

In the Study.

An Ordination Service.

BY THE REV. JAMES DONALD, D.D., KEITHHALL.

Ordination Prayer

(Following the singing of the hymn, 'Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire').

OUR souls do magnify the Lord, and our spirits have rejoiced in God our Saviour: for He that is mighty hath done to us great things, and holy is His name. We praise Thee, O God, that Thou dost enable us to look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities, to see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down, whereof the stakes shall never be removed, nor the cords be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, where-in shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our King: He will save us.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, we thank Thee that Thou hast in these last days spoken unto us by Thy Son, who being the brightness of Thy glory and express image of Thy Person, and upholding all things by the Word of His power, when He had by Himself made purification of our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: and we believe that there is none other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved, but the name of Jesus, the Son of the Living God.

Holy Jesus, who for the suffering of death art crowned with glory and honour, we thank Thee that, as the Risen Lord, Thou didst command Thy disciples to go and make disciples of all the nations, and didst assure them of Thy perpetual presence unto the end of the world; and that, as the Ascended Lord, Thou didst endow them with the manifold gifts and graces of Thy Spirit, and gavest some to be apostles, and some to be prophets, and some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of Thy body, the Church. Blessed be Thou who daily bearest the burden of our spiritual charge, Thou God of our salvation. Thou art the Bread that strengtheneth us, the Wine that maketh

our heart glad, the Vine in whom we abide, the Life of whose fulness we receive, the Good Shepherd who restoreth our souls.

Thee also, Holy Spirit, Spirit of our Father, Spirit of Jesus, we confess and adore as our Advocate and Comforter, the Guardian and Guide of our understanding, our affections, and our will. Breathe on us, Thou Breath of God: fill us with the Life in Christ.

Blessed and glorious Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, accept our thanksgivings and prayers; and confirm and ratify our act, as we do now ordain this man a Presbyter in Thy Church and a Minister of Thy Word and Sacraments, by the laying on of hands. Abba, Father, send forth the Spirit of Thy Son into his heart, take and use him as a willing instrument of Thy purpose of love. Jesus, make him a faithful preacher of Thy cross and resurrection, an able expositor of those holy Scriptures which testify of Thee. Holy Spirit, anoint him with the oil of gladness, and rest upon him with Thy sevenfold gifts for this service.

May he take heed unto himself, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made him overseer, to feed the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. For Zion's sake may he not hold his peace, and for Jerusalem's sake may he not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. May he fight the good fight of faith, and be of them that turn back the battle to the gate. May he discern the presence of the King in the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger, visit Him in the sick, receive Him in every humble disciple. May he honour them that fear the Lord, turn many to righteousness, be a guide to the young and a staff to the aged, may he solace the bereaved and the desolate, lift up the head that is bowed down, and turn to the sacrifice of Christ the dying eyes. May he have the girt loin and the lit lamp of the alert servant. May he not count his life dear unto himself, so that he may finish his course with joy; and having kept the faith, may he receive the crown of righteousness, which the Lord will give unto all them that love His appearing. These things we ask of Thee, O Father, pleading the merits of Thy Son, Jesus

Christ the righteous, unto whom with Thee and the Holy Spirit be glory for ever. Amen.

Ordination Addresses.

I.

Dear Brother: There is a well-known hymn of Doddridge's, beginning with the words, 'O happy day, that *fixed* my choice on Thee, my Saviour and my God.' The speaker is the Christian believer; but this day you can take the lines into your mouth with a new-born emotion as the Christian minister, adding the words, *And on Thy service*. 'O God, my heart is fixed,' exclaims the Psalmist, 'I will sing and give praise, even with my glory,' that is, with my soul, the image and the instrument of the Divine Glory. And it is written in another Psalm, 'His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' Fixed and steadfast in trust,—fixed and steadfast in praise and in personal consecration to the service of your Saviour and your God,—these are the main elements of the happiness of the day of your ordination. Other and secondary causes of happiness are present, and by the good providence of God they are abundant,—the call you have received, the universal goodwill, the pleasant district where your home is to be; but all these are tributaries of the main stream, 'I will go to the altar of God, unto God my exceeding Joy.' Your call to this parish is of God; it is He who has granted you favour in the sight of this people, who has appointed the sphere of your work to be among them; and He has done all this with a definite end in view, that you should 'serve *with your spirit* in the gospel of His Son.' This means your devoting to this service the enthusiasm and energy of your innermost being. You are 'separated unto the gospel of God.' While these words express St. Paul's consciousness of the special qualifications he has received for his Apostolic ministry by means of his early training at Tarsus and in Jerusalem, they above all signify that he is 'a chosen vessel unto Jesus, to bear His name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel.' In like manner, my brother, your early home training, and the direction of your thoughts to the Christian ministry, as well as your University training, and that which followed it under an honoured successor of Norman Macleod, were all of them providential preparations for the work

unto which you are now ordained; but it is the election of God, and of Christ the Head of the kingdom of God, that has 'separated' you, and made you 'a chosen vessel' to bear the name of Jesus before the people of this parish. 'Separate *unto Me* Barnabas and Saul for the work unto which I have called them,' said the Holy Ghost by the mouth of one of the prophets, when the Church of Antioch had met to pray for guidance in the matter of the Gentile mission. And, in speaking thus, the Holy Spirit showed that He is the Church's Patron and Guide, who directs all her movements and ministries of grace. He is the Creator-Spirit, who with His Divine breath called the Church into being at Pentecost; and His command, 'separate *unto Me*,' is also a promise, 'I will be with my servants in the work, will give them a mouth and wisdom, will accompany their preaching with My power, will take of the things of Jesus and show to them, that they may show those things to others, and will thus add unto the Church such as shall be saved.' Enter, then, my brother, on your work, with this high assurance of the help of that Spirit, who is the Lord and Giver of the life in Christ.

As one now admitted to the charge of a parish, you may be suitably addressed under three aspects: as *the Leader of the Church's worship*; as *the Preacher*; and as *the Pastor of the flock*.

You have no doubt already felt, in your work as an assistant, the strain upon the mind and heart that is involved in the endeavour worthily to lead the Church's worship. To compose prayers of your own and commit them to memory is a safe course to follow, particularly in the first part of the service. But as the service goes on, and spiritual thoughts throng into the mind, one feels independent of written forms, or of the outlines he has drawn up, and is often able to give free expression to his desires and longings, and so to reach a higher level in prayer. This is not of ourselves; it is the gift of God. Those inspired moments when, through the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we really speak as children to their Father, touch the Unseen, and grasp with firmer hand, as well as uplift our fellow-worshippers to grasp, the Eternal Grace, are the celestial altitudes of public prayer, and tokens for good shown to us that we have not altogether failed in leading the Church's worship. Yet will the most rapt emotion be of little practical worth,

if the language be wanting, in which it may find seemly clothing: it is therefore necessary that the memory should be constantly replenished out of the stores of God's Word. Rich as ancient liturgical forms are, their richness is chiefly due to the felicitous use that they make of the words of Scripture. Seek, my brother, to have those words at your command; refresh your memory with them before entering the pulpit, and then you will be always well prepared.

Secondly, you can fulfil the Preacher's office effectively, only if you take St. Paul's principle, 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,'—a principle already enunciated by our Lord in the Parable of the Sower,—and make it the fundamental principle of this part of your work. You are a minister of the Church of the Reformation, which has ever put the living Word in the place of pre-eminence among the means of grace. It is well to have a bright service, to make every part of it tasteful and attractive, to hear 'the pealing organ blow,' and the singing of 'the full-voiced choir'; but these are but pleasing and useful aids, and may even be hindrances, if the pulpit be set aside as of minor account, or if he who speaks from it be depending upon them rather than upon his own assiduous preparation. Ritual is but a usurper, if it dethrone the pulpit. The place where I now stand belongs to you, and in it you will plead for your Lord, and bear witness to His perfections as the Man and the Redeemer. Here you will exhort your hearers to be like Him, to live the moral life in His spirit; for it is of no use telling people about their moral duties, unless those duties are based upon Christ. And here you will dispense to all who come, parents and children,—for the Visible Church includes *both*,—that Living Bread whereby the life of the individual Christian is developed and its strength renewed. Apply your mind diligently to the study and exposition of Scripture, and your preaching will be fresh and stimulating for forty or fifty years to come. A happy experience which sometimes comes to us preachers is this: there are seasons when our text has not to be searched for, but comes to us, as it were, of its own accord,—when we are 'pressed in the spirit' or 'by the Word' to take a certain line in the exposition of Divine truth. This is an encouraging sign that God is using us as His instruments for communicating the know-

ledge of His Will, or purpose of Love. But freshness in preaching will never be wanting, if the preacher looks forward with resolution to the Lord's Day, which always comes round so quickly, and reminds himself, 'Nothing is so important for me as my pulpit work.' You will find too, my brother, that your girding yourself for this work will speed your own running—your 'pressing toward the mark.'

Thirdly, use well, and persevere in using, your splendid opportunities for pastoral faithfulness. Not the parish church, but the parish, is the Sheepfold; and the work of feeding and tending has to be gone about in the homes of your people. Your learning to apply God's remedy for sin by acquiring the knowledge of their needs, is no less essential than your proclaiming it from the pulpit. You are not new to visiting work, having been assistant in a great city parish. But you are now a man in authority, as well as 'a man under authority'; you feel a new sense of independence as you survey from this spot the field of labour; and while, with reason, you glory in the prospect, you also realize the responsibility. The responsibility, then, is to be met by thoughtfulness or considerateness,—by your 'considering' others, and thinking hard how you may employ your time so as to profit them. We, ministers, are the officials of a King, who made Himself the humble attendant upon the hungry and the sad and the weak, and who calls us to be 'the servants of all.' Find, then, my brother, in the service of the young, in ministering to the sick and the bereaved, in that breaking of the bread of life 'from house to house' which may be looked at as a continuation of His miracle of multiplying the loaves, many lines to lead you into the road whereon He walked. Yourself young, you will have great influence with the young, of whom many, it may be in distant lands, will hereafter bless your name. It is also a solemn reflexion that among the older members of your flock now present, there may be some into whose dying ears you will have before many years are passed to repeat your Saviour's words of consolation, bidding them 'not be troubled, nor afraid.' By your visiting, you will gain your people's confidence; and sometimes you will find evidences of personal religion and a patient trust in Christ, that will make your heart cheerful, as you wend your way homeward. When people see you intent upon really knowing them,

they will appreciate your work more. You will be something higher than the popular minister; you will be 'the approved Christian.' To have the approval of those under whose observation you live is one of 'the things that accompany salvation.' 'Be ambitious,' then, in St. Paul's sense of the word, both to be well-pleasing to your Lord, and to be well-pleasing to men, 'not seeking your own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved.' Learn by unselfish service that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.' 'Strengthen that which is diseased, heal that which is sick, bind up that which is broken, bring again that which was driven away, seek that which was lost': so shall men take knowledge of you that, as a Pastor, you are walking in His spirit, who still carries on in glory His own work of 'the Great Shepherd of the sheep.'

Finally, my brother, 'be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.' 'Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.' You will have—all have—moments of dulness and depression. None of us can be perfect ministers, because none of us can be perfect men. It is well that we should be made to feel that we are but 'the earthen vessels,' in whom God is pleased to make known 'the excellency of His own power.' Live for your parish: yea, rather, live unto your Lord, in all the blessed activities of a love resembling His: what higher hope have we of heaven, than that of being thus engaged? May the happiness of this day, the good wishes of your presbytery, the esteem and high hopes of your friends, the hearty welcome of a united people, be foretokenings of your Saviour's final approval, and of His hereafter crowning your name with glory, honour, and immortality! Amen.

II.

Dear Brethren and Friends: You have witnessed this day a solemn event in your history, and an act such as few of you have witnessed before, in the setting apart of Mr. MacNicol as your minister. Of this act you have not been merely spectators: you have had an active share in it yourselves. You are not to think that it is in consequence of our possessing any special virtue that we, the ministers present, have laid our hands upon the head of Mr. MacNicol: we have done so at your behest, and because of your choice and call to him to be your minister. We believe that

we have fulfilled our part by the authority and in harmony with the mind of the Holy Spirit,—for it was He who moved the early Christian Church to take over the ceremony of 'the laying on of hands' from the Old Testament Church as 'the familiar and expressive sign of benediction or blessing.' *Our* act of blessing, then, has been accompanied with your approval and consent, and you have ratified it by your prayers and intercessions. None of you, I am sure, has witnessed his ordination without saying, 'God bless him,' or bidding him God-speed. Let us consider, then, how you may give practical effect to your kind thoughts, and become a help and a support to him in his ministry.

In the first place, the edification and comfort of a service largely depend upon people's coming to it in a devotional frame of mind. It is an undoubted fact that there is in church a wonderful interchange of influence between minister and people. If warmth of heart, devout longings for communion with God, are present on the part of the congregation, the minister will be more fervent in spirit: coldness and formality, on the other hand, will depress him, and the temperature of worship will be sensibly lowered. A devotional frame of mind will not come at your call, but there are means of obtaining it. Remember your minister in your prayers at the throne of grace on the Sunday morning, and on entering church; also, if possible, read a Psalm, as the 84th, or a chapter in St. John, before starting from home. 'Receive us'—'open your hearts to us'—is an affectionate entreaty of St. Paul's to one of his churches; and I would apply it thus: 'In your prayers for those near your heart, make room for your minister.' The end which a congregation should have in view in worship is expressed by St. Luke in a single word, *with one accord*. Bright will your service be, if it can be truly said of you with your minister, 'They lifted up their voice to God with one accord.'

Secondly, as his hearers, your right to judge of the quality of your minister's preaching is not to be gainsaid; but it is a right which, to be exercised with justice, must ever be exercised in the element of love. To provide something fresh for the pulpit every Sunday is a laborious work, and large allowance should be made for him who is steadily engaged in it. A thing that will help to make his sermons good is people's coming to hear them. Irregularity in coming to church is often a

cause of ministers being judged hastily with respect to their preaching: for people, hearing them seldom, understand only in part, and miss the unity of thought. Give your young minister the gladness of seeing the faces of most of you who are present this day looking up to him as he enters the pulpit. To be a steady hearer is the appointed means of being 'not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work.' And 'that man shall be blessed in his deed,'—blessed in the constancy of both his hearing and doing.

Finally, the Voice of the Good Shepherd may be recognized in that of one of His under-shepherds, if the ear be open to hear it. Your taking your minister by the hand on leaving church to-day signifies your intention, as members of his flock, to fulfil your part of the covenant between him and you. Then, bear his burdens; be forbearing to his faults; and in the unreserve of family life, always speak of him with respect. Do not be impatient, if his many other duties prevent him from calling for you as often as you should like. If there be illness or any trouble, do not depend upon his hearing accidentally of it, but send him word; this will be true kindness. As a servant of God and a Christian minister, he is not one already made perfect, but one who is still in the making; and your interest in him and prayers for him, your friendly criticism no less than your active love, are among the things that will give his character and work their mature form. I will only add that I have a high opinion of his gifts, and am liking him already. I do think that he will be a comfort to you, and earnestly trust that he and you, now happily united, may have prosperous and peaceful times together.

LAUS DEO. AMEN.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Small Things.

BY THE REV. A. F. TAYLOR, M.A., ST. CYRUS.

'He that contemns small things shall fall by little and little.'—Eccles. 19¹.

WHERE is my text? Well, you will find it in the Bible, and you will *not* find it in the Bible. You will not find it in the Bible which you generally use, but you will find it in a larger Bible used by many Christian people; for in that larger Bible

there are some books which come between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and my text is in one of these.

But the words of my text speak for themselves: 'He that contemns (or despises) small things shall fall by little and little.' The man who said that had discovered for himself that what people call little things are sometimes very important things, and that the man who thinks that 'little things' do not matter is making a very serious mistake.

It is a long time ago since this text was first written, and we know now that the man who wrote it was speaking far more truly than he knew. It is scarcely going too far to say that one of the greatest discoveries of the last fifty years has been that the little things are really the big things—not big in their size, but tremendously big in their importance. An earthquake that kills ten thousand people in a few minutes is a terribly big thing, isn't it? But there is a tiny animal (a bacillus, the doctors call it) which, though you cannot see it, kills its tens of thousands every year. It is a far more serious peril than the earthquake.

I think it was the great surgeon Sir Frederick Treves who was recently giving an address to the medical students of one of our Scottish Universities. He reminded them of the old story of how St. George killed a huge and terrible dragon, and then he held up before them a glass pencil on the end of which there was an invisible group of the little germs which give people the fatal disease of consumption. 'This,' he said, 'is the real dragon, far more cruel and far more destructive than that old dragon which dwelt in the marshes of Lydda, and you, gentlemen, you are the knights of St. George who have to slay this terrible monster.'

Yes, the little things are very important things, and so it is that he that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little.

Don't despise small faults, for small faults may do a deal of mischief. Isn't one ill-tempered girl at a picnic enough to spoil all the fun?

Don't despise small sins, for if small sins are neglected they will soon grow into big ones. Judas sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, but he seems to have begun by taking pennies out of the bag.

Don't despise small duties, for small duties faithfully done fit us for the great and noble duties of life. Find in the Bible for yourselves this text: 'Thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.'

And then here is a lesson not for the children, but for fathers and mothers and the Church.

Don't despise small people, the Church that despises the small people, and neglects to care for them, 'shall fall little by little,' until there are no people left in it at all. Its candle shall go out.

April.

BY THE REV. ROBERT HARVIE, M.A., Earlston.

'I have set before thee an open door.'—Rev 3^d.

I propose now to say a little to you boys and girls about the month of April. The name of the month comes from a Latin word which means 'to open,' and that is why I chose this text. When April comes round it is just as if God were saying to each of us, 'I have set before thee an open door.'

When we spoke of the month of January we took the text, 'I am the Door,' for January is the month of Janus, who was the Roman god of doors. And here we are again, only three months later, and the month is telling us that it is a door.

I wonder what that means for you and me?

January is the door of the year counting by months, but April is the door of the year counting by seasons. March is boisterous and cold as a rule, and we are not altogether sure if the winter is quite over; but April comes on, and we know that it is the door leading into better times and promising us warm sunshine and brighter days.

So we are now at Spring, which is the first season of the year. Winter is just like our night, for trees and flowers don't look as if they had any life at all.

But they are only resting, as we do in sleep, and then in Spring they waken up and begin to put on their garments of leaves.

In later months there are plenty of flowers, but not so many bloom in April; it is just the door leading into the garden of the year.

Doesn't it look as if God spoke to the leaves and flowers, telling them of the warmth and sunshine that was yet to come, and so they begin in this month to prepare to show themselves in all their beauty?

But God speaks also to the birds. When the

winter cold comes, they fly away to warmer climates and wait there till our Winter is over. Then God tells them that the time has come to return and let us hear their music. They do this in the mornings, reminding us of the brightness of the day and the freshness of the air outside. To the birds, as well as to the flowers, God speaks, and when He calls more of them back in April, He says to each, 'I have set before thee an open door.'

But the month has its message for you and me also. It is just the same as for these others. I once came across some things a man had written about April, and he said, 'I was born in April, and every year when it comes round I am born again into new delight at what it brings.'

We are all glad when Spring is here and we see everything bursting into life again.

It is in Spring that the farmers open up the soil and put the seed into the ground. It wouldn't do for them to wait till the very warm weather came to plant their seeds. If they did that, they could not expect a heavy crop at the time of harvest. Well, I think that when God gives us January, which is the door into a new year, and then April, the door into the year that begins with Spring, that is just His way of telling us that He wants us to begin and sow seed for Him. Jesus tells us that the seed He wants us to sow is the Word of God, *i.e.* the love we are taught in the Bible, and the ground where we sow it is our heart. He means that we are to read about Him, and learn what He says, and then we are to obey Him, to do what He did, and to be like Him.

But He says we must begin now if we are to have a full crop at harvest. If boys and girls are to grow up into good men and women, they must begin early to follow Jesus and to try to be like Him. And the harvest you will gather in will be all the good deeds you have done and the kind words you have spoken because you loved Jesus and tried to please Him.

The wise man said, 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.' And the month of April says you are at the door of a new year. Is it not a splendid chance to begin now to prepare for that harvest?