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Robertson of Irvine, Poet-Preacher.



Photo by John Ferguson

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Yours Truly  
W. B. Robertson



# ROBERTSON OF IRVINE

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ARTHUR GUTHRIE,

EDITOR OF "THE ARDROSSAN AND GLENMORRIS HERALD"

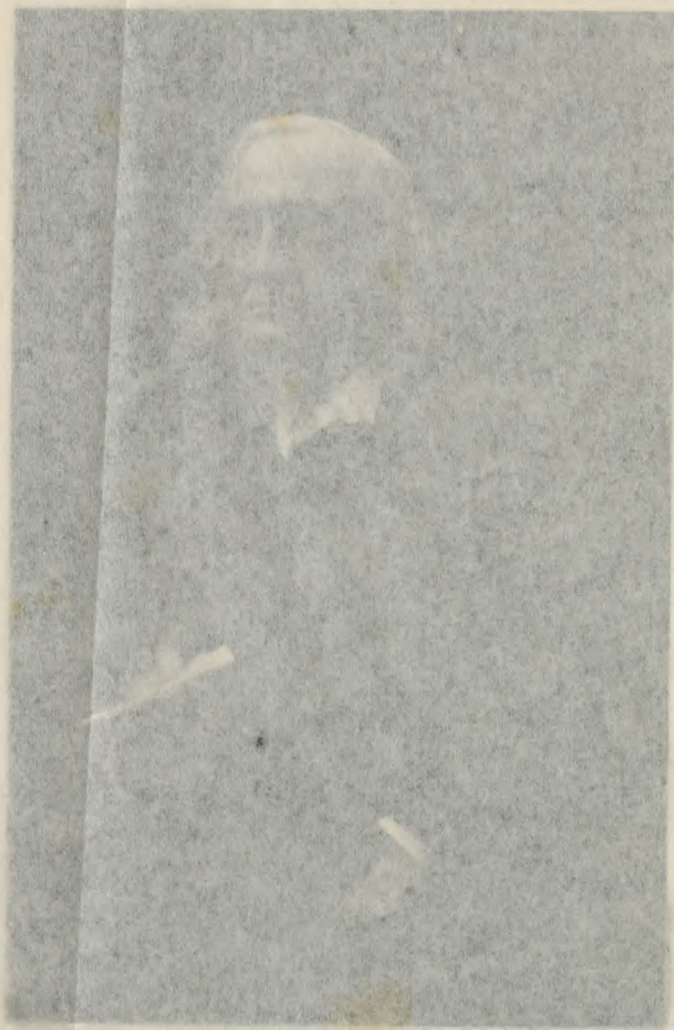
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LONDON: WOLFE & SONS.

EDINBURGH AND GLASGOW: MENZIES & CO.



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W. B. Robertson



# ROBERTSON OF IRVINE

.. Poet = Preacher.



BY

ARTHUR GUTHRIE,

EDITOR OF "THE ARDROSSAN AND SALTCOATS HERALD,"

AYRSHIRE, N.B.

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## P R E F A C E .

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THE substance of the following pages appeared in the latter months of the year 1884, in the *Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald*, as a series of articles, headed "MEMORIALS OF TRINITY CHURCH, IRVINE."

In preparing them for republication, my recollections of personal intercourse with Dr. Robertson, extending over a long period of years, the many careful reports which from time-to-time were made of his ministerial services in his own and other churches, his lectures and speeches, have furnished the added matter. The title indicates both the limitations and the scope of the work—the life only in so far as it is a setting to the picture of the preacher.

For the details of the early years of Dr. Robertson's ministry in Irvine—more especially, for the impression he then made, I acknowledge with grateful

## PREFACE.

feelings, my indebtedness to Mr David Lambie, Dundee, and other kind friends.

The life of Dr. Robertson, wrote one of these friends before any Life had, as yet, appeared, should be written by a *woman*. In this view I concur. Only a woman, like-gifted to the authoress of "The Life of Edward Irving," could paint, with that delicacy of touch and true sympathetic insight, the portrait—as it lives in the memory—of a man so lovable, a personality so real and yet so ideal, and a genius so unique, as ROBERTSON OF IRVINE, Pastor and Poet-Preacher.

ARDROSSAN, 1890.

# CONTENTS.

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CHAPS.	PAGE
I. CHIEFLY RELATING TO THE ECCLESIASTICAL ARCHÆOLOGY OF THE DISTRICT, . . .	1
II. BIRTHPLACE, PARENTAGE, SCHOOL AND COL- LEGE, . . . . .	14
III. CALLED TO THE BURGER KIRK, IRVINE, . .	32
IV. ORDINATION—FIRST IMPRESSIONS, . . .	48
V. CHURCH GROWTH : “OUTWARDS AND UP- WARDS,” . . . . .	65
VI. FRIENDSHIPS—GROWING POPULARITY, . .	106
VII. CALLS, . . . . .	139
VIII. CHURCH BUILDING, . . . . .	160
IX. OPENING OF TRINITY CHURCH, . . .	177
X. THE CHURCH’S SERVANT—SPECIAL SERVICES,	199



## CONTENTS.

CHAPS.	PAGE
XI.—ANNIVERSARY AND CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES,	245
XII.—ILLNESS, . . . . .	274
XIII.—CLOSING YEARS, . . . . .	308
XIV.—PREACHER, LECTURER, AND POET, .	342

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## Illustrations.

PORTRAIT, IN PHOTOGRAVURE, FROM A PHOTO. BY JOHN FERGUS,  
LARGS.

TRINITY CHURCH, IRVINE (CALOTYPE), FROM A PHOTO. BY A.  
BROWN & CO., LANARK.

# ROBERTSON OF IRVINE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### Chiefly Relating to the Ecclesiastical Archaeology of the District.

Trinity Church as seen from the Railway Station—St. Inan—Carmelite Friars—Site of the Friary—Benefactions—Revenues of the Order granted for Educational purposes—Irvine a Religious Centre after the Reformation—David Dickson—Hippo and Irvine.

IF the reader, having a few minutes to spare while awaiting the arrival of a train at Irvine Railway Station, turn himself townward, his eye will not fail to rest on a handsome Church, of novel design, and erected—as all ecclesiastical edifices should be—on an eminence over-looking a wide stretch of landscape. There are other good-looking Churches within view, but Trinity Church, designed in the Venetian-Gothic style of architecture, with colour introduced into the stone-work, windows curiously fashioned, carved archway and arcade, pointed gables, and lofty spire, is unique and conspicuous. The site allows the build-

ing to be seen to great advantage from the railway. The observer will notice that the hill slopes to the river Irvine, the stream flowing within green banks seaward; and it needs no great stretch of imagination to fancy the extent and beauty of the view obtained from the summit crowned with the Church—flowing river, sandy beach, rolling sea, and far-off mountain-ranges, ever changing with the varying lights of day, and reflecting the mood of each passing season—the freshness of spring, the calm of summer, the pensiveness of autumn, and the gloom of winter. As he looks in admiration, not unmixed with surprise that so beautiful a Church should be erected in a town with a population apparently of only a few thousand inhabitants, the train is signalled, he takes his seat, and leaves, but carries with him a vision of the beautiful in Church architecture—a mental photograph of a sacred edifice in the West of Scotland, grand in design, harmonious in its proportions, rich in its ornamentation—a veritable “sermon in stone.”

I will have more to say about the building by-and-by; meanwhile, I may remark, that Irvine, for centuries, in regard to Churches, has been a favoured place. St. Winning, and the saint's successors in, or belonging to, the Abbey at Kilwinning, for hundreds

of years, were the only servants of God in the district, and would not, we may be sure, limit their religious ministrations to their own side of the Garnock. We are not to suppose, however, that Irvine had not, in early times, a patron saint of her own, as well as Kilwinning. For St. Inan (or Evan, as he is also called by the Bollandists), the eremite and confessor, commemorated on the 18th August, is represented by the Scotch hagiologists as belonging to Irvine, in Ayrshire, where he lived in great holiness, did many miracles, and wrote several books. The MS. of one of these, on "The Names of Sacred Places," was in the library of Bonci, the Archbishop of Pisa, at the time of this prelate's death, in the year 1619, but was unfortunately lost sight of after the breaking up of his library. In 1837, when Colonel Mure of Caldwell was residing in Italy and Greece, he, personally as well as by deputy, made diligent search for the works of St. Inan, as well as for the lost chartulary of Kilwinning, but no trace of either could be found.

According to some writers, St. Inan flourished in the year 839, under the Scottish king, Kenneth I. But this king lived two centuries earlier, so that it must have been Kenneth II.—Kenneth Macalpin—for St. Inan is said to have prophesied of his triumph over the Picts, and their union with the Scots, which took place in 843, under his reign. St. Inan, therefore, could not have been

much later than the time of St. Winning. He was a man of great repute in his time, resided occasionally at Beith, a neighbouring parish, where his chair and well may still be seen; and founded several churches—his name being associated with that of Lamington, Southenan and Inchinan. After journeys to Rome and Jerusalem, as Dempster tells us, he “fell asleep at Urvinum (Irvine), in Scotland, of which place he is the patron saint”—where also, as we learn from other sources, he was buried. St. Inan, therefore, furnishes us with a fitting link between the time of St. Winning, in the sixth century, and the building of the Abbey of Kilwinning in the twelfth, when the religious life of Ayrshire received a new impulse under the De Morvilles and their vassals. The influence of the Abbey of Kilwinning over the villages of the district continued till the Reformation. Like several others, the Church of Irvine anciently belonged to the monks of Kilwinning, and was served by a vicar.

Fully a century after the coming of the monks of Tyron from Kelso to Kilwinning, the district came under another influence—that of the Mendicant Friars, as they were called; for the erection of a Convent by the Carmelites,\* or White Friars, on the banks of the

\* The Carmelites were the third Order in importance of those Mendicant Friars, and had their origin and name from Mount



Irvine, not far from where Trinity Church now stands, is placed, by local antiquarians, in the thirteenth century. The exact site of this religious house is a disputed point with them. A century has passed since the fragments of a wall, supposed by some to be part of the Convent, was dug up near the south corner of the present churchyard. But others are of opinion that these fragments were the remains of a Chapel, known to exist, dedicated to the Virgin Mary; for, close by, is a well called the Chapel Well, and the true site of the Friary was near the spot where Fullarton Free Church now stands. 'The Friars' Croft gives a colouring of truth to this latter conjecture; but, be this as it may, the White Friars had one of the nine Convents they possessed in Scotland at Irvine, and its inmates ministered there to the religious wants of the community till the Reformation.

Carmel, in Syria. Very numerous in Spain and Italy, they came into Scotland in the 11th year of the reign of King Alexander III., which would be A.D. 1260. Their attire was a scapulary, or small woollen habit, of a brown colour, thrown over the shoulder. In Scotland they were called White Friars, from their outer garments; and for the same reason the Dominicans were called the Black Friars; and the Franciscans the Grey Friars. Like the two latter Orders, the Carmelites were allowed to preach abroad and beg their subsistence by the way—hence called the Mendicant or Begging Friars. They had, however, nine conventual rallying places in Scotland, amongst which was that of the Convent at Irvine—which stood on, or near to, the "hill Mizar" of later Presbyterian times and influences.

It would have been satisfactory to have had the exact date of the foundation, but the charter has been lost. It may be assumed, however, that the site of the Carmelite Friary was on the south bank of the river. The Friary was founded, not later than some time in the fourteenth century, by a Fullarton of Fullarton, and his land lay on the south side of the Irvine. That being the case, it seems improbable to suppose that he should, in order to get a site for the Friary, purchase ground, within the Burgh of Irvine, on the other side of the stream. The first authentic account is dated 24th August, 1399, and is a contract and indenture "between Reginald Fullarton of that ilk and the provincial brethren and Convent of the Carmelite Friars, near Irvine, whereby, for the payment of 40 merks (£51 11s 1½d), to be expended in meliorating and upholding the houses of the said Convent, and for repairing the principal Kirk and Cloister," they should, in all time coming, "pray weekly on the Lord's day, or any other feast day, on the beginning of a mass at the great altar, with an audible voice, for the souls of Sir Adam, and Marjory, his wife, and for Reginald and his wife, and their heirs and successors, and for the souls of all the faithful deceased." It seems probable that this *Sir Adam*, who was so commemorated, was the original founder of the Convent, and he was the immediate predecessor of

Reginald—a certain “Adam Fullarton, Knight, Lord of Crosseby,” having granted forty silver pennies, for the safety of his soul, to the Abbey of Paisley, in the year 1392.

And there were others who gave gifts. Sixteen years later (1415), Alicia Campbell, Lady Loudon, granted four tenements in Irvine, and an annual grant of five merks, from another tenement, for the support of a chaplain to perform divine service in St. Mary’s Chapel. Still later, in 1540, Alexander Scott, the Provost of the Collegiate Church of Corstorphine, granted, to a Chapel in Irvine, five roods of land in the burgh, also a tenement, and a piece of land beside the bridge of Irvine, two acres of land, and annual rents to the amount of £6 2s 4d, from other tenements. It may also be mentioned, amongst other incidental gifts, that when King James IV., and his Queen, Margaret—daughter of Henry VII. of England—were on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Ninian at Whithorn, in July, 1507, they arrived at Kilwinning on the 10th, when the King gave an offering of 14s to the reliques at Kilwinning; and that same day, on their coming to Irvine, he also gave 14s to the “frires of Irrewin.”

Time and change have removed all traces of the buildings, but, thanks to King James VI., the revenues of the Order, and of churchmen within the territories of

the burgh, were granted by charter in 1572 for educational purposes. Better this than enriching neighbouring proprietors, for the King's foundation of the school at Irvine still remains ; and, for it, the Academy has a noble record to show of good work done to the community generally, and a long roll of scholars who have distinguished themselves in every walk of life. But only a portion of those permanent gifts and rich emoluments of the friars came to enrich the town. Robert Burn, the last prior of Irvine, had the sagacity to foresee the strength of the gathering Reformation storm, and astuteness enough to look after his worldly interests. It is recorded of him, that he "alienated the lands which went under the name of Friars' Croft, to Fullarton of Dreghorn," the superiority remaining with Fullarton of Fullarton. The charter of James VI. conveys, in a perpetual grant to the Provost, Bailies, Councillors and community of the Burgh of Irvine, "All and singular the lands, houses and buildings, churches, chaplainries, orchards, gardens, crofts, annual rents, fruits, rents, profits, emoluments, farms, alms, anniversaries of death whatsoever," pertaining to the Friary, to be united in one tenement, and called, in all time coming, "The King's foundation of the School of Irvine." Prior Burn had clearly not made away with everything, but, in the document, part of which is quoted above, there is certainly a good deal of empty phrase-making. The

property possessed by the Royal Burgh on the south side of the river was acquired by purchase.

We think better now of those Carmelite, and other friars, so far as their religious offices and work are concerned. The times were bad, men lawless, and however corrupt the Church, what religious light there was—what help given to the poor—what kindly ministrations to the sick and dying; in short, what of God and the higher life there was, assuredly, was mainly theirs.

More favoured still, Irvine was one of the centres, whence religious light flowed in the years of active evangelistic effort which followed upon the Reformation. If John Welsh might be said, by his ministry, begun in 1590, to have revolutionized, in a moral and religious sense, the neighbouring town of Ayr, David Dickson, in like manner, some years later, revived the dwellers in the lower portion of the valley of the Irvine, and attracted to the Royal Burgh not a few of the more eminently godly from distant parts. David Dick, or Dickson, the sixth protestant minister of Irvine, was the only son of John Dick or Dickson, merchant in Glasgow, whose father was an old feuar and possessor of some lands in the Barony of Fintry, and Parish of St. Ninians, called the Kirk of the Muir, on the same



“delectable” mountainland which was afterwards to furnish Irvine with his most worthy successor, Dr. Robertson, the second minister of Trinity Church. Dickson was ordained minister to the town of Irvine in 1618, where he laboured for about twenty-three years. During the doubtful visitation of religious zeal in 1630, known as the “Stewarton Sickness,” it is recorded of him that his prudence was distinguished, and the interest of practical religion maintained. In 1639 his public-spiritedness was recognized in his appointment as chaplain to the newly raised Ayrshire regiment. He was afterwards Professor of Divinity in the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. In these two places, it is said, the most part of the Presbyterian ministers, at least in the west, south, and east parts of Scotland, from the year 1640 to the time of the Revolution, were under his care. It may also be interesting to note here, that in 1647, when the pestilence was raging in Glasgow, the masters and students of the University, on Mr. Dickson’s motion, removed to Irvine; and, further, that the learned Mr. Durham, afterwards of Glasgow, passed his trials there.

In December, 1662, Dickson, while in Edinburgh, fell extremely sick. Like Robert Baillie of Kilwinning—his sturdy henchman in the Presbytery of Irvine, in the General Assembly, and in the Professor’s chair of

Glasgow College—his heart was broken with the heavy change which then settled down upon the beautiful face of the Reformed Church. Having been very weak for some days, he called his family together, spoke to each, pronounced the apostolic blessing (2 Cor. xiii. 14) upon them with much solemnity, then put up his hand and closed his own eyes, and without any struggle or apparent pain, expired in the arms of his son, in that same month and year, after a very short period of illness. He was thus one of the great personalities of the times—active in ecclesiastical affairs, a Professor in the Church, the author of books which survive to this day; above all, a preacher possessed of that convincing, persuasive power which touches the human heart, and leads to conversion. Under him a great revival work was begun, the influence of which was felt, long after, in Irvine and neighbouring parishes; but with that humility, which was so conspicuous a trait in his character, he was accustomed to say that the vintage of Irvine was not equal to the gleanings of Ayr in Mr. John Welch's time.

One fact in David Dickson's life connects the past of Irvine with the present. He wrote some short poems on pious and serious subjects, such as "Christian Sacrifice," and "True Christian Love," which were adapted to be sung to common psalm-tunes. More

important still, he found an English version of Augustine's old-ballad hymn, "O mother dear, Jerusalem," and more than doubled its length by adding from the original in Latin. In the extended form he published it, and, becoming popular, this sacred song, "so sweet and holy," was sung everywhere, and entered into the very life of the people, "throwing a fragrance," says a writer, "over her hills which, even to this day, is not only remembered, but *felt*." \*

Two hundred years pass away, and Irvine is again favoured with a somewhat similar ministry. Like Dickson's, this ministry also drew its inspiration from the consecrated well of poetic genius. For both, the same surroundings—sandy knowes, the hills of Carrick, the Craig of Ailsa, the silver streak of sea, Arran's majestic peaks; and both were alike in their

\* See an interesting paper by H. B.—"THE STORY OF A HYMN," in *Excelsior*—Vol I., edited by the late Dr. Hamilton. The author traces the hymn to Augustine, and the reader is asked to turn to chapter xxv. of Augustine's *Meditations*, where he will find, he says, the whole of David Dickson's Hymn. "He will find the same allusions, the same figures, the same passages of Scripture—he will find all but the Popish references to the Virgin and the Saints, &c., which were thrust upon the original by the versifier, or versifiers, in England, in the end of the sixteenth century." The writer finds what he calls a "rugged old boulder upon the sandy hilloeks of Irvine," traces it from Scotland to England; from England to France; from France to the shores of Africa; "floated over the Mediterranean in the folios of a Latin father, having taken about a thousand years in the passage between Hippo and Irvine."

love for the old Latin hymn writers, and passion for holy thought in verse.\* In the annals of the Irvine pulpit, with common consent, the first place will be given to those two ministries—to that of David Dickson, for the widespread influence for good which he exercised in Ayrshire and Scotland in the seventeenth century; and to that of William B. Robertson, who, while he lived, was universally recognised as the Poet-preacher of the United Presbyterian Church.

\* The *Dies Iræ* in *The Presbyterian Hymnal* is Robertson's translation.

## CHAPTER II.

### *Birthplace, Parentage, School and College.*

Place of Birth—Bannockburn District—His Father—Mother—Brothers  
James and Andrew—Model Family and Home Life—School and  
College—Acquaintance with De Quincey—Returns Home from  
Germany.

**W**ILLIAM BRUCE ROBERTSON was born  
May 26, 1820, at the farm of Greenhill,  
situated about five miles from Stirling, on a height  
that slopes on one side down to the plain, out  
of which rises the rock of Stirling, and near to  
the top of which is Torwood, hidden among the  
trees that mark the remains of the old Caledonian  
Forest. Every step of the country, for miles around,  
possesses historical interest—for the Carse was the  
battlefield of Scottish independence. From his earliest  
years, it had a charm for the future preacher. In a  
letter which has been published, he says:—"I used  
to think when looking at it through the eyes of  
childish romance from the heights above Bannock-



burn, that the garden of Scotland—not to say Eden—lay somewhere along the sunny side of the Ochils, to Dollar eastward, and that the flocks on these hills, on summer evenings, were tended by the veritable shepherds of the Delectable Mountains.”\* Thus, he was a poetic dreamer even in childhood; and this fits in well with an old cradle remembrance, of being awakened out of a sleep before the parlour fire in the old house at home, and hearing his father, and another equally reverend sage, discoursing on the religious movements of their day, and of his drinking in some conscious feeling of the earnestness of their talk, without even understanding their words.

His father, John Robertson, factor on the Plean and Auchenbowie estates, was a man of rare intellectual power, “polished and matured by a liberal education, and by a long life of self-culture.” From the “Memorial,”† printed for private circulation at his death, I gather that he was born at Auchenbowie, 6th December, 1780; received his education at Stirling Grammar School and Commercial Academy; afterwards prosecuting his studies at the University of Edinburgh under Professors Hope, Munroe, and

\* Letter addressed to Rev. W. B. R. Wilson, Dollar, from Mentone, 17th January, 1872.

† “Memorial of Mr. John Robertson of Greenhill.” By the late Rev. J. Steedman. (Printed for private circulation.)

Playfair. "His reading," we are further told, "was wide and multifarious: but his favourite subjects were those in which only men of superior mind are likely to take pleasure—chemistry, mathematics, and theology. Before his sons entered college he taught them geometry and its kindred sciences; and when far advanced in life, a few hours' study in the higher mathematics was to him only a pleasing recreation." He was also familiar with the best theological literature, including church history and sacred biography, systematic divinity, and works purely exegetical. When but a youth, he settled the great question of his relation to God and his Saviour, and at the close of a long life, could bear testimony to the truth, and declare that his faith in Christ had never wavered. "He drank the water of life at the fountain-head, direct from the well of truth, pure and undefiled." Of his home relations, the "Memorial" says:—

"In February, 1809, Mr. Robertson married Margaret Kirkwood, daughter of Robert Kirkwood and Margaret Bruce, sister to the Rev. Professor Bruce of Whitburn. She was of singularly sweet and engaging temper and manners, of sincere and ardent piety; a 'prudent woman,' a 'keeper at home,' 'in whom the heart of her husband safely trusted, who did him good and not evil all the days of her life.' The pair resembled Zacharias and Elizabeth of old, being 'both righteous before God, and walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.' About the time of his marriage, Mr. Robertson, in addition to his other secular engagements, became farmer

at Greenhill, on the estate of Plean and Auchenbowie, and manager to the coal companies there. The situation commands extensive views, both of the beautiful and the grand in landscape scenery. Taste and culture made it a pleasant abode, and the beauty of holiness made it one of the happiest of our happy Scottish homes. Here the numerous members of the family were all born. Here many of them died. Here those who survived their infancy received their early education. Here a generous, constant hospitality was exercised, and the excellent of the earth in great numbers visited here. Here was a Bethel in which the patriarch had reared both a throne and an altar to his God. ‘Mr. Robertson’s of Greenhill!’—what sweet and hallowed memories will these words ever awaken in the bosoms of hundreds scattered throughout all parts of our country, and in far-off missionary fields, till the grave close over the present generation of men !”

The late Professor Graham bears similar testimony to the character and influence of the father and mother of the family, known in the neighbourhood as “The Holy Family;” and ascribes to heredity the genius and grace possessed by all the members, but most richly developed in William :—

“All the neighbours around the farm of Greenhill, in the parish of St. Ninians, near Stirling, went to consult the father, as men used of old to inquire of the oracle of God. He was one of those massive, grave natures, of few words and of much tenderness, which Scotland produced in large numbers. He bore deep marks of the far back spirit of independence which made the morass of Bannockburn, that lay beside his farm, the harvest field of national liberty ; and higher still, there was at the centre of his Christian nature the fervour of the old Secession piety, caught at its very hearth, in

Ebenezer Erskine's Church in Stirling. With these central qualities were combined the modern breadth and discipline which only a College training gives. And the mother had the deep passion and music—sacred and inborn—which she gave to all her children, but gave in richest measure to her third son, William. That music, that finer spirit, often trembled under the weight of a nature too finely touched. And if her son had, in rare balance, both spheres of emotion, (beginning from the pathos of the minor key and seldom ending without reaching the major notes of hallelujah and triumph,) still, the dominating element of his intellectual and spiritual nature and make, came from that gentle, ethereal mother. This made his deepest nature lyrical, and lifted it into a higher rhythm. This was the leaven that leavened the three measures of his gifts—intellect, emotion, and action—and in greater breadth, and under a more varied culture, made his sermons, and poems, and prayers, and his whole life, the bread of life; and more, the wine of life also, to many. In him, the father and the mother thus showed themselves, alike in the singular weight and balance of a life, measured in its dealings with his fellow-men, and which, for a man of his high-strung temperament, kept him singularly free from mistakes and blunders, and sustained him on soaring wings that lifted him up to the very gates of heaven, in impassioned ecstasy and eloquence, carrying all souls with him.”\*

There were fourteen of a family; and, of six sons, five—James, William, George, Robert, and Ninian—were devoted to the ministry. James Robertson, whose Memoir has been published, was the second

\* Funeral Sermon preached at Irvine, 4th July, 1886. Beautiful glimpses of family life at Greenhill are also given in “the Life of Dr. Eadie,” by Dr. Brown; in “James Robertson of Newington: a Memorial of his Life and Work;” and in Dr. Brown’s recently published “Life of William B. Robertson, D.D.”

eldest, and is remembered as the widely known minister of Newington United Presbyterian Church. He died in 1879, in the fortieth year of his ministry. Though laid aside for some time from the stated duties of the pastorate, he was able to do work for the Master till within a few days of the end ; for he had just returned from the North, where he had been preaching, when the summons for the longer journey reached him. He was in Scotland *facile princeps* in the rare gift of attractively presenting Bible truths to the young mind. Principal Cairns, at his death, said of him : “ He had the spirituality and poetic glow of the Rutherfords and Ralph Erskines of other days, associated with the missionary and evangelistic spirit of the present time.” The Moderator of the Free Assembly (the Rev. James C. Burns of Kirkliston), in session when the sudden decease was intimated, referring to the loss thus sustained by the Church universal, said he was “ one of those servants who both work and watch ; a man both genial and gracious—a Nathaniel and an Apollos ; whose name should have been not James, but John.” “ A man of an all too rare spirit,” said the Rev. James Taylor, of Kilwinning, brought up under his ministry, and who thus, in a sentence, sums up his fine character :—“ Not a Peter, but a John ; not a Paul, but a Barnabas ; not

an Augustine but a Chrysostom ; not a Luther but a Melancthon."

Andrew, the eldest of the family, was the layman, and, like his brothers, was a man of fine literary taste and acquirements, which he subordinated to the call of duties connected with the management of extensive coal works on the estates he and his father factored. He mastered, we are told, the science of mining, and was often consulted with regard to mining operations in different parts of the country. Wise, just, and considerate, he solved with ease many of the vexed questions which disturb the relations between employers and employed. An active worker, he taught classes of young people, and superintended the Sabbath School ; a truly Christian man—of "unaffected humility and unconscious goodness," whom the widow and fatherless trusted, and in whom the needy found a ready helper. He died, 29th February, 1860, after a few hours' illness, from internal cramp spasms—a disease from which he had suffered for years, but about which, with the heroic fortitude of a truly brave man, he had said little.

Of the sisters, Isabella made the care of her brother William and his manse her chiefest joy—she died, 1877 ; and Jessie, who survives, was privileged to watch and cheer him through the Valley of Death.

A member of the present Town Council of Irvine,

a Magistrate of the Burgh, reared, like the Robertsons, in the parish of St. Ninians, and who attended school with them, often refers to their remarkable amiability. On a particular occasion, having forgotten a line of his task, he was ordered by the teacher to stand aside as a punishment. One of the Robertsons, seizing a favourable opportunity, slipped up behind him and gave him the lost cue, the result being that he was shortly afterwards restored to his place in the class. This little incident, he says, was an illustration of the ready sympathy, good nature, and cleverness of the Robertson boys. The same gentleman testifies to the unostentatious character of old Mr. Robertson, and to his remarkable regularity. The family went to the Burgher Kirk in Stirling, the conveyance being a cart drawn by a steady-going old white horse. So punctual and regular was the appearance of Mr. Robertson's cart, that the clocks of the villagers might have been set by it. Those of them who went to the Parish Church of St. Ninians, which was nearer at hand than the Burgher Kirk of Stirling, knew, from long experience, that when the Robertsons' cart came into view, it was time to get ready.

It was, indeed, a model home in which Robertson was nurtured. Taste, and culture, and sound worth made it a pleasant abode, and one of the happiest homes in Scotland. The genuine piety of the

parents and the elder members of the family, thus enriched, was broadened by daily contact with varied phases of life—the miners in the collieries, the farm servants, the loving, if strict, discipline in the family of an elder in the Secession Church. The father, soundly orthodox though he was, encouraged Shakespeare to be read aloud in select passages to the children, and large portions were committed by the young folk to memory. They were allowed, in their own natural way, to act scenes, and give readings from several plays ; also from Milton's *Comus*, Cowper's *Task*, and two books of *Paradise Lost*, before visitors and the servants ; and, when quite young, the future D.D. could repeat the whole of *Julius Cæsar*. One incident, in later days, he related to me with the view of getting the meaning of a word used by a servant, and to know if it was used in the West country. The young folk had dressed up in a garden house a figure to represent the dead body of the murdered Cæsar, before which one was to declaim the oration of Mark Antony. It was draped with a white cloth, and, when uncovered, so corpse-like had the form been dressed, that one of the female servants, lifting her hands, exclaimed in genuine and undisguised horror—" *It's a Cowsie*,"\* and rushed shrieking from the place.

\* The word *Cowsie*, properly, is an adjective, meaning frightful, dreadful, horrible, &c., but it is also used as a noun in the sense



For a few months William was taught at the school at "The Camp," where he mixed with the neighbour children; then at home, by his brother James, assisted by Daniel M'Bride, and James Somers (afterwards a parish minister); and then at Stirling. His education at home, he used to say, was thorough. Lessons—morning, noon, and night; the only relief, an occasional visit to Stirling, a run in the garden, a pony ride, or an hour in the woods. He recalled his school days in a speech delivered at Cumnock, in 1871. With inimitable humour he remarked that he always associated his school days with a long black instrument called the *tawse*, and when teachers used to instil into him, by "pawmies" on the hand, what was the "chief end of man." "Now," he further said, "being in those days somewhat given to sentiment, I found it at times difficult to get along with my education. I read such books as 'Blue Beard,' greatly in preference to the Catechisms, Larger or Shorter, and could never learn the 'chief

of a fright or frightful thing, a horrible object, a bugbear. It is a derivative from *cow*, to frighten, terrify; hence to subdue; from Danish *kue*, Icelandic *kuga*, of like meaning. Probably the latter is the original source. Although, like most of our langsyne words, it is fast dying out, it was common thirty years ago both in the West and East. "A few years ago I was not a little surprised by hearing it used in all its force of meaning near the East Neuk o' the Kingdom of Fife. 'O what a COWSIE!' was then shouted in horror by a woman to her child, whose face, hands, and clothes testified of earnest work on mud pies or in gutters."—*David Donaldson, Editor of Jamieson's Scottish Dictionary.*

end of man,' for wondering whether Sister Anne saw anybody coming."

William and George were enrolled students of Glasgow University in 1832, being twelve and ten years of age, respectively. William does not seem ever to have possessed a robust constitution, for his studies at Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities, and a tutorship he undertook in the family of Captain Aytoun of Glendevon, in the Ochils, were more than once interrupted by illnesses. Of the Glasgow period, Dr Edmond, of London, remembers the brothers, William and George, in the Tyrones Greek Class of Sandford—"ever shining as twin stars"—"their fresh scarlet gowns covering their boyish forms"—"sweet and gentle George, beautiful and brilliant William!" and it is on record that in the classes he excelled in Greek metrical translations, and read much miscellaneous literature. His course in Arts consisted of three sessions spread over five; and, of all his studies, he told me, he preferred mathematics. In Edinburgh he was a session under Dr. Chalmers, which, says Professor Graham, "left a mark on a spirit as finely tempered as Chalmers' own, but more kindred to the imagination of Edward Irving. To one preacher, Dr. Candlish, he always said he owed much for doctrinal power and oratorical urgency, though Candlish was even more unlike Robertson than

Chalmers. But he was always an hospitable soul, full as all such souls are of a general receptiveness, and knowing, under all forms, men of his own power and passion.”\*

When he entered the Divinity Hall of the United Secession Church, in 1837, the late Dr. John Ker bears testimony to the high place which the ethereality of his imagination, the originality of his thought, and his striking personality, as shown in his youthfulness of look and motion, gave him among the students; and which made his discourse waited on as an event. Even then, he gave token of what was to be the most marked feature of his style as a preacher—the pictorial. In a discourse on the text, “*This is that King Ahaz,*” Dr. Ker says, he drew “the picture of a man moving in the dark along a burial path till a grave stops his footsteps. He stoops to examine it, and gropes out the epitaph. It is the tomb and character of the wicked King of Judah; and then he proceeded to sketch his deeds and his doom, till their crept over us a feeling of *eerie awesomeness*.”† Another of his Hall discourses was on the text, “*Pray without ceasing,*” in which “he compared the spirit of prayer in its ebb and flow.

\* Funeral Sermon, preached in Trinity Church, Irvine, 4th July, 1886.

† “The Rev. W. B. Robertson,” in “Scottish Nationality and other papers,” by John Ker, D.D.

to the breathing in the living frame as it rises and falls, the beat of the heart-blood as it comes and goes, waxing and waning, but when it stops the man is *dead*." Principal Cairns, a fellow-student, also refers to this discourse, and says of it that it "was marked with all the fervour and vivid fancy of later days."\*

But not only did he impress his fellow-students; he had already earned a reputation as an able speaker at religious meetings. A Stirling correspondent, sending notes of the services in connection with Bannockburn U.P. Church, at which he assisted in 1885, says:—"The writer is personally acquainted with not a few who remember him, when but a stripling, conducting services along with his brother James, and the wonderful way he had of chaining his audience as he introduced, here and there in his addresses, parts of the wonderful allegory of John Bunyan—an allegory that seems to have woven itself into the warp and woof of his being. Nor has he forgotten the Pilgrim yet, for at some points of his address, on Sabbath, the audience showed an almost childish delight, as the preacher pictured one or two scenes in that story, so familiar to us from childhood."

It was while in Edinburgh that he formed the

\* Funeral Sermon, by Principal Cairns, preached in Trinity Church, Irvine, 4th July, 1886.

intimate acquaintance of De Quincey, the author of "Confessions of an English Opium Eater;" and one of the dreams he cherished, till his latter days, was to write the story of two years of the life of this fascinating, original, and gifted writer. The two years referred to are those of 1839-40-41, the two last sessions of his attendance at the Divinity Hall of the Secession Church, in Edinburgh. At this time De Quincey had found a temporary "sanctuary" in Princes Street,—the house of his law-agent, Mr. M'Indoe, S.S.C., a relative of Robertson's. Here the young student was privileged, as few others were, not only to make the friendship of De Quincey, but to often visit him alone, and for hours, night after night, listen to his low-toned, weird, musical speech. What these two years of the literary history of the mature scholar and his youthful disciple might have revealed, if it had been written, can only be matter of conjecture now, so far, at least, as their personal intercourse is concerned. But when one finds William Robertson attributing so much—as he invariably does—to so early an acquaintance with the old man eloquent and his writings, as to say—"I gained more from De Quincey than all I obtained from all my teachers"—it may be of interest to note that these years represent a period of great literary power and activity on the part of De Quincey. To *Blackwood's Magazine* he con-

tributed such scholarly papers as the following :—  
“ Miracles as Subjects of Testimony,” “ Philosophy of Roman History,” “ Milton,” “ The Essenes,” “ Casuistry,” “ Theory of Greek Tragedy,” “ Style,” “ Homer and the Homeridæ,” and other papers ; while in *Tait's Magazine*—in a series of delightfully chatty papers, entitled “ Autobiographic Sketches, with Recollections of the Lakes,”—he also, for the first time, lifted the veil of mystery which hung around the society and the scenery of that district ; including racy sketches of its poets, Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, Charles Lamb, Professor Wilson, &c. ; indirectly affording glimpses into the inner and the outer life of the most mysterious of all the personalities of that mysterious region—“ The English Opium Eater ” himself.

Such, and so varied, were the influences of the contemporary writings of De Quincey to which Robertson refers. But who shall estimate the spell of his “ weird, musical speech ” on that plastic heart and mind ; or who shall paint the picture, even of the outward circumstances of these strange interviews, from the time that the magician opened the door of his chamber to receive his visitor till he passed him out again. To be brought into contact with such a great mind was of itself an education of the highest kind ; for De Quincey was the friend of Coleridge, and Coleridge

was one of the greatest thinkers of this century. Concerning Coleridge—of whom De Quincey was as “the spokesman to the people” of this age—another “poet-preacher,” Dr. W. C. Smith, has said, “I am more indebted to Coleridge than to any one else for what is deepest and best in me.” One thing may be noted, it was De Quincey who suggested that his young friend should complete his studies in Germany ; and thus William Robertson was one of the band of well-known preachers—Dr. John Ker, Professor Graham, Dr. Logan Aikman, and others, who, about this period, sought illumination and qualification for their future work at the feet of theological Professors at the Universities of Halle and Berlin. Accompanied by Alexander Renton, afterwards minister at Hull, he took a winter session at Berlin, where he associated with Tholuck, Neander, and Von Schelling. Tholuck says “he was an idler,” but the poetic soul intuitively grasps principles ; and genius gathers stores of intellectual thought, as Robertson evidently did when a student, with little apparent effort.\* His letters, and his lecture

\* “It cannot be doubted that Tholuck greatly enlarged his horizon, and gave a colour to many of his succeeding enthusiasms, especially his unbounded passion for Luther, with German art, poetry, and sacred song.”—*Principal Cairns*.

“Under Tholuck and Neander his essential genius found its true kindred and home. For the Teutonic spirit, chiefly in its old mystics—as also in Luther, alike in his passionate experience, and evangelical in his principal doctrine, and again in the deep learning

on German student life, indeed, show that he was not only a close observer of German manners, customs and scenery—seeing, also, with keen zest, what was grotesque and amusing—but a diligent, yet untainted student of German philosophy. This last does not surprise us. His home training, under a father so wise and good, and free from all narrowness of sect ; his acquaintance with the best works in English literature ; his familiar intercourse for a time with such a fine mind as that of The Opium Eater, though then but a mere lad, had made him broad in the true sense. He could find something to love in John Ronge, and to pity in the superstitious worshippers of “The Holy Coat of Treaves.” And it was this same unsectarian sympathy with the sorrows and hopes of our common humanity which sometimes exposed his “orthodoxy” to suspicion ; as, when in Irvine, in 1862, he wanted wrecked sailors to be buried according to the rites of the Church of Rome, to which they belonged ; and which, on another occasion, when in Italy in 1876, led him by a sudden impulse to join a procession of priests at Chiusi,

and simple unconscious devoutness of Neander, and even more in the romantic lyrical movements of thought and feeling in Tholuck so like his own, this German spirit breathed its crowning life into every member of his previous culture and made it, in its atmosphere of redemption, stand up and go forward, an exceeding great army.’  
*Professor Graham.*



and raise his voice in the chant of the *Miserere*. But he was not to be caught by a vain philosophy, however it might appeal to an imagination so poetic as his own. His genius was to be consecrated to the service of his Maker ; the chords of his harp were to be touched by the soft hand of piety, that it might vibrate "with solemn music in the ear of God." Even at this early age he had learned, what he afterwards so well taught, that "the beautiful is always allied to the good and the true."

He returned from Germany, after completing his course of study at Halle, by way of the Alps, Italy, and Switzerland, reaching home on 20th October, 1842.

### CHAPTER III.

#### Called to the Burgher Kirk, Irvine.

Favourable Impressions made by Robertson on his Trials for License—  
Call to Irvine—Early History of Cotton Row Church—David  
Blackadder—Malt Kiln—Burgher Kirk—Daniel Montgomery—  
The Session—Rev. Alexander Campbell's Ministry and Personal  
Traits.

“A YOUNG man has been licensed to-day  
who will yet be heard of in the Church.”  
This was said by a minister, on returning home from  
a meeting of the Stirling Presbytery, March, 1843.  
The young man referred to was William B. Robert-  
son, who had that day passed his trials for license.  
The remark was made in the hearing of a lady visitor,  
who communicated with friends at Ayr, where there  
was a vacancy; and thus the young preacher, who  
was afterwards to make the West famous, received his  
first appointments to preach at Ayr and Irvine.

After fulfilling his engagement in the former  
place, he preached two Sabbaths in Irvine to the  
congregation meeting in Cotton Row Church, vacant

through the death of their first minister, Mr. Campbell. He had only four discourses prepared, and, as there were three diets of worship each day, he had to utilize a prayer meeting address and write one more sermon. In these circumstances, he was greatly relieved, he told me, when the remark of an Irvine probationer furnished an excuse for declining the request that he should again preach on the Fast-day. The impression made was most favourable, and the leading members of the congregation—all shrewd and intelligent men—said that of the favoured probationers, William Robertson was the one preacher who showed decided originality and marked individuality. They were, therefore, enthusiastic in their support of his election to the pastorate. The call, when moderated—although others were named—was largely in his favour, and came out as an harmonious one. On its being presented at a meeting of Presbytery held in August of that year, and subsequently accepted, the ordination was fixed for 26th December, the day after Christmas.

The early history of Cotton Row Church, Irvine, to which the young preacher had thus been called, is typical of that of most of the Dissenting Churches in the West of Scotland, formed in the latter part of the last, and the beginning of the present century. The

promoters of the cause, for the most part were weavers, who then, and for several years after, were the most numerous class of work people in the place—douce men and women; and of the class who, at the beginning of the present century, were known to have a good deal of that personal self-assertion and regard for doctrinal precision which distinguished the men of Kyle throughout the days of Charles II. and his brother James, and whose fathers had evinced a lively concern in the debate between a time-serving Establishment and the four brethren, of whom Ebenezer Erskine was the chief. With all their self-assertiveness, they were a worthy class. If their family rule was hard and unduly strict, they believed it was a rule founded on the fear of the Lord, which they dared not gainsay. It is a mistake to suppose, as some have done, that Carlyle's father was an exceptional man—he was only one of the numerous class of which the Burgher and other Dissenting Churches were then mainly composed.

An application to the Associated Presbytery, in 1802, to be congregated, was signed by only six persons, and not till 1807 was the congregation regularly formed. Previous to being congregated by the Secession Presbytery into a Church, a few in Irvine, and in neighbouring parishes, were connected with the first Dissenting congregation in Ayrshire erected at

Kilmaurs,\* for the distance was only a few miles, and we know that the membership of the Kilmaurs Church included many who were residents of such distant parishes as Cumnock and Colmonell. William M'Knight, Charles Bannatyne, and Dr. James Richmond, successively occupied the pulpit of the Parish Church during the eighteenth century. With the exception of M'Knight, they were Moderates, or tinged with the prevailing spirit of Moderatism, and therefore lacked the evangelical fervour, as well as the learning, of the saintly Dickson. And the Relief Church, erected in 1776, was no less objectionable. That Church had been troubled in the early years of its history with a crazy woman (Mrs Buchan), and a weak minister who came under her influence;† and although matters improved after their departure, and the Rev. Peter Robertson, the clergyman who next succeeded, was certified sound in doctrine, and eminent for his piety and unassuming simplicity of manners, the Relief Church, with its free communion, was too broad to suit the stricter Burgher.

David Blackadder, a teacher in Irvine, and afterwards ordained (1804) minister in Maisondieu Lane, Brechin, began the congregation by preaching in his own schoolroom. Mr. Blackadder boarded with the family

\* The Secession Church at Kilmaurs dates from 1737.

† See Train's "History of the Buchanites," (Murchland, Irvine.)

of Mr. Wilson, a joiner in Kirkgate, and was, at the time referred to, a dark-haired, serious-looking, bashful young man. He composed excellent discourses, and in the quiet seclusion of his own chamber, or with his landlady and her family for an audience, could deliver them with great fluency and energy, but he found it a sore trial to hold forth to the audiences which filled his schoolroom on Sundays. Previous to 1807, Mr. Wilson and his family attended the Parish Church, but their sympathy with the enthusiasm of the young Dissenter who had taken up his abode with them, on the death of Dr. Richmond, whom they greatly respected, led to their casting in their lot with the promoters of the new cause, and the family or their descendants have ever since been connected with the congregation—thus perpetuating the influence of the first preacher.

This holding of the service in the schoolroom, however, could only have been for a brief period; for we know, that until the Church was erected, worship was held in a malt kiln, rented at 2s. per week, at the corner of East Back Road and Glasgow Vennel, still known as “The Kiln-end.” It had no windows, the door to the windward was kept shut to prevent a draught—the opposite door open to admit the light. “An old Malt Kiln,” Mr. Robertson called it, speaking of the place, years afterwards, “that had no

windows, and the door of which must be left open to admit the light, where some worthy old ministers, young then, dead now,—Elles of Saltcoats, Schaw of Ayr, or Blackwood of Galston,—rode over on a pony to Irvine, on Sabbath, and preached to the little handful of Burghers clustering for worship in the dusk and *chiaro-scuro* of such manger-cradle, such out-house of an inn." This old Kiln, used for drying grain, or, rather, for "making malt" for the innkeepers and other retailers of beer, at the beginning of the century, and at the period of our narrative used as a tabernacle, or temporary place of worship, by the Irvine Burghers, still exists, though in a transformed state. The door at one end remains, but windows have been let into the sides, and it now contains a shop and several small but comfortable-looking dwelling houses.

The Church in Cotton Row—the Burgher Kirk—was, as might be expected, a homely building, not very large, somewhat antiquated, with inside staircases (afterwards put outside), table seats, the pews cribbed and confined, and, in keeping with the times, small windows. Cost was a consideration to a struggling cause, and it will be remembered, that at the time of the erection, plainness of architecture was desiderated as in keeping with the simplicity of the gospel

preached. The cost of the building was £1100, and when opened it was burdened with a debt of £800. It is not unworthy of honourable mention, however, that the whole of the windows in this Burgher Church were made and put in, free of charge, by John Morris, a working joiner, as his contribution towards its erection. This is mentioned here because it illustrates the sacrifices made, in these old times, by many in the class to which John Morris belonged.

If David Blackadder, teacher, began the congregation, another teacher, in these early years of its history, was its moving spirit. The name of Daniel Montgomerie, "the schulemaister," is still a household word with the inhabitants of Irvine, especially amongst those who have reached the threescore, or threescore-and-ten years. And it is with something more than a smile that they recall his system of teaching—more particularly his manner of punishing negligent or offending pupils. Daniel had been engaged in agricultural pursuits in early life, but the effects of an accident had made him a cripple; and, being gifted with a vigorous and healthy mind, he had turned his attention to culture and seed-sowing of a different sort from that to which he had been formerly trained, qualifying himself for the mastership of a small school in which the three R's were efficiently taught. He acted as session-clerk and



treasurer of the congregation, and retained the latter office, I believe, till his death, which took place not long before that of the Rev. Mr. Campbell. His school in East Back Road is now converted into dwelling-houses; the little cottage in which he lived being a few yards to the south, and nearly opposite the back entrance to the old Church. The old schoolmaster propelled himself in a coach, somewhat resembling a Bath chair, to Church on Sundays; and he took such a leading part in the management, and had so much influence over its affairs, that it is said the site of the Cotton Row Church was selected because it was near to his residence.

The Session was composed of sturdy Dissenters, God-fearing men, who valued spiritual independence, and who, living nearer to the times of dissent and disruption than their successors of the present generation, felt more strongly on matters ecclesiastical, and, it may be, understood them better. "Like their old pastor," writes a correspondent, "they have gone home, and are at rest with God. Well do I remember them: old John Robertson, of the Cotton Row—a devout Nathaniel; the two Malcolms, William and John; the two Orrs, William and John; the Mackinlays, father and son; Clark Smith, from Shew-alton; good old Mr. M'Gavin; and Mr. Paterson, of Corsehill—all rare, good men; and another (elected

to the office during Dr. Robertson's pastorate) not the least in service, kindly George Wilson. All of them were men well exercised in the duties of the eldership—visitation and prayer. For weeks together I have known elder John Robertson visiting and leading the devotions in a household where its mainstay was laid on a bed of affliction, and unfit to discharge the duties of priest in his own household. Such memories as these cling to us, and when I think of their upright, pious, devoted character, it explains why Cotton Row Church was so eminently successful during the ministry of our beloved pastor and friend, Mr. Campbell."

The Rev. Alexander Campbell, the first minister, was ordained 22nd February, 1809.\* Under his ministry the congregation grew and prospered. At his first communion the members had increased to one hundred, and for a few years hearers came from Troon, Loans, Dundonald, Dreghorn, and Kilwinning. For the convenience of the Troon members and

\* It is noteworthy here that one member of Trinity U.P. Church, Janet Gray, residing in the hamlet of Loans, four miles along the Ayr road, remembers Mr. Campbell's ordination. In favourable weather this worthy old lady walks to Church, and home again in the evening. Indeed, she continues, down to the present time (June, 1889), a very regular attender of Trinity U.P. Church; and she was a warm admirer of Mr. Campbell's successor, the Rev. Dr. Robertson. She was present with her aunt at Mr. Campbell's ordination in 1809, being then a little girl, four years of age.

adherents, who were not equal to the journey of twelve miles, the Rev. Mr. Campbell occasionally held religious services in the only place then available for the purpose at Troon—a saw-pit, the site of which is now occupied by Portland Terrace, and where he and his congregation were twice surrounded by the tide. Troon continued under the wing of the Irvine Burgher Kirk till 1828, services being conducted, and the ordinance of baptism administered, at intervals as required, or as was deemed necessary by the Rev. Mr. Campbell. The late Rev. Dr. M'Gavin, of Dundee, who was baptised by him and brought up under his ministry, said of Mr. Campbell that “he was a kindly man, and took a great interest in the children. His classes for Bible instruction, held on the Saturday afternoons, in Daniel Montgomery’s school room, opposite the Pen Close, in the East Back Road, were well attended, and his zeal and faithfulness greatly appreciated; although not a few of the boys grumbled at their Saturday holiday being thus interfered with.”

“Mr. Campbell,” writes another correspondent, “who, to his honour, rose from the ‘seat tree’ of a hand-loom, to the Christian tribune, was a faithful and energetic overseer, with a leaven of the old Puritanic verve and passion in the pulpit, and the most gracious and quaintly accented *bonhomie* out of it. The right man had gotten into the right place. Mr. Campbell beheld the committee of six, which had offered him the invitation to settle amongst them, grow into a communion roll of five

hundred ; and his method of dividing the Word was highly acceptable to those whose sympathies had been aroused by the secession of Erskine and the relief of Gillespie, and who, moreover, were zealous to display, as a provocation in righteousness to Erastians, not a little of the austere regard for Scriptural authority of the men of the Covenant. He was to no inconsiderable degree comminatory in his style of preaching ; although this cannot be held as a just or valid reason why he should be condemned to-day. It was the prevailing mode of his time, and more particularly of the strait sect to which he belonged ; and it is enough for us to know that he was entirely sincere and faithful, at all risks, to what he conceived to be the letter and spirit of his commission. He was certainly not a time-server in his preaching ; he was one of those who abide by what they conceive to be the truth, and fearlessly proclaim it, whosoever may carp or gainsay. Such fulness of conviction, and fiery intolerance in the enunciation of it, do not approve themselves to the more reflective and judicial temper of the present day ; but fifty years ago it was accounted no error for a minister to thunder over the heads of his hearers with the sublime assurance and all-sufficient dogmatism of a prophet or an apostle. When he came to Irvine, Mr. Henderson was the parish minister ; but the latter was shortly afterwards (1813) succeeded by John Wilson, A.M. (afterwards Dr. Wilson, of Stirling), who was altogether a preacher very superior to his predecessor. Immediately after Dr. Wilson's settlement, one of the parishioners met a seceder at the close of an afternoon service. 'Man,' said the well-pleased parishioner, just fresh from an exegetical *tour de force* 'Man, we ha'e gotten a gun !' 'Ah,' rejoined the seceder, on whom it had been raining, for an hour and a quarter, fire out of heaven, 'we ha'e gotten a cannon !' There was, in a rough sort of way, truth in the distinction ; in logical analysis and synthesis, in bland deportment and measured temperance of speech, the parish

minister was unquestionably the better man of the two. But Mr. Campbell moved an audience as the other could not, and would have been the right sort of preacher for the morning of Drumclog, or Aird's Moss. Even the hearer, who in his own mind felt disposed to enter a tacit protest, was in the sequel caught and carried along by the onward sweep of the speaker's enthusiasm. With the older members, he was, as of course, the pattern and paragon of what an evangelical teacher should be. His sermons had the Pauline *foison* and marrow, and were pungently seasoned with texts and passages from the Epistles; in truth, the phraseology was derived from these and the Confession of Faith, and could not be thoroughly relished except by those who had been habituated to the same severe regimen. He was a disciplinarian in matters of observance. He has stopped in the course of a sermon to apostrophise Sabbath breakers, whom he had seen from the windows gadding in the fields, and his cure for sleepers was a profound and sudden surcease. He would not permit a Sunday School. To him it was a disturbance of the day of hallowed rest; his classes were therefore held on the Saturday afternoon, and then it was all Bible and Catechism from the highest to the lowest form. He was indefatigable in his diets of visitation; he beat up Sunday absentees in the course of the following week. He remembered the poor and the forlorn with his prayers and his purse: for his unction as a man of God had been the means of gaining him the favourable regard of a widow with a jointure. He had a memory, for faces, like that of George the Third; if he saw a face once, he knew it again, and for names his memory was equally retentive. He seemed to know everyone who sat under him by name and surname. His hearers were, as is usually the case in a country pastorate, widely scattered in their places of residence, many of them dwelling beyond the municipal boundaries, but in due course he trudged on foot to every one of them. For many years, the burly

form in black, the great gold seals depending from the old-fashioned fob, the sturdy walking stick, the white hair, the large keen blue eyes, the benevolent and ruddy face, were familiar in the lanes and highways around, as well as in the streets of the ancient burgh. When he died, a heavy change settled—or seemed to settle—in the hearts of those who had grown to love and venerate him, on the church and its precincts. The manse, from which he had been wont to issue, in gown and bands, his white head bared, just as the bells ceased, passed into strange hands, and there was some audible dissatisfaction regarding the way in which he had bequeathed his effects. It may be mentioned that Mr. Brash of East Campbell Street, Glasgow, preached the funeral sermon. A humble stone near the northern wall of the Churchyard tells his name, and records a date, but the personality, which was once a benignant and yet fiery force, is almost as much forgotten in these latter days as if it had never been; and the passers-by who deign to pause, and who can recall the living image of the dust below, must be very few indeed. It must be with a touch of sadness, not without a personal reference, that any one who knew him in those distant days will ponder the retrospect."

Like Robertson, of Clerk's Lane, Kilmarnock, Mr. Campbell seems to have been a fair type of the ministers who filled the pulpits of the United Secession Churches in Ayrshire fifty years ago. From other sources, as well as from the correspondent quoted, I learn that he was genial and hospitable. No minister of the town was so much liked by wedding parties, from the mining villages, coming to the manse to have the bride and bridegroom joined

in marriage ; for rumour went that, after the ceremony, all present were treated to a glass of wine. Talented young men, too, from the Theological Hall, were special favourites with him, and though in no way connected with Irvine, they could consider the Manse a home to which they were always welcome. The boys and girls of his flock he would name by their familiar Scotch diminutives ; and in the Saturday class, where he taught the Bible and Catechism, though there was neither rod nor tawse used by him, corporal punishment was not entirely excluded. Passages of the Bible were to be committed to memory by the boys, and should one be caught, as often happened, hiding his open Bible in his bonnet and reading the verse from it, the Minister would pounce upon the culprit, and with a vigorous “cuff” on the cheek, express his opinion of such conduct by saying—“Ah ! Jock, you would be a *reading minister*.” The Jock referred to, however, did not become a minister, but went to sea, and died like a hero, rescuing his shipmates when his ship was wrecked on the wild coast of the Hebrides.

In his efforts to keep his hearers from sleeping during the Sunday services, Mr. Campbell would stop in the middle of a sentence, fix his eye upon an offender, and pointing to him, would ask a neighbour in the pew to “awaken that sleeper.” Sometimes he



would go back upon the sermon, that the sleepy hearer might pick up the thread of the discourse. On one occasion a child in the gallery fell asleep, and falling from the seat to the floor, hit his head upon the book-board. The fall and blow set the child acrying so lustily that it had to be carried out of the Church. The minister paused until the last sound had died away, and then resuming, he gave to those before him the serious warning—"See that none of you big ones be falling next!"

At the time of the Reform agitation, in the year 1831, Mr. Campbell, along with many other Whigs and moderate Conservatives, sympathised in a mild way with the people; and the weavers who were got up as Emperor and Princes of India, with turbans, white robes, sandals, etc., for the great Irvine procession of 1831, were dressed in his house; but he discountenanced Radicalism, and after 1832 voted for the Conservative candidate, to the intense disgust, not feebly expressed, of the non-electors.

"Under the ministry of Mr. Campbell," said Mr. Robertson, at the laying of the foundation-stone of the new Church,—“a homely, hale-hearted, and, I believe, a heavenly-minded man, whose portly person I have never seen, but with whose portrait I am familiar, as pictured and preserved in gown and bands, with his bluff face and silver head, in several houses; and as pictured and preserved in fond remembrances in many hearts, though these now, too, are dying away; under his ministry



the congregation grew first outwardly, then upwardly, for thirty years and more; for something singular it is, that the duration of his ministry—beginning in that manger-cradle, that out-house of an inn, and ending, as many will remember, so suddenly, after expounding, on the Sabbath, the Ascension Psalm (the 24th)—as near as I can calculate, was just the same as that of his Master's life upon earth."

"I recollect well," says a correspondent, "the preaching of that sermon: the sudden and solemn change when the old man went, and the portly presence became a shadow." He died on the 2nd of March, 1843.

## CHAPTER IV.

### Ordination—First Impressions.

Morisonian Controversy—Ordination—Beginning of New Ministry—  
Low Financial Position of the Irvine Burgher Kirk—Youthful  
Appearance of the New Minister—First Impressions—Spiritual  
Insight—Seraphic Preaching—Doctrinal Position—"All Truth  
Centres in the Cross of Christ."

AS arranged, the day after Christmas, 1843, the Kil-  
marnock Presbytery of the Secession Church met  
at Irvine, and set its seal to the new pastorate by  
ordaining William B. Robertson minister of Cotton  
Row Church. In 1842, James Morison, of Clerk's Lane  
Church, Kilmarnock, after an exciting debate in the  
Synod, had been suspended from the ministry, for  
holding heretical views: the taint of heresy was be-  
lieved to be wide-spread amongst the younger minis-  
ters; the air, in the West of Scotland especially, was  
still full of the din of controversy; and in no pulpit  
was Mr. Morison more contemptuously spoken of than  
in that of the Rev. Mr. Campbell of Irvine, who  
would not so much as name him, but spoke of him

as "that fellow up the way." The doctrines of Particular Election, Reprobation, the Extent of the Atonement, and the Work of the Holy Spirit, were discussed by every class, and in households where religious discussion of any kind was formerly unknown. The like had not been seen in Ayrshire since the Stewarton Revival; and large numbers journeyed from all the neighbouring villages to sit under the ministry of the so-called heresiarch, who offered for their acceptance a gospel which was unconditioned by Election. "*Whosoever*," "*any man*," "*the whole world*," were phrases in the mouths of every one interested—and these included the greater part of the community.

A new minister was about to be ordained by the Presbytery, and there were suspicions as to the soundness of his views. It was probably known that his brother James was with Mr. Morison when he made his evangelistic tour in the North, where he preached the celebrated sermon, "What must I do to be saved?"—the publication of which had created the ferment. In the circumstances, therefore, it behoved the Fathers and the Brethren to be careful; and so, when delivering his trial discourses in October, the young minister-elect was subjected to a very strict examination on their part, so as to make assurance of his soundness doubly sure. He passed the ordeal successfully; but years afterwards, in a soiree speech,

he described himself as a "poor trembling youth at the gates of the terrible Presbytery of Kilmarnock, desiring to get in, but whose gates were guarded with the flaming sword of Orthodoxy;" and it was always a source of gratification to him, that shortly afterwards, one of the most suspicious of the elder presbyters frankly confessed his regret that doubts had ever been entertained of the genuineness of his allegiance to the recognised standards of the Church.\*

An eye-witness of the Ordination thus graphically describes the scene, in the "old barn-like Church," on that gray December forenoon, so memorable to many :—

"The Ordination of the young preacher was an event in which a few of the faithful women, as well as devout men, of my native town (Kilwinning), took a deep interest, and amongst the former, one who was the maternal angel of my early years. I had never seen an Ordination, and with leave of absence from the parish schoolmaster of the time, I found myself one of a little company of devoted burghers

\* The Rev. Mr. Elles, Salteoats, is the minister referred to. As the youngest minister of the Presbytery, it fell to Mr. Robertson to address Mr. Matthew Dickie, when ordained to the charge at Cumnoek, July, 1848. Still suspected of having brought with him from his student-life in Germany some Transcendental dreaming in his brain, there were whisperings—"Behold the dreamer cometh;" but all doubt was removed when, in his address, he said "The commentary by Matthew Henry, with its spiritual insight, and sympathy with the meaning of the Word of God, without any great apparatus of grammars, and lexicons, and Biblical criticism, is worth a whole cart-load of German rubbish."

who were early afoot, their faces turned toward the town of St. Inan, not on *his* day, however, but on the day appointed for the Ordination of one of his saintly successors—the pastor-elect of the Church in Cotton Row. Treading our way down the backway to the Church, I saw for the first time the square barn-like edifice, with its two long round-headed windows, which was afterwards to become the first home of our gifted Eremite. When we arrived, the old Church was filled to overflowing in every part, except the back seat in the gallery opposite the pulpit—not a bad place as it turned out to be, especially after getting one's-self lifted up between the book-board and the ceiling. The dim light of a gray December forenoon was struggling to make itself felt within the walls of the Church, before the pulpit of which the venerable fathers and brethren of the Presbytery were seated. When the hour for beginning the induction service had arrived, all eyes were fixed on the pulpit, where the young brother of the Presbytery, who was to open the proceedings of the day, was expected to take his place. But instead of any one ascending the pulpit stairs, a short, inexplicable pause and consultation, on the part of the fathers, ensued. In the suspense, the burly form of Elles of Saltcoats—aye ready in an exigency—appeared to detach itself from the group immediately in front of the pulpit, as if he had been delegated to stand in the gap. Ascending the pulpit, he gave out a psalm, which the congregation sang with spirit. But still the preacher was invisible. He then engaged in prayer, but had not proceeded far when the sound of the lifting *door-sneek* was heard in the silence, and the movement round the foot of the pulpit gave token that the dilemma of the hour was sure of a happy solution. And so it turned out, to the relief of the assembled fathers and brethren, for there, crouching on the pulpit stairs, was the unwilling delinquent, the Rev. Mr. Duff of Dalry—the appointed preacher, pale and perspiring, but ready to take his place at the conclusion of the prayer. It appeared that, instead of

doing the journey from Dalry to Irvine on horseback, as in olden times, Mr. Duff had entrusted his transportation to the 'iron horse'—an innovation of only some three years' standing on that road—and that some detention on the way had thrown him late. When he did get into the pulpit, however, he gave proof that, although somewhat jaded in body, he was neither 'lag nor lame' in mind, as he descanted on the text—'Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith' (Romans iii. 27). The sermon being over, there followed the usual Ordination service, with its accompanying charges, and the ceremony of the day was brought to a happy issue."

Mr. Robertson's father and other relatives were present at all the services; and the usual Ordination dinner was attended, not merely by personal friends from a distance, by members of Presbytery, and of Cotton Row Church, but by representatives of other denominations in the town desirous to welcome the young preacher, who had won the hearts of the burghers of Irvine. The Rev. Dr. Edmond, now of London, was one of the speakers at the Soiree held in the evening, and is said to be the only one now alive who addressed the congregation on that interesting occasion. On the Sabbath following, the young pastor, according to custom, was introduced to the congregation by the Rev. Mr. Stewart, of Erskine U.P. Church, Stirling, who preached from the text, "He that winneth souls is wise." His own text was, "One thing is needful."

Robertson's active ministry, thus begun on the first Sabbath of January, 1844, continued, with the breaks incidental to most lives, till the beginning of 1871—a period of over twenty-seven years—when the serious illness, afterwards to be noted, occurred, which changed, if it did not practically close, his connection with the congregation. There were the usual summer or autumn holiday breaks, when he took excursions to the Continent and elsewhere, in the company of friends.\* Thrice he was laid aside by illness—the first time in 1849; and, during these years, more than many men, he had to face family trials and bereavements. First, his brother George died suddenly, in 1845—his ministry at Busby only lasting six and a half months; then his mother, in 1855; his brother Robert, in 1857; Andrew, in 1860; and seven years afterwards, the venerable father followed to that eternity—that heavenly kingdom—and that rich

\* One of these visits is noteworthy. "In the autumn of 1857 I met him," says Principal Cairns, "at the Berlin Evangelical Alliance, almost the only ecumenical meeting ever held in Germany, and to this day felt in its results. Dr. Robertson refused, through modesty, to take any part in it, but contributed to a journal a vivid sketch—and especially of the last meeting of three thousand persons in the *Garrison Kirche*, where he described the closing act, the rising up of the vast audience, and of the late King, with his brother (the Emperor William) and other members of the Royal Family, to sing 'Nun denket alle Gott' (Let all men praise the Lord)—as a world-wide homage to the King of Kings."—*Funeral Sermon*, 4th July, 1886. [His name stands in the list of delegates—Robertson, W. B. Prediger, Irvine.]

inheritance of the saints—so frequently the theme of the Irvine minister's preaching.

The new ministry began under exceptionally discouraging circumstances. The Irvine of those days was not like the Irvine of these days. It resembled Washington Irving's "Sleepy Hollow"—a dull, respectable, academic air pervaded the place. The site now occupied by public works was then sand dunes, waste and unproductive lands; and so, as there were no outward crowds to draw upon, in the closing days of Mr. Campbell's ministry, the Church had been feeling the pinch of evil times. The reasons for this are not far to seek. As years rolled on, the area of membership became circumscribed on account of the rise of other congregations, until latterly, few who resided beyond the limits of the town attended the Irvine Burgher Kirk. The weaving trade, too, began to fail—and the weaving contingent was numerically large in the congregation. Then, the congregation, such as it was, had not learned to give even as they might have done, and as they soon most worthily did under a new inspiration and example. The plate on Sundays in these dull times was well filled with the large copper pennies then in circulation, and, amongst the load of copper coins which it contained, there were



always found three silver sixpences ; but that was the maximum on ordinary occasions, and the minister himself invariably contributed one of the sixpenny pieces. Several members of the congregation, indeed, were very well-to-do in the world, but the only two monied men the kirk could boast of were, Mr. Hill—a genial and popular gentleman who had resided abroad as a merchant for many years, but who was, at this period, proprietor of the house and grounds of Ravenscroft ; and Mr. John Smith, writer. The result of this state of affairs was, that in the early part of the year 1843, a financial crisis was reached, when, after much consultation, it was agreed by the managers of the Church, that Mr. Paterson, of Corsehill, should see the minister and ask him to drop, for a time at least, £30 of his modest stipend of £130 a year. The messenger of death, however, stepped unexpectedly in before him, and that, too, on the very day Mr. Paterson was to have paid his visit. When the Church's prospects at this time were at their worst, through dissension in a neighbouring Church, a number of rather important family accessions took place. But the hope of a revival chiefly centred in the *stimulus* expected from the young minister ; and, as we shall see, in this hope, they were not disappointed.

In appearance, the new occupant of the pulpit was

a marked contrast to the old incumbent. "Instead of the venerable pastor, of portly form, bluff face, and silvered head, came a stripling"—writes one who remembers the beginning of his ministry—"slim and slight in figure, almost juvenile in his youthfulness, with the pallor of study on his cheek, an expressive and intelligent face, full dark thoughtful eyes, the perfect outlines of the eyebrows, and a forehead suggesting that of Shelley, as seen in his portraits." "When I saw him mount the pulpit stairs," says another who heard him preach at Saltcoats immediately before his ordination in Irvine, "I felt indignant that one so young should presume to teach a Church, but when I heard his prayer, I felt that the most aged might sit at his feet." A well-known story illustrates his juvenile appearance in these days. He was engaged to preach from home. The Church was crowded—even the aisles and pulpit stairs were occupied. Ascending to the pulpit without gown or bands, he found an old woman sitting on the topmost step. She was very unwilling to make way for him. She could not imagine that he was the preacher whose fame had attracted so large an assemblage; but yielding to his resolute purpose, audibly cautioned him—"Laddie, laddie, ye maunna gang in there. Dae ye no ken that's the place for the minister?"

Nor was the contrast only in appearance—the

message was so different: if not in essential truth, at least in the style of its delivery and in spiritual insight.

"One of God's singers had come to them," writes again the friend who remembers these early years, "whose privilege it was to lift the veil which hides the invisible; and the hearers, who gathered in ever-increasing numbers, in the Cotton Row Church, under this new teacher, began to decipher writings, which, for the first time, they discovered to be written on the walls of God's temple; and to see, as they had never before seen, the finger of God—the Supernatural in Creation, Providence, and Grace. New doors were opened, through which they saw the Beautiful everywhere, and there was, consciously in some cases, and unconsciously in others, an enlargement of their spiritual vision. They saw, through the eyes of their poet-teacher, deeper meanings in the mysteries of Providence; were educated to a fuller understanding of that immeasurable love that lies hidden to all but those to whom it is revealed in the Divine plan of Redemption; and nature had a new voice for them, as he pictured its 'hills, vales, woods, netted in a silver mist;' the whole crowned with the legend—'Holiness to the Lord.' His weekly burden to his people was

'See! Is God not with us on the earth,  
And shall we put Him down?'

I can never forget my first impressions of Dr. Robertson as a preacher. He was the one preacher who gave me a sense that he spoke from immediate inspiration; that throughout the week he was as one who had been dwelling in the Great Presence on the Mount; and hence, on Sabbath, when the people gave him audience, his face shone, and his words were as full of rich suggestion as perfect music. The sermon in that somewhat distant time, did not seem a dull mechanical exercise, alien to present human needs and yearnings,

but touched with genius, and quickened with fire from heaven. The Irvine people were impressed without being able to tell how. Not one, probably, in a hundred could adequately gauge the value of what was set before them, but the minister succeeded, as others of similar endowment have done in like circumstances, in forming the taste, enlarging the apprehension, and chastening the will of those whom he taught. For himself, he was saved from dilettantism by his truth and sincerity of feeling, by his apostolic earnestness of conviction; and, instead of becoming a mere Sybarite in refinement, he assimilated all these gifts and accomplishments in the clear subtle flame of spiritual emotion."

All the testimonies which come down to us from these days speak of the impression made, in almost identical language. "The first time that I saw or heard Dr. Robertson," says the valued contributor to whom I am indebted for the details of the Ordination, "was either while he was still a probationer at Irvine, or shortly after his Ordination to the Burgher Kirk of that ancient Burgh, when, unexpectedly to the few who had assembled to hold the weekly prayer meeting of a congregation in the neighbouring town of Kilwinning, he was seen threading his way up the eastern aisle of the Church, under the escort of that late stalwart son of St. Fillans—the Rev. Mr. M'Gregor, the minister. As they approached the precen-tor's desk it soon became manifest that this mysterious stripling was to take part in the homely services of the meeting. The writer was only a

lad of some eleven autumns at this time, and the youthful preacher did not appear to be more than ten years his senior:—

“The subject of his address I do not remember, but the ‘phonograph’ of his voice, and the picture of his appearance in the Burgher Kirk of ‘Saigtoun,’ on that occasion, has been preserved in the portfolio of my memory for more than forty years. It was as if one of the seraphim of Isaiah’s Vision had somehow wandered into the dim sanctuary of my early pilgrimage, and lifted up his voice in adoration as he offered the concluding prayer. There he stood like one transfixed in the precentor’s desk, as with clasped hands and upturned face he rolled out his full-toned, well-rounded sentences, with long, solemn intervals of silence between each, as he lifted up his voice and cried—‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.’ This was unconsciously the keynote of his whole ministry in the West, and the only word which can adequately express its character is the word *worship*, the *spirit* of which prevailed in every act of ministry—Godwards or manwards. Indeed, no ministry in recent times has so fully reflected the glories of the New Jerusalem. To listen to the cadences of his rich mellow voice, as he discoursed of heavenly things, was as if one listened to a solo in some grand Cathedral service, as the solitary voice of the singer floated down the arched roof—filling chancel, nave, and aisles, with music. Such, and so singularly *unique* in its character and manner, was the voice of Robertson’s ministry; for, as a preacher, his style even then, as I afterwards came to know it in his maturer years, was truly seraphic. His preaching was not directed to his audience, but spoken rather *in their hearing*. He was not censorious, but when he did speak reprovably in the ear of his generation, it was not to condemn, but rather that men might be won to a conviction of their

'undone' condition, by reproducing the vision of its opposite—the good, the beautiful, the true—in their own souls. Thus, by the vision of the holiness and the glory of God, rather than by that of His terrors, he sought to convince all men—even the prophets of his own times—that he who would live for, or speak for God, must needs have the *heart* 'purged' and the *lip* 'touched' as with a 'live coal' from off the altar of God—the altar of His love. He neither accused nor excused his generation, but showed it that which is good in contrast to that which is evil—and this also as in the presence of the Lord. His manner of utterance was one peculiarly his own. It was always dramatic, but varied in character—generally a long melodious monologue; here, in parts, conversational or pictorial; there, antiphonal, as if one cried unto another—soul unto soul: brother unto brother—and the burden of his cry, in answer to the 'Woe is me!' of the prophets of the earth, was ever to magnify the holiness and the glory of God. His manner in the pulpit or on the platform was always that of one who waited for the divine afflatus to fill his soul. While he was musing, the fire burned; *then* spake he with his tongue. And, when this afflatus came, as sometimes it did during the congregational singing of a psalm or hymn, his very body became subject to the motive influences of the informing spirit of the man. Like some royal yacht, richly laden with the precious things of the earth, the sea, and the sky, he seemed borne along by a higher power, yet always under the controlling rudder of his own sweet will; but not without *the graceful leeward dip of the body*, and the occasional undulating motion of the shoulders, and of the well-rounded head, with its weight of long, floating hair."

The new voice was lifted up at an opportune time. The religious awakening in the West—the result of the Atonement controversy, inclined the hearts of his hearers to receive with due seriousness the new

message, in which the Fatherhood of God was magnified, and the greatness of His love in Christ presented with the warmth and earnestness of a great soul all aglow with poetic fire. He preached upon the old themes of Justification, Conversion, and Prayer; but like John Bunyan, who transformed the hard, scholastic theology of the Puritans into visions of Wicket Gates and Palaces Beautiful, of Castles of Despair and Delectable Mountains, and of the City where all the bells were set a-ringing when the gates were opened to receive a redeemed soul; so the justification of the sinner became, in the sermons of the young preacher, a great dramatic spectacle, in which a soul was tried before Eternal Justice, and its everlasting destiny determined. Thus, if images of beauty came to surround the commonplaces of the received creed, and a new glory shone upon old truths, the preaching was saved from being considered frivolous and theatric, by the deep spiritual feeling which pervaded it, and the moral earnestness which it displayed. He held fast by the Creed of his Church, but though zealously evangelical, he could not with his quickened intellect, and keen observation of the current thought of his time, shut his eyes to certain of its limitations; and so his people were pleased that the harsher aspects of the Creed could be softened by him, and harmonized with what were then called "the New Views." As



bearing on his doctrinal position, he said on one occasion :—

“Diversities from Scripture were not to be permitted in the least degree, but there were diversities that man’s own science made, in shaping and formulating truth within the narrow logic of the understanding, and the doctrine of ELECTION had been so dealt with. Woe to the Church that lets go her hold on that doctrine, but when shaped into a scientific system it seemed to split asunder and go off into two different directions. So they had higher and lower Calvinists. What was then to be done? Some would say, cast overboard your systems of theology altogether, for they are Jonahs, getting the ship of the Church into trouble; but, if they did that, they would not be long (as all Church history showed) in throwing overboard the Scriptures too, and sailing out from some Plymouth Sound or harbour into a sea of doubt. They should not try to make these differences seem smaller than they really were, but they should fairly measure the difference, and then see, if, after all, it was not a matter of forbearance, so that across the chasm they might throw the arms of Christian Charity. Augustus Toplady and Charles Wesley could have joined in singing ‘Rock of Ages,’ and ‘Jesus, lover of my soul,’ so that there seemed to be some high region of love and song where they could meet and embrace each other. It was only within certain limits, defined by Scripture, that these diversities could be permitted; but they should be honestly and forcibly brought out and looked at. Where there was no difference, there needed to be no forbearance. The doctrine of the ATONEMENT might be called *the* doctrine of the Scripture; and woe be to them that would swerve in the least away from that. It was very sad to think that earnest, gifted men, like the late Robertson of Brighton, should swerve from this soul-saving truth, and go their weeping, woeful way, in darkness. They should not bite and bark at such a man as that,



as living dogs do at a dead lion, but they should rather mourn for him in his distress, and sore disease of mind—for mental malady it surely was. He was like a splendid wreck—a ship on fire at sea—but yet they hoped he had got into the heavenly harbour too. Some ladies of his Church, with the clatter of their tea cups, and their scandal tongues, did fret and vex his manly, martial spirit, and make him most untrue unto himself, in taking umbrage at the Cross of Christ. These withered maids thought themselves, no doubt, the keepers of the High Priest's palace door, and would not let this rash disciple in, and were the means of tempting him to deny his Master, even in the hour of His sore travail for our sin. But yet, we trust, Christ turned and looked upon him too, and by that look sent him weeping bitterly through those showers of tears that fell on his early death and funeral, on to the golden morning and the golden shore, where he has met with Christ, we hope, and said unto Him after all, 'Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.' But on the other hand, he would most sternly say, woe to the Church that swerves away in the very least from the doctrine of Vicarious Atonement. But here, again, the doctrine when taken out of Scripture into the hands of science, splits asunder, and goes off into narrower views on the one side, and broader views on the other. The real question of Atonement was not a question of mensuration or number, it was a question of guilt and expiation: it had to do with the conscience, not with the arithmetical understanding; and was not likely to be raised in the form of a question of number at all, when a man was truly in earnest about his sin, and salvation from it."\*

"Few men in these days," he once said to me, "have done so much for the religious life of Scotland as James Morison. The pendulum of human thought is

\* Soiree speech, at Saltcoats, 9th July, 1866.

ever swinging to the extreme points : he found it at the extreme point of God's sovereignty, and brought it to the other extreme—man's responsibility ; but the truth lies where these two meet"—and, crossing his arms, he made the sacred sign, as, in a voice of singular depth and persuasiveness, he said—"All truth centres in the Cross of Christ."

## CHAPTER V.

### Church Growth: "Outwards and Upwards."

Revival in Church Life—The Ideal Christian Minister—Expository Lectures—Visitation of the Sick and Bereaved—Personal Traits—Development—Missions—Sabbath Schools—Lessons of the Sea—Improvement of Psalmody—Praise should take the first place in the Services of the Sanctuary.

THE beginning of the new ministry in the Burgher Kirk is said to have been like the coming of spring-time. "If the old preaching, with its necessary fitness to the period to which it belonged, was like a landscape under a leaden sky of gray, over which a sharp east wind was blowing, the new was like the same landscape breathed upon by the soft west wind, the air sweetened by the balm of a reviving vegetation, the play of golden light in the stirring foliage, and the ineffably modulated tones of colour in the distance." So writes a friend; we know it became a new

starting point. The new voice—new style—new thought, revived and quickened spiritual emotion and aspiration, alike in individual and congregational life, to a degree never felt before. And yet, at this distance of time, it is only in a very general way that we can gather anything like a living conception of the growth and development of the young preacher's special pulpit gifts, and of the influence he acquired over the minds and hearts of his congregation. Like all other preachers, he would have the difficulties incidental to stated weekly preparation, and therefore his dull days;\* but, as he felt himself more and more in touch with his people, there would be the discovery of new powers, greater freedom of utterance, and, as with all minds in which the creative faculty is large, a gradual unfolding to his spiritual vision of the higher aspects of God's teaching in Nature and in the Divine Word.

Fortunately, he has left on record his ideal conception of what a Christian minister should be, and, though given at the close, rather than at the

\*Four or five Sabbaths after Mr. Robertson came to Irvine, a friend who had promised him a day did not keep his engagement, and the young minister, unprepared as he was, had to take the service. The Church was filled as it had been on the previous Sabbath; but he was sadly dull, and he seemed conscious of it. Referring to the circumstance, afterwards, he said, that on other days he was afraid he might forget his sermon, but he had no fear that day—there was no sermon to forget.

beginning of his ministry, we have no reason to doubt that from the first he sought to live up to it:—

“A man of God, made strong in grace, and mighty in the Scriptures, and gifted, if God pleased, with eloquence,—rare eloquence, with holy lips, and holy life as well, to draw the flock, as by sweet pastoral music, the Good Shepherd going before, Sabbath by Sabbath, heavenwards; a man of gentle nature and kindly heart, to win his way among the people, in his visiting and other intercourse, and especially among the dear little children and the humble poor—who were especially accessible to courtesy—and always with the sound of his Master’s feet behind him; a man of strong, yet sympathetic nature, defiant of death and all danger, yet dealing most gently with the dying in the chamber, and the mourners at the funeral; preaching with power, and yet tenderness, and praying with tears, and yet with strong crying and tears; a man intent on saving souls, and bringing them to Him whom his soul loved, even to His cross; on doing the work of God, and destroying the works of the devil; and, in all, and above all, a good man, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and looking up steadfastly towards heaven, and beholding always the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, so that his face shall shine, and he shall feel emboldened to go through anything to death, and martyrdom—if need were, faithful unto death.”\*

How quickly his powers as a preacher developed is shown by the fact that two of his greatest sermons—“The Book of God’s Remembrance,” and “The Inheritance of the Saints;” together with his translation of the Beatitudes—after the Greek style of

\* Speech at Ordination of Rev. Mr. Dickie, as pastor of Trinity Church, Irvine, August 5, 1879.

architecture—into a temple of Holy Living, in which he assigned to each of the beatific conditions its proper place and level in the ideal temple of the Christian life, beginning with “the poor in spirit” at the door of entrance, and passing on to the highest condition, that of ministering and suffering with Christ—are placed within the first three years of his ministry. He told me that he gave very thorough preparation to several courses of lectures which he delivered to his people—Expository lectures on the Gospel of Mark, Genesis, Exodus, Jonah, and on the Epistle to the Romans; and to a series of Sermons on the Silences—*the silence of God*: “These things hast thou done and I kept silence;” *the silence of Christ*: “He answered not a word;” *the silence of the suffering Saint*: “I was dumb and opened not my mouth;” *the silence of the inexcusable Sinner*: “He was speechless;” and *the silence of suspense in heaven*: “There was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour”—when the seven angels could not blow their trumpets until the prayers of all saints came up and were presented by the Angel of Intercession in the golden censer; for, without these prayers, God could not work in carrying forward the history of the Church, as developed under the successive trumpets.

The lectures on Mark’s Gospel were directed towards

practical ends. Those on Genesis extended over a considerable period—each lecture a fresh picture of patriarchal life and adventure, with the leadings of Divine Providence underneath. The most effective passages were distinct creations, full of poetic feeling, and were repeated by him again and again in other connections, because appropriate and beautiful. In his lecture, for example, on the death of Rachel or Jacob, such a passage as this would break in like a refrain:—

“Some may never carry in their hand the palm branch of fame, some never hold the olive branch of peace, some never handle the evergreen of hope; but all must bear the myrtle and cypress, as they march on to the dirge-like music of ‘All flesh is grass.’”

Or, in picturing our hope of immortality, and the glimpses given us here of the world beyond, he would say:—

“Sometimes I think of the great eternity as of a fine old Cathedral, with saints and angels singing in the lofty galleries, and of myself as a child scrambling over the tombstones outside, where all is storm and darkness, and looking in, through the rain-drizzled coloured windows, upon the glory within, longing for the door to be opened, or a window to be raised.”

The study of the book of Genesis, if we may judge from the frequency with which he drew illustrations from its incidents and teaching, must have been to

him a source of great pleasure, and of ultimate profit in future preparation. In the last discourse preached by him in Trinity Church, August 30, 1885, there occurs this striking and suggestive passage drawn from the lot of Israel's inheritance, as completed according to the prophecy of the dying Jacob, and the distribution of land to the tribes of Israel as given in the 49th chapter:—

“He sometimes thought that the inheritance of the saints might be completed in a somewhat similar way—that some might dwell, like Zebulun, the sailor tribe, on the shores of the bright land, and make exploratory voyages across the ocean of the infinite; and some might dwell like Asher and Issachar, among the fields and gardens, and cultivate the trees of the Paradise of God; and some might sit, like Dan, in the wisdom of the serpent, but without his cunning, communing with cherubim on the mystery of redemption; and there shall be many like Gad, whom a troop has overcome, but who has overcome at last; and not a few like Joseph, who have endured temptation and received the crown of life; while many shall walk like the lion-like Judah to the throne. Therefore, he went on to say, there were different stations and employments in heaven, but they would all return again, and yet again, in the eternal years to heaven, to sing the new song before the throne of God. No doubt there would be differences of position and employment there, from the strong holy angel who veiled his face before the burning throne, incapable to bear its brightness, to the little babe who died yesterday, and went up waving its little palm branch, glittering with the dews of immortal youth, to sing Hallelujah to the King of little children.”

In the discourse preached by him at the Anniver-



sary Services, (held, August 25, 1867) there also occurs a passage, which, in its original form, would, no doubt, be part of his expository lectures on Genesis. The text was Hosea xii. 3, "By his strength he had power with God;" the passage relating to the struggle of Jacob, with the angel of God, previous to his meeting with Esau. It is pictured with such striking dramatic effect, that the scene and the wrestlers could not fail to be brought vividly before the hearers, although in this, as in other like passages, the words fail to convey any adequate notion of the impressive effect produced by his changing tone of voice, and corresponding gesture:—

"It was evening when they came to the brook Jabbok, and the sun was going down behind Mount Carmel; the tents were pitched, the cattle fed; and when the sun had set and the evening worship was engaged in, Jacob retraced his steps over the brook. He wrestles, for what? for the blessing of the birthright, which he had not gained, but rather forfeited by his sin. His scouts had been out and had returned with the news that his brother was coming to meet him with 400 armed men. He had sent presents to him, but that was not enough; he saw the revengeful Esau with his army of freebooters coming fast upon him. It was folly to think of giving him battle, with the few shepherd lads he could call together, so he turned to God and asked Him to change his brother's heart. In wrestling, all the powers of the body, and all the efforts of the will, were required. They were used also in earnest prayer, and Jacob applied them. Never

were there such combatants ! The one, the Eternal God, the other, the worm Jacob. He (the preacher) had read, in Scripture story, of the stripling David prevailing over the Giant of Gath, but of nothing else like this. The wrestlers close in each other's arms. *Who falls ?* The angel, not prevailing, touches the hollow of Jacob's thigh, so that he cannot wrestle standing, but Jacob puts his arms round the angel's neck and drags him to the dust, and there in the dust they wrestle till the day dawns, and, Jacob prevailing, becomes no longer the supplanter, but Israel, 'For as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.'"

Jacob's victory naturally leads to an inquiry into the source of Jacob's success, and this the preacher found first, *in the strength of Solitude*. There was the solitude of choice—Isaac in the field at eventide, David in his bed in the still watches of the night, and Christ on the lone mountain side. There was also the solitude of necessity—Jacob, in the providence of God, was forced to be alone. It did not matter on what side of the brook he was—there was no soul near who could sympathise with him. One poet has said of another—

His soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.

And so, intellectually, Jacob stood among his more immediate friends like a live star, a mountain among the hills, a Saul among a race of pigmies. Then, his strength was also that of *Supplication*—the greatest of all strengths. By it, prison doors had been set open,

battles had been fought, and the grave itself made to give up its dead. Lastly, he said, there was *the strength of the Holy Spirit* :—

“ It was in that way only that we could solve the mystery of the worm Jacob prevailing with the mighty God. It was the God within wrestling with the God without. Jacob's weakness was his own, and not his strength. By virtue of the Holy Spirit, our prayers had their full expression before God. Desires of ours that lay too deep for words, wants that were even too deep to be felt—those silent and unspoken prayers were all heard in heaven. Unknown to ourselves, they were all known to God. Such was Jacob's strength—the strength of Solitude, of Supplication, and of God's Spirit. As blessings, lost and forfeited by sin, may yet be recovered by earnest prayer, we ought to ask importunately, knock loudly, and, laying hold on Christ, refuse to let Him go unless He bless us.”

The books of Exodus and Jonah were similarly treated by him. Three of his best known and most frequently preached discourses were on texts taken from the former. First, “ And the Lord said unto Moses, wherefore criest thou unto me ? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward” (Ex. xiv. 15), the most striking passage being the crossing of the Red sea—the Israelites entering upon that “ marine gallery with its crystal walls,” as the waters were “ darkening in the evening twilight, and reddening in the kindling of the Presence-Cloud ; the long procession defiling on the further shore, when the dawn had streaked the East ;” and a powerful description of the cavalry

charge at Balaclava--the preacher picturing the doomed horsemen rushing past with swift and awful pomp to be rent, and torn, and scattered; the audience, as he proceeded, sharing in some degree the sublime intoxication of daring which every man felt who rode into that flame-lit smoke of death. Second, "Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him" (Ex. xxxiv. 29)—the words taken by the preacher as teaching that the richest beauty is commonly unconscious; is not aware, or is but imperfectly aware, of the love and admiration which it excites. There is, 1st, Unconscious receiving—as (*a*) unconscious education in infancy, (*b*) unconscious preservation of the saints from perils, and (*c*) unconscious possession of gifts and graces; 2nd, Unconscious giving; 3rd, Unconscious being. The third discourse, which Dr. Graham calls "that never-to-be-forgotten sermon," was preached from Ex. xxiv. 11—"They saw God, and did eat and drink." I can only give the heads from memory:—1st, To eat and drink and not see God, is sin; 2nd, To eat and drink and not see God, because of tears, is sorrow; 3rd, To eat and drink, and see God, that is salvation. Robertson told me that the subject suggested itself to him whilst walking between Kilwinning and Irvine at time of harvest. The fields were waving with golden grain ready for the sickle, and in the provision which God had made for man and

beast, he read the teachings of the text. When preaching the sermon at Ardrossan, July 12, 1857, after a prolonged pause, so prolonged as to arrest attention, he startled his hearers by rolling out in his deepest tones—

“There was a sound of revelry by night,  
And *Babel’s* capital had gathered then  
Her beauty and her chivalry.”

A “surprise effect” like this was no unusual thing with him when preaching.

The older members still remember the flood of light which he threw upon the Divine mysteries of grace, when lecturing through the Epistle to the Romans.

More than most ministers, he would profit by coming into contact with the varied experiences of human life, in a congregation largely composed of the artisan classes. His youth, his genial, happy nature and broad sympathies, ensured him a loving welcome into “whatsoever house he entered,” and a confidence and devotion and admiration from both young and old which could nowhere be surpassed. If his unsystematic ways, as these sometimes did, led to a gentle reproach for neglect of visitation, the reproach, by an easy stroke of pleasantry, was turned aside, and he would leave the house more beloved than before. It was a saying of his, when his late

or irregular hours were referred to, that there were twenty-four hours in every day, and it was all one when the day was commenced, provided the hours were well employed. Possessed himself of a great capacity for love and suffering, invalids were not unfrequently visited at midnight, when they were brightest, or needed comforting, and these visits were spoken of years after. In the sick-room he showed a special tenderness—a true brotherly pity—and great tact in dealing with difficulties.

“‘To depart and be with Christ,’ Paul says, ‘is far better!’” was his remark to a mother seriously ill.

“But Paul had nae bairns,” was the sad reply.

“Oh, yes! had he not the care of all the Churches?”

His readiness, when visiting, was indeed great ; but, in narrating to one of his session an incident which occurred at the sick bed of a poor man who was thought to be dying, he admitted that the extraordinary and unexpected character of a request made by the prostrate invalid struck him like a blow, and completely nonplussed him. He was about to offer up a prayer, and asked the man if there was anything special that he desired and wished him to pray for. “Well,” was the reply, “I don’t know of anything I’m more in need of than a new suit of clothes.”

At a very early age he had learned the lesson that in the house of mourning, silence was golden—that the grasp of the hand, the sympathetic look, conveyed more than words, and that the time for speech was when the bitterness of the separation was somewhat mitigated. Then, as few could, he comforted the bereaved by speaking of their departed friends as, above, swelling the retinue of palm-branch bearers, or as white-robed chorus singers, and of the certainty of reunion, because “Christ had burst the bands of the grave; had carried away the gates of death and made them gates of heaven.” With him, bereaved mothers were “weeping Rachels,” and he directed their thoughts heavenward, that they might find the consolation and comfort they needed by hearing in fancy “the voices of their infants ringing overhead in the songs of paradise.” Bereavements, he told mourners, were “but a laying up of treasure in heaven, and though awfully black, they were blessings, just as the dark purple grapes are the richest, and the thunder-cloud black with the riches of rain. Each bereavement was the shadow of Nathanael’s fig-tree, with which the path of life is skirted, as all German roads are with poplars, and Italian ways with cypresses and palms—and in the shadow of which might be seen the gleaming of the lowest step of the ladder that rises into ever-wider opening heavens.”

This same all-embracing sympathy often took him to the pier-end, when fishing boats were in peril on the sea, and to his holding prayer-meetings with the fisher-folk, which, when there was great anxiety for the safety of friends and relatives who had to cross the bar exposed to a south-west storm, were sometimes prolonged far into the morning. Like all ministers in seaport towns, too, he was often the bearer of sorrowful tidings, from distant lands, of death—by disease, by shipwreck, or by falling overboard; and we can think of him, in his own touching way, speaking to wives and mothers—so stunned by the unexpected news that tears refused the needed relief—of the Christ who wept with the sisters in Bethany, weeping with them too; and of his pointing forward to the resurrection day, when the “crystal doors” of the ocean sepulchre would open at the voice of the Archangel, to give up its dead; and there would be no more sea. And, what he was to the sick, the sorrowful, and the bereaved, he was also to the dying. Then his speech became the fervid outpouring of the whole heart; but the ease he gave to troubled souls, and the light he cast upon the dark passage called death, can only be known in heaven, and is remembered by saints in glory!

From the individual, he carried at times the consolations needed at seasons of affliction and bereave-



ment to the congregation, and by happy image, or unlooked-for turn of expression, threw unexpected lights on the darkest and most sorrowful themes. "Alluding to the loss of a member of the congregation who had met his death by drowning, he described the manner of his death in the quaintly beautiful but comforting words—'He has gone from us, *entering Heaven by the Crystal Gate.*' So, too, when referring on another occasion, to a female member, whose death had been startlingly sudden, but whose character for deep and genuine piety was well known to all, he said—'Mary was her name, and like Mary, too, she was in her character and experience ; for, Mary-like, she early chose the good part which was never taken from her. And Mary-like, too, it was ever her delight to sit at Jesus' feet and hear His words. 'Nay,' he added, 'may we not say of her that she was Mary-like even in the event and manner of her death. For in the startling suddenness with which she was summoned away from us, was it not just as if the message had been brought to her, as it was to her namesake in Bethany of old, 'The master is come and calleth for thee, when straightway she rose up hastily, and went forth to meet Him.' "»\*

\* " *Irvine Poets, Native or Resident.* By Rev. W. B. R. Wilson, Dollar.

With the loving sympathy, just referred to, there was the reckless generosity which emptied his purse to every piteous appeal for help. He never knew when he went out precisely how much money was in his pocket, and he very often returned unable to tell exactly how much he had given away. A characteristic story is, that on one occasion he astonished, if, indeed, he did not shock his landlady, by coming into the house from a walk in the evening minus his coat. In answer to his landlady's amazed inquiries, he explained that a poor man had asked him for an old coat. His heart was touched by the beggar's pleading, and, knowing that he had another coat at home, and that the one he had on was getting a little threadbare at anyrate, he told the man to follow him. On reaching the stair-foot, it struck the minister that it would be a great saving of time to give it to the poor man there, and so pulled it off and, without further ceremony, gave it into the astonished beggar's hands.

Another marked personal trait is pointed out by a correspondent, as distinctly characteristic of him. "He had a peculiar dexterity," he says, in meeting any embarrassing question, or in extricating himself from a difficult position. The forward, the conceited, and the arrogant, were assured of a sore defeat if they attempted to display themselves

offensively in his presence. With delicate touch he could meet their unwise words or conduct. The undiscerning might think there was only kindness and goodwill expressed, but the reflective saw a most fatal wound to their pretentiousness—a wound which opened the deeper the more it was considered. Yet there was no malice in the infliction of the wound.” Sensitive himself, he shrank from giving pain to anyone. But when it had to be done, his natural tact and kindness enabled him to do what was disagreeable with a gloved hand.\*

Every department of existing Church work speedily came under the reviving influence, and new departures were taken:—*outwardly*, as the earnest young minister was fond of saying, in better attendance at the services in the sanctuary, in increased church-door collections, and greater interest in congregational affairs generally; *upwardly*, in a deepening of spiritual life, and in enlarged views of what a Church of Christ should be. He lifted the Church up to a higher platform of Christian duty and responsibility. He

\* A preacher who was said to have the failing of taking too much help from other people's sermons, and had once preached a sermon which bore too close a likeness to one printed in the *British Pulpit*, a well-known publication, asked Robertson if, when on the Continent, he had ever preached in any of the Churches? He replied, “No! I never preached out of the British Pulpit.”

believed, and got his session to agree with him, that a small, compact congregation, knit together with heart and hand in the labour of love, made a far better—nobler, healthier, stronger—Church, than any miscellaneous crowd of people who put their pennies in the plate, and were paid back with what was called Church privileges. “Temptation was strong,” he said, “in all our Churches, composed more or less on the commercial principle, to make it dominant—the Church a shop, the pulpit a counter, where the preacher exhibits his wares, and where, like John Gilpin, he would dismount from some of the finest flights of oratory, at the sight of three customers coming in.”\*

The first step in the way of development—taken in 1844—was to erect a Session-house and Vestry. During Mr. Campbell’s ministry the want of a Session-house was not much felt, because the residence Mr. Campbell occupied was convenient to the Church; but now that the young pastor had to put on his pulpit robes in a house on the opposite side of the Cotton Row, the awkwardness of this arrangement, particularly at the season of equinoctial gales, can be understood. Mr. Robertson,

\* Speech at Irvine, August 5, 1879.

with whom money never seemed to be of any consideration, in his princely way gave £20 towards its erection—one-sixth part of the total cost. Mr. John Smith, writer, already named—a rich, buirdly widower, having a lucrative practice, and further favoured of fortune in being one of the legatees of the millionaire, Holms o' Caaf—who sat in one of the two large pews erected against the northern wall when the inside gallery stairs were removed—caught the spirit of the times. There was a debt of £350 remaining on the Church building, and he nearly took away the breath of old David Malcolm, the kirk treasurer, accustomed to old methods of finance, by enthusiastically proposing to wipe off the entire debt by one grand effort. It was simply impossible! It could not be done! So said old David, but Mr. Smith was a man of tenacious purpose, and with an active brain. He promised a certain sum conditionally, got Mr. Hill to make a similar promise, persuaded the members to sign proportionate monetary obligations, and at the meeting held on the 14th January, 1845, the entire debt was wiped off. It was a Napoleonic onslaught on the enemy which had beleagured the Church for years previously, and it was completely successful. This also done, the congregation was encouraged to further efforts, as people are wont to be who come off vic-

torious in any struggle, and other improvements were effected on the building.

The new-born zeal next showed itself on behalf of Missions. The minister, from the beginning of his ministry, sought to cultivate the missionary spirit, and so when the collectors came round he simply, in his contribution, doubled the largest sum given by any other member of the congregation, and, as a matter of course, many followed, so that contributions went up with a bound. The effect of the minister's liberality was marvellous. "I was driving home from a meeting of Presbytery at Saltcoats with the minister and three other clergymen, not long after Dr. Robertson was settled amongst us," said a worthy old elder, in course of a conversation on old times. "The three ministers were bewailing the fact that they could not get their respective congregations to give with decent liberality to Missions. Dr. Robertson (he was not Dr. then, though) said nothing, and I got tired listening to them. I just told them that I had never heard Mr. Robertson say 'money' to one of us in the Church, but he showed the example. 'Be open-handed yourselves,' said I, 'and your congregations will follow you.' That stopped them. They did not say another word, on missionary collections, in my hearing."

In this connection, it may be of interest to note that Mr. Robertson was one of the speakers at the Synod's annual Missionary Meeting in 1864. He followed Sir Henry Moncrieff, of the Free Church—hence the playful and pleasing references in his opening remarks to Sir Henry, and the proposed Union of the Churches, then under discussion:—

“I confess I feel a little awkward in standing, in the august presence of the Moderator, in this Assembly; and it would certainly have been great presumption in me to have addressed such a meeting as this had I not been pushed forward by kind hands, whose gentle strength it was not easy to resist. Moderator, in the spirit of the hymn we have just been singing, I glory in the name of our United Church—a Church that carries in its very name a history of divisions healed, and on whose banner, unfurling wider to the world every day, I seem to see the beautiful device of a dove, with an olive leaf in her mouth, emblazoned silvern and green, upon an azure ground of the quiet waters of quieted strife, and surrounded with the motto, ‘Peace and love to all the holy brethren;’ a Church, too, that hopes, Sir Henry, to be united ere long, and to have her arms quartered with another and greater company of the great army of the Lord of Hosts—who shall not fight less bravely side by side with us against the heathen and the infidel, that among her noble crusaders she numbers a Knight of the Holy Cross, and yet has not a single *vassal* among her troops, because they are all *free*. But you must not be surprised, Sir Henry, if you should find, by-and-bye, that we are the most missionary Church in the world. I have been counting on my fingers how many reasons we have for being a missionary Church. In the first place, *we are a human*

*Church*, and there is nothing that appeals to our humanity so much as do missions to the heathen. In the second place, *we are a Christian Church*, and there is no Christian Church that is not a missionary Church as well. In the third place, *we are a European Church*, inheriting the promise made to Japhet, whom God shall enlarge and make to dwell in the tents of Shem. In the fourth place, *we are a British Church*, and Britain is the Ocean Queen among the nations. In the fifth place, *we are a Scottish Church*, and Scotchmen have been travellers all the world over, as if they were meant to be the Levites or missionaries for the whole human race. In the sixth place, *we are a Protestant Church*, and Protestantism is the mother of all our modern missions. In the seventh place, *we are a Presbyterian Church* that does not need to carry liturgies, and organs, and bishoprics to the heathen to convert them, but that, with a Bible and a preacher, can extemporise her worship anywhere. In the eighth place, *we are an orthodox Church*; and heterodoxy that goes, like Colenzo, to convert the heathen, is much more likely to be converted itself. In the ninth place, *we are a Voluntary Church*. Yes; we have unexhausted and inexhaustible tiends of Voluntary liberality to draw upon. And in the tenth and last place, for I have got over all my fingers, *we are a United Church*, and nothing tends so much to promote Christian missions as Christian union. The subject assigned to me is a hopeful one. It is the certain progress and final triumph of the missionary kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There are desponding souls in present times, trembling, like old Eli, for God's ark. They are doubting if the battles of the Lord, of His Church militant, for the conquest of the world, should not be given up as virtually lost already, if missionary enterprise will ever occupy the whole of the vast field of the world. We hear that missionaries make but little way against the heathendom abroad, and see how ministers and other evangelical agents make but little



way against the heathendom at home ; against Neologists, Pantheists, Colenros, Renans, *et hoc genus omne*. Modern Science, too, in British Associations, and modern Philosophy, are developing new forms of antagonism to the Gospel truth, that to those timid souls seem quite insurmountable. And so we are getting into the dungeon of Doubting Castle, and despairing of the final triumph of the missionary kingdom of the Lord. I do not sympathise with them at all, and in the sequel will show reasons why. Perhaps it may be said that I am of a dreamy and romantic turn of mind ; and certainly I am not one of those lugubrious souls that only love the gloomy grandeur of the minster and the *miserere*—that go dressed in sackcloth and drenched in tears—never singing but in sadness, never praying but in despair, and never opening the heart's door to any sunny hopes or gladness at all, but only, like the great west door of St. Paul's, opening at a funeral. I like to see things on the sunny side, and if I do dream sometimes, it may be that doing and dreaming are not so far asunder as some seem to think.”\*

He then went on to argue that the Gospel, being true, must prevail ; and that, however great the diversities of religious belief existing in the present day, and the difficulties to be overcome, the Church would ultimately see the whole world brought into subjection to Christ.

New interest was given to the Tuesday evening prayer meeting, by his selecting such subjects as Layard's Nineveh (then exciting considerable attention), for ex-

\* Report in the *Caledonian Mercury*, May 12, 1864.

position in an easy lecture form; while on Monday evenings he lectured on Geology in relation to the teachings of Scripture. From the beginning of his pastorate he had, as a matter of course, a Bible class for the more advanced young people in the congregation, but in August, 1845, a new departure was made. Mr. Campbell, as we have seen, objected to Sabbath Schools, and held his Bible class on Saturday afternoons. His successor had no such objection, and, at the date referred to, the first Mission School connected with the congregation was organized and met in the vestry of the Church. Up to this time, Sunday School effort in Irvine was represented solely in the Combination School at Kirkgate-head, the teachers and scholars being drawn from no particular Church in the town. Now, the pent-up desire to work amongst the young vines in the Master's vineyard, previously discouraged or repressed, under the young minister's stimulus found vent, and its impetuosity was like to carry all before it. A Sabbath morning School was also instituted, and Mr. John Wright remembers the Psalm with which the proceedings were opened:—

“As streams of water in the south,  
Our bondage, Lord, recall.”

Teaching was thus given, morning and evening; and,

the numbers increasing, a second school was opened in Boyd's Vennel; and then a third. In addition to the ordinary classes, Mr. William Cunninghame and Mr. John Wright taught advanced classes—young men who had left the ordinary Sunday School; and during the week, Mr. John Young, and others, conducted, for many years, classes in which lessons were given, in reading, writing, and arithmetic, free of charge. For the schools, Mr. Robertson edited a Hymn-book. The hymns selected to be sung were far in advance of anything then in use; and although he would not own the authorship of any of them, I have always thought, from intrinsic evidence, that not a few were adapted and improved by him in the course of editing.

In addition to the strong personal interest taken in the lessons and work of the schools, the minister always presided at social gatherings of the Sabbath School teachers. His buoyancy of feeling, and delightful play of humour, were pervaded, I am told, with a fine religious spirit, free from all mere sanctimoniousness, which gave to the meetings the character of a religious service. He would, on such occasions, weave into his remarks, with inimitable skill, and sometimes with startling effect, incidents he had met with in his ordinary experience, and which never failed to take hold upon the hearts

and imagination of the hearers. An illustration of this may be given. Speeches had been delivered by speakers, lay and clerical, and when one of these had closed his remarks upon "Encouragements to Sabbath School Teachers," the Chairman followed. Reading out his own Evening Hymn for the choir to sing, after the lines—

"Where the sailor on the deep  
Rests on his rude pillow,  
Rocked a little hour to sleep  
On the heaving billow,  
Save, Lord, save  
From storm wave;  
Guide with gentle motion  
Through the pathless ocean"—

he paused, and referring to the speech on the Encouragements to their work, said—

"I have just been hearing to-day of an interesting instance of the benefit of religious training. A ship was rounding Cape Horn, where, as you may know, on account of the fogs and storms, the sun may not appear in view for many days together. The ship of which I am speaking, had encountered violent storms; the weather was intensely cold, so that icicles were hanging from the mast and yard-arms. A sailor boy was ordered out upon one of the yard-arms to reef a sail; but as he was out there, hanging over the dark and stormy sea, he raised a cry that his hands were getting benumbed and that he was about to fall. The captain, a relative of his own, shouted to him to hold on, and seizing a piece of rope lying on the deck, ran up the rigging, went out on the yard and lashed the boy to it until he could be rescued.

When the captain was tying the rope round the body of the lad, he said :—

‘If you ever prayed in your life, pray now.’

‘I cannot pray,’ said the boy ‘but I can sing.’

‘And there, over that wild sea, the boy sang this verse of the paraphrase—

‘The Lord commands the tempest forth  
And stills the stormy wave;  
And though His arm be strong to smite,  
’Tis also strong to save.’”

The story, told with deep pathos, riveted the attention of all present, but the interest became intense when he closed with these words: “That sea captain is a member of this congregation, and that sailor boy was taught in your own Sabbath School.”

With a congregation in which seafaring men and their families formed a part, is it surprising that the sea, seen from his manse windows—the beautiful Island of Arran set in it, as in silver, was, for him, a great attraction, and that he found in it subject and illustration for his pulpit work? Some of his most beautiful images and illustrations were drawn from the sea, as for example :—

“Navigation had laid her hand upon the tossing manes of the steeds of ocean, and put the bridle of the compass in their foaming mouths.”

“The Apostle John, that old man eloquent, when in his lonely island, would often remember the fishing nights

on the Sea of Galilee, with his brother James, his father Zebedee, and the hired fishermen who worked with them, and his separation from yonder cottage near the shore, where in the dark wintry nights *his mother would place a lamp in the window*. In his island jail, *with the ocean walls around him*, there is little wonder that he described Heaven as a place where 'there shall be no more sea.'

In the sermon on the words, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward," he introduced, with touching and poetic pathos, the story of a mother who had lost her boy at sea, and who could never afterwards bear to hear its remorseless moanings. Preaching at Ardrossan, in behalf of the local branch of the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society, August 4, 1867, from the text, "The sea is His, and He made it," (Ps. xcv. 5), he said, he saw the sea to be "*The servant of the human race*"—equalizing the temperature, and, as the humble handmaid of the earth, cleansing its door-steps and washing its sandy shores; "*the scene of wonders*"—wonders in Nature, in Providence, and in Grace; "*a symbol or symbolic teacher of the truth*"—a symbol of the everlasting and the infinite, most like God Himself; in its restlessness, like a wavering and wicked soul; and of temporal and spiritual calamities. It was also "*a sepulchre*," which received those who, dying at sea, were let down with rough and gentle hands, in some coarse shroud, and the body weighted to

make it sink. He had no sympathy, he said, with the narrow monastic view that would divorce us from the study of nature.

“How often, in seaport towns especially, did the worshipper look through closed eyes on the sea, and in the trance of prayer behold the ship that carried away some dear relative, while a petition went up to God, to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit, that they might be saved from storm or shipwreck,\* and be brought into their desired haven. So also, in preaching, we might look out on the sea. The Scriptures, which ought to be the pattern of preaching, make frequent reference to it. Palestine, from which the Bible came, was representative of many lands. There were miners in its mountains, merchants,

\* His sympathy with the relatives of sailors was shown in a marked manner when, during the storm of February 27, 1860, the schooner, “Success” of Nantes, was wrecked trying to make Irvine bar, and all hands perished. On the plea that it would be a comfort to the bereaved friends to know that the last offices for their dead were performed in the way they deemed most sacred, he proposed they should be buried according to the rites of the Church of Rome, to which communion, it was concluded, they belonged. The proposal met with opposition, but four years afterwards when, by the laudable efforts of Mrs. Campbell, one of his own members, sufficient funds were raised to erect over their burial place a stone of remembrance, in the form of a chaste obelisk, he furnished for the three sides of the plinth, forming part of the pedestal, the following lines—

Seven dead the sea gave to the shore,  
To wrap beneath the sod,  
Till they and we shall stand before  
The judgment seat of God.

Their names, their lives, their faith unknown,  
These dumb, dead here arrive;  
But what's hid now shall then be shown,  
When here they stand alive.

Sail on! dark cofined fleet of seven!  
On to revealing day;  
And may we make the harbour Heaven,  
Not lost nor cast away.

in the streets, shepherds in its pasture fields, soldiers in its cities, and ships and sailors in the towns along its seaboard. From the tribe of Judah there was the law-giver; from that of Levi there was the priest; from Dan, the counsellor; from Issachar, the farmer; and, not to mention any more, there was Zebulun, the sea-faring tribe. So the Bible, like the land of Palestine, and like its people, contains an ample variety, and in it we often catch glimpses of the sea. We see it, when its polished mirror flashes with the light of the first morning that ever dawned: when, with overwhelming might, it breaks its barriers and drowns the world; and we see it in the visions of the prophets and the songs of the psalmist. There is also that blue expanse of water cradled in by the Galilean hills, rushing through the gorges of the Jordan, and falling into the Dead Sea, by which the Saviour loved to walk. The Bible, *like an ocean shell*, is ever sounding of the sea, from its commencement to its close, where, in Apocalyptic vision, the venerable John heard the voice that sounded like the voice of many waters."

To the several agencies set in operation under the quickening influence of the new pastorate, there is to be added, the improvement of the psalmody; and the influence of the movement, then inaugurated, is felt to this day. Music, at that time, was not much cultivated in any of the Irvine Churches. On one occasion, the late Dr. Anderson, of Glasgow, was preaching in the neighbouring Relief Church; it was a Sabbath evening service, and after it was over, he frankly told the congregation from the pulpit, that their singing was so bad, that it might well be said with



reference to it, that the last shall be first and the first last, for the newly converted Hottentots might easily put them to shame.

Daniel Montgomerie, the schoolmaster, was the first precentor in the Irvine Burgher Kirk. Daniel—supported on his crutches—stood up on Sundays and led the psalmody, performing his task without fee or reward, and to the entire satisfaction of the congregation. James Holmes next filled the post, receiving a salary of £5 per annum. James Holmes—as honest a souter as ever worked in leather; a man who may have made melody in his heart, but which was inaudible in the Church; who liked seclusion and self-effacement, and who felt uncomfortable—a feeling in which the audience shared—when he stood up in sight of the people behind the precentor's desk. Mr. Campbell thought there was no precentor like him; but James himself honestly felt he was not equal to the new order of things, and resigned; the congregation marking their esteem for him by giving him £10 in place of £5 for his last year's services. Campbell Livingstone, a Dreghorn miner, succeeded. Mr. Robertson discerned in Livingstone an excellent capacity for the office to which he had been appointed, and spared no pains in furthering him in his musical studies, and developing and refining his musical tastes. The result was a vast

improvement in the service of praise in Cotton Row Church, and in the training of the choir. Glasgow and Edinburgh divines, who occasionally officiated in the Church, began to talk of Livingstone, and in course of time he was translated to a city Church, with a comfortable salary, and week-day employment more congenial to his taste than coal-mining. But the author and leading spirit of the revolution in the psalmody was the minister himself. Like a wise master-builder, he first laid a foundation by selecting the best voices in the town for private practice; and after the taste had been somewhat improved, and an interest excited, a choir was organised, for the proper conduct of which strict rules were framed, and a course of careful training entered upon. The choir was a popular institution in Irvine, but a minister held in less esteem would have failed to overcome the prejudice then existing against the introduction of choral music into the service. It was not till Sabbath, 8th April, 1849, that the choir was permitted to make its appearance in the Church, and then only on trial for three months, and on condition that the minister should examine the list of tunes which it was proposed to sing each Sabbath day, and approve of the same. From the rules which were adopted on 20th March, 1849, it also appeared that membership of the Church was a condition attached

to membership of the choir ; a rule that came to be relaxed when younger voices were needed, but then only in exceptional cases.

Probably, no one in the West of Scotland—certainly no minister, in these years, did so much to put praise in its proper place in the temple service as Mr. Robertson. At home in his own Church, as we have seen, he gave practical effect to his views by interesting himself in the training of the choir ; in neighbouring towns, and in other parts of the country, he sought to stimulate the taste for improvement by means of soiree speeches and lectures. In 1853, the substance of much that he had been elsewhere saying on the subject appeared in an article in the *United Presbyterian Church Magazine*, based on the Hymn Book then just issued. He therein says :—“Of the three correlatives, PREACHING, PRAYER, and PRAISE, the last is the greatest :”—

“Preaching stands related to faith, and when faith shall be lost in sight, preaching may be dispensed with ; Prayer stands related to hope, and when hope shall be finished in fruition, prayer may be superseded ; but Praise stands related to charity—and it shall never fail. Love and song shall be eternal. The formative and auxiliary shall ‘vanish away,’ the final and essential shall be permanent. The pulpit and the altar shall give place to the choir, so that it may be said without either impropriety or irreverence, and has been said by a master in Israel (the Rev. Thomas Binney), with allusion to 1 Cor. xiii. 13 : ‘And now abideth

*preaching, prayer, praise*, these three ; but the greatest of these is *praise*.”

He protests against praise being regarded as a mere appendage to the Church service. “Asaph’s office,” he says, “had become almost contemptible ; the highest grade of worship, in which earth meets with heaven, men with angels, and the living with their ‘blessed dead,’ had almost grown into a by-word and a scorn ;” and this neglect, he was afraid, was because there was not much of real right-hearted religion amongst us. “Enough of curiosity, perhaps, for it is often nothing more, to ask for preaching ; enough of selfishness, perhaps, for it is often nothing more, to ask for prayer ; but little of that strong and joyous love whose proper voice is singing, and which demands an utterance in song.” One cause of this deplorable result is the modern severance of poetry and music—the offices of poet and musician being separate, and the work of each developed along its own line with but little respect for the other.

“But ‘from the beginning it was not so.’ Poetry and music were a twin birth, they grew side by side, and what the one moved to utter the other instantly expressed in song. The bards of old were literally singers ; the ancient psalmists had actually lyres ; their muse was essentially musical ; and it was by no figure of speech, like our modern poets, but in real fact, that they *sang* the deeds of men and the praise of God. Poets of antiquity,

like Homer, the far-famed father of Greek minstrels; gifted seers, like Balaam, the unhappy child of unsanctified genius; and holy men of God, like Jacob, David, and Isaiah, the inspired organs of Divine utterance, all seem to have chanted forth their verses in a kind of recitative, sometimes, if not always, sustained by instrumental accompaniment. If the poetry was improvised, the music was improvised along with it—they were forged at the same furnace and filled with the same fire. It was usually to the sound of music that the spirit of poetry, that the spirit of inspiration itself, awoke—‘Bring me a minstrel,’ said Elisha, ‘and it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him,’ (2 Kings iii. 15). It was always in the garb of music that the spirit, once awakened, dressed itself and went forth on the world. For music (if we may so express it) was the printing press of the ancients. When David would publish a ‘psalm or song’ to the people of Israel, he gave it to Asaph, Jeduthun, or other chief singer, to have it taught to the temple choir, and performed at some of the great festivals in the audience of the assembled tribes. So truth went forth upon the land through the gates of praise. Snatches of song from the temple service were carried home by the hearers, and repeated as ‘melodies of praise’ in the ‘dwellings of Jacob.’ Their ‘schools of the prophets,’ too, were, in one important aspect, *sacred music schools*, in which young men were trained to chant the praises of God, with instrumental accompaniment. It was by means of the minstrelsy of a choir of these youthful prophets, chanting their hymns along the hill-side, that the Spirit of God charmed the wild and wayward spirit of King Saul, when he was led, through his passionate love of music, to join their company and prophesy along with them. Miriam is called a prophetess chiefly, if not solely, because she was possessed of a rare gift of sacred song. From all which, and much more to the same purpose that might readily be advanced, we do not conclude with the ribald sceptic Paine, that ‘prophesying in

Scripture is neither more nor less than singing;’ but we escape from this conclusion by accepting the broader one—that prophecy, with poetry in general, was usually uttered through the medium of song.”

Without arguing the subject farther in that direction, he thought—

“It was important to observe how closely poetry and music clung together in the Church of old, so as to seem essentially one; and how much more true to the nature of man, in the deep unity of all his powers, this was, than their modern disseverance; for while this points, as we have said, at one source of the weakness of our modern psalmody, it helps us at the same time to apprehend in its fulness the Scriptural idea of praise. When praising God is inculcated in Scripture, the music is understood as well as the words and sentiment. Scripture regards the Church in heart and voice and ear as one—consecrated wholly to God, and in one unbroken act of worship yielding praise from the depth of the heart—bringing it forth in language, and perfecting (Matt. xxi. 16) it in music. It does not write the name of praise on separate fragments of the column, but upon the whole pillar in the temple of God; ascending from its basement in the heart, along the shaft of the psalm or hymn, to where it culminates into music, and is crowned with the graceful capital of song.”

As God takes pleasure in the sacrifice of praise—*i.e.*, the fruit of our lips—he insists that the psalmist, or praise-singer, should “magnify his office:”—

“He should know that its chief end is to please not the creature, but the Creator. He should know that it yields delight, not only to himself, and perchance to his

listening brother, but that it yields delight even to God. As God 'saw everything that He had made,' and rejoiced in its excellence, when as yet there was no man to survey it; as He beheld a fair light blossoming out of chaos, and rejoiced in its beauty, when as yet no human eye had seen it; as there are hundreds of hermit-like flowers in the wilderness, and countless pearls glittering where no man's eye ever sees them, in the crystal palaces of Ocear, and all unconscious, too, of their own loveliness; but God sees them, and rejoices in their beauty; just so, if a man shall sing praise, like David, on his bed at midnight, though not a creature in the world should overhear him, even apart from his own delight in the exercise, the ear of the praise-hearing God shall listen, and take pleasure in his song. It gives pleasure to the singer himself, and it may give pleasure to many others besides; but this is only broadening the circle—extending the basis of the pyramid of praise which always returns and ascends to God as its centre and summit. The art of poetry, and that of music, have sometimes been defined as arts of pleasing men; but the art of praise-singing is emphatically an art of pleasing God. Luther knew this. He believed that his songs pleased God; and in this belief he produced those admirable hymns that enshrined the spirit of the Reformation, and which have proved the blessed means of preserving it, amid the almost total wreck of German Protestantism. He says, in his own quaint way, 'God has not for a thousand years bestowed so many great gifts upon any bishop as he has upon me. But I am mad at myself for it. I do not enough rejoice at them in my heart. I do not sufficiently return thanks for them. *I sing, indeed, from time to time, a little song of praise to the Lord, but 'tis very inadequate.*'

"David, too, a greater than Luther in the choir of sacred singers, believed that his songs were pleasing to God, more so than the altar-sacrifices themselves; and in this belief, under inspiration, he produced those incom-





parable psalms that have formed the Church's liturgy of praise in every age. He says, 'I will praise the name of God *with a song*. This also *shall please the Lord* better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.' (Ps. lxi. 30, 31.) And then, as one hath well observed, this 'sweet singer of Israel,' breaking out constantly into songs of praise, and ever again entreating his friends to join him to 'come and sing unto the Lord,' this was the very 'man after God's own heart.' Do our readers know, that with such sacrifices God is *well* pleased—that they have it in their power, through grace, to '*please God with a song*'—to please Him more, we venture to affirm, than even angels can? For God has greater complacency in refitting the shattered lyres of earth, than in preserving in its fulness the unbroken minstrelsy of heaven; and the scale of our praises, if not so high, is broader and deeper than the angels'.

"Our songs range through the plaintive scale of sorrow, and ascend from that, by transitions which angels may 'look into,' but cannot execute, into the relative scale of joy. The most exquisite music is developed from the contrast betwixt the two, and is accompanied in its most cheerful strains by the remembered tones of former sadness, the tremulous echoes of gone, but not forgotten, weeping, that soften and cement the harmony. The voices of saved men, rushing up in praises from the depths of broken hearts that God has touched, yield greater joy in the presence of God than even the

'Angel's voice

That makes the heavens be mute.'

A persuasion of this truth, pervading our congregations, should speedily, we think, revive our psalmody, and unite it to the very heart of the Church's piety. And then, it should not be left to the chance direction of any musical amateur, that 'hath a pleasant voice, and playeth well upon an instrument.' It would be guarded carefully by all the priests to God, like that sacred fire on their



altars, which had come down from heaven, and which, while it yielded light and warmth to the worshipper, pointed with all its fingers of flame upward to God.

Speaking to the friends of Psalmody improvement, at a breakfast meeting, held in Edinburgh, in the year 1857; he said, Music was the finest of the fine arts, "inasmuch, as those arts, addressed to the ear, stood much higher than those addressed to the eye. . . . Music was wedded to holy love in the house of God . . . and they nowhere read that God was pleased with a Cathedral or pictured wall, but they did read that he was pleased with a Psalm." On another occasion, (1867), when presiding as Honorary President of the Ayrshire Tonic Sol-Fa Association, he said :—

"It ought to be impressed on the minds of all, that praise, by singing, was a moral duty, not a mere ceremonial, and that he who neglected this duty was breaking God's command just as really as was the swearer, the thief, or the drunkard. No duty was more frequent or explicitly enjoined in the Scripture than that of praise by singing. It was true, that sacrifice was enjoined as well as song, but praise by singing was a moral duty, and not a mere ceremonial institute. Outside the ceremonial temple, in the background, there stood Miriam with her many-thousand-voiced choir, sounding over Egypt's dark sea; in the foreground, were Paul and Silas singing within their dungeon unto God; and, in the midst of the temple itself stood King David, preferring song to all sacrifice, and they seemed to see him mount to the summit of the temple, and beckon unto all nations to come and join in singing praises to

the Lord. Then, they seemed to hear from all quarters a response—all peoples lifting up their voices in praise to God. If this was a moral duty, the neglect of it must be sin, and he who, not being physically disqualified, showed such neglect, was as really a breaker of the law as was a drunkard, a swearer, or a thief. Grown-up people might put forward the excuse that they were too old to attend to this matter, but this is just as if an old thief were to come forward and say—‘I am too old to think of reforming myself, but I will train up my children in the paths of rectitude.’ Jonathan Edwards, in his ‘Directions for self-examination preparatory to Communion,’ had such a question as this: ‘Do you live in sin—by erring in the neglect of singing God’s praise—for if it is God’s command that we should worship Him in this way, then obviously your duty is to do it. Inasmuch as it cannot be done without learning, therefore, he who has neglected opportunities of doing so is living in sin.’”

The years pass, the singing in the Church choir acquires a precision, a fine taste, an appreciation of the sentiment sung, with marked excellence of voice and execution, given to few choirs to possess. And this movement was well supported by the congregation, for the standard of singing all over had been raised by a succession of choirs exchanging the choir-seat for the pew. The whole of the service, preaching included, was thus raised to a high level. “I know,” he once said, in course of a brief address, “that the beautiful and harmonious rendering of God’s praise is a great help to preaching. It stimulates mental effort and moral resolution; it

clears the intellect, brightens the fancy, strengthens the memory, touches the heart, and throws the whole man into a finer frame for the reception of the divine harmonies from above. Milton received his finer inspirations under the influence of music. Lord Bacon had music brought into the room adjoining his study; Massillon, a distinguished Frenchman, composed the orations with which he used to dazzle the French court, while musicians played to him; and, to quote a higher illustration, 'Bring me a minstrel,' said Elisha, 'and when the minstrel played, the hand of the Lord came upon him.'" But however inspiring, Mr. Robertson never allowed the subtle spell, or all-entrancing influence, of good music, used in the service of praise, to be other than the handmaid of pure devotion.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *Friendships—Growing Popularity.*

Irvine Forty Years Ago—The Old Tolbooth—Seagate Castle—Population of Irvine—Contemporary Ministers—Distinguished Visitors—His Genius Recognised—His audiences in Glasgow—Preaches in London—Notes of Sermon: “Grieve not the Holy Spirit.”

TO one of Robertson's tastes and habits, Irvine, at the time of his settlement in it as minister of the Burgher Kirk, was a most desirable place of residence. It is pleasantly situated in a beautiful part of the valley. Within easy walking distance are green fields, the Eglinton woods—then as now very beautiful and umbrageous—a stretch of moorland, sandy dunes, and the rivers Irvine and Garnock emptying their waters into the sea. Although Irvine, a few years previously, was connected by rail with Glasgow and the coast towns, it had not as yet caught the bustling spirit and active enterprise which followed upon the extension of the railway systems all over the country, and, later, the adoption of Free Trade as a national

policy. A few coasters frequented the harbour, mainly for coal—which was brought to the ship's side in carts, from pits in the neighbouring parishes of Dreghorn, Kilmaurs, and Kilmarnock; but the skippers did their work after the sleepy fashion of the times, and, even though loaded, would lie for days, waiting for a favourable breeze.

It was a quaint old world town, that could boast of possessing a Royal Charter, and an Ecclesiastical record which, as we have seen, went back into the dim centuries. Its burgh officers wore, as they still do, scarlet coats. Its magistrates and town councillors in solemn pomp marched to Church on Sundays, preceded by the same officers carrying halberds, and showed themselves to be ranged on the side of righteousness by duly taking their seats in the Magistrates' Loft in the Parish Kirk. The Tolbooth, now removed, was situated in the centre of the Main Street. It was meant for the safe-keeping of the criminal classes, but utilised in those days as a receptacle for impecunious debtors from Kilmarnock, Kilwinning, Stewarton, and the neighbourhood, who often spent months within its walls. If the creditors were hard-hearted, and would insist upon their pound of flesh, they were kept in durance until debts were compounded or paid in full. The authorities were merciful to a degree unknown in modern prison discipline. Visitors were admitted freely,

but such visitors were expected and allowed to take in such a quantity of liquor as would respectably treat the inmates, the jailor himself not unfrequently being a partaker to an extent that unfitted him for duty. It was no unusual sight to see a little bag slung gently down over the iron stanchions from the windows of the north-west gable, where, ere it had begun its descent, a brown face, the upper section of which was crowned by a Kilmarnock night-cap, would hail the passer-by, and request him to take the money and the bottle within the bag, and from the Wheat Sheaf Inn procure "half-a-mutchkin of the best." The request was usually complied with. A natural sympathy towards the incarcerated generally produced a willing and honest service, and, as the little bottle was replaced in the bag, and gently drawn aloft, there descended hearty thanks for the favour.

More interesting still, there is the old Castle at the Seagate; and the young minister, it would appear from the following letter, addressed to the writer, not only speculated upon its probable age, but lectured upon it. The letter, playful in style, shows him in the character of an original, independent inquirer and searcher, all through life, into old records. To understand his point it is necessary to explain that in the "Annals of Roger de Hoveden" there is the following entry—1184—a spring of running water *near the*

*Church of St. Winning*, in the western parts of the territories of the King of Scotland, and *not far from* the Castle of Irvine, flowed with blood, etc. . . . .

The young archæologist does not seem to have known of Hoveden's account of the *well* till many years after his lecture on Seagate Castle, and when it came under his notice he was dissatisfied with the locality assigned to it by Hoveden, who says it was *near the Church of St. Winning*. But finding afterwards that the *Peterborough Chronicle* (of older date) says—"not far from the Castle of Irvine," he gives the preference to the older chronicle, and in favour of the *Redburn*, which lies nearer Irvine than Kilwinning. On the other hand, it is contended that Hoveden's statement, as being later and more circumstantial, and that of an eye-witness, is likely to be the more full and trustworthy. But be this as it may, it does not interfere with the playful humour of the letter, written in reply to an enquiry concerning the old Castle at the Seagate.

"It does not seem to be sufficiently known," he says, after a preliminary remark, "that in the mouth of *two* witnesses at least (the other distant witness being Roger of Hoveden, whom you know) the age of the Castle may be established to be 700 years at any rate. See *The Peterborough Chronicle. Chronicon Angliæ Petriburgense* Ab Anno D. 654, usque and A.D. 1368 (preserved in the Cotton MS. British Museum).

*A.D. 1184 . . . Et in Scotia, quidem, fons fluentis aquæ non*



*longe a Casiello de Irewin, manavit sanguine, per octo dies, et totidem noctes, sine intermissione,*

*Literal translation of the above.*

The Peterborough Chronicle of England. From the year of our Lord 654 to the year of our Lord 1368. (Preserved in the Cotton MS. British Museum.)

A.D. 1184.—And in Scotland, too, a spring of running water, not far from the Castle of Irvine, flowed with blood for eight days and as many nights without intermission.

“This testimony is not much different from that of Roger, who, in fact, is understood to have borrowed it from the Peterborough Record, his annals being mostly copied and compiled from other chronicles. But Roger was a clever fellow, and makes these dry details into something like ‘history,’ and being a clerk of English King Henry, and sent into Scotland in the troublesome year of 1174—when William the Lion was made captive—he might get acquaintance with the west, to which his mission also lay, and so be able to throw in those touches of ‘Tynningham’ and ‘St. Winning’ to enlarge and embellish the Peterborough Record of what occurred in 1184. I suspect the nearness of the *red fountain* to the *Church of St. Winning* is an embellishment of Roger’s own, and a little pious geographical fraud for the honour and glory of the Saint, from which have come and gone other mythical wells of weeping in the same line of consanguinity. If the holy grounds of St. Winning were to be credited with the miracle, why had not the Peterborough monks heard of this from ‘their own correspondents’ in the Saint’s own house? Most likely those streams of blood were some outbursts (perhaps after heavy rains) of the *Redburn*, and other waters impregnated with iron ore, and which, I well know from the redness of our pitchers and filters, did flow ‘not far from the Castle of Irewin.’ Through this, from Roger raising annals into ornate history, we had almost lost sight of our Seagate Castle and proof of its existence in 1184 (through



the Saint and his well being *hoved in*), but the stern faithfulness of the Peterborough chronicler, which we cannot choose but fully copy (whatever he adds to it) keeps him right.

"I have always believed in the 12th century antiquity of Seagate Castle, standing then, perhaps, if not earlier in reality, but afterwards in dreams, at the actual gate of the sea. Boats harboured where now cattle are slaughtered, and were even moored under the Castle windows, into which the songs of the minstrel floated with the evening star, and the serenaded maiden had her morning bower in the garden behind, that stretched out to what is now the *Bachelor's Walk*; while the warder, in the north-west tower, saw the gleam of armour at Stane Castle, and the glance of sails at Ailsa Craig, and sounded his trumpet, that rang defiance into Kyle, and echoed over Cunninghame, and startled the sleepy monk of Kilwinning dozing over his prayers!

"Thirty years ago I called attention to that round arch, with ornate moulding, that recalls the later Norman style, though with a somewhat feeble echo. I said it was '*waik*' and disappointing, having nothing of the massiveness and force of the early Norman, or even the dignity of the later style (with all its later gracefulness and ornamental dog-tooth and chevron) still held, till it died away grandly into the pious arms of its assistant and successor, the beautiful early English. It rather seemed a foretaste of that strong ginger bread that the 'ages of imitation' have since baked in abundance, which men, even masons too among the rest, have begun to feel their kinship less with the *Monks* than the *monkeys*, and mimic their beautiful works, still before their eyes, line for line and stone for stone; but 'yet there is *no life in them*'—religious works, *imitated*—i.e., *dead works*! They may have been invented centuries after the Norman time, the restorer copying something he still saw before him, and believing, from hints which the other ruins gave him, that

its antiquity rose high enough to testify the (architectural) anachronism. The confusion that came with the wars of the Succession invaded architecture also, and—(what I do not remember to have ever seen in England, where the development to what is (falsely) called the Renaissance, is not so broken)—in Scotland, as at Dunkeld and Glasgow, you may see the Norman arch dimly over the acute. Had they already begun to say their prayers on stone (like a witch's prayer) backward? as this nineteenth century has systematically done—going back since the revival of Church Gothic—through the Perpendicular, the Decorated, the Middle, the early English; and now into Norman (Dr. James Brown's, Paisley), passing up the whole mediæval gamut with side notes (not exactly grave notes) of Belgic and Romanesque. Where next? The oldest Antiburghers of Glasgow (Dr. Black's) who have lived through it all, say—'Back to the heathen temple of the Greeks!' with its outside column bearing up the frontal entablature, as classic philosophy bears up the mystery of life—that does not press with overwhelming weight—low towered as in the East, nor is thrown under foot, as in the North, by tower and spire that point, like hand and finger, up to Heaven!

"But the Church must not draw me, following my instincts, away from the Castle. Nobody that I know of had mentioned this work *then*. Burton, years after, I found, refers to it as doubtfully Norman, though only improbably, in a footnote (I think) of his History of Scotland. Norman it was, let us say, by *imitation*—a faint copy of the style of the period of its nativity, and what may tell the age quite truly, like a copy of some old baptismal register now lost. When I thought this I had only the stone book to go by—not yet having seen or heard any other histories of 'Cunninghame.' So the learned, *i.e.*, those who had frequently brought me to book—with their books—they held by the dogma of *some jointure house*—some inscription of arms

on a stone vault—some date of 1361, which was said to be decisive. These, they believed as firmly as the Confession of Faith, and what a bold freethinker was I that dared to read out of the stones a greater age for the Castle than canonical books of Genesis assigned to it, and dared to doubt the universally received orthodox chronology! I said, ‘But the vault might be older than the sculptures, and other parts older than the vault itself.’ ‘A day or two,’ they said; ‘1000,’ I said, ‘10,000 days.’ Oh, terrible!—this East Church minister—this innovator in worship, that expounds Genesis by Geology, and Scripture by common sense, and has some strange heretical-like ways with him! Poor man! he has now filled up the measure of his folly, and actually believes that the Seagate Castle may have existed 200 years before it was built! I became suspected, and dared scarcely go down the Seagate. The very children seemed to lour at me! ‘Oh, Roger! what a comfort thou had’st been, if I had known thee. But first, I have to find another witness of equal truth and value, at the very least, and was not long till on a southern tour among cathedrals I had the happiness to find him, who said, that in 1184 the Redburn was running not far from the Castle of Irewyn—good *Peterborough chronicler!*’

The population of Irvine, in 1843, when Robertson was ordained, was between five and six thousand; and in character and social position the average inhabitant was much above that usually found in towns of similar size. There was a large infusion of the “bien,” not to say wealthy, classes. This, no doubt, was due to the facilities which the Academy, at that time, offered for imparting what was then regarded as a good education, to the healthful proximity of the town to

the sea, and its quiet respectability, and good government. As we have seen, the saintly Dickson laboured here, and made his influence felt for good. Robert Burns, too, for a brief period of his unhappy and fitful life, here worked as a flax dresser,\* and it was the birth-place of Galt, the novelist; Montgomery, the Christian poet; Eckford, the great architect and builder of the American Navy; and, not to mention others, of Lord Justice-Clerk Boyle,† whose monument stands nearly opposite the Town's Buildings. There were no rows, as now, of chimney stalks that rise "waving their black banners;" nor hundreds of workmen begrimed with the dirt of honest toil. To the inhabitants of Irvine, indeed, might then be applied Robertson's characteristic description of the membership of the United Presbyterian Church:—

"You are a clergyman," said a distressed parent—a well-known statesman—to him, on one occasion, "in which class is most happiness to be found?"

"In the U.P. Kirk," was the reply.

\* "The uncongenial and unsuccessful trade, the rude society, the scoundrel partner, his distance from home, and, it may be, a certain looseness of habits here acquired, reacted violently on his spirits, and made the brightest man in the West of Scotland, for a year, a gloomy hypochondriac."—*Gilfillan's Life of Burns*.

† Lord Justice-Clerk Boyle left the Grammar School of Irvine, the same year Galt entered it; and Eckford was one of his school-fellows.—*Life of Galt*.

“In the U.P. Kirk?” and the questioner looked inquiringly,

“I believe,” continued Robertson seriously, “happiness is to be found in all classes; but when you ask me where it is *most* to be found, I would say in the lower middle-class, and the better-paid artisan class. These two classes mostly compose the United Presbyterian Church, and it has been my great happiness to labour as a clergyman amongst them.”

And if there was much to interest in the surroundings, and to respect in the people, it was also fortunate—as supplying a needed mental stimulus—that the pulpits in neighbouring Churches at, or shortly after, his ordination, were filled by men exceptionally able. The Rev. James Drummond\* was called to the Relief Church the year after his own ordination, and, from being a fellow-presbyter and fellow-townsmen, became a close friend, until his death in July, 1867, when, as we shall see in its proper place, it fell to Mr. Robertson to recall all that was beautiful in a life of singular sweetness and grace, not to speak of Mr. Drummond’s eminent intellectual qualities, and the all-too-rare gift which he possessed of “melodious utterance in thought.” The Rev. Mr. Cousins (afterwards of Melrose), was minister of the Free Church, and one of the most scholarly and gifted men who ever honoured Irvine

\* Father to Dr. Drummond, Moderator of the U.P. Church (1889-90).

with his presence. The Rev. Dr. Leishman was minister in the Baptist Chapel, and, somewhat to the annoyance of his flock, a good deal less of a religious conservative than Baptist ministers usually are. The Rev. David Wilson occupied the pulpit of Fullarton Free Church, and the Rev. Mr. Browne (late of Beith) was Parish minister.\* To these names may be added the Rev. Mr. Jaffrey, a retired clergyman; and two of the most gifted religious poets of the day—Mrs. Cousins (A.R.C.), the authoress of the well-known hymn—“The sands of time are sinking,” and Mr George Paulin, then rector of Irvine Academy, and author of “Hallowed Ground,” and other poems.

A few of the above-named formed a club, chiefly for conversation on special subjects, each member leading in the subject assigned him; and, latterly, for the study of geology. No record has been preserved of their proceedings; but, when we think of who they were, there can be no doubt had there been present a “chiel Gurney,” to take *verbatim* reports, those intellectual banquets might have furnished material for new *Noctes Ambrosianæ*. Robertson, at least, had few peers as a brilliant conversationalist, and, when excited and stimulated by kindred spirits, would be heard at his best. In this connection,

\* The Rev. Dr. Sommerville, and the Rev. R. S. Macaulay, were not ordained until 1853 and 1860 respectively.

it is told that George Gilfillan and Dr. William Anderson were his guests, at the same time, and the three are said to have walked through and through the Eglinton woods till near midnight, Anderson discoursing all the time on the "Pre-Millennial Advent," as the only hope for the Church and the world. There is no reason why the incident should be regarded only as a tradition, for three such minds could not be together for hours without having high converse on themes in which they would have a common interest, and what more likely, than this one of the near approach of the Coming Day—the day of the Lord—a "blessed hope" held very strongly by one, if not two, of the trio. Nor is this the only story illustrative of the "high debate" which took place in and around the manse, when kindred spirits met, and of the U.P. minister's wonderful mental activity, and powers of conversation, when in congenial society. It is no mere tradition, but a well-authenticated fact, that, on one occasion, along with Professor Graham, then of Liverpool, and the Rev. Mr. Kirkwood of Troon, he started a conversation, one summer evening, in the Manse study, which was carried on with unflagging spirit till daylight appeared, when, in place of retiring to bed, the three went out in "the dewy dawn," and refreshed themselves by taking a stroll in the garden. And this brilliant gift continued to be



one of the charms of personal intercourse with him, be the company gentle or simple, till the close of his life. Meeting, in his later years, a friend in Princes Street, Edinburgh, on his way to the hairdresser, the conversation turned on the traditionary history of the historic scenes around Stirling, in the midst of which he was brought up, and the spirit of which he had drunk in from his earliest years. The conversation was continued while he was under the operator's scissors, until the hairdresser, under the spell, exclaimed—"Man, Dr. Robertson, I would cut your hair a' your days for naething, to hear you talk!"

The young minister's intimate relations with the best known and most popular ministers in his own denomination, and with men distinguished in literature and science, interested, and was a source of much pride to his congregation, and to the Irvine folk generally. A touching passage in a sermon led to a close friendship with Mr. and Mrs. Bartholomew, temporarily residing during the summer months at Montgreenan, near Kilwinning, and it was known that through these friends he had the *entree* into the best and most select circles in Glasgow. De Quincey paid him a visit, but not having previously advised him of it, the minister, unfortunately, was from home. Dr. Jaap, in his memoir of the philosopher, with the view of showing the impression that his careless, poverty-stricken attire,



and his odd ways, had upon strangers, relates that when he visited Robertson, "the old lady, who took him for a wandering vagrant, refused point-blank to let him into the house and await his return." She would not even, he says, let him cross the threshold to write a line telling that he had called, "but offered to allow the lass to bring the minister's writing desk to the door, that De Quincey might pen his note there." The result was an indignant note, and Mr. Robertson, he goes on to say, was "horrified by the tale of how his illustrious visitor had been ignominiously turned away from his door." The story is only true thus far, that Robertson was from home when De Quincey called—the rest is a myth. In a letter, dated 25th September, 1885, the minister himself tells me the incident as it really occurred. Referring to a version then going the round of the papers, he says:—

"It is unhappily incorrect—not perhaps as the story goes (which is a pity), but as it happened. I was lodging with Mrs. Cochrane, in High Street, who treated De Quincey with all politeness, as a lady should (though she did suppose he might be some wandering bookman), admitted him, and told him of my absence, which he regretted, and which made him, after a little while of indecision, resolve on returning to Glasgow (to Professor Lushington's) with the train. He went to no principal Inn that I know of, and certainly his letter was anything but indignant. It was full of excuse for having failed to advise me, as he had promised, of his coming; of regret

at the mutual disappointment, and praise of our 'dear little town.' Immediately on coming home I learnt what visitor I had had, and wrote, as you may suppose, to bring him back as soon as possible. The servant had seen nothing remarkable, but Mrs. Cochrane had felt that he was no ordinary man, and being much exercised at not having insisted on his staying till I returned, went to her younger sister, who was better read in literature than she, and said—'Margaret, I am afraid he has been one of the minister's literary friends.' 'Get Gilfillan's Portrait Gallery,' said the sister—'try De Quincey.' Ah, there it was! But it was too late. They thought I would be vexed, and the train, I believe, was not yet gone; but they failed to find him."

With the name of De Quincey may be associated those of Dr. John Muir, the celebrated Sanskrit scholar; Dr. John Brown, the genial author of "Rab and his Friends;" his kinsman, Dr. Samuel Brown, the great chemist and dreamer, whose two posthumous volumes are among the gems of our literature; and Sheriff Alexander Logan, of whom John Brown says, "He might have made himself almost anything a man may be," and whose famous dream of Judas the Betrayer has been preserved in the *Horæ Subsecivæ*. Friendly intercourse with literary and ministerial celebrities, as may be supposed, increased with years, and what is rare in the life of a dissenting minister, several of his friends belonged to, and moved within, the charmed circle of the higher aristocracy of birth and position. The above names are noted because they

were intimate friends during the earlier period of his ministry, and known to be so in Irvine.

Outside the immediate locality, Robertson's fame as a preacher grew apace. The marked individuality of his style was quickly recognised as striking and original, and he was by common consent placed in the front rank of pulpit orators at a time when Glasgow and the West of Scotland could boast of such preachers, in his own denomination, as Robson, King, Anderson, M'Farlane, Edmond, Ker, Eadie, Macdougall, and others. It was something new, in those days, to have the fine arts—architecture, music, painting and poetry, consecrated to the service of the sanctuary, and, through the imagination, made to minister to the worship of God: to have Divine truth unfolded and enforced by illustrations borrowed, with a poet's insight, from legendary and mythical lore, the phenomena of nature, men's lives, and the varied passions which influence human action. Gilfillan early acknowledged Robertson's special powers, and thus refers to him in his "Remoter Stars in the Church Sky"—"In the United Presbyterian body, besides Dr. Anderson, there is another *man of genius*, the Rev. W. B. Robertson of Irvine, whom his friends call the modern 'Jeremy Taylor.' He is certainly possessed of wonderful fancy, as well as wit; is a poet as well as an orator; and preaches highly eloquent and rich discourses, perhaps

a little too luscious in their ripeness, and too uniform in their splendour."

Gilfillan was probably assisting Robertson at a communion season (June, 1846), when the two made a pilgrimage to Burns' Cottage. Of this visit, Gilfillan, in his *Life of Burns*, says:—"We remember one rather odd circumstance. When looking at the concealed bed in which the poet was born, our companion (the gifted Rev. Dr. W. B. Robertson of Irvine, the orator and poet of the West,) exclaimed: 'Here's a laddie! here's wee Bobbie Burns!' A cry from the bed confirmed the words, and drawing near, we tried to complete the *glamourie* of the scene by imagining that the boy who lifted up his arms and smiled was the inspired child, to whose birthplace, in that humble cottage, the civilised world had flocked for nigh one hundred years."\*

When Robertson visited Glasgow, so largely recruited from the towns and villages of Ayrshire, the largest Churches were too small to hold the crowds that went to hear him. Such visits were usually paid at Communion Seasons, or on the occasion of Anniversary Services.

"To not a few in the great Scottish Metropolis of industry"—writes a correspondent, over thirty years ago,

\* "The National Burns." Edited by George Gilfillan. (Glasgow: William Mackenzie.)

fresh from hearing him assisting at services in the Church at Langside—"the appearance of Mr. Robertson among them is doubly welcome—welcome chiefly for his own sake, but also as suggestive of the early home which has been left for a more stirring arena of action. The sea breeze of the Ayrshire coast has cooled his brow and blown back his hair; and his presence seems to bring some of its freshness to hearts to whom such a privilege is too much a distant reminiscence. Those of whom we speak are mostly young men who have come from Irvine and the neighbouring towns, or the surrounding country-side, and who invariably form a part of every audience he addresses in Glasgow; their hearts standing up to give him a yet kindlier greeting than the rest. For ourselves, we have never seen Mr. Robertson here, but there arises a 'picture in the brain' of the town of Irvine, with its one graceful spire pointing ever upward to the azure of immortality from its sacred mount of graves; its line of harbour, with here and there a coaster with its frail-seeming fretting of mast and spar; its sand-hills along the shore, and the delta where the sister-streams, Irvine and Garnock, unite ere they together lose themselves in the ocean; and beyond, the deep-voiced sea, quivering in sunlight, or spotted with travelling summer shadows, or dimly seen through the steaming mist of rain, or speckled with foam in the freshening breeze; and afar, steeped in the blue haze of distance, the sovran peaks of Arran, the lonely rock of Ailsa, worn with wave and tempest. These are but a few points of the picture; yet how passing fair were the broad landscape if made to live anew on the canvas of MacCulloch, swathed in that diviner light which never was on sea or land."

In 1852 he was sent to preach in London; and, in connection with the position he had attained as a popular preacher, it may be noted here, as the most convenient place, what was said of services that were

held by him in 1859, when he again visited the Metropolis to promote a new cause in Islington:—"Of all the distinguished ministers," writes a correspondent, "who have come up from the North to help this movement, no one has been more acceptable than Mr. Robertson. He attracted large audiences, gathered, if one may trust the external aspect of the crowd, from all parts of the city. On the last Sunday of his visit, Mr. Robertson preached an excellent discourse from the words, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit,' and an English friend who had listened to Mr. Spurgeon on the previous Sunday, when he had preached from the same text, and who also heard Mr. Robertson, assured me that both as to matter and form, Irvine had greatly the advantage of Surrey Gardens. If the United Presbyterian body means to take root in London, they ought to send up a man like Mr. Robertson. For such an one, there is plenty of room and work in the great Babylon."

The discourse above referred to was frequently preached by him, when from home assisting at special services. It is also memorable as the sermon preached to his own people and a large congregation, when he returned from Italy in 1878—his voice at first, round, full, and deep, but towards the close requiring an effort; and it was the one selected for delivery, March 13, 1881, when invited to take the

service in the College Chapel, Glasgow University. The following very complete notes\* of the discourse will now be read with interest :—

“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.”

EPHESIANS IV. 30—“*Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*”

The history of the world, or of what they might say amounted to the same thing in God’s sight, of the Church in our world, might be divided into three grand eras—the Patriarchal era, the Jewish era, and the Christian era—each of them comprising a period of some two thousand years. That was, two thousand years from the fall to the Covenant with Abraham ; two thousand years from that to the Crucifixion of Christ ; and two thousand years from that to some great event still lying in the future—in all, six thousand years ; and if to this they added a Sabbath of millenium, then singularly enough, the lifetime of men—not of the individual who died and passed away, but of the race of men upon the earth, from the creation to the judgment day, would just be threescore and ten centuries—a great week of seven thousand years, in which, according to the Divine arithmetic, a thousand years were counted as one day. These three dispensations seemed to arrange themselves according to the Trinity of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—the first beginning from the time when, as they read in Genesis, men were called the sons of God, and issuing in the adoption of the chosen family of Abraham—the *dispensation of the Father* ; the second beginning with the people amongst whom the Passover was instituted, and issuing in the Crucifixion of Christ—the *dispensation of the Son* ; and the third beginning with the day of Pentecost, and issuing

\* The report in the *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, of Aug. 3, 1878, revised and supplemented by the late Mr J. Lidgate, writer, Edinburgh, from MS. Notes in his possession.



in some grand Pentecost still lying before them in the future—the *dispensation of the Holy Ghost*. Or, first, the dispensation of the Prophet uttering predictions; second, the dispensation of the Priest making sacrifices; and third, the dispensation of the King ruling and conquering in love. Or first, the dispensation of faith; second, the dispensation of hope; third, the dispensation of charity. In the first, the Church was in the family; in the second, the Church was in the nation; in the third, the Church will be in the world. In the first, ignorance rather was corrected; in the second, guilt rather was expiated; in the third, depravity rather was conquered; and then, in the fourth and last dispensation, man created anew in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, walked with God at the close of the day. In the junction of the second and third of these eras—the meeting of the ages as it literally was—Christ having finished His great work, and announced the advent of the Holy Spirit, said to His disciples, “It is expedient that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, will not come to you.” And the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, had come into the Church, and now, betwixt the first and second coming of the Lord, the Church, upon her mysterious way, with the great red cross of her redemption behind her, and the great white throne of her completed redemption before her, and the Holy Spirit guiding her upon the mystic way between, hears what the Spirit saith unto the Churches—hears what Scripture saith,—“Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” It was not affirmed that in no sense was the Holy Spirit withheld until Christ came. The strivings of the Holy Spirit, its leadings, upholdings, and vexings, were facts in ancient times. In ancient times, as well as now, whatsoever of truth, whatsoever of beauty, whatsoever of goodness there ever had been in the world, in any nation, and in any age, was to be traced up to the Holy Spirit of God. The relation of the death of Christ to the mission of the Holy Spirit was a relation



of truth, rather than a relation of time. The one preceded the other, as the cause precedes the consequence, rather than as yesterday preceded to-day. You know that God in His goodness encinctured life with the atmosphere. It was in that that they breathed; and breathing, lived, and moved, and had their being. It was the element through which light came, transmitted to the eye; and were there no atmosphere, there could be seen no roseate dawn, or golden sunsets, or the living forms and faces of dear friends. It was the medium through which sound came transmitted to the ear; and were there no atmosphere, there would not be any hearing of the harmonies of music? there would be no sweet melodies of birds, or the melodious voices of friends. It was, in short, the element of natural life itself, and without it this world would be as dumb as a picture, dark as midnight, and as dreary as the grave. The Holy Spirit (be it spoken reverently) was the Church's atmosphere. By means of this, she breathed, and breathing, lived, and had her being. It was the element through which light and sound came transmitted to her eye, so that if God should take His Holy Spirit from them, there would be no more effectual hearing of the Good Shepherd's voice, no saving views of Jesus, and no more visions of celestial beauty haunting the Church upon her homeward way. It was, in short, the element of spiritual life itself. Without it the Church would be dumb, dark, frozen, dead. But then, just as the atmosphere was sometimes more and sometimes less in motion, and life was quickened or not quickened, purified or not purified, accordingly; so was it with the Holy Spirit before and after Christ's departure. For there were always breathings of the mystic wind, that bloweth where it listeth on the surface of the new creation; but after Christ's departure it had come down rushing in the reviving wind of Pentecost. And even as the natural sun, eight months ago, astronomers told them, was nearer to the earth; and they beheld him in mid-winter, take his lowly way from where he started, in slanting sunrise in

the east, to where he fell in early blood-red setting in the west; till, as the seasons rolled on, they beheld him climbing the southern skies to his meridian throne, and retiring, astronomers told them, away from earth, so that through his retirement, and through his ascension, the winter was past, the rain was over and gone, the flowers appeared on the earth, and melodies of love and beauty were breathing and bursting everywhere; so also there, the Son of Righteousness had retired. He has ascended, and through His retirement and ascension, had come the great spring and summer of revival, the more abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The figure he had used was imperfect. All figures on the subject were imperfect. Even Scripture figures were imperfect. It was impossible through material figures, perfectly to represent heavenly truth. The Holy Spirit was called wind, called dew, called rain, called fire, called many other such impersonal agencies. But the Holy Spirit was a person, and no mere impersonal agency; a person of the blessed Godhead, and no mere attribute or qualification of the Godhead. This was manifest from the beginning of Genesis, where the Spirit moved on the face of the waters, to the end of the Revelation, where the Spirit and the Bride say "Come." The Holy Spirit is also said, in Scripture, to "lead," to "witness," to "make intercession," to be capable of being "resisted," and in this long golden chain he had found a double link, for it described Him by His action—sealing; and by His motion, as being grieved:—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." The denial of the Holy Spirit's personality seemed to be the gate through which modern sophists would conduct them to the denial of all that was called God, or that was worshipped, and the acceptance instead of a gloomy, dreary, pantheistic system which gave the aching spirit of man nothing to turn to and trust in his misery, but impalpable mists and shadows,—nothing but hard iron laws,—nothing in the breast of God but a ghastly wound where a beating heart ought to be,

no Father's heart, no Brother's heart, no Spirit's heart. In contrast with that dreary orphanage, to have a personal Spirit bearing witness with their spirits that they were the children of God! And how powerful, in such a practical relation, was an appeal like this, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." The text contains—

I. A GREAT PERIOD,—"*The day of redemption.*"

II. A GREAT PRIVILEGE,—*Being "sealed" "by the Holy Spirit of God."*

III. A GREAT PRACTICAL REQUIREMENT,—"*Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.*"

IV. THE GRAND PERSUASIVE TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THE REQUIREMENT—THAT WHICH KNOTS UP THE WHOLE, —"*Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God by whom ye are sealed.*"

I. A GREAT PERIOD,—"*The day of Redemption.*"

(1) That was the day of completed redemption, at the resurrection of the dead, for here they should view redemption as consisting of several stages, or gradations, culminating in complete redemption at "that day" They might say, the day of election was the day of redemption in purpose; the day of Christ's death, the day of redemption in purchase; the day of conversion, the day of redemption in fact or experience; but the day of the blessed resurrection of the dead would be the day of redemption, fully and finally completed. When the soul should have travelled through her mystic phases of transfiguration, in the footsteps of Christ who went before her, crucified, dead, buried, risen, ascended with Christ, sitting with Christ in the heavenly places; and the body also, in its order, following in the footsteps of the soul that went before it, and Lord Christ, who went before them both, should have been dead, buried, and risen with

Christ, then perfect soul and perfect body meet together at the gates of the resurrection, wearing the likeness of the Perfect One, Christ Jesus, then redemption would be complete. Then, the redeemed in purpose, in purchase, and in fact, should meet, with each other and with Christ, at the gates of eternity, and they should enter in, to be for ever with each other and with the Lord. The redeemed may now be marching at different stages of the road, but their journey is the same. They were all ascending the same hill, they have left the vales and paths below, but the summit is not yet reached,—the mount of transfiguration where Christ sits with His saints in the bright encircling cloud, which is not yet pierced, but which shall be pierced on the day of redemption. It was not to be supposed that there was no redemption till that day,—that man must wander through mortal life, through a gloomy gallery, and through the gates of death and the resurrection, on to the great white shining throne of God, in judgment day, not knowing, all the dreary way, whether at the end of it they were to be saved or not. But there was a day yet to come, when the redemption should be finished and complete, when the last vestiges of sin and sorrow would be swept away, when the voice that on the Cross said, “It is finished,” and that was even now often breathing in the homes and hearts of men, saying, “Open to me my sister, my love, for my head is wet with the dew, and my locks with the drops of the night,” that voice would swell sonorously into the trump of God, shattering the sepulchres, and startling the sleepers of a thousand nights, yet gentle as the voice of the bridegroom over the bride, “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away; for lo, the winter is past, and the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come; arise my love, my fair one, and come away to the mountains of spices which I have prepared for thee;” yet terrible as the voice of the conqueror marching like thunder into the place of tombs,—“O death, I will be thy plague;

O grave, I will be thy destruction." The day of redemption had a bright and a dark side. It was the bright side that was adverted to in the text; and it was generally the bright side that was noticed in the New Testament. It was worthy of remark, that the New Testament writers should generally picture that last day as a day of brightness and rejoicing,—never as a day of terror and wrath exclusively; sometimes not as a day of wrath at all, though well they knew that when He came all kindreds of the earth would wail because of Him; when He set the sheep on His right hand, He would set the goats on the left; when He would say to these, "Come ye blessed," He would say to those, "Depart ye cursed." In Scripture, the resurrection of the wicked was comparatively lost sight of in the resurrection of the just. The cries of the wicked were drowned by the songs of the righteous; and the wailings of the day of wrath were lost amid the splendours of the day of redemption. It was instructive to notice how, in the course of the Church's history, as the Church receded from the spirit of adoption, and the old Hebrew spirit of bondage came back upon her heart, that she changed the day of Christ's redemption into a day of wrath. In pictures in the Catacombs, in which the persecuted Church in the first centuries took refuge, and where they had left memorials of their faith and piety frescoed and engraven on the stones; and in pictures of a later age, as he had seen them in Rome and Ravenna, the face of the Saviour still wore a mild, benignant expression. It was usually that of the Faithful Shepherd, with benignant aspect, carrying a lamb on His shoulders; but as the age wore on, and grew darker, and the spirit of bondage returned upon the Church's heart, the face, as pictured by the artists of the time, grows gradually old, and dark, and stern, till, in the midnight period of the Romish Church, it was positively frightful to behold. Then awoke the wail announcing the day of judgment, as the day of terror and wrath, even to the Church itself.

Here, Dr. Robertson quoted from his own translation of the "Dies Iræ,"—

"Rolls the trumpet's shattering thunder,  
Rends the realm of tombs asunder,  
Driving all the great throne under.

Death with nature agonizes,  
All creation startled rises,  
Summoned to the great assizes.

Opened book, all eyes engages,  
Bearing record of all ages,  
Blazoned on its burning pages.

Whenee the Judge strict doom is dealing,  
Every hidden thought revealing,  
None escaping, none appealing."

Such was the way in which the Church, through her own gloom, changed Christ's beautiful day of redemption into a day of terror and wrath. The Papacy had thrown its dark shadow over the brightness of the day of redemption. It needed the Reformation to change that day of terror and wrath into the day of redemption. Undoubtedly it was a day of awful wrath and terror to the unconverted man. No one spoke of this so solemnly as Christ Himself, whatever people might be disposed to make of His words, when He spoke of "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched," and the terrible damnation of hell; but in the text it was God's saints that were addressed, and so it was not the dark side at all, but the bright side of the cloud that was shown, that glorious appearing of the blessed hope,—  
"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

II. A GREAT PRIVILEGE—*Being "sealed" by the Holy Spirit of God.*

1. God has *marked* or *stamped* His people for His own



treasure. A seal distinguishes the property of him whose it is; and so God has marked His people as His own peculiar property. Every seal is a mark, but every mark is not a seal. Believers were sealed from all eternity. But it was not that sealing that was spoken of in the text, but rather the sealing that was going on here and now, like the sealing going on in the seventh chapter of the Book of Revelation. In the temple of God there was a great shew-bread table on which provision was made for all the twelve tribes. Reuben might be as unstable as water, but his loaf was there for him; Simeon and Levi might be cruel, but their loaves were there for them; Judah might go to his kingdom, Issachar to his farm, Zebulun to the sea, Gad to the battle, Naphtali to the dance and song, Joseph to the garden of beauty and sorrow, Benjamin to the prey like the ravening of the wolf; it made no difference, their loaves were there for them. Though ten tribes should go down to captivity, though they should never return, their loaves were there for them, full and free, without respect to the diversity of their character. Those who came to the shew-bread table, where Christ, their High Priest, stood, and did what David did when he was an hungered, who got the bread out of the High Priest's hands, through personal communication with Him, and ate it, they, then and there, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of God.

(2) God's people were sealed for *security*. A seal secures property, as well as distinguishes it. If you want a thing to be secured so as not to be touched, you seal it. And so were God's people secured from apostacy and harm. They were stamped with the image and superscription of the King. No evil should befall them. The pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day, should not come nigh them. They would carry the lamp of their spiritual life, unquenched, to glory. Once in Christ, believers are always in Christ, they go on infallibly to glory. Do you see that host crossing the threshold of time, as the

stars walk in the firmament at midnight? God has counted the number of the stars, and He knows each individual that composes that host, not one of them faileth. Not one of these pilgrims shall stray behind, no wild beast will devour them, no archer will shoot at them. They trample every difficulty in their way, and go on, from strength to strength, until every one of them appeareth before the Lord in Zion. They are "sealed" unto the day of redemption.

(3) God's people were sealed for *assurance*. They were not only marked and secured, they were also *assured*. It is possible that some of God's people might be sealed without being assured, but generally they were sealed and assured,—the Holy Spirit witnessing with their spirits that they were the children of God. How were men to know that they were sealed? Not by climbing into heaven, and searching the sealed book of God's elect there. How did they know this beautiful summer had come? Did God send an angel to blow a trumpet and announce it, or write it in golden letters on the blue firmament? No, they felt the warm breath of summer upon them; they saw the fruits and flowers of summer growing and ripening around them. So also they felt the warm breath of God's love dissolving their ice-bound hearts, and the flowers and fruits of God's grace springing up around them. They had thus the double evidence, in their character, of the feelings within and the fruits without. That was another function of the Spirit's sealing; and then they were like the mystic book—sealed within and on the outside.

(4) God's people were sealed for *consecration*. Sealing also meant consecration. As when they wrote a letter to a friend, they did not care to let every one, through whose hands it passed, know all that was in it, they sealed it; so God's children were secreted. The world knew them not. Under the mystery of love, and under the clods of the sepulchre, God sealed them, on till that day when the trump shall be blown, the seals opened,



the treasures displayed. "Then, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day shall I make up my jewels."

III. A GREAT PRACTICAL REQUIREMENT—"*Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.*"

The language is figurative. It teaches us by analogy. The blessed God sits undisturbed in his own eternal calm. He dwells in the serene tranquillity of His painful emotion. But, in Scripture, God is represented as having feelings analogous to our own; and, to suit our capacities, they are described as if they were our own feelings. Thus, God is said to rejoice when man repents, and to be grieved when man returns to sin.

We can understand what is meant by Jesus Christ grieving, because he became incarnate, and had a heart like our own, sin excepted. We can understand what is meant by His weeping at the grave of Lazarus, for we ourselves have stood at a grave. But it is not so easy for us to understand about the Holy Spirit—who has not stooped into the sphere of human feelings and emotions as Christ has done—being grieved. When we read of the Holy Spirit being "grieved," can we point to some blessed motherhood or sisterhood in the Trinity, analogous to the Fatherhood of God, and the Brotherhood of Christ? Shall we deny the doctrine, because we cannot understand it? No; let us be humble before the Majesty of the Godhead, and let us not add sorrow to a grief so profound and mysterious. Grief is a mingling of love with displeasure. The Holy Spirit is grieved only at the believer's sins. The mother mourns over her child's disobedience. If the child of another misbehaves, she blames and chides that child. But the child she has borne with such agony, and nursed and educated with such care; when he sins, she weeps, and follows him to the haunts of his wickedness to woo him back to the paths of holiness and love. The Holy Spirit is highly

displeased at the sins of others, but is grieved at the believer's sins.

"The Holy Spirit of God." We sometimes read of the Holy Father, the Holy Son Jesus, but it is usual in Scripture always to connect the word "holy" with the Spirit. All the persons of the Godhead are equally holy. But the Spirit is the sanctifier of the saint. It is His special office to make holy, to beautify us with salvation, to cleanse our sin-soiled countenance, take off our polluted garments, and give us the transfiguration change of raiment wrought out by the righteousness of Christ. When the believer sins, he undoes the work of the Spirit, counteracts its operations. The painter and artist are much displeased when their works are marred, and the Holy Spirit is grieved to behold its work defaced by those whom it seeks to beautify.

(1) The indulgence of deceit grieves the Spirit,—see verse 25th, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour." As it is by the truth that the Spirit sanctifies, falsehood must be detested by Him.

(2) Covetous desires grieve the Spirit,—verse 28th, "Let him that stole steal no more." Covetousness sets up idols of gold and silver in the heart, which the Spirit seeks to be the residence of Christ alone. The Spirit points us to the spiritual, seeks to carry us up to heaven; covetousness points us to the carnal, and enchains us to the earth. Covetousness in the Church is especially grievous to the Spirit. Look at the effect of covetousness on Judas the traitor; the blood of Jesus Christ is laid at his door.

(3) The indulgence of sensual passions grieves the Spirit. Verses 19th-22d,—Fleshly lusts oppose every work of the Spirit.

(4) Malice and angry passions grieve the Spirit,—verse 31st,—The heavenly dove will not dwell in a scene of strife. Where brethren dwell together in unity, there God commands the blessing. Be man-like, be God-like,

but "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." Has the Spirit convicted any of you? Do not try to drown its convictions with the world. Go whither the Spirit would lead you, even to Christ; and He will pluck out the arrow of conviction shot by the Spirit.

IV. THE GRAND PERSUASIVE TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THE REQUIREMENT—THAT WHICH KNOTS UP THE WHOLE,—"*Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God by whom ye are sealed.*"

Not by whom ye are comforted, though that is also true, but by whom ye are sealed. The argument is—your salvation has been secured; the Holy Spirit has secured it; therefore do not grieve It. It is not fear that is appealed to, but the believer's gratitude, and love, and joy. The truth of the text cannot be appreciated by doubters in religion. The mandates of a stern father often fail to bring the son to obedience; but the tear on his mother's cheek—that touches him—comes home to him with power. He remembers a mother's love, and tries not to grieve her. The argument is not—Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, because He will leave you. It was stronger than that—He would never leave them, never forsake them, therefore they should not grieve Him. Believers do not abstain from sin in order to be saved, but because they are saved. They do not fly from iniquity in order to escape from condemnation, but because there is "now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."

*In conclusion—*

(1) *To those believers who are not assured—who doubt and despond.* You need to fear, lest the Holy Spirit be withdrawn. Pray with David, "Take not thy Holy Spirit away," "Create within me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Remember the end of David's predecessor, who gave himself up to despair: that unhappy

King Saul, who rushed through the red gates of self-murder into the terrible elsewhere.

(2) *To sinners, who have always rebelled and grieved the Holy Spirit of God.* The Holy Spirit will not always strive with you. You have trampled under foot the Son of God, and grieved the Holy Spirit of God. Has the Holy Spirit finally departed from you? No, if you have not yielded to Him as the Spirit of mercy, He will return to you as the Spirit of vengeance. If you have not experienced the sweet breathings of peace and love from the Holy Spirit, you shall soon feel it, as the stormy wind of judgment. If you have not allowed the Spirit to work in you the baptism of regeneration, you must then feel it operating upon you with the baptism of unregenerating fire. Yield to the influences of the Spirit of God, and then come to Jesus Christ, by whom you will be justified, and sanctified, and "sealed unto the day of redemption."

## CHAPTER VII.

### Calls.

First call to Shamrock Street U.P. Church, Glasgow—Call declined—Manse built—Mammon, a Satire—Call to Regent Place U.P. Church, declined—Second Call to Shamrock Street U.P. Church—Address before Presbytery—Call declined—Revival of 1857.

RETURNING to congregational life in the Burgher Kirk, I find its tranquillity was seriously shaken in 1851. In that year, Mr. Robertson got a call to Shamrock Street U.P. Church, Glasgow. The stipend offered was more than three times the amount which the Irvine congregation paid him, and the new sphere temptingly presented to him many reasons why he should accept the pastorate of this Church. Not one of the congregation dared to ask him whether he would go, and even at a meeting of session, the night before the day on which he was to give his reply to the Presbytery, the subject was not once mentioned, though it was in the heart of everyone present. After the meeting he walked to Bridgegatehead with one of

the elders, and before parting with him, the minister asked if it did not seem rather strange that no mention had been made of the call. The reply was, that they were afraid to speak of it. Wishing, possibly, to draw out an expression of opinion, Mr. Robertson referred to some of the advantages offered. "There is one drawback," said the elder. "And what is that?" he asked, evidently interested. "*I believe there are no poor people in Shamrock Street Church,*" was the reply. Without another word, the minister turned on his heel and went home. Next day the call was declined.

Had Mr. Robertson found himself otherwise circumstanced—the locality less fair, society less devout and cultivated, and a congregation less devoted—he might, when this call was presented to him, have decided otherwise. As it was, the declinature gave immense satisfaction to the congregation. Old John Malcolm, one of the elders, leading the devotions at a prayer meeting, in East Back Road, prayed with great unction, that "the Lord might forgive the Shamrock Street congregation the sin of covetousness;"\* and in this incident,

\* These old elders of the Burgher Kirk—worthy men all of them—were very strict in the exercise of their office when offenders were brought before them for discipline. On one occasion the offender pled hard to be let off, and he would be careful in the future, but was told by one and then another that their patience was exhausted. Finding all appeal vain, he turned upon them, and said, "A set o' puir gardeners in the Lord's vineyard !

we have the best possible illustration of the feeling with which the attempt to deprive them of their minister was regarded.

Their gratification took the practical shape of providing him with a manse at a cost somewhere about £1300—not large, but a handsome residence on the Kilwinning Road. Some years previously, the managers, feeling that the stipend of £130 a-year was rather a paltry remuneration, had raised one hundred pounds, and presented it at a Congregational meeting. In accepting the gift, he said it was proof to him that they had confidence in his discretion as to spending it, and, without much loss of time, he proceeded to establish his possession of this virtue by purchasing with his hundred sovereigns a fine parlour organ, to be used as a help in furthering the continued improvement of the Church's psalmody. Now, his personal comfort was to be considered; he was to have a home, and no longer be in lodgings.

Admiration for the unselfish act of the young divine was not confined to the Burgher congregation, and the episode was made the subject of a clever satire, by a gifted young author, a native of Irvine, still alive, though advanced in years. A copy of the publi-

It's no wi' you—'Let's dig aboot it, and dung it; but it's cut it doon, why cumbereth it the grun.' The minister smiled at the unexpected outburst; told him to go home and he would make his peace with the session.



cation, along with other documents, is deposited in a glass jar within a cavity, made for the purpose, in the foundation stone of the Manse, and, here, in this connection, some extracts from it may very properly have a place.\*

After a preliminary flourish of a few lines, Canto I. opens with the following panegyric of the reverend hero of the day:—

I sing a pastor, generous, just, and kind ;  
Of brilliant parts, but of a humble mind ;  
Gentle, yet firm ; expert the truth to scan,  
And to make known God's character to man.  
The truth he teaches he exhibits, too—  
His practice proves his doctrines to be true.  
He draws the raptured souls with cords of love—  
Directs and leads them to the realms above.

As the bright stream that from the mountain's side  
Draws the pure waters of his crystal tide,  
Descending swiftly to the fruitful plain,  
To bless the pastures and the fields of grain ;  
Meandering there it slowly onward flows,  
And the bright sun upon its bosom glows :  
Calm and serene its placid waters rests,  
The groves and meadows pictured in its breast :—  
So, thus the man whose praises now we sing  
Waters his flock from heaven's sacred spring ;  
And, as he onward moves, with labours blest,  
He bears his congregation on his breast.  
His life, the Sun of Righteousness displays,  
Reflected in his teaching, works, and ways.  
O happy people ! cherished thus, and led  
By one so kind, so watchful, and so staid.  
O happy pastor ! o'er a flock who prove  
To thee, by all their acts, devoted love.

Then follows an account of a midnight convention of

\* *Mammon. Dedicated to the Clergy of Scotland.* By the SHADE OF JOHN KNOX.

evil spirits, in the Kirkyard, presided over by the great spirit, Mammon :—

Ah ! Irvine, had thy sleeping Burghers kent  
Who used the Kirkyard, and to what intent,  
Your Provost, Bailies, and your Council, too,  
Had racked their brains to find out what to do.  
And what betide thee, Bruce, that fearsome night,  
That thou shouldst venture out to see that sight ?  
Nay, more, they say, with hoofs and horns ye flew  
To the Kirkyard and joined the wicked crew.

A sudden yell from the top of the spire summons the fiends :—

Fast to their seats the vast assembly fly—  
The stones, the walks, the kirk's own roof on high,  
Were clad with black and grizzly figures dire,  
With glaring eyes like burning lamps of fire.

The doings of Mammon's agents in Irvine are rehearsed, and a plot is laid to entrap the young Burgher minister, when the convention is suddenly ended by "good John Rankine," who is represented as having wandered in his sleep to the Free Kirk and rung the bell.

The scene of Canto II. is laid in the Cathedral crypt of St. Mungo. The fiends are jubilant. Dr. William Anderson is to moderate the call :—

To Mr. R. the Rev. Dr. writes,  
And to the charge his friend he thus invites,—  
Dear brother, you the Shamrock Street Church call  
Unanimously,—you are desired by all.  
Their call the Glasgow Presbytery approve,  
And join in sending you their Christian love.  
A willing people this who ask your care  
Have proved themselves, by many an effort rare ;

At their own cost the meeting-house they built,  
 No fruit of discord to perpetuate guilt,  
 But to the Lord their ready aid they lend,  
 His glory and His kingdom to extend.  
 To all our Presbytery thou'rt very dear,  
 And Glasgow offers you a better sphere,  
 Where powers like yours extensive good may yield:  
 Your present is too limited a field.  
 Some of your dearest friends are there,  
 So now, dear Sir, to Glasgow do repair!

(Mammon took care that the amount of gold  
 Should, by some dear, attentive friend be told,)

The more than dubious manner in which our hero reads the letter, and asks, "Has Mammon's self no interest in the deed?" is strongly depicted, as also the excitement in Shamrock Street. The people there are by no means sure that they will succeed:—

Here, opposition stirs up anger's fire,  
 There, disappointment but excites desire;  
 While all determined that, without delay,  
 The worthy pastor must be bribed away.  
 "We'll add a hundred to the former call!  
 The man's a saint, and worthy of it all!  
 From other churches, he'll draw crowds away,  
 And add to our respectability!  
 A deputation must the offer bear,  
 Of managers who influential are."

Ah, Mammon! Mammon! ill you ken your man!  
 You take the way to frustrate your own plan.  
 Full well he knows that gold oft leads to hell;  
 It must but make him jealous of himsel'.  
 Had you a hundred sovereigns ta'en away,  
 A good assistant missionary to pay,  
 You might have lead him easy by the lug—  
 He'd gone as cannie as a collic dog.

Away! away the deputation fly,  
 Dressed in their best, to the Ayrshire Railway by.

A watch of gold each in his fob did wear;  
 Well-brush'd coats, vests, boots, and well-combed hair.  
 Swift as the wind the railway engine flies,  
 Or Jove's own bird that cleaves the liquid skies.  
 Within a coach at ease they rest secure,  
 Buoyant with hope, and of succeeding sure.  
 With them two guards of honour Mammon sends  
 (Two trusty imps, for their own private ends.)  
 Close by their charge, unseen, they occupy  
 Two vacant seats, while 'long the line they fly.  
 At Irvinc's station soon they all alight,  
 Wait on the pastor, who they 'gain invite.  
 He hears with horror what they now propose,  
 Quick to his face the blushing crimson rose.  
 "Brethren," said he, "you do me much surprise!"  
 And on them sternly fixed his scowling eyes.  
 Firmly, he said, "the time for my reply  
 Will come when meets Kilmarnock's Presbytery!"  
 They saw he thought the call from Mammon came,  
 And busy conscience witness'd the same.  
 'Twas plain to both the offer he despised,  
 They stood convinced, convicted, and surprised!  
 They thought of Achan and his wedge of gold;  
 Of cruel Judas, who his Master sold;  
 Of Simon, who the gift of God would buy—  
 And of themselves! in such a plight, oh fie!  
 They knew not what to say, nor dare they fly!  
 The imps stood laughing, as the elders blushed,  
 Then off to tell great Mammon quickly rushed.

The scene of Canto III. is laid in King Street  
 U.P. Church, Kilmarnock.

Beneath the pulpit, to the west appears  
 The moderator, well advanced in years;  
 Of grave deportment, and of comely mien:  
 Whose countenance gave interest to the scene.  
 Imperious Mammon there the pulpit claims;  
 He scowls around, his eyes were burning flames.  
 Before him lay a wedge of solid gold,  
 Which was by Athan stolen in days of old.  
 A silver coin the Jews to Judas paid,  
 With Simon's leathern purse beside it laid.

In his right hand the haughty fiend did hold  
 A roll of calls, his left a purse of gold.  
 Before him sat the Rev. W. A.,  
 Encircled by Kilmarnock's Presbytery.  
 On Mammon's right were seated down below  
 The three commissioners of great Glasgow.  
 M'Gill and Eadie side by side are here,  
 And Mr. R. sits modest in the rear.  
 Strangers and friends are present, not a few;  
 Angels and fiends, though hid from mortal view.  
 Great Dr. A., with all his powers, arose,  
 And spirits dire the worthy R. enlose.

Old Avarice thought to strike her poisoned dart  
 Deep in the centre of his bleeding heart:  
 R.'s guardian angel snatched the dart away,  
 And struck it into Mammon in the fray.  
 From his right hand the Irvine call he tore,  
 And flung its scattering fragments on the floor.  
 "My Irvine friends," said A., "Heaven asks your aid!  
 Aside be every selfish motive laid!  
 And with your prayers your worthy pastor send  
 The cause of love and truth and Heaven to extend!  
 Now hid as in a bushel is his light,  
 Unknown his talents and unfelt his might.  
 Send him where Glasgow greatly needs his aid,  
 With us the powers of darkness to invade;  
 Where giants must with giants fierce engage,  
 Defend the cause of truth, and war 'gainst error wage."  
 Next he indulges in our worthy's praise,  
 With words that added lustre to our lays.  
 These read, R.'s guardian angel standing near,  
 And on our manuscript let fall a tear.  
 Along our lines fast flowed love's native river,  
 And blotted out the baneful praise for ever.  
 Elles, an ancient teacher, frank and kind,  
 Less apt to weigh his words than speak his mind,  
 With feelings keen as most unmanned the man,  
 While down his furrowed cheeks the water ran,  
 Declared how much his brother's loss he feared.  
 Whom he so loved, respected, and revered.

Our pastor rose with feelings deep impressed,  
 And thus disclosed the tumults of his breast:—

"No words of mine can tell what now I feel,  
 My heart is pierced as with dividing steel :  
 On either side my much-loved friends I see,  
 To please them all's impossible for me.  
 Strong reasons are why I should still abide,  
 And o'er my loved and loving flock preside ;  
 Strong reasons, too, exist why I should go  
 To Glasgow, and my present charge upthrow.  
 O Thou, my loving Lord, my God, my Guide,  
 Keep me from Mammon, vanity, and pride.  
 O grant Thine aid, cause me to apprehend  
 Thy sacred will, and make this trial end.  
 Glad then I'll stay, to Glasgow go, or far  
 (If 'tis Thy will) as Africa's Calabar.  
 Till clearly by Thy will I'm called away  
 I with my charge in Irvine still will stay."  
 Great Mammon heard these words, and fainted quite away.

Mr. Robertson might also, had he so chosen, have exchanged Irvine for a new church offered to be built for him in Edinburgh. But he did not see the Lord's hand pointing in that direction ; nor did he see it when in February, 1861, a call was presented to him from Regent Place U.P. Church, Glasgow. When his reply was given, he said—"He was sorry it had come, not for his own sake, for it was a compliment ; not for his congregation at Irvine ; but sorry on behalf of the congregation of Regent Place. He was not to blame. He had seen it coming, and beckoned it not to come ; but onward it would come, through a moderation, voting, signing, sustaining, and down the railway to this Presbytery, where he had now to confront it face to face by a decided declinature."

A more serious attempt was made to remove him

from Irvine to Glasgow a few months later. In 1851, as we have seen, he received a call to Shamrock Street Church, then in its infancy, and now, ten years afterwards, they return, on the death of their first pastor, (James Robertson, D.D.), to their first choice. Greater interest, probably, was never taken in the promotion of any former call in the Kilmarnock Presbytery, and never in any court of the Church was there more effective speaking than on this occasion. The pleadings of the Irvine Commissioners—men of approved piety and ability—R. Henderson, R. Dunlop, J. Gilkison, John Wright, and William Orr—were heightened and in fine taste, and showed, more than anything else could possibly show, the intimate, loving, and spiritual relations which had grown up between pastor and people. The money element was never once recognised; nor were his talents and genius, great as these were, made much of. The commissioners pleaded the still higher ground, that he had been for seventeen years the valued instructor of all, and the spiritual father of many. They pleaded that he had been the instrument in God's hand of doing much good, and that many tokens of favour from the Master were valid reasons why they deplored the prospect of his removal from them.

“In the seventeen years in which the Lord Jesus had placed Mr. Robertson in the pastoral work in Irvine,” said



Mr. Gilkison, one of the commissioners, "has He acknowledged and blest it; and does He seem at present to be, through Mr. Robertson's instrumentality, preparing hearts for the reception of greater blessings? I am thankful to be able to say, that Mr. Robertson's labours have been very abundantly blessed in the awakening of dead souls, and leading them to place their trust and confidence in the Lord Jesus. As elders we have been privileged to take part in this blessed work; having our own souls refreshed by the joy of seeing others delivered 'from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.' Throughout Mr. Robertson's labours, that promise had been very graciously fulfilled, 'He giveth seed to the sower.' The Holy Spirit had opened up very many precious truths to his mind, and enabled him to speak quickening, refreshing, and strengthening words, whereby believers had grown in knowledge, and in grace, and been fitted for the Master's service. Is it, therefore, wonderful that there is a deep and strong attachment in the congregation towards Mr. Robertson, and a desire, if the Lord will, that he should continue still with them as their pastor. I can understand, however, that, looking at it from some points of view, such would not be sufficient reason for wishing to retain him. For instance, were the ear merely pleased, the imagination gratified, and the intellect exercised; where the human instrument is seemingly perfect and yet the heart remains untouched, no spiritual blessing being vouchsafed: in these circumstances it would be mere selfishness to wish to retain him, and it might be a duty for the pastor to leave when the Lord had opened up for him another sphere of usefulness. We would wish it, however, to be distinctly understood that such is not the circumstances in which we, as a Church, have been placed, seeing the Lord has been blessing, and is continuing to bless, Mr. Robertson's labours amongst us."

The call was declined in a speech of considerable

length, and delivered after a protracted stay in the vestry adjoining King Street Church, Kilmarnock, where the Presbytery were assembled, and from which he was only brought by friendly force. With deep feeling and pathos, he said he was not prevented from accepting the call on the score of health—he had preached in a Church not overly-well ventilated for seventeen years with comparatively few interruptions. “Some constitutions lived by leaning, as the boy’s kite leans, or as the bird in flying leans, upon the breeze it flies against. The best supporter of their energies is work; friction developes latent electricities.” Nor was he afraid of the work—the peculiar and the heavy work that might be given him to do. “Preaching to a new congregation ought to be comparatively easy, with stores of manuscript, and specially easy when one could follow out the peculiar bent of one’s own mind, not caring greatly whether people generally approved or no; though ninety-nine men out of a hundred disliked it, and could get no good from it, there would yet be found, in the wide circle of the city, a sufficient number of the hundredth men to be attracted by the very style that had repelled others.” “In country churches,” he continued, “one must be more careful to adapt one’s self to every class of mind, and, for himself, he felt humbled for that want of adaptation to classes of men generally that needed

the widest circle it could find to draw upon, and that probably would have wrecked the Irvine congregation long ere now if he had not succeeded, through God's blessing, partly in suppressing his own individuality, and partly in moulding his large congregation into harmony with his own style." It might have been different had he been disengaged from either, and a call from both before him. As it was:—

"Year by year continually a bond of union had been growing up and strengthening between him and his present charge, which it would certainly require something stronger than this divided call from Shamrock Street to break. Where was the household in that Irvine Church into which, sometime or other, during these seventeen years, into whose inmost heart of love the angel of joy, or the stronger angel of grief, had not admitted him! Every baptism had baptised him into closer fellowship—every marriage married him into closer union with them—and every funeral that had carried away the dead, had bound the minister more closely to the living, and all this going on in silent strength for seventeen years and more; what wonder if the bond betwixt them now was such as should require some stronger force than this divided call from Shamrock Street to break? Did city brethren rightly apprehend the close relationship between a country pastor and his people? Child of their childless—father of their orphans—brother of them all; entering into all their household joys and griefs in the most homely and familiar way; interested in the father's work and wages, in the children's education, in the son's going to sea, in the daughter's going out to service, in the grandfather's ailments, in the very baby's frolics, and in the mother's earnest prayers, and keen heart-wrestlings for them all; he lives in them, and lets them live in him, and seeks to

interpenetrate their common life with his own more sacred life ; and their sorrows, and their struggles, and their triumphs, are reproduced on Sabbath in the pulpit ; and the moans of their sufferings, and the music of their joy, and the questions of their inner life, return upon them through his Sabbath prayers and sermons, idealized, corrected, sublimated in the light of the Cross and of eternity—he is one with them and they with him identified. Was not this something different from preaching two discourses eloquently to a crowded city audience upon the Sabbath, and losing sight of them, as one must do, in a great measure, amid the roar and bustle of the following week. He did not mean to say that this was a description of the city churches. No. And though it were, perhaps no Church would answer to it less than that which had enjoyed as well the faithful visiting and admirable preaching of Dr. Robertson. But that was the extreme upon the one side, and no doubt upon the other he had overdrawn these Arcadias, the pastorates, in which the under-shepherds knew their flocks, and called them all by name, and led them all the better to communion with the heavenly Shepherd, that their fold was a comparatively little fold. But enough had been said to indicate the close relation betwixt him and his present charge. He was bound to them especially by whatever good he might have been the means of doing to them. He had a tree that he loved above all other trees in his garden, not because it had the greenest foliage, or the most golden fruit, or the finest convex figure, reflecting the concave of the over-arching sky, but because he had planted it and watered it himself. Why did a mother love her children so ? Because they loved her ? or not rather because she had been the means of blessing and of life itself to them ; and might he not say of this Church, after seventeen years of watching and praying for them, although in all unworthiness and ‘deep humiliation,’ that he was ‘earnestly desirous of them as a mother cherisheth her children.’ An elder, a commissioner from

Irvine, who had gone to the heart of his reason for wishing to remain—had spoken of blessed revivals, that had been changing not so much the face as the heart of their Church of late, bringing in among them a great increase of spiritual life, and making all things new. He might almost say their Church had been born again within the last few years. Veils had been rent from the faces of the sleepers, and dead eyes awakened to the visions of the Eternal real. The Church that could hardly be built outward, had, he believed, been building upward. He could tell of souls awakened—of souls saved—and saved souls sanctified—and sanctified souls ascending even triumphant to glory. He was no enthusiast, and had no sympathy with the parading of the holiest secrets of men's hearts before all eyes, but there *were* secrets there of the kingdom that cometh not with observation, that would come out when the books were opened—and *there* lay the deepest reason of his attachment to his present charge. Why should he forsake a work that God seemed to be blessing and had blessed? Then, too, he read these words of Christ to His first ministers, 'Into whatever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house; and if the Son of Peace be there, in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.' He did not mean to say that in no case could he relinquish his present charge. Far from it. He was the Church's servant, and not theirs. He was Christ's servant, and not theirs; and if He should only indicate His will, though in the faintest manner, yet distinctly, that he should remove elsewhere, he would not be as the horse or as the mule, that have no understanding; he would follow the guidance of the Master's eye."

He then referred to certain circumstances connected with the call, and concluded as follows:—

"Some worldly people might give him credit for having

made a sacrifice. They knew nothing of the lofty spiritual regions in which such questions were discussed. To them it was a mere question of lower or higher position—of a lesser or greater salary; therefore he craved to say, the question in this form had never been present to his mind, and that he would not take credit for making a sacrifice when he did not feel in his heart that he was doing anything of the kind. Some Christian Epicureans seemed to think that the way of duty was always that which was lighted with the silver and golden lamps, while Christian Stoics thought that it was that which was marked with the most numerous crosses and the sharpest thorns. For his part, he believed that it was neither, or that it might be either, but that it was always that on which the Lord, the Spirit, whose prayer-sought guidance he would seek to follow, undeterred alike by the splendour on the one side, or the comparative obscurity on the other. One sacrifice he did make, he would not deny. It was not the sacrifice of the high privilege of mingling as fellow-citizen with such as Dr. Robson, moderator of the Synod. He would not further advert to that; he would refer to the risk he incurred of offending his dear friends in Shamrock Street, some of whom were present, and one especially, who was among the dearest he had on earth, and who conscientiously believed he was doing wrong to-day, and doing them wrong. And when he knew that the lips of their late pastor—those lips into which grace was poured so plenteously, and which poured it so plenteously on others—if those dumb lips had language from underneath the dust, they would say to him, Go! and when he knew that the deepest and the holiest grief that mourned his loss might count itself in some little way consoled if he, as his successor, would try to lift the fallen mantle, and assume the blessed work that the dead hands had dropped: here was a sacrifice to make, and he knew not what to say to it, but only this—that where the spirits of the just made perfect are, he trusted his decision was approved of; and this, that

his dear friends would give him credit for acting conscientiously, where his affection for them was not at fault, though even the kindest feelings might seem to be sacrificed at the altar of duty—stern daughter of the voice of God. Some, too, might think he was acting foolishly in waywardly resisting those beckonings that might so easily be construed into the beckonings of the hand of God, and in shutting door after door that seemed to open on him for exit to usefulness elsewhere, till, finally, and as it might seem irrevocably, he shut this last door too—but he had lived long enough, and seen enough of men not to put overmuch trust in any one, but all the more he trusted in God; that if God gave grace to a man to do what he believed to be the right thing in difficult and trying circumstances, that he would also take care of him, however unworthy, and open up his way; and in this faith, and in the hope that his decision would be approved of in that day that shall try all doings and all days, and with the earnest prayer that Shamrock Street Church would suffer nothing from this day's decision, would speedily be guided to another, more according to God's own heart and theirs, and glad, amidst regret, that he was to continue with his fathers and brethren in the Kilmarnock Presbytery, he begged leave to decline this call."

This second call from Shamrock Street U.P. Church, Glasgow, was accordingly set aside.

In course of the pleadings, reference was frequently made to the great revival movement in 1859, begun in Ayrshire through the preaching of Mr. Sellars, a Free Church student, and which, within a few weeks, made itself felt in every part of the county. Irvine did not escape the influence. For several weeks in



succession, meetings, attended by hundreds, were held every night in Churches, and private dwellings, the audiences giving earnest attention to the faithful addresses delivered. All the ministers took part in the services, and, for a time, denominational differences were lost sight of, in the prevailing desire that souls might be saved. Mr. Robertson took an active part in the work, sometimes holding services in the open air, in the neighbouring mining village of Dreghorn, and in the opposite direction, near the Eglinton Furnaces, with the result, as testified to by a commissioner, that many of those who were awakened were brought into the fellowship of the Church.

Mr. Andrew James Symington describes one of these out-door services.\* Robertson and Dr. Angus Smith, the celebrated scientist, were mutually desirous of being introduced to each other, and the visit was paid whilst this revival work was at its height. "When we arrived at the Manse," says Mr. Symington, "we found that he had gone to address a meeting of miners in the open air at their works, about a mile off. We followed, and, as we were not expected, got among the crowd of listeners, and fortunately were not observed by Mr. Robertson till after the service was over. The sermon was a remarkable one, as simple in its telling illustrations as it was power-

\* *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, Nov. 5, 1886.

ful in the enforcement of truth. Rarely have I heard such an earnest flow of impassioned eloquence—one could have heard a pin fall—and the begrimed audience, spell-bound, hung on his every word. The theme was “mansions prepared,” and the subject was approached and opened up by an allusion to the coming November term time—to those who were going to flit—and he asked them if they had yet looked out other houses to which they would go. Then, as to our abode on earth, he said, we were all tenants-at-will. But our heavenly Father had prepared, not cabins or houses, but mansions for us. These were freely offered, and why should we anxiously look before us to the habitations of a few short years, and yet think so little of the heavenly mansions, prepared from before the foundation of the world for all who love Him, for Christ’s sake, by Him who made these glorious stars, twinkling overhead in the blue. Then he pressed home the gospel offer, and as an ambassador for heaven, invited all to come and receive their inheritance.

“Dr. Angus Smith was greatly struck with this mode of presentation by one who was as gifted as he was good, loving and lovable, and he did not wonder at the marked impression produced on such an audience; and this impression of the service, on his return to England, he communicated to the

*Manchester Examiner*, October 15, 1859. He writes :—

“When I was in Scotland, I desired to see a revival meeting, as there is now a beginning there. I walked with a friend over a bare field and a few wet lanes, in the beginning of the evening, and passed great furnaces, where they were making countless fortunes for some great purpose not revealed to themselves. We came to a square of colliers’ cottages, chiefly inhabited by Irish, who had no priest to care for them until some one came to convert them to Protestantism. This preacher had more zeal for his Church than for the truth abstractly, and the people sent him disgracefully away. But another man had now come to speak. He spoke of no Churches; he stood under the stars, with the glimmering light of the surrounding furnaces tinging the atmosphere, and fixed the people to the soil with a strain of the simplest kind, but of most pleasing sound. His voice sounded in my ears like music long remembered, a wail whose sadness was in a hopeful tune. It sounded as a poem, and was one, and still remains one, as I listen. The earth and heaven, and what we believe of our movement onwards in the one and towards the other, were made the subject of a beautiful epic, better than that of the wise Ulysses, whose journeys were less interesting and not more entrancing. A short prayer followed, the men taking off their hats, and standing devoutly, although the wind was whistling around them, the melancholy sound of the distant sea in it, adding to the cold as well as to the music. We went home with the speaker, we shared his genial life; heard some of his own poetry, which showed him a poet; his own speculations, which showed him a thinker; his own reading, which showed him a man of taste, not contradicted by his engravings; and his own wit and humour, made him to possess genius, and to be a keen sympathiser with humanity.”

Mr. Robertson, although taking an active part, had no sympathy with some of the manifestations of feeling shown at this time in several parts of Ayrshire. "These," he said, "were not necessary in a genuine revival. The seed must first be sown—sown by parents, and Sabbath school teachers, and ministers. Then the dew of God's grace could make it grow up quickly, as we may sometimes see the blades in a field of corn appear in a single night, after an abundant fall of dew ; but silently, for the workings of God's grace in us were as silent and mysterious as the life in the growing corn."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Church Building.

New Church to be Built—Site Gifted—Architect's Design—Laying of Foundation-stone—Address—Progress of the Work—Leaving the Old Church—Andrew Clark, the Beadle—Anecdotes.

THE declinature of the call by Mr. Robertson to Shamrock Street U.P. Church, Glasgow, marks a new departure in the history of the Burgher, now called East U.P. Church, Irvine. The call was declined at the meeting of the Kilmarnock Presbytery held on 11th June, 1861, and on the 28th of the same month, at a meeting of the congregation, it was unanimously resolved that a new church be built forthwith. The building erected in 1808 was out of date, and the situation unsuitable, being in a back lane, away from the centre of the town; and now that they were assured that the pastor whom they loved so much, and whose services had been blessed to many, would only leave at the paramount call of

duty to the Master, and not from mere desire of change, they felt encouraged to proceed with the work.

A new church was, indeed, needed. However dear to many, because hallowed by its associations with family and congregational life, and by association with worth and piety, it was a clumsy building, and out of keeping with the times, and the character of the worship with which they had been favoured for nigh twenty years. "Bare walls," wrote a correspondent four years previous to the erection being undertaken, "are good enough for bare preaching ; but for such poetic prelecting as Mr. Robertson's, surely the light should stream through the panes in hues of green, and gold, and 'palpitating' crimson. Arch and pillar have arisen to the silent music of a sculptor's dream, and, born of imaginative emotion, the begetter of like emotion in others ; and the manifold voice of psalms 'swell and swoon,' storm and calm, with far other sweetness and power ; and so the noble sermon should have equal and harmonious accompaniments."

The general community, too, in larger measure than usual, shared in the desire of the congregation to erect a Church worthy of the pastor, and which, in architectural beauty and suggestiveness, would reflect his teaching. Numbers were ready to give a helping hand. The site selected was the gift of the owners—the

late Patrick Blair, writer, (who belonged to the Established Church), Mrs. Grieve, Miss Caldwell, and Captain James Brown; and the Magistrates and Town Council, officially, took a very special interest in the necessary arrangements connected with the entrance to the ground, which was secured by procuring three houses in Bridgegate Street and Hill Street. No finer site could have been selected. It was on a height, and midway—"quite in a line," said Mr. Robertson at the laying of the foundation stone—"a rampart line along the river side, with the Established Church upon the one side, and the Free Church, and the other Presbyterian, upon the other; and we stretch forth our hands to you on the one side, and to you upon the other, and say, 'we are come nearer to you than ever, and let us live and love accordingly.'"

Of nine designs received, that of Mr. F. T. Pilkington was chosen. The style of architecture is Venetian Gothic, with colours introduced into the stonework; and, as it should be, the chief façade is to the west. The church assumes the cruciform appearance, three of the limbs of the cross being treated as apses—one to the east, another to the north, and the other to the south—the fourth being the main front, which consists of a lofty gable, 99 feet in height, flanked on the one side by the tower



and spire, and on the other by the session house. The centre of the western front is made up of an arcade, including a large arch, and two smaller ones on each side, and above these are two single mullioned windows, with tracery in the heads, the whole being surmounted by a rose window, 28 feet in diameter. This gable has a most imposing appearance, the top portion of it being a radiated green, white, and red stone-work. The tower, which is placed at the north-west corner of the structure, consists of a massive porch at the foot, and then rises quite plain to the upper portion of the tower, from whence a graceful spire springs 170 feet in height.\* The basement of the spire is elaborated at the angles with panels, and has a two-light window in each face. The session house is a circular building, of the height of the main walls of the church, and is finished with a conical roof, terminated by an elaborate finial. The lower part of it forms an arcade, and above the arches are two double-light windows connected by pilasters, and surmounted by a pointed arch. In the eastern end of the structure there projects an apse, which forms a recess for the pulpit, and over which there is a large double-mullioned window,

\* The spire was not completed till the year 1868 or '69. The vane of the spire was originally too heavy, and during a gale of wind, a few years afterwards, it lay over, and had to be reduced.

having traceried heads to the columns. The north-eastern and south-eastern facets, which flank this large window, are also pierced with triplet lights. There are also apses in the north and south elevations, each of which are surmounted with double-light windows, with vesica above, and flanked with triplets. The vestry, octagonal in shape, is situated at the north-east side of the church, and its roof, which is also octagonal, rises in two divisions to a height of about 50 feet, and is intended to group with the spire. All the capitals and arches are enriched, some of them with conventional and some with naturalistic foliage, giving a chaste and rich appearance to the ornamentation of the building.

The foundation stone was laid, in the presence of several hundreds of deeply interested spectators, in the bright light of an autumnal sun, on the afternoon of 26th August, 1862. It was an exceptional day for a season that had been unusually variable; and the informal artistic grouping of the crowd within the area to be occupied by the building, and on the rising ground around; the sandy delta, at the meeting of the rivers; the sea beyond; the hills of Carrick; the Craig of Ailsa; and, in the distance, the Arran hills, whose peaks stood out clearly defined against a sky already suffused with the rich tints which herald our Western sunsets at this time of the year: com-

bined, formed a picture which few then present will forget; and the hope was expressed that He to whom the house was being dedicated, through the golden light, was smiling on the undertaking.

Ministerial brethren in goodly number were there; friends from a distance, representatives from all the Churches in the town, even the Magistracy and Town Council were officially present, on the auspicious occasion. The hundredth Psalm was sung, and after the usual formalities were observed, Mr. Robertson said—

“As the pastor of the congregation that designs to worship in the church, and that has through my hand laid this stone, it seems to be expected that I should address some words to the spectators. Amid the stir and bustle, the outward movement and excitement, of the scene, we ought not to forget its deep solemnity. In laying the foundation stone of even an ordinary dwelling-house, much interest will naturally gather round it. We think on to the time when the building shall be finished, and human life astir beneath its roof; the drama of domestic life begun within its walls, with marriages crossing its threshold, births cradled in its chambers, and funerals departing from its doors; with mother nursing the children, and father returning from his work at eventide, and sons and daughters growing up, and old age sitting in the chimney corner, and altogether eating, drinking, sleeping, waking, mourning and rejoicing, in that mingled play of human life upon the household stage, on which the curtain rises at the cradle and drops in heavy folds around the tomb. Forecasting all this, as we naturally do—what wonder if an interest gathers round the laying the foundation stone even of an ordinary

house ! But how much more around the laying the foundation stone of a new church—a church ! a house of the Lord, as my learned friends know that that is the literal meaning of the word—a house devoted, dedicated, set apart to God—a house to stand among the other houses of the town like a Christian among other men, or a Sabbath among other days—a church ! in which, when once it shall be opened, shall come and go the scenes of the divinest drama of our human life ; with marriages—yes, marriages, we trust, of souls, when ‘ He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom, and the friend of the Bridegroom that standeth and heareth Him shall rejoice greatly because of the Bridegroom’s voice ;’ of births—yes, births, we trust, of souls, when ‘ it of Zion shall be said that this man and that man was born in her ;’ and where, too, holy grief shall sit, within these walls, bemoaning her dead, till He who is the Resurrection and the Life shall come to her and say, ‘ Weep not,’ and bid her dead arise. A church where, Sabbath after Sabbath, penitence shall weep, prayer supplicate, praise sing, and preaching sound the silver trumpet of the gospel, and somewhere thereabout [pointing to the place where the pulpit was to stand] babes shall be brought for baptism ; and where, too, season after season, gathering in from the surrounding town and neighbourhood, souls dressed in white shall sit together at the table of the Holy Supper, where God’s own presence shall look down, and where the mystic ladder shall be placed, with its ascending and descending angels, and where the worshippers, awaking from their earthly dreams into a higher life, shall cry, ‘ This is none other than the house of God, and it is the gate of heaven.’ Surely the laying of the foundation-stone of such an edifice as this ought to be done with great solemnity. We do not lay it with masonic honours—we do not lay it with great pomp, parade, and pageantry—with rattling drum and ringing clarion and salvos of thundering artillery, as they may lay the foundation-stone of a new college or a palace,

a senate house or an exchange ; but in far simpler, and I think, too, far sublimer style, we lay it with simple song and speech and prayer—with earnest dedicative prayer to God.”

He then asked, “How do we lay this stone?” First, in GRATITUDE: in thankfulness to God for His great goodness to them as a congregation, they laid the stone, and called it Ebenezer; they laid the stone in FAITH, in HOPE, in CHARITY; *faith in Christ*, that foundation God had laid in Zion; in the *hope* that God would help them through with what they had begun, for the silver and the gold were His, and the hearts of men were in His hand; and in *charity, or love*. For—

“God’s house, the Church, is built for the displaying of His love. He first built the house of the material worlds for the displaying of His power and wisdom; then He built the house of the holy angels in Heaven for the displaying of His holiness; then the house of the fallen angels in the place of woe for the revealing of His justice and indignation against sin; and now He is building the house of the Church, on Christ the foundation, out of the ruins of a fallen world; dead stones turned to living stones by being laid on Him, in whom it groweth up a holy temple to the Lord. He is building it across the earth and through the ages to display His love. The language of the architecture of God’s Church is love. The living stones are crying out love! love! For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him—buildeth by believing—might not perish, but have everlasting life. And so we build in charity, in love, unto the perishing, the unsaved world around. We trust that many

hence may yet be gathered from the homes of wickedness and haunts of sin, even in this quiet town and its green neighbourhood, to worship God within these rising walls. God helping us! shall we not go down to the lanes and alleys, to the highways and hedges, and even compel them to come in, that those who worship God nowhere may come perchance to worship here? I am told that when our spire is built it will be a signal seen far out at sea; and if, perhaps, we put an illuminated clock in it, ship-masters say that it will be a very excellent signal light, or beacon light, to guide ships into the harbour. However that may be, I trust the church itself will be a sort of lighthouse in a dark and dangerous sea, and that the congregation, as the peaceful family within, doing all things without murmurings and disputings, will shine as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of Life, that immortal souls, tossed to and fro upon the dark and angry waters, may not suffer shipwreck, and go down with all their precious treasures to the depths of everlasting woe."

The church, he continued, was also built in love to Christian brethren universally; and, after acknowledging the brotherly feeling which prevailed amongst the members of the various denominations in Irvine, the liberality of the donors of the site, the encouragement given to the congregation by the Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council, he concluded as follows:—

"And now, on this beautiful site, we would lift up our eyes to those heavens, and say unto Him who has brought us hitherto—Master, it is good for us to be here, let us build! And now unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, even the Father, to worship Him both

in the earthly and heavenly temple, both in God's house made with hands and in the house of God not made with hands—to Him by whom the handling of the mallet and the trowel, and other offices of masonry and carpentry, are numbered with the acts and sacrifices of His holy priesthood—to Him who has instructed us to lay the rule, and square, and compasses, and other symbols of our skill and industry upon His altar, to find His consecration there—to Him who wrought with His own hands at Nazareth, and wreathed, in doing so, a crown of glory round the sweating brow of manual toil; to Him from whom comes forth the skill to plan, the power to execute, the patience to toil on, and the reward, and without whom nothing is strong, nothing is beautiful, nothing prospers—to Him do we commit this work which we this day so auspiciously begin: for, except the Lord do build the house they labour in vain that build it. For He shall build the temple of the Lord, and He shall bear the glory."

To this beautiful address may be added two paragraphs, extracted from the History of the Church, enclosed in the memorial stone, because illustrative of the happy relationship which subsisted between pastor and people; and the hope entertained that only death would part them:—

"Repeated attempts have been made during Mr. Robertson's ministry in Irvine to remove him to other spheres of usefulness, and calls have over and over again been presented to him for this purpose; but hitherto Mr. Robertson's attachment to his people, and his people's attachment to him, together with the many proofs he already has in Irvine of his labour not being altogether in vain in the Lord, have led him to remain where first ordained.

"This foundation-stone is laid in the hope that death



only may sever the connection between a pastor much, but not unduly, beloved by his people. It is laid also in the hope that the building may be successfully finished, that within its walls may long be proclaimed the free and glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that under its roof many sinners may be converted, many saints built up in their most holy faith, and all to the praise and glory of a three-one God."

The work proceeded apace. Craftsmen plied the chisel, the axe, the hammer; and the building, like other true works of art, slowly rose, a sacred edifice of great beauty; to be "a daily sermon in stone" for present and for future generations—a teacher of the beautiful, and that other truth, that God's temples planted upon heights, with lofty spires pointing heavenward, should be the fairest and most costly buildings in the land. It was a bold undertaking for a congregation in a country town; but they had faith in their God helping them; they meant to solemnly dedicate their beautiful church to the Holy Trinity, after whom it was to be named; and so

"The 'Pastor'

Built his great heart into the sculptured stones,  
And with him toiled his 'people,' and their lives  
Were builded with his own into the walls,  
As offerings unto God."

This was indeed the spirit in which the work was begun and carried through. Speaking of it, nine years afterwards, Mr. Robertson said:—"The architects of the middle ages tried as best they could to

shadow forth in the dim magnificence of their arches, and in tower and spire pointing like hand and finger up to heaven, the idea of God and eternity. But there was a danger of making the seen and the temporal hide, instead of shadow forth, the meaning, and they were to see that neither preacher, sermon, hymn-book, nor architecture, would obscure their perceptions of God and truth."

Although in a somewhat unfinished state, the congregation, anxious to associate the opening of the new church with the twentieth anniversary of the settlement of Mr. Robertson in Irvine, arranged that the last Sabbath of the year should be the last Sabbath on which services should be held in their old church in the Cotton Row. To minister and people, however much elated at the prospect before them, the occasion must have been a trying one, and of deeply solemn meaning. Here for twenty years he had taught the old and only truths that ease hearts full of sorrow, and thrown light on the vexed problems which, in all ages, have darkened, disturbed, and distressed souls; a partner in the drama of many human lives—baptizing the infant cradled in the arms of the parent—binding, in the indissoluble bond, loving hearts—the consoler of the troubled, the suffering, and the bereaved.

Here he had acquired his deservedly great reputation as a preacher: delivered his grandest sermons, and gathered around him friends charmed and fascinated by his talents and genius. To one so keenly sensitive to circumstances and surroundings, the last service in a church erected in other times for a generation which had passed away, and where he had himself taught for so many years, would be deeply significant. With the clear vision of the poet he would see deeper, and feel more than others, because he could, better than they, re-people the past with those who had gone to the higher sanctuary within the veil, and those who had gone forth from the congregation to fight elsewhere the battle of life, and whose names were inseparably associated with the past history of the church.

“Not without regrets,” he said, two days after at the opening soiree, “did they leave their old and old-fashioned church. As Jacob went out from Beersheba, the well of the oath, so they had left their Beersheba, the scene of many sweet and sacred recollections—for there was the *well* where for half-a-century the flock had been watering and Jesus sitting by the well,—the well of the oath, where sacramental oath had been sworn so often in the holy communion,—a scene of many hallowed associations, where they had loved the living and lamented the dead, and helped each other to struggle with temptation, and with sorrow, and to overcome. He could not wonder that he had seen tears in the eyes of many—especially the older church members—at the farewell on Sabbath last. But as in accordance with the beautiful law

of progress that carries up the child into the man, the dawn into the noon, and the blossom into the fruit,—as the blossom must lose something of its beauty, the morning of its freshness, and the boy of his joyousness in being carried up into the man; so in reaching to the things that are before, we must forget those that are behind, and consent to let regrets for the old church be swallowed up in higher gladness on entering the new one.”

I cannot, however, part with the old kirk of the Cotton Row without some reference to Andrew Clark, the beadle—or “bedral,” as he was commonly called. There are no “bedrals” now, by-the-way. The old men, with their old-world cracks, and their crusty manners, are as dead as the ancient Romans, and their places are filled by a new race known as “church-officers,” less inquisitive, perhaps, but not half so interesting. Andrew was one of the good old stock of “bedrals,” his bedralship being a heritage from his father before him, and the kirk, and its belongings, he came to regard with a sort of proprietary instinct. It was *his* kirk, in a sense in which it was not the kirk of any other individual. Towards the minister, when young, he was fatherly and patronising, and was indulged in many little liberties on account of his sterling worth. Flying out to the manse, spread-eagle fashion, one Monday morning, to announce the theft, by some sacrilegious thief, of the minister’s pulpit gown, the minister, more interested

in the appearance of Andrew, ruffled and excited as he was, than in the disappearance of the robe of office, asked him to come in and take a cup of tea, as he would be the better of it after his fright.

A few stories told of him may bear repetition:—It became known, some time before the old church was deserted for the new, that Lord Oranmore-and-Browne, then resident for a time at Bourtriehill House, (the only mansion-house in the parish), was very desirous to hear Mr. Robertson preach, and that he meant to attend the Cotton Row Kirk some Sunday for that purpose. This, as a matter of course, put the gossips in a flutter. Disappointed on several occasions, they were at last gratified, one Sabbath forenoon, by seeing the great man walk into the church. Even Andrew, usually very self-possessed, became excited, and stumbling through the duties he had on hand, rushed out to the vestry just as the minister was preparing to leave, and cried in at the door—"The lord's in the kirk the day!" The expression was grotesque enough to make the minister laugh outright; but the presence of a lord of the State in the Burgher Kirk was a serious matter to Andrew, and seemed to take the old beadle's breath away.

A young clergyman, now a Rev. Dr., who was a frequent visitor at the manse, and often

preached for Mr. Robertson, was a great favourite with Andrew, and it was the old man's desire always to see the young divine look his best in the pulpit. "Come back, James ; come back, I tell ye," cried Andrew after him on one occasion, as he was leaving the vestry in full canonicals to enter the church. Somewhat astonished at the abrupt and unexpected command, the young clergyman turned round and asked him what was the matter. "Brush your hair !" was Andrew's laconic answer ; and, "noo, ye'll dae," his comment, as the operation of hair-brushing and grooming was concluded—"I couldna see ye gaun up the pulpit wi' yer hair in sic a state."

Strangers occasionally came in for a share of Andrew's free and easy attention, and were sometimes not a little shocked at it. "Is this a pey-sermon or a swap ?" he would ask a strange minister, when attending him at the close of a Sabbath day's services, as coolly as if he were inquiring at a brother-weaver how much per ell he was to get for his new lappet.

Colonel Ferguson, who resided at Shewalton House, was an admirer of Mr. Robertson's eloquence. He was a very precise old gentleman, and was lame of one leg. Arriving at the Burgher Kirk one Sabbath morning, he made his way down one of the passages, evidently intending to take a seat in the front of the

area. While still in the passage, however, and before getting into any of the pews, he was overtaken by the beadle, who, in a stage whisper, asked him the question—"Are ye deaf?" The stately old Colonel turned round in amazement, and asked the beadle what he meant. "I'm askin' are ye deaf, sir." "No, thank God, I have all my senses, I'm not deaf," was the Colonel's reply. "Weel, weel," said Andrew quite coolly, "if yer no deaf I'll gie ye a back seat."

When Andrew lay a-dying, the duties of the office were temporarily discharged by his daughter. There was to be a baptism on the Sabbath, and it gave him great concern. The minister having called to inquire for him, and while seriously speaking to him concerning the eternal world, on the life of which he was soon to enter, the faithful old beadle, ignoring all that was being said, looked up and asked, "Wull she manage't?" Thus, his ruling passion--his duty to the Church--was strong even in death.







Maclure, Macdonald & Co., Glasgow.

TRINITY CHURCH, IRVINE

## CHAPTER IX.

### Opening of Trinity Church.

Why so called—Architect's Plan—Stained Glass Windows—Dr. Cairns' Opening Service—Dinner—Presentation—First Sabbath Service—Rev. Mr. McLean's Sermon—Rev. W. B. Robertson's Sermon on the Resurrecting Creatures—Art ought to be the Handmaid of Religion.

TRINITY Church, Irvine, was formally opened on Tuesday, 29th December, 1863. The name "Trinity" was given by the pastor, with the sanction of the congregation. "We liked the name," he said, "for its Catholic aspect—the spirit of brotherly love which it breathed; and it was better than the "Burgher Kirk," better than calling it by the name of the minister, which was so often done, as if the minister were some Roman saint—or, rather, some sort of shopkeeper that displayed his ecclesiastical wares on his pulpit counter, Sabbath after Sabbath, to church-going customers; better, too, than calling it after St. Paul, or St. Peter, or St. James, or any



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TRINITY CHURCH, IRVINE

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other of the 'glorious company of the Apostles;' and much better than calling it after Augustine, or Ambrose, or any Romish saint, or any Presbyterian saint either, such as Knox, Erskine, or Gillespie. "He could not admire the consistency," he went on to say, "of those who refused to call their churches by the names of any of the 'glorious company of the Apostles,' and yet named them after their own Presbyterian saints and fathers. But, they got rid of all that, by getting away from men's names altogether, and calling it 'Trinity Church.' They entered the Church, through the gate of Baptism, in the name of the Trinity; and they worshipped God the Father, through Christ the Son, in and through the Holy Spirit."

The idea of "The Trinity," indeed, was a favourite one with him; and, both in conversation and discourses, he frequently referred to the three-fold blessing of the High Priest; the three-fold form of baptism; and the three-fold form of the benediction. God (the Trinity) created man, he would say, (1) in knowledge, (2) in righteousness, (3) in holiness; man fell into a state of (1) ignorance, (2) guilt, (3) depravity; and Christ comes to restore as prophet, priest, and king. The new life unfolds itself through the spirit of faith, hope, and charity; and in the three-fold worship of preaching, and prayer, and praise. He found, too,



the Trinity of the Godhead, in the three parables contained in Luke xv.—God the Son was found in the first—that of the lost sheep; God the Holy Spirit in the second—that of the lost piece of money; and God the Father in the third—that of the Prodigal Son. In one of his commemoration services,\* also, when preaching from Eph. ii, 18—“For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father,” he spoke of the church or temple of the Holy Trinity—the temple of true worship for all nations:—

“There was,” he said, “the temple of Jerusalem, built by God’s command and for God’s worship—the holy and beautiful house, as the Hebrews called it. And there was another, more magnificent in architecture than it—with its white marble walls, that shone like dazzling snow, and its pillars of jasper, every one the gift of a King—the temple of Diana, the temple of the Golden Moon. This temple stood in Ephesus, and had been built for idol worship. Both were now fallen. The temple of Jerusalem had fallen—not a stone of it was left upon another; and, as to the temple of Ephesus, the moon now walked in her brightness over a wilderness of broken columns, and jackals howled by night over the place where the famous temple once stood. But behold another—the spiritual temple, built of souls, on the foundation of Jesus Christ. This is the temple of the Holy Trinity—the temple for the worship of all nations—a spiritual temple, built on the foundation of the apostles, and the prophets, and on Jesus Christ Himself. He found in the text—First, the three in One—‘Through Christ we have access by His Spirit to the Father;’ second, the two in

\* 10th October, 1869.



once—*We both*, both Jew and Gentile, have access by His Spirit to the Father; and third, the temple built up by that three in one and two in one. And so the temple rose in beauty—the heavenly temple, with Christ as the foundation and chief corner-stone, and with Jew and Gentile builded together for an habitation to God. It was a temple for the Lord God Almighty, which a multitude that no man can number shall build up together through the deathless ages of eternity.”

Again, on another occasion, with that catholicity of spirit which was so distinguishing a feature in his character, he said:—

“God’s temple for all nations is the temple of the Trinity, worshipping God the Father, through Christ the Son, in and through the Holy Spirit. Through Christ, having access by one Spirit to the Father, it mattered not where we worshipped, and very little with what form—whether in conventicle or cathedral; whether with simple Presbyterian forms, or ‘where, through the long-drawn aisle or fretted vault, the pealing anthem swells the note of praise.’ In either case I could join heart and hand with the worshipper and say:—‘We are brothers, worshipping the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit. This is none other than the house of God, and it is the gate of heaven.’”

The weather was unfavourable for the opening ceremony. Rain fell heavily, and, like all rain in the West of Scotland at this season, was bitterly cold. There was great discomfort in the church—the atmosphere, murky; the walls, damp and cold-looking. The work, too, was behind, and the workmen had almost to be driven out of the building, to allow

the dedicatory service to be proceeded with, at the advertised hour. None-the-less, there was a large assemblage of people, many friends of the minister coming from considerable distances to be present on the interesting occasion.

Although no rays of sunlight streamed in through stained glass and triplet windows, it was seen that the interior was perfectly in harmony with the character of the building. The architect's aim—"The key-note on which he developed the rich artistic music of his anthem in stone"—was, to combine architectural beauty with the convenience of the worshipper, and he succeeded in securing his object. It was observed, that the general plan was that of a fan, spreading from the platform or pulpit as a centre, and as no pillar or projection interposed between the preacher and the audience, the speaker commanded every one, and so there was less temptation for those present to look away from him. A difficulty, in providing for the enormous superincumbent weight of roofing which covered the building, was overcome by placing stone pillars at the points where the pressure was heaviest, and which were connected with the walls by beams over which the walls of the church are raised. In this way, although the church is upwards of 70 feet in breadth, the span of the roof, which is an open timber one, was reduced to 30 feet.

A single gallery was placed at the western end, and reached by a stair in the tower.

The special feature in the interior, however, and the one which has been much admired by visitors, is the magnificent stone pulpit or platform. It is semi-circular in shape, about eight feet in height, the front adorned with carvings in Caen stone, and it fills an apse at the east end of the building. Within three panels are represented the holy ordinances of the Lord's Supper, Baptism, and Marriage; and in the niches, between and on either side, are figures of the four Evangelists. The carvings and the sculptured figures are beautifully executed. Only two of the four fine windows which now adorn the Church were then completed; these being the double-mullioned window behind the pulpit or platform, the gift of Mrs. Henderson and Mrs. M'Kinlay—subject, the beatitudes; and the fine Western rose window (St. Catherine's wheel), from which the heads of the Evangelists, alternating with conventional foliage, "look to the sunset," the gift of the late Mr J. H. Young, Glasgow. A short time afterwards, ex-Provost Brown filled in the window above the entrance door with three Parable designs; and, later, Mr. and Mrs. David M'Cowan, Glasgow, presented the window in the south transept, facing the entrance, as a memorial of Melville Walker, a beloved nephew.

This last mentioned window is a fine specimen of Munich workmanship ; and the subject—mothers, representatives of the leading types of the human race, bringing their children to Jesus—is treated with fine artistic effect, brilliancy of colour, and perfect drawing. The window consists of two magnificent panes, and over these a small upright oval, the design representing an angel with a face of exquisite beauty. On the large pane to the right of the spectator is a group of four figures. Christ is represented in the attitude of blessing ; His right hand is raised, and, with His left, He grasps the hand of the child who stands at His feet. The parents are in the background. The other pane also contains four figures. An Eastern queen is represented, leading by the hand a child who carries a rod, and, by her side, an Ethiopian woman and child, with folded arms. The contrast of colour makes all the figures stand out in fine relief ; and the faces of the children are typical of child-like innocence.

Mr. Robertson had a good deal of trouble to get exactly what he thought suitable. He had a dread of having put into the design the conventional fat angel, and had very emphatically to impress on the artist, that he would not have the figure of any angel that appeared to have been fed on German sausages. That he succeeded in satisfying himself may be

gathered from the following letter to me, dated 30th October, 1885:—

“The window was designed by George Förtner, working under the late M. Le Chevalier Maximilian Ainmiller, of the Munich Works, whose method, I believe, is still kept secret. We chose him from among the artists that figure in the Glasgow Cathedral. The correspondence was very satisfactory, the window still more so. I sought out the Herr Förtner when last in Munich—a man of singular genius, living in a third-rate street, far up a common stair. He claimed a very modest share in the merit of his window, saying it had come of its own accord, out of their processes, better (Ainmiller had said) than any other had, and that was the reason of its excellence, not he. Like Aaron, he had only cast in the gold, and out came the calf. Modest Förtner! he had, however, been chosen to make windows for Cologne Cathedral, after a competition thrown open to all artists, and was working on his first cartoon of St. Peter the apostle, who occupied the solitary chair in his studio, and had to rise (the venerable old saint!) to give the U.P. minister a seat.”

Underneath the transept windows, provision was made for the erection of small iron balconies, to be used for responsive singing, but this idea, like some others connected with the building, has not yet been carried out. The twelve stones supporting the arched roof inside were intended to be carved to represent the faces of the twelve Apostles; the blind window to the right of the preacher was to have been filled in with a slate tablet bearing the Ten Commandments in gilt letters; and along the wall, behind the preacher, a raised seat was to have been erected for the elders,

who would then have been literally "overseers of the flock;" but all this remains as yet unattempted.

At the week-day opening service, the pastor of the Church was accompanied to the platform by the Rev. Dr. Cairns, then of Berwick; the late Rev. Dr. Bruce, of Newmilns; and the late Rev. Alexander M'Ewan, of Glasgow. Mr. M'Ewan began the service by asking the congregation to join in singing the 22nd Doxology; he afterwards read the 87th Psalm; and then gave place to the Rev. Dr. Cairns, who continued the service of praise, prayer, and the preaching of the Word. Taking for his text, "Ye shall be a delightsome land" (Mal. iii. 12), he said, he thought these words were not inapplicable to the interesting occasion which had brought them together, for he hoped that from the services of the day there would be such an effusion of Divine grace that something would be done to make our land delightsome. The heads of his discourse were :—

1st. That land is delightsome in the eyes of the Lord of Hosts which enjoys and secures for itself a pure and adequate dispensation of the Word of Life. 2nd. That land is delightsome in the eyes of the Lord of Hosts which rightly appreciates and improves the ordinances of the means of grace. 3rd. That land is delightsome in the eyes of the Lord of Hosts which multiplies instances of true conversion to Christ. 4th. That land is delightsome to the Lord of Hosts which multiplies examples of high

conformity to the image of Christ. And, 5th, that land is delightful in the eyes of the Lord of Hosts which assists in bringing other lands to Christ.

Referring, at the close, to the new church, he added—

“I heartily congratulate this congregation on having, by the good hand of God upon them, seen this day a sanctuary opened, so fair in its outward proportions, and yet so suitable to the grand and all-important ends of Christian worship. Brethren, the place is delightful, and must be felt to be so by every person of taste; it only remains to add the crowning attraction of that grace divine, without which the whole gathered splendours of architecture, and all the arts, are but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Your sanctuary rises in the classic land of Scottish chivalry and song, where even a Christian acknowledges that the loveliness of Nature catches a warmer glow from kindling association, and the air is redolent with the breath of liberty and the fragrance of poetic genius. Yet how poor were these, even at their highest price, but for that deeper, richer, diviner irradiation cast over this region, and so much else of our native land, by the presence of the Gospel in its heroic form, by the struggles of the Reformation, the martyr memories of a succeeding age, and the progressive revival of this ever-ascending century, which, by the grace of God, is again creative of the lofty, the great, and the lovely in the religious sphere, and is turning the hearts of the children to the fathers! Oh, may this sanctuary, reared amidst circumstances so auspicious, bear a part in beautifying the face of the moral landscape, and from it, as from His throne, may the words of the Great Restorer go forth, ‘Behold I will make all things new.’ Long may my beloved friend and brother be spared to assist in changes so beneficent, and with that silver trumpet of the Gospel, which God has given him to put



to his lips, and which he loves to use so well, herald the blended jubilee of grace and nature—"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree!" Long may the wonders of a new creation be here repeated, prelusive to the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. And may scenes, worthy not only of the tongues of men but the harps of angels, yea, the smile of God Himself, surround this place with an ever-brightening, ever-rising glory, as the gate of heaven! Come then, thou Spirit of glory and of God, rest on this habitation and on thy faithful worshippers! Thou that takest pleasure in Thy saints, and beautifiest the meek with Thy salvation, enter here! Create in every heart a sanctuary within a sanctuary, and write on every forehead, Holiness unto the Lord! Rejoice and gladden for ever, O eternal Spring of all lasting joy and gladness, that which thou dost here create! And let Thy salvation be near to them that fear Thee, that glory may dwell in our land. Amen."

The services were closed by the congregation singing Ps. xxxv., 9; a most appropriate prayer by Dr. Cairns; and the rendering by the choir of the anthem—"Lord, for Thy tender mercies sake, lay not our sins to our charge, but forgive that is past, and give us grace to amend our sinful lives, to decline from sin and incline to virtue, that we may walk with a perfect heart before Thee, now and evermore."

As usual on such occasions, friends from a distance were entertained to dinner by the congregation; and in the evening a soiree was held, when the church was crowded. The keynote of all the speaking was congratulation: the architect (Mr. Pil-

kington), whose genius had raised a most noble edifice, was congratulated; the congregation, on their new possession; and the pastor, on the completion of a work in which he had taken such a deep personal interest, and which—beautiful every way—was typical of his genius and of his pulpit services.\*

On the Sabbath after the opening day, the interior of the building was seen to much greater advantage. It was perfectly lighted; and the accoustic qualities were again satisfactorily tested. The late Rev. Alex. M'Ewan, Glasgow, conducted the forenoon service, taking for his text, John vii. 53, and viii. 1—"Every man went to his own house; Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives." In the text, he said, he saw one figure in different aspects:—1st, Jesus alone

\* It had been arranged by members of Ardrossan United Presbyterian Church, on the opening day to present Mr. Robertson with a pulpit bible, and psalm and hymn books, but this was prevented by a delay in the ornamentations of the binding, from a design kindly furnished by the eminent architect of the church. Mr. Robertson, during a vacancy, was moderator of Ardrossan U.P. Church session, and the gift, three weeks afterwards, was presented by a deputation—not in recognition of his genius, although none recognised this more than did the deputation, "but because," said their spokesman, addressing him, "of the love begotten in us by an intercourse with your large-hearted and generous mind; because of the sweet memories of hallowed times when our hearts responded to the spiritual truths so faithfully and beautifully set before us in your ministrations; and because it is well that proof should be given of the existence of that heavenly-bestowed blessing—Christian gratitude." Inside the first board of the bible was the following inscription:—"Presented to the Rev. W. B. Robertson, Irvine, by the United Presbyterian Church, Ardrossan. A token of remembrance for valuable services. December, 1863."

among men ; 2nd, Jesus alone with God ; and 3rd, Jesus alone in the world for God and man. It was in dealing with the second division that most direct reference was made to the circumstances under which they were met. In other countries, he said, he had often admired the practice of opening the gates of the churches to allow the merchant from the counter, the woman from the market, and the soldier from his drill, to enter and present their petitions to the Heavenly Father ; and in our Reformation zeal, we had, perhaps, herein lost a beautiful and important practice of the old Christian Church. But, be that as it might, he fervently desired that they should make this edifice a house of God—a place where they would see the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in His temple.

Mr. Robertson himself conducted the service in the afternoon. The invocation addressed to the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, and who dwelleth in the hearts of men, was expressed in the most sublime language, thrilling and solemnizing every worshipper, who felt as in the immediate presence of the Divine Being. Reading Genesis xxviii., 10-22, and commenting as he read, he applied the incidents therein mentioned to the circumstances in which they were themselves placed:—

"Jacob," he said, "left Beersheba, the scene of all his early associations, and we could fancy him standing on the heights and looking back through his tears at the old homestead. They had left their Beersheba, the old church—Beersheba, *the place of the well*, and many had found in the ordinances dispensed in the old church, a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. Beersheba, *the well of the oath*; and in their old church many thousands had taken, in the Lord's Supper, the oath to be faithful to the Lord and to each other. Jacob left Beersheba, *the place of his guilt*. He had there, at the instigation of the pious Rebecca, deceived his old dim-eyed father, and defrauded his brother of his birthright. From what strange quarters temptations come! Here was the pious mother who had prayed with clasped hands over the boy Jacob, as only mothers could, teaching him to deceive his father, and doing the devil's work. But in that long journey from Beersheba to Luz, somewhere about sixty miles, Jacob had plenty of time for thought. They could fancy him as he walked along the sheep walks, the moors, and the uplands, thinking of the deception he had practiced on his father, shedding tears of bitter repentance, and making to God a full confession of his sins. And then, having cast away his guile, like the man described in Ps. xxxii., or Nathaniel under the fig tree, he saw 'the heavens opened, and angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man.' Even so in the old church they had sinned and helped others to sin. They had brought sin with them, not only from their birth, but from Paradise, whence they were all expelled in Adam."

Jacob's vision of the mystic ladder rising to heaven, with angels ascending and descending, and Jehovah at the summit—the *gospel* hidden in his heart thus blossoming out into a beautiful and holy dream—was described with fine pictorial effect, and led up to a

reference to those unutterable longings of the soul, which only God could satisfy.

"The Hindoos," he said, "believe that the feeling of sadness that we have when listening to exquisite music, is caused by the remembrance of the music we have heard in Paradise, and which we can never hear again. There is also a German legend about a lost church, to which there was no pathway. But sometimes—the legend tells—the casual wanderer, in the deep silent twilight, hears the tones of strange, far-off bells borne floating on the evening air; and that, in the misty gray of the deepening shadows, some wanderers have suddenly found themselves in the gloom of the forest standing before it, its white pinnacles gleaming like spirits in the light of the moon and stars. There was no sound of human voices, although around the shrine bowed the forms of venerable men; while the tones of the organ mingled with the soft and silvery sound of bells, and a reverent and hallowed light trembled over every nook, and crypt, and corbel. They all knew there was a sense of something lost—a sad sense of something beautiful and lost—lying at all men's hearts. The very heathens had their fables of the golden age and the garden of Hesperides. The thief upon the cross, yearning, was still seeking for the lost Paradise. And they, too, had all been haunted in pensive hours with dim longings and undefined regrets, as if they had caught glimpses of its golden gates, and heard the echoes of the music that could now be heard on earth no more. But what 'eye hath not seen, or ear heard' God would reveal unto them by the Spirit. The lost church, Jacob found at last, and he hoped that all might find it in this new church, which they had reared for the worship of God."

In the discourse which followed, the preacher lifted the thought of his hearers from the vision of the

ladder to the anthem of the worshippers before the throne, and the assent of the Ideal Creatures—artistic types of loftiest intelligences—to the exaltation of the Saviour.

“And the four Living Creatures said, Amen!”

(*Revelation* v. 14).

The subject was worthy of the preacher and the occasion, and the skeleton which we venture to reproduce can only give a suggestion, but no adequate conception, of the elevation of thought, the originality, and the wonderful imagery employed in treating so grand a theme. Enough, that the scene was laid in Heaven; the actors—the Living Creatures; the object of their worship—the Lamb slain; and the burden of their anthem—the exaltation of the Saviour, as seal after seal of the book of God’s Providences were opened:—scene, actors, and worship, were clothed in thoughts and images which are the birthright only of the poet, whose own spiritual life finds its daily sustenance in the highest truths.\* The report proceeds:—

\* The late Professor Graham must have had this discourse in his mind, although he does not specially name it, when he says:—“What is called imagination, is, in Dr. Robertson, the predominating power—and it is the power which makes you see in clear form and modulation the inner reality and harmony of the truth; and he being ‘native and endued to this element,’ it is curious to note how he glides and carries you with him ere you are aware across the threshold of what is around and within, far upward into spiritual visions. Doors in heaven open upon you as

“After pointing out the meaning of the word, ‘Amen’—expressing assent to what was said and sung, and the various applications of it in Scripture, and its use in ancient times when prayer and song were finished in the sanctuary, he showed that in the passage he had last read it expressed the assent of God’s intellectual creation to the exaltation of the Saviour—the Lamb slain upon Calvary—in reward of His obedience unto death. He then proceeded to consider, in detail, who and what the Living Creatures were, and what they represented:—1st, their Nature; 2nd, their Office; 3d, their ordinary Anthem; and, lastly, their Amen to the New Song.”

*Referring to the first head—The Living Creatures, he said, were Ideal Creatures and Ideal Representatives of God’s intelligent Creation, of loftiest created excellence, inferior only to the Divine.*

“He distinguished between the real and the ideal life—the real life, that which God possesses, and all God’s animated creatures possess; the ideal life, that which man creates by his imagination. For God had gifted men with a creative power, and often the ideal works of painters, sculptors, and poets, survived the gifted men who created them, working most mightily for good or evil in the world. He enumerated instances of these ideal creations, amongst others, those Scriptural ones, the good Samaritan, the rich fool, the man clothed in pur-

you are lifted up from the dingiest Patmos of your pew, and pass in among the living creatures, the soaring hallelujahs, till you stand entranced for a season too brief, but never forgotten, before the Beatific vision—the sight that makes all things new. It is the fairy tale true in the highest experience. The child wanders a step or two into the forest, and all transforming influences come upon him, and upon all the marvellous region. The young man opens his eyes, in obedience to the prophet, and sees the divine armies and victories, near him and in him; while around him are still the hard hostilities of his troubled fight.”



ple, and the ten virgins. And such were the Living Creatures—ideal creatures, possessed of no real life, but yet possessed of ideal life. They are the products of a sanctified imagination, working under inspiration from above. As such they were the representatives of God's intelligent creation, of loftiest created excellence, inferior only to the divine; and, with an elaborate proof, he pointed out how the Hebrew and Oriental mind conceived of and expressed ideal excellence, by adding together, and compounding into one, in a way that seems very strange and rude to us, the different parts or attributes of different creatures, as illustrated by the Egyptian Sphinx, the winged Bulls of Nineveh, and the forms of the Living Creatures before the throne. Under the law of Hebrew art, Inspiration did not disdain to work—and through this language, God spoke. The *four* Living Creatures united, therefore, constituted an aggregate of excellence such as would be obvious to the Hebrew or Oriental mind. To make plainer what they were, he showed that they did not represent, as some had supposed, the persons of the Trinity; nor did they represent the Holy angels; nor, lastly, gospel ministers."

*Proceeding to consider the second head, he said, in their office they were the Chorus to the drama of Revelation.*

"The Book of the Revelation was a drama—it was dramatic in its form and style. This might seem strange to us, with our ideas of the drama and the stage, and general character of actors, actresses, and play-going and play-loving people. They ought, however, to remember this, that though so widely put asunder now, among Greeks at least, in old times, the Church and theatre were really one; for the dramatic poets and the players were the teachers of morality; and they were the most pious people who went most punctually to the theatre. And, even amongst the Hebrews, and by God's appointment too, the worship instituted was a ritual of a most scenic

and dramatic kind. It was no cause of wonder, then, that the holy history of Jesus' blood-bought Church should be presented in this volume as a drama acted on a stage, nor that the imagery in it should be consistent, though borrowed from what seems at first two very different quarters, the one the service of the Hebrew temple, and the other the enacted drama of the Greek theatre. In a fine picture, which, however, we dare not attempt to reproduce, he represented the scene—a stage, and on the stage a throne, occupied by the Incomprehensible God, holding the sealed book in His hand, and three rings or circle about the throne—(1) the Living Creatures, (2) the four and twenty elders, representatives of the redeemed Church, (3) the innumerable company of angels; while the material creation of God lay outside. He then represented the action begun. The hero, in the guise of a lamb which had been slain, entering upon the stage, and, in the midst of the assembled worshippers, taking the sealed book; the opening of the seals; and the song, the new song of exaltation to the Saviour, sung by elders and angels, to which the Living Creatures say, Amen. Their office was to watch the stage; and they so watch, resting not, day nor night, saying, Holy! Holy! Holy! He identified the Living Creatures with the old Hebrew cherubim and seraphim, though they were now doubled—the two cherubic figures, being made four Living Creatures—as the twelve tribes of Israel are doubled also, and become the four and twenty elders—the same, in nature and office, as these cherubic figures seen in Ezekiel's vision; seen by Isaiah in the Temple; the cherubic figures on either side the Mercy Seat; and, further back, until first found with glancing swords guarding the gates of the lost Paradise. So they stand, down through the ages from the fall onward, watching God's dealing with us men, ever singing their anthem of 'Holy! Holy! Holy!'"

*In considering the third head of the discourse—"Their ordinary Anthem"—he pointed out that it was remarkable*

*that they did not celebrate God's mercy and God's redeeming love: they celebrated His holiness, His almighty power, and His eternity.*

"The reason for this was, that, until the period of man's fall, God's mercy and God's redeeming love had not been disclosed. Up till the fall, there were three grand syllables of His name disclosed—holiness, power, eternity ; but now there comes the revelation of another new attribute—mercy and redeeming love, the grandest syllable of all. And so, the Chorus of the Living Creatures are planted at the gates of the lost Paradise, and made to stand, all down the ages, watching the development of this new attribute of mercy, to see if it shall be in harmony with the others already disclosed ; and thus, the watchers and Christ's Holy Ones continually cry, 'Holy ! Holy ! Holy ! Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.' "

*Lastly, in the "Amen to the New Song," the preacher pictured the Living Creatures standing at the gates of the lost Paradise, debarring entrance to fallen men until their guilt should be atoned for, in accordance with the strictest holiness ; of men coming in vain with sacrifices ; of Hebrews coming with the appointed sacrifices ; of heathens, too, with theirs.*

"But the gates remain shut, and the swords are flaming, till at last comes One, God's incarnate Son, who offers Himself up, and by His *blood* the gates are opened. And now the Anthem changes to the New Song—'Lift up your heads ye gates, and be ye lifted up, that the King of Glory may come in.'

"After further illustrating the 'Amen to the New Song,' four harmonies were inferred—1st, the harmony of holiness and mercy, in the plan of our redemption through the cross ; 2nd, the harmony of natural science and evangelical religion ; 3rd, the harmony of right reason and faith ; and the reasonableness of the Saviour's exaltation.

These being fully illustrated and enforced, he, finally, (4) adverted to the harmony of art and evangelical religion.

He concluded as follows :—

“I am glad to-day that we have been enabled, by the help of God, and through the liberality of others as well as yourselves, to rear so fair an edifice, which is not only meant for the accommodation of the worshipper, however excellently that has been attained, but which is also meant, through the language of the architectural art that makes the ‘very stones cry out,’ to utter something of that homage and that honour we render to the ‘worthy Lamb that was slain ;’ whom we proclaim as King, not only of the good and true, but also of the beautiful—and who, we believe, does not disdain the worship rendered Him, through the art of the Bezaleel, or the Aholiab the artificer, or the Asaph the harmonist, or the Aaron the orator. I am glad to-day, that here, upon this hill on this seashore, we have been raising a protest in stone against that notion that has been so prevalent amongst us, that while our business, our pleasure, our domestic love and joy, may dwell in ceiled houses, that any sort of house for worshipping God in, however mean, is good enough ; against that unhappy divorce of truth and goodness from beauty, which, upon the part of our noble Covenanting and Seceding forefathers, was, indeed, a matter of stern duty, conscience, and necessity—but which, upon the part of us, their children, seems to be so no longer. We place this house, then, at the feet of Jesus ; to Him we devote it ; and it is enough for us, if He shall be pleased to accept of it. We seek to link it on to that grand orchestral anthem, that is rising to Him through the very stones themselves, from every creature in heaven and in earth, and under the earth, and in the sea. To Him, too, we commit our vindication from the charge of seeming overcostliness—to Him who vindicated Mary from the charge

of 'waste,' that, not without apparent cause, was brought against her when she broke her alabaster box of ointment, very precious, at His feet—'Let her alone, she hath done what she could.' Our principle is this: The best for Christ!—the best of architecture, of music, of eloquence—the first fruits, and the best of all for Him: 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive it; and the four Living Creatures say, Amen.' And yet we know right well, that it is not the art of architecture, music, eloquence, or any other, that can make this house be the house of God. It is only the presence of God, the Shekinah, the mystic ladder betwixt earth and heaven, by which God's gifts and blessings, angel-like, descend to us—by which our prayers and praises, angel-like, informed by God's own Holy Spirit, ascend to Him. God grant *this* consecration of our new church now and henceforth, so shall this be none other than the house of God, and this shall be the very gate of heaven."

The choir concluded the service of praise by chanting Luke i., 67-69. In the evening, the service was conducted by his brother, the late Rev. James Robertson of Newington, who preached from 2 Chron. vi., 18—"But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?"

## CHAPTER X.

### *The Church's Servant—Special Services.*

Made a Burgess—No Leveller—Supports the Action of the Authorities in Irvine in refusing to Grant Licenses for Tents at Marymass Fair Races—The Church's Servant—His popularity at Soirees—Illustrations of his Humour—At Jubilee Celebrations—Notes of Sermon, "John the Baptist in Prison"—Notes of Funeral Services—The Rev. James Drummond, Irvine; and the Rev. Dr. William Bruce, Edinburgh—Notes of Sermon: "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

THE opening of Trinity Church marks the highest point in Mr. Robertson's ministerial career. His powers were then at their maturity; as preacher and lecturer he had achieved a distinction unique in the Scottish Church; he was known to be a poet, whose verse had comforted hearts bowed down with sorrow and bereavement; and his wit, geniality, and loving and lovable personality, had brought him troops of friends. His townsmen, too, had paid him the honour of admitting and receiving him as a burgess and guild-brother, (30th January, 1862,) on the nomination of Bailie Paterson, afterwards Provost; and

it is remembered that on his taking the oath *de fidei*, he remarked, that he was very much pleased to be not only a *Burgher* but a *Burgess*. The honour, he afterwards humorously said, was great indeed, "but it happened also to carry with it a serious responsibility, and might have brought him considerable celebrity. Not long after, a murder had been committed, in some way connected with Irvine, and if the man had been condemned to be hung, being the junior burgess, he would have had to act as hangman." \*

The honour was not undeserved, for, as a citizen as well as minister, he had always taken an active part in all public movements likely to advance the best interests of the community ; and, seven years after that his name was added to the roll, he preached an able discourse† in justification of the refusal of the magistrates and councillors to let ground for tents at Marymass Fair Races, for "the sale of those execrable stuffs that poisoned the souls and bodies of the multitude which attended, and strewed the fields and highways through the night of Saturday, and morning of the holy Sabbath, with the prostrate forms of drunkards." Though a Liberal

\* Introduction to re-delivery of Lecture on Luther, at Irvine, Dec. 20, 1883.

† "The Tent Question"—"Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv. 33) ; 20th August, 1869.



in politics, and a Dissenter who had no faith in Church Establishments, Mr. Robertson was no leveller. In the sermon delivered on the occasion of the death of the Prince Consort (Dec. 22, 1861), he exclaims :—

“Away with your socialistic theories that would abolish ranks and orders in the commonwealth, and bring all down to one dead level ! Why ! are there not ranks and orders in the heavens above us—thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers ? and in the Church amongst us—‘obey them that have rule over you’—and shadowed forth, too, in external nature, where the earth does homage to the sovereign sun for light and movement, and the moon to the lordly earth, and the sea tides to the moon—carrying water to and fro, obedient to her looks, to wash the feet of the lordly earth, as servants wait upon the eyes of their mistress ? And is not the lion king of beasts ? and the eagle king of birds ? and in the kingdom of green leaves too, where the oak is the monarch of the forest, will the strong and stately trees, his princes and his peers, reign not over the common underwood and brushwood ? and in the kingdom of the fields, where the grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away, the grass is the commoners, and the flowers of the grass, the nobles and the princes. And, this day, when a prince has fallen amongst us—the people of the land ; fallen, too, in the flower of his most princely manhood, and been numbered with the withered grass of common people dead, it seems meet to remind you, from his very fall, that there are differences of ranks and orders in the State, of God’s own ordinance, and that the men who fill the higher places are entitled to obedience from us, to them, and to their laws.”

It was in this spirit that he justified the action of the magistrates and councillors in Irvine in their

attempt to deal with an evil which was a disgrace to the place :—

“Thank God,” he said, “that He has given us civil rulers of this sort, who count themselves the guardians of the public morals, who know themselves to be, in their own place, the ministers of God, ordained of God for good to the community—the office of the civil magistracy being, as the Scripture says, ordained of God for the suppression of the wrong, and upholding of the right ; for the punishment of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well. Men who can take, and who are not ashamed to take their law from God’s own Word, and who have set themselves accordingly, to putting down, if possible, that drunkenness that used to revel and riot so on their Town’s Moor on Marymass Saturday, refusing to betray the good of the community, and barter the interests of sobriety, and men’s immortal souls, for a few paltry pounds of profit to a prosperous treasury. It is due to them that the Church should let her voice be heard, and speak out frankly, here, as we now do, to say how much she is indebted to them for the stand they have so taken on the side of truth, morality, and righteousness. We wonder that any thinking man should object to this kind of union between Church and State. The problem of union between Church and State seems to be pressing again for solution in the present day, for the solution rendered by Church Establishments for centuries is now, by almost general consent—at least consent that is every day becoming more and more the public mind—abandoned and pronounced unsatisfactory. The true solution of the problem may be found where, in her province and in her place, the Church, and in his province and in his place, the Civil Magistrate, do set themselves together side by side, neither lording it over the other, both under law to Christ, to promote the good of the community.

“Such a union is surely, any one must own, a Scriptural one ; and we rejoice that in this little burgh town

municipality, albeit on a somewhat narrow and limited scale, of course, the thing is so far done; the union which is destined yet to supersede the other, already is in some measure realised. The Civil Magistrate can serve the interests of the Church and Christ, not by subsidising the clergy, not by sitting, in virtue of his office, as ruler in the temple of God, which he has no right to do, but in a much more excellent way, we crave to think, namely, sweeping clear your Irvine moor of the tents of drunkenness and sin. Of course, it will be said, the races are still there, and if the drinking was bad, the races, some may think, are not much better. I am not here as their apologist. I do not plead for them. They may be bad enough—I do not know. I have never seen them all these five-and-twenty years, but I confess that I should be inclined, upon the whole, to be conservative of ancient customs springing out of social and industrial life—popular sports, public recreations of an innocent character, which have come down to us from olden times, and I think it were a pity that such things should be discontinued altogether, or were to break loose and away from under the control, the regulating wisdom, and the healthful influence of the Civil Magistrate. But, granting they are bad, and only bad, would you reform nothing because you cannot reform everything? Would you object to putting down one evil because you cannot put down all? See, with reverence, how God Himself, as Civil Ruler and Chief Magistrate to the Hebrews, dealt with such things as capricious divorce, private blood revenge, and slavery. The law of Moses, the judicial law, the law of Hebrew civil government, did not create these, but found them already existing in the Hebrew state of society, and it did not abolish them entirely at a blow, but fettered and restrained their working, clogged them with severe conditions, and so partially abolished them, and moved in the direction of their total abolition in the end. And this is the course that the wise magistrate, in humble imitation of the Wisest, will be likeliest, we should say, to

follow ; and if the thing is found to be so bad that there is no reforming it, but that it must be swept away entirely, then away with it, and the sooner the better, since it belongs to those evil communications that corrupt good manners. But see whether you cannot replace it with something better, and do not object to putting down one evil because you cannot put down every evil at once. This were bad policy and bad principle."

The seven years of active life which intervened between the opening of Trinity Church and the illness, which in 1871 laid him aside for years, were mainly remarkable, apart from the discharge of his pastoral duties, for the many demands made upon his time and services from all parts of the country. More than ever, he was the servant of the Church Universal—opening new churches, and preaching on special occasions to raise funds for church-building, debt liquidation, and other purposes.

We have no means of knowing, but it would have been interesting had a record been kept of the new churches, of all denominations, Mr. Robertson opened in course of his ministry, the special services at which he assisted, and the sums of money collected on such occasions from the crowds which his fame as a preacher attracted. In Ayrshire alone, during the years referred to, I find, from newspaper reports, that he assisted at two jubilee celebrations—the Rev. David Ronald's (Saltcoats, 1864), and Dr. John Bruce's (New-

milns, 1865); preached the evening sermon at the opening of West U.P. Church, Saltcoats, 1866; took part in the funeral services on the death of the Rev. James Drummond, Irvine, 1867; same year, preached a sermon at Ardrossan on behalf of the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society; and, nigh the close of this period, presided at the ordination of the Rev. Mr. M'Donald, as pastor of the U.P. Church at Cumnock. To the services thus rendered to friends and churches in Ayrshire, are to be added, attendance at soirees, assisting at communion seasons, and giving other needed help to churches and friends elsewhere.

It is almost unnecessary to say, that at Church soirees, and like gatherings, he was a great favourite, and that on such occasions he was full of humour of the most delicate, playful, sparkling sort. He was ready at repartee, quick to see the humorous side of all things, and had quite a treasury of anecdote, which at such times, he could draw upon, and tell with a quaint drollery which was irresistible. Thus:—

A worthy couple, on their way home from the Burgher Kirk of Denny, found their dog, which had been missing, come out of the Parish Kirk.

"John, do you see whaur the dog has been? It has been in the Parish Kirk!"

"Aye, Janet," answered John, "We can dae naething tae it the day, being Sawbath, but if we're spared tae the morn, we'll shoot it."

"He was heartily tired," he said, "with sitting listening to so many good speeches, and was now glad to get up and let off the steam. He felt himself very much like the servant girl, who, on a recent Sabbath, after he had delivered a discourse of an hour and a half in length—a very short one for him—and not having the small book near him to give out the chant, opened the large bible to read the words, on which the girl exclaimed, 'Odds! is he gaun to begin again.'"

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"Few subjects are so common in poetry as the running stream—few nymphs so well known as the Naiads. There are so many things that (as poor Chatterton might have said,) 'like a running river be.' Our human life itself resembles it; and moralizing poets, who cradle their thoughts among the flags on the river's bank, and try to find harps on the willows, may always be expected to tell us that life, like a stream, is always flowing and flowing downwards—that what has passed will not return—that it is more playful at its source, and more sober in its movements, as it nears the ocean, and so forth."

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"The beauty of streams is much like the beauty of maidens, which depends a good deal on the kind of scenery, rich or poor, they have to pass through. There is not so much difference amongst them (streams or maidens) in themselves. The one, just so much water, more or less;—the other, just so much of something else. Some difference, indeed, there is in both cases in respect of size, some in respect of shape, some in respect of tendency to dancing, and some more especially in respect of purity. Let streams, and maidens, too, keep clear and pure, and though they flow through no rich scenery—though flowing only through a wilderness—they shall at least reflect blue heavens and mirror stars."

Illustrating the grotesque application possible in

certain common forms of popular speech, Mr. Robertson was wont to tell the following story as having occurred in a remote district of the island of Arran. The demand for flesh meat was not very vigorous in that unsophisticated locality, and accordingly it was only occasionally that killing day came round. Some visitors to the island who were staying in the neighbourhood were grievously disappointed one morning on calling at the village butcher's shop, to find that the whole resources of the establishment were inadequate to make provision for the day's dinner. Seeing their disappointment, the worthy consort of the absent tradesman considerably sought to console her intending customers' dejection, by the reassuring promise, that though she had "nothing to offer them the day, she would have plenty of beef for them the morn—for he was goin' to kill himself."

Fondness for producing a surprise effect was also a habit of his, one instance of which may be noted in connection with a visit paid to the manse by one of his elders, accompanied by his son, who was leaving the following day to begin a college course of preparation for the ministry. When the visitors rose to depart, and Mr. Robertson was taking leave of the youth, he said in that quick, playful, and yet tender way so peculiar to him, as he looked first at him and then at his father, "Ay, there he goes! And I



hope he'll be a better man than his father!" The son, not prepared for such a benediction, and not seeing promptly enough the pleasant turn of which the words were susceptible, felt a momentary pain at what seemed disparagement of his father's character. But the father, probably humbler and more ready-witted than his son, proved equal to the occasion, for he promptly rejoined, "Amen, sir. You could na ha'e wished him onything mair to my mind."

When Mr. Robertson first delivered his lecture on Luther in Cathcart Street Church, Ayr, then a vacancy, before beginning his lecture, which he delivered from the platform in front of the pulpit, and not from the pulpit itself, which, as a structure, was rather high and narrow, he said, with a humorous twinkle in his eye, "I've been asked to go into the pulpit; but I've declined. I prefer to speak down here; for you know if I went up there *I might get the call*." (Call to the Church, or cold in the head.)

When told at a friend's table of a young minister, the cost of whose education at College and Hall had been met by the sale of hen eggs, he remarked, that he would, then, be a *lay preacher*.

And yet, brimful as he was of humour, an undercurrent of deep seriousness underlay it all. As in letters, writings, and conversation, he passed quickly

from the gay to the grave, so in his public addresses ; and possibly, it was due to this seriousness that his wit was never barbed with gall, or that his humour never in the slightest degree approached to license of any kind. "This transition from the clear, dry intelligence to the most many-coloured play of humour," reminded Dr. Ker, "in its quick touches and turns, of the skimming flight and sudden dip of the swallow from air to water." . . . . It "led by an easy change of mood to what was best and highest—the dip of the wing, as at Bethesda, had healing and life."

Here are a few specimens as illustrative of this beautiful blending of humour with higher teaching :—

"We wonder what makes so many ministers go a-fishing? Can it be some dim idea of apostolical succession from the mighty fishermen of old? For ourselves we have no taste whatever that way. Though we like fish as well, perhaps, as cats are said to do (it is the only tendency toward Puseyism, with its Friday fish dinners, that we confess to), yet like cats, too, we like to keep our feet dry. We have no fancy for wading through wet places for weary hours, for the chance of getting another unfortunate creature at the opposite end of our fishing rod, and then coming home all soaked and draggled to dine late upon small fish, or none. The lawfulness of such sport being granted—and nobody, we suppose, denies that—we, for our part, would decidedly prefer to go a-shooting; though, being too poor to take out a shooting license, we should be restricted (like the ex-King of the French in Holyrood, twenty years ago) to shooting sparrows. Or we should borrow a horse and join the scarlet Nimrods and their merry men, that shall presently be showing them-

selves behind the falling leaf-screen of the autumnal woods, with their high-mettled hunters and bugled halloo, and melodious hubbub of the hounds. And yet, after all, fishing is, in many ways, the finer sport. It is a case of 'killing no murder,' or such a mild species of it as may practically be considered none at all. We belong to a broader school than those sentimentalists who would place fishing sport on doubtful terms with the Sixth commandment, and in danger of sessional excommunication. Wherever the difference may lie, few persons that would shrink from shedding the blood of a fox, would hesitate about slaying a fish. Strange, by the way, that sport should dwell next door to suffering—that when Sport leaps up and seizes the beechen spear, both fish and flesh had better look about them; and that the pleasure of sport should, generally speaking, rise in the ratio of the risk and danger to ourselves, or suffering to others. . . . *Anglers fish hidden joy out of the waters of trouble.*"\*

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"It is good for the ladies that they never grow old. They only know how to keep always young. But there was something beautiful in being young. There was the youthful man with strong limbs, manly form, and elastic step; and the beautiful maiden with sparkling eye, tinted cheeks, rosy lips, and well-rounded form. And so it was when men looked into the looking-glass—the ladies never did that—and traced the furrows appearing on their cheeks, and saw the silvery grey peeping from among their locks, they never thought they were so old. Oh, no, they did not like to think they were growing old. The Graces were all young—young hope, young joy, young love. It was natural to think of being always young. The question was—How shall we keep perpetual youth? We could not keep our bodies always young. They are a part of the material universe, and all material things are

\* Review of "Scenes of Youth Revisited," by the Rev. David T. Jamieson, Kilmarnock; *The Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, Oct. 16, 1858.

growing old. The sun and moon ; Arcturus, beautiful Arcturus ; Orion, strong Orion ; the Pleiades, the seven-starred Pleiades ; the everlasting hills, were all growing old. Yea, all God's universe was growing old, and the time was coming when in the beautiful expanse above, the golden flower stars would shake their petals and descend as a shower of star-leaves and be lost in eternity. How long, O Lord, how long, Thou knowest, Thou to whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day ! Our bodies, being a part of the material universe, could not always remain young ; but in our souls we could. There were three ways by which we could retain our perpetual youth. Three simple recipes :—The first was not mountain dew. No ; that made one grow old very soon.

“ Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And never brought to mind ?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And days o' langsyne ? ”

No, surely ; for a too often indulgence in the “cup of kindness” would very soon prove not “langsyne,” but “short-syne.” Neither was it debt dues, though the paying of one's debt kept many a care away. No ; it was neither mountain dew nor debt dues ; but, first, it was to be humble. To be humble was always child-like, and to be a child was to be young in years, and in thought. Then a second recipe was to have eyes of thankful observation on God's mercies, and eyes of wonder on God's wonderful works. God's providences were not like a watch, wound up every day, but were ever new. The young liked things new, they were fond of change, and delighted in things new. So we were ever to have eyes of thankful observation on God's mercies. A third recipe was—be liberal. Exercise the grace of liberality. Avarice was old. The young Church at Pentecost was liberal, and so was the Church in the Wilderness. The women brought their ear-rings and gold rings, purple and fine linen ; the carpenter, timber ; the merchant, the fine oil and spices ;

till Moses told them to stop. It was a splendid sight, and he wished he could see it now. Aye, it made a congregation young to build a new church. Be loving—hatred was old. More especially, love the young. Oh! what a dreary world it would be without the happy, dancing, young, frank innocence, childish prattle, ringing laugh, and merry voice of the young. Be holy—sin was old and ugly. The holy angels were all young. Mary saw young men at the sepulchre of her Lord. Sin was always old; and Satan, the prince of devils, was styled that old serpent. So keep holy, and be always young, and then though you should live to a thousand years you would be ever young.

“ A willing people in thy day  
Of pow'r shall come to thee,  
In holy beauties from morn's womb,  
Thy youth like dew shall be.” \*

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*                    \*

“He was a Burgher, but he never knew he was a burgher until he was seventeen or eighteen years of age. Now that he looked back, all that he could think of was that the Independent children were the cleverest, and the Parish Church girls the prettiest. He had often thought of the four bodies—the Established, Free, Independent, and the United Presbyterian, including in this last all Seceders—he had often thought of them being like the four beasts of the Revelation—the first having the face of a lion, the second that of an eagle, the third that of a man, and the fourth that of an ox. He sometimes thought that the Established Church, with its grandeur and prestige of royalty, had got the face of a lion; that the Free Church, with its earnest, aspiring nature, had the face of a flying eagle; that the Independent Church, with its intelligence and thoughtfulness, had the face of a man; so that there was nothing left them (the United Presbyterians) but the other. But seriously,

\* Notes of Address at celebration of Rev. David Ronald's Jubilee, Saltcoats, 26th July, 1864.

he did not find that these four living creatures were put asunder in Scripture Vision. Here they were all joined in one, supporting the same throne, and there was no discord in their voices when they sung together—‘Holy, holy, holy.’”\*

His rare gift for seeing in his friends only what was good, made many of his personal references significant and beautiful. Thus, on the occasion of the celebration of the Jubilee of the ministry of the Rev. David Ronald at Saltcoats, he remembers when himself “a poor trembling youth at the gates of the terrible Presbytery of Kilmarnock,” that it was the kind fatherly hand of the now venerable minister that led him in, and so “he desired to place on his head that day one green leaf of grateful remembrance.” Dr. John Bruce, Newmilns, in his old age, was to him the model and ideal of the Christian minister. His ministry had begun when “the thunders of the guns of Waterloo had scarcely died away,” and this fact suggests, “that through peace and war—through trials and through tears—by the help of God he had held on,—still amongst them, with the wreaths of fifty summers, not altogether without thorns, round his brow, and the dew of his youth not yet exhaled.” Dr. Bruce, he further found to be the counterpart of the loving John who leant on the Master’s breast at supper—gentle, amiable, mild; while, on a similar

\* Extract from Speech at Cumnock, 10th January, 1871.

jubilee occasion, (February 11, 1884,) he found a resemblance between Dr. Joseph Brown, Glasgow, and that other John—John the Baptist,—“in his Nazaritic scorn of self-indulgence, and all luxurious habits that debase the body and corrupt the mind, in administering rebuke to wickedness in high and holy places, and that with no rhetorical and brazen-sounding declamation; but in terse and telling words, well chosen and well put; like John the Baptist, going to the point directly and at once—an old man eloquent—holding forth and holding fast—and the faster where it was assailed—the banner blazoned like the military ensign of the conquering host of Constantine—the figure of a lamb pierced by a cross.” And at the jubilee of Dr. Frew, of St. Ninians, (December 24th, 1884,) he recalled the memories of his own boyhood—the reverend elder laying out the plate, as he passed by the iron gate of the church in St. Ninians, on his way to the Secession Church in Stirling, and of what some boys of his acquaintance said—on the Mondays—about the eloquence of the wonderful sermons delivered by the then youthful preacher the day previous. “It was perfect rapture!” one of them had said; and so, now in the autumn of his life, his eulogist saw the ripened golden fruit in the faithful discharge of ministerial duties, and good work done as an expositor and theologian—“reasoning with all



the subtilty of a logician, the learning of a scholar, and that sympathy with the Word of God which constitutes the fine genius of our greatest commentators, such as Matthew Henry."

On occasions of this kind, he always saw the ideal minister—the true under-shepherd, the faithful pastor of the flock, which, by the Chief Shepherd, he had been called to lead. Thus, at times of bereavement, the minister is represented as weeping with those who weep;—at funerals, "pointing up the long street of the Future, to where the little gate of the city of Time leads out to the great Eternity, when Christ arrests the funeral;"—at marriages, "by no priestly incantation turning the water of natural delight into the wine of spiritual joy;"—on Sabbaths setting forth Jesus only, trusting in God for results, but not "tabulating his converts by the dozen;" and at the end of the day, weary and worn after preaching, is found "kneeling by the bed of the dying, and praying with the departed soul; or at home in his chamber and study, alone with God, and wrestling for a blessing on the day's services, and on all the people."

As a relative and co-Presbyter, he was asked to take a prominent part in the celebration of Dr. Bruce's Jubilee, at Newmilns, 17th July, 1865. The sermon preached, "Causes of offence in Christ," but

better known as "John the Baptist in Prison"—was singularly appropriate to the circumstances, and was one of the few sermons he frequently delivered at special services.\*

#### Causes of offence in Christ.

*"Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me."—(Matt. xi. 6.)*

After pointing out that these words were first spoken of a minister's son—of John, the son of Zacharias, minister of the Hebrew sanctuary, whose quiet home lay far from the bustle of the city, in the hill country of Judah, he said:—

"The scene opens in the gloomy jail of Machærus Castle, on the silent shores of the Dead Sea. King Herod has cast John into this jail 'for Herodias' sake.' Here John gets into the deeper and darker prison, which John Bunyan has called Doubting Castle, kept by Giant Despair. I do not wonder that this brave, free son of the wilderness, whose views of Christ had been so clear and decided, and his courage in confessing Him, so bold, when the winds of heaven fanned his cheeks, and the dews of heaven bathed his brow in the wilderness, should, when shut down in the dungeon, lonely, bound, inactive, have come to doubt whether after all this was the Christ. They who know a little of the moods and phases of the spiritual life, and how it looks down from the sunniest heights of assurance to the depths of despair, should not find much difficulty in understanding his experience. And so it seems that it was less for his disciples' sake, the little baptised Church

\* This sermon was also preached with no less appropriateness at the celebration of Dr. Joseph Brown's Jubilee. In the evening, after preaching, on this last occasion, he became seriously ill, and for some months thereafter "a lock was again set upon his lips."

clinging around him still, than for his own, that John sends messengers to Jesus inquiring, 'Art thou the Christ? or shall we look for another?' "

The preacher then proceeded in a number of particulars, to show that there were causes of offence in Christ, both in John's days and in our own, and that those were blessed who were not offended in Him. He showed (1st) that *John might have been offended with the work given him to do*; in some respects a large and dangerous mission, in others a small and lowly one. 2nd, *John might have been offended in the way in which Christ developed His Messiahship*—his ideal Christ came short of the reality; and in this John was not singular. There was something in every one's picture of Christ which required to be put out, and something left out which required to be put in, to bring it to the real Christ of God: and this was no easy task to John, or to any one. 3rd, *John might have been offended at the amount of evidence for Christ's Messiahship*. He likely thought that Christ ought to have worked more striking miracles that men might have believed upon Him. The evidences were threefold—a threefold wall, a threefold cordon—external, internal, and experimental; and that God should restrict the evidence to what was enough, and no more, was, to many, a cause of offence. 4th, *John might have been*

*offended in the method of Christ's working, because so much broader than his own working.* There was a narrower and severer view of doctrine, duty, and worship, and a view which was broader and kindlier; John represented the one, and Christ the other; and the preacher, in an elaborate and finely conceived argument, pointed out this truth in its relation to doctrine—such as election: to duties and morals, such as abstinence: and to forms of worship, such as standing at praise, and kneeling at prayer, failing not, in his conclusion, to warn his hearers against the narrowness which might exist, whatever opinion upon these subjects might be held—and the blessedness belonging to those who, Christ-like, took the broader and kindlier view of their neighbour's convictions:—

“A band of thirteen men, one of them the incarnate God, have arrived at a Galilean village, and they come to the market place. It is evening, the shops are shut, and the dark-eyed Hebrew children come out to have their sports and pastimes. There are two bands of children there to-night, the one disposed and the other indisposed to play. The one party says to the other, Come, let us play together. Let us play at marriages. And so because children have strong imitative powers, and readily react whatever they have seen their seniors do, as they have seen the bridal procession passing up the village street with piping and dancing, so will these little children play at marriages, and make mimic music, and they call on their fellows sitting in the market place to rise and take part in the dance. But no, they will not rise. They are silent.

They are not in the mood to-night. Then they say, Come now, be good children; do not be silent. As you do not like to play at marriages, we will play at funerals instead. With children's strong imitative powers, as they had seen the village funeral pass down the street with minstrels making mournful music in the forefront and lamenting relatives following, so this mimicking party of minstrels and mourners call on their fellows in the market place to rise and perform the funeral. No! They are still silent and sulky. They will neither play at one thing nor another. Christ, incarnate God, loves to watch the sports of children, and to take His illustrations from them too. Now these two schools continue still. They reappear in all Church history, and we find them in the present day. Some hold narrower and some broader views regarding God's election, Christ's atonement, the Holy Spirit's work, and who shall say that neither of them are not Christians? I make no allusion to heresy. Within certain limits there must be difference of view because of the sunlight. All truth takes on the colour of the gold or azure through which it passes. God has allowed and ordered that it shall be so. John took the narrower view regarding doctrine, for his thoughts were mainly, if not exclusively, Jewish. John may have heard in prison of Christ's dealings with the Roman centurion, the woman of Samaria, and the Syro-Phœnician woman, and Christ sends to him the message, 'Blessed is he who-soever shall not be offended in Me.' And there are two schools of manners in the Church, one retiring from the world, the other mingling freely with society. John represents the one. Men called him a misanthrope, and thought he had a devil. Christ represents the other. They called Him a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. And there are two schools of worship. The one clings to places and forms and times, the other leaves them altogether. John thought that at Jerusalem men ought to worship with certain forms. Christ shows us that the Church in all nations is the temple, and that men may

worship God the Father anywhere through the Son and by the Holy Spirit."

5th, *John might have been offended with the place of His working, and the men whom He chose to work with Him.* He might have thought that Jerusalem should have been the scene of Christ's labours, but He worked in the villages and towns of Galilee; himself belonging to the priesthood, he might have looked for the work being confided to that privileged class, but fishermen and tax-gatherers were the first preachers in the kingdom of God. 6th, *John might have cause for offence with Christ's treatment of himself.* Christ's treatment of the Baptist seemed strange, having never visited him, or sent a message of enquiry; and yet we, too, are often bewildered by God's providences as administered by Christ; and if it should be so, we should remember who said: "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me."

The tragedy of John's great life is drawing to a close, for Herod is on his way to battle with Aretas the king, "for Herodias' sake," and halts at Machærus. Here he celebrates his birthday anniversary, and there is song and revelry by night, while John lies bound in the dungeon underneath. Feasting and drinking are going on, for to-morrow in the battle they may die. The feast is over and the wine served; in comes the daughter of Herodias, and in her light and buoyant girlhood moves, sylph-like, through the mazes of the dance. The king smiles approvingly,

his vulture eye pursuing these nimble feet, and he vows to give her whatsoever she shall ask. And now he is in a sad dilemma. He had heard John gladly, and he had watched the dance gladly too. Sermons had entertained him, and so had the dance. But there is no escape. That artful Herodias has him in her toils. The king is exceedingly sorry, yet for his oath's sake he orders John's execution. And now the executioner is going down the castle stairs with lantern and sword in his hands, while the Dead Sea waves are plashing on the castle walls. In the silence and the darkness, lighted only by the jailor's lamp, John awakens from his slumbers or looks up from his sorrowful prayers. That noble head with Nazaretic locks, those tear-filled eyes, that pale, pale face is laid upon the block, and for a moment in the lamp-light the headsman's sword flashes,\* and John is dead—beheaded in prison. John! John!! Was it for this that Jesus said, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me?"

We cannot say that John in prison had much conscious blessedness, for he could not, like that other John in Bedford jail, get away to the delectable mountains. He could only lie and moan in dark despondency, and yet if it were only the consciousness of having done the right, he must have had a deep joy underlying all his outward sorrow, and was far happier than King Herod afterwards was with the ghost of the murdered Baptist pursuing him along the corridors.

Those not offended with Christ have a blessedness which may be contrasted with the misery of those that take offence and go away. Take your choice. Will you go to scepticism with its dark and dreadful doubts? Will you go to superstition with its mazes and mummeries? Will you go to agnosticism with its frost-work clear and cold that chills and kills? Will you go to pantheism that makes all things tears and laughter, good and evil, and all persons, God and man and devil, all divine, and therefore all devils too? Will you go to atheism that howls out "No God?" Will you go to——.



I do not know that there are any more. You have got your choice. Which will make you better than you are? Oh no! Christ, I will stay with Thee though Thy ways may be strange, for outside Thy fold, Good Shepherd, there is nothing for us but darkness and despair.

There is the blessedness of being tested and found true. For, after all, the causes of offence are not in Christ, but in ourselves. Two men go to a feast which includes every delicacy. The one is hungry, the other sick, with no appetite. The feast is quite the same to both, the difference is in the men themselves. Two men go to hear an oratorio; the one has a taste for and some knowledge of music, the other is troubled with the musical representation of sacred things, so that while one is ravished with the music, to the other it is only a jangling noise. The oratorio is the same to both, the difference is in the persons themselves. Two men go to a picture gallery to see a picture of Christ. The one has a taste for art, the other none, and he is troubled with doubts about the propriety of such representations. The one rejoices in Raphael's divine masterpiece, the other sees only so much canvas and paint. The difference is in the men themselves, the picture is the same to both. So here, causes of offence are not in Christ, but in ourselves.

Lastly, now is the judgment of this world. He that is pleased with Christ is not condemned, he that is offended with Him is condemned already, for now the Shepherd King is passing down the ages with His crook in His hand, placing the sheep on His right, and the goats on His left, and saying 'Come ye blessed,' so blessed that ye pass the eternal judgment even now. It is the blessedness of not being offended in Christ, and being faithful unto death.

And now, the noble head is in the hands of the tigress, Herodias; but I see the white robe and the palm branch and the crown of glory, and hear the angels shouting, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' Our faith teaches that, in another sphere of being, he will repeat the same character and the same work he has done here. The

forerunner of Jesus Christ, as he came before Him into this world, has gone before Him into the other, to stand on the other side of Jordan, as he did in the wilderness, crying, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.' And as Christ rides forth through all His vast dominions to take possession of those He has purchased with His precious blood, and all the armies of heaven follow Him on white horses, still John goes before Him proclaiming His advent to the infinite bounds of everlasting, and Jesus points to him and says, 'Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.'\*\*

The sermon ended, the preacher suddenly dropped his voice, and continued :

"John the Baptist was not the only John of whom we read in Scripture. There was another John of different character and history from his. For while the Baptist was a preacher, stern, majestic, terrible, this other John was gentle, amiable, mild; and while the Baptist was cut off in mid-time of his days by bloody martyrdom, this other John was honoured to survive until a good old age, surviving all the rest of the glorious company of the apostles; he lived to see his jubilee, and beyond it too. It even seemed in his extreme old age that he might be tarrying till the Lord should come—such honour specially befitting that disciple, for this other John was 'that disciple that Jesus loved.' He had special tokens of the love of Jesus, inasmuch as not only was he one in that world which Jesus loved, but one of that Church which He loved as his affianced bride; nay, one of the twelve that was always with Him by day and night, in sorrow and joy, in labour and prayer; nay, one of the three admitted to intimacy with Him in scenes of the closest seclusion; nay, that one of the three who leaned upon His breast at the Last Supper, so that we

\*The close of the discourse is taken from report in *Christian Leader*, because of its greater fulness.

have a Pyramid of the beloved of the Lord, ascending, and narrowing as it ascends ;—the broad world is its basis, and the Church, the twelve, the three, are the superstructure, and John, this other John, stands solitary on the summit, as the ‘disciple that Jesus loved.’\* For he had special likeness to the love of Jesus too. He was not as John the Baptist may have been, one of your men of iron nature and of ruder mould, who go, if faithfully and well, yet roughly, also, through the work that God has given them to do, who rudely handle shrouds, and weeping faces, and broken hearts; and who when their own turn of sorrow comes, and the shroud is in their dwellings, and the funeral is at the door, retire quite sullenly within themselves, and seek no sympathy, as they give none. Not such at all was Jesus, and not such at all was his beloved disciple John. They were both tremblingly alive with tenderest sympathies. They loved the little ones, they loved the lambs, they would not ‘break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.’ And if, in present times, among our brethren and our fathers in the ministry there is one rather than another upon whom the mantle of the loving John has fallen, I am sure we

\* *Gradation* was a favourite form of illustration. His sermons present many instances of this. Here is one :—“Who could tell how much joy, and who could tell how much suffering, the human soul was capable of? The ladder of joy went upwards. On its first step was a little babe; on the next, a laughing child; on the next, a young man rejoicing in his strength; on the next, a mother with her baby in her arms; on the next, a strong man rejoicing in health of body and soundness of mind; and higher still, and yet more blessed, was the man whose iniquity was pardoned; and higher still, the man whom God had called, the man who had received the crown of life; and highest of all, the blessed dead who had died in the Lord. Who could tell how much the ladder went beyond that, into the joy that was unspeakable? And who could tell how much suffering the human soul was capable of? The ladder of suffering went downwards—tears, sorrow, misery, remorse, despair, down to the depths, but, how far, no man could tell. Truly, men were fearfully and wonderfully made: and God preserved them.”

are all agreed that this is he whose happy jubilee to-day we celebrate, whose praise for sweetest gentleness of holy life is certainly in all the churches, and who, too, has survived unto this good old age, in honour befitting a disciple that Jesus loves."

Very tender and loving these personal references to the venerable pastor who had so long filled the Newmilns pulpit; but how touching the pathos of the language, in which he expressed his grief at the loss of his friend and fellow-Presbyter, the Rev. James Drummond,\* whose ministry in Irvine was almost contemporaneous with his own. During all the years, a very close intimacy was maintained between them, all the more, possibly, because the one was a set-off to the other. Mr. Drummond was a rhetorician of no inconsiderable skill, a man of culture, in sympathy with the widening thought and growing knowledge of the day, with a melodious euphuism of utterance, which was very pleasing; but

\* In a letter to the Rev. R. S. Drummond, Kilmarnock, (May, 7th, 1884,) excusing himself from being present at his ordination, he addresses him as—*My dear Grand Nephew*. "As your grandfather was my brother, I may call you so; and gladly would I come to witness your young triumph in my old division town (ere the Presbytery divided), but I have not the chance of hearing you preach, like Paul—or of trying myself (who am less than the least of all your western worthies) to resemble him in any other way than as I daily, at present, do, being *prisoner in my own hired house*, and the soldier that keeps me is the East wind. A loek has been put upon my lips for some weeks to keep my chest in peace and quietness, and though now taken off again, I am not yet making any engagements in the service of public speech."

though his pulpit abilities were great, he had not the poetic second-sight of Robertson, who saw in things material the garb of things immaterial, and was never without a vision of his own.

Mr. Drummond died 9th July, 1867, and his removal—"into the corner—his withdrawal into the dark hidings of the grave and glory," deeply affected his friend and neighbour. Very beautiful was the tribute paid to his memory—"Not paid in haste." "Grief," he said, "he knew was apt to throw a halo of ideal glory round departing brows—to rain from its own cloud of death a rainbow arch for the ascending form, and see, through tears for the departed, excellencies undiscerned before ;" but of all the circle of surviving ministers, he knew but few he would place beside the dead, and, outside the darkened home, he ranked himself as chief mourner."

"Not easy (were the office mine) to draw the portraiture of one who was distinguished, not so much by any special mental gift or moral excellence, as by harmonious combination of them all. The sunlight of his life (to draw a figure from that optic science that he loved, and use it as he might himself have done) must not be broken up into its separate prismatic hues. For though, as light contains within itself all beautiful colours, yet these are not displayed in their variety and beauty till their white envelope is rent by some disturbing force: so did his life contain within itself the finest elements of mental and moral character. Yet such was the unruffled calmness of his temper, and his power of self-control, that these in their

variety and beauty were more hidden than revealed by that white raiment his life always wore of natural equanimity and God's own blessed peace. Not only were his intellectual gifts of a high order—they were improved by systematic and severe self-culture that continued with him to the last—much underrated by himself, no doubt, yet not such as to break the outcome of the power that was within him through any want of self-reliance in emergency ; for while those talents God had given him were thankfully and humbly consecrated to the highest purposes, they were so balanced by a sober judgment and a steady will, and so completely disciplined by use, that memory, so richly stored with Scriptural and scientific truth, and fancy purged of all extravagance, and a rare gift of clear melodious utterance of thought, with all the other powers of a well-cultivated mind—whatever pulpit work or other public work was given him to do, they never put him in a hurry, never left him at a loss—but he was always equal to his work, and up to it. His powers of mind stood harnessed at his service, and were reined entirely under his control. If, in his moral character, where all was so well balanced and adjusted, there was one feature that stood prominent, then I should say it was his inoffensive peacefulness, his constant willingness to serve and to oblige, and quarrel with no man, on any provocation whatsoever. Then his intellectual and moral natures—both so delicately shading off into each other—were in their turn blended up together in the higher spiritual life ; so baptized (it seemed to me) unto the Spirit—so interpenetrated with transfiguration from the grace of God—that of this character of rounded shape, it may be difficult indeed to say where nature ended and where grace began.”

This tribute to the memory of his departed friend, eloquent with heart-felt sorrow, was preceded by a

sermon which led up to the lessons of the death and bereavement :—

“The preacher said he sometimes thought the grandest sights of this world were its funerals. Westminster Abbey never looked so grand as when its western door was opened to the dead ; and St. Paul’s Cathedral never looked so grand as when its western gate was opened, though it only opened to the dead, and when its vaulted roof gave back the martial music which attends the funeral of a Nelson or a Wellington. It seemed to him that this display was not all vanity. It came forth from the Lord of Hosts Himself, who adorned the dying autumn leaf with a border of the brightest crimson, and who gave the richest hues to all that was frail and perishing. Even the burial of Christ was not a mean one. His death was shameful, but His funeral was by no means poor.

“The resurrection of the Saviour, he continued, might be taken as a proof, a pattern, and a pledge—a proof of his Messiahship ; a pattern of the soul’s awakening into life ; and as a pledge of the resurrection of the just. There were many ways in which the Messiahship of the Saviour could be proved. There were His miracles of power and beauty which he performed from the time of His baptism with water till His baptism with blood. There was the evidence given by nature at His death. The sun, like a Judean mourner, veiling his face, the rocks rending, and the graves giving up their dead : but mightier proof than this was the watch dispersed, the sealed stone removed, and the dead Christ risen again. The resurrection proved the divinity of Christ, and this was of infinite importance, for if Christ were not God, how could He be trusted in as a Saviour? If He were not omniscient, that which He did not know might be the soul’s salvation ; if He were not omnipotent, the thing which He had not power to do might be the work of redemption. If the blood of Christ had not been divine, what trust



could have been put in its efficacy to save? If Christ were not God, how could He act the daysman's part? The raising of Christ from the dead proved that all He had spoken was true, for God would not have raised up a liar and a blasphemer from the tomb, and He had declared His own divinity. The fact of His Messiahship shed a glorious light on all that this Man of Sorrows had done—this Saviour of the world, who had not where to lay His head till He laid it, covered with tears and blood, in the grave."

"I have seen a lamp uplifted at the end of a dark gallery filled with precious stones and jewels. They had lain there hid, but flashed and sparkled as soon as the lamp's rays touched them. Looking through a dark alley I have seen the sun rise, making the leafage glitter, and golden fruit that hung from the branches of the green arcade appear ; and the rising of Christ from the dead sheds a light on all His life among men, from His death on the cross away back to the manger in which He was cradled, and the stable in which He was born. It says to us—Yonder child playing on the street of Nazareth, yonder carpenter busy at His work, yonder weeping man that knows not where to lay His head, who asks a draught of water from a Samaritan woman, is God. The finishing of Christ's mediatorial work was proved by His resurrection. A person who had a debt to pay, which he could not pay, and which must be paid, if told that a friend had paid it for him, would doubtless like to see proof that it was really cancelled. A man who had a punishment to suffer, that he could not suffer, and yet which must be endured, if told that a friend had borne the punishment for him, would like to see proof that this was the case ; and one who had a burden to bear, which he could not bear, and which he knew must still be borne, if told that a friend had borne it for him, would, no doubt, be anxious to see the proof that this was so. Jesus, the friend of man, had paid his debt, had suffered his punishment, had borne his

burden, and the proof that He had done so was His resurrection from the dead. It was also a proof of His being mighty to save. The strong Samson when bound with cords, awoke and burst them asunder, and carried away the gates of the city of Gaza; but Christ had burst asunder the bands of the grave, had carried away the gates of death, and made them gates of heaven.

After discoursing with great eloquence on this part of the subject, the preacher went on to consider the resurrection of the Saviour as a pledge of the rising into life of the bodies of believers:—

“The question was—Shall the dead rise? He had watched the morning rise in beauty out of the gloom of night, had watched the transformation of insects, had seen the dragon fly emerge with wings of fire to fly over field and meadow. But some one might say—“These never sinned, and the dark enigma, like a stony sphinx, still sat at the gloomy gates of the grave. But they did not require to argue from speculation—the thing was already proved. Some one had told him that a certain tree in his garden would not bear fruit, the soil being too cold and damp, and the atmosphere uncongenial, but the days were wearing on to autumn-time, and the fruit on that tree was ripening. What further proof could he have than that which set at nought all arguments from speculation that it would be otherwise. So, to compare loftiest things with lowliest, the mystery was already solved, the proof was already given, for Christ had abolished the power of death, and had Himself been the first fruits of the resurrection. It was no question of chemistry, of botany, or of psychology, for the tremendous curse of death was already removed.”

Fifteen years afterwards, he was called on by the

claims of kinsmanship, and of a life-long friendship, again to embalm in beautiful thought the memory of another minister of the gospel. The Rev. Dr. William Bruce, senior pastor of Infirmary Street U.P. Church, Edinburgh, died November, 1882, and to a crowded audience Dr. Robertson preached the funeral sermon. Dr. Bruce was a minister, when he himself was a student attending Edinburgh University, and recalling those days, he presented the congregation with a living picture of a young preacher—of delicately moulded yet manly form ; features chiselled like a marble statue, and brow, which all wisdom even in early youth had cleared of warm colourings of passion, and strewn instead with a beautiful white snow—standing erect, calm and dignified, in the carved oak Gothic pulpit of the old Cowgate Church—the pulpit unlike all other pulpits of the period in the Secession Church, but quite in keeping with the character of a building erected for the ornate service of the Episcopalian. There—“standing calm and dignified, under the Transfiguration depicted on the vault, and Moses and Elijah pictured on the wall, his youthful form reflected between the light and shade ; his pale and thoughtful face lit up with spiritual light—his silvery tones, like the fountain of Siloam playing softly, thrilled through the dusky big church where hundreds upon hundreds of hearers sat listening.” Then followed a suggestive character

study—a character in which, he said, doing and dreaming were in striking union :—

“I have known some men that did more, and many men who dreamed more, but never any one who united the doing and the dreaming as he did—as Joseph did among his brethren of old—as he did among ourselves. In him, again, there was a singular union of metaphysical acumen, of keen discriminating, analytical power, with a genuine poetic gift. It was the former rather than the latter of these he employed in his preaching—in his pulpit work. I know not why ; but I believe he thought that his strength lay in that, and was resolved to serve God with his best. It seemed to me, at least, in those days, that he was quite unequalled as a preacher when he would take up and preach with a metaphysical depth such a text as this, which was a great favourite with him—‘The good that I would, that I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do.’ Though he had such wealth of illustration and resource in his poetic power, he does not seem to have employed it very copiously, for it may have sometimes happened that audiences not trained to very subtle reasoning failed to follow him down into these depths. What rare power of pictorial illustration he possessed ; and what a poetic gift he had ! Of this, his hymns, his little lyrics, and longer poems—many of which were printed, and some left unpublished—bore ample testimony, for I am not sure he very well knew of his power ; he was so very modest, very humble. How often true genius is unconscious of itself, and the highest are often the humblest ! Then, when you put all the philosophical and poetical on the one side, see how very practical he could be, on the other ! Just as content, if need were, to hew wood and draw water in the courts of the temple, as to bring the holy oil and light the golden lamps. Now, speculating on free will and fate ; now, singing little melodies, which shall be sung long after he is dead, long after you are dead ; now, preaching

sermons Bishop Butler might have preached ; now, writing larger poems in which his measures are all rhythmic, like the roll of the ocean, or the ripple of the brook, his words being full of music and of picture, and dreams of beauty floating round him on the mystic wind that blows as it listeth. Then, on the other hand, see how practical ! Formulating hard, dry statistics, making out minutes, or merely copying minutes verbatim, word for word, diligently, with all the precision and accuracy of a notary or common office clerk. Well, I don't know which to admire most in him, but all showed that he was not a partial, but in those respects, a perfect man. Then, in the higher ranges of the spiritual and moral life, there was in him, as you all know, a striking union, and a perfect balance of the contrasted graces of strength and gentleness. I have known some men as gentle, and some men as strong, but never any in whom gentleness and strength were so harmoniously united. The oak, which is the strongest of all trees, has the most delicate and gentle leaves, and such I sometimes thought was Dr. Bruce, but rather in him the gentleness predominated. The sweet music of his beautiful life was the sweetest hymn he ever made. He did not only work and pray by turns, but he did so simultaneously, praying always—in the street, in the household, in society, and in solitude, walking always with his God. Yet he had no air of sanctity about him, no put-on piety ; no man was more free of affectation of this kind, but all the more you felt that God was with him of a truth—that a mysterious, holy presence hung around him—an atmosphere of serenity, of purity, and peace.

The sermon which preceded was also one of those which he selected for delivery on special occasions ; and, it will be observed, contains two of his most striking pictures—the dream of his trial before

the judgment-seat of God; and the personification of the Christian virtues.

“To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”\*

*Phil. i. 21.*

“It was the prayer of Balaam, the false-hearted prophet, who darkened the life that was in him—‘Let me die the death of the righteous, let my last end be like his’—and when he stands forth uttering this prayer, priest-like, before the world, all the people of the world say at once, with down-bowed heads—‘Amen.’ If you have ever seen the death-bed of the just, as I have recently seen it, how desirable is such an end! He (Dr. Bruce) said in his own calm, deliberate way—‘Yes, Christ is won; a victory!’ But we must win it too, by faith, by prayer. There was a little weeping, but not much, all through the night, and in the dim grey of a November morning, the trumpets were sounding, and the victory was won; and who returning from a scene like that could not pray earnestly—‘Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.’ I dare scarcely touch the death-bed scene—to draw aside the curtains, where lies the breathless body. Have you observed how few death-bed scenes—next to none at all, are described in the Scriptures? You may have been surprised at that, and even disappointed. You would wish to know how it was that David died. Was it amid his nobles and councillors, and, commending his spirit to God, he gathered up his feet in his bed and died peacefully? Then

This discourse was preached at Cambridge in 1879—fuller, no doubt, as he had no remarks to make after—and the *Cambridge Independent Press* then said:—“We should imagine no one who heard it will readily forget it. Spiritual insight, profound thought, rich feeling, felicity of language, wealth of illustration, bursts of original poetry, and stories of tender pathos, all lent their aid and their charm to the composition, and it was set off by a delivery which was, perhaps, peculiar, but certainly effective.”

the nobles and councillors must have gathered round him, and, lifting their hands, said, 'Mark the perfect man,' 'Behold he is asleep, surely the latter end of that man is peace.' Brothers and sisters, I am sure you would wish to know how Mary died, the Mary of Bethany. Was it on some quiet Lord's-day morning, I wonder, in the peaceful village, beyond the hills, when the Master came and called her, and she went forth to meet Him when death fell upon her? Or did she die of a slow lingering consumption, with the hectic on her cheek, and the death-light in her eye; and did her sister Martha minister to her? was Lazarus there, he who had been brought to life from his four-days' grave? And as she lay with upturned marble face amidst a cloud of raven hair, did the neighbours come in to comfort her sister; did they look upon the other, lying spotless, with hands crossed on her breast, as when in prayer at Jesus' feet; did the neighbours lift their hands and say—'Mary, Mary, thou hast chosen the good part that shall never be taken away from thee?' I do not know—I cannot tell—Scripture has not told us, and does not open up to us scenes like these. Hundreds of victories in Christ's grace there must have been, but they are all withdrawn from our view, 'ere ever the silver cord is loosed, and the golden bowl be broken.' 'To me to live is Christ.' I am sure you will remember, that the pastor, who is gone, insisted most earnestly that the death of Christ was the ransom of his life; and I say it, because the longer I live, the more I preach, and whether I preach or not, the more I am persuaded, that all really right-hearted men begin just somewhere thereabout, by knowing this, that we deserve to die. and knowing that Christ has died, that so we might not die. Deserve to die! and that not only death temporal, the resolving of the body into dust, but the more terrible other death—who knows how terrible it is? 'Because of sin, death entered into the world.' Well I know some say there was death in the world, and dying here upon this earth, before man fell at all. Our young scientist in geol-



ogy looks back into the past and tells us that there were multitudes of creatures of all sizes sporting in the misty sea, or roaming through the tangled forest of the rude primeval world, and sees them not only living, but sees them die, to be shut up in stony sepulchres that remain with us to this day, until the geologist opens them with his iron hammer, *rifling the Dunecht charnel-house of the world*. I do not doubt that the young geologist sees all that, and it is not at variance in the least with the grand old respect for the Word of God, coming down through centuries, and which abides, though all the sciences, unsaying to-day what they said yesterday, should rise up with a whirl of blasphemy against it. I have no doubt, for my part, that there was dying of creatures on earth before man fell—I do not wonder at it; but, my brethren, if we begin to think of it, there was a death far more terrible than that, in the universe, before man fell. There was not only death affecting the body, but death affecting the spirit—the soul; there was not only the death of animals, there was the death of angels. The awful tidings had been heard in heaven before man fell, whispering that there was one of the holy angels dead. What, dead! I see him going down from the shining gates of the Celestial City, black-browed, hearse-like, crossing the shadows of worlds, down to the infernal vaults, an angel of heaven! I sometimes think if I were a painter I would like to paint a picture like that. But there was not only one; there were many. Satan was the one, and the whole of his rebel host—a third part of the heavenly throng, they say—swept down into that terrible place; and that was spiritual death, alienated from the life to come. There was death of both kinds before man fell—death in the body in its lower ranges; and the soul in its more awful desertion. And what was the kind of death announced to man? Why, it was the terrible union of those two—the death, on the one side, of the beasts that perish; and, on the other hand, the awful death of the rebellious angels. Sad thing it is, if we do not misread the word of God, this terrible

double death which is up to this hour realized whenever any unconverted sinner dies ; and the sad strange thing is, that we men and women in this world think so little about it. Yes, there is an unconverted one lying in his chamber, and friends sitting about, talking about the weather, about politics, and the state of trade, and about the affairs in Egypt, and the price of iron and corn—anything !—and even Christian friends do not seem very much concerned, though beneath that shroud a man lies dead in a double sense, shall I say the awful words—‘body and soul.’ And if it be so, what are we to do—continue to defy the eternal God? No! Christ died that so we might not die but live—‘Surely He has borne our sins and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him smitten, stricken of God, and afflicted ; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed,—‘God has so loved us that He has given His only begotten Son’—that He might spare us He has not spared Him—His death upon the cross becomes a substitute even of the double death—Christ’s death becomes the substitute for my double death. Do you believe this? Well, I do, for one ; and it is thus I have learned to say, ‘to me to live is Christ.’

As I wandered through the wilderness of this world, I alighted on a certain place and dreamed, and in my dream it seemed to me I was condemned to die. I did not know for what crime it was—it might be theft, idolatry, or murder—it rather seemed to me it was all these in one—for, evermore, heralds’ voices went ringing through the judgment-hall in which I stood—‘He that keepeth the whole law and yet offends in one point is guilty of all ;’ but what was chiefly charged against me was the awful crime of having murdered, of having crucified, the King’s Son. There were three counts in the indictment against me—First, having eaten forbidden fruit ; second, of having broken all the holy laws ; third, the dreadful one of having crucified the King’s own Son. I

pleaded not guilty to the first and third, and only partly guilty to the second. Then the witnesses came forth against me; and the first witness, I remember, on the first count, the charge of having ate forbidden fruit, was a very old man, who said he had come from the Garden of the Fall, where he had eaten forbidden fruit, and that he was my father, and that I had sinned in him and fallen with him in the first transgression; and as he renders his evidence, there is something in my heart that says, in spite of me, 'That is true.' And the second witness, on the second charge of having broken all the holy law, was a meek man in middle life, who said he had come from Mount Sinai in the wilderness, and he held up against me in evidence the broken tables of the law. And the third witness, on the terrible count of having murdered the King's Son, I looked who he should be. It was the King's own Son Himself, with His face so young, so pale, so sorrowful. He did not speak a word. He only turned and looked on me. I wept bitterly. Then my accuser pointed to my guilt and doom out of an old written book; and strange hanging memories of guilt came over me, and an evil sense of murder I had, somehow, done; and even the Judge's face grew dark, His brow grew stern, His cheek grew white, and the trumpet sounded, and He rose and pronounced on me the dreadful sentence—'Thou shalt surely die!' and I was carried, fainting, from the judgment seat. It was midnight, and the night before the morning of the day appointed for the execution. I was lying in my dungeon; the bell of midnight tolled heavily, and I was moaning through my fitful slumber, 'What must I do to be saved?' when One stood beside me, visible as by a halo of sunlight. I knew Him well again—that face so young, so pale, so sorrowful, but lovely now: 'chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely.' He said—'Poor brother, give Me thy prison dress, and I will die for thee.' When He stood there arrayed in my prison dress, He looked so like to me that I thought He was my brother; but so majestic, too, I knew at

once He must be God. I said—‘Thou die for me?’ He said—‘Yes; it was arranged in Royal council long before.’ So, when the dim gray morning came, they led Him forth instead of me; and somehow the scene changed, and now I was in the City of the Passover: it was spring-time, and there were great crowds of people on the streets, dark-robed priests, and cursing soldiers; and the meek and gentle Jesus they led to a place called Golgotha, and crucified Him; and, as I stood there, He turned His dying eyes to me and cried out, ‘Vindicate the atonement made!’ and the voice ran up to heaven, and back there came sweet, silvery voices that broke all around me, and said—‘Live! live!’—so now I live because Christ died for me, even through His death.

Christian brother, that is no dream; it is the most real of all realities, in this most dream-like world, to you and to me; and if anyone asks me, why I, who was condemned to die, do still live on, this is my answer—‘To me to live is Christ.’ But not only is the death of Christ the ransom of my life, but the spirit of Christ is the source of my life. Man is a new creature, born again in the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. He has not only leave to life—he has far more than that—he has life to life, a new life, for here I crave you to distinguish between leave to live and life to live; and, to illustrate this, I will take the following comparison:—Beneath the wayside hedges, in the opening summer months, you will find a dark brown caterpillar. So vile a little worm it is that you think of killing it at once, until, on second thought—and second thoughts are often the best:

“He prayeth best who loveth best,  
All things both great and small,  
For the great God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all,”—

you spare the little creature’s life, and on this second thought the small, dark brown caterpillar gets leave to

live. But mark what takes place. The vile little worm you had almost killed, see, it weaves itself a snowy silken thread, see how it makes a cave of a nettle leaf, see how it binds itself overhead in silver threads, and hangs there, waving in the summer breezes, till, when the season is advancing, and there comes a richer warmth in the air, and the skies are bright over land and sea, he comes out in beautiful attire, and floats away in the summer sunlight—a resplendent butterfly is that dark brown caterpillar you almost killed! He has got leave to live, and now has beauty and power. Formerly he crawled upon the ground, and fed upon the nettles, now he floats away on the golden sunlight, and feeds on the roses, and drinks from their dewdrops on their blushing leaves. Saved man has not only leave to live, but a new life to live. He has a new quarter in God's holy kingdom. Whence then this new life? I think the Scripture says expressly, it is Christ's death that has opened up the influences of spiritual life in time and eternity—'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.' In the words of him who has 'gone before':—

"The seed we bury in the earth,  
'Midst dust and darkness lies;  
Awaiting there a second birth,  
And, to be quickened, dies."

So you must be crucified with Christ in order that you may wake in newness of life. Are you possessed of this life? I ask the question because there are just two classes in this church, in this city, in this world—they are the living and the dead. Who are they, the living? They are those in whom Christ lives, and the dead are all the rest! What are you living for? What is it that attracts your feelings in a strong unbroken current towards itself? Is it the world? fame? wealth? earthly friends? Take care of him you call your friend. They are not easily got back again when once taken away. I knew a mother

once who gave her whole heart to a favourite son, but he grew up a drunken reprobate, and broke the heart and twisted the arms that were twined around him. Give your heart to the world, and it will kill you with its slow poison; give it to fame, and that Will o' the Wisp leads to sorrow and vexation; give it to earthly friends, and they will make sport of it ere long; give it to Christ, and all is safe and well. Oh, how happy is he who can say with the apostle, 'To me to live is Christ.' I live for Jesus, and if you do this, when your death comes it will be a gainful death—no doubt of that. What gain to a believer?—eternal gain! What gain in knowledge?—we shall 'no more see as through a glass darkly, but face to face.' Sometimes I think of the great eternity as of a fine old cathedral, with saints and angels singing in the lofty galleries, and of myself as a child, scrambling over the tombstones outside, and looking in through the coloured windows to the 'dim religious light,' longing for the door to be opened, or the window to be raised; and oh, I hope to you and me shall be opened the glass through which we darkly see; and we all be angels, though it be necessary to go down to death to enter the great temple, and join the heavenly choir. So runs my dream, for what am I but an infant crying for the light. One must speak very cautiously on this subject, but I have sometimes said that if I had my choice I would not enter heaven by any other road but that which is a black pit called death. I would not miss the opportunity of overcoming the sharpness of death, that I might carry with me through eternity the remembrance, and the palm branch of that victory. And shall not the heavenly land be all the brighter in the end, my brothers and sisters, for that 'dark bridge of sighs,' called death, by which we enter? But death is not death at all—death is abolished! It is a mere transition from one world to another, bringing together the mourning friends and the ministry of angels—the breaking of the heart strings and the tuning of the harp strings—the breaking of the 'golden bowl' and the bringing forth of



the golden crown. Where is death? I cannot see it anywhere—it is excluded!—it is abolished!—and ‘life and immortality brought to light’ instead.

It may be possible for one who has not lived a righteous life to say—‘To me to live is Christ,’ for I remember here that poor penitent thief on the cross, who, dying, cried for mercy, and he found it. When others see in the penitent thief much worthiness, I see rather much unworthiness; when others see a very model of repentance, I see rather imperfect impenitence; when others see in him a very great consideration for others, I see a great selfishness for his own safety—I see a man perishing upon the cross, and hell beneath, and the great red flames tossing up their arms to drag him down in their embrace, and turning round his leaden-eye in the lurid light he reads, if he can read, or hears some one read, upon the cross,—‘*Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.*’ He thinks there is some hope for him yet. It can make matters no worse; it may make his position better, and he cries—‘Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom.’ And Jesus said, ‘Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.’ I magnify the conversion of that poor heathen, and yet I don’t want to die like the penitent thief, crying bitterly for mercy at the last hour. Rather should it be with us, as with St. Paul, sailing away in the ship of death—‘I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.’

Methought I saw a beautiful blind sister open the gates of Heaven; her name was Faith, and she just opened them wide enough for the soul to enter. But after her there came a brother, brave, a soldier, in arms; he opened them wider still—his name was Virtue-Bravery. Then after him there came another brother, pale, student-like,



with a book in the one hand ; his name was Knowledge—he opened them wider still. After him there came another sister, a nymph of ruddy, healthy hue ; her name was Temperance—she opened them wider still. Another sister came, with downcast eyes ; her name was Patience—she opened them wider still. After her a brother, with prayerful lips and countenance ; his name was Godliness—he opened them wider still ; and was followed by another, called Brotherly-Kindness, who, with outstretched arms, opened them wider still. I wondered if there were any more : yes, there was one, a sister. Up she comes ; she has been visiting in the huts where poor men dwell, with a basket on her arm, and a bible in her hand, and she opens the gate widest of all—her name, they said, was Charity. And as I wondered what this might mean, I heard a voice saying, ‘Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ,’ and, if so, a blessing shall be ministered to you abundantly in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. Amen.’” \*

Another old friend, Dr. Young of Kelly, died 13th May, 1883 ; and Dr. Robertson was asked to preach at the evening service in Skelmorlie U.P. Church, on the Sunday following the funeral. His text was, “Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. i., 10) ; and in course of his remarks he happily illustrated the doctrine of immortality in the old Testament, there only dimly taught,

\* Specially reported for *The Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald*.

through a suggestive analogy. He said:—"Just as he whose death we are this day remembering with sorrow, found imbedded in the caverns of the earth the dark substance by which he has illuminated the homes of rich and poor in many lands, so did Christ bring to light the doctrine of a future life. The shale was in the earth long before, but it was Dr. Young who revealed its illuminating power. Even so, the doctrine of immortality, imbedded in Old Testament passages, was practically unrevealed until He came who brought life and immortality to light."

## CHAPTER XI.

### Anniversary and Christmas Eve Services.

Cost of Trinity Church—Anniversary Services—Catholicity of choice in the assisting Ministers—A Church Service—Hymn, "At a Baptism,"—Christmas Eve Service—Excitement in consequence—Article in *United Presbyterian Magazine*—Presbyterial Action—Mr. Robertson's defence from the charge of ritualism—Practice—continued.

THE cost of the erection of Trinity Church was over £7000, and notwithstanding the liberality of members of the congregation, and the generous contributions of friends outside, at the opening a debt of considerable amount rested on the building. To lighten and ultimately remove this debt, services other than those commemorative of Mr. Robertson's introduction to the pastorate were instituted. They were usually held in autumn—the foundation stone of the Church having been laid in August—and were looked forward to with interest by many in the neighbourhood, as well as by the congregation, for the intellectual and spiritual stimulus received. The pastor was catholic in his

choice of ministerial brethren asked to assist on those occasions, thus giving practical illustration of true Christian union and his own breadth and liberality. As was meet, at the laying of the foundation stone, as we have seen, there was present the moderator of the U.P. Synod, the Rev. Dr. Robson; at the opening services were the Rev. Dr. Cairns and the Rev. Alex. M'Ewan; and the Rev. Dr. Eadie and Rev. Mr. Hutton afterwards assisted. In subsequent years the Free Church was associated with Trinity Church and its pastor, in the ministrations of the Rev. Dr. Buchanan and the Rev. Dr. Walter C. Smith; the Congregational Communion, in the ministrations of the Rev. Mr. Batchelor and Dr. Pulsford; the Established Church, in those of Professor Caird; and at the services previous to his illness, the Rev. Dr. Edmond of London, now of the English Presbyterian Church, was the assisting minister.

For seven years these were red-letter days in the congregational life of Trinity Church. Everything conspired to elevate the thought and solemnly impress the heart of the hearer. There were the beautiful surroundings, the influence of numbers, an atmosphere charged with a feeling of expectancy, but more than all, as a spiritual stimulus, there was the living form which the service took, shaped by the artistic mind of the pastor himself. These anniversary occasions are now only

memories, but never-to-be-forgotten memories, to all who were privileged to take part in them.

The three correlatives, as he called them—praise, prayer, and preaching—were built up by him on the principle of a progressive unity. The praise was perfectly rendered by a congregation that for many years had been taught that, of the three, praise stood highest with God. Standing statuesquely in the desk, as the singing proceeded, with countenance lit up, he would move to the rhythm of the music, while the choir, at the same time, seemed touched with a like feeling,—an electric spiritual current passing between them. The music thus took a deeper tone; and a meaning, never discerned before, unfolded itself in the hymn, to choir, singers, and congregation. The prayer which followed, naturally drew inspiration from the elevation and emotion begotten of the singing—hence his prayers can only be described as rapt utterances, full of holy yearnings and aspirations, breathing as from golden censers the incense of a pure sacrifice; and, while fitting into the higher service of praise, they led up to the central thought of the discourse which, at such special times, was often a prose poem. Believing that souls were to be reached and lured heavenwards through the imagination, he waylaid and surprised his hearers with visions of beauty, and by thoughts which only a poet—and a poet

inspired by the Divine Spirit—could suggest. Thus, when he spake to them of the holy land on whose mountains angels alit, their wings radiant with the dew of heaven; or of men in whose ears God had whispered the secret of the future,\* they felt new emotions of delight, and the silence would become so intense, that, when the speaker would intone *The Sanctus*, ascribing honour to Him whose glory fills not only the heavens but the earth, a hearer imbued with his own spirit might almost fancy that he heard the flutterings of seraph wings. Need we wonder, therefore, that by his preaching the “door posts” of the temple of many hearts were moved, and their spirits filled with a

\* “Rapt into future times Isaiah sees the temple of ‘the House of His glory’ glorified. He sees it shining with a marvellous brightness out into the darkness of surrounding heathendom—yet not with any brightness of its own. Though, with its marble walls, its golden roof, its glittering pinnacles under the lustrous sunlight of that oriental land, it is said to have completely dazzled the eyes of all beholders—yet not with any brightness of its own does it so shine; but ‘because her light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon her;’ and see! Gentiles coming to her light; crowned and sceptred monarchs to the brightness of her rising; crowds of pilgrims emerging from the circling heathen darkness marching to her shrine; citizens and soldiers from the landward regions; islanders and sailors from the sea; and penitents, among the rest, with tears in their eyes, that, erewhile, had despised her, but that now are glad to come and worship and kneel down at her feet, with retinue of camels and dromedaries laden with the gold of Sheba for her treasury, the perfumes of Arabia for incense at her altars, and cedar wood and pine of Lebanon to beautify the place of her sanctuary, while Kedar sends his whitening flocks, and Nebaioth his rams, for sacrifice—for so, in panoramic vision of the future times, Isaiah sees God ‘glorifying the House of His glory.’”—*Discourse on Isaiah lx. 7.*



sense of the presence of the Lord, as the smoke of the glory-cloud filled the temple of old.\*

A suggestive part of the service was the remarks on the Scripture readings with which he often prefaced the discourse. At the opening of Trinity Church, it will be remembered, Jacob's leaving Beersheba, and his vision of the mystic ladder, were applied to their leaving the old church, with its associations and lessons, and to their hopes of spiritual blessing in entering the new. At anniversary times this prologue to the sermon gave variety to the unity, and from the personal application of the teaching could not fail to make a most lasting impression on the hearers. A brief illustrative example may be given from the service held January 7, 1866. The beginning of a new year suggests the need of a revival; and so, after reading Numbers xxiv. and Hosea xiv., he remarked that these two passages presented two pictures of God's Church:

\* Dr. Walter C. Smith assisted at Commemorative Services, January, 1866, when the pastor preached from the words, "There was silence in heaven for the space of half-an hour." "What his line of thought was," he says in *Good Words*, "I cannot now tell, but I remember a series of pictures, of the white horse, the red horse, the black horse, and the pale horse with its rider Death, and how the preacher declined to give any historic account of those symbols, but wrought out a high ethical purpose from the apocalyptic vision. That was the first time I heard him preach, and the effect he produced on me was exactly the same as I have often experienced since. It was not the power of eloquence, but of poetry. He was an *improvisatore* rather than an orator. You were not so much roused to action, as rapt in wonder and delight."



“One summer morning, hundreds of years ago, Balaam looked down from the top of Mount Peor, on the wide-spread encampment of the Israelites, stretching out to the east, west, north, and south, with the pillar of smoke in the midst over the tabernacle, and looking at it he exclaims : ‘How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob ; and thy tabernacles, O Israel ! as the valley are they spread forth, as gardens by the river’s side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters.’ The second picture, found in Hosea, was also taken from the kingdom of green leaves. On the slope of a mountain-side is a garden, and a forest. It is a summer morning, and the dew is sparkling on the grass, on the flowers, and on the waving corn ; it is upon the cedar, the olive, and the vine ; and as the dew is to the lilies among the grass and the trees of Lebanon, in its refreshing and reviving power, so God promises to be to His people Israel. At the beginning of this, another year, as a people, it was this refreshing dew of God’s grace that was required. A revival was wanted that would cause genuine religion to spring up, as the dew caused the corn to spring up, so strongly and yet so silently.”

“The temple of Holy Character,”\* already referred to, was occasionally used in the form of a prefatory reading, or as a communion address. He would read the 5th chapter of Matthew, and then proceed to describe the house or temple of holy character as having in front a lower range of three pillars, three corresponding pillars in the upper range, with a transverse beam between, and a crown or pediment above :—

“On the first pillar of the lower range was inscribed—  
“Blessed are the poor in spirit ;” on the second pillar—

\* See Page 68,

“Blessed are they that mourn ;” and on the third—“Blessed are the meek.” On the transverse beam, the inscription was—“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness ;” on the first pillar of the upper range—“Blessed are the merciful,” on the second pillar—“Blessed are the pure in heart,” on the third—“Blessed are the peace-makers ;” and on the pediment or crown of the whole—“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.” The three pillars of the lower range stood related, he said, to the three parts of man’s nature—the understanding, the conscience, and the will. They had to renounce their own wisdom in coming to Christ, and in doing so, as prophets, they became “poor in spirit ;” as priests, they became mourners for sin ; as kings, they have to renounce their own will, and in doing so, they became meek. Thus the whole man was based on Christ—the rock, the true foundation, and the only one. From the transverse beam, on which was inscribed, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness,” the fabric of the new life rose in beauty above it, as was seen from the pillars inscribed—“Blessed are the merciful,” “Blessed are the pure in heart,” “Blessed are the peace-makers ;” and inasmuch as all real goodness showeth itself in deeds, less or more grand, like Christ’s, who died for them, they had, last of all, on the pediment—“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.” That was the house of holy character, sketched by Christ himself, and he hoped it might be their character that day.”

He would go on further and say, that there was one prayer which might be said to contain the contents of all—the Lord’s prayer.

“It was remarkable as occurring in the very centre of the Sermon on the Mount—in the midway between the description of the house of holy character, and the contrast of that house—the house built on the sand. The various parts of that prayer corresponded to the

various pillars of the house of holy character. "Our Father which art in heaven" corresponded with the rock on which the house was built—Christ himself, who was revealed to them from above. The first petition—"Hallowed be thy name," was especially the prayer of the poor in spirit, who were contented that their own name be dishonoured that God's may be honoured. The second petition—"Thy kingdom come," was especially the prayer of the mourners for sin, who sighed for the coming of the kingdom which is righteousness and peace. The third petition—"Thy will be done," was especially the prayer of the meek. The fourth petition—"Give us this day our daily bread," was in sympathy with the desire of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. The fifth petition—"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us," corresponded with the prayer of the merciful. The sixth petition—"Lead us not into temptation," was the prayer of the pure in heart. The seventh petition—"Deliver us from evil," was especially the prayer of the peace-makers, and the grand doxology—"For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever, Amen," corresponded with the desire of those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, and who are content with no glory, that God may get it all."

The baptismal service was also beautiful and impressive, and, therefore, parents in the congregation had no desire to get their babes baptised at home. Mothers, especially, felt the influence, for as the child was placed in holy keeping by pastor, choir, and congregation each taking a part in the dedicatory service, the circumstance, the scene, the praise, but most of all the prayer, solemnly remained with them through life as a blessed memory.

The hymn, "AT A BAPTISM," originally written for a private occasion, was not used in the Church service, the words not being in the "Presbyterian Hymnal;" but to suit public baptism, if it ever came to be used, it had this alternative added to the first verse:

"Sprinkle, sprinkle, now.  
Blessed Saviour, Thou !"  
"Thou baptise the young immortal  
Entering through the Church's portal,  
Hands, and feet, and brow,  
Sprinkle! sprinkle Thou."

### At a Baptism.

Sprinkle, sprinkle now,  
Blessed Saviour, Thou !  
From Thy white hands sweetest water,  
On this little baby daughter;  
On her fair young brow,  
Sprinkle, sprinkle Thou !

Not by works of right,  
Sin-stained souls come white ;  
Not till Thou, from pit abyssmal  
Raise them, and with wave baptismal  
Wash them clean and bright,  
Sin-stained souls come white.

Jesus, holy child,  
Only undefiled!  
Ne'er was, ne'er shall be another  
Spotless babe of maiden mother  
Like Thee undefiled,  
Jesus, holy child !

Slumbers hidden sin  
Baby's breast within ?  
Our eyes trace not one dark feature  
In so fair and young a creature.  
God's eye sees within,  
Sees that hidden sin.

Sprung from tainted root,  
Buds in beauty shoot ;

But our tree of life is blasted,  
Withered leaves and blossoms wasted ;  
And much bitter fruit  
Shows that tainted root.

Shells that ocean strews,  
All in rainbow hues,  
Round earth's neck stringed necklace tying,  
Soon in air and sunshine lying  
Soon on earth they lose  
All their rainbow hues.

Ling'ring Paradise  
Round the infant lies,  
Sounds, like fading music, ringing  
O'er her, and a deep light springing  
Through those soft mild eyes,  
Ling'ring Paradise !

Eden's *silver* gates,  
Lo ! the black-veiled Fates  
Shut behind Thee ; but the Graces  
Onward lead, with unveiled faces,  
To where Jesus waits  
At Heaven's *golden* gates.

Quenched is Eden's light !  
Quenched in sin's black night !  
Yet, 'tis night our heaven's extending,  
And one brightest star ascending :  
Morning star and bright !  
Pledge of heavenly light.

Richer, nobler life  
Comes through toil and strife,  
Lost one saved excels the angel ;  
Who, through faith, through Christ's evangel,  
Conquers in the strife,  
Wins the crown of life.

Ne'er, then, child of earth  
Ruc thy lowly birth.  
If thy better birthright prizing ;  
If, through Lord Christ's own baptising,  
Born in second birth,  
Thou shalt rise from earth.

Fall'n—though fall to rise,  
Climb to loftiest skies,  
Where the blood-washed robe ranks fairest,  
And those pearls are counted rarest  
Which, beneath the skies,  
Were tears in human eyes.

Come then, blessèd Dove !  
Through cleft heavens above,  
Crown this babe, white-robed ascending ;  
While we on the shore, down bending  
O'er the depths of love,  
Cry,—come blessèd Dove !

In the midst of his work a storm, sudden and unexpected, arose out of a service held on Christmas Eve, 1868, and for a time the pastor of Trinity Church was the innocent cause of no little criticism in quarters where other and better things might have been looked for. We have already seen how readily he inaugurated and encouraged the movement for an improved service of praise in the sanctuary ; and for years he had contemplated framing a liturgy which would be in harmony with Presbyterian forms, and in which praise, prayer, and preaching would each receive its proper place. The service referred to was a first attempt at carrying out the idea, and the usual entertainment given to the Sabbath school children, arranged to fall on, or near, the date of his ordination as minister of the church, was the time chosen. As the beautiful building admirably lent itself to floral decoration, the teachers, with an eye to artistic effect, encircled the massive pillars with

floral wreaths, and inscribed on beam of gallery, in floral characters, the words, "A Merry Christmas." Being Christmas Eve, the services, not altogether, but in part, naturally took their main colouring from the season's festival: sacred song blended with appropriate exercises, breathing deep thanksgivings for the Child born at Bethlehem; these, again, were connected with the life and mission of Him who was the Desire of all Nations. The preacher's thought, from the contemplation of the great event, was full of glowing aspirations after a higher spiritual life, and so solemnizing, that the prevailing feeling, I remember, was that of the disciple on the Mount of Transfiguration—"it is good to be here."

The report proceeds:—After appropriate praise and prayer, Dr. Robertson said—

"The birth of any man child was an interesting event—another added to the many million lives, to the multitude which none can number, who are to stand before the judgment-seat of God; another life from the birth-source, which shall flow on through the channel of mortal life, the gulf of death, and the underground channel of the grave, to the boundless ocean of eternity:—for, once born, one must hold on to think, and live, and feel for ever. Such was the birth of every one who had his time to be born behind him, and his time to die before him still. But how intensely interesting the birth of that child whose name is called 'Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace,' but for whose birth we all must have died eternally, and but for whose birth, it would have been better none of us had



been born. If any one thinks it is wrong to celebrate this birth, he has no business here. This is a meeting of the Church, not of the World; and if the World may keep her birthday anniversaries of kings, nobles, and literary men—Shakespeare and Burns—has not the Church as good a right to keep the birthday of her Lord and Saviour? Shall we not go, even now, to Bethlehem, and see this great thing that has come to pass? Let us go with the shepherds—it was angels bade them go; but let it not only be the angels in Heaven above—these are ministering spirits that still lead man in the right road—that lead us hither; but the angels of the heart within—the angels of peace, and joy, and gratitude to God. Let us go with the wise men, guided with Christ's own star, to the place where Christ was—it may be, that his star shining on our hearts has been the lamp which has guided us to this house of God on this winter night. The service would be chiefly the service of song, and most appropriately so, for the Scripture says, songs are for the merry—‘if any man is merry let him sing.’ This was in no light and frivolous, but in a solemn Scripture sense, a merry Christmas; and the key of all the music to be sung, whether in hymns by the Church, anthems by the choir, or carols by the children, is the same—good tidings of great joy, for unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

The congregation having sung Par. xxxix., 1, 6, and 7, to the beautiful tune Palestrina, the preacher went on to remark:—

“Scarcely had man sinned and fallen, than the promise was given—‘The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head;’ and that, from the opening of the gates of prophecy, when the gates of paradise had closed, down to the closing of those gates, where Malachi stands—a period of near 4000 years—runs an unbroken line of prophecies regarding the Saviour. All the prophecies projected

from that line, at all points, moving along in different curves, more vertical or more oblique, according to their less or greater distance from the fulness of the time—all met upon the head of the babe born in Bethlehem. Isaiah had foretold the manner of His coming, and Daniel the time, and Micah the place; and, at that very place, and time, and manner, He did come. Not more punctually did the revolving seasons bring the summer roses up, or the revolving skies bring the stars, than the revolving ages brought up the Rose of Sharon, and the Bright and Morning Star. The darkest hour precedes the dawn, and, in the dark ages after Malachi, the voice of psalms, as well as prophecy was dumb. And when the Sun of Righteousness arose, like the fabled statue of Memnon that became vocal at sunrise, or the woodlands in morning joy, the voice of Hebrew psalmody broke forth again in Simeon, and Zachariah, and the Virgin Mother, Mary.”

He then read Luke i., 46th, 55th, and from the 56th to the 80th verses.

The order followed:—

*Choir.*—“O, come all ye faithful.”—Music, *Adestes Fideles*.

*Scripture read.*—Luke, i., 8-18.

*Choir.*—“Hark, the herald Angels sing.”—Music from *Mendelssohn*.

#### A PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING.

*Scripture read.*—Matthew, i., 1-12.

*Choir and children.*—“Brightest and best of the sons of the morning.”

#### PRAYER.

*Christmas Carol.*—Beautifully sung by a choir of twenty-four children; thereafter the children were dismissed.

The service was resumed by prayer, and the congregation singing, “Bright and Joyful.” The passage,

Luke i., 68-69, 78-79, was then read, and the preacher delivered a discourse from the words, "The Dayspring from on high, to guide our feet into the path of peace." The discourse occupied over half an hour.

"After illustrating the way of peace—showing the need of it felt in the human breast, though torn by misery, and soiled by sin, and bloated by guilt, yet beneath all there was a word of God, an Alpha and Omega of old original Scripture, that nothing had been able to destroy; for God had made the soul for Himself, and there were infinities within it which only the infinite could fill, eternities which only the eternal could inhabit;—never could her desires be satisfied away from Him; and in all her misery she was haunted with visions of the true, and the good, and the beautiful—the memory of what she had been and the dream of what she might yet be.\* And so in coming to herself, not as she was by nature and by wicked works, but as in conscience and in Christ, she saw what she ought to be—it was her higher, and truer, and nobler self, she felt she needed to give to God. The prodigal came to *himself* and said, 'I will arise and go to my father.' The prodigal, indeed, in the parable might return to the father's house without any special guide to show, or mediator to open up, the way. The memories of his father's house might be enough to guide him back, and of his father's heart to assure him of a welcome when he came. It is not so with us. Though memories of our Father's house, and heart, too, are floating round us here, we need a Mediator between God and man to make our peace, and guide our feet into the way of peace; and this is He who was born at Bethlehem, and of whom Zechariah sang, as the Dayspring from on high, that

\* "The worshipper stood outside with clasped hands, and lips that longed to break forth into song, yearning after God till Christ came and opened the door."—*Discourse, Eph. ii., 14.*

guides our feet into the way of peace. The preacher showed how that, by His incarnation and birth, He joined together, in one person, God and man, who were so far asunder. For unto us a child was born on that old Christmas night, whose name was called the Mighty God. That little baby's face, the face before which earth and heaven shall flee away ; those little eyes, the eyes of Him whose eyes behold all things ; those little hands, the hands of Him whose hands support the universe ; those tiny feet, His feet whose ways are in the sea, and His footsteps in great waters, and the clouds and the lightning are the dust of them.

'He who made the earth and skies,  
Low cradled in a manger lies ;  
And God's incarnate feet and hands,  
Are closely bound with swaddling bands.'

And 'Mary Mother,' singing lullabies to Him whom all the angels are adoring. Go, go to Bethlehem and see God manifest in the flesh, the God and man that were so far asunder in nature, and still further by man's sin, brought together in one person. The preacher then went on to show, that, not only by His birth but also rather by His blood, salvation came to man—for it was not the child that made the peace, but rather the crucified ; not the cradle, but rather the Cross—for it was by His holy beauty, finished work, and perfect righteousness ; by His blessed intercession ; and lastly, by the bestowal of His Holy Spirit to mould our will into harmony with the divine, Jesus guides our feet into the way of peace. Thus five angels met the Pilgrim's soul upon his way back to his father's house, as Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. The first, the Angel of the Birth, saying 'Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy ;' the second, the Angel of the Blood, saying, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee ;' the third, the Angel of Beauty, saying, 'I have clothed thee in white raiment ;' the fourth, the Angel of the Blessed Intercession, saying, 'I bring thee nigh to God ;'

and the fifth, 'the Angel of the Blessed, Holy, Heavenly Dove, saying, 'Peace be with you'\* Did they not seem to hear all those angels singing in the multitude of the heavenly host; nay, rather, they are all one angel, the uncreated angel, Jehovah, who was born in Bethlehem, and who by His birth, His blood, His holy beauty, His blessed intercession, and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, guides our feet into the way of peace. In conclusion, the preacher showed how God's thoughts, that are as high above man's thoughts as the heavens are higher than the earth, are summed up in Christ, the Eternal Word, but that this could not be understood by us until it was translated into our human language of flesh and blood. This was made effectively striking by quoting the phrase, 'The Word was made flesh'—first, in Latin; then, in Greek; then, in German; and lastly, in English. So the Eternal Word was translated into our human language of flesh and blood; for the Dayspring on high had visited us, to guide our feet in the way of peace."

The discourse was followed by, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow." Tune—"Old Hundred," on key A, on which key the preacher repeated the creed, the choir responding "Amen;" and a succession of prayers, in which the choir led the responses. The Lord's Prayer was repeated, the choir singing "Amen," and then rendering the beautiful Christmas anthem, "In the Beginning." Prayer followed—the

\* His references to the ministry of Angels were always suggestive and beautiful. Thus:—"On that mystic ladder—Christ—descended the Angel of Pardon, with his proclamation of acquittance; the Angel of Purity, with his white robe; the Angel of Comfort, with his healing balm; the Angel of Peace, with his olive branch; the Angel of Joy, with his trumpet; and the Angel of Victory, with his palm."—*Discourse*, Eph. ii., 14.

whole service concluding with Augustine and Ambrose's grand hymn, the "Te Deum," and the benediction.

However beautiful and suggestive, the service was regarded, in certain quarters, as a dangerous innovation ; and, when individual members of the Kilmarnock Presbytery would not be prevailed upon to move in the matter, by instituting a Presbyterial inquiry, a minister of the Church, at the request of the then editor of the *U.P. Magazine*, was found willing enough to write a condemnatory article for its pages, on the ground that it was an attempt, within the bounds of the Presbyterian Church, to revive the observance of Christmas as a religious festival. It was an uncharitable production, as such productions usually are ; and, without the slightest hesitation, the writer pronounced the observance of Christmas, "for aught we know, a presumptuous opposition to the Divine will, . . . a mere human invention, savouring of will-worship, and, may be, calling forth from the great Head of the Church the disapproving interrogatory, Who hath required this at your hand ?" Two sentences may be quoted to show the animus which ran through the whole article :—

"There were hymns and anthems, and a Christmas carol, sung by a choir of children—the *precise number of the elders in the Apocalypse.*"

The words italicised are not in the report, and the

readers of the *Magazine* did not require to be reminded that John saw, in Apocalyptic vision, twenty-four elders standing round the throne. The insinuation is obvious. The writer wanted his readers to believe that twenty-four children had been selected to sing the Christmas carol, because such is the number of elders in the vision, but for such an absurd inference he had not the slightest ground. Again,

“The effect [of the scene] was striking, it is said, and we do not doubt the fact; but it might have been more striking still *by the slight addition of an altar, a little incense, and white raiment.* The service is said to have been solemn and impressive: neither do we call this in question, *but the same thing may be said of High Mass.*”

Perhaps it would, but there was neither altar nor incense, nor white raiment, and the writer should have based his criticism on what was, and not on what might have been.

The congregation of Trinity Church was indignant at the treatment their minister had received in the *Magazine*, and the Presbytery took prompt action. The article appeared in the February issue (1869), and on the 9th of the same month the Presbytery met. There had, indeed, previously been mutterings of dissatisfaction at the service, in certain quarters. At the time, a Joint Committee of the Free and U.P. Churches were actively engaged negotiating a basis



for Union between the two bodies, and it was feared that were ministers of the latter Church to begin and take liberties with the Directory, the negotiations would suffer. Liberty in non-essentials was to be sacrificed to expediency.

The Presbytery's action was somewhat halting. They declined to say whether or not a congregation had a right to hold a Christmas service, if they so chose, but complained that a gross ecclesiastical irregularity had been committed, in that the writer, without a single word of communication with a brother under their protection, had openly attacked him. By thus limiting their complaint, they laid themselves open to be told, as the editor did in the April issue, that the *Magazine* was private property; and the writer's criticism was no more than what the press claimed everywhere—the right to animadvert on anything taking place. The public took a healthier view than the Presbytery. In the newspaper correspondence which followed, the members were told that liberties of all kinds were taken in Presbyterian churches, and it was their duty to have protected that liberty; that they should have shown their sympathy with the cry for improved psalmody, more devout devotional exercises, and a higher type of church service, by signifying their approval of the attempt made in Trinity Church to combine, within strict Presbyterian forms, responses

which at one time were part of the service of the Scottish Church. It was contended that to take up no higher ground than mere ecclesiastical irregularity, and simply express satisfaction with the explanations that were given, was to leave the original complaint where it was, and the liberties of ministers and congregations in no better position than before.

It transpired in the course of the proceedings, that Mr. Robertson had been in correspondence with an "honoured minister" of the Church, who had asked for an explanation. His letter, to the friend referred to, only touched on the two points—Christmas-keeping and ritualism—and he offered, as the best course in the circumstances, to read it. The request was granted, and after vindicating himself, as he could easily do, from the charge, in this instance, of Christmas-keeping, because never appointed or represented as a Christmas service, but only allowed to take a Christmas type, he proceeded to deal with the further charge of ritualism :—

"It is not said," he continued, "what ritualism is, or how the thing concerns us at all: and were I speaking anywhere but here, or as a special pleader for myself, I should, of course, before proceeding, ask that it should be said what ritualism is, and where, in our meeting, any one pretends to find it. But I am pursuing an entirely different line, laying open freely every point at which offence is, to me, possibly conceivable, and, likely enough, suggesting many that might not otherwise have been thought of; so that, like the poor prisoner under

Prussian law that is examined without knowing the specific charge against him, if not found guilty of one thing, may be found guilty of another; but with a *mens conscia recti*, I can perfectly afford to do all that; and with the most ingenuous surprise, I ask them, where is there ritualism? Hundreds cry out against ritualism, not one of whom seems to have the least idea of what it is. Thanks to Lord Cairns, who is going to the heart of the matter, and helping us all to see more clearly what it is—what this ritualism is, and that the real battle with these Ritualists is no mere outside, or right and left wing skirmishing, as so many suppose, against millinery and lighted candles, and the like, but a real, central, earnest life-and-death struggle with that Popish Sacramentarian lie that has used these things less as a dress in which to show itself, than as a mask in which to go disguised. Put out the candles, and the deadly fire will burn as fierce as ever. Deny the outcome in the form, as Dr. Pusey says, and the doctrine will only be driven back the more strongly upon the heart. But put out the fire, and the candles may burn if they like, but they will go out soon enough, and nobody will think it worth his while to light them. The Ritualists of to-day will be the Sacramentarians of to-morrow. The paradox is coming out that ritualism itself is a non-essential with the Ritualists. The essential of ritualism is its priesthood and unfinished sacrifice. It puts as mediator the man and the Mary betwixt God and me, and sees that man and Mary displacing Jesus Christ, the only man who can mediate betwixt God and my soul. It holds that the sacrifice of Christ is not finished yet, that, in virtue of His omnipresence and eternity as God, which prevade all space and all duration, His body in its union with His Godhead may be said to extend over all the earth and through all time, so that it is still sacrificing in their churches as on a constant Calvary, and on their altars as on a perpetual Cross; and their priest can bring the sacrifice, then and there made from the altar, and place

it on the people's lips for the salvation of their souls. There is the essential of ritualism! Is the sacrifice of Christ finished or not finished! 'It is finished!' Jesus cries from Calvary: 'No,' says the Ritualist, 'It is *not* finished yet; it is making to-day, and to-morrow, and the third day also it will not be perfected! That is the lie—the Sacramentarian lie—which is the essential of ritualism; and those who describe ritualism as something altogether different should see to it that they are not leading attention away from the central doctrine of the finished sacrifice that is assailed. And where, then, I ask, with us is the ritualism? Altar, priest, eucharistic sacrifice, confessional, mariolatry, scores of abominations, of which Rome is the mother—against these, the best protest I could make, I thought, was the simple preaching of the gospel of the way of peace, that night, through Jesus Christ alone. Feebly enough, God knows, but how sincere—and stern to deadly earnestness—of Protestant and evangelical sincerity. He also knows, and, I will add, *He* only knows, who looketh not as man looketh, on outward appearances, but who looketh into the heart. But passing this, which lies beyond the question, and coming to the mere appearance—the mere form or dress of ritualism—I ask again,—where is the ritualism? Does ritualism use liturgies? They may be good enough for some people, but we had none. Instrumental music is very commonly introduced at soirees, though there is an edict of our Church against it; but we had none. Psalm-singing, processions through the church, as you may sometimes see at Highland sacraments? We had none. Does ritualism multiply forms? It may be rather said that we abridged them. For as ritualism employs chants, we did not use them—not even an ordinary chant—not to say a ritualistic Gregorian, though these are now pretty much used in our churches, and were recommended to us by the Synod's Musical Committee within a year ago. Does ritualism use vestments? Then I did not wear the pulpit gown

Lighted candles? The gas burning dimly, so that I could not see well to read over the hymns, the officer would have brought me candles, and had them in the vestry, when I forbade him. It seems ridiculous to refer to this, but let the ridicule fall in the right quarter. Most truly, is it said, our meeting was distinguished by the absence and severe exclusion of whatever is, or even might be, supposed to be ritualistic; for lastly, here, does ritualism exist, as it is commonly, perhaps, supposed to do, in a slavish adherence to set forms that deaden and cramp the very spirit of true worship? Does it? and should it then have been counted to us ritualism, if that night, for once, we had broken away from our Presbyterian ritualism altogether, left our good old revered forms of worship, and burst away into quite fresh and new scenes, just to show that we were not ritualists? Did we then do this? No; we were too stern Presbyterians for that, and we kept, as I think, a more excellent way. We adhered to the good old forms of free prayer, read Scripture, and delivered address, the only liberty being taken, as aforesaid, with the music. But the prayers throughout were free, and not liturgical; the sermons and addresses were delivered and not read; nothing was read but the hymns and Scriptures, and they were read openly. Even the music was vocal only, and nothing instrumental was allowed; and had the difficult problem been presented to you to construct a meeting that should at once be a protest against ritualism, and yet do homage to our Presbyterian ritual, to which it must adhere, and not depart from it in making that protest, how under these severe conditions could the meeting have been otherwise conducted?—how possibly could the problem otherwise have been better solved? Of course there was an order in the service. The Scripture says, ‘Let all things be done decently and in order,’ but any arranging was not done beforehand, and it was only revealed to the audience as the meeting went on, and not programmed to them as a church service, a concert, or soiree. I would not follow the path indicated by

any liturgy, however excellent and lawful, to be taken. Presbyterian freedom in worship is a far greater thing than liturgical bondage, and the effect of the whole, in its order and connection, on any thoughtful mind, in its relation to ritualism was meant to be, and most emphatically was, to show that prayer combines itself with the other parts of worship so as to form a succession of devotional sentiment that shall elevate the mind from a lower to a higher stage of the spiritual life, far better by being left free, than being hindered under the guise of help, by set form of words of any ritual or liturgy. It might not be worth while trying to show this, but certainly when it is shown, and shown successfully, it is strange to find it mocked at as ritualism. It might, however, still be said that the *tout ensemble* had a ritualistic look, for ritualism affects the artistic and ornate, and there seemed in our meeting some straining after those. With respect to the artistic, there was nothing more of that on my part—if so much as—than what I try to use every Sabbath in giving a living unity to the church service as a whole. I would not like to be that minister who leads the worship of God's people in a slovenly style, who makes piety stand for want of preparation, and excuses slothfulness in worship as Presbyterian simplicity. It surely needs more true artistic power to mould, by the help of God, our simple Presbyterian forms into a living and effective unity, than to run through the wearisome routine of a mechanical liturgic ritual. Never would I submit, on any account, to be tied down to a set form of movement and of words that ever more repeats itself—itsself, nothing else—from Sabbath to Sabbath. I would incorporate into the church service time-hallowed words and forms of devotion that the Church has used for centuries, and it might be well if we had more of that, but that is a very different thing from selling one's birthright of free prayer for the mess of pottage of liturgy. This, however, is going aside from the subject. I only wanted to say that art—true art—is free, and the more you are of a true



artist, the less you will be of a ritualist or formalist. And as for the ornate, I might argue, if it were required at all, to vindicate our meeting, thus—‘There is a gate called Beautiful into God’s temple, and it may not be very wise in us to refuse to enter it because the temple of the Ritualists has another of the same.’ I know the danger, that beauty of worship is apt to degenerate into worship of beauty, but it is a two-edged danger, for ugliness of worship is just as apt to degenerate into worship of ugliness. Let it be granted that the ritualistic worship is beautiful, which, as a whole, it certainly is not. I deny that it is beautiful. It may be pompous, spectacular, and imposing: it is childish, unmanly, a theatric puppet show. It wants the first element of beauty—simplicity. It is not

‘Like the cerulean arch we see,  
Majestic in its own simplicity,’

and that without which nothing is beautiful—the spirit of true worship by which God has also garnished the heavens—how can it be beautiful if it wants that? But, granting that in some sort it is beautiful, I ask, if they use some form of Scriptural beauty, and speak lies through that language of beauty, should you not rather seize upon that language and quench their lies by speaking the truth through the same. If Colenso writes lies in English, you do not therefore disuse that language and rush into French and German, but you rather use the beautiful English language to quench his lies, in it, with your truth. Our Church—if I understand the manner of spirit she is of, if I do not mistake her teaching as developed through her practice, more especially in recent years—says this, that in permitting kneeling at prayer, chanting in psalmody, etc., she is not to be understood as giving in, in the very least, to Rome or ritual, that also do these things, but on the contrary, she holds that Rome and ritual shall only be the more effectually put down by her taking out of them anything that may be good in them, and using it herself. If they sing well, let us not, therefore, sit dumb and put



our fingers in our ears, or act 'the howling wilderness,' but let us try and sing all the better. Ulysses' way of resisting the singing of the Sirens, when he had himself bound to the mast, and his ears stopped with wax, and ordered his sailors on no account to let him loose, however urgently he might entreat them, when the Sirens were singing as the ship sailed by, was not accounted so good as Orpheus' way when he took his lyre aboard and sung aloud to it hymns of praise, and so drowned the singing of the Sirens. Our Church has taken this road, it seems to me, in permitting or encouraging improvements in the worship, or what are accounted so—kneeling at prayer, standing when singing, chanting psalms, singing hymns—though some will say the mark of the beast is upon all these, and that they expose our noble Church to the taunt, 'They of Italy greet you.' I know it is a perilous road for any Church, congregation, or minister to take. The Church that shall take such a way for putting down heresy is sure to get herself libelled as a heretic. The Saviour, replacing John the Baptist's narrow way with His own broader way, is libelled as gluttonous and a wine bibber; and the minister, or the Church, who shall dare to take such a way for the putting down of ritualism, need not wonder much at being misunderstood, and suspected of being somewhat ritualistic. No doubt it is an offence, but it is not that offence which brings a woe on him who gives it; but rather the offence of the cross most like Christ's own, who himself bore the imputation of that very sin he is working, suffering, dying to destroy. That offence which, instead of bringing woe to him that gives it, brings blessing also; and, to him that does not take it, as when Jesus said concerning John, 'Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.' If my Master gives *me* this cross to bear, since it is most like His own, God help me to bear it. No one can overrate my stern and uncompromising hatred to everything Romish and ritualistic, but just, therefore, would I leave no lawful means untried to resist their inroads; and especially would I be careful of distinguishing what is really Romish and

ritualistic from what is not, and wresting from them what does not belong to them. I may have special sympathies with the artistic ; I hope I see the danger from that side. Pray God, I may never overlook it, even as the sympathies of others, with reason in her grandest, loftiest ranges, do not make them overlook the danger from the side of rationalism, but rather help them to see this more clearly, and to carry the standard of the Cross more triumphantly over the whole territory of human thought. Would God that we had some one to expound to us the true relation of evangelical religion to Art, for then, might it not be seen how the Romish Crucifix, that has so long dominated in the realm as to claim it as its own, should there also be put down by the triumphant Cross of Christ, and this, also, with the kingdoms of science and philosophy, be won as another kingdom to our Lord and His Christ. But I will leave this line of argument, which, whatsoever truth and value it may have, is not needed in the very least to vindicate our meeting, for that, as I have showed, had no affinity at all with ritualism. Its meaning lay not in the likeness to it, but in the difference, for nothing could be more absurd than to suppose that we had any sympathy with ritualists, or that our honest, and ingenious attempt to turn our soiree anniversary at Christmas to spiritual profit and good account, and hold it in the best, and most devout, and the most profitable way we could, should lay us open to the charge of being ‘made like unto them.’ ”

This magnificent piece of rhetoric satisfied the Presbytery, and they passed a resolution recording satisfaction with the answer to the charges irregularly brought against him by the writer of the article, and declaring, there was no reason why they should proceed further in the matter. At the succeeding meeting

of Presbytery the subject was revived by the editor's reply in the April issue ; but so far as Mr. Robertson was concerned, the much-to-do-about-nothing ended with the delivery of the Vindication, of which the preceding is the most important part.

Nor was the practice abandoned because of the opposition. A similar service was held on June 19, 1870, when he was assisted by several brethren ; again, on 27th December of the same year ; and there was a further beautiful development of this association of praise, prayer, and scriptural teaching, in an In Memoriam Service, on the evening of the funeral of Mrs. George Brown of Burnside (Sept. 1, 1875). On this last occasion, the hymns selected were those which were favourites with the deceased lady ; and the discourse, which was on the text, "Death is swallowed up in victory," rose "by help of scripture-reading, prayer, and song, from the depths of darkness and the grave to the heights of light and life eternal." In these services he made the

Three solemn parts together twine  
In harmony's mysterious line.

Yet all were one ; together all—  
In thought that awed but not appall'd—  
Taught the adoring heart to fall

## CHAPTER XII.

### Illness.

Degree of D.D.—The Coming Shadow—Manifold Labours—Serious illness—Angel-Child—Sent Abroad—New Year's letter to his congregation—Mentone—Studies Romaunseh—Hymn, "Up! up! my heart!"—Testimonial of Five Thousand Guineas—Mr David M'Cowan's Letter—Dr. Robertson's Reply—Florence—New-year salutation texts—Rome—Continental experiences—Art ought to be the handmaid of Religion—Sorrow's teaching—"Eviva."

IN 1869, the Senatus of Glasgow University, his *Alma Mater*, conferred upon the pastor of Trinity Church the degree of D.D, an honour he well merited, and it came when he was about to enter within the shadow of a long illness.

Twenty-eight years of continuous labour was beginning to tell on Dr. Robertson's strength; and, towards the close of 1870, he felt it necessary to take medical advice. The anniversary services of that year, held in the month of August, as was afterwards remembered, were unusually solemn and impressive. Could it be the coming shadow? In

his preliminary remarks on Psalm lxxxiv. he resorted to Jacob's vision, as given at the opening of the church in 1862, and, pausing, at the words—"Give ear, O God of Jacob," he spoke of the stone which had served the patriarch for a pillow in the wilderness of Haran, as the foundation of the first Church in the world, and, in some sort, of all churches since, including their own. The ladder betwixt earth and heaven was a type of the Church, and Jacob spoke for the Church of the future, when he said, "Of all that Thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto Thee." He also commented on 1st Cor. vii., 29-31—"Brethren, the time is short;" and the text of the sermon was: "What is your life." (James iv., 14.) When the hymns—"Return once more, return," and "I'm but a stranger here," were sung at the close of the service, a deeply solemn feeling pervaded the large audience, although it was not known, at the time, that, before another August came round, the pastor—who had so eloquently spoken of life, as *real, and not illusionary*; as in this world *partial and not complete*; *something comparative, and not final*; *personal, not pantheistic*; *practical, not passive*; *passing, not permanent*; *weak to accomplish what it willed*; and, finally, *as something that was very precious*,—should be seeking recovery, elsewhere, from an illness so serious as to

bring him face to face with that "great to-morrow of eternity," that great and awful day, when the question put, as he said in closing, would not be "What is your worldly station or profession?" but, "What is your life?"

Notwithstanding the feeling of weakness which about this time began to creep over him, there was no pause in his work at home and abroad. Towards the close of the year he fulfilled an engagement in London, assisting his friend, the Rev. Dr. Edmond, on the occasion of the anniversary services of the opening of his church there; held a children's service on the Saturday; preached on the Sunday; attended a Ladies' Dorcas Society meeting on the Monday, and, in the evening, delivered his lecture on Martin Luther—the Rev. Dr. Henry Allon, the well-known eminent Congregational minister, presiding. Dr. Allon had never previously met with Dr. Robertson, nor had he heard him either preach or lecture. At first, I am informed, he was somewhat listless, then puzzled, but speedily awakening to the perception and recognition of genius, like the rest of the audience, he sat riveted till the close. He afterwards expressed the opinion that "the United Presbyterians must be a people remarkably rich in talent, when they could afford to keep a man like that in the small town of Irvine." The Sunday after Dr. Robertson's return was a

Sacramental one, and he had young people to see, and the usual meetings to take. The late Dr. Finlayson, Edinburgh, assisted, and preached from what was afterwards seen to be a most suggestive text—"What wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?" On the Tuesday following (10th January, 1871), in the absence, through indisposition, of the late Rev. John Symington, he presided at the Rev. Mr. M'Donald's ordination at Cumnock; and at the dinner which followed, delivered one of his most humorous speeches. On Friday, 13th, he delivered his lecture on Luther, at Muirkirk; preached at home on Sunday; made a speech at a soiree in Paisley in course of the week; and on the following Sunday, with an illness every day nearing its crisis, he kept an engagement at Pollokshaws. The sermon he preached, on this last Sunday of his active ministry, was that on John the Baptist in prison; and, recalling the circumstances five years afterwards, he referred to John's experience of Christ's treatment as his own:—

"Exceeding strange treatment it was," he said, "Christ never visited him, or sent a message, but cast him off, as it were, in the mid-time of his days. *There* was the mystery of Providence!—the faithful servant of the Lord struck down in the mid-time of his days, and laid aside as of no more use. The noble vessel that had ploughed the stormy seas, and weathered many a gale, and brought home many a cargo, was stranded on the black rock. He had spoken of how all that might, perhaps, be realized in the



experience of some then hearing him ; but very little did he think that, making all allowance between a worthy and most unworthy servant, he would, in his own case, within a week realize that strange experience. But never in his loneliness did he forget, or did they (his congregation) forget those words of Jesus to His disciples, 'Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.'\*

Dr. Robertson returned from Pollokshaws to take to his bed with a serious attack of pleurisy. When passing through Glasgow, friends whom he met were struck with his appearance, and it was with the greatest difficulty he was able to walk the distance from Irvine railway station to the manse. The serious nature of the illness could not be long hid. Early in February (1871) it was known that he had gone down into the depths, and was within the shadow of death. No words can express what was felt in Irvine, in neighbouring towns, and by friends in Glasgow, where he was so well-known. His friend, the Rev. James Brown, D.D., Paisley, arranged for the supply of his own pulpit, and came to the manse to assist the pastor's devoted sister (Miss Robertson) in nursing him.

Prayer was made for him continually. "Hundreds of loving eyes," he afterwards said, "which had been wont to look kindly on him, looked wistfully through the mist of tears towards the manse, where in fancy they saw the mourners assembled and the minister's funeral

\*Speech at Irvine, 18th January, 1876.

depart from the door.”\* “But God turned the shadow of death into the morning, so that he had only gone down into the waters of the Jordan, and his flesh had come again as the flesh of a little child. But as the little child took time to grow into manhood’s strength, so the health of the invalid could only be established by long, weary waiting.” This favourable turn was not reached until he underwent once, and a second time, a hazardous operation, which left him so weak, and in such a critical condition, that it was months before there was any assurance that his recuperative powers would assert themselves.

An incident of the illness, as told by himself, may be related here.

I had asked him—as we left the village of West Calder, and turned into a bye-path, which again led to an avenue which he was privileged to use—if it were true that, during his illness, he heard as if in a heavenly choir the infant voice of a departed child of one of his members. In reply, he told of a visit paid not long before his illness to a household, over which hung the shadow of death. When he entered, the child was lying on the grandmother’s

\* To show how intense was the feeling in Irvine, a correspondent writes—“Just when Dr. Robertson was at his worst, and we all thought he was dying, a shipmaster’s widow dreamt he would not die, but that, like good King Hezekiah, fifteen years would be added to his life. Strange to say, this was the number of years he lived after being stricken down.”

lap, and the mother, bowed with grief, was seated on the other side of the fireplace. The child, he saw, had but a short time to live, and he sat down beside the sorrowing mother. All at once the child sang out with clear but feeble dying voice—

“There is a happy land,  
Far, far away.”

Turning to the mother, he said—“Hear! your child is on the way to Heaven.” And then came—

“Saints there in glory stand,  
Bright, bright as day.”

The child died about Christmas time, and on the following Easter morning, after he had passed the crisis in his trouble, the touching incident was recalled in a singular manner. Day was just breaking; the rosy dawn was beginning to fill the room, and the birds to make themselves heard outside, when, in the growing light, he saw angels with trumpets in their hands, and, out of the midst of the angelic throng, he heard again the clear-ringing voice—so well remembered—of the angel-child singing—

“Bright, bright as day.”

Filled with the vision, he tried to raise himself to catch hold of one of the trumpets, that he, too, might praise God, but, in the attempt to rise, the vision vanished.

From the vision he passed on to tell of an incident

which took place on a Sabbath evening in an hotel in the Engadine. Seated beside a lady of rank, who had been playing the piano, and who was, he knew, rationalistic in her views, he, by way of drawing the bow at a venture, told the above story in her hearing, and, as we can imagine, with that pathos and weird cadence which his voice could at times assume. Deeply impressed, she said, "No one has ever spoken to me in that way upon religious themes. Had I been so spoken to, it might have been otherwise with me." "You see," he added to me, in concluding his narrative, "in religion, some minds must be approached through the imagination, and that lady was one who could only thus be influenced."

It was summer before he could be removed from Irvine, first to Pitlochrie, in Perthshire ; then to Brighton, where he resided for a month ; and, in November, to escape the cold of our variable winters, he was taken to Mentone, in France—the congregation, young and old, rich and poor, contributing a gift, in money, which was presented previous to his leaving. All correspondence was forbidden him, and this "restraint of silence," he confessed, in a letter to his attached flock, he felt to be "the hardest part to bear in a yoke of trial." He was afraid that it might seem like ingratitude on his part to a loving people, to whose

prayers he believed he owed life itself, and to whose liberality he was indebted for his residence abroad : but his restoration to health was more needful for them and him than letter-writing.

He broke the long silence, however, on 2nd January, 1872, when he sent his people a New-year greeting. The letter is apostolic in its touching tenderness, and his anxiety to be amongst them again may be read in every line :—

“I could not longer delay writing,” he says, “being moved to it, partly by the feeling of returning health, which grows stronger upon me than hitherto, and seems to promise a complete recovery and comfortable return to my beloved friends and work, so soon, at least, as the winter is past and the rain and snow over and gone—and sooner, I hope, than you seem to expect ; and partly have I been moved by the return of another new year, and the sacred and touching memories it brings along with it. For round that cape at the turn of the year, when we have doubled the lowest point of winter and set sail back toward summer, how many ships of memory come floating, freighted with most precious remembrance of the living and the dead ! The opening of our new church, the opening of my ministry among you in the old one, the issues of that ministry to you and me, in *Time*, whose accounts are not yet closed, and to so many in *Eternity*, whose books of life are shut and sealed till the judgment be set and the books opened. So many to whom I was ordained pastor have gone on before us to the everlasting habitations ! I knew not when my life was trembling in the balance ; when I was down at the dark cypress gates and seemed to have glimpses of those within—I knew not whether I belonged more to them or to you—whether

more white hands beckoned me to go on, or to stay. But, by God's good pleasure, I continue to this day with the surviving Church, and greet you now, across the distance, with the salutation of 'A happy New Year;' and if I am still spared to return to you, as I hope soon, dear brethren, shall I not have to preach to you, more earnestly and affectionately than before, the same old blessed truth as it is in Jesus, which only shows the brighter and shines the more precious through affliction, *as fine gold tried in the fire*. Meantime, I can always be present with you in spir in the holy hours of Sabbath worship, and how ofte, on other days of the week, I find myself still visiting about among the homes of the Church, and especially where, as I understand, sickness and sorrow have been seeking admittance for that Healer of the heart that stands at the door, and knocks, and where death has been wreathing a crown of glory round the hoary head, and making young life and loveliness immortal, and gathering to the Good Shepherd dear little infant lambs, some of whom, though of my own flock, I have never seen; but we shall see them in the land that is 'bright, bright as day.'

"And now, dear brethren, you will pardon me if this letter—this New Year greeting, be made a short one. For, now I have begun, if health permit, and you permit, I hope to write you, until my return, frequent little letters, rather than long ones. I thank God, more than I can tell, for your oneness of spirit, your kindness to me, your patience and prayerfulness, and that grace which has been given you to turn affliction into a blessing. I thank God that my ministerial lot has been cast with a Church whose praise, I hope, will yet be 'in all the Churches.' May the year that has now opened be the richest in spiritual life to one and all of you. May Trinity Church draw nearer and live nearer than ever to her Saviour and her God. This one thing do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God

in Christ Jesus. (Phil. iii., 13). How much of that old pastoral letter to the Philippians I would like to quote to you, though no man—(however great his gifts of grace—much less I)—could adopt and appropriate all the words of Paul (chap. i., 20-30). May the words of Christ's *own* epistle to His Church of Thyatira (the Church of progress of the seven) be addressed by Him (the flame-eyed One) to you also:—"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and *thy works*, and the last to be more than the first; and he that overcometh, I will give him the morning star."

He liked Mentone; and Mentone "walled all round on three sides—west, north, and south—by a double range of mountains, through which no valley cuts a passage for the wind, thus effectually screened, in God's kind providence, from all western mistrals, northern glacials, and eastern Euroclydons," was to him that first winter of his illness an excellent convalescent home. Under date 15th March, 1872, he writes:—

"If I were writing something to be read to the children on Monday night, I might tell how, outside my window, even now I can see the fig tree putting forth its leaves, and silently announcing that the summer is nigh. A footpath leads through a gate, fastened with withes, into a garden of olives—tall, dark, venerable trees, under whose grey misty shade and black funereal fruit one can walk and remember Gethsemane. So dark is the shadow—one can understand why, even at the season of the full-orbed paschal moon of this month, Judas thought it necessary to bring lanterns and torches to discover the face that was more marred than any man's, and distinguish it from the rest. Behind this garden rises a mount of olives,



that might well be a resort for secret meditation, and for midnight prayer, to one who had the mind that was in Christ Jesus, loving lonely communion with the Father in the hillside woods. In the green open spaces on the summit, in the golden flashes of sunlight, one might also seem to see the gleam of the ascending pierced feet! Still other olive mounts, that climb so high one can see how the dove of Noah might find an olive branch when the waters were still deep upon the earth. The white high road, and the mule path to the mountains, are skirted with frequent palm trees; and the beautiful branches carried about by the children, and offered at this season for sale (as it is near what is called Palm Sunday), remind you of the palm-strewn mountain-way on which Jesus rode into the city of His Cross, to ransom the multitudes that none can number, that, having overcome by the blood of the Lamb, they might stand before the throne singing, with palms in their hands. Then, there are vineyards on the terraced slopes, in which the vines, with the tender grape, are already giving forth a delicate perfume, as in the spring-time in the garden of the Song of Songs; and the vine-dressers are pruning the fruitful branches, that next season they may bring forth more fruit, and abide more firmly in the vine, out of which they can do nothing. For these things are still *done* in parables, as once they were spoken in parables by Him who still changes the water into wine, in the vineyards of Mentone, and still, through vines ordained by Him into this ministry of parable, preaches to those that have the ears to hear it, of Himself as the True Vine, whose purple grapes were crushed in vintage of the hill of Calvary into the cup of that wine of the new Covenant that is still drunk at communion tables—wine, many centuries old, and abundant enough for all guests and all ages—yea, who Himself has trodden the wine-press alone, and returned with dyed garments—with vesture dipped in blood.

“There, too, the emblem of our mortal state, presented in

the trees of the wood, is perhaps more truly and exactly rendered here than in cold northern climes—for, whereas there is not a spring-time for all the births, and a harvest-time for all the funerals, but life and death run on together simultaneously—so here the seasons seem to run abreast, round all the year—bud, flower, fruit, bare branch, being found simultaneously in the same garden, and even on the same tree (as one basket of fruit is gathered, another is ripe, another is ripening, another is in flower, another in bud; as the second basket is gathered, the third is ripe, and so on—as death and life run on together simultaneously, and at a pretty equal constant rate—as one generation of the human race goeth, and another cometh at one and the same time, and with no space or interval between, as with you, comes between spring and harvest time); and so the emblem of our mortal state becomes also, in another view, the beautiful type of immortality itself—as here grows many a tree, most like the Tree of Life in the Paradise of God, bearing its fruit every month, and whose leaf does not wither. Of this kind the most beautiful species are the citron tribes, including orange, of deeper red, and lemons of a rougher rounding and a paler gold. They grow in gardens enclosed—miles of them along the hillsides—and, over the high stone walls, reach their russet branches, on which, in lanterns of green leaves, the beautiful fruit is hanging like a thousand golden lamps. I do not know that this was the literal forbidden fruit that the woman saw was pleasant to the eyes as well as good for food. It is the fruit referred to in the mythic legend of the golden apples in the garden guarded by the dragon—which is no doubt an old world tradition of Eden and the fall—but I *do* know that it *is* the tree of which the Bride sings in the Canticles in the responsive song of the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley, ‘As the apple, (rightly the citron tree,) among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.’

. . . . .

"Amid such trees of Oriental mould and of Judean growth, rich and fragrant with Scriptural and sacred associations, as I wander in this genial climate seeking health and finding it, one can scarcely fail to hear the voice of the Lord God walking among the trees in the garden; and if, sometimes, it seems to chide and say, 'What dost thou here, standing all day idle, for there is a vineyard to be cultivated elsewhere, and barren fig trees in it too, perhaps?' yet oftener I seem to hear the voice speaking good comfortable words and saying, 'I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it! I will keep it night and day,' and 'Rest thou in the Lord; wait patiently for His time for thy returning. Do not fret.'

"By the time this may be read to you, your Spring Communion will be over. Again, from the hands of the officiating elders, or rather, as I trust, from Christ's own pierced hand, you will have received the symbols of His sacrifice, and said, as you received Himself afresh into your hearts, 'This we do in remembrance of Thee.' Again, the Great High Priest, King of Righteousness, and therefore also King of Peace, has brought down the bread and wine from the altar of His atonement to feed you, returning, weary from the battle, but I trust victorious over the evil; and in the strength of that meat may you go onward, conquering the evil, and battling for the right, and good, and true, so as at last to have an entrance administered to you abundantly into the kingdom, as part of the victorious 'Sacramental host of God's Elect.'"

Improvement was slow; and it was thought advisable he should not risk a return home. He therefore remained at Mentone till April, when he went to Serbelloni, on Lake Como, till June; and then sought the more bracing atmosphere of the Engadine,

where he remained till September ; in his leisure, studying the Romaunsch—"an unknown tongue unintelligible to all foreigners, but spoken by the dwellers in this, the highest valley in Europe ;" and interesting himself in the Grison Protestant Church, "hidden for centuries in the rock cliffs of the Alps beneath the glaciers."

Of this Church he hoped to bring home "full, correct, and interesting information":—one thing, he translated a beautiful Engadine hymn, handed down from mediæval times, and which formed part of their choral service. He heard it sung by his landlady to a simple mountain air, which, probably, inspired his own setting :—

**Up ! Up ! my Heart !**

- m.* Up, up, my heart !  
 No more give way to sadness ;  
 But know thou art  
 Redeemed to life and gladness.  
 The secret, God long hid  
 In dark evangels,
- f.* Now comes abroad  
 With trumpets of the angels.
- p.* The hidden morn,  
 With which Time long went mother,
- cres.* At last is born ;
- f.* O ! Christ, Thou, and no other,  
 Com'st us to save,  
 From sin and dark disgraces,
- pp.* And thro' Thy grave  
 Show us sweet Holy faces,

- m.* In Bethlehem, see  
 One born of woman lowly ;  
 Meek Virgin she,  
 In shadow of the Holy.
- f.* But Him, oh tell !  
 Who towers in grandeur lonely ?  
 Earth, Heaven, and Hell,  
 Make answer, "Jesus only."



- m.* Both God and man,  
 Unutterable wonder !  
 In person one,  
 In nature still asunder.  
 Of our flesh, God  
 Disrobeth Himself never ;  
 And men, by blood,  
 His brothers are for ever.

*p.* Who with sore pain  
 Death on the cross hath tasted,  
 Our foes hath slain  
 And their black kingdom wasted.  
 The while He lay,  
 Bound in the grave's dark prison,  
*f.* Till the third day  
 Behold! the Conqueror risen!

*m.* Him high Heaven holds,  
 With hands all pierced and bleeding,  
 Which now He folds,  
 For sinners interceding.  
 And shields us so  
 From Satan's fierce assaulting,  
 When pilgrims go,  
 Upon their journey halting.

Up, then, my heart!  
 To Thee, my Jesus only,  
*p.* Till when I part  
 On my last journey lonely,  
 Safe from all harms,  
 Thy blood shall shield me dying,  
*cres.* Till in Thine arms  
*f.* I wake to find me lying.

It was while he was residing in the Engadine that a surprise awaited him. When it became known that he would need to pass the winter in Italy, a few gentlemen, all, with one exception, I believe, outside the congregation, formed themselves into a committee to raise a fund with the view of presenting to him a pecuniary testimonial. With a generous large-heartedness, the committee resolved that the sum should be a large one; and

with a delicacy of feeling, and thorough appreciation of the sensitive, loving nature of the friend whom it was their privilege to honour, they confined the subscriptions to a comparatively small circle. The sum aimed at was £4,000; some ninety friends subscribed £5,297. The gift was truly munificent, and, had it been needful, could easily have been doubled, for there were many hundreds of friends who would gladly have borne testimony to the spiritual good received from Dr. Robertson's teaching, by adding to it, had opportunity been offered. He was, indeed, the pastor of Trinity Church; but, when in health, he had also laboured abundantly for the Church Universal. As few were so able as he to touch the hidden springs of feeling and spiritual life, with words pulsing with sympathy and hope, so that power of his—so brilliant and effective—made his services eagerly sought for, whenever a good cause required to be inaugurated, or a feeble cause strengthened. In the letter which conveyed to Dr. Robertson the sentiments of the subscribers, Mr. David M'Cowan, Glasgow, who writes with much delicacy, taste, and truth, thus refers to the gift:—

“It is no breach of confidence to tell you, that at the meeting referred to, all those present were of opinion that it would be quite unworthy to offer you less than £4,000. The result has shown that they did not miscalculate the feelings and the wishes of others with whom



they had afterwards necessarily to enter into communion. For it is now my privilege to inform you that the gifts with which they have been intrusted, and of which I have now formally to ask your acceptance, amount to Five Thousand Guineas.

“It is also my good fortune to be able to assure you, that nothing of the kind could possibly have been prosecuted with more comfort and less ado. The preliminary circular usual on such occasions was entirely avoided. Every one was more ready with his gift than another, and thus to testify his warm interest in one whom so many regard, and with whom, in his affliction, they deeply sympathise. If any error was committed at all, it was in not giving a wider circle an opportunity of sharing in a deed which has given so much delight to those who performed it.

“We hope that the shadows which now cloud your earthly path will speedily pass away, and that bright days are yet in store for you. We long for your return to the congregation you love so well, and to the Church which now laments your temporary exile. May He who has been with you in the days that are past, be with you still, and compass you with His favour as with a shield. Waiting upon Him, may your strength be renewed, and the time soon come when the hope shall be realised, which so many cherish, that the voice with which multitudes were wont to be charmed, and comforted, and cheered, shall be once more heard in the midst of us, with something of its former brilliancy and power.”

Dr. Robertson's reply is written from St. Moritz, and dated 13th September, 1872. He calls it “a golden harvest” that had been ripening during the summer months, which he gratefully accepts, and for which he thanks, first and chiefly, his Heavenly Father—God, who, truly in the channels of bounty, most

like His own, does "turn some men's hearts," not merely as the drops and streams, but as "the rivers of water are turned, to cheer the thirsty ground"—who had "prospered the golden seed sowing, and blessed the springing thereof;" thanks "the honoured committee who had taken charge of the costly gift;" and all "friends indeed," known and unknown, who had contributed to it. He then goes on to say:—

"In formally accepting of the testimonial which you have, in such kind and beautiful words, presented—as now, across the distance that divides us, I do accept of it, with this right hand, into which, as I write, all my heart is throbbing—I feel (as you have done in asking my acceptance,) that mere formal words cannot utter all that is meant betwixt us. 'New wine needs 'new bottles;' and as, when one is quite full, you cannot empty it by turning it suddenly over, so I have been sitting with your letter in my hands, for, I shall not say how long, not knowing at all what answer to make. It has marked an epoch in my life that I had never expected to see—an 'Ebenezer' and memorial pillar on this side that long 'bridge of sighs' over which, in my sickness and exile, I have been travelling, and, to which, as to other mercies which you also entreat for me, God in His great goodness has spared me, and by a way that I know not, softly and gently guided me on.

"I need hardly say that the value of the gift, in itself so high, is greatly enhanced by the friendship—to me so precious—and loving sympathy so deep and widely spread, of which it is the symbol and the proof. Had it come to me by inheritance, or even by honest toil, I could not have prized it so highly as when coming, as it does, not from cold hands of legal right, but from the warm heart of Christian love. To me, more precious than all honey-

combs of golden treasure on earth, is, of course, or ought to be, that good name that is better than great riches,' which you encourage me to seek after and strive to maintain by writing it out—small enough in my case as it is—in such large letters of silver and gold. But not less precious is the pleasure, or, as I must say, the pride, of numbering among friends of mine such and so many truly Christian gentlemen—not only 'righteous' men that do 'justly,' but 'good' men that do much more. I will not be withheld from boasting of them and their goodness, or rather of the grace of God that is in them, and that has flowed out through them so richly to me. They have wrought a 'good work' on one of the lowliest of the members of that Body whose Head is in Heaven—that Church which is in earth and Heaven both—down with whose feet on earth, in the dust, I have meantime been cast, torn, wayworn, and weary, and you have come and bound up the wounds and bathed them, and anointed them with kindness, and I *do* pray I may be so counted one of His, that He may say unto you, 'Ye have done it unto Me.'

"It does honour to the Christian name. It makes one feel proud (shall I not say?) of one's country, of one's Church, of that inner circle that has grouped to do this kind act. It testifies to the presence amongst us of that higher goodness, that gives not as the world gives, by measure and grudgingly, but in diviner-wise, by surprises of kindness, and with free and bounteous hand. For as you know well, I have no claim whatever on those who have done me this favour. Their debtor I have always counted myself, for the warm welcome they have invariably, of late years, increasingly—given me to their churches, their platforms, their houses, their hearts; for the patience with which they have borne with my idiosyncrasies, indulged my wishes, and listened to my discourse, all for the sake of One infinitely dear to us in common, of whom they loved to hear, and I was honoured to speak, and for whose sake, also, they have done this kind-

ness,—to me most unworthy, but ‘He is worthy for whom they have done this.’ And Him I hope yet to return to preach to them upon occasion, to my own dear Church at Irvine, and others in the Scottish West, and elsewhere, please God. I shall no longer indeed be able to say with an Apostle, ‘Silver and gold have I none,’ (you have put *that* out of my power); but none the less do I hope to ascend with you, into the Temple at the hour of prayer, and enter by the gate called Beautiful, and say to any lame that may be lying around it, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.’

“My health, thank God, improves upon the whole, steadily though slowly, and I am not without hope of being brought back to thank you with the living voice, and see you all face to face; and yet not all, perhaps, for some ere my return (should that ever be granted), may be, as some of my kindest friends already are, in the interval, ‘fallen asleep.’ But at all events there remains for us (with them also) the glad meeting in the ‘House Beautiful,’ into which the angel faces are thronging, and up toward which, over these Swiss mountains, I, faint and good for little in this exile, am still striving to climb, as you are doing more energetically and successfully through the crowded streets at home. And *there* I doubt not your kindness to me will be remembered, not only as a service done to a sick brother, but as a sacrifice with which God is well pleased—not only as a gift ‘abounding to my benefit,’ but as fruit ‘abounding to your account.’ You have bound me to you all afresh, and to my work if I return, and to God’s will, in any case, by this golden chain, and made me so much more your debtor, that I should be ashamed to thank you for it in this way, if, indeed, I knew any other better way of doing it.”\*

\*“Not one of the many thousands who have been wont to listen to this poet-preacher could fail to read with lively interest that, as the result of a perfectly noiseless movement on the part of a few of his friends, the sum of five thousand guineas had been sent to cheer him in his weakness and exile, with its

Referring, four years afterwards, to this unexampled gift of generosity to a dissenting minister, he said, playfully, yet gratefully :—

“Through the exceeding liberality of certain sympathizing friends of his, it had come quite unexpectedly and spontaneously, that though he had been as poor as a church mouse—and of all church mice the U.P.’s are said to be the poorest: they had no cheese of an endowment, or Sustentation Fund, such as the Established and Free Church mice had—through the kindness of his friends, while high up in Switzerland, seven thousand feet above the level of the sea, he awoke one morning to learn, that in the West of Scotland a great shower of gold had fallen, and that five thousand kings—five thousand sovereigns, at least—were on their way across the Alps to render service to him. They could judge of his astonishment and joy—he said joy, for they all knew how fond he was of money—it was a weakness, a failing of his, and had always been. At any rate it would be mere affectation to deny that he loved it just as other people, in its own place. Such were the circumstances in which he received this testimonial, so rich, so rare, so really expressive of the love and favour to him of these Christian gentlemen, who occupied the highest standing in the Church and in society. That was what had raised it in his estimation far beyond all reckoning. He asked them to rejoice, and give thanks. The woman in the parable, pictured in the north transept window there—they preached by pictures in Trinity Church, both from the pulpit and from the windows—

assurance of admiring and loving sympathy. We are sure that we speak in name of a community wider than the United Presbyterian Church, when we congratulate the gentlemen concerned—whose names have not been given to the public—on the honour they have done themselves in honouring one who is universally beloved.”—*Glasgow Herald*, Oct. 31, 1872.

when she had found one piece of silver, called together her friends and neighbours, and asked them to *rejoice with her*. But she had found one piece only, while he had found a hundred thousand—she silver, but he gold. He asked them to *rejoice with him* on their own account, for they were so identified in interest with him, both secular and sacred—so bound up with him, both inwardly in faith, and outwardly in finance, that their prosperity was his, and his theirs.”\*

From the Engadine, Dr. Robertson went down to Florence. Under date 14th Nov., 1872, he writes:—  
“From Switzerland we have been driven southward, before the darkening winter, into Italy, and are at present in Tuscany, in the beautiful vale of the Arno—in Florence, the city of Savonarolo—the prison of the Medici—the fountain of modern Italian literature and art.” He knew better now, than he would allow himself to believe when at Mentone, the depths to which he had gone down, by measuring them by the length of time it was taking for a return to perfect health and strength. The thought that the half of the period of his extended leave of absence is past, however, encourages him. “I do rejoice,” he says, “that the night is far spent, and the time of the separation shortening, and bringing me almost within sight of those that gather round me in perpetual, invisible remembrance, singly or in household groups, or in the church as seen from the pulpit, where we

\* Speech at Irvine, June 18, 1876.

are, I hope, together, in the Spirit, on the Lord's day."

The close of the year 1872, spent in Florence, revived old recollections of Irvine and his ministry there—old New-year themes, the opening of their church on the first Sabbath of a New-Year, and the dear brethren who, in the interval, had "fallen asleep"—and the old things become *new*, as he culls a few flowers from the garden of his heart—each with its appropriate text,—and sends them to his congregation as *his* new year salutation.

"In this beautiful Florence, 'the city of flowers,'" he writes, Dec. 31—"they have a custom of going one day in winter to the cemeteries—paved with white marble under the black cypresses—carrying wreaths of flowers and evergreens—roses, lilies, and immortelles, to place them on the ground of their kindred and friends. Sometimes with lamps hung up to burn after dark. What lamp of Scripture promises, brilliant with prophecy and resurrection!—what garlands of olive, palm, and crowns of roses that have blossomed out even of thorns—are hung to the eye of faith over the graves of your Christian dead! For *their* graves have been made in the 'garden sepulchre,' whence therefore the city of rottenness, and 'roots of a dry ground' shall ascend as *a city of flowers* indeed. *That* desert also shall rejoice and blossom as 'the rose.' With 'His dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs.'

"I well remember some faces in my audience in Irvine, that shone with a beautiful light, (though they wist not they were shining so) when once, after trying (in vain of course) to picture heaven, I paused and said—'There is only one preacher who can show you what heaven is like.'



*He can*, his name is *Death*—faces—ah, shining now with a still sweeter lustre—on the mount, and in the vision of God—*then*, they saw through a glass darkly, but *now*, face to face.

“And so they are not left behind, but rather gone before, and in thinking of them, we must not return into the past, ‘seeking the living among the dead,’ but rather, forgetting the things that are behind, reach unto those that are before. Forward, then, brethren, on the path the new year opens. Christ Himself has gone before and calls you. On! from strength to strength. Your peace more peaceful, your penitence more humble, your faith more trustful, your hope more ardent, your love more loving, your activity more active, your devotion more devout, and with a fresh baptism of the beauty of holiness and the dew of everlasting youth may you carry forward with you from the new year’s Sabbath day such constant sense of deliverance from death, of awakening to new life, of thankfulness for God’s mercies that are new every morning, as shall make every day become to you a new year’s day—in short, that new heart constantly by grace created anew within you, shall *make old things pass away, and ‘ever more make all things new.’*”

“Might I send you some new year Sabbath salutation texts? To the Church assembled I should send that, of course, which was the salutation of the early Christians upon the Lord’s day morning, ‘The Lord is risen indeed;’—To sorrowing, struggling, seeking souls (such are not some of you) the salutation of the angels to the women at the sepulchre. ‘Fear ye not, ye seek Jesus that was crucified;’—To each Sabbath School teacher, that of Elisha to the Shunamite, ‘Is it well with the child?—To the reapers of missionary contributions, and other labourers in the Lord’s harvest, that of Boaz to his reapers, ‘The Lord be with you;’—To the managers, the salutation of the temple-guards, when at evening the watch was changed, ‘The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion;’—To each brother in the eldership, the salutation of John (who was

himself an elder) to the well beloved Gaius, 'That thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth;'—To the choir, 'O sing unto the Lord a new song;'—And to all of you, Christ's own sweetest salutation—may *He* carry it *Himself* into each household, '*Peace* be to this house.' May He, walking in the midst, breathe it on the Church assembled, and into every heart, *Peace* be with you!

'O LAMB OF GOD THAT TAKEST AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD, SEND US THY PEACE!'

Dr. Robertson prolonged his stay in Florence till May, 1873, and was in Irvine, 24th June following, the guest of ex-Provost Brown. Wherever he went he received a most cordial welcome, but it was a sore disappointment to both pastor and people that he was forbidden to preach; only visits were paid, and the old friendly intercourse renewed.

Summer passed, and he returned to Italy, taking up his residence in Florence, until the rigours of an unusually severe winter drove him farther south. In a letter addressed to his congregation from Rome (February 22, 1874), he complains that, even there, the cold was keenly felt, and this leads him to think of Paul, the aged, imprisoned in the dungeon, near where he was writing, charging his young friend Timothy to bring with him the cloak that had been left at Troas, together with the books and parchments. He had visited, he tells his people, the

homes in which he is said to have lodged, the rooms in which he was confined, the Judgment Hall of the Imperial Palace where he was tried, and the spot where he is said to have been beheaded :—

“All which, with less or greater probability,” he continues, “they still show, one seeming to hear a voice from heaven among the ruins, and from the ground that was reddened with the blood of the saints from under the altar. The very stones cry out against everything like uncertainty in the Word of God. And since coming to Rome, I must say that I have felt now more than ever desirous, and if God will, and you will decide, to return to the work which, three years ago, I was, through utter disability and threatened death itself, compelled at that time almost helplessly to abandon.

“On Sabbath last I had the honour and anxiety of preaching in this city, and though I have suffered a very little (but very little indeed) from doing so, the experiment, which has not been the only one, is quite successful enough to warrant the good hope that I shall be thoroughly able in the beginning of summer to resume my ministry among you, though not without assistance, more or less, as you, in your kindness, may render, or I, in my need, may require.”

In this letter, as well as in that of 14th November, 1872, he showed himself the interested and intelligent observer of the religious condition of Italy. In 1872 he writes hopefully—Protestants were so differently treated now than in the time of the Medici; and the new Free Italian Church he expected to see pushing its peaceful conquests into the very heart

of the Romish Church in the metropolis, and its banner "ere long be seen waving over the City of the Seven Hills." Larger experience moderated expectations, and now, in 1874, he writes, that he is vexed at the present aspect of Church affairs in Rome, where evangelical Protestantism is broken up into fragments. "The Protestantism of Italy, so far as he had seen it," he says, "is much more negative than positive, more destructive than constructive, more an assault on the crucifix than a preaching of the Cross." Again, "Roman Catholicism is certainly giving way, but is getting replaced by something far worse than itself. Of multitudes that cry 'No Popery,' the most part mean no religion at all."

It was his purpose, within the three months lying before him, "to visit Greece; if not, the Pyramids of Egypt; if not, the mountains round about Jerusalem; if not, trace some of the footsteps of Paul in his ministering tours, or of Israel in her bondage in Egypt," that he might gather store for future Scripture exposition; but the wish seems to have been abandoned. Nor was the expectation expressed in the letter, of being able, on his return, to resume his ministry, realised. In hope of seeing Church matters settled by the ordination of a colleague, he remained at home in 1874-75, but the years 1876-77 were spent in Florence, the time broken

by visiting the Etruscan tombs of Chussi, Orvieto and Siena, and prolonged stays in the Engadine and at San Remo.\*

It is not purposed in these pages to give an account of Dr. Robertson's life in Italy during his earlier or later visits. Enough to say, that his enforced residence in Florence and elsewhere was fully taken advantage of for making a thorough study of Art and ancient Church History. These subjects had always for him an attraction, and, through exceptional facilities offered him, he became a well-informed and valued guide to everything worth seeing of the buildings, and frescoes, and the paintings which are the pride of the city of Florence. Old friends sought him out, and distinguished visitors asked for introductions to him.

\* In a touching narrative "A BRIGHT LIFE" (Nisbet & Co.) to which Dr. Robertson contributed the introduction, I learn that when in San Remo in the early weeks of 1877, drawn thither by the serious illness of his niece, Jessie Robertson, he gave the address, after his brother James had dispensed the Communion to a congregation in a drawing-room; and also preached on several occasions. One present on that Communion Sabbath informs me, that while delivering the address, he was so carried away by what his mental eye *saw*, that all unconsciously to himself he descended from the little raised pulpit, improvised for the service, and walked up and down the passage to it, in front of the congregation, and with up-gazing eyes, almost making *them* see what his own mental eyes evidently beheld. His beautiful and suggestive thoughts, when occasionally preaching in that little "Church in the house," where invalids and their friends made the congregation, were most comforting and appropriate, as for instance, "Christ never leads us through a darker room than He has Himself been through before."

And all were alike charmed, surprised, and delighted with his marvellous improvisations, full of finest poetry and quaintest imagery ; with his analysis and criticisms of the paintings, enlivened with anecdotes of the lives and characters of the painters ; and with what amazing dramatic power he could, on such occasions, recall the past, and present it in living form before his wondering hearers. But he never forgot that he was a minister of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ, and so never failed to make the frescoes and paintings texts from which to preach the great evangelical truths of the grace of God. He thus, himself, sums up his experiences in Italy :—

“He had not been idle in all these years of rest. They might be as busy as the ship lying at the quay taking in her cargo, as in the same ship sailing, outward bound, with all sail set, carrying her freight across the sea. He had touched at many points, and put into a good many ports, taking in more or less cargo at each. First, at Mentone, he had got freighted with some knowledge of the social and religious life of southern France, among the vine-dressers and citron-gatherers on the shores of the Mediterranean, and that *Comus* of history which the Marquis of Lorne, too, had begun to sing of, that looked down from the Saracenic castles and Romish convents on the Alps behind. At Serbelloni, on Lake Como, he had taken on board some pictures of grand reaches of lake and mountain scenery, laid up in the hold of memory, for use at some other time—perhaps here where they preached by pictures—together with the music of the beautiful bells, continually sounding, echoing, answering, from village to

village all round the Como Lake. Then up, away among the Ratian Alps, seven thousand feet, as he had said, above the level of the sea, in the home of the eagle, the wild deer, and the snow, where no grain grows, but only hay, and Alpine roses, and perhaps some modest lilies of the valley—here and there a few that grew in grass. He had made acquaintance with the Swiss Protestant Grison Church, and the hardy simple mountain pastors—presbyterians they were, with their strange language—the Romaunsch—that he had tried to learn—and tragical Church History that was so little known. Then, down to sunny Italy—the minster and the music of Milan, the mosaics of Ravenna, the monasteries of Assisi, the pictures of Perugia, the road to which lay through old Etruscan tombs, with urned ashes of men dead long ago. The frescoes of Florence, the Mediæval art of Siena, the classical art of Pompeii; and modern art; old world history, catacombs, forum, Vatican, and capitol of that most extraordinary city, Rome. Through all these had he strolled and studied carefully, and had become persuaded, more than ever, of the truth of what he used to argue strongly, years ago, that it was Christianity in its evangelical type—the same they tried to preach and practice in Irvine—that had given them the finest architecture, music, painting, and sculpture, in the world. From her despised urn, she had sprinkled a baptism of beauty, wherever she had gone. Even in the midst of the darkest ages, the greatest fresco painters of the Middle Ages preached of Him out of their frescoed walls, painted four hundred years ago and more, the very same gospel he had sought, Sabbath after Sabbath, to preach to them; and in the galleries and temples of art, as well as in the halls of science, and homes of philosophy, they had no cause to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. He had been careful to inform himself of the true state of Christian life at the present time in Italy. He regretted to say, that the Church was much scattered, and much broken up, but not without some hope of better things and better days coming. At all these ports he had



touched, and taken in some cargo, for which he expected to find some use ere long, when, over the harbour bar, by which he was still restrained, he was allowed to sail away into the open sea, in voyages of lecturing and preaching, as before. More especially, however, there were some lessons he had learned in the school of affliction, in these bye-past years, running down into the deeper inner life struggles, and fellowship with God, that would yet have an outcome, if God spared him, in the sermons he yet hoped to preach, not a few of them, he hoped, out of this pulpit to the congregation which had always met his yearnings after the true, the good, the beautiful, and all in God Himself, with hopeful sympathy, and never more than when these were earnest, deep, and true. So there was a time for everything—a time to lie in harbour, and a time to sail; a time to be silent, and a time to speak; a time to gather stones, and a time to throw these stones away. For the last few years he had been gathering stones; and now he did not mean to say he was going to throw them away—for he was never very good at throwing stones, he left that to men of more destructive tendencies—to iconoclasts, and your awfully orthodox men, whose religion consists, in great measure, of throwing stones at the religion of other people—good and useful men, in their way, for doing the rougher, sterner work of life;—but he preferred the constructive to the destructive; the building up of stones to the throwing of stones; so he hoped to build up the stones he had gathered into the Church of a living people, here and elsewhere. He had been ordained too young, and had been sent back five years to the Divinity Hall. God had given him other five years of Practical Divinity at the feet, he hoped, of the great teacher, Jesus Christ, and his ministering angel, Sorrow, the schoolmaster, to bring men near Him.\*

The thoughts here, so beautifully and so lovingly

\* Speech at Irvine, January 18, 1876.

expressed, he thus threw into verse, when asked by a friend what he did in Italy, and what he meant to do in the future:—

*Eviva!*

I heard all the birds, in the days of spring,  
Twitter and chatter, and whistle and sing,  
But the earth in these days gave no fruit,  
Nor till harvest-time when the birds were mute;  
And then came the reaper and vintager out,  
And brought home the corn and wine with a shout—

*Eviva!*

In days of old, when I was young,  
Flowed silver speech from a fluent tongue;  
But now I keep silence, as I ought,  
And the silence gives me golden thought;  
And whether by speech or by pictured book,  
For something or other ere long you may look—

*Eviva!*

The gay young summer, in whites and greens,  
Is never an end, but is only a means  
To that higher end which the autumn brings,  
When sweating-brow'd labour feasts with kings,  
And the year is crown'd with a golden crown,  
And all heaven's paths drop fatness down—

*Eviva!*

So those who prefer their youth to their age  
Must be making a backward pilgrimage;  
When things go right, the beginning's not ill,  
But the end, says the wise man, is better still;  
And fools they must be who prefer the past,  
When the banquet of life gives the good wine last—

*Eviva!*

## CHAPTER XIII.

### Closing Years.

Trinity Church during Dr. Robertson's absence—Ordination of Mr. George A. Heughan—Recollections of the past—Church strife—Ordination of Mr. William S. Dickie—Touching reference to successive bereavements—Removes to Bridge of Allan; then to Westfield—Life at Westfield—Occasional services—Preaches and lectures at Cambridge—Last Sabbath in Irvine—Notes of Sermon at Bannockburn—At Ventnor—Illness—Death.

HOW fared it with Trinity Church all these years? For a time the pulpit was supplied by a succession of preachers, but this arrangement proving unsatisfactory, first, Mr. James Orr, B.D. (now Dr. Orr of Hawick), and then, Mr. Matthew Muir Dickie (afterwards of Haddington), were, when not in attendance at the Divinity Hall, located in Irvine, and discharged pulpit and visitation duties. Few congregations could have borne the long interval between Dr. Robertson's illness and the fixing of a stated pastor with so much patience and so little loss in material resources. At the time, they were singularly well off, both as to session and management—the members of which were men of good report, full of faith, and

men who most thoroughly enjoyed the confidence and respect of the people.

At the close of 1875, Mr. George A. Heughan (now of Pollokshaws) accepted the call given him, and, on January 18, 1876, was ordained colleague to Dr. Robertson. The Doctor was at home at the time, and took a prominent part in all the proceedings of the day. That he was able to do so, gave the congregation and friends present intense pleasure, as so much exertion, without injurious effect, was accepted as giving assurance of his all-but complete recovery at no distant date. His voice, it was noticed, was as full as in the old days when hundreds hung upon his lips, and were moved by an eloquence, rich in poetic imagery, and broad in its conception of all that pertained to the Christian life. Nor was there, in the several addresses he gave on the occasion, any lack of the old playful humour, the ready turn from mirth to more serious thought, the blending of the real with the ideal, prose with poetry, the artistic with the natural—for which, for over a quarter of a century, he had been famous, and, not famous merely, but truly beloved and honoured.

The ordination of a colleague naturally led him to say much that was of a personal interest, and to recall the years of his pastorate in Irvine, and the endearing relations which had always subsisted be-

tween himself and the congregation. "For intelligence," he said, "for real spiritual life, for tenderness of heart and sympathy, he did not know any other Church he would prefer to them. When he came they gave him a pulpit gown, and when it was worn out, they gave him another, and yet a third. But better than that, when he came they also gave him what was called the mantle of charity which covers a multitude of sins—a mantle of love which sees the ideal in the real, perfection in that which is imperfect; and that mantle was just as fresh to-day as it was at first."

"Never, indeed, could they wholly forget the things that were behind, the sweet communings they had had together—of times of combat and labour by the way, when they had fought together, and worked together, and prayed together; and those sweet faces of the dead that seemed to cluster round them, and to look down with pleading eyes, entreating not to be forgotten, as they started on a new march of their Church's history:—

Yet not much joy, after all, was mixed  
With the sweetness of those past years;  
Not very much sunshine came betwixt  
The long, long showers of tears.

And oft when I lie awake at nights,  
The old days come again  
With bars of black on their troubled lights  
And weeping sounds of rain.

Till there comes a voice on the midnight wind—  
Comes a knocking at the door—  
That bids me forget the things behind  
And reach unto those before."

The settlement, thus auspiciously begun, was unfortunate, and in the autumn of 1878, Mr. Heughan resigned the charge. Dr. Robertson's finely strung nature—sensitive to every breath of feeling, was ill-fitted to cope with the circumstances, not of his seeking, which had arisen. Fortunately the vacancy which followed was comparatively of brief duration, for, on 5th August, 1879, Mr. William S. Dickie was ordained as a successor. Very touching were the references made by Dr. Robertson, in course of the ordination proceedings, to personal bereavements, and to the congregational turmoil and strife, which for some time had cast a shadow over his life :—

“Successive strokes of relative bereavement,” he said, “had fallen upon him—six of his nearest and dearest relatives had been taken, the coffins lying black across these last years, and the two last taken—the dearest of them all \*—*a via dolorosa* of ascending sorrow, but leading up, he hoped, ever nearer and closer to the Cross of Christ. Along with these, mixed up with them, there had come sorrow of another kind—in one sense worse to bear. The loss of saintly friends, safe in the arms of Jesus, was not perhaps so hard to bear as sin, as strife, as deadly mischief, in a Church so dearly beloved, for which he could have died, and almost did.”

“The Church had been shaken, terribly shaken, and why so? Shaken, some might wish him to say, like the gold-bearing earth by the gold finders, on the slopes of the Cordilleras, who are said to let out the rubbish and

\* His sister, Isabella, died Dec., 1877; and his brother, the Rev. James Robertson, of Newington, 3rd June, 1879,

keep the gold. But he would not say that, because, if true, it would be most ungenerous to say it, and, if false, it would be a wicked and malicious lie. It was shaken, as a house built upon a rock is shaken with the swirling flood and tempest, though it stands on a firm foundation; or shaken, as the trees in the forest are shaken with the wind, so that they might strike their roots down deeper in the earth; and so they had been shaken, that being rooted and grounded in love they might grow higher and purer as a Church—more firmly established in the faith. A new day had dawned on Trinity, all the better for the storm and darkness through which it had come; and their path, he was persuaded, and that of their young minister and himself along with them, would not again be darkened, or made like the evening light that darkens, but like a beautiful crescent, or the dawn of that light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The salutation of the Pyrénées peasants, meeting each other on the street, is—‘Praise be to Jesus Christ;’ the answer is, ‘Amen!’ A harvester arriving in the field with another, or a shepherd keeping his flock on the hillside, and a younger shepherd coming to relieve him, exchange the salutation—‘Praise be to Jesus Christ, for ever, Amen!’ and so, (turning to his colleague) let us salute each other, my dear young friend—‘Praise be to Jesus Christ, for ever, Amen!’”\*

Previous to the settlement of Mr. Dickie, an arrangement had been come to between Dr. Robertson and the congregation, by which, while still retaining the position of senior pastor, he was thenceforth to be relieved from the responsibilities of the pastorate. This arrangement involved his leaving the Manse, which he did towards the close of 1878, when, for a

\* *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, 9th August, 1879.



time, he made Miss Robertson's house, at Bridge of Allan, his home. Afterwards, in 1881, he took up his residence at Westfield—an old mansion-house in the neighbourhood of West Calder, then the property of the late Dr. Young of Kelly, to which he removed his books, and where, until his death in 1886, he kept open house for his friends.

Westfield House will ever be associated with pleasant memories by all who had, during these years, the privilege of spending a day, or days, under its roof, in the company of one whose brilliant conversational powers made the hours fly all too quickly. Dreary enough, possibly, the house might be in the winter time, when shut in by the snows, but delightful in the spring and summer, when the Calder woods enclosed it with a screen of green leaves, its large garden lying to the sun, and the air vocal with bird song. It was reached from Newpark Station by an avenue of trees, and it suited him because of its quiet restfulness, the accommodation it gave him for the entertainment of friends, and because its railway facilities, east to Edinburgh, or west to Glasgow, were convenient.

When "in residence" he had always a large correspondence on hand, for he was much less an idler in this respect than he was supposed to be by some who waited long for a letter in reply to theirs; and, as

a host, the experience of one visitor was that of all—a warm, loving welcome—and the guest made to feel that the Doctor, and not the guest, was the favoured and honoured party. As I write, I recall the morning and evening prayer at family worship—the child-like simplicity of his supplications; the humble confession of sin, as from a deeply penitent heart; the unwavering trust in Jesus Christ, as being able to save unto the uttermost; the longing aspirations after a pure and holy life; the glorious hope of the blessedness of heaven; the remembrances of loved ones gone home, and the hope of re-union—aspiration, confession, and trust, clothed in language which lifted the small kneeling circle into very near communion with a risen Lord and the Father of spirits.

The days were pleasantly spent sauntering about the grounds; but the evening sederunts will never wholly pass from memory.

I see the sitting room at Westfield, after the lamp is lit. Books everywhere, table and writing desk littered with papers, the mantel-piece crowded with the photographs of friends. The lamp imperfectly lights the room, and so there are deep shadows; and the talk round the fire, as often as not, takes shape from the surroundings. If the conversation drifts to memories of his pastorate in Ayrshire, incidents of the olden time are recalled, and story after story—usually hum-

orous—told of ministers: of Elles and Ronald of Saltcoats; Meikle of Beith; M'Dougall of Paisley; Gilfillan of Dundee; Professor Graham, and others. If to Art and its relation to religion, there are at hand no end of illustrated books, picked up in Italy and elsewhere, and we hear of the frescoes in the Chapel of San Marco; of the dependence of Art upon the purity of faith; of Florence and its beautiful surroundings; and of Savonarola, whose history he meant to write, and for which he had gathered ample material. If to antiquities, he would discourse for an evening, at will, on Etruscan Art, or of Celtic and Norman remains, for, of these subjects, he had made a special study.\* Mention of the Engadine, again, would suggest his stay there, the distinguished people he had met in hotels, and their talks on Florentine Art; or he would picture, as he once did, the death and burial of Mr. James Blair, architect of St. Enoch's Station, Glasgow, and a native of Irvine. Mr Blair, he said, had been sent by his physicians to that famous health resort, and, unknown, he died

\* "His study of Italian Art, in its bearing on Christianity, led him back to the art of ancient Egypt and Assyria, as preserved in the monuments. Of these he had become, for other reasons, an earnest student. He was a member of the Society of Biblical Archæology, and knew some of its leading promoters; and I have heard him describe, with profound feeling, his sense of the poetry enshrined in such descriptions as that of the descent of the goddess Ashtar to Hades."—*Principal Cairns in Funeral Sermon.*

after a few days' illness, in an hotel at Schulz-Tarasp. How the friends in Scotland were communicated with, and how Communal rules were set aside that the stranger might have sepulture after the custom of his own country; thus prefacing a description of the religious service held on the occasion,—begun by himself in the Salon, in German, after the manner of the English liturgy; continued with three prayers in Scotch fashion; completed, at the open grave, by a prayer offered in Romaunsch by the village pastor, and the benediction pronounced in three languages. As, with ever-changing voice and deep pathos, he told the story, so vividly did the scene present itself, that I saw the coffin, garlanded with wreaths of Alpine roses and the beautiful Edelweiss, borne on the shoulders of mountaineers; the funeral procession proceeding up the stone-paved road to the churchyard, amidst the grand surroundings of Alpine scenery—snow-topped mountains, black fir woods, the yellow harvest, then ripe in the valley, and, above all, the clear blue sky.

Thus the night passed, and, when the bedroom candles were brought in, preparatory to retiring to rest, standing, for half-an-hour or more, the conversation would be continued, the visitor listening with rapt attention, as, in rich variety of illustration, he set forth the gradual unfolding to the human race of the idea of God's ineffable holiness, beginning with

the earlier teaching in rite and symbol; then rising into the vision of Isaiah, with its fuller development in the "Holy, holy, holy," of the Seraphim; finally, culminating in the adoration of the Living Creatures before the throne, as set forth in the Revelation of John. Or, possibly, the theme would be the Trinity; or, the imperfection of all human systems of theology; or, the many-sidedness of truth; or, of all men being better than their creed; and, as he discoursed, there would open up to the listener new reaches of thought, and he would see spiritual visions never before dreamt of. At such times, with his grand head erect, and his eye sparkling with a divine light, with pathos and power, he

"reason'd high

Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Fate;"

but, however lofty the theme, there was no narrowness of view; to fulness of knowledge, aided by a marvellous memory, there was added the sanctified intuition of poetic genius, which sought for a solution of all the dark problems that vex this human life of ours, in the love of God, as revealed in the Cross of Christ.

Dr. Robertson's active public life, from the period of his being relieved from the responsibilities of the pastorate in Irvine (1879) till his death in 1886, may be briefly told. When health permitted, he assisted

ministerial brethren, and the requests for such assistance were so many that they had oftener to be declined than accepted. He assisted at jubilee celebrations,\* and, also, when death removed old friends, to

\* Dr Ker refers to the feeling of *eerie awesomeness* which crept over his fellow-students when Robertson sketched the deeds and doom of Ahaz, King of Judah. A correspondent, sending notes of his sermon at Dr. Frew's Jubilee celebration (28th December, 1884), used a similar expression. He said, no one present will forget the *eerie* creep of soul that stole over them as the preacher supposed Lazarus coming from the world of spirits at the request of the rich man, to warn his five brethren. "He stands and knocks at the door of their mansion, and at length enters, in his grave-shroud. His glazed eyeballs and hollow cheeks declare him a tenant of the narrow house. In deep sepulchral tones he says—'I have come from the night of the grave, and I know of death, and of hell, and of heaven, and it's all true.' But the eldest brother is a Pharisee. He is a self-righteous man. He fasts and he prays. He pays tithes of all he possesses. He is not as other men are—the message can't be for him. The second brother is a Sadducee. He believes neither in angel nor in spirit. He is the type of the sceptic of the present day—when death comes it is utter annihilation. He explains away this appearance of Lazarus as an optical illusion. The third is a merchant, buying, and selling, and getting gain. He is an avaricious man, but his brother left him no legacy in his will, and he cannot now believe that he cares for his soul in eternity, when he cared so little for his body on earth. The fourth is a fashionable man, a man of æsthetic taste and culture; he loseth himself in the beauties of nature, of art, of literature. The sight of Lazarus in his mansion was an offence to him. What had this beggar got to do here? The message could not be for him. The fifth was a delicate, pale-faced youth; the least thing put his poor heart in a flutter. He could bear no excitement, and, as he beheld the form of Lazarus in his grave clothes, he swooned away, and when he recovered, the apparition was gone." "It is utterly impossible," continued the correspondent, "to reproduce in words the thrilling effect on the hearers, of Dr. Robertson's tones. For a moment one had a glimpse of the dim spirit-land, while the preacher, in his inimitable way, bore us, on the wings of imagination, completely out of the work-a-day world!"—*Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*.

some of which services allusion has already been made. By invitation of the Senatus of Glasgow University, he conducted a service in the Chapel, in March, 1881; and he was so far recovered, in 1883, that at the anniversary services held in Greenhill Church, Derby, he preached twice on June 10th, once on June 12th, and again twice on June 17th, without injury or apparent fatigue. At the close of the same year, he revisited Germany, and was present (November 10) at the unveiling of the memorial statue to Luther, at Eisleben, the reformer's birth-place. Principal Cairns, when referring to this, and a visit he at the same time paid to Hallé, where almost all the friends of his youth among the Professors had passed away, said:—

“He described to me his affecting interview with Dr. Ulrich (who died a few weeks after), and also interviews with others: he was especially struck with the change of tone among the students, who in his early years had irreverently given to their drinking cups the names of the then most derided opponents of Rationalism. He did not conceal from himself that a good deal of the enthusiasm connected with the ‘Luther Feast,’ was as much national and patriotic, as evangelical; but he was thankful to hear all Germany then ringing with Luther's great hymn, and looked forward to a brighter future.”\*

Of his many engagements, in these years, perhaps the most important were those connected with the establishment of the Presbyterian Station at Cambridge,

\* Funeral Sermon, 4th July, 1886.



because of the personal friendships then formed, and of the influence of his preaching, in a seat of learning, where there existed a prejudice against the Presbyterian form of worship. If an ideal service, as was said, would consist of Episcopalian singing, Wesleyan praying, and Presbyterian preaching, Dr. Robertson then showed "how the high themes of life, death, and immortality could be handled by a preacher of commanding ability."\*

His first visit to Cambridge was paid near the close of 1879, shortly after Mr. Dickie's ordination to Trinity Church; and a second visit was made in April and May of the following year, when he preached on three successive Sundays; and, on week-days, delivered his lectures on "Martin Luther," and on "Poetry and the Fine Arts." Both on Sundays and week-days, students and dons of the University crowded to hear him; while the local press unanimously spoke of both sermons and lectures as "marvellous" productions. "His remarkable power," said they, "of making others see more vividly, pictures present to his own imagination," was a surprise to them; and "it was refreshing to see a lecturer so thoroughly in earnest, revelling, as it were, in the task which he had undertaken, and utterly abandoning the slipshod style in which religious subjects are often treated from the platform."

\* *Cambridge Independent Press.*

Dr. Robertson's visits to Irvine were always memorable. Crowds flocked to hear him preach, and personal intercourse, renewed by visitation, was, to many, a revival of old times.

On March 18, 1883, I find, he assisted at a communion, and preached a powerful and eloquent discourse from the text—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name" (Psalm ciii., 1). The central thoughts were—(1st) thankfulness on account of the common and general blessings of God's providence; and (2nd) for the special and higher blessings of His grace;—in other words, "first the common level on which all men stand; and then, secondly, the ladder of six steps ascending from the earth to the heavens—Jacob's ladder—for which the Psalmist was preparing, and which stands immediately after the second verse of the ciii. Psalm." Two characteristic passages may be quoted from the report. After referring to man being fearfully and wonderfully made—the body "the tent-like habitation in which he journeyed through the wilderness which lay between the two eternities"—

"He pointed out the fitness of the comparison of the human body to a house or temple; spoke of its flesh-built walls being covered with skin, richly tapestried; he described it as colonnaded with bones, fitted with a framework, vault-like, marble white, that bore up, and over-arched the chambers of the hidden life within, and with

conduits that sent forth red streams which ebbed and flowed from the heart's cistern, and conduits of the subtle nerves, strung from side to side, from wall to wall, from the lowest basement to the loftiest pinnacle, along which telegraphic messages were sent with more than lightning speed. It was, too, a house in motion, and, pertaining to it, what dignity, what majesty ! how exquisite in form and symmetry ! so delicate and tender, like David's harp of many strings, like the Æolian lyre, vibrating to the wind's slightest breath.

“And God not only made them thus, but had given them this beautiful world to dwell in—this green and golden earth. How beautiful God had made the world ! If He did not regard beauty, why was it so profuse—in earth's ten thousand flowers, in the Gothic Cathedral of the woods, in the magnificent Alhambra of the sunset ? How beautiful was the earth if they only had the eye to see it ! . . . But what had made this world chiefly interesting to them, the inhabitants of it, was, not that it was beautiful and wonderful, but that God had made it the scene of His redeeming love. ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life ;’ and it was this, and not the beauty of the world, that made this earth—the place of His people—so wonderful. It might be that there were other worlds, in the depths of space, in which there were lovelier sights and sweeter sounds than any they had on this earth ; but in none of these might they see that strange sight of a cross upleading to a crown, and the mystery of sorrow leading up to joy. Quoting the text once more,—‘Bless the Lord, O my soul,’—he spoke of the passages which immediately followed it, as a ladder of six steps—the first, ‘Who forgiveth all thine iniquities ;’ the second, ‘who healeth all thy diseases ;’ the third, ‘who redeemeth thy life from destruction ;’ the fourth, ‘who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies ;’ the fifth, ‘who satisfieth thy mouth with good

things,' and the sixth, 'thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.' Step by step they ascended that ladder; and after describing the growing felicity, the preacher concluded with a sublime reference to the final comparison—'Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.' The eagle, it was said, in its old age renewed its youth and plumage, and, with its plumage and youth renewed, emerged from the eyrie, and soared up through the sky, from which the earth, with its golden forests, brown mountains, and glittering sea, all tapered to a point. It fixed its eye on the sun, the legend told, and soaring still upward and onward, found in the sun its rest. Though not literally true, like many other legends, this one contained a higher truth than the mere tale itself would have unfolded though it had been literally correct. The soul, eagle-like, renewed its youth, through the regeneration of the Holy Ghost, and, its youth renewed, soared upward to the sky, with eye fixed on the Sun of Righteousness."

He returned again to Irvine at the close of same year (20th Dec., 1883), to re-deliver his lecture on Martin Luther—a lecture which seemed to grow with the years, for on this occasion it took fully two hours to deliver.

His last visit was paid in August, 1885, when his colleague, the Rev. W. S. Dickie, was married to a young lady, a member of the congregation—the event thus being of double interest to the senior pastor. On Sunday (30th August) he occupied Trinity Church pulpit for the last time, and preached to audiences which so filled the church that, at the afternoon service, even the platform stairs were occu-

pied. The forenoon's discourse was full of characteristic touches ; and, for this reason, as well as for the interest which attaches to all but the last words he uttered in the building which will ever be associated with his genius, I give the service as reported at the time, although it is but an imperfect outline of what was said.

As usual with him, the discourse was preceded by a brief comment on the Psalm read, which, on this occasion was the lvi., and, observing that the title of the Psalm had only been partially translated, he said :—

“It was written by David, when hiding from the persecution of King Saul ; and there were even grounds for the supposition that it had been scrawled out on the walls of some of the dens or caves of the mountains where he was hiding. In dealing with this episode in David's life, it was to be remembered that David was hiding from the persecution of his friends in Jerusalem, and of King Saul, and he did not wish to tell this to the Philistines.

*Jonath-Elim-Rehokim,*

Dove of the Terebinth Tree ;  
Bearing the sorrow that stroke him,  
Bearing it silently.

So did the David heart-broken,  
How could he tell it in Gath ?  
All the hard things had been spoken  
Against him by friends in wrath.

Driven from home among strangers,  
Wand'ring with wildered brain ;  
Ne'er did he 'mid the new dangers  
Of the old wrong complain.

Only when grief grew violent,  
Then his good harp took he,  
And played the old air of the silent  
Dove of the Terebinth Tree.

Wild through the strings went his fingers,  
Dashing out wrath 'gainst his foes;  
Over his friends the strain lingers,  
Never a word against those.

How would the Philistines glory  
O'er him, had David showed  
The sin, and the shame, and the story  
Of wrong in the house of God.

Much they had done to provoke him,  
Never a word said he;  
*Jonath-Elim-Rehokim,*  
Dove of the Terebinth Tree.

In all this, David represented Christ, who had been led as a lamb to the slaughter, and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Rejected and despised of men, He had come to His own, and His own did not receive Him. No; it had pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, 'He hath put him to grief,' and therefore He kept silence. He was the dove, the silent dove, upon the 'distant tree,' as the words might have been rendered. Referring to the air to which the psalm was about to be sung, he said it was probably a popular air at the period at which the psalm was written. The best tunes that had ever been written had been popular airs of that description, and this, by Sebastian Bach, was probably not so much composed by the musician as by the people themselves, and adapted to the position of David, as the dumb dove of the Terebinth Tree."

The choir having sung the selection, with admirable effect, there followed the sermon (John xix., 25-26), full of pictures, the object being to show the audience

the four figures standing beside the Cross on which the Saviour hung, and how they were distinguished in their relations to it.

“And there stood by the Cross of Jesus, His mother,” &c.

“Round the Cross,” he said, “they found a great variety of characters represented, in relation to the crucified One. There were the haughty Pharisee ; the Caiaphas that judged Him ; the sceptic ; the agnostic ; the Pilate that condemned Him ; the timid disciples, and those that, false-hearted, forsook Him and fled ; the persecutors ; the scoffers ; and those that wagged their head and said ‘Ha, ha :’ the dying sinner, and malefactor. But there also stood by the Cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary, wife of Cleophas, Mary Magdalene, and the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

These four were then each described in their order :

#### MARY OF NAZARETH.

“Mary of Nazareth, the mother of our Lord, was the only mother in the world that ever found it an impossibility to make an idol of her child. There were many virgins in Israel in the days of Herod the Great, but only to Mary was the lofty privilege given to bear on her maternal breast the Bright and Morning Star, as the blue heavens bear up the star of day—the noon-day sun. So old pious masters had been used to represent the mother robed in blue—in blue raiment—with the sunlight beating upon her breast. She had the lofty privilege to be the mother of our Lord—a lofty privilege of which all mothers of the race might well have been ambitious, down from that Eve, the mother of us all, who said, ‘I have got a man,’ or rather *the* man, thinking she had got the promised Lord. Poor Eve ! like many of her daughters after her. Well might the angel



Gabriel salute Mary, with 'Blessed of the Lord art thou among women;' and her cousin repeat the salutation—'Blessed art thou;' and that she herself should sing—'My soul doth magnify the Lord; my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, for He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden.' He had no sympathy with 'Mariolatry,' but they should never hesitate to call her the 'Blessed mother,' the 'Sorrowful mother,' too,—the Dolorous mother.' By the greatness of her joy was to be measured the greatness of her sorrow; by her triumph at His cradle, her trial at His Cross. 'Yea,' said Simeon, 'a sword shall pierce thy soul also;' and here they saw the iron enter into Mary's soul. How could she bear to see her dear Son crucified? 'Can a woman forget her child?' and could she remember Him the less that the Son of her womb was the Son of God? To separate the grief belonging to the maternal character, and the joy which came to her otherwise, would be a difficult task in a psychological analysis of Mary's character.

## MARY CLEOPHAS.

"Of Mary Cleophas not much was known; but she was the mother of James the Just, the writer of the epistle, and, as was commonly believed, it was the character of the mother rather than the character of the father that moulded the character of the son. They knew the character that her son, James the Just, bore. He was a pre-eminently upright and conscientious man; and probably his mother, Mary Cleophas, had a similar character, somewhat softened in tone, as became her gentle womanhood. He further referred to her relationship to the Holy family—her sisterhood to Mary—and said, they had always been used to think of her as a noble, virtuous, queenly woman, and that it was most instructive to find her standing opposite the Cross of Christ.

## MARY MAGDALENE.

"The third Mary had a different character. She was the

penitent of tradition—the Mary Magdalene out of whom our Lord had cast seven devils, and, as some supposed—(he did not stop to argue the question)—she who had washed the Lord's feet with her tears—the *dishevelled tresses of her wasted beauty covering His shining feet*. She had thus been not merely the victim of a diabolical possession, but a person of bad character, classed with sinners and publicans of the street. In some strange tragedy, sin and sorrow had been wrapped up in her previous history, before this poor wanderer of Magdala had come to sit at the feet of Jesus in her right mind; and no wonder she stood at the Cross! She had been forgiven much, and she loved much.

“These two Marys were types of two different characters that met at the Cross of Christ—the one, gentle and soft; the other, following more after toil and struggle. Paul and John were types of these classes among men, and Mary Cleophas and Mary Magdalene among women—both equal debtors of divine grace. Standing, side by side, at the Cross, and equally welcome, they found the pharisee who had prayed a thousand times, and the publican who had never prayed till now, and whose prayer was—‘Oh, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.’”

In what appeared to be a parenthetical manner, when dealing with this part of the subject, he continued, introducing

SAVONAROLA.

“‘Tell me,’ cried Savonarola, the great preacher of Florence before the Reformation—(he preached at six in the morning in the great Cathedral, which would be crowded from the night previous, the people sitting with their hymn books and their night lamps all night waiting till he would march from his cell at daybreak)—‘tell me, ye saints in heaven, were ye saved by your works? David, profligate and murderer, wast thou? Saul

of Tarsus, persecutor and injurious, wast thou? Peter, who denied thy Master, wast thou? But, says Peter, I repented and wept bitterly. But what made thee repent, but that look from the eyes of Christ that cut thy heart? And thou, Mary Magdalene, who wast often rebuked for thy sin, thou didst not return from thy wanton ways till, by the way-side, thou heardest the voice—‘Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.’ But it is hard, the preacher went on to say, to bring ourselves to this—to place ourselves on the same low platform of humiliation with the murderers and the impenitents of the race. We never do so. We stand before the Cross and see the beauty of the patient, holy Jesus, contrasted with our unworthiness. Then the soul comes down from the high places of self, each one feeling that he is the chief of sinners, and even the Magdalenes can come no lower than that.”

Then fourth in the group was

THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED.

“John himself, they believed, was that disciple. Though he had there veiled his own name, yet there were other passages in which he had adopted the same description, and, from comparing these with one another and with what was known of John, the veil was easily withdrawn from the veiled son of Zebedee. John had received special tokens of Christ’s love. Not only was he one of the great world that Jesus lived and died to save, he was one of the Church that Christ loved—His affianced bride. He was one of the Church, in the days when the Bridegroom was with her. He was one of the twelve that were always with Christ, by day and night, in sorrow and in joy, in labour and in prayer. He was one of the three in the scenes of close seclusion—the resurrection chamber of Jairus’ daughter, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and in the Garden of Gethsemane.

He was that one of the three that leant upon Christ's breast at the Last Supper, and he alone could venture to ask, who it was that would betray his Master. And, so, they had a pyramid: the broad world was its base, and the Church, and the twelve, and the three, were the superstructure, as it narrowed upward—and John stood on the summit as the disciple whom Jesus loved. John might be so called, because he had special affinity with the life of Jesus. While another John—John the Baptist, came in the spirit of Elias—stern, majestic, terrible—John had come rather in the meek and gentle spirit of Christ. They saw this from John's gospel. The other evangelists brought other features of the Saviour's character more prominently into view: Matthew represented Him rather as the Messiah of the Hebrews; Mark had given the miracles rather than the discourses; to him, Christ was the lion of the tribe of Judah; and Luke, himself a Greek by birth, and a physician by calling, represented the Saviour, as the Saviour of the world and the Physician of souls. In the gospel of John, Christ was rather the incarnate love and brotherhood of God, dwelling among men and sympathising with their sorrows. It was John who gave them the beautiful scene of the feet-washing, and the short, sweet sentence—'Jesus wept.' He led them away, from the stir and strife of Jerusalem, to the quiet village. In short, he brought the Saviour's loving sympathy into view, through the medium of his own, like sunlight streaming through crystal. Though in youth he had a zeal not according to knowledge, when he would have called down fire from heaven on a village of the Samaritans, because they would not receive Christ, in after-life that had been softened down, by close communion with the incarnate love. In the epistles of Paul, we are men—fallen, condemned, justified, sanctified, glorified; but John lost sight of man altogether, in the brilliant sunlight of love. 'God is love,' and 'Little children, love one another, for love is of God,' and 'He that

is born of God loveth God,' and so, love embraced everything, with the Apostle whom Jesus loved. Then John might be so called because of his peculiar consciousness of the love of Christ. The publican called himself a sinner, or 'the' sinner, so conscious was he of sin, and John might have been so deeply conscious of the love of Christ that he called himself 'the' disciple whom Jesus loved. Referring to the story of the 'strife in heaven,' in which the heavenly company are represented striving as to which had the right to sing the loudest strain of praise, he said, the conclusion and the truth was, that each of them had the right, as if there were no other, to say—'He loved me and gave Himself for me.' As God saw every object in the universe, as if there were no other to be seen, so Christ loved every one of His disciples, as if there were no other. Each might say—'For me, the counsels of old were holden; for me, the Son of Earth died; He loved me and gave Himself for me.'

"Such was the four-fold group that stood beside the Cross—three Marys and one man. That did not warrant them to say that three-fourths of the piety of this earth was female piety—that three-fourths of the Christian family were sisters and not brothers; still it was well worth remarking, that, of the group, which in some sort might be considered representative, that stood round the Cross, three out of the four were Marys, and only one man; and, that, a young man too,—the youngest, perhaps, of all the twelve.

THE BEST PICTURE THAT HAS EVER BEEN PAINTED  
OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

"The best picture that has ever been painted of the crucifixion was by that pious old master, Fra Giovanni, or Brother John. Such a picture ought never to have been painted, for the subject was too solemn, too divine, to be treated so by a mere human artist's hand; and

in modern times, when painting seemed to have lost its piety, such treatment might be considered quite profane. In this picture, the mother of Jesus was represented as fainting and falling—not standing—by the Cross. That was untrue, both to nature and art, both to fact and fable, for nothing was so powerful to uphold and strengthen, as a mother's love. Remember Hagar, carrying her son Ishmael—now grown a young lad—across the desert sands ; and Rizpah, the daughter of Saul, watching her seven dead sons upon the black rock, amidst the golden barley sheaves, to guard them from the birds of prey by day, and the beasts of prey by night, through the long drought season, till the rain had come ; or any other mother you know, that watches the couch of the sick and dying child by lamp-light in the shaded room, yet never murmuring, never wearying, never complaining of the toil—never even feeling it at the time, though she will afterwards, and they would not wonder that the mother of the Saviour stood, and did not faint or fall. That Cross and death of Christ had, indeed, accomplished what even His life seemed never to have done. It had emboldened a Nicodemus, who had come timidly to Jesus by night ; and a Joseph of Arimathea, who had previously been a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. It had emboldened these two timid men to do the boldest thing then done, for they went boldly to Pilate and claimed the body of Jesus. And so, from the crucified One, a strengthening virtue comes to support those that stand around the Cross. 'They that wait upon the Lord shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.' Mary of Nazareth, Mary Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene, and the disciple whom Jesus loved, stood and watched with Jesus in the hour of dying agony. John and two brothers watched with Him in the garden ; John and three sisters watched with Him at the Cross. They stood to testify their devotion unto death. They thought not of themselves, being so much occupied with the crucified Saviour that there was no room

left for any thought of themselves, or of the brave thing they were doing. The noblest deeds were unconsciously done, as the noblest words were unconsciously spoken; and they stood to render an assistance needed by His enemies or requested by Himself. But he requested none. Alone and unassisted He fought the battle; He bare the heavy load. 'He hath trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with Him.'

## THE FAMOUS PICTURE OF THE LAST SUPPER BY DA VINCI.

"It was said that Da Vinci, in painting his great picture, had raised so much expectation in the faces of the apostles grouped round the table, which he had painted first, that when he came to paint the central likeness, that of the Saviour, he could not do it. He could not redeem the promise that the faces of the group had raised. This was a doubtful question in art, one upon which they could not there enter. But who could paint the Saviour at the table; who could paint the Man of Sorrows at the table; who could paint the Man of Sorrows on the Cross? We only saw Him reflected in the eyes and faces of that four-fold group around it. In their tears, their wonder, their astonishment, and their love, they beheld, as in a mirror—as in a glass darkly—the glory of the crucified Lord. What did they see—what did they now behold? Now, they beheld the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. Now, they saw fulfilled what Jesus said—'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up;' and 'they that believe on Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.'

"The preacher went on to say, that they all deserved to perish, but God was willing that they should not perish. There was no way by which they could get salvation but by the great atonement; and who could offer that great atonement? Earth could not; heaven could not; even the angels could not; and when it was asked—Whom shall I send; who shall go for us? from



the throne of the second person in the Godhead came the words—‘Lo, I come.’ And Christ had come down the golden stairway of humiliation from the palace and the throne of the Eternal God. He made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Himself the form of a servant; by successive steps of humiliation, coming down still lower—‘being found in fashion, as a man, He became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross.’ Now was the great atonement offered, and that was what they saw—Mary of Nazareth, Mary Cleophas, Mary Magdalene, and the disciple whom Jesus loved.

“He went on to remark that it was not to be supposed that Jesus died by an act of His divine power. He had gone to death by no way by which they could not follow Him. He had left His footsteps, step after step, in the valley of the shadow of death, and on the sands of the dark river. In death, as in all things, sin excepted, Christ had been made like unto His brethren. And oh, said the preacher, in deep and earnest tones, may our death be like His—a breathing out of the spirit into the Heavenly Father’s hands, and an awakening, if it should be from amid the angry execrations of men and the visions of their scowling angry faces—an awakening on the bosom of bliss, to hear the choral singing of the angels, and gaze upon the shining faces of the redeemed in the palaces of God.

“There they stood by the Cross to receive the dying commands of Christ. These were—‘Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother.’”

HERE WAS A PICTURE HE WOULD LIKE TO PAINT.

“An aged, sorrowful mother, leaning upon the arm of her adopted son, who leads her—how carefully, how gently—the great Cross behind them, and the humble cottage of the fisherman before. ‘And, from that hour, that disciple took her to his own home.’ The relation is altogether singular, and cannot be repeated, but it was none the less, but all the more, a type and representation of various other relations to which it was more or less

distinctly allied, such as :—that young man leading home his widowed mother from his father's funeral ; or he who leads the faithful partner of his love to his own home—most happy home, when they receive each other from the Saviour at the Cross ; for he leads her to his home, and through that home—through happiest domestic bliss—to the house of the Lord in heaven.

## ANOTHER ILLUSTRATION,

to close with, from a different point of view, in which these words become the close, rather than the beginning. I knew the mother of a sailor boy. She brought him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and though he went to sea against her will—indeed ran off—and lived a really wild and reckless life, yet never had he forgot his mother's lessons, or lost the memory of his mother's love. She died in grief, and went up in tears to heaven, because she had no assurance that her own dear son was saved. But he was saved, for he had carried in his heart,—hidden, it might be, but hidden in his heart—the word of God she had taught him. He had carried a magazine and store of influences, upon which, at any time, a holy spark from heaven might be let fall. And so it was ; for even as Jacob, in the distant land, with the truth that he had learned, and the parental training of Isaac slumbering in his heart, lay down on the cold ground, in tears, with a stone for a pillow, and in his sleep the truth slumbering within him grew up in beautiful dreams into a ladder between earth and heaven, the Covenant God speaking down to him,—so, under the fig tree of a foreign land, did this young man see heaven opened, and angels descending and ascending, and awoke into a higher spiritual life, and said, 'It is the gate of heaven.' After that, the ship in which he sailed was wrecked, and he went up *through the water-gate* of the city of the new Jerusalem, not knowing that his mother had gone up before him, and she not knowing that her son was coming. But Jesus took him by the hand, at the

gate, and led him to her, and said—‘Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother!’ I have no doubt that all this has been, more than once, realised in the sailor households of this congregation.”

#### CONCLUSION.

The preacher concluded with a very impressive reference to the judgment of the world. “Would they tremble to believe how near the judgment was—that it would begin to-morrow—that it would begin to-night—that it had already begun, and was going on now—that already many of the books were closing? For he that believeth was not condemned, but he that believeth not was condemned already. Now the Shepherd King was travelling down the ages with His cross—His crook—in His hand in the preaching of the Gospel, dividing the sheep from the goats, placing the sheep on the right hand, and the goats on the left, saying to these ‘Come, ye blessed;’ saying to those—not yet, ‘Depart.’ Thank God, there is yet appeal to His mercy, through the Cross. Behold again, the Lamb of God.”

The last sermon, preached in the afternoon, was founded on these two texts—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1. Peter i., 3), and, “Giving thanks unto the Father” (1. Col. i., 12), and the last truth taught to His people: “Heaven was not a change of place, but a change of heart; and, if they would enter heaven, the change of heart must take place here and now.”

A month later, he undertook the forenoon service at the jubilee of the congregation at Bannockburn, which his brother Andrew had assisted to found. A

correspondent, on sending brief notes of the service, remarked, that he was wearing well, and that it was with pleasure the crowded audience looked upon the ruddy countenance of the preacher, "as with voice and manner, betraying very little paling of their fires, he held the people under the spell of his eloquence. His text was "Go forward;" and in the light of what was so soon to follow, one passage is suggestive. "Nothing," continues the correspondent, "could have been finer than the way in which he spiritualized the delivery from Egyptian bondage, and the wanderings in the wilderness--the lights and shadows in the life of faith. At one time, the pilgrim ready to perish by the way, within the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; at another time, resting at the spiritual Elim, with its threescore and ten palm trees, and its twelve wells of water."\* "His prayer," said Principal Cairns, who was present, "was most unearthly; and the sermon which followed his exposition of the Beatitudes, went through all his styles, dwelling in triumph on the victories of Christianity, on its duties (illustrated by a stirring picture of the charge at Balaclava); and on its prospects, ending with a most delightful and congenial contrast, pictured to the life, and drawn from his youthful Swiss experiences, between the ascent of an Alpine

\* *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, October 9, 1885.

summit, where the dreariness increases with every step, and the last stages of the upward Christian path, as it nears the Delectable Mountains and the golden city.”\*

Later in the autumn, he preached for the Rev. Forrest Young, at Wark, Tyneside ; and, on his return home, before leaving for Ventnor, on a visit to Dr. and Mrs. Williamson, he preached for the Rev. Mr. Muir, of Bridge of Allan. Writing me, after his arrival at Ventnor, under date 8th November, 1885, he says :—

“I came here last week, and have been baptising on Friday, and preaching on Sabbath. It rains, rains ; but the choice little town and irregular surroundings, both in sea and landscape, are very charming. The tone of the climate is quite Italian, but the society, especially in this darkening November, when invalids are arriving for the winter (and some for the grave), is more serious than gay. A hospital at hand has one hundred patients in consumption. On a good day, you may see the hundred guests strolling about, so that the place, so very beautiful, is not very lively, and there are ‘sepulchres in the garden.’”

Finding “the climate and scenery delightful, and the friends much more so,” he would willingly have prolonged his stay, but he wanted to be home in time for Mr. Gladstone’s meeting at West Calder, and to escape a winter journey, with which, he said, he did not agree. It was on the way home that he preached his last sermon. He stayed a few days

\* Funeral Sermon, 4th July, 1886.

in London, and took the evening service for his old fellow-presbyter, Dr. Walter Morison, formerly of Ayr. On 1st January, he was again at Westfield.

The winter of 1885-1886 was a severe one, and he seems to have felt urgent need to guard against exposure. He continued his correspondence with friends; was at Bridge of Allan, on a visit to his sister, in the end of February; and, in March, felt sufficiently well to take a walk through the snow to West Calder Church. The distance was too great in such weather, for, though part of the road is partially protected from cold winds by trees, other parts are exposed. This walk, in March, was the beginning of the end. He was, indeed, out on good days after this, and was able to spend one day in Edinburgh, paying, as the after-event showed, farewell visits to old friends, but recuperation did not come, as formerly, and, at the end of the month, he left Westfield for Bridge of Allan, never to return.

He died, Sunday, 27th June, 1886. A few weeks previous to his death, I had a letter from him, in which he said, that an old complaint had become complicated, but with his usual hopefulness he expressed the belief that he had "turned the corner." "I am going up to summer," he wrote; but it was to summer in a land where there is an ever-cloudless sky; where the glory of the

holiness he preached is not marred by sin; and where the meanings of this dark little life of ours, so very perplexing to him, are all unravelled in the great light of eternity, and in the presence of the "Father of lights."

Death-beds are sacred; and, in one of his discourses, he takes notice of the divine reticence of Scripture, in that it describes but few death-bed scenes.

Not much is said of his own, but sufficient to show that all the higher and finer aspirations of his nature showed themselves,—during the few weary weeks of nursing and waiting, of hoping and despairing,—more than ever. He died as he lived. There was trust in Christ's work, and, so, peace and joy; a child-like humility that saw worthiness only in the Lord, his Saviour; patience, though suffering much pain; a quiet preparedness, and resignation to the will of God; the old humour, so delicate and playful, never deserting him; and, till the very end, that beautiful, tender consideration for others, which through life was so conspicuous a trait in his character. "I would not," he once told his people, "miss the opportunity of overcoming the sharpness of death, that I might carry with me through eternity the remembrance and the palm-branch of victory;" and so, when within sight of that "dark bridge of sighs," where all earthly ties must be



parted, he asked his sister to read to him the Scripture which describes the walk of Elijah and Elisha down to the river Jordan, and the sundering of the two by the chariot and horses of fire, "one to the prophet's reward, and the other to the prophet's work." He crossed the dark river of separation—death—in the quiet of the day of rest, as the bells began to ring for the afternoon service. And so departed

"One of those great spirits,  
Who go down like suns,  
And leave, upon the mountain-tops of death,  
A light that makes them lovely."

His remains were interred in St. Ninians church-yard, on the afternoon of Thursday, 1st July, as the sun was beginning to sink in the west. Dr Frew, in a prayer of inexpressible pathos and beauty, and in language which seemed to have caught something of the deceased's poetic elevation of thought, gave expression to the feeling which filled the hearts of all present—grief for the loss of a loved friend, of a gifted servant of God, and of a sacred eloquence now silent, save as it has found a feeble echo in the hearts and memories of those whom he was wont to hold spell-bound.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### Preacher—Lecturer—Poet.

*The Preacher*—Analysis of his style—Elocution—Irreproducible Pictures—Philosophic Thought—Consecrated Gifts. *The Lecturer*—Qualifications for lecturing—"German Student Life"—"Martin Luther"—"Poetry and the Fine Arts"—*The Poet*—Lyrical—Thought in Rhyme—Hymns—Conclusion.

WHEREIN lay the witchery, the spell-like influence, which, for years, the pastor of Trinity Church exercised over so many minds? The question is not easily answered. The difficulty lies in the marvellous combination of great and rare qualities of mind—an imagination which gave birth to poetic fancies, a subtile brain, sparkling wit and humour, with a personal fascination of manner, which no one who came under its influence could resist.\* This union of

\*Very touching, at his death, were the references made to the fascination of his intercourse with friends:—"His heart was always young within him, and his choice delight was to surround himself with a company of the young, to seek to form their taste in art, and music, and literature, and to solve the difficulties that press on the present generation in the field of religious truth."—(*Dr. Ker.*) "He was simple in heart, full of kindness and sympathy, as tender in feeling as a girl, overflowing with wit and repartee, but without sarcasm, without ridicule, without a bitter or wounding word."—(*Rev. R. M. MacInnes, Ayr.*) "Children loved him, women loved him, shrewd men of affairs loved him, as men love

qualities made him the preacher and lecturer he was, and this is why the estimate of friends may be esteemed by some as too highly coloured, and why no one has ever been able to convey to those who never heard him, any true, living conception of his pulpit and platform appearances. As a preacher, possessed of special gifts of style and thought, he stood alone in his day. Audiences—especially strange audiences—found it difficult to say why they were so moved. It was not that the sermon was a great oratorical effort—it was said to be more oratorical than oratorical; or because of the rare subtilty of the thought—present as this was in his most ordinary productions; or the artistic use of picture, metaphor, and simile—which no one could miss observing; or keenness of spiritual vision—which some have called seraphic; it was in the fine blending of all of these, as combined with, and “bodied forth” under the

their own flesh and blood, and the only weakness that he showed—the great love for friendly love, the value which he set upon affection and regard—was a weakness which made colder hearts feel shamed and small.”—(*Rev. A. R. MacEwen, Glasgow.*) “His face beamed with the deep intelligence of human thought in its varied endowments, as his heart, with all the pulses of human sympathy, from the sublime to the tender, from the most reverential to the most quaintly and irresistibly ludicrous. Still the human in him seemed only a little lower than the angels; his extraordinary face, with wings behind it, would hardly have been out of place in some old mediæval picture.”—(*Principal Cairns.*) These are but a few of the many that might be quoted.

peculiarly fascinating influences of voice, look, motion of body, and dramatic action—a combination of spiritual and weird faculties which, as a preacher, made him “*the only one*” in the eyes of his contemporaries. Imagination was the dominant faculty in Robertson’s mind. His imagination has been spoken of as less akin to that of Chalmers than that of Edward Irving—the “Shakespeare of preachers,” as he has been called. But if Robertson was inferior to Irving or Chalmers as a preacher, it was not that his imagination was less potent, but, rather, that in them it was associated with a strong intellect; whereas, in Robertson, it was wedded to a more subtile and luxurious fancy than they possessed. Hence Robertson’s mind was more poetical, theirs more philosophical; and, therefore, in this respect he is a purer specimen of the poet-preacher. In this, Robertson had a strong resemblance to Gilfillan. Both were essentially poet-preachers, and on these two faculties—imagination and fancy—as on the wings of a strong eagle, each, after his own manner, disported himself in the pure empyrean of thought; but Robertson had more unction and spiritual insight than Gilfillan, more innate refinement, and a more highly cultured taste, together with a specialist’s fuller knowledge of Music and the Fine Arts. They were men of *light*, rather than *leaders* of men. In Irving and Chalmers these two

qualities were combined—hence their pre-eminence as thinkers and preachers. In William Anderson, Norman Macleod, and William Arnot of Glasgow, again, we see the imagination in combination with a strong practical understanding—hence their “inspired common-sense,” the catholicity of their sympathies, and the manliness of their utterances ; while in Guthrie, M’Cheyne, and John Ker, the imagination was ever at the service of the heart,—hence their fine enthusiasm, their heavenly unction, and their power over the affections. In Robertson, something of all of these classes of mind and character were present ; and as a poet-preacher he would seem to be entitled to the foremost place amongst the illustrious dead of our own Presbyterian nationality.

He had a complete mastery over his voice, which was singularly flexible, full of music, and rich in its deepest tones. A slight burr no way marred his speech, but rather was so managed as to add to the charm, and give variety, as voice and figure were brought into accord with the rhythm in which his poetic thought was cast. His fluency was very remarkable. In quick transition, he passed from tender pathos to tragic solemnity, and sustained attention by vivid dramatic expression in speech, attitude, and eye. Or he would introduce a significant pause in his discourse, after which the hearer, attracted by the unwonted

silence, would be startled by a striking thought or graphic picture. Glamoury, witchery, therefore, was the effect produced as he proceeded—

“ Now flashing sharp on sharp along,  
Exulting in a mounting throng;  
Now dying off to a low song  
Fed upon minors.”

His elocution, which was thus peculiar and altogether his own, was simply one side of his individuality as a preacher and public speaker. In all its variety of easy expression, pathos, solemnity, and dramatic force, it was shaped and dominated by his thought, which, like his elocution, was delightfully varied, and cast unexpected lights upon the deepest truths.

The grandest passages were those in which pictorial teaching was set forth in dramatic form; and, as the impression made was dependent on attitude and eye, on the changing inflexion of the voice, and on the rapid transition of the thought, these passages, when reproduced in letter-press, give but a poor idea of the effect they produced upon hearers during their delivery. Such irreproducible pictures will present themselves to those who have heard him preach his best-known sermons. These include, the funeral of Jacob, with its “blazonry of grief;” the spectacle of the crossing of the Red Sea, in the darkening twilight, by the Israelites; the dream of his own indictment, at

the judgment-seat of God, on the charge of murder ; the executioner of John the Baptist, with stealthy step descending the castle stair, with lantern and sword in hand, the prison lighted only by a single lamp, and John's pale face on the block ; the picture of the stranger, from an unfallen world, entering heaven, surprised to see so many seats empty, listens, and hears the far-off sound of angelic music rising up, up, through the sky—the song of the reapers as they homeward bring the harvest sheaves ; and, to add only one other—that striking and difficult passage, his description of a storm at sea, in which, by gesture and speech, he so wrought out the oratorical illusion that his audience seemed to hear the ship groan, and throb, and shudder, before it went crashing upon the breakers—lost because the lighthouse-keeper neglected to show the lights :—

“There comes a noble ship, a London merchantman, with precious cargo and most precious lives aboard. The storm is up, the lightnings flash, the thunder rolls, the deep sea yawns, the waves roll mountains high, the strong ship groans and creaks and quivers through the waters :—but there is no fear (for 'tis a good, strong ship), if they could only sight the lights. Where are these lights? We ought to sight them hereabouts, or have we lost our way? Ah ! there they are ! red and white, and red again. All right ! The ship goes safely on her way ; saved, on the part of those that, in the lighthouse there, have unconsciously been the means of saving it. Their duty is to do the work that



has been given them to do, and leave results to God—to trim the lamps, adjust the lenses, cleanse the mirrors, and set and keep in motion the revolving wheel of fire. For if they fail to do so, through feasting, or through slumbering in the night, so that the lamps have gone out, and the revolving wheel of fire has ceased to move, what then? There comes another noble ship, a British man-of-war, or transport ship, with many hundred soldiers' and sailors' lives aboard. The storm is up, the lightnings flash, the strong ship groans, and throbs, and shudders through the waters; but 'tis a good strong ship: no fear if they could only sight the lights! Where are the lights? 'Breakers ahead!' is shouted from the prow. That cannot be, for where the breakers are lights ought to be! 'Breakers ahead!' Crash goes the ship, and hundreds of precious lives are in the sea, and in eternity! Who is to blame? You in the lighthouse there—you should have showed the lights! It will not do to say you did not know that such a ship was looking out for them. Your duty is to do the work that God has given you to do, and leave results to Him. The ship is lost wholly through fault of yours; and none the less that it is through you lost unconsciously."

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that Dr. Robertson's discourses were all picture-images—beautiful thoughts, made more beautiful and striking by voice and manner. If that had been so, he never could have drawn together, as he did, the most cultured audiences, or maintained his position, for so many years, in the first rank of Scottish preachers. He was no theologian, some have said; but may this not have been because he held that spiritual truth lost

rather than gained by being formulated into a system, and, also, because he held, that religion is a life which cannot be more than imperfectly shadowed forth by the tenets of any creed? A rich vein of philosophic thought pervaded all his discourses; and it was not the less profound, because exposition and illustration were presented with a clearness which to some might be deceptive, in consequence of the purity of the element through which it was viewed. A less lucid thinker would have blinded others with the mist in his own eyes, and made his exposition seem deep when it was only obscure. His sermons were no dry and unassimilative summary of other men's labours, but the result of much and varied research. A preacher who held, in all honesty, the faith of the Church of his fathers, because he read in the doctrines deeper truths than the common mind perceived, and yet was classed among the liberalizers of his time, could be no mean thinker; and it was this happy combination—this clear discernment, as he puts it himself—that God had placed us “neither in the perfectly dark nor in the perfectly bright, but in the middle light, or *chiaro-scuro*, betwixt the two,” that enabled him to reconcile what seemed to be irreconcilable, and led him to disagree with “the two opposite schools of the present time, the one that makes darkness to

be the test of truth, and ignorance the mother of devotion; the other that makes light to be the test of truth, and the human mind to be the measure and gauge of all mysteries. Or, put in a form which might (he said) be remembered, for he counted it important:—

“ The superstitious darkness take  
To be of all things head and chief,  
And ignorance the mother make  
Of all devotion and belief.  
To sceptics, truth is what is plain,  
What they can see all round and round;  
They make their little three-inch brain  
Gauge of all mysteries profound.  
But not the dark, but not the clear,  
Can be the measure of the true,  
Nor noon nor night's our portion here,  
But, *chiaro-scuro*, 'twixt the two;  
Which, to the good, is dawn of heaven,  
That brightens to the perfect light;  
But to the bad, a dusk of even,  
That darkens into outer night!”

“The longer I live, the more I am convinced that the beautiful is allied to the good and the true,” is the opening sentence of his famous sermon from the text—“There was a rainbow about the throne.” And so, in accordance with this conviction, Dr. Robertson sought for the beautiful in all things, that he might the more effectually work out his mission as a preacher of righteousness, and a minister of the truth. To this end, his gifts, as one of God's singers, were consecrated; and his sermons were

frequently prose poems, jewelled with metaphor and simile. He shaped thought to the eye that it might be apprehended by the intellect; hence, to him, it was æsthetically a fitting thing to speak of Penitence as weeping tears of contrition for sin; Holy Grief as bemoaning her dead; and Wealth as gathering in his treasures. Nature furnished him with analogues of spiritual truth—God's works in the outer universe revealing to him the inner world of the human heart. The Arts—music, painting, and sculpture, old-world legends, and poetic symbol, were drawn upon to enrich and interpret his teaching. He dreamed dreams, that in parable he might, like the Master, help men more clearly to see spiritual truths. Himself a graduate in the school of affliction, with the rare sympathy of a fellow-sufferer he taught the weary and the heavy laden, the sorrowful and the suffering, in humility and obedience to wait on God's hand. And, to bring all who heard him within reach of the divine,\* Christ he represented as Jacob's ladder stretching from earth to heaven, and the Church of God as ministered to by the ascending and descending angels.

\* "One of the great marvels of his teaching lay in this—that he made men feel the near warmth of the heart of Christ, and long to get out of themselves, and get within its glow and its light. It was a ministry having all the three dimensions of a Divine and Human depth, and breadth, and height, and, to these, is surely pledged the fourth, everlasting length."—*Professor Graham.*

Men paused to hear the lyrical melody—the pleasing music of his utterance, and were charmed and impressed. In Irvine, and wherever he went, his voice was recognised as that of a prophet of the Lord, whose lips had been touched with a coal from off the holy altar; and whose mission was to present men with a lofty ideal,\* and through the medium of a beatified imagination to let them see the Infinite love of God in a crucified, risen, and exalted Christ. And, as in the days of his strength, he was pre-eminently a preacher of the gospel, even so, in the days of his weakness, this continued to be his heart's desire to the end, for it is told of him, that just before the final struggle, he said to his sister, "*I think I could preach*

\* "In its two-fold aspect—the God-ward in worship, and the man-ward in the declaration of the word—the ministry of Robertson of Irvine was, perhaps, one of the purest, the most beautiful, the likeliest to the seraphic ideal of Isaiah's vision, which this poor earth of ours has seen in modern times. This vision (Ch. vi. 1-8), more than any other, gives us the *note* of his distinctive mission, even as it gave his whole being a truly spiritual tone and radiance—filling his imagination with its glory, his spirit with reverence, and his heart with true humility. In his personality, there was a most remarkable instance of what has too seldom been seen in the Church—a richly-gifted nature consecrated in its *entirety* to the sacred calling—a nature touched at all points with the "terrestrial" glory of genius, yet not blighted nor blighting—but rather quickened and exalted thereby—and in its turn ennobling, adding a "celestial" glory to every function of the ministry, whether of worship, as represented by the two drooping wings that covered the face, and the two that covered the feet; or that of service *man-wards*, as represented by the two expanding wings, and the action of the hand of the seraph in the vision. A nature at once essentially spiritual, and, withal, truly human, in its sympathies."—*David Lambie*.

*a sermon yet, and this would be the text,*”—and in his old musical tones, sounding loudly through the room, he cried,—“*He is able to save to the uttermost.*”

The qualities which made Dr. Robertson great as a preacher, and gave individuality to his lectures, were—abstract thought thrown into concrete form; apt and felicitous illustrations; a charming voice and manner; with a free play of fancy, and occasional strokes of wit and humour. There was no sermonizing in his lectures; although he held that deep earnestness was not incompatible with “scientific laughter;” for, as he said in his lecture on Luther, “he who would weave a broad web of life, must have warp of laughter, as well as woof of tears.” One thing was noticeable—however brilliant the wit, or exquisite the humour, or striking the picture, or inimitable the acting, his lectures, like his sermons, had but one note, and that was—“worship God,” and they manifested throughout, a poet’s love for the beautiful.

His lecturing was not confined to Irvine. Previous to his illness, besides neighbouring towns, he had lectured in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and as far north as Inverness; in Liverpool and London; and, across the channel, in the Rotunda, Dublin. After his partial restoration to health, he repeated his lectures in several places, notably in Cambridge, where the local

press said "it was refreshing to see one so thoroughly in earnest;" and that the reports published gave but "a very imperfect idea of the eloquence and power of the lecturer."

His choice of subjects is easily accounted for. The interest which, all through life, he took in Archæology, suggests why he lectured, in the early years of his ministry, on the old Seagate Castle in Irvine; his residence in Germany, and subsequent visits, account for "German Student Life" and "Martin Luther;" his poetic sensibilities, for directing attention to music as used in the service of Praise; and, as the bent of his genius led to Art studies in their widest range, he lectured on "Poetry and the Fine Arts," with the view of showing that these, being related to religion, should be used in the service of the Giver of gifts.

His lecture on "German Student Life," written and delivered many years ago, was an "exposure of the blighting influence of German Rationalism," and an able vindication of Christian truth. After a very amusing picture, graphically painted, of the family discussions arising out of the Rev. Mr. Burgher's desire to send his son, who is studying for the ministry, to complete his education at German Universities, the lecturer began by noting a few of the many things received from that country:—apples from their orchards; the fruit



of harvest fields; the best of music; the best of husbands for our Queen; a new philosophy; translations of her literature—received through France in the writings of Lamartine, through America, in the writings of Emerson, rained upon us like a baptismal shower in the works of Maurice and Kingsley, in mists and dews in the works of Coleridge, that had burst up like lava from the strong fiery soul of Carlyle, and threatened to overflow the press, the pulpit, the heights of science, and the very Hill of God. Ever since the days of Martin Luther, he went on to say, there had been in Germany, until recently, a marked decline in evangelical religion, which had resulted in the present modern rationalistic philosophy. If he were compelled to choose between them, for his part he would rather have Pio Nono for his Pontiff than this mad modern German philosophy. And, to illustrate what he meant by this, he told of a fellow-student—a Pantheist, or Hegelian, as he called him, of the extreme left, with whom he made a walking tour.

“Some years ago, previous to 1848, we had crossed a mountain pass on the High Alps, with dazzling pinnacles of snow on either side, skirted by the dark pine woods, out of which ran the rivers of ice, the deep blue glaciers, down into the meadows with their sheepfolds, their cattle with the tinkling bells, that lined, on either side, the mountain torrent, up whose steep course we were climbing: a scene that everywhere repeats itself in Switzer-

land, but all bathed, that morning, in the yellow mists of sunrise behind us, and the dark purple of a thunder-storm before. In such a scene, whatever be the cause, not merely the being of a God, which the Atheist denies, but His living personality, which the Pantheist denies, becomes most vividly revealed to the conscious soul. One gets to feel, amidst these Alpine solitudes and silences, broken only by the scream of the eagle, the shout of the chamois hunter, the ringing song of the herdboys far down the vale, as Moses may have felt amid the solitudes of Midian, till every hill becomes a Horeb, every bush is burning with God's presence, and every spot is holy ground, where you must put your shoes from off your feet, and commune with the living Presence, and the living Voice that speaks to you out of the burning glory, saying, 'I AM THAT I AM.'

"In such a scene I was walking with this Pantheist—my fellow tourist, the denier of the personality of God. And, as we walked along, I asked him: 'Vanzelow, did you ever pray?' 'Pray! pray!' said he, 'what's that? Pray to God! What's God? That cloud is God, yon rising sun is God, that ground there (kicking it with his feet) is God, and I am made of that, and so I am God, and when I pray, I summon up myself!' The scorner laughed, I shuddered! And the thunder pealed along the cliffs, as if God called, I AM! and the reverberation of the distant mountains answered, 'Yea, Thou art!' After a little while, we two had a very narrow escape from a considerable danger. An Alpine waggon, heavily laden with timber, which was being dragged up the steep incline of zig-zag terraces before us, suddenly broke its traces, and came down with a terrific crash, not far from where we were. I said, 'Vanzelow, had you been killed just now, where would your soul have gone?' And he said, 'My soul gone! gone to the Absolute! relapsed into the All, melted into God—the wind, the waves, the elements, gone to feed the flowers, the worms, perhaps.' I shuddered, he laughed; and we two walked on. And, again, the thunder pealed along the

cliffs, as if God called, I AM ; and the reverberation of the distant mountains to the Breener and the Bernina answered, 'Yea, Thou art.' After a little it came on to rain, we had no shelter, and the rain was very bitter. Vanzelow turned his dark face to the sky, and said, 'If there be a God in heaven, I spit at Him.' I shuddered, and shrank aside lest a thunderbolt should strike him down ; but no hand struck, no voice from heaven rebuked the blasphemy : all was still in the silent heavens—'in the silent magnanimity of nature and her God.' I tell you that I turned back eagerly upon the Alpine waggoners and woodmen, rude Roman Catholics though they were ; and felt a thousand times nearer to them, in sympathy, than to that dark-souled and wild-eyed Hegelian, exchanging with them the salutation and response, without which they would have no fellowship with any passing stranger :—'Praised be the Lord Jesus Christ,' I said. 'For ever, Amen !' they answered. '*Gelobt sei Jesus Christ !*' '*In Ewigkeit. Amen.*'"

Pantheism, he continued, was worse than Popery—indeed, they helped to spread each other by their mutual paction. Dr. Pusey, terrified at it, went to the opposite extreme. The brothers Newman divided, the one going further into the darkness, and the other returning back to Roman Catholicism ; and John Ronge, from whom so much had been expected, had expelled Popery, only to become possessed of spirits more deadly than those he had cast out. Our duty was to flee from both to Christ. Popery was all feeling : Infidelity all intellect. Then followed a series of pictures descriptive of student life in Germany, as he saw it, with a picture of Wittemberg, once so cele-

brated, but now silent from the transference of the University to Hallé, about 50 miles distant ; there being at the latter place, as many as fifty-three professors, and more than a thousand students, professing views varying from the wildest Pantheism to the most dove-like Christianity. The minutest details were noted :—the student's dress, his journey to Hallé, the quaint German villages through which he passed, the antique appearance of the University town, with its narrow streets, lighted at night by lamps hung from ropes suspended across them, his lodgings, his hours of rising, his studies, the lecture rooms, into which the lecturer led his hearers, giving pen-and-ink portraits of the professors, and notes, taken down in the classroom, of the lectures of the leading and most learned of them, namely, Gesenius, Tholuck, and Erdmann. The Students' Clubs, or *Burchen-schaften*, were referred to, with their singular customs and badges ; their youthful buoyancy ; their Quixotic knight-errantry (a strange survival) ; their Latin disputations over German beer ; their duelling, which though not very deadly, yet prepared them for the revolutions in 1848, in which many students fought. Meantime, those theologians fell under suspicion, and were excluded from pulpits, who bore marks of sabre wounds on their faces, which rather hampered what he called their "morning exercises at Cripplegate."

With great art, in a dialogue between a student and his betrothed, he then sketched the history of German philosophy, from Kant downwards, to which the simple German maiden, with great *naïveté* and much common-sense, took reasonable and Christian exception, seeking to draw him back from the gulf by her affectionate sadness, and playing and singing the song of the Lorelei. In the metaphysical problem, a practical solution through personal affection is indicated, while its darkening, soul-destroying power, in conflict with a mind earnestly groping and struggling after the truth, is described. The student dies, and, with marvellous power, the funeral by torchlight is graphically pictured:—the wail of the trumpets, softened, as the procession drew near, by other instruments—the glimmering of the lights in the distance—the thousand students with torches and swords—the attendant horsemen—the bay windows thronged with spectators—the hearse drawn by black horses adorned with flowers—the open bier, also ornamented with a wreath—the grave—the oration—the lowering of the body—the clashing of the swords—and the inverting of the torches—the march back to the Square with mirthful song, and the wild and wailing requiem sung at the close. In concluding, he expressed the belief, that although German Pantheism was the great upas tree which was casting its blighting

influences everywhere — through Cousin in France, and Emerson in America, there need be no fear as to the ultimate triumph of truth :

“In the past,” he said, “truth had vanquished the philosophy of Plato, of Aristotle, of Bacon ; had vanquished rationalism in Germany, and would yet vanquish the pantheistic philosophy which denied the personality of God, and made God to consist of everything visible and invisible ; as well as the rationalistic doctrine, which would reduce the inspiration of the holy prophets to a level with the genius of Burns, or any modern poet. The forms in which the truth is dressed may pass away, but the truth itself is unchanging and eternal. ‘Men may pass away, but the truth remaineth.’ In astronomy, in botany, in music, there had been many systems, and one system had supplanted another ; but stars had always shone with the same brightness, flowers bloomed with the same beauty, and songs been sung with the same sweetness. Systems of philosophy might change ; theology, too—so far as it is only human science ; but the truth, the love, the personality of our Lord Jesus Christ remained the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

In his lecture on “Martin Luther,” all his great powers as a literary artist were seen at their best. Wit and humour, the pictorial and the dramatic, were never for long absent ; the figure of the great Reformer all the while growing upon the canvas, painted in living colours. He began :—

“The bells had tolled eleven, on St. Martin’s eve, in the little Saxon town of Eisleben, on a dark winter

night, the 10th of November, 1483. The rhyme of the watchman—

“Hear, good people, and let me tell  
Eleven has struck on the old church bell;  
Eleven apostles went then forth  
Preaching truth through all the earth”—

had echoed through the dark street, when the voice of a child was heard—a voice which was destined to take up the truth, and shout it through the world like thunder. It was the voice of the new-born Luther. The parents of Luther were of peasant origin, and to his companion, Philip Melancthon, he would sometimes joke on the subject of astrological forecasts. That he should become a famous doctor, and pull the Pope about by the hair of his head—all that, he would say, was surely not written in the stars. If not written in the stars, the early life of Luther had not been without some token, or prognostic. The name of ‘Luther,’ in old German, had the meaning, pure. The father prays God that he may be ‘Luther,’ pure, and propagate pure truth, and, inasmuch, as the St. Martin of the legend was represented as giving all the bread from under his cloak to the poor people, and was regarded as the model of mediæval generosity, the mantle of St. Martin seemed to have fallen on Luther, as they found his wife, in after years, contending that there was no necessity for giving away all the bread in the house to the poor people about him.

“Referring to Luther’s school days, the lecturer described them as anything but agreeable. Luther had told them that he had been flogged as often as fifteen times a day—ten times for the commandments, and five for the paternosters. They were literally beaten into him. Possibly Luther’s strong will had brought him in for some of those attentions of the schoolmaster, as his opposition to the parental rule had brought him into sore trouble, and had caused him great suffering, when brought under that most stern schoolmaster—God’s holy law. The surround-



ings of Luther's boyhood—the dark woods, the roaring furnaces that flared through the night, the spectral figures that seemed to float between the fires, had awakened conscious dread of the everlasting burning, and filled his imagination with pictures of giants and goblins. The giants of Luther's young imagination were no classical giants, but those strong, coarse, stupid, blundering giants with which the peasant literature of Germany is full, especially that of the northern Scandinavian regions. They might think of the school-boy Martin, with his satchel in his hand, whistling through the darkening woods at dusk to keep his courage up, and they would not be surprised that the devil Luther had to do battle with was no classical Satan, like the Satan of *Paradise Lost*—no polished Mephistopheles, but just the strong, coarse, blundering 'cloutie,' with hoof and tail and horns complete, that had come into the peasant homes of Scotland from Scandinavian legend. It was such a devil, as appeared to Luther, that could be fought, not only by faith, but by physical force—not merely by prayer, but by something more tangible—taking the inkstand and dashing it at his head. The labouring life of Germany, and of Europe, the Samson Agonistes of the mines and fields, was struggling for emancipation from feudal vassalage. That man, Martin Luther, had fought the battle, and won it, too, without drawing a single drop of blood. The childhood of Luther had had its bitterness, and its sweetness, too. God's own love he did not know, as yet, though he had experienced the holy charm of a mother's affection. He had a strong constitution, a heritage from his peasant ancestry; and a love of the beautiful—a melancholy yearning after the beautiful, which haunted him all his days. Along with that, there was a rare, rollicking humour in the young lad, which was, again, softened down by the terrors of an awakened conscience. While Luther was growing up, the furnaces of Mansfeld were producing not only iron, but gold, for Luther's father.

He was elected a Councillor, and became a sort of Bailie Nicol Jarvie of the Sautmarket of Mansfeld. Luther's father, Hans, in his improved circumstances, had sent his son to the University of Erfurt, where Luther developed both his genius and his fame. At that time he studied music, and lovingly remained true to it, to the last. He visits his father, Hans, at the vacation, but there is something brooding on his mind, on the occasion of his visit. He has some trouble, but does not, or will not, explain. It was, perhaps, the effect of his recent illness, for he had been brought to death's-door; but in the Erfurt library he had found a rare old Latin book. It was no other than the Bible. Luther found that there was much more of God's truth in this world than the priests cared to let the world know. The Church said the way to heaven was through the monastery; the old Latin book said, 'What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' These things wrought on Luther's imagination, and the lecturer described how, under the awe-inspiring influence of a thunder-storm, the splendour of the lightning flashing and dazzling around him, a companion struck dead by his side, a voice in his ear—'Luther, turn a monk and save thy soul,' he had, beneath God's glittering thunder-storm, resolved to enter a monastery. Bidding farewell to his student friends, that same night Luther knocked at the low door of the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt. The old monk, with his night lamp, takes him in, and next morning, when his friends call to see him, he is dead to the world. They may go to him, but he shall not return to them. Now began those struggles, and that deliverance, and those experiences of a sinful soul, of which that act was the germ and foundation. The most menial duties are performed. He winds the clock, sweeps the floors, and with the monastery sack on his back, goes through the streets of Erfurt begging. Truly, if ever monk was saved by monkery, Martin Luther should have been saved. He had fasted and

prayed till he nearly killed himself; and weakened by fasting, and worn-out by prayer, the monster furnaces were still burning in his soul. Lying one day in his cell, to all appearance dead, he is visited by heavenly music. It was a band of fuldas singing outside the convent walls, and he was revived by it; but something more than music was wanted, and that something more Luther found in the old Latin book. There he learned that souls were saved—not by singing masses, but by the infinite grace of God. After this discovery, all the texts of Scripture that had pursued him like so many furies seemed to leap, and bound, and dance, and sing.

“Passing on to the scene which finds Luther at Wittenberg, the lecturer observed that to his faith Luther added bravery. Wittenberg was described as the Mecca of the Reformation. It was a somewhat longish walled town, and the lecturer took his audience through it, beginning at the castle church at the western gate, and passing on through the market place, Melancthon’s lodgings, the University, and other points of interest, and describing them in a manner which brought the old German town before the listeners almost as vividly as though it had been actually exhibited to the eye. He then pictured Luther, the new-made professor, with bare feet and black dress, in his lecture-room. He was no dilettante professor, and the criticism on his first lecture, which was from a text in Paul’s epistles, referring to repentance and remission of sins, was that this new professor would trouble all the doctors yet. Attending the University were Spaniards, Italians, Waldensians, Swiss, Frenchmen, Dutchmen from the feet of Erasmus, Englishmen, and Scotchmen, and there they stood, side-by-side, listening to Luther. Then, from the professor’s chair, Luther rose to the pulpit—the carved oak pulpit which was still preserved, and in which the lecturer himself had stood. Luther told them he always entered it with fear and trembling, but, presently rising out of his fear, with great eloquence and earnestness, before he finished—as was said

of one of their great Scottish preachers—he was ‘like to ding the pulpit doon.’ The lecturer found a comparison to Luther in the character and genius of Dr. Chalmers, and of Robert Burns, had the latter only ‘taen a thocht tae men.’

“His description of Tetzal, the Pope’s agent for the sale of indulgences, formed a most graphic and amusing picture. Pope Leo X.—a lion in his way, but a very gentlemanly and accomplished lion, the lecturer described as having no more real religion than a pagan. This elegant pagan Pope wanted money, and had got up a bazaar for the sale of indulgences, and all the saints in the calendar were represented as sending in contributions. For a certain sum, sins already committed, or yet to be committed—sins of the living, or of the dead down in Purgatory, could be pardoned. Theft, lying, and so on, had each a price set upon it, as on a marketable commodity. These indulgences were a sort of Papal pardon, issued in the form of Papal bank notes, and ordered to be cashed by all the Pope’s agents—that was to say, all the priests throughout Christendom. It did not occur to Leo that any of his priests would refuse to cash his notes, and, so, threaten to bring down the central bank; but there was one man who had the courage to do so, and that man was Martin Luther. Tetzal’s style of advertising and vending his wares was imitated with the skill of an accomplished actor:—Sin for sixpence; lies for a shilling; theft and murder, cheap, cheap! Sinners were to be got out of Purgatory on the shortest notice.

‘As soon as the money clinks in my box,  
Straightway St. Peter’s gate unlocks,  
In half-an-hour—three-quarters at most,  
Up in the skies a most blessed ghost.’

The indulgences that were granted by the travelling friars needed to be received by the priests to whom the persons holding them confessed, as the necessary condition for absolution, but Dr. Martin Luther refused to receive

them. 'Where did you get that?' he asked. 'I got it from Tetzel, out there drumming his pardons.' 'Drumming his pardons! God help me, I'll knock a hole in his drum!' He did it, too, for with the Thesis in the one hand and a hammer in the other, he nails his Thesis on the door. Strike! son of a miner. Strike! the Son of a carpenter stands behind thee. Strike! for you are knocking at the gates of the Church of a new Reformation! Strike! He said he would knock a hole in Tetzel's drum, and the third stroke did it.

"The lecture reached its climax when the lecturer came to describe the summons to the Diet of Worms, and Luther's determination, in spite of the dissuasion of friends, to go 'though there be as many devils to face as there are tiles on the houses of Worms.' The quiet of the summer morning, as the cavalcade approached the city, the call of the cuckoo in the woods, the thoughts which occupied Luther's mind, were represented with a genius which entranced the audience; and the scene at the Court of Charles was unrivalled as a piece of word-painting. 'The bells,' he said, 'are ringing four of the afternoon in the cathedral tower. The western sun is striking in through the arched windows of the mediæval Free Hall, and touching the fretted roof with gleams of red and golden fire; and there, upon an elevated throne, sits Charles, far the grandest of the monarchs of his time—three mitred electors on his right hand, and three helmed electors on the left. There were there, the ermine and the crosiers, the armour and the sheathed swords, and chiefs of the earth with the regal purple. The amphitheatre on either side is filled with princes and with prelates of the empire. One hundred princes, margraves and barons, knights, nobles, deputies, and ambassadors of kingdoms, are on the one side; and over against them, on the other side, are one hundred cardinals, bishops, and inferior priests; and, as the western sun flashed in upon the many coloured scene, the red robes of the cardinals, the yellow silk of the martial Spaniards,

contrast with the sombre black of the priests, and the purple and gold of the electors and their thrones—a scene of grandeur and magnificence such as is rarely, if ever, seen upon this planet ; and the poor monk, Martin Luther, has to face all that ! And there, before the throne, and behind the table, covered with the books of Luther that have been condemned, stands Dr. Eckius, the Papal Nuncio, and public prosecutor for the Church ; and the hall is crammed, crowded to the door, at which the Spanish sentinels are standing, and Luther is asked to enter. Knight Freundsberg, one of the bravest soldiers of that day, is standing by the door ; he holds back the crowd, and lays his hand on Luther's shoulder as he enters, and says—‘ Poor monk. I’ve fought many a dreadful battle, but not such a one as thou art to enter on here ; but God will help the right, and He shall not forsake thee !’ And now the door is opened, and Luther enters, and passes up to the table with his head uncovered—pale, emaciated with recent illness. The eyes of centuries of royalty, and centuries of priesthood, are upon him ; and what wonder if he feels bewildered at the first. And, in the hush ensuing on his entrance, Dr. Eckius stands forth, and, pointing to the books on the table, asks—‘ These are thy books, dost thou retract or no ?’ It needs not here be described the scene that followed. A long discussion, which lasts through two days, in which the question ever before them repeats itself—‘ These are thy books, dost thou retract or no ?’ But Luther stands immovable as a rock, and the days run on, and finally it resolves in that culminating question—‘ These are thy books, dost thou retract or no ?’ And Luther said, ‘ Since you require a simple and direct reply, I give it you. I never will submit to Popes and Councils when they are manifestly in the wrong ; but I’ll submit to the Scriptures of God.’ Brave words, and commonplace enough ! But they startled that assembly like a peal of thunder, and to the hundreds of swords and crosiers, the lightning of defiance flashes back. Spirited

monk ! The nations struggling to life are listening ! The nations yet unborn are listening to the words, '*Hier stehe ich, Ich kann nicht anders ; Gott helfe mir. Amen !*'—Here I stand, I can do no other ; may God help me. Amen !

"The lecturer now followed Luther to his seclusion in the castle of the good landgrave of Hesse, and gave a graphic sketch of the life he lived there. It was here he did such excellent work as a translator, and here he had his famous encounter with the devil. He saw the black figure against the wall, laid hold of the inkstand, and dashed it at the devil's head. Ink, printing ink, was just then coming into fashion, and that at anyrate was dashed at Satan's cranium. That Luther should believe in such a devil as he pictured, ought not to seem so very strange, when it was remembered that, fully two hundred years after, witches were believed in, and were burned in Irvine. There are no witches in Irvine now, remarked the lecturer, except young witches, and they deserve to be taken out to the Golf-fields, or some other place, and consumed in the pleasant flames which they themselves have kindled. This monk, this man, this miner's son, did not fear him in the least, but dashed the inkstand at his head. After his triumph in the struggle with Popery, he did not sit down like Alexander and cry because he had no more worlds to conquer, but fought the great Goliath of hell with an ink-bottle. Luther's courtship and marriage now occupied the lecturer's attention. The singular elopement and courtship was, perhaps, the only one on record in which true religion and school board romance kissed each other. The humour of the scene in which the nine nuns escaped in nine herring barrels, was inimitably brought out. It was a perilous descent—shut out from the sanctuary of girlhood ; poor nuns ! The young women's hearts trembled ; but their young hearts had not been crushed out of them yet. Poor daughters of Jephthah, shut out from the sanctuary of girlhood, they only think of the higher sanctuary of marriage. Luther's wife was one of the nine. Her portrait represented her as having a full round German face



blue eyes, and golden hair. — Luther was vastly well pleased with her. The lecturer referred to some of the humorous features of Luther's married life, the outcome of Luther's rough and ready wit, and his wife's good-natured simplicity and obtuseness. In this part of the lecture the rev. gentleman referred to some criticisms of Melancthon's preaching, and as descriptive of it, referred to the fable quoted by Melancthon's friends in his defence. The lion made a feast including every delicacy, but among those who came to the feast were some pigs who went snouting about and grumbling that he had forgot the turnips. The lecture was appropriately closed with a solemn and impressive description of Luther's death-bed scene and burial. 'Do you rest in Christ?' and the answer came, that he did; and the silver cord was loosed. The last scene of all was the solemn procession, the leaden coffin, covered with velvet pall, carried shoulder high, the open grave on the right hand side of the chancel, and the solemn chanting of the choir.\*

If the lecture on Martin Luther was the more artistic, that on Poetry and Fine Arts, was, I think, on a higher plane, and revealed, possibly, more than any of the other lectures, the great range of his knowledge in art, his fine poetic taste, and critical powers. In his view, Poetry was Fine Art, and Fine Art was Poetry. Poetry was something to be felt rather than known; and might, he said, be

\* *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, Dec. 20, 1883. "Martin Luther" was prepared for a course of lectures in the Glasgow Corporation Galleries; but delivered first in Kilwinning "to see how it would go." When given in Inverness to an audience composed of the *elite* of the county, such was the influence of the surroundings that he delivered it without reference to a single note.

expressed in five different ways: in written composition, and in music, appealing to the mind through the ear; and in painting, architecture, and sculpture, appealing to the mind through the sense of sight. Poetry, architecture, sculpture, painting, and music were thus fundamentally the same, and it was possible to express a phase of feeling in one, or in all, of these varied forms. In the lecture he took Collins' picture of Melancholy to illustrate what he meant—

“With eyes upraised as one inspired,  
Pale Melancholy sat retired;”

and, in an exquisitely beautiful way, showed how the same feeling can be expressed in the sombre outlines, and in the pointed arches, of Gothic architecture. He then passed to sculpture, and gave the same theme to Canova. He pictured the result, and in doing so, incidentally, but critically, ranged through the principal galleries of Pisa and Florence, as if to find the man who could best express his thought. The result was “poetry in marble.” The same theme was then given to Correggio to paint, apparently with some misgivings as to whether he was quite the man. “However,” said the lecturer, “we will give it to Correggio,” and again he describes the result. The painter said just the same thing on canvas that the poet had sung in words. Now it was the turn of the musician to handle the

theme. He seizes on a "phrase of melancholy sadness," and works the idea into an oratorio. In a passage of striking beauty, the *motif* of the music was described, and how ever and anon there recurred the original phrase, which expressed the very soul of plaintive sadness. In this way the identity of the arts, from architecture to music, was made plain—"architecture was frozen music, and music was architecture dissolved in sound." If asked to choose between the arts, Dr. Robertson would give the palm to music. He vindicated the position of music as a handmaid of religion, and thought she had "too long led a vagabond life in the music hall and the concert room." In order to express religious feeling, "it was desirable to have the highest and best music in all its varied forms. The advantage which music and poetry have over the fine arts, is, that the productions of the former class are stationary, and have a tendency to localize religion, but music is obiquitous and speaks all languages."

"Architecture, sculpture, and painting, were fixed arts, for the noble works in which they found expression could not travel from place to place. Cologne Cathedral, grand sermon as it was, in stone, could not come there to preach to them; the Madonnas of Raphael did not make visits from home, especially as the Italian government put

a heavy penalty on the exportation of works of art, and matters were likely to remain so unless another Napoleon Buonaparte should arise and give these and other celebrated pictures another trip to Paris. Fine arts seem to have seen their best days and to be on the decline. Men did not build cathedrals or paint Madonnas now, and perhaps it was best they should not, if that sort of devotion had died out. Some one had said to him, 'Why do we not build cathedrals in these days?' He said, 'My dear friend, why do we not write Shakespeare? The tinted glass through which we used to see was broken, and we now saw more clearly, or thought we did, in this nineteenth century, with its electric light, thinking itself so clever, the first century that ever was, and that there would never be another like it.'"

In treating of what poetry is in itself, the audience was asked to discriminate between imitative, which is always popular (and of which he gave some amusing illustrations), because it appeals to the common understanding and to daily experience, and creative art, which "bodies forth the form of things unknown, and gives to airy nothings a local habitation and a name." This is by far the highest power that can be given to man.

"The poet," he said, "was literally the creator, the maker, and he thought it was in Greece that they

baptised him so, from classic urn and with the Castalian dew. Yet it is no mere heathen baptism that has bestowed upon him such a name. If Socrates may have held the basin, and Plato stood godfather at the font, St. Paul himself might have preached the sermon on the occasion of such baptism as that, for it is a grand truth, if we would only think it, that God has gifted man with a creative power, that in this respect man has been made in the likeness of God, the image of Him that *created him*. Not only has He given us this world, and dominion over all His creatures in it, but He has given us the power of making other ideal worlds for ourselves, and peopling them with creatures of our own imagination: and the possession of this power it is that makes the man the poet. In this sense the poet is a creator, his works are called creations, and his genius is the 'faculty divine.' And though the fall has robbed us of so much, it has not robbed us of this god-like power. Its heart is sad; its arm is palsied; it works no longer now, as once it did, creating the beautiful only out of its heart, and love, and joy; but still, with saddened heart, but still, with paralysed arm, it has come down through the ages, shaping out its wonderful creations. For so it works, in brick and mortar, on the plains of Shinar, and utters forth its thought of proud ambition and of universal conquest, in a tower of Babel.

"Then, in a milder mood, it seizes on the massive boulder of old Egypt, and, brooding over it, comes on the Sphinx, the stony image of eternal peace. And then it joins together the bull's body, the man's head, the eagle's wings, expressing thus by cumulative art, by aggregate of excellence, its ideal of the perfect; and lo! colossal human-headed winged bulls are standing on the marble stairs of Nineveh. And then it crosses towards Greece, and binds Prometheus, the forethinker, by the way, upon the rock of Caucasus, with the vulture preying on his heart (or liver, rather, for these wise Greeks knew that the answer to the question, *Is life worth*

living? depended upon the liver) that always grows again, and always is devoured amidst the dreadful storm and darkness.

"While, on the other, or the sunny side of human life, it makes Apollo touch his lute at sunrise, and presently a thousand nymphs and satyrs, graceful and grotesque, are dancing round the fountains and through the dewy woods, while rosy-fingered Morn is entering through the orient gate, and leading in the white-robed hours, and Venus, through the western gate, is returning to Heaven from a midnight marriage supper, scented with wine and perfumed with roses.

"And now it is in Araby the blest, working in the Thousand-and-one-Nights, kindling its wonderful lamp, rich with emblazonry of gold and pearl, and it carries it gleaming over the waters betwixt Africa and Europe westward from the city of Haroun Al-Raschid. Mark how it calls upon the Moors, and all the other slaves of the lamp, to rise and build its gorgeous palaces in Arabesque and the beautiful Alhambra.

"And now it has gone North—into the gloomy forests of the Scandinavian North, and, as it works amid their awful darkness, and the roaring thunder of their hearse-like pines, up rise, at its command, in lurid banquet, grim, grizzly groups of warrior gods, drinking the blood-red wine from cups of human skulls.

"And now it is riding with the Erl King down through the moon-lit woods of Thuringia, and the wife of the charcoal burner in the wood-edge cottage clasps her baby closer to her bosom, and mutters a keener prayer, as she listens to the clattering hoofs echoing down the midnight depths of the forest.

"And already the convent and cathedral bells are ringing, and long-robed monks pace the frescoed cloisters, and gay troubadours sing their minnie-songs in the sunny trellised gardens, and black-robed priests chant the "Canto Fermo" in processions with funeral candles. But here we must not linger, for

presently it is in England, merry old England, amidst its hedgerow lanes and hillocks green, and having fixed her canopy beneath the arched and ample forehead of a lowly man from Stratford-upon-Avon, forth walk upon the English stage the finest products of poetic art, the *Hamlets*, the *Lears*, the *Desdemonas*, all of them re-enacting in ideal drama this strange life of ours, with scenery alternating between the darkness of a "Tempest" or a "Winter's Tale," and the bright, ringing merriment of a "Midsummer Night's Dream." And, finally, she comes to Scotland (if you please) on a visit to her numerous family of children, the fairies; and, having paid a visit to her mermaid in the sea cave, and told her how her cousin the Greek syren is getting on, in a ship quite of her own, from Iona, the holy Isle, where already she has built the cathedral, sculptured the Reilig Oran, and walked in white with the holy singing monks of St. Columba; she comes sailing, through the Corryvreckan, down into the Firth of Clyde, lands on Carrick shore, and drops her mantle on the shoulders of an Ayrshire ploughman. And, presently, there is a fearful rider up, and galloping through mirk and midnight on to Alloway kirk; a ride all the more fearful for the bursts of drunken merriment with which it is surrounded, for the unearthly eyes that gaze upon this Scottish Gilpin as he rides his dreadful race, and for the troubled lights, the dreadful *chiaro-scuro* of the picture, that vanishes beyond the dance of witches, and beyond the brig, into a silence more mysterious, and darkness more profound. Such are some of the works, such are some of the creations, good and evil, of this remarkable power with which God has gifted man. Observe, first, that it is life-giving, like the music in the Masque of Comus, that can create a soul under the ribs of death; and though not real, but ideal life that it creates, it has a marvellous influence on real life for good or evil. And here comes an affecting thought in the contrast between the mortality of man himself, and the immortality of some of his



creations. Raphael is dead ! but Raphael's Madonnas still live, shedding their wonderful beauty into the eyes of thousands. Dante is dead ! but Dante's *Beatrice* still lives, the lovely *Beatrice* walking through heaven. Spenser is dead ! but not his heavenly *Una*, with her milk white lamb. Milton is dead ! but not Milton's *Eve*, the mother of all living creations of the kind since then. Shakespeare is dead ! but Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is still talking to the grave-digger, and shall hold on to talk so long as there are graves to dig, and sheeted dead to lay in them, and thoughtful men to stand beside them, and to wonder what dreams may come, in that sleep of death. And so, too, Robert Burns is dead, and buried in Dumfries kirkyard ; and we, for our part, are most willing that the memory of his wretched life be buried with him, and that we tread softly upon the poet's grave. But then his dreadful rider *Tam* still lives. No man can murder *Tam* ; no scorn of aristocrats can break or chafe *Tam's* spirit ; no drink can send *Tam* to the Dumfries Kirkyard. Sprung, full-equipped, from the teeming brain of genius, there he rides through mirk and midnight on to Alloway Kirk, and shall hold on to ride, so long as this strange human life of ours can make a mock at her own misery, and blaze out rockets of wild drunken laughter upon the night of her own terrible despair. And here, too, comes a very serious thought when we remember that 'these mighty poets, in their misery dead' are not dead, but living still ; that they have gone through darkness, and oblivion, and kirkyards to give an account of the genius God has given them, and the use on earth that they have made of it. It becomes, I say, a very serious thought, what shall become of those who have abused their gift, and sent forth moral Frankensteins upon the world, that work wreck and ruin when it is now no longer within their power, or any power, to stay them ? I do not press this point, but I am old-fashioned enough to think that it is a very serious one ; and when others have held festivals for the dead, I have

sometimes retired to my chamber in sorrow ; and, hoping in the great mercy of God for the dead, but trembling for the living, dropped a tear in silence, and passed on."

Was there not genius of a high order in the conception and working out of this grand picture of the procession of the poets ; and, say we not truly, it was genius, in the most sublime sense, consecrated to God's service ?

To assign Dr. Robertson's place on the roll of eminent preachers has often been attempted by critics of his pulpit oratory, but seldom has reference been made to his poetic effusions. This is, probably, because his preaching powers so far dominated all else, that his poems were regarded as only secondary, and the mere out-blossoming of the thought which, when preaching, he sought to impress upon his audience. From extreme sensitiveness, when alive, he was reluctant to let his poetical productions see the light ; though, in his latter years, he contemplated collecting a number of those based on Scripture texts, and printing them for private circulation.

Many of his poetical pieces may fairly claim a place amongst the sweetest lyrics in the language. They are simply expressed, with a fine, terse, Teutonic ring. In symbol, some of them teach the most profound truths ; others, full of pathos, express the deepest feelings and

needs of the human heart. To sing, was part of himself. In preaching, when he became impassioned, whole passages would, unconsciously, be spoken in blank verse, and then his voice would rise and fall with the measure of the line. It was the poetic gift, in his soul, that sublimated his thought as a preacher, that discovered spiritual truths in nature, that supplied the music of his eloquence, that gave to the mystery of the drama of human life, as seen by him, its sad significance, and that opened doors into heaven for seeking souls. Several of his best known poems suggest pulpit use: for he oft-times cast his thought into metrical form, that it might be the more easily grasped; and in the hope that, as George Herbert expresses it,—

“A verse may find him whom a sermon flies,  
And turn delight into a sacrifice.”

Numerous instances of this might be given. “THE VEILED BRIDE,” which, it will be remembered, appeared in *Good Words*, was suggested to him, when lecturing through Genesis, and gives an unexpected and fresh turn to a thought, that would never have occurred to one who was only an expositor. “TALITHA CUMI,” in which the restoration of the physical is taken to represent the new life at the call of the Master, was introduced, with impressive effect, in the discourse “Christ the Revealer of hearts,” The sermon—

"Moses wist not that his face shone," also offers several examples of the introduction of verse, to illustrate the teaching. In speaking of "unconscious receiving," he had asked the mothers present when they thought the education of their child began?—

"When they sent him to school? When they taught him his letters? When they taught him to speak? No: it began before that—began with his beginning, began with the first breath of life he drew. The household that he entered was his school, and every person, every object in it, were the baby's teachers. The touch of their human hands, the sound of their human voices—and chiefly she, the mother of the child, with her babe in her arms, she stands across the centuries (paint her, Raphael! paint her, Giotto!) the everlasting Madonna and Child."

Dropping from her lips and eyes,  
Soft and hidden harmonies  
Steal into the young child's heart;  
Mirror'd in clear depths below,  
Gleams of mystic beauty flow,  
And fix and ne'er depart."

Again, the unconscious preservation of the saved from peril, and the possibility that none would see the morning light *were Christ not praying all the night* (a most beautiful thought), thus out-blossoms—

The angel that in darkness stalks,  
The pestilence in gloom that walks,  
No living child on earth would spare  
But for the Saviour's midnight prayer,  
But for the Cross on which our sins He bare,  
And His red blood besprinkled there.

Dr. Robertson's Consolatory hymns are well known. In the early years of his ministry, in leaflet form,

they passed from hand to hand ; and hearts, smitten with grief, drew strength to bear from the teaching of "THE BRUISED REED," which, though crushed, was "re-tuned," by the Good Shepherd,

" to harmonies  
More rich than angels know."

In "THE DEPARTED NIGH," the bereaved found comfort in the thought, that the separating medium was only a thin cloud-veil which at any moment a little sickness may rend:—

The thin cloud-veil between us  
Is mere dissolving breath,  
One heaven surrounds and screens us  
And where art thou, O Death !

Or, if the sorrow arose from the death of a beloved child, in "THE CHILD'S ANGEL," the little innocent's nearness to the heavenly Father's throne gave a reason for drying up tears.

Angel hosts, all mingling, changing,  
Circle above circle ranging,  
Marshalling throng God's holy place ;  
But the children's angels, dearest  
To the Father's heart, come nearest—  
They always see His face.

His translation of "THE DIES IRÆ" is familiar to many, from its being printed in the Presbyterian Hymnal. This magnificent rendering rises to the awful grandeur of the theme, and compares favourably with Dr. W. I. Iron's translation, generally considered the

best of the versions which preserve the double line of the original.

Of the Text hymns, I select for quotation—

**Spring up! O Well.**

*(Num. xxi. 17.)*

As when pilgrims, faint and weary,  
Where the sandy billows swell,  
Sing across the desert dreary—  
“Spring up! O Well,”  
So the Church, the Royal Daughter,  
Brought in wilderness to dwell,  
Sings, in search of Living Water—  
“Spring up! O Well.”

Lo! while yet the song is singing,  
Breaks the Living Water through,  
Like the tears of earth up-springing  
From her eyes of deepest blue:  
Then in streams it runs and rushes,  
As the choral voices swell,  
Till full out the fountain gushes—  
“Spring up! O Well.”

Sing it softly—sing it slowly,  
Sing it with the morning bell,  
Singing “Holy, Holy, Holy”—  
“Spring up! O Well.”  
Quick the singing—quick the springing,  
Quick the welling waters flow,  
Through the weary desert dreary,  
Sounds of mirth and gladness go.

Hark! the sounds of many waters!  
Breaking through the desert dumb,  
Come ye! come ye! sons and daughters,  
Every one that thirsteth, Come!  
All,—for all the fountain springing,  
And let him that heareth tell,  
How he hears the pilgrims singing—  
“Spring up! O Well.”

Still for God our souls are weary,  
 In this dry and thirsty land,  
 Till beyond the desert dreary,  
 And beneath the palms we stand ;  
 Till we hear behind us ringing,  
 Soft and low, the funeral knell ;  
 And before, bright angels singing—  
 “ Spring up ! O Well.”

“EVENING INTERCESSIONS” is, perhaps, the most perfect, as a bit of art work; in rhythmic form, of all his pieces hitherto given to the public. The words, he told me, were written for a beautiful German Chorale—*Straf mich nicht*—“Afflict me not.” The melody is simply exquisite, imbued with strong religious emotion, suggesting human needs, and uttering a cry for divine help. And then, when we think of when and how it would be repeated—day-light gone, the Church in shadow, sometimes the storm beating outside, suggesting sailors in peril, the music of the voice subdued like distant bell chimes, we can easily imagine the solemnizing effect the singing of it had upon the hearts of the audience.

#### Intercessions ; or Evening Prayer.

God's bright temple in the skies,  
 Night is op'ning slowly ;  
 Let our song like incense rise  
 From a priesthood holy.  
 Sacred flame,  
 In Christ's name,  
 In our censers laying,  
 We come humbly praying.



For our loved ones all we pray ;  
 Thou God, looking hither,  
 Dost see the near and far away  
 In one glance together !  
 Seen by Thee—  
 They and we,  
 Both that One Eye under,  
 Are not far asunder.

When the sailor on the deep  
 Rests on his rude pillow,  
 Rocked a little hour to sleep  
 On the heaving billow :  
 Save ! Lord, save  
 From storm wave :  
 Guide with gentle motion  
 Through the pathless ocean.

Where the sick lie wearily,  
 Tossing in their sorrow,  
 Murm'ring oft the plaintive cry—  
 Would that it were morrow !  
 Oh ! repress  
 Sore distress :  
 Give them calm sweet sleeping  
 In their " night of weeping."

Where the tempted may have strayed  
 Into scenes of danger,  
 Let not virtue be betraycd—  
 Rise, Lord, to avenge her !  
 With strong arm  
 Shield from harm,  
 Or from the trial, rather,  
 Keep them, Holy Father !

Where the penitent has gone,  
 To his chamber weeping,  
 Leave, ah ! leave him not alone,  
 Bitter vigil keeping :  
 Breathe, O Lord,  
 Some soft word,  
 All that true peace speaking,  
 His vexed heart is seeking.

Star lamps now are filled with fire,  
Heaven's broad dome revealing ;  
Lord, we are a lowly choir,  
At Thy threshold kneeling.  
Yet our song  
Ev'n among  
Angels' songs, ascending,  
Holds Thine ear attending.

Other marked characteristics of his poetry might be referred to, such as his teaching by symbol, and his estimate of the tender and beautiful influence of womanhood in all relations of life ; but I close with "The Evening Prayer," which, perhaps, more than any other of his poems, suggests his sacred office—an earnest pleader for men, at the footstool of the throne of the Eternal.

On a bleak day, in February, 1887, I stood by his grave, in the old Church-yard of St. Ninians. Early in the morning, loving hands had bordered it with the lily of the valley, and placed at the head a bunch of snowdrops. Fit emblems, these firstlings of the year, of the pure and noble life of Dr. William B. Robertson, Poet-Preacher.









