



ST GILES' LECTURES.

FIRST SERIES—THE SCOTTISH CHURCH.

LECTURE X.

THE CHURCH OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY TO 1843.

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IT is not too much to say that no previous period in the eventful annals of the Church of Scotland is more memorable than the three-and-forty years with which this lecture has to do.

It is not a period rendered remarkable by a literary galaxy, such as that of which the previous lecture took note. When we look to the Church from 1800 to 1825, we can see among its leaders only one name associated with the highest success in any department of general literature. That one exception is Principal Hill, who, as a leader of the Church, was strangely deaf to the voice of the people, and strangely flexible in the hands of some of the silent leaders of his party ; but, as a lecturer on theology, has left a treatise which is a noble monument of fairness, clearness, and learning. Dr John Erskine, who ended his honoured life in 1803, and Sir Harry Moncreiff,

who followed Erskine as the head of what was known as the Evangelical party, were ministers and ecclesiastics of the highest stamp, upright, wise, and consistent; but—unlike Carstares or Robertson—they draw more repute from the Church than they give to it. Its annals must record their names with honour, but they do not lend it a lustre from their fame won in other fields. So, too, it was in the later years. The historical works of Dr George Cook, who succeeded Hill in the leadership of the Moderate party, are candid and clear, but they are chiefly remembered because, as we shall see, their author was a prominent actor in memorable scenes. I do not know that any one of even Dr Chalmers' books is likely to have permanent value, although a select few of his greatest sermons will probably always be known and quoted. Other names will occur as we proceed; but this much we may say at the outset, that our period is not remarkable from a literary point of view.

It is the changes which were effected in the years 1800–1843 that make them memorable. Within and without, the Church was revolutionised. In her separate parishes, and as a corporate body, she did and she suffered much. We have to shew what good work she did, and also how her calamities came from her own doings. No former lecture tells of a time when she was so much left to herself. And therefore, when we treat of the events of this period, we cannot ascribe Scottish errors to foreign influence; for they were Scotland's very own. I hope to be judged with consideration for the exceeding difficulty of my task.

(1) The first subject which rises into view is the change in the school system of Scotland. After a century of neglect, the Church set herself to make the existing schools efficient. Hence began—during our period—the annual Presbyterial examination of schools, and after a little while (1819), the Annual Report upon them, which continued with excellent results until the Act of 1872 abolished the ancient connection between church and school. Next (1803), the school salary of eleven

pounds, which had been the figure since the Revolution, was raised to twenty-two pounds (subject to revision, according to the price of grain, every twenty-five years); and it was made imperative on the heritors of every parish to provide a dwelling-house for the teacher, 'consisting of not more than two apartments, including the kitchen!' This statutory provision was happily supplemented in many parishes. It was during our period that the Church of Scotland began to see that taxes are not all, and to realise what a mine of wealth there is in the heart of a willing people; and one of the first shafts driven down into the latent riches of that mine concerned education. The voluntary efforts of the Church were guided for sixteen years by two men whose names may well be enrolled in the list of her worthies. The first was Principal Baird of Edinburgh University, who stirred the whole country by proving that in the Highlands and Islands alone, out of a total population of between three and four hundred thousand, there were twenty-eight thousand between the ages of six and twenty who could not read, and eighty-four thousand of the same age who could not write. For many a day the learned Principal toiled in behalf of the long-neglected Highlanders; and he gradually succeeded in evoking so great liberality that not only in the Highlands, but everywhere, the country was covered with a network of schools. Normal schools were in operation; school-libraries (why so much neglected in later times?) were founded in many places; returns of Presbyterial examination of between two and three thousand schools were called in every year; and about 1842 the Church was nearer to John Knox's scheme, as regards her ordinary schools, than she had ever been before. Principal Baird was efficiently aided by Dr Norman Macleod, whose fervid appeals, like those of his illustrious son and namesake, were a blending of common-sense and Christian charity and infectious zeal, such as stirred all hearts. With the Gaelic Bible—itself a product of this century—and the 'Celtic Collection' of suitable pieces for school-reading, the

schoolmasters sent forth by the learned Principal and the eloquent minister enabled for the first time the children of one-third of Scotland to read in their own tongue the wonderful works of God. It was not till after the Rebellion of 1745 that the Protestant Reformation was carried into many districts of the Highlands; and even at the beginning of our century men printed their congratulations of themselves on journeying without molestation among the hamlets and scattered cottages of Celtic Scotland! I do not know that in any country or district there was so great a progress as took place between 1743 and 1843 in those parts of our own land; and it was mainly due to the minister, the catechist, and the school.

(2) In regard to Sunday-schools also, the Church passed through nothing less than a revolution. There were some Sunday-schools in Scotland before Robert Raikes—just a hundred years ago—began his noble work. But the Church had never taken up the subject; and in the very end of last century, when she found that the work which belonged to her was being done without her, she was stung into a most unbecoming passion. It is far from edifying to be told that Dr Hugh Blair lent his gifts of style to the composition of the extraordinary harangue called a 'Pastoral Admonition' (in 1799), which was meant to sweep from the kingdom all preachers unauthorised by the Church, and all Sunday-school teachers who had no commission from the Presbytery of the bounds. The Assembly intended to crush the Haldanes; to keep Rowland Hill from the pulpits; and to scare the people from countenancing those adventurers who wanted to teach the Bible to their children. The Haldanes were two gentlemen of property and of old family, who had given up an honourable career on the sea in order to promote religion in Scotland. Ready to spend and to be spent—Robert Haldane alone gave £70,000 in ten years to the cause of religion—men of zeal, energy, fortitude, and faith, they did more to bring

Scotland into living sympathy with missions in heathendom, and with the reviving faith in the Churches of the Reformation, than any court of any Church in the beginning of this century. Though they were not always right, nor always gentle in expression, they were always upright and self-regulating men whom no party could claim. As at the beginning of their life they defied the careless parish ministers and the angry Assembly, so at the end of it they publicly denounced the Voluntaries who courted martyrdom by refusing to pay the Annuity Tax which supported the National Church in Edinburgh. When they went over the land preaching love and good works, and with such power that Sunday-schools and prayer-meetings started up behind them as they went, they were only doing what the Church herself ought to have done.

The Sabbath-school movement was not paralysed by the Pastoral. Schools grew and multiplied; they became recognised as an adjunct of the Christian Church; but it was not till 1850 that the Church of Scotland had the courage to undo her mistake of 1799, and take cognisance of the Sunday-schools under the superintendence of her ministers throughout the land. It is easier to do wrong than to undo it; and when one sees the youngest and least experienced members of congregations intrusted with the responsible task of teaching those not much younger than themselves, it is impossible not to feel that the Church grievously erred in allowing the system to grow to its present dimensions without her control. Is it not possible for the Assembly to go back to one part of the bad Act which closed last century, and to offer the supervision and examination of her Presbyteries to both teachers and taught; not to check or choke, but to develop the efforts made in the Sunday-school to discharge the Church's duty to the young?

(3) Though the Church was not formally concerned in the Apocrypha controversy—for the British and Foreign Bible Society, which caused it, was not connected with any Church—

the dispute was so keen, and sent its roots so deep, that no sketch of the Church life of the time would be complete without some notice of it. The British and Foreign Bible Society was founded for the circulation of the Holy Scriptures alone; but with the view of securing a readier entrance for the Bible into some countries, the Society, from about the year 1813, had given money grants to aid foreign associations in circulating the Scriptures with the Apocrypha, and had itself issued Bibles, with the Apocrypha sometimes interspersed, sometimes appended. A still more serious fact, which in the end led to greater bitterness, was that the practice was concealed. Contributors were not made aware of the tactics of the directorate; and for this the permanent officials were to blame. Robert Haldane had arranged for a French Bible with canonical Scriptures only, and as usual had contributed generously to it; but even into it the Apocrypha was thrust without his knowledge. When this became known in Scotland, the Scottish contributors were indignant, and after fruitless private remonstrance (continued for three or four years), they stopped their contributions as the shortest way of bringing the Society to a right mind. There was of course a stormy controversy; and pamphlets were strewn thick as leaves in autumn. The Scottish eventually won the day—won it step by step; and the Bible Society at last agreed to promulgate a resolution that ‘the fundamental law of the Society which limits its operations to the circulation of the Holy Scriptures, is distinctly recognised as excluding the circulation of the Apocrypha;’ and that ‘no pecuniary aid be given henceforth to any Society circulating the Apocrypha.’ The leader of Scotland in this matter was Andrew Thomson—one of those men whose power is quite inadequately represented by the printed works they leave behind them. His treatment of ‘Infidelity’ and of ‘Universal Pardon’ is lacking in mellowness and self-repression, and his ‘Catechism for Young Communicants’ wants simplicity,

tenderness, and fervour. To appreciate him, we of this generation must go back to the generation which it was his highest ambition and his undoubted attainment to 'serve by the will of God.' When we stand anywhere on Scottish ground from 1820 to 1830, there can be no doubt that the greatest personal power in the pulpit, on the platform, and in the press, was wielded by that generous, fearless, wise, and unselfish man.

The chief result of the Apocrypha controversy upon the Church of Scotland, whose fortunes we are following, was that it publicly severed the ministers and members of the Church from their Dissenting brethren. Up till that time, the missionary and philanthropic societies had been national, not ecclesiastical; but when the Scottish branch of the Bible Society was broken up, the Churchmen, with scarcely an exception, were found in the new Scottish Bible societies; almost all the Dissenters, save the Haldanes, clung to their London connection.

(4) From home-work let us now turn to foreign missions. It is a Church's primary duty to fulfil the Redeemer's last command by preaching the Gospel to all nations. But the Confessions of the Churches of the Reformation are all singularly deficient, usually dumb, on this matter; and the Westminster Confession is no exception. Except that the General Assembly, in 1699, 'missioned' four ministers to accompany the ill-fated Darien expedition, not only to labour among the Scotch settlers, but also for the conversion of the natives, and in 1700 touchingly encouraged them, I do not remember that the Church of Scotland had ever specially addressed itself to foreign missions. The Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge (1709) was indeed specially authorised and encouraged by the Church from the first, but it did little for foreign missions, though (in terms of a special bequest) it had usually a single missionary—David Brainerd was one—labouring among the American Indians. At the end of last century, missionary societies not connected with any particular Church sprang up everywhere; the London

Missionary Society (of which a Scottish minister was the originating spirit), in 1795; the Church Missionary Society, in 1799; the Scottish Missionary Society, in 1796, and in the same year, the Glasgow Missionary Society. The Edinburgh Tract Society, the first in the kingdom, was founded in 1794. In the early part of this century, the work of those societies, and of some others for Jewish Missions and for special objects (such as one for the importation and education of Africans and Asiatics), was keenly taken up by many people in Scotland. Deputies from England came to plead the cause of the English societies, and their Scottish rivals or friends also appealed to public favour. The Serampore missionaries, and many others who laboured in the foreign field, had some of their first and warmest friends in Scotland. The efforts made in Scotland for foreign missions before the General Assembly moved in their behalf, were by no means contemptible. For example, in 1817—I take a specimen, to which many might be added—there was raised in Leith, for Foreign and Jewish Missions and for the Bible Society, upwards of £250.

But there was great significance in the Assembly's action in sending Dr Duff to India. It meant that henceforth the Church of Scotland was to be organised as a missionary association; and that its own courts were to be the directors of the operations carried on abroad.

It marks a new position in the General Assembly, when we find its admirable Pastoral Letter from the pen of Dr Inglis, the founder of the mission, thus undoing, in 1824, the rude rebuke of Missions in 1796: 'Having our own hope in Christ and His salvation, it would be altogether unnatural that we should not have a desire to communicate this blessed hope to those who, with ourselves, have one common Father—whom one God hath created. Is it possible that we can rely on the merits of Christ as a Saviour, for the exercise of that mercy and grace, by which alone we can be delivered from everlasting misery, and

made partakers of everlasting happiness, without an earnest desire to make known the way of salvation through Him to others who partake of our common nature? . . . Or is it possible that the assurance, which is given us, of the ultimate and universal prevalence of the Redeemer's kingdom, should not establish our minds in the use of all wise and righteous means for hastening that happy time when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth?'

There are few things in the history of the Scottish Church more delightful than the conjunction of men who founded her Foreign Mission. It was no party movement; no Moderate denounced missions, even on the plea that education must go before the Gospel; no Evangelical needed to bid the Moderator 'rax him the Bible.' The mind of Dr Inglis, from which the scheme started, like the goddess of wisdom in ancient story fully armed, was the mind of the greatest of the Moderates of his generation; the missionary, Dr Duff, who threw up the certainty of a distinguished career at home, and went away through perils by sea and perils by land, to a career in which his ardour was only paralleled by his industry, and his great aims by his great success, was an Evangelical who owed his conversion to an echo of the teaching of Simeon.

The principle on which the India Mission was organised was new in itself, and had a completeness which new ideas only acquire when they arise in a master-mind. The principle was that, while the Gospel is to be preached to all who will hear, education, with the definite aim of raising up a native pastorate, is to be an integral part of the work of the mission. Education was therefore not to be elementary only, but catholic and complete. Other Churches have since that time more or less adopted the principle; and even those which did not adopt it are ready to testify to its being an invaluable part of the work the Christian Church has to do in India. The five who entered the Institution the first day Dr Duff opened the doors, had swelled before 1839 into eight

hundred; and in our own time a far greater attendance on classes conducted on the same principles, shews how well the programme has stood the test of time and trial.

(5) Let us now turn from these general subjects to try to picture the position of the parish minister in the beginning of this century. That not many ministers were as little concerned about their duties, and as easily induced to find their chief interest outside of their own parishes, as was Dr Alexander Carlyle, the keen-witted incumbent of Inveresk, may be taken for granted. That good men of another stamp lived, and laboured, and died in the charge to which they were first appointed, we know from the Memorials of Dr Somerville, whose life in Jedburgh was of this sort until he completed ninety honoured years. Up till 1810, many of them had incomes as small as Goldsmith's Village Pastor, but a government grant of £10,000 a year sufficed to raise the minimum to £150. Some of them were professors as well as parish ministers; but after many years of dispute on the subject of 'Pluralities,' the not very logical result was reached, that a professor might not hold a quiet country parish, however near the college, though he might occupy a city charge, however laborious, as well as his chair.

The country owed much of its progress in literature and agriculture and comfort to the parish minister in those old days. Perhaps the greatest stimulus to social progress was the institution of savings-banks by Henry Duncan, minister of Ruthwell. He is one of the best possible specimens of the older type of country minister; a preacher who began with no high idea of his mission, but whose conviction and fervour deepened through the honest work of forty years; a man of science; a writer of readable books; founder of one of the most influential of country newspapers; and above all, originator of those noble institutions for the nursing of the poor man's savings, with which his name will be always associated while industry strives for independence.

When we turn to more directly ministerial work, we find one of its chief departments in the practice of catechising, which was usual at the beginning of the century. Every group of houses or district was the scene of a day of visitation, when the minister personally invited each household to meet him in an appointed central place—a barn or farm-kitchen—where not only the children but all adults who were willing to undergo the ordeal, were examined on the words and meaning of the Shorter Catechism. In some cases, the minister spent the night at the successive centres of visitation, so as to make a regular missionary tour of his parish. The minister's visit made an anxious time for many a man and woman as well as for every child; but in faithful hands it was an occasion of useful teaching, both doctrinal and practical. Catechising still lingers in some districts, especially in the North. In two country parishes in the South I found it one of the most interesting and profitable things which it fell to me to do; but over the country, as a whole, it is extinct; and the minister's annual visit brings only a short service of reading and prayer. The Sunday-school is not so robust an ordinance as the domestic and district catechising which it has superseded; and it is scarcely doubtful that it does less to bring the public opinion of the parish to bear on the success or failure of the home-training of the children.

We turn from pastoral work to preaching. There is not much doubt that, in the beginning of the century, the ordinary preaching was of a cold and semi-philosophical kind; a teaching of ethics, with Scripture used as an illustration rather than relied upon as an authority. But the century was not many years old when a change began, and with wonderful rapidity spread over the land. The work of Simeon and Hill and the Haldanes was no doubt in many cases effectual; but it would have done little had not causes of more general power been in operation. The French Revolution, which stirred society to its very depths, and made

all thoughtful men consider their ways, brought the mass of the people to a new study of the Bible and a new appreciation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In many men unknown to fame, that change which all the world can read in the life of Chalmers was undergone; and he who began to teach in sermons easily written, and heard, and forgotten, was striving ere middle life was reached to utter the thoughts that struggled within him, and to declare the message of the living God. The brilliant career of Chalmers, and the herculean, unselfish labours of Andrew Thomson, were beyond all comparison powerful in guiding this new-born zeal. But the change was not confined to such as they. The party which by tradition bore the name of Evangelical was not distinct, either in doctrine or in practice, from that which inherited the other name of Moderate. While Chalmers was toiling in the wynds of Glasgow, and Thomson was smiting hip and thigh the advocates of the Apocrypha or of gradual abolition of slavery, the chief of the Moderate party was maturing the great project of a mission from the Church of Scotland to the heathen. We all find it easier to give by sight than to give by faith; but the greater work of directing the sympathy of the Scottish Church to realms unseen was distinctively the work of the Moderates. It was a Moderate of the Moderates, Dr Bryce, who laboured so hard in India to bring a mission to Calcutta; and not only was it the wise head of the Moderates at home who planned the mission; but of those to whom, in 1839, Dr Duff dedicated his book on India, two-thirds were of the same party. The great missionary records upon his page of dedication the names of the committee: Brunton (convener from the time when Dr Inglis died), Gordon, Chalmers, Ritchie, William Muir, James Grant, John Hunter, John Paul, and John Bruce, 'under whose wise, paternal, and prayerful counsels the missionary enterprise of the Church has hitherto been conducted with such unbroken harmony of design, and such multiplied tokens and pledges of the divine

approbation.' And of those nine men, only three left the Church in 1843. When I know those things, and know how the eloquent pleading of another Moderate, Robertson of Ellon, was widely circulated and of great power in behalf of the India Mission, I must express my deep regret that even in our own day some writers upon missions charge all manner of public and private misdeeds upon the Moderates. There could be no better authority than Dr Inglis, of whom Duff well said that 'his thoughts were never expressed till weighed and re-weighed in the balance of a penetrating judgment;' and he says: 'What I maintain is, that the crime of either contradicting or culpably neglecting the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, is not imputable to any such number of the established clergy of Scotland as to give the slightest ground for supposing that ecclesiastical establishments have a tendency to discourage Evangelical ministrations. My observation during what has now been rather a long life, entitles me to say that, in the course of the last forty years, there has been a gradual approximation, on the part of the clergy, of what are called the two sides of our Church, to a closer resemblance of one another in all the great features of their public teaching—and it must not be forgotten that any opposite testimony which seems to be borne by our Dissenting brethren refers to a case respecting which their means of knowledge must be comparatively small.'¹ If proof of the truth of those wise words were wanted, I should point any inquirer to the fact that all the missionary, and almost all the active committees of the Assembly, had Moderate conveners, in the very year of the Veto, 1834. Dr Brunton presided over Church Accommodation, as well as over Missions to India. Principal Macfarlan was convener of the Colonial Scheme; and Principal Baird, of the Education Scheme.

(6) All parties in the Church combined in some depositions for false doctrine. Let me speak of one. Edward

¹ Inglis, *Vindication of Ecclesiastical Establishments*, p. 232.

Irving seems to me, as I look back over those years with such light as I can cast upon them, to have been the man of greatest genius that played his part while they passed over the world. I have heard from the lips of one who knew him well, that he said, as he paced the college quadrangle in his student days: 'There seems to me to be a new style of preaching possible;' and of that new style his sermons remain the first, last, and only specimen. It is a strange blending of exposition, exhortation, poetry, pathos, and scorn; now, in lofty speculation, speeding like a meteor high overhead; now, as though it were the forked lightning, cleaving at our very side some hoary erection of human fraud or folly; and now melting in the softest tears of human sympathy. Nothing that Chalmers ever wrote rises to the height of passionate meditation which is sustained through Irving's *Discourse on the Book of Psalms*; there is not in all that has ever been spoken from a Presbyterian pulpit since Maclaurin's *Glorying in the Cross of Christ*, anything to compare with Irving's *Ordination Charge* in the little chapel at London Wall; and in some of his *Discourses on the Incarnation* there is a grandeur of thought which seems to me to lift even the reader into a purer air. What it must have been to hear him, there still live those to tell who stood on the hillside for many hours, caring not how the sun crossed the sky while the spell of the great preacher was upon them; but even those who never heard him can say that the old prophetic fire has not come so near us as when Irving lived and spoke. His oldest friend, who has been so lately laid to rest in their native Annandale, and who also brought from the banks of the Solway some such scorn and pathos as one had believed to be impossible save on the banks of the Jordan, never ceased to say of him: 'He strove with all the force that was in him to be a Christian minister. He might have been so many things; not a speaker only, but a doer—the leader of hosts of men. . . . His was the freest, brotherliest, bravest human soul mine ever

came in contact with. I call him, on the whole, the best man I have ever, after trial enough, found in this world, or hope to find.' It was this man that the Church he loved with so romantic affection exiled from her bounds. It was really because his enthusiasm had carried him away, so that the decent order of worship in his church was destroyed by a Babel of many voices, which his simple heart believed to be the primitive gift of tongues restored to a long self-impooverished Church; but the avowed ground of deposition was that he believed, and in undoubtedly harsh words declared, our Lord's humanity to have been preserved in sinlessness by the abundant gift of the Holy Spirit, and not by the Incarnate Deity of the Divine Son in His Person. Surely never was there better ground for toleration than in this heresy, which was only the struggle of a loving believer to find that his Redeemer was 'in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.'

(7) A question which came into prominence in the very end of last century, was one which has had more momentous results in the Church than any of those already mentioned. It was the question as to the way of enlarging the old parochial system of the Church, so as to keep pace with the growth of the population. There were tens of thousands growing up for whom no church accommodation was provided, and who could not be invited to come to churches that would not contain them if they came. But they were not actually invited. Home heathenism was the consequence. The enormous population made it impossible for the old ideal of the parish minister, as the friend and pastor of all his parishioners, to be realised. Another evil result was found in Pauperism. In the old time, the funds of the kirk-session—drawn from the weekly collections in church—were sufficient to maintain the poor of the parish; and the eighteenth century was more than half done before the power of the heritors and kirk-session to assess the parish for the poor was called into exercise. But as Dissent attracted the population, the collections in the parish church

became too weak for the burden on them, and in large populations, especially in the south of Scotland, assessments crept in. As Chalmers brooded upon this fact, there grew up in his mind an enthusiastic admiration of the old parochial system, and an exceeding bitterness against all and sundry who could be charged with destroying or mutilating it. The masses who belonged to no church—many of them lying low and besotted on the ground, crying for food from legal funds—became a nightmare and a daily torture to him. When he went to Glasgow and found himself in the Tron parish of 11,200 inhabitants, with only 3500 of them connected with any church, he declared war against every system and every practice which made it impossible for him to carry the Gospel to all for whom, as minister of the parish, he was nominally responsible. He stigmatised the Town Councils, which exacted such rents for sittings, that the poor man could not take his rightful place in the pew; he denounced Dissenters, who were fostering the idea that it was enough to open churches for those who might choose to come; he rolled out his sonorous anathemas against the unpatriotic Scots who would not see that legal relief of the poor was destroying the independence and the provident habits of the people. And what he preached, he practised. There was a new church—St John's—opened for him in Glasgow, in which the great orator was allowed to have his own way; with the result of shewing that the parochial ministry drew the home heathen to the Church of Christ, and that in his large and poor parish of ten thousand inhabitants, the sum spent on the poor was never more than ninepence per head of the population.

In whatever light we view Chalmers as a parish minister, he is the greatest man who has ever borne that official name. As Dr Inglis adapted Knox's principles of church and school to India, Dr Chalmers applied them to Scotland with a generous devotedness which swept away every obstacle, and a prayerful patience which never doubted of the final triumph. He was not so

unapproachably great when crowds were hanging on his lips, as when by the power of a great conviction, and the example of heroic personal toil, he moved the hearts of his people, as one man, to rally round him, to act for him, to subdivide the parish into districts, to make a record of the state of every family, to make the parish-church and the district-school centres of living personal influence upon young and old, so as to verify his own happy phrases, by 'sweetening the breath of society' through 'the omnipotence of loving-kindness.' It is well to know what men thought and said of him: it does us good to remember that Jeffrey said Chalmers' power made him understand that of Demosthenes; and that the keen and critical Lockhart for a time forgot to analyse, and could only say: 'In presence of such a spirit, subjection is a triumph; I was proud to feel my hardened nerves creep and vibrate, and my blood freeze and boil while he spake, as they were wont to do in the early innocent years.' But these things might become mere traditions, as in the case of Kemble or of Edmund Kean, whereas the principles he revived, expounded, expanded, and verified can never cease to guide men, while churches toil to bring the wanderers to the fold of Christ.

When, therefore, the General Assembly, in 1834, appointed him to direct Church Extension, it was well known that the illustrious Home Missionary was about to move the kingdom to imitate his own example, and to provide not only churches but ministrations for all the people, poor and rich, within the shores of Scotland. The results were immediate and amazing; chapels sprang up on every side (187 in four years); while the parishes which had been united in raising the needed funds had learned their strength, their separate and their united strength, and were filled with the glow of a common enthusiasm. No longer units in action, they were now fused in one living organism, as the members of one body.

It was a fair and goodly scene; but in its advancement to

perfection, the Church was raising up enemies and difficulties that strewed it with wreck and ruin.

First of all, the Dissenters took alarm, and hence came the 'Voluntary Controversy.' The Seceders had done good work in many a parish where they had 'seceded' from the corruptions of the Church in the hope of seeing it amended, or where they had afforded 'Relief' from the evils of Patronage. But they were changed since the first days. There had grown up in the minds of Dissenters an idea that they had some sort of vested interest in the corruptions and weaknesses of the Established Church; an idea that if these were swept away, there would be an unfair blow inflicted on those denominations which were founded as a remedy for them. Thus the still living historian of the Secession Church says: '*The Church Extension Scheme, which was aimed alike at the prosperity of both denominations (Secession and Relief), had led the two bodies to combined deliberation and concerted action, and increased their mutual esteem.*' It is curious that an attempt to benefit the nation through the Church should be regarded as an attack upon Dissent. Yet so it was. It was impossible but that some collision should occur when Dr Chalmers tried to increase the Establishment, because many were ready to say that Dissenting Churches were doing all that is needed. To dispose of that objection, Dr Chalmers proclaimed the fact that men were falling away from all Churches; and at the same time he shewed that the very principle of Dissent, as only meeting a demand, incapacitates it to supply the deepest needs of a nation. In oft-repeated and now well-known arguments, and with unnecessarily stinging epithets applied to his opponents, Chalmers shewed that an endowment is equivalent to the poor man's seat-rent: and that its existence enables a minister within the definite territory of his parish, for which the endowment is provided, to go from house to house offering the Gospel without money and without price. He called this an 'aggressive ministry,' which seeks out and 'excavates' the home-heathen; and he

stigmatised Dissent as the means of providing only an 'attractive ministry.'

Thus came the actual collision between the Church and Dissent, which in its deepest meaning was largely political. Scottish Voluntaryism is mainly a political result of the fermentation among the masses during this century; its dogma of the severance of the ruler from religion originated with the French Revolution, and is a part of the democratic upheaving which led to revolution on the Continent. Perhaps it may be well on this hazardous subject to quote the words of an admitted authority. In his life of Dr John Brown, Dr Cairns says: 'It was not till the close of the eighteenth century that the impulse given by the American and French Revolutions, and the impressions made by the constant discussion of the claims of the Roman Catholics in the British Parliament, began to produce a wide and conscious divergence amongst the Seceders from the ground practically occupied by their fathers.'¹ That ground, as is well known, was the support of the Establishment principle.

There had been a solitary voice raised for this political Voluntaryism so early as 1806 by a seceding minister in Newcastle, and there had been much unseen preparation of Dissenters for the coming struggle; but the blast which roused the conflict was a sermon by the Rev. Andrew Marshall, Kirkintilloch, in 1829. He sounded an assault upon National Establishments of religion as unnecessary, improper, unjust, impolitic, a secularising of the Church of Christ, and a setting aside of the positive ordinance of the Saviour by which the Church is to be self-supporting. In his most highly wrought passage there is an elaborate contrast between the Church portrayed in the New Testament and the Church in the condition which he describes as 'incorporated with the State.' It closes thus: 'The one is the bride, the Lamb's wife; the other is more

¹ Cairns' *Life of Brown*, p. 169.

nearly allied to her whose name is "Mystery"—the woman who is arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, and who has in her hand a golden cup full of filthiness and abominations.'

It was not likely that words like these would be forgiven; and the defenders of the Church rushed to the rescue. Orators on each side went to and fro as with a fiery cross over the land; and courses of lectures in defence of the Church were delivered everywhere. Those which were delivered in the great cities and afterwards published, are remarkable for ability, and also for strength of sweeping statement. They are fair specimens of the intellectual power and intellectual ferocity which have so often characterised ecclesiastical polemics in our country. The immediate politics of the struggle centred in the Church's claim of state-endowment for her new chapels, and in the Dissenting opposition to that claim. The Dissenters gained the day. Exceeding bitterness was the natural result. And when the Non-Intrusion party tried, about 1839, to secure the help of the Dissenters in curtailing Patronage and asserting Spiritual Independence, those Dissenters, headed by Dr John Brown—one of the most honoured of ministers, but the fiercest of Voluntaries—declared that they could not as citizens consent to liberate an Established Church from national supervision and control. This curious position meant, that being Christian Voluntaries, they wanted to play the part of an oppressing 'Cæsar'! And thus the majority of the Church, thwarted in their claim of Endowment, and unaided in their struggle for Non-Intrusion, were driven to assert their views of Spiritual Independence more loudly. In this way, as Dr Cairns puts it: 'The Dissenters suspended their own exertions to diffuse Voluntary principles, believing that the reforming party in the Establishment were doing their work' (p. 196).

(8) We have seen that politics gave a great part of its force to

the Voluntary Controversy ; but we must now say that secular politics originated and shaped the Veto Act, from which the cry of Spiritual Independence and eventually the Free Church arose. Politics came in necessarily at that stage. The Reform Bill of 1832 gave the people new power in the State ; and they naturally expected greater power in the Church which had always been the people's Church. The Reform Bill did more ; it inspired the Voluntaries to denounce the Church with fresh vigour as a remnant of feudalism that should not be allowed to survive in the glorious days of the people's liberty. The friends of the Church were compelled to think how they could vindicate and popularise the Establishment so as to increase its power for good. The Moderate party, led by Dr George Cook, proposed to call into practical use the long disused but never abolished right of the congregations to present *objections of whatever nature* against the minister who had received a presentation from the patron ; of those objections, the Church courts to be the judges. This was a significant though insufficient tribute to the change of the times, and a confession that the rule of Robertson and Hill had unduly repressed the people's rights.

But the popular party in the Church felt that more than this was needed. The policy on which they decided was the Veto Act of the General Assembly, proposed by Dr Chalmers in 1833, and carried on the motion of Lord Moncreiff in 1834. The Veto Act provided that, when the majority of the male heads of families, being communicants, dissented without reasons from the nomination of a minister presented by the patron, the nomination was null and void. Its key-note was that *dissent without reasons* prevented any further proceedings in the settlement ; so that the presentee was rejected without any trial of his qualifications by the courts of the Church. I am far from suggesting that the wish to popularise the Church was wholly political. True sympathy with all that is best in her history led naturally to it. But in the particular form of action

which was adopted, we see the power of secular politics. The natural course would have been to stand on the old lines of the Church of Scotland; to object to Patronage as a grievance and a burden, and thus to constrain the Reformed Parliament to extend the ecclesiastical suffrage. But this would have been inconvenient for the new ministry. 'There is nothing,' says Dr M'Crie, 'that the Voluntaries dread so much as the abolition of Patronage.' And the Voluntaries were a large and resolute part of the new ministry's following. It was the object of the members of the ministry, therefore, to keep the matter out of Parliament. Brougham, it is said, was eager to get the Church to try her own powers; and certainly his irrelevant start to the floor of the House of Lords to eulogise the Veto as soon as it was passed, and to declare it 'safe and beneficial and in every way desirable,' looks very like this. There can be no doubt that Jeffrey (Lord Advocate) and Cockburn (Solicitor-General) threw all their weight into the scale. 'I am for the Veto,' said Cockburn, 'and as what we are to stand upon finally.' But they would all have been of little weight had there not been in Scotland a man of the highest character and of undoubted devotion to the Church, who was an unswerving upholder of Patronage and a leading Liberal. It was, unquestionably, Lord Moncreiff's attachment to the Church and to Patronage, rather than his Liberalism, which chiefly swayed him. But the result, in his advocacy of the Veto, as the plan which would least injure Patronage, united him with the Liberal politicians. Cockburn says: 'I hear his evidence before the Patronage Committee not only converted the Tory members to the Veto, but the Anti-Patronage men to Patronage.' Upon Lord Moncreiff rests the chief responsibility for the ills that so nearly ruined the Church he loved so well. He pledged his reputation as a great lawyer in behalf of the Church's power to pass the Veto Act; and with ill-fated persuasiveness he urged that if ever the Church went to Parliament at all, the proper time

would be when litigation had proved that the Veto Act was wrong, because beyond her own powers. So it came about that, by the lay-politicians, the Veto Act was made a law of the Church.

By the lay-politicians almost alone. There was no living ecclesiastic of sufficient power to hold his own, not to speak of shaping the counsels of the party. Andrew Thomson had always assailed Patronage itself; and had he lived, it is little likely that he would have yielded to this desire to maintain it. When a proposal to abolish slavery by slow stages was all but carried, his famous speech, with its 'Give me the hurricane rather than the pestilence,' took a public meeting by storm, and made the movement for instant abolition, with all its dangers, to be triumphant, in spite of the fears of politicians. One can imagine how he would have spurned the Veto. Chalmers was the only outstanding man, and he was an unwilling convert to the Veto. He wanted anything rather; wanted popular decisions by the Assembly under the old law; wanted to go to Parliament for an Act to make assurance doubly sure. But he was all for Patronage, characteristically saying that congregations are fit to give a 'gregarious consent,' but not to give a gregarious initiative. There was but one minister in Scotland—he was not in the Established Church—who could dare to speak all his mind; and it was no common mind. Dr M'Crie, the biographer of Knox and Melville, and the bosom friend of Andrew Thomson, said: 'A Tory ministry forged our chains; a Whig ministry refuses, when it is in power, to strike them off. Which of them are most criminal? We hold the former as enemies; we denounce the latter as traitors.'

And so, under a mistaken belief that it was in the Church's power, the Veto Act was passed, to gratify the people, to outflank the Dissenters, to preserve Patronage, to save the Whig ministry from trouble. Though Dr Cook argued in 1833 that it was *ultra vires*, and would be overturned in the courts of law, the dissent of the Moderate party in 1834 does not

raise that question ; but there was left on record by the Dean of Faculty, John Hope, a biting dissent, declaring that any presentee rejected by the people, and not having his qualifications tried by the Church courts, would have a legal right to the stipend and all other rights appertaining thereto.

And so it came about, as we shall see. But meanwhile, we must speak of another rash course to which the sense of the greatness of the Christian people, and of the Church's duty to them, prompted the Church. The taunts of the Voluntaries caused that to be badly done which might have taken another and a better shape. The chief taunt was, that an Established Church is fettered by the State and cannot expand herself—cannot erect new parochial charges as an increasing population requires. To meet this, the Church's ill-advised proceeding was to assume to herself the power of making new parochial charges, so far as to connect an ecclesiastical district with an unendowed chapel, and to give the minister a seat in Church courts. Chalmers was again overruled. He at first denounced the idea of admitting unendowed chapels to 'the high places of the Establishment,' and he knew that all his plea in behalf of Endowment as the poor man's seat-rent was annihilated by this new measure. But it was very tempting. The Church had been established before she was endowed ; so that it was a gallant attempt to assert her original power of recognising charges irrespective of Endowment ; and as Chalmers believed that Endowment could never be raised by the contributions of the people, and as he was tired waiting for the State, he consented to this impatient enactment. The daring deed was done repeatedly. In 1833, the Assembly admitted ministers of those Highland churches to which a yearly Parliamentary grant was given ; in 1834, it admitted at one sweep all ministers of chapels ; and in 1839, it received ministers of the Associate Synod of Seceders. On the first occasion (in 1833), Dr Cook was not alive to the importance of the step, and acquiesced, though, it is said, against his better judgment.

One solitary dissent, by the Rev. W. R. Pirie of Dyce, remains as a proof of his sagacity and his courage. He was the first in Church and State to see what all Scotland soon learned in bitter experience. On the subsequent occasions, the Moderate party protested against the admission of chapels as beyond the Church's power.

The storm soon came. Mr Robert Young was presented to the parish of Auchterarder, and was vetoed by the people. He applied to the Court of Session to have it declared illegal for the Presbytery to reject him without trial of his qualifications. His plea was that the Act of 1712 revived the Act of 1592, which provided that the Presbytery be 'bound and astricted to receive whatsoever *qualified* minister presented by his Majesty or other laic patrons.' His claim was to be taken on trial of his qualifications by the Presbytery; and he pleaded that the Church courts had no right to allow the people's dumb dissent to prevent his trials. After five months of pleading and debate, the court by a majority declared the action of the Presbytery to be illegal. After some time, the case was appealed to the House of Lords, and there the judgment of the Court of Session was sustained. Not only so, but Brougham, in a long and rambling speech accompanying the judgment, used many arguments and some phrases which I can see no reason either to forget or to forgive, on the one hand, or to regard as containing good law, on the other.

But meanwhile, the majority of the Church had committed the Assembly to a declaration that they would stand by the Veto. The settlement of a minister was declared to be a matter purely ecclesiastical; and all jurisdiction of the civil courts in regard to it was repudiated. 'What the Assembly was concerned with,' said Dr Robert Buchanan, in proposing the motion, 'was not the wisdom of the Church, but the competency of the Church in making such a law at all.' This unhappy resolution led to all the irreparable evils that followed. Lord Moncreiff's counsel to go to Parliament was forgotten. The majority of

the Church made the political interpretation of an Act of Parliament a matter of 'Spiritual Independence.' Meanwhile, another presentee who had been vetoed in the parish of Marnoch, applied to the Court of Session to have it declared that the Presbytery of Strathbogie, within the bounds of which Marnoch lies, was 'bound and astricted' to make trial of his qualifications. And the court accordingly declared that the Presbytery was so bound. Whereupon the Presbytery recorded in its minutes a declaration that it was bound to make trial of his qualifications. For making this minute—they had gone no further—the seven members constituting the majority of the Presbytery were suspended by the Commission of Assembly, and the Commission resolved to send deputies to preach in their parishes. Then they applied to the Court of Session for protection; and the Assembly's deputies were forbidden to use the church, churchyard, or school-house. This was the 'First Strathbogie Interdict.' After a while, the Court granted a 'Second Interdict,' forbidding the deputies of the Commission to preach in any of the parishes, or otherwise to molest the complainers in the functions of the ministry. This last Interdict was passed in absence, without debate; was never enforced, though openly and contumeliously broken by the deputies of the Church; and I suppose that all concerned were glad to let it drop. The Court of Session had no right to prevent the Church from preaching the Gospel in any parish; and it would have been well for the Moderate party if they had openly made common cause with the Non-Intrusionists in publicly denouncing this act of the Court as usurpation. Had they done so, they would have shewn that they maintained Spiritual Independence. By their supine acquiescence, they drove the public sympathy to the mistaken men who believed that every step consequent on the Veto was for Christ's Crown and Covenant.

But the time for wisdom was past and gone on all sides. The Church, by her majority, was defying the statute law, and

abiding by an incompetent and impolitic political act of her own. 'Our dearly beloved Venerable proceeds to its annual slaughter of Mother-Church to-morrow,' wrote Cockburn one day. The Court of Session had abandoned its calm serenity; and the judges proceeded in a strange fashion to act as though because 'for every wrong there is a remedy,' therefore, for every wrong done by the Church, the remedy lay with them. The Parliamentary parties had also lost their wisdom. Neither Whig nor Tory leaders could see how great the crisis was, or how imperative some remedial measure. The Duke of Argyll made an attempt to have the Veto legalised. The Earl of Aberdeen brought in a bill to recognise explicitly the Moderate view, that *objections of whatever kind* might be stated by parishioners against the presentee, and that the Church courts must decide upon them. But neither of those proposals came to anything, and the Church hurried to strike the rocks and be rent in twain. The court ordered the Presbytery of Strathbogie (which had previously after trials found him 'qualified') to proceed to receive and admit Mr Edwards, and the Presbytery did induct him in January 1841. The Assembly deposed the seven offenders. The Moderate party, holding that they were wrongly deposed, made common cause with them; and after that time the battle was inconceivably fierce. How Scotland rang with the war-cries; how in every parish the representatives of Non-Intrusion declaimed with earnest eloquence against the doings of the Court of Session, my time does not permit me to tell. At an early stage, Dr Candlish saw that the people would not be moved if the conflict were understood to be merely one of jurisdiction between the courts of the Church and the civil courts of law; and intimated that it must be pleaded as involving the privileges of the people as well as the rights of the Church. And so it was. The Veto which was actually intended to perpetuate Patronage, came to be treated as a kind of Anti-Patronage; and the question of the Church's competency

to curtail Patronage by the Veto was described as involving the Crown rights of the Redeemer. It was this which stirred all Scotland as it had not been stirred since the days of the Covenanters. The banner of the Covenant was supposed to be again floating in the breeze, and in the church and in the open air Scotchmen trooped to defend it. And when at last, in 1843, the crash came, many of the best of the ministers and a whole host of willing people left the Church of Scotland. No other result could be expected, one would think; but some who did not know Scotland had a hope of different results. I believe it may now be considered certain that the Scottish advisers, clerical and lay, of the Conservative government, which succeeded to power in 1841, had a deluded hope that only a few of the leaders of the Non-Intrusion party would leave the Church, and that the rank and file would remain in the old citadel. It is inconceivable that any one who had ever gauged the force of religious feeling, or even who had any remembrance of what Scotch Presbyterians dared and did in former times, could believe that the men of 1843 would be detained in the Church by the paltry terrors of the forfeiture of position and stipend. Dr Candlish, in whose speeches were always first and most forcibly announced the principles which afterwards became the rallying-cries of his party, had for years announced the impending secession, the Sustentation Fund for the support of the clergy, and the attitude of necessary antagonism to all Establishments which he and his friends would be obliged to take up. When I read those speeches, so full of nervous force, of passionate logic, and of unparalleled skill in selecting the topics that would longest absorb the attention of the people—and remember how the party took their watchword from the busy brain of that born leader of men—it seems to me unpardonable that any one should have believed it possible for truants in any considerable number to fall out from the Non-Intrusion ranks. The torrent was sweeping all before it; and

only a passion like their own could have roused against the Non-Intrusionists the feelings of the Scottish people in behalf of the integrity of the old Church. But the Moderates as a party did not even understand the voices of the storm which was shaking the house of their habitation.

It was here the parties were unequally matched. Dr Inglis had been laid in his grave some months before the Veto was decreed. Dr George Cook, who since the death of Principal Hill had led the Moderate party, was without the qualities needed for a time of commotion. He was learned, upright, wary, sincerely attached to the Church; and one who knew him well, said in after years, 'he was the best business man of a minister I ever saw in the General Assembly.' But he had been identified with the Church's business and not with her action; and he never learned that reason is less powerful than feeling in moving human life. Dr William Muir can never be named without the reverence due to a dignified, generous, unselfish life, devoted with every power of body and soul and spirit to the work of the Christian ministry, and to the manifestation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; but he attempted to occupy a middle position between those whose views were irreconcilable, and as they drew away from each other, he was left without support and without power. There was one man more powerful than those named, who is said to be as much responsible for misleading the government in 1843, as Lord Moncreiff was for misleading the Church in 1834. The Dean of Faculty, Hope, did his best to verify his dissent from the Veto, and to prove that it was bad law. In many a stormy passage uttered at the bar, or diffused through the press, he repeated this statement; and at last he had as a lawyer the satisfaction of seeing judges who had eulogised the Veto coming judicially to maintain his view. But passion interfered with his intellect, and prevented him during the conflict from understanding that spiritual theory of the Church as possessed of inherent jurisdiction by Divine appointment, which is the

doctrine of the Confession of Faith, and as such is recognised by the law of the land; a doctrine which he had indicated in his dissent from the Veto, and which he had in after-days to reiterate, if not to rehabilitate, from the Bench. There was one of the Constitutional leaders of whom I am perhaps debarred from repeating here what I have said elsewhere;¹ but regarding him—Robertson of Ellon—I may quote Hugh Miller's words: 'Dr Johnson threatened on one occasion to raise a mob. . . . The man we describe, if there be truth in natural signs, or if Nature has written her mark with no wilful intention to deceive, could lead and head a mob too. . . . We have before us the redoubtable Mr Robertson of Ellon, the second name and the first man of his party. . . . He has character, courage, momentum, and unyielding firmness.' Though he was never called to lead a mob, he afterwards shewed how he could do a harder thing when he revived a dispirited Church. But he was not in the councils of the Moderates at the last. He was excluded because he would not approve of the second Strathbogie Interdict.

There were others of whom we cannot here take account. The gifted and learned and beloved Principal Lee was never a leader of the party; and some others, as Drs Pirie, Paull, Bisset, and the younger generation, of whom John Cook and James Grant were the best known, were not always members of the Assembly or in the array of the battle. Dr Mearns—clear and cogent—took a less prominent part after his motion was defeated in 1834. It is not wonderful that popular enthusiasm was with the other side. Its nominal head and its great glory was Chalmers; but its real leader, as I have already said, was Dr Candlish. With him in close array were Cunningham, furnishing lore and logic and terse

¹ *Life of Professor James Robertson.* I ask leave to refer to the full narrative of the Non-Intrusion Controversy in that volume (1863); and to refer to my pamphlet on *Spiritual Independence* (1875) for an account of the judicial and ecclesiastical principles raised during the controversy.

statement, and sometimes rough personalities, to the service of his party; Buchanan, a born diplomatist, and withal a man of infinite pains in the mastery of details; Dunlop, who dedicated all his powers of legal learning and of lucid statement (not usually giving the opposite side full justice) to the behoof of his party, and afterwards of the Free Church; and Gordon, full of dignity; and Welsh, who seems to have been loved beyond most men; and Patrick Macfarlan, the only considerable ecclesiastic who originally approved of the Veto; and many others whom it is not in my power to name this day.

Behind them, leagued with their leaders in many a hard encounter in Church courts, was a vast majority of successive General Assemblies. There was doubt whether all of them would cohere till the end; and accordingly a Convocation of ministers was called in November 1842, at which, after many days' debate and discussion, the whole of the members were pledged to go on together to the end—out of the Church if need were. This was not what many a man expected when he went. The circular calling the meeting, said Dr Candlish, '*must not seem as if it were intended to commit men who may come as to ulterior steps.*' The circular was open enough; but the Resolutions were very binding. It is only a few months since any report of the proceedings was published; and now that we have it (in the Memorials of Dr Candlish), we see how, in solemn enthusiasm, all the brethren, guided by Candlish's skilful hand—with occasional bursts from Chalmers and others—came closer and more close together, until after ten days they emerged as one mass, molten in the strong heat, ready to take the shape of the Free Church. Of all who were prominent, there is but one survivor; and it is notable that he (Dr Begg), with manly consistency, held his own then, as ever since, denouncing the Act of Queen Anne as the source of all the evils of the Church.

After the Convocation there could be little hope of a peaceful solution of the difficulties of the Church. If there had been

any such hope, it was dispelled by the Stewarton case in January 1843. In this case the Court of Session, by a majority (eight to five) declared that the Church courts had no power to make *quoad sacra* parishes. Thus, as the Auchterarder case struck at the root of the Veto Act, so did the Stewarton case take the sanction of law from the other two Acts of the Church in 1833 and 1834—the Parliamentary Churches Act and the Chapel Act. So far as the Court of Session could undo all the work of the Church for ten years, it had undone it.

And on the 18th of May 1843, 451 ministers left the Church of Scotland (289 being ministers of parishes), leaving 752 ministers, of whom 681 were ministers of parishes.

It was not a Disruption of the Church from the State. It was a great secession, and may well be called a Disruption of the Church, one part from the other. It has taught Scotland and all the world how great is the power of an earnest and united membership when it strives to serve Christ. But still it is not on the whole a thing to be regarded with thankfulness. It has weakened the Church of Scotland, which, if it had continued strong, could have evangelised the nation; it has embittered ecclesiastical life, and thereby kept religion at a low level; it has encouraged Church Extension on the principle of supply and demand, so that simple territorial work, not thwarted by visible competition, is impossible; and—mainly in consequence of this competition—while Scottish churches are more than doubled in number, those who are outside of all churches are not fewer but more numerous than before.