

open air on a beautiful *Green* in the immediate vicinity. But at the wintor sacrament, strange to say, the parish Kirk was kindly granted, after morning service, and I believe was better filled, and honoured with better gospel preaching, on such occasions, than on any Sabbath all the year round. A sort of heartless humdrum morality constituted the staple of state-paid preaching in that and in many other Kirks in Scotland at that period. It is said things have changed for the better in this respect. Thanks to the provocation of secession and dissent, which has saved from absolute rottenness the Ecclesiastical Establishments of Britain; though little gratitude is felt, and less expressed, for this important service.

Some of the aged, who were privileged to spend their youth in some corner of Scotland where the religious element predominated, will bear me out in saying that the coming sacrament threw its solemn shadow over days and weeks before. Conduct, which at other times might be indulged in, not being deemed in itself sinful, though bordering on levity or unlicensed enjoyment, was watchfully avoided as the communion season drew on. The walk became more careful. Mirth and everything that savoured of jollity were abjured and banned in view of the pending solemnity. For a good while previous, those that were candidates for the Church membership had weekly interviews with the minister,—interviews calculated to leave a deep, serious impression on their minds. They, in general, walked not only circumspectly, but tenderly, apparently bearing in mind “the dying of the Lord Jesus.” And as the time drew near, intending communicants, even those who lived most closely with God, began as it were, to gather up their skirts—to “gird up the loins of their minds,” as their mental and spiritual habits, as might be expected, had been less or more loosened, and, may be, had got a little *draigled* amid the toil and moil of this trying world. They began betimes to make ready for the right and profitable observance of the feast, by more frequent searchings of heart, by more earnestness in prayer, and by a more careful walk before the Lord, if not before those that were without. Preparation-work began early, and it became more earnest and assumed, more of outwardness if not of actuality as the solemn season approached. The Sabbath preceding was termed, by way of distinction, the *Preparation Sabbath*. Nor was this designation inappropriate, as the services in the sanctuary had more or less of special reference to the sacramental work of the following Sabbath. Then Thursday or Friday was set apart for self-examination and humiliation. It was called, though not with much propriety or truth, *the Fast Day*, as few, if any, literally fasted thereon. Still, as I know, some conscientiously partook but sparingly on that day of “the bread that perisheth,”—not more than was deemed necessary to sustain nature under the rather long journey to and from the house of God. I would here observe that fasting is at times an important religious duty, and, then, when