

JOHN KNOX ADMINISTERING THE SACRAMENT
AT CALDER HOUSE.

THIS Poem, which appeared first in "Drawing-Room Table Book," edited by the late Mr. C. Hall, is now by permission reprinted in this volume. It refers not to the Covenanting period of Scottish history, but its subject and spirit are such as to make it worthy to appear beside the Lays of the Covenanters.

Calder House, Mid-Lothian, was in the time of Knox the residence of Sir James Sandilands, who in 1563 was created Lord Torphichen. He had previously been head of the order of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem in Scotland. This dignity, with the ceremonials it involved, is gracefully alluded to in the Poem. Sir James was one of the strongest supporters of the Reformation, and was a warm personal friend of Knox. At Calder House, the great Reformer met the Earl of Argyle, Lord James Stuart, afterwards Earl of Murray, and other powerful supporters of the Reformed religion.



JOHN KNOX ADMINISTERING THE SACRAMENT
AT CALDER HOUSE,

IN THE EARLY PART OF SPRING, 1556.

THE howling winter winds have passed, and spring steps forth
again

To shed her first sweet gifts abroad, on mountain, stream, and
plain;

And freshly bud the Calder woods, the Almond freshly gleams,
And hails with gurgling, fond delight, the sun's returning beams.

Another spring approaches, too, though faint and dim its power;
The MAN hath come, John Knox hath come, but scarcely yet
the HOUR;

For Scotland must be fiercely struck, and rent with breach on
breach,

Before the spring of Heavenly Truth her darken'd soul can reach.

Yet great and chosen ones there are, of counsel deep and wise,
Who soon for truth and liberty in stemless force shall rise;

And fast the Worthies of the land are gathering, staunch and true ;

The men who ne'er resolve a thing but their right hands will do.
This day, in Calder's ancient hall, a faithful few have met,
And round the Table of their Lord a brother band are set.

In that same ancient stately hall high festivals have been,
And antique rites, and pageantry, and gorgeous pomps, I ween;
And barons bold, and ladies bright, in rich array have shone,
And dreaded conclaves have been held by the proud Knights
of Saint John.

A noble concourse once again to that same hall repair,
And barons bold and ladies bright again assemble there ;
But not for pomp or dalliance vain, far other is their aim,
Their Christian Faith and Liberty with one voice to proclaim.

And, mingling with the noblest, sit the lowly village youth,
And hoary sires and matrons new-begotten to the Truth ;
While some sweet cottage children there, with little twittering
tongue,

Point to the antlers and the spears that round the wall are hung.
The stranger in the gates is there, the minstrel blind and grey,
Whose heart is smitten with the sound of the high celestial lay,
"Glory be unto God on high, and peace be on the earth,
To men goodwill," as angels sang at great Immanuel's birth!

All sit, one family of love, within that stately hall :
Vain man hath made divisions, but God is the God of all !

And Knox is in the midst of them, long driven to and fro ;
He comes their trusted counsellor, their guide in weal and woe,
The great Apostle of the North, Reformer of his land,
Which to its latest days shall bear the broad marks of his hand.

But not this day with levin-words to shatter and consume ;
He comes with influence as of spring, to cherish and illumine :
His message peace, and love his theme, not as it yet shall be,
When his patriot soul shall burst and roll, like tempest on the sea.

That eagle-glancing eye looks soft, and on that brow so stern
A glow of solemn tenderness ye plainly may discern ;
That fiery heart, which yet shall stir the nation to its base,
Itself is melted in the flame of pure Redeeming Grace.

“ O ye that hunger, hither come, and plenteously be fed !
The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him whose feast is spread.
In truth and spirit worship Him, no other service bring ;
A broken and a contrite heart be all your offering.
No table this of sorcery, no idol Mass is here,
No sacerdotal mummery to rouse the vulgar fear :
These are the symbols of the Death which raised our fallen race ;
Salvation to this house hath come ; believe, receive, embrace !

I break the bread, I pour the wine, even for His own Name's sake:
Come ye unto the banquet room, and of His grace partake!"

He breaks the bread, he pours the wine; in fervent prayer they
bend,

That the Holy Spirit in His power may on their feast descend;
Then silently from hand to hand the bread and wine are passed,
Till all have owned their dying Lord, from the first unto the last.

Oh! how bright on roof and cornice do the golden sunbeams lie,
As if gazing down upon them, each one a seraph's eye!
A deep and blessed stillness doth through all the chamber creep,
As when the stars of midnight lay this heart-sick world to sleep.

On that assembly falls a fear, but with the fear a joy,
And pious vows and songs of praise their raptured tongues
employ;

A sacred influence fills their hearts, a light, and strength, and
love,

Are winnow'd on them from the wings of the brooding Holy Dove.
'Tis thus the graces signified flow through the outward sign,
And the Human, in its flights of faith, half soars to the Divine!

