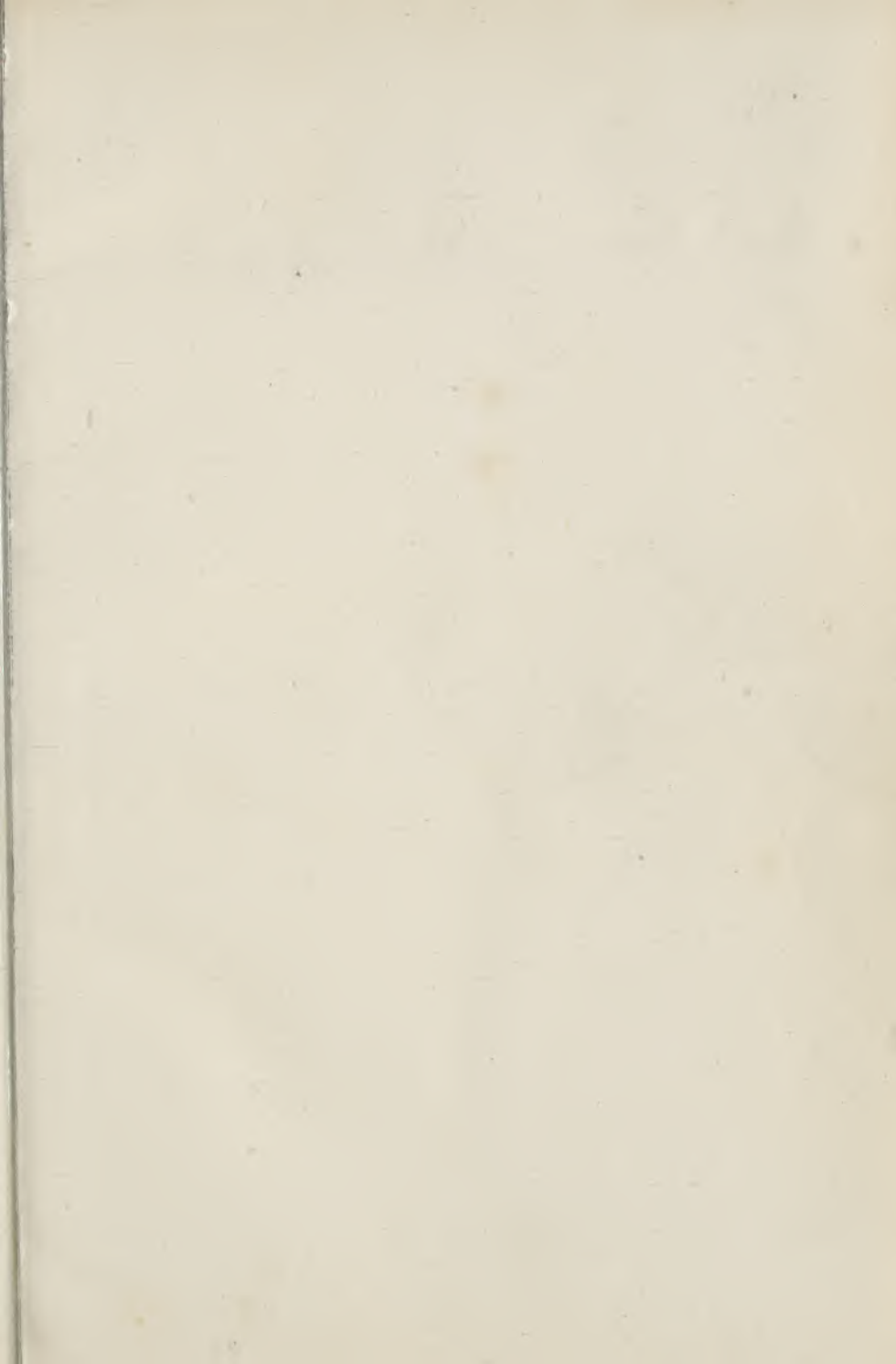


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# Last Words

BY THE LATE

REV. GEORGE CHARLES, M.A., B.D.,

FORMERLY OF BUSBY,

WITH PREFATORY NOTE BY THE

REV. JOHN FRASER, BRECHIN.

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## PREFATORY NOTE.



**F**OR the congregation among whom, as assistant minister, the late Mr Charles was called in the providence of God to spend the last months of his life on earth, the following Sermon has a very peculiar interest. It was the last Sermon they heard from him: it was the last he ever preached. In little more than seven and twenty hours after it was spoken he breathed his last, dying as peacefully as he had lived. It was his last message on earth as an ambassador of Christ—and it was delivered *to them*. It was upon a theme, too, on which he could speak with all the fulness of knowledge and power of one who for years had so dwelt upon it in his own thoughts, and so deeply meditated on it with his whole heart, that his own life among men told plainly how intimately he had become acquainted with it. One could not know Mr Charles himself without being impressed by the reality and simplicity of his Christian character. There was visible in him no exaggeration, no restless and painful effort to be conspicuously different from other men, no ostentatious endeavour to be a shining example. What did make themselves felt were the reality and simplicity of his character as a disciple of Christ. Men simply felt the better of being with him, without being conscious of any effort on his part to make them better. His life was a wholesome, fragrant, Christian reality, which did good to men, and gained their regard and confidence at once by its transparent truthfulness. These are the qualities which distinguish this

Sermon. There is nowhere in it any straining after effect, no trick of rhetoric, no ornament but that of a quiet simplicity. It must arrest the reader, as it did the hearers of it, by its truthfulness, its directness, its Christian moderation, and by the loving Christ-like spirit that breathes in every word of it. It is a Sermon to do a man good : and of necessity it speaks more effectively to those who knew Mr Charles than it can to others ; for to those who knew him it speaks the same message that his daily life so plainly spoke to them.

This Sermon is therefore published mainly for the sake—and in compliance, indeed, with the unanimous desire of the congregation to whom it was last preached. It was not specially composed for them ; but as he did not preach it to them exactly as it was written, the attempt has been made to give it here as nearly as possible as it was preached.

May God accompany it with His blessing : And though the preacher's voice is now silent, may that truth which he had so manifestly made his own, which so clothed his own spirit with the beauty of Christ, and which he wrought up with so honest and loving a purpose into this Sermon, still go on winning its way into the mind and heart of every one that reads what is here printed. The beloved preacher has gone to his rest ; but so true a man was he, that we who knew him hear the very man himself still speaking to us in these " Last Words."

BRECHIN, September, 1882.

J. F.

# LAST WORDS

BY THE LATE

REV. GEORGE CHARLES, M.A., B.D.

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“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”—JOHN xv. 12.

THERE is something deeply solemn and precious about last meetings. Long remembered is the last evening that is spent together by the members of a family ere one of their number sets out for a foreign land, knowing not whether he shall ever see again the well-known faces of those whom he leaves behind. More solemn still is the last affecting interview which the dying parent holds with his children, who must be parted from him when he begins his journey to that “undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns.” The farewell look leaves an impression that hardly ever fades away: the parent’s dying counsel and his last sweet words of love are cherished in the memory as a precious treasure to be kept with religious care. Christ at this time occupies a position analogous to that of the dying parent. He has spoken His last word to the outside world. And now, in the little upper room at Jerusalem, He has gathered His children around Him for the purpose of cheering their sorrowing hearts, and giving them His farewell counsel ere He leaves them to go to the Father. That interview they would never, never forget. The charges then given to them by their dying Lord they would feel themselves laid under the most sacred obligation to remember and fulfil. And what was the great

charge that He gave them, speaking of it as a new commandment, dwelling upon it, and repeating it again and again that He might impress it upon their memory? Was it that they should love Him, and keep Him in perpetual remembrance? No. In His dying charge He seems to forget Himself altogether in thinking of others, and His whole soul seems to go forth in love towards His children. He lets His thoughts go forward to the time when they shall go forward to carry on a warfare against their enemies, no longer having Him beside them to bear the brunt of the battle. He sees the need that they will have of being united together in the bonds of love if they are to make a successful stand against the enemy. He sees the need that they will have of an intense love for their fellow-men if they are to be successful ambassadors, bearing the message of reconciliation to the guilty. And so He says to them "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." A great commandment truly, but how shall we ever be able to obey it? Is it possible for us to show to others the same intense love which He whose love "passeth knowledge" exercises towards us. No. Never. And He asks it not of us. He asks not that our love should equal, but that it should resemble His. He asks not that it should be of the same strength, but of the same kind. A dewdrop cannot hold the sun, but it may hold a spark of sunlight. We cannot shine forth with all the splendour of the Sun of Righteousness. What the Saviour asks is that we allow some of the rays of that glorious Sun to shine in upon our hearts, and then be reflected from us to others. It is our purpose to bring before you some of the leading characteristics of the love of Christ, which must also be characteristics of our love, if it is to resemble His.

I. First of all, the love of Christ is love towards the unworthy. This is a very prominent feature in the love of Christ. In order to see this, we do not need to look at any one special instance, such as the prayer which He

offered up on the Cross on behalf of those who were putting Him to death, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." For there is not one among all the redeemed who is not in exactly the same position as these men for whom Christ offered up that ever-memorable prayer. Not one among all these tens of thousands had anything in himself to attract the love of Christ. All were enemies of God and of Him whom He sent to be their deliverer, haters of righteousness, rebels rushing madly on to destruction, deserving and desiring not a Saviour's love. And as we look at the examples given us in Scripture of those who have obtained mercy, does it not sometimes seem as if choice were made of the most unlovely and unamiable by nature, in order to show that the whole matter from beginning to end is one of free grace. Now if our love is to resemble Christ's love—if we are to love as He loves—this feature must be seen in our love also. How, then, are we to show that our love, like His, is disinterested, free, and exercised towards the unworthy? Can we do this by simply loving Him? No, brethren, though your love to your Saviour were the warmest that ever beat in a human heart, though you should even be ready to go to the stake and give your body to be burned for His sake, you could never love Him in the same manner as He loves you. For when you love Him, you love an object worthy in every way to be loved. He is the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely, and when your eyes are opened to see Him as such, you cannot but love Him. And when you think of what He has done for you, when you are able to say "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." then you feel that He has a claim upon your love infinitely higher than any other can have. But, on the other hand, when He loves you, He finds nothing in you by nature that deserves His love. As you think of the love that flows out from Him towards you, is it not your daily wonder that He should ever have loved you at all? And do you not feel that you never can love Him as He has loved you—a sinful unworthy man? Again, you cannot dis-

play this feature of the Saviour's love by loving your own immediate friends, who have been united to you by many ties of affection. For, so long as your love is confined to this narrow circle, you are loving only those in whom you see something to draw forth your love, or from whom you hope to receive love tokens in return. The only way in which you can make your love resemble His in this respect is by obeying his command—"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Does not this view of the matter give very great solemnity to the command of Christ about loving your enemies? It is only as you are loving your enemies that you can exercise that love wherewith your Saviour loved you, and if you neglect that opportunity, another will never be afforded you. Hence it is of vast importance that we take good heed to ourselves as to the way in which we act in this matter. Take the case of a man who has wronged you—acted deceitfully—shown flaws in moral character that seem to make him not worth loving, not worth caring for. Let us ask ourselves, then, the question—How am I acting towards such an one? What are my feelings towards him? In my dealings with him, am I actuated by a feeling of resentment on account of the injury that has been done to me? Or am I filled with genuine sorrow for the man himself, and is it my longing desire that he may be set free from all deceit and led to walk in the paths of righteousness? There is One I know who is yearning over him and desiring to do him good. Am I then looking at him in the same light in which Jesus is looking at him? Am I seeking by my prayers and my endeavours daily to do him good? Am I putting forth every effort that I can think of to melt his heart, and make known to him the love of a crucified Saviour? If not, I am failing to act up to the will of Christ expressed in his dying words: "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."



II. The love of Christ is a self-sacrificing love. Language fails when we begin to speak of the self-sacrifice of Christ. No words can convey any adequate idea of the immensity of that sacrifice. Truly, never was love put to a severer test than was his: never was there a sacrifice made than can be any measure of the sacrifice of Christ. A whole race of beings was standing on the brink of destruction. Against each one in the company sentence of death had been passed, and there was nothing in prospect but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. Though the whole of creation were given not a single soul would have been ransomed. There was only one in the whole universe who was able to give deliverance, and that one was the Son of the Eternal God. As He then looked upon the ruined people, had He been as one of us, might He not have said, "I pity them, my heart bleeds for them: but what can I do for them? I must just stand by and see them perish." But did He speak in this way? Did He hesitate for a moment? Did He shrink from the sacrifice. No. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." What a sacrifice! The more we think of it, all the greater does it appear. In speaking of His self-sacrifice, is it enough to say of Him that He gave all that he had? No. He gave all that He was. He gave Himself. Yes, that is the sacrifice which He made for you and for me. And He who thus gave His life a ransom for us says to us, "This is My commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you." Do not our hearts fail us as we listen to these words? There have been, and still are glorious instances of self-sacrifice in the world. Our heart thrills as we listen to the story of noble Christians who, while some deadly pestilence was raging, exposed themselves to danger, in order that they might bear the message of the Cross to the sick and dying. Do we not see statesmen lay aside personal ambition for the sake of what they conceive to be best for their country? In social and private life, too, there are noble

instances of unselfishness. There are gentle, quiet, loving souls who seem never to think of themselves. They are like a sunbeam in the house. They are living heroic lives—in one sense more heroic than those who act unselfishly in higher positions. Sometimes those who are enabled to do noble deeds on great occasions fail in making use of opportunities at home. As a general rule how small is the amount of sacrifice made for others compared with what it might be. If we look to ourselves shall we not find that a great deal of our love amounts simply to selfishness? We gather around us a select circle of friends, and take delight in their society because that affords us pleasure, and helps to keep us from feeling weary as we fight the hard battle of life. But let some calamity befall one of the select band, and then the sincerity of our love is tested. Are we not very apt to stand by in our selfishness and say to the starving brother "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled," and yet we give not of our abundance to supply his want. Or if we do give some help, how grudgingly it is given! And is there not often selfishness in our very liberality? We give in order that others may look and admire our self-denial. Let us think more of Gethesmane and the Cross: let us have more constantly before our minds the life and death of Him who gave himself for us, and then we will see that all our self-denial in the past is not worthy of the name: then we shall be stirred up to love one another more as Christ has loved us.

III. The love of Christ is a tender love. A great deal depends upon the way in which a kindness is shown. Some people who give away a great deal, and put themselves to considerable sacrifice, spoil the good that they might otherwise do by the unpleasant and unfeeling way in which their benefits are bestowed. They have love—real love—but there is a want of tenderness in it. They stand, as it were, at a great distance from those whom they desire to help, and make them feel as if they were in the position of beggars. And so, while the outward wants

are satisfied, the bleeding hearts that ache within are never reached. It is very different with the love of Christ. His love is not more distinguished for its greatness than for its tenderness. A mother never was more deeply touched with the sufferings of her child than is Jesus with the sufferings of His own people. Nothing can ever equal the tenderness of His dealings with His own children. Just look for an example to the last interview which He had with His disciples before He suffered. They had often grieved Him and caused Him many an hour of sorrow by their unfaithfulness and perversity. But He does not address to them one harsh or upbraiding word. Every word that He speaks is a word of tenderness and sympathy. He was going forward to endure the most appalling sufferings for their sake. But He does not give them any harrowing details regarding them, or say "See what you by your sin are costing me." He casts a veil upon the future, and deals with His disciples as His dearest friends, and while giving them this example of tenderness He says to them "Love one another as I have loved you." There is great need for us to imitate Christ in this matter of tenderness. There are critical moments in a man's life when one gentle, loving word may have the effect of melting his heart and leading him to decide for Christ. On the other hand, a single harsh and bitter expression may drive him along the road to destruction. As we know not, therefore, what may be the effect of a single casual word on our part, should we not make it our earnest endeavour to put aside all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour and evil-speaking, and to be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another? More especially, to bring the matter nearer home, should this tender love exist between the members of one family. And most of all should we who have parents alive show to them the utmost tenderness. We doubt not that you love your parents, and if they were taken from you, you would mourn and be in bitterness for many days. But are you treating them now with tenderness? Are you showing to them anything of the

love wherewith, if you are a child of God, Christ is loving you? It may be the infirmities of years have come upon them and they require special care. Are you, then, cheerfully and ungrudgingly giving them all the attention they need? Perhaps through age the powers of their mind have become enfeebled, and their memory has given way. Are you inclined to become irritated on this account, and to deal harshly with them? Ah, then, if you know the love of Christ, think of the many times in which you have provoked Him and worn out His patience. Think, too, of the tender way in which He has bound up all your wounds, and borne with the provocations which you have offered to Him. Then you will get an example of tenderness which may well make you ashamed.

IV. The love of Christ is a wise love. There is wisdom as well as tenderness in His love. There is in Him the most perfect tenderness. But we greatly mistake His character if we suppose that there is nothing in Him but tenderness. He does not act the part of an over-indulgent parent. In Him we find severity as well as tenderness—a very tender severity indeed, but still severity. Look, for example, at the way in which He dealt with the rich young ruler. We are told that as the Lord looked upon him, He loved him. He regarded him with tenderness and affection. Did He then speak flattering words, and say to him, “It will be a hard thing for you to give up everything, I will not ask so much of you?” No. Though He loved him, and though He knew that for that time at least the man would go away exceeding sorrowful, He plainly laid down the condition—“Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.” And it is in the same way still that He deals with souls. He says—“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” Though He yearns over the salvation of souls, and looks with the tenderest pity upon a lost world, yet He will rather have no disciples at all than lower His claims to gratify the wishes of any man. Brethren, is there nothing here for us to imitate? Ah,

yes, there is. We need care and divine guidance in this matter ; still, our love must be wise as well as tender if it is to be like the Saviour's love. Let us not, while pitying the sinner, make light of his sin in any way. Let us affectionately and tenderly make known to him his danger, and urge him to flee to a city of refuge. But at the same time we have need of very great caution in doing this. We have need to make sure that we are under the Spirit's guidance, and that the wisdom of our love is the wisdom that cometh from above. We shall even sometimes find that to maintain silence altogether is our highest duty, for there are cases in which a judicious silence will be more impressive than anything we can say. It may startle men, and cause them to think so as to discover the reason for it.

V. Lastly. The love of Christ is an unchanging love. He never grows weary of His friends, or desires to change them for others. The circle of His friends, indeed, is ever growing wider and wider as the years roll on. But He never loses sight of or forgets an old friend. Although there is an innumerable company there is no danger of any one, however feeble or humble, being lost in the crowd. He knows each one by name, and loves him even to the end. "Can a woman," he says, "forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee." This truth about the unchangeableness of Christ's love is a most precious one to all true disciples. He gives you the comforting assurance that His interest in you, like Himself, changes not; and that in whatever circumstances you are placed you will find in Him a friend ever faithful and sure. There may be many days of darkness before you in the unknown future. Your path may be one of conflict and of suffering. But whether joy or sorrow be your earthly portion, whether your pilgrimage be long or short, you have throughout all your life One whose love to you is as warm and tender as when you first gave your hearts to Him—One whose love to you is as fresh as when He died for you

on the Cross. Even when you are called to lay your head upon the pillow of death you will not be left in solitude, for there will be One at hand who has loved you with an everlasting love, and who will be with you as you walk through the valley of the shadow of death. But as we are thinking of the preciousness of that love to us, which is unchanging, we hear the Saviour's voice saying—"Love one another, as I have loved you." We are very apt to grow weary of loving. The warmest love that can subsist between two attached friends is apt at times to grow cold, or even to vanish away altogether. Families, once happy, are broken, and instead of loving one another as of old, brothers and sisters look upon each other with coldness or even animosity. All this arises from the fact that one or other of the parties is neglecting the Saviour's dying command—"Love one another, as I have loved you." Were all united together in loving a common Saviour, and in seeking to obey His commandments, then earth would become more like heaven, human love would possess more of the unchanging character of the love of Christ. But to look at human love from a higher point of view, how ready is even our love for the souls of men to grow cold. Regarding all men as brethren, we would seek their good always. But how apt we are to change. One day we are full of love, and feeling as if nothing were too much to do, when our spirits are stirred by some wave of revival. But days and weeks pass on, and our love begins to cool down. We no longer feel in such matters as we used to do. We grow weary of well-doing. In this we are not acting in a Christ-like spirit, or obeying the Saviour's command, for His love is unchanging, and He has told us to love one another, as He has loved us. Let us seek, then, to live in close communion with Jesus Christ, in order that, realising the unchangeableness of His love toward us, we may be more constant and unwearied in our love to one another.

Brethren, such are some of the points characterising that love of Christ which we are called to imitate. His

is love towards the unworthy. It is a self-sacrificing, tender, wise, and unchanging love. And remember that there is a commandment regarding this love. It is not merely stated as a desirable and a becoming thing that we love one another. Christ says "This is my commandment," and any one who neglects it does so at his own peril, and is guilty of the basest ingratitude to the Son of God. But at the same time let none be discouraged because of the greatness of the commandment. While it is a commandment, it is Christ's commandment, and he would never have called upon you to do what is impossible. If you feel unable of yourself to obey it, seek His grace to help you, pleading his own words—"My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." But perhaps you are yet a stranger to a Saviour's love. Ah, then, you will make but poor work of loving your brother. And it is vain for you while still without Christ to attempt to win his favour by setting yourself to be very amiable and very patient under the infliction of injury. In so doing you are beginning the matter at the wrong end, and will be sure to fail. For, however amiable you may be, and however many qualities you may have to attract the esteem of men, you still lie under the curse. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha." First of all learn to love the Lord Jesus Christ, and then you will be in a proper position for seeking to obey the commandment "Love one another as I have loved you." The two act and re-act upon one another. The more we love Christ, the more will we love one another. The more we love one another, the more will we know of Christ's love: the more will we be drawn to him, for it is to the loving heart that Christ reveals Himself. The two will go on together increasing, waxing brighter and brighter, until we lose ourselves in a perfect ocean of love.

## A P P E N D I X .

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In the West Free Church on Sabbath forenoon, 10th September, the pastor, Rev. John Fraser, preached an impressive discourse from St. Luke xix. 42, "If thou hadst known," and, with special reference to the sudden death of his esteemed colleague, at the conclusion of a touching sermon, said :—

He that preached in this pulpit last Sabbath afternoon, and that should have been preaching to us this forenoon, is no longer a dweller in this world: his body is lying in the cold and silent grave, and his spirit is with God. What terrible changes does a week—even a single day—bring about! Last Sabbath Mr Charles was preaching to us, and this Sabbath he is in his grave! Oh! if we had but known that we were to see and hear him no more in this world, with what hungry ears and beating hearts would we have listened to his last words, and with what power would they have taken hold of our spirits, what glimpses would they have given us into the eternal world. It is not necessary that I should relate to you the circumstances connected with Mr Charles' death; these are already familiar to you all; but I do feel constrained to speak of what Mr Charles has been to you and to myself during the time he has been assistant in this congregation. Your acquaintance with him was longer than mine. You have known him since the beginning of February—I did not know him even by sight until the beginning of June. I had, indeed, had correspondence with him



about the work of the congregation, and in that correspondence his gentle and unassuming and earnest spirit revealed itself sufficiently to satisfy me that he was a man whom one could trust; but it was not until I saw him, and became personally acquainted with him, that I discovered him to be a man whom it was impossible to know and not to love. I suppose every one who knew Mr Charles loved him, for he was a most loveable man. I heard of his great acceptability with you both as a preacher and as a man, when I was doing the Church's work abroad, and what I heard relieved my mind of all anxiety regarding your welfare, and filled me with gratitude to God that He had sent such a man to you—a man after His own heart; and the pleasure and profit I have derived from his companionship since I returned are more than I can tell you. He was always most kind, most pleasant, most obliging, most helpful. We all know what he was in the pulpit—a preacher of no common order; but only the sick and the sorrowful among us know what a son of consolation he was in the sick-chamber and in the house of mourning—how well he knew, having been himself Divinely taught by painful experience, how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. I had hoped that Mr Charles might be allowed to remain with us a long time. But the Divine Master has ordered it otherwise. He lent us His beloved servant for eight months. After all his work was done elsewhere, God sent him here to us for a short space before He took him home to Himself to His eternal rest; God gave us the last of him; He sent him to speak to us his last words on earth as a minister of Christ; He sent him to us that the pure and gracious and holy light of his beautiful Christian life might shine among us for a little time that some of us might be helped thereby in our own Christian life. While, then, we deeply mourn Mr Charles' loss to-day, we should also be very thankful to God for his Divine favour to us in sending His servant to us, and giving us the benefit of

his teaching and example even for so short a time. We must all, I think, be the better for Mr Charles' brief ministry here. But God has been teaching us also by the suddenness with which he has removed our beloved brother from the midst of us. Surely God means well to us by sending to us this sorrow. Oh, that we might be roused by this Divine visitation out of our indifference and easy unconcern. God is preaching to us the need of earnestness—the need of faith—the need of being ready for his call—the need of being filled with the spirit of Christ. The preacher of last Sabbath is no more—how will it be with all you hearers before another Sabbath comes round? Who can tell? Let us remember what was the burden of our beloved brother's message to us. The Master knew it was to be his last, no one else did; and therefore it was the Master's special message to us:—"This is my commandment that ye love one another as I have loved you." That was a message which came appropriately from the lips of a man like Mr Charles. He was a man beloved, because his own spirit was a loving one. And so it will be with us. Do not let us complain that others do not love us; rather let us cultivate a loving spirit towards others, and then we will be blessed by the love of others, even as they are blessed by ours. And are we not ready to thank God also that he has at length given his weary servant rest? Our brother had carried about with him for years the burden of bodily weakness—a burden which shut him out from many of the joys of life and of active service. But he did not complain: his spirit was always sweet and serene. He enjoyed life in this world, even with all its drawbacks for him, because he had such an affectionate heart—he was bound to this life by the ties of filial and brotherly love; he loved this life because of the treasures it contained for his loving heart. But at length it was enough; and suddenly

"God's finger touched him and he slept."—

He slept, but for a moment, that he might awake in the better land, freed from every burden, and rejoicing in a fuller life and an intenser love. It grieves us to part with him; and let us remember in our grief the grief of sorrowing kindred; let us commend them to the Divine Consoler; and for ourselves—let us accept the Divine will, and let us try always to know the time of our visitation, the time when God is near to us, as I think He has been in a very special way during these past eight months. Of our beloved brother it can most truly be said that “to him to live was Christ, and to die was gain.”

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Funeral sermons on the late Rev. George Charles were preached in Stranraer Free Church on Sabbath, 17th September. Rev. Charles M'Neil, of Dumfries, preached in the forenoon. His text was from 2nd Corinthians iv. and 18.

At the close of an eloquent sermon, he exhorted his hearers to remember Him who once entered into the unseen holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us, whom having not seen we love, in whom though now we see Him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And there are, he went on to say, also others whom we loved, and love within the veil, living in that unseen with our unseen Lord. They have passed on before one by one till the unseen has become real as the home of our childhood, when these faces were all around us. Of these one has but lately entered in—hurried away almost without a farewell from the service on earth to the service above at the Master's call. And still we follow him with the eye of faith as a brother not lost, but only gone before, and feel that heaven has one attraction more because he is already there. It were out of place for me to say much with regard to a life and character so well-known to the vast majority present. In various quarters also much I might have said has been already said in public,

but perhaps you will still bear with me in my desire to add yet another to the many wreaths of loving regard which have been laid upon his grave. I believe I knew him better than any one beyond his family circle. We were playmates in early childhood—we were school-fellows in boyhood—we were companions at college, and the fastest of friends to the end. Were did I say; nay are, for our friendship, though interrupted in its intercourse, still exists; and I believe we shall yet meet and know each other better than we ever did on earth. At school Charles was known to all his school-fellows as a boy of a singularly guileless, conscientious, kindly character, with a supreme contempt for anything mean. His strict regard for parental authority—a regard as perfect in the playground as in the home—was matter of general remark. He was indeed the one boy whom everyone quoted as an example of true filial piety. A diligent and successful scholar at the Academy of this town, he became an equally diligent and successful student in Edinburgh—first at the University, and afterwards at the New College. During several years of this period we lived together, and as he had been at school, so still he continued to be at college—an example of the most earnest, unaffected piety. After a course of faithful and distinguished study, Mr Charles was licensed by the Presbytery of Stranraer, having added to his degree as Master of Arts the farther honourable distinction of Bachelor of Divinity. He then almost immediately entered upon the work of the ministry, and filled in succession two important assistantships. The first was at Blackford, where he laboured for about four months with great acceptance, and received at the close of his short term of office a handsome recognition of the esteem in which he was held. “I thought him,” said the minister whose pulpit he filled—“one of the most interesting and promising of young men, and one so like his high calling.” Leaving Blackford for the more favourable appointment of assistant to the venerable

Dr Fairbairn, he entered upon work in Newhaven with an ability and earnestness which soon secured for him not only the regard of the congregation, but also, as I know from personal testimony, the high esteem and complete confidence of Dr Fairbairn himself. From Newhaven, as most of you know, he was called to Busby, where he was ordained in 1873, and laboured till 1877. Here his ministry, though brief, was eminently successful—a large addition being made to the congregation such as necessitated the turning of the plain hall where they had hitherto worshipped into a handsome and commodious church. During the last two years his health was considerably broken, and his work interrupted by necessary intervals of rest, but in the earlier period his labours for the good of the congregation and neighbourhood were incessant—far beyond his strength—as the result soon sadly proved. The immediate cause of the breakdown was, however, his unwearied exertions during a severe epidemic of scarlet fever. There was scarcely a house in the town that did not suffer, and being the only minister available for visitation at the time, he was in demand on all hands, both by night and by day. “During that terrible time,” writes one, “he flitted about from house to house among the stricken like a veritable angel of mercy,” and “to this day many of the mothers cannot speak of him without the deepest emotion.” “All who came into contact with him,” writes another, “loved him much, and his name is almost a household word in Busby, all holding him in the highest estimation.” Mr Charles’ pulpit work was at the same time highly appreciated. His sermons, always carefully prepared, were full of well-digested thought and rich spiritual experience. Clear and pointed in style, they were also delivered with all the impressive earnestness of a man who felt he discharged a divine commission and had a God-given message of priceless value to his fellow-sinners. Mr Charles also took a deep interest in evangelistic efforts, and especially during the first part of



his ministry a great and good work was done, the precious fruits of which remain to this hour. Several of those then brought in may be seen to-day in the eldership of our Free Church, while of others, one having every opportunity of judging, testifies "they are the most devoted and active Christian workers it has been my privilege to know." Yes; his ministry was brief, but it was very fruitful, and "by those he has left behind," writes the Rev. Mr Henderson, his successor, "he being dead yet speaketh." Of the time when he was laid aside from active duty, and lived under his father's roof in your midst, I need not speak farther than to remind you of the quiet, unquestioning resignation with which he met this overturning of many hopes, and the unwavering, ever-cheerful faith with which he bore his trial throughout. In the truest and fullest sense he "left it all with Jesus." After this protracted season of weakness he had, however, at length the joy of resuming his much loved work, and continuing in it for nearly two years. Only those who knew him in private could have any idea of the real joy which this afforded him. It was not the return of health he prized so much, as rather the possibilities of usefulness this restored. He loved and lived for the ministry which had been committed unto him. During this period several congregations in this neighbourhood had the benefit of his services, and to the work done among them fitting references have been elsewhere made; but let me add a word as to the months in Brechin. "Mr Charles," says Mr Fraser in a letter he kindly sent me, "was very greatly beloved by my people, and his death has caused a gloom over all who knew him. His preaching was greatly valued especially so his addresses at the weekly congregational prayer-meeting." In Mr Fraser's absence he dispensed the communion, and the services were described by some who had been present as most heavenly and edifying. "The sick," says Mr Fraser, "discovered in him that true sympathy which only a suffering experience,

sanctified by the spirit of Christ, can enable a man to shew to other sufferers." "He was not sent to Breehin for nought," adds Mr Fraser; "he was a precious loan from the Master for a time, and he has left a blessing behind him." During the time referred to you had a visit from Mr Charles, and were privileged to hear him preach from this pulpit. I may mention that while staying a night with me on his return journey to Breehin he spoke of that service with much pleased satisfaction. He esteemed it a privilege to have been permitted to occupy his late father's pulpit, and it will, I believe, be a gratification to you to know that what gave so much pleasure to yourselves was also a service of much pleasure to him. His last visit to Stranraer seems indeed to have been one of the happiest possible. Again and again he expressed the happy recollections he had carried with him of these few weeks, and of the kindness he had everywhere experienced. In short, he returned to Brechin with a buoyant spirit, grateful for the seeming return of strength, and full of noble desire to do the Master's work. Little did we dream his work on earth was so nearly done, and that he was so soon to be called to the service of the Temple above. The summons came suddenly, but for him not a moment too soon. Mr Charles had not passed through the fire of affliction in vain. His nature, sweet and amiable and unselfish, as it always was, had become peaceful and gentle, and tender beyond almost anything I have met. The point of view from which he looked at everything had also, we frequently remarked, become singularly spiritual. In short, he lived in the heavenlies with Christ—lived ready to depart. And though so unspeakably painful to us, because so unexpected and sudden, the manner of his departure was only what love itself could have wished for such as he. Yes, now that I look back upon our conversation and intercourse that last evening we met, six weeks ago, I can distinctly see how a waiting attitude was developing all unconscious to himself. The hymn he asked to be sung, and expressed his special pleasure in hearing,

was that in Mr Sankey's collection entitled "I shall be satisfied." That chorus, "I shall be satisfied, I shall be satisfied when I awake in His likeness," seemed to have for him a peculiar meaning and interest. And soon—alas, too soon for us, but not too soon for him—he slept, and awoke, and was satisfied. The Sabbath before his death he preached, as you are aware, from the words, "This is my commandment that ye love one another as I have loved you." And what more fitting word for a last from such a loving, sympathetic, self-forgetting heart. His life was eloquent with the gospel of love, and his latest breath was given to impress its importance. He preached on the occasion with unusual power and impressiveness. His very face, some even remarked, had an unusual radiance of expression. It seemed as if the old experiences of Busby were to be lived over again. Alas, it was the strength of a last effort—strength divinely given for what the Master had ordained to be his last message. The sad sequel you know, and I dare not trust myself to dwell upon it. Let me rather, in closing, once more lift your thoughts and affections to that unsecn bliss upon which he has entered, and whither he beckons all to follow. Could you catch his voice from yonder heaven it would tell you over again the story of redeeming love—it would tell you the worth of eternal life—it would plead with you to be reconciled to God, and to lay hold upon the hope set before us in the gospel. You loved him—you have parted with him in deepest sorrow. Make sure through penitent, believing acceptance of the common salvation, of meeting him again before the throne, and in the Mansions above.



