

"One department of his duty as a minister, which he always viewed as of peculiar importance, was his conversing with candidates for admission to the Church. He was not long in his new charge till he had met with hundreds of young persons and others desiring to be admitted into Church fellowship. Many of these were accepted, but a large proportion were induced to delay their application till such evidence of fitness might be furnished by them, as would justify their admission. In January 1822 he writes, "Besides the weekly preparations, a weekly class, and an increased number of visits to the sick, I have been obliged to begin conversation with intending communicants, and will probably have to spend in that exercise part of three days every week till April. You see I cannot have much time at my disposal."

"He relaxed in no degree his industry in preparing for the pulpit. He had a very strong conviction of the disadvantages of repeating old discourses. The additional difficulty he experienced in committing them to memory, which partly arose from his system of short-hand writing, was by no means the chief reason why he declined delivering in Glasgow discourses prepared in Stirling. The very few instances in which he did so, led him to feel as if the old discourses wanted, in his own mind, that freshness and interest which they had in the beginning, and of which compositions newly written were possessed. It is believed that most ministers who have followed similar habits of pulpit preparation, will understand the reason on which he acted in this particular. Out of about two thousand discourses, composed by him in Stirling, it is certain he did not repeat more than twenty during the quarter of a century spent by him in Glasgow, in the midst of a multitude of the most pressing pastoral and public engagements. He has thus left behind him between four and five thousand lectures and sermons, with almost no exceptions, fully written; a monument of prolonged and systematic industry, revealing to a great degree the secret of that remarkable equality in his pulpit appearances, on which his hearers were in the habit of remarking. Though he had greatly overcome the excessive anxiety in the prospect of public service, of which he sometimes complained in Stirling, yet he never attained, indeed, he seems never to have coveted an absence of solicitude in entering the pulpit. To another minister, who, judging from the remarkable self-possession of his manner, had ascribed to him an exemption from the ordinary anxieties that accompany pulpit service, he replies: Your complaints respecting yourself are, I suppose, common to you, with all your brethren; and I am astonished you should imagine that I am exempted from them. I scarcely ever enter a pulpit without a temporary hectic. But God, is better to us than our fears, would lead us to anticipate, and we have constant reason to wonder at his forbearance.

"It may be added here, that he did not relax in that minute daily study of the Scriptures, which he had practised from his boyhood, and which he regarded as a daily exercise, indispensable to his personal progress and comfort, and to his ministerial efficiency. To general reading he always devoted, on system, a portion of his time, as those who remember the pertinent allusions and instructive facts of his conversation cannot but conclude. The public events of the day of more pressing importance, he set himself to master, not from any effort to cope with the current information of the times, but from the necessity of that impulse from within, which prompted him to