel and Lübeck; and the eerie North Sea 'haar,' under which it often lies, gives it something of that mystic air which is shared by all the east coast towns in Britain from smoky Newcastle to cold Arbroath.

The business centre of the town is the High Street, which runs from the Scots Gate to the Town Hall, a broad irregular street serving forty years ago as the only market-place. Half-way down the street a covered entrance leads into an

irregular quadrangle styled on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle 'Golden Square.' Three sides of the Square are occupied by dwelling-houses and a tannery, and the fourth consisted till recently of Golden Square Church and manse, built there at a time when Dissenters could not secure a frontage towards a main street. The church is now an adjunct of the tannery; but in spite of vats and hides and various uglinesses, one can see that it was no mean place of worship: a large, airy, well-lighted building in which the Word of the Lord could sound forth without hindrance. It was seated with pews of all shapes—square, oblong and triangular—most of these belonging to old Berwick families, while the walls were lined with single rows of pews in which sat the humbler folk and new-comers to the town. Deep galleries protruded on three sides, and on the fourth stood a high box-pulpit for the minister, a lower box-pulpit for the precentor, and a still lower bench for the elders. Here gathered twice every Sabbath without fail—in those days 'half-day hearers' were unknown—chief citizens of Berwick, farmers both from Berwickshire and from Northumberland, inhabitants of Spittal and of Tweedmouth, and a fair proportion of the artisans of the town. It was essentially a *bein*, respectable congregation, just a little proud of its respectability and very proud of its young minister, who combined his great gifts with punctilious regard for all moral and religious proprieties.

As the town clock struck eleven, the beadle bustled up the steep pulpit stair with Bible and Psalm Book tucked under his arm, adjusted these with care on velvet cushions and then stood waiting at the foot of the stair. There was a hush—as seemly preparation for worship as any voluntary—amidst which the creaking of the minister's boots was heard, and all eyes were fixed on his solemn and stately approach, as he slowly mounted the stair and at once hid his face in his black-gloved hand. When he rose to give out the opening psalm, he showed a majestic presence: black glossy hair wellnigh



covering the compact philosophic forehead ; blue gleaming eye taking note of every worshipper, tenderly as a good shepherd his flock ; strong, rounded shoulders, slightly bent in true priest fashion ; great limbs, awkward, but with the awkwardness of strength eager to be used. The psalm ended, there came the 'long prayer,' so called to distinguish it from the 'short prayer' which followed the sermon.

People have said that they would walk miles to hear John Cairns say, 'Let us pray.' In the fashion of those days the prayer lasted fifteen or twenty minutes, but unlike the fashion, it contained no argument, moving steadily and quietly along familiar lines of adoration, thanksgiving, confession, humiliation and supplication. Scriptural it was, not through quotation but by embodiment of Scripture truth ; terse, full, free from self-analysis and personalities, rarely yielding a phrase which the hearer would quote, yet lifting all into God's presence by dint of the speaker's own godliness. Then came the reading of Scripture and another psalm as prelude to the sermon, which would last perhaps fifty minutes. The morning sermon was always expository, —strictly so, devotional and practical suggestions being brief and incidental. He used no notes of any sort, yet every word corresponded with the manuscript, for he reckoned it wrong to speak in the pulpit without verbal preparation. The result was a certain cumbrousness and almost coldness in the earlier part of the sermon ; but this soon vanished as the hearer unconsciously discovered that, though the sentences were logically balanced and adjusted, they were the natural expression of the speaker's thought, and that both mind and heart found free vent in the longest of his periods. Shrewd writers on homiletics have said that the main thing, whether a preacher uses manuscript or speaks extempore or commits to memory, is that he should be 'in his sermon' ; and Cairns fulfilled this to the letter. Before he had been preaching for ten minutes, men felt that they had the true thoughts, the

genuine feelings of a man of far-reaching mind and deep-searching heart, and this conviction was increased by the obvious artlessness of his style and the ungainliness of his delivery. Ungainly his delivery was. Frequently he would lean his elbow on the Bible and bend forward. Then he would clasp his hands in front and move them up and down. Again he would cross his arms over his chest as if seeking to hide his heart. When the fire kindled within him, his arms were loosened and began to swing, with clenched fists, right and left alternately, but freely with full strength, so that a touch of the swinging arm would have laid a man low; until as the end approached and he appealed to conscience, he grew quiet again, his voice deepened, and the peroration was given with folded hands and closed eyes.

The afternoon service was the same in arrangement, but not in substance. While the lecture gave place to a sermon of a more or less hortatory type, the topics of devotion, too, were different, being all but entirely intercessory. Indeed, the 'long prayer' was devoted exclusively to pleading with God for all sorts and conditions of men. It was probably in this exercise that the breadth of his mind, the warmth of his heart and the width of his religious perspective showed themselves most clearly. The world's general necessities, its special evils and blessings, the public and private events of the week were laid before the Almighty calmly and reverently, so that the narrowest mind was broadened in its outlook and the most restless spirit was soothed. There is no more common complaint among Presbyterians of the present day than that, of the two services which constitute the Sabbath-day's worship, the one is only a repetition of the other. Cairns avoided this not by seeking for variety in ritual, but by a careful division of the different elements of Christian worship between the two services.

In his early ministry he took no special notice of the children in church, and, indeed, rarely was present at the

Sunday-school ; but to his Bible-class, which met on Sunday evening and was attended by about 100 young men and women, he gave earnest attention. At first the sexes were separated, but after a few years they met together. The class began with a repetition lesson taken either from the Bible or from the Shorter Catechism. Then followed an examination upon some prescribed text-book, either an easy manual of theology or a Church history, and the meeting always closed with a minute cross-questioning upon the afternoon sermon. 'What was the text? How many heads were there? Give the particulars under each head. What illustrations were used of this or that particular?' All these things were asked authoritatively, as parts of the business of the day on which every one was bound to be informed. Yet everything was gentle and considerate, help being given to the backward, and no shy scholar having cause to blush for a blunder. Occasionally the programme was varied by some exercise. The young men would be asked to make sketches of sermons or the girls to write out prayers. There was no effort to attract or entertain ; and yet there was attraction and interest of the most living kind.

'It was,' writes one of his pupils who has had wide experience of religious teaching, 'the best hour of the day to us. He was nearer us and we were nearer him than in church. The grandeur and momentum of his pulpit eloquence were not there, but we had instead a calm, rich, conversational instruction, a quiet disclosure of vast stores of information as well as a definite dealing with young hearts and consciences, which left an unfading impression. The meeting always closed with a request that some two or three would speak to him after the class was dismissed ; and they learned that the absence from church of some member of their households had been noticed.'

Although his preparation for preaching was always careful, the level of eloquence which he reached varied greatly. He



himself has recognised that the 'staple of pulpit work must consist of the enforcement of ordinary moral and religious maxims'; and while his powerful personality always lent force and interest to commonplaces, his manuscripts show that his normal preaching was distinguished only by the steady march of a well-ordered mind, and the combination of breadth of view with evangelical earnestness. But at Communion seasons he never failed to rise to real eloquence. Like Chalmers, he selected his subject weeks or even months beforehand, and the whole of the communion week was given to the writing of the Action Sermon, which is the technical title of the sermon preached on the forenoon of the communion sabbath, the communion itself being among United Presbyterians usually observed at a separate afternoon service. Those sermons were always on some evangelical topic dealing directly with the divinity or the saving work of Christ, and they were habitually apologetic, close and careful in their reasoning and abounding in explicit or implicit references to current controversy. It was here that the distinctive power of his pulpit oratory was most manifest—his power of presenting solid argument on religious subjects, without repelling the hearer by dogmatism, or wearying him by controversial minutiae. He assumed no technical acquaintance with theology, measured the intelligence and interest of his audience, and aimed at securing assent to truths of which the importance is universally acknowledged. There was not a touch of provincialism, nor of any other pettiness in his appeals. He stood forth as a champion of catholic truth in its deepest and widest aspects. The antagonists whom he denounced were those recognised as the enemies of the Christian Church as a whole, and the unbelief which he sought to expose and to remove was no divergence from Confessional theology, but unbelief in the judgments and the mercy of the Trinity. In speaking thus we are not anticipating, for many if not most of the sermons



by which he electrified crowds twenty years later, were cast in the moulds of his early Action Sermons.

It was on those occasions that strangers usually frequented the church ; but it was not by such preaching that he won and held the love of his flock. As his letters show, 'quiet pastoral industry' was the ideal he proposed to himself, and greater industry in a pastorate is scarcely conceivable. Following the traditional usage which, more than any other, has given the clergy of Scotland a hold upon the Scottish people, he visited his congregation officially with unflagging regularity. The day and hour of each visit were intimated beforehand and the whole family was present, the merchants and shopkeepers of the town never hesitating to let young people away from business in order that they might attend. Each child was brought forward in turn to repeat a psalm or passage of Scripture, prescribed at the previous visit ; a few friendly inquiries were made about family affairs and absent relatives ; some word of encouragement or interest was spoken to every one ; and then the household knelt in prayer. Wonderful prayers they were, varying always according to the situation of the family, with delicate reference to those present and unflinching recollection of the absent, but short, simple and direct ; for he was, perhaps unconsciously, teaching the head of the household how he ought to pray. His extraordinary memory was here of the utmost service to him. He never forgot a child's name or character. It is told of him that being asked by some curious inquirer, he repeated without a pause the names of all the children in his congregation, apologising for his ignorance with regard to two families of new-comers. Similarly, he rarely went to preach in a distant town without remembering some relatives of the members of his flock, and seeking them out that he might report upon them when he returned to Berwick. This was done without officialism or any apparent effort, partly from sheer kindness, but mainly from real concern in all who had been intrusted by God to

his care. For behind his formal visitation, as he called it, though it had nothing formal in it but its regularity, there was a background of incessant watchfulness. Not only the sick, but the anxious, widowers and widows, orphans, poor people and those on the verge of sin were ever on his heart; and when he went among them there was a genial, humane air of concern for them which led to a worship of him that no man could reckon undeserved. Old people still living, when asked about his early preaching, speak of it as a secondary matter. 'Ay,' one aged woman said, 'I suppose he was a fine preacher, but I know that he was my kind, dear friend.'

A considerable part of his pastoral duty was rural, as more than a third of his congregation was drawn from Scottish and English farms, some of them seven or eight miles distant from Berwick. In the spring or autumn, when the scenery of the Merse and of Northumberland is at its best, he would start in the forenoon, and walk, book in hand, from farm to farm, conducting worship with each family and closing the day by holding a service in some schoolroom or barn to which his own communicants brought their neighbours. These were among his happiest days. His descriptions of the scenery on both sides of the Tweed show that he combined an almost animal delight in nature with a consciousness of God's presence, which made his solitary walks exercises in devotion. And they served a further purpose in bracing his physical strength, which his studious habits taxed unduly.

He had no burden of any sort in managing the affairs of his congregation. The finance, property and other outward matters were in the hands of a body of elected trustees, taken as a rule from the well-to-do members of the congregation. Capable and kindly men they were, who managed their business smoothly and with a pardonable pride in their efficiency. No doubt they had their 'tiffs,' but in these they did not appeal to their minister, and it was entirely in accord-

ance with his temperament to abstain from such duties. Of course the finance of the congregation flourished, and it needed no great liberality to furnish the stipend of £180 with which he began his ministry. The congregation quickly increased, rising from about 500 to 750 communicants, and pausing at that point only because the limits of church accommodation had been reached. As prosperity increased, the stipend was raised in spite of his protests. This made no change in his frugal way of living; but he was grateful for the increased means of lending help to needy friends. Many a letter from struggling acquaintances shows how graciously assistance was tendered.

The next proof of financial prosperity was the provision of a seemly house for the minister. Although the Golden Square manse commanded a fine view of the Tweed, it was a cramped building with a mean entrance. In 1852 it was set apart for church purposes, and the congregation acquired a new manse in Wellington Terrace, where he was established in the month of June. He now became for the first time a householder, and placed himself under the care of an elderly servant of whom he stood in considerable awe. Legend says that he habitually entered the house by the back door, being reluctant to give her the trouble of answering the bell.

The new manse was a handsome, semi-detached villa, standing on a section of the old city walls, where these form a sort of quay or embankment for the Tweed. The study, where he spent the greater part of his time for the next twenty-four years, occupies the front corner of the house, and the view from its windows is very striking. A south window looks down upon the slow stream of the river, which is at this point spanned by an ancient bridge and dotted with fishing craft, wood-ships from Norway and brisk little steam-ferris. On the opposite bank stand the cottages of Tweedmouth, fronted with picturesque lines of salmon nets, while the broad shoulders of the English hills beyond are dotted



with cottages and farmhouses. The other window, beside which he always sat, looked across a few gardens and past the long pier right out to sea, where Holy Island could be seen beyond the breakers in clear weather, and at night the flash of the Longstone lighthouse. It is a dangerous coast for navigators, the scene of many a disastrous shipwreck, and one can hear the echo of wild October storms sounding in some of the grandest passages of his sermons. In truth, in every way the manse suited the man. The road in front was little used. His only immediate neighbour was the Vicar, Rev. Joseph Barnes, with whom he had quiet and friendly intercourse. Behind, there was a plot of grass where he conned his sermons in privacy on Saturday afternoons; and without passing through any street, he could reach the long stone pier and, sheltered by its parapet, rejoice in the wild solitude of the breaking waves. He was not quite unnoticed in those lonely promenades. At the head of the pier there was a five-barred gate, and the town boys used to hide behind the parapet to see the 'big minister louping' as he made his way homewards; for when no observer was in sight he always cleared the gate with a running leap.

In the general life of the town he took, during those years, little part beyond his fair share in its charitable and educational affairs. One of the charms of Berwick to him was that it presented few pressing claims to public work. He was not a ready speaker, or at least had not yet discovered his readiness, and he had neither the inclination nor the capacity for such management of men as the direction of provincial life involves. Once or twice only did he feel called to take up cudgels. There was a Ragged School at Berwick, mainly supported by his congregation, in which the Bible was taught as one of the daily lessons. In 1852 the Roman Catholic priests withdrew their children on the plea that there had been attempts at proselytism. This step led



to a keen local controversy, in which he was the champion of the position, which he maintained afterwards before a larger public, that in a Christian community no one can fairly object to the teaching of the Bible. Although the controversy, in which he showed vivacity and skill, was in itself insignificant, it had special interest as bringing him into line on educational matters with his friend Dr. Thomas Guthrie, who was at that time engaged in a similar contention in Edinburgh.

On another local matter he showed still more clearly his independence and his discretion in debate. An attempt was made in 1851 to revive the Lamberton Races, and the good town lost its head in anticipation of the prosperity which would accrue. The Corporation voted money for the purpose, and the trading part of the community was full of enthusiasm. Mr. Cairns, however, convened the clergy of the locality and gained their concurrence in a public remonstrance. Besides, he addressed a careful and temperate letter to the local newspapers, arguing that the races, though 'not sinful in themselves,' would inevitably be injurious to the moral and religious welfare of the district. As a matter of course, his action was unpopular in many circles, but his well-measured words served as a rallying-point to the respectable citizens, and in a year or two the Races were abandoned.

As to politics, it would have been impossible for him in any circumstances to have been a 'political parson.' But the politics of Berwick were of a kind in which a man like him could not be active. The town had at that time two members, returned by a constituency of 800 voters, nearly half of whom were Freemen. Those Freemen, whether householders or not, were entered on the voting register at the age of twenty-one, and a large proportion of them were loafers who regarded their votes as pieces of property to be given to the highest bidder, just as they leased the strips of meadow which they received at the same time. Bribery, drunkenness and rioting were matters of course at every

election. Up till 1852 the town was represented by two Tories, or by a Whig and a Tory; but in that year two Whigs were returned, and both were unseated on petition. Mr. Cairns registered a vow that he would never vote for a candidate who had been unseated for bribery, a vow which was put to the test, for the unseated members in course of time presented themselves as candidates. In spite of the urgency of the prominent Whigs, he scrupulously adhered to his resolution, and was thereby involved in temporary unpopularity. On one occasion, indeed, when he announced his vote at the poll, according to the open voting system then in force, the announcement was greeted with groans,—probably the only time when he was so treated at Berwick. Beyond this declaration on behalf of electoral purity, and attendance at a political banquet given to Sir George Grey, for whom he had much personal respect, he took no part in politics, although his sympathies with Liberalism were well known. As far as Berwick was concerned, he confined himself to the careful discharge of his pastoral duties, reserving his superfluous energy for congenial occupations.

This period was perhaps the most active of his literary career. Although his publications were miscellaneous, a glance at the *Appendix* will show that they were solid, and represented a great deal of steady labour. The first was a Memoir of his friend John Clark, who closed a chequered though blameless career in January 1849. Clark's strong speculative power and noble character had not prevented him from failing in the ministry of the Original Secession Church, and at the time of his death he was a probationer of the Free Church. Cairns, who had been his counsellor and helper during trouble, prepared a Memoir as a preface to a volume of Clark's *Remains*, which appeared in February 1851. It was more than a biographical notice, being designed as a justification of the unbiassed study of philosophy by Christian students. Its seventy-seven short

pages abound in passages of great beauty and in exquisite reminiscences of college life, which would have secured for it a lasting place in literature if it had not been weighted by Clark's somewhat heavy sermons, and which justify the verdict of Dr. John Brown,<sup>1</sup> who, with all his graciousness, was no flatterer in literary matters. One passage will serve to show the growth of Cairns' own views as to the worth of speculation. He is dealing with the want of congruity between Clark's brilliant metaphysical promise and his subsequent career :—

'It is true that Mr. Clark never became an author, nor brought the full vigour of his speculative mind to bear upon any of the discussions or controversies in which he was fitted to take a lead and communicate an impulse. Whether he would ever have returned with energy to the track of his juvenile researches, and in what series of efforts he might have redeemed or more than redeemed his early promise, it is now vain to inquire. It is of more importance to remark that he chose a part in every sense capable of being justified, and to a reflecting mind more deserving of honour than the cultivation of abstruse literature. An intellectual age is too apt to judge of all things by its own standard, and the spirit of the schools too much infests all sections of the Christian Church. But it is not the less true that he who makes an accession to the sum of human virtue is greater than he who merely enlarges our stock of ideas, and that the self-denying labours which issue in the salvation of men have a place in the kingdom of heaven before even the fruits and discoveries of recondite Christian speculation. Where God indeed bestows such capacities, it is in ordinary circumstances His will that they should proceed in the natural line of their development. But it is not always so; and where a surrender of speculative tastes and habits is cheerfully made at the call of practical activity, there may be a moral beauty and impressiveness in the sacrifice which far outweighs the loss to the Christian body.'

He himself, however, had not yet reached the stage for 'surrendering speculative tastes and habits,' and when in 1850 his friend Professor Fraser became editor of the *North*

<sup>1</sup> See p. 346.



*British Review*, he joined the editor's staff cordially and enthusiastically. That review had originated in the silence of the *Edinburgh Review* as to the Disruption, and its founders had been Free Churchmen; but the new editor, though then a Free Church professor, attempted to give it a broader basis with conspicuous success. A periodical which included among its contributors Whewell, Whately, Brewster, Kingsley, Freeman, Caird, Conington, John Brown, Goodsir, Eadie and Masson, might fairly claim a place beside the older quarterlies; and although the *North British* was short-lived, it was for at least ten years a distinct force in the world of letters. Cairns undertook as his department recent German philosophy and theology, agreeing to furnish at least two articles annually. His first and most striking article was an elaborate critique of Müller's Doctrine of Sin, an article to which the late Thomas Hill Green referred his pupils at Oxford as the most exhaustive compendium of recent phases of German thought. Brightness of style and acumen in judgment were so combined with encyclopædic knowledge as to rouse general curiosity about the authorship. 'A phenomenal performance,' 'a prodigious article,' 'a rare display of genius': such were the phrases with which it was received by the press. But beyond the indication of what Cairns might have achieved in that direction, the article has biographical interest in the precision with which it defines his theological position. He divides modern German theologians into three classes—Left, Middle, Right. In the Left he places deistic and pantheistic rationalists, and in the Right the Confessional or hyper-orthodox, from whom he dissents on the ground of their conservatism and sectarian harshness. In the Middle party, which owes its foundation to Schleiermacher, he recognises three sections distinguished by the comparative weight which they attach to Christian Consciousness, and to the Bible. He sets aside Hase, De Wette and



Ewald as giving the Bible too little authority; sets aside Twisten, Nitzsch, Ullmann and Neander as giving too much licence to Christian consciousness; and takes his place, though not without reserve, beside Harless, Tholuck and Müller in seeking 'to build up, out of the data of Bible interpretation, counterchecked but not overruled by Christian consciousness, a system which may harmonise with the philosophic spirit of the present day.' This may be taken as a fair indication of his permanent theological position.

The articles which followed, and another series contributed to the *British Quarterly*, were, if less original, equally vigorous and exhaustive, and showed a power of discriminating criticism which one does not reckon upon finding in those who are personally so genial and charitable. Withal they have a stout, stalwart contentiousness about them, tending sometimes towards excess, and recalling the little boy at Oldcambus school who was always squaring his fists. No one can read them without reckoning the writer to be a man who is not only able but willing to fight for the truth. He will not call evil good nor darkness light, and when he strikes he strikes straight, without gloves. Once, at least, his criticism brought about a personal collision. In an article on the Infallibility of Scripture, in which he defended the plenary as distinct from the verbal theory of inspiration, he wrote so pointedly about Mr. F. W. Newman's method of handling the Bible in his *Phases of Faith* and *Hebrew Monarchy* that Newman demanded proof or retractation from the editor. The issue was a tedious controversy, in which Cairns substantiated his points one by one, and declined to retract a syllable. Although in the judgment of the editor of the Review he came off victorious, he reckoned it a 'dreary business—the most wasted time of his life.'

The same article brought him into interesting relations with a young scholar, then assistant master at Harrow, Rev. B. F.

Westcott, now Bishop of Durham. His attention had been called by the Messrs. Macmillan to Westcott's first literary effort, the *Elements of the Gospel Harmony*, and he had referred to it in terms of high praise as a proof that it is possible 'to be a debtor to Germany without being a slave, and to contend intelligently, thoughtfully, yet charitably for the doctrine of Inspiration.' This led to a grateful recognition by Westcott of the kindness of his unknown reviewer, and to an effort on Macmillan's part to bring the two men together. The same publishers also tried to secure his friendly recognition of F. D. Maurice's *Lectures on the Prophets*, and indeed invited him to Cambridge in order to establish personal relations between Maurice and him; but Cairns again and again declined to review Maurice's writings for reasons which his correspondence makes clear. Although the *North British* articles were anonymous, the authorship was an open secret. A letter from Baron Bunsen, which will be printed in its proper place, is one of many which indicate the growing recognition of his individuality. It was indeed generally reckoned that he was about to be swept into the world of letters.

In April 1852, the Edinburgh Chair of Moral Philosophy became vacant through the resignation of Christopher North. The appointment was in the hands of the Town Council, who immediately approached Cairns with a request that he would allow himself to be nominated for the vacancy. He declined at once, and although friends who heard of the offer begged him to reconsider his decision, the matter did not cost him a moment's thought. He was consecrated to the service of God in the Church, and his vow of consecration was one which could never be recalled. With a reserve which showed itself afterwards in still more notable forms, he mentioned the matter neither to his kindred nor to his congregation, and threw himself with great zeal into the support of the candidature of his friend Macdougall, who

was elected in June 1852. The election of Macdougall, who was a Free Churchman, led to a display of sectarianism which brought out Cairns' power of fight. The University Senatus attempted to revive a dormant Test, which pledged professors to uphold the Established Church, and although they could not exclude Macdougall from the Chair, they declined to admit him to the Senatus. This unworthy policy was generally condemned, and the condemnation found voice at a crowded meeting held in Edinburgh on October 29, 1852. Most of the Edinburgh notabilities of the day appeared upon the platform; but the burden of speaking devolved upon Principal W. Cunningham, Dr. Douglas Maclagan, Mr. Hill Burton and Mr. Cairns. Mr. Cairns' speech was a vigorous and pointed assault upon the policy of the Senatus, an appeal to liberal members of the Established Church to cut themselves loose from such unfairness, and a direct claim that 'the universities, as national property, should be held, administered and manned without respect of creed.' The result of the meeting was that the Senatus gave way; and it had further results, for it proved to be the first step towards the complete abolition of tests.

Yet, eagerly as men sought to bring him into public, and capable as he showed himself when they succeeded, he at heart disliked both the press and the platform, and regretted every interruption of his pastorate, which he regarded as his proper work. He was 'amazed' by the reception accorded to his articles, not understanding apparently that reviewers do not habitually compress the results of a year's hard reading into thirty or forty pages; and he was gratified by it in a simple sort of way, although 'disgusted' with the style of his own performances. Yet his happy months were those when he had no review in hand, and could pursue theological and philosophical research without thought of publication. Occasionally he was overcome by a longing



for more leisure for study, and once he avowed to a correspondent that he felt that, 'with more leisure, he might make discoveries in theology.' But such longings caused restlessness in his reviewing rather than in his ministry; and when his stalwart frame began to bend under the strain, it was not his pastoral work that he resolved to curtail. In 1854 he requested and gained relief from his obligations to the *North British*, taking the state of his health to be an indication that Providence intended him to be nothing more meanwhile than the minister of Golden Square.

This was probably the brightest period of his life. One friend, Principal Scott of Manchester, described him as 'the only known example of an entirely happy man.' He loved solitude—loved to be alone in his library thinking and reading—loved to preach the Gospel, loved to visit the sick and to gather the children of his flock at his knees, reckoning it 'so close a copying of Jesus Christ,' loved his friends tenderly and even passionately. For, though he was happy in solitude, he had many dear friends. There were his aged mother and William in the Oldcambus schoolhouse, his student brother David, and his discreet and helpful sisters. There were the Wilsons and the Browns in Edinburgh, families in whose varied experience of suffering he played the part of brother and of shield. Among the neighbouring clergy there were many true and close comrades, notably John Ker, at whose departure from Alnwick he wept like a child. And in Berwick itself there were those at whose firesides his huge body shook with laughter, and with whom he could talk on topics dearer to him than metaphysics or theology. Notable among these were Philip Maclagan, a gentle-souled, devout doctor, son of an army surgeon, and brother of the present Archbishop of York and of Professor Sir Douglas Maclagan; and Mrs. Balmer, the aged widow of his predecessor, to whom he was drawn not only by his reverence for her husband's memory



and the marriage of her niece to John Brown, but by her sympathetic nature. With her he spent every Monday forenoon in conversation and prayer, and when frailty or health took her away from Berwick, he wrote to her weekly with a fulness of self-disclosure which only George Wilson shared with her. If she knew him better than any other woman upon earth—better even than his own mother—it was because she alone knew one passage in his life which might have given him a still closer woman friend. At the age of thirty-one he was the rejected suitor for a young lady's hand. At the time he was consoled by the hope of renewing his suit with more success. But presently the ground for hope disappeared. Stray notes in a holiday journal show that a fierce struggle followed in which his whole nature was stirred. But he was victorious. Never a murmur crossed his lips, and the only trace of the trial, even in his confidential letters, is a rare hint that the best lessons of his life were those which he had learned through suffering.

He was not a poet, and yet now and then his heart overflowed into classic yet grotesque verses, in which a stately mastery of words blended with a quaint North Germanism. From time to time throughout his life he made translations of German hymns, which had a wide private circulation; but between 1850 and 1854 he wrote more original verse than at any other period. 'Hardly laboured rhyme,' he himself calls it in the first of the following sonnets, but it is something more.

RAILWAY BRIDGE, BERWICK: NOVEMBER 1851

Delay is Nature's law : the beats of time  
 From these dull hammers swell to months and years  
 Slowly the buried work its head uprears,  
 Struggling to light like hardly laboured rhyme.

Long toils the craftsman deep in mud and slime ;  
 Smoke clouds his view, harsh voices stun his ears ;  
 At length he shoots aloft the graceful piers,  
 And spans the sky with arch on arch sublime.  
 Thus in the soul's dark depths, blow after blow,  
 Filling with heavy sound the weary hours,  
 Is struck by the great Master-builder's hand ;  
 Till, rising to the heavens, secure though slow,  
 Midst trouble's waves Faith's stable archway towers,  
 By which the floods for ever are o'erspanned.

WRITTEN IN THE DOWN TRAIN : NEWCASTLE  
 TO BERWICK

Mother, my homeward way once more I wend,  
 As wearied children on a summer's eve ;  
 No cause my pleasant task hath left to grieve ;  
 Such hours of absence can I rarely spend.  
 Yet as the bow full-urged doth quickly bend  
 To its own shape, as soon as it hath leave ;  
 Or as the spring-tide billows backward heave  
 To ocean's breast—so I to thee now tend.  
 Thy love hath given my wandering heart a home,  
 With clustering fruit o'erspread and tender shade,  
 To whose sweet rest as to my own I come,  
 And sit with none to make me there afraid.  
 Happy the soul with such a covert blest !  
 Hard by God's altars, I have found a nest.

GAIRNEY BRIDGE : THE FIRST MEETING-PLACE  
 OF THE DEPOSED SECEDERS

\* \* \* \* \*

Here must His witnesses still learn to make  
 Their chosen dwelling—lone but fit abode  
 For friends of Right, unawed by priestly rod,  
 Who council-seats and judgment-halls forsake.  
 Church of my fathers ! in no evil hour  
 Forego thy dear-bought dower of liberty !  
 Let not the guile of art and wealth and power  
 Corrupt thine ancient pure simplicity !  
 Here come to breathe afresh thy mountain air !  
 Here kneel, and own thy strength is faith and prayer !

## COMMIT THY COURSE AND KEEPING

*From the German of Paul Gerhardt.*

Commit thy course and keeping,  
 When darkness veils thy soul,  
 To His love never sleeping  
 Who wheels the starry pole :  
 He spreads the clouds their highway,  
 And walks upon the wind ;  
 And shall He not some byway  
 For thy weak footsteps find ?

Thou must with resignation,  
 As weanèd child behave ;  
 And look for *His* salvation,  
 If thou wouldst have Him save.  
 Thy griefs and fears tormenting  
 And self-consuming care  
 In God work no relenting ;  
 He yields to only prayer.

In one wide look of kindness,  
 Father, Thine eye doth go  
 O'er all that mortal blindness  
 Pronounces weal or woe !  
 And when Thy wisdom chooses,  
 Let friend or foe combine,  
 What yields and what refuses  
 But helps Thy high design.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yea, though all hosts of evil  
 Should stand in thick array,  
 In spite of man and devil  
 God's plans must hold their way.  
 What He hath fore-appointed  
 Shall keep its ordered place,  
 And hell's dark league disjointed  
 Must break to let it pass.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let God but work His pleasure,  
 He is a Sovereign wise ;  
 His work in weight and measure  
 Will charm thy wondering eyes :  
 And thou, as one that dreameth,  
 Shalt find thy cares all gone,  
 When He, as Him beseemeth,  
 Hath wrought the work alone.

He may His covenant token  
 Defer for one brief hour,  
 As if His word were broken,  
 His arm bereft of power ;  
 Whilst thou in lonesome sadness  
 Bewail'st thy bitter lot,  
 Cut off from former gladness  
 By God Himself forgot.

Yet soon thy bands untying  
 (So thou abidest true),  
 Thy dungeon gloom and crying  
 God's arm shall lighten through,  
 And thy bowed heart relieving  
 From the dark load it bore,  
 Shall, after all thy grieving,  
 Leave not behind one sore.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lord, let our sore complaining  
 Thus yield to Thy decrees ;  
 Thy grace in us sustaining  
 Weak hands and feeble knees !  
 Spread but to death's dark portal  
 O'er us Thy wings of love ;  
 Then shall our path immortal  
 Go straight to Heaven above.

## TO DAVID CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Jan.* 17, 1850.

'You do not surprise me by the quandary you have got into. I always expected it, and perhaps before this time. No man can escape the contagion of doubt, not as a mere inoculation, mild and gentle, but as a serious and even threatening disorder—I mean no man in your circumstances and of your capacity to take up the elements of contagion. It is well to understand this, and not to

regard doubt as sinful, but as a crisis which it pleases the Infinite Mind that all teachers of others should more or less pass through. Only, doubt has its duties, as well as its privileges, and these I hope you will fulfil in a creditable manner. Doubt pre-supposes some truth attained; otherwise it annihilates itself and the capacity of attaining more, working with a self-condemned instrument. Keep these things in view, and endeavour in the strength of your own mind to divide the light from the darkness. Nor does doubt exclude the use of religious resources and the practical conduct of all things on the old principles. Of course religion cannot be exempted; but it is quite possible to live in the Christian element on the strength of previous convictions and habits, while examining the Christian arguments and doctrines to the foundations, and even by the twilight of feeling till faith re-emerge in full day. Religious reverence and prayer are the natural expressions of such a state of mind. And once more, doubt ought to respect provisionally the general sentiments and convictions of mankind, more especially of such as are serious and supernatural and remote from biasing influences of an inferior order, and ought to question them with self-distrust and sobriety. So that taking these things together, I should say the ethics of doubt consisted in hope, prayer, and humility; leaving out the use of means as too obvious to be insisted on. I trust that you will doubt in this spirit, and that you will come out of the furnace of speculation with nothing melted of the gold, but something rejected of the dross of traditional faith. I need not assure you of my best sympathies and prayers, which are those of one—

“Multum et terris jactatus et alto,  
 . . . dum conderet urbem.”

‘You will not, however, mistake indifference to results for a philosophic impartiality. As well might a jury endeavour literally to dismiss all feelings from their mind when they enter the box. The caution is against the withholding of fair play; if you give only fair play to sides of questions that you are at present disinclined to, it is enough. Nothing so chimerical is required as bringing your mind into a state of equilibrium before you proceed to examine the evidence.

‘You will perhaps not be pleased with me for declining to answer your question about the originality of conscience. I do so after consideration. It is better for you to sound your own depths and make up your own mind from your own cogitations and ruminations,



than for me to throw in materials, to which perhaps you would attach extrinsic weight. If you come to agree with me, I shall value the agreement all the more; if you persevere in a preference for another side, I shall then debate the matter with you and endeavour to convince you of your error. Meanwhile "sine cortice nabis."

'My own mind is pretty well made up on all these points; but I shall relish greatly a revival of them at the end of the Session, when your opinions are likely to be more formed. Do not despair of self-attained certainty. The sense of truth is as real as the sense of perplexity, and if you persevere on the above principles you shall have it for your reward.'

TO REV. JOHN NELSON

BERWICK, *Jan.* 31, 1850.

'You are one of the few to whom this little essay (on Julius Müller) may be sent, with the assurance that it will be valued both for friendship's sake and for German theology's sake. The substance of it can hardly be other to you than a tale long told; but we Germans, when addressing a British public, must begin at the beginning. It is the fruit of many an inward groan by the classic banks of the Spree, and many a solitary hour in the loftiest attic class-room of the Friedrich-Wilhelm's Universität, almost up among the gods that figure in all their nakedness upon the battlements. I failed to learn much then that I have since begun to learn; but I look back on that period with intense interest as the most intellectually active of my life, and the laying down of the tertiary formation of a creed fit to bear soil and crops, and never again, I hope, to be upheaved by a cataclysm.

'We were much to each other then, and we may well be thankful that the grace of God has kept us true to the time-hallowed truths of the Christianity of all periods from the beginning, till, it may be hoped, we have such an unction from the Holy One that we need no other evidence and need fear no hostile influence. It is sad to look back on some of our bright contemporaries, now little better than wandering stars. We might have been as they, had not a higher gravitation kept our spheres unbroken. I would gladly be debtor to the portion of the public that are dreading sad eclipse from German orbs coming between them and the sun, were it only to calm their fears and assure them that Germany has already buried a good many of its own dead that are struggling to be galvanised in this country. I wish you would do your part. . . .'

‘You would be much struck with the account of Lord Jeffrey’s death. What a shadow is literary fame, present and posthumous! I never felt it so airy and empty. How soon we must be in the world where the fame of time is worse than nothing if not connected with the Highest Name! . . .’

FROM SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON

*Feb. 9, 1850.*

‘I return you my best thanks for your article on Julius Müller’s philosophical theology, who is for me quite a new hero. Your essay, which I perused with great interest, both on your personal account and for the importance of the subject, struck me not only for the ability and learning which it exhibits, but for the wisdom and charity and unsectarian spirit which pervade it. I trust that this is only the commencement of your contributions on such subjects, for I am sorry that in the criticisms on German theology that have fallen in my way in the journals of this country, the writers have usually shown rather their own ignorance and bigotry than the one-sided views of those whom they set themselves to combat. *Macte animi!* Believe me that, as much is expected from you by all your friends, no one will be more rejoiced as you gradually fulfil these expectations than myself. . . .’

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

*BERWICK, March 14, 1850.*

‘. . . The anonymous article has had more success than was anticipated, which cannot but be gratifying to the modest author, on whom, however, in his incognito, these honours repose like the parts of a Roman trophy upon the dead trunk of a tree. This figure is wonderfully like some of the anon’s favourites, so his style seems to be contagious. It is already influencing the tone of literature. Letters are taking colour from it.

‘I hope my ever dear mother is better. It is about the time of her annual visit. When is she coming? In Berwick we are very much as usual. They are seeking a house for me. I am quite contented to remain where I am, though I shall move to please the public. . . .’

‘I do not think the Anti-Parish School movement makes much progress. You will be amused perhaps more than edified by the debate between Dr. Candlish and Hugh Miller. . . .’

## TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *May 11, 1850.*

' . . . I had a very pleasant ride up the Tweed on Wednesday morning in company with Mr. and Mrs. Mearns and "a wonderful wean" of theirs, which cried and slept and ate panada very much like other people's children, though upon the whole a nice bairn. . . . Peebles interested me more than ever, and the old castle of Neidpath was thoroughly explored. . . . I met there, among others, a fine young student of moral philosophy, Veitch by name, who is as far forward at the age of twenty-one as I am at thirty-one. He has been much distinguished in the University of Edinburgh; and is likely to add something to that subject. It always does me good to meet congenial minds on these abstruse questions. The number is small, and many of the best people otherwise have no taste whatever for these darling inquiries of mine.

'I rode on Friday to Biggar, a sweet place in summer, which looked like Herrnhut, being built upon a small slope and embosomed in round green hills stretching away on all sides. The Smiths are all nice people . . . and I exceedingly enjoyed their society, which was increased by three or four students, and as many neighbouring ministers. . . . Miss L—— lent me a copy of Tennyson's poem,<sup>1</sup> which I read with great admiration, and I hereby retract much of what I said, though his references to the Bible, like those of many of our younger writers, are more artistic than experimental. It is, however, very lovely, and whatever it may do to others, has done me as much good as a sermon, because I can supply the gaps in his eloquent and pathetic grief. . . .'

## TO MRS. RATTRAY

BERWICK, *July 12, 1850.*

' . . . It is the eve of our communion. I expect Dr. Brown on Sabbath, so that for one day you must be content to let him wander from his orbit in Broughton Place to lend a little illumination to this obscure region. He preached the best sermon I ever heard, this time three years ago, on the "Son of Man." It will be hard for him to preach as well again. Only, like you, I am not a critic, except perhaps when I hear Morisonian preachers. There is nothing particular stirring here. Happy is the man or woman who loves laborious monotony! It is the most easy of all things to be

<sup>1</sup> *In Memoriam.*



got in this world, and the most servicable to our day and generation. May you have inward incidents in your life better than outward, the growing sense of God's love and a nearer approach to the image of Christ making itself felt in happy hours of communion with Him! . . .'

FROM JOHN BROWN, M.D.

SOUTH QUEENSFERRY, *Sept.* 26, 1850.

'You must not be angry at my writing you about your health. From Aunt Balmer's and other accounts I have got it into my head that you are not in a good way—that you have overworked that big and hardy brain of yours, and that if you do not call a halt you may get into general bad health or into some specific and serious ailment. I write you on my own selfish account, because a great deal of my comfort and much of my spiritual life depends upon you. It is no trifle when a Titan like you gets amiss. Those who are worst to set wrong are also worst to set right. One thing you can amend immediately, and that is your taking so little sleep. You should have eight hours in your bed out of every twenty-four.'

TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *Decr.* 30, 1850.

' . . . Give my kindest love to Dr. John and his excellent helpmeet, with good wishes for the next half century, which is so soon to open, and still better wishes for the long, long centuries and millennia that are to come afterwards. May we indeed get ready before the half of the half century is out, though I do not wish to see such good and kind people curtailed of a patriarchal longevity. And for yourself, I hope you will live as long as the daughter of Phanuel, or any other undecaying Scripture worthy.

'As for the Review article, I am certainly pleased that it pleases others; but it stands too much before me in its nakedness and scragginess to yield me much genuine satisfaction. Alas, I shall never reach any decent conformity to my own standard, and this is one of the things that make literary exertion unwelcome to me. There is a calm satisfaction in the love of friends and in the quiet discharge of pastoral duty which outweighs it all, though I do not mean to deny that it is also pleasant at the time, and that I am bound to it by conscientious obligations. Nothing new has happened here; the old battle is still running on in the Border against conscientious Dissenters.'



FROM JOHN BROWN, M.D.

EDINBURGH, *Jan.* 17, 1851.

' . . . I have read Clark's *Life* with the greatest pleasure, and I trust with something better than pleasure. That young man is now in my mind a living, breathing man, to be loved. I do not know any modern book which contains more—I might say so much—vital truth. I am greatly charmed with your pages on the romance of your youthful fellowship—that "sweet hour of prime." I can remember it, can feel it, can scent the morn. But as you say, the day is before us—the noon of the world and of our own souls is not yet reached. Your book will do great good, especially to students during their college life, and thus answer your expectations. How are you, the man who has given me all this pleasure? Is his liver doing its work, and his chylopoetic viscera working sweetly and unfelt? Is he stronger, and sleeping and eating like a Trojan?

' . . . I hear great reports of the leader of the coming *North British*. I have put in nearly fifteen pages of Arthur Hallam's *Remains*. To all who have read *In Memoriam* they will be deeply interesting. To be the thoughts of a youth of twenty, brought up in a circle where pride of intellect and all that would externally help to make a man satisfied with himself were dominant, they are most remarkable for their humility and depth and unaffectedness.'

TO DAVID CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Jan.* 29, 1851.

' . . . Herewith receive the *Bards of the Bible* if they do not break through the envelope by the power of the high-pressure, condensing steam force that is in them. Pity the science of the nineteenth century cannot yoke such energy to drag its engines! However, the progress of Gilfillan's mind is onward. May his next work be less Gilfilloquent!'

TO REV. JOHN NELSON

BERWICK, *Feb.* 13, 1851.

' . . . I have sought a leisure moment to tell you how much I have enjoyed your maiden review of Neander. . . . I am far indeed from satisfaction with my own production. I see the *British Banner* has pronounced it "heavy," and I have been also a little

diverted with sundry other oracles. But we need not care. "We move," as Lady Kicklebury justly remarks, "in our own sphere," and can afford to look down from our quarterly immortality on the vanishing glories of the daily and weekly press. How little could we have thought, when reading together the first number of the *North British* in your room at Bonn in July 1844, that in less than seven years we should be packed up together in the same boards! The changes of the world are wizard-like—"et nos mutamur in illis." May we indeed be changed for the better, and serve, if it may be, the best Master a little in this field!

FROM SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON

*April 15, 1851.*

'I have read your very able article in the *North British Review* on Ethics and Christianity. I feel much gratified by your expressions in regard to myself, both in that article and in the Memoir, and not the less that I must attribute them far more to the personal partiality of an old pupil and friend than to any desert of my own. Your review of ethical systems interested me very much, more especially the accounts you give of the more recent theories, of which I was wholly ignorant. The foundation of ethics, connected as it is with moral freedom, has always appeared to me the most difficult, as the most important, problem in philosophy; and I confess that I see not how the discrepancies of opinion on this point could be avoided by merging philosophical ethics in Christian theology. The problems I still conceive ought to be treated separately.'

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *May 6, 1851.*

' . . . I have been lifting up a testimony against the Lamberton Races, which, though perhaps not the most popular thing I have ever done, was one of the most needful, and will, I trust, do some good now and hereafter. I have sustained no detriment, but the contrary, in the eyes of the more sober portion of our community; and as for the rest it is not a part of my system to court their favour. . . .'

TO MRS. BALMER

HORNSEY, *Aug. 29, 1851.*

' . . . I have been much occupied with the conferences of the Evangelical Alliance. . . . I have met many old German friends and made some new ones, among others, Dr. Krummacher. . . . Last Sabbath I preached for Mr. Binney, . . . who rose above my expectations both in the pulpit and out of it. He is a most manly preacher and a sturdy companion, altogether one of the most racy men I ever fell in with. . . .'

## JOURNAL

HORNSEY, *Aug. 15, 1851.*

'Spent seven hours in Exhibition. The three most exciting moments were the first glimpse of the outside, the first look up from the fountains at the roof and around, and the first view, after three hours' roaming about among details, from the extremity of the gallery. This last was one of the sublimest moments of my life, all feeling being absorbed in awe and oppression. . . . The wonder of curiosity is over; now for the wonder of intelligence. It might be the study of a winter more profitable than any in a university. If man had more grace he would be a glorious creature. This day has much enlarged my conception of the resources of the species. I felt how utterly insignificant I—and each individual—was in the presence of the total. Yet had my philanthropy and, so to speak, ambition excited to do something in my time, however small, since this aggregate was a collection of littles. Pressing cares of a personal kind all vanished; they could not abide the expansion of the spectacle. So it must be with the disclosure in heaven of the wide range of the universe on man who has been his own all in time. The gathering of all masses around Jesus Christ forcibly struck me. Unity of civilisation demands unity of religion. The luxury, frivolity and occasional indecency of objects exhibited are only tares among the wheat. The contrast between Russia and the States would make me proud, were I an American. The despotic will of a Xerxes devising more gorgeous pleasures is finely contrasted with the noble though bald independence of a people who will feed and clothe themselves and make the world their own as free men. The magnificence of Russia is that of slaves rearing pyramids for tyrants, while the activity of the nation is not represented. Never passed a day of more intense interest or of less

qualified intellectual pleasures with strong mixture of sentiment and something of religion.

‘Dies mirabilissimus. De anima non spernend. Saepe me devov. totis mentibus. Ex. vi.

*Aug. 17.*

‘Dies Dominica. Mane in lecto de omnibus prec. “There is a land,” etc. Me in capel. devovi. Genesis i. 27. Laus Domino vitae.’

*Aug. 20.*

‘Diem in Evang. Unione feliciter peregi. Ps. cxxxiii. 1. Multa signa bonitatis Dei. De omnibus solatium. Sit gloria Deo.’

*Aug. 22.*

‘Me saep. in Evang. Unione devovi. Sic clauditur annus 33. Ebenezer. Ein feste Burg. Hebrews xiii. 5.’

*Aug. 23.*

‘Dies natalis. Expend. orans et praedicans. Multa pax et solennitas. Legi Ps. xxiii.-xxxii. De omnibus mirum solatium. Veni Creator. Ezek. xl. 3. Omnia bene auspicata. Gloria Deo in excelsis.’

*Aug. 29.*

‘Vieles habe ich heute in Beziehung auf Deutschland erfahren, viele Begeisterung erlebt. Me saep. devovi. Gloria Christo.’

*Sept. 2.*

‘Jewish conference. Noble stand of Baptist Noel against romance of Jewish missions founded on Millennarianism; temperate and ingenious reply by Birks. Very interesting meeting diversified with absurd Rabbinism of Dr. C—— otherwise a good man. Me saep. devovi. The God of Abraham praise.’

PARIS, *Sept. 8.*

‘In crossing, much conversation in Latin with priest. Usual arguments from novelty of Protestantism, diversity of its sects, and non-existence in Scripture of any distinction between fundamentals and non-fundamentals. Ready to admit the dependence of moral truth, including claims of Church but not matters of salvation, on



reason. Convinced of his sincerity. Affected by his exclaiming, looking up to moon and round on sea, "How wonderful the love of God in shedding His blood—more boundless than the waves."

'In trajetum me devovi; deinde in terra, ad finem molis in conspectu Angliæ. Semper Isaiah vi. 1-8; omnia precatus de grege, amicis et——'

PARIS, Sept. 9.

'Modern paintings in Louvre monotonous; even pagan mythology gets stale in such hands. Magnificent Murillos and horses by Salvator Rosa. . . . Beyond general admiration, learned less from Louvre than expected.'

Sept. 10.

'Heard mass in Madeleine. Indignant and disgusted with burial of the Name which is above every name amid unknown and questionable crowd of saints. If wish could have done it, would have razed domes, chapels and gew-gaw gilding to ground. Gorgeously decked officials muttering incantations in unknown tongue like Mercury *ψυχαγωγός* of paganism. . . . Evening walk in Champs Elysées, amidst pleasure-seekers with whom Holy Mother Church contends in vain, since they prefer old Adam in his simplicity.'

Sept. 11.

'Absorbed to-day by new Assyrian sculptures in Louvre. They differ from Layard's in having likeness of man-bull on one side and, on other, man carrying in breast suspended from arm a monster lion. . . . Architecture of Notre Dame admirable, and carving round choir; but altar-pieces utterly wearisome, without soul, idea or spirituality, as if votaries of this religion could only repeat eternally the Ram Ram of paganism. . . . Astounded in boulevards with indecency of prints scattered everywhere. As the artist sows, the crowd reaps. Type of nude statuary and painting inconsistent with Christian morality, and will have to be changed in a better age.'

Sept. 13.

'Parisios reliqui et tandem coelum purius spiravi. O Deus misericors, fac omnia quæ visa sunt ad bonum eventum redeant, et per vitam tibi et Christo tuo *τῷ κόσμῳ νικητῇ* arctius me addicam.'

*Sept. 15.*

‘Ad Elberfeld adveni. In Prussia intranda me devovi.’

*Sept. 17.*

‘In rebus Germaniae me immiscui, cum multa bened. praesent. in primo et ultimo cantu. Gloria Deo in excelsis.’

MANCHESTER, *Sept. 21.*

‘Ad Coenam Dei me devov., multa precatus de grege, de amicis, de——. Isaiah xli. 10. Veni Creator. Mira voluptas in praedicando. Gloria Deo.’

BERWICK, *Sept. 27.*

‘In initio laborum me devovi. Mirabilissime de—— affect. Deus da lucem!’

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Oct. 20, 1851.*

‘. . . There is an awful pressure of ideas when I look back on the ten weeks. The Exhibition is only one of five or six things that stand out as having impressed themselves in all their length and breadth upon my imagination. London is another—dreadful, boundless, abysmal—enough to swallow up all the admiration and terror that any man can bestow. Then Paris—totally new in every particular, versed as I was in foreign cities,—a perfect world in itself—woe’s me! a kingdom of darkness, with the light that is in it—and how much light is there—science, art, glory, gaiety, religion, blended in one incomparable panoramic whole! The Evangelical Alliance in London cast all Synods, Assemblies, and Baptist or Independent Associations into utter shade—a perfect œcumenical council bringing most of the leading actors in Christendom upon the stage and opening up a peristrepthic picture of the Christian world. The Conference at Elberfeld—narrower but far deeper—disclosed a new movement in the inmost heart of German evangelism, opening up a totally altered future for that long hagg-ridden land of speculation, and promising to help us all with a New Reformation. Add to this flying glimpses deeply significant of things in Belgium, France, and Germany, of a political character; and the interest of having seen the whole fortress-crowned north of France. . . . I never before received so many new ideas in six

weeks ; and my brain has hardly yet recovered from the tension and agony of the process. But my health has stood well, and I hope I am a better and more devout man than when I went away. Certainly if I am not, land and sea would cry out against me.

‘Altogether the great Christian struggle of the age has assumed before me a vivid unity which it never did before, reflected back with intense distinctness from the unity of the kingdom of darkness. I hope I may work by God’s grace a little more intelligently, and incorporate into my own system some of the sublime elements of activity which I have encountered both at home and abroad.’

TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Dec.* 25, 1851.

‘Being kept at home by the holiday this morning, and not being disposed to read any more Hebrew or go out to service in “the church,” I feel very much as you do on Fast-days, and can condole with you on the recurrence of seasons. We have both of us got far enough into the sea of life to have learned all its characteristic tides and currents and ground-swells, and to be very thoroughly convinced that wading through it merely for wading’s sake would not be a very enticing prospect. I hardly remember a time when these feelings did not exist almost in premature strength in my mind, and time has rather changed their character than increased their depth. The sentimental pensiveness of earlier years has acquired more and more a moral colouring ; and the vanity of the world has been felt with aggravated sadness as a mere show and spectacle, where the great multitude mistake their parts, and the few play them out very indifferently. I dare not check these moods, for there is deep truth at the bottom of them, and they are bound up with everything like a clear and sober view of the eternal relations of this world. It is probable that the Saviour experienced something of this periodical depression of consciousness when looking on the darkest side of human things ; and He was in all likelihood man enough to connect it with the vicissitudes of times and seasons. Only, the deep inward sentiment of vanity and disorder caused by personal sin must have been wanting ; and it is the more wonderful that, with nothing but the clear eye and pure sympathy of a spectator, He should have been so much affected. We cannot think of His retrospect of His own life at recurring intervals without a painful contrast. What Schleiermacher calls the eternal war between the idea of Christ and the idea of ourselves,

which is the basis of Christian humility, is here very fully realised. I do not know how often since my last birthday the sentiment has arisen, "You will soon have lived longer in the world than Christ himself; and to what purpose?" The deliverance I find from such frames of mind is just to acknowledge the truth *ex toto animo*; to ask very earnestly forgiveness and grace; and to be willing to live on as long as He shall see best, at whatever sacrifice of self-complacency and wearisome sense of imperfection, striving at the same time to become by His help a little better and to diminish the humbling distance. I am not conscious of wishing to live for any other end. The poverty and unutterable meanness of a life pitched on any lower scale than that of trying by discipline and effort to become like the Son of God and to make others like Him, I discern as clearly as any mathematical axiom, and feel it, too, often as much as is endurable. The grievance and affliction of being so unlike Him and of seeing so many in the same case is not to be remedied and must be borne. As Lacordaire says, "It is the dart of Epaminondas in every true heart, and when it is plucked out, death will follow." It is only right, after all, that the vanity of the creature (ourselves principally) should be brought strongly out in antithesis to God's excellence and fulness; and hence the most Ecclesiastes-like moods and experiences—nay, the whole of Christian life on this negative side is a true hymn of praise of God, which he that has ears to hear may hear.'



## CHAPTER XIV

### MINISTER AT BERWICK

1850-1854—*continued*

Letters:—*Lives* of Reid, Chalmers, and Jeffrey, Change of residence, Bunsen's *Hippolytus*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, F. W. Newman, Political banquet, Plato's *Republic*, Tweedside scenery, Theological professors, Goethe's *Faust*, Henry Rogers, *Kirchentag*, Crimean War, National education, Calderwood on *The Infinite*, Cambridge, House of Commons, J. B. Gough, etc.

#### TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Feb.* 26, 1852.

'I HAVE got home from Perth, and have hardly recovered my mental equilibrium since the desperate effort of writing and delivering that Lecture. I must make some use of it in this region where the Papists are lifting up their heads. They have just withdrawn all their children from our Ragged School because we teach the New Testament. We are engaged in an effort to prove that we had no disguised aim at proselytism, and I have no doubt we shall succeed, though perhaps Dr. Guthrie and his school would consider this as a poor justification. . . .

'I thought the "Sterling" article in the *North British* rather weak; and in such an encounter to be weak is to be miserable. The article against F. W. Newman in November was by the Most Rev. the Archbishop of Dublin; and Fraser, to his infinite honour, after a keen *tiff* with the prelate, wrested the *amende honorable*, which brings up the rear of the present number. No piece of literary ethics that I have heard of for a long time has gratified me so much as this act of reparation.'

#### TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *Mar.* 25, 1852.

'Your *Life of Dr. John Reid* came at two o'clock, and having despatched all the work of the day I took it up at eleven, just to

get a taste of it before bedtime. I hurried on through chapter after chapter, till four o'clock in the morning found me at the last.

'I think it a first-rate performance both as to the mere biography and the Christian effect of the story. It is very dramatic, and the points are seized with great skill and simplicity. It is not too much a doctors' book, and yet quite enough so, not only to catch their interest, but to exhibit that genus of humanity from its first budding and efflorescence through all its developments into its highest professional glory.

'I must acknowledge, however, that by far the deepest impression has been made on me by the religious crisis and the terrible sufferings. But for these, the life would have been common enough, and not even you could have made it widely interesting. As it is, these taken in connection with the antecedent carelessness and the peculiar surgical researches exalt it to the highest tragedy, or rather to tragedy ending with such a *Deus ex machina* advent as constrains the profoundest awe and devotion. The Prometheus *vinculus* and *solutus* sublimely illustrate each other, and the sudden starting up of the terrible struggle and victory out of a comparatively monotonous and passionless life must arrest the most languid attention. The Keswick experiences are very affecting. I happen to have religious associations of my own with these Lakes, such as ally me to few spots in this world.

'The book, by God's grace, will do a world of good, and make on many minds impressions and wounds to the quick, which I bless God I do not any longer require. You have not been ashamed of the Cross in anything, nor have you brought it forward in a way to cause the least recoil on the part of those you seek to win.

'It is the best thing you have written in point of style—not so elaborate or brilliant as some things—but more quietly deep and full, and with that constant in-working earnestness which is the soul both of truth and pathos. It is less crystallised and more glassy than your earlier writings. The felicities are more self-sprung and are incidental to a great moral purpose. The most striking image to my mind is the comparison of the non-religious man's relation to God with that of the feudal baron to the suzerain. This has all the vivid power of the deepest moral truth.

'I do not trust myself to speak of the thousand personal scenes between us which this book has called up. None know so well or

so gratefully how much of autobiography there is in it. Forgive me for saying with a full heart that it could only have been written by a sufferer in the like kind, and one who had suffered as calmly and well. God ever bless you! May I get a full share in my own soul of all the good this book is fitted to do to a wide circle!’

TO MRS. BALMER, EDINBURGH

BERWICK, *May 18, 1852.*

‘. . . I have visited to-day about fifteen families, . . . and have besides run through the first volume of Dr. Chalmers’ *Life*. . . . It has greatly interested me, all the more from the contrast with Lord Jeffrey’s, which I read a fortnight ago. I think that both men have been a little over praised by their biographers; and that fifty years will greatly contract the limits of their reputation, to say nothing of their published works. Only, in relation to their contemporaries they stand on a different elevation; but it is a much harder thing to influence the minds of ages. I have learned much from Jeffrey, especially from his love of nature and his affectionateness, the two most original things about him: his intellect was not so super-eminent; and he never, alas! reached the highest region of truth, where it is seen from a spiritual centre. Chalmers’ early intellectual history was somewhat different from my preconceptions: not so his conversion. His earnestness and humility and following hard after God have even more impressed me than his thoughts or his eloquence, both of which I knew before. It is a book to do a minister a world of good, especially one beginning to be flattered and blinded by the world’s praise. I think, however, I got nearly as much from my late toothache, which was a blessed lesson in self-mortification. . . .’

TO THE SAME

GOLDEN SQUARE, *June 7, 1852.*

‘. . . It is now near midnight; and as I am going to remove on the morrow I write a few last lines from this house, as interesting to you as to me. How many happy hours have we both spent in it, and some sad ones too. But at this time to me the joy so exceeds the sorrow that one reigning expression of gratitude and

satisfaction is shed over all my feelings. May it be so when about to leave the world and take the great departure into our last new habitation!

‘If I am not a better man than when I came here three years ago, I am certainly a wiser one. I hope I am also somewhat better; but I mend very, very slowly. I am certainly more sensible of that than two or three years ago. I leave the future with God, including all interests personal, relative, congregational, literary and others; and I do not know at this moment an individual under the sun with whom I would change places, except an inwardly better edition of myself, which is very slow of being produced. But I am willing to wait the great flitting for all that remains to be done when it comes, and meanwhile to go on in weakness from strength to strength. . . .’

WELLINGTON TERRACE, 10 P.M.

‘May my new habitation be a place of the feet of the God of Jacob! I felt to-night at family worship how much the house differed from the old one. That had a character of local sanctity to keep up; this, to acquire—and I felt that on me would depend the future reputation and living influence of the building. . . . I have dedicated every room to God, mentally, if not by express devotion. My heart is full, but not sad. I may be carried out of this habitation to the grave. At this moment I have no other wish, and the idea (praised be God) has no terrors. . . .’

TO HIS MOTHER

BERWICK, *June 8, 1852.*

‘I write a few lines to-night to you rather than to William, because it is something of an epoch with me. This is the first letter I have written in my new house, bating the finish of one more than half-written; and surely I cannot pay this mark of respect and affection so properly to any other. The longer I live, the more I feel how much I owe to you, and the more do I bless God for all the good influence you have exerted over myself and the whole family for so many years. I pray that you may be long spared to us—that your declining years may be more and more soothed with the consolations of the Gospel and the hopes of a Christian



immortality—and that at length you may leave us all, with unblemished reputation and increasing usefulness, to be introduced to far better company than even that of affectionate sons and daughters. You know that I am not very profuse in such expressions, and, had I not felt them at this time more than usual, I should not have given them utterance.

‘I have very much reason to be grateful to the congregation for all their kindness. They have indeed abounded in this all along, but never so much as now. I have had innumerable gifts. . . . None, however, affected me so much as sister Jean’s. I like everything that keeps up the family connection.

‘I trust I carry my gratitude higher than man. At the same time it is right to thank good Christian people; and I receive it as some proof of ministerial usefulness. Do not imagine, however, that I am lifted up with this change in my residence. My utmost desire is that I may not be less happy and that in my new abode I may be more useful. . . .

‘I commend myself to God’s grace and guiding and do not doubt that I have your daily prayers.’

#### TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *June 17, 1852.*

‘. . . I have walked ten miles to-day, visited nearly as many families, conducting a short devotional exercise with each, and preached an hour in a village schoolroom; so that you have only the fragments of my being left, hardly worthy of being gathered up. . . . Nothing can be more delightful than Berwickshire June—our only spring month. . . . The vast Kettle of the Merse never looks so wide and rich, its magnificent forests contrasting with the lighter green of sheltered cornfields and its gentle background of hills warding off the Lammermoor nakedness and cold behind, and associating most delightfully with the reigning comfort of the unequalled panorama. . . .

‘I now ask you to *my own* house. . . . You will not in the least incommode me amid my opening housekeeping, and the building is so large that you might spend a good part of your visit in rummaging its outs and ins. I have got a *douce*, staid servant, a little stricken in years.

‘I left Mrs. Reid with great recalcitration; but with philosophical composure I determined that the matter was to be taken in a

grateful and kindly spirit, and that it is liker a Christian . . . to wear diamonds and stars as common things (as the miller his hat to keep his head warm) than to shrink from them as dangerous and showy baits of the flesh. So I am quite satisfied to enjoy my finer prospects and statelier walls with Christian equanimity, placing the *summum bonum* in another region. . . .'

## TO MRS. BALMER, ABERDEEN

BERWICK, *June* 18, 1852.

' . . . I will not deny you the triumph over me of admitting that my health is better. The furniture has all answered excepting the feather-beds, which I had to discard after trial. . . . Everything else is delightful. I am going to-day into the study for the first time. . . . At the same time, by way of satisfaction to humility, I broke forth one morning into the following exalted lines :—

'Worth owns no suit to hall and palace gate ;  
 Through loop-holed huts she freely lifts her eye  
 To her true home, unchecked by meaner state  
 Of storied wall and ceilèd canopy ;  
 She owns no power in lifeless masonry  
 Or gilder's art, the inner man to sate ;  
 But from a point can grasp infinity  
 And a fair world in dungeon depths create.  
 Houses are only great to little men :  
 Earth's largest spirits could such things despise,  
 And wandering round in cave and mountain den  
 Could half-unclothed anticipate the skies.  
 Not heaven's wide roof though stretched from pole to pole  
 Nor less than God's own house could lodge their mighty soul !'

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *June* 24, 1852.

'A good woman in humble life warned me to-day against pride, and expressed the fear that I might be too much made of. She had just lost her husband, and the conversation turned on the vanity of this world. There was so much sincerity and unaffected kindness in the way the advice was given, and so little of authority or

self-sufficiency, that I was very greatly affected. She added that, if I ever married, she hoped I would select a Christian companion, and give that the prominence it deserved above all considerations of rank or fortune. Such advice from one trembling on the brink of the grave was fitted to do any person good; and I only wish that I may be kept from both evils, to which I am as much exposed as any of my neighbours. I fear, however, that my besetting evils lie in a somewhat different region; and perhaps Satan may get an advantage over me rather in the pride with which I despise the pride of outward show. As to the other point, I am thankful that I have not only held the principle, but acted on it. May I do so to the end; and if it please God, may I have grace to avoid every snare and complication connected with the whole subject by "letting well alone"! I trust, however, I am prepared to follow God's will, though the one alternative be that of preference and the other of resignation.

' . . . After the communion we are to elect five elders. This business needs your prayers. I am glad to hear that you like Niebuhr. He was a noble genius, and his affection for his friend Dora quite romantic. May God make us like all good people! . . .'

TO MRS. BALMER, ABERDEEN

BERWICK, *July 9, 1852.*

'I have sometimes come down to see you after my Action Sermon was written, and I now seize the pen to write a few lines on the same occasion. I have written a doctrinal sermon on Heb. ix. 13-14—a little didactic and dry; but perhaps my communion sermons have been too apt to be ambitious and florid, so it may be a variety. It is not so good as some I have written, which I rather lament, as it is the first composed in my new dwelling; but I have done my best and therefore take no blame. Would that I felt more the truth that I have endeavoured to set forth—the freeness, spotlessness and divinity of Christ's sacrifice! When I think of His life, it completely overwhelms and often depresses me. So much self-control, so much patience, so much unwearied labour with almost no fruit, so magnanimous an abandonment of self to the will of the Father when most trying to His own spirit! I do most earnestly desire and pray for this, that I may be willing to work and to wait and to govern my own spirit when things do not make all the progress I desire.

'We have just got over a frightful turmoil of an election. Forster and Stapleton (Liberals) in, and the two Tories out, to their great chagrin, amid many charges of bribery on both sides, which, alas! are not without foundation. I fear, too, there has been a good deal of drinking. . . .'

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *July 23, 1852.*

' . . . Our election is over, but the result not yet authenticated. It is feared Sir G. Grey has lost by the narrowest majority. Berwick has fought nobly in this struggle with ducal tyranny and Church domination. It has almost redeemed in my mind the sickening impression left by our borough contest, where Liberalism gained by unscrupulous measures. . . .'

## TO MRS. BALMER, HEXHAM

BERWICK, *July 29, 1852.*

' . . . I must strip in good earnest to my article on Inspiration, . . . though I could read with great profit at least another year. It has been more useful to me as a theological study than any which preceded ; and I only want time to work up the results. . . . However, I have now had sufficient experience to find that if I write anything it must always be done in haste, and perhaps I could not do anything better otherwise. . . .'

'It does seem at times wonderful to me that such freshness and interest should surround all our intercourse. It is the nature of affection. Yet I could not have believed it before the experience. May you live yet many years to enjoy happiness and to make others happy, and always resist as well the tooth of time upon the vivacity of your spirits and the strength of your affections! . . .'

## TO THE SAME

HORNSEY, *Aug. 26, 1852.*

'I need not say how welcome and acceptable were your congratulations. I spent indeed a very happy day, but kept all my thoughts to myself, as I am shy of mentioning these things except to my most intimate friends. Indeed nobody keeps my birthday except yourself ; and I so shrink from display on these occasions that I have no wish to see the number enlarged. I do hope I shall



be a little better by next period; and I cannot tell how much I have to be thankful for on looking back to the past. May I be of some little service to you in your journey, and may all other dear friends have reason to wish my life prolonged, though indeed I still adhere very much personally to my old views on that subject. . . .’

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, Oct. 21, 1852.

‘. . . I finished the first proof of my article a week ago. It swelled out to forty-eight mortal pages, and almost killed me ere it was finished. . . . A very pleasant visit from Professor Fraser succeeded, and we talked over the whole question. He is a fine fellow, and has suggested some not unimportant adaptations to current moods of reasoning and feeling. But it will appear substantially as it was written. . . .’

FROM BARON BUNSEN

LONDON, Oct. 27, 1852.

‘Allow me to address you by these lines, which are in the first place destined to beg your acceptance of a copy of my *Hippolytus*. Last summer I became acquainted with your article on Niebuhr in the *North British Review* through the Duke of Argyll, when on a visit to him at Inveraray. I heard at the same time from this Christian and enlightened nobleman that you were deeply engaged in theological and philosophical studies, and would certainly take a lively interest in the researches and aspirations of my work on Hippolytus and his age. It is unnecessary to say to you how much I was rejoiced to find you connected with the *North British*, which every lover of truth and friend of Scriptural evangelical Christianity must wish to see prospering, and more and more take that position of *geistige Freiheit* which alone can save faith, as certainly as faith alone can sanctify that liberty of the spirit.

‘When, therefore, our common friend Mr. Morell expressed to me the other day his belief that I might request you to take up my book for an article in the *Review*, I felt relieved of a great anxiety; for I am aware that if my book gets into wrong hands (and every hand is wrong which does not have the means and the good-will of entering into the recesses of early Christianity and the cravings of this age) most Scotch Christians would conceive an erroneous impression both of the subject and of my own tendency.

‘Allow me, therefore, to express additionally the hope that this may be the beginning of a closer connection between us.

‘You will easily perceive that I have not written out of a wanton wish to start paradoxes, or out of a spirit of party, but out of a deep conviction of the duty I feel imposed upon me to pay a heavy debt of gratitude to this country, by telling thus the truth on more points than most of the sons of this politically so free country venture to do. At the same time I wish to inspire some courage and consolation to many souls, here and in my native land, who begin to be dispirited by the apparent progress in our age both of Popery and Infidelity.

‘As to the substructions of the book, you will easily discover them in our blessed Neander’s and Niebuhr’s method and in my own. I believe the most condensed parts are the Aphorisms and the Reliquiae Liturgicae; and as to the latter, I have scarcely found anything done critically.

‘Whether you undertake or not to review my book, I hope you will read it and let me have your opinion upon it.’

#### TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Dec.* 30, 1852.

‘I have been speaking against American slavery, having been mightily concussed and stunned with that to me most wonderful of woman’s books, *Uncle Tom*. Of course to you in Edinburgh this fit is long over; but I was otherwise occupied in the first heat of the excitement, and was disposed, I must own, rather to pooh-pooh the whole phrenetic agitation. However, I have been bitten at last; and that, in a scorners of novel literature like me, is something to glory over. . . .’

#### TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Feb.* 3, 1853.

‘. . . I am busy at work and reading. Happily no writing is in the wind, which makes the days seem each more golden than its neighbour. Surely no mortal ever writes a book or a review without dismal necessity urging him on behind. The only pleasure is in getting the thing done. It sweetens all other labours to think that there is no shadow like this resting upon them. . . .’

‘My controversy with F. W. Newman cost me two long papers. . . . He reiterated his demands for insertion of contradictions and

protests, but the editor, being satisfied that I had done him no injustice, refused him any apology or word of explanation. Poor man! I am really sorry for his awkward position in the eyes of the world, with his strange medley of doctrines or phases of his faith—first one phase, then another, in the same book—and the controversy has . . . deepened my sympathy for his unhappy wanderings on the mountains of naturalistic moonshine and emptiness.’

FROM JOHN BROWN, M.D.

23 RUTLAND STREET, *Feb.* 1853.

‘My dear K—— sends you her best affection and gratitude. It was so truly kind to think of writing at all, and it is so comforting, so in the highest sense good for us, that you have written as you have. May God reward you for this! It was so exactly what K—— was longing for, fitted so curiously into all her needs, and did her so much, and will continue to do her so much, spiritual good. It is so true—the only truth and the only comfort. She bids me tell you that if sympathy is a poor thing to the giver’s eye, it is a rich, an inestimable thing to the receiver’s heart—a sort of thing that there is no expressing the true blessedness and power of. I don’t know how often she has read this letter; she says it is so living and speaking and satisfies her and goes all the length. . . . You have done us both much good, and made us love you dearly.’

TO MRS. BALMER, GLASGOW

BERWICK, *March* 23, 1853.

‘. . . On occasion of my visit to Cockburnspath I went to the churchyard to see the graves of my father and brother. I could not have anticipated such calmness and peace as I felt there. Life seemed so sweet and beautiful, ended as it was in their case, that I had no remaining regrets and no wishes for myself, except just to be satisfied with God’s time and way of ordering me out of the world when it came. Nothing of all the pleasure of the visit to my living friends and relatives (and it was a very happy one) was to me so sacred as this solitary converse with the dead. I have been more elevated in spirit ever since. . . .

‘All my dear relatives are well. I slept in my brother’s house at Dunglass . . . and saw a great many old faces. It is a most changing world; but it does not so depress me, as once it did, to



contemplate its vicissitudes. I do think I have more hold over the infinite and eternal sphere beyond. Though very far behind in other graces, I have been led more to set my affections on things above. As I saw the growth of the old and venerable trees, it was some comfort to think that during a considerable tract of years I was conscious of a little growth in myself too, most of it the fruit of trial. I wish I had better improved all my opportunities, for I am the slowest of scholars. . . .'

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *March 30, 1853.*

' . . . I went on Monday to Alnwick, having satisfied my wise head that I might do so, *salva fide et salva ecclesia*, and was a good deal entertained with the transactions of the first and last of my political dinners. A horrid cram and barbarous feeding of parties long ere the company came or grace was said—at some parts infinite disorder of 2000 people, all standing up together, and a general squeeze—very much eloquence against intimidation, territorial influence, etc. etc.; eulogies of Sir George Grey, Free Trade, Northumberland, working classes, progressive reform echoing windily through crazy pavilion-woods and laurel festoons stuck full of artificial flowers, seen by gas-light at mid-day. Speakers—Sir George himself, who fell below my hopes, damped by the ponderous weight of the testimonial and complimentary rhetoric; Earl Grey, teathy and vigorous, with an unlordly physiognomy; Earl of Carlisle, grey locks and massive face and radiant benignity, with a deal of sentiment and humour; Lord Panmure (Fox Maule), fluent tongue, under a wild, unkempt, ragged-school-looking head and eye, and with a most rotten twang of sermonising; all eclipsed by the presenter of the Testimonial, who was lately, according to a report, a working man on the quay of Newcastle, and is now a representative of 13,000 working men, whereof the humble individual who now addresses you is one of the least laborious. A most diverting episode was occasioned by the absurdity of the chairman, Sir W. C. Trevelyan, who, being an in-season and out-of-season teetotaller, not only prefaced the toasts with a homily against the usages of a barbarous age, but in replying to his own health reopened the same view, insisting that social reform must come before political; and amidst the growing impatience of the mixed multitude, and ultimately their chaotic insurrection, stood to his text, and amidst wild shouts of laughter tried to hammer out his



speech, of which nothing was heard but such fragments as "facilities of intemperance," "progressive diminution of the sale of ardent spirits," "unholy traffic in intoxicating liquors," etc. I literally wept with laughter, and with a kind of strange consternation at what might become of such a mass thus bereft of a head. At last the poor man gave in to chaos, having with a sublime courage braved the elements for about fifteen minutes. Altogether I was much entertained, if not instructed, by the whole day's exhibition. Do not judge my real sentiments by the above *caricatura*. I got some useful hints for the pulpit and some lessons in the graceful movement of the arms from my aristocratic *corps de théâtre*. This is a very light and worthless letter; but you must pardon it, dearest mother, for it comes to me at the time. . . .'

TO MRS. BALMER, GLASGOW

BERWICK, *April 6, 1853.*

' . . . Somehow the solicitude as to your health has not been able to depress me; and I have felt carried up by a force higher than the power of my own will or reason. I hardly remember any more cheerful period. It has many of the characteristics of that October in Edinburgh now more than four years ago, when I could truly say, "I feel that I am happier than I know." I have prayed that in the multitude of your thoughts within you the comforts of God's salvation might delight your soul. There is little solid but what comes from that quarter; and the confidence inspired by God's own Spirit nothing earthly can take away. The exhilarating effect of our charming spring weather I have felt mingling with this higher feeling, like a constant running melody to some heavenly air. The very earth and sea seem radiant with happiness, and the sunshine impregnated with some ethereal element finer than either light or heat. The exquisite image of Buchanan in his ode on the first of May, when he speaks of the vernal feeling as the all-investing atmosphere of a world purged by the last fires and peopled with the blessed—which is to me the very highest type of enjoyment in the most favoured moments of out-of-door exhilaration—has been often with me this week, attended with a sort of stealing intrusion of unsolicited spiritual calm and gladness, quietly waiting to be indulged, and lifting up the mind without rapture or excitement to a more than ordinary level of placid and contented acquiescence in all that God has ever done or is doing in all matters in which I have any interest.'

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *April 11, 1853.*

‘. . . The sufferings of God’s people always affect me less than the sins of those who know Him not. This is the grievous cross in this chequered world. There is hope at the bottom and not far down in the one case; in the other the trial is a great deep, and nothing but confiding submission and earnest entreaty to God to make things better can afford any standing ground. This is what most binds me to the work of the ministry. I don’t think I could be thoroughly satisfied with myself if I were not trying directly to grapple with this great evil and to bring men into the only state in which they are fit to face the solemn future, and to shake off the imprint of evil in this sinning and suffering world. . . .’

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *April 15, 1853.*

‘. . . Having preached my sermon (1 John iii. 1) I send you my best love and good wishes. . . . I am conscious of innumerable dulnesses and stupidities in regard to divine things. But I have more lucid intervals, and am thankful to be able always to believe these things true, even when they shine with little brightness. . . .’

‘. . . Probably our communions have too much work for our ministers. It is not needed by people who hear so much of the Gospel, and the tension of mind is too severe. . . .’

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *April 25, 1853.*

‘I do not doubt that — understands and loves the Gospel; only it would be well that it were seen and read of all men. We have all something defective and blameworthy, and probably are ourselves the subjects of regret to those who wish us to be something that we are not yet. . . .’

‘Our two honourable members are unseated for bribery and corruption—let them go, and may they be the last of the race. . . . I find it very difficult to persuade you that I am *not* solitary, even after a friend like George Wilson departs. I am never less alone than when alone, and the last thing for which I weary is habitual

companionship. You will say this is perversity, but in me it is nature; and no religious obligation requires me in this to make myself over again. I am thankful rather that work and books and reflection open up such pure happiness; and the visit of a friend only sends me back with fresh relish to these never-failing joys. I have got 126 volumes of the classics added to my library—a beautiful accession. . . .’

TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *May 20, 1853.*

‘The delightful summer days afford great facilities for private studies, as there is little trouble in the congregation. I am reading Plato’s *Republic* with much interest. I have just got the length of his enlightened proposal for a community of goods and wives, with a programme of female emancipation that leaves America far behind. It is one of the few monstrosities of that divine genius, who is more of a Christian than all moralists ancient or modern, except Christians, and who, even in this aberration, was grasping at a higher unity of mankind than unaided nature could reach. Happy is the child-like Christian who has brought to his door “a city of God” so much nobler than the Republic of the best and wisest of the heathen! . . .’

TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *June 2, 1853.*

‘. . . This week I have done almost nothing in the way of study, having been three days in succession on different country roads, partly visiting regularly, partly seeing the sick and partly baptizing. What I have lost, however, in reading books I have gained in reading nature. The Tweed is never so lovely as in June. I have walked all week by green hedges and among springing fields by the smiling river. Nothing could be more fresh and fair, only a slender remnant of east wind preserved to enhance the charm of the contrast; while the recent copious rains have made the earth one breathing surface of life, almost speaking its thankfulness to heaven. This evening I had occasion to be out before sunset in the neighbourhood of the Bell Tower, in the sweetest, calmest, brightest hour of a rather overcast day. The Magdalen fields, a perfect paradise of green and gold; the stilly look of the

sea, all but reposing under a dying east wind; the round, broad, softened orb of the sun descending in majesty behind Halidon Hill, spreading a rich hazy lustre on the woods and corn-fields far away up the country, and giving a romantic charm to the scattered mass of the town and the bay behind—made up a picture which had more of an unworldly character in it than I have seen for a long time. The softening down of the old ruins, so as to blend with the subdued life of nature at that tranquil hour, affected me deeply. I thought that thus in some happier age of the world, when the sun only rises on peace and goodness, the wrecks of old struggle and turmoil may be toned down to the surrounding landscape, and deepen the joy of the new world that has arisen. Once to-day upon an open moor, the smell of blooming whins so affected me that I shouted aloud in involuntary rapture. It was the sudden invasion of the sense and memory together by one of the strongest aromatics of early summer. The orchards are peculiarly lovely this year, and blend in the country with the wider sweep of efflorescent nature in one delightfully various whole—the creation of a Spirit that seems to speak to you through all, and to enjoy your wonder and entrancement. Certainly this is the highest element of the pleasure; though I feel always very keenly the satisfaction described in the *Spectator* of “running about upon the earth and enjoying it as a brute.” May we only be grateful for all that comes to us through eye and ear and heart and limb! . . .’

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *June 15, 1853.*

‘ . . . I see in the Free Church Assembly a long debate, Edinburgh *versus* Aberdeen. I was very sorry Edinburgh was beaten. It was a mere struggle of local pride against the greatest good of the Church. I think the argument is all against provincial colleges. The Free Church or any other may attempt to multiply colleges; but it cannot manufacture professors. . . . It is an almost incalculable evil to place young men under second-rate teachers. It deadens all their noblest powers, and in the case of the Christian ministry brings even Christianity itself into a danger of contempt. . . . If the Free Church do not stop in time, she will repent it. Even our secular universities are miserably ill garrisoned, —a star here and there among dense opacities. How much harder to find in the one special subject of theology, and that too in one



Church, a sufficient staff of pre-eminent instructors! A second-rate professor ought to be as intolerable as a second-rate poet, and will not do more good in his generation. . . .'

TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *May 26, 1853.*

' . . . I have spent the week with Plato, of whom I will not say more at present than that he gives up the management of the commonwealth to the philosophers—in my humble opinion the most incompetent dreamers in it, and most certain to run it aground, as they would the Channel Fleet. In this, by the way, Carlyle in his *Latter Day Pamphlets* agrees with him, despising the government of the many, and using, apparently without any plagiarism, the figure of a ship's crew rising against the pilot and forcing him to steer according to their universal suffrage. I have also finished the re-perusal of Goethe's *Faust*—a most remarkable work of genius, though very far from being delectable to a Christian mind. . . . This meagre outline can give no idea of the wealth of genius bestowed on the work, the manifold criticism of human life and manners, and the frequent bursts of exquisite lyrical feeling and melody. His Margaret is very fine, though open to many objections on the score of incoherence. Her songs are most pathetic and unsurpassed. Mephistopheles is an attempt to sketch a different Satan from Milton's—a sneering, heartless, incorrigible vagabond, with an eye only for the low, the vicious and the distorted in God's fallen world, and finding in that blindness and bitter sarcastic iciness his own doom and judgment. I do not admire the idea, which I reckon radically defective; and Mephistopheles too much amuses one to impress his intense hatefulness. Altogether the human side of the tragedy, which is the finest, does not agree with the philosophic-theological, and in that point the work is a failure. I must say that the picture of successful wickedness excites in me a stronger desire to oppose the Gospel to the works of the devil—the only remedy, though Goethe did not know it. . . .'

TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *June 30, 1853.*

' . . . You ask for information about Henry Rogers. I only met him once for half-an-hour in Dr. Brown's,—a little man with a bald

forehead and a keen black eye, full of intelligence and gentlemanly vivacity, olive-complexioned and oval-faced, dressed in black coat and light brown kerseys. He might pass for a country school-master on holiday, but for his fine English and his piercing eye, that looks full of memories of the world. I have read almost all his writings with great admiration. But he has written nothing nearly so good as the *Eclipse of Faith*. It is a prodigiously clever book and solid in argument. The fault perhaps is that he drives sarcasm a little too far. Yet he is dealing with a very unreasonable and captious generation. . . .’

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *July 7, 1853.*

‘. . . Land and sea, earth and sky, have often spoken to me this summer the sweetest solitary music, and I have been happier than I knew—as if earth were already gone and better visions of light and purity opening all around. Surely this is a dawn of immortality ; this is a voice of Him in the soul, who saith, “I give unto them eternal life.” . . .’

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *July 21, 1853.*

‘. . . I can enter to some extent into your feelings of depression ; though I can always trace mine to some cause, some affliction of others, some misbehaviour, some painful view of human nature, some failure to accomplish in the way of duty what I had contemplated. The more mysterious kind of depression that comes and goes like the shadows upon the sea, I do not greatly feel, and certainly do not encourage when it pays me a visit. But then I have everything, humanly speaking, to make me happy—no bodily pains, no sickness near, no sad bereavements to look back upon. In short, I do not see how I could well be happier as far as external things go ; and I have not the least desire, except that my nearest and closest friends were freed from their afflictions, and that I had myself a little longer time for favourite studies. I expect to pass through life much in this way, though it does not become us to dictate to Infinite Goodness and Wisdom. . . .’

TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *Aug.* 12, 1853.

‘. . . I had a very pleasant excursion to Arran from Irvine on Monday, and enjoyed greatly the beauty of that romantic island. I have seen no island like it anywhere—many as fair and lovely, but none so grand and even sublime. Mr. Robertson is very flourishing in Irvine and I rejoiced in his joy. On Saturday I spent a very agreeable anniversary of my ordination in great quietness and solitude. God, who knows where to send the seeds of truth, sent me that day a report of a very fine address by J. Angell James on the Christian Ministry. It was to me a word in season; and I felt greatly invigorated by reading it. Our Trustees yesterday, instead of a supper, went up the Tweed and held a *kettle*.<sup>1</sup> . . . It was a very pleasant day, and a great deal of good and even devout feeling pervaded the assemblage. Your health was given in connection with the ladies of the congregation. . . .

‘Have you heard the strange and amazing news from China—that that great empire is on the eve of becoming, nominally at least, Christian, and that the rebel army, so likely to succeed, have adopted a form of Christianity? . . . I will send a copy of the *Times* containing one of a series of most astounding notices that have electrified the whole country. It is the Lord’s doing, though much chaff be mingled with the wheat. . . .’

TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *Aug.* 18, 1853.

‘. . . The congregation is certainly flourishing—all but the prayer-meetings, which do not mend, and vex me and others a good deal. But for this want of prayer the only remedy is prayer, and that I hope will not be withheld. . . .

‘David is busy with the Hall and writes in great spirits. I sometimes wish I had the leisure I had when a student. I believe I should make discoveries in theology—at least to myself. But I would not, all in all, exchange my present for any position of leisure under the sun. My aim must be to create more leisure for myself as a minister by saving time and by other expedients of the old-fashioned order. I shall next Tuesday be thirty-five years of age. I have been very happy; nor can I complain of a single passage in my life that I did not myself make uncomfortable. . . . God’s

<sup>1</sup> A river-side picnic.

goodness and mercy have followed me all my days, more especially my days of ministerial labour. I am a much wiser and better man than when I went to the Continent nine years ago, and a great deal happier in every respect, though the golden haze of youth has been exchanged for the more sober realities and solidities of manhood. The haze has gone into the future beyond the line of the visible and temporal, and is a great deal brighter and more glorious than any orient shapes of early fancy that hung around this lower scene. But I do not mean to anatomise my own experience on paper. It is a pleasanter business in a morning walk or solitary musing, such as I had this week up among the Lammermoors, amidst green knolls and heathy ridges, that in point of botany, at least, would not suffer much beside your Grampians. . . .'

## TO THE SAME

AMSTERDAM, *Sept.* 3, 1853.

' . . . This morning I saw Leyden, whose glory, alas, is departed, in all that makes a great school of learning. Many of our old Scotch divines were educated here; and I felt a kind of sacredness in the rooms where some of them must have sat at the feet of the lights of other days. . . .'

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERLIN, *Sept.* 19, 1853.

' . . . I have much reason to be thankful for a very prosperous and interesting journey, of which something may be made in the way of enlightening the English public as to German matters. My expectations from the apparent revival have not been realised in any large German city; and though symptoms of progress are here and there perceptible, the whole mass of Germany is as yet but little affected. The reaction in the State is disastrous, most of the evangelical clergy being mixed up with it or seeming to be so; and thus the whole struggle, *Kirchentag* and all together, acquires a Jesuitical look in the eyes of the revolutionary masses, which are totally alienated from Christianity. The *Kirchentag* begins its deliberations to-morrow. I expect something from it; but one has no idea of the fetters which the complicated political relations impose on energetic and thoroughly manly action. One universal testimony have I found from both friends and foes of living Protestantism—that the Court influence of Berlin is doing more harm to the cause than all other influences are doing good: a sad



example of the benefits of a nursing-father to the Church or a nursing-mother,—the overlaying of the child.

‘. . . Berlin is once more considerably altered, I don’t think much for the better. In the style of architecture, painting and sculpture there is too much pretension and too little luminous simplicity. All recent German things bear the impress of *Streben*. The exquisite artlessness of the earlier days is sought in vain. Macaulay’s theory of poetry seems to me to be applicable to German art of all descriptions; civilisation and criticism have crippled and lamed it to a great degree. One of the most ill-omened applications of this spirit is to religion—the creation of a grand liturgical worship that shall outbid Rome on the one hand and the theatre on the other. The consequence is that there is a miserable reminiscence of both without the attraction of either; and the true work of the Church, which is not to be a school of art but of the religious principle, and demands the whole man for that end, is mutilated and caricatured. May the old wine regain its flavour, for it was better than the new! . . .’

TO MRS. BALMER, ABERDEEN

BERWICK, Oct. 19, 1853.

‘. . . I have determined this winter never to preach on the Sabbath evenings, and to take my work as lightly as possible, writing shorter lectures for the Sabbath forenoon and also curtailing the devotional services. I have erred in this respect, and to no possible use. . . . I have a great deal of work connected with study this winter. But it is not nearly so grinding in its character as that of last season, with its weary drudgery about Inspiration and the contest that rose out of it—the latter the most wasted time of my life.’

TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, Dec. 26, 1853.

‘I embrace this secular Christmas day to make up for my long suspended writing, which has had too good a justification. I have been engaged for the last three weeks on a laborious paper for the *North British* on German ecclesiastical complexities, which is not yet quite finished, but which has almost finished my brain, having led yesterday to a stoppage of the circulation of ideas in the pulpit, which fortunately was relieved by an infusion from the MS. This

is not a proper state to be in at any time, and I mean to discontinue authorship great and small, except literary correspondence with scientific friends, of which I will instruct them to keep copies for the benefit of posterity. I am really weary of the Black Sea which I have been beating about in. I have had no time to do even the most necessary and Christian duties, *e.g.* the daily reading of the *Times*, and the noticing of the march of war with its horrible shadow towards our own country. What a miserable comedy (humbug is a word of too strong moral application) do the whole of our recent Peace glorifications, Grand Exhibition included, now seem! What a childish anticipation of the only true Millennium! Not that they were out of their way, but that men expected too much from them, and put them in the place of the only agent that can make despots wise, or arm against them a strong enough body of virtuous and united resistance to make them powerless. It was like a Millennium with a bull-dog on the horizon—all very well if he could become a bull-calf, or if the pacific household would agree among themselves as to the way that rusty muskets and pitchforks, with anti-hydrophobial anodynes, should be brought to bear upon his hypothetical incursion. Mockery will be written on all such misreadings of human nature. The diabolic element will assert itself until it be hurried out by more sensible exorcism; and perhaps to some extent it will get worse by being let so long go unrecognised. This however is fitter for the newspapers. But I never saw a war brewing that had so little to abate its brutal horrors, or to make either a Christian or a patriot on either side go into it with any heart.

‘I have heard from David all your Edinburgh news. How like it strikes me one winter is to another! The inexhaustible novelty of life is soon exploded. For my own part, I never read of anything going on with you that I should like much to see or hear. A quiet hour with yourself and Jessie—mother included—once a week would be a true pleasure. But as for your public life, I am far better out of it (think I) than going round with its treadmill. Perhaps I feel with years too much of a growing fatalism. “Let the world go hang; it may wag as it will for me.” This is not a Christian virtue by any means; but it is a virtue in which I find it easy to indulge. I am really as happy in all internal and external respects as any man can safely be—bating always that hideous “article”—and I rejoice to see good done round about me and to be going on quietly, I hope with an increasing number, to a better world. . . .’

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Feb.* 16, 1854.

‘ . . . With regard to National Education, I am not sanguine. Parties are too much divided: the people as a whole are too dull and inert upon the question, the badness of the parish schools having operated as a wet blanket on all popular eagerness to see more salaried idleness and privileged incompetency, and the sons of Zeruah in these circumstances being still too many for us. I have no private information about the Lord Advocate’s Bill, but have my own fears that it will prove an abortion, and that probably in the end, all attempts to include religion having failed, the question will be settled on the broadest scale, after a struggle, with an Irish eviction of religion, which is not so bad, combined with a separate teaching and stereotyping of sectarian differences as its appendage (the people of Scotland insisting on *some* religion), which will be odious. The Edinburgh meeting was good only destructively; constructively, it was insufficient. I foresee a long battle on this question ere the voice of the country can be got to declare itself with any distinctness; and meanwhile, while grass is growing, the wild ass’s colt will be in a most prosperous and satisfactory condition as a civilised and harnessed animal.

‘ My German article has been voted dull and dreary with singular unanimity. I saw the *Edinburgh Advertiser’s* verdict, “awfully heavy,” and I have no doubt that this will be the prevailing feeling. . . . I have now written nearly my last for a long period. It is too exhausting work with my other labours. . . . ’

## TO REV. HENRY CALDERWOOD

BERWICK, *Feb.* 24, 1854.

‘ . . . I have read your treatise on the Infinite with very great interest and admiration, and I have no hesitation in pronouncing it a positive accession to the philosophical literature—not very copious—that exists on the subject.

‘ In general I agree with your positions, and have long done so; and if ever I had been called on to discuss the points at issue between you and Sir W. Hamilton, I should have arrived at exactly the same results. M. Cousin is of less moment in the controversy, as the truth receives less justice in his hands. . . . The parts of



your treatise that strike me as most valuable are:—the elimination of the Absolute out of the controversy, the discussions on negative thinking, the statements regarding space and time as irrestrictive conditions, with the whole protest against the irrelative character of the Infinite, and, finally, the analysis and refutation of Sir Wm.'s theory of causation, which I am persuaded are unanswerable. Many minds that have passed through his training must have had the germs of these arguments and illustrations fermenting within them. But I know of none that have as yet so fully and clearly developed them, with the exception in part of Professor Fraser in his article in the *North British*, where he anticipates your criticisms on causation to some extent, and hints a difference very broadly from Sir Wm.'s negative view of the Infinite. Still, your work has the freshness of originality; and on some points, especially the setting aside of the Absolute and the repelling of the unconditional character of the Infinite as irrelative to objects in space and time, you have not been anticipated, to my knowledge, at all.

'A good many of your positions as to the nature of space and time I cannot agree to. I think we know them both as finite and as infinite and can isolate and amplify them at will, making other objects their boundaries, and yet not identifying time with duration nor space with body. Yet as to the fact of the infinite conception of space and time being the radical one, I am quite of your mind.

'I have myself been restrained by a feeling of gratitude and reverence from animadverting till now upon Sir William's system as a whole, though I regard it as little better than an unintentional enlistment of philosophy on the side of scepticism—an altar erected in the modern Athens to the Unknown God. Nor would I wish to seem to urge on others to assail it; only, as you have asked my opinion and move on your own responsibility, I could not withhold my judgment.'

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *March 9, 1854.*

'What do you think about the School Bill? You are out of the frying-pan into the fire, or rather out of the tyranny of the mob into that of the despot. But the Bill, so far as known, is better than I feared, and the opposition of Dr. Candlish is auspicious. I anticipated some separate action from his absence from the Edinburgh meeting. . . .'



## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *April 19, 1854.*

‘ . . . I enclose a few lines to Jeanie, to whom I have endeavoured to wish all the bright and happy things which so dull a fount of inspiration can suggest to the heart and fancy of a new-made mother. Nor do I less wish you joy of this auspicious event. “Many shall rejoice at his birth” is a beautiful Bible expression. May it hold the same high sense to the end! . . .

‘ I have been doing very little in the way of study. My health has needed attention. But the quiet flow of grateful work without oppression or hurry has been very delightful, and I have prosecuted just enough of reading and thinking beyond my every-day necessities to diversify life. . . .

‘ I never had fewer shadows in my horizon in the shape of work to be done as a task, or of evils that I felt or feared. Of course we ought not to boast of to-morrow, and in so uncertain a world all things may be reversed suddenly. It needs only, as it were, the turning of a cock and the gaslights glimmer and vanish. But I wish to be thankful for present mercies. Nature is renewing very beautifully at this time the face of the earth, and the Tweed in its laughing blue reflects the all-but-unending clearness of the sky. I went out on Monday to the opposite side of Norham to the funeral of an old minister, a venerable man long engaged in labours there. It seemed so unlike a funereal sky, cloudless sunshine falling on bursting buds and springing fields, and the joyous river murmuring on to its own music. It is beautiful to think of this world being fully rehabilitated and restored; yet perhaps it would want that exquisite charm of association, and of sadness overcome even when it is cherished, which the memories of earth, as it now is, clothe themselves with. The joy of sorrow past and overpast can no doubt be preserved even in a new and garish scene, where nothing is as yet toned down; but it is difficult to conceive this so readily, and the scarred and worn face of our old mother putting on her summer smiles after winter is something that goes deeper now into the soul. But I do not mean to dissertate on this or any other subject, and only beg to subjoin a few lines I have translated from a German hymn written by an Electress of Prussia in the middle of the seventeenth century. It is but an echo of the original, and I send it only as a remembrance of common feelings and sympathies.

‘Jesus, Refuge of my soul,  
 My Redeemer, lives undying ;  
 Yes, I know it : let me roll  
 Fear away, and grief, and crying—  
 All the shades of midnight gloom,  
 That have gathered round the tomb !

‘Hid with God my Saviour lives,  
 Lives with Him my soul’s whole treasure !  
 Light His hidden glory gives,  
 Soon it opens without measure.  
 Who shall then a darkness spread,  
 Part the members from the Head ?

‘One strong bond of deathless love  
 Has our hearts too close united,  
 One dear vow inscribed above  
 Has our hands too firmly plighted,  
 That death’s curse should ever part  
 Hand from hand, and heart from heart.

‘I am dust, and to the grave  
 Sin and death this flesh shall banish :  
 My Redeemer, strong to save,  
 Soon shall bid corruption vanish,  
 Dust to glory wake, and raise  
 To His side for endless days.

\* \* \* \* \*

‘Keep, then, keep your spirits free,  
 Let no lust or passion enter !  
 To that Refuge daily flee  
 Where your endless hopes all centre !  
 Let your hearts take wing and stay  
 Where ye seek to rest for aye !’

TO MRS. BALMER

HORNSEY, *May 1, 1854.*

. . . At Cambridge I found the Macmillans very happy to see me, and received from them great and unbounded kindness. . . . On the Fast Day I heard a very good sermon of its kind from a Mr. Goodwin, who is here considered about the best preacher. He is a sound Churchman, and that to me was the attraction, as I wanted to hear men of his stamp. . . . With Cambridge I have been greatly struck and delighted. The country is miserably flat ; but the buildings are magnificent, and everything is in the first

blush of spring. The monastic character of the foundations, combined with the accomplishment and grace of English gentlemen, and rendered venerable by the long series of great names attached to each college, forms a picture not seen probably anywhere else in the world except, of course, at Oxford. Yet I had rather be Vicar of Golden Square than Fellow of any College. . . .’

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

HORNSEY, *May 6, 1854.*

‘At Cambridge I saw Sedgwick, Whewell, Adams and Stokes. . . . In the House of Commons on Monday I heard a wrangle in Committee on University Reform, in which Lord John, Gladstone, B. Disraeli, Pakington, Walpole, Thesiger and a whole cohort of others took part. It was a fortunate opportunity, and almost satiated my thirst to see the House. Lord John is not so wee-looking as is said, nor so hesitating. The Chancellor is a most dexterous fencer and rhetorician, with a touch of Scotch doctrinairism . . . Poor Benjamin decidedly pleased me more than I expected. He does not look so lank and dreary as *Punch* represents him; and a manly, straightforward, but rather brassy look, voice and manner give him currency with the unknowing. . . . Gladstone and he sat at opposite sides of the table like two gamecocks or Skye terriers; and evidently no love is lost between them. Altogether the house was rather hum-drum. . . . I expect to assist on Wednesday at a great dinner of the Society for the Sons of the Clergy—present, Prince Albert, the Archbishop of Canterbury, etc. etc. I have seen much of Exeter Hall meetings,—Wesleyan, Church, Bible, Protestant Alliance. The Bible Society one was by far the best. The sum collected for the Jubilee Fund is £100,000, and the ordinary income £120,000 and upwards. It is truly cheering to learn what God is doing everywhere. There are constant rumours of victories from the Danube and the Black Sea. . . .’

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Aug. 23, 1854.*

‘. . . To-day I complete the round number of six-and-thirty years. I invited myself to a regular dinner, and then proposed the toast of the day in a glass of water, venturing to hope, un-

accustomed as I was to public speaking, that the happy occasion might return several times for the sake of a life so valuable to friends and to the public, and that growing years might bring growing virtues; whereupon, when the cheering had subsided, the favoured individual rose amidst much embarrassment, and acknowledged the great compliment of being thought at such an age not lost to all improvement, pledging himself to do his little all not utterly to disappoint the too partial friend who had proposed, and the company who had received, the toast in so flattering a manner. The oratory had at least the merit of brevity and, if little original, was perhaps sincere; and it is now to be seen whether it goes the way of all after-dinner speeches.

‘Seriously, George, though getting older (only a year) I do not know anybody who is happier, or who has more reason to be happy. I have all and abound—work, friends, money, more health than I have had, peace of mind and a steady, daily sense of God’s love and favour, which, without any affectation of singular privilege, is, I believe, more than falls to the lot of many Christians, and is certainly by its whole amount more than I deserve, to say nothing of the negative quantity that would spring up on that style of calculation. I firmly believe that I am growing happier with the flight of years. I accept that as some small evidence, too, that I am getting better, though on that point gratitude is a somewhat dangerous virtue, and needs to be well watched in its jubinations. But on this scurvy text of self I will not go through all the nineteen heads till a future opportunity, which I promise will not return for at least a year.

‘I have entertained myself last week and this by reading over Horace. My wonder is that I was so little shocked before with such a pagan rascal. The ——— Regiment are highly classical. They are Horace translated from Eton to Windsor, just over the river. I had not read him for eight or nine years.’

#### TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *Sept.* 5, 1854.

‘You are indeed a much and variously tried man; but I do not feel disposed to say anything worse about this affliction than the very Christian-like word of Virgil: *Deus dabit his quoque finem.* “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He carefully keepeth all his bones; not one



of them is broken." There no doubt were broken bones in the days of David and worse surgeons a great deal; yet this is mentioned as one of the blessings of the righteous, so that the great principle of faith *versus* sense must here come in, and a poor sufferer must learn to deny that any break has happened of the worst and most serious kind. Zwingli, like a sturdy Swiss Christian as he was, when mortally wounded on the battle-field of Cappell, was able to say, "Who would call this a calamity?" and many more have been able, not to say with the old Stoics, "Pain is no pain," but with my excellent predecessor on his deathbed, "Though I have pain, I have peace." Patience must have its perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing—a striking estimate of patience as the sum of all the graces, which indeed it is in their bearing on trouble, for it springs out of faith and love and blossoms into hope. It has in itself the elements of perfection; and when it is perfect, the Christian character is fully rounded off and consummated. But, alas for us, how hard a thing is it to be patient as Christ was, as sensitive and yet as victorious, as conscious of a will of our own and yet as ready to merge it in that of the Father! May He be your example and your succour, present in solitude and lassitude, in constraint, weariness and hope deferred, in the threefold irritation of broken bones, temper and plans, healing, soothing, cementing and "making all your bones say (the favourite quotation of St. Augustine), 'O Lord, who is like unto Thee?'"

'You have learned long ago that the best learning comes from trial, and that often the most striking views of spiritual things, as of natural, come with some sharp and abrupt turn in the road, leaving an image which lives long after the rough jolt has passed away. May it be so now, and may you see more of God's wonders in the deep than at any former time!

'I shall wait with anxiety for next report of your return to a two-handed condition. . . . Poor is the friendship that shrinks from its share of necessary sorrows!'

#### TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Sept.* 13, 1854.

' . . . There is nothing of much moment here now or at any time. The most exciting event is a threatened progress of cholera. . . . I have had my mother, brother, and two sisters with me for ten days. . . . When they are away, I shall feel more at liberty

to go out and in. . . . For myself I have no apprehension at all. Every bullet has its billet, which is just the vulgar translation of our Lord's words : "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

## TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, Oct. 3, 1854.

' . . . I devoted the whole of Sabbath to exercises connected with public affairs. The congregation was very attentive, and though I was somewhat fatigued I enjoyed the service. Then last night came the victory with the alleged fall of Sebastopol, which has caused great ringing of bells and excitement. However, Sebastopol, etc., were quite eclipsed this morning by the entrance of a band of circus performers driving twenty-in-hand. . . . What a strange creature is man, and even Christian humanity ! I saw crowds of excellent people gazing with all the interest of children. . . .'

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, Oct. 3, 1854.

' . . . I send you a few more sermons ; but I do so with reluctance. I know how little a statement written almost *currente calamo* from week to week of things universally known, and often read by you before in other sermons of mine, can have of solid value and interest. If they do good to the hearers, it is enough : for readers they are not made ; and the slight intermixture of interpretation and generalisation they contain will not make them rank with readable compositions except perhaps while one is an invalid. May you soon escape beyond the power of enduring them ! My self-love will not be wounded by their being put away with the chicken-broth and arrowroot of the sick-room. I send you the two sermons I preached on Sabbath-day. The first is entirely owing to the hints of your letter about the War. I thought them so just and seasonable that I threw aside my other preparations and determined to go over the dark side in one sermon and keep all the bright for the other. Hence you may have the satisfaction of hearing yourself preach for once, at least by a "supply."

'And so Sebastopol is taken ! It is remarkable that the news, at least the probable news, should come on a thanksgiving day. But I hope devoutly we shall have no public thanksgivings. I shall be thankful not to be called upon in the Christian Church to

give thanks for such a victory, though I am very thankful as an Englishman and even as a philanthropist. But Christianity abhors all such isolation and strife of nations, and will not condescend to bless God for the triumphs of one over another. That is a Jewish idea, suitable to a miraculously governed people, whose wars were the wars of the Lord. We are no such crusaders of justice, fighting under the sign in the sky, and I trust our clergy will leave *Te Deums* to the autocrat. I should as soon think of including a vote of thanks to the Almighty in those to be proposed in both Houses of Parliament to our fleet and army. With the return of peace it is different. I shall then (may it be soon!) give thanks with all my heart and even for the victory in that light, if it be found to have led to peace and also to the establishment of righteousness. In this sense the Church in Heaven sings her Hallelujah over the fall of Babylon and the reign of Christ. But I did not mean to give you beforehand the introduction to another sermon.'

#### TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, Dec. 13, 1854.

' . . . It will be a source of as much satisfaction to you as to myself that David has completed his probation and begun to the work of life. There is no other so high and glorious. Let us pray for him that he may find not a quiet and easy sphere, but one where, by hard labour and with spiritual weapons, he may make some impression on the kingdom of darkness. There is nothing to be got in the ministry or out of it without its price; and severe, self-denying exertion is the lowest figure at which anything worthy of Christian desire is to be obtained.

' I had the great pleasure last week of hearing Mr. Gough. He was a good deal happier than in Edinburgh—less tragic, perhaps, but more genial and apparently at home. I do not reckon his high passages as equal to his quiet and subdued ones. Some of the latter, consisting of snatches of autobiography and incidental traits of description, were perfectly beautiful. I think him, all things taken together, the most remarkable speaker I have ever heard; and I have never seen a greater impression, and but rarely indeed one approaching to what he makes. I only dissent from him in his exclusiveness—the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill. This to me is perfect fanaticism, more especially in one who admits that the affair is one of expediency, and that nothing

beyond permission can be Scripturally demanded, though more be, in his opinion, due to the Total Abstinence cause. I feel, on the contrary, a perfect identity of aim with him and the party, and notwithstanding the story of Betty and the Bear, maintain that every abstemious person in the world, and more especially every self-controlled Christian, is doing great service in expelling the monster out of the house and killing him. It is mere injustice to say that Christian men and ministers, who are as hearty in their denunciation of drunkenness and as remote from encouraging it as they are from countenancing theft or whoredom, are doing nothing. But I do not mean to refute this great speaker whom it was a real luxury to hear. . . .'



## CHAPTER XV

### MINISTER AT BERWICK

1855-1860

Precarious health—Call to Glasgow—Sabbath question—Logie Chair controversy—  
Literary projects—Organ question—Speech at Berlin—Journalism—Free Church  
professorship—Dr. Hanna's estimate—Principalship of Edinburgh University—  
Losses by death—Memoir of Dr. Brown—Memorials of George Wilson—Letters.

THIS quiet and happy life was bound to close. Its fulness and cheerfulness had been largely due to the fact that hitherto it had had two separate channels, each of which gave freedom to a separate character. There was the sedulous pastor devoted to his flock and feeding them with food convenient for them, and there was the philosophic theologian of growing power and influence with those who neither knew nor cared anything about Presbyterianism and its affairs. The time had come when both channels were full to overflowing. No doubt there have been cases in which country clergymen have made valuable contributions to the world of letters while showing professional fidelity. But Berwick was not a country charge. The congregation had increased largely, and with Cairns' view of pastoral responsibility, this implied a proportionate increase of work. Besides, in the case of a Presbyterian minister, a growing reputation carries with it growing demands for public service of all sorts. There is no such thing as Presbyterian parity. Official distinction may be avoided, but personal distinction takes its place, bringing with it a burden which has to be borne along with the ordinary duties of the pastorate. Certainly it was a

gracious thing for a man who was revising manuscripts for the leading publishers, writing laborious reviews and rapidly becoming the 'embodied conscience,' as William Graham called him, of liberal evangelicalism, to visit the sick members of his congregation almost daily, to compose two or three weekly sermons brimful of thought and learning, and to rush across country ungrudgingly to preach to crowds at church functions. But it was beyond the limits of human nature. Even a giant could not stand the strain, and the long unheeded warnings of his two medical friends, George Wilson and John Brown, forced themselves upon his notice towards the close of 1854. He began to 'stick' in the pulpit; his biliary system became deranged, and he himself confessed the need for some change. 'My life,' he wrote, 'has been a perfect race for the last three years; some radical reform there must be. . . . But for my summer holiday, I should have broken down altogether.' The public, however, would not leave him alone. Although he was only thirty-six years of age, and the Presbyterians of that day had many famous preachers, his personality was so impressive and attractive that a demand for his presence arose when any general movement was in process, and the leaders of the United Presbyterian Church resolved that he must be brought within immediate reach, and appropriated more definitely for Church purposes.<sup>1</sup> In the judgment of others as well as in his own, some change or at least revision of his method of living was inevitable, and the change came in this way.

Glasgow has always been the head-quarters of the United Presbyterian Church, and forty years ago the chief congregation in Glasgow was Greyfriars. Its history, its size, the character and liberality of its communicants gave it a

<sup>1</sup> Though Berwick is in England, his congregation was at that time an integral part of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and had no connection with the English Presbyterian Church.

fair title to be reckoned important; and when a vacancy occurred through the failing health of its popular minister, the Rev. Dr. King, the determination of its members to secure Mr. Cairns as their junior minister met with the general support of the denomination. When a rumour of their intention reached his ears, he wrote at once begging them not to proceed. But they resolved to take him by force, and while a Call made its slow way through the Church Courts, a battery of guns was brought to bear on him. The claims of Greyfriars congregation, the general interest of the denomination, the sin of hiding his light under a bushel, the urgent spiritual necessities of Glasgow, the opportunities which he would find of moulding the youth of that city, the abundance of leisure which he would secure in so prosperous a pastorate, the advantage which would accrue to Berwick from a change of ministry, the disaster which would result from a refusal—all these were urged upon him by recognised Church leaders, who among Nonconformists are always inclined to exaggerate the importance of having a particular man in a particular place. It is true that those who knew him best held their peace; but even John Ker, of all men the most free from ecclesiastical motives, wrote to him as follows:—

‘I hope your mind is pointing you towards Glasgow. . . . The longer I look at this city and the manifold interests both denominational and Christian that depend upon our position here, the more I feel the mighty importance of having our strength in such a centre. I do not intend to say anything in the way of flattery—your taste and my forte do not lie in that way—but it is my deep conviction that your presence here would be invaluable. You would influence not merely the one prominent congregation that calls you, but 360,000 people. . . . As to extra work, which I believe is one of the larvæ looming among the smoke of Glasgow, it is, like most hobgoblins, worst in the distance. . . . Experience has taught the fool who writes to you to say No to such demands, and I shall hand over this acquirement to you, a wise man. . . . Every minister here will welcome you with open arms. . . . May

God guide you to a wise and righteous decision, the best for His truth and Church and for the use of the talents with which the great Head has furnished you !'

Such arguments told upon him steadily from week to week, and although he shrank like a shy girl from publicity, he began to think that the finger of God pointed him to Glasgow. He made careful inquiries as to the probable effect of the climate of Glasgow upon his recent ailments, and also as to the possibility of carrying on the pastorate of Greyfriars without being involved in platform and committee work. Upon both points, however, the reply of his advisers was deterrent, and this fact was emphasised by the affectionate dexterity of his Berwick flock. They were in great distress and excitement ; yet so sure were they of the conscientiousness with which he would decide, so much dignity had he preserved amidst his genial ministry, that the ordinary arguments faltered upon their lips. It did not occur to them that the pecuniary consideration—although the change to Glasgow would more than double his income—would be a factor in the decision. Nor did they think of pleading their personal attachment to him. But while the local newspapers overflowed with letters and articles showing how firm a hold he had gained of the general community, they deliberately told him, privately and publicly, that he 'had not the qualifications which form the principal requisites of a city minister.' . . . 'He delights in the study, and in consequence he shines in the pulpit ; but for the platform he has no peculiar turn nor tact nor talent, and amidst the buzz and bustle of Glasgow he would find himself at sea.' Besides such generalities, which confirmed his own convictions, they produced practical inducements on the eve of his decision, in the shape of the following resolution, which gives an amusing insight into his ministry :—

'The congregation, being desirous of relieving their beloved



pastor of some portion of the labours and fatigues in which his way of executing the duties of his office has for some time past involved him, not only for the sake of preserving his health, but to give him time for those studies and pursuits in sacred literature to which by duty and inclination he is so much attached, do hereby resolve:—

(1) That he be requested to discontinue the weekly lecture on Wednesday evenings; (2) That instead of completing a visitation as hitherto once in every year, the congregation will be entirely satisfied if he completes the circuit in three years; (3) That it being now made known that he has several times been sent for to visit the sick, whom he has attended once or oftener every day till recovery or death, without the elder of the district having got any notice of the case, it is affectionately and earnestly recommended that members and others carefully avoid in future this very irregular and improper course, and that in every case of sickness or distress the elder be in the first place alone sent for, and he on request, if seems necessary, will give notice to the minister, being ready and willing himself to take this labour from the minister's shoulders. (4) That Mr. Cairns be requested to read the lecture or exercise in the forenoon of the Lord's Day, instead of delivering it *memoriter* or extempore as heretofore.'

Three days before the date on which his reply had to be given, he wrote out a careful and sober refusal of the Call, and then shut himself up in absolute privacy to lay bare his heart to God. On the eve of the presbytery meeting he revised his answer, and found that it stood the test. When he announced in a crowded church that, having looked at the question with his own intelligence, and having then submitted his decision to God, he was persuaded that he ought to remain at Berwick, the old building echoed with a sound in which one 'could not discern the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people.' The reasons which he gave were frank and explicit in their statement of his plans and ideas of work:—

'1. I mention first the loss of my influence for good in my present sphere. I do not measure this by the exaggerated anxieties of those whom I love so much. I chiefly refer to the influence which by

God's blessing has grown up in this place, extends over the district and is great and salutary in proportion to the number of tender ties which have been formed in such a series of years. This is so much spiritual capital of slow growth which I could neither transfer to a successor nor carry elsewhere, and I value so highly the store of moral power slowly and painfully acquired over the souls of men, that the very strongest reasons alone could induce me to sacrifice and extinguish it. In a great city the power of the pulpit is more diffusive, but it is not so deep, for the pastoral element is less developed; and I could hardly hope ever to stand on the same footing of intimate and all-pervading acquaintance with a congregation. Besides, I feel the importance of this district, and I see the danger of undervaluing the outposts of the Church. Why should I withdraw from a sphere which needs my services as much as ever, and in which God has blessed them with openings even beyond my utmost power to overtake? I dare not say that the Greyfriars congregation is so vital to the public cause or so much in jeopardy that at all hazards I must go to its relief, and when I consider the sacrifice of vital power and usefulness which I should need to make, there seems to be a bar put in my way by the Head of the Church. . . .

'2. The second reason is the state of my health. Although never laid aside from duty, I have often, during the last three or four years, discharged it with great discomfort. My former vigour is for the time gone, and both in study and in preaching I experience hindrances and debilities to which I was once a stranger. On this point I have been slow to complain; but I have often suffered what I myself only knew. A considerable portion of my work might have been lightened if I had hinted to my congregation that it was too much for me; some labours, too, were self-imposed; but even necessary duties have lately been discharged only by an effort. This surely is not a state of health in which to undertake a new and weighty charge. . . . I am touched by the offers of ease and rest made by the Greyfriars congregation; but the arrangements suggested by my present flock—of which I can estimate the working with certainty—turn the scale in their favour, and they have the prior claim to a reduced system of labour.

'3. Thirdly, in this place I can better unite the work of the ministry with studies and writings in sacred literature. I have always struggled to maintain this combination, though how imperfectly no one can feel more than myself. It is my desire, if health be restored, to undertake some more considerable work in Christian

literature than I have yet attempted. To this I feel as strong a call as to the ministry itself—a call which gathers strength with the lapse of time, and is increased in force by the painful conviction how little I have done that I once hoped to do. . . . I cannot convince myself that in Glasgow I could command equal time for mental abstraction. . . . I admire the energy of those who unite the ministry in cities with Christian authorship, but I shall be satisfied if I can accomplish my designs in a retired sphere while they appear more prominently on the public stage; and I trust that our Church is wide enough to cherish such diversities of gifts and temperaments in her bosom.'

His decision was commended by those who knew him best. Dr. John Brown, senior, wrote at once:—

'I congratulate you on your "outgate" from the severe strain to which you have been subjected. I think you have come out at the right side, and I trust that both the Church and the world will have cause to be thankful. . . . On every point you have done just as I could have wished you to do. May God give you life and health fully to redeem the pledge which you have given!'

Yet the 'strain' to which Dr. Brown refers had been very great. It is not easy for any man to resist an appeal in which five-sixths of his personal friends concur with the Church which he is seeking to serve; and to a healthy, objective nature protracted consideration of personal plans is wearing in the extreme. When his grateful congregation urged him to take a few months of complete rest, he had no room for choice, and crossed at once to Paris *en route* for the Appenzell Alps and Lucerne. His letters show that at every stage of this journey he hunted out memorials of the religious history of Europe, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. From Lucerne he crossed to the Vaudois, where he took some part in Waldensian celebrations—not, as readers will see, without shrewd insight into Waldensian faults.

Returning to Paris for a meeting of the Evangelical



Alliance, he reached Scotland in time for the Ordination of his brother David, at Stichel, near Kelso, and resumed work with the twofold determination to curtail his preparation for the pulpit and to make some permanent contribution to theology. His first studies, however, were philosophical. The urgency of his friend, Mr. Adam Black, persuaded him to undertake the writing of an article on Kant for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and for the next ten months he was engaged in re-reading Kant's works with digressions into relative philosophy. Admirably as this article was executed, it withdrew him for another year from his theological project; and when it was finished, he turned still further aside to examine authors' manuscripts for publishers, to translate ecclesiastical documents for the Evangelical Alliance and to write pamphlets on the Sabbath question.

The Sabbath question, which then for the first time took the shape of proposals to open museums and picture-galleries on Sunday, appeared at Berwick in 1856, and brought him into prominence. The Mayor convened a meeting of the townspeople to protest against the movement. Most of the clergy and leading citizens attended, and were in full sympathy with the purpose of the meeting; but there were dissentients in the audience, and a young newspaper editor moved an amendment to the chief resolution, supporting his position by the usual commonplaces about the cheerfulness of Sundays on the Continent, and by the statement that prior to the Dark Ages there had been no such thing as Sabbath observance. The Mayor was in distress, as a disturbance seemed imminent, and turned in vain to the Vicar for support. But Cairns begged leave to reply, and in an impromptu speech showed the mover of the amendment that he had reckoned without his host in venturing to dogmatise about Continental religion and patristic literature. He met the argument at every point, contradicting it and confuting it, gave vivid descriptions of Continental religion, and flung



the Fathers at his opponent's head in such store that he fled from the hall in discomfiture. As the result, the amendment was defeated by an overwhelming majority. To those who are in any way acquainted with Cairns' later platform gifts all this seems most natural. But to the burgesses of Berwick it was surprising. Hitherto, with all their reverence for him, they had measured his power of speaking by his carefully prepared sermons and his somewhat halting addresses at week-day meetings. But now they learned that, when he was roused, he could appeal with rare impressiveness to a popular audience, and carry all before him by the rush and swing of reasonable and pointed eloquence. To himself, too, the incident, if trivial and local, was something of a disclosure. Although he was nearly forty years of age, he had, since his Ordination, scarcely opened his lips in public without careful and verbal preparation, and the debating powers of college days had fallen out of use. It was commonly remarked that henceforward he showed less anxiety about his public appearances, and that, especially in the affairs of Berwick, he had less hesitation in taking the place which was generally assigned to him as the first man in the community.

The spring of the same year showed his controversial strength in a way which set all Scotland ringing with his name. Sir William Hamilton was scarcely buried when a keen controversy arose as to the appointment of his successor. The controversy was not personal, but between conflicting schools of thought. Whatever opinion may be held about the Hamiltonian philosophy, Hamilton had not only deepened but popularised the interest of the country in philosophical questions, and had lent new life to that method of psychological metaphysics which is usually termed the Scottish Philosophy. Meantime the influence of Hegel and Fichte had reached Scotland, and was giving birth to a philosophical method entirely diverse and adverse.

As yet, the only literary representative of the new method was Professor James Ferrier, of St. Andrews, whose *Theory of Knowing and Being* had been published in 1855. Ferrier, if not a Hegelian, was imbued with the spirit of Spinoza and Hegel, and he had written critically and almost contemptuously of the Scottish School and of Hamilton himself. When it was known that he was a candidate for the vacant Chair, it seemed as if the interests of the Scottish Philosophy were at stake, especially as the two other candidates of most note, Professor Campbell Fraser and Principal Scott of Manchester, were at that time reckoned to be Hamiltonians. An extraneous element entered. Both Fraser and Scott were dissenters, while Ferrier was supported by the Conservative party, which had been accustomed to have its own way in university affairs. The appointment, however, was in the hands of the Town Council, a body which, though devoid of special qualifications for exercising university patronage, had shown considerable discretion in its elections through following the advice of those qualified to pronounce upon the claims of candidates. In truth, unless each appointment can be intrusted to specialists, this is obviously the safest plan for any electing body to follow, and mischief intrudes only when the electors yield to personal or partisan bias. In this particular case, the Town Councillors, by means of Dr. John Brown, let the Berwick minister know that they wished to have his judgment, and with his habitual straight forwardness he thought it best to publish his opinion. A month before the election he issued an *Examination of Ferrier's Theory of Knowing and Being* in pamphlet form. The pamphlet, while free from personality, was explicit in its aim, viz., to show that the appointment of Ferrier would be a renunciation of views and methods which had recently given the University an eminent place among the seats of intellectual philosophy, and would have a dangerous in-

fluence upon religious thought. In thirty closely argued pages, six reasons were specified for this position, with a clearness which gave the unprofessional mind a fair general idea of the question at stake. Cairns was by no means a Hamiltonian, as is patent from his letters to Professor Calderwood and his article on Kant; but he was an absolute and ruthless anti-Hegelian. The Hegelian dialectic appeared to him as a logomachy, and he knew the theological results of a method which finds or merges the existence of the material world and the being of God in movements of consciousness. In Germany the Hegelian philosophy had been closely connected not only with the Tübingen School of theology but with still grosser rationalism, and there had been no indication either in Germany or in Britain of that spiritual and reverent Hegelianism which, under the guidance of the late Professor Green and the present Master of Balliol, has during the last thirty years saved many of the best English and Scottish minds from materialism. Even now, with fuller appreciation of the place of Hegel in the history of philosophy, it would be hard to answer Cairns' criticisms of Ferrier, and especially hard to show that Ferrier's metaphysics are logically consistent with a belief in the personality of God and the moral responsibility of man.

The pamphlet came like a thunderclap. It was a frank and definite declaration that the appointment of Ferrier would be a thing wrong in itself; and the Town Councillors were impressed. Numerous pamphlets were issued in reply, and the daily press was filled with letters denouncing, deriding, abusing Cairns for his dogmatism, his ignorance of philosophy, his unwarrantable interference. Professor Aytoun published a *Diverting History of John Cairns*—clever but scurrilous. It was said that Cairns had been prompted by personal spite against Ferrier, owing to his having ridiculed him in student days at an evening party in Hamilton's house;



that he was obliquely seeking to secure the Chair for his friend Fraser ; that he wished to help the Free Church to get rid of their Professorship of Logic as he had helped them three years before to terminate their professorship of Moral Philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Everything indeed was done to blunt the shaft which had been shot from Berwick. But the stout archer discharged another arrow,—a second pamphlet, *The Scottish Philosophy: a Vindication and a Reply*, clear, strong, emphatic and impersonal, qualifying nothing, challenging Ferrier to say if there had been any quarrel between them, and repeating at greater length his philosophical criticisms. It became known in Edinburgh that both Cousin and Rémusat, then chief authorities, concurred in his judgment, and when, on July 15th, Fraser was elected to the Chair by a majority of three, no one doubted that Cairns had contributed largely to the result. Unfortunately, Ferrier did not let the matter rest, but published a long pamphlet in which he combined criticism of the successful candidate with violent abuse of Cairns. Since his biographer has acknowledged his ‘unphilosophical warmth,’ it would be ungenerous to enter into detail, and one gladly records the fact that when Cairns called to inquire for Ferrier on his deathbed, Ferrier appreciated the courtesy and said, ‘That must be a fine fellow.’

The whole incident was an exciting one, and it was the first of many occasions on which Cairns was exposed by his own deliberate action to the unsparing criticisms of the contemporary press. But he showed the utmost calmness from beginning to end. The attacks upon his character and motives scarcely ruffled him. He was profoundly grateful for the result, and his only regret was the inevitable increase of publicity which the contest entailed, and the shower of appeals for help from aspirants to Scottish

<sup>1</sup> So far as Cairns had any counsel in this matter, it was from George Wilson and from the genial author of *Rab and his Friends*,



Chairs which fell upon him at intervals during the rest of his life.

Amidst this public excitement there was the sadness of private sorrow. Indeed, one of the controversial pamphlets was partly written in the Edinburgh Infirmary at the bedside of his elder brother Thomas, who died there on June 14, 1856, from the effects of an accident. Thomas Cairns, a man of strong and sterling character, had been his father's successor as shepherd at Dunglass, and his death was deeply felt not only as a personal sorrow but as terminating the connection of the family with their early home. The following extract from a letter written by Cairns on his thirty-eighth birthday is inserted here to explain the course of his feelings:—

'I look back on the past year with thoughts of severe trial, hard work and frequent anxiety, blended with gratitude for stronger health, successful labour and (what perhaps is only ideal) increased acquaintance with old departments of study. There has been comparatively little that is sweet and genial. I have drudged too hard and been too much engrossed with the cares of this world. Affliction has been required to give spiritual things their prominence, and I have not been able to keep sufficiently to my one great aim—the Gospel ministry, with other studies and labours merely as a relief and a variation. . . . I have felt very inconveniently the pressure of publicity and the tyranny of a name. God may soon alter this and leave me in privacy and solitude as a punishment upon some fault of mine. Yet the old state of being one's own master, so far as public claims and demands go, was far more acceptable, and nobody can less enjoy the notoriety and engrossment of the other condition.'

In this spirit he settled down to work in the autumn of 1856. The article on Kant was off his hands. He had finished a Preface to a new edition of Culverwel's *Light of Nature*, in which, with remarkable succinctness, he showed the relation of Culverwel to the Cambridge Platonists and the older English deists. On Sir William Hamilton's death, Cairns was urged to edit his Lectures; but he declined on

grounds clearly explained in a letter to Lady Hamilton, and showed his reverence for Sir William only by reviewing the Lectures in the *Scotsman* when they appeared. He had definitely resolved to remodel his course of life. Hitherto the idea of marriage had not been dismissed from his thoughts, or at least from the thoughts of his friends. But now he asked his sister Janet to preside over his household, and secured in her a real addition to his resources. Quiet, wise and genuine, she not only supported him loyally in his pastorate, but watched over his health with an unselfish fidelity which did not waver for six-and-thirty years. So strengthened, he threw himself with renewed force and love into his pastorate, and his flock continued to increase. A new and larger church was opened on June 25, 1859, but the limits of its accommodation were at once reached.

Meanwhile all his leisure was given to planning and constructing a treatise on theology. It was to be an apologetic work setting forth the bearings of the Gospel upon ancient and modern systems of philosophy. Day after day, month after month he sat in his study pondering, plunging occasionally into classical literature, but in the main meditating without help from books; and in June 1857 he put pen to paper and began to write on the *Difficulties of Christianity*. For a year the writing made good progress, and all his friends, whom he took freely into counsel, were glad that he had a work in hand worthy of his powers. How the work was interrupted will be seen presently.

During this period his voice was rarely heard in Church Courts. For ecclesiastical management and administration he had neither liking nor capacity, and the only question of any consequence with which United Presbyterians had to deal was a request for permission to use instrumental music in public worship. On this matter he supported his friend, Alexander MacEwen, in pleading for a liberty at that time

barred in all Presbyterian churches. While acknowledging that he personally wished for no 'extraneous aid to the human voice,' he contended that the Church was not entitled to bind her members by legislation on such a matter; and when the Synod decided otherwise, he was one of thirty who recorded their dissent.

As a preacher, however, he placed little restriction upon his engagements. One week's record shows that, besides the Sunday's normal work, he had preached five evening sermons in different parts of the country. Wherever he went he was followed by crowds, and his reputation and popularity steadily increased. Several of the sermons of this period exist in published form; and apart altogether from the force and attractiveness which they gained in delivery, the continuity, solidity and energy of their thought fully justify the impression which they made.

The most notable of his public appearances was at the meeting of the Evangelical Alliance in Berlin in 1857, when he was selected to address the Alliance in the presence of the Royal Family as the representative of English-speaking Christendom. He chose to speak in German, and took as his subject the probable influence of the closer union of German and British Christianity. His firm grasp of the various phases of recent German thought, his large and hopeful view of religion, the simple dignity of his manner and his obvious devoutness combined to carry the immense audience mainly composed of Germans by storm, and Royalty asked for the privilege of his acquaintance. If the reader will compare this fact with the letter in which the scene is described, he will learn more of Cairns' freedom from self-consciousness than many pages of writing could tell. The Berlin Conference had special consequences in bringing him into close relation with the leading representatives of evangelical religion on the Continent. He increased the number of his German friends, becoming an

occasional contributor to several German journals,<sup>1</sup> and formed acquaintance which deepened into intimacy with Oosterzee, Pressensé, the Monods, D'Aubigné, Malan and Revel, who thenceforward corresponded with him as to the movements of their respective Churches.

Those years show, besides, a fair amount of general literary work. Every now and then, yielding to strong pressure from Dr. John Brown, he contributed a powerful article—a notice of some eminent person or a review of some notable book—to the columns of the *Scotsman*, a journal which has been distinguished by its skill in securing the occasional services of men of all schools of thought. While his pen lacked perhaps lightness of touch, he had in a marked degree other qualifications for journalism—wide knowledge at command, sober critical power, and complete freedom from temper and from personal bias. A brief extract referring to Chalmers will give a general idea of his journalistic style:—

‘These great gifts of intelligence and imagination might have made a philosopher or a poet, had they been lodged in a calmer temperament or a purely idealising spirit. But through a singularity of constitution, almost without parallel, they became the mere instruments and handmaids of more urgent sympathies and intense convictions, that turned the man of science and fancy into the man of work and conflict, made Plato and Newton give place to Socrates and Paul, and ended the development of the *savant* and the idealist in that of the orator, the reformer, the missionary and, if need were, the martyr. While practice thus carried it over speculation, the vanquished in some sense gave law to the victor. The pulpit, the church court, the mission-field, with their appropriate topics, were brought into unwonted juxtaposition with the French Institute and the British Association. The stars in their courses fought against infidelity. The Veto law was a new case of the problem of the Three Bodies. Territorial missions were illustrated by “parallelograms.” And the planet

<sup>1</sup> *Deutschen Zeitschrift, Beweis des Glaubens, Zeitung für evangelischen Christenthum*, etc.



Jupiter, "made up of infinitesimals," cast a fostering ray on the Sustentation Fund and the stipend of the minister of Ballahulish.'

Those qualities led him into another line of literature to which he probably contributed more frequently than any of his contemporaries—the writing of biographical prefaces and estimates of character for biographies. No doubt, in later years, he frequently discharged that office by furnishing the manuscript of a funeral sermon. But it was not so at this period. Every such notice was written with care, sobriety and discrimination. Although his estimate of the living seemed sometimes to err by excess of generosity, there was no such excess when death intervened. It was as if he felt that the deceased had passed to the bar of perfect justice, and that the partiality of friendship must adapt its judgments to that tribunal. The most notable compositions of this sort were his contributions to Professor Veitch's Memoir of Sir William Hamilton, and to the Life of the Rev. Alexander Kirkwood, Baptist minister at Berwick, the latter of which gives some interesting information about the surroundings of his own ministry.

In University and School affairs he was habitually concerned, and made many a journey to Edinburgh to support the cause of educational reform.<sup>1</sup> In 1859 he was urged to become candidate for the Assessorship of the University Council, but declined, seconding the nomination of Mr. Maitland, the Solicitor-General. His educational attitude, although not so precisely defined as at a later stage, shows itself to some extent in the letters of this period.

The clearness of his reply to the Greyfriars Call delivered him from similar overtures for nine years, but not from approaches of another kind. In 1857 the Free Church proposed to institute a professorship of Exegesis in her Edinburgh College, and the proposal was combined with a

<sup>1</sup> He received the honorary degree of D.D. from Edinburgh University in April 1858.

general wish to appoint Dr. Cairns to the new Chair. Dr. William Hanna wrote to the *Witness* as follows:—

‘As a logician, a metaphysician, a theologian, Dr. Cairns stands without a rival of his own age in Scotland. He is the man of all others to whom we look with greatest hope that he will enrich Biblical literature with original contributions. . . . No one can forget the generous aid which he rendered when two of our former professors were candidates for University Chairs, and it is within the truth to say that both stand more indebted to him than to any other. It was no slight temptation to any literary man to have the successorship to Sir William Hamilton within his reach. But the honours, the emoluments, the reputation which he twice had but to put forth his hand to grasp, he has put aside for no higher earthly prospect than an ill-paid and comparatively obscure position in the Church to which he belongs. He has done so deliberately, and because he has resolved to consecrate his life and labours to the defence and illustration of the truth as it is in Jesus. I question if in our day any nobler sacrifice has been offered at the shrine of the Christian Faith. . . . With his brilliant reputation and varied scholarship, with a soundness in the faith beyond all suspicion, and with that genial, social, impulsive nature which he possesses, he would infuse into the breasts of the young the living fire which burns in his own earnest, ardent spirit.’

To this proposal, however, he gave so decided a negative that it was withdrawn, and, indeed, but for public statements made years afterwards by Dr. Guthrie and others, no one would have known that it had taken a definite shape.

The same reserve was maintained with regard to a more important proposal. In 1859 the Principalship of Edinburgh University became vacant through the death of Principal Lee. Immediately the leading Councillors wrote to Dr. Cairns asking leave to submit his name, and assuring him that the nomination would meet with general acceptance.

This is likely,’ their representative wrote, ‘to be the last appointment the Council will have to make, and if we place you in the Principal’s Chair the act will be ratified by the country as one of the best appointments ever made.

Unfortunately the reply to these communications, which was despatched within eight days, cannot be recovered; but the tenor of it is apparent from the following response which it called forth from his correspondent:—

EDINBURGH, *May 24, 1859.*

‘. . . I perused your letter with much care; and I must say I honour and, if you will allow the word, love you the more for the sentiments which it contains. We cannot say a word in answer to the reasons you urge, and I can only add my earnest prayer that you may be long spared to labour in your Master’s vineyard and may be sustained by its choicest fruits. Do you know anything of the personal character of ——? I know that you would be glad to see a distinguished man as successor to Principal Lee.’

That the offer of a position so influential, and in many respects so congenial, was made to him in his fortieth year, and that he immediately declined the offer on the ground that he had consecrated himself to the service of Christ in the Church, is certainly remarkable. But far more noteworthy and characteristic is the fact that he mentioned the offer to no one, and that his own brothers knew nothing of it until they examined his correspondence after his death.

Yet those years brought changes, deeper, broader and more lasting in their influence than any elevation to Principalship or to Professor’s Chair. A humble man may be more than compensated for voluntary sacrifices by the real joy which he finds in a life of lowly labour; but the inscrutable Disposer, while receiving such sacrifices, may take away treasures which His servant prized, and enforce a far heavier sacrifice for which compensation is impossible. During those fourteen years the chief pleasure of the life of John Cairns had been in friendship,—open, unreserved friendship, in which there was no flaw. There was the venerable Dr. Brown, to whom he always wrote as ‘My dear Father,’ an unemotional man of strong and godly character, who guided the impulsive young theologian as one of his own sons.



There was George Wilson,—vivacious, bantering, tender, devout, who, while always mindful of his great debt to Cairns, could freely twit him and tease him and weep with him over dead men and women whom both had loved. There was 'Dearest mother Balmer,' the mainstay of his social life at Berwick, with whom he prayed over the members of his flock, and discussed every detail of his work. And only twelve miles away there was his real mother, the noble old shepherd's widow, whose praise was no flattery, and whom he welcomed on her yearly visit to the manse as though she were a queen. These four friendships went to the very soul of the man; they made him what he was; his quiet and trustful intercourse with them came very close in his heart to his intercourse with God. Within three years these four friends died. Dr. Brown died in October 1858; George Wilson in November 1859; his mother in September 1860; Mrs. Balmer in August 1861. Blow upon blow, sorrow after sorrow, cut after cut of the Divider's knife right into the quick of that big, boyish, buoyant, confiding soul! His letters disclose the story. When Dr. Brown dies, his grief is almost passionate, and he can barely express sympathy with the sorrowing household. When Wilson dies, he has more mastery of his grief, though it goes still deeper, and he takes the mourners in his great arms, devoting himself not only to their service but anew to his own work. When his mother dies, he is composed and resolute. When Mrs. Balmer dies, he writes as a man who knows that the days of such friendship are ended, and that he must be more than ever alone with God.

His plan of work, too, was definitely and, as it proved, permanently affected. Dr. Brown had named him and Rev. Dr. Smith, of Biggar, as his literary executors, and besides discharging editorial duties in posthumous publication, he undertook very reluctantly to write a Life of Dr. Brown. Dr. Brown's gifted son John was at that time in a state of



health which made him incapable of a sustained effort, and the task was pressed upon Dr. Cairns, not only by the family but by others whose judgment had weight. In undertaking it, however, he made a condition which rendered complete biographical success almost impossible, that he should omit, or chronicle in their barest form, all personal and family particulars, leaving these to be appended in a supplementary chapter by John Brown. It is singular that a writer of so much literary insight as the latter consented to such a division of labour, which would in any case have given an element of dryness to the body of the book; and unfortunately his health failed when Dr. Cairns' work was finished, so that the concluding chapter was not forthcoming in time for publication. When it appeared some months afterwards in the shape of a 'Letter to Dr. Cairns,' the critics and the general public had pronounced upon the Memoir, and many of those who laughed and cried in turns over 'Rab's' exquisite delineation of his father, reckoned it a reproach upon the writer of the Memoir that it afforded no reason either for laughter or for tears. To the end of his life John Brown reproached himself with having failed his friend at a crisis; but that aspect of the matter found no place in the thoughts of Dr. Cairns. His only fear was lest justice should not be done to the subject of the biography. Indeed he quoted all depreciatory criticisms with a gleeful and grim satisfaction, taking them as confirmations of his own opinion, that biography was a field of literature for which he was constitutionally unsuited. None the less was the book masterly and complete. If it did not increase, it did not lessen the reputation of the author. Dr. Brown had for thirty years taken a prominent part in the theological and ecclesiastical affairs of Scotland, and Dr. Cairns' narrative of the controversies of the period was conspicuously temperate and fair. Upon the Voluntary controversy, the Atonement controversy, and Church Union movements, it is still the

best existing authority. While there is no lack of appreciation, it is entirely free from exaggerated praise, and most readers of it will assent to the frank verdict of William Graham that it is a 'thoughtful, calm, conclusive book, perhaps too reticent and colourless, but none the less like Dr. Brown because of that.' One notable feature is the care with which Dr. Cairns distinguishes his own opinions from those of Dr. Brown upon various important questions, specially in regard to Voluntaryism and the relation between Faith and Reason—an unconscious indication of the importance attached to his views at that time by the reading public in Scotland.

Although a labour of love, it was a very burdensome labour, occupying his leisure for eighteen months. 'Dear old Dr. Brown,' he writes, 'I hope that I shall love him as much when all this is over. . . . It will go hard with the next friends who attempt to draw me into biography.' Upon George Wilson's death, which occurred before the Memoir was finished, such an attempt was made. But he steadily refused, confining himself to writing a sketch of Wilson for *Macmillan's Magazine*. This refusal was, however, more due to a sense of unfitness than to unwillingness to preserve his friend's memory. When Miss Wilson undertook a biography of her brother, she did so with the promise that he would guide her, a promise which was fulfilled with scrupulous fidelity from week to week; and his work was not finished when the biography was issued, for he superintended the publication of the *Counsels of an Invalid*, which did not appear till 1862.

These duties were lovingly and ungrudgingly discharged, but they interrupted his own theological enterprise for more than three years. In the manuscript of *The Difficulties of Christianity*, the interruption is indicated by a change in the colour of the paper and the ink; and there is a change in the style of thought and expression which proves that more than mere years had intervened.

Another link to the past was broken during this period by the death of Miss Jean Darling, the confidential counsellor of his student days. When nursing an Irish labourer, who had been deserted by his comrades, she and her brother Adam caught typhus fever, which proved fatal to both in October 1859.

In connection with Wilson's Life he had to face the fact that it would be incomplete without a tolerably full disclosure of his own character. At first he shrank from this, but ultimately he yielded to it as a duty, in words which form a fitting prelude to the revelation of a great sorrow. They were addressed to Miss Wilson:—

'Who would have thought that our conversations held in such solitude would be published on the housetops? I would not have chosen this; but I yield to what seems the will of God and hope it may be overruled for His glory. . . . What was done in secret He thus requires to be spoken of openly.'

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TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, Jan. 8, 1855.

'Accept my thanks for your fine verses. . . . I think that the unequal rhymes would be better replaced by octo-syllabics, so as to make them uniform. . . . In some styles an occasional eccentricity of metre has a relieving effect; but not in the monumental style to which your verses belong. . . .

'In poor Forbes' death . . . I felt your loss reflected, and also the disaster to the whole complexus of the physical sciences. I sincerely wish you could *bona fide* have written a more distinctively Christian monody; but silence in such cases is the truest homage to the memory of a friend as well as to the cause of truth. I trust, however, that you may find solution of the mystery without adjourning it to the day which shall declare all.'

FROM JOHN BROWN, M.D.

23 RUTLAND STREET, Jan. 25, 1855.

'I have sent off your MS. to Sir G. Lewis by Henry Rogers. I read enough to make me very proud of my father and very grateful to you, and very sure that you will not be allowed to close your



list of such good works. Be assured that if you can occasionally write in this way without prejudice to your pastoral work or your own health, you do a kind of good you can in no other way do. . . . You are right about the War Sonnets. I don't care for our new poets; they are all too raw—too distempered and unkempt. Their wine is not only new, but it is given out to the public with the fermentation on it and the clearing process omitted. Have you written any "rime" lately? . . .'

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Jan.* 25, 1855.

'I fear the Burnet Prizes will not turn out anything great. The former ones are forgotten long ago, and the institution does not seem likely to bring much that is vital to the birth. If a man has any ideas relative to the existence of God that he judges worthy of £1800, he will not wait till the prize moves him to reveal them "to those that sit in darkness." Think of the melancholy catalogue of the disappointed—upwards of two hundred. The best thing would have been to have given the successful men the bare honour, and to have apportioned the £2400 among the two hundred. It would have been some compensation for literary work, otherwise thrown away. The system is bad, and this is not the age for literary revolutions. . . .'

## TO MRS. MEIKLEJOHN

BERWICK, *Feb.* 13, 1855.

' . . . We are not likely to get the piece of ground expected for a new chapel. The Church of England people have at the eleventh hour refused to sell their old vicarage. It is too holy for the possession of the Philistines. This does not tend to raise Israel in the eyes of the Gentiles. I fear our long continued peace is likely to be disturbed in this matter. But I shall fight no battles. . . .'

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Feb.* 15, 1855.

' . . . I thank you for your paraphrase of the incomparable verses of the Apostle, which is as good as could be hoped for; and that is no small praise. I accepted it, however, as an indirect utterance of personal faith and calm confidence in the prospect of death, and in that light the lines are doubly, trebly interesting. . . .'



We must ere long tread the lone passage and look at death from the other extremity. Probably like a dreaded operation it will lose some of its penumbra of terror in passing into reality, but will still remain a very serious and stern fact, which we shall then be glad enough to realise as over. May we only be numbered amongst those whom death cures for ever; and then the pang will not be remembered for joy that a man is born into the world. I know by experience that it is a very soothing thing to look back upon death as having been near, without serious flinching. . . .’

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *March 12, 1855.*

‘The telegraphic statement of the capture of Sebastopol wants confirmation. Lord Raglan is said to be wounded and Sir Colin Campbell slain, with great slaughter everywhere. God grant that it may be the end of these horrors! The death of the Emperor is tragically grand. It has an awful moral—something Belshazzar-like, too, if Sebastopol fall in the same crisis.

‘. . . Much indisposition prevails in the congregation. I have not been so hard worked since I came to Berwick. Without my week’s relaxation in travel, I should have broken down. . . . But in the cause of the sick one cannot but rejoice to do anything. . . .’

## TO MRS. BALMER

OLDCAMBUS, *June 9, 1855.*

‘. . . I am still suffering from the intense tension of mind during the past days with regard to the Glasgow Call; but I have been reviewing the whole matter, and to my unspeakable satisfaction my heart does not reproach me with a single considerable failing in it from first to last. . . . If I ever did anything as unto the Lord it has been this; for I was really quite raised above the fear of reproachful censure on the one hand and wounded affection on the other, and enabled to judge as I thought the general interests of the Church required. . . .’

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

PARIS, *July 10, 1855.*

‘. . . I cannot think how such a nation exists; and truly it exists ill, for the marks of blood are thickly scattered over all the principal parts of the city. I went to French service twice, hearing

a rationalist Protestant and one of the separatists of Monod's party. . . . To-morrow I shall be again on the banks of the Rhine. But I shall cultivate French, and hope to know it and Italian ere I return. . . .'

## TO THE SAME

ZURICH, July 23, 1855.

' . . . On Friday I explored Baden-Baden and saw youngish ladies seated by one o'clock at the *rouge et noir* tables, who had come like Caesar in perfect sobriety to the destruction of their fortune, if not their country. . . . The only good thing the Frankfort Parliament did was to extirpate these nuisances; but they have come back with legitimacy, order and royal, grand-ducal and electoral nursing-fathers of the Church. You can have no conception of the bitter *Ingrimm* of the great mass of the German people against these divinely granted benefactors.

'In Constance I saw the council-room where Huss was condemned, and stood on the spot where he was burnt. I look on his as about the greatest martyrdom in history; certainly none has struck its roots deeper in the minds of men. . . . Some years ago money was raised to erect a monument, but the Government of Baden, the same which so magnanimously farms out the gaming-table to the highest bidder, saw in it a danger to the Christian peace and concord of its mixed population. . . . After the Appenzell Alps, Zurich is rather tame . . . and yet it is exquisitely beautiful. The moon is shining now on the bright green lake, and the mountains are sleeping by its sides with the loftier Alps at its upper end. But Zurich is no longer the city of Zwingli or Bullinger, or others that make its shores classical to the Christian, as its many literary remembrances do to the scholar. The Gospel is nearly silent in its pulpits. I heard two sermons yesterday of the most miserable type—one of the more bald rationalism, the other of the more sentimental, with Christ on the lip but no living Gospel to awake the dead; and the people showing their appreciation of nonentity by leaving each preacher in vast solitude. In the one church Zwingli had once preached; in the other, Lavater. . . .'

## TO THE SAME

AMSTEG, Aug. 1, 1855.

' . . . Amsteg is frowned down upon by mountains 9000 feet high, and kept in a most poetical excitement by the roar of two

torrents that unite beneath my window. . . . The lake is about as grand a composition of rock and water, not to speak of William Tell and Swiss liberty, as can be seen in the wide world. It is a sore affliction to be prohibited from climbing; but I feel that I am on honour. . . .

‘From Zurich I visited one of the grandest shrines of that venerable humbug the Church of Rome, Einsiedeln, a massive cloister with two great spires in a secluded and wild valley of the canton of Schwitz. It owes its origin to a St. Meinrad (or somebody), not that he built it, but he gave it its sanctity by retiring from the world to this pure and sinless altitude. Two centuries after his death, St. Somebody wanted to consecrate a chapel to him and was informed in a vision that the Saviour in person had already consecrated it in the night-time, the twelve Apostles and a host of saints and martyrs officiating, so that it was better for him to “let well alone.” This St. Somebody had contrived to possess himself of a black ebony image of the Virgin given to St. Meinrad by an Abbess of Zurich, and this image is the grand attraction of the cloister, having performed more miracles than are recorded in all the Acts of the Apostles. By the way, I rather think that the black image which had been lost was restored by the Saviour on the night of the consecration. To this scene, which has as authentic a history as the Loretto legend itself, not fewer than 150,000 pilgrims come yearly. I was shown through the spacious cloister in which one hundred monks, with about as many pupils, live on the fable, besides their other revenues; but the great attraction to me was the black image which fell down from Jupiter. Only the face is visible, the rest being swathed in gold or gilding; and even the face is overshadowed with a gold crown, so that it takes some time to detect the black visage in the midst of the dimly lighted shrine. In its right hand the figure holds a sceptre and in its left a child, equally black and equally wrapped up, while a mimic crown and sceptre are granted to the child—a fit image of the divided empire of Mary and her Son under the Popedom. . . . On the wall behind there is a multitude of votive tables which bear a most striking resemblance in style to the credentials of Holloway’s Pills—he by the way might get ideas from them. . . . It is really sad, sad; and speaks more for the debasement of Popery than a thousand doctrinal errors. . . .’



## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

LA TOUR, *Aug. 17, 1855.*

‘. . . I have now seen all the three valleys and explored two of them. I spent last Sabbath at Bobi with M. Revel, and was much interested in this rustic congregation—a mixture of the Italian and French look with something of the sedateness of the Scotch in their deportment, and not a little of the parti-colour of the Irish in dress; but no rags or squalor such as too often appear in their habitations. The minister’s is the only Bible in the church, and all the rest have hymn-books containing the psalms and some few prayers. The family Bibles are too large to be brought to church. The sermon was a very good one, sound in doctrine and forcible in application. . . . The people, however, are by no means models of Christian perfection. . . . The pastors complain that their religion is formal, and consists too much in admiration of their covenanting and seceding ancestors. It is always easier to garnish the sepulchre of the prophets than to imitate the holiness of their life.

‘On Wednesday I was present at their greatest annual festival—an open air fête . . . at Pré de Tour, a rocky amphitheatre where on more occasions than one they repulsed whole armies of Popish assailants, and where at an earlier period their school of the prophets was held. . . . About 4000 or 5000 had clambered for miles over rugged paths to a *cul de sac* shut in by frowning mountains. On a sort of plateau under the shadow of walnut-trees they listened for three hours to addresses on their deliverances and duties, singing appropriate chants and hymns at intervals. I had gone without the slightest intention of speaking, but I could not for dear old England’s sake resist the appeals, and constituted myself for the occasion the representative of all Christian denominations that hold by Great Britain. . . . It is the only audience I have addressed since I left home, and the first on this new year of my ministry. I shall certainly not forget this day, which is quite as picturesquely interesting as any old Covenanters’ assembly. . . .’

## TO MRS. BALMER

PARIS, *Aug. 29, 1855.*

‘. . . To me this city has lost its novelty, and seems more and more a hateful though fascinating compound of frivolity and misery. Nothing can be more agreeable to sense, nothing more dismal to serious reflection. In London you have enough of show and glitter,



but you know that the salt of the earth is there: in Paris you have more brilliancy without any conservative element, human or divine, except taste and a certain fear of social disorganisation and destruction. I could only live here at the express bidding of God.

‘I saw the Queen and the Emperor on the day of their departure. I did so in the company of Drs. Smith, Henderson, and Bonar of Glasgow and other grave theologians who played truant from the Evangelical Alliance. The spectacle was really well got up; and I was thankful to see the good little woman safe and sound out of Parisian influences. The most vivid interest was manifested, and I learn that her sojourn had realised the expectations of her allies in point of courtesy and good breeding. Napoleon looks not worse, perhaps better than his portraits; but I was much impressed as I always am with the idea that the last of his career is not yet come.

‘I went yesterday to Versailles. The chief internal attractions of the palace are an immense ballroom and stupendous halls filled with paintings of the battles of France, with statues of her kings and warriors. I was utterly fatigued and disgusted with miles of paint representing blood and carnage. It does not show the least advance upon the decorations of the palaces of Sennacherib, except that the figures are not so hideous, and that occasionally a scene of priestly splendour and consecration comes in to relieve the odious monotony of war. This palace was the famous ill work of Louis XIV. and of Louis Philippe. What a monument it is of the folly of both! All the glories of the reign of the former were utterly extinguished by the victories of Marlborough—none of which of course occur—and the latter, after having spent boundless sums on the more modern part of the palace, left it—to whom? I hope our worthy Queen has found in Paris the monitor that Philip wanted—the true Ecclesiastes. The meetings of the Alliance are very interesting. Dr. Duff delivered to-day a stirring and powerful address on Missions. It was like a trump of doom uttered over the worldliness of existing Churches and a call to assembled Christendom to turn from luxury and pomp and to remember the perishing nations. . . .’

FROM PROFESSOR FRASER

EDINBURGH, Sept. 11, 1855.

‘. . . I deeply lament the doubtful prospect your letter gives of your return to the service of the *North British*. You are one of

the very few Scotchmen on whom I was relying for help. But I fully appreciate the greater importance of a substantial contribution to your department in the form of a goodly octavo. . . .’

TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *Oct. 1, 1855.*

‘. . . I have had the disagreeable work of reading over last week a long manuscript treatise on the Fall and Original Sin. I had written on the subject before the author had an opportunity of enlightening me; but I could not discern much agreement in our views. I undertook the work solely to oblige the publisher who chose to make me judge of the performance; and I leant to mercy’s side, though the treatise is both able and well-meant. . . . As for myself, I have long given up speculation on this subject in despair; and this author’s theory is, I fear, only another proof that the knot is not to be untied at this stage. . . .’

FROM MR. J. ALLAN

WALLACE GREEN, *Oct. 31, 1855.*

‘Your letter was laid before the Trustees of the congregation last night. I am desired by them to say that, having already witnessed such signal proofs of your superiority to merely temporal considerations, your declining, for the present, the offer to advance your stipend to £300 did not entirely surprise them. But it has served to enhance the gratitude to God which they as well as the whole congregation have long felt for a pastor of a character and with endowments like yours. The Trustees will have unaffected pleasure in making the very modest addition to your stipend which is all that you will at present accept . . .’

TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *Nov. 19, 1855.*

‘. . . I lectured yesterday on the “dry bones” in Ezekiel. . . . He is a grand old hero, and I take to him very kindly. He did not let out his soul like Jeremiah; but it is absorbed into the texture of his predictions, and I see something divine in his very impassibility. It is a real pleasure to think that we are of the same religion with these noble and glorious ancients, and that somewhere they are not beyond our reach, if they will not be ashamed of us. . . .’

TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *Nov. 27, 1855.*

‘. . . I have been urged much to notice a new work by Bunsen, which has made much sensation in Germany. It is on Religious Liberty, and is a bold and manly protest against the reactionary and persecuting spirit, especially of Protestant Governments. I have complied, as I sympathise deeply with the sufferings of persecuted Baptists and others; and besides, I have an unfeigned contempt for the policy that is leading to such results. . . . But I have found already that I must be chary of such literary labours, otherwise my head will rebel and compel discontinuance.’

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Dec. 3, 1855.*

‘I am very sorry for the concern you have been put to. I had nothing more than a *stick*—quite of the old type, which left a little dizziness and confusion. . . . As to the cause of the *stick*, I may state that the week before last, besides the prayer-meeting on Wednesday and a visitation on Tuesday of about ten families, I had a marriage-breakfast on the Wednesday, meetings in the Wesleyan Church on Monday, and in the Primitive Methodist on Thursday—each taking up some hours; and that I wrote out the circulars for a Harvest Thanksgiving Meeting, preached in the Low Meeting on Friday, and prepared a lecture on Ezekiel’s Temple and a Thanksgiving Sermon. Besides, I read over 500 pages of German. . . . The wonder would have been had I suffered nothing. I had presumed too much on my robust condition, and I accept this as a benevolent hint to be cautious. . . .’

TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *Dec. 3, 1855.*

‘I have seen the *Times* account of the meeting about Miss Nightingale. I question much the wisdom of this universal testimonial-giving system. The highest excellence cannot be reached or promoted by it; and the lady in question is best rewarded by silent veneration, and a personal hint to each man’s and woman’s own conscience—“Go and do thou likewise!” I fear even the Apostle Paul would have got his public meeting and list of subscriptions with fashionable leaders and a string of resolutions—“that this meeting,” etc., “unexampled heroism,” “burning

Christian zeal," "noble dedication on the altar of self-denial," etc., "that he be presented with an honorary directorship of all known Missionary Societies," etc. etc. Why cannot people let others go to heaven in peace? This is perhaps one-sided; but so I feel.'

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, Dec. 17, 1855.

' . . . I live in hope to have the ancient Monday mornings renewed, and to see you *vis-à-vis* at the breakfast table and appropriating the larger share of the conversation to my equal relief and enjoyment.

'Last week was one of considerable monotony and even labour. You would not thank me if I entered upon an analysis of Kant, whose principal work I began to read again after an interval of twelve years. I managed two hundred pages, and found it not so hard as it once seemed, though perhaps my knowledge of German is now more advanced. As to turn and capacity for mere philosophy, I hardly think I have made much progress. My mind has been filled with other things, and a more practical and matter-of-fact habit has sprung up as the inevitable consequence. This may account for my diminished veneration for the mysterious divinities of the metaphysical world, whose powers in the regeneration of the earth I now conceive to be much less than I once accounted them. I have seen Germany so little benefited by these great lights that I do not envy her illumination, though I still regard Kant as about the greatest since the days of the ancients who has arisen to grapple with the problems of the intellectual hemisphere. I will not pursue this subject. The lady to whom it was a favourite one would not rise in my estimation.

'Yesterday I read over the second volume of Dr. Judson's *Life*, and it deepened the impression of the first volume, and altogether produced feelings both of a humbling and an exalting character. Such men are pre-eminently wanted in this age; and I should conceive that so far as mere intellect is concerned, if God only gave the sublime devotedness and energy, a number of Judsons might be produced. Such books leave one without excuse; for the spirit ought to be the same in us, and surely if it were so, the world would soon assume a new face. I have also read some miserable details of religious persecutions in Sweden—the old story of Lutheran intolerance. . . .'



## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Dec. 25, 1855.*

'A merry Christmas, and many returns to your professional High Mightiness,<sup>1</sup> seated on your lofty throne at the head of a thousand arts and sciences! May you gain insight into the meaning of Technology year by year according to your need, and help the world to see with your eyes as far as such vision is attainable or desirable! This Christmas finds you somewhat settled in life in comparison of any former one; but, after all, it is not the conventional man of society nor the Post-office-Directory man that Christmas was meant for, but that higher conception of the generic idea, which is the fundamental one from youth to age, and perhaps more so amidst the struggles of unrealised hopes and aspirations than when one has conquered what is called a position, and put himself amid the first three or thirty of the eager host. It is a great pleasure to me—not that it is any novelty, but at such times one reviews one's pleasures—to see in you so clear and high a notion of the "Bestimmung des Menschen" under all the varying conditions and externalities of life; to see it and feel it with a wholesome reaction on my own mind, impelling to a more single-minded pursuit of life's great business. I wish I could note the growth of goodness and holiness as in the bark of trees or the inner ring of the timber from year to year. But I cannot find much more than a general purpose and strain after improvement; and when I apply the measuring line, the quantity shrinks and decreases in a very unsatisfactory fashion. However, I am not of those whose religious utterances are melancholic and desponding. I hope to be found at length on the right standing-ground, and with the right education for a better and final system; and I have long seen through the folly of not taking the comfort of the Gospel as a remedy because you are only convalescent and not off the invalid list altogether. I have gone through some rather severe experiences this season; but I would not wish any trial that is past other or lighter, and I believe that I am in some things a wiser and certainly not a sadder man, for in truth I am inwardly happy and at peace, and willing either to work, wait, live, die, as God pleases, anywhere, anyhow, in or out of the world, and only desirous to be a better workman. . . . I am reading Kant and preparing to confute the whole of transcendentalism—if I can only understand it.'

<sup>1</sup> George Wilson had recently been appointed Director of the Industrial Museum of Scotland and Professor of Technology in Edinburgh University.

TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *Jan 1, 1856.*

'I greatly enjoyed Professor Macdougall's visit. He was in excellent spirits, and we rambled over the whole circle of things certain and uncertain in philosophy, theology and human belief in general. . . . I mean to have a great holiday to-night by reading one hundred or two hundred pages of Kant. I shall be quite undisturbed. What a delightful beginning of the year! Do you not envy me?

'We are fallen on sad times, when the colour of vestments and the length of candles are the articles of a standing and falling Church. I read the great trial lately in London. It is as perfectly ludicrous as any chapter in *Don Quixote*. O for a spirit of wisdom in the nineteenth century of the Christian era to understand John iv. 24! . . .

TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *Jan. 15, 1856.*

' . . . I have got the young men's class to the middle of the eighth chapter of Romans. It has been difficult navigation; but I have held on and explained the whole as well as I could to such an audience. The great mass at first have not the least idea of any connection. It is to them inspired interjections, verse by verse—if, indeed, they really believe in Inspiration at all—and they are surprised to find that it can be made to look like a piece of ordinary discourse or reasoning; but gradually they brighten up and can trace order and sequence. I do hope that something more than an intellectual change goes on in these exercises; but that is in the hands of the Spirit of God, and we can only use the prescribed means. With the girls I have lately entered on the same course. They are less likely to be interested in argument. Their minds are more fluid and discontinuous. The truth soaks more through them; it does not need to enter only at certain large and regular apertures.'

TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *Feb. 7, 1856.*

'I have spent two very pleasant days in Edinburgh. . . . The Jubilee was particularly pleasant and cheerful—the venerable Dr. [Brown] in good health and in very lively spirits. His children

were all there except one, making eight of a party, myself included. I felt greatly the honour of being one of so domestic and intimate a circle, and endeavoured to talk, laugh and make play as much as possible, though this was not needed, everybody being in tranquilly cheerful humour, with a certain tinge of solemnity by no means unpleasing. Dr. Brown discoursed on a multitude of long-forgotten and out-of-the-way persons and things, giving a large insight into the religious history of the last half century. He also fought his battles over again with Yates, Andrew Thomson, Robert Haldane and other antagonists, and recalled the pleasant and delightful men, more remote and more recent, with whom he had taken counsel. . . . At family worship the duty of prayer devolved on me. I never felt less competent, though I endeavoured to express some of the feelings of the junior persons present. I shall remember the day as one of the most interesting I have ever spent in any circle. . . .’

TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *Feb.* 13, 1856.

‘. . . You ask about the Edinburgh election. It has turned out in favour of Adam Black. I like and admire Adam; but I like ill many of his supporters, and I thought that his party showed too much *finesse* in concealing Macaulay’s resignation. Besides, I object to his disposition to spare Maynooth and remodel the Forbes Mackenzie Bill. Only, I do not think I should have voted against him, as my gratitude for his past valour and services and my respect for his honesty are strong. My own views and leanings, however, point to a closer political as well as ecclesiastical alliance with the Free Church, though that is unpopular with multitudes of Dissenters. I would not give in to their Establishment views, or help them forward by a side wind; but where Dissenters can without compromise coalesce with them, I think that this is the best hope for the future. I believe that every conflict with them is inauspicious; and though I would watch and restrain them, I would rather embark with them than with the old party Whigs, for whom my respect and veneration are exceedingly limited.’

TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *Feb.* 25, 1856.

‘I have read with much interest your account of the Plymouth Brethren. There is something primitive and simple about their



ways which I cannot but admire. They seem better at home than abroad, where, especially in Switzerland, they convert their Church principles or no-principles into instruments of aggression and tear up existing congregations. Taken alone and by themselves, if they would be content with such seclusion, they furnish a pleasing and not useless variety of the great army of Protestant evangelical believers. I have much more sympathy with their unworldly style of social life than with our own more fashionable and respectable Christianity; only, the difference lies in a great measure in their fewness, which makes their society select, and in their brotherly love of a similar kind to what gathered around the ancient *agapai*. However, I hope you have got good amongst them. I look with sovereign contempt upon all ecclesiastical exclusiveness, hierarchical or democratical, and think that we have had more than enough of banning and excommunication in all its grades and varieties. . . . What a great triumph in Parliament of the Sabbath cause! I hope we shall now have rest. . . .'

FROM GEORGE WILSON

June 9, 1856.

'I read an Examination of "*No-ing and Being*," by one Cairns (Christian name John) of Berwick. The tone from first to last is irreproachable, the reasoning fair and open, the blows straight and at the face, and the *coup de grâce* given quickly and effectually. . . . You will make many enemies by it, and the most wicked, bitter, angry things will be said of you. But they will do you no harm; and a high cause will be served by your pamphlet. . . . In sober seriousness, looking on this election with the feelings of an old jockey who has won (*i.e.* has got) a cup himself and burnt his betting-book and ceased to administer strychnia to his brother riders and betters, and putting away the thought which the reading of the Examination continually brought up, that you and you only should fill the Chair, I have read your analysis, so brief, so fair, so honest, so earnest, with (though I had not supposed that possible) a deepened respect for you, and with a deepened joy that you are at better work than grinding at a Logic-Mill, and that you daily delight to show a more excellent way of knowing even as we are known. . . .'



FROM JOHN BROWN, M.D.

23 RUTLAND STREET, *July 8, 1856.*

‘ . . . You have done it: it is an arrow “shot by an archer strong,” which hits the bull’s eye and ends the business. I don’t think I ever enjoyed anything more; it is so easy and rapid and thorough, and so intensely clever and funny. Never was a reduction more pleasantly, more victoriously achieved. Its only fault is that it is too short; but I believe this is not a fault, and there is a sort of sublime ludicrousness and offhandedness about it which is very impressive. . . . Your sure walking among impossible places is quite surprising and delightful; and the broad, frank humour and earnestness of the whole! Many will thank you. . . . How I envy you being able to do such a thing! What a joy to master and see, as from a tower, the end of all! God bless you and cheer you: there is more work for you yet. . . .’

FROM BARON BUNSEN

CHARLOTTENBERG, *July 29, 1856.*

‘ . . . I was glad to hear that the Scotch Philosophy School will be continued by so able a thinker and so powerful a writer—a man who, although taking the ground of that school, does not ignore the school to which I and the greatest part of Germany belong. . . . I hope you will give me the long-wished-for pleasure of seeing you in my native country.

‘ May I direct your attention to a highly interesting work on Bacon by Kuno Fischer? . . . He is one of the most rising men in German Speculative Philosophy, and one of the few Germans who can write prose. . . .’

TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Aug. 11, 1856.*

‘ . . . I have nearly finished Kant. Only my great engrossment with it, coming after the long interruption of the Logic Chair business, could have kept me from writing you when the latter was decided. I believe the work was from God. I never doubted it, and I should have thought so had things gone the other way. It is so much a part of God’s discipline to suffer the worse cause to triumph, that I could have been contented to be beat, with all the ill-will and abuse into the bargain. What does it matter, if a man

is right within and can stand kicking from the elasticity of a good conscience? . . . I have received nothing but good from this collision, and I thank God for the whole. Like you I rather enjoyed the last *brochure*; only I thought it might have been cleverer. Indeed, the literary qualities of the other side fell far below what I had anticipated in a great party. I hope I am done with fighting for a long time. . . .'

TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *Sept. 22, 1856.*

'I have been saddened by the death of Samuel Brown. . . . Poor fellow, what a bright intellect quenched, and a great character broken down by adversities of various kinds! I trust that his many trials have ended in the unclouded light and sorrowless activity of that world to which, I understand, he looked forward with Christian hope. Soon the whole generation of my contemporaries will be gone, and a new race will fight other battles and struggle for other prizes. May the "one thing needful" rise far above all earthly attractions, and when we fight, even for it, may it be with the presentiment of the grave on our minds, and the thought how soon we shall lie down there together and be covered with the dust! I liked Samuel, as well as admired him. He and I had one passage, but it did not end in estrangement. . . .'

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CHAPTER XVI

MINISTER AT BERWICK

1855-1860—*continued*

Letters about: Macaulay's *History*, Hamilton's *Life*, Kossuth, Article on *Kant*, Palmerston, Berwick politics, Evangelical Alliance at Berlin, Havelock, Biblical criticism, Degree of D.D., Robertson's *Sermons*, Bunsen, Whately, Death of Rev. Dr. Brown, Weak consciences, Bible in Government schools, Belfast Revival, Death of George Wilson, *Memoir* of Rev. Dr. Brown, Death of Mrs. Cairns, etc.

TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *Sept.* 29, 1856.

'SINCE I came home I have read Macaulay's *History*, vols. iii. and iv., with extreme admiration and delight. They are more solid than the former volumes and betoken, I think, harder study; while the graphic power—as for example in sketching the Battle of Killiecrankie and the Siege of Londonderry—is as wonderful as ever. But there is still the old worldly tone. It is a book which shuts out the invisible world and makes every thing great in reference to secular interests and standards only.

'I have also read Dr. John Young's book on *Evil*. It is more than respectable in power and clearness, but it raises more difficulties than it lays. I think it abler in some respects than his former work, but less generally interesting. It is too dry for entertainment, and too florid for philosophy. The style of his other book was better.

'I am reading Perthes' *Life*. If you like Niebuhr, you will like this better. It is more Christian, and contains a heroine better than any in Mrs. Stowe. *Dred* I will not read till I can't help it. I dislike lying in all its branches. . . . I feel much need of growing earnestness in the work of God. . . .'

TO LADY HAMILTON

BERWICK, *Oct.* 30, 1856.

'I have given the proposal you were kind enough to make the fullest consideration, and I regret to be obliged to abide by a negative answer.

'I announce this conclusion with sincere concern, because of the great anxiety you were kind enough to show and the possible embarrassment to which you may be reduced; and also because I may seem to undervalue the call to contribute my utmost to the posthumous usefulness of one whom I am bound by so many ties to venerate, and whose unpublished works deserve all the care due to writings destined to last as long as the studies to which they relate.

'I can only plead my great engrossment with present duties, which have become the business of life, and from which nothing of a literary or philosophical sort has ever yet seemed urgent enough to draw me away. I have had sufficient experience of my inability, amidst the claims and distractions of my present sphere, to do justice to a labour which cannot be attempted by halves. To this must be added my comparative ignorance of Sir William's logical discoveries, which would increase the necessity of close study and application to the work, though, had other engagements permitted, I would, with the help of a friend like Mr. Veitch, have deemed this obstacle not insurmountable.

'I may add that the state of my health has once and again required me to contract even my ministerial duties, and that on this ground I should hardly have felt justified in entering upon a work of indefinite extent. . . .'

## TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *Dec. 4, 1856.*

' . . . I had the pleasure of hearing Kossuth in Edinburgh last week. I greatly admired him, though my conviction was less than my admiration. His schemes seem to me a sublime impossibility in the present state of Europe. As to his eloquence there can be no question, nor as to the manliness of his character. I was also agreeably disappointed by his cheerfulness. I had expected a more moody and depressed aspect. He seems like a candidate at an election who is going to win. . . .'

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Dec. 17, 1856.*

'As you have given me a text, I shall first despatch it. The psalm (cxxxix.) from ver. 13 speaks of creation under figures drawn from a weaver, an embroiderer or similar artist, working after a



pattern and sees as well in the darkness as in the day. . . . By the way, Bishop Horne (though a miserable critic) has a good note on this paragraph. I am ready to go any length with you about Final Causes, persuaded that the metaphysical side of the old-fashioned argument is quite invincible.

'I have corrected the last proof of Kant . . . with some little anxiety. It is not very popular in style, and besides takes up ground different from Sir W. Hamilton and Professor Fraser. However, the discord is not obtruded, and I hope captious judges of the late controversy may miss it, while candid ones will admit that the Scottish School is broad enough for all. . . . I greatly liked Isaac Taylor's essay on Chalmers; but it did him both more and less than justice. I wish Isaac would come out with his views of Inspiration, which he always hints and hesitates about. . . .'

FROM JOHN BROWN, M.D.

23 RUTLAND ST., *Jan. 26, 1857.*

'Let me thank you with all my heart for the pleasure I have got from your essay on Culverwel. . . . I read your Kant, and was only sorry it was so short and so purely expository and historical. I would have liked more of Cairns; but it seems to me admirably done, and indicates in a very quiet way an immense amount of reading and thought. . . . You would get a well-signed requisition to demolish Maurice and a few more heresiarchs. I hope you mean to pay no attention to it, although I signed it and should not say so. Take your own time and way, and never do anything that anybody else tells you to do. . . .'

FROM PROFESSOR FRASER

CHURCHHILL, *Jan. 27, 1857.*

' . . . Your article is the best and most satisfying account of Kant I have yet read. The only abatement of satisfaction is its dense brevity. . . . In the latter part you have given the germ of a whole system of metaphysics, which I wish you could one day elaborate. I do not see that, when some verbal explanations especially are given, there is much difference between us regarding the limits and reality of human knowledge. In a great measure, at any rate, the apparent difference is occasioned by our looking at the problem from different sides.'

## TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *March 4, 1857.*

' . . . Another proof of the extreme instability of things is the sudden defeat of the Government. Palmerston was yesterday the hero of the country for his gallant struggle through the War. To-day he is cast off by a majority of those who hailed him as the nation's only hope, and dragged in the mire of a dishonourable censure. I have read with much interest the extraordinary series of admirable speeches called out from both sides by this crisis, and I am compelled to think the case has been made out against the Ministry. But we have a poor case against the Chinese—perhaps sufficient to have obtained a verdict on special pleading, but utterly rotten as the basis of the horrors and atrocities of international quarrel and bloodshed. I am heartily sorry for Palmerston, who has been obliged to fling his shield over reckless and almost dishonest proceedings, and has suffered in consequence. But I hope he will stand on an appeal to the country, though that will involve the tumult and riot of an election. I think this whole passage in our history fitted to exalt the honour of the nation, and to teach all bullying and meddling officials how they should deal with inferior nations, and even with arrogant and irritating fecklessness, like that of the Chinese. The latter come out as badly as we do; but Britain ought to govern her policy by higher maxims. . . .'

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *March 25, 1857.*

' . . . Here all is in the ferment of electioneering. . . . I do not agree with Palmerston in this business, but mean to support him in general, and hope that the eccentric Liberals, from Lord John downwards (who has greatly exalted himself in my eyes by this matter), will save their seats, and the only issue of the Palmerston fever be the downfall of the old unreforming faction. By a merciful Providence the dissolution has snuffed out the Anti-Sunday League, Sir J. Walmsley being obliged to make up at Leicester for deserting Palmerston by offering to be a better boy in the other matter. . . .'

FROM MATTHEW FORSTER, M.P.

BERWICK, *March* 1857.

' . . . I am grieved at the loss of a supporter of whom I have always been so proud, but I thank you for the frank and kind terms in which you notify that loss.

'If you knew all the circumstances attending the decision to which you allude, I think the conclusion you have come to would have been a little more merciful. But it may be a satisfaction to you to know that I have taken such precautions and securities as will prevent the possibility of any like result on the present occasion.

'It will gratify me much to see the ministers of religion, and the influential inhabitants generally, second my efforts to inaugurate a better state of things. It has always been matter of regret and surprise to me that the system to which you allude appeared to attract so little of their attention. But your letter affords me a gratifying proof that the attention of one of them is alive to it at last, particularly one so highly esteemed and influential as yourself. . . .'

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *March* 30, 1857.

' . . . Our election was very exciting. Marjoribanks defeated the Conservative by two votes. Stapleton was at the head of the poll, chiefly through Dissenting influence and Tory coalition. Poor Forster at the bottom. I could not help him, since he was turned out for bribery last time, I hope unknown to himself. Great slaughter in the south. Gibson and Bright out and Cobden not in. But Lord John at the top redeems all. . . .'

FROM A. MACMILLAN

CAMBRIDGE, *May* 29, 1857.

' . . . Have you leisure or inclination to look over the MS. of Mr. —'s last work—a new and rather expanded edition of his first little book on the Gospel? He wishes us to show it to some one, to see if he has omitted any important question. We know no one whose judgment we should prefer to yours. . . .'

TO MRS. BALMER

BERLIN, *Sept.* 18, 1857.

‘ . . . The Conference has been hard work, and I have knocked myself nearly up, having spent the most of this day in translating into English my paper of yesterday, and then having dined with a number of German friends who invited me to their company as the only Englishman who had spoken on the relations of Germany and England. The paper succeeded better than I had anticipated, and I felt great relief when it was over. But I do not dwell on personal matters. . . . Everything has been blessed of God, and the programme has been carried through with perfect success. I will only mention three remarkable occasions. The first was the opening, when the whole thing was fresh and new, and Krummacher gave a singularly good address. The second was the visit of all the members of the Alliance, nine hundred strong, to Potsdam, where the King, as it were, received the assembled nationalities, being separately addressed by chosen speakers from each. . . . Nothing could be more simple and familiar than his behaviour, and some of his remarks were very happy. It was an unprecedented spectacle, and will never recur again in the life of any who took part in it. The uppermost thought in every mind was—What a contrast to the days of Frederick the Great and Voltaire! Christianity is the only power that lifts its head after the humiliation of centuries. The whole affair was quite free from State parade and flattery, all the more so that the King was known to have run counter to influential advisers in countenancing the Alliance. A scene which almost impressed me more was at the close, when, the King and also the Queen being present, after the solemn farewells of English, American, and French brethren, and the closing address and prayer of Dr. Krummacher, the whole vast audience stood up to sing, “Nun danket alle Gott,” and amidst the startling echoes of a trumpet at its full pitch the sound of human voices bursting with thanksgiving rolled up in perfect thunder to heaven. Although utterly exhausted with the labours of the Conference, and suffering from the dullest headache, I felt such an inspiration as I have rarely experienced, and I do not think anything more sublime and heaven-like can ever occur in this world. In Berlin, the whole proceedings have produced a quite peculiar sensation, and it is impossible, with the blessing of God, that great fruits should not arise from them. The number of English has been at least two hundred; but the great mass and substance of the Conference have been Germans from



all parts of the country, all appearing to partake the common excitement. . . . I had hoped to take a little rest in Berlin; but I will rather do so at some other point, as I do not wish to extinguish my impressions of these days by descending to any trivial enjoyments or relaxations. . . . I hope that all goes well with the congregation, who I doubt not have helped this great assembly with their prayers.'

TO MRS. BALMER

HORNSEY, Oct. 1, 1857.

' . . . The Indian news is again sad and even dreadful. Poor Havelock is likely to be hemmed in and all lower Bengal to get up in a blaze; and our reinforcements will be absorbed one by one as they arrive, in extinguishing the conflagration at a multitude of points, without ability to march at once to its centres and put it out. None but God can help us in such a crisis, and I still trust that He will, though after great and perhaps unmingled disasters. I mean to be home for the Fast Day, as I think it urgent that every minister should be at his post. . . .'

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, Nov. 16, 1857.

' . . . I am thankful to be so well again. I suffered little pain and no serious hindrance except detention from church and inability to visit the sick. . . . It is, however, a lesson to work while it is day; for I might have lost the power of preaching altogether.

'I had to study all the literature on the Little Horn of Daniel, and got more leisure for it than I should have had in ordinary circumstances. It is a grand inconvenience attendant on lecturing on such subjects, that one must often rush to a conclusion by a kind of inspiration. Some of my past lectures would need that gift to warrant full confidence in their conclusions. However, I have only prophesied as yet regarding the past. I have not extended my inspiration into the future.

'I have read a very interesting piece of Wesleyan biography—the *Life of Newton*. You should get this from your library. It is a very edifying book, setting before one the career of one of the greatest of preachers, perhaps the greatest since Whitefield, and a noble example of Christian simplicity and charity. There is no Spurgeonism in this honest-hearted and self-forgetful Methodist, though I hope Spurgeon is getting out of his comic tub. . . .'

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Nov.* 25, 1857.

‘. . . I have delayed writing in the hope of being able to announce the departure of a nasty sore throat. How or when or where I caught it I cannot tell. The most plausible theory is that of Mr. Inglis, of Stockbridge, that it arose from speaking too much German. . . . It resembles somewhat in its active moods a spur and in its worst a Scotch thistle. In its more tranquil state it is simply an obstinate settlement of the Berwick burr with the prickles. . . . I have really much to be thankful for in having preached twelve years without any such stoppage, the rest being not of the organ but of the player.

‘. . . It is five years since I preached in Edinburgh, excepting Dr. Brown’s Jubilee Sermon. What rapid work is being made of life! “Dum loquimur fugerit invida aetas.” However, I do not complain of envious age. It may go on. I have lived by God’s grace a happy life, and look forward to a brighter and better where British Associations and Berlin Conferences will have been shoved aside for better things of the same kind.

‘I rejoice in your commemoration of Havelock in your Society of Arts’ speech. He is a man for Baptists to be proud of. In fact all our great men are now of that colour. It must have a great effect on the high and dry controversy, which many waters cannot to me float into importance. Is it not, however, a noble thing that those great spirits, Carey and Marshman, should be so avenged, just as it is a divine satire on the East India Company to have exploded it in a resistance to Christian proselytism? Happy is the turn of the public mind on Missions altogether. Sydney Smith is cast to the moles and bats—and much good may they get of him!’

## TO REV. DR. BROWN

BERWICK, *Jan.* 20, 1858.

‘. . . I do not think that any very complete elucidation has yet been given of the figures and titles appropriated by the Saviour in the Revelation. They are either interpreted too coldly and vaguely, or pious writers suffer fancy to run away with them. The dull criticisms of the rationalistic school on this book are to me incomprehensible. Their folly is made manifest to all men in reducing the grandest poetry to the level of the Sibylline books, and in making the most wonderful and prolonged utterances of religious

affection and adoration emanate from some stupid fanatics who wove the book like the cocoon of a silk-worm around the dead Nero, who was expected to come out in a fresh development and fight with Christ. Had there been any decent evidence of anything like a Sibylline origin, they would have been loud in praise of its glorious style and contents, and would have sought to damage the genuine Bible by exalting the one above the other. The same dulness is seen in the non-appreciation of the grandeur of Daniel, which every fool of the Maccabean age is supposed capable of having written, or, according to some, a joint-stock company or fortuitous concourse of fools and fanatics, whose fabrications ran into such sublime shapes as Belshazzar's vision and Daniel's prayer, not to speak of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams. Surely the time will come in all lands when some sort of elementary feeling for the sacred and the great will be so diffused as to nip such absurdities in the bud, and serve as a foundation for the positive Scripture criticism and exposition to build upon.'

## TO MISS BROWN

BERWICK, *March 5, 1858.*

' . . . I have had this week the novelty of an infant in the house. . . . I rejoice in the gambols and pranks of children ; but I cannot say that I feel any serious regret that I have none of my own. I wish those who have that felicity much comfort in it, and much wisdom and grace to manage things rightly ; and I am perfectly satisfied to rejoice in their triumphs and successes.

'I have tried this week to write two discourses, and have felt as yet no discomfort. It is to me odious to go back on old and forgotten mss., though I am thankful to have them in case of necessity. . . .'

## FROM GEORGE WILSON

*March 28, 1858.*

' . . . The Senatus did itself the honour to-day of making you a Doctor of Divinity. The hearts of several of us have long been set upon this ; but there was supposed to be some possible feeling about your helping Fraser, which might stand in the way. To make an end of this I went to Aytoun, and, finding that he had no grudge, at once opened my mind to the Principal, who received the thing so cordially that . . . to-day it was settled. . . . I stole a

march on Robert Lee in proposing you ; but as I only guessed his purpose, he has no complaint against me. My dear John, God made you a Doctor of Divinity ; we have only recognised the divinity. . . .’

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *March 29, 1858.*

‘Never was mortal man more surprised. . . .’ Had I not been a person of somewhat equable turn of mind, and besides a little used to the deceitfulness of all honour and glory, I should have been quite overwhelmed. If I was not, my dear friend, ascribe it to the fact that real gratitude for your kind interest and for the concurrence of other friends came in to divide the feeling. This is my prevailing satisfaction, besides the sense of being connected with our venerable Alma Mater by this new tie. . . .

‘I am truly glad to hear from Fraser that Mr. Ferrier is to be LL.D.’d at next meeting. What you say about Aytoun is highly gratifying to me. I did not, however, suppose that he had any confirmed prejudice. War is war, and honourable men understand it.

‘I have been hindered all winter by very doubtful health from studying much or writing anything on the plan I had projected. I am a very laggard D.D. ; and if it were necessary to indulge humility in utterance, I could do it with very considerable honesty. However, it is not, as that grace flourishes best in the shade, and therefore I only express the hope that I may be enabled by God to diminish somewhat the vast difference I feel to exist between what a true Doctor is and what I am. . . .’

## TO MRS. BALMER

BERWICK, *May 20, 1858.*

‘. . . F. W. Robertson’s *Sermons* I have read very partially. There is fine thought, fine style, fine sympathy with the present moods of English feeling, but I think on the whole poor divinity, and more power to flash light on the sides of questions than to illustrate them in their completeness and symmetry. It is Arnoldism in its aphelion, and I fear will not come back to the sun. I have, however, as aforesaid, read him only in part. . . .’



## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *May 26, 1858.*

‘. . . I have got Bunsen’s work on the Bible. It is able and elaborate and shows a creditable zeal for the honour of Scripture, but in many respects, to my mind, practically infringes on that homage. The long Preface is too like a dissertation on the past and present of German theology. . . . The fragment of translation is not ill done; but in the commentary there is a prevailing tendency to allegorise and vapoise. Altogether I do not hail the work, though there are noble passages in the Preface, with more of supernaturalism than I expected. It will make a violent commotion and deserve not a little of the rough treatment which it is sure to provoke. . . .’

## TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Aug. 5, 1858.*

‘I saw you exerting yourself to rescue the Town Council from the hands of the Philistines with more courage than success. It was a scurvy business altogether, and though I never was an enthusiastic admirer of the Town Council system, I could not but feel disgust at the trickery practised upon them. . . . The only consolatory incident was the utter defeat of the “high” party in their attempt to retain the Principalships—the downfall of a real sectarianism in retribution upon their clamours against an imaginary one. On the whole, the Bill is a great advance; and if the Curatorial system only work in Edinburgh, it will be an almost unmixed blessing to Scotland.

‘This day completes my thirteenth year in Berwick. No man has all his wishes gratified; but few have so many as I, and I do not know really anything I want, unless perhaps a continuance of my present improved health, and more time for study and writing beyond my necessary duties. . . . I have just made a census of the congregation, which shows about 730 communicants—more than I can well attend to. When I became a minister, I did not anticipate anything like the success it has pleased God to give me. May I be enabled, either in success or failure, to do His will from the heart, which is really the chief end of man! . . .’

TO REV. DR. BROWN

CORK, Aug. 27, 1858.

‘O the combination of splendour and squalor in Dublin! . . . Nothing I have seen equals it, except perhaps some of the miserable towns on the southern slopes of the Alps. St. Patrick’s Cathedral, girt about with rags and old trumpery, beat anything I had ever seen, and contrasted far more with the palace like Bank and College than the Cowgate with St. Andrew’s Square. The Irish have no sense of incongruity, or they would tone down the Corinthian of the one to the pre-architectural chaos of the other, or rather strive to lift the other up to something like decency. In fact the contrast with the Cowgate is unfair, since but for Ireland we should have no Cowgate. My ramble through mean and grand brought to my knowledge the fact that Archbishop Whately would preach next day at Donnybrook, and thither I went in time to hear a charity sermon on the Barren Fig-tree. A venerable-looking, grey, old man, of a faded ruddy look, with more shrewdness than mass in his head and face, trembling very exceedingly in his long sleeves, but with a firm voice. He read with great bluntness and decision a clear, penetrating, semi-sarcastic exposition of the doctrine of good works, with hits now and again at the Romanists, very keen and effective, but not sufficiently genial, and with not one touching or fervent utterance as to the sole and exclusive reliance that a sinner must place in the finished work of Christ. This was taken for granted; but it could not afford to be slurred over, and hence I was much less edified by the sermon than by the sublime *Te Deum* and Litany that preceded. The collection was for a district lay-visitation agency, and this was vindicated in the same half-sarcastic tone, the speaker asking what would be thought if the clergy should reserve the highest place in heaven for themselves to the exclusion of the laity, and thence urging on the laity the duty of work if they expected reward. I was provoked by his cool allusion to the efforts of others than members of the Church of England. “With these we have at present no concern.” This deference to Church bigotry, with which he does not sympathise, was not worthy of Whately, and though I had not intended to give much, I thought it only reasonable to leave the Church to support a work so carefully guarded from foreign contact. Altogether I admired the zeal of the old man in preaching where there was no official necessity; and I hope he edified others more than me, though I was not without some enjoyment of his usual sense and fidelity in illustration. . . .’

TO MISS BROWN

BERWICK, *Oct. 13, 1858.*

'Alexander's note was hardly needed to assure me that your father was no more. I have felt such an unutterable dejection and loneliness all day; it seemed to come from some unerring quarter. I am indeed very sad, and do not know how to comfort myself, or whether I ought to seek any comfort that would abate the keen and desolating sense of what I have lost. Your father was to me what no other person ever was or can be; and even if there were others in the world, life does not admit, from its necessary laws, of my ever forming such relations with them. It is not mere agitation, but the sober, abiding sense of wide-wasting bereavement, extending over all the departments of life that were most interesting and, indeed, made life what it was. It is not mere loss of enjoyment and intercourse, or the tearing up of old ties, extending over almost the whole of any independent life I have had; but the worst is the crippled sense of security for the future, the total absence of any other to whom I can look, under God, for the same guidance and direction. God forbid that I should not have faith in Himself; but He does not work miracles, and I do not see any process by which I can rationally attain the same unbounded confidence in any other human being or have it always with me as a constant element in every hope and purpose. On a multitude of subjects I shall never speak to others, or care anything in comparison for their advice or good opinion. I feel bitterly my increased weakness on some sides where he was always strong; and I deplore his loss with all the strength of the desire I have to live for the same ends and to walk worthy of his friendship. If I could see anything in this grief irrational, I would try to abate it; but it seems that God, who has made my life what it has been, has made this affliction necessarily grow out of it, and that in feeling thus solitary and forlorn, I am looking at things exactly as He wants me to look at them.

'I would not burden you with my complaints amid your own distresses, but I cannot write anything else; and you will ascribe it to anything but want of sympathy that I can do so little to hold you up in the day of your calamity. I can only pray now and then a few broken sentences; but God knows all your care, and the Great Intercessor, who has delivered him from all fear and sorrow for ever, will deliver us too—now, as far as He sees good, and in due time for ever likewise.

‘It would have been a great comfort to have seen the end. But I do not regret my leaving. I sought guidance in the matter, that I might not indulge my feelings at the expense of any duty, and as I did not think the end so near, I struggled away. Again and again I resisted the impulse to turn back in the street, and even to leave the carriage when seated in it. But it would have been a comfort to have seen the very last, and to have mingled my tears with yours, though nothing is to me more terrible than the first cries of bereavement.

‘I may not write again soon. I cannot do it with any composure, and many other friends will. May God be with us and teach us not to suffer such things in vain! . . .’

FROM JOHN BROWN, M.D.

October 17, 1858.

‘Thanks for what you sent, which I would not have missed for any consideration; it is its soul and heart, as the truth in it was his heart and soul. The *Scotsman* is very thankful; and the editor’s short words in sending the proof were, “This truly is admirable.’ Is it not strange that the great central truth there stated, and which the world needs so much to be told, could not have been told as you tell it without his being dead? . . . I do hope you will get no harm from all this. There is an expression in your address at Mr. Peden’s funeral which frightens me: “We cannot compress too much work for Christ into our short life.” A long life will enable a man to do more effectual work for his Master than a short one, in many ways—and not the least, as enabling him to consecrate his ripe age and his last days, which have a richness and depth which nothing but time and sorrow and knowledge of human life can ever gain, to this work. Think seriously of this, my dear friend, and don’t speak of “compressing,” and above all *don’t do it.*’

FROM REV. DR. JOHN KER

BAYONNE, Nov. 8, 1858.

‘I have had many sad thoughts since I heard of the departure of our venerable Professor. A rock is removed out of its place, whose shadow I always felt over me. . . . We shall look to you, my dear friend, in more ways than one to take his place and carry on further his work. I have often, with others, thanked God that He has



given us such an one as yourself, with a heart that comprehends and loves the good old Gospel, and a power so distinguished to defend and illustrate it. Our Church through all her borders has her eyes turned to you at this time, and none so much as those who studied with you and know you best. I shrink in saying to you what I could freely say about you; but it is right that you should have this distinctly before you, that when it takes a shape you may be able to give a right decision. I am convinced God has a great work for you here, not only in regard to our Church but in the common cause of Christian truth. . . .’

TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *Jan. 3, 1859.*

‘. . . As for myself, I have not been able to do much, but have striven to write a very little. I have not got past the difficulties connected with the origin of evil, which indeed is not much to be wondered at, since the subject is the deepest bog in which the human mind can *lair*, if you know the meaning of that word. . . .’

‘For the first time I have had some little strife in the congregation, which however I hope will end peacefully. Our architect comprised in his plan a Maltese cross on the gable of the new church. The thing was passed *nem. con.* some months ago; but as the plan began to be executed there arose in some quarters murmurs of Popery and deadly mischief, and one or two of my good elders were carried away by this bugbear. The Trustees and the majority of the Session stuck to the plan with my full concurrence. . . . There has been no particular bad feeling, and perhaps some way of escape may yet be devised, as the stone of stumbling still lies unhoisted. Meanwhile, I have been lecturing, in course, on 1 Cor. viii.-x., and discussing at large the whole question of weak consciences and forbearance. I cannot think that Paul intended to bind down the Church to every crotchet and prejudice, and to make the weak masters of the situation in every controversy. This would be the “irresistible might of weakness” in a new sense. It is not, “if meat offend my brother,” but “if meat *make* my brother *to offend*”—if I make *him* do anything against his conscience; I have perfect right to follow my own, he being saved by his protest or non-concurrence. . . .’

‘A more cruel year than 1858 has not for long occurred in ravages made among my nearest ministerial friends. But they have all died at the right time. . . .’

FROM JOHN BROWN, M.D.

23 RUTLAND STREET, *Jan.* 9, 1859.

‘. . . We cannot change our minds as to your being the one only person to write our dear father’s Life. This expectation I find is universal. I will assist you in every way I can, and will try to give you something which you may insert in the Life. . . . My father, . . . I am morally certain, looked forward to your taking charge of him for posterity. . . . I know that you are desirous to work at your own work; but this, which we all earnestly and affectionately beg you to do, will not interfere much nor long. . . .’

FROM THE SAME

23 RUTLAND STREET, *March*, 1859.

‘. . . J— has let me read your notice of Sir William. It is admirable—lion’s marrow. I am truly glad you have done it, and could not help thinking how the great thinker himself would have been gratified by its strong and exquisite appreciation of his specific worth. . . .’

TO MRS. BALMER

ARTHUR’S LODGE, EDINBURGH, *May* 5, 1859.

‘. . . The meeting of the Alliance at Belfast was the most interesting I have attended, chiefly through the extraordinary and almost miraculous impression of the Revival. . . . The whole of Ulster seems to be laid hold of by God and constrained for once to attend to the common and eternal truths of the Gospel. . . . On Saturday I preached at Monaghan to a congregation in a state of active revival. I never saw such impression in hearing the Gospel; but it was as strong before I had uttered a word as at the end of the day’s services. . . . There is not a Protestant family in Monaghan but has family worship. Open sin in every form has disappeared. God grant that this may last; but it is almost too much for human nature. . . .’

TO GEORGE WILSON

BERWICK, *May* 5, 1859.

‘. . . Principal Lee is gone. He was worthy of respect in many ways, and in some things he will be missed. I have already an

application for a testimonial for the office. It seems almost absurd to fill up such a post by testimonials, and I mean to say so to my correspondent. Probably the best thing would be to put in some layman so as to break the chain of clerical monopoly and to put down that grasping spirit which has been so great an offence in the sacerdotal claimants for such honours. I do not envy the successful candidate. It is but a loose and tottering throne surrounded by many turbulent wars.'

FROM GEORGE WILSON

*June 12, 1859.*

' . . . There is to be a meeting about the Bible in India, at which I am importuned to speak, and I am very willing to do so, if I can as a consistent Dissenter. As I understand it, Lord Stanley's clause takes away the Bible from Government schools even where it is not made compulsory and where the natives don't object to it. Now, although I have the greatest dread of State Christianity, and don't like to see Sir John Lawrence refer to our Government as "a paternal despotism," still it does seem doing the Devil's work without even the Devil's pay to hold back the Bible where it would be accepted. We have talked of this, but write me a line. . . .'

TO GEORGE WILSON

*BERWICK, June 13, 1859.*

'Your query touches a difficult question. We both hold that the State ought not to furnish instruction in religion to any portion of its subjects, but leave that province to personal conviction. We also hold that in cases where its action must involve either a homage to the word of God or a defiance of it, the State is bound to choose the former. These are the limits within which this question lies. We should both hold that any attempt to set up a State-Church in India supported by Indian taxation was unjust and unscriptural; and we should hold, too, that any surrender of the Christianity of the dominant race, such as would be involved in transacting public business on the Lord's Day out of complaisance to the Indian people, would be carrying Voluntaryism too far. I expect very little from even missionary efforts of Government in the way of introducing the Bible into Indian schools with the concurrence of the natives, though I see nothing in this inconsistent with the principles of Dissenters; and hence I would not unite with

State-Churchmen in an agitation to secure this benefit, as if it were great and precious. On the other hand, I think the avowed and thorough-going exclusion maintained in Lord Stanley's despatch falls within the category of denial of Christianity by the dominant race, such as would be involved (though perhaps not so flagrant) in consenting to treat the Lord's Day as non-existent, or in recognising caste in Government institutions. It is in this light alone that I would energetically protest, and join Churchmen in protesting, against the exclusion of the Bible, especially where heathen books of religion are used. This is a false neutrality; and even were an utter exclusion of all religion possible, I doubt whether it would not seem a denial of our own convictions in regard to the Bible were we not to offer it, however little chance there might be of its being accepted or of its bringing any great advantage—taught, as it would be, under a bureaucratic State system and not by the agents of a living Christianity. I think we do harm by this over-acting of neutrality, and should like to see the harm redressed. Only, the amount of good likely directly to follow from the opposite course in the way of spreading the doctrines of the Bible, I rate much lower than many, even Dissenters, do. The chief blessing will be, that God will own other efforts more when this national offence is abated, and that the heathen will not suppose us a race of hypocrites. I make, however, much allowance for Lord Stanley. There is an English generosity in his policy, though unfortunately he gives what is not his own. Pardon the haste of these remarks. I yesterday exhausted myself in preaching Golden Square permanently vacant. . . .'

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *Aug. 2, 1859.*

'I have been lecturing this summer through the First Epistle to the Corinthians with much interest. I have especially enjoyed the 15th chapter. It is grand beyond my former conceptions—the argument so linked, and the depth of thought so remarkable. I entirely dissent from Isaac Taylor's "spiritual corporeity" notions. A spiritual body is not in Paul's mouth a more refined kind of material, but material more subservient to the spirit as distinguished from the soul. The first Adam was made soul and body; the last Adam, spirit and body. The one was destined to the sensuous employment of the body in this world, the other to its spiritual employment in heaven. This is the contrast between natural (soul) and spiritual



(spirit), and not Isaac Taylor's view of the one body as more gross in its own structure, the other more etherealised. The one man is of the earth and made with his body to live on the earth ; the other, being divine and from heaven, cannot be bound down to the earth as his primary destination. Further than that the body shall be dominated by spiritualism from Christ, not by sensuousness from Adam, the Apostle goes not ; and the "physical" theory is an *excursus* beyond what is written. . . .'

TO MRS. BALMER, EDINBURGH.

BERWICK, Oct. 6, 1859.

'I promised to give you a further account of my Irish experiences. . . . From Belfast to Londonderry and to Monaghan, one pervading impulse has laid hold of the people. It is as if Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* had been translated into the experience of multitudes. Great differences exist in different p'aces. Antrim and Down have been affected all but universally, while the other parts of Ulster have felt, or are feeling, the impulse. It is wonderful, even if not genuine ; and its magnitude takes it out of the region of contempt and ridicule. I know no explanation of the phenomena but one—the working of the Spirit of God. The solutions of the difficulty by excitement and epidemic do not really explain anything. It is not natural to man to be excited in masses, to read and hear the Bible and to pray ; nor can this reach the universal desire to be pointed to Christ, and the very general breaking off from sin and the enjoyment of peace and hope after anguish and distress. Nature does not contain any epidemic so like to Christian conversion, and yet different ; and even the unbeliever must admit that whatever goes by the name of conversion in quieter times is here reproduced on a larger and wider scale. Have the Protestants over a district embracing a million and a half of souls suddenly lost their senses, and become the victims of a delusion which is only at worst a warm and glowing utterance of ancient Christian truth? Hysteria or catalepsy will explain something of the bodily manifestations ; but what pre-disposes the body to this visitation in connection with Christian doctrine, or how does this explanation serve in the innumerable cases where there has been no bodily affection at all? There is only one consistent theory, that the same cause which makes men Christians in a quieter manner is making these Christians in a more violent and demon-

strative. Men may hold that the Christian process is all through a delusion and this a flagrant case of it; but they are not entitled to speak scoffingly of this movement, while professing respect for the general ideas and operations of Christianity. It seems to spread in Glasgow, and will, I hope, with greater tranquillity than in Ireland, spread over the whole country. There is more interest in Berwick than I had supposed. An unadvertised meeting filled our church last night, when I gave some account of the Evangelical Alliance meeting in Belfast and the Ulster Revival. Such a winter here, as last summer has been in Ireland, would be a felicity almost too great to hope for. . . .'

FROM A. MACMILLAN

LONDON, *Nov. 22, 1859.*

. . . I was very glad to find that you consider Mr. Maurice so far right, though I cannot well understand your agreeing with him on this, which I have always felt the cardinal principle of his teaching. How glad I was to find that your orthodoxy does not involve the admission or inculcation of a doctrine that shuts up a man within the bounds of a narrow logic, refusing to him that very power without which logic is an empty mill grinding the wind, or the mere barren stones of a dictum which you may call divine but can never know to be so!

'As to the spirit of Mr. Maurice's book, I think you are mistaken. . . . Knowing him to be so loving and gentle and wide-souled, I may be reading him through his language, but if I have been doing him over-justice, Mansel has amply compensated for it. . . . I by no means take in other than good part anything you may say about him, as I know that it is, albeit inimical, yet the utterance of a gentle and knightly enemy. . . .

'I have asked Masson to ask your help in the *Magazine*. He had previously suggested you. We have an article by Huxley on Darwin's book in this number, which seems to me to open up the most interesting questions in psychological regions. I should be glad to know what you think of it. . . .'

TO MRS. BALMER, ABERDEEN

BERWICK, *Nov. 23, 1859.*

'I grieve that you should not have heard from me the first sad news of the loss of dear George Wilson; but I have been so

occupied with waiting on him that it was impossible. I learned on Saturday that he was ill of pulmonary inflammation and pleurisy. His sister telegraphed for me. . . . When I arrived, I found hope very low. . . . I saw him and prayed with him. He knew me perfectly, and declared himself satisfied to be in the hands of a good and kind Redeemer, saying also that he had peace in Christ. I left for a little, and the doctor came and extinguished all hope. I went up to bid good-night, and prayed again shortly, when he repeated his assurances. He had a beautiful expression—all the sweeter for the pallor of death. After about half an hour, his sister rang the bell in token of a change. He was breathing very heavily, and the end was visibly coming. I hastily prayed, and, as I rose, he slightly opened his half-closed eyes in token of recognition. This was the last act of intercourse, and in fifteen minutes all was over. . . .

‘Thus ends a noble and heroic Christian life—a perfect miracle of work done in the weakest of frames and in the face of the most uphill difficulties. And thus closes another chapter of my most sacred friendships—not to be opened again till He speak who openeth and no man shutteth. I am much affected, as you may suppose; but though cast down I am not destroyed. I think more of the loss of others, especially his poor mother and sister, to whom this would be a total eclipse, if God were not love and a light in all darkness. Clouds and darkness are only *round about* God; *in* Him is no darkness at all. You will excuse my haste and confusion, and pray for me and others in this hour of need. . . .

‘I wish I could love all my friends as I would wish to have done when they are gone. But I did love George Wilson, and I love you. . . .’

TO MRS. WILSON

BERWICK, Dec. 5, 1859.

‘. . . In the multitude of my thoughts within me, none has been so constant and deep as the sense of the great spiritual loss God’s Church has experienced. I ever saw in George more of the saint and Christian witness and hero than anything else. All his science and genius brightened to me on this side, and I loved him most because he showed forth in his own region, as few have ever done, the high praises of our God and Saviour. I have learned much from him in his own departments of teaching, which I should never have known otherwise. But I have learned far more of what



belongs to the department common to us both, the philosophy of human nature and the glorious adaptation to it of the Gospel of Christ. I feel it a great and sore privation to have all our communings on the things of God and the ways of men ended. But I would be most ungrateful not to review, as I have lately done, the long and bright past with feelings deeper than tears, that I have known and been known, loved and been loved, so well and so long. I cannot tell how much I have owed to him. It should certainly have done more for me; but it has not been all lost. God sees it to be better for me now to want this joy and gladness, and I strive to say, "Thy will be done!"

'Forgive the personality of these statements. They only show his worth and preciousness, and enable me to enter better into your more deep and special solitude. May God, even our own God, comfort and succour you, and bring light from the future to relieve your great eclipse!

'I do not need to speak of obligation and attachment to you as well as to him. There are times and seasons when this ought to be spoken about; and there never can be one in your life or mine more calling for it if it were requisite. But words speak less than deeds, and I greatly prefer that that medium of utterance—the favourite one in the past—should still be adhered to. I shall endeavour to write you now and then, as often as many labours will permit. I do not need to begin to include you and all you love most in daily prayers. God will strengthen us to strengthen one another, and we shall endeavour to do and bear the remaining work and burden of life as God would have it borne and done. Weeping should not hinder sowing, and in the best time all shall be reaped by all the sowers together in endless joy.'

#### TO MISS WILSON

BERWICK, *Dec.* 19, 1859.

' . . . I cannot find a single valid objection to your going courageously forward. . . . You have qualifications which I want, even had I the time and leisure. I have discovered, if I needed to discover it, that biography is not my forte (if I have any forte); and I have no doubt whatever that in ease, fulness and colour, you will leave me a long way behind. . . . I shall lend all the assistance in my power. I have a great pile of letters, full of most important biographical matter; and I shall also give my recollections. Many



of the letters cannot be published. They touch living people, and they rip up myself so fully that I should hardly like to go abroad as they would present me. . . . Do not hesitate to write as often as you require. The relief you have given me is sufficient warrant. . . .'

TO MRS. WILSON

BERWICK, *Dec. 26, 1859.*

'I have for so many years written about this day to our dear George that I fall at once into the habit of writing you. None of our letters were ever more cordial and brotherly, for we then spoke most of the hopes and joys and aspirations that linked us most closely together. I am beginning to think of him with some clearness as amongst other society and engaged in nobler pursuits; but I can well believe that the love which then flowed forth in his replies may not be shut up from offices of still better ministry; and of this I am certain, that he would wish no one else, in case all such intervention of the departed is forbidden, to be the interpreter of his present feelings and sentiments towards me, but only yourself alone. I therefore address you as I would himself, and ask you to enlarge your heart and love me not only with your own love but with his also, while I shall endeavour to transfer to you all my love for him that can now find no outlet upon himself, in addition to what I have so long and so warmly cherished towards you since you began many years ago to treat me as if I had been your own. I find no remedy for our deep grief but in love. It soothes and composes me, and my heart settles into something like rest when I think of you as still to be loved and cared for, and helped on through your solitary way, and as still loving and caring for me and helping me by your prayers, amid the desolation and blank which God has seen meet to appoint to me as to you. The element of heaven seems to gather round about me when I feel in this way; for God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him. May God only increase in me these feelings, and enable me to connect the memory of the past with such a depth of love to you and to all your house, that death in his withering power may be overcome, and even overruled to strengthen all heavenly affection, sympathy and kindness!

'I cannot enter upon any other topics, even those connected with our bereavements, our consolations and our hopes. You have so long been accustomed to speak to me in the language of solace

and exhortation that I will not attempt to speak to you. I will only pray for you, that God may brighten your remaining days with still more of His own presence, and that the Great Comforter may meet you as you still follow the bier and say, Weep not. May the light that streams from the future come in more sweetly as you draw nearer it, and may the shadows of death turn more habitually into the morning!

'You will also remember me in your prayers and sympathies, and chiefly as a Christian minister. Seek for me no earthly advantage or honour—not even comfort in life and exemption from trial—but truth in the understanding, love in the heart, and readiness to be and do and suffer in all ways, circumstances and times what Christ sees best. Seek for me more self-denial and superiority to the favour of man, more wisdom to go out and in before others, more compassion for the afflicted, more ability to speak a word in season to the weary, more success in rousing the dead and careless to the things of God. I know you do this, because I know you love me. But I beseech you, as I feel how much I need it, to abound more and more.'

## TO MISS WILSON

BERWICK, *Jan.* 13, 1860.

'I am working night and day at Dr. Brown's Life, which I must finish at all hazards by the end of March. . . .

'I heard from Daniel yesterday—a beautiful letter, which it did me good to receive. Poor fellow, his loneliness is now very different in that far-off region.

' . . . Let me not forget my great interest in the young men who decided for Christ in this time of trouble. What a nothing is the mere manner of baptism to such a result! Would to God that all the unconverted members of my congregation became Christian Baptists! I should myself furnish the water for their immersion. . . '

## FROM REV. ———

GLASGOW, *Jan.* 25, 1860.

' . . . What a biographer you are becoming! You will positively frighten your friends from approaching you, and every smile of affection will be construed by them into the biographic glare! You will be looked upon as a perpetual remembrancer of the end of life and the approach of judgment. O that some of your friends may outlive you for sweet avenge! . . . '

## TO MISS WILSON

BERWICK, *Jan. 25, 1860.*

‘. . . I have got tolerably far with Dr. Brown’s Memoir; but this journey to London, undertaken from a dutiful regard to the Synod, is not in its favour. My utmost ambition in regard to it is not to fail. I am not made of biographical stuff; and the trouble that I have in expressing the simplest matters is something incredible.’

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *April 3, 1860.*

‘. . . I have come to the end of my narrative proper, and have only a short sketch of character to write. I am profoundly grateful that I am so near the close. . . . But oh, dear Jessie, what work it is! . . . I have never enjoyed anything like rest since this work was undertaken; and at times the sense of perplexity, vexation and all but despair has been indescribable. I have tried to do my best, and have enjoyed snatches of pleasure in some portions of the work. . . . But all past literary hindrances and perturbations have been nothing compared with those connected with this enterprise. . . . My excellent friends, especially Miss Brown, have done everything to help me, and I have no possible reason to complain of them. The difficulty has been in the very nature of the work, my unbiographical turn, and the necessity of working amidst other engrossing occupations. I have need of patience, so pray for me that I may not fail till the work be done. . . .’

## FROM JOHN BROWN, M.D.

23 RUTLAND STREET, *April 6, 1860.*

‘. . . Your sister kindly brought the close of the Memoir, which I have just finished, with a strange mixture of sorrow and gratitude and a kind of joy. It is now safe, and *he* is safe beyond all fear. It is the truth in love; you have quite singularly divined his nature and rendered it in this Memoir (with every kind of negative difficulty to contend with) with a truth and life to me very marvellous. . . .’

## FROM THE SAME

23 RUTLAND STREET, *May 4, 1860.*

‘. . . You have made me very thankful and taken a misery off my mind. . . . If God spares me I may be able to do something for the second edition. I shall never forget your kindness in this matter. . . .’

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *April 9, 1860.*

‘. . . I have fully entered into your regrets in connection with the death of Sir John Hall, who has at length terminated his useful and blameless career. . . . I have felt moved to write a very few lines to Lady Hall recurring to her deceased husband’s kindness at the time of our family affliction. . . . How soon we must all follow to the grave! It is a quarter of a century since I personally ceased to be connected with the Dunglass estate; and all of us are now, though in many ways related to the family, off the grounds. May we seek for a settlement which shall never be broken and a house from which none shall go out!’

## TO MISS WILSON

BERWICK, *July 18, 1860.*

‘. . . I would have sent you some notices of Dr. Brown’s Memoir; but they were rather of the laudatory sort. However, the *Athenæum* has enabled me to allude to my labours without any vanity; for it declares the book a “dry morsel,” and closes with the deliverance: “Dr C. has few of the graces and endowments which belong to the life and labour of one who writes biography.” You know enough of my own private opinion to understand that I cannot take this greatly amiss; and I shall now have the highest literary authority to protect me from any more of this incompatible labour. It is not often that an author and a reviewer so jump together in an adverse judgment. The same article does some justice to Dr. Brown, which shows that the book is not altogether opaque in its representations. If I find any more notices of this sort, I shall gratify your envious eye by a faithful report of them. But do not, I pray you, fear the critics. Like Bunyan’s lions,



they are chained and can only roar. Write what you feel to be your duty. Do that as well as you can, and then you may laugh at the whole creation. . . .’

TO DAVID CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Aug.* 17, 1860.

‘. . . With regard to the reviews I am quite satisfied. The *Nonconformist* regards the work as one of the decided failures in recent religious biography from its not attempting an interior revelation, but commends the things attempted and done. This is about the substance of other unfavourable judgments and is unquestionably true. But as the tree falls it must lie. As a sexton lately said to me about his minister: “As for Mr. —, we can say little about him; but he’s there.”’

TO MRS. RATTRAY

BERWICK, *Sept.* 6, 1860.

‘My dear mother died on Tuesday at Oldcambus. She was only ill four days. Professor Syme performed an operation for hernia; but the disease was too extreme. She did not suffer much, and died, as she had long lived, in the full faith and hope of the Gospel. Her age was seventy-three.

‘I had reached Paris on my way to the German *Kirchentag*, when I was recalled by telegraph, but arrived too late. Most of my brothers and sisters were present. Life thus narrows its circle, and the unequalled blessing of a mother’s affection and prayers remains no longer. But all is for the best; and death is not to Christian friends, who are soon to meet again, the formidable thing it appears to the natural eye. . . .’

FROM JOHN BROWN, M.D.

BLAIRGOWRIE, *Sept.* 7, 1860.

‘. . . A mother’s death, and such a mother’s, is a loss there are no words for; indeed, we hardly know how deep it goes, much less can express it. Almost every day I saw her wise, truthful, affectionate and truly great face in that wonderful photograph, so that I loved and admired her in a way quite peculiar. I used to

think that she could not but have sent out into this strange world's work the very sons and daughters she did. To you, of all the children, this will be the greatest and deepest sorrow and want. May God who gave her to you, and gave you to her, comfort and help you! Be thankful you had her so long, and were so daily and hourly with her. . . .'

## TO MISS WILSON

BERWICK, *Sept.* 12, 1860.

' . . . The sad scenes of the past days will not bear to be written about; but God has been gracious in answer to prayers. My brothers and sisters are all scattered again. The clustering of wounded hearts together, which makes both the grief and the solace of such seasons, has given place to the solitude in which each—not alone—bears his own burden.

' I go off to London to-morrow to fulfil an appointment. . . . I have always striven in every trial to discharge all duties as usual. It is the happy peculiarity of ministerial work to be no distraction, but the best anodyne of the mind. . . .'

## TO MRS. WILSON

BERWICK, *Nov.* 19, 1860.

' I feel impelled to write a few lines, which you may read on the day which brought you and all of us such grief last year.

' I will not even allude to the scenes but too well remembered, which we passed through then. I will only say that however hard it may be for us to recal them, they are regarded with other feelings by the glorified one, and that all was presided over by infinite wisdom and unerring love. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints," a text which does not mean that God is quick to take them, but that He is slow and does not come to this last extremity with them without the greatest forethought and tenderness. He would have spared George to us if he had not been needed for other and higher services. For these the price of death, though a great one in the sight of the Lord, was not too much. It will be the same with us too. God will not call us to the last act, and ask friends to part with us, till there is some higher end to gain, which will reward all.

' I am grateful that you have lived to see the memorial of so

much Christian struggle and devotion nearly issued. It will be, I trust and believe, a true prolongation of his life to the best ends in this world. Nor do I think that anything is revealed which his own present judgment would suppress. I can believe him desiring—even praying, if prayer exists there—that all might learn from him how unspeakably exalting Christian faith and hope are, and how glorious is the transformation which they make even on the best natural character. . . . May God only grant us to live worthy of such associations with the true children of light, and to draw closer and closer to their Lord and ours! . . . You will remember *my* additional need of your prayers since last year.'

## CHAPTER XVII

### MINISTER AT BERWICK

1860-1867

Pastoral zeal—Wallace Green church—Tone of his ministry—Shrewdness—Relation to Episcopalians, etc.—Humility illustrated—Public sermons—Duke of Argyll and Creeds—Call to Morningside—Significance of refusal—Other Calls and other duties—Change of character—Letters and Diary—Recollections of Rev. G. B. Carr.

AMIDST those changes and losses, which struck at the very root of his private life, there was no faltering or wavering in the work of the ministry. He was absolutely master of his grief, and it is doubtful if any one in Berwick knew that he had passed through deep waters. Indeed, neither the duties of friendship nor the multiplying demands of public life lessened to any appreciable extent the careful and generous completeness of his pastorate. The changes introduced into his work after the Call to Glasgow reduced considerably the time spent in preparation for the pulpit, and from time to time his devoted congregation effected still further reduction by requesting him to re-deliver courses of sermons and by other friendly devices. But of his pastoral labour he would make no reduction. Deliberately and willingly he adhered to the conception which he had formed of the personal claims upon him of the individual members of his congregation. To discharge these was the business of his life, with which no other duties could be allowed to interfere. A probationer was appointed to assist him, but this made little difference. When there was sickness or trouble in a household, he could not remain away, so that he and his assistant met in the same sick-



rooms and crossed one another in other functions from which relief was intended. The pastorate, as he conceived it, was essentially one-man work, and the assistantship was allowed to lapse.

As was natural under such leadership, the increasing congregation developed fresh energy in the new church, which had, in 1859, taken the place of the old Meeting-house. With the change of site the name had been changed, 'Golden Square' becoming 'Wallace Green.' Wallace or Walls Green, the chief open square in Berwick, has a quaint parish church at one corner, and is surrounded by other public buildings. But the new church, a handsome mixed-Gothic edifice with a spire 127 feet high, dwarfs the other buildings and is indeed the most important architectural feature of the town. In 1860 the congregation included 780 communicants, who contributed liberally to missions and charities, and maintained all the agencies of a well-organised city congregation. In Home Mission work Dr. Cairns had the assistance of several candidates for the ministry, who afterwards proved the advantage of their training; but his principal help came from earnest and devout laymen of whom there were many among the communicants. Early in the Sabbath morning, these men met to ask for a blessing on the day's services, and in the evening they gave themselves energetically to Home Mission duties, not, however, confining these to the Sabbath. From his elders also, of whom there were twelve or thirteen, he had that voluntary but organised support which is the distinction of Presbyterianism in its practical working. They were men of various upbringing. Around a nucleus of Seceders of the genuine Scottish type, the attractive power of his ministry had gathered many whose early associations were with the other Presbyterian churches, as well as some Episcopalians and Baptists. But they all had a serious and practical interest in the church. Dr. Cairns not only recognised the worth of

their assistance, but organised it specially. Every Sunday at the close of the morning service they met to go over the sick-roll, and each reported upon the invalids intrusted to his care, and also upon those who chanced to be in poverty or distress of other sort. It was a sagacious plan, binding them together and securing a guarantee of fidelity to office; and it was carried out with systematic brevity and exactness. Indeed, in all church arrangements he showed a precision and diligence which, in a less genial and cordial man, would have been reckoned formal and pedantic. Every service and every meeting began with the stroke of the clock; every engagement was remembered; no duty was overlooked or discharged casually. It seemed to the faithful elders as if the ministry was his sole concern, and indeed public calls, however pressing, were always treated as secondary. It was so not only with the elders. The very humblest could reckon that the seemingly abstracted figure hurrying along the street, with umbrella under arm and gaze fixed on the ground, would stop and beam with soft blue eye and shake hands with vice-like grip—'Cairns' only vice,' John Brown said,—and that there would be kindly questions about home and work and, in case of children, about play. He knew them all and watched them, not with an official zeal but from an instinct of which they knew the source. This friendly carefulness reached far beyond his own flock. It was said that he knew more people in the town than the parish registrar; and although no one ever suspected him of proselytism, he was always ready to help and to serve. Was there a 'collection' wanted by one of the smaller churches? In spite of all his resolutions about not preaching in the evening, he would come unhesitatingly with one of his great sermons, and the church would be crowded, and the managers would almost forget their satisfaction with the half-crowns that had been dropped into the 'plate' when he lifted them to some large vision of Christ's kingdom, and

then in his closing prayer folded them in his arms. Was there a nervous woman who needed to be told with all tenderness of her husband's sudden death? When her own minister shrank back, he would ask Dr. Cairns to go. Was there a prodigal who knew no church and of whom every one despaired? It was Dr. Cairns who tapped at the door in the gloaming and spoke straight loving words which no man knew.

Yet in all his ministry, public and private, there was an air of dignity and independence. In the pulpit he was classical and statuesque, even when the rush and sweep of his oratory were strongest. There was nothing trivial, nothing tentative, nothing inserted for effect. All was guided by that solemn, sacrificial idea of worship which was inherent in the older Presbyterianism. He stood up among the worshippers not only as a prophet but as a priest, who 'bore them on his heart before God continually,' and every part of the services bespoke the quiet and settled assurance of one who knew the way into the holiest of all. It is doubtful if any liturgy can produce the same combination of attractiveness with gravity as the free yet premeditated devotion of a single great soul which keeps its own individuality in check for the sake of God and man; and in his case the power of a strong and pure personality was habitually and obviously subordinated to the responsibilities of a great office. His journals and letters show that it was not to the formal and ritualistic elements of Roman Catholic worship that he chiefly objected but to its triviality, gaudiness and unreality; and, on the other hand, his keen sympathy with earnest evangelism was tempered, or at least controlled, by a thorough dislike for extravagance and vulgarity. This may be said to have been the note of the greatest evangelical Presbyterians of this century—of Andrew Thomson, Chalmers, Norman Macleod and John Ker; but in him it was specially remarkable, because in the days of his highest reputation as a preacher he lived

on terms of closer familiarity with the common people than did any of these men.

At no time was this more conspicuous than when Communion approached. On the preceding Sunday, a day almost as solemn as that of the Sacrament itself, he led the candidates forward, with a thousand eyes fixed upon them, and addressed them in words which never varied :

‘You have to-day fulfilled your baptism vow by taking upon yourselves the responsibilities hitherto discharged for you by your parents. It is an act second only in importance to the private surrender of your souls to God and not inferior in result to your final enrolment among the saints.’ Then followed a brief enumeration of the duties of the Christian life, closing with the words: ‘Nothing must separate you from the Church militant till you reach the Church triumphant.’ Thereafter the candidates, having one by one declared their faith and hope, received the right hand of brotherhood and were numbered with the faithful. This tone was maintained during the celebration of Communion. All was deliberate, impressive, final. There was as much of sacramentarianism as is consistent with the belief that each soul has safety through its own faith in Christ crucified.

It was the same in private intercourse. No one was ever known to take liberties with him. He moved about on his Master’s business with a certain reserve, which was redeemed from stiffness by the fact that he was unconscious of it. It was only among the poor and weak, who never misunderstand their ministers and rarely intrude upon them, that he showed the same freedom as among his private friends. Stories were often told about the hearty boyishness with which he threw himself into quaiting matches at the annual river-side picnics of the Church Trustees ; but these were quoted because they were at variance with the tenor of his life. In the words of one who was brought up in his congregation :



'Life was a tremendous thing from his point of view: Christianity a regal, majestic, conquering system: public worship an overwhelmingly solemn engagement. The influences which surrounded us were therefore of an overpowering sort. It is true that there was no trace of melancholy in his great broad face, which would brighten in an instant at the sight of any one he knew particularly. Nevertheless, as long as we were in his classes we were rather awestricken; but when we reached manhood our feeling became one of profound homage. We lived in an old-world community crammed with mediocrities, and the colossal personality gripped our imaginations and hearts. His commanding intellect controlled our thoughts, and his quenchless imperial faith and pure exalted character dominated our lives.'

Beneath his apparent abstractedness there was a shrewd sagacity, which was all the more effective in practical affairs because it seemed to be exercised unconsciously. It became a saying that he could not make a mistake. If differences arose in the congregation, he was never involved in them. Mainly, no doubt, this was through deliberate abstention. When, for example, the new church was being completed, something like a schism arose about the position or structure of the baptismal font. Each party was eager to secure his support, and at a Session meeting one keen partisan introduced the subject and said that there was a general wish to know his opinion. Dr. Cairns sat in silence for a few minutes looking at the ground, and then rising, said, 'Gentlemen, I think our business is over, and I wish you all good-morning.' Yet he knew how to get his own way in matters for which he felt responsibility. The members of his Bible Class had an annual soiree, at which he was always present for an hour. One year a proposal was mooted and adopted to close the soiree with a dance, and no one dreamed that the proposal would reach his ears. But when the evening came round, fiddle and piano being stored in an adjacent room, he proved to be in an unusually jovial and conversational mood. Although the heels of the young people grew

more and more restless, he sat on chatting with them half-hour after half-hour, till the time came when the meeting was bound to break up, and then he gravely said good-night to each, being himself last to leave the room and handing the key to the church-officer. Not a word was said, but there were no more proposals to dance at church meetings.

Similarly, at one time he was troubled by the aggressiveness of an Episcopalian neighbour, who, as the minister of the parish, thought it right to invite the Wallace Green flock personally to the parish church. Dr. Cairns, having made sure of his ground, called upon him and requested him with the utmost courtesy to attend to those who were more in need of such attentions, wherewith the aggressiveness ended.

While he showed a growing sense of responsibility towards the community,<sup>1</sup> some of his brother ministers were more prominent and energetic in special causes, such as temperance and religious equality. His habit of mind inclined him to the broader and more catholic departments of Christian reform. Twice or thrice indeed he was involved in local controversies with Jesuits, but these were forced upon him and did not lessen the respect in which he was held by the Roman Catholics in the community. His relations to the Episcopalians will best be defined in the words of the Rev. J. G. Rowe, Rector of Topcroft, who was Vicar of Berwick from 1866 till 1880:—

‘When I went to Berwick, Dr. Cairns was the first and, I think, the only Nonconformist minister who called upon me. I was struck at once with his large, well-built frame, fine, open countenance,

<sup>1</sup> Among his papers there is a brief analysis of the religious condition of Berwick :

‘1. Thanksgiving for (*a*) purity of doctrine preached ; (*b*) prevalence of goodwill ; (*c*) exertions made for the young ; (*d*) success of Bible Society, Tract-distribution, etc.

‘2. Acknowledgment of (*a*) intemperance ; (*b*) Sabbath-breaking ; (*c*) deadness of the Church and languor of Christian effort ; (*d*) conformity to the world and inconsistency of Christians.’

bright, intelligent eyes and expressive, masculine mouth. His manner was manly and heartily cordial, not gushing nor obtrusive, but that of a man who meant what he said and was prepared to respect your opinions, while he firmly held and maintained his own. I remember how he wished health and prosperity to me and mine, and a blessing upon the work I came to do. He told me how he admired the liturgy of the Church of England, and how fully he could subscribe to her Articles. His issue with us concerned solely Church government. That he really meant this, was witnessed by his not infrequent attendance at the Thursday morning lecture in the parish church, prompted, I think, by that simple humility which led him to make one of the "two or three" then gathered together, and by his enjoyment of the restful hour and beautiful service. During my residence in the good old town, we were the closest neighbours. Better, holier, more happy neighbours none could have than were he and his sister. He was so retiring and so greatly occupied that we did not often succeed in getting him into our house. Yet we did sometimes, and never without benefit. Once or twice we took a cup of tea with him, and I remember, as doing me great honour, the receiving Dr. Guthrie and Dr. Cairns at the Vicarage. It was only a short call. But a call from two such men!

'We were the best of friends. But my notions were quite as exclusive and churchlike as those of my brethren, and this kept us in public matters somewhat apart. Yet often have I said: "If all men were like Dr. Cairns, how many difficulties, how many wrong feelings would be swept away!"

'... A very warm-hearted man he was, and his warm heart drew others to him. Many years ago he gave an address to the undergraduates at Cambridge. My son, who was among them, had never been in the Doctor's place of worship; but I well remember his description of the pleasant, bright, welcoming countenance and the warm, firm clasp of the hand, and the sincere joy which the great but humble scholar gave to the brave young fellow, in the beginning of that battle of faith and pure life which the elder had fought with such distinction although on different lines. They were of one kin, and by this time my blessed boy and his revered friend are worshipping together in the land where all can think and see, as all will love alike.'

No feature of his ministry was so distinctive as its humility. The example of Jesus was constantly before

him, and it seemed to him most natural and most honourable, if honour bulked at all in his view of life, to employ his whole strength and capacities in the humblest pastoral offices. It would be untrue to say that he underestimated his own powers. The most that can be fairly said in criticism is that he underestimated the worth of what may be done in public, and thus came to give to individuals too large a share of his energies. With his sense of consecration to the ministry he combined an extraordinary depreciation of his personal position, which made him utterly indifferent to social distinctions so far as they affected his own life. That this was entirely unconscious, it would be unreasonable to say ; but the reader will remember that he is tracing the character of a man who at the beginning of his career had been faced by the idea of distinction, had wrestled with it and had cast it aside as a thing worthless and dead. To take a place beside the very lowliest men and women, to regard them all as his equals and to keep that place, except when Providence by unmistakable signs led him elsewhere, was the settled purpose which guided all his movements.

Yet in his carrying out of this principle there was a downrightness which raised many a smile among the good people of Berwick. Naturally they noted it chiefly in little things. They told one another how he carried his mother's blue bandboxes through the High Street in broad daylight, and shook hands with servant girls when he made formal calls upon their mistresses. They did not know that, when he was travelling, he dropped a few words to every chambermaid about her religion, and coupled his *douceur* to the 'boots' with a friendly handshake. It seemed a remarkable thing to the elders, that when they were formally considering a request from an ostler in the Red Lion for admission to communion, the minister should say : ' He is an excellent Christian man ; I have known him for long ; he is my cousin.' They did not know that one great delight of his annual



holiday was that it enabled him to sink into the broad stream of humanity and to speak as a friend with the beggar on the streets and the labourer in the fields. Any one who will read his frank record of how he knelt on Croagh Patrick to help a tattered Irishwoman to light her pipe and gave her a shilling for tobacco as a compensation for listening to an exposure of the errors of Papacy, will discover his interpretation of the words: 'Before honour is humility.' A Berwick friend recalls how he said to Dr. Cairns in a bantering way about one of his greatest sermons: 'Do you know that that sermon of yours is being sold for a shilling?'

'A shilling? Oh, that is far, far too dear.'

'But who gets the shilling, Dr. Cairns?'

'Well, I suppose the bookseller gets about twopence, and the publisher perhaps fourpence; and then there is the cost of printing; and the balance, if there is any, goes to the people who asked me to print it.'

'Do you mean that you, the man who wrote the sermon and went to London to preach it, get nothing?'

'Ha! ha! ha!' Dr. Cairns roared, laughing till the tears streamed down his cheeks; 'you are a clever man, Mr. —; I never thought of that.'

He 'never thought' of these things—of the bearing of what he did upon his own interests and reputation. They were outside his purview; and if people smiled at his simplicity, they smiled with loving veneration.

Naturally the impression of this deepened with the increase of his publicity. The extent of his peregrinations in preaching is almost incredible. In a single year he would preach in forty or fifty different parts of Great Britain, hurrying home to Berwick by early trains or even by night.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> When considering a Call to Edinburgh, he made the following note: 'From March 20, 1863, to March 20, 1864, I spoke or preached at the following places:—London, Liverpool twice, Edinburgh four times, Glasgow five times, Orkney fifteen services, Wick, Tain, Warkworth, Hexham, Yarrow, Selkirk, Eyemouth, Ayton twice, Auchencrow, Duns twice, Stichel, Irvine, Kelso, Coldstream, Wooler, Ilford, Norham, Spittal, Dunfermline.'

To the outsider it seemed as if he must live on the railway, and indeed even his iron frame was strained to the utmost, as his letters show. Yet as a rule the intellectual effort was limited, for he confined himself to a few sermons, which he rarely altered, and an hour or two sufficed to revive his recollection of them. But the sermons which increased his reputation were of another type—not so much sermons as Apologetic lectures. He would take some current phase of scepticism and compress into the limits of an hour a close and clear examination of it, showing its inconsistency or its practical consequences or its bearing upon Gospel truth, and deliver this, without a note to help his memory, from place to place, until a demand arose for its publication. A good type of such sermons may be found in one which he preached before the National Bible Society in 1863, and which, under the title of *False Christs and the True*, ran through many editions in England besides being translated into German. It was written when the religious world was excited by the startling popularity of Renan's *Vie de Jésus* and immediately after the appearance of the second edition of Strauss's *Leben Jesu*, and consisted in a closely reasoned defence of the historical Christ. Without rhetoric or denunciation, it exhibits in clear outline the mutually destructive character of the naturalistic theories of the Incarnation, their incompatibility with an intelligent belief in the Gospels and their incongruity with history. The argument is more like that of a theological magazine than that of a popular sermon. Yet every now and then living fire breaks out. We quote two or three passages, not as the best but as fairly indicative of the style of his oratory at this stage. In the first passage he is speaking of the contrast between the first and the second editions of the *Leben Jesu* :—

‘With the gradual abandonment of the Tübingen hypothesis of a late date of the Gospels, and the retrenchment of nearly a century of the time within which a fanciful modification was possible, the

mythical theory lost all plausibility. Though Strauss had declared the future construction of the Gospel history, without the use of stones taken from his building, a hopeless task, not only did the ablest names in Germany reproduce the life of Christ in declared opposition to his theory, but others, and these in increasing numbers, rose up to develop that fertile theme as if he had never written. The living Christianity of Germany had ceased to think of him; the prevalent unbelief had learned to follow other masters; so that, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of his book, the task of recalling attention to it devolved on himself; and yet he was found to have shared so far in the general abandonment of his own theory, that he soon afterwards came forward to declare that the tone of recent defences of Christianity had driven him back for edification to the Wolfenbüttel fragmentist whose work he re-issued, and who, as is well known, makes Jesus and His apostles so unlike innocent enthusiasts, that they were, on the contrary, partners in the long and ever-recurring pious fraud of Jewish sacred history. . . .

‘. . . This is all that is left for Renan as the exponent of the last phase of naturalism. This is the God on whose breast Jesus reposes; and when he leaps the gulf impassable to ordinary men between the human and the divine, this confused conscience of the universe, not yet become absolute, and undistinguishable from atheism, is all that he holds in his embrace. The moral Deity of Kant, seated firmly amidst the ruins of schools and temples, on the stern summit of the law of duty, is out of date. The God, even of Voltaire, who, if he existed not, would need to be invented, is no longer a desideratum. A God who must work no real miracles, but who can dispense with sham ones, is the latest product of religious philosophy. It has designed a temple, but only achieved a cenotaph; and the white sepulchre, garnished with paint and strewn with *immortelles*, which, amidst the applause of millions, it has erected, is the common tomb of natural religion and of Christianity. . . .

‘The success of Christianity has been so stupendous that Renan bows down always before the impression and ascribes it to the historical plan of God. Yet it may be demonstrated that, as Renan has stated the problem, it defies his efforts. Let us grant that Christ was a millenarian enthusiast preaching a Kingdom of latter-day saints. Will this millenarianism, taken in connection with Christ’s morality, account for his influence over men? Renan grants that neither of them was original, and that neither by itself



would have been sufficient; not to add that they seemed contradictory influences. But he goes on to say, and this is the very essence of his treatise as a theory of the origin of Christianity: "It was exactly this contradiction which assured the fortune of his work. The millenarian alone would have done nothing durable; the moralist alone would have done nothing powerful. Millenarianism gave the impulse; morality assured the future." There is here a singular confusion of thought, which vitiates the whole argument. Had the belief in the approaching end of the world given an impulse in the direction of obeying Christ's morality, there might have been something in this cause; so that when the end of the world did not come, the morality might still have been adhered to for its own sake. But it was a mere general impulse or revolutionary shock to the mind that the millenary belief gave; and Renan himself admits that the morality of Jesus suits better a settled state than a revolutionary one. While men, therefore, might have been stirred up to follow Jesus through fear or hope of the world's approaching end, this confessedly would not have been a moral success of Christianity; and then, when they were undeceived, the whole transient growth would have withered away. It is characteristic of Renan to ascribe the larger success to the error rather than to the truth; and he totally forgets to account for the success of the Gospel among the Gentiles, who were not, like the peasants of Galilee, inflamed with the hope of an instant kingdom, but to whom every conception of the Messiah, with or without a millennium, was unknown. The impression likely to be made by Christian missionaries who, in our day, should preach the immediate coming of Christ in the streets of Benares or Peking, may help us to judge of the revolutionary impulse of such preaching eighteen hundred years ago in the streets of Antioch or Rome.

' . . . Yet a book like Renan's is the inevitable sequel of all other attacks made, within Christian Churches and without, on the veracity and authority of the Bible. Till the anti-supernaturalist school have eliminated miracle from the Gospels, and reduced Christ to the laws of human development, they have done nothing; and therefore, if this be their last word (whether they have courage to speak it or no), it is material to show how incoherent it is, how contradictory to all the laws of thought and truth, and how unerringly its charge of illusion brought against the origin of Christianity recoils, like an echo from a rock, on its own explanation. And yet has Renan, however unwittingly, rendered a real service to the Christian cause by the very intrepidity with



which he has carried out the pure humanitarian theory of Christ, and by the vigour with which he has asserted all the intolerable results which it involves.'

Such sermons are, like review articles, to a large extent ephemeral, their power lying in their adequacy to meet special movements of the shifting current of unbelief. Yet their value is indisputable. There are few in any generation who can exhibit fairly the bearings of speculative theology upon the faith by which men live, and still fewer who can constrain large audiences to listen for more than an hour to solid Christian thinking; and Dr. Cairns achieved these ends without departure from the rules of fair debate and with notable disdain of the ordinary artifices of oratory. It would be hard to say whether his popularity was greater with the ordinary hearer or with educated persons. Plain people rejoiced, without full understanding, to hear the foes of faith demolished one by one by so doughty a champion, while theologians recognised that a man who could do this work so thoroughly, so honestly, and in so catholic a spirit, was rendering important service to the Church of the day. Letters of thanks poured in upon him from distinguished men of all schools; and if the Broad-Church party murmured that 'Cairns was losing himself in popular apologetics,' there was no sneer behind the murmur, for it is impossible to sneer at a man who deliberately professes to defend the creed of Christendom before general audiences, and who in his defence uses no unfair argument and appeals to no vulgar prejudice. 'I do wish,' wrote Macmillan, 'that you would let us hear your judgment upon Maurice and Kingsley. Everything you say, albeit inimical, is the utterance of a gentle and knightly enemy.'

The same may be said of numerous controversial articles which appeared during this period in various magazines—several in the *Dial*, a brief-lived but vigorous weekly, edited by Mr. Peter Bayne. Perhaps the most notable were a

series evoked in 1861 by the appearance of *Essays and Reviews*, and published afterwards in a separate shape under the title of 'Oxford Rationalism.' With a discrimination which will now be generally recognised, he singled out Jowett's Essay as superior to the others both in tone and in substance, and questioned the title of several of the writers to remain within the Church of England, holding the views which they professed with regard to the supernatural elements of Christianity.

The question of creed-subscription was forced upon him personally in 1866 at the annual meeting of the National Bible Society, held in the City Hall of Glasgow. The Duke of Argyll, in opening the meeting from the Chair, drew a contrast between belief in the Bible and belief in creeds, and declared that Confessions of Faith, although historically important, are not binding upon the individual conscience, and that each must determine for himself the extent of his adherence to them. The Duke, himself a stalwart Christian apologist, was at that time immensely popular in the west of Scotland, and the clergymen who followed held their peace. But when Dr. Cairns rose, he had an air of hesitation which was always understood by those who knew him to betoken some emphatic declaration. After a courteous preface, he craved leave to interpose a word with regard to individual liberty of judgment; whereupon the audience showed its hitherto unexpressed sentiments by bursting into vehement applause. He proceeded:

'I feel called upon to say that, while we concede the most absolute latitude and liberty to all who are beyond the pale of particular Churches, yet for the sake of that great principle of liberty itself and the authority of the Word of God, on which, as well as upon the voice of conscience, that principle is founded, we do not concede that those who have voluntarily accepted special Confessions as their own may, while those Confessions remain unrecalled and unrevoked, depart from them without putting themselves right with the Christian public. The grand and sacred interests of Christian truth

and Christian morality must not be compromised by a contradiction between the creed which has been accepted and the belief of those who have accepted it. In this qualification of the sacred principle which you, my Lord Duke, have so eloquently and forcibly laid down, I do not refer to any special case. Yet, as the minister of a Church which has given its assent to a creed, I could not myself so carry out that principle as to consider, when anything new had dawned upon me, that I was not bound to come and make such statement as would save every appearance of contrariety and contradiction in the eye of the Church and of the world. I say this, lest I should be held as assenting to all the consequences deduced from the noble assertion of the rights of private judgment to which we have listened from one who has an hereditary right to speak to the Churches of Scotland on the subject.'

This episode led to a considerable newspaper controversy, in which, however, neither the Duke of Argyll nor Dr. Cairns took much part, and which, therefore, led to no further disclosure of their respective views. One incident emerged illustrating Dr. Cairns' singular integrity. When the report of the meeting was being prepared for the press, the Secretary of the Society, in sending a shorthand report in proof, pointed out that some impromptu expressions might be altered with advantage. He replied that, while several of the sentences were undoubtedly in very bad English, he must, in the case of a controversy, abide by what he had said, and that he had no reason to doubt the accuracy of the reporter.

Instances of similar controversy might be multiplied; but it is enough to say that, in spite of his desire to lead a private life, he came to be viewed as a protagonist of evangelical religion. With increasing frequency he was requested to take the field in current controversy. While religious societies passed resolutions asking him to preach or lecture upon special topics, individuals whom he respected pressed upon him the necessity for an adequate reply to this or that assailant of the faith. Not more than twice or thrice, however, did he respond to those appeals. More tempting to

him was an urgent request, signed by people of real judgment, that he would 'speak out' about the appointment of a materialist to one of the Scottish Chairs. This reached him at the same time as a friendly challenge from his old friend Masson that he would answer John Stuart Mill.

'I can name one former student of Hamilton's, now a minister in what would be accounted in England one of the straitest sects of Scottish Puritanism, and who has consecrated to the duties of that calling the powers of a mind among the noblest I have known, and the most learned in pure philosophy. Any man who, on any subject of metaphysical speculation, should contend with Dr. Cairns, would have reason to know, ere he had done with him, what strength for offence and defence there may yet be in a Puritan minister's hand-grip.'<sup>1</sup>

But in the face of such calls he fell back upon his 'quiet pastoral activity,' adding a few pages now and then to his projected treatise and repeating to himself a favourite motto: 'So glide my life away!'

In the spring of 1864, however, a definite and all but successful effort was made to alter his course. For half a century—indeed, since the days of Dr. John Erskine—Edinburgh had been favoured with a series of eminent evangelical preachers, but now there was a threatened break in the succession. Dr. Guthrie's health had given way, Dr. Candlish had begun to retire from public affairs, and the foremost preachers of the Established and United Presbyterian Churches happened then to be in other parts of Scotland. The centralised character of Edinburgh and its Athenian spirit gave special prominence and influence to the living voice, and it was reckoned desirable to secure some one who would continue the succession. Accordingly there arose a movement, widely spread and undenominational, to 'bring Cairns of Berwick to Edinburgh.' The occasion taken was the planting of a United Presbyterian

<sup>1</sup> Masson's *Recent British Philosophy*, 1865; p. 265.



church in the rising suburb of Morningside, and a Call was presented in due Church form. But the strength of the Call lay in strong representations from other quarters that there was work awaiting him in Edinburgh which no one else could discharge. The matter was lifted out of a congregational aspect by a memorial from 167 elders of the metropolis, stating that the Call represented the needs of the United Presbyterian Church. The Free Church leaders, with whom he had by this time come into close relation, urged him to come. Hundreds of the students at the University, led by those who were preparing for the ministry, memorialised him to the same effect. But a single document, with its signatures, will best explain the character of the invitation:—

EDINBURGH, *March 26, 1864.*

‘The subscribers, understanding that the Rev. Dr. Cairns has received a Call to the congregation of Morningside, desire to express their earnest and strong conviction that his removal to Edinburgh would be a signal benefit to vital religion throughout Scotland, and more especially in the metropolis, where his great intellectual gifts and powers, his deep and wide scholarship, his mastery of the literature of modern unbelief, and the commanding simplicity and godly sincerity of his personal character and public teaching would find an ample field for their full and immediate exercise.

‘JAMES CRAWFORD, LORD ARDMILLAN; E. F. MAITLAND, LORD BARCAPLE; JAMES MONCREIFF, M.P.; ADAM BLACK, M.P.; DAVID BREWSTER; LYON PLAYFAIR; ALEX. C. FRASER; THOMAS CONSTABLE; JOHN COWAN, LORD COWAN; P. C. MACDOUGALL; J. BROWN, M.D.; PHILIP KELLAND; JAMES LORIMER; JAMES Y. SIMPSON; J. S. BLACKIE; WILLIAM H. GOOLD; W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER; ROBERT S. CANDLISH; WILLIAM HANNA; F. BROWN DOUGLAS; ALEX. MONCRIEFF; CHARLES COWAN; JAMES CUNNINGHAM; ALEX. CRUM BROWN; J. W. HARVEY, R.S.A.; JAMES MILLAR.’

There was no mistaking the meaning of this. Men who by character, ability and definite Christian activity were entitled to speak for the Church, thought that it was his duty

to go to Edinburgh, and the impression upon him was only deepened by an endeavour made by the secular press to show that such representations were worthless and absurd. He wrote to two of the memorialists whose judgment he specially respected, asking them to state at greater length the reasons which had led them to append their signatures, and then betook himself to that privacy in which all great questions of his life were decided. The Berwick people, as nine years before, showed their knowledge of their minister by their procedure. They represented to him the 'irregularity' of these memorials, assured him of their wish to increase his leisure for literary work, and offered to appoint a probationer to act as his substitute when public duties called him away from home. Those arguments turned the balance, and after a period of hesitation more perplexing, according to his own statement, than any other in his life, he declined the Call in language so frank and unpretending as to elicit the admiration of the journals which had made sport of the proceedings at an earlier stage. While acknowledging that his ministry might have wider usefulness if transferred to Edinburgh, he hinted that already he preached very frequently in great cities, and that therefore there was no reason for him to change, so far as special occasions were concerned. Such relief from ministerial duty as the change would bring could, he reckoned, be secured only by detaching the duties of the pulpit from those of the pastorate, and such a severance he declined to make.

'Amidst mingled activities I am interested and instructed by the changing experiences of people whom I know and love. I have learned more of the truth, the value and the adaptation of Christianity from the scenes of my daily ministry than from all books and other companionships. I have learned to preach in the sickroom, and beside the deathbed and the grave, amongst the joys and sorrows both of rich and poor, and amidst the smiles and hymns of children.'

He considered that the more commanding position of Edinburgh was counterbalanced by the intimate connection which he had established at Berwick with the various Churches in England; and as to public Church questions, the pressure of minor agitations was distasteful to him, while his position at Berwick was peculiarly favourable for the furtherance of Church Union. There was indeed only one reason which would have led him to exchange the quiet of Berwick for a situation in which he would have been committed to a larger share in the details of public life, viz., the prospect of increased leisure for study.

‘I do not know what ties I would not break to extend my knowledge of Christian, semi-Christian and un-Christian literature in this age of grave and perilous conflict, and to attempt to make some contribution to the cause of truth. However, the kind arrangements which my people have suggested, and of which I mean to take full advantage, have removed this reason for a change; and if I can ever do anything more extensive in this field—in regard to which past delay and disappointment forbid me to speak otherwise than with great caution—I am likely to do it better without any rupture of ties or change of relations. . . .

‘I do not forget that Morningside has been, so far, the representative of Edinburgh. It is with a profound sense of responsibility that I decline a call to a city with a Christian influence so great, of whose offered welcome, so cordial, so catholic, so inviting, I feel deeply unworthy, and which has thus added a fresh obligation to older benefits that I can never repay, and renewed friendships with the living and sacred memories of the dead. (At this point Dr. Cairns was so deeply affected that he proceeded with difficulty.) I would follow the departed in the path of duty, though it does not lead me beside their graves, and I cast myself on the candid construction of my many friends in that great community, persuaded that our co-operation in all good works will not be diminished by an act of fidelity to conviction which keeps me locally apart from them.’

There is no doubt that this decision, more than any other since his dedication to the ministry, affected the character of his life-work. He was in his prime, with bodily health



established and with powers matured, yet ready for further development. He had discovered his faculty of ready and impressive extempore speaking, and the stimulus of city life would have added directness, simplicity and variety to his distinctive gifts of oratory. To almost every great preacher a change of scene in middle life has brought some such alteration; and when Dr. Cairns in his forty-sixth year refused to change his surroundings, he practically fixed for life the type of his pulpit eloquence. Thereafter it did not show much development, except that which necessarily accompanied the increasing fulness of his intellectual and moral life; and while there was for twenty years no trace of decline in his preaching, the deepening of his influence was in other directions. There is little satisfaction in discussing the 'might-have-beens' of life, and such discussion would be specially unreasonable in the case of one who steadily pursued a definite plan; but it must be noted that this was one, and not the least important, of the many stages at which he refused to give his life a character which others reckoned to be in the lines of its natural growth.

The refusal had indeed to be repeated again and again. In 1866 he was urged to accept the collegiate charge of Wellington Church, Glasgow, and early in 1867 he was invited to Nicholson Street Church, Edinburgh; but in both cases his negative was distinct and unqualified. Two other invitations of a different kind were addressed to him within this period. In 1864 he was nominated for a Professorship of Exegesis at Knox College, Toronto, and would have been unanimously elected if he had not stopped the movement. In 1867 he was asked to become Professor of Church History and Systematic Theology in the English Presbyterian College. He did not regard this last as involving any withdrawal from the plan of his life, and his letters show that he declined it on entirely public grounds with a special view to the interests of Church Union, which



had by that time become of paramount importance to him. But in none of those cases did he show any anxiety or distress, and the proposals, being by letter and more or less confidential, did not come before the public.

Meanwhile the amount of work laid upon him increased yearly in volume. It was not the United Presbyterian Church that acted as taskmaster. He spoke less in Church Courts, and served less on committees, than most prominent clergymen, until in 1863 the Union question arose. But he was perpetually consulted by those who guided Church affairs at home and abroad. Missionaries who were seeking to adapt their teaching to the needs of the heathen, colonial Presbyterians concerned in the training of their students, ministers at home getting into difficulties with their congregations or presbyteries, young men distressed by sceptical literature, editors eager for his contributions, publishers seeking for guidance—these pressed upon him from day to day, and he replied to their letters, which would fill several volumes, with the utmost care and kindness. This seemed to him no burden but rather a privilege, for he was set upon leading a helpful life, and the more quietly he could render help the more satisfaction did he find.

Although the composition of the *magnum opus* lingered through causes which next chapter will explain, his private reading did not abate, but tended more than ever towards patristic and classical literature. Butler's *Analogy* he read regularly once a year, and he re-read *Origen against Celsus* until he knew its finest passages by heart. When he went away from home to preach or lecture, his usual companion was a volume of Greek or Latin poetry, and when he returned, his recreation consisted in plunging into the minutiae of some theological controversy as a tired pedestrian into fresh water. The recollections of the Rev. G. B. Carr, appended to this chapter, show how, like the Secession ministers of olden time, he gave the students

of his congregation direct benefit from his voluminous learning.

Such tempests of passionate grief as were recorded in last chapter do not leave a strong character unaltered as the wind leaves the sea after storm. 'One's history,' he wrote, after Mrs. Balmer's death, 'cannot be written over a second time, and Providence does not fill up some vacancies.' Few men indeed, after forty-three, seek to fill the 'vacancies' of friendship. There was now no one to whom either by letter or in conversation he poured out his heart as he had poured it out to Dr. Brown, George Wilson and Mrs. Balmer. As long as might be, he clung to Wilson's mother and sister, or rather delighted in their clinging to him. But Mrs. Wilson died in 1864, and in the following year Miss Wilson's marriage, though it did not terminate the brotherly relationship, removed her from his guidance. He had many intimate friends left, and unfailing confidence in his kindred. Yet there was the empty chamber, the silent chord, the sealed letter—the very existence of which the keenest observation was needed to detect. For the mark of the man was that he had so conquered his trials that they left no impress of moodiness or gloom. A certain abstractedness there was, as of one whose life was apart from present scenes. But this gave way in a moment at the sound of a friendly voice, and the simplest joke would call forth the old roars and convulsions of laughter. In earlier years he frequently, almost to tedium, wrote and spoke about the brevity of life and his own willingness to die. Now such reflections became rare, time having been brought into unbroken line with eternity, and death being of less consequence to him. He had become one of those to whom, after the measure of a man, one day is a thousand years and a thousand years are one day. Yet he was, as before, supremely happy. 'For myself,' he writes, 'I have not a wish on earth that is not gratified; I desire nothing but to labour on thus to the end.' With this there

was combined a hopeful, sanguine, almost regal faith in the divine government of the world, and in the progress of the kingdom of Christ. It was in public that the change of his character became most apparent—in a disinclination to controversy, a suppression of personal differences, a softening of tone in his apologetic preaching and writing, which, to say sooth, had hitherto been sufficiently emphatic. More stimulus was required to lead him to gird on his armour, more persuasion to convince him that any man's thoughts were evil; and if this kept him from lines of distinction which the ordinary judgment would have commended, it taught even those who criticised him to concede to him the place held by those who obviously yield only to the highest influences. 'The first part of his life, with the pastorate as its governing interest, may be said to end at this stage; and the spirit which marked its close may be described in words which he used of another. 'In a sense of indestructible unity and predestined association, he came daily to the spirits of the just: and next to the hope of the highest welcome, there breathed in his lifelong struggle the humble but warm desire to gain also their sentence at the end of the day, that he had not marred their work nor dishonoured their memory, but like them had borne and had patience and for Christ's name's sake had laboured and had not fainted.'

FROM REV. F. D. MAURICE

5 RUSSELL SQUARE, *Feb. 14, 1861.*

' . . . The only question about the Atonement which I wish to stir is this. Did the Father send the Son, who was of one substance and nature and purpose with Him, that He might take our nature and die on the Cross to redeem us out of slavery to the Devil, and to reconcile us to Himself? Or did the Son take our nature and die on the Cross, that He might redeem us or some of us out of the hands of His Father, who had a purpose of destroying us? *No* statements and no phrases of high Calvinists, moderate Calvinists, any-ists, offend me which are in harmony with the first

belief. *All* statements and phrases of high Calvinists, moderate Calvinists, any-ists, which approximate to the latter statement or imply any the slightest modification of it, I wish, God being my helper, to resist to the death. I do not charge you or any one with preferring the last to the first. See you to that, and let God see to it! I must assert a distinction which I believe is higher than heaven, deeper than hell, for the sake of God's honour and man's salvation. . . .'

## TO MISS WILSON

BERWICK, *Feb.* 14, 1861.

' . . . The review will do no harm. The writer is, I fear, religiously antipathetic; and something of the kind I expected from the school which George attacked in the person of Douglas Jerrold. You must just suffer it, and be thankful that neither the subject nor the writer is buffeted for faults.

'I wish I could help you to *Helpful Women*. But my ignorance in that region is great and boundless. There is the noble Olympia Morata in the forehead of the morning sky of the Reformation in Italy and Germany; and the immortal Catharine De Bora, wife of Luther. . . .'

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *May* 11, 1861.

' . . . One reason of my uncertainty about coming is the prevalence of considerable religious feeling in Berwick at present. I should rejoice to be able to speak of the movement in unqualified terms; but being in the hands of the Primitive Methodists, it has all the typical characters of their religion, and especially their revival religion—boisterous singing, the anxious seat, women and children praying, and services protracted till midnight. Still, good is being done, and some young people connected with my congregation have, I hope, received saving impressions. . . . I do not go to the meetings themselves; for, as I could not control them, I do not like to be responsible for them. . . .'

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *July* 24, 1861.

' . . . I hope to go to Geneva for the Evangelical Alliance meetings; but I contemplate spending ten days before in seeing some



parts of the Rhine and Switzerland. If I am spared to carry out my plan, there will not be much unexplored either in Switzerland or on the way. It is not very encouraging thus to diminish the sources of enjoyment; but, like the Good Parson, one must learn to think of brighter worlds in order to allure the people—a highly professional view of duty, you will say. . . .

‘I have one piece of very pleasant intelligence to send you, the appearance of good among the young people in my congregation. A gentleman from London began two months ago some meetings for children. Considerable interest was awakened; and I have thought it right to begin a separate meeting with our own children. . . . A short address is given; and then all who come are conversed with, separately and solitarily, by myself or other persons connected with the congregation. The conversation consists of a few questions and solemn appeals to repent and believe. No profession of anxiety is exacted. They know what awaits them, and yet they come in such numbers. I have never enjoyed anything more, and I hope that God will hear our prayers and send much blessing. . . .’

#### TO MISS WILSON

BERWICK, *Aug.* 19, 1861.

‘You would get a notice of the death of Mrs. Balmer. . . . I saw her twice on Saturday. She was perfectly conscious and happy, reposing in her Saviour and able to assent to the truths I stated, especially the 23rd Psalm, which I repeated in verse. . . . There was no death-scene and no struggle. She departed almost imperceptibly: “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

‘Mrs. Balmer has been to me for many years so close and faithful a friend that I can hardly realise her absence or estimate the blank her departure makes. I have many friends left, some invaluable ones, and I bless God for all that they are to me—would that I could be more to them—but one’s history cannot be written over a second time, and the providence of God itself does not fill up certain vacancies in our experience. This I have felt before, and will now feel again; but the will of the Lord be done. The departed may well be suffered to reach their kingdom. . . .’

#### TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *Dec.* 13, 1861.

‘. . . I am sorry that I have written no sonnets that can be lent or copied. Their privacy is no loss to anybody, and their extinction

by fire is highly probable. Would that I could have written anything on George! But I knew I could not, and never tried.

'I have done little yet to the work I contemplated, not having written in all more than two chapters. I hope this winter to write one on the Incarnation. . . .'

## TO MRS. WILSON

BERWICK, *Jan. 1, 1862.*

' . . . I am unspeakably distressed at the prospect of war with America; and you, in addition to Christian and philanthropic anxieties, must feel concerned about Daniel and his family. My fears are greater than my hopes; but a short time will now decide. This stupid world does not get a bit wiser since the days of Nebuchadnezzar and Chedorlaomer. I do not know whether to cry or to rave; but perhaps it would be better to pray. . . .'

## TO MISS WILSON

BERWICK, *Feb. 24, 1862.*

' . . . I was just thinking how I should fulfil my part in the Preface when your letter came. I hope to send it soon. . . . I can advise, unhappily, nothing about titles. My whole mind takes unkindly to book-producing from contents to titles. . . .'

'I read over last week, with great admiration, Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. Observe, brethren, as a practical inference from what hath been said, that the true knight is the Saviour of the world, the Round Table is the Christian Church and the *Idylls of the King* are a metrical sermon with four heads. . . .'

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *May 21, 1862.*

'Let me thank you much for *Religio Chemicæ* and the dedication. I hope it may not inflate my vanity, but only minister to gratitude, which is one of the most innocent, as it is one of the most pleasurable of the emotions.

'I see that a long sentence is reproduced to the honour and glory of Mr. Maurice. This I wrote at George's suggestion, long before that redoubted theologian had developed himself into his later phases. It is not unlikely that this, coupled with a passage in the Letters, may raise some complaint against us all by those who do

not know when they were written. . . . It might be worth while to note the date in a footnote. A more general testimony is of less consequence; but in the passage the truth of Mr. Maurice's views is vouched for, which some might suppose a certificate of later and less laudable disputations. I forget whether there is anything in the letters directly controverting any of his dogmata. If so, this would entirely supersede any caveat. From the candid and intelligent there is nothing to fear; but unhappily neither the admirers nor the assailants of Mr. Maurice belong eminently (at least not all) to this category. . . .'

TO MRS. WILSON

BERWICK, *Nov.* 21, 1862.

'This season recalls sad memories, though the shadow of death is turned into morning. May it be given to us to remember the departed, as Tacitus says, by imitation; or, in higher words, not to be slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. I met lately, in reading over some parts of John Howe, with the fine thought that God is better served by the lowest in heaven than by the highest on earth, as nothing can possibly glorify Him so much as perfect conformity to His will and devotion to His glory.

'We shall in God's time leave this tumultuous scene with all its struggles and mysteries and have light cast on our remaining darkness. We may well indeed wait patiently and work cheerfully; for God is on our side, and our High Priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. I feel more pleasure in the work of the Christian ministry in all its parts. It seems to me so much more glorious a thing to be doing good than anything else—even seeking truth, though more humility is learned in that way than the world in all its schools can teach.

'Continue to pray for me from year to year as I feel more than ever the burden of responsibility, which is often more than I can easily bear. But I do not yield to depression, but wish to live and die in the faith and comfort of what is infinitely worth all labour and all endurance; the blessed above alone know the great reward.

'Last year my absence from home exceeded all bounds; and I must now cultivate rural tranquillity.

'I hope sincerely that you keep well and that all goes happily. "So glide my life away!" It would glide better if there were not so many rocks in the current, native to the stream, and only wearing

down very slowly under the friction of all the discipline and lessons of time. However, let us be thankful if the current is in the right direction and not going on to the Dead Sea.'

## TO MISS WILSON

BERWICK, *April 8, 1863.*

'In March I had to go through a great amount of Papal reading: the Decrees and History of the Council of Trent; Waddington and Neander on the Council of Constance; Calvin and Turretin on the Romish question; Isaac Taylor's *Loyola and Jesuitism*; the whole of Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, of D'Aubigné's *Reformation*, and of Ranke's *History of the Popes*, with M'Crie's *Knox*, Chillingworth and Fuller. I have learned a good deal of Italian out of Ranke, and have written on the subject. I do not regret the time spent on the study, more especially as much of my work has been a vindication of John Huss, for whom I have a special liking, having some years ago gone over the scene of his martyrdom in Constance. Out of the eater may come forth meat; and the only great drawback has been that I have had to content myself with the most vulgar authorities, no book of reference in the least degree voluminous or rare being accessible here. However, I have done the best with my materials.

'I hope I may now get leisure for something more congenial, though every branch of theology is for me increasingly interesting. I have had to preach and visit as usual, and a pressing request from a friend extracted from me a review of a missionary book in 600 pages, which had first to be read. I have also been struggling to follow the Colenso controversy, though little is now to be added in that field. I am behind on the antiquity of man, but I am quite willing to take science if it come authenticated; I have no doubt that Revelation will square with it. . . .

## TO MISS JANET CAIRNS

KIRKWALL, *Aug. 15, 1863.*

' . . . On Sabbath I took part in the Communion service, and Dr. Paterson's congregation verified all I had heard of it. On Monday there was a Union meeting in the Free Church where with others I spoke. . . . As I had received an urgent request to go round our congregations in Orkney with Dr. Paterson, we went out



on Wednesday to Tankerness and each gave a short address; ditto on Thursday at Orphir in the Free Church, and on Friday at Firth. The mental labour is small, the addresses being quite extemporaneous; and one sees the country and gets the fresh air without any fatigue. Since Wednesday, we have all been here in excitement about the Channel Fleet which lies in the Roads. . . . Dr. Paterson and I have seen a great deal of the officers. . . . I value this, never having come very near naval society before. The introduction which I valued most was to Captain Chamberlain of the *Resistance*, who turned out to be the son-in-law of Basil Hall and introduced me to his son. I had the great gratification of mentioning to him the obligations of our family to the Dunglass house, and told him the story of poor Thomas and Sir John Hall's kindness, and also Captain Basil's kindness in visiting me once when I was beginning my studies. He was deeply affected by the recital and called next day. . . . Nothing has given me more genuine pleasure than this meeting; and it seemed to give him as much, which quite drew my heart to him, and made me wish every blessing at parting on Basil Hall's grandchild.

' . . . Next week I expect to visit several places on the other side of the island. . . . and I have been urged much to take another week about Tain and Strathpeffer. . . . '

#### TO MISS WILSON

BERWICK, *Sept.* 22, 1863.

' . . . I was delighted to see Daniel so unsophisticated by all the patronage of the world and by all the cant and pomposity of some sections of the world of science. There is nothing like nature and genuine simplicity; and these I found in him, even I think improved. May God give us all grace to hold fast the true and the solid, which cannot be if we forsake the path of lowliness and supreme regard to the glory of God. . . . I have greatly enjoyed my holidays, which were or ought to have been *holy* days, as I preached twenty times in four weeks. I am now making up for so much of the pulpit by trying to extract a little Christian edification out of Euripides, who is, by the way, the most Christian of all dramatists. . . . I have no room to speak of the Orkneys, Hexham, Selkirk and Yarrow—each comely in its kind. The earth is full of the riches of God; but all nature is tame to the higher strains of grace, which our miserable generation is turning away from as a faded memory of juvenile credulity. How different the sublime adoration of Milton in his

*Paradise Regained*, of which I lately read over the fourth book as a welcome relief after preaching, or rather as a dismissal hymn! It will be a long time before the negations of our current literature rise so high. . . .'

TO MISS BROWN.<sup>1</sup>

BERWICK, Oct. 1, 1863.

'I read Mr. Wilson's speech with much interest. He has not fallen upon a stagnant age of the Church of Scotland. I hope he will strike high and cast in his lot decisively with its best and soundest elements. There is room for successors to Maclaurin and John Erskine and such men; and there are those who seem to covet another succession. He is not likely (and this he will allow me to say) to lose anything by connection with the descendants of Ebenezer Erskine and John Brown; and I can wish nothing better for the other member of the future co-partnery than to abstract and absorb all that is vital in our mother Church, from which the rest of us are parted for a season, though it is to be hoped, unless the Church of England first win her affections, not for ever. I hope Miss — may have some time to rest in the Church of Scotland instead of being whirled directly into another terminus; and may rather help to hold up the blue banner in a declining age. But it is the young ministers, it seems, who are afflicted with this awful heresy; and Mr. Wilson being the youngest, will, I fear, be the worst. I read in the *Scotsman* all the correspondence,—the courtship, it may be called—till a John Smith two days ago finally relieved all my anxieties by forbidding the banns. No movement has any chance which is frowned on by such a representative man, at the head of one-third of the human race; so that the Church of our fathers is out of danger.

'One great change leads to another; and I have been trying to familiarise my mind with heathenism by reading over some plays of Euripides ere my holiday end. It may be of some service when things go a little further, and a general move sets in towards the old divinities. I have been securing a front seat in the temple by coming rather before the general congregation; and though things look at present rather squalid and ruinous, those architects who have done so much to paganise Christianity may soon make such alterations and repairs in the way of Christianising paganism, that

<sup>1</sup> On learning of the engagement of her sister to the Rev. J. Stewart Wilson.

one may by and by (as they say in boarding-schools) enjoy the comforts of home.

‘I had intended to write more seriously; but as it is the 1st of October, I take ill with the restraints of school. . . .’

TO MRS. WILSON

BERWICK, *Nov.* 20, 1863.

I send just a line in connection with our anniversary, which falls this year on the Lord's Day. Better is the day of death than the day of birth; and so we shall, I hope, find when looking back on death from the other side. What the departed do and delight in, we do not know except in the vaguest manner; and for myself, I seem to know it less the longer I meditate. It is enough that they rest from all sin and grief and care, and are consciously near to God, and serving the Lord Christ. Nor can I think of them otherwise than as in society; though the nature, extent and details of their social intercourse in a disembodied state are the most insoluble mysteries. It is far better to prepare heaven than to reveal it. What is reserved will be disclosed in its own time. May we only look forward and hasten, and follow those whose faith and patience have made them heirs of all! Continue to pray for me that I may be the better for all the death-beds I have seen, and the better able to watch by more, until the day break and the shadows flee away.’

TO MISS WILSON

BERWICK, *Jan.* 4, 1864.

‘Since you wrote I have opened two more churches, one for Dr. Eadie in Glasgow and one for Wm. Robertson in Irvine. What an addition this was to labours and travels, I need not say; but the doom is now accomplished, and my pledge to my congregation takes full effect. At Irvine a curious scene occurred. In front of the pulpit, which is a semi-circular platform, runs a ring of stone with figures in bas-relief, emblematic of Baptism, Marriage, and the Lord's Supper, the last being in the centre and supporting the cushion on which lies the Bible. The figures had been hastily put up and, amidst the heat of the sermon, I all unconsciously gave such knocks and pushes to the central one, that it threatened to give way; and had I not been dragged back and warned by brethren on the platform, the whole might have yielded to the pressure, and I

myself been precipitated ten feet or so among the ruins of the carved work of the sanctuary. It might have been represented as a judgment on the makers of images and on every one who trusted in them. The speaking and the music in the evening were among the most delightful I remember. However, my "rest and be thankful" has now come, and I must try to find some other outlet for superfluous energy.

'You ask about Inspiration. I do not know a perfectly satisfactory work on the subject. Gaussen is a little too rigid for me, but contains fine things. Read *Aids to Faith*, in reply to the *Essays and Reviews*, which pretty much contains my creed on the subject. Too lax, but very eloquent, are Coleridge's *Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit*. As to Renan's *Vie de Jésus* . . . the very mention of his thesis is sufficient. It is like proving that one's mother is a witch, after others from the same data have proved her a myth. So horrible an outrage the Christian Church most reasonably passes by, and goes on with its old love and veneration. The preposterous thing is that Renan professes to love and venerate too, while virtually piling up the accusation. . . .'

FROM REV. DAVID SMITH, D.D.

BIGGAR, Feb. 26, 1864.

' . . . Unless you have made up your mind never to remove from Berwick, now is the proper time, when, having acquired experience, you yet remain in the full vigour of body and mind. . . . At Morningside . . . you would have a congregation of your own making—not over large . . . You could do good to the cause of religion in general and to our Church in particular. . . . Independent of the influence you could exert upon public opinion, there are a great number of young men connected with Law, Medicine, and the Church . . . over whom you could exert a most salutary influence; and among whom, I understand, there is a very great interest excited in you. . . .'

FROM JOHN BROWN, M.D.

23 RUTLAND STREET, Feb. 26, 1864.

' . . . I have read it<sup>1</sup> and bless God He has such a witness. You have done nothing—as for expression and general execution—

<sup>1</sup> *False Christs and the True.*



so perfect, and you must let it be published at once ; it is sure to do good. It may, by God's blessing, do the best of all good to the poor blinded stumbler himself among those weary, dark mountains of vanity . . . It is all wonderful for elevation and power and perfect justness and mercy.

'How odd to watch the dying out of one error to give birth to the next ! The truth grows ; it never dies in this way in giving birth to some new development—and yet it is always new and always commensurate with the present living wants of man. . . .

'I was looking over some of your letters to my dearest. I am grateful to God for making you a Barnabas as well as a Son of Thunder. . . .'

FROM VERY REV. DEAN MILMAN

DEANERY, ST. PAUL'S, Feb. 1864.

' . . . I have read your *False Christs and the True* with profound interest and great admiration. You have thought it right (not always the case) to read, study and comprehend the authors whom you undertake to refute. . . . It is the best reply which I have yet seen to Strauss and Renan.

'If you by any chance should fall in with my remarks on Renan in the new edition of my *History of Christianity*, you will see that we agree in the estimate of the ephemeral character of his book. . . . I trust that I shall not shock you if I add that one of the strongest points which struck me on reading your pages was that, though called a sermon and delivered as a sermon, it has nothing strictly professional and might have been written by a religious layman, by a churchman of the world. Christianity, even theology, has now passed out of the exclusive domain of the clergy on the Continent. . . . It will never do in England to confine it (as I am sorry to say so many of our leading men in the Church wish and strive to confine it) to the special province, special language, special mode of the clergy ; nor to the old rigid Calvinism of the kirk in Scotland. With a wider basis of Christianity (which it has been my object for many years to establish) all is safe. . . . Let me repeat my strong and conscientious conviction that you have rendered most valuable aid to our common Christianity and done high honour to yourself and to your Church. . . .'

FROM REV. DR. GUTHRIE

FINISTERRE, *March 26, 1864.*

'How kind it was in you to think of me! May our Heavenly Father return you your kindness to a wounded soldier a thousand-fold. I am so thankful that you, and "the like o' ye," are left to carry on the good work which at present I can only help by my poor prayers. I got a bit of a fright before I left England by a report that formidable difficulties had risen up in the two Committees, anent the relations which should or might subsist between Christ and Caesar, Church and State. I could not understand how this could be, unless parties were of a mind to look out for some excuse for dropping the courtship, and I believed better of those who composed in the main the Committees of both Churches. As to the question of Endowments and State Connection *versus* Voluntaryism, everybody understood, I thought, that that was to form a sort of neutral ground—was to be regarded as an affair of mutual forbearance, all the more that it was most unlikely that it would ever become, to use the favourite words of my old friend and still older opponent, Dr. John Ritchie, a *concrete* instead of an *abstract* question. He used to set his audience in roars of laughter by asking those who wished to pin him down to argue the question on abstract principles—Who ever saw an *abstract* Established Church? And then away he went with rich but rather rough humour, setting forth the wrongs and abuses of Establishments in the *concrete*. On writing our friend Mr. Dalziel, I was relieved, though not surprised, to hear from him that these flying rumours were groundless, for which I gave and now give God thanks.

'This is a brilliant people and a great nation; but what is to become of France? Unless God have mercy on them and raise up among them such men as they murdered in cold blood or hunted out of their borders, "their blossom shall go up as dust." Even here, in the most popish district of France, religion, such as it is, has no hold of the intellect of the country; and morals are everywhere rotten. The Lord greatly bless and long preserve you to our country, the world, and the Church.'

FROM JOHN BROWN, M.D.

23 RUTLAND STREET, *April 1, 1864.*

'... I grieve to add to your tension and distress. I do pity you for all that is laid upon you, and which you must and can alone

bear ; but I hope that this document may relieve you so far as to make it all the easier to decide the question. It is a very serious thing to give and to receive such a paper, and you don't need me to tell you how thoroughly representative the names are and how powerful. . . . Adam Black in giving his name said : " This is more than ever was done for Dr. Chalmers." You must not feel oppressed by thinking we expect too much of you, or are expecting you to flourish at soirees and on platforms. . . .

' It is difficult for us to make you comprehend, indeed we would almost not wish you to comprehend, how important we think your being here is to all you and we think best in religious truth and liberty. But the foundation of all our wishes and argument is that you are in our opinion specially fitted by God, and by your own gifts and labours and entire nature, for a special work in His cause, for which we think your removal here necessary. But I ask your pardon : the entire case is before you, and we, every one of us, leave it there, with absolute (as far as we may so speak in any case) certainty and assurance of your judging not only honestly but in the main rightly. . . .'

FROM REV. DR. M'COSH

BELFAST, *April 7, 1864.*

' . . . It may seem presumptuous to offer an opinion on a subject on which it is not asked. But on very grave public grounds I press you to go to Edinburgh. Opinion is in a very critical state there, and may be led to evil or turned to good. . . . The Church has not the power in guiding public opinion which it had in the days of Andrew Thomson and Thomas Chalmers. Dr. Cunningham has been removed ; Dr. Candlish is not able now to control the young mind ; Dr. Guthrie and others have been laid aside ; and I tremble for the young thought of the metropolis of Scotland. I feel myself called on by a deep and imperative sense of duty to press you to enter into that field. . . .'

FROM JOHN BROWN, M.D.

23 RUTLAND STREET, *April 14, 1864.*

' . . . I am somehow not surprised, and I like you perhaps better than ever for what you are going to do. I know you believe it is God's will as well as your own, and now that you have made up your mind, I believe it *is* His will. I like to think of His doing all

things according to the counsel of His own will ; and after a thing is over, then we may know it is for, indeed is, *the* best. But it is easier to say "God's will be done" than to acquiesce ; and that we here will find no easy matter. . . . Most will be surprised by your decision ; they almost all thought you were going to come. I hardly think I did. It is so difficult for the world to believe in any man, especially it would seem a minister, acting disinterestedly. . . .'

## TO MISS JANET CAIRNS

DUBLIN, *July* 30, 1864.

' . . . Last night I preached in Skahard, near Roscommon . . . in a church erected on the property of Mrs. Crum's brother. It was a most extraordinary gathering from all parts. Some came more than twenty miles in pouring rain. Such is the rarity of Scotch preaching there, though they have an excellent Irish minister. . . .'

## NOTES ON A TOUR IN IRELAND

'The flat country over which we rolled on toward Westport had little interest ; but behold on the left, in the midst of the plain, and between us and the sea, the great Croagh Patrick, otherwise called, by way of eminence, the Reek, where St. Patrick preached the sermon that "drove the frogs into the bogs and banished all the vermin." I was seized with an irresistible impulse to leave the car and make the ascent while my companions continued their journey. . . . After skirting the shoulder, I breasted the mountain, and scrambled up over bog and heather till I came on a track. The views thence over Clew Bay, with its multitude of islands, and the green cultivated fields around Westport, were perfectly enchanting. . . . At the base of the cone, I came on a large heap of stones with a block at the top sculptured into a rude representation of the Virgin and Child . . . the monument of some pilgrim who had died on the spot. Amidst the crevices, sheltering themselves from the wind and the rain, I descried the first company of actual pilgrims resting a while till they attempted the summit. They were all barefooted, for neither shoes nor stockings are allowed, and the rough limestone track adds virtue to the pilgrimage. Up the long steep I toiled, struggling with the blast, shapes of other pilgrims looming out dim and gigantic from the mist. The summit is a circular plateau covered over with stones half-formed into something like rude walls,



while in the centre is a large erection surmounted by a cross, and a ring-like path surrounds all, roughly paved with fragments of limestone, over which the pilgrims walk fifteen times, or on the great day crawl on their bare knees. The mist covered everything distant; and I had time amidst the driving cloud, from under the shelter of one of the heaps, to survey my fellow-travellers. Some were cowering amidst the stones; others were making their revolutions; and one man was running round at quick time with a pole in his hand and a look of great abstraction. By and by a group of women came for shelter to the heap where I was ensconced—seven or eight, of different ages—and I began to talk with them. They seemed a little startled by my presence. “Sure, it is not often that a gentleman like you is here,” as if they did not know whether to take me for a pilgrim. One, a hale-looking woman, who had come from beyond Castlebar, took the lead in the conversation, and after some other civil remarks, she drew out a pipe and requested my help in lighting it, the penance not extending to tobacco. I did my best, making a shelter behind the stones and stooping down near the ground; but it had to be abandoned in despair. I then began to ask them what they expected from the pilgrimage, and whether it was sure to take them to heaven. My friend did not venture to say this, though a younger woman was ready with an answer. I spoke of the blood of Christ as what alone could take us to heaven, and said I hoped that by trusting in Him they might get there. The elderly woman crossed herself and cast her eyes upwards with a look of unutterable expression, as if there could be no doubt that such as she would be saved. She then began to speak of one Protestant and another in her neighbourhood who had changed, and seemed to hint that I myself might do worse than change. At length one of the party broke in, “Sure, sir, you will be giving us something to drink after talking with us.” I had by this time endeavoured to say a little more on the vanity of trusting to pilgrimages for salvation. “I cannot give you drink,” I replied, “but I will give a trifle to this good woman to buy tobacco; and you will let me say a little to you of what I say to my people at home.” I then very shortly tried again to state the way of salvation through faith in Christ; and pulling out a shilling, the last I happened to have in my pocket, I gave it to the woman. She grasped my hand with perfect delight and kissed it. “Sure, your reverence is in the right way; and may God ever bless you for your kindness!” The rest, without any envy, seemed to share her joy. I saw the poor woman next day trudging home to Castlebar . . . and she renewed her expressions of

thankfulness. Afterwards I had a talk with the man whom I had seen running round. He had much more intelligence, and frankly admitted that to come to the top of this mountain would do no good unless the heart were right with God—"Only," said he, "Christ tells us not to call Him Lord, Lord, and stop there," quoting the words in the Vulgate, and meaning that pilgrimage was one of Christ's commandments. Here, however, I had the advantage of him, as I could reply not only that the word of Christ said nothing about pilgrimages, but that even his own Church did not encourage this ascent of Croagh Patrick. Afterwards I met this man on my descent, and whether he had got less good from his exertion than he expected, or whether he thought merely to please me, he said, "This is the first time, sir, I have been up here, and it shall be the last."

' . . . The view from the point where the mist ceased could not have been more glorious. The vast sweep of the bay lay open with "an island for every day in the year"; the smaller clustered in picturesque confusion on the right, somewhat larger islands in the centre, with the Mayo mountains beyond; and on the left, Clare Island, with its mountains as high as the Cheviots, and the Atlantic rolling between its promontory and Achil-Beg. A lurid evening sun shone over all, and its westering beam revealed, in the far Atlantic, promontories and islands fading into distance. The pilgrims seemed to enjoy this spectacle as much as I did, and in conversation with them . . . the long descent was beguiled. . . . They thought it a merciful dispensation that so much of the lower slopes was bog, acting like a plaster to their suffering feet. . . . It is sad that one of the loveliest spots in the British empire should be associated with a superstition more gross and debasing than I have witnessed in Bohemia, in Papal Switzerland, or, I had all but said, in Rome.'

#### TO MISS WILSON

BERWICK, *Aug. 7, 1864.*

'My sister kept your letter till after my work was over, and then I learned the great change which had taken place. I have found grief or regret the least element in my feelings, and am thankful that the intense longing for immortality which your mother so lately expressed to me is fulfilled. . . . Since my last interview with her, my thoughts, even amidst the excitement of travel and other work, have gone back to the scene of Wednesday fortnight. One part of our conversation was a charge to tell any congregation I preached to

how happy she was amidst weakness, deafness and the prospect of dissolution. This I fulfilled in addressing an assembly of Scotch settlers in the county of Galway, though of course I mentioned no name. Singularly enough, though I knew nothing of her death, and was even meditating for Monday a long letter full of Irish experiences, I was led this morning to lecture on 1 Corinthians xv. 54-58, and was surprised by the fervour which a higher power infused into the service. Thus I have felt it at every death, but never before unconsciously. I dare not say, with this fact before me, that her removal is a loss to my ministry; for it may be that a higher position of influence than any earthly prayers could reach is now attained. I will therefore be thankful for the past; and I will continue to think of her as still a living presence, not withdrawn by death, but made more and more sacred. . . .'

FROM REV. DR. A. CAIRNS, MELBOURNE

EDINBURGH, *Aug.* 21, 1865.

' . . . I cannot leave this country without expressing to you the very great pleasure your company, your conversation and your preaching afforded me. I shall never again enjoy such a feast as you provided me with in Free St. George's. You are above flattery, and I cannot flatter. But in my circumstances it is allowable that the heart should speak freely and unrestrained by the trammels of a just conventionalism. . . . To you, I am persuaded, the healthy public mind will turn as the ablest expounder of the truth and defender of the evangelical faith against the assaults of numerous enemies. May the Lord hold up your arms and realise the hopes of all who, like myself, admire your intellectual talents and great erudition, because they are sanctified by love consecrated to the glory of the Name that is above every name! . . .'

TO MISS JANET CAIRNS

LEICESTER, *Sept.* 4, 1865.

' . . . The views I have had of Leicester are very interesting, especially the abbey where Cardinal Wolsey died, and the old castle where many parliaments were held in the dawn of English liberty. The chapel of Robert Hall is in a poor lane. . . . The congregation on Sabbath morning was about 500, and in the evening about 1400, there being always a great disproportion. . . .'

## TO THE SAME

LEICESTER, *Sept. 11, 1865.*

' . . . I have got your letter and decided accordingly, viz., to refuse all further offers of preaching. . . . To-morrow I leave Leicester for North Wales, having pleasant memories of it and of the great kindness of the people. The only things unpleasant have been the heat and draughts and general stew of the Temperance Hall, sufficient to sweat down a practitioner for the Leicester races. . . . There is a freedom and directness in such services exceedingly attractive to me; and though I had to stand to the side of the desk and then wheel half round to my right in order to cheat the echo, I believe the feat was accomplished, though at a sad expense of Christian straightforwardness. . . . This evening I attended the annual meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society, and having been asked to come on to the platform, spoke for about ten minutes. Dr. Carey went out from the Leicester chapel—that of which Robert Hall was afterwards minister. . . .'

## TO M. CHARLES LE RÉMUSAT

BERWICK, *April 24, 1866.*

' . . . Allow me very warmly to thank you for your letter, and for your volume, *Philosophie Religieuse*. I have read over *uno haustu* your essay on Mansel, with which I entirely agree. . . . It is indeed a great enjoyment to find our best philosophico-theological literature so thoroughly studied and so candidly judged in France. . . .'

## FROM REV. DR. A. DUFF

EDINBURGH, *July 3, 1866.*

'That *you* should view the missionary enterprise in the light you have done is to me fraught with encouragement and strength. I have long been led to regard it as God's great work on earth—the great work committed to *His* Body, the Church, by its adorable Head and King. And hence, among other reasons, the supreme desirableness of Christian Union. To all your aspirations on that head I do with all my heart and soul respond. Let me make my acknowledgment to you for your many noble utterances on that exalted theme. The perusal of these has again and again imparted to me the intensest and purest joy.'



## FROM REV. PROFESSOR EADIE

GLASGOW, *March 29, 1867.*

' . . . I should say decidedly that you stay with us. I do not think that London and the English Presbyterian Church and College present the same wide field of usefulness. Where shall we find a person to teach Systematic Theology but yourself? At next Synod you will be chosen Professor, and a Chair will be found to suit you and your "line of things." I am sure that your choice of London would be an unspeakable disappointment to the entire Church. . . .'

## TO REV. PROFESSOR CHALMERS, LONDON

BERWICK, *March 30, 1867.*

'The offer so courteously conveyed to me . . . relative to the Chair in your College . . . is a tribute of respect and confidence of which I feel personally unworthy. . . . In dealing with it I have endeavoured to rise to the frankness and catholicity of its spirit, and to weigh carefully and dispassionately the various interests involved. I have also distrusted my own judgment and sought an amount and variety of advice, such as in dealing with calls to other spheres of labour I had not solicited. . . . Placed as I am between the interests of Scottish Presbyterianism on the one side, now so deeply engaged in the Union movement, and that twofold English Presbyterianism on the other, whose rapidly approaching sections the call was equally meant to represent and to assist in consolidating, . . . I had to survey a wide and far from clear field, and to take care that, while ready to seize every opportunity of extricating the question, no step of mine should further complicate it. I am free to confess that, while patriotically alive to the interests of Christianity in Scotland, my sympathies with the English field are such, and such my anticipations of its ever growing fruitfulness, that in certain circumstances I could gladly throw myself entirely into it. Had the question of the separation of our English churches from Scotland been settled, I would have regarded a call coming either from a British Church or from a United English Church as having a force that could hardly be resisted. But in present circumstances I do not feel that the constraint is equal; . . . and as my ties with the General Synod of our Church have not been dissolved, I am bound to regard its authority, and . . . I dare not, looking at the interests of the Union alone at the present crisis, incur the responsi-

bility of presuming upon its concurrence. The Union movement in Scotland . . . has not yet passed beyond the region of difficulty and conflict; and those who have been connected with it from the beginning can hardly change even their local position without in some measure affecting any influence they may have in connection with it. . . . Even the influence of local distance involving frequent absence from the Committee and from other places where I have opportunities of pleading the Union cause, may be unfavourable; . . . and I have no means of fully ascertaining the judgment of the Church. . . . Looking at these difficulties, I must respectfully and affectionately request leave to abide in my present situation, and to do what I can from this centre for the cause of Union and every other cause. . . .’

#### REMINISCENCES BY REV. G. B. CARR

‘For several summers Dr. Cairns gave up an hour in the morning—a gift enhanced by his extraordinary frugality as to time—to reading with another student and myself. His first action, after a cheery “Good-morning,” was to look out to sea and examine the barometer. Then we sat down, he with his wonted carefulness always putting an old letter below his elbow when it rested on the table. Sometimes he lay full length on the sofa reading Latin, Greek, or Hebrew, as the case might be, at sight. Even the Hebrew Lexicon he consulted only once, when it turned out that he was right in his conjecture. The work was gone through soberly; but occasionally an anecdote would come. I remember how he enjoyed telling that a student in offering half the normal fee to Gesenius, who was niggardly, suggested that he should put a “daghesh forte” into it; and with what amusement he explained the intensive force of the verb in Genesis xli. 14, where “shaved” should, as he said, be translated “shaved himself with vigour.” While laboriously exact he was very patient and gentle with us. His scholarly habits seemed to me to hinder a just appreciation of him by the many, who did not sympathise with his love of minute accuracy, and imagined his interest in points of scholarship to be out of proportion to their importance.

‘As an adviser on personal questions, he was slow to interfere. While full of sympathy and willing to talk over a matter in its various aspects, he invariably pressed that the responsibility of decision lay with one’s self, and so left it, after prayer. I got more

good from such discipline than from the best definite and particular advice. When at a later stage I consulted him about theological difficulties, he always dealt with these from the point of view of the history of doctrines. His intimate knowledge of old controversies with unbelief led him often to think it needless to deal specially with modern presentations of doctrines.

‘As to his normal preaching, to which I listened for many years, much that he said of Dr. Brown might have been written of himself: “The niceties of metaphysics and the resources of rhetoric he left to those who were less in earnest. . . . All sentimentalism and affectation in the pulpit were abhorrent to his religious feelings and to the masculine simplicity of his nature. . . . Every trace of juvenility and superfluous ornament gradually disappeared.” I imagine that he not only sacrificed his leanings towards philosophy, but his love of style, which was often shown in private by his appreciation of epigrammatic and neat sayings, and by his quotation of eloquent passages. Only a few of his published sermons show what he might have reached if he had given all his gifts full play in preaching. Yet there was not a sermon which did not give examples of his best style. One was ever anew being reminded of the philosopher and apologist who for the moment forgot his audience, and one could see the restrained powers of imagination and even of fancy, with “the poet’s eye in a fine frenzy rolling,” or oratorical force of literary beauty, of individual, bold, rich, varied expression ready with apt metaphor. Sometimes, however, his style was rugged, suggestive, interrogatory, advancing rapidly from point to point, recalling his private conversation and his extempore speech in the class-room. Latterly, there was quite a change in his pulpit manner, the old, somewhat awkward leaning on his elbows being given up. He evidently knew the time for a special effort, as on the occasion of his first appearance on an Edinburgh platform at the meeting of Dr. Guthrie’s Ragged Schools in 1862, or at the Chalmers’ Centenary, when his speech had special interest from its vivid description of the oratory of one whom he was supposed to resemble. One extempore effort is very memorable—an address in the Corn Exchange during a series of evangelistic meetings in 1862. He had just come from Edinburgh, and described how in the High Street he had heard a ragged girl singing a hymn then in vogue, “Rest for the weary.” On this he founded an appeal to every age and class and character. Each sentence began: “Rest for thee, who art,” etc. In solemn tender depth of feeling, together with

strength, chasteness and beauty of language, it appeared to me to equal anything I ever heard. . . .

'I may bear my own witness, from over thirty years of observation, to his rare, perhaps unapproached, character. It was never hinted that it was "a pity he said or did this or that." His wide knowledge of men and affairs of the past served him as a refuge from gossip and other trivialities, and furnished him with resources which kept him from "offending in word." I remember that when we were staying at Hornsey, the Rector said to him in the vestry after service: "Oh, Dr. Cairns, you have come as a spy to see the nakedness of the land!" "And I found it flowing with milk and honey." His shrewdness indeed could not be hid, and the overcoming the temptation to utter his judgment must have involved long self-discipline.

'But standing out beyond his wisdom and prudence was the entire absence of self. This delivered him doubtless from the natural results of the cruel flatteries by which he was tried in public and in which he himself never indulged. No man was more careful in avoiding superlatives about his friends. On one occasion, when he presided at a lecture given by Dr. — to the Theological Society, the lecturer began by fulsome praise of the Chairman, who buried his face in his hand. In proposing a vote of thanks, he spoke somewhat as follows: "In Dr. —'s presence, I shall only say that he has amply fulfilled the promise of his college days." The same careful moderation was obvious at Ordination festivities and other such high-days for flattery. Yet this Pauline absence of self was not coupled with St. Paul's self-revelation. With all his kindness and geniality, one was conscious of a reserve or objectivity which, while it kept him from the temptations of the opposite temperament, removed him to a certain distance from his fellow-men, and even in writing these things I feel as if I were the youth who lectured on George Fox, and to whom an old Quaker said, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep."



## CHAPTER XVIII

### CHURCH UNION MOVEMENT

1863-1873

Cairns' relation to Movement—The situation—Negotiations opened—The Civil Magistrate—State aid—Articles of Agreement—Voluntaryism defined—Free Church Anti-Unionists—Discussions as to Doctrine, Sustentation Fund, etc.—Acceptance of Articles—Difficulties as to procedure—United Presbyterian restlessness—Speeches and correspondence—Growing opposition—Cairns as controversialist—Failure—Effect on Cairns—Explanatory letters.

FROM 1863 till 1873 Church Union was Dr. Cairns' chief public concern and interest. It occupied his mind and heart, and absorbed such leisure as he found amidst his pastoral and professional duties. To some extent it affected even these; for in deciding not to go to Morningside he was influenced by the interests of Union, and, as his letters have shown, he refused a professorship in the English Presbyterian College on the explicit ground that he could not leave the United Presbyterian Church when the Union movement was at a critical stage. The period so occupied was the 'table-land' of his life. When he began to make Union Speeches, to attend Union Committee meetings and to correspond on the subject, he was forty-four years of age, full of elasticity, energy and resources, with obvious and undefined power of expansion either in theology or in practical affairs; when the Union proceedings ended, he was fifty-five, and the general lines of his activity, as well as his position in the eyes of the Church and the country, were to a large extent determined.

Yet this movement, which enlisted the best energies of his full manhood, was unsuccessful. It is true that his personal repute was rather increased than lessened, that he displayed faculties hitherto latent, and that his inward life lost none

of its brightness and strength. But the immediate purpose of the scheme was not accomplished, and the Church which he sought specially to serve emerged from the endeavour a smaller and not a stronger corporation.

The failure did not arise from want of competent allies. All the foremost United Presbyterians were of the same mind on the question. The Union phalanx of the Free Church included Drs. Candlish, Guthrie, Fairbairn, Buchanan, Alexander Duff, Rainy and Douglas, Sir Henry Moncreiff, Lords Dalhousie and Kintore, Mr. Murray Dunlop and Dr. Grainger Stewart. The English Presbyterians were represented by Drs. Chalmers, James Hamilton, M'Crie and Lorimer, and the Reformed Presbyterians by Drs. Goold, Binnie and Symington. Undoubtedly there was opposition from clear-headed, resolute and able men; but no one would compare the two ranks as to distinguished character and practical ability. The Unionists, as the advocates of Union came to be called, were men whose careers in other directions were marked by uniform success, and yet they failed in a cause which in its general purpose will be acknowledged to be a good one—the bringing together of different sections of the Church of Christ.

The materials for explanation are not wanting. Throughout the negotiations Dr. Cairns sent full reports of all Committee meetings to the late Dr. David King, with a view to keeping the English United Presbyterians in line with the proceedings; and these reports, with his voluminous correspondence on the subject, furnish copious data. In order to make clear his contribution to the movement at its different stages, it will be necessary to explain its general course.

Fifty years ago there were in Scotland five 'bodies' of Presbyterians outside the Established Church;<sup>1</sup> while in

<sup>1</sup> Excluding some small 'bodies' which have had little ecclesiastical consequence.

England there were four. All of these, though varying slightly in Church polity, were identical in doctrine and in worship; and immediately after the formation of the Evangelical Alliance, which originated in 1844 in the house of a Secession elder, they began to 'feel after' union. The first actual Union, in 1847, constituted the United Presbyterian Church. In 1852 the Free Church absorbed the Original Secession. As early as 1849 the different sections of Presbyterianism in England proposed to move towards one another, the only hindrance being that the Churches with which they were connected were separate in Scotland; and Dr. Cairns' residence in England, where separation was less reasonable and more hurtful than in Scotland, increased his sense of the need for early action. When he was ordained in 1845, there were no fewer than five denominations of Presbyterians in the little town of Berwick! In 1857 he was one of a dozen ministers and laymen whom Sir George Sinclair of Thurso brought together in Edinburgh to confer about Union; but the only result of the conference was the publication of a manifesto with the signatures of 150 laymen. The final impulse came from the Colonies, and especially from Australia, where the representatives of the different home Churches united in 1859. Dr. Cairns was in constant correspondence not only with Dr. Adam Cairns, the leading Australian Free Churchman, but with the Australian United Presbyterians, and it was largely through his advice that the latter, after holding apart for a while on the ground of their 'Voluntaryism,' took part in the Union. When in 1861 an appeal from Australia came before the Free Church Assembly, Principal Cunningham, the acknowledged leader of the Assembly, made a notable utterance often quoted afterwards: 'There is nothing in the formula of the United Presbyterian Church to which I have any objection; I could sign it myself.' This, with public declarations from Dr. Thomas Guthrie,

gave the general impression that the Free Church was ready, and in the following year deliberate action was taken.

The movement was in the direct line of Dr. Cairns' temperament and convictions. We have already seen that from his student days he had set himself to assert and to defend the generally acknowledged truths of revelation, and that the whole tone of his preaching and of his Apologetic writing was catholic. He was constitutionally appreciative of the excellence of men and systems, and indisposed to strife and rivalry. The course of events had hitherto kept him quite clear of ecclesiastical contention, and he was identified with no one party. Although he was loyal to the Church of his fathers, many of his dearest friends belonged to other Churches, and he had come into close personal relations with most of the leading Presbyterians in Scotland and England. To him the idea of Union was in itself natural, not as a matter of Church diplomacy, but as the outcome of his strongest sympathies and convictions. He had thrown himself with uncommon zeal into the Evangelical Alliance; and the practical work of uniting Churches, which presented itself when he was at the age of enterprise, appealed to him as a call from God. The idea, indeed, by which he was at first governed was that of a great Presbyterian Church as wide as the English language and as comprehensive as Episcopacy—a Church which, while separately organised in different countries for administrative purposes, should be one in basis and spirit, taking the Reformed Faith as its creed, simplicity as its guide in worship and the Bible as its sole ultimate Standard. He recognised that in such a Church there must be range and tolerance, room both for conservatism and liberalism, with individual and even local freedom in many directions. Nothing was further from his mind than the identification of a Church with a particular side in politics or with sectional views of doctrine. There was indeed one other limit. Such



a Church, both in formation and in administration, must be independent and free from constraint by civil powers; and he reckoned that, if supported and specially privileged by the State, it could make no fair claim to be free either in constitution or in creed; so that the idea of union with a denomination established and privileged by the State was not in his thoughts. But the views held by individuals with regard to the relations of Church and State did not seem to him to be essential, and he did not think that any theory as to the abstract right of the State to endow or support the Church should be made a term of Church communion. It is necessary to define this, because it regulated his public speeches and his policy in committee.

His ideal was a large one, and he knew that it must be reached by degrees. Indeed, he kept it to himself after discovering that it withdrew attention from the particular scheme which had first to be carried out,—the Union of the Presbyterian Churches in England and of those in Scotland which had no State connection. He was the first to move in the matter. Taking occasion of an Ordination at Newcastle on January 28, 1863, he declared, in a calm and carefully composed speech, that ‘the time for union between the Free and United Presbyterian Churches had now arrived, that such a union was desirable, practicable and obligatory, and in particular that the only existing divergence between the two Churches, a different view of the Civil Magistrate’s duties in regard to religion, need not be a hindrance, as neither Church made this a term of communion.’ The speech was fully reported and discussed in the Scottish newspapers, and he followed it up by bringing an overture from the Berwick Presbytery to the Supreme Court of the Church in the following May. There were two other overtures on the subject—one from the Lancashire Presbytery and the other from the Broughton Place Session; and the burden of presenting the case devolved upon him and his

lifelong friend Dr. Andrew Thomson. But the burden was a light one, as the right moment seemed to have been chosen. The overture was adopted with the utmost enthusiasm, and the Synod agreed, by a vote of 178 to 17, 'That a Committee be appointed to consider the subject in all its bearings and to report, and, more immediately, to meet with any Committee which may be appointed by the Free Church or any other of the Churches mentioned in the overture, and confer with them as to our relative position and the steps proper to be taken to promote present co-operation and ultimate union.' It is true that the small minority included keen and well-known Voluntaries such as Mr. Renton of Kelso, Mr. (now Principal) Hutton and Mr. (now Professor) Calderwood; but they were not opposed to Union, and would have been satisfied with a distinct assertion at the outset that their views would be 'tolerated' within the united Church. When the resolution was reported a fortnight later to the Free Church Assembly, there was a keener discussion. Professor Gibson, Dr. Forbes, Dr. Begg and others urged that the Standards and the history of the Free Church put union with Voluntaries out of the question; but for the time they were mastered by the statesmanship of Drs. Buchanan and Candlish, and the humour and pathos of Dr. Guthrie. A Committee was unanimously appointed without any *caveat*, and in July those two Committees, with a Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, entered upon 'negotiations'—a sadly significant word—which lasted for ten years. To those who were then boys it seems as if prompt action would have been crowned with success, and as if the wave of enthusiasm for union which was very strong at the time would, had advantage been taken of it, have overborne the dissentients. Still, those at the helm were shrewd men who knew their Churches. They may have been right in thinking that rapid procedure would be ruinous; and the younger generation, who have

still the question of Presbyterian Union to face, must judge how far failure was due to inevitable circumstances and how far to the method which was taken.

The method was this. A programme was drawn up of subjects upon which differences existed, or might be supposed to exist, between the negotiating Churches. At the head was placed that intangible person, the Civil Magistrate, who, through his very intangibility, has for 150 years had power to create one schism after another in Presbyterianism. Eight other subjects were specified. Five of these were administrative and involved nothing vital; but three were of consequence, viz., the Doctrines of the Churches, their Finance, including the Sustentation and Augmentation Funds, and the grants received by the Free Church from Government for maintenance of day-schools. It was felt, however, that divergence of view upon the first point was the one serious obstacle to union, and attention was at once concentrated upon it. First the United Presbyterians tabled a Statement of their special views and then the Free Churchmen tabled a Statement of theirs. That there was direct conflict will be seen at a glance.

#### FREE CHURCH STATEMENT

'The State may lawfully employ the national resources in the support of the Church's ordinances, . . . nor is there in this any violation of personal liberty or of the rights of conscience. And the Church may lawfully accept such support when her spiritual independence is preserved entire. . . . But the question whether such support should be given by the State and accepted by the Church must be decided by each of the two parties according to the time and circumstances.'

#### UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH STATEMENT.

'That the Civil Magistrate is not judge for the community of what is true in religion and has no authority to prescribe a creed or form of worship, . . . and that it is not the province of the State to provide for the expense of religious ministrations.'

These Statements, it should be observed, were not drawn from Church Standards, and did not represent terms of communion in either Church, but only prevalent views; so that the Committee had thus formulated a hindrance to union which previously had been vague and attributable to individual opinion. It was a precarious method, which gave a weapon to the opponents of union. In other respects, however, the Statements showed coincidence. They agreed entirely as to the freedom and independence of the Church, as to the concern of legislators in religion, and as to the duty of civil authorities to legislate for Sabbath observance. Taking the Statements as their materials, the Joint-committee agreed to extract from them certain Articles of Agreement, or, as they were afterwards termed, 'Principles which the Churches hold in common,' and thereafter to formulate the distinctive views of each Church, so far as not included in those Articles. Then came the crucial point of procedure. Dr. William Marshall, perhaps the most far-sighted, if also the most combative, of the United Presbyterians, proposed to begin by defining the idea of the Church—the most natural plan, it seems, for those who were dealing with a Church question. But Mr. Murray Dunlop, a layman who had gained great influence by skill shown in drafting the Free Church Claim of Right, contended that a beginning should be made by defining the idea of the State as regards religion, and his contention carried the day. Although the importance of this decision was not apparent at the time, it regulated all proceedings and determined their issue, for it led the Committee into a series of debates upon the Civil Magistrate which lasted for a year and were twice renewed after the Articles which resulted had been submitted to the Courts of the three Churches. The debates of course circled round the question as to the religious character and duty of the Civil Magistrate. All agreed that he ought in the abstract to be a Christian; but the



question was whether he should be a Christian officially or personally—*qua* Magistrate or only *qua* man—and whether he should use his influence and authority to ‘further’ or ‘favour’ or ‘protect’ or ‘promote’ the Christian religion—whether, for example, he should legislate for Sabbath observance on the ground of the Fourth Commandment or simply on the ground of the social and civil advantage of a day of rest. Some extracts from Dr. Cairns’ letters will show the character of the discussions on this and other points, and will also, in spite of his self-suppression, illustrate the part which he played in them and the devout, eager spirit by which he was guided.

TO REV. DR. KING

BERWICK, Oct. 30, 1863.

‘. . . Yesterday was a memorable day, and I believe has gone far to seal the Union. . . . We were not without breezes, even squalls; but I hope we are now in the Fair Havens.

‘At our separate committee meeting on Wednesday, the Free Church Statement was discussed. The general judgment was favourable, with many remarks and exceptions . . . and it was agreed to go to an open conference, Dr. Harper being instructed to say that the document was not regarded as raising any formidable bar to union.

‘At the joint-meeting Dr. Buchanan was in the Chair, and admirably arranged the business. Dr. Harper having made his statement, . . . much arguing followed as to the sense in which the Magistrate may be said to “judge for the community.” It was found that in one sense the Free Church repudiated this, but held that our statement, being ambiguous, could not be accepted. A new turn was given to the debate by Mr. Murray Dunlop, who said that our paper had somewhat disappointed him by leaving out the sixth article of Sir G. Sinclair’s resolutions,<sup>1</sup> and that he feared without this no union could be effected, as we based the duty of the Magistrate towards religion too much on expediency, and did not

<sup>1</sup> ‘That in the judgment of both Communion it is a duty incumbent upon all men and especially upon those in authority . . . to recognise the paramount supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . and to regulate their conduct in whatever capacity by His laws. . . .’

recognise Christ's supremacy. This called up Dr. Harper . . . and Dr. Johnston of Limekilns, who explained that it had been left out as being ambiguous and so associated with Free Church peculiarities as to be a *vox signata*, but they declared their readiness to state the same truth in other language. As Mr. Murray Dunlop had referred to my quoting this resolution in the Synod, I had to rise and explain that, not having been present, I did not know the reason of its omission, but could enter into the difficulty felt by our committee, while personally ready to accept the words. Strong statements from Dr. Lindsay and Dr. Robson as to their Voluntarism being founded on the Word of God and as to the Magistrate's duty to own that Word and disendow the Church accordingly, made it apparent to the Free Church brethren that we had no wish to recal our acknowledgment of the Magistrate's duty to be subject to Christ and to rule according to His word. This brought unity, Dr. Marshall following up with a suggestion to alter the language, so as to omit the word "recognise," which was ambiguous. This gave universal satisfaction to Free Church brethren, except Dr. C. Brown, who feared that we could not fully hold the point if we objected to such words as "own," and "acknowledge" in place of "recognise." On different grounds, Dr. Bannerman contended that the very ambiguity of "recognise" was a felicity, as it left room for both sides; and with this Dr. M'Michael so far concurred. Substantial agreement having been obtained, we appointed a sub-committee to adjust its language, Mr. Calderwood calling attention to the other words such as "countenance," "further," etc., which would need to be so dealt with as to commit neither side. At a subsequent stage, the Free Church brethren fully accepted our clause: "and has no authority in spiritual things, whether to prescribe a creed or form of worship, or to interfere with the administration of the affairs of the Church"; so that the only one of our clauses omitted is the ambiguous phrase that "the Magistrate is not to judge for the community of what is true in religion"—the Free Church brethren conceding this as regards dictation, but not as regards persuasive influence and application of national resources. It is understood that the omitted clause will still be provided for. Then came a second, and still more earnest contention. The Free Church accepted at once what we submitted about marriage and fasts and thanksgivings, adding that they were not agreed about the grounds, some resting on the right to limit labour, others on the duty of protecting worship, and others on the express law of the Fourth Commandment. Dr. A. Thomson and Dr. W. Johnston followed in a nearly similar strain, the latter,

however, objecting to the "prohibition of open desecration" if it was meant to make the Magistrate the executor of the divine law, since this would extend his right of punishment to every command of the First Table. The strain of this discussion alarmed Dr. C. Brown, who expressed grave fears that the Union might perish on this rock if the Magistrate was not allowed openly to legislate on the ground of the Fourth Commandment, and that it was hard to give up the Endowment theory, or rather its possible application, and get only in return a barren acknowledgment of the Magistrate's right to act for the good of religion, without any specific instance. Things here looked dark and threatening, when Dr. Bannerman rose and said that he did not see any ground for anxiety in our document, which evidently went on the principle that the Magistrate was to take the Fourth Commandment into consideration. Dr. Begg also spoke, but in a less desponding tone than Dr. Brown, only contending for the Magistrate's right to act on the Sabbath law, and asserting that idolatry actually was put down by Government in India, as in the case of Suttee and other enforcements of the First Table of the Law. I here made a short statement, taking exception to the prohibiting of desecration *as sin*, which drew forth the assent of Dr. Bannerman, and quite relieved my only objection; and then, as no other United Presbyterian member had conceded that the Magistrate might allege the Sabbath law as the ground of legislation, I did so, instancing the case where the Magistrate in his own public arrangements, or as an employer of labour, was bound to act, and to act avowedly, on that law, and extending the remark to the action of the community upon itself, there being no more persecution in shutting up, for example, the Botanic Gardens, because the community, and the magistrate in their name, regard this as demanded by the law of God, than in the decision of any other controverted question of legislation according to the action of conscience. . . . Little more was done till a speech of Dr. Marshall almost produced a crisis. He was in a "pitching-in" mood, and proceeded to demolish what he imagined to be the Free Church theory of the Magistrate being Christ's vicegerent, who took His laws and executed them by pains and penalties, pronouncing this little better than blasphemy, refuting, amidst reclamations from Dr. Begg, what had been said as to Suttee, and saying that it had been put down not as idolatry but as suicide. This speech, uttered with great vehemence and seconded by many blows and knocks, seemed not unlikely to shiver the Union vessel to pieces, and we sat trembling. At the close, Professor Gibson rose and stated that he had not time to refute

the speech, but did not agree with it, and left, but in no flurry; and to our unspeakable relief the others took it all with the greatest good humour, Dr. Candlish combining general assent to much that had been said with acceptance of the remainder of our Article; while Drs. Bannerman, C. Brown and Rainy admitted they had often talked too loosely of the Magistrate acting on the law of God. The blast thus did good rather than harm, and God really disappointed our fears. Ultimately, amidst entire harmony, a sub-committee was appointed to settle the phraseology.'

TO REV. DR. KING

BERWICK, *Nov.* 19, 1863.

' . . . Our meeting to-day has not carried us forward so far as I expected; but neither have we lost anything. . . . At the outset Dr. Marshall gathered up our previous agreement into three propositions. . . . The first respected the general subjection of the Civil Magistrate to Christ and His Word. . . . Vigorous attempts were made to get in "governor of nations," "magistrates as such," and similar phrases (to which some of us would have had no earthly objections, though we said nothing through reluctance to divide our own strength); but all that the Free Church brethren could extract was the addition of the words "and relations" to "several places" in that document. . . . But a long battle was fought on the third proposition, which was ultimately made to contain four negative statements—that the Magistrate "has no authority in spiritual matters; that he is not to impose a creed or form of worship; that he is not to interfere with the independence of the Church; and that he is not to further religion in a way inconsistent with its own spirit and enactments, which disclaim and condemn all persecution." The chief contention was about our proposal to disclaim "force," which was supported by Dr. Buchanan and others as relieving the Free Church of an unhappy onus; but most of the Free Church brethren objected to it as a *vox signata* of Voluntarism, and as Dr. Harper and Mr. Calderwood agreed with them, the word was waived on the motion of Dr. MacEwen, with a pledge that our view should be stated in a later Article.

'We proceeded to the Sabbath question, when a desultory and keen debate arose about prohibiting open desecration. The confusion and exaggeration which resulted were met by Dr. Bannerman, who strongly asserted the incompetency of the Magistrate to punish Sabbath desecration as sin, and threw overboard the whole idea of



his being the lieutenant of Christ to enforce the moral law, showing that the parties were really agreed. I followed in the same strain and moved accordingly. As the matter seemed brought to sufficient harmony, all the documents were referred to the separate committees, it being left to them to include a prohibition of desecration, guarded by the addition of the word "offensive," so as to show it to be punished as a crime against society and not a sin against God.

'We have thus, you will see, just reached our old terminus; but the time has not been lost, and by God's blessing our harmony will soon be permanently sealed. . . .'

TO REV. DR. KING

BERWICK, *Feb.* 10, 1864.

' . . . After revision of past findings, the debate on Distinctive Principles began, it being understood that each committee had the control of its own paper but would welcome explanations with a view to minimise differences. A remarkable discussion followed, the Voluntary controversy being now rehearsed not in a polemical but in an eirenic spirit. . . . We began with our paper. . . . Professor Bannerman conceded that the Magistrate is not entitled to prescribe a creed; but at the instance of Dr. Candlish it was agreed to put all this into the Free Church preamble, so as to save them from seeming to deny what we hold on these points. This morning to our great delight we found that the Free Church had adopted such a preamble, which gave a very happy tone to the whole conference . . . and we agreed to reconsider our Article, as seeming to bear too hard on them after their explanations. They boggled at voluntary giving being "Christ's only ordinance for the support of His Church," denying that State endowments set aside this ordinance, and appealing to the frequent co-existence of great liberality with national endowment. Here we gave in, as also about the violation of conscience in the case of heritors assessed on property bought subject to burdens; and it was agreed that if they would strike out all about personal liberty and conscience in their paper we would reconsider ours. We then went on to the Free Church paper in order to cast United Presbyterian light upon it. We began with the clause "may lawfully recognise the Church's creed and jurisdiction," etc. It was pointed out that here the word "Church" was used in a new sense, for a particular Church and not the universal; and the Free Church brethren undertook to look to this. They also were ready to acknowledge the primary and perpetual obligation

of Church members to maintain ordinances and promised some modification here. We then went on to the last distinctive Article, and our reasons of protest on both sides passed unchallenged. . . . In a separate meeting of our committee, we had a long debate on "Christ's only ordinance" . . . which was ultimately allowed to stand. We also agreed to add a protest against other Established Churches besides that of Scotland.

'In the meantime our brethren had finished, and were so delighted with their result that they came to tell us. They kept their preamble against the "Magistrate judging," etc., transformed everywhere the "support" of the State into "aid," and put first in the paragraph the primary and perpetual obligation laid on Christian Churches. Justly did Dr. Candlish say on leaving us in the midst of our discussion, "Be as good boys as we have been." Nothing remains but the putting of these amended results in shape to finish with God's blessing this memorable discussion. . . .'

#### TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *March 2, 1864.*

' . . . We have had one of the least comfortable of all our conferences, though happily evil did not arise, nor was good stayed. On coming to the Articles of divergence . . . it turned out that the Free Church were not satisfied with us for saying that Christ's law about freewill offerings was "the only ordinance"; and the evening was consumed in the attempt to make palatable this exclusive language. . . . Dr. Begg asked how we could propose to unite with men who went in the face of Christ's ordinance. Mr. Main regarded the clause as a censure on the whole past history of their men who had been in the Establishment. . . . Professor Bannerman repeated all the difficulties about the Ferguson and other Bequests, when these were not from Christ's people. . . . On our side it was asked why they and we had met for discussion, and gone so far, if it had not always been known that we regarded State endowments as a disregard of Christ's express law. Things were in an uncomfortable way; and Drs. Gibson and Forbes began to protest that by attending the Committee they had given no pledge that they would unite with a Church that ran down their views, since the whole movement had been urged on by others. Dr. Harper replied that difference did not imply censure; but matters were still troubled. . . . When I rose with great anxiety to propose a softer view of the difference, I endeavoured to explain that the positive side of Christ's ordinance about His people supporting His ministers was stronger than the

negative side, according to which no others were to do so; and that the latter was more of the nature of inference, though held by us to be clear; so that we did not charge them with flying in the face of a direct and visibly exclusive ordinance of Christ. This gave great relief, and to my very sincere joy Dr. Eadie, who had hardly spoken before, came out strongly on the same side. Ultimately . . . we agreed to say nothing more than that Christ's ordinance excludes State aid. With this the Free Church were perfectly satisfied. No other change was made on our paper, except to cut off the protest against all Establishments and limit the protest to the Established Church of Scotland. This was greatly desired by the Free Church as avoiding the appearance of a joint-crusade against National Churches under the garb of Union, and contributed to the satisfaction of next day's meeting. . . . It was agreed to report the results without passing judgment on the question of forbearance as to discovered differences, leaving that rather to the Church Courts. . . .

'This is on the whole a very gratifying report; and we may well thank God and take courage. You cannot possibly be wanted at the Synod. The battle of "forbearance" is then to be lost or won; and our decision will, I hope, have great effect on the Free Assembly. The work is still "in the morn and liquid dew of youth," when "contagious blastments are most imminent." . . . We are really coming to a great issue, and we need to pray and work our best that the foundations may be well laid. . . .'

FROM REV. DR. GUTHRIE

BRECHIN, *June 2, 1864.*

' . . . How much your letter has comforted and gratified me; and not only me but mine!

'There are many things in the past that one looks back on with pain; some things, with thankfulness and pleasure. Among the latter, in connection with our blessed prospects, there are two which I dwell on with peculiar satisfaction, the first being that the Free Church anticipated the Union and took time by the forelock when you were asked to fill her Moral Philosophy Chair; the second, that one-and-twenty years ago on the first occasion of my opening of my lips in the Free Church Assembly, I proposed the coming Union, and expressed my desire for it and my conviction that no insuperable or even serious obstacle stood in the way of a consummation so devoutly to be wished for. When the event happens and the

news is carried up to heaven, it will, I doubt not, add to the happiness of some that were my nearest and dearest who are now in glory. Poor Gilfillan of Dundee is raging and rampaging at an extraordinary rate. . . .

‘May the Lord long spare you and more and more bless you and make you a blessing!’

This letter shows the sanguine view which prevailed, and the special hopefulness with which, in 1864, the Articles of Agreement were submitted, not for approval but as a Provisional Report, to the Supreme Courts of the Churches. Even at this stage the Articles represented a large amount of work, and before they finally left the Committee’s hands six years later they were, as Dr. Cairns says, ‘monuments of industry and patience.’ Keen Christian minds had been applied to pressing questions. The individualism of the Manchester school of politics was in the air, and modern ideas of liberty were making their way into the consciousness of the Church. Denominations, increased in number and in power, were coming to claim an equality with State Churches which could not long be denied them. It was specially needful that those who adhered to Standards drawn up at a time when only one Church seemed entitled to consideration should measure the limits which the rights of the individual conscience set to the religious functions assigned to the body politic. This work was so thoroughly done that it has exercised during the last thirty years an increasing influence upon all the Churches concerned, and the Articles retain definite value in two directions. Positively, they show that those who hold different theories as to the relation of the State to the Church may concur in their views as to the relation of the State to religion—that, on the one hand, advocates of disestablishment and disendowment may ascribe Christian duties to communities and rulers, and that, on the other, those who maintain that in some circumstances the establishment and endowment of the Church by the State



are permissible and even beneficial may hold that this does not imply the title of the State to prescribe a creed and form of worship or to deal with affairs specifically religious. Negatively, the Articles demonstrate by their generality that the Christianity of a nation does not admit of formal analysis nor of exhaustive statement, but must work itself out in national life. In this respect they probably gave the Civil Magistrate his final dismissal from Presbyterian debate; no further attempt to define his character is likely to be made.

Yet both the negative and the positive value of the Articles were for the future. For immediate purposes they were too vague and colourless, being obviously capable, as indeed was intended, of double interpretation; and their value was more than cancelled by the accompanying statement of the distinctive views of each Church.

We are, however, anticipating. When the Report was presented to the United Presbyterian Synod in 1864, there was a keen discussion as to the bearing of the Articles upon opinions held in the Church. A tenacious minority, representing a fourth or a fifth of the Court, regarded the Articles with suspicion, as imperilling their own more rigid view as to the severance between politics and religion. They held 'that the sphere and duties of Magistracy are specifically secular, not religious,' and that 'while a Magistrate may be stimulated by motives peculiar to his faith, he has no more right to go beyond the sphere of the secular in any of his official actings than if he were a heathen man and a publican.'<sup>1</sup> They did not attempt, indeed, to force this principle upon others as a term of communion, but they were justifiably anxious to preserve their liberty, and they therefore opposed on every possible occasion the adoption of formulæ which might seal their lips in a united Church. It became the business of Dr. Cairns and of his

<sup>1</sup> Letter signed by Messrs. Renton, Hutton and Oliver in the *United Presbyterian Magazine*, April 1871.

colleague Dr. Harper, in a series of speeches delivered at intervals during the next nine years, to clear Voluntaryism from this so-called secular aspect. Some extracts from the first speech, delivered in 1864, will explain his precise position :—

‘ . . . There seems to have sprung up, and prevailed to this time, in regard to the Voluntary principle, a misconception to this extent, that it emancipates the Civil Magistrate altogether from the control and influence of religion, and makes legislation in the Christian, as opposed to and distinguished from the Pagan spirit impossible. . . . Now I hold that, as advocates of the Voluntary principle, we are called upon, having this public opportunity, authoritatively to disavow such a construction of it, and to do so in circumstances that will make its appearance again for ever hopeless. . . . We are not called upon to speak of the position of the Civil Magistrate in a heathen country, among Jews, or Mohammedans. . . . We have to deal with his relation to the Christian Church in a country professing a generally received Christianity. . . . And we are bound in a crisis so solemn and interesting to enunciate in bold, clear terms his subjection to Him whom the Father hath made both Lord and Christ. I believe that such a statement, without compromising our position, will go far to remove a prevailing sense of soreness and discomfort. . . . Is there any one here who will contend that the Civil Magistrate is to derive no light from the Word of God, as though that Word had never come to him or to his subjects? In a Christian country like this, with which alone we have to deal, would any one wish to limit legislation to the light of nature, or to put the Bible in abeyance before Plato’s *Republic*, Cicero’s *De Officiis*, Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, or Bentham’s *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Politics*? . . . I hold that we are doing justice to our principles, to the universal creed of this Church and to the greatest and wisest teachers among Voluntaries in the past age when we say that “magistrates as well as other men are under obligation to submit themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to regulate their conduct in their several places and relations by His Word. . . .” As to the duty of the Civil Magistrate “to further the interests of the religion of Christ among his subjects in every way consistent with its spirit and enactment,” that proposition can be denied only by the man who holds, in the most absolute, entire, unrestricted sense, that with religion the Civil Magistrate has nothing whatever to do ;

because if he has to do with religion, he must have to do with it in the way not of opposing it, but of furthering it. This must be conceded by all except those who maintain his entire neutrality, and *that* a neutrality dictated by regard not to the interests of religion, but to blind atheistic fate, or it may be by epicurean indifference. I believe that no such view is held by any member of the United Presbyterian Church. . . . The Free Church, in their conferences with us, have gone on the principle that the Civil Magistrate is not to separate and isolate himself in the community, but may set up an Establishment as representing the general sense of a Christian nation. We disavow that part of their creed; but we do not disavow the general doctrine that there may be times and circumstances when the Civil Magistrate, representing the general sense of the Christian community, comes forward, in entire harmony with the principles of religious liberty and the natural rights of men, and furthers the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a saying of Robert Hall's, when George III. stood up at the Halleclujah Chorus of Handel, that it seemed to him to be a great act of national homage to the Christian religion. Our Queen never addresses Parliament without introducing into that State paper—not a private document—some devout reference to Divine Providence, and some earnest prayer that the God of nations may bless and direct the assembled representatives of the country. Is there one of us who would wish on Voluntary grounds to retract this statement from such a document? When our Queen assumed the government of India, she directly expressed in her proclamation her own attachment to the Christian religion, while she stated that she would respect the false religions of her Indian subjects. That paper called forth universal commendation, and from none more cordially than from the Liberation Society. I think the only fault they found with the document was that it did not go far enough in putting an end to that miserable system of false neutrality, to which had been traced many of the evils connected with the Indian Mutiny. . . . In the paper issued by the Committee there is a distinct statement that "the Civil Magistrate may, and on suitable occasions ought to, appoint days on which his subjects shall be invited to engage in acts of humiliation or of thanksgiving." I ask, is this done by the Sovereign as a private individual, or as a magistrate? I know there is no force employed: that force is disclaimed, and justly disclaimed, by our committee. Still, I say, there is here a magisterial act which comes under the compass of these Articles of Agreement. Do any of us wish it to be otherwise? I have heard

no one say that that part of the paper should be retrenched. Therefore, if we concede, as we do unanimously and cordially, that the Civil Magistrate should, on suitable occasions, appoint such days, is not the moral effect of such a summons, call or invitation, in a most important sense, the furthering of the interests of the Lord Jesus Christ?’

The contention for this position was not confined to Church Courts, but overflowed into denominational literature,<sup>1</sup> and at every point it was successful. The Articles, after full discussion, were accepted and approved by every Presbytery, and by the Supreme Court in 1871. Dr. Cairns by no means stood alone. He would have disclaimed the prominence which others gave him, and there were those who showed more business faculty and took a firmer grasp of minute details. But undoubtedly it was to the glowing force of his advocacy that the steady position maintained by the United Presbyterian Church, amidst provocations and uncertainties, must chiefly be ascribed. At the close of the negotiations Dr. Hutton wrote to him: ‘We have reached this stage through your vast personal influence more than through any other cause.’

The reference to ‘soreness and discomfort’ in the above extract points to the situation in the Free Church. Readers of Dr. Henderson’s minute account of the Convocation which preceded the Disruption<sup>2</sup> are aware that that great movement was by no means unanimous, and that it included a party who were persuaded with the utmost difficulty to leave the Established Church. They were men strongly conservative not only in politics but in their whole tone of mind. Slow as they had been to acquiesce in the Disruption, they thereafter made the ‘principles of the Disruption’ their watchword, and condemned Voluntarism as secular and atheistical with the same vigour as Chalmers

<sup>1</sup> Notably a controversy with the Rev. Dr. Peter Davidson, published in the *United Presbyterian Magazine* for October 1864.

<sup>2</sup> *Memorials of R. S. Candlish*, chap. ix.



and Buchanan had shown in 1834 and 1835. They did not wish to unite with United Presbyterians unless the latter would disavow Voluntaryism, and in the north-west Highlands especially, where they had immense weight, and where United Presbyterianism was practically unknown, they carefully nursed a popular antipathy to the Union. They did not refuse to serve on the Union Committee, but they persistently attempted to give the Articles of Agreement a shape inconsistent with Voluntaryism, and they continued the attempt as long as they had the faintest hope that the United Presbyterian representatives could be led in this direction. Dr. Cairns' Union speeches in the Synod were indirectly addressed to this party and designed to remove their scruples. Year after year the Free Church Assembly occupied itself in discussing not Free Church principles but United Presbyterian principles, and in comparing the speeches of Dr. Harper and Dr. Cairns with other United Presbyterian utterances.

It would be tedious to trace the various stages of negotiation and discussion, the character of which has probably been made sufficiently clear by the above extracts. The Report on the Civil Magistrate was sent down to presbyteries, and for a year the Committee was occupied with other necessary considerations, upon which the letters which follow will shed some light.

The first letter, referring to questions of doctrine, needs special explanation. The Free Church, largely as it has recently contributed to liberal theology, was in its beginnings the somewhat proud champion of rigid orthodoxy, and its leaders in the far north had been in the habit of speaking with a severity bordering upon contempt of the Seceders' Atonement Controversy, as if it had included some dark and fatal departure from sound doctrine. In truth they at times seemed to regard the still more pronounced liberalism of the Established Church as comparatively innocuous, or at least

as less deserving of their censure. It is true that the dominant tone of Scottish dissent has always been evangelical, and that the special questions raised by the Atonement Controversy were limited in their scope. Yet there probably was some foundation for those ideas. In the United Presbyterian Church there was no sympathy with the type of hyper-Calvinism which was then congenial to northern minds. It was therefore with no little apprehension that those who were most anxious for Union entered upon discussion of doctrinal differences.

TO REV. DR. KING

EDINBURGH, *July 21, 1864.*

‘. . . We have had a very satisfactory meeting, for which we cannot be too thankful.

‘At our separate meeting it was found that the Free Church Committee had departed from their view of proposing questions to us, and had drafted a joint doctrinal declaration prepared by Dr. Candlish. . . . As it was rather “high” on the subject of the Atonement, it did not meet with much favour. It did not contain a single point of coalescence between our peculiar views (so called) as to the extent of the Atonement and the strictest Calvinism, not even the connection between the Atonement and the Gospel call. Besides, there were serious objections to complicating the work of Union with a doctrinal manifesto, and also to inventing new terms of faith, needing a battle to get them through the Synod. Hence we replied that we would prefer a conference.

‘At the conference, after long discussion . . . the idea of a joint declaration was discarded or at least postponed, and it was agreed to use the Free Church paper only as a starting-point. The right of our Summary of Principles to be equally used was contested by the Free Church as involving them in the disagreeable work of criticising our quasi-Synodical documents. However, it was at last allowed to be referred to in our speeches. . . . We proceeded to the Free Church statement of the sense of subscription to Confessions of Faith. This we all agreed to in the abstract, but Dr. MacEwen expressed great fear that the succeeding parts on Original Sin, the Atonement, the Work of the Spirit, etc., might lead to complications; and Dr.

Marshall came out very strong on the unhandsomeness of requiring us to define the sense of subscription, as if there had ever been any need of explanation on that head. This produced something of a scene, after which the conference broke up. Dr. Buchanan spoke to me afterwards in a more excited state than I had ever seen him before, and complained that the original idea of questioning having been departed from, and a joint declaration against prevailing errors substituted, it was too much to regard every disclaimer as reflecting on our Church. . . . At the evening meeting some members appealed to the Summary, and this brought out from Dr. Candlish the opinion that the Summary was defective in not stating strongly enough the extent of depravity and of the penal consequences of Adam's sin as imputed to his posterity. Things were here very uncomfortable; but Dr. Candlish soon qualified his judgment, so as to mean that, though good enough as a popular statement, it was defective as a scientific explanation. After some others had spoken rather in a jealous strain, the tide of battle was turned by an appeal to the language of the Confession. . . . After some demur from the Free Church, and after I had stated that I did not remember any case of heretics who had consented to repeat the words of the Confession on that subject in a non-natural sense, the Committee declared themselves of one mind without any new Article or explanation. This was a great deliverance, and an omen of good things to come. . . . With regard to the nature of the Atonement, Dr. W. Johnston renewed his style of battle, showing that in the Confession the same statements substantially were found, and objecting to some of the phraseology as new, such as the strong language about substitution, equivalence, and demerit really and actually transferred. . . . Dr. Candlish then volunteered a most conciliatory statement that all differences as to the extent of the Atonement sprang out of a wish to find a basis for the Gospel call; that he appreciated the motives of the United Presbyterian members; and that, while some of his own brethren rested the call more exclusively on the command of God, . . . he personally always took into account the intrinsic, infinite sufficiency of the Saviour's work. This produced a very happy effect, and called up Dr. Harper, whose truly admirable compend of the early universal-reference views of the Secession and its adherence to Marrow doctrine, was followed up by Dr. George Johnston and Dr. A. Thomson. They, with him, disclaimed all Arminianism in our Church—the last speaker casting his shield over Drs. Brown and Balmer—the whole making evidently a great impression on the conference.



Dr. Gibson acquiesced, only cautioning against rationalising too much or going too far beyond the command of God; and in this strain Dr. Goold also spoke. . . . A most delightful sense of relief and thankfulness was produced; and some of us confessed that we had never seen more visibly the hand of God.

‘When the conference was resumed . . . the Reformed Presbyterians laid great stress on the universal sufficiency, and one of the Symingtons disclaimed Dr. Goold’s exclusive regard to God’s command, and read a passage from their Standards which expressly grounds the call on the infinite merit of Christ’s sacrifice. Dr. M’Michael also spoke well, ascribing the whole dispute about the Atonement to the ambiguity of words. . . . A motion was proposed, bringing out distinctly the connection between the call and the sufficiency, and after I had declared satisfaction with the liberty which was on all hands allowed, it was unanimously adopted, and a small committee named to put the agreements in a brief minute. Dr. Buchanan’s closing words of thankfulness found an echo in every breast. . . .’

TO REV. DR. KING

BERWICK, *June 21, 1865.*

‘. . . The Sustentation Fund discussion equalled in interest and excelled in cordiality any past discussion. Dr. Buchanan commenced by a lucid and forcible statement of the origin of the Free Church system—its necessity, its merits and its continued adaptation to the Highlands and other portions of the Church, and then, by request, candidly stated its drawbacks and shortcomings. This occupied about an hour, and made a great impression. Our short paper fell in with the current. Dr. Harper and Dr. Thomson expressed the conviction that the United Presbyterian Church had no insuperable objection to adopt a modification of the Sustentation Fund. On the other hand, Dr. George Johnston and Mr. Peddie spoke of a great repugnance to such a principle, and almost made our present system one of Scripture. This led to emphatic statements that the Free Church held as strongly as we the duty of congregations to their own ministers. . . . A good deal of animated discussion followed, in which the Reformed Presbyterians showed themselves not averse to a partial adoption of the Sustentation Fund principle. But the speech of the day was made by Dr. Marshall, who dissented altogether from those who regarded our present system as one of principle, . . . confessed the slight success of the central system in



our hands, paid a glowing tribute to the Free Church system, as in its own place a splendid success though not without dangers, scouted the idea of attempting to import both systems into a United Church, and solemnly appealed to the committee to originate a new scheme or *via media*, to be worked from the outset by the whole Church. This speech made a deep impression. Sir H. Moncreiff, Dr. Buchanan and others assented, while Dr. Goold, Dr. Thomson and I urged further the speedy attempt to devise a practical system; and a sub-committee was appointed to report at next meeting. Other discussions followed on Titles and Deacons' Courts, showing a greater accordance of practice than had been expected. A more important meeting has not been held. . . .'

The following letter to Dr. Cairns will show the aspect of affairs outside the Committee:—

FROM REV. SIR H. W. MONCREIFF

EDINBURGH, *May 11, 1866.*

'Will you excuse me for addressing you once more in a confidential way? I am persuaded that some people are endeavouring to sow the seeds of dissension, which, if they take root, may soon be fruitful in a manner not easily to be overborne. You have noticed the movement of the Established Presbytery here about the abolition of Patronage. Perhaps you have seen also what some men in our Church, who ought to know and judge better, are attempting, viz., to interpose between us and our wished-for Union, the Utopian idea of Union with the Establishment. These men do not know that they are playing the game of an enemy. What they are doing can come to nothing in the direction that they speak of. But it may accomplish somebody's object if it carry some of our Free Churchmen off upon a false scent even for a time, so as to rouse a legitimate jealousy in your body, and so alienate us from one another.

'I feel confident that, by God's blessing, we may overcome this element of evil that has been introduced, provided your friends have patience with us, and give us time to meet misconceptions and assert right principle and common sense. But ours is a large and varied body, and it may give us some trouble to let the daylight fully in upon some influences that are afloat of a misguiding character. . . . Perhaps your brethren and their people are prepared already to exercise much forbearance toward us under the difficulties

which may meet us at and after our Assembly. But I trust you will excuse my entreating you to do what you can in the line of indicating the continuance of the most friendly and cordial feeling, even while things may be occurring which may perplex or harass or impede us, while fitted to irritate and annoy some of you.

‘I believe that in the strength of Christ we shall prevail over hostile forces, and be speedily united as we wish. But we need your prayers much for wisdom and faithfulness combined. . . .’

In June 1866 the returns of Presbyteries upon the Civil Magistrate Article were laid before the Committee, and again the Magistrate assumed his place of pre-eminence.

TO REV. DR. KING

BERWICK, *June 20, 1866.*

‘. . . This has been perhaps the best day we have ever had of our Union negotiations. We have cause to thank God and take courage. Our own committee agreed to request the other committees to go over the programme, with the view of extracting new Articles of Agreement out of our apparent differences about the Magistrate, and of so reducing our differences. At the same time Dr. Buchanan had sent the draft of a new Article on the subject which he would support, but which he thought should be moved from our side. It greatly astonished and delighted us by the extent of its approximations. . . . The suggestions were cordially approved, but it was felt to be better to ask Dr. Harper to move them than formally bring them up as the findings of our committee. We also agreed to recommend the bringing in among our Agreements of the common view as to the obligation of supporting the Church by freewill offerings. At the joint-meeting Dr. Harper made his suggestions, which Dr. Buchanan supported and nobody opposed. But it was judged better to leave the final putting of them into shape to a small committee, the very important point having been gained that all modifications should be published for the use of presbyteries before their Union discussions. We then took up the Free Church distinctive Statement about the Magistrate acknowledging the creed and jurisdiction of the Church. . . . Dr. Marshall urged that this was not distinctive, and explained in what sense he held it. Dr. Bannerman explained that he held it precisely in the same, and so did Dr. Buchanan, urging its value as a protection in cases like the Cardross one. I stated that I had main-

tained it in that very case. There was an agreeable surprise in the Free Church committee at these statements, and they admitted that it could no longer stand as a distinctive principle. . . . It was also conceded that an Article should go in about our agreement as to Christ's ordinance for maintaining and extending His Church, and nothing was left outstanding but the one difference—now admitted to be the only one—about Civil Establishment. . . .

'We next took up Education, and received guarantees from Drs. Candlish and Buchanan that they would limit their reception of grants to secular purposes,<sup>1</sup> and adapt their Normal Schools to our views. Dr. Buchanan said that for himself he strongly preferred limiting the reception of State money to secular education. . . . You will rejoice with me on these results. . . .'

TO REV. DR. KING

BERWICK, *Jan.* 16, 1867.

' . . . We have had hopeful meetings. . . . I went with considerable anxiety, consequent on the uncomfortable jar made by our Edinburgh Presbytery, and by the recent attitude of Drs. Begg and Gibson. . . . I was anxious to feel again the pulse of both committees, and to see whether any grave and lasting evil had accrued. Happily our own committee are more hearty than ever, and Drs. Begg and Gibson have been so schooled by defeat that they are back in the Committee, contending indeed longer than their brethren for some points, but with no bad humour and no apparent purpose of defeating or even delaying the negotiations.

' . . . It was agreed to publish henceforth the minutes, but not to admit reporters. All the committees reported and exchanged their papers of suggestions from presbyteries. . . . The debate revolved round the old topics of "Magistrates like other Christians in their several places and relations," etc., which Drs. Gibson and Begg wished exchanged for something more technically official. They were sufficiently teasing, and there was a good deal of hard hitting on both sides; but the whole ended in good harmony, with a provisional suggestion likely to please Dr. Begg and to get us out of this endless circuit. . . . It came out more clearly than ever that no Voluntary denies the Magistrate's duty to use his legitimate influence for Christ, and no Free Churchman gives him a *quasi* sacred function above other Christians. . . .'

<sup>1</sup> The Free Church of that date maintained about six hundred day-schools; whereas the United Presbyterians, although they had a few denominational schools, generally regarded Education as a national concern.

## TO THE SAME

BERWICK, *March 21, 1867.*

'It is with a sense of unspeakable relief that I announce the final acceptance of the Articles of Agreement. Those weary and tantalising labours have now ended in a document which will be historical. Our own committee . . . did not agree to the suggestions sent down from the Joint-committee, but restored the obnoxious phrase "as well as other men." . . . We also prefixed a new clause to our distinctive Article "that it is not competent to the Civil Magistrate to determine by legislative sanction what shall be called and regarded as the religion of the State" . . . and modified our answers to "open questions" in a more Voluntary sense. . . .

'At the joint meeting the battle was joined on our emendations. The keenest debate was about the clause which says of the Civil Magistrate, he is bound, etc., "as well as other men." This was the last struggle of the Begg and Gibson party. . . . It was an admirable discussion in temper as in ability, . . . but neither side would yield, and the matter looked rather serious. At last the Reformed Presbyterians, who rather took our side, proposed a new wording, and it was agreed that the committees should meet and vote on it separately. *We* adopted it in five minutes; but the Free Church hammered away at all possible constructions, until to our relief Dr. Buchanan appeared with a smile on his face to ask us to accept a new form, "that all men in their places and relations, and therefore Civil Magistrates in theirs, are under obligation," etc. This was hailed with great delight, and all were satisfied. . . . The other articles were rapidly gone over, and our unanimous assent to the revised Articles ended a long chapter of the Voluntary and Establishment controversy.

'Taking up next the answers to the Free Church queries on "open questions," we had long conversation on the Irish Church and the *Regium Donum*. . . . Drs. Begg and Gibson, while condemning indiscriminate endowment, rather defended the *Regium Donum* men, as not responsible for the sin of others in giving or taking it. It was brought clearly out, however, that United Presbyterian sentiment may be safely trusted to assert itself on this subject in a United Church. . . .

'We passed on to a long and most valuable conversation on our several formulas of assent to the Confession. It came out that all meant the same thing, whether assent was, as in the Free Church, to



the "whole doctrine," or, as with us, to "an authorised exhibition of the sense in which we understand the Scriptures" . . . and a minute was passed expressive of gratification at the identity. . . . Incidentally, some discussion took place about necessary latitude in minor matters, such as the six days of creation; but no one Church was here more rigid or free than another. With regard to the exceptions to or explanations of the Confession in our formulæ . . . a most hopeful agreement appeared, and Dr. Candlish rather surprised us by saying that, even if a man thought the Confession intolerant, he was so protected by the Act of 1846 that he might sign it with a safe conscience. This seemed to me, as I stated, to make the Free Churchman and the Voluntary already one in profession; and though Dr. Gibson and others tried to controvert Dr. Candlish, the point was clearly established. . . . This was a most important result; though our side (and here Dr. Begg and others agreed) desiderated a clearer exception than in the Free Church preamble. There will evidently be no difficulty in getting this. . . .'

TO REV. DR. KING

BERWICK, *May 1, 1867.*

' . . . I have just returned from two anxious and agitating but not unsuccessful days of the Joint-committee—rather, I should say, decidedly progressive, though not without a great strain on both mind and body. . . . With regard to Education, there was the same tendency as before on the Free Church side to hold loosely by the Government grants as connected with religion, and to fall back on Dr. Chalmers' plan of taking money only for secular branches, and a corresponding tendency on our side to go into a United Church without exacting an absolute preliminary renunciation of all religious connection of the Normal and other schools with Government, as indispensable to Union. An important suggestion was made by Dr. W. Johnston that the whole question might be decided by the majority of the United Church, it being understood that we would defend our Synod's views, and protest, but not secede, if overruled. . . . We had previously insisted on entire preliminary separation of religious from State-supported education. No doubt what wrought the change was the approach of the Free Church to our position. . . . It is on this ground that I justify myself in acceding to Dr. W. Johnston's side. If our Synod say that the educational arrangements of the Free Church shall be adjusted to our meridian,

as a *conditio sine qua non* of Union, I will then, but not now, face the responsibility of stopping the negotiations on that point, till the Free Church give in.

‘Another important point was a modification of our distinctive Article. . . . The Free Church friends of Union having privately given us to understand that the first clause was made a handle against us, as if we denied the right of all legislation based on Christianity, we added to the words “it is not competent to the Civil Magistrate to give legislative sanction to any creed,” these defining ones—“in the way of setting up a civil establishment of religion.” This, I think, is truly distinctive, and a great improvement on any former form.

‘But our chief and great battle was upon our proposal that the Joint-committee should declare for itself that our ascertained differences do not form an insuperable bar to Union, and should recommend the several committees to seek a deliverance of their Supreme Courts to the same effect. This made great commotion. Drs. Candlish and Buchanan did not seem to have expected it, and the former gave me a private hint that, if pressed, it would throw a great advantage into the hands of Drs. Begg and Gibson, . . . assuring me at the same time that they would face the question in the Assembly and there carry it triumphantly. . . . However, I urged the absolute necessity of getting the question discussed in the Supreme Courts, and . . . we ultimately agreed, at my suggestion, to withdraw the request for a decision of the Joint-committee on “forbearance,” while holding to the point that the several committees should be desired to get from their own Courts a speedy decision. The Reformed Presbyterians agreed with us, while the Free only promised to recommend the continuance of negotiations. There then arose a debate of two hours and a half—keen, excited and going into the very marrow of the question. It fell to me to begin it, and to ascertain how much separate action on our part they would not resent, such as a separate recommendation to the Synod which would lay them under a moral necessity of deciding the same question. . . . Dr. Candlish implored the Joint-committee not to tie up their hands, hinting, but not distinctly enough, a pledge to look the question in the face. This called up Dr. Marshall in his ablest, keenest mood, to urge the bolder course, mingling even reproaches, if the friends of Union in the Free Church now failed to speak out. He never spoke better or to more purpose, though a little too acrid. Dr. W. Johnston with equal ability supported him; and then Dr. Buchanan made a noble statement, conceding all that was required, and declaring that it would be morally discreditable

in their Assembly, if they had found any bar, not to say so. I expressed for myself the conviction that such statements were enough, and that, as no one had yet said there *was* a bar, silence gave consent. Drs. Begg and Gibson now came forward, not to say that they had discovered a bar to Union, but that they would hold themselves free in the Assembly to take the course they deemed right. When Dr. Rainy and Sir H. Moncreiff had supported Dr. Buchanan, Dr. Candlish made a much more decided speech than his first, though there was no change, but only he saw that he could now do it prudently. It was put to us whether we would withdraw our request; and accordingly we had a separate meeting . . . at which we decided that we should do less harm by suffering our request to be set aside or outvoted than by withdrawing it, though several (myself included) would have been fully satisfied with the moral assurance obtained in the discussion. . . . When we reported to the Joint-committee, Dr. Buchanan moved that the decision of the separate committees was a sufficient answer to the request, and with this we were satisfied. . . . I have no doubt that our plain speaking in this whole matter, and our resolution to get forward, have materially helped the next meetings of our Courts.

'We had to-day long discussions on the Doctrinal Article. . . . Drs. Wood and Gibson introduced a motion bringing out the special reference of the Atonement to the elect. Dr. Marshall made a very elaborate reply, defending the general reference from the Synod of Dort, Hodge and Horatius Bonar, . . . and Dr. Rainy made a weighty speech, substantially agreeing with him. Dr. Begg here parted from Dr. Gibson, and did not approve of any new statement. Dr. Marshall insisted on questioning the other committees as to the sense of some words . . . from the Larger Catechism which had been added to their extracts; but the answers gave satisfaction, and when the vote was then taken between Dr. Gibson's motion and one by Dr. Buchanan re-affirming our doctrinal harmony, only Dr. Wood voted with Dr. Gibson. Thus ended all discussion of alleged doctrinal differences. . . .'

Although the 'alleged doctrinal differences' were so easily disposed of in committee, they bulked very largely out of doors, and were constantly discussed in local presbyteries. In the United Presbyterian Church, as future events showed, there was a rising tide of liberalism; and the more liberal theologians, especially of the younger race, were not



altogether satisfied that, while their representatives were being cross-questioned as to their Calvinism, doctrinal progress made twenty years before should be openly criticised, and theological discussion stayed so long as Union was in prospect. Not only men swayed by literary interests like Mr. George Gilfillan, but solid theologians such as Dr. Joseph Brown, thought that their freedom was in peril, and were inclined to rebel against what they reckoned a policy of repression. With all such half-rebels Dr. Cairns was in private correspondence.

There was the same constraint in practical matters. The proposal to sanction the use of organs, which had been vetoed in 1857, was renewed nine years later; and when it was urged that the question should be left to be settled by a United Church, this was taken to mean that the proposal might give offence to the Free Church. When Dr. Cairns and others reversed their votes in Synod on this matter, his best friends wrote to him that there was a limit to the self-restraint which the Union cause justified.

Meanwhile the Supreme Courts had not given a clear decision. There was no doubt that the United Presbyterians were willing to unite if an embargo were not placed upon their views; but, as the above correspondence shows, they felt it necessary at the beginning of 1867 to insist that the Free Church Assembly should say if *they* were willing to unite with men who were opposed to State-churchism on principle. With this request the Free Church leaders could not but comply.

Committee meetings were only the framework of the duties in which Dr. Cairns was involved. In every part of the country, Union demonstrations were organised, chiefly by the Free Church, the United Presbyterians needing no such stimulus; and at almost every one of these he appeared to represent his Church. With the foremost Free Churchmen he had always been a *persona grata*, and with the body



of the people he had a repute as the redoubtable champion of evangelicalism which made his appearance welcome. Withal, as a platform speaker, he had a unique power of raising his subject above the suspicion of ecclesiastical manipulation, into the region of Christian utility and Christian duty. His speeches were carefully written out so far as the practical aspects of the question went, but the more impressive and popular parts were extempore, consisting usually of illustration, either from Church history or from incidents connected with the locality in which he spoke. His varied learning seemed to the ordinary hearer to be boundless; and when he closed there was the deeper impression left that a strong Christian man, stronger intellectually and morally than any one beside him, and obviously consecrated to God, believed from his heart that the cause for which he pleaded was a great cause. It was by such speeches, delivered chiefly in 1865 and 1866, that he gained the title of the 'Apostle of Union.'

His correspondence on the subject was very large. He made it his business, as we have seen, to keep the English section of the Church in line with the movement, and the task was not easy, as that Church grew impatient over the delay. Although it was only in 1867 that he was appointed Joint-chairman of the Committee, he was from the first the man to whom Drs. Buchanan, Candlish, and afterwards Rainy, wrote when troublesome questions arose. The other party too in the Free Church, strange as this may seem, consulted him and confided in him. When they wanted to ascertain the United Presbyterian view of some doctrine or practice, they knew that they could reckon upon a reply which, however kindly, would be unbiassed by any wish to 'manage matters.' But, outside those important communications, letters of all sorts poured in upon him. One correspondent wants him to say categorically 'if the U.P.s are orthodox'; another asks him if he has noticed that

Principal Cunningham's name corresponds with the number of the Beast; another wishes him to 'define his attitude towards the Established Church'; another begs him to consider if it is kind of him to break the Free Church in two; another offers him £5000 as a means of effecting Union, if he will use his influence to persuade Mr. — to contribute £45,000; another, a very eminent missionary, urges him to keep the Voluntaries in order on the Education question; while another, almost equally eminent, submits an elaborate scheme for founding a 'Voluntary Established Church.'

He seems to have replied to all such correspondents, and the time so spent must have been very great. Yet he rarely—more rarely than was generally supposed—consented to intervene personally in side questions or to negotiate privately. His great courtesy, and his willingness to explain his position, gave the impression that he was easily influenced; but careful study of documentary evidence shows that there were not more than two or three occasions, and these unimportant, on which he was persuaded to modify his original idea of the basis on which Union might be accomplished. It is true that he frequently held a mediating position, but that position with him was both instinctive and deliberate. In several of his public speeches he said jestingly that suspicions were cherished of his thoroughness, but the jest was always received as a jest. No hint was ever dropped that he was capable of compromising a principle.

This became apparent as the Synod and Assembly of 1867 approached. Drs. Buchanan and Candlish had become extremely anxious as to the course of things in the Free Church. Differences had been accentuated; and a careful revision of the Articles of Agreement did not modify the fact that the United Presbyterian Church was opposed on principle to the establishment and endowment of religion.

It became plain that a large and rigid minority in the Free Church had serious scruples with regard to the Union, and Dr. Buchanan earnestly urged Dr. Cairns to make some statement as to the Civil Magistrate which would mollify them. Any such statement was out of the question. Yet he resolved to present his own view with unusual fulness to the Supreme Court, and he did so in a strongly significant speech, in which he argued, from the history of the Secession Church, that belief in the lawfulness of the civil establishments of religion did not exclude men from her communion, and that there was therefore no hindrance to union with a Church in which that belief prevailed, and renewed his declaration that the Civil Magistrate was bound to submit himself to Christ, and could not be neutral towards Christianity when opportunities consistent with Christ's law presented themselves of furthering its interests. He carried the Court with him by a majority of 389 to 39.

It was different in the Free Church. Although there too a large majority agreed that there was no bar to Union in the Articles of Agreement, the leaders of the minority resigned their places on the Committee and declared war. Thenceforward the whole situation was changed. The vacancies in the Committee were filled, and the negotiations proceeded with even greater hopefulness, through the withdrawal of the contentious, so that before 1870 all difficulties seemed to be removed and there remained only the drafting of a Basis of Union. But meantime the Free Church minority were at work throughout the country, on the platform, in presbyteries and in their congregations, denouncing the Union party as faithless to Church principles, and the United Presbyterians as secularists and heretics. According to the published opinions of Drs. Buchanan, Candlish and Guthrie, they used unscrupulous means. Whether they did so or not, they succeeded. The Unionists played into their hands by suspending negotia-

tions for a year, and attempts to counteract them by public meetings and periodical literature only brought out the fact that, while the majority in the Free Church were ready and anxious for Union, the minority were irrevocably set against it. The Press was to a large extent on the side of the minority, for it was generally felt that the accomplishment of the Union would be a fatal blow to the prestige, if not to the existence, of the Established Church. Various public questions, too, assumed a threatening aspect, notably the Education Question, about which a few words must be said, to show the position held by Dr. Cairns.

When, in 1867 and 1868, the long-delayed promises of an Education Bill for Scotland began to take shape, the position of the teaching of religion in public schools required to be considered; and a controversy arose in the Press and in Church Courts, which lasted till the passing of the Education Bill in 1872. A few prominent United Presbyterians publicly declared against the inclusion of religion in any system of national education, and the Anti-Union Free Churchmen used this as an illustration of the atheistical and secular aspect of Voluntaryism. The use which they made of it was quite unfair, for United Presbyterian opinion, as expressed in Church Courts and elsewhere, was distinctly in favour of the maintenance of 'use and wont,' *i.e.* the teaching of the Bible and the Catechism in public schools. Like the other men who guided the policy of the Church at that time, Dr. Cairns held that, while the State should neither enforce any form of religion upon children nor use public money in the teaching of religion, the exclusion of the Bible from daily school-lessons would be a great calamity, and that parents were not to be prevented from acting on this conviction by the fact that education was regulated and partly provided by the State. He held that liberty of conscience is sufficiently guarded if parents are allowed to withdraw their children from school when religious lessons



are being given, and that the contributions of parents by fees or local rates entitle them to have a voice in this matter, inasmuch as when their own money is being spent in paying school expenses they cannot be said to 'use public money for religious purposes.'<sup>1</sup> When, in 1872, Dr. Dale of Birmingham proposed to visit Scotland as an advocate of secular education, he intervened to prevent the visit. In his correspondence with Dr. Dale, which is appended to this chapter, he only expresses views which he maintained to the close of his life. But undoubtedly the misrepresentations of the Anti-Unionists made him specially anxious at that time to keep the question in abeyance.

Such misrepresentations, however, did their work; and as the years passed the hope of Union began to fade. At first the Free Church leaders spoke of showing a bold front and of carrying the matter through at all risks, and they undoubtedly meant to do so until they discovered that there was more than a risk. It became plain that there would be a disruption, and they had to measure how far union with the United Presbyterian Church would be a compensation for such an issue. It was generally understood that the Anti-Unionists had taken the opinion of Counsel, and had been led to believe that, in the event of a disruption, those who abstained from union could vindicate a right to all the Free Church property. But there was a greater issue than property at stake. The Free Church, with good right, regarded itself as chief curator of religion in many parts of Scotland, and it was precisely in those parts that the minority was strongest. Gradually the leaders of the Union party determined that they were bound to preserve the outward unity of their Church. However the present generation may

<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered that his position was formulated at a time when parents defrayed the greater part of school-expenses by fees. Yet later changes did not alter his view. At his death he was Vice-Chairman of the Association for Aiding School Boards in Inspecting Religious Knowledge.

judge them, the United Presbyterians who knew them best, and who could measure their motives, believed that they were acting rightly, and publicly and privately supported them in this determination, which was slowly and painfully reached. From 1868 till 1871 there was a good deal of hopefulness in the negotiations, owing to a proposal to 'unite on the Standards,' *i.e.* to proceed to union without any attempt to formulate either harmony or difference; but when in 1871 nearly a third of the Free Church Assembly voted that they did not wish to have even 'co-operation' with the United Presbyterians, the ultimate issue became apparent, and it seemed as if the two Churches were further apart than they had been twenty-five years before, when Chalmers declared for 'co-operation with a view to incorporation.' There remained the task of formulating schemes of co-operation in the training of ministers, in mission work, and in the transference of ministers from the one Church to the other. Of these, only the last-named became law—in a Mutual Eligibility Act, which has had little worth. It became clear that if Churches are to have separate corporate existence, each must maintain its own organisations. Except the brief Statement of Principles which the negotiating Churches held in common, there is no outward relic of those years of toil.

As far as Dr. Cairns was concerned, this last stage was even more anxious and laborious than the earlier stages had been. His colleague, Dr. Harper, was yielding to old age, and an arresting hand had been laid upon other valued helpers. In the Church Courts his burden was thus increased, and as long as hope of success remained, he continued his Union pilgrimages, seeking in public and private to bring the Free Church dissentients back to counsels of peace. Those were the only years of his life when he appeared as a controversialist in Church Courts, and they were very trying years. In the United Presbyterian Church

there were, as we have seen, clear-headed men who reckoned that he was mistaken in his policy, and suggestions were constantly reaching him that the welfare as well as the unity of the Church was in peril. It was hinted to him that he was too anxious for the interests of the Free Church; and though such criticism was overborne by the mass of United Presbyterian feeling, he had, in speaking, to measure every word. Outside, there was a far more critical public watching all closely, without the constraint which friendly feeling set upon United Presbyterians who differed from him. But he held on his way magnanimously, keeping hope when others lost it, and disclosing practical capacity which had not been apparent before and was rarely displayed afterwards. With unflinching courtesy, chivalry in argument, and composure unruffled by the keenest attack, he combined the dignified statesmanship which comes only from calm conviction and obvious integrity of purpose. The chief men in the Free Church have acknowledged that his utterances went far to prevent the breach in their denomination which they feared when thoughts of immediate union had been abandoned. Among United Presbyterians none loved or honoured him more than those who from year to year were overborne by his strength. If he retained the affectionate respect of the Free Churchmen who prevented the Union, this was not from want of plainness of speech on his part. In May 1873 it fell to him as Moderator to open the Synod at which the Union Committee had to acknowledge that negotiations with the Free Church must be suspended. A brief extract will show how calmly and impressively he could measure degrees of responsibility:—

‘As errors in the Church spring from abuse of liberty, so divisions, in many cases at least, spring from obstinacy of possession. Men believe that what they have is, even to its minuter parts, so precious that it must be conserved, even at the risk of creating or perpetuating division. Every Christian, indeed, believes that whoever is



required by any Church authority to belie his convictions, is bound to separate ; and every Protestant holds that corruptions in a Church may be so grievous and apparently incurable that reformation demands secession. But even to Protestantism the unity of the Church is native and anterior ; and the burden of proof never lies on unity, but always on separation. There may be cases where Churches cannot unite, because they differ widely in doctrine ; and the inclusion of divergent types would practically be a toleration of error. There may be other cases where they cannot unite because they disagree as to the rites in which their unity would be expressed, or as to the mode of government in which it would be enforced. Even in regard to these cases, the unity of the Christian Church—its outward and visible unity—has, other things being equal, always a presumption in its favour ; and where doctrine, ritual, and government are the same, the arguments for unity are not only strong, but invincible. This has long seemed to multitudes of their own members, and to others beyond their pale, to be the situation of the Presbyterian Churches of this country—at least of such of them as do not, by connection with the State, introduce new and extensive difficulties into the problem of incorporation. The evils of their separation have long been felt ; and the distinctive truths which they have been supposed to conserve have become relatively so small, in comparison of the mass of their visible agreements, that their separate existence has assumed the character not only of a misfortune and a weakness, but of a mystery and a stumbling-block. It must ever be to the honour of these Churches that, constrained by these convictions, they took an earnest step ten years ago in the direction of Union. Now, after lengthened and careful inquiry, the grounds of their fusion are found to be much stronger than when they commenced negotiations. Nothing has been discovered more adverse than was anticipated, while very much has awakened an agreeable surprise at the extent of manifested unity. And yet we are met by the unabated, and in some respects increasing, sounds of opposition ; and there is reason to apprehend that not only may a comprehensive Union be for a time deferred, but that our Union measures may leave to one of the negotiating Churches a legacy of painful controversy if not of partial disruption. I shrink from the apportionment of responsibility in connection with such a failure. I am far from claiming for the friends of this Union infallibility of judgment or impeccability of temper ; but I solemnly believe that, in the main, posterity will approve their efforts, and that, while those who have taken the grave responsibility of arresting the



movement will receive credit for conscientiousness, the Presbyterianism of the future, one day happily united, will here record an unhappy obstruction and not a needful pause. I say this with great reluctance and from an overpowering sense of duty, but in no unkind spirit, for there is not one of those who have constrained this arrest with whom I would not consider it my duty to unite, were they only willing to do what I think justice to the agreement which has been established between our several Churches. Even should they unhappily go further, and withdraw from the Free Church on the ground of its alleged unfaithfulness, I could not regard my relation to them as in the least altered, or my duty as in the least abated to proclaim that we ought not to exist in a state of separation, and that till they or I renounced our present creed, worship and government, we could not exist side by side and yet apart in the same country, without an injury to all the principles alike of Presbyterianism and of Christianity. In the meantime, I do not regard the cause as in any real sense lost. God is only trying our patience and exercising our self-control. He is teaching us to cease from man and look more to Himself. If we keep our eyes fixed upon our overwhelming agreements and growing affinities; if we regard our ultimate union as a necessity of the future, and live under that idea, suppressing all impatience and temporary irritation; and if we work towards this consummation in our intercourse, our separate arrangements and, when opportunity offers, our renewed conferences, then, sooner than many anticipate, our divisions may be healed, and the sadness of present frustration may only enhance the gratitude of those who shall live to rejoice over the divinely granted issue with the "joy of harvest."

The Union Movement was not altogether without visible results. South of the Tweed, where the Civil Magistrate, being an Episcopalian, has less disruptive power over Presbyterian consciences, the various Presbyterian Churches achieved a beneficial Union in 1876. To secure this, the United Presbyterian Church alone had to make a sacrifice by detaching 100 of its congregations, the other party to the Union, although affiliated with the Free Church, having always been a separate corporation. Dr. Cairns advocated this sacrifice continuously, and the weight of his influence was an important factor in securing the concurrence of the

Church in Scotland and of individual congregations in England. In the same year the Free Church absorbed the Reformed Presbyterians. During the Union discussions the latter had as a rule sided with the United Presbyterians. But when they had to choose, they preferred incorporation with the larger of the two Churches. It is to the credit of the United Presbyterians that, when thus excluded from the results of a movement which they had initiated, they did not grudge the advantage which accrued to the Free Church. When Dr. Cairns rose in the Free Church Assembly to tender congratulations, the enthusiasm with which he was received showed the general appreciation of the contribution which he personally had made to this generous policy. There was one other result of a practical character—an alteration in his attitude towards Disestablishment. But this will be recorded in a future chapter.

Undoubtedly he was gravely disappointed by the issue. A cause to which he had devoted an enormous amount of strength and time had failed; and although he knew the failure to be only temporary, he did not live to see success. When, fifteen years afterwards, he was urged to take a lead in re-opening negotiations, he declined, not merely on the ground that it obviously lay with the Free Church to indicate any change of their view, but because he thought that the honourable task must be undertaken by new men. Yet the failure left no bitterness nor even depression in his mind. Recent memoirs have shown that the friends with whom he had co-operated were very differently affected. Dr. Buchanan's heart was almost broken; and a dark shade fell on the closing days of Dr. Candlish and Dr. Guthrie. But in his case there was immediate and complete acquiescence in the result, as an indication of the will of God. Indeed, the following verses, written when the failure was fresh and sent to Dr. Maclagan, who had recently set for him a dislocated elbow-joint, show his insight into the human cause of failure:

## DOCTORS DIFFER : DELAYS ARE DANGEROUS

A hundred doctors on a Joint Committee  
 The work of Union tried ten years, and failed ;  
 But one good doctor on a joint took pity,  
 And in ten minutes, lo ! his skill prevailed.

Churches, be wise ! reduce each dislocation,  
 Ere joints and bands are stiff and shapeless grown ;  
 Beware of heat and chronic inflammation,  
 And heal your breaches ere the sun goes down.

He was too little of an ecclesiastic, and had too many personal resources, to be vitally affected by any ecclesiastical cause. To him this Union had never been an end in itself, but simply the practical method in which it seemed at the time right to express the unity of the Christian Church ; and when he discovered that he had been mistaken, the only visible effect was some increase of self-distrust and a diminished disposition towards ecclesiastical enterprise. To the end of life he continued to be an 'Apostle of Union' ; and if, as some will reckon, he contributed more to the true unity of the Church, and even to the outward unity of the Scottish Churches, when 'negotiations' were set aside, this was because in public as in personal affairs, he lived in the faith of his own bright motto, 'The best is still to come,' and because his heart was so schooled as to be incapable of cherishing a grudge. Within a few weeks of the close of the movement, he wrote to his sister with regard to a religious revival : 'It seems as if this were to be God's way of bringing still better results than those for which we have been working. . . . This is the last day of my fifty-sixth year ; in some very important respects it has been the happiest in my life.'

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The following letters are appended to illustrate some of the later phases of the movement dealt with only briefly in the narrative.

## TO DAVID CAIRNS

BERWICK, Dec. 3, 1867.

' . . . What a touching death also, and most afflictive to us all, that of James Hamilton! The loss is irreparable, save only as God can repair all things, and bring the best creations last out of His treasures. To myself it is a grievous blank; and our whole Union movement seems for the time impoverished by it. The unfortunate explosion at the Free Church Commission has grieved me much. Dr. Candlish is very excusable, if not more; but it would have been better to have said less and worked on energetically in the Committee. We had a delightful meeting at Greenock—a model of such meetings, and the memory of it has sweetened to me sore experiences. As Dr. Buchanan once said: "If our union were more to the devil's mind, it would be more easy work." In life and in death we can expect nothing from him but assault and deadly hostility. But this only teaches us to look more to his great Conqueror, and to expect his downfall with all his works.'

## TO THE SAME

Jan. 16, 1868.

' . . . The Union question is in a kind of crisis. If the pamphlets of Dr. Rainy and others restore the confidence of the Free Church (as is hoped), matters will be better than ever. I have never despaired, and I do not now. *Deus dabit his quoque finem.*'

## FROM REV. DR. BUCHANAN

GLASGOW, May 14, 1868.

'How can I sufficiently thank you for your noble and magnanimous Union speech! I regard it as a special token for good from the hand of the Lord. I have long felt that, just at the place on which you have laid your finger, there was still room for mutual explanations. I look upon it as most providential that you were led to notice Sir H. Moncreiff's admirable observation on this part of the subject. Such comments as you made—so generous and so satisfactory—will at once arrest attention. The whole tone and action of your Synod in the present crisis have excited my highest admiration and my deepest thankfulness. May we have a like measure of the guidance of the same spirit of love and power and of a sound mind! . . .'



TO REV. DR. KING

BERWICK, *Feb. 11, 1869.*

‘At our yesterday’s meeting a paper on the Civil Magistrate, drawn up by Mr. Elder of Rothesay, and intended to embody or supersede the Distinctive Articles, was adopted with a few minor alterations. . . . Our separate committee had been occupied in guarding against a defective estimate of the ancient application by the Church of Scotland of the Article on the side of intolerance, and we all had come armed to the Joint-meeting. Dr. Rainy very happily cut the ground from our feet by proposing to leave out the compendium with which Mr. Elder’s document opens, so that we did not need to say anything of the attainments or non-attainments of our early fathers. This valuable paper now pledges the Free Church to remain free of State connection, and also concedes the ground of mutual forbearance. Our own part in the narrative was left to receive some minor corrections, in addition to a not unimportant one, which substitutes “the ministrations of the Church” for “the ministrations of religion,” as what the State is debarred from providing for, leaving the door open for Chaplaincies, etc. Mr. Kennedy of Dingwall asked some questions, and professed himself satisfied, which is an important point, since, as a leading Highland minister, he exerts great influence. . . .’

FROM REV. DR. MARSHALL

COUPAR-ANGUS, *Dec. 27, 1869.*

‘. . . I do not know that friends thank me for my tilt with the Kidston-Nixon faction in this year of repose. My apology for it is that Dr. MacEwen’s letter seemed to have been too blunt to pierce the faction; that Dr. Duff treated us to such a Jeremiad in the Union Committee; that in bargaining for a year’s rest with our Free Church friends we did not bargain to bear silently a year’s foul abuse from their brethren; and that my patience is nearly exhausted. . . .’

TO MRS. CLARK

BERWICK, *Jan. 21, 1870.*

‘. . . The Union itself is very slow and retarded. The Free Church Presbyteries’ decisions have been better of late; but the minority is so considerable as to dictate great caution. However, I have not given up the hope of Union within a reasonably early

period, only am prepared for either fortune, as it would do no good to force on a premature issue. We have morally gained the battle, and can afford to wait. . . .’

TO REV. WM. GRAHAM

BERWICK, *Feb. 26, 1870.*

‘. . . It may be interesting for you, as an overturist, to know how boldly the Free Church leaders are going forward. We are to have a Committee meeting on Wednesday, and everything indicates decision and speedy resolve. I don’t say this to discourage your action; but facts are always precious. May God guide us all right! . . .’

FROM REV. DR. HARPER

ESKBANK, *March 11, 1870.*

‘. . . Dark clouds in the West. It is very plain from the spirit and out-speaking of the Gibson party that they will leave no stone unturned to arrest the Union. Yet I can hardly think it will be in their power to defeat in the Assembly so reasonable a proposal as that of asking Presbyteries to express their mind on the question.

‘In some quarters the idea is creeping in of the disestablishment of the Church of Scotland and the conversion of her temporalities into a common fund, of which all the Presbyterian Churches are to share—ours with the rest. Dream or no dream, this prospect is used as a reason for suspending Union for the present, in hope of a more comprehensive amalgamation! All honour to the liberal-minded and just-thinking men of the Free Church, who I trust constitute an overwhelming majority. . . .’

FROM REV. DR. RAINY

EDINBURGH, *May 13, 1870.*

‘. . . Allow me to thank you most warmly for your noble speech. It cannot fail to do good. Along with Dr. Harper’s, it sets an example which I hope we shall be able to follow. Whatever difficulties surround public questions, the effort to deal with them worthily is in itself a good greatly to be prized. . . .’

FROM REV. DR. CHAS. J. BROWN

EDINBURGH, *May 13, 1870.*

‘Truly the Lord was with you in the whole meditating and delivering of your noble speech. A thousand thanks. But I write

a hasty note to urge that it should be at once published, and placed in the hands of every member of our Assembly. . . . I will write to some of our leading friends, though I daresay it must have occurred to themselves.'

TO REV. DR. HARPER

BERWICK, *Feb. 24, 1871.*

' . . . The chief interest of the meeting lay in considering the plan of the campaign. Dr. Buchanan laid open in a clear and noble speech their design as follows:—To express approval at the Assembly of the decision of the vast majority of the Presbyteries; to hold a full conference and get the ultimatum of the Anti-union party, so that, if they propose to make the Establishment principle a term of communion, that proposal may be definitely set aside; to extract their programme; at all events, to reappoint the Committee, and with a view of showing that incorporation is still pursued, to remit to them specially the handling of the Sustentation Fund question as a present ground of objection and difficulty; and further, to recommend some plan of immediate federation for the Joint-committee to mature, such as that of joint ministration and membership in all the negotiating Churches, and thus to ripen matters for another year, so as to make the ultimate incorporation a kind of moral necessity. This plan was very cordially taken up by us, as uniting real progress with caution, and going as far as the Free Church could go in the present circumstances. . . . Indeed these arrangements, with God's blessing, make the Union irrevocable. After the meeting, we had a distinct conference on the Education Bill. All the Free Church leaders were loud in its praise, and earnest that nothing should be done to peril it. It was really remarkable that the most searching adverse criticism as to the room left for denominational grants, and as to the unsatisfactory solution of the Central Board question, came from the United Presbyterian side. On these points Drs. MacEwen, Calderwood, and Taylor somewhat strongly insisted; and I so far sympathise with them, though United Presbyterian and Free Church alike acknowledge and accept the settlement of the religious difficulty otherwise made. It is evident that in fighting against an English central government (if we resolve to do so) and in striving to blot out the denominational system entirely, we shall have to go mainly alone. However, it is wonderful that such unity prevails between the Free Church and us as to the matter to be taught and the provisions of the Bill on that

head. Mr. Nixon and Dr. Begg will not do much to disturb this harmony. I am delighted with the success of your resolutions in the Edinburgh Presbytery. Including that, only two dissentients are reported in all the seventeen Presbyteries yet heard from. 'Truly the divine blessing has rested on this appeal.'

FROM REV. DR. HARPER

*Dec. 25, 1871.*

'If our Free Church friends set their faces resolutely to carry No. II.<sup>1</sup> and succeed, there will be encouragement to go on; but if anything short of this be the thing proposed, I think that it would be better to suspend negotiations for the present.'

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

*BERWICK, Jan. 18, 1872.*

' . . . The Union matter went on most comfortably. All is settled that we need care for till next Synod. The exchangeability of ministers is conceded and everything else looks better. It was a great effort to me; but I am glad that I went. . . .'

TO REV. R. W. DALE, LL.D.

*BERWICK, Feb. 9, 1872.*

'My friend Dr. Rainy has told me that he has written to urge you not to come to Scotland at this time to endeavour to influence our national policy in favour of the Birmingham League movement. I had some thoughts of writing you myself in the same strain, though not altogether from the same point of view. I shall take the liberty of stating how I feel on the subject. Our principles are nearer your position than those of the Free Church. We could work your plan; but as we see no chance of having it carried in Scotland we endeavour to make the best arrangement we can. We hope to secure a Conscience Time-table, and our Church will use every effort to get the rates, as well as the grants, restricted to secular education, leaving the religious education to be controlled by the local Boards and paid for by the parties actually receiving it. But we are not prepared for any enactment excluding the Bible from the regular hours, if the local Board shall so arrange it; at least, a large body in our Church would oppose this, myself included. Nor are we ready to agree to any exclusion of the Catechism, provided it be restricted to the

<sup>1</sup> The proposal for Mutual Eligibility: see page 535.



extra hours, and protected by a Conscience Time-table. These views are held by very many in our Church, which, however, is greatly divided on the whole subject. In the interest of our denomination, which has suffered much from these divisions, I think it better that we should fight the battle out among ourselves, rather than be agitated by a new party, however much we sympathise with your grievances, and respect your motives in wishing to help us. Another reason why I should recommend your not coming, is that the Disendowment question is likely very soon to rise in Scotland, and to be taken up by the Free Church as well as by us. You could not get that Church, more than many in ours, to agree with you on the Education question; but on the general Disendowment question you could, at least very many in it. I should therefore deprecate a beginning on a point hopeless of attainment, instead of on one where all parties are likely better to understand each other. We must soon come together on that question; and we look for your valuable help. Would it not be a pity to begin with discord and cross purposes? I have written quite frankly; and I know that my opinion is very likely to differ from that of my friend Mr. Renton. But it is quite sincere.'

FROM REV. R. W. DALE, LL.D.

BIRMINGHAM, *Feb.* 13, 1872.

'It was very kind of you to write to me, and you may be sure that your judgment . . . has very great weight with me; and I may add that I have read Dr. Rainy's Lectures in reply to the Dean of Westminster, who wants to take all the bone and muscle out of Scotch Christianity, with such admiration that it would be a real pain to me to take a course which he seriously disapproves.

'It is not on behalf of the National Education League that I have thought of visiting Scotland, but on behalf of the Central Nonconformist Committee. There was . . . an understanding come to privately that Dr. Raleigh, Mr. Hannay, and myself, with some United Presbyterian minister, should place ourselves in communication with friends in Scotland, . . . and arrange if possible to assist the manifestation of the feeling adverse to the Lord Advocate's Bill, which we knew existed, but which was in danger of being suppressed, as it seemed to us, by the policy of the leaders of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches. . . .

'Your own position I have had some difficulty in apprehending. You say that you would not have the Bible excluded from the

school "during regular hours," by which I imagine you mean the hours not covered by the Time-table Conscience Clause. Now it is my full persuasion that the Bill must certainly do what you deprecate . . . and on that point there need be no controversy between those who hold your position and the southern Nonconformists. . . . On the question round which the controversy will move, I should be very grateful if you could find time to give me a sentence or two of explanation.

'You say: "We hope to secure a Conscience Time-table, and (1) our Church will use every effort to get the *rates*, as well as the grants, restricted to secular education, (2) leaving the religious education to be controlled by the *local boards* and paid for by the parties actually receiving it." If your Church will really do its best to secure what is expressed by the clause which I have marked (1), there is no difference between your position and ours, except on the point about having the Bible read in "regular hours," which will really not emerge.

'But if (1) means all it seems to mean, I cannot understand (2). Why should the local board control religious education—how can it control it—if no public money is used to provide it?

'If you mean that the schoolroom should be at the disposal of Churches out of regular hours—at times to be determined by the Board—for the purpose of giving religious instruction to those who are willing to receive it, this is the platform of the League, and I believe that many Nonconformists would offer no serious objection to the proposal.

'I can hardly imagine that any possible injury could be inflicted on the projected Disestablishment movement by the attempt on our part to elicit public feeling in Scotland in favour of amendments to the Bill, restricting grants and rates to secular education. It is quite possible that some, perhaps many, Free Churchmen, and some, not many, United Presbyterians, might be irritated by our movement; but for their own sakes—not out of consideration for us—they will go in for Disestablishment, and no hard words flung at us in this present controversy would chill the earnestness with which we shall support them.

'The one point on which I should like to trouble you is—what shape do you think the amendments of your Church are likely to assume, in order to secure that neither rates nor grants shall go to provide religious instruction? As the Bill stands, public money is to provide for the teaching of religious doctrine, just as it provides for the teaching of grammar and geography. I think that if your

friends stand by your principle, they will render my visit to Scotland very unnecessary. If they do not stand by it, they will give into the hands of their opponents a weapon, the edge of which will cut them sharp and deep when they raise the Disestablishment question. . . .’

TO REV. R. W. DALE, LL.D.

BERWICK, *Feb.* 14, 1872.

‘In speaking of the exclusion of the Bible at “regular hours,” I meant the formal prohibition of the Bible, even where a School Board could agree about it, and where the instruction was understood to be paid for by fees, as is proposed by the United Presbyterian Committee. In such a case I should regard a formal enactment relegating the Bible to a separate place as undesirable. It never has been done in Scotland. As the Conscience Clause is necessary for the Catechism, I am ready to see it, under the above conditions, separated even formally, although this would be a novelty; but I do not think that the Bible should be thus treated by any Christian nation. Naturally enough, Roman Catholics and others, who did not wish their children taught it, and who, as the United Presbyterian Committee propose, would not pay for it, would learn when it was taught daily, and would withdraw their children. This I should think a better arrangement than a formal separation of the State from the Bible. Only, as you say, the Government has proceeded already in the line of Conscience Clauses, and the difference between those of us here who wish religion to be taught voluntarily is more as to the wording and arrangement of a Bill than as to any question of deeper principle—save that a slight of the Bible by the Government—even though not intended—ought to be avoided. I am glad to find that we do not differ about the application of the rates, as well as the grants, to secular education. The United Presbyterian Committee have strongly urged on the Lord Advocate the insertion of a declaration to this effect—which already exists as to grants—in his Bill. I am sorry to see that he has paid no attention to it as yet. What measures may be taken to enforce their views, I do not of course yet know. But I have no doubt that they will do all they can to impress them. It would be quite easy for the School Board to arrange, under Parliamentary control, that all the rates should go to secular instruction.

‘I mean no more by the “control” of religious instruction by the local Board, than you indicate. But I have noticed with much



regret, that your association forbids the employment of the teacher by the local Board—an arrangement than which in Scotland nothing could be more unwelcome and unworkable. This would be a separation of the school from religion, for which, I am persuaded, Scotland is not prepared, and which would exhibit the Voluntary principle in an unattractive light. This is not done in Ireland—even under the National system, and I hope it will not be pressed.

‘I am far from saying that your visit and that of your friends might not do good, though you already know the other side; and I only take the responsibility of stating my own opinions, and not of framing your decision. But you can now judge tolerably well how the land lies, and I have no doubt that the cordiality which is so desirable between the southern and the northern Nonconformists will not be interrupted.’

TO REV. JAMES ROBERTSON, VIEWFORTH.

BERWICK, *Feb.* 19, 1872.

‘In reply to your circular inviting me to a Conference on Education on the 28th instant, or to an expression of approval of the Resolutions on which it proceeds, adverse to State provision for religion in an Education Bill, and also sympathising with the English Nonconformists and Irish Presbyterians in their struggle for combined secular and separate religious education, I have respectfully to state the difficulties which I feel in accepting the invitation and which lead me, till I see how they are met, to decline.

‘I have always been favourable to the general resolution of our Synod, “that it is not within the province of civil government to provide for the religious instruction of the subject”; but at the same time, I do not regard the permissive reading of the Bible as any violation of that principle, and I even regard the secular education as incomplete, which omits the greatest classic in the world. I believe also that the preservation of the Shorter Catechism, with the addition to the other safeguards of the Lord Advocate’s Bill of the one urged by our United Presbyterian Committee—that the rates, as well as the grants, should be understood as not applicable to any denominational teaching, which the fees alone should cover—would be quite consistent with Voluntaryism and in perfect harmony with the existing Irish practice, where all Catechisms are freely used after the mixed secular education is ended.



Nor would I set up a separate agency to administer this question distinct from the School Board, in which I would have perfect confidence, and which, having only the fees of the parents to work upon, could not be under any temptation to misinterpret their wishes. In the case of children not provided for by their parents, though I should have no objection in principle to an exceptional payment from the rates, I should in point of expediency prefer an appeal by the School Board to voluntary liberality.

‘While I sympathise with the grievances of the English Non-conformists, I am unable to agree with them in excluding the national teacher from the work of religious instruction. There may be reasons for this in England, but in Scotland I can see none, and in Ireland the National teacher is freely allowed at the separate hour to give religious instruction. I entirely agree with your general principle as to the evils of the support of denominational schools out of public funds, but I wait to see how far the above provisions, all of which I hold to be undenominational, will be allowed by those who join in your movement.

‘I will only add that, though I agree with our United Presbyterian Committee in urging on the Lord Advocate the acceptance of their proposal, to secure the payment of religious instruction by the fees alone (which would remove the only, or almost the only, deviation of the Bill from perfect Voluntaryism), I am yet so thankful for the many approaches it makes to the principles of Dissenters, and for the noble future which it opens up for education in Scotland in contrast with anything in the past, that, beyond frankly stating the one point where it falls short in that respect, and endeavouring to have it improved, I will do nothing that can endanger the passing of the Bill.’

#### TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Jan. 20, 1873.*

‘. . . Our Union business is likely to come to an issue soon. I expect that Dr. Begg and his friends will make or force on a rupture. If they do not, the Eligibility scheme will slowly gain the day. You would rejoice at the action of the General Assembly Commission. I agree with the *Daily Review* that we ought to back them up; but I do not know the views of others. . . .’

FROM REV. DR. BUCHANAN

GLASGOW, *Jan. 27, 1873.*

‘. . . I see Nixon has at length ventured on an answer to your admirable letter. It is an obvious failure, and in ordinary circumstances not worth a reply. In present circumstances, however, it seems to me very desirable that you should hold at him and not allow him to ride off as he does in a cloud of vague words. I also should like very much, that in order to avoid a *mêlée* of combatants the matter should be left in your hands. . . .’

‘As to the Union Committee’s Report, I was quite serious in what I said as to the importance of your writing it, rather than that I should write it. In the way of a testimony to the true position of your Church on the question of National Religion, it would far more suitably, and with far greater force and effect, come from you than from any Free Churchman. I beg therefore very earnestly that you would undertake the drafting of the Joint-report.

‘There is reason to think that Begg is really meaning to make a disruption at next Assembly. We shall meet therefore to make the real nature of the question at issue as clear as possible. . . . May we have much of the guidance of Him whose name is Counsellor! . . .’

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Feb. 7, 1873.*

‘. . . I have been working all week at a part of a final Report of our Joint-committee to the Supreme Courts. My part is a *résumé* of the history of our negotiations regarding the Civil Magistrate. This paper happily is finished; but there are many things to attend to about the English Union, which is a difficult operation. As for the Scotch, we all feel that, but for a stretch of higher power, it is gone for the present. . . .’

TO REV. DR. MARSHALL

BERWICK, *April 17, 1873.*

‘We have lived to see the last meeting of the Joint-committee that will be held for some time. It is impossible not to be both humbled and saddened; but it is some consolation to us that we have done all we humanly could to prevent the break-off of the

negotiations, and a still greater, that God is holding out the good hope that the delay will not be of long duration. Our own Committee met on the 14th and revised both the Joint-report and our special Report, which will furnish the matter of our motion to the Synod. Dr. MacEwen and I are to draw it up, sending it to you for any suggestion.

'The Joint-meeting on the 15th will live in the memory of all who were present. Dr. Buchanan was in the Chair, and Dr. Candlish was able to be present. A large meeting was gathered to see the end, and a tribute to Dr. Guthrie's memory fitly opened the business. The Joint-report was then slightly corrected, and the special Reports were read by Dr. Goold, Dr. Buchanan and myself. There were almost no criticisms, and every allusion to speedy resumption of negotiations was warmly taken up. The closing devotional exercises were singularly impressive. Dr. C. J. Brown, taking the Chair, gave out the 46th psalm, which was sung with very great feeling, and offered a most remarkable prayer. After the reading of the 48th psalm, Dr. James Mitchell followed in a very low but deeply feeling tone. When the 147th psalm had been sung, Dr. Harper prayed in as notable a strain as Dr. Brown, and Dr. Binnie closed the series of prayers with great appropriateness. The whole was ended by the singing of the last verses of the 122nd psalm, Dr. Brown only adding, "We have taken infestment of Union." The benediction was pronounced by Dr. Buchanan, and we shook hands in a promiscuous kind of way with a good deal of emotion. Dr. Buchanan was the last to leave, and as he stretched out his hand to me he good-naturedly said, "I am not going to bid you farewell." We need not doubt that the meetings are not over; but who will see the next is better hid than known. There is the fullest expectation of a disruption in the Free Church. How many and who will leave, are questions unsettled.'

CHAPTER XIX

MINISTER AND PROFESSOR

1867-1873

Professorship—Character of Lectures—Relation to students—Sketches by Rev. Dr. Smith and Mr. Kirkup—Strain upon health—Sick furloughs—Additional duties—Cheviots—Italy—Oxford—Paris in ruins—Centenary of congregation—Moderatorship—British Museum, Spurgeon, etc.—Reformed Synod of France—Dr. Guthrie's death—Homes of Wesley, Cowper, and Butler.

FROM student days Dr. Cairns seemed to be destined for a professorship. His original intention had been to make teaching the work of his life, and although he looked back thankfully to the consecration by which this had been altered, the alteration was not regarded by others as final. Between the date of his Ordination and 1867, no fewer than seven Chairs had been placed within his reach, and some of these had been pressed upon him with great urgency. From the beginning, he had found the instruction of the young the most congenial part of his ministry, and the type of preaching which he had developed was argumentative and didactic. At heart a student and a scholar, he had, without any external stimulus, been increasing the mass of his learning from year to year. He was not unconscious of his aptitude for research, and although he had little of the spirit of literary productiveness, he regretted the fragmentary character of his contributions to theology. His regret was shared throughout the Church, and his refusals to accept a more prominent pastoral charge increased the feeling that he had not yet reached his proper place. While students of philosophy were sorry that he had been lost to metaphysics, those who appreciated his consecration to the ministry were



anxious that within its limits he should find more adequate employment for his resources and his powers. In 1866, the death of Professor Lindsay created a vacancy in the Theological Hall. The vacancy was in the Chair of Exegesis ; but in order to give Dr. Cairns scope for his special gifts, the Synod, in May 1867, substituted a Professorship of Apologetics, making other provision for Exegesis, and enthusiastically elected him to the new professorship, into which he entered in the following August.

Although he was thus, in his forty-ninth year, appointed to the work most congenial to him, he was not in any sense set apart for it. The Hall, now finally settled in Edinburgh, met, as in his own student days, for seven weeks every autumn, and he, like his colleagues Drs. Harper, Eadie and M'Michael, combined his professorship with the full duties of the pastorate. The salary—£100—was intended merely to defray personal expenses, and the only relief given was that arrangements were made for filling the pulpits of Professors during Term. In other respects the professorship was a clear addition to work already in hand. Although much may be said for intrusting the training of students to those who are actually engaged in the work of the ministry, such a system inevitably affects the permanent worth of the lectures of Professors, especially in the case of subjects which require systematic treatment. Old material, not always appropriate, must be utilised ; important topics must sometimes be treated hastily or adjourned till leisure is secured ; and there is a temptation to produce work which may be used both in the classroom and in the pulpit, although not quite suitable for either. If some of these causes gave Dr. Cairns' early lectures an uneven character, he steadily resisted the last-mentioned temptation, making his professorship a business in itself and developing from year to year, as time allowed, a consistent and exhaustive treatment of his subject.

He had two distinct Courses, the one dealing with the

history of Apologetics, the other with the positive Evidences of Christianity. In preparing the former course, he took nothing at second-hand, and, though already more familiar than most historical writers with patristic literature, he set himself anew to the study of the great battle-grounds of faith. The salient features of this Course were on the one hand the almost excessive importance which he attached to the controversies of the fourth, the seventeenth, and the eighteenth centuries, and on the other hand an unusual fulness of detail, arising partly from the scholastic bent of his mind and partly from a laborious conscientiousness which curbed him in generalisation. The lectures were laden with the results of independent research and of sagacious criticism; and it is a real loss to the cause of Christian learning that the composition of them was so frequently hurried that as a whole they are unfit for posthumous publication.

The other Course, dealing with positive Evidences, rested upon an independent and original framework. Discarding the traditional distinction between External and Internal, he regarded all Evidences according to the manifestation of God which they present, and divided them into those which manifest His Power, Knowledge, Wisdom, Holiness, Benignity. This philosophical and exhaustive classification had the special merit that it permitted enlargement without loss of consistency or balance. Still more notable was his treatment of 'prevailing errors,' a subject specially assigned to him in the terms of his appointment. Leaving formal errors, *i.e.* those which relate to the Scriptures as the source of knowledge, to the Professors of Biblical Literature, he classified material errors, *i.e.* those which relate to the contents or doctrines of the Scriptures, according to their bearing upon the Gospel. They affect either the need, the impetration, the application, or the issues of Redemption, and are therefore essentially Pelagian, Socinian, Synergistic or Universalist; and the special errors of the day are most

satisfactorily examined as instances of those types. It will be obvious that such a scheme rises far above the sporadic and arbitrary methods of recent Apologetic literature, providing as it does a logical place for every heresy and emphasising its most important aspects. The apparent defects of the scheme are its largeness and its implied denial of the claims of new heresies to originality. Yet to a philosophical or scholarly theologian these will seem to be merits rather than defects. In this Course were included large sections of the treatise on the Difficulties of Christianity which he had been writing at intervals since 1856. That work, thus broken into pieces, was never resumed, and only his personal friends knew of its existence. Yet it gave his lectures a feature of inequality which all his students recognised. One day they would be electrified by well-balanced eloquence worthy of the march of his massive thought, while the next day they found it hard to maintain attention, the lecture, though also massive and solid, being unfinished and irregular in style. They did not know that the one lecture was the result of months of close thinking and weeks of careful writing, and that the other had been written late on the previous evening or after a long sitting of the Union Committee or in the lassitude of a 'minister's Monday.'

The work of his professorship included, besides lecturing and the ordinary amount of examining, the hearing of sermons and other preparations for the ministry of a practical kind. Into these he threw himself with great earnestness and full sympathy. He erred perhaps in thinking that all his pupils were earnest, and in excessive reluctance to injure the feelings of the dullest or the most careless. But the error was a gracious, winning one, and at this stage it was not conspicuous. He systematically entertained the students, eight or ten at a time, in quiet rooms at 14 Gayfield Square, where he lodged with the widow of the Rev. John Peden, formerly his neighbour at Berwick. Although by such

intercourse as well as by his considerate demeanour in the classroom he secured their complete confidence, it was notable that he did not seek to give much personal guidance in private. Readers will remember how again and again he had refused to guide young men, including his own brother, through speculative difficulties, and towards most of his pupils he maintained a similar attitude. This was not due to reserve, still less to failure in sympathy, but to the conviction that each man must fight a battle for his own faith. His fearless confidence in the self-evidencing power of the highest truths led him to be chary in interfering personally, lest he should deprive young combatants of that strong sense of victory which had been the reward of his own unaided struggle. One student, who at that date was floundering at the university in the marshes that encircle Hegelianism, recollects how in the misery of mental confusion he was referred to Dr. Cairns for guidance. Dr. Cairns asked him to write out a detailed statement of the points which perplexed him, and having read the statement, merely told him to 'go on and think out things for himself without fear.'

Yet the personal concerns of his pupils and the sanctity of their vocation were constantly in his view, and he sought to know them and to help them as he knew and helped his congregation at Berwick. He attended their debating societies, gave careful counsel about vacation plans and family affairs, and opened his purse to poor students with a liberality which none but the recipients knew. More valuable to them still was the daily pattern which he gave of consecration to the ministry. Even during Term he could not withhold himself from pastoral work. Worshipping on Sundays in Broughton Place Church, to which he was drawn by memories of Dr. Brown and by friendship with Dr. Andrew Thomson, he was ready for any service that might be asked from him there or in any part of Edinburgh, and preached with special frequency in German



to the small Lutheran congregation of the city. His flock at home was never forgotten. All particulars about the sick and the dying were carefully reported by his sister, and it needed only a word to secure a flying visit from him on a Saturday.

Two of his pupils have furnished an adequate record of the general influence of his early professorship.

SKETCH BY REV. JOHN SMITH, D.D.

‘I can distinctly recall the stir of interest through the whole Church at the appointment of Dr. Cairns. We met then in the bright, warm, relaxing days of August, in the Upper Queen Street Hall, a species of expanded attic, from which, in stolen moments, we could catch glimpses of the Forth and of Fife. The figure of Dr. Cairns, as he then was, comes back to me as if it were yesterday, —tall, massive, reverend, erect, and yet with a suggestion of the stoop of later years: the kind, strong face, even then crowned with a glory of white hair, but irradiated by the freshness and unbroken vigour of middle age, looking down from the height of that great frame, upon us meaner mortals, with fulness of purpose and broad, calm insight, yet with an unaffected meekness that bound us to him. At the height of his reputation, in Scotland at least, and called with acclamation to his Chair by a Church which regarded itself specially favoured in being able to employ one so distinguished in such service, he drew out the love and trust and enthusiasm of his first classes in unexampled degree. He lived within wider horizons than the typical theologian of that day, knowing, and surveying with a large intelligence, the actual currents of thought. Nor was he merely an analytical faculty upon legs, but a great-souled, fiery-hearted man, alive to everything noble in literature and life, with a keen perception of the loftier and austerer graces of style, reaching at moments a rare height of poetic beauty and vision. Withal, he was a student, sternly conscientious, thorough, sometimes to a fault, capable of hard, continuous toil and, in emergencies, of enormous bursts of energy.

‘What made contact with him an epoch in some of our lives was the union of such intellectual force and catholicity of judgment with the beauty of a sanctified character and total homage to Christ. I came to him from a teacher who had saturated me with his positive scientific spirit, while he repelled by his materialistic explanations of

the higher human faculties. Dr. Cairns was like a sun, scattering the clouds of fear and painful surmise that had begun to gather round the unreasoned piety of boyhood. Following him in his course of thought, in which, while just to, and even throwing a certain intellectual sympathy into the interpretation of, defective and unbelieving views, he moved on broad lines to a conclusion of faith, one learned—surely a lesson for life—that the spiritual could hold its own in every court of reason and experience.

‘The working hypothesis of evolution had not at that time come to dominate all spheres of thought, and the lines of his defence were those which had been generally accepted, but they were adjusted with great fulness of knowledge and breadth of view to the actual situation; so that beyond the impression they produced at the time they left a permanent effect upon the life of the Church. It is an outstanding fact that of the three Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, the United Presbyterian has been least afflicted with the unsettling spirit of rationalism. If this meant that the Church has been either blind or indifferent to the currents of modern thought, it might justly be regarded as a reproach. But it has been her glory as well as her strength, that God has given her a succession of striking personalities, in which whole-souled faith was associated with brilliant gifts, literary and artistic sensibilities, and a large measure of speculative power. The names of John Ker, William Robertson, and John Cairns will bring before the reader the quality and greatness of this gift. For nearly half a century they have moulded the thought and spirit of the Church, emphasising not the war of a reactionary faith with culture and reason, but the harmony of these last with humble and aggressive religion. And this harmony has been not merely taught, but lived in consecrated individualities which fascinated and attracted and inspired. One has to know the Church in its length and breadth, to see how deep the influence of these lives has gone, teaching her, from the central seat of the spiritual, to come into harmony with all fact, and preparing her for the fierce strain of these last days. It is in this line that I see the true magnitude of Dr. Cairns’ influence as a professor. Of the three whom I have mentioned, his influence was at once the widest and the most profound. The fragments that remain show that his lines of defence were well laid, and as ably supported and defended. What evaporates from the printed page, however, is the personal tone of loyalty to truth, the communicated impression of sobriety and catholicity of judgment, the unfeigned anxiety to strain no point against an adversary and the gathering enthusiasm of

conviction with which he reached a conclusion which seemed final, an end of all controversy.

‘In the distinctive lines of his mental working, he had not in any very large measure absorbed those influences and tendencies of thought which have become predominant in recent years. But as an open-minded and original inquirer, he revealed, from his own standpoint, affinities of thought with the coming time and opened up lines of inquiry, showing that the breath of the new movements was at work in him. First of Apologists, so far as I know, he appreciated the value of a full historical treatment of apologetics. With enormous labour, he studied the monuments of Ante-Nicene literature, in order to show how the Christian spirit first vindicated itself at the bar of reason, and met and parried the attacks of warring opinion in the decaying Roman world. Here, in one leading interest, he was on the line of research since pursued by Hatch and Harnack. His Atlantean effort, however, was only partially successful. He did not take in the whole problem of the influence of Christianity on that world, and its reactions on the thought of the Church, confining himself to the defence of Christianity against overt attacks. Perhaps also, he went into too much detail. Certainly he was encumbered by the enormous mass of accumulated material; and so the great design remained a fragment. Yet he opened to us the world of patristic literature, and while we were too much men of that past day to appreciate aright the value of his investigations, we were drawn out to this great Herakles in the toils of so breaking a labour, and acquired view-points and working conceptions which have stood many of us in good stead to this hour.

‘No account of Dr. Cairns at any stage could be other than incomplete that left out of view the influence of his piety. We were never allowed to forget the nature of the work for which we were preparing. Not so much by overt act, as by sheer pressure of his personality, he set before us a higher idea of personal holiness, wider horizons of duty, larger sympathies, and such an example of noble simplicity of life and abounding charity as has changed, in many directions, the accepted standard of pastoral qualification and success.’

#### SKETCH BY THOMAS KIRKUP, ESQ.

‘I suppose no men are so hypercritical as students after they have been four or five years at the university. To those who are aware of this, it will give the most accurate impression of our



feelings towards Dr. Cairns when I say that, with regard to him, criticism could not be said to exist. We all had for him an appreciation which was far deeper than ordinary admiration; it was admiration blended with loyalty and veneration.

‘Both of his Courses of lectures were marked by the same high qualities—wide and accurate learning, philosophic power and insight of the first rank, orderliness and lucidity of presentation, singular fairness in interpreting other men’s views. Such rectitude and integrity of judgment, such candour and equity in discussion, such single-minded devotion to the highest themes and the noblest aims, as we every day saw in him, are exceedingly rare. His lectures had been newly written, and appeared to be fresh and alive from his mind and heart. They could not be dissociated from the man; they were the direct outcome of a rich, spiritual experience and of a wide outlook over a long course of struggle in which the spiritual interests of mankind had been involved. The faith which he held and defended was the faith of St. Paul and St. Augustine, the faith of the leaders of Protestantism, of the chiefs of Puritanism and of the Fathers of Scottish Nonconformity, the faith of all the great sections of the Christian Church, however overlaid and obscured. Compromise with passing theories, and all other forms of that opportunism, which has now become a prevalent note in theology and ecclesiastical life, would for him have been treason against the sacred majesty of divine truth and against the gravest interests of the human soul. He therefore made no concession to the fashion of the hour in theology, and could not be expected to make any. The charity wherein he abounded beyond other men was not the easy charity born of indifference or nebulous conceptions of truth, but the expression of a large and generous nature nurtured in the Christian faith—a charity associated with strong convictions and clear perception of the supreme importance of the questions under discussion.

‘I believe we saw him at his truest and best in the prayer-meetings of the students on Saturday mornings, in which he frequently joined. The childlike devoutness of his prayers, the strength and sincerity of his approach to the Unseen were the clearest expression of the simple piety, the surrender of the soul, the absorption in divine ideals which moulded and pervaded his words and bearing, in all the phases of his life.

‘Such endowments and characteristics are rare taken singly, and in their combination they are unique. He was so gifted and so trained, I believe, that if the requisite leisure had been granted him



at an earlier period of his life, he might have done for the Church of the nineteenth century what Bishop Butler did for that of the eighteenth. Though we may regret that he remained a pastor till he was nearly sixty, bringing to every detail of his pastorate the same fervour and conscientiousness which he showed in his Chair, the impression of the noble simplicity which made him accept all duty as having a divine right over him is all the stronger. He was a man of heroic stature, moulded of the sacred metal of which martyrs and confessors were made. By his unsparing unselfishness, the width and tenderness of his sympathies, his childlike faith, his strenuous and resolute devotion to great ideals, he reached a high place among those who have made the world better and richer. Looking back on him as he sat in the theological Chair—massive, toil-worn and pathetic, yet full of faith in the divine, of hope for the future, of charity for all men, one feels that his memory is a spiritual possession and a monition to the pursuit of all things true and pure and lovely.’

The above reminiscences show how faithfully he embodied the ideal of true apologist as he sketched it in his Introductory Lecture :—

‘The best apology for Christianity is a life which makes the supernatural visible to ourselves and others. The more we find by experience that Christianity condemns in us all that is evil and brings forth all that is good, the more our personal faith in its divine right and power will grow, even amidst our growing sense of failure and imperfection ; and the same conviction must spread to others, as faith is shown by works, and as the rule is brought into fresh application, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” . . . May the Christian cause find in us, in our several places, consistent upholders ; and, as we cannot rise to its pure and awful height, may it be our aim and prayer to fall below it as little as possible ! The brightness of every Christian example will not only preserve, but indefinitely multiply, the illuminating power of all the evidences of Christianity, as the polished surface of the concave reflector at once mirrors and multiplies the illuminating power of the lighthouse ; and thus the heaven-enkindled Pharos will send a broad and kindly beam over the waste of waters in a troubled period, and guide through storm and darkness those who “are afar off upon the sea” to safety and rest.’

At the close of his first session he pursued his preparation of lectures with the reckless enthusiasm of boyhood. 'I am very busy,' he writes in December to his brother David, 'with the Greek Fathers—Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and their apostolic precursors. Their Christianity was one to live and die with, and they needed it all, as we do.' The following letter shows how his studies blended with all his experiences :—

TO REV. JAMES ROBERTSON, NEWINGTON.

BERWICK, *Dec.* 30, 1867.

' . . . I am so incessantly occupied that I have not had a moment to express my sympathy with you, and my joy that so dear and venerable a saint of God as your father is at length home for ever. Such lives are the true apologies for Christianity, and when they end, their lesson remains, written by the Spirit of the living God. . . . I often wish for myself that I had more of the simple faith of those worthies who are successively being taken from us. Dr. Smith of Biggar was only two hours behind him. They had the same birthday of immortality, and I am willing to believe that they keep it together. . . . Let me ask your prayers for me in my work. The prayers of those who are thus brought near heaven have special power with God.'

Meantime there was no relaxation of pastoral duty, and the Union negotiations, which were at a critical stage, involved an unusual amount of correspondence and public speaking. 'Do exercise your imagination,' wrote a shrewd adviser, 'in preparing these lectures; they will be liker their neighbours, and you will be more likely to finish them.' But he was deaf to such warnings. His health gave way completely, and he escaped for a short rest to Copenhagen, Hamburg and Berlin, including characteristically a visit to Königsberg, made for the sake of gathering memorials of Kant. He struggled through the Hall session, giving extempore lectures, and bathing every morning in the Forth; but after a brief return to Berwick he had again to leave the country.

## TO MISS JANET CAIRNS

GRANDVILLE, *Oct.* 31, 1868.

'I have just come over from Jersey, rather tired, without much to report of progress; but you know that I was not very sanguine at the outset, and I am willing to use all the means in faith and hope. I have felt much reliance on God in all my bad turns with this weakness, and I go farther south, humbly confiding in His guidance and presence. . . . There is no Protestant place of worship here, but it is not the first time I have worshipped alone.'

## TO THE SAME

NANTES, *Nov.* 3, 1868.

'By the mercy of God I keep rather better, and go on my way with interest and satisfaction. The country through which I have passed by *diligence* is delightful; the weather is charming, and the woods are in the finest tints of autumn. . . . I have explored this city, so famous in the history of Protestantism, and have had a long talk with the Protestant minister. Six miles up the Loire, which flows under my bedroom, is the place where Knox worked in the galleys. . . . I am filled with mental pleasure, and only hope the body will in due time share it.'

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

IRUN, SPAIN, *Nov.* 7, 1868.

'I am sitting beside a log fire, with drenching rain and blinding snow outside, having walked from St. Jean de Luz through the mountains, than which I have seen none lovelier. One great conical peak, and another behind it splintered into three, dominated the whole chain. The views of sea and valley, too, were grand. . . . I have spent the Sabbath happily, with many thoughts of our own congregation and of the sick and others. I am confirmed in my opinion that work will now do me more good than anything else.'

MONTRÉJEAU, *Nov.* 11, 1868.

' . . . Yesterday I saw Toulouse to great advantage, especially the scene of the battle of April 10, 1814, in which our poor uncle took part. At the base of a pyramid which commanded the scene of

action, I met with a French veteran, who explained the course of the battle. He showed me his Mexican medal, which was of about as much value to him as the clasps which uncle used to display when in full dress; and we both agreed that peace was better than war, and that the countries had gained nothing but debt and misery from all this bloodshed. The view of the vast plain is incomparable. . . . To-day I have seen the Protestant college of Montauban, and had a talk with Jean Monod. . . . I shall have much to say when I come home, for I have talked incessantly about religion everywhere.'

PARIS, *Nov.* 17, 1868.

'I came round by Auvergne, in order to see the birthplace of Pascal. . . . High hills, swelling into snow-crowned mountains, succeeded each other rapidly till, as we mounted the valley of the Tarn, the scenery became sublime. Far up was the jagged Puy de l'Orient, with the mist playing around it, shaggy with snow, its pure peaks glittering in the morning sun. Clermont, where Pascal's father was president of the law-courts, lies at the foot of the Puy de Dôme, a dome-shaped mass like a great potato pit. By ascending the Puy, Pascal established the fact that the atmosphere had pressure or weight. It was a pleasure to identify the surrounding scenery and the town and, above all, the grand mountains. I was glad to find that a countryman going to a neighbouring fair knew about Pascal and where he was born, though a lady passenger, a zealous devotee of Rome, did not seem to have heard his name. Next day I saw at Orleans all connected with Joan of Arc, arriving here in time for a very interesting Sabbath. I took part in the exercises of a Young Men's Christian Association in the evening.'

HORNSEY, *Nov.* 19, 1868.

'I arrived here yesterday, well rewarded for pursuing my third-class system by two very interesting conversations, one with a student of law, another with an old servant of M. Guizot. . . . I am somewhat better. Nothing, however, will cure me but regular work. God has been very merciful.'

About the time of his return, a new kind of work was laid to his hand, which, for the next twenty years, entailed a great deal of troublesome correspondence—the appointment of professors and ministers for the colonies. It has recently



been common for Colonial Presbyterians to intrust such appointments to two or three leading men in Scotland, representing the different Churches, and in such cases Dr. Cairns was almost invariably the United Presbyterian representative. The duty was a tedious if an important one, and sometimes involved him in personal investigations which were not at all to his mind. He was also engaged at this time in a variety of literary work, revising Krummacher's *Autobiography* for Dr. Easton of Darvel, examining, with a view to publication, the manuscripts of his friend Professor Macdougall, who had died during his absence, and contributing Apologetic articles to various periodicals.

When the spring came round, his watchful counsellor, Dr. Maelagan, sent him off again, this time for a walking tour through the Cheviots and Liddesdale with his brother David. Starting from Kelso, they resolved that when they reached the hills they would speak to every one they met, and visit every house on their way. It need scarcely be explained that 'speaking' meant, or at least implied, speaking for God. They soon reached a district sparsely inhabited by shepherds, to whom they were personally unknown, and who, owing to a recent religious revival, showed unusual eagerness for guidance.

'This was to my brother,' writes Mr. David Cairns, 'one of the most delightful features of our journey. Nothing gave him keener pleasure than to resolve the doubts, clear away the difficulties and confirm the faith of those converts in the hill country, and he regarded it as a singular providence that he was led thither when this work was required. In the midst of it we had a very different experience. One morning we found, at the manse of the Rev. Dr. Cathcart of Harbottle, a distinguished Hindu medical student—a cultivated and refined gentleman, but a pure materialist, whose native faith had been undermined by scientific study. Dr. Cathcart took us to see some geological curiosities in the neighbourhood, and in the shadow of the rocks my brother and the young Hindu discussed philosophy for two or three hours, travelling over the whole field of Matter *versus* Spirit. I do not know if any conviction was

produced, but I remember my brother said that he had never met a more acute or subtle antagonist, and remarked how strange it was that such a duel between East and West should take place on that secluded hillside. . . . When we reached Flodden, he was full of eager interest and enthusiasm in tracing the various positions of the battlefield, and from a commanding post on Flodden Edge declaimed with immense spirit a large portion of the description of the battle in *Marmion*. . . . In coming down from the Great Moor hill we called, according to our practice, at a secluded shepherd's house, where we found gloom and sorrow instead of the usual bright and cordial welcome. The shepherd's son, a tall lad of seventeen, lay dying of consumption. My brother endeavoured to talk with the family and guide them. The lad, on being asked if he did not feel lonely, replied, No, that he was very fond of reading. His father here broke in: "Ay, he's a great reader; and when I was at Hawick nine months syne I brought him a great muckle book that would serve him a while." It turned out to be the first folio volume of Matthew Henry's *Commentary*, and we found that the lad had read as far as the Book of Deuteronomy with great appreciation and profit. When we came away after prayer and pleasant talk, my brother, referring to the good use to which the big volume had been put, said to me, "This is true fame."

In November and December he was again off work, visiting Naples for the first time, climbing Vesuvius, refreshing his recollections of Rome and Florence, and searching out the curiosities of Parma and Modena. His journals show a continuous increase in the variety of his interests. At Turin he is discussing the prospects of the Vaudois with M. Meille, and at Florence living with Dr. Revel and preaching for Mr. Macdougall. In Rome he is in attendance at the public meetings of the Vatican Council, not in the iconoclastic mood of his student days, but quietly critical, reckoning the services as deficient in unity, and thanking God for the Reformation. Behind these things the old classical interests assert themselves, calling him away from Church affairs to the battles of Hannibal, and bringing Virgil and Horace into line with the Acts of the Apostles; while he is full of fresh delight in natural beauty and of religious concern for the

plainest wayfarers. It was this habit of forgetting himself that made his tours so complete a tonic.

TO REV. WILLIAM GRAHAM

BERWICK, *Feb.* 26, 1870.

'I have gained strength, though I must constantly repeat "non sum qualis eram." I have, however, written a good many pulpit lectures and have gone through other work. Since my return, I have read about one thousand small folio pages of Eusebius, being near the end of the *Demonstratio Evangelica*. His Greek is tangled enough, but I can now untwist it with some ease.'

TO THE REV. DAVID CAIRNS

EDINBURGH, *Aug.* 10, 1870.

'The tremendous agony of the French War engrosses attention. Last night the streets were filled with persons gathered round the news-shops, eager for the latest London papers. I got into conversation with a group of Germans full, of course, of their country's success; but I won't rejoice till I see the end, and, besides, great hazards attend an overwhelming victory on either side.'

In the following October, the writer, then a freshman at Oxford, saw one morning, from his windows in Balliol, the big figure of Dr. Cairns bending over the books in Shrimpton's or Acock's window, and rushed across to greet him. He had just arrived for a short visit to Oxford and said, "Now you must show me Oxford." When he heard that I too was a stranger, having arrived only the day before, he said, "Then let us see it together"; and I learned more of the history of Oxford from him during the three hours that followed than during the next four years of undergraduate life. He seemed to have the literary and historical associations of every college, from Merton to Magdalen Hall, at his fingers' ends, and to be as much concerned in Isaac Casaubon as in John Henry Newman.

In the spring of 1871, health failed again, and he had to give up all public engagements except those connected

with Union, which he reckoned to have almost as strong a claim upon him as the work of his congregation and of the Hall.

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

EDINBURGH, *Aug. 11, 1871.*

'I am thankful to be on the whole better than I was last year. I have closely attended the British Association, and have got much instruction and met many eminent people. The stand made by some of us in the Anthropological Section has done good;<sup>1</sup> and on the whole the tone has been less hostile to revealed religion than at one or two former meetings. I spent the Scott Centenary very quietly, going over to see Dr. W. Johnston, and buying at a book-stall a copy of Scott's *Poems*, which I spent the evening in reading, after seeing the illumination.'

As soon as the session was over, he made his way to Paris, to trace eagerly but sorrowfully the stages of the recent carnage and destruction.

TO MISS JANET CAIRNS

PARIS, *Oct. 2, 1871.*

' . . . From the battlefield I returned to the Place de la Bastille, where the marks of the fighting were terrible. Just beside the station was a great heap of blackened ruins—wood and masonry from an adjacent building all rudely shot together. The omnibus took the route through the very centre of the splendour of Paris; and such a sight! Every house almost in the Rue St. Antoine was struck. On one shattered church, amidst the ball-marks, stood the words *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*. On we rode till a horror beyond all others arose—the Hôtel de Ville, one of the most wonderful structures in Paris, now roofless, gutted, shattered, burnt—a spectacle without example in history. When we passed the Palais Royal I did not know it, and actually asked what it was. The Tuileries were even more destroyed, open to the sky, some of the pillars half-fallen, in other places the ranges complete but supporting nothing, and great masses of burnt ruins hurled down

<sup>1</sup> This refers to a discussion in which he and Dr. Ginsburg took part with regard to the antiquity of Jewish institutions.



and filling all the spaces within. . . . I could not look on these ruins without tears, and was never so near despairing of the human race. But God is stronger than man.'

In November the Centenary of his congregation was celebrated with great enthusiasm, Drs. Guthrie and Edmond assisting in special services and meetings. The celebration was a great event in the Border country, for the congregation closed a century of honourable church life in the highest prosperity. Praises without limit were poured upon the minister's gifts and graces. But he, according to his wont, seemed barely to notice what was said about himself. Speaking as if he were only one of a series of ministers whose fidelity to stewardship was their chief honour, he urged the congregation to cling closely to the Gospel and to increase their activity in home and foreign missions. Indeed, throughout the proceedings, the only reference he made to himself was this:—

'For myself, I will say only that I have striven to walk in the steps of these evangelists, holding forth, like them, the Gospel as the only and all-sufficient remedy for our curse and ruin; and while I have found in many other places a response, more than I ever expected or looked for, and such as utterly to preclude in my mind the entrance of the vain delusion that a new Gospel is needed for any part of our country, I have found nowhere, and I bless God for it, a more cordial and unfailing response than in this congregation; and the sermons that seemed to myself to contain most of the ancient and time-hallowed truths have been apparently the most prized and remembered.'

In the following January he wrote to Dr. Maclagan:—

'A proposal has been pressed on me strongly by Drs. MacEwen, Taylor and Finlayson that I should consent to be nominated for the Moderatorship of next Synod. I pleaded your interdict and other reasons; but they urged that it would probably prevent a division, and also that I would have less to do in the Synod, with no speaking beyond supplementing the Union Report. I was not reconciled; but they are very headstrong, and may propose me in the face of all you can say. I have no love for the work, but the opposite; yet I would undertake it if not medically inadmissible.'

In May he was unanimously elected to the Moderatorship, and the office, although it delivered him from some duties of debate, increased, if increase was possible, the demands for sermons and speeches. The first official duty which devolved upon him was congenial—to represent the Church at the first meeting of the Reformed Synod of France. The following letters show that he combined this duty with historical research and other interests:—

TO MISS JANET CAIRNS

LONDON, *May 27, 1872.*

‘. . . Yesterday morning I had the great pleasure of seeing Spurgeon’s wonderful congregation and hearing him at his very best. . . . The sermon, which showed great ingenuity and occasional comic power, was extremely fine, and I was even more struck with the prayers than with the sermon, though nobody else could have preached the latter. In the afternoon I heard Newman Hall,—exceedingly good, even after Spurgeon. . . . I was delighted to see so large and mixed a congregation, for the purest Gospel was most impressively preached.

‘I had resisted the attraction of St. Paul’s, with the churching of the Judges and a sermon by Canon Lightfoot, having such an abhorrence of going to church in state, . . . but in the evening I went to Westminster Abbey. . . . The music was superb, Handel’s “Worthy is the Lamb” sublimely rendered; but the hymn-singing was in effect immeasurably below the singing at Spurgeon’s. The sermon by Dr. Vaughan disappointed me. . . . It contained some fine thoughts, but was much below his best in *Good Words*, and not very suitable to an audience in need of the bread of life.’

LONDON, *May 29, 1872.*

‘. . . A great work of the last two days has been to verify some facts in the history of English Deism. At the British Museum my old friend, Mr. Bullen, and Mr. Turpin enabled me to find out all I wanted about Woolston, a renegade clergyman of last century, who wrote against our Saviour’s miracles and made great scandal. Unhappily he was prosecuted before Chief Justice Raymond in 1729, imprisoned for a year and fined £100. The current assertion, that he could not pay the fine and died in prison, is contradicted in

Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*, which affirms that he died in his own house. Voltaire had means of knowing, and the discrepancy has caused me a good deal of trouble. The Museum supplied a key in an anonymous memoir of the year of Woolston's death, which states that, being unable to pay the fine, he purchased liberty to reside within the rules of the prison. I then hunted out the old King's Bench, and learned from the chaplain that there was a detached house within the gates, where such criminals then lived very much at large. Thus both stories are true, and though Woolston died in one sense in prison he was hardly a martyr to infidelity. I am glad to have got to the bottom of this. . . .'

LILLE, *May 30, 1872.*

' . . . Yesterday in London I went to a ritualist church in Margaret Street; but the proceedings were comparatively moderate, though the dress and decorations were of the highest figure. I have seen the same thing here to-night in greater perfection, . . . along with a Lent pastoral of the Archbishop of Cambrai, the most noticeable parts of which are a condemnation of ungodly newspapers and a permission to eat eggs.'

PARIS, *June 1, 1872.*

' . . . I arrived here to-day and went immediately . . . to Galgnani's, where I read the debates on Union, etc., and saw to my great joy the victory of which your letter had already apprised me. I was also delighted to see that the rumoured breaking off of negotiations with America was groundless. . . .

'I came from Lille by way of Douai, where the Roman Catholic version of the Old Testament was made, a gloomy fortress, and by Cambrai, where Fénelon was Archbishop, across a flat and dreary plain, to St. Quentin, where in January 1871 General von Goeben gave the last blow to the army of the North. The positions were pointed out by a soldier . . . who also showed me the ditches where he and his comrades had lain down to fire under cover. He was a very good fellow, though his notions of religion were rather incoherent. One hardly ever meets with Frenchmen who know more. Some gentlemen in the restaurant listened with great interest to a short statement I gave them of the nature of Protestantism, of which they confessedly were very ignorant. This arose out of my declared intention to stop at Noyon, the birthplace of Calvin. . . . They knew about Calvin, and spoke of him respect-

fully, and of the continued remembrance of him there. Noyon is one of the sweetest places I have ever seen, surrounded by charming hills, which furnish a great contrast to the dismal plains of Flanders. . . . In this secluded valley one of the greatest lights of the world arose—a man who has done more for Scotland than even Knox, and who has left his mark on the whole of Europe and America. His birthplace is a neat house beside the cathedral, of which his father was a canon. . . . The cathedral, a splendid and ancient structure, is in all things Romish, as is the town, so that Calvin has no honour in his own country. I rambled about the cemetery, and climbed the highest neighbouring eminence, wandering through a vast forest in the light of the sinking sun.'

PARIS, *June 5, 1872.*

' . . . I am delighted with all that the Free Assembly has done. I see Principal Pirie has been down on me in the Old Assembly. It is really very gentle, and our differences are small compared with those on this side the water. On Sabbath I took a long walk to hear M. Bersier . . . and was amply rewarded. Monday I spent in reading the newspapers, and in a splendid walk round my old friends, the ruins, which are softened by the finer weather and the flowing life of the city. Tuesday was devoted to reading about Voltaire's life in the National Library. I got a great deal of information, and cleared up a number of points. He left England in 1727, so that his assertion that Woolston died in his own house has not the value of contemporary testimony. After my day's work . . . I visited M. Eugène Naville . . . and came home in an omnibus, passing Voltaire's statue. Happily the conductor was not a believer in him, and admitted the necessity of Christianity. . . .'

TO REV. DR. MACEWEN

BERWICK, *July 12, 1872.*

'I attended the opening service of the Synod in the Oratoire, where M. Babut, nephew of Adolphe Monod, in an eloquent sermon on Christ's witness to His own divinity, gave a keynote to the whole proceedings. There was a large concourse of members, and the place was crammed by the public. The first note of worship was Luther's hymn, "C'est un rempart que notre Dieu," magnificently sung to his own chorale, a proof, in the present state of French feeling, how religion rises above nationality. Your



letter . . . was read to the Synod, and was listened to with the greatest interest. I was then called to the tribune, and gave a short address in French. . . . I stated the position and numbers of our Synod, and what we did for France, and then entered briefly on the old relations of France and Scotland, and the degree to which our Christianity had been and remained Huguenot. I also, in standing up for the old doctrine, thought it right to say that we had separated from the State, and did not want to return to it, though this did not abate our interest in the struggles of State Churches for the vital truths of the Gospel. The address was very well received, and I was thanked by the Moderator in name of the Synod. The allusions to the State Church question were afterwards taken up in a kindly tone, and some members, among them Guizot, expressed to me their pleasure at the fraternisation. Next day Dr. Robertson of New Greyfriars delivered an admirable address in name of the Church of Scotland, and the Competency of the Synod was carried by 61 to 45. The long doctrinal debate must have done a world of good. The rationalists were beaten both in eloquence and numbers, and were visibly cowed by their defeat. . . . I regret that the Synod has not made the creed imperative on its lay members, though it can hardly fail to do so on its pastors; but their difficulties are very great. I attended all the proceedings from June 6 to 13, and got a great deal of knowledge of their forms and usages, as also of their language and leading personalities.

‘On the Sabbath forenoon I heard another fine sermon from Bersier, and in the afternoon went to the Scotch Church. Professor Flint was there, and we were as cordial as ever, notwithstanding Disestablishment debates at home.’

In February of the following year he was saddened by the death of Dr. Guthrie. After taking part in the funeral services in Edinburgh, he preached to his own congregation a sermon which was published and widely circulated on ‘Dr. Guthrie as an Evangelist.’ In this, as in his Lecture on Dr. Chalmers, he dwelt almost exclusively upon the value of high gifts when consecrated to the evangelising of the poor.

Reference has already been made to the burden which devolved upon him in May through the failure of the Union movement in Scotland. In October he had to exert himself to the utmost to prevent a similar failure in England; but

in this case the effort was successful, the English Synod adopting by a majority a motion which definitely committed the Presbyterians on the south of the border to Union. He combined attendance at the Synod, which met at Sunderland, with a holiday visit to the homes of Wesley, Cowper and Butler, and to other places noted in the religious history of England. It will be observed that several of the letters in which he describes this tour are dated 'Sunderland,' having been written in the Synod House when he was supposed to be absorbed in the business of the Court. The first letter has special interest from its account of his first meeting with the American evangelists with whom he afterwards identified himself so closely.

#### TO MISS JANET CAIRNS

LINCOLN, *Oct. 1, 1873.*

' . . . There was a great crowd at Mr. Leitch's church. At the meeting, which was opened by Mr. Leitch and myself, the chief peculiarity was the singing by a Mr. Sankey, with harmonium accompaniment, under the direction of a Mr. Moody, an American gentleman, who has been labouring in Newcastle for five weeks. The singing was very impressive, the congregation striking in at the choruses with thrilling effect. The address by Mr. Moody, though thoroughly Yankee, was deeply earnest, and produced a great impression. It was on the grace of God, and had many happy strokes, though here and there grotesque. The audience were fairly carried away at times by this mingled impulse of singing and appeal . . . and at the close a good many persons, impressed for the first time, waited to be spoken with. I had the privilege of speaking with one or two, and felt how happy a call it was, especially as they seemed to find relief. . . . I have conversed about the movement with a good many acquaintances, who all speak warmly of its results. . . . I was told of one Berwick or Tweedmouth person who had been impressed at that meeting. I earnestly pray that the movement, which has spread all round Newcastle, may come to Berwick, and that its fruits may be as lasting as they are striking and general. On my way to York I spoke with a good many people in the carriage about the matter, and endeavoured to turn it to some account.

‘Nothing could have been a greater contrast to this than Doncaster. . . . I went out to one of the churches there and saw the preparations for a Festival . . . not unlike those made for the old worship of Ceres or Pomona. . . . I grieve that the Church of England should go off on so false a scent. . . . Here happily Bishop Wordsworth sets his face against ritualism, and all in the Cathedral is refreshingly plain, with only two simple candles on the table. . . .’

#### TO MISS JANET CAIRNS

GAINSBOROUGH, *Oct. 3, 1873.*

‘. . . Yesterday was a great day in the world. The Evangelical Alliance met in New York ; I visited the birthplace of John Wesley at Epworth ; and the annual fair was held in the little town—to many the greatest event of the three. . . . Epworth, which has about one thousand inhabitants, stands in a hollow and climbs the height farthest off from the approach. . . . The little church where Samuel Wesley ministered is on a ridge at the bottom of the town, and the rectory where his son John was born is higher up, both being surrounded by trees. . . . The rectory contains nothing that was in Wesley’s days ; but is the same building. It is in two parts—two storeys high and tiled, with an immense hawthorn in front, and covered with creepers. . . . It is wonderful to think how great and glorious a turn in the Church of God connects itself with such a seclusion. Many a good thing comes out of Nazareth. I had most interesting conversations with Wesleyans in humble life which showed me how deep a stamp is left. One said, “So long as God is on our side, we are the strongest firm.” . . .’

#### TO THE SAME

NORWICH, *Oct. 4, 1873.*

‘. . . I got to Boston in time to climb the Stump . . . and had a wide view of corn and pasture land. In the church, of which the Stump is the steeple, Hallam, the historian, and John Conington, the Oxford Latinist, are buried. There is also a beautiful monument in the vestry to John Cotton, the founder of Puritan emigration. It is the gift of the New England Boston to Old England, and reminded me of the Evangelical Alliance in New York, which would be holding its morning meeting when I was “on the Stump.” . . .

‘But the event of the day has been a visit to the tomb of Cowper

at East Dereham, . . . a pretty little town amidst undulating scenery, with grass, orchards and thick woods. The church has a high roof and square tower, and is surrounded by a crowded churchyard fringed with old trees, with a bell-tower on the opposite side of the road, as in Italy. The interior has a row of plain pillars on each side, making narrow aisles, and as the chancel is roofless the altar stands at the head of the nave. . . . Cowper lies against the left wall, an iron rail screening the platform of stone which covers his dust. His monument, with Hayley's inscription, is in the centre of the wall ; and on the right, one for Mary Unwin and another for Margaret Perowne. The clerk showed me where he sat in the north side, fronting the pulpit . . . and I saw, on the floor of the passage at the end of the seat, the name "Mary Unwin, 1796." Cowper had been able to come to church, though in a state of unbroken depression. From the church I retraced my steps . . . to his house, or that of his kinsman Johnson. It has just been pulled down to make way for an Independent Chapel. . . . As I stood before the hoarding, a stalwart Norfolk squire who was passing seeing my interest, came up and told me that his father had been one of the six chief mourners at Cowper's funeral. . . . I told him who I was, and he was extremely kind. . . . A jeweller, who has possession of the garden behind, showed me where, on the second story, just above the foundation-stone of the Chapel, the poet had breathed his last . . . as well as the garden retreat, which must have been very quiet and secluded. In the centre of it rises an enormous apple-tree under which he is said to have written the *Castaway* and some other of his later pieces. This was deeply interesting to me, as I had seen the arbour at Olney where, in happier days, he had written his *Hymns*. . . . I gave my guide a small subscription to the Chapel, and I left with the wish that the place so affectingly connected with Cowper's last scenes might fulfil his hymn, "Jesus, where'er thy people meet," etc.

' Few things have affected me more than the circumstances of this visit. I had heard the mighty sweep of his hymn, "There is a fountain filled with blood," in the Revival meeting at Newcastle so shortly before ; and in the meeting at New York and to the ends of the earth his words are going forth conquering and to conquer. Yet in East Dereham he never had one ray of light, till God let it down on his dying face.

" God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain."



## TO MISS JANET CAIRNS

NORWICH, *Oct. 7, 1873.*

‘ . . . When I went on Sabbath morning to the Presbyterian Church, I was recognised in the porch by the elders . . . and I had no escape. I had therefore to preach twice, and I am not the worse for it. . . .

‘ Yesterday I devoted to the Cathedral—a fine one, but not equal to Ely or Lincoln. I went over all the monuments, including one to Bishop Stanley by his son, the Dean of Westminster. . . . In the Castle, now used as the county gaol, I had a long talk with a Primitive Methodist warder, who was a local preacher and a rare character.

‘ In the forenoon I went to Yarmouth . . . and thence to Lowestoft . . . I talked much of the way with a Methodist Sunday-school teacher, upwards of sixty. He said he stuck on, as the “young ones were rather fandangled,” and would gad about on Sunday afternoons neglecting their classes. . . . He did not think much of college-bred ministers: “they are worse when they come out than when they go in”; and he added that “there were better doctors outside the college than inside.” He was a truly good man, and I saw how much Methodism had done for these parts. . . . At Lowestoft I ran down to the docks and went out, amidst heaps of herrings and other fish, to the extreme end where . . . an old seaman pointed me to the Ness, “the most eastermost land in England.” . . . The sun was breaking out red through the clouds behind me, and falling on the wooded cliffs. Before, was the great ocean a little ruffled and rolling in, with many ships upon it. I hurried with great elation northward along the smooth white sand, till I came to the bulging Ness with banks of shingle sloping down to the sea. There was a solitary gentleman fishing . . . with whom I had a good long talk on religion and the present state of Popery and of the Church of England. . . . A little beyond was a wooden breakwater, designed to keep the sand from shifting. I went out to its very extremity and, with the waves below, wished a blessing to America and England, and then turned my face to the cliffs and made my way to the railway. . . . I spoke to a number of people, among others to a young woman who was hailing her husband far below by waving her handkerchief. He had just returned from fishing at Seaham, and I remembered how many of our own congregation had like experiences. . . .’

## TO THE SAME

SUNDERLAND, Oct. 16, 1873.

‘ . . . The way from Cambridge was in the dark, but I had interesting illustrations of English character. Two compartments of the carriage were filled with “legs” of the Newmarket order, low and rude creatures, horsey and broken down, who could not get on without smoking and playing loo. “John Thomas, thee art wanted for a *gem* in this carriage,” was the appeal of one of them to another. Thus they went on, and the shillings and half-crowns disappeared. Meanwhile I had fallen in with a German from Nuremberg, a most interesting fellow, who is employed as waiter at a Newcastle hotel, and who looked down on his English fellow-travellers. . . . This man was up to the whole political state of Germany and France, and we had most interesting talk on all subjects—religious too, though unhappily here his views were somewhat negative; yet he was open to light. Amongst other books which he had read was Whewell’s *Plurality of Worlds*. The contrast was immense between men to whom the whole world was Newmarket and Doncaster, and this solitary student pursuing amidst his uncongenial vocation such out-of-the-world inquiries. I hope some day to see more of him. . . .’

## TO THE SAME

SUNDERLAND, Oct. 17, 1873.

‘ . . . Stanhope lies on the left bank of the Wear. . . . It is one straggling, winding, uphill street with woods, rocks and heath above, and the beautiful vale of the Wear amidst cultivated meadows and venerable trees a long stone’s throw below. The Parish Church, where Bishop Butler preached from 1725 to 1736, is about half-way up and on the right hand, with two rows of very old and thick trees leading up to it. It is very simple within, the central part new, but the tower and the chancel old. There is a plain oak Communion table, very likely of Butler’s time. The seats in the chancel are the same as in his days, and, farther down the church, there is an arm-chair of his time, in which I took the liberty of sitting. . . . Through the kindness of the Rector, I had the opportunity of examining all the entries in the parish record attested by Butler’s signature. They are as follows:—

“Oct. 1, 1725. Mem. That it is this day agreed by the Rector and the Four and Twenty that the Rector’s cess for the poor

shall be equally divided to every quarter, as they now are settled; that is, £75 to every quarter. JOS. BUTLER, Rector."

'This is signed in a beautifully round hand, and the names of the Four and Twenty follow.

"May 12, 1738. It is agreed by the ministers, the overseers and the rest of the inhabitants of Stanhope and Newlandside quarter, that Ann Golightly shall have 7s. 6d. yearly cess out of this quarter. Mem. That she is to have the same from Newlandside by Dr. Butler's order, they having agreed to refer it to him. John Lee, 3s. per week. JO. BUTLER, Rector."

'[The names of the overseers follow.]

'The rectory lies down nearer the railway on the opposite side of the street. . . . On the upper side of the house there runs a terraced walk, which was a favourite place of meditation; and lower down, in a deep valley, there are old trees of great circumference, under whose shade he loved to pace, not only by day but by night. Here doubtless the *Analogy* was finally thought out and adjusted to its present state. Greater abstraction from the world could not have been realised; and yet there is a wild beauty about the spot which makes it anything but a desert. Only, the Four and Twenty could give him little help in dividing the quarters of his subject; but I would not say that they could not understand him, as I found the dalesmen a hard-headed race, and their very capacity of Methodism (John Wesley came here too) showed that they could speak for themselves. I had a specimen of the local humour when asking a young farmer what I should see from a distant point. His reply was, "a sight of fell and the road!" It was only too true; for I had to labour through the fell, till at last, from the excavations of a deep quarry, the ocean rose upon the view. This is not a bad image of Butler's work—a "sight of fell, but a road through it, and a grand outlook beyond." . . .

'I returned to Stanhope in time to enjoy the hospitality of the doctor, which completed a circle of generosity, as I had had lunch with the Rector, who, a successor of Simeon and Carus in Trinity Church, Cambridge, spoke a great deal about Simeon and Henry Martyn, his curate, and showed me MS. sermons of the former and an autograph of the latter. Having thus carried away happy memories of Stanhope, I got down to Durham by nightfall, and so ended the holiday of

BROTHER JOHN.'

## CHAPTER XX

### MINISTER AND PROFESSOR

1873-1876

Zeal in ministry—Moral earnestness—Total Abstinence—Evangelistic tendencies—Revivalism—Private dealings—Tour in Cornwall—Pastoral relations—Veneration and affection—Delineations by the Rev. Dr. Smith.

THOSE early years of his Professorship were the fullest and in some respects the most notable years of his Berwick ministry. Undoubtedly the tear and wear upon health were such as would in the case of most men have taken away elasticity. In addition to the writing of his lectures, he had a heavier share of public work than at any other period, with constant travelling, wearisome committees and varied correspondence. But he had no constitutional ailment; and though he was forced every few months to go abroad for the sake of health, a complete rest, with change of scene, always cured him. His pastorate, far from losing spring or vigour, developed in two notable directions.

During the twenty years which followed his Ordination, Berwick had expanded commercially, and there had been a change in the social habits of the townspeople. A more general diffusion of prosperity had been accompanied by a relaxation of the moral strictness which had formerly marked the middle class. New dangers had arisen and there was new need for plainness of speech. The change is reflected in a series of expository sermons on the Book of Proverbs, which made a profound impression fully justified by a perusal of the manuscripts. In calm, strong and measured



language, they blend a direct and earnest moral appeal with an affectionate insight into the temptations of the young which the world does not expect from a profound theologian. A single extract will show with how much dignity and clearness he spoke on a topic which only the pure in heart can touch to any profit:—

‘The sacred writer proceeds to speak of impure relations with the other sex. It is one of the divine signatures of the Bible that it deals so boldly and faithfully with an evil which is often treated as too private and delicate to be mentioned from the pulpit. There is not a man in this audience who does not feel that it is the voice of God that thus assails and condemns this great sin. I have read many books on ethics, ancient and modern; but in none of them, save in books borrowed from the Bible, is this stern and awful reprobation of uncleanness to be found. God alone speaks out; and He does so in loud and clear tones, that all, especially the young, may be solemnly warned. . . . The female tempter is here spoken of as the aggressor; but alas! the injury too often comes from the other side. Who shall say how dastardly, how cruel and how brutal that outrage is, which drags down a miserable victim of seduction to this level, and leaves her, stripped of all modesty and shame as here described, to revenge upon the other sex the wrong first received from it! Such a wretched outcast is spoken of as a “strange woman”—one who has no home, no friends, no social ties and who never can establish any, but lives and dies in the same misery. This aggravates the sin on her part, and makes it a greater violation of natural modesty. . . . But is there not also something here which appeals to every man with a heart in his breast, not to mix himself up with this hideous system, which condemns hundreds of thousands to live and die “strangers”—sunk, degraded, lost, with no refuge but the grave?

‘Warning is given against the strange woman as “flattering with her lips.” Truth expires in this region like sunlight in the pestilential swamp. The man who ventures here is self-deceived as well as duped. There is an affecting reference to the earlier and better state of the forlorn and degraded outcast “which forsaketh the guide of her youth and the covenant of her God.” Among the Jews, she was still one of a holy nation, a covenanted people, and therefore awfully guilty. And is the sin not great and crying in this Christian land? Solomon has no sympathy with the horrid and

infamous doctrine that there is a social necessity which excuses the sin,—a doctrine only worthy of hell and the father of lies. Even the most hardened know that they are sinning; and, alas! are there not among them those who have gone from Sabbath-schools and Bible-classes and Communion-tables, and who are bringing down the grey hairs of Christian parents with sorrow to the grave!

This dark sketch of sin and woe is closed with the awful strokes: "Her home inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again: neither take they hold of the paths of life." The whole vile system lives in the shadow of death. Incredibly rapid is the descent of the miserable victims themselves to the grave—the prey of remorse, disease and strong drink, without one word of sympathy from earth, or one hope sent down from heaven to relieve the gloom. They are dead while they live, and soon are they twice dead, plucked up by the roots, the voice of their blood crying against all who have brought them to or kept them in such a state! Nor is the death theirs only, but that of those who are tempted to share their sin. The wages of this sin is emphatically death. How many bring themselves thereby to a premature grave! How many ruin not only the body but the soul, and never lift their heads again out of the vile depths into which they have plunged! The words may not be without exception, "None that go unto her return again: neither take they hold of the paths of life"; for to grace nothing is impossible; but an awful cloud of death rests on this sin, and the first visit to a harlot's house is a long and dreadful step toward hell! I therefore solemnly warn all, older and younger, who may be in danger of this perdition; and I point them to the grand remedy against this evil, the surest of preservatives, Christ the fountain of purity, springing up in the heart and rising to all eternity, but for whom and whose love and grace this boasted land of ours, I hesitate not one moment to say it, would sink again into the abominations of paganism, and would be as Sodom and would be as Gomorrah!

There was no less clearness in his dealing with drunkenness, an evil towards which his personal relation was at that time changing; but a single passage will not suffice to explain the steps which led him to enlist in the Total Abstinence army.

Brought up in a home where, without need of vow or pledge, strict sobriety had rested upon deep Christian

principle, he had passed through college at a time when the Church authorities were disposed to give Total Abstinence a cold shoulder. Nothing could be more significant of the time than that, in Diagnostic debates, he championed the right of Temperance societies to exist, against young men of the M'Cheyne school, who maintained that 'the Church ought to be the only Temperance society.' Yet neither then nor during the first twenty years of his ministry was he himself an Abstainer, although frugal and abstemious in the use of wine. There was a Total Abstinence Society at Berwick, vigorously supported by several of the other ministers, but he lent it no countenance, and indeed described the cause as 'a mere beating of the air,' the method being alien to his habitual moderation in practice and in language. In 1862 this Society requested all the ministers of the town to preach upon Temperance according to their different views of it, and he responded in a sermon which was published by request, and every word of which would be indorsed by any sober Christian, whether Abstainer or not. Acknowledging that the Total Abstinence movement, 'even if guilty of all the sins of tongue and pen laid to its account, has yielded a preponderating amount of good,' he pleads for the union of Abstainers and Non-abstainers in discountenancing drinking usages and reducing the number of public-houses, indicates the opinion that a publican's trade is lawful for a Christian, declares, as if it were a great matter, that Church sessions ought to urge Total Abstinence upon the intemperate, and emphasises the fact that intemperance is only to be effectually overcome by the grace of God. Two years later he gave up the use of alcohol; but it was not till he became Professor that he let the fact be known. His predecessor, Professor Lindsay, had been president of a Students' Total Abstinence Society, and he was invited to fill the vacancy. In accepting office, he defined his position frankly.

‘When I was asked to act as President of this Society, I had never been connected with any similar association, but for more than two years I had acted on the Total Abstinence principle, and, as no pledge of any kind was required, I could not reasonably decline. Not that I blame pledges; but, as I had not before taken one, it was easier to join a Society where nothing but the moral intention of continued Abstinence was expected. That moral intention I certainly have, and I am ready to give reasons for it. Like other ministers, I had from time to time to deal with those who had fallen, or were falling, into habits of intemperance, and who could not be saved or recovered by the moderate use of stimulants. I long satisfied myself with saying to them as earnestly as possible that they ought to act on the principle of Total Abstinence; but I began to ask if I could not do anything more—if it really would not be a step in advance, at least by way of experiment, to offer to encourage them by my own example. The result was that I resolved to enter on the experiment, and I have had no cause hitherto to repent of it. I judge no man and condemn no man who takes a different view of his duty, either in relation to intoxicating drinks in general or in relation to such cases as have impressed me. I stand up for the rule, “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind,” and while feeling myself at liberty to associate with those who think as I do, I recognise the services to the common cause of Temperance rendered by those who, in the various walks of philanthropy, are bringing Christian influence to bear upon this great evil without going all the length that we here are prepared to go. There is certainly a loud call in the circumstances of our country for vigorous effort to arrest this great and formidable vice. . . . The spirit of the age is self-indulgence, and all other tendencies help on the passion for strong sensation. . . . I do not defend Total Abstinence as an ascetical counteractive to such sensationalism, because I could not advocate one extreme in order to meet and check another. But to those who, like myself, regard it as on other grounds desirable, it may be an additional recommendation that it meets, at one point, the strong and turbid currents of our time, and rescues, by the grace of God, a large part of our nation from a tendency which, in one shape or other, is so powerfully assailing the whole. . . . There is an immense field for us to cultivate, and while we welcome every other help against intemperance, we may be permitted to try to the utmost our own specific, and to apply the old rule that prevention is better than cure, along with the kindred maxims, that grave diseases require sharp remedies,



and that it is better to part with one member than to lose the whole body.'

In the same spirit he said to the Society three years later:—

'We have no need of vehemence, exaggeration or intolerance. Many of the wise and good are not Abstainers. Let us work with them as far as we are agreed, recommending our principle by perseverance and conciliation. It is enough that our course is lawful, and that it has the recommendation of visible sympathy with humanity and also of unchallengeable affinity with Christian self-denial.'

Although he was now a declared Abstainer, years passed before he took any share in Temperance organisation. The ultimate step was taken in the spring of 1874, as a last and successful endeavour to rescue from intemperance one who was not a member of his own congregation. It was a notable day at Berwick when he walked down the High Street with this friend and enrolled himself as a Good Templar. There was naturally much talk and some criticism; for his Good Templarism was not merely formal, but led him to take an active part in all the work of the Lodge. But to criticism in such matters he was absolutely indifferent, and he had valuable support from Dr. Maclagan and others of his elders. In October of the same year, he appeared in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, as an enthusiastic advocate of the Permissive Bill; and thenceforward he gave an annually increasing amount of time and energy to the support of Total Abstinence in its political, social and religious aspects. Several of his speeches and sermons on the subject were very widely circulated, one tract alone having a circulation of 180,000, and his personal devotion to the cause was unbounded. Although not a pioneer, he was probably the most important addition to the Total Abstinence ranks in his generation, not only through the great weight of his character, but because of the charity which

he always combined with his most enthusiastic utterances, and the resolute steadiness with which he treated the movement as a religious one. While he undoubtedly grew much clearer in the opinion that Total Abstinence is a Christian duty, he never failed to recognise the title of others to form a different judgment, and this infinitely increased the weight of his often-repeated declaration that, so far as his judgment went, it was the simplest, the surest, the most Christian way of removing the hindrance which strong drink creates to the spread of the kingdom of Christ.

Those years brought with them another notable development by connecting his ministry with the strong tide of evangelism which swept the north of England and Scotland in 1873 and 1874. Such a wave was a reply to hopes and prayers which he had cherished from his youth. Revivalism of the more excited and exciting kinds has not always found favour among Presbyterians, even the most evangelical, and there were many features in Dr. Cairns' character, and even in his ministry, which might have made it repugnant to him, and which indeed led some of those who knew him best to wonder at the attitude which he assumed. His philosophic tone of mind, his instinctive horror of extravagance, his dislike for self-analysis, and the calm, argumentative character of his own ministrations, would naturally have led him to look unfavourably upon religious movements in which those features are not dominant. But the working of his mind and heart was not natural, but supernatural. He was constantly alive to the influences which guide the human soul contrary to its natural leanings. Although he never spoke of the date of his own conversion, he shared to the full the belief, which lies at the root of evangelical doctrine, that a radical change is essential for the salvation of the soul; and he was too familiar with the history of Christianity to doubt that, while in the normal state of the Church souls are gathered one by one, there

come seasons when the Gospel net is like to break for the multitude of fishes. A later chapter will show how he named the *Lives* of Baxter, Brainerd, Henry Martyn and Chalmers, with the *Confessions* of Augustine, as the religious biographies which he personally had found most serviceable. A man who made such a choice was sure to be found in the forefront of any real revival. Further, he was free from that ecclesiasticism which leads many earnest clergymen to be chary in recognising Christian work which does not flow in Church channels. On one occasion he was present at a great meeting of the Glasgow Foundry Boys' Society, an organisation which has sometimes awakened clerical criticism. A prominent clergyman, in addressing the meeting, had spoken a great deal about the Church, its authority and methods, and the need for always acknowledging its claims. When Dr. Cairns rose, he had that restless look which always marked his face when he saw the need for protesting. He began by saying that he agreed with all that his friend had said about the Church, but that he was not sure that he could quite agree with him in a definition of the Church, and then straightening himself out to his full height, he said, 'Wherever I see a young man teaching the Gospel to half a dozen children, I recognise a living branch of the Church of Christ.' It was impossible for one who stood upon such ground not to welcome those who showed any skill or power in dealing with the soul. Once and again he had singled out the evangelistic energy of the founders of the Free Church as their chief distinction. Of the Belfast Revival in 1859 he had, as his letters have shown, formed a favourable opinion after personal investigation; and while his own preaching was stately, intellectual and unsensational, it had borne good fruit in the way of direct conversion, which he had sought to increase by outdoor preaching, special services and direct personal appeal. His holiday travels were, as we have seen, private evan-

gelistic enterprises. When he threw himself into organised evangelism, there was no change in his standpoint, but simply the turning into a new channel of the force which had inspired his whole career.

In November 1873 he had expressed the hope that the religious movement which he had witnessed at Newcastle might reach Berwick.<sup>1</sup> The following letter shows that in less than a month his hope was fulfilled:—

TO REV. DAVID MACEWAN, CLAPHAM

BERWICK, *Jan. 26, 1874.*

‘The great movement here, which God has sent into the whole town, so engrosses every moment that I cannot come to the committee meeting. I am occupied from morning till night in seeking out persons who either come to our inquiry meetings, or whom I expect to find anxious or willing to be conversed with on personal religion. The Corn Exchange is filled, and sometimes crowded, every night, and many wait to be conversed with. I have conversed with upwards of fifty, belonging to other congregations, within the last twelve days, and in my own congregation more than sixty have been conversed with by myself and other ministers. This is independent of multitudes I have talked with, old and young, at their own homes, and even on the streets. Very few of these have come to me; but knowing the deep anxiety that was all abroad, I have gone to them, and often with the most blessed results. The movement, so far as man is concerned, consists only in preaching, praise and, above all, prayer. Our noon-day prayer-meeting is attended by from one hundred and fifty to two hundred. God grant that the results may be as solid as they are now full of joy and promise!’

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BERWICK, *Jan. 30, 1874.*

‘The Revival still continues. On Wednesday evening, amidst the counter-attraction of three M.P.s speaking in the Town Hall, we had the Corn Exchange filled, and last night and this, we have had very large meetings in Wallace Green, all but filling every part of

<sup>1</sup> See page 575.



the church. Lord Cavan has spoken to-night, and is sleeping here. He is a very simple Christian and a good speaker. The meeting to-night is the last in the third week. Very many in comparison with the whole population have professed to find Christ: quite as many at other times and in other ways as in the inquiry meetings. I have made a regular canvass of my congregation, and with the most hopeful results. It has been hard work, but I never came anything so near the souls of men. The results cannot yet be counted. If the half hold, it will be the most wonderful experience by far I have ever passed through. Pray for us very earnestly.'

TO REV. DAVID MACEWAN, CLAPHAM

BERWICK, *Feb.* 18, 1874.

'We have separate meetings every night of the week in the Green's Mission Hall, in our own Mission Hall, in Wallace Green, at Tweedmouth and at Spittal, with a Sabbath-evening meeting in the Corn Exchange, which is always filled. We have not much time for study; but inquirers are still, though in smaller numbers, conversed with. It has altogether been a very remarkable season. My chief labour has lain in going to people's own houses, and entering on serious dealing with them. This has obviated a great many reserves and delicacies, and has been even more useful, in my case, than inquiry meetings, though both are best. I would recommend this to your consideration. It is thoroughly constitutional, and suits many who will never come to you.'

As was inevitable, he was at the head of the movement, and his guidance of it was all the more effective because unnoticed. In addition to those mentioned above, he called in other friends of experience as helpers, Dr. J. H. Wilson, Mr. Morgan of Viewforth, Lord Polwarth and Mr. Moody. But in the main the work was done by Berwick ministers and laymen, Dr. Maclagan being always at his right hand. The utmost care was shown in bringing the results of special meetings into line with Church work, conversion being sealed by appearance at the Communion-table. Reserve was shown in the public quotation of individual cases and in inviting recent converts to address meetings. The

following notes made for an address to those engaged in the work show that his enthusiasm was linked with wise caution:—

‘Revived interest in religion ought to show itself by providing for the external ordinances of religion. We may err, even in sincere efforts to revive religion, by departing from (1) Scripture doctrine, *i.e.* heresy; (2) the spirit of love, *i.e.* sectarianism; (3) the spirit of reverential awe, *i.e.* self-dependence. Let all things be done decently and in order. God will bless Scriptural and persevering effort. We ought not to desist though our zeal exposes us to the scorn of the world and even of our own kindred. Domestic and public religion go hand in hand. The success of the cause of God is matter of the deepest joy to a pious mind.’

The Revival lasted at Berwick for nearly two years, and throughout its course he was unflagging in his exertions, recognising it as a heaven-sent blessing of which he was bound to make full use. Mid-day after mid-day he appeared among the workers to give guidance and encouragement. Night after night he was on some platform, not always as a speaker, but perhaps offering a few words of fervent prayer with a fresh, cheerful ardour rare in a man of fifty-six, and almost startling in one who returned to his study to wade through the perplexities of the Synod of Dort or the *Dialogue with Trypho*. From month to month he visited Glasgow, Edinburgh, and other centres where revival was in progress, carrying tidings of God’s work from one place to another, and wherever he went taking part gratefully in those private dealings with inquirers which many good men view with suspicion. As to the lasting benefit of the movement he had no doubt, and when it was outwardly spent he treasured the results. In November 1874 he writes: ‘Our work here survives, though it is quieter. Some very blessed fruits remain, and I have seen no evil.’ Indeed, to the close of his life, he identified himself with many such movements without any criticism of them, although no one who knew him doubted his steady purpose of exercising quiet control.

It cannot be said that any result was apparent in his own preaching. There was in fact no room there for increase of earnestness or for additional prominence of evangelical truth. But there was a private result of a singular kind. From the days when he was schoolmaster at Ayton, he had been in the habit of speaking to people personally about their relations to God, and the habit had grown upon him. This is what is termed in certain religious circles 'aggressive work,' but there was no aggression in it. It was done not only tenderly and deferentially but secretly, the high chivalry of his nature leading him to reckon such dealings as private. In 1873 he began to keep a daily record of those to whom he had spoken. Some lists contain fifteen or twenty entries, others only two or three. In some cases there are only designations, such as 'engineer at Carstairs,' 'barrister at ——'s funeral,' 'youth of Fettes College,' 'housemaid at Mrs. ——'s.' If he did enter a name, he disguised it, lest the list should fall into a stranger's hands. Indeed, until his death, no one knew that night after night he made a reckoning with himself as to his direct speech to his fellow-men about their eternal welfare. In every house where he visited, among high and humble, wonderful reverence was cherished for him, and long after he left there was kindly, grateful talk about his devoutness and earnestness; but those who agreed in saying to one another that he was a noble man did not know that he had been watching separately over each of them as one who must give account, and had not been quite unconscious in his raising of their hearts towards God.

Nothing could be more significant than that in October 1874, when thoroughly exhausted by such labours, he turned his steps for holidays to the most notable scenes of modern revivalism.

TAUNTON, *Oct. 1, 1874.*

‘. . . In crossing the Bristol Channel I was reminded of the only other time I had been on it, in 1852, when I took an excursion from London and walked up the Wye. How much has been altered since then! How many years of my own life have slipped away, leaving no room for another period of the same length, and, I may truly say, no desire for it! Yet I am quite willing to cross the Bristol Channel and the Spittal Ferry as long as it can be supposed to do any good.’

TEIGNMOUTH, *Oct. 1874.*

‘. . . The face of poor G. —, who met his untimely end in this stream, has been continually rising before me amidst this beautiful scenery, which has all the lightness of France or Italy, with a greenness of meadow and leafiness of wood peculiar to our moister air. Thus everything earthly, even the fairest, has its shadow of death. May this teach a more heavenly-minded frame of desire after a river which has no such shadow!’

At Plymouth he sought out the starting-place of the Pilgrim Fathers, and the birthplace of John Kitto, while his historical sense drew him to the memorials of Sir Francis Drake. Friendly study of the Plymouth Brethren at their headquarters, and the welcome duty of preaching wherever he was asked to preach, did not hinder his eagerness to ascertain the exact working of the Penryn quarries and the Penzance tin mines, nor his antiquarian concern in St. Burian and St. Sennen. From Penzance he made his way to Land’s End, rejoicing in the wildness of the rocks and the stormy grandeur of the Atlantic.

LAND’S END.

‘My guide here showed me the rock, in the midst of scanty soil, where Charles Wesley stood while writing his celebrated hymn, and a little further out a high stone from which John Wesley had preached. I crept carefully round and downward till the very last standing-ground is reached, with foaming waves one hundred feet below. Standing on the ledge, I touched the extremity with my umbrella and, not satisfied with this, went down on my knees and touched it with outstretched hand, assured that I had reached the true extremity of England westwards.’



TO MISS CAIRNS

*(On a post-card)*

LAND'S END, Oct. 7, 1874.

"He is able to save to the uttermost."

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.""Upon a narrow neck of land  
'Twixt two eternal seas I stand."

God bless you all. Amen.'

Returning to Sennen, he found a congenial host in the Rector of the parish.

'We spent the evening, after a Harvest Thanksgiving service, in going over hymns with which the family were familiar, while I tried to sing some which they had not heard, such as "Jesus of Nazareth," "The Life Boat," and "Light in the Valley." It was an extraordinary experience that my journey should thus end amidst Revival associations and in reporting the work of God to so devout a family.'

Thence he made his way by St. Michael's Mount to Helstone and the Lizard, celebrating his queer exultation in the wildness of the storm-beaten rocks by despatching another post-card :—

LIZARD LIGHTHOUSE, Oct. 8, 1874.

'At the southern extremity of England, I salute the northern and the whole good town of Berwick.

"The works of the Lord are great; sought out they are of all them that take pleasure therein." "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."

At every stage he struck up acquaintance with stray fishermen and labourers, delighting to find permanence of evangelical influences.

MANCHESTER, Oct. 15, 1874.

'From Truro, where I tried in vain to find the house where Henry Martyn was born, I came to Redruth and thence to Gwennap, the open-air sanctuary where the Wesleys and Clarke preached. It is

on the side of a hill surrounded by a ring-fence. There are twelve converging circles, affording beautiful seats carpeted with grass for about 10,000. The pulpit consists of two upright granite slabs, connected at the bottom with another slab, on which the preacher stands. I gazed with profound interest on this grass church, where so many have been moved to repentance and tears, and where the Methodist hymns ascended in their first fervour to heaven. I sang over some of them, and then standing on the slab gave out certain texts. This was evidently a matter of interest to some children who came out from adjacent cottages, and to whom I gave a few exhortations, although their aims were more terrestrial. . . . There is still service here on Whit-Monday, usually conducted by Wesleyans, but an old woman with whom I returned to Redruth told me that two weeks ago a Church of England minister had preached to a great congregation. "Sir, he was a converted parson." "Are they not all converted?" "Oh no; but he did preach beautiful about Ezekle's dry bones. Sure it was beautiful." . . . From Bristol I visited Gloucester Cathedral with Warburton's Monument and the Bell Inn, where Whitefield was born, besides seeking for memorials of Robert Raikes. . . . I write these recollections after one speech in the Free Trade Hall and another in the Synod.'

Those various undertakings, and the frequent absences from home which they involved, in no way loosened the tie which bound him to his work at Berwick. He was indeed careful to take his congregation with him at every point. After a holiday tour they reckoned upon having a conversational lecture in which he dexterously blended personal incidents with suggestions of broader ideas. When he had preached a special sermon in London, Edinburgh or Glasgow, it was repeated at Berwick, and this even though the topic might seem to be above the level of the ordinary hearer. In fact, Sozomen, Theodoret, Evagrius, and the other historians who occupied his leisure during 1874 and 1875, were occasionally brought to bear upon the Wallace Green congregation. He assumed instinctively that they were interested in all that he had in hand, and since his rule was to undertake only those duties which were consistent with his pastorate, it

seemed natural to him to explain how he was employed. Instinctive though this was, it had results which deliberate skilfulness would not have secured. Besides the broadening of Christian sympathy among the more intelligent, there grew up among the plainest people a very beautiful reverence for him as a man who lived in a large world, and who had great power in it. If a countryman discovered a musty book in some old cupboard, he would take it to 'the Doctor,' who would spend a long evening over it, and stride across the country next day to give the donor a disquisition on its contents. Young men who had gone to London would keep an eye upon the bookstalls, knowing how eagerly any book in an unknown tongue would be welcomed in the manse; for although he was a notable linguist, picking up languages with marvellous facility, his linguistic prowess was naturally exaggerated. Many queer letters, of which the following may serve as a specimen, show that more practical powers were ascribed by the rustics to the holy man of God who passed by continually:—

*Dec. 9, 1874.*

'I write a fuie lines to you About a veray important subject Concerning the Great Curce that our contry Have Been afflicked this three years & more, I sae in the first Place three years Past, upon Poor People that Have Potates Planted and Expeced a Good Crop well throw the sumer they Looke well, then comes the time of Liften of the crop, Heres the curse Comenced, a great manee of them is Roten with-a deedly deeses then who is to Blame fore this I sae it is the Ministers is to Blame fore all this; I se Bay Reeding the Sceptures that the Minstrs is to Blame fore Brecken the Covenant that God Allmity Have Made & Geaven us to Be a rule to Derect man How He is to Leve there Bay, now I se that Minsters Have Brocken some of this apart of them in the same Manere that God Have tacken apart of our Crops Bay Rott, as I Have said that Minsters is to Blean, fore Both aden & tacken away frome the Bibles truths Minersters is Greatly to Blame fore Brening strang Books into the Curchs I se Bay Reeding in verous Parts of the Bible condemes your Prenceple Now in order that we may Have our Good Crops, we must Geave up Sinin ageanst the

Great God that Made us, fore if we Give over sinin God will geave  
over Puneshin, Now Mr. Cairns I se that there Must of Nessety Be  
some thing Done in the Mature. . . .'

Behind this quaint reverence for his power, there was the general recognition that he at heart preferred the quietness of his own pastorate to the stir of the big world outside, and that it was much more to his mind than a career of distinction. It was known that he thoroughly disliked flattery, direct or indirect, and that, when away from home, he shunned gala-days, prominent places, and the society of celebrities. It was told that when an eminent person in London had brought together a party of men high in Church and State to meet him at dinner, he slipped away from the table and spent the evening in searching out the lodgings of a Berwick lad. At another time, in St. James's Hall, he detached himself from a knot of titled people to hail a humble friend. After a long talk, the friend said: 'You must go back now, Dr. Cairns; these grand folk want you to talk to them.' 'Yes,' he replied, 'but I don't want to talk to them.' Such stories passed from lip to lip and formed a framework for the deep and devoted earnestness of his actual ministry. Essentially spiritual as the latter was, it was of the most humane and tender kind, concerning itself in all life's affairs. It was nothing strange to see him trundling an old woman's barrow up a steep hill, or thrusting his strong arm between two fighting drunkards; and, when he required to use words of caution or rebuke, there was a gracious eagerness in his manner which freed his words from all offence.

In June 1875 he paid a farewell visit to his old comrade, Alexander MacEwen, who was dying at Llandudno, to lend that strong, silent support which he always brought both to the dying and to the sorrowing. 'I have lost,' he wrote, 'one of my warmest, wisest and best friends.' Even where, as in this case, his own sense of loss was deep, he diffused something of his grand assurance of immortality.



Meantime, fresh and living family interests were rising in the growth of the children of his brother David, who were as dear to him as though they had been his own. When, in October 1875, his brother went to Kreuznach to place his daughter at school there, he travelled with them. Miss Cairns writes :—

‘Although most of my uncle’s holiday journeys were taken alone, I think it was a real enjoyment to him to have somebody to look after. The ground over which we travelled was familiar to him, and he was anxious that we should not lose a single point of beauty either in nature or in art. He talked incessantly to fellow-travellers in train and steamer and hotel. To a bewildered waiter at Coblenz, who could not understand how gentlemen refused wine, he gave a short summary of our principles as Abstainers. In order that we might not feel ourselves left out, he never spoke long with any one without telling us what was being said. As you know, his conversation always led up to one point, about which he left a few earnest, kind words. He was greatly delighted with my own friend and teacher, as reminding him of the intelligent Christian ladies whom he used to meet in Berlin in student days, but he lamented the gradual change of customs and manner of living which had crept over the country since the War. On the Sabbath, my father and he took Communion in the Lutheran Church. There was a look of surprise in the congregation when the tall men walked forward to the Table ; but they were quite unconscious of it.’

By this time the shadows of departure from Berwick were beginning to fall, and the chapter may be closed with the words of the Rev. John Smith, D.D., who, as his immediate successor and his friend, was well able to measure the character of his later ministry :—

‘One’s very first impression, on introduction to the charge, was that, if succeeding a great man entailed responsibility, it also carried with it notable blessings : one entered into such a heritage of respect for the ministerial character and reverence for the ministerial office. Seldom has a minister of Christ left upon a community a more profound and manifold impression than was gradually revealed to me, following in his footsteps along street and lane, and out to farm-steadings and hamlets. To the humble and suffering he was known as the devoted pastor, the wealth and greatness of whose

character was felt in the momentum of his tender sympathy, and in the self-sacrificing unworldliness of his deeds. To the mass of the people he was above all things the preacher, whose great sermons lived in the calendar of their minds and were frequent subjects of fond recollection. The association of evangelical Christianity with such intellectual force, width of culture, lofty simplicity of nature, and breadth of independent judgment, bound not a few to the Church who might otherwise have drifted away, and, in select minds, created a type of religion based on intelligent conviction with wide ecclesiastical and social horizons, yet fervent, individual, and practical in its endeavours to seek and to save the lost; while the whole community, flattered by his inflexible resolve to abide in their midst, proud of his acquirements and receiving a sort of reflected honour from each new proof of his extending reputation, admired and loved him.

‘I could quite suppose that some of his College friends would be ready to say that in renouncing hope of an academic career, and in becoming Secession minister of Berwick, he was burying himself. Yet in judging as to the environment of a notable life, it is almost always unsafe to go upon surface judgments of advantage. And Berwick had much to do even for John Cairns, who made such royal repayment for what he received. It was no slight advantage to him that, while maintaining closest contact with Scottish ecclesiastical life, he yet lived in daily view of the larger currents of the English world, and in sympathetic fellowship with the Methodist and other evangelical denominations. Nor was it of small moment that he found himself, as a Presbyterian and a dissenter, forced to look with the severe justice of principle, and yet with the large charity inseparable from him, upon that hoary Anglican Church which did not recognise his Orders. He did not live in a land-locked bay among his own ecclesiastical kin, but on the high seas, where issues were being raised that brought him into contact with the great historic positions of Christendom. Men recognised in his judgments—even in those of a controversial kind—not the manufactured conclusions of a partisan, but a certain œcumenical note, the broad, calm, unbiassed findings of a strong and sanctified intellect, alive to historic sequence and tolerant of minor diversities.

‘One has to live in Berwick to feel all the gently quickening influences of the somewhat sleepy old place. An aroma of antiquity lingers around the fragments which remain, from days of constant bickering and frequent siege. From his study window Dr. Cairns could see Holy Island, and rock-enthroned Bamborough farther

away on the southern coast, the former the religious centre, the latter for a time the civic capital of Saxon Northumbria ; and as he looked forth at night, the light from Grace Darling's Farne Islands would flash brightly upon him. To some recluses physical surroundings mean little, but Dr. Cairns lived among his people, and in his ceaseless visitation he spent much time in the open air. Northwards towards Lamberton, up the steep ascent from Tweedmouth, on to Scremerston, Cheswick, and Ancroft, and for several miles on both banks of the Tweed, he was to be seen hastening on the King's business, yet sensitive to every effect of light or gleam of beauty. I have heard him refer to the summer nights when he preached on village commons or at farm-steadings in the slow descending twilight, with a poetic tenderness and vividness of reminiscence which thrilled every heart.

'The first personal impression that he made on all who met him was one of wonder at his humility. It came out in ways so unstudied, and in degree, judging by common standards, so excessive, as sometimes to arouse incredulity and provoke a smile. These, however, were in their way striking tributes to the beauty of this grace. For the thought underlying them was—how can so great a man, consistently with perfect ingenuousness, display such lowliness and speak in such generous exaltation of tone, about commonplace achievements and inferior men?

'And yet no one came very near him, without seeing a steady consciousness, enfolding all his life, that he was a man apart, to whom God had given special powers, and from whom He expected special service,—one therefore who must subject himself to rigorous spiritual and intellectual discipline. Wherever he might have lived, in provincial boundedness, or in the eye of Scotland, he would have lived from within, in the light of this conviction, and on the lines of holy walking and self-denying toil. This supreme loyalty to God, in the deeps of his personal life, was the key to his whole character. It was this spring of moral purpose which, impelling him undeviatingly on a high and individual course, kept him simple in heart, void of the least trace of puny self-consciousness, not merely untouched by, but infinitely far from the remotest suggestions of envy or jealousy,—until at length he grew to a manhood of apostolic build, which by its serene, equal, complete beauty hushed the sharp tongue of controversy and smote detraction into silence. Even his friend Graham felt that he held the region of his inner life in stern reserve, through a desire and purpose to be loyal through and through to the higher Will which was his constant rule.



‘One who knew him better than most others said : “Gentle in his judgment of others, he is positively merciless with himself.” His judgment was not misproportioned, much less distorted, but uniformly made in this larger ethical light. If he leaned at times heavily to mercy’s side, it was in a spirit of Christlike love that was always seeking to redeem for nobler uses, and to lift to a higher plane, lives that might be crushed or go to waste. He had Christ’s thirst to make something of the worst, and disliked that hounding spirit which sometimes takes possession of righteous men ; and his look of reverence for the image of God in the most sinful seemed to bring the Master into the midst.

‘The stir of new interest which he had brought into his ministry came from no novelty of method, or innovation in doctrine. He breathed a new charm into the old forms, and even in the glow of his youth struck that note of profound seriousness which was to become conspicuously his own. With all the deference, tenderness and reserve so beautifully shown in his letter to Sir William Hamilton, he wrestled for souls. More circumscribed men might have come straighter to the point, but he was always moving on the lines congenial to his mind, towards the directest of practical issues. Alive to every phase of current feeling on religious and moral questions, he was led into the Apologetic vein in a practical interest. Versed in philosophy, he did not turn Christianity into a philosophy, but accepted with his whole soul the supernatural facts and revealed doctrines of the faith. He searched out the harmonies between the world of human thought and the revealed order of grace, and often rose by masterly movements, from the common levels of intellectual and moral experience, into that spiritual region where they reached their highest end and complete explanation.

‘One is tempted to record in a sentence or two what seemed the peculiar note of his oratory, and the quality of those magnificent effects to which from time to time he attained. He stood on quite a different level from many who, in their way deservedly, achieved contemporary distinction. Neither in thought nor in language, had he a vestige of that studied mannerism, or those laborious efforts at brilliance, which lift some into note. Still less was he to be confounded with those who, half through sympathy and half through conscious imitation, echo and re-echo courses of thought, intellectual methods and qualities of style, which have caught the public ear. He was a man apart, standing on his own feet, looking out at the world with his own eyes, with his own intellectual centre, and his own hard-won findings in the regions of philosophical and theological thought.



While rating at its highest value the discipline of contact with other minds, he yet spoke with an individual voice, from the depths of what he was, following the resultant lines of his own personality. He could afford to be dull at times; but even then men felt themselves within wide horizons, and under a broad if grey sky. Now and again the wide excursions, in which great stretches of thought, appearing and re-appearing, recalled the wandering mind, culminated in no striking climax. But in his chosen hours, from the singular meekness of his commencement, on through the stately progression of his thought, he seemed to be catching fire, his words glowing with an ever brightening radiance of imagination and heart, until, as he gathered up the whole, in a unity of view, preparatory to personal application and appeal, suddenly there broke forth what was nothing less than an unveiling, sometimes a very convulsion, of his aroused personality pouring itself forth in tides of eloquence which subdued and overwhelmed, or in some cases moved to extraordinary heights of enthusiasm and unwonted expressions of applause.

‘Although it was difficult to make him believe ill of any one, few could be more faithful or urgent in dealing with backsliders or with the victims of intemperance. I have heard of striking cases of rescue, and of happy results of apparently fruitless labours discovered after many days. The effects of the Revival movement were apparent, when I went to Berwick, in many lives and in important Christian activities. There had been no alteration in Dr. Cairns’ course of study and laborious intellectual discipline, but an obvious broadening of his sympathies in various practical directions. Especially did he see the tremendous barrier to the progress of the Gospel in national intemperance, and became more pronounced in advocacy of Total Abstinence. But he was chiefly filled with the joy of bringing men to personal decision for Christ. His humility in taking the lowest place at evangelistic gatherings, his deference to those who were greatly his inferiors, because of their one talent of earnest evangelistic preaching, his holy urgency in pleading with men for God, and his beautiful insensibility to what others might think, intensified the charm of his character, and brought out that note of Christlikeness which dominated every other quality in later years.’

## CHAPTER XXI

### DISESTABLISHMENT

Public declaration for Disestablishment—Relation to his earlier attitude—Religious groundwork of his position—National religion—Interests of Christian truth—Liberty of the Church—Title of all to deal with national institutions—Broad Churchism—Effect on Christian liberality—Bearings on Church Union—Reconstruction of Scottish Churches—His spirit in the controversy—Its influence and weight—Appreciation by his opponents.

ON May 6, 1872, in compliance with a requisition from members of the United Presbyterian Church, Dr. Cairns delivered in Edinburgh a long and careful Lecture on the Disestablishment of the Church of Scotland. Prior to that date, although there had been no concealment of his opinions, he had not spoken publicly on the subject. Thenceforward for twenty years he was an open and indefatigable advocate of Disestablishment. In Church Courts, at conferences of various Disestablishment associations of which he was a member or office-bearer, and at meetings held in all parts of the country, he spoke frankly, fully and fearlessly on this topic, with such frequency that it would be impossible to enumerate his public appearances. As the question gradually became the question of the day in Scotland, it presented itself in shifting aspects, and there was necessarily some change in the method of his arguments and appeals, but there was no real divergence from the position which he assumed in 1872. The course of politics in no way affected his attitude. Although deeply concerned in political questions, and an avowed Liberal, he was not a politician. So far as can be ascertained, the only occasion in the course of his long life when he appeared on a political platform was at a banquet given to Sir George Grey,

which he agreed to attend after much hesitation. Otherwise he acted invariably upon the principle that a minister, for the sake of his calling, ought not to be involved in political partisanship. In 1885 he stepped forward into politics, but this was exclusively in order to gain fair consideration for the Church question. When appeals were made to Liberals to suppress that question for the sake of party unity, he declined to accede, and declared that he would vote only for candidates who accepted the Disestablishment policy, refusing even the strong plea of Mr. Gladstone, for whom he cherished deep admiration. When Disestablishment had secured a place in the Liberal programme, he still refrained from general politics, and beyond expressing thankfulness for the progress of the cause, scarcely deviated by a shade from his original position.<sup>1</sup> This therefore seems the proper stage at which to explain the ground on which he stood, which was in several respects distinctive.

The position which he assumed in 1872, and maintained to the close of his life, was alien to his general mood of mind, for he was by nature an apologist rather than an assailant. It involved an apparent aggressiveness from which in most matters his amiable and conciliatory disposition recoiled. His deep sense of the essential unity of the Church prompted him to avoid contention with other Christians. In all departments of Christian activity he willingly co-operated with the Established Church, and from boyhood he had numbered many of her ministers and laymen among his closest personal friends. Naturally enough, these things suggested to those who differed from him upon this one subject that there was some inconsistency. Admiring and loving him, and contrasting him with dissenters of a contentious type, they could not understand his attacking an

<sup>1</sup> Wide circulation has recently been given to a story that Dr. Cairns was party to a pact with Mr. Gladstone in regard to the support to be given to Mr. Gladstone's Irish Home Rule Bill. The story has no foundation. Dr. Cairns deliberately avoided entanglement in the Home Rule question.

institution which they held dear and precious, and voices were from time to time heard expressing regret that he had so far departed from the spirit which marked the other relations of his life. It has even, since his death, been broadly hinted that he was led by others in his later years to acquiesce reluctantly in a policy which he disliked. The absurdity of this misrepresentation must be apparent to those who have noted the course of the first fifty-four years of his life. The only two facts which give it a semblance of truth are that his standpoint differed from that of some advocates of Disestablishment, and that he did not seek to propagate his opinion till he judged that he was called upon to do so by the interests of the Christian Church.

Readers will remember that in College days he was the victorious champion of the severance of Church from State—that, unlike some Seceders, he welcomed the Disruption enthusiastically as a first step towards a place of complete freedom, and that when an honoured friend urged him to join the Established Church, he courteously alleged the greater freedom of non-established Churches as his ground for declining. His conviction had been both strengthened and broadened by minute acquaintance with the recent religious history of Germany and France, in which he had seen orthodoxy blighted and rationalism enforced by State patronage; and although he had had pleasant relations with his Church of England neighbours at Berwick, his experience there had not been such as to lead him to think that the maintenance of an Established Church conduced to the interests of religion. While, in general, reckoning it enough to hold his own opinion, he had in all debated matters taken his natural place beside the other dissenting ministers of the locality. An incidental reference defines his attitude: ‘An excellent neighbour of mine in the Church of England, who regarded all the parish as under his care, when I once remonstrated (for we were good friends) on a practical



application of this theory, fairly conquered me by the appeal, "If you do not regard this as my right, then bear with it as my infirmity." For more than twenty years, he bore with the position of the Established Church as 'an infirmity,' though not regarding it as a right. Repeatedly indeed he had appeared at public meetings in Edinburgh to assert the rights of dissenters in national schools and in the national Universities. In 1860 he had come forward to support the Free Church in the Cardross Case controversy, though carefully guarding himself against indorsing the Claim of Right. In the Union discussions, while disowning the secular aspect of Voluntaryism, he had steadily maintained his own position and the position of his Church. Indeed, he could jest publicly at the idea that he was not a thorough Voluntary.

Yet he had been chiefly concerned in the positive interests of the Church—in her doctrine, her worship, her faith. While recognising that destruction might be as needful for her welfare as construction, he preferred to take part in the latter; and he willingly left the open advocacy of Disestablishment to others, so long as the interests and the progress of the Church were not manifestly hindered. This preference, which had hitherto kept him silent, he maintained when he entered the controversy. In his first speech he said:—

'There are obviously two sets of considerations by which our policy can be vindicated. The one goes to show that the existence of an Established Church is a violation of the proper duty of the State—in other words, a political wrong and injustice. The other, that its continued existence is a detriment to the highest welfare of the Church—in other words, a spiritual evil and impediment. Though I do not undervalue the former set of considerations, I lay far greater stress on the latter.'

Indeed, although he frequently argued on the grounds of political justice and civil equality, he never based his argument on the idea that the State is or should be exclusively secular.

'I believe that no nation can be neutral in relation to God or

Christianity, can disregard the voice of Revelation, or make its civil laws irrespective of Divine legislation on such matters in Holy Scripture. I go further, and with the Synod of our Church believe that it is the duty of nations to further Christianity by Sabbath-observance, by religious fasts and thanksgivings, and by other measures consistent with its own spirit and enactments. . . . But I cannot regard the State as called to be the supporter and propagandist of Christianity in the way which is alone possible in State Churches. A new field is here entered on—the direct, leading, predominant support of religion to the exclusion or subordination of other agencies. The Church becomes as much a State function as the Army or Navy, and for this there is no plea in the obligation of the State to avoid godlessness, as in legislation and education. It is an overstraining of its province—a forgetfulness that its great work is civil and not spiritual—and an encroachment, without necessity or call, and indeed, as I believe, in the face of express Divine arrangements, on the work of the Christian Church. As the distinctive action of the State is coercive, and of the Church voluntary, the State cannot be anything like a co-ordinate factor in the spread of Christianity, but best honours it by avoiding in its own action every violation of it, and by smiling on the efforts of the Church to make it prevalent; and thus the State Church system, from however excellent motives it may proceed, does yet, as leading the State to apply its methods and resources in a region beyond its competency, involve, as all such confusions and exaggerations do, error and injustice. I am far from wishing to lay down any hard and fast line between the lawful action of the State in furthering Christianity and the unlawful. Much may here depend on times and circumstances. Much can be done in Britain that could not be attempted in India; and hence there is room for great diversities of judgment as to periods like the Reformation, when rulers were virtually absolute, or peoples so united as to make State establishment and endowment only another way, and the only way that had dawned on them, of fulfilling a Christian duty. But it is my firm conviction that the more fully the distinctness of Church and State is realised—a grand peculiarity of Christianity, by which it gloriously redresses the weakness of all Pagan ethics and politics, which had only one agent to do the work of two—the more does it supersede the application of State resources to the uses of the Church in its distinctive functions; and as no function of the Church is so distinctive as the preaching and propagation of the Gospel, the ordinary support of this ordinance falls beyond the pale of State obligation.

This conclusion, drawn from the distinct province of the State, is confirmed by the strain of Christian teaching, which places the obligation of its own support and extension on the Church; and though the exclusion of the State may be only a matter of inference, the inference seems clear enough to determine a general rule. I grant, however, most willingly, exceptional cases, like those of soldiers and sailors, of criminals and all others to whom the State can be fairly regarded as standing *in loco parentis*; and I have not the least hesitation in allowing that if a mature and enlightened Christian nation, while ordinarily maintaining the ministry in what I think the normal and appointed way, could devise any destination of national property that might seem to its members for the glory of God, and could agree about it, I for one would oppose no protest. It is to be remembered, however, that such exceptions do not break a rule. . . . These considerations, although so far independent of numbers, are indefinitely strengthened by the admitted fact that the Established Church is the Church of the minority. On the theory that an Established Church should be the Church of the majority—that apparently acted on at the Revolution Settlement—she has lost her claim. On the nobler theory that a national Establishment is an act of national homage to God she is equally indefensible, for an act of national homage cannot be performed by a minority. It is impossible to appeal here to the large body of Anglicans, for many of them disown Presbyterian orders, and regard its existence not as a homage to God, but as an offence. Nor can it be said that, on Scottish soil, we who agree with its doctrine and polity pay national homage by it vicariously, for we protest against its action, and do not mean to employ it as our common witness-bearer.’

It will be noticed that there are here none of the common phrases or arguments of controversy, and that the position assumed is one which might at first sight be reckoned inconsistent. He concedes the right and the duty of the State to recognise religion, and draws the line only at the ‘propagation of religious truth.’ Yet there is no more inconsistency, as he frequently contended, than in the case of a Christian merchant who insists upon the social laws of Christianity being observed by the clerks in his office, and yet thinks it wrong to interfere with them in regard to their



church attendance or to assess them for the maintenance of a church where they do not worship.<sup>1</sup> It is of course easy to show that the position is incompatible with the doctrinaire statement that 'the State has nothing to do with religion'; but the latter statement was far from Dr. Cairns' mind. There can be little doubt that his view is shared by the great body of Christian Nonconformists throughout Great Britain; and that the contribution which he made to Disestablishment in Scotland largely consisted in showing that the support of Disestablishment does not imply secularism, and that, in his words, 'a religious community does not need such an organ as an established and endowed Church to make its religion tell on national affairs.' In some speeches, certainly, he dwelt more fully upon the political injustice of Establishments; but always within limits. It was impossible for him, permeated as he was by classical ideals, and familiar with the history of Christianity, to regard the State as 'anarchy *plus* the police constable.' With him the idea of national responsibility to God was strong and dominant; his perception of the national value of Scottish Christianity was specially clear; and his wish to place national religion upon the broad basis of personal conviction, and to disentangle it from all that is compulsory, and that therefore tends to become formal, was one of his chief motives for advocating Disestablishment. The following extract represents fairly the way in which time after time he presented this aspect of the question:—

'We do not concede to others the great title of the Church of Scotland. We have its work to do and its honour to uphold as well as they. The State cannot define or limit the succession of the great Scottish Reformation. Wherever there are men working on

<sup>1</sup> Even those who reject such comparisons, as ascribing too much authority to the State, and regard the latter as a 'Social compact,' will acknowledge that an association of men may agree to comply with the practical precepts of religion, without being logically compelled to bring the provision of religious ordinances within the scope of their association. In this aspect, too, Dr. Cairns sometimes presented the case.



the lines of the Scottish Reformers, and perpetuating their immortal spirit, there are their successors. Connection with the State is but an accident in such a history. In the words of Dr. Chalmers, to insist on it is to 'exalt the adjective to the place of the substantive.' The greatest passages in Scottish history leave this region of establishment below. The true Church of Scotland was with Knox in the galleys, with Melville in exile, with Rutherford in prison, with Argyll on the scaffold, with the Covenanters on the mountains, with Erskine and Gillespie in their solitude, with the great separation of 1843 that went forth to new conquests,—though I grant also that those who remained in the same spirit partook the same inheritance! Now, the question for all of us is how we may best follow the heroes and martyrs of our Scottish Christian history, and the steps of their Lord and ours. May He give us the humility, the wisdom, the zeal, the courage, the brotherly-kindness and charity! May we have faith in His Gospel, His leadership, His infinite and inexhaustible resources, and His willingness to help all who, according to their light, strive alike to make the Church free and the State Christian; and may He thus prepare us for a better state of His kingdom, more resembling the kingdom which cannot be moved, where there shall be no such witness-bearing needed for its rights and liberties, no such struggle for its claims and obligations, but where, as a kingdom not of this world, it shall have risen to its true sphere, and the effect of its righteousness shall be quietness and assurance for ever.'

The reasons which made him eager for Disestablishment may be given in the order in which he marshalled them in his first campaign, with some explanations taken from later speeches and pamphlets.

He placed first *the interests of Christian truth and sound doctrine.*

'This,' he said, 'is to my mind so important that it outweighs every other consideration, and did I not believe that something like a turning-point had arrived in the history of Scottish Establishment, I should very possibly not have taken part in any movement on the present occasion. . . . I seriously declare that it is this consideration which moves me more than anything else to strike for Disestablishment.'

The special heretical tendencies within the Established

Church which he had in view have proved to be so unprolific, and have left so little record in literature, that even in twenty years they have been almost forgotten. But the notable point is the right which he claimed, as a citizen and as a Christian, to deal with such movements. To him the Church was an institution intrusted with definite functions in the assertion and propagation of Gospel truth.

‘Burke has said that the *raison d’être* of the British Constitution is to put ten honest men into the jury-box; so the *raison d’être* of the Church is to put a preacher of the Gospel in every pulpit, and to send the guidance of the Gospel to every sick and sinful person in the land.’

The strongest conceivable justification of the Established Church, a justification which might, in certain circumstances, have led him to withhold his opinions about Establishments, would be that she fulfilled that function. But if the teaching of her pulpits is not evangelical, that plea disappears; and the Christian citizen is bound to exert himself to remove the evil, whether he be in communion with the Established Church or not.

‘For a national institution we are all responsible. If our national Churches were nothing more to me than the Church of Rome now happily is, I should be disposed to treat them as I prevalingly treat it, by leaving them alone.’

No one could have more effectively swept away the weak though current plea that dissenters ought to do their own work and not interfere with a sister Church. The Established Church is in this reference not a sister Church, but by her own avowal a national institution with a special function; and every individual is entitled to consider how far she fulfils that function, without laying himself open to the charge of interference. Indeed, seeing that the Church’s function is the most important of all, he is bound to watch far more anxiously over her movements than over those of any other national institution.

‘Conscience is not absolved by individual separation from a system of the workings of which we disapprove.’

Every member of the nation is responsible not only for the establishment and endowment of religion as national acts, but for the special influence which the established and endowed Church is exercising upon the Christianity of the country.

‘In this matter no one can put us out of Court, and when we distinctly think that evil influences are being exercised we are bound to seek to remove those influences.’

While honouring the evangelical party in the Established Church, he recognised that of recent years they had been unable to assert themselves. As to the rationalising school, he did not wish to persecute them, or to close their lips. He acknowledged their right to promulgate their views as individuals, and the service which they might thus render to the cause of civilisation. But he roundly challenged their title to use for such purposes the resources and position which are assigned to them for doing the specific work of the Christian Church.

In the emphasis which he gave to this aspect of the question he stood almost alone, although it was in line with the frequent ‘Testimonies’ of the Secession Church. It brought upon him the thunders of the daily Press, and he was stigmatised as ‘uncharitable,’ ‘bigoted,’ ‘presumptuous.’ Some extreme Voluntaries, who contended that an Established Church must always and in everything be an evil thing, reckoned that he was giving away their position. But with the public at large the argument told, and the strength of it was felt within the Established Church. On June 3, 1872, Dr. Norman Macleod wrote:—

‘The last Assembly has been the most reactionary I have ever seen; all because Dr. Cairns and others have attacked the Church for her latitudinarianism!’

In speech after speech he reiterated the argument, and it formed the staple of his last literary contribution to the discussion.<sup>1</sup> Among Christians, at any rate, the strongest item of Church defence is that the Established Church is the guardian of Christian truth, and surely there can be few more effective replies than that, while she is not the proper guardian, her professed guardianship has failed.

The exact bearing of this argument becomes clearer in his second plea for Disestablishment—*the liberty of the Church*. 'The State, by going beyond its own province, narrows the field which God intends to be cultivated by spontaneous effort, and interferes with the free working of the plan which Christ appointed. In asking the State to leave the field, Christians are therefore contending for the liberty of the Church. Dr. Cairns was, however, less inclined than many to press this aspect of liberty, although he recognised it; and he dwelt with much greater frequency upon the amount of liberty which could be justified for the Established Church.

'I do not deny that the Church of Scotland has many liberties denied to other State Churches. No one can compare it with them, if he be a Scotsman, without something of elation rising in his breast. The miserable bondage of the Protestant Church in France, the abortive efforts of German Protestantism, . . . with the pale shadow of Church representation in the English Convocation, . . . make one rejoice that in Scotland, even with State alliance, so much of the spirit of Knox and Melville has preserved itself. This liberty I seek not to sacrifice but to extend, and the Church in Scotland needs it more than ever. It has indeed claimed a spiritual independence equal to that of the unendowed Churches, and professed to regard their immunity from State control as a dream or a mystical abstraction. But the fact remains that the solemn decisions of its majorities have been reversed and declared incompetent by a State tribunal. . . . Meanwhile it has practically enjoyed a great deal of liberty; but, like a ship swinging by a lengthened cable, has been liable at any moment to be drawn up to the anchor of State jurisdiction.'

<sup>1</sup> *Why I would Disestablish*: Longmans, 1886.



Here again he reverted to the claim of the Church to be a national institution, and pressed the point that, if the Church ceases to be under national control, and thereby ceases to be under restraint, she becomes sectional and loses her claim to a national position. In other words, he presented this dilemma: Either the Church is the religious organ of the State, in which case she must comply, or be ready to comply, with the injunctions of the State, and thus lose her freedom; or she is independent, controlled and regulated by those who take their place within her borders, in which case she is as free as other Churches, but has no more claim than they have to a so-called national position or to privileges specially guaranteed by the nation.

‘The Broad Church party in Scotland has never obtained from any competent authority a legal standing. Whatever liberty it takes with subscription (and I suppose no one will deny that it takes such liberty) is unauthorised. Even the General Assembly cannot authorise it, for it is bound by its compact with the State and with the nation to teach a prescribed doctrine. It is otherwise with the Established Church of England. When, in 1860, one of the authors of the *Essays and Reviews* was prosecuted before the highest Civil Court, he was acquitted. This gave the whole Broad Church party a legal standing; and though it was strange and unseemly for them still to profess assent to the Thirty-nine Articles, it was not in the common sense of the word dishonourable. But where has the Broad Church party in the Scottish Establishment obtained any such recognition? They may be tolerated, but they are not legitimated; and a recent prosecution shows that the toleration of them is limited. Now I appeal to this section, and ask if it be for their good, any more than for the good of the nation, that this slackness in subscription should exist? Can they really build up within the Establishment a morally creditable party, which has no footing except by evasion on the one side and sufferance on the other? How can an honourable liberty ever be recovered? Only by Disestablishment.’

The above appeal was made at Aberdeen in 1882; and soon afterwards, partly as the result of such appeals, and partly with the purpose of drawing the Free Church back to

the Establishment, there issued from the North an attempt to secure a Parliamentary 'declaration' of the freedom of the Established Church. The attempt, as might have been expected, only served to call attention to the terms on which any Church can claim to be national. Like his friend Dr. John Ker, Dr. Cairns held that to give endowments and a privileged position, without annexing conditions, is to increase both political injustice and religious danger; and he did not hesitate to found his protest against the concession of freedom upon the recent action of the Established Church.

'I acknowledge that the path of the Established Church has been rendered difficult by a kind of natural instinct of justice, which makes them, as they profess to be national, wish to be more comprehensive than I think any faithful Church of Christ ought to be; and yet I cannot acquit the so-called orthodox party from the impeachment of feeble and temporising action. With regard to the other party, let me say a word as to how little worthy it has proved itself of any special privilege. I do not speak theologically, but morally; and I do not speak of Broad Churchmen outside the national Church, many of whom have shown great courage in avowing and suffering for their opinions; but of those within the Established Churches of England and Scotland, whose readiness to strike up compromises with the other party I anything but admire. Has it been to the good of the national conscience that, while often denouncing their own associates as blind, reactionary and bigoted, they have still clung to the same endowments with them, have subscribed the same formulas, and striven to present the same even line of battle, the same hollow square, to all comers? What has this section done—corresponding to its claim to progressive thought, and to immeasurable advance beyond vulgar superstitions and antiquated absurdities—to stake out new ground in organisation, to elevate the morality of church-fellowship, and to give us some glimpse of a new Jerusalem where the more sordid and material laws of cohesion should be transcended and done away? I hold that if any tree has been known by its fruits, it is this; if any system has been tried and found wanting, it is this; and as this party is mainly responsible for all the evil, past, present, and possible of that demoralising system, I hold that so far from being

exalted to special privilege, it should by the nation, in just retribution as well as in defence, be brought down and fastened to the common level, and have its deceptive motto, "equal endowment to all," replaced by the stern watchword of morality and of truth, "equal justice to all and endowment to none."

His third ground of argument was that *disendowment would increase the Christian liberality and activity of the members of the Established Church*. It would be unreasonable to burden those pages with an array of statistics which may, as every reader knows, be so ranged as to give apparent confirmation to almost any thesis. It will be enough to say that, while Dr. Cairns occasionally made an excursus into this department, he uniformly accepted the facts as to the Established Church on its own showing, and was contented with proving that, if the Church when disestablished showed as much liberality as the non-established Churches show at present, the financial gap left by the withdrawal of endowments would in time be filled. He also pressed very often and very strongly that the Established Church of Scotland cannot claim to be in any distinctive sense the Church of the poor, that in many of those districts, which are sometimes said to be absolutely dependent upon endowments, the Free and United Presbyterian Churches supply the wants of the humbler classes, and that to a large extent the endowments are at present employed in supplying ordinances to comfortable and prosperous people, whose liberality is thereby checked. He fully recognised that, as the immediate result of disendowment, there would be a strain put upon Christian finance; but he had no doubt that the Church would prove herself adequate to the occasion, and he habitually appealed in proof of this to history, bringing proof after proof, with endless variety, to show that the chief forward movements of the Church had been taken when she depended exclusively upon the goodwill of her members. In these matters, however, he was in the main travelling over well-trodden ground;

and the object of this chapter is to explain what was distinctive in his position.

The fourth of his reasons was that Disestablishment was *the only path to the union and reconstruction of all the Presbyterian Churches*. He probably placed this last because it is a reason which may apparently be met by a blank contradiction, or even by a laugh, and because it rested on special circumstances rather than upon a general principle. Yet it lay at the root of his own feelings in the matter. It was in seeking for Union that he had been led to advocate Disestablishment publicly, and throughout his advocacy of it, he had behind him the fact that long and laborious efforts after what he reckoned the greatest good of the Scottish Churches had been thwarted by the existence of a State Church.

‘How different would the issue of the Union movement have been but for this disturbing influence! I do not charge the Established Church with consciously and intentionally defeating our negotiations. There were some members of the Establishment who, much to their credit, expressed sympathy with them. Yet was it not the fact that the presence of a State Church beside us acted as a hindrance and stumbling-block? It exalted all our theoretical differences about the Civil Magistrate into matters of living and practical application. We could not calmly weigh the points in hand as purely speculative and abstract, especially when it came more and more to light that there was a party in one of the negotiating Churches which was anxious to keep the Establishment on foot in the hope of reconstructing it and finding for themselves sooner or later a place within it. The Establishment thus acted as a side-support to disunion, and the failure of that long, anxious and deeply important negotiation was in no small measure due to its indirect influence.’

The force of this argument in the abstract, or even in the present day, may fairly be questioned. It can scarcely be said that the existence of a State Church is in itself a hindrance to the union of two Churches which are not connected with the State. But as a matter of history, the



hindrance was operative, and indeed determining, owing to the fact that one of the two Churches negotiating for Union had not come to accept separation from the State as a final position. Twenty years ago the Free Church reckoned that the civil establishment of religion was not only legitimate but in certain circumstances desirable. Time after time during the negotiations, the tenor of the Free Church Anti-Unionists' language to United Presbyterians was this: 'You will never join a State Church; we want to join the State Church as soon as certain evil things are removed, and therefore we cannot and will not unite with you.' Thus it gradually forced itself upon those who wished for union, especially as the proposals for abolishing patronage in the Established Church gave a brief gleam of hope to the Anti-Unionists, that the only plan of carrying the whole of the Free Church into union was to put the hope of re-entering the Establishment out of the question. This is not the place to discuss the process by which the leading minds in the Free Church were led to advocate Disestablishment. But it must be said that while Dr. Cairns, through his friendly relations with them, was thoroughly cognisant of the drift of their opinion, there was no pre-arrangement, no hatching of plots such as at the time was laid to his charge and theirs. In opening the campaign, he was careful to state that he was not aware of their practical proceedings. Yet he regarded their action in calling for Disestablishment as a 'friendly challenge to the older dissenters to renew their former protest against the existing system.' So it came about that he joined hands with them in what was really a new phase of the former effort. When he moved through the country with Principal Rainy addressing Disestablishment meetings, he was only continuing the journeys which he had made with Drs. Buchanan and Candlish as an Apostle of Union. If the later campaign has had more definite results than the earlier one brought at the

time, it is not because their spirit or aim has been different, but because an essentially Christian purpose has been supported by more of Church unanimity and by the course of national politics.

While Union with the non-established Churches was thus first in his view, he held that the disestablishment of the Church of Scotland would bring her members into a position from which Union would eventually result. Yet he was too skilful a speaker to dwell much or frequently upon the certainty of immediate union. Once and again, indeed, he pleaded with the Established Church not to drag out the strife to the last, but to accept a place of equality and liberty, and to prevent the bitterness almost inevitable if Church defenders continued to denounce the advocates of Disestablishment as envious sectarians bent upon the overthrow of the Kingdom of God. But the failure of such appeals did not in any way affect his judgment or his policy. When they replied that they would be so sore and so indignant that they would never dream of uniting with those who had brought about Disestablishment, he seemed scarcely to regard such an answer as worthy of serious treatment. 'Time,' he said, 'would heal their wounds'; and if that larger union must be delayed, such delay surely was no reason against a movement which was good in itself, and therefore bound to promote the welfare and unity of the Church. Of those who said that if the Church were disestablished they would cease to be Presbyterians he took absolutely no notice, reckoning the declaration as one which the country and the Churches would appraise at its real worth. Indeed, the question as to what any man or any set of men would do as regards Union, was not one which could possibly affect him. He was doing his best to set the Churches upon a footing on which they could discuss and consider Union fairly and freely; and the outcome, in the case of Churches under popular control, and capable of freeing themselves from

wrong leadership, was to his mind certain. Similarly, when proposals were made for a reconstruction of Presbyterianism within the Established Church he turned away from them without the slightest hesitation.

‘We have to guard against every possible scheme of reconstruction that admits the principle of Establishment. We oppose such schemes, not because we do not love Union and hope for it. We aim at a reunited Presbyterian Church in Scotland as much as any section of the Church of Christ, and in our own place we have done and suffered for it as much as any. But we oppose reconstruction as bound up with Establishment—first, because Establishment is in itself a bad thing, which does not become good when associated with Christian union. Secondly, this union would come from the wrong quarter. It does not belong to the State to construct a Presbyterian Union. That is the work of the Church itself. We ask the State, therefore, to stand out of the way. We are as rude as Diogenes, who, when asked by the Macedonian king what favour he could show him, told him that all he asked was, that he should stand out from between him and the sun. We shall get Union when the State is out of the way. Thirdly, till the State has withdrawn you cannot tell what is to be united. This new Church of Scotland with which we are asked to unite does not exist at present. Bodies that are to be united must stand clear, outside of each other. The Church of Scotland must have its definite historical place as a separate and independent because disestablished Church, with all questions as to its endowments and other arrangements settled, before the other Churches can take up the question of Union. I have seen too much of the difficulties of Union where the individuality of the Churches was round and clear to attempt it. Otherwise we should lie open to the remark of Lord Brougham, in regard to the old Scottish system of marriage, that under it one might be married he did not know when, he did not know where, he did not know to whom.’

In 1886 and thereafter, schemes of various sorts were mooted whereby the endowments might be preserved for religious purposes, even if the Church were disestablished. With regard to such schemes, the following passage explains his views:—

‘I wish I could see any outlet in the utterances of one whom I

so much respect and admire as Professor Flint, and who leaves so far behind the alarmist and despondent strain of some others. As a United Presbyterian, I could not go into his plan, as I understand it, of somehow standing aside and leaving the teinds to come into the possession of those in Scotland who could conserve them for religious uses. If some great capitalists could be got to buy up the teinds and to give them voluntarily to the Church, leaving the price to be used as national property, that would in one way meet my difficulty ; but probably it would not satisfy Dr. Flint, and, still worse, would prove unrealisable in fact. I am afraid that we have to settle it at the polling-booth, with great regret that we cannot arrange it otherwise. We do not wish to gain a mere triumph over the Church of Scotland, but to solve an inevitable conflict by fair political means, which need not leave incurable bitterness behind.'

This last sentence illustrates, better than could any statement, the spirit of all his utterances. He felt that he was engaged in a great movement, with issues stretching into the distant future. It may be said, indeed, that he was little affected by the bearing of it upon the immediate prosperity of the United Presbyterian Church, having seen for many years that that Church, dearly as he loved it, must seek for a place in a larger Church with a wider mission and a greater future. In beginning one of his latest speeches he said :—

'In the midst of the present excitement I feel as if the bright and happy time of youth were come back, when for years in my student life the country was moved to its depths by the conflicts and public meetings that preceded the Disruption. That has been one of the greatest blessings to the Church of Christ and to the world, and so, I am persuaded, will the present movement ultimately be. Therefore, while regretting that I differ from many valued friends, I come to this platform with a glad and thankful heart, and with no other feelings towards the Church of Scotland than those of kindness. I sympathise with the motives of those who are defending her, and even with their difficulties ; but I do not share their fears ; and if in any case they look on us with opposition, we must as readily as possible bear it, and look for a better day which is sure to come. These agitations stir men's souls ; they break up the fallow ground ; they give to our politics a higher consecration ; and they lead the



Church of Christ, not into a wilderness, but into new paths, where the apparent wilderness becomes a fruitful field, with mines below better than of gold and silver. I shall try to speak as temperately as possible, looking to what has the semblance of argument in the innumerable speeches that one reads, and discounting what is due to panic, and expresses itself in the form of complaint or denunciation.'

His prominence in this controversy exposed him to incessant attack. Indeed, his utterances were more closely watched and more keenly criticised than those of any other man, except the distinguished leader of the Free Church. The reason for this was obvious. The advocacy of Disestablishment by one so genial in character, so courteous in demeanour, so fair in argument, and so closely identified with all that has been best in the Christianity of Scotland for forty years, was a solid fact with which Church Defenders required to reckon, and of which they were anxious to explain away the significance. Yet personal charges he ignored, and he studiously avoided retaliation. There were rumours of one occasion when he went to a meeting without a prepared speech, and let himself loose upon those who had attacked him, deriding them, tearing their sophistries to pieces, and showing that marvellous power of parry and thrust which some knew and all suspected to exist. But the occasion is perhaps a myth, and it is named only to illustrate the general feeling that he spoke with studied reserve, caution and impersonality. Careful examination of his speeches, as they were written and as they were reported, does not show a single case in which he named an opponent except with respect and deference, or spoke in a way unworthy of his own conviction that he was engaged in a great Christian enterprise.

One other noteworthy feature remains—his singular cautiousness, not only as regards persons, but as regards the subject itself. One of the pioneers of Scottish Voluntaryism, in paying a tribute to his services, has suggested that he

was too apt to make exceptions to the principles which he enounced. The criticism—although, we think, a mistaken one—was based upon fact. He was more anxious about the future than many Voluntaries are—more anxious so to state his principles that, when they won the day, as he reckoned upon their doing, they should not be misapplied. His aim was one which would not be gained by Disestablishment becoming an accepted item in a political programme. He looked forward to the time when it would be an accomplished fact, and when the relation of the nation to religion, and of the Churches to national life, would require readjustment ; and with this in full view he studied so to set the case before the Scottish people that Disestablishment should not be, even in appearance, a triumph of secularism. For example, in the very year of his first declaration for Disestablishment, the United Presbyterian Church instituted a standing Disestablishment Committee, which, being appointed for a specific purpose, pursued that purpose exclusively. In the course of 1873 the Committee issued a statement which seemed to ignore the decisions of the Synod with regard to the religious duties of the Civil Magistrate. Dr. Cairns supported, or rather originated, a motion, which was passed by the Supreme Court, declaring that the Committee's statement must not be regarded as superseding the Article of Agreement drawn up and sanctioned in the course of the Union negotiations. It was the same with regard to the retention of 'use and wont' in Public Schools. Year after year, when reports were submitted which might be taken to imply that the Bible should be excluded from National Education, he guarded himself and others against any such application. Even with regard to the small minority of the United Presbyterian Church which did not at first acquiesce in the Disestablishment policy, he vindicated its right to its position, on the ground that the acceptance of any theory as to the relations between Church

and State has never been a term of United Presbyterian communion. This deliberate moderation, far from being a source of weakness, has been the chief reason for the continued unity of the Church, and for a gradual decrease of the minority.

It has had its own effect, too, upon the other Scottish Churches. A Church which is purely militant tends to isolation, and loses its spiritual power over the nation at large. Such isolation and such loss of power are checked by those who make it apparent that, beyond the particular aim in view, there is a large horizon and a charitable appreciation of the very keenest antagonists. That this was the case with Dr. Cairns was felt even by those who were led by pardonable strategy to speak angrily of his avowals of goodwill. There could be no clearer illustration of his spirit than the last occasion when his voice was raised publicly on the subject. In 1890 he appeared before the University Commissioners to give evidence with regard to the abolition of Tests in the Faculty of Theology. While indicating his belief that the teaching of religion was outside the province of the Universities, he said that he 'was prepared to see a large approach to the teaching of what might be called theological subjects under the name of arts or science,' and that he would rather intrust such appointments to the wisdom and right feeling of the University Courts and the control of public opinion than to any selected sectarian board.

'If the Established Church would accept the position, and allow the Test to be abolished, those of us who are Nonconformists would guarantee that, if any Nonconformist were appointed, he would be prepared to work in harmony with the Established Church so long as it continues in possession of its present position in the Universities. . . . It would be very undesirable to raise a difficulty for the Established Church in addition to those which would necessarily arise in connection with Disestablishment. . . . I think they might risk the abolition of Tests without express provision, but

if they desired a veto on appointments, that might be admitted. I would like to see the Chairs opened at once altogether, but I would not like to create any trouble or difficulty to the Established Church, . . . which has a real interest in the question. It would be extremely hard if they were suddenly confronted with the difficulty of creating a new institution.'

It was by words like these, obviously springing from a thoughtful recognition of the Christian duties and the Christian character of his opponents, that he retained their respect even when he threw his great weight into a movement which they reckoned to be disastrous. On one of his latest absences from home, he welcomed a proposal from his host, Professor Campbell Fraser, that they should call at several neighbouring parish manses, and Professor Fraser tells how everywhere he was received, not as an antagonist, but as a genial and dignified champion of the common faith. It is to the honour of the Church of Scotland that, on the day following his death, one of the most consistent of Church defenders spoke of him publicly as 'the best loved of all Scottish ministers.'



## CHAPTER XXII

### FAREWELL TO BERWICK

1876

Reorganisation of Hall—Call to Edinburgh—Reluctance to leave Berwick—Acceptance of Call—Last year of ministry—Farewell sermon—Removal to Edinburgh—Presentations—Later relations to Berwick.

THE history of the United Presbyterian Church since the Union of 1847 had been one of steady growth. The distinction between Relief and Secession had completely disappeared, and with a gradual increase in numbers and in financial prosperity there had been a growing sense of corporate unity and of Christian obligation towards the country and the world. At many points a need was felt for development of organisation and administration corresponding to the position which the Church now held as one, if the smallest, of the three Scottish Churches. There was some delay from the hope that those needs might be faced jointly with the Free Church; but when the Union negotiations drew to a close, action was promptly and enthusiastically taken in several such directions. Of these movements none was more important than that which brought Dr. Cairns' Berwick ministry to a close, the reorganisation of the Theological Hall. Five short Terms, separated from one another by intervals of ten months, had proved, it was thought, insufficient both for systematic instruction in theology and for giving a practical knowledge of the duties of the pastorate. It was accordingly resolved, in 1875, that the Theological curriculum should consist of three sessions, each lasting from November till April, that the number of Pro-

fessors should be increased, and that the Professors should devote their whole time to professorial duties. The scheme was an expensive one, involving additional annual expenditure of more than £3000, besides large outlay upon new buildings ;<sup>1</sup> but the Church was unanimous, and faced the change without hesitation.

At that date there happened, through the death of Dr. M'Michael, to be only three Professors, and one of these, Dr. Harper, had already passed his days of full work. To the other two, Dr. Cairns and Dr. Eadie, it was supposed that the change could not but be agreeable, as they were men of learning, whose health had suffered from the strain of their twofold work. But the idea was fallacious. To both of them the work of the ministry, which had been the chief business of their lives, was so congenial that they were at first disposed to decline the Call. Dr. Eadie refused to be separated from his congregation, and ultimately concurred only partially in the new scheme. Indeed, he died before it was carried into effect. The reluctance of Dr. Cairns, although according to his wont it was not publicly expressed, was very great, and the struggle was keen. He loved the quiet and friendly air of Berwick. Every stone of it was dear to him. The gentle beauty of the border landscapes and the wildness of the North Sea coast refreshed him, soul and body, when he returned to them from public life. Publicity was unwelcome, almost unpleasant to him ; and if he had not rebelled when it was thrust upon him, he had found compensation in the fact that the main part of his life was spent in a homely place where he felt that he was among friends who knew him and loved him. Beyond these local attractions, he thoroughly enjoyed the duties of the pastorate. To preach to his own congregation, to visit them in their homes, to concern himself about their well-being, had been the chosen

<sup>1</sup> The handsome College Buildings in Castle Terrace, provided by voluntary subscription at a cost of £50,000, were opened in 1880.

work and the dearest privilege of his life. There was little compensation in the prospect of being free for literary work. The 'whole process of book-producing had for long been distasteful' to him. He was in his fifty-ninth year, and he knew that removal to Edinburgh would increase the duties of the platform without lessening those of the pulpit. Indeed, as far as personal advantage went, his only motive for leaving Berwick was his consciousness that at his age he could not hope to minister for many years to so large a congregation. It is not strange that he doubted if the call of duty was imperative.

The decision did not require to be made hastily. Although it was only in May 1875 that the Synod actually 'called' him to leave Berwick, he had for some months known what was coming; and when, in July of that year, a deputation appeared before his Session to intimate the Call, he had practically decided to accept it. It is a notable illustration of the reverence of his congregation for him, that they abstained, at his express request, from making any attempt to influence his decision. They knew that he loved his work among them and that he loved them; but they also knew that expressions of their love were needless, and would not alter the balance of his judgment.

'When Sir Peter Coats and I,' writes Dr. David MacEwan, 'went to Berwick as the Synod's deputies, we found him in a state of great anxiety. He seemed to shrink from taking a step that would give his congregation pain. Never can I forget the scene presented in the prolonged conference which we had with him and his Session. There he sat at the head of the table with downcast eyes and a countenance that betokened deep emotion. The elders were equally solemn and concerned. We were listened to in perfect silence; and for a time it seemed doubtful if we were to succeed in our mission. What particularly impressed us was the extraordinary deference and tender consideration that he seemed to give to every utterance of his elders. Not one man in a thousand would have acted in the circumstances with such intensely delicate regard to the feelings and opinions of others. The strong plea of the interests of the Church

as a whole prevailed; but the result was not attained without a hard struggle.'

Although a year would pass before he required to leave, he at once intimated to the congregation the grounds of his decision:—

' . . . I sincerely thank the congregation for their sympathy with me in circumstances so gravely affecting all the relations of my life, and for their prayers for divine light and guidance. . . .

'It would be in many respects a relief to me if I could decline this Call and resign my professorship. The labour is so severe, and the burden of responsibility so great, that if I could with a safe conscience confine myself to the work of the ministry, I should be thankful. I am far from saying that my labours in the Hall have not brought much enjoyment and reward, but they have involved incessant strain. The duties of such a congregation are enough for any one man; they are indeed very laborious also, but they have always been pleasant, and I should have been well contented to have had nothing more as the work of life. Since the recent Revival movement, they have been specially welcome, and though increased in weight, they have gained in attraction.

'I have therefore no motive to leave, and I could cheerfully have remained in the service of the congregation. I long and seriously considered whether this was not my duty; but I have become more and more convinced that in the present state of our denomination the claims of the Hall are irresistible. The number of students is not equal to what it has been, nor to the wants of the Church. A great and critical change is in progress, which many fear may reduce them still further. The whole of this central and vital interest of the Church is in a transition state. The experience of the older Professors seems called for along with the qualifications of younger men more new to the work. To leave the Hall in such a state of things, and to put away the call of the Church to continue to work in it to the utmost of my power, seems to me to be a step which could not be justified except by considerations equally grave on the other side, and my dear congregation will not ascribe it to any want of interest in them, and in their highest welfare, but to the constraint of what I judge the more urgent necessity, that I accept the call of the Synod.

'I humbly trust that, as God has been earnestly invoked for light, this decision, however painful in many respects to myself, is in



harmony with His will. Again I thank the congregation for many and precious tokens of their sympathy and interest, and I pray God to bless them, assured that He will make darkness light and crooked things straight, and overrule all things for His own glory.'

A year of steady work, broken only by the autumn session of the Hall, elapsed before he left. In some respects it was the most beautiful year of his whole ministry, full of life and energy, and softened by the pathos of the approaching end. There was little expression of sentiment or even of sorrow on the part of his congregation. All knew how this would grieve him, and they paid him the highest of all compliments by acquiescing in a decision which was so costly to them. On his part they noted an increased earnestness both in the pulpit and in their homes, and a fixed purpose to let no cloud hang over this last year. It was more in relation to those outside of his own congregation that the sense of coming loss became apparent. As he detached himself from one after another of the societies and agencies with which he had been connected for thirty years, the voice of the community found more or less adequate expression. It was recognised that the Border town and district were about to lose their chief personality—a man not only honoured by all, but reckoned as blameless before God. Yet amidst all expressions of regret and admiration he was silent about himself, with a silence which would have seemed to a stranger unnatural and forced, but which was known at Berwick to come from his unconsciousness and his complete occupation in the work that lay to his hand. The autumn was brightened by a short tour in Germany, and then saddened by the death of a dearly loved sister. But the winter found him as steadily at work as if there were no change in prospect.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM GRAHAM

Berwick, Jan. 8, 1876.

\*I have just finished Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret, and want only Evagrius and Philostorgius to finish the third volume of

Valesius. I was led to this reading by my last year's discussions of the Arian controversy. I now ought to know enough of it, though I must read Athanasius and his compeers. The shadows of recent affliction still linger, and those of coming change gather; but I have had hitherto a busy and not unhappy winter.

'I have greatly admired and enjoyed your *Life of Dr. Macfarlane*. I wish old Evagrius had given us a little more of your colour of the time. The only tolerable things in him are the contemporary documents, as of the Council of Chalcedon, which are as graphic as a newspaper report of a "shine" in the Synod. We are expecting a visit from one of Mr. Moody's successors, and there is still not a little Revival work and life, which I much enjoy.'

About this time many letters like the following brought their balm :—

'My dear and honoured Pastor,—I feel constrained to let you know what joy I have in my dear Redeemer. The foundation of my faith was laid by the words which you gave me to learn when I first attended your Bible Class. Your most gentle and instructive teaching was received by me like showers on thirsty ground. I return you my heart-felt gratitude for the untiring care and trouble you have spent on us young people. We do pray that God will bless you for your great work, although your leaving us is a very sore trial. . . .'

At last, on May 16, the Synod formally instructed the Presbytery of Berwick to loose him from his charge, and appointed him as Joint-Professor with Dr. Harper in the Chair of Systematic Theology and Apologetics.

TO DR. MACLAGAN

EDINBURGH, *May 19, 1876.*

'The change has come, and I now, with deep solemnity and sadness, write as no longer the minister of Wallace Green Church. There were some ups and downs in the Synod's procedure, but I was all along quite passive and willing to fall in with any arrangement. . . . I look up to God to carry me through and to guide and bless the congregation, with a constant sense of obligation for all your kindness and help through so many long years. . . . The Synod have left me Moderator of the Session till another be appointed.'

On June 18 he preached a farewell sermon to an enormous congregation on the text: 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.' Like all his great sermons, it was arranged on the traditional plan: 'We ought not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, first, because it is power of divine origin; secondly, because it is power of benignant character; thirdly, because it is power of unlimited range and efficacy.' But he excelled himself in the wealth of argument and appeal which he poured into it. Indeed, it was a gathering together of the various strains of thought and feeling which bound him to the Gospel, with the barest references to himself, and the obvious design of drawing the hearts of the hearers towards Christ. A few extracts will illustrate the spirit of his references to his own ministry.

'I do not need to set before you at length the evidences drawn from the miracles of Scripture or from its prophecies, from the heavenly strain of its doctrine and its morality, from the visible adaptation of its great provisions to man's necessities and wants. . . . I will only say that, having been called for the last few years to study this body of evidence more carefully than before, and to weigh what the most considerable of its opponents, ancient and modern, have advanced against it, my own conviction of the truth of the Christian Revelation has been at every point greatly strengthened. I have, however, an argument in many of those before me—an argument which I trust I do not want in myself—which is more decisive than all others, the argument from experience. I am speaking to those who have felt the power of the Gospel. . . . You know how mighty is its power to enlighten, to renovate, to emancipate, to spiritualise. I could not have led you back to God if it had not come from God. . . . Who can be ashamed of that which bears this stamp of divinity?

'I address many who have experienced Gospel deliverance—some from the grosser lusts of the flesh, others from those seductive vanities of the world and sins of the spirit which not less fatally war against the soul. Will you then be ashamed of your freedom and of that truth which has made you free? Will you be ashamed of your purity, your temperance, your truthfulness, your meekness, your patience, your spiritual-mindedness, which are the true ornaments of

your souls, or of that Gospel which has clothed you with them? Will you be ashamed of that which is the stamp of your celestial birth, and proves you to be sons and daughters of the Almighty? . . .

‘Show me the believer whom the Gospel has disappointed! Bring him from the palace or the hovel, from lettered Europe or benighted Ethiopia, from the midst of British tenderness and delicacy, or from beneath the grim shadow of Polynesian infanticide and cannibalism! Set him before me, an undeniable believer in the Gospel of Christ and yet the victim of an evil conscience, the slave of iniquity, the trembling thrall over whom death as before shakes his dreaded dart, show me a spectacle like this, and then I too will be ashamed of the Gospel, then I will give up all confidence in its power and resign myself to utter despair in a world whose last light has gone out in darkness. But till then I must glory in it; and my answer to the unbeliever will be in its own words: “What if you do not believe? Shall your unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid; yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.” . . .

‘For more than thirty years I have preached this Gospel among you, and I bless His name this day that to not a few it has by His grace proved the power of God unto salvation. To Him I ascribe all the praise; and I would rather on such an occasion remember defects and shortcomings than dwell even upon what He has wrought for us. The sadness of parting from people to whom I have been bound by such close and tender ties, from whom I have received every mark of respect, affection and encouragement, and in regard to whom I feel moved to say, “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning,” inclines me rather to self-examination and to serious fear lest any among you should have suffered through my failure to set forth and urge home this Gospel of salvation. If then any of you should be in this case, through my fault or your own, that you have not yet obeyed the Gospel of Christ, I address to you in Christ’s name one parting call that you may at length receive the truth.’

This spirit of detachment from what was local and personal upheld him to the last, though all around him were in tears.

TO MRS. SIME

BERWICK, *July 13, 1876.*

‘This is my flitting day, after nearly thirty-one years’ residence. Everything is packed, and I write upon the top of a dismantled



bookcase. The essentially painful thing to me is separation from my dear people; the mere local changes in comparison are as nothing. But the Christian principle out of which such ties arise will outlast them, in so far as they are broken, and sanctify any place of work, so that I am really happy and unmoved in the midst of the agitation, and my whole trust is in God and in Christ for time and for eternity. . . . I shall begin my studies in Edinburgh at once, as my lectures will be resumed there in November. What a terrible blow the death of Dr. Eadie has been to us! . . .'

## TO MISS CLARK

OLDCAMPUS, July 14, 1876.

' . . . I have passed through the agony of disembodiment or dislocation. Berwick is my home no more, as I left it yesterday after several days of chaos. I ought to be a wiser—I certainly am not a sadder man than I was thirty-one years ago, a generation-span which might well have sent me to a more distant terminus. But we are all immortal—it is a consoling though a time-worn truth—till our work is done. The kindness of my congregation could not have been exceeded.'

## TO DR. MACLAGAN

EDINBURGH, July 17, 1876.

'We have got wonderfully through the transition period, *exceptis excipiendis*. I begin my studies to-morrow. Yesterday I worshipped at Broughton Place and at Newington. I felt the change much and will feel it for long. . . .

' . . . I expect to get good work now, through early rising and the privacy which Edinburgh at this season enjoys. There is a grass plot behind the house with a fine view of Arthur's Seat in its lion-like length. From the library window I have a full view in the distance of North Berwick Law and the intervening bay. But the river and the German Ocean are a *hiatus valde deflendus*. However, I thank God and take courage.'

Anxious as he was to avoid formal expressions of thanks, the congregation could not allow him to slip away unnoticed, and an address was presented to him with a cheque, a salver and, what he valued perhaps more highly, a gift of

plate to his sister. He returned to Berwick at the beginning of August for the presentation, which was of a semi-public character, many outside the congregation having asked leave to take part in it. The cheque he handed back to the congregational Trustees for the institution of a Scholarship to assist students preparing for the ministry; and although he complied with their earnest request, that during his lifetime he would use the interest himself, his compliance was formal, for he returned it annually in the shape of a contribution to missions. In accepting the gifts he said:—

‘It is a very solemn thing to me to-night to recall the 6th of August 1845, when I was ordained in Golden Square Church by a Presbytery, most of whose members are numbered with the dead. Had I not been separated from you a few weeks ago, I should this evening have completed the thirty-first year of my ministry. I looked in this morning upon the old church with feelings of defect and shortcoming; but I bless God that I was ever ordained to the work of the Christian ministry, for it has been the joy of my life all through these years. I have much to reproach myself with; but I can stand here and say that by the help of God I have endeavoured simply and fully to set forth the Gospel of Christ, and He has made me everlastingly His debtor by the comfort and happiness He has given me in this work. I have striven to combine preaching with regular pastoral visitation, and I cannot too strongly avow my sense of the importance of this. I have visited every person in the congregation once a year during my whole ministry, and it has been a great privilege that I have been able to do so even during this last year. Oh what happiness have I found amidst old and young, in thus seeking them out, and entering into their joys and sorrows, and speaking to them of Christ and His love! I have been immeasurably overpaid, and if I had not these rich treasures of memory I should feel at this day unspeakably poorer, as a Christian man and as a Christian minister. . . . For myself, as my ministry here ends, I have to bless God’s name for any honesty of purpose in it, and for any desire to walk up to the standard of the apostle, “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.”

‘. . . I cannot expect that all should recognise the propriety of

the step I have taken, but I am grateful for your belief that the decision which has severed our long and happy connection has not been reached or carried out without a constraining sense of duty to the Head of the Church and to the interests of His cause. The way in which you have acted in this matter has laid me under an obligation, even stronger than existed before, to do all that I possibly can for your permanent welfare and your highest good. . . . If it is hard to speak for myself, I find it still harder to speak for my sister. Indeed in speaking for her I am still speaking for myself, since we cannot be separated. All through our joint working she has been my better half, and I do not see how I could have got on in my ministry without her. I therefore with all my heart thank those who have so crowned the past kindnesses in which we both have shared during all those happy years. . . .

‘When I leave this place to-morrow I shall turn my face to work as hard and laborious as any I have ever had, saddened not only by recent bereavement but by the thought that I shall never return from the Hall to be here engaged as I have been engaged. But I shall also leave, cheered by the memory of your great kindness, rejoicing in the prospect of future intercourse as frequent and as like the past as God may permit, trusting to the help of your prayers and, above all, looking for that guidance from above, to be with you as with me, that shall uphold us in what remains of our earthly work and warfare, and secure for us through grace a meeting in that better world where the lights and shadows of our personal and congregational history shall alike have melted away in the blessed presence of our God and Saviour for evermore.’

The hope he had expressed that the personal tie might not be broken was answered. For the rest of his life he was as it were the minister-supernumerary of the congregation, watching eagerly over its corporate movements as well as over the personal experiences of individuals. Every year, at the request of his successors, who were anxious to preserve the tie, he addressed a pastoral letter to the flock. When any special plan was initiated or any crisis occurred, his support was forthcoming. Usually when he returned to Berwick to preach, as he did very frequently, he closed the Sabbath services by conducting a service in the open air, standing on the steps of the Town Hall. The broad, antique street was

always densely crowded, and every window within hearing distance had its eager auditors, while poor castaways were seen peeping round the corners of lanes. When he uncovered his statuesque head, the multitude bent to catch the sound of the familiar voice, gradually weakening with age, until it broke out in the trumpet tones of warm appeal to the understanding and the heart. Then, as a thrill of pleasure and pride passed from man to man, one could see the extraordinary power over the whole community of the undeviating, unblemished simplicity, rectitude and self-denial of those thirty years. Even if he had done no work of any sort outside the Border country, had never been Professor, or Church leader, or Apostle of Union, it would have been much to have shown that in those latter days the strongest mind and the broadest sympathies, working in the traditional lines of a puritanic and orthodox ministry, can so reach and grasp and hold the love and reverence of men of every sort.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### PROFESSOR IN EDINBURGH

1876-1879

Home life—The new Hall—His lectures—Method with students—Kindly counsel—  
The true bishop—Lectures to Jews—Presbyterian Council—Norway and Sweden  
—Mr. Gladstone—M'All Mission—Experiences utilised—Election to Principal-  
ship.

NO. 10 SPENCE STREET, which was Dr. Cairns' home for the rest of his life, is a semi-detached villa in a short blind street running off the Dalkeith Road, nearly two miles from the centre of Edinburgh. It was chosen partly on account of its quietness, partly because it would involve a daily five miles' walk in going to and from the college, but perhaps chiefly because of its convenience for 'Brother William,' who in 1876 gave up very reluctantly the school-mastership at Oldcambus, which he had held for thirty-two years, and became an inmate of the household. Behind the house there was a small garden into which he could wheel his chair; and the lower part of the house was in other ways adapted to his needs. Often a roar of laughter rising from the little sanctum opening on the garden, where he cheerily pursued quiet literary labour and received his numerous friends, reached the library above and brought down 'Brother John' to share the merriment. The library was a large, well-lighted room, lined with shelves quite insufficient for their miscellaneous contents, for which in truth the owner was only partially responsible. He had naturally been presented by publishers and authors with books of every description, good and bad, and although many re-

mained uncut, he was too considerate to dismiss them. But the books of his own buying were exclusively of the first order, and about the time of his coming to Edinburgh they began to include all notable publications on Assyriology and Egyptology. Although it was not a library to impress a stray visitor except by its size, it was a valuable one, and unusually autobiographic, since, excepting presentation copies, it represented his actual reading. In this room, when not at the College or otherwise publicly engaged, he spent the whole day, the employment of every hour being recorded from day to day. This record was begun in his sixtieth year, probably from a wish to limit increasing interruptions to his studies. His times of recreation were the meal hours, but these were seldom prolonged. The mode of living was simplicity itself. Indeed he owed the fresh vigour of his health, with his singular power of bearing a continuous strain, to the fact that he maintained in a sedentary life the frugal habits of the Scottish peasantry.

‘His tastes at table,’ writes his brother, ‘were of the plainest sort and, for one with a healthy appetite and a large frame to support, markedly abstemious. At our eight o’clock breakfast he as a rule took nothing but coffee and bread, not always with butter. Dinner taken at two o’clock consisted of two courses, to which he would suffer an addition only under protest. At five there was tea, resembling breakfast, and he closed the day with a basin of porridge. When his engagements did not suit those hours, he would rarely allow the household arrangements to be changed, and, unless we were careful, would go without meals altogether, dissenting almost passionately from any alteration made to suit his convenience if he reckoned that it gave extra trouble. He rarely went out to social entertainments, yet was always pleased to welcome friends of any rank, eager to entertain strangers and particularly desirous that every mark of hospitality should be shown to them. When my personal friends were guests, he received them with un-failing cordiality, lingered with them at table, and left with a friendly apology for the claims of his work. Our three nephews, who in succession came to Edinburgh to study for the ministry, dined with us every Saturday, now and then bringing a student companion.

He gave up the afternoon to them, and showed the utmost freedom and glee in fighting all sorts of student battles with them.

‘At the time of his leaving Berwick, his strength had yielded to a severe attack of sciatica and the agitation of the change, and though ere long he regained vigour, he never recovered his rapid stride and swinging gait in walking. When he reached Edinburgh, he set himself with entire absorption to preparation for the extended course of lecturing which the new arrangement involved, and he used to speak of those four months as the longest spell of unbroken thinking and writing that he had ever enjoyed.’

The Hall, or College as it began to be called, was practically a new institution, and apart from his own departmental duties, he found great interest in helping to shape the course of study. He had at that time five colleagues. Principal Harper was associated with him in the Chair of Dogmatics and Apologetics; Dr. David Duff was Professor of Church History; Dr. Johnstone, of New Testament Literature; and Dr. Paterson, of Hebrew. Among these there flitted, with gracious and discerning touch, the Professor of Practical Training, Dr. John Ker, a man who combined the quickest perceptions with full and genial sympathies and the gift of bringing goodness to light. The Professors were united by ties of friendship and by mutual respect, and the College was then reckoned to be the best manned of the eight Theological schools in Scotland. Although Dr. Cairns was the most distinguished of the Professors, he had at first no more than a fair share of administrative duty, and was free to devote a reasonable amount of time to his own department. This is mentioned here, as explaining subsequent changes which seriously affected the later years of his life.

Leaving Dogmatics to Principal Harper, he gave himself to the history of Apologetics, though not neglecting theoretical statement. The desire for exhaustive study, which had marked him always, now found fuller scope than before. He traversed again with avidity the great

controversies of the Church Catholic, and reproduced them with reckless exuberance of detail. The writer has before him the manuscript of a continuous history of Arminianism, which contains in six lectures an amount of minute information such as an ordinary lecturer would not give in a score, and many lecturers would not think of giving at all. The Synod of Dort, for instance, is traced in its shifting movements with consummate skill, Mr. Motley's misapprehensions being laid bare one by one, and the partial triumph of the Orthodox party exhibited without a touch of exaggeration. From beginning to end of the Course, every new paragraph brings out some fresh point, and all the digressions return without fail to the central line of argument. It is not surprising if such lectures were only partially appreciated by students, three-fourths of whom did not know, when the lecture began, that there ever was a Synod of Dort or that Motley had written about theology. He sought for no assistance in rhetoric. His own pleasure in discovering new vindications of Christianity led him to reckon that such discoveries would be sufficiently attractive to his students. His manner in lecturing was not particularly effective. Having been accustomed for thirty years to speak to large audiences without notes before him, he did not rapidly accommodate himself to reading manuscript to twenty-five or thirty hearers in a small classroom. Even those who felt the essential power of such lectures, and who learned most from them, recognised that he was working under some constraint and misjudging the attainments of his auditors. The contrast between the noble teacher, ploughing his way gleefully and victoriously through abstruse argument imbedded in masses of Latin and Greek, and three or four rows of young men struggling vainly for a quarter of an hour 'to make an abstract' of what was itself an abstract, and then resigning themselves to a vague following of the cadences of the lecturer's voice, was only another illustration of that



habit of under-estimating his own work and over-estimating those among whom he worked, which we have found before to have been the chief intellectual defect of Dr. Cairns as a leader of men.

It was far otherwise with his lectures upon special topics, upon single systems or upon individual men. Even from a rhetorical point of view, these were grandeur itself. When he took a life like that of Origen or a doctrine like Justification by Faith, and by way of summary or of introduction gathered together leading points, emphasising their chief lessons, he was doing work for which his whole past life had been a schooling; and although his spectacled eyes were still bent over the manuscript, the ear of the most careless student was caught by the cogency of the argument and held as under a spell by the rapid, well-balanced array of proofs, until the big soul seemed to fill the farthest corner of the little room and carry every listener out into freer and purer air.

His designed method with the students personally was unwavering generosity and indulgence. It was designed, if also instinctive, and in no sense the result of blindness. Forward students did not know that he saw their forwardness, and idle students, supposing that he imagined them to be diligent, sometimes smiled at him for doing so. But no one who saw the quick, clear flash from under his thick eyebrows, no one who heard his voice when he must needs check conduct unworthy of men preparing for a sacred office, shared that delusion. Countless stories were current of his excessive simplicity and credulity—how in examining he would give full marks to three-fourths of the students, or treat an obvious blunder as if it were a mistaken opinion based upon great learning, or receive frivolous excuses with grave courtesy. But he was dealing with men between twenty-two and twenty-five years of age, whom he reckoned it right to regard as honest and industrious Christian gentle-

men, and it would be hard to prove that he was wrong in so reckoning. The opposite plan has been tried, and has failed, in theological seminaries. Shrewd, severe, critical professors, who have been quick in seeing faults and in exhibiting weakness on the pillory, who have given censure without restraint where censure was deserved, and been limited by strict justice in their appreciations, have not as a rule been successful in training candidates for the ministry; and if some of Dr. Cairns' pupils have said that they would have been better men had he spoken to them more severely, it may fairly be held that this judgment of theirs shows that they have been mistaken.

Indeed in his own conception of his office the teaching of theology was, if not subordinate to, inseparable from the direction of other lines of preparation for the work of the Church. He was better aware than most theological professors of the hardening and secularising influence of the systematic study of the doctrines and literature of religion, and he regarded actual participation in Christian work, even amidst lectures and examinations, as the best counteractive. In working out this idea he considered himself the assistant of Dr. John Ker; but Dr. Ker's health was very uncertain, and the burden fell to a large extent upon Dr. Cairns. Besides encouraging the students to engage regularly in Home-mission work during the session, Dr. Ker and he developed an admirable scheme for sending students during the summer vacation, which lasted for seven months, to act as missionaries or assistants under clergymen in different parts of the country. The scheme, which has become a recognised institution in the United Presbyterian Church, required at the outset a very great deal of care and labour, especially in selecting students suitable for different kinds of duty, and in examining their reports of work. The finance of the scheme, too, involved labour. All the details passed through Dr. Cairns' hands,

and while the sagacity which he showed in dealing with individual cases surprised those who regarded him as excessively simple, his affectionate and fatherly concern in the first experiences of his pupils created a tender reverence for him which had further bearings when they were ultimately settled in charges of their own. Few men have been so widely consulted by the younger clergy. Difficulties of all sorts—as to theology and as to practical duty, as to personal religion and as to dealing with office-bearers, spiritual difficulties, financial difficulties and even domestic difficulties—were laid before him with a frankness which is never shown except to those whose judgment is gentle and who are absolutely safe as confidants. Of course, unfair advantage was sometimes taken of his accessibility and generosity. Men would send him page after page of morbid self-analysis or of silly boastfulness. They would consult him about trifles and occupy his time by writing about affairs which were the proper concern of local lawyers or infirmary nurses. They would ask him for his judgment on some well-known book, in order that they might know if they ought to buy it. They would try to involve him in those petty local contentions from which the ministers of no denomination are exempt. Yet the actual waste of his time was limited. Plato has said that good men, though they seem to be easily imposed upon, have singular shrewdness in dealing with affairs, and another wise man has said that those who cast bread upon the waters find it after many days. In the Church there is more need, as there is more reward, for the influences of charity than for those of authority, more need for mercy than for judgment. In every part of Great Britain, in the Colonies and in mission-fields, there are men holding honourable places and doing honourable work owing to the gentle tolerance which Dr. Cairns showed them in student days when their intellectual or moral character was at stake.



Besides giving counsel to young ministers, he was always willing to help them, and the best help that he could render was to conduct a Sabbath's services. This he regarded as an essential part of his duty to the Church. During the session he confined his preaching to Edinburgh and the neighbourhood, often stipulating that there should be no public announcement, so that the strain of preaching to a crowd might be avoided. But from April till November, excepting a few weeks' complete holiday, he moved through the country from week to week on this office. Selection was required, for he was flooded by invitations. These were allowed to accumulate till the month of March, when he laid his plans for the summer, and deliberately picked out places where there were special difficulties or trials, or special need for spiritual stimulus. Ministers of wealthy city congregations could hardly, by the most urgent entreaty, secure his services, while he was ready at the call of any lonely pastor who was seeking to feed his little flock in the face of unfair opposition or rustic indifference. It is doubtful if any Episcopal visitation could bring more genuine and lasting helpfulness than he carried with him during those years, when he was still in the full vigour of his strength and the increasing power of his reputation. Many months before, his visit was rumoured throughout the parish. As the date approached, inquiries were made by members of adjacent congregations for 'a seat'; the elders and managers discussed how they could arrange benches in the passages; the precentor set the choir practising the best tunes; and it was announced that there would be no evening service in the other churches in the parish. But the manse was the centre of the excitement. The student son repeated legends of Dr. Cairns' great feats at college; the girls had their stories of the reasons why Dr. Cairns was not married; the minister smiled to himself when he saw that his wife was anxious in her preparations for the distinguished visitor,



and told her to be sure to take off her rings before she shook hands with him. When he arrived late on the Saturday, carrying a bag little larger than a lawyer's brief-bag, his broad boyish smile and his clasp of every hand, including the servants' and the infant's, set matters right at once. But he withdrew to privacy as soon as possible, and till far on in the night he was heard pacing his room, breaking out occasionally into a psalm and then resuming the 'committing' of his sermon. In the morning he was still under constraint, and was very brief when he led the household in family prayer, returning without delay to his preparation. Then came the great hour when a hush fell upon the crowded church, and he mounted the pulpit as one who bore the ark of the covenant, and laid hold upon the worshippers with a grasp that was not loosened until they were dismissed in the name of the great Shepherd of the sheep. It might be that some few smiles were seen when a familiar text was announced: 'The bright and the morning star,' or 'His enemies shall be clothed with shame,' or 'Behold, He is alive for evermore.' But they were smiles of pleased recognition. Plain people would boast how many times they had heard the same sermon from him, and would indeed be rather sorry if the sermon was a new one, for the strength lay not in novelty of argument nor in freshness of illustration, though these were not wanting, but in the strong man, great beyond dispute in mind and heart and body, identifying himself so absolutely, so unreservedly, so hopefully with the doctrines of salvation, and giving such lavish and convincing proof of the faith that was in him. Even in the hymn that followed the sermon, whether it was 'Jesus, lover of my soul' or 'Jesus, thy blood and righteousness,' or 'His name for ever shall endure,' he still pervaded the church, for a thousand voices could not drown the strong notes of honest praise which rose from the pulpit. When the evening

came, and the family gathered round the supper-table, he was as happy and as gleeful as a child, listening to every particular about the household, talking to the boys about their Greek and Latin, telling the mother about the church of her girlhood, giving the minister himself particulars about all his college friends, and then breaking off into a long description of some out-of-the-way corner of Europe with such fulness of detail and reality of impression, that the housemother would at last be forced to declare that the children must be sent to bed, and then host and guest sat over the fire talking of more personal affairs till the burden rolled from the back of the younger man as Greatheart bade him be of good cheer. Busy as he was, he could not leave by the first train in the morning, for he must pay his respects to the other ministers of the village and to the former tenants of the manse, and look out the nephew of some old Berwick lady, and have a few words with the servants, and ten minutes in the study to bring last night's talk to a close. When the train steamed out of the station, and he settled himself down to the study of the Koran, the minister went back slowly to his manse feeling that there was something more to live for than the praise of men.

In speaking of these things, however, we are to some extent anticipating. During the first two years of residence in Edinburgh, he kept the long vacations as free as possible for the writing of new lectures, and in winter found quiet and congenial work on Sabbaths in ministering to a new congregation which found its home within fifty yards of his own door; for his health was in a precarious state, not so much through public exertions as through the unrestrained ardour of his private studies.

The spring of 1877 brought with it new engagements which were full of interest to him. At the request of Bishop Claughton, he gave in London the first of a series of Lectures

designed to present Christianity persuasively to the Jews. At the beginning of the lecture—a powerful vindication of the originality of Jesus—he made an apology which gives some idea of the character of his casual reading:—

‘Although engrossment with other work has left me less time than I should otherwise have taken to consult authorities, I have for a number of years studied the Jewish controversy. I have carefully read, to the best of my ability, the Old Testament in the original, and such Jewish interpretations of it as are reported in the standard Christian commentaries, especially in regard to the Messiah. I have gone over the objections to Christianity put by Celsus into the mouth of his Jew, as met and replied to by Origen. I have studied fully the dialogue of Justin Martyr with Trypho, and also the long and interesting debates maintained by Eusebius in his *Gospel Preparation* and *Demonstration*, and of more modern literature, omitting much that is less formal, I have travelled through the *Amica Collatio* between the learned Orobio and Limborch, in which the argument on both sides is pretty well exhausted. In travel, also, and residence on the Continent, as well as at home, I have had no small discussion with non-Christian Jews and with Jews who had become Christians, and have learned something of the internal conflicts in the Jewish communion, and of the reactions of modern opinion upon the synagogue since the days of Spinoza. In ordinary circumstances, to mention these particulars would savour of egotism or of impertinence. But the Jew is entitled, when addressed in an argument, to have some guarantee for sympathy of spirit, earnestness of aim and general accuracy of representation.’

In April he was offered, and he accepted, the Cunningham Lectureship, instituted by the Free Church in memory of one of her foremost theologians. A new step was taken when that Church appointed a lecturer outside her own communion; and although the election did not come at a convenient time, he welcomed it not only as an indication of an ‘enlarged and generous spirit,’ but as a pledge of the Union which he still believed to be in the near future. The Lectures were not to be delivered till 1880; but the desire to prepare them carefully made him specially



anxious to bring his own college work to something like completeness.

Meanwhile theological controversies were rising in Scotland on every side. The special shape which these took in the United Presbyterian Church, and the part which Dr. Cairns played in them, will be described in a later chapter. On the movements in other Churches he kept a keen but silent watch. The Established Church, though diverted from theology by those adjustments of popular election which the Abolition of Patronage involved, had her own contests as to fidelity to creeds; and the Free Church was in a state of tension on questions of Old Testament criticism which Professor Robertson Smith had raised. The following letter illustrates his habitual desire to be just towards those from whom he differed:—

#### TO MISS CAIRNS

STAMFORDHAM, *May 31, 1877.*

‘. . . To-day I have read over all the Assembly debates in Professor Smith’s case with much interest. It is a very difficult case to handle; but I think that the Assembly have taken the right view. I have scarcely spoken to anybody about it, as I wanted in my position to avoid any utterance that might hinder his getting a fair trial. I still hope he may come out of the matter better; but it was not easy to allow him to teach. . . . I could unhesitatingly oppose his views; but the question is how far all of them ought to be proscribed by authority. A year’s delay and discussion will do good.’

In the summer, a different line of thought opened out in the arrangements for the first meeting of the Pan-Presbyterian Council, which was held in Edinburgh at the beginning of July. It was a movement which he regarded as full of promise, not so much from the hope of any definite ecclesiastical result as from the feeling that questions of creed and worship, and the problems of the day with regard to home and foreign missions, would be better solved by



the Presbyterian Churches in concert than by each acting separately. He had also a growing interest in the religious welfare of America and of the Colonies, and found an almost boyish pleasure in making the acquaintance of the leaders of religious thought across the seas. By them his intellectual strength and genuine goodwill were fully recognised from the outset of the proceedings, and from 1877 till 1890 he was set more and more in the forefront by those who managed the business of the Council.

When released from the public and private duties which this meeting involved, he made a few weeks' preaching tour in Inverness-shire, accompanied by some of the American members of the Council. The following letter is addressed to one of his students:—

10 SPENCE STREET, *Aug. 10, 1877.*

'I have been in Inverness since you were there, and saw some very curious places—among others Cawdor Castle, which tradition connects with the tragedy of Macbeth; but I do not find that Shakespeare gives any countenance to this, as he lays the scene of the murder in Inverness Castle, and Cawdor is on the Nairn. However, I had the pleasure, when I came home, of reading over *Macbeth*, which I had not done for a long time, and by a kind of affinity, and also through the wish to get ready for some more patristic work, I took to Euripides, and have this week gone through the *Medea* and the *Alkestis*, and the larger half of the *Iphigenia in Aulis*. One year in autumn, I made a holiday of reading all Euripides, and was sorry when he ended. He is the most pathetic of the dramatists, and in some things the most Christian, though I grant to K. O. Müller and others his decline from the severe dignity of Sophocles. Shakespeare, however, is far more terrible, and the absence of the bad religion and of the calamities coming perversely from the gods (*e.g.* the anger of Diana with Agamemnon) even where there is little beyond the general Christian basis, gives his pathos a far deeper hold. The *Alkestis*, on the other hand, is rather a good example of what paganism allowed, and Shakespeare wanted—the presence of the supernatural to help and deliver, where it is wished for and morally beautiful. Shakespeare could not make Christ or an angel act the part of Herakles in bringing back

Alkestis, though there are some very Christian things on the victory over death. These writers have all to me a great Apologetic value. We see what paganism was in its darkness—in man's worst necessities—a great deal better than from any general descriptions or even historical records of its working.

'I am going off to preach as a kind of "supply" for some weeks in Christiania—seeing, I hope, also some of the Norwegian scenery, though my visit is primarily work and secondarily play.

'I hope to see you back with a great deal of various German lore and other Continental *Errungenschaften* in your repertoires, and fresh for the studies which you will look to as the crown of all. Happy are we that we have them as the work of life—the spoil of all other books and explorations—the permanent amidst all changes—changing indeed with them, but only to make its unity more real and precious. . . .'

The above-mentioned visit to Norway was a semi-official one, made in consequence of an appeal to the United Presbyterian Church by two clergymen who had seceded from the State Church of Norway, a Church which is High Lutheran in creed and Episcopal in constitution, with rationalistic elements. The secession rested not on theoretical grounds, but upon practical evils arising from Episcopal enforcement of miscellaneous communion; and Dr. Cairns was deputed to make inquiries as to the religious character of the movement. Besides, he was invited to preach for six weeks in the English chaplaincy at Christiania, which happened to be vacant. It was the sort of mission in which he always delighted, opening up a new type of Christianity and bringing him into personal contact with Christian labourers in an unfamiliar field. His first business was to learn the Norsk language, and to this he set himself, when he embarked at Hull. Within a fortnight he ventured to speak in Norsk, indifferent, as his letters show, to the smiles which his blunders might provoke, and in a month could address public audiences without serious difficulty. His method of learning a language was that employed by most notable linguists, in which the

dictionary, the Bible and daily newspapers are more employed than the grammar or conversational exercises. At Christiania, he adapted himself readily to the English Prayer Book, only inserting an extempore prayer after the Collect for the day, and had much friendly intercourse with the English-speaking inhabitants of the town. Among the Norwegians he was delighted to discover a notable revival of personal religion in the State Church as well as among the secessionists, and into this he threw himself with great zeal, taking care to make plain to the bishop of the diocese that his errand was not that of a schismatic. In regard to the ecclesiastical contention he reserved his judgment, and seems never to have gone beyond taking communion with the secessionists and showing them, from the history of Scotland, that those who are led by conscience to leave a State Church need not be dismayed by administrative or financial difficulties. Making it his chief concern to see and to support the evangelical movement, and reckoning it to be genuine and hopeful, he was not prevented from taking part in the manifold enterprises of Pastor Storjohann and other clergymen of the Established Church, and at their request he addressed meetings of the students at the University, while at every spare hour he attended the theological lectures of the Professors. It was, however, in moving among the simple country people in fjords and valleys that he found his chief pleasure. Summoned on week-day evenings by the primitive church bells, they gathered round him in hundreds and sometimes in thousands, as he told them in broken Norsk about recent Revivals in Scotland, and pressed upon them the great verities of the Gospel. He enjoyed those meetings, and still more his numerous visits to cottage homes among the hills, and that 'incessant talking' with stray mountaineers which accompanied his delight in Norwegian scenery. The ecclesiastical results of his observations were embodied in an



official report, and he depicted their religious bearings in a series of articles which appeared in the *Sunday at Home*. A few extracts from letters to Mr. William Cairns will bring out his more personal interests and other matters which he, perhaps too jealously, excluded from those publications:—

PORSGRUND, *Aug. 27, 1877.*

‘Mr. Wettergreen, with whom I had come from Arendal, had telegraphed to the pastor here, and there was a crowded meeting. The impression of my plain narrative of our own Revival excited wonderful interest, and I got many a shake of the hand. Then we spent a delightful hour with the pastor, who had studied in Berlin a year before me, and with whom I had many topics in common. I have mastered Norwegian so as to enter into the singing, which is truly grand, the hymns being Luther’s. I shall sleep as soundly amidst an intense smell of pine as if I were a fairy in the heart of a Scotch fir.’

*Aug. 29, 1877.*

‘A lovely drive to-day through majestic mountains, with rushing streams by the roadside and bright water expanses coming ever and again into view. The sides of the road were covered with blaeberryes, and the postboy was enough of a child to linger with me and get some. He gave me parts of his history, and I found that he could read and write and had been confirmed. He was a smart little fellow and seemed serious, for he took well the few words I spoke to him; and when I put together one sentence, ‘Gud elsker os alsa skullen vi elske ham’ (God loves us, therefore we ought to love Him), he helped me to the last word in the tone of one who felt it. . . . I am persuaded that there is a real work of grace going on here, and I commend it to the prayers and sympathy of all at home, especially through Dr. Maclagan to the Berwick Bible-class, of which I have said a little in speaking to the young men. I had no idea that I should be in the midst of work like this; but I rejoice in it, and am very strong for all that is required. I wonder at the help and countenance I have received in all directions, and at the eagerness of the people here.’

*Sept. 1, 1877.*

‘Yesterday I walked to Frogner, the highest point of land near Christiania . . . and was lost in wonder and admiration at the view. The play of light and shade on the unbroken panorama was



incomparable. The sun was slowly coming down, and his rays were scattered over the immense expanse—here the most exquisite clearness and mirror-like distinctness, there coldness and gloom. Hills and mountains rose in successive ridges with their rocks and dark forests and smiling valleys and occasional lakes, as if the whole were one billowy sea with the charming vales in the trough of its waves, and the same immeasurable sense of distance as on the ocean. Eastwards was the far-off line of Swedish hills, while the space between was filled up with the stretch of the Christiania Fjord in its whole length and breadth, the glittering spires and red and white buildings of the town shading off into the green and smiling landscape on every side. The heights that I climbed yesterday seemed but nothing, and the fjord lay among them like a picture in its frame, glimmering in tender and delicate blue, and contrasting with the amber of the hills beneath the sun and the gloom of ridges far away in the north. I have hardly seen anything grander even in Switzerland.'

Sept. 7, 1877.

'Gjøvik is the highest latitude I have reached in this world, and I reached it in the pleasant company of a colonel in the Norwegian army, who made the sail very interesting by his intelligent conversation about Norwegian affairs. He reckons the *Bunder* system as a hindrance to civilisation, and thinks that there is a democratic movement growing which will supplant in the public service the classes which have done so much for the country. . . . Last night in a farmhouse, I discovered with great delight a Swedish translation of Sankey, and found much sympathy in my work from the farmer and his wife, who spoke with great affection of their own minister and his family as "bra' folk." . . . In the steamer I met with one of the bra' folk, a bright youth of twenty-five, who has charge of a parish on the waterside. We had much lively conversation, repeating Greek, Hebrew and Odes of Horace to one another. He gave me a very favourable idea of the younger ministers, and is likely to rise. . . . This morning I climbed Krog Kleven to see the sun rise, but found an obstinate mist. I waited, however, for hours, singing to myself and hunting for blaeberrries until, in a moment, clouds formed in the sky, and amidst pelting rain a rent was made in the mist with the suddenness of lightning. The Tyri-fjord, the remote mountains, and the lovely plains in picturesque confusion, appeared with such enchanting effect that I actually screamed with delight. This alternation was repeated at

least twice, and then the mist rolled completely back, leaving all in permanent beauty.'

CHRISTIANIA, *Sept.* 13, 1877.

'I feel now at home with the people and the language, and have to-day examined a large school in classics and modern subjects, besides getting an idea of the Norwegian school system. . . . The education is not unlike our own, only the idea of going from a parish school to the university is unknown, and hence their ministers do not rise from the working classes. . . . I have also been studying the working of the Gothenburg system under the kind guidance of the vice-consul. Some of the uses to which the surplus profits are appropriated are queer. In this year's accounts, besides roadmaking and hospitals, there is an entry of one thousand dollars for prayer-houses and two hundred dollars to help teetotallers, so that the gin-shop is made tributary to the cause of Abstinence, though whether this would propitiate Bailie Lewis or not I cannot tell. The vice-consul thinks that the system has tended to diminish drinking.'

CHRISTIANIA, *Sept.* 20, 1877.

'I have spent a long day hearing lectures at the University, and to-morrow I am to give one myself on recent theories of our Lord's life. . . . I have read over Genesis and Isaiah in Norsk, with some published sermons. I am still, however, too slow in taking up conversation. I have reason to be thankful for God's abounding mercies, and I hope some good has been done by my labours, however imperfect.'

Returning at the end of September by Sweden, he was greatly delighted with the picturesque freshness of Stockholm and by its memorials of Gustavus Adolphus, one of his favourite heroes, whose Battle-hymn he translated:—

'Fear not, O little flock, the foe  
That proudly boasts to lay thee low,  
Thy gathered strength o'erturning :  
Though legions vast should make thee quail,  
Though flesh and heart should faint and fail,  
To night succeeds the morning !

'Take heart again ; the war is God's ;  
He will maintain, 'gainst every odds,  
His quarrel single-handed :

Thou'lt see, by His own Gideon,  
His trusty, tried, and only Son,  
Thy cause and His defended !

'If God be God and truth His word,  
The gates of Hell shall know His sword,  
And all their powers be routed :  
God is with us, and we with God ;  
Let rebels feel His iron rod !  
Let victory be shouted !'

All such interests, however, gave way to glee when he gained access to the *Codex Aureus* of the Gospels in the Royal Library.

'Its illuminated pages are leaf about with those in ordinary white parchment. I could not at first read it easily, as the letters all run together ; but I gradually got into it and went over the whole superficially, seeking out important variants with care. My engrossment with this made me willingly forego all else except my wish to see something of the living Church and especially of the good work of the Methodists. . . .'

On his return to Edinburgh, he reported himself at once to Dr. Maclagan, whose concern for his health and for his work he was always anxious to satisfy :—

Oct. 4, 1877.

'I gave fourteen addresses to Norwegian audiences of various kinds, sometimes seeking to combat modern unbelief, but usually trying to give some help to the Revival movement. . . . I met Sankey's hymns everywhere. No recent fact in the history of the Church is more wonderful than the rapid diffusion of them through the whole world. May God bless them and His own Word more to us at home !'

At the close of 1877 he wrote to George Wilson's sister, with whom he always corresponded at Christmas time :—

10 SPENCE STREET, Dec. 28, 1877.

'I spent Christmas-day in Berwick, and preached in my old church, giving the rest of the day to visiting the sick and afflicted. They have not yet got a minister, and it was a great comfort to me to be there. . . .'

'I am not yet entirely reconciled to Edinburgh. I miss the

pastoral work, but I bow to the Higher Will which bade me lay it down. I feel, too, that I could not long have taken care of so large a congregation without feeling it a trial rather than a solace, and I would fain, in the words of the old hymn,

“ Joy to find in every station  
Something still to do or bear.”

‘I enter into this spirit very defectively ; but I do not put it away. I have been much pleased with the favourable notices of your husband’s books. . . . Wishing you every blessing through Him who has made this season His undying memorial, and has filled this world, as He will the next, with still more glorious monuments, and praying that His grace may be with all we love and value, I am,

Ever your Friend and Brother, etc.

Towards the close of the session he was much occupied with delicate Committee work, which the next chapter will explain.

TO REV. PROFESSOR GRAHAM

*May 3, 1878.*

‘I hope the Synod will enjoy peace and quietness. God has never failed us yet, and He will help us out of this sad embroglio, though not, I fear, with all our passengers. . . . To preach at Liverpool will be a pleasant break in the heavy work which lies before me. . . . I have had great rest in reading over the last six or seven books of Plato’s *De Legibus*, which often recalls Proverbs and the Pentateuch, without any need of Robertson Smith.’

The heavy work referred to was an undertaking to assist for a fortnight in Mr. M‘All’s mission in Paris. On the road to Paris he formed one of a deputation of Scottish ministers, who waited upon Mr. Gladstone to express their sympathy with him in his denunciation of the Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria.

LONDON, *May 23, 1878.*

‘We have just returned from breakfasting with Mr. Gladstone. The party included Professor Goldwin Smith, Dr. Calderwood, Dr. Walter Smith, Mr. Cullen, etc. . . . I had the pleasure of a



long talk with Mr. Gladstone. We talked of Samuel Johnson's estimate of Scotland, which Gladstone said was positively wicked. He spoke of Scott as having first fused England and Scotland. I said that this was all the more wonderful from the want of full religious sympathy. He hardly admitted this, and brought out the better element in *Old Mortality*. When the conversation turned to Wales, he said that the Welsh were the most moral in the empire, and that every judge wanted a North Wales circuit. I alluded to the influence of Methodism in Wales, Mr. Gladstone distinguishing very clearly all its different forms. On reference being made to Southey's contrast between Wesley and Voltaire, he rejoiced that the Bishop of Orleans had done one good thing in denouncing the Voltaire Centenary in the French Chamber, though he admitted that Voltaire had been right in fighting against intolerance. Much of the conversation was on the war feeling in London, and the humiliating adhesion of the upper and middle classes to it; but he contended that the majority of the working classes, even in London, were adverse. . . . I ventured to mention to him that thirty-four years ago I had seen his book on Church and State in the library of Vinet at Lausanne: "Ah, we have travelled a long way in forty years, sometimes for good and sometimes for evil." This remark he made with more feeling than almost any other. I ventured to express my interest in his Homeric study, and he went into a discussion as to how, without formal borrowing, there had been a kind of conduit between Phœnicia and Greece. This however, he held, came later, the Phœnicians, who were Canaanites, making the Greeks worse than in the days of Homer. . . . He was very frank and kind, and has great conversing power.'

PARIS, May 31, 1878.

'I have been very busy every day, preaching in the Scotch Church and addressing Mr. M'All's meetings. I have also spent several days in the National Library in researches about the French deists, and have been much concerned in reading the debates in the Assembly and in our Synod. The results are upon the whole in the line of my sympathies. I had a strong desire to hear Victor Hugo speak at the Voltaire Centenary, . . . and I have been reading about the celebrations. Hugo is as grand as ever, and one note of his speech against war is truly powerful; nor is there anything anti-Christian, but the parallel between Christ and Voltaire. Only, the whole pitch is too screaming, and the limitation of the great and civilising influences of last century to France is really ludicrous,

The enemies of the great poet, too, have been careful to remind the world, in squibs, that he has before now represented Voltaire, who is by this speech placed among the stars smiling on the amnesty of the extreme Republicans, as a monkey, an emissary of Satan, and a wicked kite striking down all the doves of purity and virtue in their heavenward flight. There is nothing so rare in this capital as the sober-minded consistency which springs from fixed principles and is supported by religion—such a character as that of good old Earl Russell, who is the least French of all our great statesmen.'

## TO DR. MACLAGAN

PARIS, *June 1, 1878.*

'I bless God with all my heart for Mr. Smith's acceptance of the call to Berwick, and pray that he may have a longer, a happier, and a more effectual ministry among you than it was my privilege to enjoy. . . .

'The work going on here under Mr. M'All in the lower quarters of Paris is remarkable. I have spoken at a meeting every night in English, with a word in French here and there. The fervour of the people is great, but generally there is less visible burden of anxiety than at our revival meetings, and there are no "after-meetings." About 8000 persons attend in twenty-two meetings every week. I have spoken also at the Oratoire, the Salle Evangélique, and the Congregational Chapel. Paris is full of English people, all eager to work, yet not jostling one another, and there is great activity among the French Protestants. The wranglings at home seem to me small in comparison of this work, though no one values more the stand for sound doctrine.'

PARIS, *June 3, 1878.*

'Yesterday I preached in the Scotch Church, and had the great pleasure of hearing Dr. W. B. Robertson in the evening. He is in wonderful vigour, and his sermon was remarkable. . . . He quite agrees with me about the Synod. He is the last man to give up the old position, and hopes that nothing has been done to injure it. He fears, more than I do, that an actual breach has been made in the faith of our younger ministers.'

The use which he made at home of those varied experiences was characteristic. Sometimes, in the Class-room, he would break off in the middle of a lecture to give a minute

and graphic description of some historical site, set off by homely pictures of its modern aspect. But such illustrations were introduced sparingly. On the other hand, he would often go unannounced to some noon-day prayer-meeting, attended by thirty or forty people, or to the gathering of a small congregation in a village town, and, choosing as his subject the state of religion and society in Francè, in Italy or in Germany, would pour out a detailed narrative full of spiritual sympathy, rich in gleams of political insight, and picturesque from the realism of its personal incidents. Rarely—too rarely many of his hearers thought—did those reminiscences appear in his sermons, which, as he went from town to town throughout the long summer, were in the main unchanged. In truth, although now and then he gathered himself together and wrote a special sermon, the period of sermon-writing began to draw to an end. Nor did he care to give a literary form to his impressions in travel. One has to search for these in dusty volumes of the ‘Reports and Proceedings’ of various Societies and Committees. He regarded his mission rather as one to be delivered by word of mouth to the living Church, and it gave him deep and unalloyed pleasure to convey to the humblest audience some cheering intelligence about the work of God in unknown lands. He seemed to feel that he was thus binding the Church together, and giving others something of that confidence in God and Christ which he himself possessed.

Indeed, whatever his inclinations might be, he had at this stage no leisure. With the close of 1878, a new burden fell upon him through the illness of the Principal of the College, Dr. Harper.

TO DR. MACLAGAN

*Dec. 30, 1878.*

‘I cannot make any engagement that will prevent me from being ready to help Dr. Harper. My own work is about enough for me, and when I have his in addition, the whole night, reaching some-

times far into the morning, is required for preparation. I do not feel comfortable if I am not ready to take his class at a moment's notice. . . . My call at present is rather to uphold your hands. . . . I have been attending the children's prayer-meetings on Saturdays with great pleasure.'

The death of Principal Harper, on April 13, 1879, was not only a sorrow but a serious loss to him. Dr. Harper was one of those clear-sighted, firm, yet loyal and generous men, to whom large, loving and lavish characters cling closely in religious affairs. Besides, Dr. Cairns was habitually thankful to have some one near him whom he could fairly ask to take the foremost place; and there was no doubt in any mind that thenceforward he must be the official head of the College. On the 8th of May he was elected with acclamation to the Principalship. The Rev. David Croom, in proposing him for the office, expressed the general feeling that they were all 'thankful that they had such a man among them to elect,' while his lifelong friend William Graham, in supporting the nomination, spoke of him, in words which were widely quoted afterwards, as 'a man of thought and labour and love and God, who had one defect which endeared him to them all,—that he was the only man who did not know what a rare and noble man he was.'



## CHAPTER XXIV

### CREEDS AND THEOLOGY

1877-1880

Theological change in Scotland—Modification of creeds—Position taken by United Presbyterian Church and by Dr. Cairns—Special character of movement—Overtures—Dr. Cairns' proposal adopted—Professor Orr's narrative—Declaratory Act—Deposition of Mr. Macrae—Preparation of Cunningham Lectures—Their character—Assyriology—Letters.

THE Presbyterianism of Scotland has greatly changed during the last thirty years. The change in ecclesiastical architecture catches the eye of the passing visitor, and various modifications of the puritanic methods of worship are not less conspicuous. But beneath what is outward, and to a large extent apart from it, a far more vital change has been in process. Even among those who still worship God in barn-like structures, and sing only the metrical Psalms to old-fashioned tunes, there has been a steady alteration in the perspective of doctrine, both as declared from the pulpit and as willingly accepted in the pew. The survivors of those who, thirty years ago, were reckoned as advanced and advancing theologians, are now as a rule regarded, with their own assent, as belonging to 'the old school'; while the men who were ordained during Dr. Cairns' professoriate, although not less evangelical in view, and more evangelistic in sympathy, present their message to the people in a new shape and in new relations. The exclusiveness of Presbyterian theology has practically vanished.

Yet the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger Catechism is an exclu-

sive one, concerning itself mainly with the position and the prospects of believers, and furnishing only a few loopholes from which furtive glances can be taken at the justice of God's providence and the breadth of His mercy in dealing with all His children. The change above indicated has thus been naturally accompanied by a complete alteration of feeling with regard to those documents. On the one hand, there has been a tendency, which has its parallel in the Church of England, to abandon the use of the Confession of Faith as a working test of the doctrines and practices of the Church, and to treat it as an 'historical document' indicative of the original basis of Protestantism. This tendency, while evident in many directions, has prevailed in the Established Church, in which the late Principal Tulloch was its most notable exponent. On the other hand, the need for facing the new situation has been widely acknowledged. Conscience has brought individuals into collision with the doctrines of the accepted creeds, and it has been reckoned wiser and more reasonable to define the liberty now claimed and conceded, than to leave it as a matter of unlimited privilege or individual exemption. Naturally this view has asserted itself among Nonconformists; for Churches which are under popular control must have a clear understanding with their members as to the doctrines which are taught, and they are at liberty to make needed changes without reference to Parliament. As a matter of fact, all the non-established Presbyterians of Great Britain have, during the last sixteen years, formally declared that, in various matters entering deeply into Christian life and thought, they are not bound by the Westminster teaching. In this process, which is certain to have far-reaching influence upon the future of Presbyterianism, the United Presbyterian Church not only was the first to act, but acted in a manner which has regulated the methods of the other Churches.

In the case of such movements, it is difficult to assign the

precise share of credit or of responsibility to individuals. The greatest statesman of this century, when his followers ascribed to him the countless political developments which had occurred during his lifetime, replied that only a very small and insignificant fraction could reasonably be attributed to him, and that concurrence in the action of the nation and of the Liberal party was all that he could claim. Such a disclaimer has a special meaning in regard to reforms in the Church. Apart from the merits of those who first advocate change, there is a general drift of conviction and feeling to which many men contribute, and for which no one is wholly responsible. Yet when a reform becomes manifestly necessary, and when a man of great influence and power acquiesces in the necessity, modifies and controls the reform, and presides over the transition,—when he so presides that there is no lasting strife or division, and that at the close, those over whom he has presided consider that he has been their mouthpiece rather than their leader—no sane observer will fail to acknowledge that there has been perhaps the highest indication of masterful statesmanship and individual strength. This undoubtedly was the position held by Dr. Cairns when, in the years 1877, 1878 and 1879, the Church defined its relations to the Confession of Faith.

The movement, although it was partly due to currents of thought which influenced all the Churches, had special causes in the United Presbyterian Church, which gave it a distinctive character. That Church has never been troubled by questions as to Inspiration, having been guided by a series of liberal commentators towards a tolerably free method of interpretation. On the other hand, she has drawn to herself an unusually large proportion of young men of a philosophic bent, and during the last generation this bent was emphasised by residence at German Universities and the study of German literature. The Church abounded with young ministers who, while uninformed as to the natural



sciences, and not greatly concerned with questions of history and of interpretation, were seeking to grasp central principles and to correlate their religious opinions with modern metaphysics. Thus it was in connection with the Divine Decrees, the Freedom of the Will, and the scope of the Atonement, that divergence from the theology of the sixteenth century first appeared.

There was another influence at work. For half a century the Church had been conspicuously active in foreign missions, and knowledge of the beliefs and practices of heathendom had been disseminated. Among the beneficial influences of foreign missions upon the faith of the Church, one of the most important, although it may sometimes be unobserved, is that they open the eyes to the vastness of the world, and, except in the crudest minds, undermine the belief that those who have never heard the Gospel are doomed to eternal punishment. This influence combined with an appreciation of the more scientific knowledge of non-Christian religions to create a rebellion against the dogmas of the Confession on the subject.

One other point at issue must be named. Although the chapter of the Confession which defines the province of the Civil Magistrate binds Church and State together by many crossing cords, United Presbyterians had for eighty years been satisfied with disclaiming 'compulsory or persecuting and intolerant principles.' The maturing of Disestablishment views had already, apart from theology, led one Disestablishment leader to propose that that chapter should be removed from the creed of the Church; and the wide-spread feeling that some change must be made in this special direction had prepared the Church for saying that the Confession was not as a whole immaculate.

When those causes were working in many minds, two young ministers, Mr. Fergus Ferguson and Mr. David Macrae, approached the Supreme Court in proper form with



a definite request that the Subordinate Standards, as the Westminster documents are technically termed, should be revised. Their points of view were distinct, and their methods were different. Mr. Ferguson's pleading was that those Standards, while defective in logic and in literary style, are inadequate in their treatment 'of God, the Universe and Man, Christ, the Church, and the Bible'—a sufficiently sweeping indictment. Mr. Macrae fixed upon a single dogma—everlasting punishment—and, with the skill of a popular lecturer and a practised journalist, endeavoured to show the inconsistency of that dogma with an honest belief in the merciful character of God. While both were men of blameless character, there were features in their methods which might have prejudiced the case against the one and in favour of the other; but personal considerations were not at this stage allowed to go beyond the subordinate Church Courts, and the Synod, when it met in May 1877, was inclined to consider the proposal in its broadest aspects. Yet there was no approach to unanimity. The largest Presbytery in the Church had been divided equally on the subject, and other Presbyteries had voted unanimously against Revision. Many of the older men regarded the movement as an attempt to overthrow evangelical doctrine, which ought to be stamped out firmly; and if they had found an adequate leader protracted strife would have resulted. But it was not only the young men of the Church who saw that a question had arisen which required to be faced. Three-fourths of Dr. Cairns' contemporaries, with whom he had worked in public matters for thirty years, were of that mind, and looked to him to lead them. They did not look in vain. Without discussing the matter with any one, he had quietly reached a conclusion in the lines of his own experience and his previously-avowed opinions. Thirty-one years before, he had paused at the door of the Church to examine the Confession of Faith, and his inter-

leaved copy was at hand to remind him how a young mind may resent its inconsistencies and cross divisions. In the interval he had again and again declared that it was essential that the creed of the Church should in the main correspond with its living faith; and it was constitutionally impossible for him to be biassed by his disapproval of the special methods in which a question which was in itself a reasonable one had been raised. Indeed, only two years before, he had drawn up, for the Presbyterian Church of England, a short Statement of the doctrine of the Presbyterian Churches, which contains proof that he recognised the need for adjusting the proportions in which Christian doctrine is stated in the Confession. Accordingly he drafted a motion to the following effect:—

‘In respect of the great importance of the question raised, the difficulty of any one section of the Presbyterian Church moving alone in a matter which affects the relations of all, and other matters requiring grave deliberation, the Synod appoints a Committee to consider the whole subject.’

The motion was intrusted to his veteran colleague, Principal Harper, and with a preamble condemning those who had moved in the matter, became the unanimous finding of the Court. In supporting it, Dr. Cairns asked for the calmest consideration of the special doctrines which had been impugned, and of their relation to the system of truth contained in the Confession.

‘I pass over as of minor moment complaints as to the style and logic of the Confession. When I inquire into the doctrinal complaints, I find it difficult to apprehend them. I cannot bring the charges of Mr. Ferguson under any systematic head, so as to say that he wishes to change in any direction known to existing nomenclature. His system is so much the product of individual thought that it requires greater discussion than has yet been given to it. . . . I know only two systems which in any serious way come in our day into collision with the Westminster Confession, and which, if we were to revise it radically, we should be likely to adopt. We are in

no danger from Romanism,<sup>1</sup> nor, I think, from Unitarianism. We are in no danger from the Legalism of former days, by whatever novelties of warmth and colour it may be distinguished from the Moderatism of last century. There remain only Arminianism and Universalism. As to the latter, I ask if we should exchange our Calvinism for the better by going over to this plausible scheme, which is finding adherents elsewhere, and presenting itself as a refuge from our severity. . . . However mysterious and awful the doctrine of future punishment as we have hitherto held it, we should, in breaking with it, cast away one of the mightiest instruments in dealing with the souls of men, and we should substitute an arbitrary conclusion for the revealed word of Him who knows, as we know it not, the harmony of the whole dark mystery of evil, in its entrance and continuance, with His own eternal love. I say this, because I believe that many outside our Church look for some move from us in this direction, and because I am persuaded that they will look in vain. . . . The other system that might be substituted is Arminianism—not the old Arminianism of men like Whitby, which found its natural death in Socinianism, but the evangelical Arminianism of our own times, which can unite with us in Christian work of all kinds, and which is so favourably represented by the Methodists. Far be it from me to speak one unkind or disparaging word of brethren whom I love so much, and who have helped to make our common Christianity what it is at this day throughout the earth. But I am not prepared to give up our Calvinism, even for the theology which, in the hands of Wesley and his successors, has made such conquests for Christ. I do not think that we should escape any material difficulty. The Methodists admit eternal foreknowledge; and no Theist, unless he be a doubtful one like J. S. Mill, will now hold, with the old Socinians, that God does not know what is coming to pass, and awaits, for example, with a sense of contingency the decisions of a Court like this. But you tell me of Reprobation! The word is not in the Confession, and you ought not to put it there. In what other sense does God reprobate sinners than that in which you reprobate annually a large part of the world by sending the Gospel to one country and passing by others? You have good reasons for doing so! May not God have good reasons, though we know them not—especially where

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Cairns once called public attention to the fact that during a period of one hundred and sixty years no minister of the United Presbyterian Church, nor of the Churches which compose it, has joined the Roman Catholic Church, or even been charged with ritualistic tendencies.



none have any claim, and where the idea of God being the author of evil is expressly excluded, as it is by the Confession? . . . Wesleyanism does not soften or exclude any essential difficulty; it "changes the place but keeps the pain." It is really Calvinistic in its doctrine of the Spirit, with His special call and the new birth. If you drive out predestination at one point, it comes in at another. God's people are necessarily distinguished by sovereign grace. If you get away from Calvin and Augustine, you cannot escape Paul, who shows his sense of special calling in the words, "By the grace of God I am what I am." . . . It is in our Lord's Intercessory Prayer, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." . . . This is the strength of Methodism as of Calvinism. The sense of grace bestowed upon the unworthy is the living pulse of all working and joyful Christianity.'

He proceeded to show that the Secession Church in the Atonement Controversy had already emphasised the universality of God's love in accordance with the only Œcumenical Council of Calvinism, the Synod of Dort:—

' . . . What Methodist can possibly preach a freer gospel than is preached in this Church? There have been ministers among us Calvinists, who have been mistaken for Morisonians. I daresay I have sometimes been so mistaken myself; but unless we give up predestination and the special covenant relations of the Atonement, which I for one am wholly unprepared to do, I do not see how we can come nearer our evangelical brethren who are not Calvinists. Yet I am willing that an attempt should be made to put our doctrines in as inoffensive and favourable a shape as possible. I shall rejoice in whatever improvement the wisdom of the Church can make. . . .

'Let me notice one solution which has been suggested, viz., that we should substitute for our elaborate Confession a brief compend containing only Articles essential to salvation. I do not at all see how this would work. . . . It would not be consistent, unless we laid everything open that was *not* essential to salvation. This we could not do with Church-government, which demands a place somewhere; nor could we, I think, abandon all the questions between Romanist and Protestant, between Arminian and Calvinist, so as to leave them open. How then could we adjust this briefer document, which would not in itself be sufficient, to our larger Confession, which is perhaps more than sufficient? Are we pre-



pared to face the making of a new Confession from top to bottom? These are examples of the difficulties which surround this question, and which, while not insuperable, must be more carefully considered, before we commit ourselves to Revision as a present duty and call of this Church.'

After pointing out the difficulty of breaking line with the other Presbyterian Churches at a time when the need for co-operation and union was imperative, he returned to indicate the character of the changes required:—

'I contend for true liberty and improvement where these can make good their claim; and I trust that the spirit of the reformers and martyrs of our country would inspire us to rise above ourselves, if in anything they should have been in error. But I have yet to learn this, in regard to the great essentials of saving truth, or in regard to that form of doctrine which the reformers with one consent adopted as to the relations of God's grace and man's responsibility. I do not place these on the same level. Luther and Calvin are greater as defenders of justification by faith than as expounders of predestination. But I am not ashamed to follow them in the one as in the other, and I do not want the Church which we love, in testifying with full sweep of earnestness for the one set of truths, to let go the other as of no authority or value. I am contented to be here on the side of Knox and Melville, of Henderson and Chalmers, of Hooker and Usher, of Howe and Pascal and Edwards. We do not need to be ashamed of a system which is identified with the Huguenots, with the Puritans, with the Port-Royalists; which has had so great a share in the deepest religious life of England and Wales, and has in our own Scotland provided in the Shorter Catechism, with its glorious starting-question as to "man's chief end"—the suggestion of Calvin—an influence richer than Scott, and deeper than Burns, to mould the inmost spirit of the population. If we speak of changing with the times, have we not America, which has developed into the greatest and most progressive of nations, and which yet, so far as its Presbyterianism is concerned, has for ninety years held by the same Confession and gone through the whole stress and conflict of the civil war in theology between the Old and the New School? . . . I would advance in this grave matter with caution. We may have too much doctrine, but we may also have too little. Many years ago I made a most dangerous voyage from Hamburg to Newcastle, and the danger rose from this, that the ship was too

light in the water. We need in these blasts to have some solid cargo. It is the doctrine, the doctrine of grace common to us with all evangelical Churches, that alone will float us. I am willing, if need be, to cast out the tackling of the ship, but I will not throw the wheat into the sea. God guard us from making shipwreck of anything that we ought to hold dear, and enable us to convey it not only to posterity but as our most precious treasure to the whole world!

It can easily be understood that such leadership secured the confidence of the more conservative minds, while it gave assurance that there would be fair consideration of proposals for reform. Of the Committee which was appointed, Drs. Harper and Cairns were made Joint-Conveners. The following notes as to the procedure of the Committee have been furnished by the Rev. Professor Orr:—

‘One looks back now with a kind of wonder on the anxiety, almost positive alarm, with which the movement was regarded. Many excellent men feared that to grant full and unfettered discussion of the various doctrines of the Confession would be to open the door to a flood of wild and heretical notions, by which the interests of vital truth would be imperilled; and there were not wanting, in the earlier stages of the proceedings, attempts to tie up discussion within the narrowest possible limits. The Committee, however, wisely judged it best to grant to every member the fullest liberty in the expression of his opinions, and the fears in question were ere long happily dissipated. The Committee included wide variety of view. There was a staunchly conservative phalanx of seniors, who proposed no change, and held the reins tightly when changes were proposed by others. A chief among these was the keen and logical Dr. Marshall, who, however, had his own battle to fight in seeking to secure the acceptance of more sharply defined propositions on the Voluntary Question than the Committee ultimately agreed to entertain. At the opposite pole was a smaller, and more or less radical section, generally in favour of a shortening and simplification of the Creed, or at all events of large modifications in its structure. Dr. James Brown, Dr. Leckie, Mr. (now Professor) Wardrop, Mr. Ferguson, and others, among whom I must include myself, belonged to this more active and aggressive party. The main body of the Committee, however, may probably be classed as of a mediating tendency, though naturally inclining sometimes to the conservative

sometimes to the liberal side. To this mediating or balancing party belonged pre-eminently the two men who in mental and spiritual stature overtopped all the rest—Dr. Cairns and Dr. John Ker; but it had many other ornaments, such as Dr. David Young, Professor Duff, Dr. Hutton and Professor Calderwood. One of the first steps was to request those who had objections to the Confession to state these in writing, with the modifications they would propose. The invidiousness which this method was expected to create was prevented, when the rash innovators were found to be Dr. Ker, Dr. Leckie and Dr. Davidson, with a few younger men. Then the heresies which had been so much dreaded proved not to be very formidable. Probably not one of them would be regarded in the light of the present-day thought of the Church as any heresy at all. It is characteristic of the change which has come over theological thought, that the questions which to-day are agitating the mind of the Churches were never brought into discussion. Even the Eschatological question, which had much to do with the earlier stages of the movement, created so little discussion that it was not thought worth while to insert any Article on the subject. The suggestions having been tabulated by our admirable secretary, Rev. James Buchanan, the unfortunate member who had made any objection was required to get on his feet and defend his position, the unmoved faces of the sterner fathers generally not affording him much encouragement. There was nevertheless much open and fearless speaking, and the result was, I believe, good for the Church.

‘Then came the question as to how the Committee should deal with the topics on which it was agreed that explanation was desirable—whether, as such men as Mr. Wardrop held, by the construction of a new Creed, or, as the majority came ultimately to think, by the framing of a Declaratory Statement, for which some precedent was given by past Acts of the Church (*e.g.* the Associate Presbytery’s Act of 1742 concerning the Doctrines of Grace). It was agreed that an attempt should be made to draft such a Statement. The successive drafts lie before me, and while it is easy to trace a gradual process of evolution, yet on the whole, and in its main lines, the very first draft blocked out the Statement which the Church has accepted. Battles were fought with varying fortunes over particular clauses, during most of which our great and good Joint-Convenor, Dr. Cairns, occupied the Chair, owing to Principal Harper’s advanced age and subsequent decease. It was little he said, but his weighty and impartial regulation of business, his complete knowledge of every point in debate, his helpful and conciliatory suggestions, not only



gave order and dignity to the proceedings, but infused a tone and spirit into them in the highest degree conducive to a successful issue. His humility was conspicuous. I can picture him yet, as he sat with bowed head listening to discussions, often prolonged and animated, to which he was more competent to contribute than any other present, with the air of a learner rather than that of a master; rarely interposing, and then invariably in the way of mediation and conciliation; reserving his aid for private conferences in sub-committees rather than bringing out his stores of knowledge and wisdom in the debate of the open council. The most characteristic proposal which I remember him making was on the very important question of a possible basis of a Church creed which would unite Calvinists and non-Calvinists without compromise of the essential views of either. He was not himself prepared to advise such a basis, but he pointed out, and repeated it in his speech to the Synod, that such a basis had been sought abroad with great approximation of success.<sup>1</sup>

In May 1878 the Committee presented a report to the Synod, recommending that no attempt should be made to alter the Confession of Faith, but that thenceforward candidates for the ministry and the eldership should be asked if they 'acknowledged the Confession as an exhibition of the sense in which they understood the Scriptures'; and this, in view of a Declaratory Statement on certain subjects in regard to which the teaching of the Confession of Faith is not adequate.<sup>1</sup> The subjects specified were: the love of God for all mankind, predestination, total depravity, the destiny of the heathen and of infants, the Headship of Christ, the obligation of Christians to maintain Christian ordinances by freewill offerings, and the literal interpretation of Scripture on points not entering into the substance of the faith. It is obvious that those topics cover a very wide extent of doctrine, touching on all that distinguishes the Confession of Faith from the other evangelical creeds of Christendom, except those which show Arminian leanings;

<sup>1</sup> The Statement is appended to this chapter in the form in which it was submitted in 1878.



and yet, with a few modifications in a conservative direction, the Synod accepted the Statement unanimously. This was largely due to the publication and circulation of a speech which Dr. Cairns delivered in support of the Committee's proposals—a laboriously careful and weighty speech traversing the whole ground. He did not regard the Statement as contradicting or cancelling the Confessional doctrine, but rather as 'checking and counterbalancing it, giving a counterpoise to what otherwise might be looked upon as too strong and extreme.'

'We propose nothing in the way of repeal or abrogation or recal of the Standards. We only propose what will explain them and free them from difficulty, and also put them in such a position as will grant liberty here and there which was not formally allowed, although generally believed to be acted upon. . . .

'Over large stretches of the Confession—such as those treating of the Holy Scriptures, Christ's mediatorship, justification, adoption, sanctification, saving faith, repentance unto life, the law of God, the Church, the sacraments—our labours have been comparatively light. . . . On these important points, there has been a ready acceptance of the Confession without any material suggestions.'

In this respect he expressed thankfulness that the Church had thus once again, after frank and careful examination, taken those doctrines to her heart. He did so with a solemnity, an air of responsibility and an obvious mastery of the points at issue which completely disarmed the opposition of those who had been afraid of change. On the other hand, he indicated more sympathy than he had expressed a year before, with the wish that the Presbyterian Churches, acting conjointly, were in a position to formulate shorter and simpler Standards; so that those who were still in favour of a more radical change felt that they were not being forced by intolerant bigotry to give up a conscientious position, but were rather accepting a different view of the immediate duties of the Church. The Statement, after being submitted to the subordinate Courts, was finally adopted in

1879 by the same Synod as elected Dr. Cairns to the Principalship<sup>1</sup>—an indirect proof of the general acquiescence in his conduct. But there was direct proof in the immediate and in the subsequent course of events. This first attempt in the history of Presbyterianism to review the relation of the Westminster Standards to the actual belief of the nineteenth century, was made and carried through without acrimony, party feeling, or schism, while the general outcome has been an increase of loyalty and unity. It has been as if the Church at large had caught something of the spirit of the last words which Dr. Cairns spoke on the subject, when in 1879 he moved the adoption of what is now known as the Declaratory Act:—

‘ . . . By this our work and labour we have laid no hindrance in the path of Church unity and union. Rather may we be found to have added to our Confession only to improve, to have touched only to restore to an older model! It is our humble hope and comfort that we have linked on other ages of our Scottish Christianity to those which have gone before, and supplied another confirmation of the great words which, as rolled out in the Hundredth Psalm over our vales and mountains, have lifted so many generations of worshippers above the sense of change and the stroke of death, to the very throne of the eternal God—

“For why? The Lord our God is good,  
His mercy is for ever sure ;  
His truth at all times firmly stood,  
And shall from age to age endure.”’

Although the general results were thus satisfactory, the movement had a painful side. The two clergymen who had moved first in the matter had gone far beyond pleading for Revision, and had laid down dogmatic statements which were reckoned as calling for investigation. Both of them were impeached for heresy. Of the one, Mr. Fergus Ferguson, it is not necessary to speak here, since Dr. Cairns was not in Scotland during the final proceedings in his case,

<sup>1</sup> It is significant that the two most active advocates of complete revision of the Confession were within twelve years elected to theological professorships.

which resulted in his resuming an honoured place among the ministers of the Church. The course and issue of the other case, that of Mr. David Macrae, were different. In May 1879 Mr. Macrae resumed a contention, which for several years he had maintained in Church Courts and elsewhere, that the Church was bound to disclaim the eschatological doctrine of the Confession, and in insisting upon this he made definite statements of his own view with regard to the destiny and the immortality of the soul which led the Supreme Court to call him to account. After keen and excited discussions, which awakened much interest throughout the country, the Synod ascertained that, apart from the fact that he denounced as immoral the doctrines which were generally accepted in the Church with regard to the Future State, he claimed the right to teach that the soul is not essentially immortal. There was great reluctance to proceed to extremities, and the case was remitted to a Committee, with Dr. Cairns as Convener; but after repeated meetings with Mr. Macrae, the Committee presented a report to the Synod, at a special session held on July 23-24, 1879, which led to his exclusion from the ministry of the Church. Dr. Cairns spoke only once, and briefly, but with his habitual gravity and weight. Setting aside the personal and incidental aspects of the case, he called attention to one undisputed point as crucial and final, that Mr. Macrae claimed freedom to hold and teach within the Church the theory of Conditional Immortality or that of Universal Restoration. Six months previously Dr. Cairns had formulated and published<sup>1</sup> his opinion that both of those theories disturb the equilibrium of Christian theology, and are incompatible with the doctrines of grace: and in the Synod he repeated that opinion.

‘In making this one of the issues before the Court, Mr. Macrae asks the Church to grant a liberty which would revolutionise its position on a great and solemn question entering into the substance

<sup>1</sup> *Catholic Presbyterian*, February 1879.



of faith, and I for one cannot assent to his request. . . . By granting his plea we should place those doctrines side by side with the teaching of the Confession, in the preaching of our ministers, in the working of our missions, and in all the work of the Church. Apart from the higher interests of truth, who can have listened to those discussions, and heard the solemn, earnest, pathetic language on the one side and on the other, without feeling that we should thereby open a door to constant strife and conflict? . . . I admit that Churches in which these views prevail are portions of the Church of Christ, if they hold nothing worse. I would not unchurch them, . . . but it is better, more in harmony with the history of our Scottish Presbyterianism, that, if we differ with regard to these matters, we should differ with peaceful separation, and not seek to cover our difference by a profession of agreement. . . . For these reasons I have acquiesced in the judgment of the Committee, and I earnestly pray that with whatever sadness we come to this conclusion, and with whatever respect and regret we part from Mr. Macrae, we may part in peace, and conserve the rights of truth and the highest interests of Christian unity and Christian charity.'

As was usual in theological debates, his judgment closed the case, and the Synod, by 288 votes to 29, 'declared Mr. Macrae no longer a minister of the Church.' It is noteworthy that five years later Dr. Cairns published<sup>1</sup> a careful examination of the passages of the Bible on which the theory of Conditional Immortality is usually founded, repeating the judgment passed during this controversy. 'While far from insensible to the moral difficulties connected with the serious and even awful view as to penalty without end, which I am constrained by fidelity to Scripture to hold, I cannot exclude this greatest mystery of Christianity by fair exegetical procedure from its teaching.'

Probably the mastery as well as the brevity of his public appearances during those important controversies was due to the remoteness and the intensity of the private studies with which he was at that time occupied, for a strong man is at his strongest when he does not employ all his strength,

<sup>1</sup> *Immortality: A Clerical Symposium*. Nisbet, 1885.



and daily familiarity with the history of great religious questions creates a just balance in pronouncing upon modern questions. At every spare hour during those months, he was employed in the preparation of his Cunningham Lectures. The actual writing of each of them did not occupy more than three or four days, and they were only six in number; but the hard reading and hard thinking which each involved were spread over as many weeks, and in some cases months. The idea of the Lectures was unique—to write, in the form of biographical history, an epitaph upon the Unbelief of the eighteenth century, to show how in England, France and Germany it had risen, flourished and declined in connection with different phases of thought and literature; to indicate the attitude towards Christianity of the leading sceptical writers of that century, their dependence upon one another, and their inconsistencies with one another; to rescue each in turn from the misrepresentations to which the scepticism and the dogmatism of the nineteenth century have subjected them, and to present a fair view of their place in religious history. It was a scheme which could be carried out only by the most laborious research, and except in the case of a man who was already unusually familiar with the literature of the subject, the labours of three or four years would have been totally inadequate. He determined to accept no judgment at second-hand, and in the case of authors with whose chief polemical works he was already familiar, to read their minor writings, recognising that these would give sidelights upon their religious attitude. The following extract from a letter to Mr. William Cairns will show his method of work:—

*August 30, 1879.*

‘For the last twenty-one days I have been occupied with the third lecture, into which I have compressed the whole history of English Deism, including twelve names. I have had to read works which I

never saw before, getting such as are not in our own Library out of the Advocates' and the New College. One or two I have had to take for granted, they are so rare; but on them I have rested nothing, and I hope to lay hands on them before giving the lecture.'

On one occasion, when engaged in writing on French unbelief, he ascertained that a rare edition of Voltaire was lying at Mr. Stillie's famous bookshop, hurried there at once, and returned in a cab with twenty volumes containing unfamiliar publications, which he read from beginning to end. His former researches in the French National Library were put to good purpose in the Appendices, where there also appeared traces of his correspondence with the custodians of the Dutch libraries. To the general reader the most interesting lectures have proved to be those in which, for purposes of comparison, he summarised the unbelief of the first four centuries, the seventeenth and the nineteenth. But the permanent worth of the book lies in the lectures which deal with its specific subject, and which, while abounding in details, are models of clear arrangement and careful, independent judgment. Next to their learning, their chief features are sobriety and fairness, and the entire absence of the denunciatory style which prevails among Apologists.

The Lectures, which were delivered in the spring of 1880, and published a year afterwards, were well received and favourably reviewed by all competent critics. He himself was more than satisfied with the reception of the volume, feeling that it was essentially a student's book and a professional piece of workmanship, and those who knew him best were thankful that he had given the reading public, although only in a volume of 300 pages, a more or less adequate idea of his resources and his strength, and had produced a book which men are bound to read who wish to know the subject with which it deals.

Indeed, the general hope cherished by those who were chiefly concerned with theology was that this publication

was the beginning of an epoch in his life, and that, although he was in his sixty-fourth year, his vigorous health and unflagging energy would enable him to convey his scholarly and philosophical resources to the next generation, by dealing as fairly and as thoroughly either with the unbelief of the nineteenth century or with recent problems regarding the origins of Christianity. But before the Lectures were well finished, he had made his way into an entirely different field of learning, apparently without the slightest idea that it was peculiar for a man of his years, with limited leisure for study, to change the line of his thought. From the close of 1879, his diaries show that every spare hour and day were given to Assyriology. He began this study, indeed, for professional reasons, thinking it right to show the students what Assyrian lore had contributed to Christian apologetics. But the subject fascinated him, and led him far beyond the limits which he had proposed to himself. Many a Saturday's diary contains a record like this: '11 A.M., Children's noon-day meeting; 7 P.M., Good Templars' meeting; rest of the day, Assyriology.' When in the spring of 1880 he sailed to America, the intervals of quiet which the Atlantic storms allowed were given to Assyriology.

TO DR. MACLAGAN

10 SPENCE STREET, *Dec.* 25, 1879.

'It was a disappointment that I could not come to Berwick, but my work presses. I have spent a great part of the day over Assyrian. Shalmanezzer and Assurbanipal do not take very kindly to Christmas associations, but they are about as Christian as a good deal in Milton's Christmas Hymn, the beauty of which is that it is so full of Paganism. May another Christmas help to carry the one saving Name among other savage tribes and roving barbarians, from connection with which, even in thought, such great masters of the world would no doubt have shrunk as far beneath them.'

TO M——

10 SPENCE STREET, *Dec.* 1879.

‘Please give me your judgment on the enclosed elegiacs for Principal Harper’s epitaph. It occurs to me that the fifth line might run thus, although as it stands it is very good :

Quem licet extremum post cursum, Christe, corones !

The only objection that strikes me is the succession of three words beginning with *c.*’

TO REV. PROFESSOR GRAHAM

10 SPENCE STREET, *April* 3, 1880.

‘What a demonstration of Providence the elections are, enough to rebuke any unbelief—I confess mine was great, with consequent depression, as if glory, drink, and the Church had for ever paralysed the better element of the nation. But England has done nobly, and redeemed herself almost before Scotland could strike. We see the unspeakable weakness of all evil only when the day comes for its overthrow. Old Conservatism was respectable, but this new article has fairly distanced contempt, save that you could not altogether despise where you had unlimited possibilities for fear.’

TO DR. MACLAGAN

10 SPENCE STREET, *April* 15, 1880.

‘I am only now finding time to answer letters, like yours, that do not bear on Hall work, or on the getting of places for students during the summer. Out of ninety-four students, we have thirty-four applying for mission-work, an increase on anything we have had before, and a cause to me of some anxiety. However, we have already disposed of fourteen or fifteen, and we may provide for half-a-dozen more. It has been a great help and blessing to the students.

‘I was glad to get the Cunningham Lectures over, but I cannot bring them out till I return from America. I hope to sail immediately after the Synod, and, God willing, to reach the American Assembly ere it rises, and the Canadian one in June. I mean to keep a good deal to Canada till the heat comes on, then to lie by and creep out again before the Council in September. . . . I wish I could come to Berwick before leaving, but I have a paper to write,



and some preaching engagements, with other studies. I am a little tired, but not broken down, considering how much I have had to do. I hope you will have a happy Communion.'

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## APPENDIX

### DECLARATORY STATEMENT SUBMITTED TO THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN SYNOD IN MAY 1878.

*The words in italics were modified before the Act was finally adopted.*

'Whereas the formula in which the Subordinate Standards of this Church are accepted requires assent to them as an exhibition of the sense in which the Scriptures are understood: Whereas these Standards, being of human composition, are necessarily imperfect, and the Church has already taken exception to their teaching on one important subject: And whereas there are other subjects in regard to which it has been found desirable to set forth more fully and clearly the view which the Synod takes of the teaching of Holy Scripture: Therefore, the Synod hereby declares as follows:—

1. 'That in regard to the doctrine of Redemption as taught in the Standards, and in consistency therewith, the love of God to all mankind, His gift of His Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and the free offer of salvation to men without distinction on the ground of Christ's perfect sacrifice, are matters which have been and continue to be regarded by this Church as vital in the system of gospel truth, and to which *she desires to give special prominence.*'
2. 'That the doctrine of the Divine Decrees, including the doctrine of Election to Eternal Life, is held in connection and harmony with the truth that "God *will have all men to be saved,*" and has provided a salvation sufficient for all, adapted to all, and offered to all with the grace of His Spirit in the gospel; and also with the responsibility of every man for his dealing with the free and unrestricted offer of eternal life.'
3. 'That the doctrine of Man's Total Depravity, and of his loss of "all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation," is not held as implying such a condition of man's nature as would affect his responsibility under the law of God and the gospel of Christ, or that he *may not experience the strivings and restraining influences of the Spirit of God, or that he cannot perform actions in any sense good; though such actions, as not springing from a renewed heart, are not spiritually good nor holy, and consequently not such as accompany salvation.*'

4. 'That while all who *are saved are saved* through the mediation of Christ and by the grace of His Holy Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how *He pleaseth*; and while the duty of sending the Gospel to the heathen who are sunk in a state of sin and misery, *and perishing for lack of knowledge*, is clear and imperative, the Church does not require the acceptance of her Standards in a sense which might imply that any who die in infancy are lost; *nor does she bind those who accept these Standards to any judgment concerning the final destiny of the heathen, which will be determined by the Righteous Judge according to the light they have possessed.*'
5. 'That *this Church* holds that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only King and Head of the Church, and "Head over all things to the Church, which is His body," and *firmly renews her protest against* all compulsory or persecuting and intolerant principles in religion, and declares, as hitherto, that she does not require approval of anything in her Standards that teaches, or may be supposed to teach, such principles.'
6. 'That Christ has laid it as a permanent and universal obligation upon His Church, at once to maintain her own ordinances and "to preach the gospel to every creature"; and has ordained that *the means of fulfilling this obligation are to be provided by the freewill-offerings of His faithful people.*'
7. 'That, in accordance with the practice hitherto observed in this Church, liberty of opinion is allowed on such points in the Standards, not entering into the substance of the faith, as the interpretation of the "six days" in the Mosaic account of the creation: the Church guarding against the abuse of this liberty to the injury of its unity and peace.'

## CHAPTER XXV

### VISIT TO AMERICA

1880

Purposes and plan of tour—Preaching—Friendliness and reticence—Madison—Scottish settlers—Pilgrim Fathers—Brainerd and Edwards—Rocky Mountains—Salt Lake City—Mormon worship—Nevada State—The Pacific—San Francisco—Yo Semite valley—Californian life—Abraham Lincoln—Negro revival meeting—Address at Princeton—Council at Philadelphia—His theological attitude—The Atonement—Results of tour.

IN earlier life Dr. Cairns had repeatedly been urged to visit America, by friends on both sides of the Atlantic. Those who directed the various catholic movements in which he was prominent felt that personal contact with him would add an important link to the religious sympathy between the two continents. American visitors to Scotland, and the ceaseless stream of Scottish emigrants, had conveyed to the United States and to Canada an impression of the position which he occupied at home. In addition to the ordinary American appreciation of everything large, which created interest in his personality, there was a distinct affinity in American theology to the encyclopædic and objective character of his writings,<sup>1</sup> leading to a general desire for closer acquaintance with him. But his own desire to see the fortunes of Christianity in the West, and to widen his knowledge of Christian civilisation, was the chief reason for the eagerness with which, in May 1880, he landed in New York for a five months' tour. He planned his movements

<sup>1</sup> The late President Porter of Yale, a typical American metaphysician, was wont to speak of Dr. Cairns' article on Kant as 'the clearest exposition and the most acute criticism of the Kantian philosophy in the English language.'

so as to include attendance at the General Assembly of the American Church at Madison in May, the Canadian Assembly at Montreal in June, and the Pan-Presbyterian Council at Philadelphia in September, giving the interval to a leisurely journey through the States. He preached every Sunday, usually twice or thrice. In New York he occupied the pulpit of Dr. John Hall for three weeks, and he fulfilled a few other definite engagements elsewhere. But, as a rule, he moved from place to place without pre-arrangement, and preached without any preliminary notice. On arriving at a town, he usually offered his services to the Presbyterian minister, and then, in his own words, reckoned himself free for any work which God might lay to his hands. Naturally, ministers were anxious to make the most of his visits; and if a Sunday's services could not be secured, special notice brought together a week-day congregation. There was strange variety in his audiences. At Quebec he preached to an aristocratic assemblage, including Prince Leopold, at Princeton to theological students, at Baltimore to negroes, at San Francisco to Chinamen, among the Nevada hills to somewhat reluctant tourists, and in Salt Lake City to ex-Mormonites. The impression made by his preaching was great and lasting. The Americans were not blind to his peculiarities of manner—one journalist wrote of him as 'throwing himself up and down like the walking-beam of an old-fashioned steam-engine,'—but the general judgment, determined by the 'propriety of his style,' the 'clearness of his arrangement,' the 'pungency of his argument,' and the 'fervency of his appeals,' ranked him high among pulpit orators. Dr. Ormiston of Ontario, a competent authority, says that 'he is remembered at New York as the most remarkable of the eloquent Scottish preachers who have visited the city.'

Preaching was in itself a pleasure to him, and it enhanced the interest of his travels by bringing him at every stage into direct contact with Christian people in different



walks of life. The informal character of his arrangements enabled him to see more of the normal religion of America than meets the eye of those who are attended by interviewers from platform to platform. He was also left free to fulfil one of the aims of his journey, the seeking out of old acquaintances and of the kinsfolk of his friends. Wherever he went, even in the smallest townships, there seemed to be some one in whom he had a personal concern. Those who waylaid him after services to claim some indirect acquaintance with him were amazed by the extraordinary reach of his memory and delighted by his unfailing cordiality. But he did not wait till people came to him. He reckoned it nothing to travel a hundred miles in order to cheer up an old college friend labouring in rough mission-work, or to take news from home to the son of one of his Berwick elders. The late Dr. Taylor of New York considered this to be the most distinctive and impressive feature of his tour. His hosts were amazed by his eagerness in hunting out people of humble rank, and noted how he brought sunshine into the homes of those whom the world had treated roughly.

This, however, deprives his letters of one element which readers may expect to find in them. They contain no general impressions, and little criticism of American habits. He travelled as among friends, and for friendly purposes, and his sense of honour prevented him from criticising those who admitted him without restraint to their personal confidence. Only during a brief experience of hotel life in the Far West does he seem to have felt free to express his shrewd judgments. For this guardedness he had an appropriate reward in the continuance to the end of his life of intimate friendships with Americans of every class. His letters, apart from their revelation of himself, are chiefly remarkable for their striking descriptions of natural scenery and their evidence of his dominant interest in the New World as a field for the Gospel. The descriptions of Mormon worship

and of negro Revivalism will have a special interest for those who value exact information regarding abnormal phases of religious life.

## JOURNAL

ATLANTIC, *May 8.*

'Much talk with cabin and steerage passengers, especially Norwegians and Germans. Norsk almost forgotten, but brushed it up. . . .'

*May 9.*

'Conducted service in saloon in morning and in steerage in evening. A great deal of religion among all the passengers, especially some Northumbrians from Flodden. Many reading Bible apart. Closed with hymn-singing.'

*May 11.*

'Atlantic in its grandeur, yet able to converse with German Jews, and got them to read the Hebrew Bible. Studied Assyrian.'

*May 14.*

'Assyrian inscriptions till 2 P.M.; then service with steerage passengers.'

*May 15.*

'Talked with many Germans—all discontented, and few with religion. Long reading of Hebrew with Hungarian. Studied Assyrian. Lectured on Nationality, with advices to emigrants. Great thankfulness to God.'

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

CHICAGO, *May 20.*

'I saw much of New York under Dr. Ormiston's guidance. Except the sea and sound and river, it wants setting, and hence is more beautiful, rich and endlessly smiling than overwhelmingly vast or stupendous.'

MADISON, *May 28.*

'This is a beautiful city, situated between two lakes and dominated by the Capitol, an immense building, with a white dome rising into the sunny sky and dwarfing the bright green trees and fine buildings that surround it. Under the shadow of the dome the General Assembly is meeting. With the other delegates, I appeared on Thursday before an audience of about 1200, being very cordially received by the Governor and others. Scots are everywhere, real Scots, and men with Scots blood who are all alive to Scotch sympathies. Nothing could be more cultured and refined, with

American rapidity and humour, than the look of the Assembly, which includes a good many Judges. I am sorry to find that they are behind us in the support of the ministry.'

AYR, NEAR PARIS, *June 3.*

'On Sabbath I preached at Willow Creek to an interesting Scotch colony which came in 1837 from Campbeltown, when Illinois was comparatively a wilderness. Most of them are descendants of Ayrshire Covenanters. On Tuesday I spoke to another little colony at Polo, a beautiful place, which has been under Prohibition for sixteen years, and has an empty jail. Before coming eastwards to Chicago, I visited many Scotch farmers.'

An extract from the local press will explain the character of such visits :—

'No one familiar with the important part which Scotch Presbyterians have borne in laying the foundations of our civil and religious liberty, a part for which they had been prepared by their own long struggle in Scotland for the rights of conscience, will fail to appreciate the suggestiveness of Dr. Cairns' visit. Most of those who greeted this distinguished representative of Scotland are lineal descendants of the Covenanters, whose banner is displayed in their church. Their ancestors were in 1666 driven by persecution from Ayrshire to Argyllshire, where they found protection from the Duke of Argyll, and there, at a later stage, they fought a legal battle for religious liberty in the famous Campbeltown Case. The members of the colony, whose home extends over eighteen miles of a rich agricultural district, welcomed Dr. Cairns, not only as a great preacher and a great Scotchman, but as one of the most distinguished advocates of religious liberty. His eloquent sermon, and an address which he gave on the social, moral, and religious condition of Scotland, were listened to with rapt attention, and at the close the whole congregation came forward to shake him warmly by the hand for Christ's sake and for the "auld countrie." It was affecting to see the tearful yet joyful enthusiasm with which the older people welcomed the honoured visitor from their native land.'

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

HAMBORO' WEST, *June 10.*

'At Toronto I just missed Daniel Wilson, but after preaching for Dr. King I discovered multitudes of friends, with whom I had an informal meeting on Monday, with prayer and singing. I was greatly refreshed and impressed with the beauty, and even grandeur,

of Toronto. Canada has made wonderful progress, and no one can place it behind those of the States which have had anything like similar difficulties.

‘There has been a fine spirit in the Assembly, and I have received great kindness in every quarter, the Union having worked admirably. Professor Bruce and I spoke on Monday, when there seemed to be great interest, as also last night, when Father Chiniquy addressed the Assembly. Montreal is evidently wealthy and highly Romish. Protestantism has massed its great churches on higher ranges than the vast Romish Cathedral and Church of the Jesuits, in token of coming victory. I am full of gratitude to God, who has watched over me so graciously and allowed me to preach so often.’

HALIFAX, *June 25.*

‘On the 17th Dr. Mathews took me from Quebec to explore the scene of Wolfe’s battle. I have seen enough of Canada and the States to learn the world-wide importance of his victory, making the destinies of America Anglo-Saxon and not French. The Presbyterian College here is a beautiful Academic retreat.’

NEW BRUNSWICK, *June 28.*

‘On the 26th I came through the Windsor and Annapolis valley, the scene of *Evangeline*. The last part of the valley is the loveliest thing I have seen in Canada. Everywhere here the Church is evidently a strong power among the people.’

NEW YORK, *July 5.*

‘. . . At Newbury I visited the tomb of Whitefield, which is as ghastly as William Graham’s description of it. At the harbour I saw the lighthouses which suggested to him, “Let the lower lights be burning,” and went thence by the Old Colony railroad to see all the Plymouth wonders. We drove up the wooden street which the Pilgrims built, the first street in America, to their Public Hall, as plain as a Seceder meeting-house, and saw the document of Sale, with their signatures. . . .’

Mr. William Burns, who acted as his escort, writes:—

‘When he stood upon the rock which was the stepping-stone of the Pilgrims from their boat to the shore, he became visibly affected, and when I told him that 50 out of the 102 died from want and exposure, and were buried secretly lest the Indians should find out that they were dying so fast, he looked over the harbour and spoke to himself with deep pathos of the sufferings of the noble band.’



## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

BOSTON, *July*.

' . . . On our way to Auburn Cemetery, Longfellow bowed to us from the lawn in front of his house, but I refused to invade him without an introduction. I finished the day by preaching on St. John xvii. 4 so as to present the other side in this capital of Unitarianism. . . . I have been seeing many friends from Cockburnspath and Berwick, but God has raised up friends to me wherever I needed them. . . . With all the heat, I have enjoyed nothing so much as preaching.'

NEW YORK, *July 15*.

' Northampton is almost too poetical for a theologian. I sought out the burying-ground where Brainerd and Jerusha Edwards, who nursed him on his deathbed, lie together. There was nothing of the pomp which makes the great American cemeteries, like Auburn, unlovely. Amidst a great array of Stoddards, Dwights, and Lymans I found the "through" about three feet high with this inscription: "Sacred to the memory of David Brainerd, a faithful and laborious missionary to the Stockbridge, Delaware, and Susquehannah tribes of Indians, who died in this town Oct. 10, 1747, aet. 32." I also visited the house, now occupied by Professor Whitney, where Edwards lived, and climbed into the hollow of one of two elm-trees which he is said to have planted. In these quiet and smiling homes, long before any manufactures had entered, occurred the scenes of Revival which filled Edwards' dwelling with anxious inquirers. Such is human nature, even that of Christians, that afterwards, through his people's change, he had to go further into the wilderness to Stockbridge, where his greatest works were written. From Northampton I also visited Holyoke Seminary, erected by a New England lady of noble character, who died in 1849, after having sent out many women to Christian labour. Over her grave there is this fine inscription: "I have no other fear in the world but that I may not know my whole duty, or may fail to do it." She is worthy to rank in this century with Edwards in the last.'

SALT LAKE CITY, *July 30*.

' The ride over the mountains has been by far the most wonderful part of my journey. The sensations of amazement, almost of horror and consternation, especially during the last 200 miles, are too vivid ever to be forgotten. . . . The bed of the Plate River had almost sunk to an eastern wady, and I had begun to fear that the Rocky Mountains were less than had been said—waste and dry

like the Sinaitic peninsula, but with no Horeb to relieve the howling and dismal wilderness—when a set of strange peaks appeared on the right, jagged, stunted, and by and by drawing near, liker unearthly shapes of clay than anything rocky, though with rich veins of ore; and then, on the left, a grand serrated ridge with snow on its summits, and at the topmost point granite blent with the limestone and sandstone. We swept over a wild and dull plateau, the mountains being now around us, and the scanty grass watered by muddy alkaline pools, here and there pastured by antelopes. Next morning the dreariness continued, and at Green River nature was absolutely naked, save here and there a stick of sage-brush,—the sand piled in all shapes with water-marks ploughed into it, and for the highest elevations, enormous shapeless litters of hardened matter, like the rakings of some gigantic street-cart, tumbled out and broken by its own gravitation into unsightly fissures before it hardened into ugly stone. Only the immensity of these stony accumulations, in all shapes and altitudes, but prevailing of a sow-backed amplitude, could raise them to sublimity, and the dreary windings of Muddy Creek, which flows among them, makes their nakedness more appalling. No fancy of any poet ever dreamt of such a scene—a wilderness of petrified mud piled up to the sky in every form of baked, rent, and twisted ugliness.

‘We had by this time got over the watershed, and from Green River, which rolled amidst these desolations to the Pacific, the rocks became more like ordinary formations of sand and limestone, though at times heaped on each other in mighty strata, while far away on the left rose the snow-capped Wahsatch Mountains, very sharp and jagged. We had climbed up as it were out of the horrible gutter of the universe, the fearful pit and miry clay. At Evanston we saw at the station two caged bears, a mountain lion and an eagle, as also, what much affected me, an Indian squaw sitting beside her husband and refusing to turn her red face towards those passengers who were not so favoured as I. A kindly American spoke to them, but they seemed lost in their own thoughts.

‘When we broke through the Wahsatch range, the scenery, which had gradually been becoming richer and more lifelike, rose to a grandeur the more amazing from the stupendous chaos that had preceded. There are two gorges, the Echo Cañon and the Weber Cañon, in which these features are concentrated. The Echo is flanked by terrific fortifications of sandstone, rising to the very heavens, and prolonged for miles often in fantastic shapes; but the Weber has two points perhaps grander, the Devil’s Slide, a gigantic

wall running half-way down the mountains, and the Devil's Gate, where the train rushes into a ravine which leaves room only for the river, but instantly sweeps round its rock angle and then emerges with it into the valley. From this line a branch diverges to the city of the Mormons, and as I came down in the evening the Salt Lake opened out on the right with high splintered peaks standing up over its placid surface. The sun was sinking, and the orange and violet reflections on the hills were like those of a home summer, only richer and vaster in effect. The Mormons cannot pollute the sky or the waters, and if they have improved the earth, as they have visibly done, it is another case of God's choosing the most unlikely instruments for His plans. . . . I shall offer to preach for the Presbyterian minister in this seat of over-belief and delusion, as I have in other places where Christ's Gospel is met by total negation.

SALT LAKE CITY, *July 31.*

'The Lake, which is twenty miles distant from this, has a promontory very like that of Sodom in the Dead Sea, only at the northern end. As a river Jordan runs out of the fresh-water lake of Tiberias into the Dead Sea, so a Jordan runs out of the Utah Lake into the Salt Lake, giving rare fertility to the plain—the most wonderful plain I ever saw. The city is almost hid in gardens, and the open streets have locust-trees and poplars on their sides, with running water beneath their shades. . . . The water of the Lake, in which I bathed, is quite hot, salter than the sea, and very sore upon the eyes and mouth. I went thrice over the head, and my hair when I returned was full of salt that combed out, but there was nothing else unpleasant. It was difficult to sink, and the feeling of exhilaration was great. . . . Brigham Young's tomb stands in the corner of a field, covered with an immense granite slab and guarded by an iron railing. A Mormon was watering the grass, and I got into argument with him. He disclaimed all wish to supersede Jesus, but I argued that a new prophet necessarily abated His claims. . . . At the corner of the street in which the palace stands, there is an Endowment House, where the Mormons bring their tithes, which are at the absolute disposal of the priesthood, and another building where their initiation rites are celebrated with oaths which even apostates fear to reveal. . . . I carefully explored the Tabernacle, an immense pile of wood with shingled roof like the long back of a turtle, supported on brick buttresses. There is also a New Tabernacle, in which men who are giving their services



in lieu of tithes were engaged in building an organ. Below the organ ran three benches for the President and his Councillors, for the twelve Apostles and for the Elders. . . . The roof and sides are frescoed with incidents in Mormon history, and at one end there is a tableau representing Moses showing Joseph the Tables in Mount Cumorah, where the gold plates were alleged to have been discovered. On the roof Joseph is represented as receiving the Aaronic priesthood from John the Baptist, and the Melchizedek priesthood from Peter, James, and John. The figures contrast very much with Roman Catholic art, the look of Joseph Smith in his several attitudes being simple almost to grotesqueness.

'The Presbyterian and Methodist ministers urged me to attend the Mormon service on Sabbath after preaching, in order that I might speak of it from observation, and although I had strong scruples, I am glad that I went. The roof is festooned with cord-like hangings, and a great fountain, with lions round it, plays near the centre. At the principal end there is a huge organ surrounded with something like living shrubbery and faced by an immense array of plain uncushioned pews and a gallery. There was a large choir, female on the left and male on the right, arranged in three rows before the organ. On a table, in the passage between the choir and the congregation, were silver baskets with bread, and a dozen of goblets with water, flanked by three flagons on each side, for the dispensation of the so-called Lord's Supper. Between the choir and the table sat some rustic-looking functionaries, while others stood behind the table ready to carry the bread and water round. After singing, which was confined to the choir, an old man with a reddish face and a very long grey beard came forward to a vacant desk near the topmost bench, while a murmur ran among those near me, "Orson Pratt"—the only surviving companion of Joseph Smith, who is supposed to be *par excellence* the theologian of the body. I think it was he who asked a blessing on the bread, which was then carried round and took a long time to distribute, every Mormon present, man, woman and child, being allowed to partake, and even to eat to any degree, if hungry. Before the distribution had well begun, Pratt gave out as his text Revelation xx., beginning with "I saw a great white throne," and going as far as "making all things new," in the next chapter. He spoke for nearly an hour and a half. Such an effusion no mortal that had not heard it could conceive. It was mostly cosmogony or prophecy, with a large infusion of Bible history up and down, and the prospects of the Earth and Mormons according to later revelations. He roundly



denied Creation, holding the elements of the universe to be as eternal as God, who only arranged them. He stuck pretty closely to the oldest theories, of all things being immortal till the transgression of our first parents, affirming beast, bird and fish, and even the earth itself (whatever that meant), to have been immortal before the Fall. He took the Flood in the oldest sense, and then, saying very little about Redemption, went on to the Second Advent, not diverging much from ordinary pre-millennial views, but with a great confusion of stages, destroying the enemies of Zion several times over, and preventing any possibility of chronology. At this stage he paused, and one of the elders invoked a blessing on the water, which continued to be carried round. Then he resumed, digressing for half an hour upon the question of the Heirship of the finally purified earth. This he rested entirely on Mormon history—the heirs of some personages after the tower of Babel, the Jews who had migrated to this country, and the Mormons who had come into the succession, being the only occupants of it for an everlasting possession. He appealed, in proof, to revelations made to Joseph Smith in his own hearing, and to other authorities of the same kind. The whole of this was incredibly low, and mixed with ludicrously misinterpreted Scripture, what Malachi says of the Lord coming to His Temple being applied to some future Mormon Temple like the present one, and all being presented in the strain of an appeal to take land-shares in some Emigration New Jerusalem Office. There was only one passage where there was any moral touch, in describing a world without evil; but the whole production as a scheme of thought was despicable, and gave me a new idea of the depth to which human faculties can descend. I could not conceive any reasonable hearer not being repelled, and I came away with the impression that a more clumsy imposture, though to some minds seductive, has not appeared in any generation.'

SAN FRANCISCO, *Aug. 5.*

'I am eager to learn if Mr. Gladstone, of whose illness I have heard by the way, is better. From the utmost corner of the land I have prayed for his recovery, and hope that God will not afflict us so sore as to take him from us. The last segment of my journey has been as remarkable as any part of it. I left Ogden in an open ear, wishing to talk more freely with the passengers, and about midnight went out to the platform and looked up to the exquisite clearness and beauty of the stars, with the desolate country around and the weird-looking ridges in the distance. The stars hung like lamps

out of the firmament, the Evening Star casting a shadow, and the Milky Way seeming quite detached and depending like a screen. I picked out our familiar constellations: the Bear without any iciness in his look, the Pleiades larger, etc. Thus astronomy began, in similar deserts, without the mountain background and with more water, when to tell the number of the stars was as attractive as it is with us to look on the sunny sea. In the morning we entered the Nevada State, to me the dreariest, nakedest, ruggedest in the Union, with more of "great and terrible wilderness" than any other, though not so barbaric and amorphous as about Green River, and with something classic, or at least Spanish, in the shapes. . . . This waste and howling scene continued, till even the sage-brush began to look scorched and the river sank out of sight. A great, classically cut, Sinai-like mountain rose from the breast of an extinct lake, distinct as in a stereoscope in every line of its beautifully rounded mass, but without one atom of foliage from top to bottom, and breaking out on one side into blood-like eruptions, the token of some mineral vein within, which makes these Nevada mountains desolate to the seeker of everything but ore. . . . From Truckee we mounted a gorge, with timber-clad peaks on our right and left, and ahead great snow-patched masses blocking all outlet. By a horse-shoe bend, more impressive than that over the Alleghanies, we turned right round, and came down under snow-sheds, which clung to the precipitous sides of the granite rock and to the thick pine-trees, as high as any in Norway. We seemed like crows about to descend on their topmost branches, till there came out far below the blue edge of the Donner Lake, where many years ago a party of explorers, beleaguered by Indians, perished or went mad. Then, winding round, and ever rising in endless sheds and tunnels, our eyes blessed with glimpses of the wild scenery through rifts in the sheds, we looked down on the lake from where Bierstedt has painted it. . . . In our rapid and dizzy flight, peaks, clouds, trees, rocks, precipices white as snow and hardly distinguishable from it amidst the pines that blended with both, whirled past in indescribable confusion, and only a momentary outlook revealed the tremendous depth of the valley, or opened out the line of summit we had left behind. It suggested the Platonic thought of the soul shut up in the body from the reality of things, and seeing only the shadows of them on a wall; but we were more fortunate, having here and there a gap in our prison, and perhaps carrying away a more vivid idea from the startling vision that ever and anon came in upon us. Slowly, very slowly, with all our speed, under summits

freaked with snow, and over ravines that sent up stupendous pines to meet us, we began to subside, but not before we had laid open to us the whole formation of the mountain range in one vast cañon; then, below, a great breastwork of broken mountain with its pines and descending hollows; then a lower breadth, and a lower in inextricable abysmal entanglement, with the American River flowing now to the Pacific and falling at last into the Sacramento. . . . We got ere long into the gold-mining range, and saw innumerable marks of digging on both sides, while the river ran in its deep bed, a dirty yellow, covered with froth and scum, that betrayed the use it had been put to. . . . The heathen Chinees began to appear in larger numbers, rice-fed at fifteen cents a day, and offering on signboards to keep the world clean. Passing over a high and savage ravine, we rapidly descended to the plain. . . . The corn here is only cut off by the ear, the straw being afterwards burned as it stands. The produce is put in sacks on the field and carried on trucks. A farmer expects 160 cents for 100 lbs., which is about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  bushel; and if he sends it in flour he calculates that its increased weight by dampness will pay the carriage to Liverpool. . . . This morning I am bright and strong, anxious to preach or do whatever other work God may send me. . . . I feel here brought into contact with all missions and Christian enterprise. I shall see the worship of the Chinese, and feel, as I look across the ocean, as if Japan too, with New Zealand and Australia and the South Sea Islands between, were at the door. Nothing is greater than the westward spread of Christianity. Everywhere, in the newest places, the Christian Church rears its head. My journey has enlarged my knowledge of the powers of evil, but also of good. Nature is more vast than with us, but so also is grace, and the earth will one day be the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.'

SAN FRANCISCO, *Aug. 6.*

' . . . I walked down to-day among the hills on the shore of the boundless Pacific. The sun sloping down without a cloud towards the waters gave an idea of majesty quite indescribable. I thought of all the Pagan nations that were connected with those seas, the noble men at work among them, and all that has to be done ere the kingdom of God reaches them. I thought also of the lines of Keats:

"Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."



SAN FRANCISCO, *Aug. 9.*

'Yesterday I preached twice and saw a good many Scotch people. . . . In the Californian churches there seemed to be less heart than in New York ; the choir is more wearily elaborate and "sole"; and the look of the people more listless, though I have met fine specimens of Christianity. It is easier to judge others than to improve one's-self, and I have found that my own wandering life is not altogether favourable to regularity in religious concerns. Everywhere one is struck with the number of Scotch who turn up. If they all were alive to the Chief End of Man, the world would soon be greatly better. This is my longest American experience of hotel life, and the impression is not favourable ; but I have not had very much training for hotel Sundays. I trust that I may soon return to more congenial scenes, though the evil around us is not always that which we have most to deplore. I have been thinking over all that has passed since my Ordination thirty-five years ago. . . . There was a great ceremony in one of the Episcopal churches here in blessing the standard of the Knights Templar, when a long and inflated harangue on the greatness of Masonry delighted a multitude of hearers. I grieve to say that the Templars of the Temperance Order are in but small force in this region. The progress in harking back from Spain has been great, but the place is still far from the level of the best Eastern cities.'

YO SEMITE VALLEY, *Aug. 14.*

'God has been very kind to me, but man is not meant to travel always, and the power of enjoyment gets over-taxed. This valley, which was discovered in 1851, deserves its fame. It is flanked by towering mountains, cleft for the most part right up in every variety of extraordinary summit. The rock is granite of flashing whiteness, rising into triangles, squares and domes. . . . The feature of the valley is two gigantic domes, the one split like the half of a helmet, the other running up in a mass of rock till an entire helmet crowns its mass. Yesterday I walked to the Mirror Lake on the one fork of the valley. . . . The pines at first by their reflection almost absorbed the view ; but when you look far enough down, in quite distinct perspective you see to almost infinite depths the outline of the rocks and of the sky. Thus the transient in the glass of time captivates many ; we need to look deep enough to catch the eternal. Thus also in religion the grandest effects are produced by simple reflection—a true display of the eternal and divine Christ ; the less



agitated the human mirror, the better. . . I keep tranquil in committing all interests to God. I have brought here with me a Spanish New Testament, and have read over the Gospel of Matthew, besides a good deal else. It is a very beautiful language, and much easier than I had expected, though I have still to get the pronunciation.'

SAN FRANCISCO, *Aug. 19.*

'Before leaving Yo Semite I climbed the Sentinel Dome, 7000 feet above the sea. . . . The effect of the scenery is altogether unlike the Alps. Here as one, valley and mountain articulate into one another with nothing but ossifications of rock. I thought that when I saw the height from above the idea of it would diminish; but it proved to be quite different, for the objects at the foot of the rock looked as if nothing earthly could reach them. The Pyramids or St. Peter's would be like the first of seven or eight stages. The very heights at the entrance of the valley, vast as they were, shrank. Nothing towered out but the opposing Dome and half-Dome, the latter sitting amidst the clear sky like a *spae-wife* who wanted a cloak to throw about her, and then the long-ridged shining mass of the peaks that ran into the great sierra above. It would have been a fine thing to have found below anything morally great that could have been matched with this spectacle. But my sense of the morally sublime has been much disappointed; and I have rarely spent a Sabbath with less sense of congeniality. There was almost no discourse possible in a quiet way with minds attuned to the day, and I only recovered the sense of greatness in the spiritual region by reading earnestly at the Gospels in Spanish, which in a new language came out in all their grandeur. I do not think I ever read so much of the Bible in one day; and though I would have preferred more society I had no reason to be other than grateful.'

SAN FRANCISCO, *Aug. 28.*

'My whole impressions of California become more grave with experience. Things are not good morally and spiritually; and hence I have rejoiced in taking part as a visitor, and in a small way, in various meetings and services. If God should bless evangelism here as elsewhere, it would be a great victory. Amidst a low enough state of things, there are grains of sense and seriousness with no reason to despair if means are only taken. I went to-day to the Jewish synagogue and could follow nearly the whole service, and I also saw much of China-Town and its opium-smoking, besides visiting the Female Chinese Mission, where the girls listened atten-

tively to a few words I spoke to them. There was also a Nestorian missionary, with whom I had talk in German. . . . Dr. Gibson has given me help in Spanish, lending me a grammar and a pronouncing dictionary, from which I have learned a great deal, so that I hope to bring an acquisition back from this once Spanish region.'

OMAHA, *Sept.* 4.

'With some fear and trembling, I resolved to come back in the open cars, not from economy, the saving being slight, but from the certainty that I should meet far more people, with greater variety, and I have been well rewarded, learning much of genuine American life. . . . Yesterday I had the good fortune to meet President Hayes and General Sherman, a somewhat time-scarred gentleman. I introduced myself to Mrs. Hayes as a Total Abstainer from Scotland, with which she was much pleased. You know the stand she has taken on that question.'

WASHINGTON, *Sept.* 13.

'At St. Louis I visited a class-meeting of coloured Methodists. It was lively but not unedifying, and reminded me of what early Christianity must have been under the Roman Empire. At Cincinnati I addressed the students of Lane Seminary and visited the home of Lyman Beecher and the house where his daughter wrote *Uncle Tom*. . . . Dr. C——, who has shown me all this city, knew Lincoln well, and thought him at bottom a Christian, and even a greater man than Washington, which I doubt, though he pointed to a statue of Washington under the Dome of the Capitol, in which he looks feeble, with a receding forehead, and none of the halo of majesty with which other likenesses surround him. He told me of Lincoln's humour, and quoted a new story as an example. Speaking to a gentleman of his circle, he said: "You must be an Episcopalian." "Why so?" "Because you swear so; and as Seward swears a good deal, and is an Episcopalian, I naturally thought you the same."'

NEW YORK, *Sept.* 16.

'Dr. Marshall's death has affected me deeply. How many campaigns we have fought together, and what a good loyal soldier he was—if at times a little wilful and rash—the bravest of the brave, and with qualities of a general as well as of a soldier. We have not another like him; but he had a heart for higher scenes, and death could not take him unawares. . . .

‘At Baltimore I saw an extraordinary scene at a Revival meeting of negro Methodists. . . . After the minister’s address, mourners were invited to a rail which ran round the pulpit. Between the pulpit and the rail, some thirty men were planted in three or four rows, and nearer the audience stood a row of women to succour the mourners, who lay elinging to the rail, some in a stupor of anxiety, others with tears and cries. The process of impression and deliverance was not an address, but prayer and singing mingled, the chorus behind the rail laying out the work at their own will, one drowning the others by loudness or diverging from prayer into singing. Ere long there was leaping and dancing, with ecstatic clapping of hands, till the whole platform was one moving, bounding, swaying, and sometimes revolving mass. The women in front responded in similar outbursts, and the excitement propagated itself to one here and there in the congregation, whose leaps and gestures were the same. There were seven or eight fits of this process, each lasting about a quarter of an hour, the temperature being always warmer, the groans deeper, and the boundings more passionate and exhausting. The singing was fine, with true negro melody, depth and power, but it consisted chiefly of refrains and repetitions, such as, “Yas, I shall know Him thar.” There was nothing indecorous in the dancing or jumping beyond its association with the subject, though, as the mourners seemed obdurate, it became more impetuous, as if to bear down all resistance. There was an entire absence of any consciousness of display, the movements being those of real sympathy and feeling, and some of the jumpers moving with wonderful gracefulness, almost as in a trance. I was repelled by this obnoxious exerescence on spiritual religion; yet at times I almost felt as if I could have joined in the excitement. They found me out in my corner and asked me to sit beside the minister, so that I could not leave till the close, which came when the singing, groaning, dancing chorus made a circuit of the church, as if they would enclose all in their net—an effect not altogether missed, for as they bore down on the other side and returned to their place the whole crowd was a wilder sea of agitation than before. After one long burst of prayer, song, clapping, dancing and ecstatic joy, the meeting, without any word of command or benediction, slowly and with a few parting leaps and shakings of hands melted away.

‘I describe this without exaggeration, not approving of it, and rather with regret. Yet it was better that these negroes, on their present level, should thus jump and shout in a demonstrative religion than neglect their souls altogether, and the effectual ex-



periences of the Gospel might realise themselves even in that strange company.

‘I gave the opening address at Union Seminary this afternoon, but I need not speak about it.’

PHILADELPHIA, *Sept. 23.*

‘On Saturday I went to Princeton, where Dr. Hodge had invited me to preach, and I received great kindness both from him and Dr. M‘Cosh. Princeton is a great place, both the College and the Seminary. Professors Mitchell and Flint are here. . . . The resources of Philadelphia are over-taxed by this vast meeting,<sup>1</sup> the attendance of the public being overwhelming. . . . The theological papers have been criticised with vigour and wholesome freedom. There has been a stronger tendency than even in Edinburgh to put the broader side, which is at any rate weak in numbers, into visible uninfluentiality. . . . I read my own paper on Tuesday, and am now free to go. On Sabbath I preached repeatedly, and have not been busier in any ten days than since I came to Philadelphia, so that the rest of the voyage will be welcome. I sail by the *Circassia* on Saturday.’

The address to the Union Seminary to which he refers so cursorily showed clearly the drift of his judgment upon the needs of America and upon American Presbyterianism. He chose as his subject the Nature, Necessity, Advantages and Defects of a Theological System, and referred with dexterous emphasis to the tendencies of theologians to be one-sided, to reckon their systems as exhaustive and final, and to rest contented with past achievements, concluding with an impressive picture of the wide career open to the Church in America, and of the necessity for a ministry not only devoted but thoroughly trained. The same temperate sagacity in suggestion was apparent in his attitude in the debates of the Council at Philadelphia. In regard to Inspiration, for instance, while taking his stand upon the infallibility of Scripture, he cautioned the Assembly against falling back upon that doctrine in controversy with unbelievers, and carefully distinguished between the genuineness or authenticity

<sup>1</sup> The Pan-Presbyterian Council.



of Scripture and its plenary or verbal inspiration. He also emphasised the distinction between the doctrine of Inspiration and the doctrine of the Canon, showing that he thought it important to assert the radical difference between general discussions as to Inspiration and discussions as to the title of separate books to the place in the Canon assigned to them by Protestants.

‘My effort as a theologian is to accord a legitimate field to criticism, and to eliminate and remove difficulties by harmonising them with the doctrine of Inspiration, rather than to bring the Bible into the midst of these difficulties without such an effort.’

Similarly, in speaking about the relation between science and religion he said :—

‘As one of the laity in science, I have been comforted beyond measure in this great continent to see it illuminated by the light of secular and theological schools. . . . In the midst of all conflicts and antagonisms, Christianity is holding its own ground, and going on conquering and to conquer. . . . When we hear of apparent scientific difficulties in the Bible which cannot easily be solved, let us continue to raise up, as a great army for God, men who, turned to Christ and Christianity, are living our religion, and I care not what difficulties you find in Genesis or anywhere else. That persistent fact is our stronghold.’

Those were extempore utterances ; but the same tone and temper marked a striking paper which he read on a subject specially assigned to him,—the Vicarious Sacrifice of Christ. The paper has biographical worth, not only from the occasion on which it was read, but as giving a clearer indication of his theological position in later years than his published writings furnish. After stating briefly the relation of the Atonement to the moral character and government of God, he proceeded to exhibit in brief outline its harmony with the facts of natural religion, the data of the Old Testament, the rest of the Christian system, and the results of Christian experience. The following extracts are significant :—

‘As to the facts of natural religion, there are two extremes into which we may fall. The one tendency, which in our day is in the ascendant, is to square Christianity with the other moral facts of human experience and the so-called religions of the world, and to make it, so to speak, the gravitating centre of human history, to which everything else converges. The other is to rest in the superiority of Christianity to all other systems, and to pile up divergence on divergence as an argument of divinity. The deepest witness to the Gospel lies in the union of these two processes—in the vindication for Christianity of what is truly human, while stamped with a purity and a greatness beyond unassisted reason. . . .

‘It is impossible to deny the strictly propitiatory character of the Old Testament sacrifices. . . . There is no meaning in types unless the blood of Christ were as truly that of an expiatory victim as “the blood of bulls and of goats”; and the parallel goes further than this general idea, so as to refute some plausible errors of our time: for as it was the animals offered that were the types of Christ, and not the offerers of the animals, and as the animals were not capable of self-sacrifice, it follows that the essence of Christ’s atonement does not lie in its being self-sacrifice, but in its being a satisfaction to justice made in the sinner’s room. . . .

‘There is one doctrine correlative to atonement which loses its place in the Christian system when atonement in the proper sense is denied—the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, or, what indeed is but a deeper and wider foundation of the same doctrine, the Trinity. . . . If the early creeds, or the *Te Deum*, or any other assertion of the Saviour’s deity be retained, how does this great and stupendous postulate comport with the exclusion of a true and proper satisfaction for sin? . . . The heralding of the free love of God or the acquisition of human sympathy is inadequate to explain divine incarnation. Nor can the effort of Maurice or Bushnell to make sacrifice an eternal law and necessity of the Divine nature be held to explain it; for that effort is a mere play, however interesting, of human thought, without basis in Scripture, and seems rather brought in by the exigency of theory to evade the evidence of Scripture as to another necessity.

‘With regard to Christian experience, not only in former ages but in our own country, it cannot be said that there is any tendency on a wide scale to disallow the hitherto received doctrine. . . . There no doubt are exceptional men, and there are exceptional parties in perhaps all Christian Churches, who indicate dissatisfaction with current phrases. But in most cases where Christianity is really

accepted as a salvation, these peculiarities may be charitably regarded as a recoil from exaggeration or an effort to retrieve some neglected side of truth. . . . The great centre of life is still the Cross, and the same banner floats above every successful Revival and every advance in the mission field. Where laxer tendencies exist, they are not associated with separation from the world nor with Christian enterprise; nor has an amended doctrine of the Atonement endeavoured to make way either by the plea of higher sanctification or of use in missionary warfare. An excellent test of the acceptance of Christian doctrine is its place in hymnology; and no one who has studied recent outbursts of sacred song, whether more classic or more popular, will have any difficulty in deciding that, in all the living centres of Protestant Christianity, the deepest keynote struck continues to be that of Paul Gerhardt's, "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden," and Cowper's "There is a fountain filled with blood." As examples in English literature only, may be cited: "Just as I am, without one plea"; "I lay my sins on Jesus"; "Free from the Law, O happy condition!" In all great gatherings of Christians, no utterances thrill like these; and it cannot be supposed there is any change of doctrine while the old strains reach every heart. I am therefore not so much moved as some by the alarms of theological defection. I dread much more the stifling influence of worldliness and religious torpor than the blasts of earnest debate; and I would therefore have the Churches here represented, while watching over orthodoxy by every right means, and discountenancing all visible error, still to hold on their path, in the confidence that their best work is to continue to preach Christ crucified, whether amidst calm or amidst the sounds of controversy, assured that this alone makes way, healing the wounded conscience and cleansing the saint from all remaining sin; and that the victory is to that Church, in the old world and in the new, in the homes of our ripest Christianity and in the darkest outfields of our missions, which shall most earnestly, unswervingly, devoutly renew that ancient confession: "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," and shall turn it most gratefully and jubilantly into song, the song alike of earth and heaven: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

'As this address,' says one hearer, 'moved from point to point, it arrested the attention and fascinated the minds of



all hearers, and before the close he had raised the entire audience to a lofty pitch of enthusiasm. When he ceased, silence for a few moments rested upon all, which was broken by a universal burst of applause.'

It was only natural that such an attitude should secure the confidence of theologians of different schools. The Council intrusted him with the guidance of a department of its work which promised at that time to be of the utmost consequence, and which, as next chapter will show, gave him a half-official connection with the American clergy, among whom he had already made numerous friends. But when he sailed for Scotland, at the close of the meetings, he carried with him something beyond such relationships. By his own acknowledgment, his tour had 'lifted him out of many ruts' and given him a permanent interest in the progress of America, with increased confidence in the power and vitality of the Gospel. To the end of his life he used to expatiate publicly and privately upon the testimony to the truth of Christianity afforded by its visible influence upon the social and moral life of the New World.

This chapter may fitly close with words written by Dr. Philip Schaff a few weeks before his own death :—

'Whenever Dr. Cairns appeared in America, he won the confidence of all as a Christian gentleman of loving and lovely character and broad sympathies, an able, learned and sound theologian, and an original and impressive speaker. While certainly one of the best men that Scotland has produced in these times, he was himself a bond of union between the various sections into which the Presbyterian Church is divided. I personally consider it one of the privileges of my life to have enjoyed the friendship of so good and great a man.'



## CHAPTER XXVI

### PROFESSOR AND PRINCIPAL

1880-1886

Share in Christian activities—Consensus Committee—Popular apologetics—Platform speaking—LL.D. degree—Browning and Lightfoot—Local interests—Church work—Hall lectures—Death of John Ker—Linguistic studies—Favourite books—Letters about Revivalism, Germany, Science and Religion, Denmark, Old Catholic Church, Disestablishment, etc.

TO describe Dr. Cairns' public life during the years that followed his visit to America would be to present a record of contemporary Protestant Christianity. The time for framing such a record has not yet come, and it must be enough to indicate the lines along which he moved.

As the recognised head of the United Presbyterian Church, he served as a matter of course on all important Church committees and represented the Church on all public occasions. Apart from this denominational prominence, he was one of three or four Scotchmen whose assistance was eagerly sought for in every unsectarian Christian enterprise whether religious or social. The countless number of Societies and Associations in the work of which he took part, shows that he tacitly accepted this position, and that he was indeed exceedingly reluctant to withhold support from any movement which met with his general approval. In this matter his idiosyncrasy was the conscientiousness with which he attended meetings and concerned himself in business procedure. Unwilling to hold a merely nominal place or to lend to any cause a sanction which might mislead others, he gave a vast amount of time to following details with which honorary office-bearers do not usually concern them-

selves. He was not as a rule a moving spirit, an organiser or a propagandist ; but he exercised a controlling and conciliatory influence, elevating and broadening every enterprise, and giving a guarantee of solidity and unbiassed earnestness to the Christian public.

Besides the general duties in which he was more or less officially involved, he had his own specialities. Any scheme that concerned itself with Continental, Transatlantic or Colonial Christianity could reckon upon his vigorous support, which derived peculiar worth from his increasing familiarity with the fortunes of the Christian Church abroad. Almost every year he visited some centre of Christian life on the Continent, either in response to personal invitation or as the representative of his own Church, of the Evangelical Alliance, or of the Presbyterian Alliance ; and he returned from each visit with a new set of friendly correspondents, who thereafter consulted him and kept him fully informed as to the movements of their Churches. When struggling Protestant Churches, without any denominational claim to support, sent deputies to enlist Scottish sympathy, it was a matter of course that they should call first upon Dr. Cairns. They habitually found him well acquainted with their special difficulties, and willing to exert himself personally in furthering the object of their visit.

Those relations took a definite shape in protracted and anxious work laid upon him by the Presbyterian Council in 1880. He was appointed Chairman of a Committee including the foremost Protestant theologians of both Continents,<sup>1</sup> which was instructed to consider the possibility of formulating a Consensus of the Creeds of the Reformed Churches. The British section of the committee was under the guidance of Dr. Marshall Lang and Professor Blaikie ; but it fell to Dr. Cairns as Chairman to correspond with American and Continental

<sup>1</sup> Professors Flint, Blaikie, Calderwood, Graham, Schaff, Hodge, Chambers, Morris, Caven, Monod, Van Oosterzee, Krafft, etc.

Churches. The project was an important one and to him specially attractive; but hindrances which were obvious from the first soon proved to be insuperable. Conservatives refused to sanction any doctrinal statement which fell short of the Westminster Standards, while liberals would not accept the Westminster dogmas as to Predestination and Plenary Inspiration. Through his judicious guidance, however, there was no friction in the Committee, and at the Belfast meeting of the Council in 1884 the proposal was set aside, or at least adjourned, without contention. His own leanings were made clear at that meeting, by the support which he gave to a request for admission to the Alliance presented by the Cumberland Presbyterians, a non-Calvinistic denomination; but in Committee he held the balance impartially and kept the complete confidence both of such champions of orthodoxy as Dr. Hodge, and of Van Oosterzee, Godet and Jean Monod, his chief Continental correspondents.

His love for presenting the catholic aspects of evangelical truth found various literary expressions during those years. At the request of the Religious Tract Society he wrote in his most cogent and comprehensive style a series of pamphlets on Christian Evidences, the effectiveness of which was shown by the stir which they created in the secularist press and by a rejoinder evoked from Mr. Bradlaugh.<sup>1</sup> In 1882 he contributed a short but exhaustive article on 'Infidelity' to the Schaff-Herzog Encyclopædia, and in the following year an article in German on *Schottland* to Herzog's *Realencyklopädie*. The latter was a phenomenal production, embodying statistics of the very smallest of the religious and semi-religious denominations in Scotland which he had procured by minute personal inquiries. The general aim of the article, as of his other publications of this

<sup>1</sup> Those pamphlets have been published since his death in a single volume by the Religious Tract Society, *Present Day Tracts*, 1893.

period, is to exhibit the solidity and strength of Christian truth and Christian work.

This also was the aim of a series of Apologetic lectures, organised by him and Dr. John Ker at the time of the International Exhibition in Edinburgh, and re-delivered in the other chief towns of Scotland. Such lectures, more perhaps than his sermons, showed his oratorical power. For a man in his sixty-eighth year to keep 4000 or 5000 sight-seers listening, with fixed attention, to a lengthy historical vindication of the doctrine of Justification by Faith was a remarkable feat, and it was more than remarkable as being achieved, like his early oratorical triumphs, without a touch of rhetoric and by sheer force of solid argument carefully arranged and eloquently expressed. In giving some of those lectures, he made an interesting experiment. Hitherto he had written out all sermons and lectures verbatim, and committed them to memory. He now tried the plan of thinking out the lines of his argument and trusting to extempore expression. He found, however, that while his hearers did not notice any difference, the strain upon his own strength and nerve was very much greater, and he reverted to his former habit. No doubt this preference was due to the great strength of his memory, which made the task of 'committing' an easy one. A single instance will serve to substantiate this. On one Saturday evening in 1882 he had to give a lecture on Disestablishment at Aberdeen. It had been a busy week, and he could not turn to the subject till late on Friday afternoon. His diary bears the following entries: 'Friday, 6 P.M.—3 A.M., wrote speech; Saturday, 10—3, railway to Aberdeen—read Assyrian; 4—5, committed speech; 5, dinner, etc.; 7, delivered speech.' The speech occupied more than an hour in delivery, and a comparison of his manuscript with the newspaper report shows that, in speaking, he did not deviate from what he had written except at half-a-dozen trifling points.



Probably, however, the chief mark of all his public appearances was what Principal Rainy has called his 'adequacy.' Having always made some preparation and measured the bearings of what he had to say upon the existing situation, he rarely disappointed an audience by failing to make a real contribution to the subject under discussion. People learned to reckon that he would present his own position fearlessly, frankly and after due consideration, and no one doubted that the position which he took on any critical subject was of consequence. If a smile often rose at his frequent caveats and almost gratuitous acknowledgments of what might be said on the other side, he never closed without a positive expression of the conclusion which he had reached. A short passage from a speech given at a Luther Commemoration meeting in 1883 will illustrate both his controversial candour and the rugged strength of his style.

'The topic assigned to me forces me to be in some sense the Jeremiah of this meeting and of this occasion, otherwise so exhilarating and joyful. But I cannot begin to complain without first rejoicing. I rejoice in my inmost heart at this grand series of meetings at home and abroad. I could have wished indeed that the tribute to Luther had been even greater, for who is not indebted to him, and has not some position given which comes from him? I could wish that every Member of Parliament had taken some part; for should we have had Parliament, as we have it, but for Luther?—every voter, for should we have any suffrages or self-government without him?—every journalist, for where would have been our "fourth estate," and would not our editors have stood exposed to a worse fire than that of their hottest criticism? I will go further, and say every ritualist, for what keeps ritualism from being driven inside Rome by force but the spirit of Luther, giving even the ritualist religious liberty to revile Luther and stay out of Rome?—and last of all, every Romanist, for has not Luther made even Popery better than it would have been without him, and given it the amount of sea-room it has in the world? I wonder at the recent utterance of a Jesuit in this city that "this man does not concern us in any degree," for he owes it to Luther that, in Edinburgh or in New York, he can say this which, as a Jesuit, he could

not say in those Romish parts of the Continent whence his Order has been expelled.'

The faculty of plain speech shown in the above passage was called for during this period in a controversy to which reference has been made in a previous chapter. Again and again, proposals were mooted for giving the Free and United Presbyterian Churches a share in the privileges and the funds of the State Church, and his attitude with regard to such proposals was eagerly watched. There was neither hesitation nor ambiguity in his utterances. He attended one Conference on the subject convened by the Earl of Aberdeen, but it was only to say that he personally, and the United Presbyterian Church so far as he understood its intentions, would not come under the wing of the State even for the sake of Union. Amidst the somewhat complicated discussions which arose, he maintained that position without wavering.

When, in April 1884, the Tercentenary of the University of Edinburgh was celebrated, he was selected, with general approval, as one of the three or four Scottish clergymen worthy to rank as Doctors of Laws with the distinguished strangers upon whom that Degree was conferred. The occasion brought social intercourse with men famous in letters and science, which he thoroughly enjoyed. He had much conversation with Robert Browning, and informed the poet that, though he was not very familiar with his poems, he highly appreciated those of Mrs. Browning, a frank avowal with which Browning was greatly pleased. In Professor Campbell Fraser's house he was repeatedly thrown into the society of Bishop Lightfoot. 'It was beautiful,' their host writes, 'to see the delight of the two great scholars—the purest and noblest men I ever knew—in one another's company.' But of such meetings Dr. Cairns said little even in the home circle, and wrote nothing to his friends. During those years he had more confidential intercourse with

eminent persons than falls to the lot of most men. Recollecting the quick and discriminating criticisms of his early manhood, one cannot but read wistfully the bare record of the fact that he 'had long talk with ——,' or 'was very intimate with ——.' But such reticence was a vital element of his matured character, arising partly from deliberate self-repression and partly from that chivalry which forbade him to repeat to others anything that could possibly be reckoned as confidential.

The private background of his life, although mainly occupied by the pursuits of a scholar, had room for local interests and local affairs. He found scope for his love of pastoral work in taking charge of small congregations—Rosehall, Arthur Street and Leith Walk in particular—and in sedulous attention to the widows and families of old acquaintances resident in Edinburgh. In the work of local evangelism his activity was untiring, and was not confined to seasons of special revival. No earnest Christian labourer working among the poor or the tempted appealed to him for help in vain. One good lady, who made it her business to read to the poorer class of tailors in their workshops, tells how she asked him to address a small gathering, and how willingly he went, in the busiest time of the session, to speak to twenty coatless, shoeless men just risen from 'the boards.' She and they were deeply touched by the friendly warmth of the address which he gave, not knowing that it was partly due to the memory of his brother who had once sat in such a place. But special incentive was not needed. At the bottom of his heart he was a man of the people.

He was as simple and as definite in showing his sympathies with the local work of Total Abstiners. His connection with the Berwick Good Templars had followed him to Edinburgh, and he joined a Lodge which held fortnightly meetings in the neighbourhood of the High Street. The ritual, insignia and grades of the Templars were



uncongenial to him, and by steadily refusing promotion in the ranks, he managed to keep free from prominence in ceremonies, although there were rumours among his students that he had been seen perambulating the streets with sash and apron. Yet he had a keen sense of duty to the 'Brethren,' most of whom were working men; and even when his health was uncertain the strongest home persuasions often failed to dissuade him from attendance at those meetings at which passwords were exchanged and contributions handed in. One 'Brother' tells how humbly he used to apologise because 'having a good many things to do, he could not attend every fortnight'!

Such extraneous engagements, however, were always subordinated to what he habitually called 'my own business,' viz., his special duty to the United Presbyterian Church, on which he put a liberal, indeed a lavish interpretation. He entered with Dr. John Ker into a plan by which they two should give a considerable part of every summer recess to the visitation of outlying and sparsely populated districts, in order to guide isolated congregations in local difficulties and give them living assurance of the goodwill of the Church. In carrying out his share of the plan, he visited several presbyteries in the extreme north and south of Scotland, addressing meetings or conferences on every day of his semi-episcopal tours. So great was the benefit of those visits that they soon led to an organised Scheme of Visitation, which was of considerable value, although it did not retain the freshness of individual enterprise.

Meantime he was steadily engaged in extending and developing his theological lectures, especially in Systematic Theology, a department which fell to him after Principal Harper's death. This was the subject towards which his mind and heart had in earlier years most inclined, the subject in which he had felt that, if he had leisure, he 'could make discoveries.' Yet his lectures in this department,



though embodying much research and careful thinking, were less impressive and probably less useful than those on Apologetics. He seemed to be hampered by his learning, which overweighted the lectures with references and quotations, and by his cautious impartiality, which led him into innumerable digressions and checked his constructive activity. Time, not having been taken by the forelock, had withdrawn some treasures, although it had brought instead others of greater value.

By far his best lectures were, as formerly, those which gave scope to his faculties of criticism and comprehension. These occurred whenever his syllabus led him to exhibit the theological position of some one doctrine or some one theologian; and he annually wrote a special lecture of this type for the public opening of the College, throwing himself into preparation for it with great zest for a month or six weeks. In these he displayed all his highest qualities, and in ordinary circumstances he would have prepared them for the press. But the circumstances of those years were not ordinary, and imposed upon him burdens which were not his own, so that the best theological products of the best period of his life have been lost.

Disease and death were very busy both among his kinsfolk and among his allies in Church affairs. Several dearly loved relatives died, and his sister, Mrs. Meiklejohn, was in 1885 brought to Edinburgh by the need for special treatment of a fatal illness. Thenceforward brotherly attention to her became one of his daily duties, and during holiday travels his letters were addressed to her. His student friends were passing away one by one. In 1878 John Nelson died; and in 1884 Lindsay Alexander, 'a true friend, ever linked with George Wilson's memory.' In July 1886 he preached the funeral sermon of William Robertson of Irvine, a man unlike him intellectually, but at one with him in firmness of faith, as a single passage in the sermon will show.

‘Such men have a special function in the teaching of Christianity. The mysteries which distress others are by them rather found to harmonise with its grandeur, and do not radically disturb their faith any more than the mists and shadows that gather as evening falls can level the rock on which the eagle’s nest is built. The loftiest and grandest parts of the Christian system, which to others bring difficulty, bring to such natures consolation and sweetest rest, and, when they come forward proclaiming the Gospel, there is in their ministry a grandeur and a reality which set upon it the very seal of heaven.’

But he had to bear a heavier blow, which struck not only at his affections but at his work. In 1882 the delicate physique of Dr. John Ker gave signs of yielding, and forced him again and again to suspend his work at the Hall. During his illnesses Dr. Cairns, with the help of Professor Calderwood, carried on the work of the Practical Training Chair, preparing special lectures, and acting as Dr. Ker’s substitute in other miscellaneous duties. Apart from this additional burden, he felt keenly and constantly those temporary withdrawals from his side of a colleague whose suggestive, sympathetic perceptions of men and things had contributed largely to the brightness and usefulness of the college. At last, on October 4, 1886, at a time when his health seemed to be restored, Dr. Ker died suddenly. It was an epoch in Dr. Cairns’ life, determining in many ways the course of the five years that remained to him. His letters of that date contain a brief but significant record of the way in which he found strength when his work was increased and its chief support withdrawn.

This event called forth what competent judges have reckoned to be the finest product of his pen. He had been at Newcastle on the day of the death, and, returning hurriedly, found a message from the *Scotsman* office asking for an obituary notice. Sitting down to his desk, he wrote, with scarcely a pause, a long article, partly biographical and partly critical, of which the editor said: ‘Few men have had a nobler panegyric, nobler in earnestness, in glowing

eloquence and in true appreciation.' It appeared anonymously; but no interested reader doubted its authorship, while those who knew the links of love that had bound the two men together wondered at its mastery, composure and completeness of form.

During those years his recreations consisted almost exclusively in the study of languages. Having gone so far with Assyriology as to be able to follow the rapid progress of that science, he 'took a fancy' to learn Arabic, as his diary shows, in the middle of an exciting meeting of the Synod in 1881. Within four weeks he recorded: 'read first page of Arabic.' Although he continued till he read the whole of the Koran, there was no special outcome of this study. He never referred to it publicly except in one Apologetic lecture, where he said: 'Judging from personal investigation, I reckon that recent attempts to emphasise the spiritual side of Mohammed's view of heaven have a very slight basis in facts.' Even in his own household, the extent of his studies was unknown. When tired and in need of refreshment, he would withdraw to his study early in the evening and pore over Arabic or Assyrian till two or three in the morning, appearing at breakfast-time as though he had had a long night's sleep. Between 1882 and 1886 he added Danish and Dutch to his repertory of modern languages, having in both cases a special purpose. In 1884, with a view to taking part in a conference of the Evangelical Alliance at Copenhagen, he betook himself when leaving Scotland to a Norsk-Danish dictionary, and made such rapid progress with the vocabulary that within two weeks he was able to furnish the *Times* reporter with an account of those of the discussions which were conducted in Danish. For studying Dutch he had two reasons—a desire to read Kuenen's works, and special interest in recent movements of the Doleerende Kerk of Holland. These studies were entirely recreative. On one Monday morning,



when he was the writer's guest, he was so thoroughly tired that he consented to take a forenoon's rest. Books of various sorts were offered him, but he asked, 'Have you anything Dutch? I am forgetting my Dutch.' A Dutch translation of Ebenezer Erskine's works being brought, he spent three 'supremely happy' hours over them, and emerged from his room a giant refreshed.

There was another and a deeper refreshment, which was still more private, though it bore more obvious fruits. Pencil jottings show that his close study of the Bible, both analytic and synthetic, was carefully maintained, and the communion with God in which this guided him became from year to year more apparent even to chance acquaintances, giving him power to bear trial, to accomplish work and to fight his various battles without fear or offence. In reply to an inquiry from Dr. Joseph Cook, the American apologist, as to the volumes which he had found most serviceable in certain specified departments of literature, he furnished a list which gives a key to the letters that follow:—

'*Christian Evidences*.—"Origen against Celsus;" Pascal's "Pensées;" Butler's "Analogy;" Coleridge's "Aids to Reflection;" Chalmers's "Evidences." *Church History*.—Eusebius' "Church History;" Athanasius; Autobiographical Works of Luther; Tyerman's "Life of Wesley;" M'Crie's "Life of John Knox;" Neander's "Church History." *Religious Biography*.—Augustine's "Confessions;" Orme's "Life of Baxter;" Edwards' "Life of Brainerd;" "Life of Henry Martyn;" Hanna's "Life of Chalmers." *Devotional Literature*.—"Pilgrim's Progress;" Rous's "Psalms;" Scottish Paraphrases; Wesleyan Hymns; German Hymns; Latin Hymns; Cowper's Works.'

TO REV. PROFESSOR GRAHAM<sup>1</sup>

10 SPENCE STREET, Jan. 4, 1881.

'You have come home like me to hard work, as a pioneer through the Old East—the home of Church History—to some

<sup>1</sup> Rev. William Graham was now Professor of Church History in the English Presbyterian College.



extent still an unexplored region. May your researches prosper with so many helps, so many libraries and, best of all, so many young minds and hearts to spur you on—if not best, only second to God's own teaching. It is a good arrangement that the hearts of the fathers are turned to the children and of the children to the fathers, and that, as they catch the perhaps fading light, we gain something of the rising, though both belong, where all things are right, to one luminary and one day.

'I begin to-morrow my Systematic Lectures on the Trinity and Incarnation, as well as Augustinianism. I come very near your field. But my prevailingly Apologetic studies have not allowed me to read it up fully, though I have gone over Athanasius and Augustine, chiefly on the Pelagian matters. I read again lately the *De Civitate*. Gibbon confesses that he knew only this and the *Confessions*. He might have added a good deal with advantage, even for the secular side of his own history. No non-Christian mind could perhaps make out so much, with here and there moderate reading, as Gibbon. But the world has quite gone away from his tracks, because he did not believe in prophecy, either Old Testament or New.

'Sad I was to see that dear Charles Birrell is no more.'

TO REV. JOHN KELLY

10 SPENCE STREET, *June 1881.*

'... I have long recognised the importance of the Religious Tract Society, and there is undoubtedly a public demand for what you propose. But your request comes to me inopportunistically. After hard study, I have just published the Cunningham Lectures, and am mapping out some special studies in Systematic Theology, which is now my chief subject of teaching. Yet I give up Apologetics with great reluctance; and from a sheer sense of duty I must do something in that field. . . I could not well take up the Being of God and deeper questions, which would require a different kind of preparation. Nor could I venture to debate on such an arena, though not shrinking from them on any other, vexed questions of the Old Testament. A defence of the Gospels or other New Testament writings I could easily make. I am therefore not averse to write, this summer and the following winter, two or three tracts of the size you indicate. I could give one to Miracles, one to Prophecy, one to the Success of Christianity, and perhaps one to the Unique

Character of Christ, taking up the last results of criticism and debate as urged by unbelieving writers, though I should not make the Tracts so much critical as positive. . . . I do not stand in any way on remuneration, being as much interested in the subject as any one can be. . . .’

## TO MISS JANET CAIRNS

STORNOWAY, *Aug. 8, 1881.*

‘After preaching in the Free Church and in our own, I have been seeing some of the huts in the interior. Language cannot describe their poverty—no chimney, not a particle of lime on the rough walls, and the most meagre furniture; but the people within reading Talmage, Spurgeon and the Gaelic Bible, and ready for any argument. It is the triumph of mind over matter, and of the Gospel over rudeness and poverty—so unlike Celtic Ireland. . . .’

*Aug. 10, 1881.*

‘The reticence of the Scottish people as to their personal religion is nowhere more striking, and yet they all know the Catechism. A little fellow on the road, some nine years of age, could not tell me in what county he lived; but when set agoing he could answer the question, What is man’s chief end? . . . This mighty set of rude and solitary mountains, unhonoured and unsung, is the grandest I have seen in Scotland. As seen from Loch Broom on a dull and sunless evening, with an exquisite tint of watery purple spread over them, they recalled memorable views of the Salt Lake. . . . Last night we crossed the breadth of the island, and visited the druidical circle. . . . Although the structure is clear, no satisfactory theory of its details has been proposed, but the effect of the whole is wild and solemn. . . . I have preached in the Free Church on behalf of the Shetland fishermen, and attended a meeting of the Templars’ Lodge. Stornoway is before most places as to temperance. . . .’

## TO DR. MACLAGAN

10 SPENCE STREET, *Oct. 18, 1881.*

‘. . . I hope that this terrible catastrophe among your fishermen has helped to religious impression. This afternoon, at the Lord Provost’s meeting, I defended the poor men against Lord ——’s charge that they were destitute of forethought and character. My brother tells me that several of the Cove youths who have perished

were brought in during a Revival at Stockbridge. This is a bright lining to the cloud, and a comfort to those who have laboured most among them. . . .’

TO MR. G. T. EDWARDS

10 SPENCE STREET, *Jan. 12, 1882.*

‘. . . Our work goes on wonderfully well. We have 108 students, including ten or twelve foreigners, and we never had finer men.

‘Cardinal Newman, as you suppose, is entirely wrong in saying that according to Calvinists “the converted and unconverted can be discriminated by man.” No Calvinistic Confession and no leading theologian known to me has ever held this. He is probably going on the papal idea that the visible and invisible Church are one, an idea which we reject, holding that the Church visible is made up of those who make a credible profession of belief, with their children. No one thinks that our Church Courts may not err by admitting wrong people to what we call sealing ordinances. I am glad that you have met the Cardinal. . . .’

TO MRS. SIME

10 SPENCE STREET, *Jan. 21, 1882.*

‘I am sadly behind with the usual greetings, but I have been working night and day for two months at a long-meditated Course on theology. It consists in the working out of the idea that systematic theology is just the logical method—definition, probation, division—applied to this special subject. I state as well as possible the points of Christian doctrine. Thence I go on to prove them from Scripture, handled in the originals and confirmed by the history of doctrine. This leads to division, or the arrangement of the doctrine in a system, with the points already cleared up and the desiderata or difficulties that remain. It has been hard labour, but I have found great interest in it.

‘I have also been much engrossed with the meetings which Messrs. Moody and Sankey have been holding here. I was so profoundly impressed with the results of their work in 1874 at Berwick and elsewhere, that I resolved to give them every spare moment. . . . Their meetings have all been crowded, and the most extraordinary impressions have been made. I have conversed in the after-meetings with persons of all descriptions, probably more than one hundred—students, ordinary young men, elderly

people and children ; and in the Grassmarket with the very lowest,—drunkards, ignorant Roman Catholics, and a good many sceptics unconvinced but unable to resist the attraction of the meetings. Many have seemed to me to accept the Gospel and to find peace and liberty. Once and again, members of my old congregation or their children turned up, receiving as they told me blessing from the meetings. There has been nothing sensational, beyond what is preached by myself constantly or sung in other ways. The force of Mr. Moody and the pathos of his fellow-labourer naturally tell. Yet I trace all this back to God, and find in it a remarkable confirmation of the reality and sovereignty of the working of His Spirit. The only feature that all might not approve of has been the coming forward of persons to be prayed for. Yet I have become used to this, and everything else is so decorous that I am satisfied and even thankful. The trouble is not the making too much of the soul but too little. It has been hard work, but I am a great deal fuller of joy than of fatigue, for the Gospel becomes to me dearer with every year. May it be so with all whom I love !'

TO REV. JOHN KELLY

10 SPENCE STREET, *July 7, 1882.*

' . . . I humbly think that more evidence is wanted before we blot out the name of ——.<sup>1</sup> It would be our sad duty, if his conversion to atheism were avowed by himself or generally known and admitted. It is not enough that he may be a Unitarian, much as I should deplore it. Christianity has made Unitarianism better than natural religion, as it made the earlier heresies better than paganism ; and even Jonathan Edwards counts Mohammedanism 'one of the effects of Christianity.' I would rank Channing's influence against slavery, and that of Longfellow generally, as things which may be quoted in such a connection. Without Christianity —— would not have done what he did ; and I hope, if he has denied it, this will only be for a time. Besides he is the type of a great movement, which nothing can define so well as his personal name. . . .'

<sup>1</sup> From a list of Christian philanthropists.



## TO MRS. MEIKLEJOHN

10 SPENCE STREET, *Aug. 9, 1882.*

‘. . . It will always be a pleasant remembrance to have preached at your husband’s Jubilee, the shades that somewhat impaired its brightness—your imperfect health and my own temporary ailment—being swallowed up in a retrospect of thankfulness and praise. God has dealt well and kindly with us, and the more we trust Him, the more we shall receive.’

ROTTERDAM, *Sept. 4, 1882.*

‘. . . I have visited the place where the Synod of Dort met, . . . and also the Castle of Löwestein where Grotius was imprisoned, and wrote his Dutch poem on the Evidences of Christianity. He wrote in a gusty old room, twelve yards square, from which he could look out on the river Wahl and the town of Ghorinkem. . . .’

LEIPZIG, *Sept. 11, 1882.*

‘I halted at Kempen, a quaint old town, to trace the associations of Thomas à Kempis with it. They are doubtful, but everybody there believes in them. Men do not willingly give up a great memory. The people of Duns would sooner give up the *e* than Duns Scotus. . . . At Cologne I spent some time, bags in hand, admiring more than ever the majestic Cathedral. Mass was going on, but I disarmed a functionary who looked suspiciously at the bags by the excuse, “man sollte nicht die Last der Welt in die Kirche tragen,” at which he smiled. . . . At Marburg I examined carefully the Rittersaal, the scene of Luther’s and Zwingli’s conference on the Lord’s Supper. . . . Although the colloquy failed to reconcile the two streams of the Reformation, to the unspeakable and abiding injury of both, it was not wholly lost. The view from the window is grand, and perhaps the theologians went now and then to enjoy it. . . . The woman who showed me all the points was a Roman Catholic of delightful character. As we stood at the place where the table stood on which Luther chalked “hoc est corpus meum,” she said: “What was it after all, sir, that these men debated about? What does the Catholic Church hold about Christ’s body, and what the Lutheran?” Whereupon I had to give her a short lecture, not troubling her with Calvin’s special view, but leading into a discussion of the deeper matter

of salvation, and finding that she was in complete sympathy with the Universal Church. I would not have chosen her as a Professor of Systematic Theology, her view of the relations between faith and works being hazy; but the principles were all there, and she could guard against error if not define truth. She laid great stress on prayer. "I say to my children, 'When you go to school, and get up your lessons, pray first to God and you will find the difference.'" Not a few such simple souls exist everywhere in the Church of Rome, especially in Germany. The more the better. This woman had at bottom no hope but in the merits of Christ. I bade her good-bye with great goodwill. . . . At Göttingen I saw Ritschl's class-room and visited the grave of Ewald, hearing some curious things about his absent-mindedness—how, for instance, he came away from a restaurant without paying for his coffee, and walked back five miles when he remembered the omission. In the afternoon I left for Eisleben, Luther's birth-place . . . and stood there with great reverence in St. Andrew's pulpit, from which he used to preach to crowds.'

JENA, Sept. 16, 1882.

'I came yesterday from the Jubilee celebration of the Gustav Adolf Verein, of which I have sent an account to the *Times*. It was impressive, and showed that the progress of Rome through the failure of the *Kulturkampf* has been exaggerated. I envy this still rationalistic University its lovely situation and its eminent history in German literature. Griesbach, Hegel, Goethe, the two Schlegels and Neander lived here. Old Hase can now lecture only in his own room. Hilgenfeld has sixty students and Lipsius more. I have gone over the whole course of the battle of 1806 with a ploughman and an old soldier . . . and have knocked many a water-glass against beer-glasses. I have spoken much about temperance, quoting Sir Garnet Wolseley, whose example in this matter makes the Germans open their eyes wide. Beer-drinking is more than a waste of money here. It has much to do with the love of base pleasure and low materialism. There is a mighty contrast to America, and hence at this point the repulsion.'

LEIPZIG, Sept. 14, 1882.

'On Sabbath I preached in the American Church, which is of great service here. Dr. Lechler, one of the finest old men I have

seen, has been extremely kind. I have attended the Verein meetings steadily, including a grand sermon by Kögel of Berlin. Yesterday I spoke on the German Church in Edinburgh, on our relations to Rome and on the necessity for faith in the Reformation principles to continue the struggle of the seventeenth century. The president in a very kindly reply said that in many things they looked to the Scottish Churches as an example.'

BERLIN, *Sept.* 25, 1882.

'On Tuesday I accompanied a Sabbath-school excursion, and was happy in playing, singing and marching with the children. It was a pleasure to miss the noisy drinking which was the poorest feature of the Verein. . . . German art has advanced, though not so much since I was here in 1868 as between 1843 and 1868. A not very welcome feature is the prominence of military subjects. Indeed the military spirit is everywhere, as if life were but a preparation for fighting or a remembrance of it. But the Germans, to do them justice, do not love war. . . . I have spent some days in seeking out familiar persons and places. I found a son of my good landlady, and my old Hebrew teacher. My lodgings are turned into a restaurant, but I have sat again in Neander's class-room, in Dorner's where I heard him in 1868, and in Hengstenberg's where I spoke to him shortly before his death. Yesterday in the Dom Kirche, where we used to worship, I heard an eloquent and thoroughly Gospel sermon from Stöcker. All the old preachers are dead. I then went to the Garrison's Kirche, where the Evangelical Alliance met in 1857. Looking down the long nave, I saw the places where different men sat. How many friends are gone! Krummacher, Kuntze, Bunsen, Sir C. Eardley, Steane, John Henderson, Alex. MacEwen! Only shadows remain, and these too will soon vanish. Yet that meeting did good in its day. The Church does not work in vain. . . . How little the opening of museums and galleries does to improve the Sabbath! The very atheists here are pleading for a day of rest. To-night I have attended a Conference of the Orthodox party. There was as much tobacco and beer as at Leipzig, with fair speaking. Yet it is a good thing to hold great religious meetings. If God bless them, they will bring life into the out-worn Church system which has so long sat crooning over its own grave.'



TO THE REV. DR. —

10 SPENCE STREET, *Sept.* 30, 1882.

‘ . . . It rejoices me to learn that, amidst your great and, as we feared, hopeless weakness, you have been following the struggles of the Christian Church and sharing in them, it may be too sadly. . . . None of these questions as to the relations of the Bible and science have for a good while given me any inward disturbance. Our Church happily, by its legislation about the Six Days, has given a wide field to inquiry ; and the moral evidence for Christianity and the transcendent glory of the Bible and of the Saviour, with the ever-growing power of the Gospel in the world, have lifted me above any depression which recent speculations might have induced. . . .

‘ The first point which you raise is the very early existence of man on the earth, and his emergence from a barbarous condition. Now, I do not think that this very long existence is admitted with such agreement as to constrain a theologian like me, who am not a man of science, to deal with it as a fact. Certainly the proof of the *universal* ascent from savagery is anything but admitted, and therefore it is perhaps premature to do more than weigh the different schemes and to look around for conciliation with Scripture, if any of the hypotheses should become so well established as to deserve to be treated like an inductive fact. This is the second thing I have to say, that, without committing oneself to any particular belief as to prehistoric men, it is not altogether incredible that such beings may have existed, while yet the Bible history of our descent from Adam is true. I can conceive a way of saving the credit of the Bible as history, or believe that it may exist, and until this is excluded, there is room for our entire faith in Scripture. Very many of those who hold man’s extreme antiquity hold also his descent from the ape. But this is not made out. Virchow has just told the anthropologists at Frankfort that it is a hypothesis unsupported by proof. If this part of the scheme be unestablished, may not the idea of excessively long existence in a savage condition also turn out insecure, at least in such a sense as to absolutely exclude the Bible narrative ? . . . Remember how steadily archæological evidence is confirming the Bible, besides showing that facts quite as extraordinary as those which have been causing you perplexity have an historical basis. Read the *Records of the Past*, containing the substance of the Assyrian discoveries. I am busy with Schrader’s *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, and have studied the Assyrian language enough to know the principles on which it is interpreted and to



have full confidence in its general results. It has greatly strengthened my faith in the historical accuracy of the Old Testament. As to our Lord's professed ignorance of the date of Judgment, I have long regarded this as consistent with His divinity and mediatorial commission. His humanity must have had limits; and though perhaps we should not expect them here, there is nothing incredible in His ignorance reaching this point, especially when it is implied that it would not continue or incapacitate Him for any duty connected with His mission. . . . However great, then, the difficulties at these points, I do not regard them as insuperable, and I pray that God may grant you deliverance from them and full trust in His blessed Word.'

TO MRS. SIME

10 SPENCE STREET, *Jan. 2, 1883.*

' . . . My own matters have gone very smoothly during the year: plenty of work in preaching and in study, but no special hitch or difficulty and more to be thankful for than I can well describe. Two years ago I took a fancy to learn Arabic, having to lecture on Mohammedanism. . . . I believe that Christianity is going to recover its lost ground from this old enemy, not it may be very speedily, but in time, and I wish to pray in Arabic for its arrival. When I have read through the Koran I shall know the originals of all my Apologetic lectures. I shall also have some revenge over Gibbon, who drew so triumphantly the career of the Saracens and yet confessed that he did not know a word of the language; and if I cannot go to Palestine or Egypt, I shall be able to imagine the sound of Wady This or Tel That.

'In September I revived old memories by going over to Leipzig and Berlin, and amidst incessant study brought myself up to the present day in Church and State. Perhaps I may never see Germany again. That was my prevailing feeling; but it was a great comfort to me that the tide of materialism, pessimism and other things to me abhorrent seems on the turn. I saw Schiller's house at Jena which Mr. Sime has so beautifully sketched. His *Life of Schiller* is, I think, about the best thing he has done.'

TO MISS SERVICE

10 SPENCE STREET, *Feb. 19, 1883.*

'The shadow of your loss<sup>1</sup> extends to us who have been so bound up all our days with your family, and it goes deep into our hearts.

<sup>1</sup> The death of the last surviving brother of Miss Jean Darling.

. . . Our dear and venerated friend, from whom I received innumerable acts of kindness, has left us a testimony. May we all seek, through Christ, guidance in life, succour in death and length of days at God's right hand! May the representatives of the name keep up the succession of grace and seriousness, and may the beautiful hills and streams associated with such unfailing kindness and overflowing hospitality record also the true piety of those who rise up to fill the places of the departed! . . .'

TO REV. J. OSWALD DYKES, D.D.

10 SPENCE STREET, *May 5, 1883.*

'I rejoice in your decision as to the Revision of Standards. It can do the Church no harm, and ought with God's blessing to do good. We are the better as a Church for our explanatory Declaration and all that preceded it, though we had not your peaceful beginning. I heartily wish you a happy issue to a not very easy undertaking. . . .'

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

10 SPENCE STREET, *Aug. 15, 1883.*

'After much toil, I have ended my statistical paper on *Schottland* and have sent it off to Erlangen. It has at least given me acquaintance with some facts: you might never know how many fingers or toes you had, unless you had to write an article for apes or some other species. I had some strange talks with the keepers of Glassite, Irvingite and Swedenborgian sanctuaries, the interiors of all of which I saw. On the whole I have been comforted with the evidence of the progress of our Presbyterianism since 1851. The article is too plain to be pleasant in all directions, though I have avoided odious parallels.'

TO THE SAME

10 SPENCE STREET, *Sept. 22, 1883.*

'You will see the Strome Ferry meeting. The whole matter will be overruled for good—not the least that the Lindsay section work with Dr. Begg. Dr. Carment told me that I was too gentle; but it suited a victory better. As to ——'s views of the Theatre, I see no earthly chance, till the world is a great deal better, of the legitimate drama. When it is fit for it, it will have, for nine-tenths of it, a drama more legitimate; but that is a long way off from the sphere of practical morals. . . .'

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

10 SPENCE STREET, *Aug. 1, 1884.*

‘. . . My days pass away silently in study and in work that leaves no mark. It is a great pleasure to revive the memory of the old Hall by working on as if it were still standing. Thoughts of Drs. Eadie, Harper, and M’Michael come up and give me company, also of many students now far enough away. . . .’

## TO MRS. MEIKLEJOHN

10 SPENCE STREET, *Aug. 23, 1884.*

‘I am so much obliged to you for your kind birthday wishes. . . . I sail for Hamburg on Friday for the meeting of the Evangelical Alliance at Copenhagen. I have many thoughts with regard to the passage to Hamburg, to which I first went from Hull in 1843. It was the first foreign city I ever saw, and I have never forgotten it. Goodness and mercy have followed me all that time, and the course of my life would have been utterly beyond my own power to conceive. I cannot tell how much I have learned, and still learn from Germany; but our own country, through the grace of God, is better.

‘. . . I have studied a good deal this summer, and can go away with clear conscience. But there is no end to learning, even when we come to the knowledge of some truth. . . .’

## TO MISS JANET CAIRNS

COPENHAGEN, *Aug. 30, 1884.*

‘. . . The passage to Hamburg was roughish, so that the passengers were thrown on themselves. We had a good deal of talk and even earnest debate on religion; and the general strain was sound. . . . I have often found that there are few better ways to gauge the currents of feeling in society, and those who have any power of testimony have here an excellent field. . . . From under the shadows of the grand spires of Hamburg, I almost thought I saw the kind friends come forth to welcome me who, forty-one years ago, broke the strangeness of my first experiences of a foreign country. There were no porters at the quay, but a German sailor rushed at me and insisted on carrying my bags. He turned out to be a man who had heard me preach to the German sailors at Leith. . . . At Korsör I tried my Danish, which I had

been studying for a fortnight, on a railway porter, and learned from him some particulars about the Danish system of compulsory education and about religion. He recognised with a smile the text I had so often used in Norway, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God."

## TO MRS. MEIKLEJOHN

COPENHAGEN, *Sept. 4, 1884.*

'We have had addresses to-day from Pressensé, Bernstorff, Schaff, Monod, Sir W. Macarthur and others. I spoke in German on the Progress of the Gospel in Germany. The King and Queen came forward at the end and spoke very kindly. Christlieb gave a very able report on the religious indifference of our times, darkly coloured, but with too much truth in it. . . . We made a wonderful excursion to Røskilde, exploring the tombs of the Danish kings, and then walking to the seaside, where we had a series of short addresses beneath the trees. In the evening there was a fine concert of sacred music in the Cathedral; but I was more impressed by the spontaneous singing, as we walked along the shore, of the old crusader hymn, "Fairest Lord Jesus," followed by "Hold the fort," thus bringing extremes together. . . . I have had to work very hard during the week in helping the reporters; but on Sabbath I gave an address to Sabbath-schools, in response to which the children, more honest than the adults, repeatedly laughed. I also attended a theological lecture at the University.'

PASSAU, *Sept. 10, 1884.*

'It will be interesting to you to receive this from the abode of John Donaldson, my old pupil, to whose father and mother I owed so much kindness in student days. I found I could just manage to see him by travelling night and day and sleeping at railway stations. I have spent six hours with him, and am about to return as rapidly, being glad to have a pleasant report to present to his sisters. The hurried journey has been full of interest, and I shall be able to rest in the steamer. . . .'

10 SPENCE STREET, *Sept. 16, 1884.*

'I have just had time to read Mr. Gladstone's Waverley speech, without reaching the rapid succession of Conservative oratory. Happy the country where these are the questions in debate! The awful shadows of the Continent, as cast by the reports at Copenhagen, hardly allow me to enjoy the mimic strife. . . .'



TO REV. PROFESSOR GRAHAM

10 SPENCE STREET, *May 2, 1885.*

‘. . . I am thankful that your Church is in so flourishing a case. Ours is not bad either, and we might get forward, if these *horrida bella* would let us. I am somewhat recruited from October last—the lowest point I had reached for many years,—and I have been equal to the Hall work, *par nec supra*. God has been merciful, as He has always been. . . .’

TO MRS. MEIKLEJOHN

10 SPENCE STREET, *June 1885.*

‘. . . I am deep in the Koran, of which I now read five pages a day with great pleasure. It gives me a much clearer idea of that people whose religion has so sadly affected the world. I look for a great turn here ere long, and this gives my reading interest. . . .’

10 SPENCE STREET, *Aug. 15, 1885.*

‘. . . I have just ended a very important and difficult business, the preparing and sending out of an appeal to Mr. Gladstone, to be signed by evangelical ministers of all denominations, against the continued connection of the State with the Church. . . . Although I have had assistance, a great deal of the responsibility and labour has fallen upon me. . . .’

GLADBACH, *Aug. 21, 1885.*

‘At Antwerp I got a general impression of the Exhibition . . . and talked with a great many nationalities—a Russian who gave the white bear some signal which made the animal growl, whereupon I reminded him that we had a lion in England, and we congratulated one another on the prospects of peace; a Parsee who spoke respectfully about the faith of Christians, but seemed satisfied with the Parsees being equally far away from idolatry, which is not the case; a Swede who was glad to hear his own language; and many others. . . . In some respects the most interesting part was the Bible Society’s stall, where I had a long talk with the Dutchman in charge of it. But for the Bible, this Exhibition would have been impossible. It makes even the Church of Rome stronger than Voltaire, Renan, and all the sceptics.’

DÜSSELDORF, Aug. 25, 1885.

'On Sabbath I attended the Old Catholic worship, which I had never seen before, in the Protestant Church. When I entered, the singing had begun, and the priest stood at the altar, his back covered with a red and gold chasuble drawn over a surplice; and the small congregation, fifty to one hundred, were singing with great devotion. The altar was like an ordinary Lutheran, with two candles lit and the wafer and cup covered up. It was just a mass that the priest went through, with lifting up of the elements and ringing of bells by an officiating helper dressed in a black surtout. It was a strange contrast to the gorgeous ceremonial of the Antwerp Cathedral, with so many stoled priests and acolytes, to see this one Separatist going through his genuflections, and the little beadle-like attendant imitating his kneelings, and holding the book behind him. It was a type of the incoherence of the whole movement, in which there is too much of Popery or too little. The sermon which followed, though not exactly rationalist, had little of the Gospel. I found the impression here that this movement has seen its best days; but I would still hope that better elements may be in it. . . .'

ELBERFELD, Aug. 27, 1885.

' . . . The Kunst Halle, which represents the type of art of which this place is a centre, shows great skill and even genius. What pleased me much was the fine taste and moral purity of the presentations of domestic life, with freedom from the exaggeration and sensationalism which mark the present French school. . . . The work of the Conferences has been hard. I spoke as a delegate to a large audience yesterday. The design of my visit is to see if there is any chance of the Reformirte Kirche joining the Presbyterian Alliance. I did not expect much, as the Church, which was once very powerful in the Rhineland, has been largely absorbed in a union with the Lutherans. However, far more interest was excited by the meeting than I expected. I had the pleasure of renewing acquaintance with Ebrard and others. . . . I spoke for half-an-hour without any writing, and took part in the discussion which followed. The result was that though the *Bund* can only be united laxly with the Alliance, Germany will be represented at our next meeting. . . .'

LONDON, Aug. 31, 1885.

‘In returning I made a most genial acquaintance in a Belgian Marquis, now the head of a Dominican monastery, with whom I had much discussion over the Latin New Testament on the power of forgiving sins. He expressly denied that the act of the priest can benefit any one without *sinceritas*, *contritio* and the *firmum propositum* to avoid everything that would displease God. He granted that knowledge of Christ’s death, and trust in it, might be the *proxima praeformatio*, but held that the voice of the Church, through the sacrament of penance, is necessary to complete and seal the work. He praised the *bona fides* of the English people as open to treat his Church with respect and fairness, and pressed me to stay with him at his monastery. His kind and even brotherly conduct confirms my hope that there may be more such men in the Roman Church than we suppose. With another priest, less intellectual but as friendly, I had much ecclesiastical and political debate. He was an earnest and apparently sincere advocate of religious equality, and I could so far agree with him as to condemn the policy of Bismarck in imposing on the Roman priests an education which they do not want, provided they ask no State favour. He denied that they asked any, and put it to me if Rome would not be justified in making all the converts she could by purely spiritual weapons. This I fully conceded, and only wished that Lord Balfour and Dr. MacGregor would come to the same understanding. . . . I am thankful for these enlargements of my knowledge of living Romish thought and action. . . . At Canterbury I saw all the memorials of Anselm, Thomas à Beckett, etc. . . . Rochester Cathedral reminded me of the Bishopric which John Knox might have had, and which is now held by Bishop Thorold, a good man, who did not know that for twenty years we had had a Sunday Closing Act in Scotland. Knox would not have made such a mark on the world had he been the Right Rev. Father in God, John, Episc. Roffensis.’

10 SPENCE STREET, Sept. 3, 1885.

‘Wherever I went, I had most interesting talks on Disestablishment, and could give a long lecture on unlooked-for testimonies in its favour. The coldest I have found to be Nonconformists of a peculiar type,—very good men no doubt, but not in the line of the future. May God bless us to a useful victory on this great question!’



TO RT. HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P.

EDINBURGH, *Oct. 28, 1885.*

'As it has fallen to me to transmit to you the Memorial of Scottish Ministers on Disestablishment, I hope I may be allowed to add a few explanations, with some remarks on the general aspect of the Scottish question.

'Of the Churches represented, I know best the United Presbyterian. We have between 570 and 580 ministers in charges. Of these some twelve or fifteen must be deducted, as in Ireland or England with no Scottish sphere. Of the rest, only fifty-eight have not signed, and from answers which many of them have given me, including my friend Dr. Hutton, I know that they are equally desirous of the object, but think that you have been appealed to enough already, or that the matter is rather for the voters themselves, or for other reasons. I do not believe that half-a-dozen ministers in the United Presbyterian Church prefer the continuance of an Establishment. As it is, 502 have signed.

'In regard to the Free Church, they have above 1000 ministers. In all, between 780 and 790 have signed. The number is larger than I expected, as they have a minority, a portion of which at least might in certain circumstances have preferred reconstruction. . . . I am persuaded that there is an element of preparedness for Disestablishment, even in the minority; and few, I believe, would go into reconstruction as a means of averting it.

'The two bodies, Scottish Congregationalists and Scottish Baptists, have always been opposed to union of Church and State. Of the Congregationalists, fifty-nine have signed; of the Baptists, fifty-one. Some have not signed because the document seemed to be drawn too much on Presbyterian lines, and made too much of Union in a Presbyterian sense; others, because Disestablishment seemed exalted above Local Option and everything else. As a proof, however, that they are really unbroken, I may mention that a week ago the Baptist Union passed a unanimous vote for Disestablishment with allusions in the discussion to this Memorial.

'A younger body, some forty years old, is the Evangelical Union which, as you doubtless know, sprang from the United Secession, in an Arminianising direction. All its ministers are Total Abstiners, and hence, as I have been assured, not a few declined to sign, because that subject seemed put a little backward. There is also, without any adoption, at least in a definite form, of Establishment views, some gratitude for kindly acts of the ministers of the Estab-



lished Church. Out of some seventy-eight ministers, this body has supplied forty-nine signatures.

‘The Wesleyan Methodists in Scotland have above forty ministers. The same great change in regard to the Established Church has come over them as over Wesleyans in the south. I have been told that most of them would have signed a general declaration ; but a pledge to assist in the severance of Church and State seems to them too political, and hence only six have signed. The Primitive Methodists have less difficulty, and, out of eight in all, five have signed.

‘The Original Secession, numbering between twenty and thirty congregations, stand, like the Free Church minority, on the principle of an Establishment, with some reference to the Covenants. Only one minister has given his name. I am not able from personal knowledge to say further how they stand affected to the Disestablishment issue.

‘There only remains the Reformed Presbyterian Church, including some seven ministers. They recently renewed their testimony against all voting and political action, so long as the constitution of the Church and of the State is not in harmony with the Covenants. From them therefore signatures could hardly come.

‘These elements are statistical in their character, though they show that hardly ever on a vexed issue has so much harmony been found in the non-Established Churches of Scotland. But I would now venture with all deference to submit, with these facts in view, some general conclusions to which they point.

‘1. *The religious welfare of Scotland requires as speedy Disestablishment as possible.* It does not admit of argument that, in such a divided state of the Christian Church as in Scotland, an Establishment cannot continue. How can the fifteen hundred ministers and upward who have signified concurrence with this Memorial admit the superior claims of the twelve hundred or at most fifteen hundred who receive State countenance? And can their public necessary conflict be other than most unedifying? Is it “national religion” for the State to continue this inevitable, unseemly conflict, which yet it is no dishonour for the non-Established to wage—which rather without dishonour they can hardly avoid? Would it not be a religious act in the State to heal such a strife? Nor can it heal it by so-called “reconstruction,” helping to break up other bodies to make the Establishment dominant, or to slowly wear them out, that peace may come with solitude.

‘2. *It is not for the interest of the Liberal party that this agitation*

*should be prolonged.* No doubt the mixing up of a deep religious element with a political question has an exalting influence, giving a higher consecration to party struggles, and thus preparing a robust, manly and Christian Liberalism for the future. Those have been the worst enemies of the Liberal party who have wished this great question stifled. But the way in which the debate has been regarded by one section of the Liberal party has brought danger. They have refused to let it go fairly before the constituencies and be settled, as discussed by ordinary political methods; and when, in spite of all suppression, a prevailing tendency has revealed itself, as in recent decisions of great Liberal Associations connecting Disestablishment with the general Liberal programme, they have refused to give these facts their fair recognition. No doubt the present Memorial will also be assailed, and instead of being regarded as a help to the disclosure of Scottish opinion, will be denounced as hasty, misleading and divisive. To your candid judgment in this matter we confidently appeal, as of one who has always desired to sound and fathom true Scottish sentiment in this direction; and though knowing that our testimony was liable to the challenge of clerical interference, we have not shrunk from the responsibility of making our convictions known. . . . Our view, as far as I may express it, is that with the advance of the Disestablishment element in the party, other elements should do justice to its progress, as well as to its inherent affinities with true Liberalism, and, by keeping step with it, avert the irritation and intestinal discord which a great principle unduly thwarted is sure to provoke.

‘3. *It is a grave question for the leaders of the Liberal party and yourself, as the recognised head of it, whether further utterances in the direction of Scottish Disestablishment are not called for.* I touch this question with great humility, as knowing your immense difficulties and responsibility, and knowing also how small in comparison are my powers of estimating the best outlet from a great political and religious complication. But you have already gone so far, that I humbly think you might safely go somewhat further. Your rigid and honourably maintained determination to be guided by the will of the Scottish people has brought you upon the track where progress is natural. Your manifesto, with its acknowledgment of Scottish progress, contains the great and solemn passage as to Disestablishment in England, so vast and weighty in its issues. Quite recently, in such a way as so far to commit the Liberal party, Disestablishment in Wales has been treated as a near and practical

issue. I cannot doubt therefore that some words, such as would encourage, cheer and cordially unite the more advanced section of the party in regard to Disestablishment in Scotland, without giving just or probable cause of injurious repulsion to others, might be seasonably added; and thus without outrunning the visible and remarkable pace of time, some further beginning be made of what will be one of its best and greatest works—works that will ever be connected with your name.'

FROM RT. HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P.

HAWARDEN, *Nov. 2, 1885.*

'On account of extreme pressure, I can only make this hasty acknowledgment of the important Memorial you have sent, and assure you, as I hardly need, that the question touched in it continues to have my best attention.'

TO REV. PROFESSOR GRAHAM

10 SPENCE STREET, *Jan. 22, 1886.*

'I have felt, as you no doubt have, the gravity of public matters, and especially of Ireland, where as yet I see no deliverance. We are also a good deal perturbed about the Disestablishment question, though these things are working our way. But the Voluntary Churches have rarely had greater responsibilities, and I feel the burden a good deal, especially as the College work is also constant. Still I am cheered by the old hopes and prospects, and I like my general work as well as ever. I have read Eusebius through again from beginning to end, and some newer books upon the Canon.'

TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

10 SPENCE STREET, *July 23, 1886.*

'... I have been very busy with Philo, having read about a third of his works—much incredible stuff of allegory, the rest the work of a great and good man, an unconscious Christian as well as a traditional Jew, holding too lightly by the evangetic system, but the reverse of a rationalist, with a great gift of eloquence.

'Yesterday I drove from Mauchline to Mossgiel and saw the old farmhouse, with the spruce and plane tree behind, under which Burns used to meditate; then, farther back, the field where he turned up the daisy and the field where he unearthed the mouse.



. . . These years were about the best in his life. In the town is the house of Gavin Hamilton, who did him no good; and the tombs that cover the spot where the tents stood in the days of the Holy Fair, with the gill-shop of Poesie Nancy among others. It was a very miserable time; but poor Burns was not up to it, and the old people still tell of the social excommunication that had begun to fall on him, at least in serious circles. It is hard to reconcile such wonderful genius with such recoil of the best from him.

‘On Monday I had a very different experience, driving by Aird’s Moss to the Cameron Stane, where Ritchie fell . . . The solitary and wild beauty completely realised the Cameronian’s Dream. We got down by the beautiful Lugar to Cumnock churchyard and the tomb of grand old Peden. . . . His enemies dug him up, and laid him here in contempt at the foot of the old gallows, but the people turned it into a cemetery, and now the Golgotha has become a Holy Sepulchre. On the way home, we saw the old house where Boswell’s father lived, and the home of Dugald Stewart in his youth. . . .’

AMSTERDAM, *Sept. 9, 1886.*

‘I have nearly attained the object for which I came here,—to get a better idea of Dutch grammar. I bought a book on Tuesday which I have now nearly read through, and I can read the Bible with a sense of comfort which I did not enjoy before. There is, of course, much still to be done; but I hope in a few weeks to read Dutch authors, if not so easily as German, yet with a sense that I can defend my own translation.’

FRANEKER, *Sept. 14, 1886.*

‘The people here are our direct ancestors, and very like us. . . . I have come to see the remnants of the old University, where many great Dutchmen lingered—Vitranga, Venema, Verschuis, and others, with the jurist Heineccius and the famous scholars Hemsterhuis and Valckenaer. The University is now a lunatic asylum. The size of Valckenaer’s house shows that philology—he was greatest in Greek—must have been a paying business in last century. In Amsterdam there is an immense and hopeful commotion, pointing in the direction of a separation from the State on grounds of doctrine. I have heard much of this movement, and seen much with my own eyes, which I need not detail, as I shall probably write about it. . . .’



TO REV. PROFESSOR GRAHAM

10 SPENCE STREET, Oct. 7, 1886.

‘I have just come from the funeral of John Ker, and send you the particulars about his death. . . . It has come so soon after dear William Robertson’s departure, that you cannot but feel as desolate as I do. John Ker was still a mighty working force in our Hall, and how shall we do without him? We must try to get above it, by looking to Him who is more than all that we can lose, and who makes their loss gain.’

TO MRS. SIME

10 SPENCE STREET, Dec. 25, 1886.

‘May every blessing for both worlds rest upon you and your husband, and may you find whatever trial gathers in our human life turned into a blessing! . . . My dear sister, though very infirm, is not materially weaker, and to my great joy the sister who has lived with me so long is decidedly better. . . . William is also well and working away at the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. . . . I have just finished writing a Present Day Tract on the Evolution of Christianity, which has required a great deal of reading in Philo and other Greek writers. . . . In our College we have sustained a very great loss in the death of Dr. John Ker. His surviving colleagues have been carrying on his work, but only as a transient expedient. What will ultimately be done we do not know. I have been busy as usual. Last week I had to finish some eighty examination papers before Tuesday, while lecturing twice daily besides. But I have much to be thankful for—few so much, and I am probably happier than I ever was before. . . .’

## CHAPTER XXVII

### PROFESSOR AND PRINCIPAL

1887-1890

Additional burdens—Leniency towards students—Sketch by Rev. J. Leckie—Persistent study—Hopeful view of religion—Struggles of Church for liberty—Patriotic feeling—Acquaintance with Christendom—Presentation of portrait—Reluctance to lead—Veneration for him—Notes by Principal Fairbairn—Advancing years—Letters.

THE death of Dr. Ker made a great change in Dr. Cairns' professorial work. He and his colleagues discharged the duties of the vacant Chair until the meeting of the Supreme Court in May 1887. Even then, little relief was given. It was resolved not to elect a successor to Dr. Ker, but to appoint clergymen annually to give nine or ten lectures on the Work of the Ministry. Although the idea of the plan was good, it was not adequately developed. The lecturers, coming to Edinburgh for two or three weeks from the midst of their own pastoral duties, could take no part in the administration or the discipline of the College. Dr. Ker's share in these was laid upon the shoulders of the remaining Professors, especially of the Principal, although he was loyally supported by his colleagues. In all personal dealings with the students, and in the general relations of the College to the Church, he bore henceforward the burden of two men, and though he bore it willingly, there was a steady strain and drain on his energies. In August 1887 he entered his seventieth year.

His lectures upon Practical Training were among the best products of his experience, full of tenderness and shrewdness, and brightened by touches of sober humour. His suggestions

as to the writing and delivery of sermons, the visitation of the sick, and other pastoral duties, showed that he had been closely observant of the causes of pastoral inefficiency, and gave unconscious disclosures of the methods by which his own success had been secured and maintained.

In examining the students, correcting their various exercises and administering discipline, his leniency and generosity became more and more pronounced, and advantage was taken of these features by students who were not disposed to work. But even they shared in the general reverence for his personal character and in special appreciation of his unconscious and childlike humility. To one blind student, who lamented his physical incapacity to present himself at examinations, he offered to act as amanuensis in the examination room, and some argument was needed to convince him that the authorities were not likely to acquiesce in such an arrangement. It happened that in the door of his retiring-room there was no key. He could not think of asking for one. But in order to secure privacy for prayer, he daily piled up chairs against the door, oblivious of the fact that the upper half was glass. It need not be said that he was never interrupted, nor that the students revered him when he stepped into the lecture-room with the beauty of holiness on his face.

The Rev. J. H. Leckie, who studied at the college from 1887 till 1890, writes as follows :—

‘When any former pupil of Dr. Cairns sets himself definitely to consider what his impressions of him were, he finds that the task is a difficult one. He feels as if the word “impression” were too definite, too limited, suggestive of something too easily grasped, to be an accurate description of the influence which the Principal had over his students. Regarding some of our teachers, we can tell exactly what they have given us ; their handwriting is easily read upon the tablet of the mind. But it is not so in the case of this teacher, whom, among them all, we loved the best. He did not give us any new theological conviction, or revolutionise any habit of thought.

He never laid hold of the mind in such a way as to determine its bent, and impose upon it the law of its future activity. He rather strengthened and toned the whole intellectual and moral life, and his influence was like an atmosphere round about us.

‘The quality which, after his intellectual power, was most apparent was his great simplicity, which revealed itself in many ways—in his utter want of suspicion or jealousy, in his almost pathetic humility, in his whole manner as orator and teacher. We all saw it, though I fear we did not all understand the nature of it. The extreme gentleness of his criticisms, the scholarly attainments with which he credited every man, the unflinching courtesy with which he treated the most unworthy, created an impression of simplicity that was only half correct. There was a prevalent notion that he regarded all his students with equal complacency, and did not see the imperfections of their work; and no doubt this general opinion was borne out on the whole by personal experience. But sometimes the more observant would be startled out of this conviction by a word or a look of marvellous penetration. His customary absorption in the subject before him and apparent forgetfulness of the class would be broken by a clear, level glance from under the heavy eyebrows, a quick look full of keenness and understanding, that implied a distinct consciousness of all that was going on and of the character of the men before him. So there arose a stimulating suspicion that he knew most of us better, perhaps, than we knew ourselves.

‘Indeed, his simplicity was not the simple thing it looked. It existed along with a keen insight and a very deep knowledge of human nature. We could never be sure how much of it arose from a certain childlikeness of character, how much from a very genuine modesty that distrusted its own judgment of men, how much even from a voluntary laying down of critical and judicial power in the interests of a singularly broad and tender charity.

‘Of the pictures of Dr. Cairns which will always stand out clearly before the mind of his pupils, the most impressive is the memory of him as he stood before God in prayer. Who will ever forget the simple “O Lord,” which was always his form of invocation, and which expressed so much more of reverence and adoration than the most elaborate ascriptions of other men? There are few whose public prayer impresses the hearer as being part of themselves; it seems either richer or poorer. But his prayers were the complete expression of himself. They harmonised entirely with all we knew of him. Just as the apparent simplicity of his character seemed to be the expression of much underlying complexity of nature, the



result of many balancing forces, so the simplicity of his prayers, with all their massive repose, conveyed to us a sense of heights and depths, of profound experience, of a passionate, wrestling, many-sided spirit. In nothing, too, did his complete want of self-consciousness appear more strikingly, revealing itself sometimes in ways that would have been amusing if they had not been reverend. One day he gave thanks, towards the end of his prayer, for the kindness of God towards the Church in Scotland, "from the Reformation onwards." But then it apparently occurred to him that this phrase hardly expressed the full greatness of the debt, and he appended, "and even before." An unfailing element was a petition on behalf of the foreign students who were with us; and if by any chance he had omitted this, and remembered it only when he was in the midst of the closing sentence, he would always stop short and introduce it. These, and other things in this connection, might sometimes cause a smile, but they always did us good and increased our veneration for the man. Certainly we do not expect to find again, on our way through the world, so complete an expression of the spirit of reverence and godly fear. It will not be possible for any of us to forget the picture of the old man, surely the most venerable figure in Scotland, as he stood in the familiar attitude, with bowed head and folded hands and form slightly swaying to the rhythm of the sentences; and so long as we can recall the sound of his voice, raised in simple phrase of invocation, we shall not be able to doubt the power of prayer.

'Another memory that will always be with us is the picture of him as he lectured. There are many things that go to make up this picture—the little old pulpit in which he sat, a pulpit surely made for smaller men; the heap of closely written manuscript, with the Greek and Hebrew Testaments; the different attitudes which he assumed during the lecture, now with arms stretched out on either side far beyond the bounds of the pulpit, and head bent low over the paper, now leaning back with closed eyes, now with his head resting wearily on his hand, now erect and open-eyed in some passage of eloquent argument. During his last three sessions the signs of age were pathetically apparent. He had more and more the look of a man who had worked too long; his head was bent down; the lines of his face often told unmistakably of a worn-out strength. And yet there was never a sign of mental decay. When you spoke of Cairns as "old," you did not mean Cairns the thinker or student. His interest in scholarship, his desire for knowledge, his eagerness to be always adding to his store of learning seemed never to abate. During the last session, he wrote and delivered an entirely new series of discourses on

Natural Religion, and gave us a Course of lectures on the Fathers, which revealed more of his true greatness as a scholar and critic than anything we had heard before. His memory had lost none of its amazing power, and he used to intersperse exhaustive accounts of speeches and sermons heard by him many years before. One day, when we came down to the class, we found the blackboard covered with an Assyrian inscription written out by himself before lecture hour, and the zest, the joy with which he discoursed upon the strange figures and signs showed that, though white of hair and bent in frame, he was in the real nature of him very young. For two days he lectured on this inscription with the most assured belief that we were following every word, and there was deep regret in his face and in his voice when he said: "And now, gentlemen, I am afraid we must return to our theology."

'And so in these days there was going on visibly before us the strange battle between an exhausted bodily frame and a mental life that was always young, between an outward man that was perishing and an inward man that was being renewed day by day. You could not help feeling as you watched the magnificent strife, This is one who keeps his youth by three enthusiasms—the love of knowledge, the love of labour, and the love of God.

'One man of our year had an unique opportunity of witnessing the moral greatness of Dr. Cairns. A student had done something which was wrong, and had sent his comrade to make confession for him. The revelation was unexpected, and to the Principal very painful. But his bearing in the emergency was one of most impressive dignity. It was the expression of grief without bitterness, a pity without weakness, a sternness that was softened and lightened by tenderness and hope. No one that saw him then could ever henceforth doubt that he was a great man. But indeed he had the habit of doing all things in a large and massive way. He performed the smallest duties in a manner that made them considerable. "He nothing common did or mean." Other men are great because of the things they have done; the things that he did were great because of himself.'

The persistent intellectual vigour to which Mr. Leckie refers showed itself in the character and method of his private studies. As soon as each session closed, he abandoned himself to research, reading for twelve or thirteen hours a day, though setting his books aside willingly when

called to open churches, conduct special services, or attend religious conventions. Thus the summer of 1887 was given to languages—Greek, Arabic, Assyrian and Dutch. In 1888 he was continuously occupied with patristic literature. In 1889 he pursued an exhaustive study of recent German theology. While he was guided by a wish to improve his Apologetic lectures, his chief stimulus was that passionate desire for the acquisition of knowledge which had marked his intellectual life since childhood. He had no design of publication, and the lectures which he gave on modern theology were almost without exception conversational.

Yet his occasional contributions to periodicals, fragmentary as these were, leave no doubt as to his view of the course of religious thought and life. The note of his utterances was always hopeful. Although his opinions on special points were frequently conservative, he was too strong a thinker to be an alarmist, and too sound a scholar to mistake criticism for scepticism. Thus, in November 1889, he closed a panoramic review of the religious life of the last century by expressing the conviction that, 'amidst tokens of *malaise* and insecurity, the movement of Christian doctrine has been in a visibly positive direction; with ebb and flow, there has been all over the world a steady rising of the tide of evangelical Christianity.' Two years later, reviewing the course of recent German theology, he wrote in the same strain. 'The Scottish people have been able to estimate at their just value all changes in doctrine which have been suggested from the side of Germany. Whilst there are movements and tendencies which cannot be contemplated without serious anxiety, a preponderance of gloom and misgiving is not justified by facts.' This was the tone, not only of his addresses to the Church at large, but of his special appeals to his students. To the latter he said:—

'Our lot is cast in troubled and chequered, but not unhopeful days. The very dust that rises is the dust of battle. It is an evil



time for men who have no sympathies with Christianity, a blessed and a joyful time for those to whom its victory is dearer than life. . . . The best of everything in Christianity as a world-wide redemption is yet to come. Forward, then, and claim it! The world is still young with you and the day long, and he who loses most that the world and even the Church calls life will keep most unto life eternal. This latest age of time is brightening through the mists with one surpassing light. Your race will not end till a great stadium in the world's vast course has been completed.'

This cheerfulness of outlook, which became more notable from year to year, and contrasted with the despondency of many who shared his evangelical convictions, was not a mere matter of temperament, but rested upon a deliberate view of contemporary Christianity. In his judgment the widespread movement of the Church towards an independent life was an evidence and a prophecy of her progress. He saw how, even in countries where Protestantism is established, the rising tides of spiritual life were accompanied by a claim for legislative and administrative liberty, and he reckoned the gain of such liberty to be infinitely greater than its risks. The freedom of the Church had a far deeper seat in his mind and heart than any denominational principle. It was an idea inseparable from his spiritual conception of Christianity, from his historical knowledge of the Church's experience, and from his observations of Christendom as it now exists. The dislocation and contention which the effort after freedom may involve were to him but the dust of battle by which no stout warrior should be blinded. He regarded the antagonism of the champions of the *status quo* as inevitable, however much he regretted it personally. In 1887, 1888 and 1889 the celebration of the third Jubilee of the Scottish Secession led him repeatedly to express this conviction. Speaking in Edinburgh in 1888 he said:—

'There is a struggle for liberty in many lands not unlike that which moved our Scottish forefathers to claim for the Church, in her government and administration, subjection to Christ alone and to



His law. That is a good and hopeful symptom, but still better and still deeper is the longing for greater purity in her communion, and for greater separation from the world. . . . Everywhere the cry of the true Church of God is more or less articulate. There is a sense of restraint, a groaning of bondage—a groaning which cannot be uttered—borne from every land and in every language, as if the Bride, the Lamb's wife, felt herself degraded and fettered by worldliness and sinful entanglement, and were obeying a mighty call to rise and sit with her Lord in heavenly places. . . . There is also a struggle for truth. We live in an apologetic age, and on every hand the Church is busy in asserting her divine origin. One hundred and fifty years ago, in the controversy of that age with unbelief, our fathers saw what it would come to if they did not defend and prove their faith; and now the whole visible Church is enveloped in this controversy. In the Protestant, in the Roman, in the Greek Church, we are all in the thick of it, and Christianity, denied a right to live, is living more gloriously than ever. It is overtopping science, showing that with all the wonders of discovery, a living and personal God is more needful than ever. It is outflanking philosophy, proving that its latest word always leads up to some mystery of the Gospel. It is dominating history, making an appeal to Christ the watchword of the greatest leader of nations, and calling forth from the deathbed of the great-grand-nephew of Frederick the Great the echo of a reviving homage to the word of the Eternal. . . . The Church is also struggling to make truth more pure and more living. The science of interpretation is more cultivated than in the best ages of the past. Theology is gathering closer around the life and death of Christ. A simpler creed is only revealing the grand perspective of the faith, and the great question is acknowledged to be, "How is the Gospel by a divine spirit to become a life of God in every soul?"

This strong sense of satisfaction in the progress of the Church towards independence was balanced by an equally strong concern for the religion of the nation. He was full of the spirit of Christian patriotism, and took an enthusiastic pleasure in every voluntary recognition of religion by public institutions and public authorities. One of the finest expressions which he gave to this feeling was in a sermon preached on April 20, 1887, in St. Giles' Cathedral, before

the University, when he pictured the splendour of the homage paid to the Gospel by learned societies, as a voluntary combination of personal tributes to God. An address delivered at Berwick in June of the same year, at a local celebration of the Queen's Jubilee, was even more notable from its recognition of the Christian influences of Her Majesty's personal character.

'I have always admired in the great German Emperor the courage and humility which have led him after every victory to ascribe it to God; and I have admired in our own Queen the open and courageous profession of religion in an age when unbelief and heartless formalism so much abound. Nor has she shrunk from recognising living Christianity wherever it is found, whether in that branch of the Christian Church to which she is attached or elsewhere. Thus she lives as truly in the hearts of Nonconformists as in any British hearts throughout the world, although we deny to a great and noble Queen like this any headship of any kind in the Church of Christ, as our fathers denied it to the Stuarts. I as a Scotchman and a Presbyterian am thankful not only for her recognition of men like Norman Macleod and Principal Tulloch, but for her goodness to men like Thomas Guthrie and George Middleton in their dying hours. In these things we see something deeper than mere womanly sympathy or native tolerance, even the Christianity which recognises everywhere the same divine image, and which, when it is set upon so lofty a throne, blesses both the country and the world.'

His hopefulness discloses itself in his private correspondence, although, with the gradual disappearance of his confidential friends, his letter-writing became more and more fragmentary.

TO REV. PROFESSOR GRAHAM

10 SPENCE STREET, *Jan. 3, 1887.*

' . . . It is sad to think that William Robertson and John Ker are no longer with us. But we cannot live always, and God has taken them at the right time. . . . A fine feeling is among the students, and there is much earnestness of spirit in the University. It really looks as if the dreary reign of negation and low materialism were giving place. What a grand England and Scotland it will be

when the old spirit of faith returns! These thoughts are not alien from my present work, a lecture on John Knox. I am not the man for this; but I have got some good out of it, were it only the shadow of the prophet's girdle. . . .'

TO MRS. SIME

10 SPENCE STREET, *Dec. 25, 1888.*

'Before our College opened, I had to read a great deal of Greek, including long discussions of Basil and the Gregories, with Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret and other writers of that period. I ought to be allowed now to forget Greek; but I had to get into some stiff and knotty regions of it not very much cultivated for the Civil Service examination. However, it was a real joy to me and a help with the New Testament. . . . The meeting of the Presbyterian Alliance I immensely enjoyed, as also the great Centenary Missionary Conference in June. Everything about Islam, Buddhism, and Brahminism was from the highest authorities. The vastness of the meeting and the character of the Reports gave me an impression of Christian success in the face of awful difficulties such as I never had before. The whole formed a splendid contrast to the sensationalism of the day, and has brightened my hope of the world in its darkest places. . . .'

Yet his judgment did not rest exclusively, if indeed mainly, upon information supplied at such meetings. His personal friendships included a large number of people of humble rank whose letters furnished him with details of movements which never reached the public ear. While missionaries poured out their joys and sorrows to him, farmers, tradesmen and artisans who had been in his Bible-classes reported to him on the religious life of the Colonies and the United States. As to Continental Europe, his method of travelling and of striking up casual acquaintances took him far below the surface with which the ordinary statistics of religion deal. The result upon himself was a strong, sanguine, yet well-measured belief in the onward movement of the Gospel, and in its increasing influence upon human life.

The predominance of this tone showed itself emphatically



in May 1888, when, as the result of a spontaneous movement among United Presbyterian ministers and laymen, his portrait, painted by Mr. W. E. Lockhart, R.S.A., was presented to the Synod. The presentation was made at one of the sittings of the Synod amidst a scene which no spectator will ever forget—the crowded Court rising to attest its profound and loving homage, and he, standing among them with bent head and folded hands, disclaiming every gift but faith and hope. After acknowledging with half-conscious humour that he had found much pleasure in discussing theology with the artist during the painting of the portrait, he proceeded:—

‘I have now preached for forty-three years and have been a Professor of Theology for more than twenty; and I find every year how much grander the Gospel of the grace of God becomes, and how much deeper, vaster and more unsearchable the riches of Christ, which it is the function of theology to explore. I have had in this and in other Churches a band of ministerial brethren, older and younger, with whom it has been a lifelong privilege to be associated, and in the Professors a body of colleagues so generous and loving that greater harmony could not be conceived. The congregations to which I have preached have far overpaid my labours; and the students whom I have taught have given me more lessons than many books. I have been allowed many opportunities of mingling with Christians of other lands, and have learned, I trust, something more of the unity in diversity of the creed, “I believe in the Holy Catholic Church.” In that true Church, founded on Christ’s sacrifice and washed in His blood, cheered by its glorious memories and filled with its immortal hopes, I desire to live and die. Life and labour cannot last long with me; but I would seek to work to the end for Christian truth, for Christian missions, and for Christian union. Amidst so many undeserved favours, I would still thank God and take courage, and under the weight of all anxieties and failures, and the shadows of separation from loved friends, I would repeat the confession which, by the grace of God, time only confirms, “*In Te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in aeternum.*”’

Honoured as he was in Church Courts, he showed a growing inclination to avoid discussion and debate, and it



became more and more difficult to persuade him to act as a Church leader. Indeed, vexation was frequently expressed at this. Men complained that, when important issues were at stake, he would sit hour after hour, with head resting on hand, noting everything but saying nothing; and if matters went amiss they would say almost impatiently, 'Why did Cairns not speak? *He* knew better.' Occasionally, indeed, if a resolution was passed of which he disapproved, he would rise to guard himself against being committed by it; but this only increased the regret that he had delayed his protest until it was useless. The *ex cathedra* position assigned to him appeared to cumber him by its responsibility. It was as if he felt that, being the mouthpiece of the Church, he was limited to the expression of opinions which had been ecclesiastically formulated. Even outside Church Courts this tendency showed itself, and those who looked to him for guidance on some difficult question would be disappointed to find that he merely referred them to a resolution of Synod or Presbytery. But it was part of his native loyalty and his engrained humility.

There was a quaint element in his submissiveness to burdens. The Secretary of the International Conference on Missions, to which reference has been made, tells that Dr. Cairns replied to a request that he would read a paper at the Conference by saying that, besides being exceedingly busy, he was quite unqualified to write anything about Missions worthy of such an occasion. With pardonable persistency the Secretary pressed his request, and urged that such a disclaimer from the foremost man in a Church conspicuous for its missionary zeal would be disheartening and misleading; whereupon Dr. Cairns at once acknowledged that he had 'received a well-merited rebuke,' and promised that he 'would do his best.' The result was a vigorous and temperate paper on the application of Christian principle to commercial life, which not only proved to be a striking

feature of the Conference, but had practical results. Among Dr. Cairns' letters is one from the head of a large trading firm, stating that the cogency and clearness of the paper had led the writer to give up an extensive spirit trade with Central Africa.

This self-depreciation was in a manner balanced by the veneration for his prowess cherished by the simple-minded, as divulged in his correspondence. It will stand comparison with what he experienced at Berwick. One farmer writes to him at great length, begging him to 'use his vast influence to abolish Free Trade,' on the ground that the imposition of a duty of 5s. per quarter on barley would diminish the consumption of alcohol. Another correspondent, more single-eyed in his advocacy of Temperance, requests him to 'unite with the Archbishop of Canterbury in insisting that all future versions of the Bible shall recognise the distinction between fermented and unfermented wine.' Others write as though only a few words from him were needed for the extermination of all sin. Besides, he had correspondents of another type—men who charged him violently and roundly with false and immoral teaching, and ascribed to him unlimited influence for evil over Church doctrines and practices. His most intimate friends did not guess how much trouble of this sort he underwent. To some extent he brought it upon himself by his unlimited courtesy and his laborious indulgence towards all infirmities.

Among recent religious movements in England, there were few which he regarded with more interest than the foundation of Mansfield College. Hailing it as a return to the welcome which Oxford extended to all-comers in Pre-Restoration days, he saw in it the prospect not only of increased usefulness for the University, but of a wider culture among Nonconformist ministers, and willingly represented his Church at the various celebrations of the College. Principal Fairbairn writes:—

‘I well remember, when the burden of responsibility in connection with Mansfield was lying heaviest on me, I chanced to meet him in Edinburgh. He took my hand in his and said: “We think of you often. It is a great undertaking, this return of the Independents to Oxford, and I remember you in my prayers. May God bless your college to the glory of His Gospel in England.”

‘One interview with him stands out very vividly in my memory. Dr. Hatch had joined me in Edinburgh, and we visited him together at the United Presbyterian College. He had just dismissed his class, and took us into his room, expatiating in his warm and rich way on the subjects that always lay nearest his heart. On his desk was a small edition of Grotius’ *De Satisfactione*, which had been published at Oxford soon after its first appearance in Holland. This led him into a spontaneous but most interesting conversational dissertation on Grotius—on his theory of the Atonement, and on the sympathy of Oxford with him and, at that time, with the Protestant schools of the Continent; and he proceeded to cite in evidence quite a number of books by Continental scholars republished at Oxford, of Oxford scholars who had been abroad, and of foreign scholars who had been attracted to Oxford. Then, still expatiating, he took us up to the Library, and showed us some of its treasures, among others the reprint of Tyndale’s New Testament, which led him to another outpouring of knowledge, no less rich and varied, as to the translations of the sixteenth century and the conditions under which they were made. And he was throughout so simple, so genuine, so possessed with the enthusiasm of a knowledge that came unbidden and would not be held back, that my companion expressed the rare pleasure it had been to him to meet so fine and indeed perfect a specimen of the Scotch scholar and divine. Then, as often, Dr. Cairns gave one the impression, almost more than any man I ever met, of thoroughly knowing his subject and as thoroughly loving the subject he knew. His stay with us at the opening of Mansfield was one of the memorable things of a memorable time. We shall not soon forget the massive simplicity, yet quaint and playful tenderness of his ways.’

Those years deprived him of some of his closest friends, and he was visited by that sense of solitude which is the lot of most men who pass threescore years and ten. But the following letters show that the solitude, far from depressing him, drove him more deeply into study, and at



the same time increased his activity in all kinds of Christian work. He did not falter in his summer rounds of preaching, and indeed, in 1889, included Orkney and Shetland in his circuit. But his chief pleasure was in unobserved work of a distinctly personal character.

## TO MRS. SIME

10 SPENCE STREET, Dec. 26, 1887.

‘. . . There are sad memories in this year—the death of my dear sister, whose life was latterly heroic, of William Graham, one of my oldest friends, and of William Nelson, who will be much missed by your brother Daniel. In Edinburgh I begin to feel myself one of a vanished generation. Yet I have had, though occasionally breaking down, considerable power of work, having preached all through the summer and lectured steadily through the session. The students have, as a rule, been very satisfactory both in their abilities and in still deeper preparation for Christian usefulness. Last night I spent among the Edinburgh Germans, and rejoiced in seeing the children marching round the *Christ-Baum* singing, “*Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht*,” before receiving their Christmas gifts. Dear Isabella Brown, Rab’s sister, is very ill, and this touches, at another point, one of my oldest friendships. . . . My brother and sister join in all loving memories of the departed and in kindly thoughts of the living.’

## TO WILLIAM CAIRNS

LONDON, June 13, 1888.

‘The evening meeting of the Conference was immensely exciting, roused, as I have seldom seen, by minute accounts from many missionaries of the drink traffic and the opium one, including scenes which appeared to belong rather to hell than to earth. We are evidently on the eve of great struggles in connection with those questions, and the retreat of the Government on the Licensing Clauses will confirm the sense of moral power in the country.’

## TO MRS. WILLIAM GRAHAM

10 SPENCE STREET, Dec. 25, 1888.

‘It is a pleasure to me to write a few lines at the close of this year, which must have been so sad to you. One of my happiest experi-



ences has been to recall those scenes of grief that can never be forgotten. God can bring joys for us out of sorrow; and when we think how the blessed have learned this lesson, it takes away the sting, so far, from our own pain. Very often in the course of this year I have missed William's companionship, but I have always found my sadness vanish when I thought that this loss was necessary to his glorification, and I have blessed God that he had reached, by this outlet from all earthly intercourse, escape from sin and sorrow, and the blessedness that is the prize of our own hope. We must, therefore, bear the solitude, that has so bright a side elsewhere, without seeking to constrain their unbound spirits into our captivity. . . .'

TO MR. JAMES MACEWEN

10 SPENCE STREET, *Oct. 29, 1889.*

'It is with very sincere regret that I have heard of the death of my dear old friend your father.<sup>1</sup> I feel deeply for your family. . . . Yet all things happen at the right time, and God does not want His servants to be always kept here. Let us be thankful that he was so long spared to shine as a light in the world, holding forth the word of life, showing us an example of the sound and true Christian of the old stock, and showing also that the strictest principle is consistent with the warmest affection and the purest cheerfulness. May all of us who knew him live as he did, above the world! . . .'

TO DR. MACLAGAN.

10 SPENCE STREET, *Dec. 24, 1889.*

' . . . May 1890 be a great year in the Kingdom of God! 1889 has had much blessing; but we long for more. I began with the New Year's prayer-meeting, speaking on "Rejoice evermore," with two heads: 1. Things to be rejoiced *at*; 2. Things to be rejoiced *in spite of*. Every year will bring the same division. . . .'

TO MRS. WILLIAM GRAHAM

10 SPENCE STREET, *Jan. 1, 1890.*

'I heard of you not long ago, but I feel bound to write to you at this season. . . . Hitherto I have been equal to my work. During

<sup>1</sup> The coachman at Auchairne with whom Dr. Cairns lodged in 1838.

the year I had a great deal of preaching in England. At Easter I was at South Shields, and in May at Leeds and Rochdale. In June I went by the Severn Tunnel in the loveliest summer weather to preach at Bristol, returning for services at Wallsend and at Berwick. In July I went north and preached for all our congregations and stations in Shetland. It was a grand time ; the scenery is so fine and the people were much interested in the preaching. . . . The loss of Dr. Elmslie to your College was very great, and it occurred at the season of your own sad bereavement. How much I miss your husband ! There is hardly one now that I can go back with on the same topics. But he had fought a good fight and finished his course. . . .'

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### PROFESSOR AND PRINCIPAL

1890-1891

Intention of resigning abandoned—Statement to Special Committee—The Berlin student again—Schrader, etc.—Berlin 'Change—Dissent in Germany and Holland—Recent Scottish theology—Professor Duff's death—Railway strike—Health failing—Committee's visitation—Synod's decisions—Stitchel—His last sermon—Harnack, etc.—Work interdicted.

TOWARDS the close of 1889 Dr. Cairns began to consider the propriety of retiring from active duty. He was still a strong man, but it seemed to him that he might best utilise his remaining strength in giving a permanent shape to some of his theological researches. None except his brothers knew that he had any such intention, and before it became definite, events occurred which led him to suppress it. Those events had an unpleasant side affecting others, and they will, therefore, be indicated only so far as is necessary to bring out some striking features in the last years of Dr. Cairns' life.

Since Dr. Ker's death, complaints had from time to time been heard among the students about the course of training at the College, and at the beginning of 1890 those complaints found voice in the Presbyteries of the Church. It was said that the curriculum was inadequate as a whole, and specially defective at certain points; that the teaching was too elementary, too linguistic, too departmental, too antique; that some aspects of modern theology were ignored, and that little heed was paid to current controversies, especially to those which bear upon the authorship and the authority of the books of the Bible. Presbyteries are

open courts, and for several months the daily newspapers abounded in reports of debates upon the justice or injustice of those complaints. When affairs took this aspect, Dr. Cairns abandoned his project of retiring from office. It is true that throughout the controversy his name had always been mentioned with respect, and his work spoken of with admiration. Had it been otherwise, the students' complaints would have been reckoned by the Church as groundless, so deep was the general reverence for him. But this fact only steadied him in his purpose to adhere to his post. His chivalrous loyalty would not suffer him to forsake his colleagues at a time when their work was under scrutiny. Besides, the 'Hall' was his sphere, his department, his concern, the institution which had latterly absorbed his chief energies; and he felt bound to give a full account to the Church of its actual condition. There was not the faintest resentment on his part, nor did he, even in the home circle, use a word of complaint such as was in some quarters expected from him. His bearing toward the students was unaltered—indeed his geniality in dealing with them seemed to increase; and if any inquisitive acquaintance tried to elicit his opinion upon the merits of the case, not a touch of irony could be detected in his unvarying reply that the matter might be safely left to the 'wisdom of the Synod.'

When the Synod met in May 1890, he was there as usual, taking a fair share in debate, expressing his unwavering view as to the retention of the Bible in public schools, and presenting his annual report upon the College. After a keen discussion, the Synod appointed a Special Committee, with instructions to inquire into the condition of the College, to confer with the Professors and others, and to report in May 1891. As soon as the Court rose, the Committee began its work by asking each of the Professors to furnish a brief note of the subjects covered by his lectures.



In response, Dr. Cairns transmitted a statement so exhaustive and minute, even in its outline of work, that the lay members of committee were filled with amazement. To the professional eye it was apparent that, while leaving Old Testament Criticism, New Testament Criticism, and Church History to his three colleagues, he had traversed in his lectures the whole field of theology, practical and theoretical. He had, as any one might have anticipated, been perfectly aware of the omissions from the curriculum, and in one department after another he had been writing courses of lectures, and delivering them when opportunity presented itself. It also became obvious that he had given his work a scope beyond the powers of any one man. He might indeed have overtaken it if he had been satisfied with supplying a general and superficial summary, but every fresh line of study had been attacked with a determination to go to the very roots of it and to give the result of his own research and his own thinking. When asked by the Committee if he had any suggestions to make regarding his special department, he replied :—

‘I have written courses of lectures on Biblical Theology, but these I have rarely had time to deliver. Under the head of Christian Ethics I have thought that there was room for something more. Hence I wrote lectures on the subject two years ago, but I have only once been able to deliver them. There is also room for more in regard to Comparative Religion. I have limited myself here to Mohammedanism. It has always occurred to me that unless one knows something of the language, or has lived among the people, lectures on Hinduism or Buddhism are of less authority. I am, however, prepared to receive any suggestions.’

It need hardly be said that the only ‘suggestion’ possible was that he was enormously overburdened, and at this early stage of the investigation a conclusion was reached unanimously : ‘Dr. Cairns’ work must be greatly reduced and he must be relieved in every possible way.’ While all were at one in admiration of the unselfishness with which he had

sacrificed his distinctive powers to the needs of the College, there arose, in some minds at least, a sense of deep regret that the absence of a qualified Board of Studies and his own eagerness for service had led to such a sacrifice, and a doubt if the permanent loss to theological learning had not been greater than the temporary gain to United Presbyterian students.

In his own mind, however, there was as little of regret as of resentment. He explained everything about his work fully and cordially, and, leaving the Committee to other phases of their duty, set out on a preaching tour, which included all three kingdoms and closed with special services at his beloved Berwick, the last he conducted there. Thereafter he made an expedition as unique in its object as in its manner. Wishing to gain some acquaintance with the methods of the younger school of German theologians, he resolved to resume his place as a Berlin student. It did not occur to him that a man of seventy-two should be less willing or less able to learn from others than a man of twenty-five, and he thought that he would learn more sitting on the benches of class-rooms than discussing methods privately with professors. It was a blithe and happy expedition, undertaken and carried out with as much interest and simplicity as his *Wanderjahr* of the year 1844. He travelled fourth class, anxious to 'see human nature a little freer than even the third class,' talking familiarly with soldiers and peasants and children, and seeking, with a skill in which fifty years' practice had made him a proficient, to guide those with whom he talked into the right road. A few extracts from letters in which, with his own minuteness, he reported all episodes and details to Mr. William Cairns, will explain both his mood and his method:—

BERLIN, *July 14, 1890.*

'At Stendhal a porter guided me to the Brunnen, where I got very good water. I repeated to him the line of Goethe about the great house in which a glass of wine is a small gift. He recognised

it, as another porter did three years ago at Hamm. . . . There are many signs of revived energy in the Church. When I arrived here, I found to my great relief that the lectures will still last for a month. On Saturday I sought out the class-room where Neander and Schelling lectured in 1843, and sat down on my old seat, two or three benches back on the right of the lecturer. Tears came to my eyes as I thought of all that had since happened, and of the dear old friends, Nelson and Graham and Aikman, whom the place recalled, with MacEwen and Fraser, who joined us from Halle, and William Robertson and John Ker, who had been there before us. Of my fellow-students, only Wallace and Mitchell remain, with Mackintosh of Buchanan. However, none of us had any reason to regret Berlin, and my thoughts of the past were not essentially sad, as the city and University have more of Christian life in them than in my day. . . . Yesterday I attended lectures by Strack, Kaftan and Pfeiderer, and had much intercourse with my good friend, Dr. Schaff. . . . On Sabbath I heard Stöcker preach in the Cathedral: a man about sixty, with fine voice and delivery, and great freshness of thought and warmth of feeling, altogether Christian and enchaining the great audience; no hatred of Jews or others, but all that was forgiving and kindly. In the evening Schaff introduced me to Dillmann, Kaftan, and Harnack, who is, so far, the rising man, but with a leaning to the Left, which made his entrance here difficult. I had talk with all these and many others. Sometimes the conversation included the whole company; but when the speech-making began, I did not feel called on to speak, as the fear of interviewers can hardly make one too silent.'

But he had not come to Berlin either to indulge sentiment or to enjoy hospitality.

BERLIN, *July 17, 1890.*

' . . . Since Dr. Schaff left, I have avoided all engagements, and gone every day to the University, attending as many lectures as possible. At first I drove, but I find that by short cuts I can make the journey on foot in fifteen minutes. It is a splendid city, and when overcome by its splendour and the heat, I sit down at any available Platz and drink without fear—the pump-water. . . .'

At the University he attended five or six lectures a day, 'exhausting,' as he himself wrote, the whole Theological Faculty, and finding refreshment by appending to each day's work lectures on miscellaneous topics, such as Prussian



Criminal Law, Roman Philosophy and the Sources of Modern History. Biermann's lectures on Roman Law impressed him greatly, and gave him suggestions as to the method of examining students. But his chief delight was the discovery that Schrader lectured on Assyriology and Dieterici on Arabic late in the afternoon, so that he could hear them without interrupting his proper business. Rumour, which cannot be guaranteed, tells that one day when Schrader was apologising to his students for having been unable to ascertain the exact text of a recently discovered inscription, an apologetic voice was heard from the back benches saying that the speaker had recently examined the inscription at Paris, and would willingly quote it so far as his memory would serve, and that Schrader, like a true scholar, called the white-haired old giant forward, and listened deferentially to a minute description of the tablet under discussion.

When his work was done, he allowed himself some further indulgences in examining various current phases of German religious life. He went sermon-hearing with Weiss, and congratulated him when in Trinity Church, where Schleiermacher once preached, they heard an eloquent enunciation of the 'article of a standing or falling church.' 'Berlin,' he wrote, 'is certainly more interpenetrated with religious life, native and foreign, than in my younger days. . . .'

BERLIN, *July 24, 1890.*

'Before returning for a last look at the Assyrian inscriptions in the Museum, I went to the gallery which runs round the Börse and reveals the immense and bustling crowd spread out below. The sound of four thousand struggling voices almost drove you back, coming as from a field of battle. I heard the same long ago in the Börse of Hamburg. It is like the sound of many waters, only with an eager, weird and burdened utterance, that may rise to heaven but hardly seems to come from it. The most striking thing was the enormous and agitated mass broken up into three compartments one dealing in German stocks, another in foreign, and the third in corn—a true Mirza-vision of human life. Here and there stand men



like recording angels, and agitated groups where men are made or unmade in an hour. I was affected by this spectacle, but not altogether disposed to preach with Augustine: "O ye sons of men, how long will ye love vanity?" for commerce is also great and has blessed the world; yet I felt deeply sad to think how much we all cling to the perishable, and how soon we, with that intensely living crowd, will have to give account of all that we grasp at and all that we possess. These thoughts went with me into the silence of the Museum, where Sennacherib and his compeers had been lifted out of their graves to point the moral. May the nail be fastened in a sure place! This is not unfit to be my last day in Berlin. May God sanctify all that I have seen and heard! . . .

'Before leaving, I attended a conversational lesson in Chinese, given by Arendt, who is a good teacher. I said a few words to the students as to the alleged discovery of the identity of the Accadian or Non-Semitic element in the Assyrian language with the Chinese, and then betook myself to spend two hours among the Assyrian inscriptions, which are now quite luminous to me.'

From Berlin he visited Wittenberg, and sat again, after an interval of forty-eight years, under Luther's oak.<sup>1</sup> Then he had written of it as, 'beginning to bud, with a cold wind rustling through it, a fit emblem of the present religious revival.' Now he finds it 'a noble embodiment of the Reformation, which will yet see a good deal of Papalism (overbelief and underbelief) consumed under its shadow without any withering of its leaves. For Germany and the world, Luther is much greater everywhere than in 1844.' Halle, too, he revisited, and revived his friendship with Frau Tholuck, besides sitting as a learner at the feet of Haupt, Köstlin, Kautzsch and Beyschlag.

HANOVER, *July 27, 1890.*

'I met to-day a very interesting Lutheran minister of this place, separated from the State. He listened with great interest to my story of similar separation on the part of our forefathers and also of the Free Church. His objections were more of doctrine than of administration. We adjusted our position by his stating such a theory of the Incarnation as provides for the real presence in the Supper—I, with this exception, professing my cordial adherence

<sup>1</sup> Compare page 174.

to the Augsburg Confession, and both of us standing outside of Erastianism. This filled up a blank in the picture of German Christianity. I had another interesting talk with a gymnasiast, who had Greek books as well as Latin under his arm. When will our enlightened privy-councillors provide such learning for rural households? . . . I did not come off so well with a younger damsel, a nice-looking child of ten or more, who resisted all my efforts to get a sight of her school-book. When I tried in joke to coax her, she hid it behind her back. In vain I appealed for help to an elderly lady, who saw no cause for breaking a benevolent neutrality. There must be a great deal of goodness in those regions when such a sensitive plant can find a place.'

AMSTERDAM, July 28, 1890.

'Worshipping this morning in the Doleerende Kerk, I recognised at once the old enthusiasm of 1885. . . . At the evening service I spoke to the congregation with much interest. In waiting for Van Schelven after service, I had instructive talk with his servant, an intelligent girl from Elberfeld, about the social state of Amsterdam and the activity of the new Church. Van Schelven explained the state of matters to me more fully. Difficulties have arisen both in the relation of the new Church to the universities and as to union. The Doleerende Kerk resembles the Free Church, while ours is typified by another movement forty years old. . . . He spoke very strongly of the decay of the Kuenen movement and its ethical modification. At the Hague I called at the Royal Library to thank Dr. Hynmaelen for all the help he has given me about Grotius, and found him a fine old man, in sympathy with earnest faith. . . . I ended by visiting a quiet street where there is a statue of Spinoza. The features have a less sombre and mysterious cast than in his portraits. With his Jewish physiognomy there is something that strangely recalls the head of Christ as our artists give it. In this out-of-the-way quarter I could not think but with sadness of his great genius which so missed the way, apart alike from the Synagogue and the Church, in trying to think of God as Love and of man as God. A gentleman whom I asked if the statue had been erected out of sympathy with his views, or as a tribute to his intellectual greatness, answered simply, "Intellectuál."'

Returning to Edinburgh, he set himself to write a compendious review of recent Scottish theology for the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*. Before writing it, he read

over every theological work of note published in Scotland during the last half century. None of his utterances give a better idea of the sober but appreciative temper of his mind in later years. While his evangelical sympathies are frankly expressed, he cordially recognises the ability and sincerity of those from whom he differs, and gathers up the general results with indisputable fairness.

In the autumn he had to part with two tried friends, whose removal brought lasting injury both to the Church and to the College—Professor David Duff, upon whose acuteness and geniality he had placed great reliance during their colleagueship, and Dr. James Brown, a large-hearted and helpful friend closely allied to him as Convener of the College Committee. He was prompt and masterly in paying tributes of respect from the pulpit and through the press to both men, a notice of Professor Duff written *currente calamo* for the *Scotsman* giving special proof that his hand had not lost its journalistic skill. Although in October he fulfilled an engagement to attend a meeting of the Evangelical Alliance at Manchester, and gave there a fresh and striking address upon the history of the Alliance, his strength was obviously shaken and insufficient to bear a new burden which fell upon him when the Hall opened in November. Arrangements had been made for the conducting of Professor Duff's classes by the Rev. R. W. Barbour of Bonskeid. Mr. Barbour, however, fell into ill-health, and in the hope of his early recovery, Dr. Cairns, generously aided by Professor Calderwood, undertook to conduct the Church History classes till Christmas. He did so cheerfully, almost gleefully, welcoming the opportunity of giving one of his undelivered courses of lectures. But the burden was beyond bearing. Indeed the position had become almost absurd. Ten years before, there had been Professors of Dogmatics, of Practical Training and of Church History. Now, in addition to his original duties, he had upon his shoulders



the responsibility for those three Chairs, and this at a time when there was something of the nature of rebellion among the students. 'During those weary months,' writes Mrs. Barbour, 'Dr. Cairns' kind visits to my husband's bedside cheered and helped him greatly; he always felt heartened and encouraged by the conversation to fight on and look upwards.' Mr. Barbour's illness gradually assumed a fatal form, and at the beginning of 1891 he definitely gave up hope of fulfilling his appointment. During the rest of the session Dr. Cairns received valuable assistance from a former pupil, the Rev. J. P. Mitchell; but this did not lessen the strain of the administration and discipline of the College. Throughout the winter, the normal entries in his diary were: '3 hours' lecture; 7 hours' preparation; 2½ hours' study'; and the 'study,' alternating between languages and moral philosophy, was, though self-chosen, not such as to unbend the bow.

One episode, which occurred at the beginning of the year, brought to light the independence of his judgment and his notable personal courage. Edinburgh, as well as the rest of Scotland, was in a state of anxious excitement through a protracted strike of the servants of the North British Railway Company. The widespread inconvenience and even distress of the public led to the holding of public meetings, which, although professedly impartial, frequently took the shape of demonstrations in favour of the strikers. Dr. Cairns, as a citizen of known popular sympathies, was urged to attend, and he viewed the request as an invitation to express his views upon the situation. He accordingly appeared at a mass-meeting, at which the general public was out-numbered by the men on strike. The newspaper report will show how firmly even in old age he could stand a storm:—

'Principal Cairns said that he was not quite certain that what he should say would exactly hit the temper of this or any similar meeting, but he was there to express his opinion honestly. He



could not take a side, further than by saying that the dispute ought long ago to have been submitted to arbitration, and that if there were a desire for arbitration on the part of the men ("No, no," murmurs and interruptions), he would plead with the Directors to yield this point. Unless the men would move in this direction, they were not doing their duty to the community (renewed interruption). They would allow him to speak. If he was out of order he would be silent. . . . He lamented the present social disruption and agitation (hisses). He sympathised with the Railway Companies in all their just interests (hisses and interruption). As a Christian minister, he believed it to be his duty to do justice to both sides. ("Oh! oh!" hisses and groans). He sympathised with the men so far as they claimed justice; but he sympathised with the shareholders (shouts of "No," and groans)—with poor widows and persons of limited income. (Disorder.) Yes, he sympathised with all suffering in this crisis, and he wished that God would lead those who had any influence to wield it justly and in obedience to conscience.'

More than once during those days of keen tension he spoke in similar terms, and for a few weeks he was received in public with silence or even with marks of disapprobation. The feeling was of course transient and caused him no annoyance, but it led the community to take note once more of his unbiassed character.

As the spring advanced, however, the pressure of work brought on an internal illness, an old enemy with which he had silently contended in earlier years, and although he was able to struggle through his work till the end of the session, he had to forego his quiet morning walk to the College. Of the various routes open to him he had, after counting the number of steps which each involved, chosen the one which led through the poorest and steepest streets, and many humble people now missed the cheerful daily greeting to which they had been accustomed for fifteen years. Before the session ended, Drs. Maclagan and Webster insisted that he should cancel all engagements for the coming summer. But his increasing weakness was not noticeable to others, and he was able to meet with the Synod's Special Committee when they visited the College in March.

One episode in the Visitation has left an indelible mark on the memories of all who were present. In the course of an interview with the Committee, Dr. Cairns was asked by one member if he thought that there was any ground for the students' complaint that they did not hear enough about modern questions. His reply was to the following effect:—

'I cannot suppose that you mean me to speak about the work of my colleagues, but I have pleasure in replying as to my own work. Apologetics has been my special department, and I have endeavoured to keep abreast of the varying lines of attack and defence, although aware that the endeavour is an arduous one. I have tried to weigh the value of current controversies. There are in our day unscientific and unimportant types of criticism which seem for the time to be great, but are essentially ephemeral. I have not as a rule given these more than the cursory and conversational treatment which they have seemed to me to merit, but have been guided by the conviction that the arguments by which the Gospel is best defended do not vary in their essence, although they may change their shape.'

The following letter is addressed to a student correspondent, who, before setting out for Germany, had written to him frankly:—

'I rejoice that there is so much harmony between us about the Incarnation and the Atonement; but I cannot think that our Church is prepared to make Universalism an open question. As to Inspiration, if there is to be a contrast between methods of proof, I can sympathise with your preference of experience to external testimonies; but both are best. For myself, Scripture on innumerable sides is a sharp two-edged sword. It cuts awfully deep as well as wondrously heals. Its whole revelation of a divine Christ, mediating by substitution and spiritual influence, is so stupendous, coherent, inimitable, unfathomable, with all the history, morality, institution worked up with it, that it goes to my very heart, and I say of this circle of books that they are divine. Must they not be divine in form as well as in substance? Go on as you are doing, and allow for the interplay of different elements. The difficulties lie in details. I recognise as deserving of regard all the facts of historical inquiry, though these seem to me to confirm the old doctrine more than they disturb it.

I cannot persuade myself that the grand old Book of God is to come down from its essentially supreme place. May God Himself direct us all in regard to His own will and way! Amidst all disturbing elements, may you learn as much as I have done from Germany, and may your companions also be led to truth and right and holiness! Let us pray without ceasing to our loving God who guides the meek in the way! The Synod begins this evening a not unanxious meeting. Remember me also in prayer, as I you, and let the Church of Christ be more in our hearts than anything else.'

The Report which the Committee presented to the Synod was such as might have been anticipated as regards Dr. Cairns. Cordial acknowledgment was made of the assistance which he had given in the inquiry, and deep regret was expressed that for some years he had been unduly burdened. The Committee suggested no alterations in his methods, and stated that 'the inquiry had deepened their sense of the immense value of his services to the College both as Professor and as Principal, and had strengthened the hope that he would long be spared to adorn the institution of which he was the honoured head, and the Church which he represented with so much distinction.' The Report was indorsed by the Synod with an enthusiasm which was as significant of affection as of reverence. The Chair of Church History was filled by the appointment of Dr. James Orr as Professor; steps were taken to preserve the balance of the different departments of study; and other alterations were introduced which do not affect the present narrative.

The Synod was scarcely over when another old ailment reappeared. Twenty years before, when making the ascent of Snowdon, he had overreached himself, and had become subject to hernia, with consequent awkwardness of gait, of which none but his doctor had known the reason. With an almost unnatural considerateness, he had concealed from his most intimate friends what would have vexed them. Now, however, the malady asserted itself in a form which could



not be hidden, and brought weeks of severe pain. It was an unusually depressing ailment, yet it cast no gloom over his spirit. He was full of cheery gratitude when, in the beginning of July, the skill of Professor Chiene devised a means of lessening the discomfort and the danger, and he was able to pay a fortnight's visit to his brother David at Stichel.

That quiet church and manse, standing almost alone, four miles from Kelso, on a pastoral hill-slope facing the beautiful undulations of the Border country, had occupied a large place in his heart ever since the Ordination of his brother in 1855. It had been a standing arrangement that he should conduct anniversary services there every April, and from year to year those visits had attracted crowded congregations gathered from a wide area. The impression produced by his preaching, deepened as it was by the respectful affection which his personal cordiality and dignity inspired, had become an appreciable stimulus to the religious life of the district. But this visit stood by itself, being longer than any previous one, and being devoted to rest. Although unable to walk far, he was in full mental vigour, and spent long forenoons reading theology in the manse garden, and occasionally bewildering rustic visitors by confiding to them the drift of his abstruse studies.

'We younger people,' writes his niece, 'came nearer to him than ever before. He was as happy as a child, rejoicing with every increase of strength. One day he came in from the garden saying to my mother, "I have come to tell you that this is a day which has wandered out of Paradise." He greatly enjoyed my brother Willie's singing, especially songs like Sheriff Nicolson's "Skye" and Shairp's "Bush aboon Traquair." We were astonished to find how familiar he was with all sorts of queer, out-of-the-way ballads. Never had we seen him so free from care, so genial and even jubilant.'

On the Communion Sabbath, which occurred during his visit, he was strong enough to address the communicants on the words, 'Ye do shew the Lord's death till He come,'



in tones none the less impressive because they wanted their old strength. A neighbouring farmer, who had been his friend from school-days, arranged a few days later for a special service for farm-workers, and to this homely congregation he preached what proved to be his last sermon, with great thankfulness that he could do so without risk to his health. The following letter to one of his nephews shows how far he was from reckoning that his work was finished :—

STITCHEL, July 13, 1891.

‘Before leaving Edinburgh I read through the three big volumes of Harnack’s *Dogmen-Geschichte*. In many things I differ from him; but I have learned a great deal, and sympathise much with his spirited and appreciative estimates of Athanasius, Augustine and Luther. His picture of the over-intellectualism of the Greek Church is very fine and, as it gets worked over and fettered by Byzantinism and renascent pagan mythology, it becomes awful. His sympathy with Augustine, though deeper, is largely due to his having saved the Western Church from much of this. I do not find so much of Ritschl in Harnack as I expected. Their resemblance is more in their common recoil from the metaphysical, and a certain curious historical intuition which they both have. I also attacked in Edinburgh the last of Ritschl’s volumes on the *Ver-söhnung*, and got through most of it. It clears up for me a good deal of his view of the whole subject, though there are still in it dark places. At Stichel I have read Hermann’s rectorial address. I have just finished G. A. Smith’s two volumes on Isaiah. I have, as you may suppose, had a great many *Einwendungen* to make against it, but have been much interested and not a little instructed. Many of my criticisms are met in the second volume, which contains a really different scheme and programme of prophecy. As the upshot of all, my tendencies in the direction of the unity of Isaiah are strengthened. The linguistic side and the realistic translations I have enjoyed much. There is also in the second volume a better ethical basis, with more power both of thought and of writing, than I could have appreciated had I not read the volumes together. . . .

‘With regard to the Hall work, I do not expect much variety to myself. While Dr. Orr will be trying his hand, with good effect, at the early periods of Church History, I shall be working under

limitations and getting all my work well up, with reference to the somewhat more scientific style which will be initiated as the result of last year's inquiries. This was inevitable, and it will do good; but I am glad that my own course has been passed under somewhat different conditions. However, I go forward with much cheerfulness, and am willing to look at, if not to inaugurate, the new period. . . . I have given Dr. King of Winnipeg, who has just left for Berlin, letters to Harnack and Weiss, with one to Stöcker, who represents, to my mind, the failing practical side in Church life and ecclesiastical reform.'

At the end of July he returned to Edinburgh, partly in order to prepare systematically for the ensuing session, and partly in order to welcome Sir Daniel Wilson, the brother of 'dear George.' With Sir Daniel he spent many happy hours, renewing old memories and gaining full information about the religious life of Canada. In his study, his 'work' consisted in German theology and philosophy, and his recreation in Assyrian and recent Biblical archæology. But a new trouble was taking shape.

#### TO DR. MACLAGAN

10 SPENCE STREET, *Aug. 6, 1891.*

' . . . My general health is better, and I have gained some practice in walking. Since my return, I have been able again and again to walk to Queen Street Hall, where our congregation is worshipping. About ten days ago a swelling began in one of my feet, which makes it not very easy to get on a boot; but to-day I have gone as far as Morningside to visit my friend, Mrs. France, who is ill. I have been able to study a good deal, and have hopes for the winter. This has been a very selfish letter, when you are so much occupied with dear G——'s departure, and with your general China anxieties. To-day is the forty-sixth anniversary of my Ordination. "O happy day that fixed my choice!" The best is still before us.'

#### TO THE SAME

10 SPENCE STREET, *Aug. 14, 1891.*

'I have followed your advice, and Dr. Wallace has sent me to bed, where three days' rest has done me much good. . . . My dear

friend, there is no occasion for your taking a journey, however gratefully I prize your offer. My appetite is good, and I can read one hundred pages of German theology daily. I am like a man in an ocean-going steamer, delivered from the world to think of the best things, without any separation from home.'

The diary shows that his companions in bed, besides German theologians, were 'languages' and the Hebrew Bible—the reading of the latter, as the following entry shows, being methodical. 'Nov. 20, 1890—Aug. 31, 1891, Hebrew Old Testament to end of vol. i.' It was a disappointment to him that he could not be present when Sir Daniel Wilson received the freedom of the city, but he celebrated the occasion by putting his congratulations into Latin verse. On the same day he sent a long letter of consolation to a humble member of his Berwick congregation:—

10 SPENCE STREET, *Aug. 20, 1891.*

'The memory of your husband goes back to and covers the time of my ministry, and his departure is like the removal of a landmark. . . . He was very kind and warm-hearted, and though there were others who spoke more about the Gospel, God has, I trust, given him the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. As I have so often said, there is nothing we have to live for but to be reconciled to God by our blessed Saviour and then to continue to seek first His kingdom. This alone can give us joy in life, peace in death and a happy meeting with the saints of God in eternity. . . .

On September 9, his medical adviser, Dr. Webster, held a consultation with Dr. G. W. Balfour and Dr. Maclagan, which resulted in the verdict that there was weakness in the action of the heart which 'necessitated an entire cessation from professorial work during the ensuing session.' He received the interdict with perfect calmness, consulting at once with his colleagues as to his immediate duty, and intimating the news to two or three friends



TO REV. A. R. MACEWEN

10 SPENCE STREET, *Sept.* 11, 1891.

' . . . I write a few lines to say how I now am and what my prospects are for the future. Upon the whole I had been going forward from my time of greatest depression at the close of the Hall, and had been equal to a good deal of study. Five or six weeks ago, however, my medical friends began to suspect that the action of the heart was defective . . . and, as the meeting of the College Committee was near, it was thought desirable to have a more formal consultation. This took place on Wednesday, and I enclose a copy of the finding. I hardly expected so complete an interdict, but I had got hints as to what the result might be, and I am thankful that the decision makes my way quite plain. I am told there is no organic disease, but the tone of the heart is weak and the organ needs rest. In other respects my health is not so bad, and I feel that I am better than I was in May. In the circumstances of our college, I should have liked very much to work on a little longer. But I bow to the Higher Will and am chiefly concerned for the burden of responsibility I must lay on the College Committee. . . .'

Arrangements were at once made to relieve him of all labour, the Revs. Dr. Mair and Wardrop undertaking the duties of his Chair. But neither in his own mind nor throughout the Church was there any idea that his work was really ended. His splendid physique, which showed but slight traces of the strain it had borne, his persistent power of study and his unruffled cheerfulness gave the impression, which he himself shared, that after a winter's rest he might have several years of partial activity, and in this spirit he settled down at once to prepare the manuscript of his lectures for the use of those who were to take his place.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE LAST CALL

1892

Daily occupations—Interest in current events—Dr. M'All—Preparation of sermons for press—Mr. Spurgeon's death—Medical consultation—Resignation—Appreciation of his work—Last meeting with students—Last Communion Sunday—Last hours—Impression—The funeral.

THE recipient of the letter with which the last chapter closed made his way at once to Spencè Street, with a general idea that something of the nature of sympathy, if not of consolation, might be welcome. But Dr. Cairns was clothed as usual in unconscious cheerfulness. He talked frankly about his symptoms and his prospects, as one who had no need to be troubled or perplexed, and everything he said implied the belief that the future would be ordered rightly. He was grateful to the College Committee for having freed him from responsibility for the coming session, his only anxiety being to lighten the task of the two friends who had undertaken to conduct his classes. His mental activity was unabated, and he had obviously resolved to use his powers so long as they lasted. Although the difficulties in connection with the College were now over, he knew that he was still needed, and he settled down to serve the Church in the methods which remained open to him.

For three months he occupied himself six or seven hours

a day in writing out fully lectures which had been given from notes and in revising others. It was laborious, almost mechanical work, for he had not time to make any substantial alterations; but he went through it buoyantly, and he was delighted that when the College opened in November he could hand over a supply of lectures sufficient for immediate use. He continued the task till the end of the year, when it was practically completed.

Each day began with an hour's reading of the Bible in Hebrew and Greek. His Greek portion was unmeasured, but his record of the Hebrew shows that he read about three pages daily. The prayer and praise with which this reading always closed were recorded on his face and in his bearing. The evening hours, which for sixty years had been given to solitary study, were now spent in the society of his brother and sister. At eight o'clock, acting on doctor's orders, he joined them in the snug parlour appropriated to William's use, and wrote his letters there leisurely, reading aloud occasionally from some classic chosen according to his mood of mind. Sometimes he would translate passages from the Greek and Latin Fathers, never halting for a word; more frequently he chose the Koran, keeping Sale's translation within reach lest some crabbed piece of Arabic should cause too long delay. With this there was blended conversation about current affairs—free, as between those who had trusted one another from their childhood, and hopeful, through the trust of all three in God.

Yet the days were not wholly spent at home. He attended meetings of the Senatus and of the College Committee, and, when weather permitted, joined the students at their Hall Dinner, or visited some sick friend. On the Sundays he was seen from week to week in the church of the Rev. W. Morison, which was within a stone's-throw of his home. Now and then he was able to show hospitality to the students, and those of them who attended his quiet

tea-parties saw no alteration in the brightness of his spirit or the strength of his memory. How sympathetically he followed the religious movements in which he had been active the following letters show:—

TO THE SECRETARY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN ALLIANCE

10 SPENCE STREET, *Dec. 7, 1891.*

‘I am truly glad to send you the enclosed important letter from Count Kuyphausen, announcing the decision of the Hanoverian Reformed Church to seek admission to the Presbyterian Alliance. The Church includes as many as 100,000 members. This is a happy result of our deputations and other efforts, and will make a great impression in Germany. . . . I am glad to say that I am no worse, and have got well through with my copying. . . .’

TO REV. DR. M'ALL, PARIS

10 SPENCE STREET, *Dec. 15, 1891.*

‘I understand that Thursday is your seventieth birthday. I am three years older, and therefore take the liberty to say, “Come up hither, and a great deal higher too, before your noble life is done.” May He say it, who says to each of us in regard to this life below, “Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further,” but sets no limit in regard to the blessed region beyond!

‘When I think of how many things we have had in common, of sympathy with and struggle for the Continent, I rejoice to have been spared to see your work so far advanced. I can judge from a long memory how much it has changed the face of Paris and of other places besides, and still more how much it has shown to be possible in the future. . . . May Mrs. M'All and you be long spared to each other and to the common work, and help to fulfil the progress of many saints of other generations to whom our land is under such obligations! The kingdom of Christ in France will surely come; and in a happier age—though this is not unhappy when God is doing so much in it—posterity will bless for Christ's sake those who helped “to build up the old wastes, the desolations of many generations.”

‘I am getting slowly better, and can read nearly as much as usual. I had overworked last winter and broke down. I was able, however, to go to the funeral of our dear friend, George D. Cullen. If we had many like him, the world would ere long wear another face. *Mais, toujours en avant! C'est l'avenir qui tout réparera!*

‘My dear, good friends, let us try to rejoice evermore, and to pray without ceasing. That is a good way to fulfil the next text, “In everything give thanks.” May your year seventy be the best you have ever seen, and may the year of outward life which coincides with it, in France and elsewhere, see the spokes in the wheel of God’s kingdom turn somewhat faster than before! . . .’

#### TO DR. MACLAGAN

10 SPENCE STREET, Dec. 19, 1891.

‘I write to express my deep sympathy with you in the death of your dear brother James. God has at length ended his struggle with weakness, and has, I trust, taken him to that land where the inhabitant no more says, “I am sick.” May you all be comforted; and as we see the day approaching, may those of us whose oldest companions are passing away redouble our diligence, that in the day of our own summons we may be found watching! This stroke will cast a shadow over Christmas; but it will not interrupt the exchange of your greetings and sympathies. May I, who have so often shared these family occasions, be permitted again to mingle my best wishes and prayers, and to plead that the Highest Wisdom and Love may bless you all far and near, in spite of sadness, beyond any former year in your history. I am thankful to say that I am holding forward, and can take longer walks. . . .’

At Christmas-time he, as usual, interchanged affectionate letters with George Wilson’s sister, Mrs. Sime, and with those members of his Berwick congregation to whom the year had brought special trial. In January he carried out another plan of assisting his substitutes, by writing out in full the Greek and Hebrew verses referred to in his lectures on Biblical Theology. When this was done, he turned to comply with a request which had for many years been urged upon him, that he would prepare a volume of his



sermons for the press. He selected eleven or twelve bearing directly upon the person of Christ, most of them Communion sermons written at Berwick, and proceeded to re-write them, with considerable curtailment. In the judgment of those who had heard the sermons preached this process was not successful, although even as curtailed they present a continuous flow of stately thought, with passages of rugged eloquence.<sup>1</sup> While thus occupied for four or five hours a day, he gave the margin of his strength to reading recent German theology.

Meanwhile he watched current events with unflagging interest, being specially concerned in the protracted illness of Mr. Spurgeon. The following letter shows his freedom from the cloud of pessimism which overhung the last years of the great Baptist preacher's life :—

TO MR. JAMES CROIL

10 SPENCE STREET, *Feb. 4, 1892.*

‘ . . . My ailment is considerably improved. I was broken down by hard work, but rest has so far bettered the action of the heart, in which there is no organic evil but only weakness of function. Whether I ever recover enough to lecture again, I leave to God. I have had my share ; but I am quite willing to work as long and as much as He pleases. . . .

‘ You have reason to be thankful for the splendid growth of your Canadian Presbyterianism. I have no chance of seeing the Toronto Council ; but I have just had a talk with Dr. Matthews about the programme, and anticipate an interesting meeting. In Scotland a very encouraging impression is being made by Moody and Sankey's work. I heard them at a convention a fortnight ago, and they seem invigorated even beyond the mark of their former visits. I do hope and pray that there may be yet greater blessing.

‘ I am writing under the sadness of Spurgeon's death, which took place four days ago. I have been one of his warmest admirers, and

<sup>1</sup> Those sermons, with ten others, were edited by his brothers after his death, and published under the title, *Christ, the Morning Star* : Hodder and Stoughton, 1892.

now I pray for the mantle somewhere to descend. Like him, I am a fixed Calvinist; but I can, perhaps censurably, strive to extract some good out of the otherwise-mindedness of those who "hold the Head." Still my sympathies go out with the brave and noble worker and sufferer who braced up our common Christianity all over the world. May God give us others like him, and may we contend more earnestly for all that exalts Christ and does helpless sinners good! . . .'

A week later he attended a service held in the Free Assembly Hall on the day of Spurgeon's funeral, and opened the service with a brief prayer. His voice was thin and tremulous, showing the gradual reduction of his strength, although he was apparently unconscious of the change.

As the year advanced, he felt bound to have a professional judgment upon his health, in order that the Synod at its spring meeting might make arrangements for the future work of the College. On February 19, Drs. Webster, Maclagan and Balfour pronounced that he was 'unfit for the discharge of any professional duty.' No hint was given him of immediate danger; but after consultation with his brothers he resolved to tender his resignation, both of Principalship and of Professorship, wishing to be entirely free for such study and writing as might lie open to him, and having a dislike to the holding of an office as a sinecure. The resignation was drafted and despatched on February 23rd, without any disturbance of his usual way of living. Indeed on that very day he proceeded with the transcribing of sermons. The special sermon transcribed included these words:—

'What is Christian experience but the secret history of the affection of the soul for an ever-present Saviour? Take this away, and it becomes a dark orb, a science of optics to the blind, a world of harmony to the deaf, a tale buried in the hearts of the dumb. The first glad word of the sinner when he falls before the Cross is, None but Christ; and this is the last of the most experienced saint.

This goes with him through life with all its changes and developments of character. He outgrows his childhood and youth, forgetting many things as things behind. He forsakes the books which once he loved, the studies from which he was inseparable; the earthly objects, it may be, no longer able in the light of conscience to retain his affection. His path is upward, and the tread of time urges him into scenes that are ever new. But time cannot antiquate his attachment to his Saviour. Distance cannot make it fade, nay, brightens it, as it draws him to the lonely isle or pathless desert to make that Saviour known. As it kindled in the soul of the stripling, it burns more ardently in the breast of the patriarch.

In the evening of the same day he wrote as follows to his brother David :—

10 SPENCE STREET, *Feb.* 23, 1892.

‘. . . All has passed in the kindest spirit and has greatly cheered my mind. I read my statement, closing with a brief prayer for right guidance to the Church. This was followed by kind words of sympathy from Dr. Whitelaw, Dr. Henderson and others, and a brief circular was adopted for transmission to Presbyteries. All were kind enough to express the wish that I should continue to hold the office of Principal; but it was judged better, as it was more in line with my own wish to clear the way, to make no recommendation in the circular. We have therefore calmly and cheerfully to leave the issue to God. I am quite willing to take into consideration any hints for indoor work, if the outward be taken away. As to means of subsistence, I am thankful that I am so well in hand as to have no motive on that score to cling to anything. . . . My mind is much relieved by the proceedings. God has been gracious; and my times, like those of all of us, are in His hands. Life is certain to have changes, but the Old Testament motto, *Jehovah-Jireh*, will carry us through all—with the New Testament. . . .’

Within a few days the fact of his resignation became generally known; and when it was understood that his public work had come to an end, expressions of deep and affectionate regret broke out on every side. The chief Scottish newspapers paid worthy tributes to ‘his long and distinguished



career, full of service to the cause of humanity in every way open to a minister of the Gospel, a professor of theology and a British citizen, his singular conscientiousness in original research, his earnestness of purpose, his largeness of heart and devotion to the public good'; while the principal organ of British Nonconformity recognised, 'with something of surprise, the almost unparalleled veneration in which he was regarded by his countrymen. His powerful intellect, his vast learning, his rugged and overwhelming oratory are thrown into the shade by that magnificent character, antequely noble and fervently Christian, which is the pride of all Scotsmen. All have known that thoughts of lofty magnanimity, of unbounded charity, of humble self-forgetfulness have been to him the very substance on which his soul fed and grew.' In the United Presbyterian Church there was a unanimous desire that he would retain the office of Principal as an honorary one, and resolutions to that effect were passed by many presbyteries. Letters poured in upon him assuring him of the place which he held in the hearts of pupils and friends. But many of them were not destined to be read.

On the 3rd of March he presided at a conversazione of his students in the College Buildings. Never, they thought, had he been so companionable or hearty; never had his frame-shaking laughter been fresher or more infectious; never had he been more courteous or deferential in his friendly concern for individuals. When he apologised for leaving before the meeting ended, they rose in a mass, and gave him a round of ringing cheers, during which he made his way out of the hall, bowing deeply and waving his hands in a half deprecatory way. He was much touched by this demonstration, and they, within ten days, were profoundly thankful that they had made it.

On the 5th he travelled to Galashiels to attend the funeral of the cousin whose bedroom he had shared during his first



college session in 1834.<sup>1</sup> In the prayer which he offered at the service, the mourners noted an air of pathetic reminiscence breathing through the familiar strength and composure of his intercession. The next two days he spent at Abercromby Place with Mr. and Mrs. William Nairn, in order that he might be present at Communion services in Broughton Place Church hard by, the church to which he had been attracted as a student by the preaching of Dr. John Brown, and of which he had been a member since his return to Edinburgh. Miss Nairn writes :—

‘When he arrived, he was in his usual good spirits. Though a little tired, he declined to retire to his room. “It would be a rest to him to talk.” Two Bohemian students happened to be with us, and he recounted to them his student experiences in Germany, describing his professors and other theologians such as Tholuck and Hengstenberg. He inquired about their own training, and was deeply interested in what they told him about the evangelical tendencies of Protestantism in Bohemia. By an easy transition he passed to the present state of religion in Germany, its strength and its weakness, and all this in such fluent German and with such a wealth of utterance that one of the students expressed his admiration by asking how he had acquired it. He answered that he used to commit German poetry to memory, and repeated some of his favourite hymns, amongst others the Crusaders’ hymn, “Schönster Herr Jesu.” He spoke also about his university course at Edinburgh, and repeated, without hesitating for a word, Professor Pillans’ daily Latin prayer, which was of considerable length. Speaking of the changes which time produces in Church services, he told us how he had heard from an old lady in Berwick that, in her young days, it had been customary to pray for the downfall of the “bloody House of Bourbon.” “France does not know,” he added jocularly, “how much she is indebted to those good people’s prayers.” Before we separated, he conducted worship, with a loving grasp of the individual circumstances of his fellow-worshippers, singular even to those of us who were acquainted with his habitual reverence and humble self-forgetfulness. A letter written shortly after by one of the Bohemian students contains these words: “The best I like to think of on that Saturday night is how he prayed for me and our

<sup>1</sup> Mr. John Murray of Glenmayne.

Bohemian country. I wish I could learn to be as humble as that saint."

'On Sabbath he occupied his old seat in Broughton Place Church, and greatly enjoyed the services, which were conducted by Dr. Thomson and Dr. Smith, saying repeatedly afterwards: "How glad I am that I was able to come!" In the evening we had a rich treat in his talk about many of the religious questions of the day. His interest in critical theories seemed to yield to his pleasure in the green pastures and still waters of the Scriptures themselves. We could not close the happy evening without his recalling sad but pleasant memories of those who had been gathered recently into the heavenly home—Drs. Robertson, Graham, and Leckie, my uncle,<sup>1</sup> and others. When he left us on Monday forenoon, with his usual hearty shake of the hand and the twice repeated "Good-bye, good-bye," we little thought that it was the last time that the tones of his voice would ring in our ears on earth.'

He went home to Spence Street with a slight cold, but continued to work as usual, chatting cheerfully in the evenings, with frequent reference to his plans for the future. On Thursday some serious symptoms showed themselves on his return from a short walk, but he was able to conduct family worship in the evening, and next day he was as usual occupied in the forenoon with writing. At dinner he was attacked with nausea, and walked up-stairs unassisted to bed. Dr. Webster, who was at once summoned, prescribed suitable remedies and intrusted him to the care of Miss Janet Cairns and Mr. and Mrs. David Cairns, who providentially arrived in the evening. When the doctor returned at midnight, he was resting quietly with an inclination to sleep, and it was thought best to leave him in his sister's charge. In the early hours of the 12th, the illness returned with fresh violence, bringing with it the shadows of death, and his kindred gathered round the bedside, except the strong-souled brother below, hindered by his physical infirmity from this last act of companionship.

'You are very ill, John?' said his brother David. 'Oh,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. John Ker.

no; I do not feel ill at all,' was the reply. 'You are in good hands?' 'Yes,' he answered, 'in the best of hands.' Then he spoke at intervals without any prompter. 'There is a great battle to fight, but the victory is sure. . . . God in Christ. . . . Good men must unite and identify themselves with the cause.' 'What cause?' asked David. 'The cause of God,' he answered. 'If they do so, the victory is sure. Otherwise all is confusion. . . . I have stated the matter. I leave it with you.' As David knelt by his bedside and prayed, the strong mind wandered—wandered back to public scenes, and he murmured words familiar to those who had gone with him from ante-rooms to public platforms, 'You go first, I follow.' So death came, not to close life but to crown it.

When the news spread through the country that 'Cairns was dead,' it called forth a manifestation of public feeling such as does not occur twice in one generation. Elderly men recalled the mourning for Thomas Chalmers. But they recognised the difference. Chalmers, although his race had not been fully run, had left outward tokens of his greatness—volumes in theology and other sciences, and an ecclesiastical organisation which would define the influence of his genius for at least half a century. But Cairns had left no such indication of his greatness. He had contributed in a thousand directions to the faith, the hope and the charity of his countrymen, and had taken a larger share than any contemporary in the religious movements of his generation, promoting, assisting and supporting all that he reckoned to be good with a lavish use of his colossal powers. Yet there was no one movement of his time, no one line of thought, no institution or organisation which could be ascribed entirely to him. From student days, when he had 'renounced the hope of distinction,' he had persistently and almost provokingly been saying to men far smaller than himself, 'You go first, I follow.' In spite of this, he had



been unable to hide the greatness of his intellect, the wealth of his learning, the latent power of his noble heart. At every point in his life he had preferred the lowly to the lofty, labour to distinction, the place of a servant to that of a master. When men had said to him, 'Come up higher,' he had declined the call, and there were those who had blamed him for it. But now the call had reached him from that Voice which the most shrinking must obey; and the chorus of praise which burst from men of every character and grade startled those whose years did not allow them to measure fully the extent of that sacrifice of the common objects of ambition which had determined his career at every stage. Those who had any real acquaintance with him knew that while native ambition had died an early death, faculties of keen criticism had been kept in firm restraint, and powers naturally combative and destructive had lost their edge through laborious self-discipline. But it needed no such acquaintance to acknowledge that the purity which knowledge stains not, and the meekness which bridles strength, are not the easy growth of years. There were rare features on the very surface of his life. All could recognise the dignity of his character, which had borne him through the keenest strife without offence, and had remained spotless during nearly fifty years of public duty. He had hidden no opinion, evaded no responsibility, forsaken no cause which he reckoned serviceable to the kingdom of God. His motives, his methods, his reasonings, in all things that affected others, had been laid open with the utmost frankness, and no one could point to any unworthy act, to any injury, injustice, harshness or conscious neglect; for he had combined the rugged strength and single-eyed fervour of puritanism with that balance and tolerance of judgment which knowledge brings, and with the gentleness of a heart which thought no evil, believed all things and rejoiced in the truth. He had been a bold and fearless



champion of the evangelical creed, and had clung to the traditions of Scottish Christianity; but he had shown his chief strength, with an enthusiasm bordering upon passion, when the verities of the Christian religion had been assailed; and in an age of uncertainty, contention and pessimism, he had left in every circle the conviction that he himself had an intense and joyful belief in the growing work of a personal and living God. Withal there had been a broad genial humanity, a tender respect for the weak and erring, a disposition to hail hopefully every sign of good in things evil, which no other teaching than that of Jesus Christ can engraft upon strength of intellect and firmness of conviction. So it was that, in the words of the foremost Scottish ecclesiastic, 'the strongest had revered him, the truest had trusted him, the purest had loved him,' and that, in the universal mourning, those who had had serious differences with him reckoned it right to acknowledge, with as much of affection as of admiration, that in public and in private he had lived a noble life, marked by features which are of the very essence of Christianity.

All this expressed itself on the day of his burial, the 17th of March. The funeral was attended by the Lord Provost and Magistrates of Edinburgh, the Principal and Senatus of the University, the Mayor and Aldermen of Berwick and official representatives of a bewildering number of agencies, societies and corporations. His own Church showed by every possible symbol how deeply she was stirred, and the other Churches of Scotland, represented by their chief dignitaries, claimed a right to share in the demonstration of honour and affection. But far more striking than anything official was the vast number of individuals of every rank who came forward to declare by their presence that a great and good man had died. Every forenoon train brought groups of mourners, and long before the hour of service the hall of the United

Presbyterian College, which holds nearly 4000, was crowded to excess. During the brief and simple service, which was conducted by the Rev. Dr. Henderson, Moderator of the United Presbyterian Church, Rev. Dr. MacGregor, Moderator of the Established Church, Rev. Principal Rainy, Rev. Dr. Thomson and Professor Johnstone, the immense congregation was preternaturally still, and the voices of the speakers, subdued by manifest emotion, were heard with breathless interest. A telegram read at the close from the Rev. Dr. Taylor of New York—'His death bereaves the whole Church'—seemed to bring a welcome relief from the sense of personal loss.

When the coffin was carried out from the walls which had so often rung with his living voice, and the long procession made its way towards Echo Bank Cemetery, the whole city appeared to have risen to do homage. Every street was lined with thousands, who respectfully saluted the funeral car. Traffic was suspended. Shops were generally closed. On public buildings flags were half-mast high, and the blinds of private houses were drawn. 'Not for many years,' wrote the *Scotsman*, 'had there been so impressive a scene at the obsequies of any clergyman; and the display of public admiration was the more remarkable when one remembered the extraordinary humility of the Reverend Principal, and how all his life he had shrunk from courting the popular gaze.' As the seemingly endless line of mourners swept down Dalkeith Road, almost every face turned with a kind of wonder towards the quiet house in Spence Street, where for sixteen years he had tried to hide the fact that he was not a common man. Around the grave, which lies in the north-west corner of the Cemetery, the darkness of the dense crowd was relieved by the gleam of official robes and insignia, and amidst the solemnity of death and the wistfulness of regret there was an unmistakable air of thankfulness, as for one who had enlarged

and brightened life and gained a great victory through the Eternal Spirit.

His kindred, who, with one of his colleagues, one of his students and Dr. Maclagan, lowered the coffin into the grave, have raised over it a simple stone with the following inscription :—

JOHN CAIRNS

D.D., LL.D.

MINISTER, PROFESSOR, AND PRINCIPAL

IN THE

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BORN AT AYTON-HILL, BERWICKSHIRE

23RD AUGUST 1818

DIED IN EDINBURGH

12TH MARCH 1892

‘ I AM AMONG YOU AS HE THAT SERVETH ’

Luke xxii. 27

*IN TE, DOMINE, SPERAVI; NON CONFUNDAR IN ÆTERNUM*

## APPENDIX

### LIST OF PUBLICATIONS BY PRINCIPAL CAIRNS REFERRED TO IN THIS VOLUME

*Sermons and Contributions to Memoirs and Biographies are not  
included in this list.*

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