

Buchlyvie U. F. Church.

1752.

1902.

Ter-Jubilee ...

... Record,

COMPRISING

Centenary Sketch, 1752-1852.

By the Late Rev. John Russell.

Fifty Years, 1852-1902.

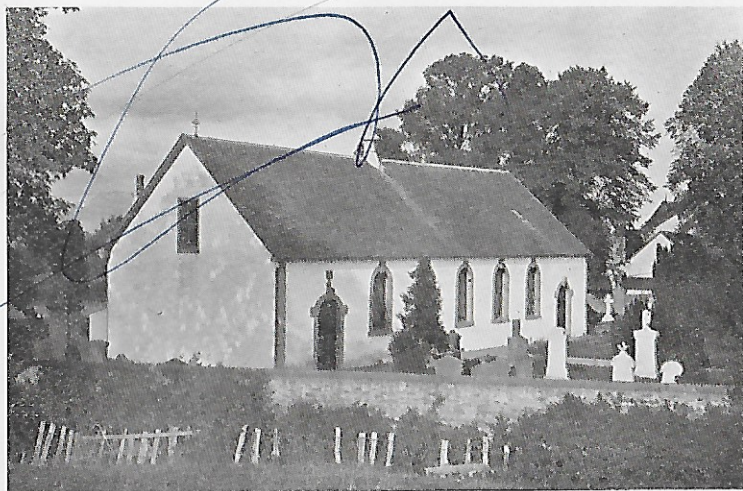
By the Rev. George Wm. S. Cowie.

AUGUST, 1902.

KENNEDY & CHRISTIE,
GLASGOW.



The MANSE.



The CHURCH.

THE CENTENARY of the UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION OF BUCHLYVIE was commemorated on the 3rd August, 1852. The Congregation met in the afternoon, when the following Sketch was read, after which the Rev. David Russell, of Dunfermline, preached an appropriate discourse on Ps. cxviii. 25, "O Lord, I beseech Thee, send now prosperity." The Congregation again met in the evening, when suitable addresses were delivered by the Rev. William France of Paisley, the Rev. Hugh Brown of Balfron, the Rev. Dr. M'Kerrow of Bridge of Teith, Rev. Peter Mercer of Drymen, Mr. William Edmond, Member of Session, and Mr. David Robertson, junior, Glasgow. On the Sabbath following, the Rev. Dr. Eadie preached to the Congregation, in the afternoon selecting for his text the motto engraven by the founders on the front of the Meeting-house, John i. 17, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

The Sketch being strictly of a local character, and such interest as it may possess being in general limited to those who heard it read, the publication of it seemed superfluous. Certain respected friends have, however, thought otherwise, and have repeatedly expressed a wish that it should be published. It is in compliance with their wishes that, after the lengthened interval which has elapsed since it was read, it has been sent to the press.

J. R.

November, 1853.

CENTENARY SKETCH.

IN sketching the history of a Christian congregation, it is not always easy to fix upon the starting point—the social conditions out of which it took its rise. It is not, in the case of this congregation, difficult to fix on the date at which it was formed into a corporate society, or the date at which its first minister was ordained. These are easily found in the records of the Session, and in those of the Presbytery under whose inspection it was placed. But there are inquiries of deeper interest which press for a solution; inquiries, namely, relating to the antecedent causes existing in the country at large—existing especially in the immediate locality—existing at the particular juncture, which may fairly be presumed to have conspired in giving it origin. To ascertain fully what these were, would be at once instructive and curious. It is not, however, always easy to trace them out, even when they are of recent occurrence, and it obviously becomes much less easy when they are separated from us by an interval of more than a hundred years.

Several of our earlier congregations had their origin in violent settlements in their respective parish churches. In the case of these, the *proximate* causes of their origin at least are broadly and definitely marked, in the unavailing contendings of the people in opposition to obnoxious candidates for the holy ministry. These circumstances so far meet the inquiries of which we speak; yet even in these cases there were doubtless, anterior causes in active operation which are not to be disregarded—causes which in that age lay widely and deeply seated in the heart of Scottish society, and of which these reclaimings and secessions are to be viewed as the offspring, rather than as separate and independent phenomena.

At the time of the Secession in 1733, only forty-five years had elapsed since the Revolution. The people of Scotland had not yet forgotten the twenty-eight years of cruel persecution which

preceded that event, nor the sufferings which they and their fathers had borne during these years in defending their much-loved Zion; nor how often they had trusted faithless rulers, and were deceived; nor how often, when they expected to enjoy their civil and religious liberties in peace, they were constrained anew to 'resist unto blood, striving against sin.' They had not forgotten these things. Old men and women could distinctly remember them as events in which they bore a part, and the younger portion of the people had often heard them rehearsed, and had deeply drunk into the spirit which they were so well fitted to inspire. With the old national spirit of freedom and independence burning in their bosoms, the consequences were inevitable. Men who loved religion and the Church of Scotland were still jealous for the safety of the ark of God, and the more so that events had taken place since the Revolution calculated to strengthen that distrust. They had seen the Scottish Parliament abolish hated Prelacy, but they had seen, too, a large number of the Prelatical curates received into the bosom of the Church, and appointed to minister in her pulpits. They had seen enacted by the Legislature, when they least expected it, the reimposition of patronage, by which the people were shut out from the choice of their ministers; and worse than all, they had seen in their ecclesiastical courts a heartless tampering with heresy, both in the pulpit and the professorial chair. It was while the religious portion of the community was agitated and alarmed by these things, that Ebenezer Erskine, in his Synod Sermon, raised his solemn protest against the course of defection pursued by the dominant party in the Church, and drew all eyes towards him in his collision with the ecclesiastical judicatories to which he was in consequence brought. Can it, then, be surprising that when that distinguished man, with his brethren, stepped forward to give public utterance to the fears and alarms that were distracting the best of the people, that the people in return should accord to them a large measure of support? Can it be wondered at, when the endeavour was made to overbear truth in the persons of these men, a large-hearted sympathy flowed towards them from every quarter of the country? It cannot; and neither can there be a doubt that it is to this state of things we

are to trace the most potent and wide-spread element, apart from all adventitious and local circumstances, in the origin of our congregations during the earlier years of the Secession.

The people of this parish were distinguished for their attachment to the Solemn League and Covenant. Wodrow mentions that, beyond many other districts, the people of this locality had taken an active part in the contentings of the sad period to which we have referred. They had not merely heard in the distance of the enormities of Claverhouse and his troopers. Some of them had met these heartless ruffians on the field of conflict, and fallen in their country's cause; while others, in the same cause, had 'taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods.' These facts still lingered in the minds of the more aged of the people in the next generation—that of the Secession—and explain the deep dissatisfaction known to have then existed in this quarter on account of the defections of the Church, and the cordial sympathy which from the very beginning was given by many to Ebenezer Erskine and his seceding brethren.*

* The following facts may be mentioned here:—In the year 1675 the Lord's Supper was dispensed in this parish under the cloud of night, in the midst of a very numerous assembly. The place of that meeting was a spot on the farm of Arnbeg, which is known to this day as 'the preacher's howe.' This circumstance, mentioned by Wodrow, shows that there must have been many devoted friends of the Covenants in this locality, and this is amply confirmed by subsequent events related by the same historian. In the year 1679 took place the battle of Bothwell Bridge. Ure of Shargarton was there, and under him, as their chosen captain, there was a numerous band from Kippen and Gargunnoch. It was their lot to be placed at the bridge to defend it, which they did with great bravery, till their ammunition failed, and the army fled. Several of them were killed, and Ure himself escaped with great difficulty. Four days after the action at Bothwell, Ure of Shargarton is found united with the famous Hackston of Rathillet and others, in a royal proclamation, in which they are denounced as rebels and traitors. In November, 1681, the Privy Council had obtained a list of the heritors in Stirlingshire who had been at Bothwell, in which appear, among others, the following in this immediate vicinity, namely—Alexander Buchanan of Buchlyvie, Donald Connel, portioner in Buchlyvie, Walter Leckie of Mye, Thomas Miller there, James Galbraith, Arthur Dougald, Arnmanuel (adjoining Arnbeg), John Dougald his son, John M'Kenzie there. On the 9th of January, 1682, a sentence of forfeiture was pronounced, among others, upon Donald Connel, portioner in Buchlyvie, by the Court of Justiciary. These facts have been gathered from various sources, but principally from Wodrow. The 'Cloud of Witnesses' has the affecting addition, that two of the persons named above, Thomas Miller and James Galbraith, for the noble part they took in that day of trouble, were sentenced to be banished to North America. They set sail, in company with two hundred and fifty sufferers in the same righteous cause, and had only made the Pentland Firth when the vessel in which they sailed was wrecked, and all on board, with the exception of fifty, found a watery grave. The two of whom we speak were not of the fifty. These sad facts would not soon be forgotten.

Of the more immediate and manifest conditions which gave an impulse to the young Secession cause in this place, there are several to be remarked. The *first* is, the proximity of the district to Stirling, where Ebenezer Erskine first raised the standard, and laboured with so much acceptance. It was an age when religious intelligence was disseminated, not as in our day by a profusion of newspapers and magazines, but for the most part by mere oral report. Vicinity to the scene of action was consequently of vast importance in kindling and keeping alive the attention of the people to all the movements which were taking place. A *second* circumstance which immediately contributed to the rise of the cause here, was a very obnoxious settlement which took place in the neighbouring parish of Balfron; and a *third* circumstance which conduced to the same effect, was one which produced a deep impression over the land—we refer to the Porteous Act and Proclamation in 1737. By that tyrannical measure it was rendered imperative upon every parish minister in Scotland to read from the pulpit the Proclamation on the first Sabbath of every month for a whole year, and that under the penalty of forfeiting all right to hold a benefice in this part of the United Kingdom. An old and respected member of this congregation, now gone to his rest, used to relate that his father and grandfather were in the parish church when the minister proceeded for the first time to read the document referred to; that as soon as they observed it, they rose along with many of their neighbours, lifted their Bibles and their bonnets, and retired with the resolution that they would never again return. Numbers of others broke off from the Establishment at the same time, judging that the Act was a glaring attempt to subordinate the Church to the authority of the civil rulers.

From the time when Erskine seceded, and immediately thereafter, there were numbers in this village and neighbourhood who not only attached themselves to his cause, but to his ministry. Sometimes he visited this district and preached, usually selecting, as the site of his religious services, a beautiful and retired spot near Honeyholm, on the banks of the Endrick. That locality

was probably selected because, being in the parish of Balfron, it was more conveniently situated for the inhabitants of that parish who were dissatisfied with the settlement already referred to. On these occasions vast multitudes assembled from all the surrounding parishes, and listened, often with blessed effects, to the doctrines of the glorious Gospel as they flowed from the lips of that 'master in Israel.' These visits of Erskine to this district were, however, necessarily rare, on account of the numerous calls which were made on his labours and time from all quarters of the country. His adherents in this locality who wished to enjoy his ministry had to travel on Sabbath to Stirling, involving a journey going and returning of thirty miles—to those on the westward even of more; and yet, illustrative of these times, not a few did travel that distance, and did it willingly; and in addition to all, during public worship, had sometimes to be satisfied with mere standing room within, or perhaps around the windows without, of the spacious building in which Erskine ministered. In these lengthened 'journeys to the house of God in company,' many things occurred worthy of being remembered and told. One interesting incident which has come down to us may here be briefly related. At that time the highway to Stirling ran along immediately at the foot of the Boquhan and Touch hills. There was at the same time also a footpath more direct, running nearly in the line of the modern highway. Then, as now, the rivulets which cross this line were occasionally dammed back by the flooding of the Forth. For the benefit of passengers, planks of wood were thrown across the water-courses to serve as bridges. One Saturday, far advanced in the afternoon, a number of tradesmen, belonging to Stirling, having been attending a public market at Killearn, were returning homeward along the footpath. The rivulets were full. Under the influence of strong drink and mischief, the party lifted the plank which lay across one of them and threw it into the waters, remarking that, should the Seceders come into Stirling on the morrow, they would at least have the trouble of going round by the highway. They were, however, mistaken, for during the night a heavy gale having sprung up from

the west, providentially threw a tree across the rivulet near the footpath, so that when the Seceders came to the place on the Sabbath morning they found indeed the plank removed, but in the prostrate tree they found a substitute which equally well served their purpose. That scripture has not seldom a literal fulfilment in the experience of the people of God—"Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee."

It was not long till the numbers favourable to the Secession became so great in the parishes of Balfron and Kippen that it was judged desirable and expedient to have a separate church and ministry for themselves. There were many arguments in support of the proposal, and not the least of these was the inconvenience of travelling to Stirling on Sabbath. When the proposal was seriously taken up, the first question had respect to the site of the new meeting-house. At first it was suggested that the most central situation was the middle of the moor which stretches between this and Strathendrick. It has sometimes been said that this suggestion was so far carried out that stones were laid down for the building. That is probably a mistake. At all events, it was ultimately agreed that the church should be erected at Edenbelly, on the southern margin of the moor. That situation is in and near the centre of the parish of Balfron, which specially demanded attention at the time, while, as far as possible, it was convenient to this locality, as well as to the parishes of Drymen and Kilmarnock, where there were many favourable to the cause. On the site then fixed upon, there has continued, down to the present day, a church, presided over by a succession of faithful ministers; and over it now presides our worthy and venerable father, Dr. Thomson, with continually increasing comfort and honour.

The church at Edenbelly, although standing on an elevation, has usually been denominated the Holm Church, on account of the first meetings of the Secession, as already mentioned, having been held near *Honeyholm*, on the strath below. The erection there was begun in the year 1739, and in 1742 the Rev. John

Cleland was ordained its first minister by the Associate Presbytery. From that date onward till 1752—ten years—the Seceders of Buchlyvie worshipped in the Holm Church, and formed a part of that congregation. Before these years had elapsed, however, the increase of adherents suggested the erection of a meeting-house at Buchlyvie for the accommodation of the people on the north side of the moor. Steps were accordingly taken, and the result was the building of the place of worship in which we are at present met. Over it have now swept the blasts of more than a century, and still it retains much of the strength, if not the freshness, of its earlier days.

* To enter minutely into the proceedings connected with the erection of our place of worship would be tiresome, and yet it would be improper, in a survey like this, to pass them over entirely without notice. It is interesting to remark that the minutes of the managers, from the very beginning, as also their accounts, have been preserved, and lie deposited among the books and papers belonging to the congregation. These show that the parties who conducted the building operations, proceeded with

* The following is a copy of the opening minute:—"Buchlyvie, 25th Oct., 1750.—The which day a considerable number of the community of Balfron, upon the north side of the moor of Buchlyvie, being convened in a body to concert and lay down a method for the purchase of a piece of ground on which to build a house for the propagation of the gospel, and also for a burial-place, it was unanimously agreed that they should make choice of a certain number of managers to carry on this work, and did make choice of the persons after-mentioned, viz.—James Buchanan of Garnsterry; Andrew Lennie there; John Buchanan in Woodend; John Forrester in Ballochneck; Thomas Morrison, feuar in Buchlyvie; William Morrison, Heights of Buchlyvie; James Fairlie, miller there; William Buchanan, wright there; James Gardiner, feuar in Kilmarnock; David Robertson, Easter Garden; Alexander Yuile in Buchlyvie; Mungo Mitchell in Garban; John M'Parlane, merchant in Aberfoil; and John Risk, weaver in Buchlyvie, to assist in John's absence; Hugh Galbraith in Garden, and Walter Parlane there, to assist in Hugh's absence; John M'Claws in Arngibbon, and William Gilfillan at Arnprior, to assist in John's absence; Andrew M'Gibbon in Cardross, and James Harvie there, to assist in Andrew's absence; Thomas Harvie in Drum, and John Fairley in Loanfoot, to assist in Thomas's absence. And also at the same time did appoint and make choice of William M'Vey, weaver in Buchlyvie, and Patrick Morrison, merchant there, for their Clerks, the one to officiate in the absence of the other. And also appointed their said clerks to receive money from any of the managers above-mentioned, and grant receipts therefor if required, or cause it to be marked in the minutes; and also empowered the said clerks to give out money to the workmen, and take receipts therefor, only as they shall be directed by the managers above-mentioned. And also appointed a part of their number to meet with the Laird of Buchlyvie in order to purchase a piece of ground for the uses and objects above-mentioned."

great caution and regularity; while in their modes of managing the business, we have some interesting and curious illustrations of the changes which have subsequently come over society. The opening minute bears date 25th October, 1750. In the committee then appointed there stand the names of some whose descendants are yet with us, and no doubt there are with us many more whose forefathers, although not named in the minutes, took part in the transactions of that day.

In the course of two months all the preliminaries were arranged, and in the commencement of the following year, 1751, they proceeded with the building. In all their transactions, the managers, as well as the community at large, seem to have acted with great harmony and self-denial. Proceeding on a principle which in that age was largely acted on in connection with public undertakings, an amount of contribution was made in the form of manual labour. It was agreed, too, by the farmers, that they should gratuitously undertake the carriage of the materials—a part of the work which must have been peculiarly heavy, when it is remembered that the roads in our neighbourhood were yet either unformed or in a condition so bad that sledges were in general use instead of carts, and that a large quantity of the materials, such as the slates, had actually to be carried from the quarries of Aberfoil on the backs of horses. In the absence of contractors the managers were necessitated to have frequent meetings in order to superintend the work as it proceeded, and to make new arrangements as constantly changing circumstances required. In the minutes there are few things sound more strangely in our ears, or seem more curious, than the orders weekly issued by the managers, successively commanding the help of the several quarters into which, for the sake of convenience, the district around was divided. For example, in the minute of February 2nd, 1751, 'the managers appoint Hugh Galbraith or Walter Parlane to go with the wrights to buy wood, and order the quarter of Thomas Harvey and John Fairley to carry it home, and if they cannot carry it all, what remains is to be carried home by the quarter belonging to William Gilfillan and John M'Laws. At

the same time appoint Easter Garden, the quarter belonging to David Robertson, to come on the seventh of this instant, to carry in the big (foundation) stones, and to bring with them horses and sleds. At the same time appoint the quarter belonging to Hugh Galbraith and Walter Parlane to come on the day following for the same work.' In the minute of May 25th, 1751, 'The managers appoint the quarter of John Fairley and Thomas Harvey to go immediately to the Greek craig, and bring down the hewn stones without delay or loss of time.' In the minute of August 13th, same year, 'The managers appoint John and James Buchanan to send horses to the quarry upon Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, in order to keep the masons at work without want of stones.' In the minute of January 29th, 1752, 'The managers appoint all corners of the community to go to the slate quarries on Monday next, if the weather hold good.' In the minute of February 9th, probably the people having been prevented by the weather from carrying out the foregoing appointment, 'The managers again appoint all corners to go to the slate quarry this week, as there are wanting but about sixty horses to perfect the whole. These extracts are taken at random from a hundred of a similar kind, which stand upon the minutes of the managers. They abundantly show the large amount of self-denying labour which must have been undergone, and that willingly in rearing this house. They testify to the very remarkable change which in the interval has come over our habits and customs, our roads, and modes of conveyance, above all, over our country labour, seeing how ill these arrangements would comport with the demands of our modern and more systematic agriculture. They show that, like the ancient builders, 'The people had a mind to the work.' Indeed, in altered circumstances, there seems a likeness to those builders even in their *mode* of working. The former engaged in their work with one of their hands, and with the other hand held a sword or a spear; the latter, while engaged in theirs, held other weapons too, but these were the more congenial ones of the ploughshare and the pruning-hook.* (*See Note on next page*).

In the beginning of the year 1752, about a year from the time

at which the building was commenced, the erection was so far advanced that the people felt warranted in taking the initiatory steps to obtain for themselves a separate ministry and dispensation of gospel ordinances. On the 19th January, commissioners were appointed to attend a meeting of the Associate Presbytery of Glasgow, with a Memorial and Petition on the subject. On the 29th of the same month they brought back their Report, to the effect that the Presbytery had appointed another meeting to be held on the 11th February, in the house of Mr. Cleland of the Holm of Balfron, in order to make inquiry into all the circumstances of the case, and to adjudicate upon the spot. Commissioners were appointed to attend that meeting, with the view of affording to the Presbytery such information as might be called for; and on the 14th of the same month, they brought back their Report to the effect that the Presbytery had appointed Mr. Cleland to the oversight of the congregation of Buchlyvie, and appointed him to remove to his new sphere of labour at the beginning of May. Thus, in the important matter of obtaining a

* To some in our day it will be a matter of curiosity, we doubt not, to learn the expense of building our place of worship. The following statement, made up with considerable pains from the scattered and numerous documents of the managers, if not perfectly exact, will be found to approximate very nearly to the truth. The accounts in the minute book are very generally in Scots money, but here they are converted into money sterling :—

Paid to the Laird of Buchlyvie for Ground,	-	£5	0	0
Building,	- - - - -	26	3	0
Wood and Wright Work,	- - - - -	48	5	0
Slating (including price of Slates),	- - - - -	20	4	0
Lime,	- - - - -	11	0	0
Raising Stones and Sand,	- - - - -	10	4	0
Sundries,	- - - - -	32	9	0
		£153	5	0

The cost may seem small; but if we suppose that the manual labour and the carriage of materials, neither of which appears among the items above, to amount to as much more—and this certainly would not be extravagant—then we have an aggregate sum amounting to upwards of three hundred pounds. If we again estimate the value of money a century ago at double its present value, and this is not too much, we reach a sum equal to six hundred and thirteen pounds. Dr. Campbell, in his Statistical Account of our parish, mentions, that at the time of which we speak, the wages of day labourers were only fourpence per day with victuals, and that the wages of men-servants were two pounds a year. In harmony with this, the accounts of our managers bear that they ordinarily paid their labourers, at the quarry and elsewhere, only sevenpence per day, and other workmen in proportion.

minister, there was no delay or disappointment. In less than four weeks from the first meeting upon the subject, they were provided with one whose ministry they had already enjoyed for ten years, and whom they were prepared cordially to welcome. In pursuance of appointment of Presbytery, Mr. Cleland preached here on the third Sabbath of March, and entered on his stated labours on the first Sabbath of May, 1752. It is, then, more than a hundred years since the first Christian assembly was convened within these walls, the first song of Zion sung, the first prayer offered up, and the first sermon delivered. What deep and mingled feelings fill the mind as we think of this! We look back with interest to the times of our fathers; with unwonted interest we look upon the scenes which they frequented, upon the dwellings in which they lived, upon the fields they cultivated, upon the places of business they were wont to attend; but with far more profound and solemn interest we look upon the 'holy house in which our fathers worshipped.' What crowded assemblies have since that opening day been gathered together in this place! What ministers of Christ, now removed to the land of silence, have stood in this watch-tower! What holy communion occasions have been here enjoyed! What outgoings of the heart of worshippers after God! What upbursts of the fountains of godly sorrow! What peace in believing! What joy of the Holy Ghost! What antepasts of eternal glory! What numbers have been convinced of sin, have been savingly converted, have been built up and sanctified, and are now 'pillars in the temple of our God, and shall go no more out!' Those blessed effects of the gospel will only be revealed in their full measure and extent at the judgment-seat of Christ; but, doubtless, many now in glory date from this house their second birth, and still, from their lofty seats look down to it as the Bethel where God first met them, and blessed them. Three average generations of men have passed away since that opening day. No one now survives who can remember it, and no one able to do so has been living for many years. Until lately there was one aged pilgrim with us who was born in the same year in which the church was erected, and who could remember all the ministers who have presided here. But even that last remnant has left us for the narrow house. 'A thousand years in Thy sight are but as

yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.' 'Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, 'Return, ye children of men.'*

Few congregations have started under circumstances more favourable than this. The great majority, at their commencement, have no meeting-house, many have scarcely even the shadow of a congregation, and almost all are without a minister; but on that opening Sabbath there was provided here, by the Master of assemblies, at once, a comfortable meeting-house, a congregation to assemble in it, and a pastor to break among them the bread of life. From this point the history of the congregation centres, for the most part, in that of successive ministers, respecting whom we shall now submit a few particulars, as we have been able to gather them.

Mr. Cleland, the first minister, left behind him in his own handwriting a diary and memorial, in which is contained a brief account of his religious experience during his earlier years. From them a short memoir of him was published in the *Christian Magazine* for 1806. We learn that he was born in the parish of Gargunnoch, in the year 1695. In his youth he seems to have been under the influence of deep and ardent piety. He took great delight in prayer; it was his custom often to retire to the fields for meditation; and the Park of Stirling is repeatedly mentioned by him in his diary as having been to him Bethel, a house of God. For some time, while he was a student, or perhaps before he formally began his studies, he taught a school at Touch, on the west of Stirling; and it is worthy of remark, that at that early period, when it has generally been supposed that Sabbath schools had not yet been instituted, Mr. Cleland was engaged in that self-denying service—a labour of love, which, there was reason to believe, was blessed for the instruction and reformation of many

* That month in which our meeting-house was opened became famous in the ecclesiastical history of Scotland, for the tyrannical deposition of the Rev. Thomas Gillespie, minister of Garnock, by the General Assembly, for refusing to take part in a violent and obnoxious settlement in the parish of Inverkeithing. He became, in consequence, founder of the Relief Church, as Ebenezer Erskine had been founder of the Secession. The separation from the Establishment in each case proceeded from similar causes. They were twin streams springing from one source—flowing in the same direction—fertilizing the same territory—increasing by like tributaries, which, after running long in distinct beds, we have now seen meeting and mingling their waters, henceforth to roll onward in one broad and widening channel, on whose expansive bosom, let us hope, there will never be seen any 'galley with oars.'

in the place. He was occasionally troubled with great darkness of mind, in respect to his state before God, and he mentions that, on these occasions, the comfort of his heart was found in the gracious declarations and free offers of the gospel. So far we have gleaned from the memoir. From other sources of information, it appears that Mr. Cleland, as a preacher, was plain, practical, and edifying. His language was unpolished, but striking and memorable, often leaving a deep impression upon the mind of his audience. A man, vigorous in intellect, warm and earnest in manner, and of piety unfeigned, he trained up a people who are still referred to as having been distinguished for the depth and soundness of their scriptural knowledge. During the course of his pastorate, an event occurred which sensibly marred, for a time, his own peace, and the harmony of the congregation. In the year 1759 the older Moncrief introduced into the Synod an overture anent memorialising the King on the state of religion throughout the country. The Synod refused to entertain it. The Professor brought the subject before the supreme court again and again, and as often it was overruled. In the meantime the question was discussed among the congregations of the body, whether the civil rulers ought to be recognised and consulted in religious matters. The subject was simply the voluntary controversy in the germ, and forcibly shows us how a truth, which in one generation has to struggle into existence in the face of strong opposition, may, in a subsequent age, when time has been allowed fully to examine it, be received with the most perfect cordiality. The subject became the matter of warm discussion among the people of this congregation. Some took the affirmative side of the question, and maintained that the King ought to be recognised in religion. Mr. Cleland took the opposite view of the subject, and supported his position by irrefragable arguments, but, unfortunately, he not merely carried the subject to the pulpit, but there, instead of soothing asperities, he employed language rather fitted to irritate the parties who held the opposite opinion. Some of his keen remarks have come down to us floating on the tide of tradition. The result was, that after the Presbytery had made an unavailing attempt to restore harmony, a few of the elders and private members left the congregation and joined the Cameronians. From the time of this untoward event, Mr. Cleland continued to labour

for several years, and, so far as we are aware, in the midst of restored peace and usefulness. He died on the 14th January, 1768, in the seventy-third year of his age, and sixteenth of his ministry in this place. His memory continued long to be cherished by those who had been favoured to enjoy his ministry.

After a vacancy of little more than a year, the charge was again filled on the 28th March, 1769, by the ordination of the Rev. John France. He was a native of Blackford, and was brought up in the congregation of Kinkell. As a Christian, Mr. France was marked by unaffected piety, as a preacher, by great earnestness and simplicity, and as a pastor, by the conscientious discharge of all his official duties. Many years have passed away since the time when he went in and out among this people. The handwriting on memory's tablets must necessarily have become greatly effaced, yet, by not a few, he is still remembered with affectionate regard. During his lengthened pastorate the congregation continued in peace, while his people, marked by intelligence, exemplified in a large measure the practice and experience of vital piety. In the absence of any memoir which has come under our notice, we shall take advantage of a few sentences extracted from recollections of Mr. France, kindly furnished by an esteemed friend. "It is now," says that friend, "above forty years since I left the neighbourhood of Buchlyvie, a boy of some fourteen years of age. Mr. France died six or eight months previous to my leaving. His grave was among the last I saw opened in your little repository of the dead. I could only observe for a few years previous to my departure the manners and the character of Mr. France. I was too young and inexperienced for such a work even then. I remember, however, being struck with his earnestness and simplicity. He sprinkled my infant face with the water of baptism, and I am sure benefited both my father and mother by his prayers and his instructions. He was very useful in his own section of Christ's vineyard, and he was blessed in building up and establishing God's children in their most holy faith. Mr. France, during the years of my observation, was labouring under the pressure of advanced age and bodily infirmities. The last portion of the sacred volume to which he directed the attention of his people, and that for many Sabbaths, was in the prophecies of Malachi, iv. 2, and I think I can recall his careworn face, his

trembling frame, and the tone in which he read the text: 'But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings.'" Mr. France died on the 3rd August, 1808, very deeply lamented.

During the lifetime of Mr. France, in consideration of his age and growing infirmities, the congregation, with the sanction of the Presbytery, took steps to provide for him a colleague. Mr. Andrew M'Gregor was in consequence ordained on the 16th August, 1804, but after a pastorate of about four and a half years, he was deposed from the office of the holy ministry, about six months subsequent to the death of Mr. France.

Here the congregation had a vacancy of four years. At length the Rev. William Spiers, having been called, was ordained on April 27th, 1813. He was brought up in the congregation of Dennyloanhead. Not less from the excellency of the man, than from the fact of his ministry having been comparatively recent, he is remembered by many with great affection and esteem. He was a person of a remarkably sweet, modest, and unassuming character. While yet a student, he gave high promise of excellence, and in his subsequent years he implemented the promise so far as his infirm health and premature death permitted. We shall here, as before, take the advantage of extracting a few sentences from the recollections of an intimate friend of Mr. Spiers—one who was very competent to form a correct estimate of his worth. "I never knew," says that friend, "a man more pure, more candid, more pious in conversation, with less pretension. I lived in his house sometimes for a considerable number of days together. I found him always serious, always pleasant, always kind, always devout. There was nothing sparkling, nothing buoyant about his mind or manners, but he was calm, solid, inquiring, and resolutely persevering in his studies and ministrations. I never saw him for a single day omit to read a portion of scripture in the original language—a practice in which he delighted, and from which he derived great advantages. As a preacher, though without pretensions to popular eloquence, he was universally admired. He fixed the attention of his hearers by the soundness, the faithfulness, and the intellectual reach of his public ministrations, while he failed not to impress them that he was a man who in all things made conscience of being for God, for humanity,

and for eternity. I preached for him once during his last illness, and found him quietly waiting for the approach of death, with the humble but firm hope of one who knew in whom he had believed. 'The memory of the just is blessed.' Mr. Spiers died on 28th August, 1825, in the thirty-sixth year of his age, and thirteenth of his ministry. In what we take to be the handwriting of Mr. Spiers, we have the following curious and interesting inscription on one of the fly-leaves of our pulpit Bible; it is as follows: 'This Bible is a present to the Associate Congregation of Buchlyvie from David M'Ewen, Esq., St. George's, Grenada. He transmitted it from Grenada, under the care of Mr. Moses Risk, who, having been taken prisoner by the French on his return from the West Indies, and having carefully preserved it during a captivity in France of five years and four months, conveyed it afterwards at his own expense, and presented it for Mr. M'Ewen.—Buchlyvie, 17th June, 1814.'

After a vacancy of a year and a half, Mr. John Young was ordained in March, 1827, but after a pastorate of nine years, he was laid aside in the early part of 1836.

Here, perhaps, with one other sentence, this brief narrative should be closed, namely, with mentioning that the congregation again remained vacant for about a year and a half; that then the present minister was ordained on the 18th July, 1837, and that, consequently, he has now entered on the sixteenth year of his ministry. Were the speaker to consult his own feelings, he would follow this course. It would be sufficient for him to be named by some future memorialist on some similar occasion, and if he should be so named, it would be enough if it could be said that under his care this 'church walked in the fear of the Lord, and was edified.' Perhaps, however, gratitude to our Divine Head demands that it be marked that the congregation has not merely had a *past*, but that it has a *present*, and through divine forbearance has hope also of a *future*, and, if so, to this extent personal feeling and delicacy may properly give way.

What, then, of the *present*? We answer we have much over which to mourn, much in the neglect of closet and family prayer, much in the neglect of the spiritual observance of the Sabbath, much in the neglect of religious converse among our people. We have cause unfeignedly to make confession before God, and to

pray that He would 'revive His work in the midst of the years. Still, without affirming that our days are equal to those of our fathers, we trust we may say that there is among us at least some measure of piety, and some of God's hidden ones. In respect of numbers there has been a slow but steady advance in our membership for several years bygone. Our attendance on Sabbath has also for some time been sensibly increased. Were it not for the continual draining away of our population to our larger towns, and to foreign countries, our meeting-house would soon be filled in every part of it.

What, now, of the *future*? We have need to reply to this inquiry with fear and trembling. Over the days to come an impenetrable darkness always rests to our short-sighted view, and the future of individual churches is no exception. The work of God will be perpetuated, but the candlestick may be removed out of its place, and the vineyard may be given to others. It has been so already, and it may be so again for misimprovement—still, without claiming to be possessed of the prophetic vision, we have great hopes of the rising generation among us, who, we trust, are destined to defend the ark of God in the coming age. We have traced for years, Sabbath after Sabbath, the advance of a large proportion of them in Bible knowledge. We have remarked in some of them—we trust we are not deceived in this—the marks of genuine conversion. And with these impressions, we can look around on the youthful faces of our Sabbath assemblies, and indulge the fond anticipation that God will continue to have a people in this place to bless Him—'That one generation shall praise His works unto another, and that the fathers to the children shall make known His name.'

If the speaker may be indulged with a remark or two in reference to himself, it ought to be stated that in his ministerial work a large measure of peace and comfort has fallen to his lot. Not that he can say he has never had bitterness of heart—not that he can say he has never met with disappointment—not that he can say he has never spent sleepless nights; but he may say that he has probably borne as little vexation as may be expected to fall to any reflecting man who, in this sinful world, has the oversight of immortal souls. In every flock there are wanderers, and the shepherd is not worthy of the name who can look on these without

anxiety, and he has not counted the cost if he expects that every one of his endeavours will necessarily be successful, and be attended with a grateful return. It has been the happiness of the speaker to be united to an eldership composed of men at once intelligent, blameless, prudent, and peaceful, and consequently no discord has ever been seen among us. Into the families of the congregation he has ever found a cordial welcome—faction he has never witnessed; and he has almost an impression that there is not one of his people who would designedly grieve him. In his young classes he has always had much to encourage him in the midst of depressing influences. With friends of other denominations he has endeavoured to live in peace, and has reaped the fruit in a large measure of confidential and agreeable intercourse. In these circumstances his prayer is: 'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.'

One word more: It has often been matter of regret that, as a congregation, we have contributed so little in support of the Missionary cause. While regretting, however, we have never despaired of seeing an enlarged Christian benevolence. We have hopes, if founded on nothing else, at least on the number of copies of the *Missionary Record* and the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, which are every month eagerly sought after and read. What if the meetings and services of this day should act as an impulse to the fuller performance of this duty? What if, surveying the self-denying labours of our fathers, we should be stimulated to follow in their footsteps? What if, from the grateful consideration of what God has done so long in this place, in giving and continuing the light of the glorious gospel, we should be led to the kindly and sympathetic remembrance of the tribes and nations whose first Sanctuary has not yet been built, and whose first Bible has not yet been transmitted, and whose first rays of the Sun of Righteousness have not fallen upon the dark mountains around them? What if, from the consideration that we have freely received, we shall be led to the resolution that we shall freely give? If this shall be the result of these meetings, they shall not have been in vain.

And now, brethren, let us take one look forward. Long ere another centenary meeting, we shall, every one of us, have gone to the land of silence, where 'there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom.' Death will soon terminate our course. Then our Bibles will be closed, the voice of the preacher will no more be heard by us, the Communion Table will no more be spread before us, and the places which we are now occupying in the sanctuary will be assumed by others. Let us prepare for that reckoning which we must render before the Judge of all. 'What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?' Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? 'Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty dominion and power, both now and for ever. AMEN.'

