

**WILLIAM
BLAIKIE**

THOMAS
CHALMERS

William Blaikie
Thomas Chalmers

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Thomas Chalmers:

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Thomas Chalmers

PREFACE

I cannot send forth this little sketch of the Life of Chalmers without expressing anew my admiration of the four-volumed biography by my late beloved friend, Dr. Hanna. It is not only admirable as a portrait, but it cannot be read by any sympathetic reader without a sense of humiliation, and without a great stimulus to higher things. It is much to be regretted that Dr. Hanna was unable to carry out the purpose which it is understood that he cherished, of condensing the work into a single volume.

Other memorials of Dr. Chalmers have been given to the world. Among these may be noted: —

1. A Biographical Notice of the late Thos. Chalmers, D.D., LL.D. Read before the Royal Society of Edinburgh. By the Very Rev. E. B. Ramsay, M.A., 1850.

2. Chalmeriana; or Colloquies with Dr. Chalmers. By Joseph John Gurney, 1853.

3. A Selection from the Correspondence of Thos. Chalmers, D.D., LL.D. Edited by Rev. W. Hanna, LL.D., 1853.

4. Mr. Isaac Taylor's elaborate articles in the *North British Review*, 1852 and 1856.

5. Thomas Chalmers, a Biographical Study. By James Dodds, 1879.

6. Thomas Chalmers. His Life and its Lessons. By Rev. Norman L. Walker, 1880.

7. Thomas Chalmers, D.D., LL.D. (Men Worth Remembering). By Donald Fraser, D.D., 1881.

8. Thomas Chalmers, Preacher, Philosopher, and Statesman. By Mrs. Oliphant, 1893.

9. Recollections of Dr. Chalmers by Professor David Masson, in *Lowe's and Macmillan's Magazines*.

Recollections by the Rev. Dr. Macaulay in the *Leisure Hour*.

11. Funeral Sermons and Lectures by Rev. Dr. Cunningham, Rev. Dr. Jas. Buchanan, Rev. John Bruce, Rev. W. K. Tweedie, Rev. John G. Lorimer, Rev. James Julius Wood, Rev. J. A. Wallace, Rev. John Gemmel, Rev. David Couper, Rev. W. Tasker, Rev. A. J. Ross, Rev. Dr. W. Lindsay Alexander, Rev. Dr. Sprague (Albany, New York), Rev. Dr. Sharp (Boston), Rev. Professor Edwards (Andover), Rev. Dr. Smyth (Charleston), etc. etc.

Among the greatest privileges and honours of his life, the writer will ever regard his having been for one session a student under Dr. Chalmers at Edinburgh; for three years a co-presbyter and cordial fellow-worker on his lines, in forming and building up a territorial congregation; and for many years the occupant of one of two chairs of theology which were constituted at the Disruption in New College, in place of the single chair which Dr. Chalmers had held, and thus in a sense, but most unworthily, one

of his successors.

EDINBURGH, *December* 1896.

CHAPTER I

BIRTH, SCHOOL, AND COLLEGE

1780-1803

Thomas Chalmers was born at Anstruther, Fifeshire, on the 17th March 1780, when the flowers were appearing on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds was come. It seems never to have been noticed that this was St. Patrick's day, and no one has ever instituted a comparison between the lives of the two illustrious Scotsmen. But if only we had authentic materials for the life of Patrick, whose Scottish birth seems well established, it would probably be found that there was no slight similarity. Transferring his labours to Ireland, Patrick, with the Gospel of Jesus Christ as his instrument, laboured for the double object of bringing individuals within the Kingdom of God, and elevating and purifying the condition of the country. The same double aim was ever present to the mind of Chalmers. On the basis of the Gospel, he could not separate the social from the personal, the general from the particular, the temporal from the spiritual. He had always an Arcadia, a Utopia, a new spring-tide for his country in his vista; but a spring-tide to be realised in one way only – by the coming of the Spirit from on high.

Anstruther was not a stirring town, for through the union with England it had lost no little of the trade, whether legal or

contraband, which in former days, along with the other little towns on the Fife seaboard, it had carried on with France and England. But an abundant element of life and activity was supplied within his father's house, where nine brothers and five sisters, among whom Thomas came fifth, must have sufficed to make any household lively. The father was in fairly prosperous business, and provost of the town. He is described as 'dignified and handsome in appearance, highly honourable, courteous, and kind; and of fervent but not ostentatious piety.' The mother was in person short, thick, erect, devoted to her household, sharing her husband's piety, but so self-restrained that a smile was seldom seen on her face. The family was connected with many members of the middle-class, some also of the clergy, and a sprinkling of the landed gentry.

The parish school of Anstruther, to which Chalmers, persecuted by a scolding nurse, went at the age of three, was taught by a master never very efficient, and in Chalmers's time old and nearly blind, who made up for other deficiencies by his great energy in flogging. There was an assistant teacher who was not much more effective in teaching than his principal, but who was as mild as the other was severe. This gentleman, who survived Chalmers, bore a very touching testimony to his kindness. 'No man,' he exclaimed on one occasion, 'knows the amount of kindness which I have received from him. He has often done me good both as respects my soul and my body; many a pithy sentence he uttered when he threw himself in my

way; many a pound note has he given me; and he always did the thing as if he were afraid that any person should see him.' Of Chalmers as a schoolboy the testimony is that he was 'one of the idlest, strongest, merriest, and most generous-hearted boys in Anstruther school.' Had one chanced to come upon the school-children engaged in their various amusements (says one of his biographers), one should soon have distinguished 'one boy above the rest, seeming about ten or twelve years of age, who is the leader in their sports – strong, active, merry, and boisterous, with big head, matted dark hair, large plain features, broad shoulders, well-proportioned but brawny limbs, his laugh always loudest, and his figure always foremost at football and the other games in which they are contending.'¹

The father and mother of Dr. Chalmers, as we have said, were of strong religious character, hearty followers of the Calvinistic theology, and, though too busy to bestow much attention on the education of their family, very desirous that they should all accept their views. Much though Chalmers respected and honoured them, he did not at first fall in with their views of life and duty. He grew up with a positive dislike both of the Calvinistic theology and the evangelical life. It was not till after he had been some years in the ministry that, under the acute pressure of personal illness and family bereavements, he came to see as they did, and to live as they lived. The change to them must have been like the conversion of Augustine to Monica. And yet, in after years,

¹ Thomas Chalmers: A Biographical Study. By James Dodds.

their intercourse was not wholly without friction. It is touching to mark in the son's diary tokens of his humiliation on account of the crossness with which he sometimes spoke to them. Both were deaf, and an aunt who lived with them was deafer still, and it annoyed Thomas, with his naturally impatient temper, to find himself misapprehended, often to have to repeat his remarks, and always to speak in that louder tone which the deaf require. We may be sure that when he felt and confessed thus in secret, he would try to make up for it at other times by double kindness, for of all things that could vex him, to inflict needless pain was about the worst. His respect for them was alike sincere and affectionate; and for his mother's widow hood – lonely, but bright, calm, and holy, he had such a reverence that it became the very pattern of all that he desired most earnestly for his own old age.

Thomas was not yet twelve, when, with his brother William, he was sent on to the University of St. Andrews. At such an age, common enough then in Scotland, boys were incapable of grasping the great aims of a university; and college to them was but an upper school. But the change to the university had at first no effect in mending the idle ways of our student. He was 'volatile, boyish, and idle.' Yet, even from the first, he was noted for strict integrity and warm affection, and in all that he did undertake he was enthusiastic and persevering. It was not till his third session that he became attached to any branch of learning. The science that captivated him then was mathematics. And so ardently did he devote himself to it, that

long afterwards, about the time when he left Kilmany, he was familiarly known as 'Mr. Chalmers, the mathematician.' He might have borne the designation to the very end. His mind was fashioned on the mathematical model, taking its stand on realities, the substantial verities of life; striving to explain their relations and applications, and then pressing them with tremendous energy on the hearts and consciences of his fellows. For Professor Brown, his mathematical teacher, he retained through life the warmest regard; and when he died in 1836, he wrote to his widow, that of all his public instructors he was the one that impressed him most, and to whom he owed most in the formation of his tastes and habits, and in the guidance of his literary life.

As the termination of his curriculum in arts drew near, it became necessary that he should choose a profession. Strange to say, although he had no favour either for theology or religion, he had declared from his boyhood for the ministry. Some of the more picturesque sayings of the Bible had taken a remarkable hold of his mind. When but three years old, being missed and sought for, after it had become dark, he was found alone, pacing up and down in the nursery, repeating to himself the words of David, 'O my son Absalom, my son Absalom; O Absalom, my son, my son!' The sister of one of his schoolfellows used to tell of her breaking in on the two, and finding him on a chair, preaching vigorously to his single hearer. It was the soul of the orator asserting itself from the very first.

But when he entered on his theological course, there seemed to be little or no development of the real spirit of the ministry. He was, indeed, full of reverence for truth, and so impatient of anything like double dealing, that when his professor represented that certain doctrines of Calvinism should not be much spoken of, he could not but ask, Why not, if they be true? Throughout his whole life he disliked men who were not above board with everything, and his own regard for truth was transparent to all. For a time his mind was clouded with scepticism. The books that were most useful in restoring his faith were Butler's *Analogy* and Beattie's *Essay on Truth*. A very remarkable effect was produced on him when, some time after, he became acquainted with Jonathan Edwards on *The Freedom of the Will*. For a time he could neither think nor talk of anything else. What so impressed him was the idea of the whole series of events in the spiritual as well as the material world being bound together by unalterable links, and thus forming one vast scheme – a wonderful tribute to the wisdom, power, and glory of God. The incident showed how his mind had expanded, and how he had come to find delight in large, comprehensive views of things. Long after, he spoke of the year in which this subject occupied him as a time of mental elysium, so great was his delight. Yet at this time evangelical truth was positively rejected. We are reminded of the experience of another, afterwards a colleague of his own in New College, Edinburgh, the late Dr. John Duncan, who, even when a student of divinity, wandered for a time in the gloomy mazes of

atheism, but when brought into the light of theism – apart from Christianity altogether – expressed his emotion in a way of his own: 'I danced on the brig o' Dee when I came to see there was a God.'

It was of course necessary, when he had advanced somewhat in his divinity course, that he should practise the art of composition. His first efforts, we are told, were poor enough. The composition both of his letters and his college exercises was bald, unrelieved by any gleam of fancy or sentiment. But in two years he had learned to write with ease and fluency, and he had formed that remarkable, if somewhat turgid style which he practised ever after. We know so little of the English writers who engaged his attention at this time that the natural history of his style is something of a puzzle. It has somewhat of the swell and dignity of Johnson, and much of the diffuseness of Burke – two of the most prominent writers in his youth. But its main quality must have arisen from the burning fervour of his own mind, and the natural outflow of his thoughts, shaping his language spontaneously, and moulding it into characteristic forms of beauty and power.

When in 1842, on the eve of the Disruption, Chalmers met four or five hundred of his brethren in what was known as the Convocation, and endeavoured to reconcile them to the prospect of an unendowed church, the task was one that demanded the highest efforts of his eloquence. It was his aim to rouse them to an attitude worthy of the occasion, and, with that view, he concluded an appeal of transcendent power with a eulogy of enthusiasm

which awakened thunders of applause. Never had he seemed more eloquent. Yet the passage that had so thrilled his audience was found after his death to be an exact transcript from one of his student discourses. 'Enthusiasm is a virtue rarely produced in a state of calm and unruffled repose. It flourishes in adversity. It kindles in the hour of danger and rises to deeds of renown. The terrors of persecution only serve to awaken the energy of its purposes. It swells in the pride of integrity, and great in the purity of its cause, it can scatter defiance amid a host of enemies.' – Already, *'ferret, immensusque ruit.'*

In those days it was the practice of the members of the university to meet morning and evening in the public hall for worship, the prayers being led by the students of divinity. In his first theological session, Mr. Chalmers's prayer was an amplification of the Lord's Prayer, so eloquent and original as to awaken the wonder of all. One who remembered his prayers on these occasions said: 'The wonderful flow of eloquent, vivid, ardent description of the attributes and works of God, and still more, perhaps, the astonishingly harrowing delineation of the miseries, the horrid cruelties, immoralities, and abominations inseparable from war, which always came in more or less in connection with the bloody warfare in which we were engaged with France, called forth the wonderment of his hearers. He was then only sixteen years of age, yet he showed a taste and capacity for composition of the most glowing and eloquent kind. Even then his style was very much the same as at the period when he

attracted so much notice, and made such powerful impression in the pulpit and by the press.'

Thus already, in his student days, that great outline of character had begun to shape itself, which, modified afterwards by new and powerful forces, made him the great man he was. The intensity of his nature, the redundant energy that hardly knew fatigue, the largeness of his view, the warmth of his affection, the independence of his judgment, and the gushing impetuosity of his style were manifest from these college days. Whatever he may have derived from his parents, or from the masters that taught him, or the books he read, a fearless, sturdy independence was the ruling feature – he was a genuine Scot.

On finishing his theological studies he accepted a situation as tutor in a family, under the feeling that, as his knowledge of mankind had hitherto been limited to his own family and his fellow-students, it was desirable for him to know a little more of the world. But his experience was not happy. It was not merely that his hours of teaching were so arranged as to leave him hardly any time for reading, but that his treatment was not what he considered due to a gentleman. Of such treatment he was sensitive to the last degree, nor was he restrained by any bashfulness or timidity from expressing his opinion of it. His employer wished to throw the blame on himself, and told him he had too much pride. He could not deny the charge, but showed a ready wit in hurling it back on his accuser. 'Sir,' was his undaunted reply, 'there are two kinds of pride: there is the pride

which lords it over inferiors, and there is the pride which rejoices in repressing the insolence of superiors. The first I have none of – the second I glory in.' This, to say the least, was tolerably smart for a lad of eighteen. But it showed not only his independence but his intolerance of opposition. Soon after, he gave up the situation.

He had not completed his nineteenth year when he applied to his presbytery to be licensed as a probationer. He was under the legal age, but probably his precocity had made a considerable impression, for the law was evaded under a traditional exception in favour of youths 'of pregnant parts,' and on the 21st July 1799 he became a licentiate. But he did not show much interest in the work of his new calling. Immediately after, he paid a visit to friends in England, in the course of which he preached his first sermon, at Wigan, on 25th August 1799. His eldest brother wrote to his father: 'His mode of delivery is expressive, his language beautiful, and his arguments very forcible and strong... It is the opinion of those who pretend to be judges that he will shine in the pulpit, but as yet he is rather awkward in his appearance. We, however, are at some pains in adjusting his dress, manner, etc., but he does not seem to pay any great regard to it himself. His mathematical studies appear to occupy more of his time than his religious.'

Returning from England, he spent the next two winters at Edinburgh attending classes at the university. Mathematics, chemistry, natural and moral philosophy, and political economy were the subjects that occupied his attention. To Dr. Robison,

Professor of Natural Philosophy, he felt himself under very deep obligations. He had been perplexed by the views which he found in the *Système de la Nature*, published under the pseudonym of Mirabeau, but really the work of the Baron von Holbach. That rigid uniformity of natural law which it enforced seemed to point ominously to materialism and atheism. Under Professor Robison's instructions he was led to ponder the remarkable harmony between the human mind and the processes of nature – the wonderful adaptation of the one to the other; and the conclusion was irresistible that this must be due to an intelligent Divine Being who had framed these adaptations. In after years this was the theme of his Bridgewater treatise, and it was one of the corner-stones of his Natural Theology. As to preaching during these Edinburgh studies, it seems to have been almost entirely neglected.

A new situation, however, opened up to him, as assistant to the Rev. Mr. Elliot, minister of Cavers, in Roxburghshire. The duties of this office he discharged for about a year with fair regularity and diligence, but without hard work, and without his showing any lively interest in the objects of the ministry. In the course of his residence there, he learned that when the parish of Kilmany, in Fife, should fall vacant (as it was likely to do, but not just immediately, by the appointment of the incumbent to a chair), he would get the presentation from the University of St. Andrews.

But what interested him much more was his appointment as assistant, for the ensuing session, to the professor of mathematics

there. All that concerned the ministry excited but a languid interest, but his literary and scientific ambition was irrepressible. Already it had begun to look towards a mathematical chair. As Mrs. Oliphant remarks, 'The life and energy of a robust young man, full of ambition, eager for achievement, was in all his veins.' As a teacher he kindled the enthusiasm of his students for mathematical science. To himself the demonstrations of geometry were alike complete and beautiful. But he had also a way of associating mathematics with other pursuits, of bringing all manner of side-lights to bear on the study, of finding analogies in this quarter and in that, that greatly increased his popularity as a teacher. As one of his students remarked afterwards, 'Under his extraordinary management the study of mathematics was felt to be hardly less a play of the fancy than a labour of the intellect – the lessons of the day being continually interspersed with applications and illustrations of the most lively nature, so that he secured in a singular manner the confidence and attachment of his pupils.'

But such popularity among the students was apt to beget a different feeling among the professors; it especially roused Mr. Vilant, the gentleman as whose substitute Chalmers had been acting. Mr. Vilant, it appeared, had been granting certificates without communication with his assistant – a grievous offence in his eyes. Accordingly, at the public examination of his classes at the end of the session, Chalmers broke out into a severe invective against him, and delivered a long, sarcastic speech in

condemnation of his conduct. The professors knew not how to look, but at last the Principal brought the speech of Chalmers to an end, and he proceeded with his examination as if nothing had happened.

His capacity of combining strong feeling in one direction with perfect self-control in every other was very remarkable. Many years afterwards, when expressing his views with extraordinary energy in the General Assembly on the question that led to the Disruption, he was interrupted by a layman, who remarked that they were all pleased to hear him, excited though he was, but that there were limits, etc., etc. 'Excited!' exclaimed Chalmers, in great astonishment; 'does the gentleman say that I am excited? I am as cool as an algebraic problem.' His head was in no degree disturbed by the vehemence of his heart.

A short time had to elapse between the close of the session and his ordination as minister of Kilmany, which Mr. Chalmers devoted to a visit to Edinburgh. His father was disappointed and mortified that on the eve of entering on so solemn a profession, he did not put the interval to use at home in the way of earnest meditation and prayer. For that, however, the son did not see the slightest necessity. He deemed himself already sufficiently prepared for his duties, with the nature of which he was well acquainted. In this strain he wrote to his father, adhering to his plan. A few years later he would have felt most differently, and, ashamed of his carelessness, he would have most cordially fallen in with all that his father had written.

CHAPTER II

KILMANY

1803-1815

On the 12th day of May 1803, Mr. Chalmers was ordained by the Presbytery of Cupar to the ministry of Kilmanny. Never did the settlement of a young man of twenty-three create less interest in the mind of the person principally concerned. There is no evidence either of that elation of feeling which a young man naturally has in taking possession of a church and manse, and filling an important place in a community; or of that overwhelming sense of responsibility which so solemn a charge excites in a serious mind. It was not the ministry but mathematics that held the first place in his heart. Notwithstanding his settlement as minister of Kilmanny, he was bent on being re-appointed to the mathematical assistantship during the ensuing winter. His predecessor in that office had been minister of a parish for six out of the eleven years when he had held it; what reasonable objection could there be to his holding it for a single session?

After what had happened at the end of last session, it was no great wonder that his employer should inform him that his services were no longer needed. This could hardly have been a surprise, though it was a disappointment; but when it was

indicated that inefficiency was the cause of his dismissal, it was viewed as an intolerable insult. Inefficiency, forsooth! If he should submit to that, it would be a deathblow to all his hopes of literary and scientific advancement, and it would shut him out for ever from all hope of a university chair.

Unabashed by the treatment of the professors, he resolved to defy them, and to open classes on his own account during the ensuing session. He was too self-confident and self-reliant to care what might be said of him, either by the professors or the public; but there was one quarter in which he was desirous to conciliate approval, or at least to prevent condemnation. He found it necessary to give reasons to his father for not confining himself to the duties of his ministerial charge. The chief reason was, that, apart from preaching, the duties were slight and easy, and it was his intention, while spending the week in St. Andrews, to return to Kilmany on Saturdays for Sunday duties, while two of his neighbours were willing to attend to any urgent week-day matters that might arise. The truth is, he had by a kind of unconscious instinct accepted the views of the 'Moderates,' – a school, in the language of Mr. Dodds, 'which was neither true Christian nor good pagan; had neither the unction of Knox nor the yearning desire for truth and goodness of an Epictetus or a Cicero.'

When he began his classes at St. Andrews, he of course had to encounter many hard sayings and much opposition. But he was confident of his integrity in thus repelling practically an injurious

charge; and with no little dignity and force maintained that he was bound to take this step in order to uphold his reputation as a teacher. And such was his simplicity and geniality of manner that he felt no embarrassment in going about among the very professors and others who had condemned him most. After a few weeks, in addition to his three classes of mathematics, he announced his intention of opening a class of chemistry. This created a fresh storm of opposition. But the class prospered, it was conducted with the greatest enthusiasm, and the very fact of so young a man braving the opposition of the whole university in order to defend his reputation gave a chivalrous aspect to the proceeding, which toned down the current of opposition. By the end of the session he and the professors were all on good terms. It was a marvellous proof of his energy alike of mind and body that he was able to do all his academic work, and at the same time write sermons and deliver them at Kilmany, without breaking down, without even the appearance of exhaustion. On the 14th March, after five months of this labour, he wrote to his father, 'My hands are full of business. I am living just now the life I seem to be formed for – a life of constant and unremitting activity.' Of the whole forty-three years that formed the remainder of his life, nearly the same thing might have been said.

The mathematical classes were not repeated in the following session, but the chemical lectures were resumed, and carried on twice a week with increased enthusiasm. The lectures were subsequently repeated at Kilmany and at Cupar. Once, when

at a loss for means to assist a friend at Kirkcaldy, who had been associated with him in the volunteer service, the chemical lectures were trotted out to the rescue. It was necessary, when he went to a town, to carry materials for experimenting with him, and Dr. Hanna tells how on one occasion one of the bottles that hung from his saddlebag having been broken, the contents were discharged on the flank of his horse, where they left a discoloured belt to tell the tale. Of this accident the present writer remembers to have heard a more detailed version, according to which the accident to the bottle, which contained sulphuric acid, was not discovered till he was in the class-room. The moment it was perceived, Chalmers, in great excitement, exclaimed, 'Oh, my poor beast!' and rushed from the lecture-room to the stable to do whatever was possible to relieve the sufferings of the unfortunate animal.

It did not escape the notice of the Presbytery that the minister of Kilmany was so much occupied with work outside his parish. But the standard of ministerial activity was low, and Chalmers had not much difficulty in defending himself. In a very short time his thoughts were again turned to the university, but in another connection. The chair of natural philosophy became vacant, and he entered the lists as a candidate. But as the election was in the hands of the professors, he could not have seriously dreamt of success. Nor was he much concerned for his failure. 'My contempt,' he wrote, 'for the low, shuffling artifices of college politics supports and elevates my mind against the vexation of

regret.'

A few weeks later, in January 1805, the University of Edinburgh lost one of its most eminent professors – Dr. Robison, of whom mention has already been made. Professor Playfair obtained his chair, leaving that of mathematics, which he had held before, to be filled up. Chalmers was again in the field, but no qualifications that he could appeal to were a match for those of the successful candidate – Mr. (afterwards Sir John) Leslie. In the course of the contest he came for the first time before the public as an author. Among the candidates was the Rev. Dr. Macknight, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, in opposition to whom Professor Playfair had written to the patrons, remonstrating against such a conjunction of offices. Mr. Chalmers's pamphlet (which was anonymous) was entitled, *Observations on a passage in Mr. Playfair's Letter to the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, relative to the Mathematical Pretensions of the Scottish Clergy*. He had ceased to have any personal interest in the case, and his whole object was to show that a Scottish clergyman might be abundantly qualified for the duties of a chair in addition to those of a parish. 'The author of this pamphlet,' he said, 'can assert from what to him is the highest of all authority, the authority of his own experience, that after the satisfactory discharge of his parish duties, a minister may enjoy five days in the week of uninterrupted leisure for the prosecution of any science in which his taste may dispose him to engage.' When the religious views of Mr. Chalmers underwent the great change

which will be described afterwards, he was much distressed for this publication, and did his utmost to withdraw it from circulation. In a discussion on pluralities in the General Assembly some years afterwards, he argued vehemently against both the principle and practice of pluralities; and, being twitted with having at one time pronounced in their favour, he candidly admitted that he had done so, but it was in the days of his spiritual blindness. The chair involved was a chair of mathematics. 'What, sir,' he asked, 'are the objects of mathematical science? Magnitude and the relations of magnitude. But then, sir, I had forgot two magnitudes: I thought not of the littleness of time; I recklessly thought not of the greatness of eternity!'

However imperfectly he might have been discharging the duties of his Kilmany charge, Mr. Chalmers was exceedingly kind and exemplary to the members of his own family, one of whom, his sister Jane, for whom through life he had the warmest affection, kept house for him, while various others were more or less resident in his manse. One brother, George, a favourite of the family, spent some months at Kilmany in the autumn of 1806, in very touching circumstances. He was a sailor by profession, and at the age of twenty-three commanded a merchant ship, which being attacked by a French privateer, gallantly drove off the enemy; but the skipper, lying down on deck, exhausted after the fight, caught the seeds of consumption, which gradually prevailed against him. His mother, three of his sisters, and two of his brothers were all around him at

Kilmany, but no material improvement took place. Returning to Anstruther, George calmly awaited his coming end, with a firm trust in the merit of his Saviour. Every evening one of Newton's (of Olney) sermons was read at his bedside by one of the family in rotation. It was one of the books which his brother had lately denounced from the pulpit of Kilmany, as drawing men away from the wholesome teaching of the gospels. Yet to his dying brother it brought heavenly comfort. And evidently that brother enjoyed a secret something which he had not. Could he be wrong? Must there not be reality in the experience that took away all fear of death, and made the youth of twenty-three so willing to die? 'The deep impression made by George's death,' says Dr. Hanna, the chief biographer of Chalmers, 'was the first step towards his own conversion.'

Less than two years after, his sister Barbara, who was five years older than himself, sickened and died. The same fell disease which had cut off George proved fatal to her. But her father could write of her that she showed a cheerful submission to the will of God, and a humble confidence in the satisfaction of her great Redeemer. Here was another case of one very near and dear to him deriving all her support and comfort in the hour of death from a source which he had been accustomed to associate with superstition and fanaticism. Again the question could not but force itself upon him, Must there not be something real in it, after all?

As to the ordinary management of his household, being under

the control of his sister, it proceeded in the ordinary fashion without much interference from him. He was easy, and easily pleased, but he was not an absent-minded dreamer. At an early period his chemical studies had led him to believe that the time would come when coal-vapour would be purified and used for illuminating houses; and when he got a new manse, he had pipes laid in it, in anticipation of this domestic use. When coffee was introduced as a beverage, he believed that in burnt rye he had found a rival to it, and used to have it produced for his friends. Once when it was proposed to subject the two substances to a sort of competitive trial, and a select company assembled to pass a verdict upon them, a cup of genuine Mocha was first handed round and much approved of; then a second cup was presented, and being tasted was pronounced to be much inferior; whereupon Mr. Chalmers burst into laughter and exclaimed, 'It's your own Mocha coffee, the second cup is just the same article as the first!' At another time, when some friends were to be at dinner, it turned out that the whole resources of the larder could produce nothing but two kinds of dried fish. Nothing daunted, Mr. Chalmers had both of them properly served; and the covers being removed, called on his guests to make their choice. 'This, gentlemen, is salt fish from St. Andrews; and that is salt fish from Dundee.' Of course he had to be often on horseback; but as a horseman he did not excel. 'What most provoked him was the frequency with which his horse threw him. At first he was much interested in noting the intervals between each fall. Taking

the average length, and calculating how far a dozen falls would carry him, he resolved to keep the horse till the twelfth fall was accomplished. Extremely fond of such numerical adjustments (a singular result of the mathematical structure of his mind), he was most faithful in counting them. In this instance, however, the tenth fall was so bad that his resolution gave way, and he told his servant to take the horse to the next market and sell him forthwith. 'But remember,' he said, 'you must conceal none of its faults; you must tell that it has thrown its master ten times.' 'But who,' asked the man, 'will think of buying the horse if I tell him all that beforehand?' 'I cannot help that,' said Mr. Chalmers; 'I will have no deception practised, and if nobody will buy the horse, you must just bring him back again.' Nobody did buy the horse; ultimately in return for a book he was transferred to his neighbour, Mr. Thomson of Balmerino, whom the animal served quietly and faithfully for many a year, without showing any vicious tendency; whence it came to be surmised 'that the peculiarities of the case were not in the animal but the restless and energetic horsemanship of the rider!'

His patriotism was intense, and not only did he fulminate against Bonaparte in the pulpit, but he joined the volunteers, and held commissions both as chaplain and lieutenant.

The early years at Kilmany passed with little change except a visit to England in the beginning of 1807. These English visits, rare in those days, enlarged his horizon, and showed him much that he did not find at home. At Liverpool he preached for a Mr.

Kilpatrick, and we may gather the character of his ordinary pulpit lessons from his two subjects – in the forenoon on the comforts of religion; in the afternoon on drunkenness. His impression of Woodstock showed that intense admiration of nature which remained to the last: 'I spent two hours in the garden. Never spot more lovely – never scenes so fair and captivating. I lost myself in an elysium of delight, and wept with perfect rapture.' At Oxford there was kindled a reverence for English academical life and learning which never left him. 'I was delighted with the academic air and costume of the place; and amid the grossness of a mercantile age, it is the delight of my spirit to recur to the quiet scenes of philosophy, and contemplate what our ancestors have done for learning, and the respect that they once paid to it.'

Three weeks were spent among the sights of London. He had a lively interest in all he saw, especially in all that concerned science and the mechanical arts. Among his old friends and neighbours were two sons of Fifeshire manses, rising to that high distinction which he coveted in his own department, – John Campbell, afterwards Lord Campbell, and Mr. (afterwards Sir David) Wilkie. He was greatly interested in all he saw of royalty: Windsor, with all its glories; the chapel-royal there, where the King and Queen and Princess Elizabeth seemed so simple, frank, and devout; and he noted especially a view he had of these royal personages at St. James's, when her majesty returned his salutation with a 'condescending notice.' Not in the vulgar sense, but as useful and ornamental elements in the social fabric, he had

a high regard for royalty and the nobility. 'I am charmed with the cordial and affectionate loyalty of the people. I saw a glow of reverence and satisfaction on every countenance, and my heart warmed within me.' Sheridan was the great orator of the day, and oftener than once he heard him speak. He used to give two instances of Sheridan's readiness of repartee when standing the fire of the hustings at Westminster. One elector complained that he was not satisfied with his treatment of the Carnatic. 'My dear sir,' he said, with a significant bow, 'the affairs of the Carnatic are in much abler hands.' Another elector, with a very ugly face, raised on the shoulder of the mob, said, 'If you do not alter your ways, I will withdraw my countenance from you.' 'I am delighted to hear it,' said Sheridan, 'for it is the ugliest countenance I ever beheld.'

Cambridge attracted him even more than Oxford: 'It smells of learning all over, and I breathe a fragrancy most congenial to me.' As if he had foreseen Girton and Newnham, he said, 'The very women have an air of academic mildness and simplicity.' He preferred it to Oxford, apparently because its objects of interest were not so concentrated, but really, in all probability, because it was the great sanctuary of mathematical study. 'In Cambridge, everything wears a simplicity and chasteness allied to the character of philosophy, and the venerable name of Newton gives it an interest that can never die.' The glories of York Minster entranced him. Wherever he went he made careful observation alike of all that was beautiful and all that

was instructive. He returned to Kilmany in July (1807), after an absence of nearly three months.

Immediately after his return, Mr. Chalmers set himself to prepare for the press a work of considerable size and research, entitled an *Inquiry into the Extent and Stability of National Resources*. Political economy had always attracted him. At the time of this publication, much fear was expressed that the continued war with Bonaparte, implying the shutting against Britain of all the ports of the countries to which his influence extended, and the confiscation of all cargoes of British goods, would exhaust the resources of the country and ruin its foreign traders. Mr. Chalmers held strongly an opposite opinion. Whether he succeeded in proving his contention may be a question; certainly his position was paradoxical. But his sagacity, as the result has proved, came out in more than one indirect form. With reference to the income-tax, he contended strongly that it ought not to be charged on the whole of a man's income, but only on the part that remained after providing for the necessaries of life. It was only a few years ago that effect was given to this view in the case of small incomes. Another matter for which he contended strongly was our obligation to provide a better living for our soldiers. He denounced the compulsory system of enlistment – it ought to be a voluntary service. And it ought to be a service of limited duration; the nation had no right to make an exception against soldiers and sailors when all other servants were engaged for a limited number of months or

years. 'Let it no longer be a slavery for life, and let the burning ignominy of corporal punishment be done away.' It was many years before these suggestions were acted on; Chalmers lived to see his proposal of limited enlistment carried out, when a friend of his own (Lord Panmure, afterwards Earl of Dalhousie) was Secretary at War.

In this and in later writings on political economy it has been well remarked that 'he bent the whole energies of his thought, not so much on its abstruser theories, as on those practical and vital problems which tend to meet the difficulties and ameliorate the condition of the working classes.' 'He was the first political economist,' says Mr. Dodds, 'who seized with a forethought and philanthropy equally before his time upon *the condition-of-the-people question*, as the paramount, the coming question of the age.' His opinion as to the dynamic by which the desired change was to come underwent a great change when his religious views changed; at the present stage he hoped that the forces of reason would gradually effect the desired improvement; afterwards he saw that these forces would be of little avail without the power of the Gospel.

But a more important publication had now come into his horizon. One of his friends, Dr. (afterwards Sir David) Brewster, was at this time engaged in editing a voluminous work, the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*. Chalmers was engaged to contribute several articles, chiefly on mathematical subjects. After the death of his sister Barbara (in 1808) he wrote to the editor

requesting that the article on 'Christianity' should be assigned to him. Probably he felt, after what he had seen at the two deathbeds in his family, that he needed to make this great subject a matter of more careful study. His own belief in the divine origin of Christianity had been firmly established long before – the historical evidence, as presented by Paley, and the analogical confirmation of it by Butler appearing to him irresistible. As it turned out, his article in the *Encyclopædia* bore mainly on the evidences; and the historical evidence received by far the most prominent place. Indeed, he was disposed to lay little stress on what was known as the internal evidence. This arose out of the fear he entertained lest men would substitute their own impressions of Christianity for the clear, authoritative declarations of God. Since God had uttered His voice, the sole and simple duty of men was to ascertain what He had spoken, and give it their profound and absolute acceptance. If they began to discuss the quality of His message, even though its supreme excellence should be the point insisted on, they would be bringing their own judgment into the case, and that might prove a very dangerous element. It needs hardly to be pointed out that in this position Chalmers placed himself in antagonism to the current view of the friends of Christianity. In point of fact, the internal evidence is that which carries conviction to the great mass of believers. At the present day, the character of Jesus Christ stands far the highest and most impressive of all the evidences. Chalmers was influenced, by a mental tendency which clung to

him more or less all his life, to dwell on one side of a truth, which, to be fully set forth, needed to be viewed in a variety of lights. But after a time he came to see that the internal evidence deserved a higher place than he had assigned to it. When his article was expanded into his treatise on the *Evidences of Christianity*, the internal branch was duly acknowledged.

But before the article was finished, Chalmers, who was then in his thirtieth year, passed through the ordeal of a very severe illness, which confined him to his room for four months, prevented him from entering his pulpit for six months, and affected him more or less for a whole year. He believed that he was about to die. The whole subject of religion assumed a new aspect of importance in his eyes. He came to see that he had been living without God, and the discovery appalled him. The will of God now became an imperative rule to him, and every energy was bent towards bringing his own heart and life into conformity to it. In such a man as Pascal the sublime transition had been made from the highest walks of mathematical science to the still higher walk of faith. Might not he be able to realise what Pascal had achieved? For a whole year Chalmers laboured to effect this change. His friends could not fail to mark the difference. Brief but solemn allusions such as they had never heard before would drop from his lips. But in many respects he was still the same. 'There were the same cordial greetings, the same kindly questionings about themselves and all their friends, and the same hearty laugh at the racy anecdote or stroke of quiet humour; for,

great as was the change effected, neither at the first nor ever afterwards did it damp or narrow that genial and most social spirit which carried him into varied intercourse with all classes of his fellow-men, and made the joy of that intercourse to be a very cordial to his heart.' But, deeply solemnised though he was, he had not attained the peace that passeth understanding, nor had he learned the precious act of free and loving fellowship with his Father in heaven.

During all this time he was ever keeping a most vigilant eye on his habits and life, and in a diary now begun we find him pulling himself up for every little fault, every loss of temper, every bitter word, every conceited feeling. And he is constantly praying for forgiveness and for strength. He is making progress in theological knowledge, finding, for example, a far higher place in his regard for the atonement of Jesus Christ. A very strong mark of his earnestness is seen in his determination finally to give up his mathematical reading, and devote himself to theology.

His views came to a point after the reading of a book then in vogue – Wilberforce's *Practical View*. Fifteen years after, he described the effect which that book had upon him in a letter to a younger brother. 'When I meet with an inquirer, who, under the impulse of a new feeling, has set himself in good earnest to the business of his eternity, I have been very much in the habit of recommending Wilberforce. This perhaps is owing to the circumstance that I myself experienced a very great transition of sentiment in consequence of reading his work. The deep

views he gives of the depravity of our nature, of our need of an atonement, of the great doctrine of acceptance through that atonement, of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit – these all give a new aspect to a man's religion... But there are other books which might be as effectually instrumental in working the desired change; and in defect of them all there is the Bible, whose doctrines I well remember I then saw in an altogether new light, and could feel a power and a preciousness in passages which I formerly read with heedlessness, and even with disgust.'

We cannot dwell at more length on this most interesting struggle; enough to say that he emerged from it into the joy and peace of believing; he laid hold of Jesus Christ as his only Saviour; entered into conscious reconciliation with God; looked habitually to the Holy Spirit for all sanctifying grace; and counted it his highest honour and delight to be a fellow-worker with God, especially in all that concerned the welfare of his fellow-men. Yet it was always observed of him that while cordially agreeing with evangelical divines in the great essentials of the faith, he would accept of no position which did not commend itself to his own mind as according to Scripture. For a class of men who insisted on very minute orthodoxies, and even questioned his own soundness because he might not agree with them, he used to speak with little patience and less respect.

The change became very apparent in his ministerial work. He threw new ardour into the visitation of his flock and the instruction of the young. His preaching passed into those

evangelical lines which formerly he had treated with contempt. Family worship, morning and evening, was regularly conducted in the manse, although sometimes it was a great trial to introduce that much contemned practice when a guest was present who had little sympathy with the evangelical life. A Bible Society was established in the parish, and all the people were exhorted to join it. Strangers flocked to his church, not merely as of old to enjoy his eloquent and impassioned delivery, but for guidance and aid in the service of God. Converts to living Christianity gladdened his heart and aided him in his work. 'Sandy Paterson,' his first convert, became a great and earnest worker among his neighbours, and afterwards, as a city missionary, in the Canongate of Edinburgh, successfully laboured in the slums. With a young gentleman in Dundee, Mr. James Anderson, Chalmers formed a remarkable friendship on the basis of their mutual interest in religion, and in his great humility corresponded with him more like a fellow-student or brother than a spiritual father. And Chalmers himself became an earnest and laborious student of the Bible; and, in order to keep up the glow of his spiritual life, instituted for himself a monthly exercise, in which he reviewed before God the work of the month, and with much confession and thanksgiving, implored the blessing of God on all his work and on all his people.

No man was more sensible than himself of the great difference between his earlier and later ministry. He told his people that earnest though he had been at first in pressing honour, truth,

and integrity upon them, he never once heard of any resulting reformation; all his vehemence had not the weight of a feather on their moral habits. It was only after he became acquainted with the true way of approach to God, and the real fountain of divine strength in Christ, that those minor reformations showed themselves as the result of that deeper and more vital process by which the heart was changed. It was his delight to hear masters testifying to the scrupulous honesty and conscientious fidelity of their servants, after they had come under the power of the Gospel. He prayed that such servants, while thus adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour, humble though they were, might reclaim the great ones of the land to the acknowledgment of the faith.

Though not much addicted to church courts, Chalmers, during his Kilmany ministry, made a few memorable appearances in them. His maiden speech in the General Assembly was delivered in 1809. The subject was not an inspiring one; it related to a recent act of the legislature on the augmentation of stipends. But his speech was a most logical and brilliant performance. The house was taken by storm. 'Who is he?' was the question on every lip; 'he must be a most extraordinary person.' Later, in 1814, he spoke on a kindred subject – the repairs and alterations of manses. A better chance for his powers occurred in the Assembly of that year in connection with a plurality case, where the 'wonderful display of his talents' contributed much to the passing of an enactment that no professorship in a university

should be held in connection with a *country* charge.

During the latter part of his Kilmany ministry he became a contributor to the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, under the distinguished editorship of Dr. Andrew Thomson. One of his papers dealt with the new-born science of geology, and greatly soothed the anxieties of many good men, by pointing out that the first chapter of Genesis does not fix the antiquity of the globe, but only that of the human race. To the *Eclectic Review* he contributed an able paper on Moravian missions, in opposition to an ignorant and scandalous misstatement on that subject that had appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*. An eloquent pamphlet, likewise in refutation of injurious statements, vindicated Bible Societies from the charge of hurting the poor. It was at this time, and in connection with this defence of Bible Societies, that he first published those views of pauperism which he maintained so constantly all his life. At Kilmany there was no assessment for the poor, and very little pauperism. It seemed to him far better to foster a spirit of independence, thrift, and industry on the part of the poor, and a spirit of brotherly consideration on the part of the rich, than to confer a legal claim on the one, and impose a legal obligation on the other. 'What, after all,' asks the author of the pamphlet on Bible Societies, 'is the best method of providing for the secular necessities of the poor? Is it by labouring to meet the necessity after it has occurred, or by labouring to establish a principle and a habit which would go far to prevent its existence? ... If you wish to extinguish poverty, combat with it in its first

elements... The education and religious principle of Scotland have not annihilated pauperism, but they have restrained it to a degree that is almost incredible to our neighbours of the south. The writer of this paper knows of a parish in Fife, the average maintenance of whose poor is defrayed by £24 sterling a year, and of a parish of the same population in Somersetshire where the annual assessment amounts to £1300 sterling.'

But the most interesting feature in the pastoral development of Chalmers during the latter part of his Kilmany ministry was the new direction given to his power as a pulpit orator. We have seen that, from the beginning, his more careful discourses were marked by great force of argument and beauty of expression, and that there was such a fervour in his manner of delivery as approached to wild uncouthness. Certain it is that from first to last his pronunciation was very broad and his accent intensely provincial. But when he struck into a vein of thought that was full of interest to his own mind and soul, he was wonderfully arrestive and impressive. In his earlier years he evidently took but little trouble with his ordinary discourses; writing shorthand, he could easily throw off a sermon in two or three hours. Yet even then he was at times singularly felicitous; and, for sheer eloquence, no sermon he ever preached was more remarkable than one delivered on occasion of the national fast, on 8th February 1809, when, after a five-mile plodding on foot through a heavy fall of snow, he convened the handful of people who had reached the church in a room in the damp, uninhabited

manse. After his change of views, his preparation for the pulpit received much more attention, and a distinction of longhand and shorthand sermons indicated that on some he bestowed peculiar pains. The late Andrew Fuller, attracted by his fame, having paid him a visit, tried to persuade him to give up reading his sermons, believing that a more free delivery would add infinitely to the impression. Chalmers made various attempts to carry out the extemporaneous method, but, instead of his acquiring more freedom, the effect was the reverse. At last he gave up all attempts at the extemporaneous, both in his sermons and speeches, except in the way of parenthetical remarks designed to elucidate some point that had not been made sufficiently clear.

But we must not close the record of his Kilmany life without adverting to an important domestic event which took place about two years before he left the place. Till near that time he had, like Dr. Livingstone in Africa at a later period, determined to lead the life of a bachelor. A recent disappointment in connection with an application for augmentation of stipend, confirmed him in that resolve. But neither Chalmers nor Livingstone had taken into reckoning a mysterious influence which can make sport of the firmest resolutions, and prostrate strong men at the feet of Hymen. Chalmers had fallen in love with Miss Grace Pratt, daughter of Captain Pratt of the First Royal Veteran Battalion, who had been living for some time with her uncle, Mr. Simson, at Starbank, in the parish of Kilmany. The marriage took place on 4th August 1812, and the union lasted for thirty-five years of

unbroken domestic happiness. His sister Jane, his housekeeper, had been married shortly before to Mr. Morton, a gentleman in Gloucestershire, and in communicating to her what was probably a very unexpected piece of intelligence, he veiled the news under an allegorical form which it may have taken her a little trouble to elucidate. Referring to a recent but somewhat unsuccessful process of his before the Court of Tiends for augmentation of stipend, he said he had been involved in another process before another court. He had been defeated in the one, but he was glad to say he had been triumphant in the other. In the latter case he had had to do the whole business himself. He had had to frame the summons and to conduct the pleadings. There had been replies and duplies, and many a personal appearance at court before the process was settled. At last a decision had been given in his favour. But the law required the decision to be followed by a proclamation – not a single proclamation at the cross, but two proclamations, that had to be made within a quarter of a mile of his own house. The letter concluded: 'I ken, Jane, you always thought me an ill-pratted (mischievous) chiel; but, I can assure you, of all the *pratts* I ever played, none was ever carried on, or even ended more *grace*-fully.' And Mrs. Morton congratulated him on his victory.

His fame as a pulpit orator had now travelled from Maidenkirke to John o' Groats, and it could not be expected that he should be left in a secluded country parish. In Glasgow, the Tron parish church had become vacant, and Chalmers was suggested as

successor to Dr. Macgill. It was easy for the anti-evangelical party to ridicule the idea of bringing a madman to such a place; but a deputation from the Town Council, who were patrons of the church, went to hear him preach. On the Sunday in question he preached, at Bendochy, a funeral sermon on Mr. Honey, a young minister whose fatal illness had been brought on by his exertions in saving from shipwreck seven exhausted sailors, whom, one by one, he bore from their stranded vessel to the shore. The impression of that sermon was overpowering. In spite of the opposition of the Duke of Montrose, Sir Islay Campbell, the Lord Provost, and the College, Chalmers received from the Town Council a presentation to the Tron, and, after considerable hesitation, accepted it. It was a great wrench to tear himself from Kilmany, which he loved and admired so greatly, and from the people that were dear to him as his own children. All his life, Fife, and especially Kilmany, continued thus dear. On his way to Glasgow he had occasion to climb the Calton Hill in Edinburgh, and the sight of Norman Law, which was visible from the windows of the manse of Kilmany, quite overcame him. 'Oh! with what vivid remembrance can I wander in thought over all its farms and all its families, and dwell on the kind and simple affection of its people, till the contemplation becomes too bitter for my endurance.'

It was no less a trial to leave the work which was now advancing so hopefully in the parish. But he could not be insensible to the claims of such a city as Glasgow, and the

boundless field for usefulness it afforded. And so, in great humility, and in great fear lest he should be giving an undue preference to intellect and culture over poverty and obscurity, he accepted the call. He preached a most impressive farewell sermon on 9th July 1815, which concluded with these words: 'Be assured, my brethren, that after the dear and the much-loved scenery of this peaceful vale has disappeared from my eye, the people who live in it shall retain a warm and an ever-enduring place in my memory; and this mortal body must be stretched on the bed of death ere the heart that now animates it can resign its exercise of longing after you, and praying for you that you may so receive Christ Jesus, and so walk in Him, and so hold fast the things you have gotten, and so prove that the labour I have had among you has not been in vain, that when the sound of the last trumpet awakens us, these eyes which are now bathed in tears may open upon a scene of eternal blessedness, and we, my brethren, whom the providence of God has withdrawn for a little time from each other, may on that day be found side by side at the right hand of the everlasting throne.'

When we compare Chalmers as he came to Kilmany and as he left it, we find much that remains the same, and much that has been changed or modified.

Remaining the same, we find his singularly energetic, forceful nature; his high integrity and kindliness of heart, as it constantly streamed out towards his family, his friends, and his flock; his eager desire for the welfare of his people, for their advancement

and elevation in all that he counted good, pure, and noble; his indomitable energy of purpose and fearless contending for right and truth; his passionate intensity of conviction, rolling itself out in whirlwinds and tempests of eloquence, that swept all before it. The great change which he has undergone has not destroyed these fundamental elements of character.

Nevertheless, all things have become new. He has learned that true life, in its every department, must be lived in fellowship with God. He has learned the way to God, to God reconciled, a loving Father, a considerate Master, a gracious Friend and Guide. He has seen the reality of Christ's atonement, and of the work of the Holy Spirit, and found a new value in prayer, and a new use of the sacred Scriptures. He has got new light on the true welfare of the people, and especially on the need for every one of personal contact with Christ; new light, also, on the true dignity of every individual man and woman in view of the capacities of their souls and the immortality that is before them. He has found a nobler theme and a higher inspiration for that eloquence which has moulded his labours in the pulpit. He is not less desirous to see the people prosperous and happy, but he has been convinced that their true welfare is dependent on heavenly grace, and, in the case of the poor, that there is nothing like Christian influence whether for preventing or alleviating the evils of poverty, or, where there are poor, raising them above the depressing conditions of their lot. And this is just the germ of that more comprehensive view of the conditions of social welfare to which he will be drawn

when he finds himself side by side with the teeming thousands of Glasgow. He looks forward more ardently than ever to the full development of the parochial system. Nor has his enthusiasm for science abated. He has seen that, much though he loves it, it is not his part to devote to it the time needed for his more immediate duties. But now that he sees it more clearly than ever a department of that great kingdom of God in which all interests are combined in a wonderful unity, his respect for it is greater rather than less. And, as a handmaid to the Gospel, he will soon find a noble use for it in those astronomical discourses which are soon to arrest the attention of the intellectual world.

Thus equipped, and with these aims, Chalmers proceeds to Glasgow. He is inducted into his new charge, 23rd July 1815. His incumbency there is to be shorter even than at Kilmany; but the eight years that are now before him are to witness the commencement of a work and the advocacy of a cause which will not only bring out the greatness of his character, but tell on the welfare of the whole Church and country for generations to come.

CHAPTER III

GLASGOW

1815-1823

It cannot be said that Chalmers took very kindly to Glasgow. He missed the wide expanse, the fresh air, the Arcadian simplicity of his much-loved Kilmany; also, the intimate acquaintance he had with every individual, and the comparative leisure of a country life. He found himself 'cribbed, cabined, and confined' by streets and lanes and 'lands,' and flung upon dense masses of population that baffled every attempt at individual acquaintance and interest. No doubt the people were most kind and hospitable, and if dinners and other entertainments could have satisfied him, he might have had them to his heart's content. But, bent as he was on his especial work, and eager to launch new plans of usefulness, it was irksome beyond endurance to have to devote whole afternoons and evenings to eating and drinking, considering the very trifling amount of good that could be expected to come of such protracted engagements. And another thing that worried him was the trifling matters of purely secular interest to which, as a director of societies, or a member of public boards, he was expected to give attention. Fancy an hour spent in debating whether a certain ditch was to be covered over or not; fancy himself and his brother-directors engaged in a long

controversy whether pork soup or ox-tail soup should be served to the inmates of an institution, and finally resorting to a practical test – a portion of each kind being brought to each director to taste! Then there was an expectation that much of his time should be devoted to certain attentions that people liked to be paid to them. Why, a funeral was hardly counted respectable unless there were four clergymen in attendance! Much nervous energy was consumed in resisting these unreasonable expectations, and if Chalmers had not come to be a great man, and possessed of a fame which overbore everything, he would certainly have suffered not a little in reputation from the necessity of so often applying a snub where kindness was meant, and becoming a transgressor where tradition had established its law.

During the eight years of his Glasgow incumbency many things happened, worthy to be noticed even in a short biography like this. First of all, his fame as a pulpit orator reached its climax; a climax never surpassed and seldom equalled in the whole annals of the pulpit. In the next place, his ideas of the advantages of the parochial system, brought from Kilmany, were matured, expanded, and practically applied, with results that demonstrated in a wonderful way their Christian wisdom and excellence. Further, as an author, he rose to a higher platform; his astronomical and commercial discourses, when published, spread his fame far and wide; and a quarterly publication which he issued on the *Civic and Christian Economy of Large Towns* showed the zeal and wisdom with which he grappled

with his parochial obligations. Meanwhile, in his closet, he was intensely occupied with the great problem of his personal spiritual life; ever and anon placing himself in the immediate presence of God, detecting and deploring his infirmities and deficiencies, striving to walk with God in every undertaking, duty, and recreation; trying hard to resist the subtle influence of human applause; and longing much for that absolute consecration which would efface self, and make God all in all. Still further, he was most assiduous in affectionate duty to his friends and family; correspondence with father, mother, wife, children, and friends went on without ceasing, even in the busiest periods of public life, and always with an eager desire to promote their highest good. And many an important call to other spheres of labour arose from time to time to distract his attention; now he was offered this important charge, now that; at one time he was entreated to become a candidate for the natural philosophy chair at Edinburgh, and at another for that of moral philosophy; now he was called to London to preach a missionary sermon, and at another time he found it necessary to make a long tour through England to acquire information about the working of the poor-law system. That he was able to sustain life under the prodigious pressure of all these varied engagements cannot but surprise us, and cannot but excite our admiration of the remarkable physical and mental energy that was able to endure it. But it had its effects; and one of these was, that feeling himself unable to sustain the pressure of such an accumulation of burdens, and

desirous to prosecute more vigorously his work as an author, he accepted, in 1823, the unanimous offer made to him of the chair of moral philosophy at St. Andrews, though the sphere in itself was absolutely insignificant, and the salary not more than £300 a year.

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