

X
LIFE

OF

JOHN ERSKINE,

BARON OF DUN ;

CONTAINING

REMARKS UPON THE RELIGIOUS AND POLI-
TICAL AFFAIRS OF SCOTLAND DURING
THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

By JAMES BOWICK.

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TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE COUNTESS OF CASSILIS,

THIS ACCOUNT OF THE PUBLIC LIFE OF HER
LADYSHIP'S ILLUSTRIOUS ANCESTOR,

IS, BY PERMISSION,

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED, BY

HER OBEDIENT AND HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

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L I F E
O F
J O H N E R S K I N E,
B A R O N O F D U N.

C H A P. I.

Introductory remarks—brief notice of the Erskines of Dun—birth and education of the subject of this Memoir—state of education in Scotland—Mr Erskine's progress in learning—supposed to be an early convert from Popery.

IN all countries, and in all ages, the convulsions of states have called forth abilities and powers which have rendered many persons famous to posterity; whereas, in more peaceful times, perhaps, the same individuals might have passed through the common duties of society known only to a few of their cotemporaries, and valued only according to their birth and official power.

It is natural to suppose, that the ingenuity of every man will be exerted, and his abilities brought into action, according to the opportunity with which he is favoured, and the importance of the cause in which he is engaged: for this reason, war will always produce its heroes, faction its demagogues, and peace its philosophers and artists.

The history of our own country sufficiently proves this assertion; and at no period of our Scottish annals is it exemplified in a clearer view, than during the Reformation in religion: an event which, in a few years, brought forth many excellent divines, statesmen, heroes, and martyrs, who might otherwise have passed their lives in cloistered ignorance and ignoble sloth, or followed the heels of ambition in pursuit of a name identified with bloodshed and rapine.

The papal church raised her vain superstructure upon the chaste and simple foundation which the apostles and primitive fathers had laid. By gradual encroachments upon the testament of Heaven, she erected a temple for her own dignity and power, until, having forsaken spiritual affairs, she took the command of temporal, and left the "rock" on which Christ

built his church, for the throne of Rome and the sceptre of the Cæsars.

In order to blind the eyes of men, and obtain full scope for her ambition, the policy of the Roman church dictated the most unwarrantable liberties. The word of God became a sealed book and a dead letter ; the decalogue was garbled to serve the purposes of human policy ; and a hundred idle devices were introduced to change the simplicity of Christ's religion into pagan parade and ostentation. Hence the imploring and worshipping of reputed saints ; hence the belief of the real corporeal presence in the eucharist ; hence the poetical and imaginative creation of purgatory ; hence extreme unction for the dying and masses for the dead, miracles at the graves of martyrs, and virtues in the relics of saints ; with many other absurdities, which vanity and cunning had imposed upon mankind, without warrant from the letter, and in opposition to the spirit, of the Scriptures.

At the dawn of the Reformation in Scotland, the established party was strong and powerful, while their opponents were comparatively few in number, and unprotected by the law of the land ; yet, by too much confidence in

their own security, the former lost their authority, and the latter gained power, both by the imprudence of their adversaries, and the justice of their own cause. The cruelties of a Beaton roused up the energetic mind of a Knox, and the machinations of a Guise brought an Argyle and a Murray to the cause of the reformers. Every blow aimed against the true religion recoiled upon the hand which urged it; and, at length, in a small, poor, and unprovided country, a few chosen instruments in the hand of Heaven fought—and fought victoriously—against papal, regal, and military power.

Among the reformers who particularly distinguished themselves during that interesting period, none was more zealous in the cause, none more prudent and active, than John Erskine, Baron of Dun; a man who, by his birth, piety and learning, was eminently qualified for the civil and religious duties in which he was engaged during a long and eventful life, spent in the service of his oppressed country.

The Erskines of Dun were a branch of the noble family of Marr; and were possessed of extensive lands, situated near the north-east extremity of Angus, and in the neighbourhood

of the burgh of Montrose. Few names, unsupported by title, have held so conspicuous a rank in the history of their country, and preserved their ancient patrimony so long, as the Erskines of Dun; a family who, at one period, possessed the baronial power of feudal tyranny to its greatest extent, and who now hold a part of the same domains, where lofty chieftains have changed to indulgent landlords, and humble vassals to respectable tenants.

The celebrated reformer, whose public life we intend to portray, was the eldest son of John Erskine, Baron of Dun, and was born in the year 1509. The education of a youth, intended to enjoy an extensive estate, must have been excellent for the times, although the best instruction which could then be obtained was a rude and unmethodized jargon of theology, philosophy, and a species of sophistry which the monks honoured with the name of logic. It was the policy of the cloistered pedagogues of that age to mix up with their imperfect knowledge of the sciences a large porportion, not of religion, but of reverence for the church, with all its ceremonies, superstitions, power, and infallibility. By this means they instilled into the pliant minds of the young nobility and gen-

try a strong prejudice in favour of the hyperbolical dogmas of the church, thereby training up in its defence, power instead of argument, and feudal authority in the place of reason and truth.

As for the humbler classes of society, they were in such a state of vassalage, as to be incapable of delivering a free opinion ; they were not only denied the privilege of a guide to lead them forward in those pursuits to which curiosity or accident might urge them, but they were strictly forbidden to search for themselves. They were taught to obey, and not to question ; to believe, and not to think : their value to the state was not appreciated, and their services were repaid with tyranny under the cloak of protection.

The first translation of the Bible having been published in England about this period, the lower orders of the people, even though they had been able, were not permitted to read the Scriptures : the privilege was granted only to *gentlemen* and *merchants*, with this proviso, " so it be done quietly and with good order." A great concession was here made to the people in general, yet the peasantry were denied the boon, and were thereby discouraged from

the desire of instruction, while the middle ranks were fettered by law, instead of being left to the exercise of their own sense and discretion. Such was the state of education, and such the stimulus to improve it at that period.*

Whatever knowledge young Master Erskine had acquired with his domestic tutor, it was intended that he should pursue it still farther under the superintendance of a more famous instructor. For this purpose he was, at a suitable age, sent to King's College, Aberdeen, there to improve himself in those studies to which his genius inclined, and which the age considered necessary for the education of the nobility and gentry. The college was at that time under the direction of the celebrated Hector Boethius, † a philosopher and historian, to whose erudition, genius, and eloquence, both Erasmus and Buchanan bear honourable testimony. His scientific knowledge was extensive for the age in which he lived; and his amiable and courteous manner rendered his instructions both easy and pleasant to his pupils. But, notwithstanding these abilities, it is cer-

* See Note A at the end.

† See Note B at the end.

tain that very little advantage was at that period derived from academical studies. The grand branch of education was scholastic divinity, which was so involved in abstruse questions and paradoxical dogmas, that it was neither understood by its professors, nor did it in the least tend to the elucidation of moral or religious knowledge. As for physical science, it must have been in a wretched state previous to that barbarous age, which condemned to imprisonment the venerable Galileo for having made his sublime discoveries in astronomy.* Ethics were confounded in the rules of the church, and logic professed only to teach the infallibility of its dignitaries. The Latin language, indeed, was about this time beginning to purify itself from monkish crudities, but the Greek was not yet introduced into the Scottish colleges.

Besides, the very system of tuition was tyrannical and oppressive ; and neither professor dared to teach, nor student to learn, in a manner different from that which the church directed. The Greek chair which Cardinal Wolsey founded about this time in Oxford, was

* See Note C at the end.

the occasion of contending opinions, strife, and confusion: one part of the university maintaining that the Greek language was beneficial and useful to the studious mind, the other insisting that it was pernicious to the church, and altogether a hateful innovation. But it was not merely the language itself, but the manner of pronouncing it, that rendered the students obnoxious to punishment. Bishop Gardiner prevailed upon the King and Council to inflict the penalties of whipping, degradation and expulsion on all those who dared to pronounce the Greek alphabet in a corrupt manner!

These specimens of barbarism are here adduced to show the state of learning and liberty in the most celebrated university of this island about the beginning of the sixteenth century. What was the condition of the Scottish colleges, none of which had then been a hundred years established, we may easily infer.*

But whatever was the state of learning then, it is certain that Mr Erskine improved, to the utmost of his power, that time which he spent under the academic shade. He became ac-

* See Note D at the end.

quainted with the knowledge of the times ; and his acquirements, joined to his own shrewdness of mind and natural genius, secured to him the character of a learned, wise, and patriotic man. After retiring from the college, he spent several years at the castle of Dun, cultivating knowledge by the perusal of the ancient classic and primitive Christian writers, and by the conversation of many learned men, whom he invited to partake of his friendship and hospitality.

It has been said that he was an early convert from popery ; and it is highly probable, that, at a time when the doctrines and ceremonies of the church of Rome began to be questioned and to come under the discussion of mankind, his active mind would not long remain inattentive to the arguments used upon this occasion. His acquaintance with the works of the primitive fathers of the church, his own testimony of popish absurdity, and, above all, his knowledge of the Bible, the standard of Christian faith, must have soon convinced him that gross errors had crept into the established system of religion, and that a judicious hand was required to root out the evil.

Such an opinion had likely been held by every reflecting and unprejudiced mind : but

so deep are the impressions of early instruction, so powerful is the authority with which worldly honours grasp the heart, and such is the respect and reverence which men naturally pay to long established systems, however absurd, that we cannot sufficiently admire the boldness of those who first dared to speak publicly against the errors of popery. At the present day, the gross superstitions and ridiculous ceremonies of the Romish church are evident and palpable, and it is thought a slight matter to treat them lightly; because we are the more emboldened by being surrounded with millions of Christians who hold the same opinion with ourselves; because we have been trained in protestant principles; and because, in reading the history of the church, the Catholics are found to be the oppressors, without reason, while the reformers are the persecuted and martyred, with both reason and religion on their side. But this view of things could not possibly appear in so evident a manner to the first opposers of popery. In examining into the errors of the church, the reformer no doubt became soon convinced that the papal doctrines and the scriptural commands differed widely from each other; he saw that the person who

arrogated to himself the office of St-Peter was chiefly employed in the temporal affairs of kings ; he saw that the teachers of religion were in many cases ignorant of its leading doctrines ; and he saw the church transformed into a mart for the sale of sin and wickedness. But, on the other hand, he reflected that that church had antiquity on its side ; that it had been the means of planting and establishing religion throughout Christendom ; and that it was protected by the laws of man, and had been permitted by the providence of Heaven. These, or such like reflections, must have occurred to the minds of a Huss or a Wickliffe, who, had they not in a special manner been inspired by the spirit of true religion, could never have dared to oppose a power so generally acknowledged and so long established.

CHAP. II.

Zeal of the Catholic clergy—they select Mr P. Hamilton as their victim—effects resulting from his martyrdom—Mr John Erskine becomes a steady supporter of the Reformation—martyrdom of Mr Straiton—account of Mr Wishart.

ABOUT the year 1527, the Scottish clergy, alarmed at the increase of heretics, and the spreading influence of the Lutheran doctrines, began to stretch the arm of authority over those delinquents who acknowledged the truth of the new tenets. This severity was thought necessary, both for the security of the established religion, and likewise as a proof of the zeal which the votaries of Saint Andrew maintained for the dignity of the holy father and the churches under his peculiar care. In order, therefore, to strike terror into the minds of all ranks, and to show that the ecclesiastics paid little respect to worldly distinction, they selected for their victim Mr Patrick Hamilton, abbot

of Ferme, a gentleman closely related to the Earl of Arran and the Duke of Albany. Hamilton had just returned from Germany, where, having been introduced to Luther and Melancthon, he had imbibed the opinions of those celebrated reformers; and having an ardent desire to promulgate the truth in his own country, he had, on his return to Scotland, begun to disseminate opinions derogatory to the existing doctrines of the church. Having been seduced to St Andrews, and there treacherously betrayed by one friar Campbell, who pretended secretly to favour the reformers, he was apprehended and imprisoned as a heretic. Next day he was brought before the Archbishop, who, with his consistory of bishops, abbots, and priors, summarily condemned him and his tenets, and immediately handed him over to the secular power for punishment. Such was the anxiety of the clergy to bring this gentleman to the stake, that, lest the King,* to whom he was related, should have granted a pardon to one so honourably descended, so young, and so modest in his behaviour, they forthwith brought him to the place of execution, where he suffered with that calmness and religious heroism for which

* James V.

the martyrs of the Christian truth have been so famed.

But this act of cruelty and folly on the part of the clergy, so far from answering their purpose, added fuel to the incipient fire of the Reformation, and, by stirring up the minds of men to inquiry, brought the contrast between the oppressors and the oppressed directly before them. A circumstance of this kind, more than subtle reasoning and polemical argument, would increase the friends of the new doctrine. The people, as a body, were incapable of comprehending some of the more delicate distinctions of religious controversy, and, like the mother of Melancthon, they were somewhat perplexed to know what side to choose; * but as an act of cruelty and tyranny speaks for itself, the victim, even though guilty, engages the sympathy of the people. How much more are his principles espoused, and his fate commiserated, when the sufferer is sacrificed to the truth of a glorious and godly cause!

Thus were the people of Scotland at once awakened, if not to the errors, at least to the cruelty of the Romish church. Their minds were set upon inquiry; curiosity prompted

* See Note E at the end.

some, zeal inspired others, and many from having experienced the severities of the church were led to examine the foundation upon which it stood, and the warrant by which its measures were executed. One heretic had been consumed in the fire, and a hundred had arisen from his ashes. As a proof how rapidly the doctrines of the Reformation were gaining ground, and how sensible the clergy were of its progress, the Archbishop of St Andrews had commanded that one Henry Forrest (who had defended the opinions of Hamilton, and who, by treachery, was secured and condemned to a like fate,) should be burned at the "north end" of the cathedral, "in order that the heretics of Angus might see the fire," and, while beholding the smoke and flames that enveloped the dying apostate, that they should thereby be terrified into obedience to the holy and infallible church. There was more sense and policy in the satirical advice given upon this occasion to the Archbishop by his servant, when he recommended that Forrest should be burnt in a cellar, "because," said he, "the smoke of Mr Patrick Hamilton hath infected all those on whom it blew."

Mr John Erskine had, at this time, not only

espoused the cause of truth, but he had taken great pains to convince others of the importance of a reformation in religion. For this purpose he employed a great part of his time in reading and expounding the Bible to his particular friends and domestics, who had hitherto found that sacred volume to be a hidden mystery. But the Laird of Dun gradually opened the minds of his associates to the real value of the Scriptures of truth, contrasting the precepts of the Bible, and the examples it contained, with the rites of the established church, and the character of its dignitaries, and explaining the several points which the German reformers had adopted, agreeably to the warrant of God, and in opposition to the church of Rome. Thus, unmolested by the high hand of tyranny, and as yet, perhaps, unsuspected, he privately sowed many of those seeds of the Reformation, which in due time brought forth a hundred fold.

Among the persons who were directly indebted to Mr Erskine, as having been the means of their conversion, was Mr David Straiton, * a gentleman of some property, who, being of a rough and careless disposition, chose to follow the pleasures which his means could afford, rather

* See Note F at the end.

than to practise the duties of religion. This course of life very much grieved his friend Mr Erskine, who wished to reclaim him from his follies and vices, and to bring him to a sense of his own dignity as a man and as a gentleman, if not to make him a convert to the true religion. In order to reclaim him, Mr Erskine very frequently invited him to Dun, where gradually by conversation, advice, and example, he tried to wean him from his depraved manners. He exhorted him to lay aside those unsatisfactory pleasures, in which he had hitherto so frequently and largely indulged, and instead of pursuing a course unworthy even of irrational animals, to reflect that the term of life is short, and rendered still shorter by the gratification of those evil habits, which at once destroy the health, the character, and the soul itself; and seriously to consider the bitter anguish which worldly pleasures throw back upon the conscience at the close of life. By these and such like admonitions, Mr Erskine wrought, in a successful manner, upon the mind of his friend, who, with a docility unlooked for, soon convinced his monitor that his words had reached his heart, and turned it from ignoble pleasures to a proper sense of morality and good conduct.

Mr Erskine rejoiced to think that his advice had taken such good effect, encouraged his visits to Dun, admitted him freely to his scriptural readings, and convinced him of the importance of a religious and devout life with such effect, that, in a short time, Mr Straiton not only became a peaceable and virtuous man, but confessed that, through the instrumentality of Mr Erskine, he had reached the only true happiness and pleasure which this life could bestow, in conforming himself to the sacred rules of true religion.

It has been said of many reformers, that they were prompted to desire innovation by sinister motives; that disappointed ambition and revengeful feelings have given rise to the greater part of schismatics; and that, while they called for a reformation in spiritual affairs, their aim was directed to temporal benefits. It is true that the example of schism is of such a pernicious nature, that, unless it is warranted by gross abuse, or conduct directly repugnant to the word of God, on the part of the church, it ought not to be encouraged, but rather repressed by decent and lawful means. He who preaches against the church of his fathers merely because his opinions are at slight variance with some

particular rite or polemical dogma, proves himself to be of a captious and supercilious nature, ill befitting the duty and meekness of a Christian ; and he who dissents on account of disappointed hope or personal pique, shows himself to be a man unacquainted with the first and last principles of religion, and totally unfit to direct others through the mild tenor of good will and charity.

In order to prove that no such feeling possessed the Laird of Dun, and that he was led to disapprove of the popish hierarchy from the most disinterested motives, we have only to consider that, at this time, he was in his twentieth year, and the unencumbered proprietor of a large and fertile estate. * He therefore possessed both youth and riches ; the luxuries of the times were at his command, and his was the season for enjoying them. If he wished to attain worldly honours, his policy would have been to pay court to the existing powers ; if he was desirous of fame, he might have placed himself nearer to the king, where by his learning and sagacity he would have obtained such a situation in the government, as would have completely identified him with the transactions of the

* See Note G at the end.

reign of James and his successors. But, forsaking all these temptations, and hazarding his credit, his estate, and his life, in a cause which was then opposed to human laws, he became, through conviction and conscientious feeling, a steady and zealous supporter of truth, a defender of its votaries, and a converter of many to the cause which he had espoused.

That the impression which his earnest conversation and example had made upon his companions and domestics was deep and sincere, will immediately be seen. His friend, Mr Straiton, had become so devoted to the cause of the Reformation, and had behaved himself for some time with such an open contempt of the churchmen, that he knew he might expect little favour at their hands, if ever he was called to account for his faith before their tribunal. In order, therefore, to strengthen himself against his trial and condemnation (which he anticipated,) he frequently, as Spottiswood declares, "prayed for strength and spiritual courage, that, if brought to suffer for Christ, no fear of death or corporal pain might cause him to shrink." It was not long till he was put to proof; for, when the tythe collectors of the district came to demand of his servants every

tenth fish which they caught, he ordered his men to throw the tythe of the fish into the sea, and bade the collectors, if they must have tythe, to take it from the common stock in the waters. This practical jest was interpreted by the priests as a refusal to pay tythes of any kind, and upon this allegation he was summoned to appear before the Bishop of Ross, who sat as commissioner for the Archbishop of St Andrews, at Holyrood Abbey, in the month of August 1534.

To this ruthless tribunal was cited a long roll of persons accused of heresy under various shapes. Of those who were summoned, many fled for refuge into England and Germany, where they afterwards became famous for their learning and piety; some few, who thought they possessed courage for the trial, shrunk back at the sight of the gloomy ceremony; others were persuaded and flattered into a recantation; but many continued firm in their faith, and defied alike the courtesy and the threats of the bench. Among these was Mr Straiton, who denied that he had refused to pay tythes generally, but that he considered the demand made upon his fish as too exorbitant, and too much savouring of rigour on the part of the church. Upon this, however, he was condemned. A pardon was

offered if he would retract his words, but he chose rather to adhere to the truth and suffer for its sake. He was bound to the stake with one Norman Gourlay, who had denied purgatory and the pope's jurisdiction; and he not only maintained his firmness of mind at the hour of death, but comforted and encouraged his fellow sufferer while the fire was lighting. Those fires, as the dying Latimer* prophesied, "have kindled such a torch in this country as shall never again be extinguished."

The offence which Mr Straiton had committed against the clergy, showed a kind of anxiety on his part to incur the displeasure of the priests. If the demand which the tythe collectors made was exorbitant, he should have had recourse to other means of redress, however small the hope of obtaining it. On the other hand, the measures employed by the clergy for maintaining their privileges, were of the most unjustifiable kind, and in strict accordance with their sanguinary and ruthless maxims of policy.

A very early intimacy was begun between Mr Erskine and the celebrated reformers Wish-

* Bishop of Worcester (mentioned in note A) who suffered at Oxford during the persecutions of Mary.

art and Knox, and to both of these zealous preachers he was a great patron. To the former especially he was kind and indulgent, respecting him both for his deep erudition and courteous manners. There was a great similarity between these two worthy characters: Both were descended from ancient and honourable families; both were learned and amiable; both pious supporters of true religion. Wishart was the second son of the Laird of Pittarow, * a considerable estate in the parish of Fordoun and shire of Mearns. About the year 1536, in his zeal to promote the advancement of literature and religion, he thought it not unbecoming his rank to take the ferula in his hand, and employ himself as a teacher of youth. Accordingly he established himself in Montrose, where, for a considerable time, he taught divinity, philosophy, and the classics with great success. The influence which the Laird of Dun possessed in Montrose, contributed greatly to introduce Wishart to the notice of the citizens, who upon many occasions testified their high sense of his merit and usefulness among them. It was observed of Wishart during his residence in Montrose, that he was a man of the most sim-

* See Note H at the end.

ple and primitive habits. He is described as a gentleman of a graceful personage, eloquent, courteous, ready to teach, and desirous to learn. In his dress he was plain and decent, ordinarily wearing a French cap, a frieze gown, plain black hose, white bands, and handcuffs. In his diet he was very moderate, if not austere and abstemious, eating only twice a day, and fasting every fourth day.

It might be supposed that a man of this character could have few enemies to disturb his own peace, and molest his useful employment; but such was the persecuting spirit of the times, that the church took cognizance of every thing, real or supposed, from contumacy to zeal,* and from witchcraft to heresy; and, ridiculous as it may appear, it is not improbable that Wishart was accused of all these abominations. One branch of his instruction was novel at the time; indeed he is supposed to have been the first who publicly taught the Greek language in Scotland. His motive had not been so much with a view to introduce his pupils to an acquaintance with the classical writers of that ancient and elegant language, as to cultivate a proper knowledge of the New Testament, by

* See Note I at the end.

consulting the original expressions, and thereby enabling his students to interpret the true and full meaning of the inspired evangelists and apostles. Considering that at that time some ignorant monks asserted that the New Testament was a heretical composition of Luther's, and that the characters of the Greek language were new even to some of the learned of that age, it is not improbable that the monks founded their accusation against the teacher on such ridiculous grounds as their own absurd conviction of his magical and heretical doctrines. Certain it is, that information was lodged with the Bishop of Brechin concerning Wishart's conduct; and on this information he was cited forthwith to appear before the primate, and answer to the charge preferred against him.

The undaunted mind of Wishart would not have shrunk from a mandate, the consequence of which his friends dreaded, and his enemies looked forward to with satisfaction. But, while he prepared to pass voluntarily to the inquisition of his diocesan, his patron, Mr Erskine, with more prudence, advised him to shun the present danger, and preserve himself for more usefulness in the cause of religion. He represented to Wishart that, although his own power

was extensive, he had little hope of prevailing in favour of his friend with so determined a bigot as John Hepburn, Bishop of Brechin, a man who had proved his hatred to the new cause by sitting in judgment against the amiable Patrick Hamilton, and who, to gain favour with the established party, had lately summoned Walter Mill, priest of Lunan, to answer for having discontinued the celebration of mass. Mill had found means to escape from the fangs of his enemies ; it was prudent that Wishart should do the same. Mr Erskine, therefore, prevailed upon him to flee from the impending storm, until a clear horizon should allow him to return with safety to himself and advantage to the cause of truth.

Accordingly Wishart secretly left Montrose ; and, eluding the bishop's emissaries, he proceeded to England, where, at the university of Cambridge, he continued his studies, and improved himself in religious knowledge by pious exercises, books, and conversation.

CHAP. III.

Power possessed by the ancient Lairds of Dun—their attempt to compel the magistrates of Montrose to submit to their tyranny quashed by James IV.—municipal government in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—Mr Erskine's conduct as a Magistrate—Cardinal Beaton—why the clergy were invested with civil authority—Wishart takes up his abode at Dun—his zealous labours—his martyrdom by Beaton—reflections.

THE power which the Lairds of Dun possessed in the neighbourhood of their estate was, like that of the other barons, extensive and almost arbitrary. The town of Montrose lay particularly under their jurisdiction, and, on that account, the Laird of Dun, as he was the virtual, was also made the official governor of the town. This manner of choosing a provost or mayor for the burgh (so different from the liberal system of the present day) was more a matter of necessity than of choice with the citizens. The barons reigned with a kind of pet-

ty sovereignty. Those noblemen whose lands lay contiguous to burghs, were generally invested by the prince with the power of constableness, and the government of the forts or castles which protected the burghs. In such cases it was most prudent for the citizens to throw themselves under the defence of such powerful men; and therefore the burgesses bestowed upon the barons the highest honour which lay at their disposal. Indeed, without this precaution, the citizens were not safe, nor were they altogether free from violence, notwithstanding their subserviency to this barbarous system. Both town and country lay open to marauders of every description, whose vigilance eluded the feeble arm of the law, the execution of which was too often entrusted with those very barons who were sometimes themselves the cause of the citizens' disquietude. An instance of this kind occurred between the town of Montrose and the family of Dun, about forty years previous to the period of which we are now treating.

John Erskine, Laird of Dun, and grandfather of our reformer, not contented with the authority which he possessed over the burgh of Montrose, resolved to compel the magistrates to sub-

mit to his tyranny. They, however, though willing to concede much in favour of the baron, would not resign the whole of their power; and, instead of allowing the town to fall under the vassalage of the family of Dun, they determined to keep fast their shadow of prerogative. They had, without any appearance of jealousy, bestowed every mark of respect on the laird, as being the parliamentary baron and knight of the shire, as well as constable of the castle and provost of the burgh; and no submission, whether real or ceremonious, short of absolute servitude, had hitherto been withheld by them from their powerful superior. But still the magistrates were so far sensible of their official dignity, as to be aware that much of this honour was mere courtesy, and that in return they had to expect the protection and patronage, instead of the tyranny, of the authoritative baron. Finding admonition and threats of no avail with such obstinate supporters of municipal privilege, the laird had recourse to chastisement and revenge. For this purpose, in the month of September, 1493, he with his sons John, Robert, Walter, and Thomas, and a number of their vassals and dependants, all mounted on horseback, and armed, some with pikes and spears, and others

with bows and arrows, came, in the dead of night, to the burgh lands, and first setting on fire the corn which grew there, they afterwards proceeded to the town. Having marched up the high street, shouting and brandishing their weapons, they challenged the magistrates to come forth, and try by battle the cause which had been left unsettled by argument. The honest rulers, notwithstanding this call upon their honour, prudently kept their beds, resolving, that, if they must fight for their dignity, they should at least have the advantage of day light in combating such powerful enemies.

These violent proceedings having been several times repeated, at length provoked the magistrates of Montrose to apply for redress at the proper quarter. Having assembled in the town-hall, they drew up a petition to the Duke of Montrose praying for protection: but the bearer of the letter to his Grace having been basely murdered by the retainers of Dun, the magistrates directed that a "bill of complaint" * should forthwith be transmitted to King James IV. at Stirling, under an escort of armed men. The King having graciously received the town's

* See Note K at the end.

“ complaint,” ordered the Erskines to find bail to keep the peace, and to appear, on a day appointed, before the sheriffs of Forfar and Kincardine to answer to the charges preferred against them.

Such was the state of municipal government about the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Even the nominal privilege of electing their own chief magistrate was not, at all times, insured to the burghs. The grasping hand of the barons, in several instances, interfered with the choice of the citizens, and the more powerful arm of royalty sometimes snatched the honour from the barons. Thus the regent Arran, at the instigation of Cardinal Beaton, deprived Ruthven, provost of Perth, of his municipal dignity, and, without asking the advice of the citizens in a matter that so closely affected them, bestowed the office upon Chartres, Laird of Kinfauns, who kept his uneasy and dangerous seat till the time of the Queen Dowager’s regency, when Ruthven was reinstated in his ancient and almost hereditary authority.

These facts are here brought together, not merely to show the barbarous spirit of the times, but to contrast the turbulent government of his forefathers with the mild, pru-

dent and wise policy of our reformer when he was called to act as provost of Montrose.

From what we have already stated regarding the moral and religious character of Mr Erskine, it will readily be believed that, in his magisterial capacity, he exerted himself in no small degree to establish order, justice, and piety among the citizens of Montrose. These virtues he inculcated by precept, and enforced by example; and, as a reward for his noble and patriotic conduct, he insured the respect and esteem of his fellow-magistrates, and the goodwill of the grateful townsmen. When he entered upon his office of provost, he was at that early age of life when folly and levity are most conspicuous in those who are born to wealth and independence; yet his manners had then all the gravity of experience, joined to the suavity of an amiable heart. By a wise and virtuous administration of his duty, he brought the hearts of the people to the cause which he had espoused in respect to religion, and he thus drew more followers after him, and with hearts more interested in his welfare, than the desperate methods which his family had before tried in order to gain the obedience of the town to their ambitious authority.

Meanwhile, the castle of Dun was an asylum for many of those preachers of the reformed religion, who, not being as yet safe to promulgate the new doctrines, chose rather to sow in private the seeds of the Reformation. The family chapel * of Dun was among the first of those buildings whose walls re-echoed the animated discourses of the reformers, and the simple strains of their praise to Heaven. These were then exercised under the authority of a man, whose power, though not equal to cope with the enemies of religion, was just sufficient to deter them from molesting him and his brethren ; and now the like doctrines and manner of worship are part of the law of the land, and observed by millions in the face of the sun. Such is the effect of perseverance in the cause of truth !

Mr Erskine, alternately with the preachers who resided with him, read and expounded the Scriptures every day to the domestics of the castle, and such of the laird's friends as were invited to this spiritual banquet. The number of those who, by this means, received convic-

* This family chapel is now the parochial church of Dun. The old castle of Dun, of which a small part still remains, stood near the east end of the church-yard.

tion of the necessity of a reformation increased every day; and while the established party were immolating their unfortunate victims at the shrine of bigotry, the reformers were secretly girding on their armour, and preparing their spiritual weapons against their enemies.

Cardinal Beaton, abbot of Aberbrothock, having succeeded his uncle, James Beaton, in the archbishopric of St Andrew's, began, at an early period of his advancement, to display his zeal for the Catholic religion. Having been appointed the Pope's legate for Scotland, and empowered to exercise the highest authority against the friends of the Reformation, he proved himself to be a true servant to the prince of cardinals, possessing, in an equal degree, cunning to apprehend his victims, and cruelty to persecute them. The reformers were now watched with double diligence, and the small portion of mercy which had been bestowed on those suspected of heresy during his uncle's administration, was completely withdrawn by the heartless cardinal. Yet, wretched as was the state of religious affairs during that period, and impolitic as was the conduct of the church dignitaries, we are not to impute the sanguinary disposition of the Beatens to all those who

filled eminent situations in the cathedrals and abbeys of Scotland. Even the elder Beaton, under whom Hamilton suffered, is represented by Spottiswood as having been "most unfortunate, that under the shadow of his authority many good men were put to death for the cause of religion, though he himself was neither violently set nor much solicitous (as it was thought) how matters went in the church." Gawin Dunbar, who at that time filled the see of Glasgow, seems to have been a man both prudent and humane. This mildness of character was known to his more bigoted brethren, who, upon the occasion of trying two heretics within his diocese, sent three judges, noted for their lack of humanity, to superintend the trial. The archbishop would have saved them after the heresy was proved, had not the deputed judges insisted on their condemnation, and declared that they would represent Dunbar as an enemy to the church if he saved its enemies from punishment. The feelings of the primate were honourable both to his nature and the high office which he possessed; and it is but justice to his memory that his name should be distinguished from the sanguinary list of his contemporaries.

Perhaps it required no common share of humanity on the part of the dignified clergy to induce them to befriend or save from punishment men who were inimical to their religion and their offices. A sentence which may be unjust in the abstract sense, loses much of its severity in men's eyes when sanctioned by an appearance of necessity, and passed in defence of an established system. If to this we add the natural desire which men have to possess their dignities and emoluments against all opposition, it is no wonder, setting aside conscientiousness in their religion, than the catholic clergy glossed their cruelty with the appearance of necessity, and calmed their consciences with a legal protection of their dignity.

It was unfortunate for the established religion, that its dignitaries were so much involved in politics and affairs of state. In early ages few men were sufficiently learned to become ministers of government. The nobility despised knowledge, and looked upon the act of killing men or chasing game, of routing an army or pursuing a herd of deer, as the most honourable of all employments. The priests, therefore, were raised to secular offices; the ministers of religion became ministers of state, and

the chancellor's robes were frequently thrown over the alb of the bishop, or the humble baldric of the abbot. In progress of time this double office became highly invidious, and justly so, seeing that no single person could discharge the duties of one office without prejudice to those of the other. Such likewise is the state of man, that no system can be made binding for any length of time. What is at first a fine theory, becomes so changed in the course of practice, that, in the end, the system is looked upon as a nuisance. Unfortunately for those in power, they will not yield a jot of their prerogative, till, in being forced to give up particular points, the whole is wrenched from them. Had the popish party in Scotland yielded a little at first to the spirit of the times, they might have retained their name and place in the country. But they foolishly expected to control men's minds by violence against their bodies; a while they fought with the lion's whelp, and in his tender age subdued and bound him, but in full growth he burst from the toils, and laid his enemies prostrate at his feet.

It was during scenes of rigour and severity against the reformers, that George Wishart chose to return to his native country. Aware

of the penalties which he would incur by teaching the new doctrines, it is probable that he had prepared himself for the worst; and anxious to lend his helping hand to the glorious cause, he boldly came forward to the work of his Master, knowing that though a violent death was the consequence, he would obtain "a more excellent reward," where the power of his enemies could not reach him. In the spring of the year 1544 he landed at Montrose, where he was received by his friend Mr Erskine with all the cordiality and welcome, which might be expected from a heart so congenial to the kind offices of friendship. Wishart took up his abode at Dun, and there prepared himself for his journey through Scotland to preach the doctrines of the Reformation.

This was a point (perhaps the only one) in which Mr Erskine differed from his friend. Possessing more prudence and moderation in the cause, the Laird of Dun considered Wishart's plan of publicly disseminating his religious principles somewhat premature. He saw the danger to which his friend was about to expose himself; and he was unwilling that true religion should suddenly lose so useful and persuasive an advocate. He therefore pressed him

to remain a little longer in the neighbourhood, where he might make himself eminently useful, and be content with a small sphere until the rigour of the times was somewhat relaxed. To these persuasions Wishart replied, that, in order to secure friends to the cause of truth, it was necessary that that truth should be fearlessly promulgated. As for himself, he knew that he was marked out for the sacrifice; but he was "ready to be offered" when it should please Heaven to allow his enemies to triumph.

From Montrose Wishart proceeded to Dundee, where, as well as in the west of Scotland, he continued to preach with great success, adding daily to the flock of the reformed church, and eluding, by singular providence, all the machinations of his enraged enemies. He paid his last visit to Montrose in the following year; and, after spending a short time among his friends there, at the particular desire of Mr Erskine he celebrated the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Perhaps this was the first celebration of that holy sacrament, in both kinds, in Scotland; for, notwithstanding that he remained in Dundee and in the west of Scotland for a considerable time, the plague having raged in the former town, and the use of the

churches having been denied to him in other places, it is probable that such a religious ordinance as the Lord's Supper could not have been conveniently celebrated by Wishart, till he enjoyed the immediate protection of such a friend as he found in the Laird of Dun.

The friars, of whom there were several orders in the town, indignant on hearing of such an heretical innovation, which they accounted pollution to the place, were by no means slack in decrying the conduct of Wishart. It is likely that some of them were in correspondence upon this subject with Cardinal Beaton; * for, shortly after this circumstance, Wishart received a letter, purporting to be from a friend in the west country, who immediately desired to see him. Upon this intelligence Wishart prepared for the journey, and, on leaving the town, he was accompanied by a number of friends, who wished to show their respect for so venerable and worthy a character by walking along with him part of the way. They had not proceeded farther than the cuningar † of Tayock, when Wishart suddenly stopped, and, meditating for a few moments, said, " I am forbidden by God to go

* See Note L at the end.

† See Note M at the end.

this journey." He then desired a few of his followers to walk towards the high ground of the cuningar, while he with the rest returned to the town. The others arriving shortly after, stated, that they had seen a troop of horse esconced behind the heights, and who doubtless were lying in wait for him. It turned out also that the letter from his friend in the west was a forgery, and intended only to draw him into the trap prepared for him.

But although, by the good providence of God, this worthy man had so often escaped the wiles of his enemies, he was at length destined to undergo the severe trial of a martyr in the cause of truth. Having been secured by the treachery and perjury of the Earl of Bothwel, he was put into the hands of his arch enemy, Cardinal Beaton, who lost no time in bringing him to the tribunal—not of justice, but of condemnation. After having been found guilty of heresy by the ecclesiastical court, an application was made to the Earl of Arran, regent of the kingdom, to order the execution of the sentence. Arran, who at one time had favoured the reformers, was now, by the persuasion of Beaton, brought over to the Catholic side; yet, in this instance, he blamed the indecent hurry of the Cardinal in

bringing Wishart to the stake. Willing to save so pious and popular a preacher, Arran, at the instigation of Hamilton of Preston (a man of virtue and shrewdness), desired Beaton to delay the execution of Wishart's sentence, at least for some time. But such was the presumption of Beaton, and such his thirst for the reformer's blood, that he not only, in defiance of the regent's order, put the sentence against Wishart immediately into execution, but also glutted his truculent heart with the sight of the martyr's sufferings from his palace window.

The death of Wishart excited great sensation, not merely in those places which, in his ministerial capacity, he had visited, and where he had won the friendship of many, but also throughout the kingdom in general. Men could not help drawing the contrast between the haughty, insolent, and hard-hearted Cardinal, and the meek and resigned martyr; and even those who were in a manner neutral in religious controversy, could not avoid condemning the impolicy of the popish authorities. But the death of Wishart was not mere martyrdom; it was murder. By the law of the land, the secular arm alone could execute the sentence of death; and, in this case, the civil magistrate

not only refused to perform, but forbade the execution. Nothing, however, can prove in a stronger degree the imbecility and drivelling disposition of the Regent, and the audacious cruelty of the Cardinal, than the circumstance of Wishart's death. It shows to what a wretched condition the law had been reduced, when a hot-headed churchman, inflamed with bigotry and a thirst of blood, dared, formally, to act in defiance of the standing laws of his country and the direct mandate of his Sovereign's representative.

The death of Beaton,* which happened a few months after Wishart's execution, no doubt freed the nation of one of its most hated tyrants, yet the manner in which that event was accomplished was unworthy of the reformers and their sacred cause. Assassination is in itself, perhaps, the most abominable of all crimes. It is revengeful, deceitful, mean, and cowardly, and altogether an act worthy only of the basest ruffian. If in any case it can be palliated, it is only in such as that of Beaton, where the object of the assassin's destruction is above all law, and totally out of the reach of justice. In all civil commotions reprisals are made with

* See Note N at the end.

great danger, and, in a religious warfare, acts of revenge ought never to be indulged. Some reformed writers have even gone the length to say that toleration ought not to be granted.* In support of this monstrous doctrine they quote the word of God, forgetting that the laws there set down relate to the worshipping of false gods, and not to that religion which adores the true Divinity under different forms and rites. If toleration is unlawful, why are the papists blamed for burning heretics and imprisoning innovators? The greatest crime of the popish religion is its cruelty and intolerance, and a reformer who advocates those pernicious principles for the sake of his own side, is equally guilty with the party whom he opposes and condemns.

* See Note O at the end.

CHAP. IV.

Queen Mary sent to France—educated a papist—display of Mr Erskine's patriotism and military promptitude.

IN the year 1548, the Scottish Parliament assembled at the abbey near Haddington for the purpose of ordering the settlement of their young Queen Mary. Of this parliament Mr John Erskine was a member, as knight of the shire of Angus. There were two powerful suitors for the hand of the Queen; in other words, for the alliance with Scotland—the Dauphin of France, and Edward VI. of England. Those who were inclined to the Protestant cause (among whom Mr Erskine distinguished himself by his eloquence and sound reasoning) wished to concede to the proposition of England, which, besides other advantages, offered to unite in one realm a royal pair so well calculated, both by rank and age, for each other's happiness. The union of the princess would have

led to the immediate union of the kingdoms, so well designed by nature to be one and the same realm; and by this union the whole empire would have become so strong and powerful, as to defy all the machinations of foreign enemies. It was farther represented by the patriotic party, that the state of Scotland was such (after the shameful defeat at Pinkey, and while faction and animosity prevailed to such a degree among the different states of society) that it was impossible for the kingdom to maintain the war much longer against the English, who were at that moment in the heart of the country, and at a short distance from the place of debate.* That the condition of a ten years' truce, whatever might befall in the interval, had been offered by England before the overthrow at Pinkey, which truce, with all other advantages, would immediately be entered into by the English government, on the delivery of the young Queen into their hands. And lastly, that every measure tending to thwart so natural, so useful, and permanent an alliance, was inimical to the young princess herself, and the country which owed her allegiance.

* The English were then in possession of the town of Haddington and the fortresses of Hume and Fastcastle.

These wise arguments were opposed, not by contrary reasoning, but by bribery and ambition. France, more crafty in its measures than England, had pensioned the Scottish regent and cajoled many of the nobility with flattering promises. The Queen-mother, who in reality governed the kingdom, befriended the suit of her native country; and, not the least powerful in state affairs, the catholic clergy, who looked upon a union with England as an overthrow of the popish hierarchy, supported the measure of sending the young Queen to France with all the strength of their party.

Power, therefore, prevailed over sense; and thus was Mary, during her pupilage, bartered for French gold, and sold by her ambitious guardians to a foreign power, which, had not subsequent events checked its designs, would have brought Scotland into vassalage, and made the ancient independent kingdom of the Bruces and Stuarts a tributary province of King Pepin's line. She was sent, or rather stolen out of the country, (for the French fleet which took her over to France had to make use of a stratagem to answer their purpose,) in order to receive her education in a court notorious to all the world for its levity, immorality, and cere-

monious frivolity. Certainly the Queen of Scots proved an apt scholar under the tuition of her uncles, the Guises, who gave her such an education as tended, on her return to Scotland, to disgust her with the simple and poor appendages of the court of Holyrood; an education which settled deeply and immoveably in her heart a love for the catholic religion; which exalted her ideas beyond her means, by teaching her the popish argument, that she was entitled to the sovereignty of England, in preference to Elizabeth; and which, in short, was the prime cause of her unfortunate and unhappy life and miserable end.

The parliament which consigned Mary to the arms of France seems to have thought it a necessary measure that their Queen should be removed. Their argument was rather unfortunate for their good sense. They considered that the Queen's residence in Scotland was the cause of the English hostilities, and, to remove these, they voted their Queen into the hands of the King of England's rival, thereby provoking Edward's government to every measure of revenge, and stirring them up to pursue the victory at Pinkey to extremity. It would have been wiser in the parliament, and better both

for the Queen and her country, that she had received her education at home. There were many fortresses in Scotland secure enough for the retreat of the young Queen ; all ranks, all parties, would have vied with each other in laying claim to her future friendship, and signalizing themselves by such deeds as would have met her approbation when she arrived at an age capable of appreciating merit. The presence of a sovereign, though an infant, would have inspired the people with far more loyalty and patriotism than the sight of a feeble and weak-minded regent, whom the country tardily and carelessly obeyed. The cause of religion, too, would probably have suffered fewer privations had Mary been educated in her native country. Though tutored in the popish faith, the operations of the new doctrines would have come under her observation in the same gradual manner in which they appeared ; and, by having an opportunity of hearing the reasons of both parties, she might, without yielding entirely to the views of the reformers, have been less bigoted in the religion to which her conscience yielded. Besides, it is very probable that, both from his relationship and abilities, the Earl of Murray would have become her adviser and minister,

and, instead of turning his back upon his unfortunate sister, (as he was in a manner obliged to do,) he would have been her best friend and most prudent adviser, enabling her by wise measures to shed a lustre over her kingdom, as she herself, by her beauty and accomplishments, would have shed around her court.

It may seem superfluous thus to draw a picture of what might have taken place under fancied circumstances; the period has gone by, and history has registered the facts as they occurred. Yet the mind in reflecting upon misfortunes cannot help lamenting them, and, at the same time, though unavailing, cannot avoid pointing out the cure after the disease has triumphed. After the parliament of Haddington had finished its discussions, Mr Erskine returned to Montrose, where he soon found another opportunity of displaying his patriotism, and, at the same time, his military promptitude.

The English fleet, under the command of Admiral Lord Seymore, brother of the Protector, anxious to annoy the Scottish coast while the land forces were actively engaged in the country, made a descent upon the shores of Fife, where they expected, by plundering the villages and towns, to avenge themselves on the Scots,

and carry off what booty came in their way. The alarm occasioned by their landing having reached the prior of St Andrew's, (afterwards Earl of Moray) he, with a company of rustics, indifferently armed, hastened to oppose the enemy. At first the cannon of the English dispersed the countrymen, but, by the exertions of their leader, they were soon brought together, when, charging with desperate fury upon the invaders, the Fifemen put them to flight, chased them back to the sea, killed and took prisoners several hundreds, and so confounded the English that many were drowned in their hurry to get back to their ships.

Enraged at their defeat, yet afraid to venture again on shore in so populous a part of the country, the English sailed northward, and arriving opposite the mouth of the South Esk river, they resolved to attack the town of Montrose, in order to redeem the honour which they lost in the Fife expedition, and revenge themselves by plundering and destroying a less populous part of the country.

To make sure of surprising the inhabitants, the English determined to attack Montrose in the dead of night. They therefore kept out at sea, riding in the bay at such a distance as not

to be discovered on shore. But this prudence seems to have deserted them after night-fall; for, by some unaccountable folly on their part, several lights were suspended about their vessels as they approached the mouth of the river. It is probable that, being unacquainted with the navigation of the South Esk, they had sent boats on shore, in the twilight, for pilots, who, in order to warn the citizens of approaching danger, had, upon some pretence, hung up those lights, which, being seen by those who were stationed at the fort, had given time for alarm and preparation against some coming evil.

Provost Erskine, upon the first intelligence, immediately sent orders through the burgh, that every person capable of bearing arms should forthwith accoutre himself in the best manner possible, and proceed with all expedition to the links, a level common which lies between the town and the sea. In the mean time he quickly armed his own retainers and servants, and, having waited the arrival of his troops, (who were composed of a few soldiers, and a great multitude of merchants, tradesmen, and apprentices hastily armed,) he divided them into three bands, and gave his prompt directions to each.

The first division he dispatched to a small hill close by the river, called the Fort or Constable hill, ordering them to remain concealed behind the ramparts until they should see an opportunity of engaging the enemy with advantage. The second division, which consisted of those who wore light armour, and were provided with bows and arrows or with arquebuses,* he himself led straight down to the river, after having directed the third division, (which consisted chiefly of servants and a general crowd of youths, with a few veteran soldiers to keep them in order,) to lie in wait behind another hill, called the Horologe hill, a short distance down the river from the Fort hill.

The landing place of the river being between these two hills, Mr Erskine led his company there to attack the English as they came on shore. Seeing a small number of the inhabitants, irregularly equipped to oppose their landing, the English, with great confidence and hope of success, came immediately from their ships, and began to fight their way through the townsmen. The bowmen at first discharged their arrows and small shot at the invaders while coming on shore, and afterwards met them

* A kind of small hand gun in great use at that time.

in a close and tumultuous fight, opposing their irregular weapons to the spears and swords of the enemy, and substituting, for their want of strength, desperate courage and resolution. The provost, fighting at the head of his men, gradually retired before the enemy; and although the townsmen disputed every step of ground with the English, yet it appeared evident to them, that the undisciplined burgesses were yielding with decency and honour before the more numerous and courageous soldiery who headed the invasion. To flatter the enemy with this idea was the intention of Mr Erskine's gradual retreat before them; and the effect was equal to his wish, for the English were thus imperceptibly drawn from their landing place to the ramparts of the Fort hill, when, upon a signal being given, the first division of the townsmen rushed from behind the ramparts and joined the second company under the provost. For a moment the English paused. But, being encouraged by their leader, they renewed the conflict with redoubled vigour against the increased power of the townsmen, who, possessing now the advantage of the rising ground, as well as an increase of forces, successfully combated and cut down their enemies.

Although the townsmen, encouraged by the command and example of their provost, not only behaved with great bravery and resolution, but thinned the ranks of the enemy at every sally, it is probable that they would not have been able to keep up the fight much longer against so numerous and desperate a band of invaders, had not a deception (somewhat similar to that practised by Robert Bruce at Bannockburn) been made upon the enemy. The English, though several times repulsed with loss from the brow of the hill, seemed resolved, if not to conquer, at least to avenge themselves ; and, becoming more and more desperate, they continued the fight till day-light began to appear, when looking towards the east, they beheld from the Horologe hill the third division of the townsmen, who, with colours displayed and horns sounding, seemed, in the doubtful twilight, to be a numerous reinforcement coming to cut off their retreat to the ships. Afraid of being surrounded by a company apparently numerous and keen for the fight, and knowing the military quality of the townsmen from the specimen which they had already seen, the English precipitately fled towards the landing place, and, being hotly pursued, great numbers

of them were cut down in the way, and many more were slain in the hurry and confusion of embarking.

The number of English who landed upon this expedition has been differently stated; probably they amounted to eight hundred; for although their loss in the Fife adventure was great, they had on board at least twelve hundred soldiers previous to their descent upon the Scottish coast. It is supposed that nearly two thirds of the invaders fell during this skirmish and retreat. The loss on the side of the townsmen was inconsiderable; for, notwithstanding the length of time which the fight occupied, the most sanguinary period was during the precipitate retreat of the English, when the townsmen possessed the whole advantage.*

The prompt manner in which Provost Erskine prepared this sudden and secret attack, and the activity and presence of mind which he displayed in conducting his irregular troops during the skirmish, show, that, had he been inclined to adopt the military profession, he wanted not the requisite qualities of a prudent general and brave soldier. Slight and trivial as this action may appear to those who compare

* See Note P at the end.

it with regular armies engaged in the field, it required no less skill and conduct to manage it successfully than those great battles which are more famous, because the armies engaged are more numerous, and because the fate of nations may depend upon the issue. But the consequences of a defeat in this case would have involved all the miseries of war, if not to a nation, at least to an extensive tract of country. It was the intention of the English first to plunder, despoil, and burn the town of Montrose; and afterwards to ravage the country, especially the How of the Mearns, a district which would have been particularly favourable for pillage, considering that it was fertile, and at the same time thinly inhabited, containing few castles of defence and no towns. But the determined courage of the Fife and Montrose leaders baffled the schemes of the marauders, who, supposing that the warlike part of the nation was drawn to the neighbourhood of Haddington, thought they could have landed with impunity on the defenceless shores of Fife, Angus, and Mearns.

In this skirmish at Montrose, almost the last blood of the last war between Scotland and England, as two distinct kingdoms, was shed.

The English, owing to distractions in their counsels at home, were beginning to be less active in the war, and soon withdrew their troops from Scotland altogether. The death of Edward VI. at an early age, happened shortly after. His sister and successor, Mary, though she dreaded the consequence of the French and Scottish alliance, did not declare direct war against Scotland; and Elizabeth, during her long reign, being the supporter and protector of the Scottish regents and most powerful noblemen, during their Queen's captivity, may be said to have moulded Scotland a good deal to her own will. Thus, after the English war of Edward VI. the two nations may be said to have sheathed those swords which, from a period beyond the retrospective eye of history, had deluged each other's country with rivers of blood, without producing a result which would have been beneficial to both—by ensuring the blessings of union and peace such as we now enjoy.

CHAP. V.

Mr Erskine becomes an exhorter among the Protestants — arrival of John Knox in Scotland — discussion with Maitland and others respecting the celebration of mass—Knox first begins to preach publicly at Dun—style of his preaching—excites the attention of the gentry—preaches at Calder—summoned by the bishops to appear at Edinburgh—returns to Dun, and celebrates the Lord's Supper.

MR ERSKINE having laid aside the sword which in emergency he had girded on, retired to his castle of Dun, where, as well as at Montrose, he continued for several years employed in ripening the cause of the Reformation, and fulfilling his duty as a civil magistrate. Having by this time gained over from popery a great many proselytes, he continued to labour among them with unwearied exertion; and while he took care that, at his chapel, and other places in the neighbourhood, they should always have the benefit of hearing the preachers of the true gos-

pel, he, in the meantime, became himself an exhorter among the protestants. The number of "exhorters" afterwards began to increase; and, in the primitive Scottish church, before and after the Reformation, there were chosen from the lay members of each congregation, several of those exhorters, whose office was somewhat higher than that of an elder, being to admonish the lukewarm, to comfort the afflicted, and to teach the ignorant. This practice, as well as that of several other offices, which the early reformers devised to meet the exigency of the times, has long ago gone into desuetude.

In the year 1554, the cause of the Reformation in Scotland received great succour by the arrival from Geneva of the celebrated John Knox. This famous reformer, who had retired into the castle of St Andrew's after the murder of Cardinal Beaton, and who was sent on board the galleys by the French, to whom the castle surrendered, escaping from slavery, retired into England, and afterwards proceeded to Frankfort in Germany, whence he went to Geneva. Having been invited home by his Scottish friends, of whom the Laird of Dun was the chief, he took up his abode in Edinburgh, and began, private-

ly, among his acquaintances, to lay down his principles and rules of faith.

Mr Erskine being, at the time of Knox's arrival, resident in Edinburgh, invited him frequently to his house, where, in company with others of a like mind, they conversed upon and discussed religious subjects, especially those topics which were connected with the Reformation. At these meetings Knox inveighed so powerfully, and with such effect, against the popish mass, the doctrine of the real presence in the eucharist, and the idolatry of worshipping the saints, that he soon silenced all the objections which the sagacity of his friends had started for the sake of argument.

One evening in particular, the Laird of Dun having invited to supper John Knox, William Maitland, younger of Lethington, John Willock, (afterwards a celebrated preacher,) and several others, friends to the cause of religion, the popish ceremonies came under their discussion. Knox having asserted that it was unlawful for any good Christian to attend mass, which, so far from being a religious ordinance, was idolatry and an abomination in the sight of God, Maitland opposed the opinion, espe-

cially respecting the unlawfulness of attending the celebration of mass, stating that St Paul himself, in order to avoid the tumult of the people at Jerusalem, went into the temple and purified himself with four men that had a vow upon them ; thus seeming to yield to the ordinances of the times. Therefore, continued Maitland, what St Paul did we may also with safety do, seeing that the nature of the times compels us to observe those ceremonies which otherwise we consider of no value.

To this Knox immediately replied, " that men ought so to serve the times as they neglect not their obedience unto God, whose commandment, how great soever the danger be, may not be transgressed." He added, that there was a great dissimilitude between going into the temple to purify and pay vows, (seeing these rites were sometimes commanded by God himself,) and the celebration of mass, which, from the first invention, was an abominable idolatry. Moreover, he doubted if St Paul's fact had any good warrant, since, so far from purchasing thereby the favour of the Jews, he was thrown out of the temple and hardly escaped with his life.

These arguments of Knox had such an effect

upon all present, that Maitland, the chief objector, becoming thoroughly convinced of the genuine nature of Knox's doctrine, immediately said, "I see very well that all our shifts will serve nothing before God, seeing they stand us in so small stead before men." The debate having thus concluded to the conviction of all present, they solemnly resolved, that, to whatever danger they might thereafter be exposed, they would discontinue their attendance at mass; and they agreed that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper should be celebrated among them according to the word of God, the rules of the primitive church of Christ, and the manner practised by the reformed churches on the Continent.

Convinced of the great rhetorical and argumentative powers of Knox, and knowing that his eloquence would come home to the hearts of many who were callous on the subject of religion, the Laird of Dun invited the champion of the Reformation to spend a few weeks at the castle of Dun, in order that the neighbourhood might be benefited by his preaching. Accordingly Knox arrived, a few days after Mr Erskine, at Dun, where he began to preach to those friends and acquaintances of the Laird.

who attended divine service there. The great Scottish reformer had not yet acquired that fame which afterwards sounded his name throughout Europe. What he had hitherto taught to the friends of the true cause in Scotland, he had taught privately; and it was not till he came to Dun that he opened his mouth publicly against the vices of the popish clergy, and the errors of their doctrine. In other countries he was well known; and at Berwick, Newcastle, and London, he had made many converts. He was now to enter upon his grand mission; and, from the effect which his eloquence and persuasive argument had upon his audience at Dun, it was easy to predict his future greatness. His style of preaching was plain and simple; sometimes familiar, sometimes serious, according to the sentiment; always animated and zealous, always impressive; the effect of it was soon made apparent from the increasing crowds who assembled to hear him; and, while some came to find fault, and others to gratify curiosity, every person of good judgment, whether approving or disapproving his doctrines, confessed an admiration of his powers. Mr Erskine took care to embrace this opportunity of increasing the friends of the

protestant cause, by inviting to his castle, during Knox's stay, all his friends of power, distinction, and birth, throughout the counties of Angus and Mearns. The result equalled the design; for the gentry around were so well pleased with Knox's principles and manner of inculcating them, that, before he departed, they engaged him to promise that he would revisit that part of the country next summer.

From Dun, Knox proceeded to Calder, where he likewise preached with great success. Among the friends whom his eloquence and doctrine secured to him were Lord Lorn, (afterwards Earl of Argyle,) and Lord James Stewart, (afterwards Earl of Murray.) The fame of this celebrated minister increasing fast over the country, the popish clergy naturally became alarmed, and, complaining to their diocesans, they were promised immediate satisfaction. Hitherto the Catholic clergy had opposed reformers, pious indeed, and fervent in zeal, but of a mild and meek disposition, unprotected by power, and easily caught in the mesh which was laid for them. But the character of Knox soon began to be developed, and his enemies found that they had now to deal with a man who was not so easily to be overruled; a

man who united the strongest zeal for religion with an utter contempt for the established system; whom no bribes could seduce nor threats overawe, and who (more fortunate than his predecessors) appearing at a time when the Reformation was already established in the hearts of the people, was supported by powerful patrons, together with the confidence and the conscious pride which the effects of his ministry must have excited within him.

Having been summoned by the Bishops to appear at Edinburgh and answer for his heretical doctrines, Knox apprized the Laird of Dun, stating his determination to meet his accusers, and requesting his friend's company on the appointed day. Accordingly, these two reformers met in Edinburgh; but, not having prepared any specific charge against him, or thinking it more prudent, in the meantime, to suspend proceedings, the bishops did not hold the diet. Knox, therefore, not caring to come to Edinburgh for nothing, took the opportunity of addressing the people. Instead of being admonished by the popish party, he became himself the admonisher of them; and instead of being condemned for heresy, he, on the same day and at the same place, preached down su-

perstition, tyranny, and the peculiar creed of popery !

Next year, according to his appointment, Knox again visited Dun. The impression which his former labours had left upon that part of the country was truly gratifying. The gentry flocked to his preaching, and, fully convinced of the truth of his tenets, (drawn from the source of truth itself,) they requested that he would celebrate among them the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the manner agreeing with the spirit of Scripture. This was, indeed, a great victory obtained over the prejudices of education, considering that it was in direct contradiction to the rules and observances of the Romish church ; and that it was an action by which the communicants solemnly, in the presence of God and man, renounced popery and embraced the reformed religion. Yet even this virtual declaration did not satisfy the hearers of Knox ; for, at the next meeting, at which, besides many gentlemen of Angus and Mearns, were present many of the citizens of Montrose and Brechin, it was unanimously agreed that from that time the idolatry of popery should be opposed by each and all to the utmost of their power.

Such was the success which followed this great reformer's ministry. Confident of divine aid, and fearless of human opposition, he marched on with a bold and progressive step; intent only upon the great work in which he was a conspicuous and active labourer, and never slackening till he saw that work established against all opposition.

CHAP. VI.

Bond of agreement by the Protestant nobility, &c.—proposed nuptials of the Dauphin of France and the Queen of Scots—commissioners sent to France—refuse the proposals of the French court—martyrdom of Walter Mill.

TOWARDS the end of the year 1557, a bond of agreement was entered into by all the protestant nobility and gentry. The subscribers of this bond styled themselves the “ Congregation of the Lord,” in opposition to the papists, who were (somewhat ridiculously and uncharitably) called the “ Congregation of Satan.” The names of Argyle, Glencairn, Morton, and Erskine of Dun, were the first which were attached to this bond of union. The object of the “ congregation” was to show to the nation that the subscribers were determined, through God’s assistance, to “ apply their whole power, substance, and very lives, to maintain, set forward, and establish, the word of God against Satan

and all the wicked powers who might intend tyranny and trouble against the said congregation."

This bond having been put into the hands of several friends of the reformed cause, was sent through the country to gather names; every gentleman, burgher, and citizen, who favoured the protestant religion, subscribing the same; so that, in a short time, the congregation became formidable, both on account of its numbers, and the determined spirit which possessed its members.

In the mean time, Henry II. of France, anxious to bind that kingdom and Scotland by a more powerful tie than that of the amicable leagues of nations, proposed that the nuptials of the Dauphin and the young Queen of Scots should immediately be celebrated. For this purpose he sent dispatches to the Scottish parliament, which met on the 14th of December 1557, urging them, in consideration of the important consequences which would ensue, to enter, without loss of time, into the spirit of his measure, and send commissioners to the court of France for the purpose of ratifying those terms which had been previously agreed upon for the mutual interest of both nations.

The Scottish parliament, without feeling so much anxiety upon the subject as the French king, did not object to the proposal, and, accordingly, they chose eight commissioners to represent the three estates of Scotland at the marriage of their Queen. These commissioners were, of the nobility, the Earl of Cassilis, Earl of Rothes, and Lord Cumbernauld; of the clergy, the Archbishop of Glasgow, the Bishop of Orkney, and the Prior of St Andrew's; and of the commons, the Provost of Edinburgh and the Provost of Montrose.

The nobility employed in this service were men of great family interest; the Bishop of Orkney had proved his qualification for the office of commissioner by the many embassies in which he had been engaged, and the Prior of St Andrew's, standing in the relationship of half brother to the Queen, was, by birth as well as ability, entitled to the nation's confidence. The appointment of Mr Erskine to this honourable service must, therefore, be looked upon as the greatest compliment which could be paid to his wisdom and virtue, on which alone his claim for the office rested. Considering that, at the time, the Scottish parliament consisted of a great majority of those who were inimical to

the protestant religion, and that Mr Erskine's principles were notorious to every member, this commission displays, in the strongest light, the unbounded confidence which the country reposed in his prudence and patriotism.

This embassy, which was expected to have been joyful, (as being on the occasion of the union of the princes and their kingdoms,) was unfortunate from first to last. Scarcely had the vessels which bore the commissioners cleared the mouth of the Frith of Forth, when a violent storm overtook them, and, blowing with increased fury during their passage, it so shattered and disabled the ships, that with great difficulty they reached the coast of France. Two of the vessels (in one of which was the Queen's bridal furniture) foundered off Boulogne; and only two of the commissioners, the Earl of Rothes and the Bishop of Orkney, escaped of the many passengers on board. The other vessels, after having been long driven about by the violence of the tempest, at length reached one of the French ports, where the commissioners disembarked, and proceeded on their embassy to Paris.

No sooner had they arrived at the French court, than they were received apparently in

the most welcome manner. The Guises, uncles to Mary, and the virtual governors of France, were particularly officious in kindness and flattery towards the plain, and, comparatively, blunt Scots. Several days were spent in revelry, joust, and tournament, in honour of the marriage; and, for a time, all seemed gaiety, splendour, and happiness. At length, in presence of the council, the chancellor of France requested of the commissioners to procure, for the Dauphin, the Scottish insignia of royalty, in order to create him "matrimonial King of Scotland." The commissioners answering that they had received no instructions from their country upon this important matter, the chancellor, with considerable ingenuity, explained, that the French court only wished them, on the first opportunity, to give their votes, and use their influence, in the Scottish parliament, to obtain this object, so honourable (as he expressed it) to both parties. This explanation was immediately followed by a request that the commissioners would set their names to a written promise to that effect.

A demand so presumptuous deserved a resolute and fearless answer; and the commissioners appropriately replied, that, even had they

been intrusted with unlimited powers, they could not have given their consent to a matter so important, without due deliberation upon its probable effect on their country; that, at the moment, it appeared to them an attempt to bind the ancient kingdom of Scotland by an unnecessary tie to France; and that, as the greater of two bodies linked together has always the command over the smaller, such a proposition would only tend to make Scotland the vassal and dependant of France.

While the commissioners were thus honestly defending the interest and liberty of their country, they were not aware of the secret hands which had been previously employed in undermining all the plans which both the parliament and the commissioners had devised for the security of Scotland. The Guises, already monarchs of France in every respect save the nominal one with which King Henry was amused, had artfully plied the mind of their niece, the Queen of Scots, in order to induce her, in failure of heirs, to convey her hereditary kingdom of Scotland into the hands of France. This piece of machiavelism was insured by a bond which Mary had signed, and by which she intended to have rendered null and void all

contrary promises, which circumstances might extort from her. Thus was Scotland unceremoniously presented to her uncles by a thoughtless girl of fifteen; whereas, had she been brought up in her native land, and endeared to it by the common feelings of patriotism, she would, even at that early age, have felt a love for her country, which no flattery of selfish counsellors could have seduced. But she was sold by the Scottish parliament for a few French louis d'ors; and her purchasers were determined, it seems, to make the most of their bargain.

After the commissioners had spent several months in France, without being induced to agree to the monstrous request of that court, they began to think of returning home. They had not proceeded farther than Dieppe, when the Bishop of Orkney suddenly fell sick. His disorder seemed to be of a very violent nature, intractable to the power of medicine; and, after languishing for a short time in great pain, he expired. While his fellow ambassadors were grieving at the loss they had sustained, the Earl of Rothes likewise became ill, and died two days after the Bishop. The Earl of Casilis next became a prey to this strange dis-

ease, which so much alarmed Lord Cumberland (the other commissioner for the nobility) that he returned to Paris, naturally supposing that some contagious fever prevailed at Dieppe. He remained at Paris a little more than two months, and then died of the same mysterious sickness !

It was currently reported at the time, that these ill-fated noblemen had been carried off by poison ; and, when we consider all the circumstances of the case, little doubt remains against this popular belief. The commissioners had been obstinate in the eyes of the French court regarding a matter which checked the ambition of France ; and the Guises, being men void of principle, were well qualified for such a revenge. The circumstantial evidence likewise comes within a shade of proof. Four men, out of eight who were in perfect health, are cut off within a short time of each other, and many of their servants, who were fed from their tables, experienced the same fate ; and this, too, in a place where no epidemic distemper rages. The commissioners, too, upon whom the disease fell, were men of the strongest influence, and such as appeared most likely to oppose, with power, any future overtures which France might make

in her anxiety to grasp at Scotland. All these circumstances considered, there is scarcely a doubt remaining of the nature of the disease by which our country was deprived of those noble patriots. In addition to the actual deaths, another member of this unfortunate embassy (the Prior of St Andrew's) became so ill, that, although a good constitution proved superior to the dose which had been prepared for him, he was ever after subject to a weakness of stomach which often endangered his life.*

The four commissioners who survived this unhappy occurrence sailed from Dieppe; and, being more fortunate in their voyage home, they landed, after a safe passage, at Montrose, in the month of October 1558.

During their absence, Walter Mill, priest of Lunan, (whom we have noticed before,) having returned to his native country, after an absence of twenty years, was apprehended by the popish faction; accused of having discontinued mass while in his official capacity at Lunan; and, what was perhaps worse in the eyes of the clergy, of having married a wife during his residence abroad. He was tried and condemned at St Andrew's; and, at the hoary age of

* See Note Q at the end.

eighty, was tied to the stake, where he suffered with firmness and constancy. The fire which consumed Mill's body was the last of those direful flames which popery kindled in Scotland. True religion now began to have some power in the nation, and snatching the murderous torch from the hands of a persecuting faction, she steeped it in the blood of this venerable martyr, and quenched its blaze for ever ! *

* See Note R at the end.

CHAP. VII.

The Congregation assume a determined spirit in asserting their rights—Mr Erskine deputed to meet an assembly of Popish dignitaries—the assembly flatly refuse the Congregation's request—authority of Mary of Guise over Scotland—the Protestant ministers of Scotland summoned to appear at Stirling—Mr Erskine requested by the regent to meet her at Stirling—business supposed to be amicably settled—the Queen-regent changes her mind.

THE "Congregation," now somewhat confident of their numbers and zeal for the protestant religion, began to assume a bold and determined spirit in asserting their rights as men and as Christians. Having drawn up a petition, praying for liberty of conscience, Sir James Sandilands of Calder was employed to deliver the same into the hands of the Queen-regent, and to expostulate with her on the imprudence of denying to the reformers the exercise of their religion. The petitioners craved, in particular, that public prayers and the administration of

the sacraments should be made in the vulgar tongue, in order that the people might understand those things which so closely concerned them ; that the election of ministers should be free ; and that such priests of immoral character, as the relaxed state of religion had admitted into the church, should be dismissed from the ministry.

The petition being referred to the priests, whose tool, in all religious affairs, Mary of Guise had allowed herself to be made, they, after digesting their vexation, replied, that they would submit the whole matter of dispute to a public argument ; but the reformers insisting that the Bible alone was the rule of truth, the priests, not a little confounded, proposed the following terms : If the reformers would agree to the celebration of mass, acknowledge the existence of purgatory, and admit the power of the saints—the church would pray to God and administer both sacraments in the common language of the country.

It is no small proof of the power and confidence of the reformers, at that period, when it is known that they considered this proposition “ridiculous and unworthy of any reply.”*

* Buchanan.

Considering what was the general character of the priests, and the policy which they had hitherto pursued, the use of the vulgar tongue in the church service appears to be a very great concession. It was no less than the opening of the veil of mystery, and exposing many of their ceremonies to the eye of inquiry and ridicule. The Latin language, being unknown to the body of the people, was looked upon with awe, first, because they were ignorant of its terms, and secondly, because it enveloped the mysteries of religion, rendered still more mysterious by its unintelligible screen.* The Lama of Thibet, though originally a mortal, is looked upon and worshipped as a god, because he is surrounded with splendid ceremony and unmeaning garniture ; and the ancient oracles were the more respected and revered, as their prophecies were the more equivocal and mysterious.

An assembly of the popish dignitaries having met at Edinburgh, Mr John Erskine was deputed by the " congregation " to reason with them in behalf of his protestant brethren. Mr Erskine was chosen for this important errand, principally on account of his moderation, sua-

* See Note S at the end.

vity of manners, and the respect which the more reasonable of the popish party had for his birth and learning. When he came before the assembly, he appealed to their own feelings as men and as Christians whether the request of the congregation was not reasonable and just, considering that its members were conscientious in their opinions, unswayed by political bias, and unbribed by hope of aggrandizement: he entreated them to reflect whither all the opposition hitherto made against the new doctrines tended; and he humbly implored them, for the sake of themselves and their cause, to yield a little to the spirit, even though they might call it the prejudice of the times.

The answer which Mr Erskine received from this mitred assembly was a flat refusal of the congregation's request, accompanied by many threatenings and denunciations against every kind of heresy, and a profession of extraordinary respect and regard for the canon law and the decrees of the council of Trent.

Certainly it is a hard matter for dignity to give up its prerogative; whether as king or bishop, as a ruler over the persons or over the minds of men, we find the possessors of the high office stickling with a jealous caution to

ancient custom, even when that has been proved pernicious to the general interest. The dignitaries of the Scottish church, possessing the love of prerogative to an extraordinary degree, overshot their mark in their endeavour to secure it. Had they been wise politicians, they would have seen that a few judicious and timely prunings from the overgrown tree of their cultivation, would have allowed the first blast of opposition to blow harmlessly over. But they confided in its strength, and in its fall they fell. Trusting to the power of France, which at that time required all its energies in asserting its claim over the Netherlands, Milan, and Naples, the Scottish clergy expected to have brought in a foreign sword to subdue the conscientious opinions of the laity, and this, too, after their neighbour, England, had shown an almost unanimous predilection for reformation in religion; when the greater part of Germany had embraced the Lutheran or Calvinistic doctrines, and when France itself was teeming with hugonots.

It was natural for the bishops and abbots to reject all measures which they supposed might sap the foundations of the national church. Such an establishment is certainly necessary

for the support and well-being of religion—because the Christian church is militant on earth, and lays claim to the strength and unanimity of the whole body of its members to defend it against its temporal and spiritual enemies ; because it possesses a power of doing good proportioned to its harmony and firmness ; because it prevents the opinions of ignorant pretenders from seducing the minds of the weak and simple ; because it administers with more regularity and order the duties of education and charity ; because it is adopted by the majority of the Christian subjects of every nation ; and because it accords with the spirit of that maxim which asserts that the wish of the few ought to give place to the wish of the many. Such reasoning would have been plausible on the part of the church dignitaries, but their actions, while they intended to save, really destroyed the superstructure of their church. Unfortunately for mankind, they are not taught without experience. Even the retrospective mirror which history holds to the eye, is scarcely sufficient to point out the advantages of prudence and the danger of tyranny. Personal experience alone is capable of reforming the man ; but then, it only makes the hoary head shake

at the remembrance of the imprudence and rashness of youth.

The congregation and the established clergy being each determined to prove their strength, the one for procuring and the other for maintaining what each party considered their rights, the government was rather in a perplexed state to know how to proceed in order to effect peace, or, at least, to prevent war in the nation. The regent, being at the time deeply engaged with political matters, was anxious first to dismiss these, that she might be the more free to exercise her severity against the reformers. Having heard that the inhabitants of Perth, impatient of legal forms, had adopted the principles of the reformation without the consent of the authorities, and knowing that Dundee was fast imbibing the same sentiments from the mouth of Paul Methven, a famous reformed preacher, she ordered the provosts of those towns to attend more dutifully to her interest, commanding the chief magistrate of Perth to use his power and influence for the suppression of heretical opinions in that city, and desiring the provost of Dundee to apprehend the obnoxious preacher, who, within the royalty of the burgh,

estranged the minds of the citizens from the catholic faith.

Mary of Guise was a princess who, by her active policy, had gained, perhaps, a greater authority over Scotland than did any of its native kings. Yet so universally throughout the nation had the protestant doctrine spread, that her commands to the provosts of Perth and Dundee were eluded; the one excusing himself to her that he had control only over the persons, not the minds, of his fellow citizens; the other warning Methven of the danger which threatened him, and giving him an opportunity of retiring from his enemies.

Enraged at these insults, and farther provoked by the contempt of her authority which the people had shown in not celebrating the feast of Easter, according to her command, in the popish manner, the regent determined to exert the utmost of her princely power to crush at once these specimens of disloyalty, contumacy, and rebellion. She therefore summoned to appear at Stirling, on the 10th of May 1559, all the protestant ministers of Scotland, to answer for the crimes of heresy and schism, and for inculcating abominable errors and pernicious doctrines into the minds of the people. This gen-

eral citation, which aimed at the extirpation of the reformed religion, naturally alarmed the adherents of the protestant cause. Though confident of their strength, they were at a loss how to proceed; their ministers, they knew, might be tried, condemned, and even executed, before their friends could come to their aid; and, to attend the place of trial accompanied by an armed multitude in their defence, would seem as a bravado to paralyze the hand of justice. It was therefore resolved, that such gentlemen and others as favoured the protestant party should accompany, unarmed, the preachers of their respective counties, in order to show, not to use, their strength at the place of trial. By such means they hoped to induce the regent, who was possessed of discernment and prudence, either to forego her threats, or to use the ministers of the reformed religion with a lenity becoming her situation.

As the day of trial approached, the ministers began to collect their followers, and to proceed towards Stirling. The counties of Angus and Mearns, whose protestant principles had been promoted by the zealous labours of Mr Erskine, appeared the most enthusiastic, at least the most multitudinous, upon this occasion. Not

only did the gentry of these counties accompany their pastors, but the peasantry, anxious to confess their faith, by testifying their attachment to their preachers, followed in such numbers, that, when they arrived at Perth, and were met by the friends of those ministers who came from the other parts of the country, they appeared somewhat formidable in the sight of the catholics.

Of this multitude the regent was informed; and, although in their appearance they were more like the crowd which assembles at a fair, than a host collected together to oppose her measures, she very shrewdly guessed that a multitude, if once enraged, can soon provide themselves with weapons, and that civil commotions are, in some instances, more destructive than a regular army. Somewhat alarmed at the effect of her own rashness, and wishing, in the meantime, to gain whatever advantage prudence might suggest, she privately sent a messenger to Mr Erskine, (who attended at Perth with the rest of the protestant adherents) requesting him as a gentleman possessing great influence with his party, to meet her at Stirling, and confer upon the business at issue, in order to bring matters to an amicable adjustment.

Mr Erskine had himself proposed the same plan, anxious to prevent the regent from being alarmed at the news of the multitude assembled at Perth, and to obtain, if possible, a reconciliation between the contending parties. He, therefore, the more readily acquiesced in the regent's wish for an interview; and he immediately went forward to Stirling in the hope of settling the matter in the most moderate and peaceable way, according to the wishes which he had always expressed.

While the Laird of Dun was employed at Stirling, John Knox arrived in Scotland. He had retired to Geneva; but having been earnestly entreated by his friends in Scotland to return, he arrived in Edinburgh on the 2d of May, eight days before the proposed trial at Stirling. Having been included with the other ministers in the general summons, he took the opportunity of his presence in Scotland to be ready in attendance; and, after staying a few days at Dundee, he joined his brethren in Perth. The presence of so independent and fearless a friend inspired the rest with additional courage; and though they hoped that Mr Erskine's arrangements with the regent would save all further trouble, they looked upon

Knox's arrival among them as extremely favourable to their persecuted cause.

The business between the Queen-regent and Mr Erskine having been amicably settled, he immediately wrote to his friends at Perth acquainting them with the agreeable news. He stated, that, instead of coming forward to Stirling against the day of trial, the ministers and their followers should retire to their respective homes according to the settlement which he had made with the regent, who had discharged them from the diet.

Confiding in this pleasing intelligence, the greater part of the people left Perth, and turned their steps homewards. But many of the ministers, and particularly Mr Knox, who placed little faith in the promises of the regent, agreed to wait some time longer, until they should hear from Mr Erskine's mouth the particulars of the interview. Naturally jealous of the popish party, the reformers thought this arrangement too sudden to be sincere, and as the day of trial was so near at hand, the ministers considered it most prudent to remain in a body till the 10th of May was past, lest, by some tergiversation, they should afterwards be held as defaulters.

These surmises, founded partly on mistrust and partly on experience, were proved to be correct. On the evening of the 10th of May, Mr Erskine arrived in haste from Stirling, and acquainted his party with the unfortunate circumstance that the Queen-regent had thought proper to change her mind upon this important subject; that the day of trial having been allowed to pass without the compearance of the ministers, they were denounced rebels; that all loyal and dutiful subjects were strictly forbidden, under pain of treason, to protect and assist the outlawed pastors; and that he himself had thought it prudent to leave the court abruptly, not knowing how far even an ambassador was safe in the midst of such perfidy and deceit.

Sincerity is one of the first virtues of the throne; without it all confidence is lost. The golden thread which binds the lieges to their prince is liable to be snapped in twain, when the centre of attraction is inconstant and vacillating. No wonder that the reformers began now to question the genuineness of those gems which sparkled in the crown of Mary's deputed authority. They had now detected a piece of tinsel where they were led to expect gold;

or, in the language of scripture, they had asked an egg, and had received a serpent. And yet a great historian,* famous for his political sagacity, but noways friendly to the tenets of our religion, gravely suspects a breach of promise on the part of Mary. "The affair," says he, "lay altogether between the regent and the Laird of Dun; and that gentleman, though a man of sense and character, might be willing to take some general professions for promises." Now, if Mr Erskine had, upon mere "general professions," advised his party to retire from Perth, adding that there was no court to be held against them, he would have been a person neither of "sense nor character," and a very unfit ambassador in so important a cause. That Mr Erskine had made a definitive arrangement with the regent is beyond all doubt, from the confident advice which he gave to the ministers in his letter from Stirling, desiring them not to appear there on the day of trial, and adding the best of all reasons, that "the diet against them would be deserted." Besides, it is to be considered that Mr Erskine's interview with the regent took place about a week previous to the day of trial, and that he

* Hume.

remained at Stirling until he found that the regent had "changed her mind," or rather changed her words; for there is little doubt that her mind was unchanged in regard to the reformers. Now, if Mr Erskine had been caajoled by hints and professions, these must have been somewhat specific as well as lasting, otherwise so honest and zealous a man would have acquainted, at least by letter, his friends at Perth; and certainly professions made and continued eight days must impress confidence, even though the person who makes those professions be liable to general suspicions.

CHAP. VIII.

John Knox preaches at Perth—outrage committed there by the friends of the Reformation—reflections on this event—the Queen-regent marches against Perth—opposition made to her—she proposes to treat with the Reformers—breaks the treaty—her commissioners join the Congregation—popular outrage at Crail, Anstruther, St Andrew's, &c.—conferences between the Queen-regent and the Congregation—her death.

THE Laird of Dun on his arrival at Perth was glad to find, that, although the great mass of the people had retired upon the intelligence which he formerly sent, most of the nobility and gentry of Angus and Mearns, as well as many barons of the other counties, still remained. Hitherto he had been unwilling to allow matters to come to extremities, having all along advocated moderation and respected legal authority; but now, seeing that he himself, and the rest of the reformers, had been entrapped by deceit, he advised his friends to unite for

their mutual interest and protection, and prepare for the worst events that might befall.

In the meantime, John Knox, whose power lay chiefly in rousing up the minds of men to the highest pitch of zeal, ascended the pulpit at Perth, and preached to the people. His discourse aimed principally against idolatry, and the sin of profaning the temple of God with images, and pointed so directly to the popish apparatus which surrounded his auditors, that the greater part (especially those of the common classes) became fully prepared to prove their zeal against popery, its priests, and its paraphernalia. The imprudence of a catholic zealot soon gave them an opportunity; for, having, at the close of Knox's discourse, begun to display his trinkets of superstition, the scornful spectators began to mock; and meeting with retaliation from the priest, the multitude gathered upon him, destroyed the shrine of his saint, broke the altars, and dashed the images on the ground. Exulting in their courageous deeds, the mob proceeded immediately to the other churches and monasteries in the town, and, being reinforced by numbers who had come to assist in the work of destruction, they soon brought the splendid edifices to the

ground, and in a day's space made the unfortunate monks of Perth houseless and homeless wanderers.

This was the first outrage committed by the friends of the Reformation, and it soon led to the destruction of nearly all the religious houses in Scotland. No doubt it originated in an accident, but the people were ready for the occasion, and only waited the opportunity which that accident brought about. The act of purging the temple of its impurities was as different from the demolition of the temple as the pruning of a tree is from sawing it asunder; and if Knox had only required the former operation, he would not have entrusted the work to a lawless and wanton mob, incapable of distinguishing beauty from deformity. But, it is beyond question that Knox, and a few more of the reformers, secretly wished the total demolition of those splendid buildings which the pride (and may we not say taste?) of the catholics had reared. Whether it be true or not, that this great, but violent reformer, advised the people "to pull down the nests in order to dislodge the rooks," is of little consequence, as it is evident that he encouraged by all means

in his power, the barbarous work of destruction.

It is true that in overthrowing the sanctuaries of the monks, "black, white, and grey, with all their trumpery," a host of idle and well fed beggars were driven abroad; but the suddenness of their removal (a degree worse than that at the suppression of the monasteries in England) would only tend to increase beggary for the time. It is true that the destroyers of those monastic buildings proved only their barbarous rage, and not their cupidity, since every thing of value found within the obnoxious cloisters was bestowed upon the poor. But this invidious species of charity was productive of no good, since thereby more beggars were made than fed. It is also true that splendid buildings, having echoing vaults, fretted arches, and storied windows, are not absolutely necessary to the spirit of true devotion (though many pious and religious men have innocently thought so,) but why demolish such beautiful monuments of antiquity? why exercise revenge against the harmless walls? why let loose an unruly, turbulent, and ignorant rabble to mix in one promiscuous mass of ruin altars and walls, images and towers, crucifixes and arches, leav-

ing only as much as would inform posterity of the rude and merciless zeal of their ancestors ?

Admiring, in a strong degree, the noble independence and persevering spirit of the reformers, and being convinced that they were actuated in most cases by their disinterested love of truth, we speak the more boldly upon the subject. All were not favourable to this work of destruction, unworthy as it was of sensible and considerate men. That it was not necessary, may be proved from the power which the reformers then possessed ; for, at that period, Knox had arrived at great popularity, Argyle and Glencairn were ready and able to assist their cause, and Stuart and Erskine had proved their zeal for the truth. That it was the destruction of the beauty and elegance of ecclesiastical architecture in Scotland, may be seen by contrasting, even in their ruinous state, our ancient churches with those places of worship which the niggard hands of parochial heritors have raised in their stead, and which surpass, in plainness and rudeness of style, all other public buildings throughout the country. The first of these acts of demolition was illegal ; however well meaning the instigators, and however pious the destroyers : the latter overthrow

of the churches and cathedrals was contrary to the express orders of the lords of the congregation,* who, when they came to possess authority, had too much respect for the works of art to warrant their destruction, and too little control over the infuriated passions of the mob to prevent it. Even in those times, many respectable persons, who had abjured popery, reflected in the language of Scripture that "to the pure all things are pure," that it was folly to destroy useful as well as ornamental buildings, and criminal to carry ruin to such an extent as to burn parish registers and other chronicles from which posterity might have derived advantage. The craftsmen of Glasgow seem to have exceeded their brethren in the other towns of Scotland in their respect for architectural elegance; for, when they heard of the intended destruction of St Mungo's cathedral, they rose in its defence, and by a determined opposition, preserved that stately fabric from the rude hands of the destroyers. The laudable taste of the present day, unvexed by faction and unimpelled by the animosities which misguided the reformers, has caused the ruins of gothic grandeur to be repaired and cleansed, in

* See Note T at the end.

order to preserve to future ages those monuments of the olden time, which, even in their dilapidated and fallen state, look stupendous, majestic, and sublime.

The Queen-regent having been informed of the disturbances at Perth, which she naturally deemed both sacrilegious and rebellious, determined to use such measures against the inhabitants as would avenge herself of the injuries done to her religion and dignity, and warn the other parts of Scotland against the like offences. Apprising such of the nobility as she thought would be serviceable for this purpose, and collecting such forces, both Scotch and French, as she could command, she marched towards Perth, with the intention of surprising the town. The reformers, being upon the alert, prepared themselves against the approaching danger. The Laird of Dun dispatched messengers to Angus and Mearns to summon the people to arms. The men of Fife and Lothian were called for the defence of the congregation, and the Earl of Glencairn, with the gentlemen of the west country, by forced marches, arrived in Perth at the head of two thousand five hundred men; so that, instead of surprising the town, the regent found that there were (be-

sides the inhabitants) upwards of seven thousand men ready to oppose her.

Upon intelligence of this, she prudently chose, rather than risk her unpopular cause to the issue of a battle, to confer with the reformers, and save time for more stratagem and strength. She therefore sent two commissioners, the Earl of Argyle and Lord James Stuart, to treat with the reformers upon such terms as would induce them to evacuate the town of Perth. These two noblemen, though friends to the cause of the Reformation, still adhered to the regent, under the hope of procuring a settlement in religious matters in a more legal and regular manner than that which the reformers themselves followed. Being met by two commissioners, the Earl of Glencairn and Erskine of Dun, on the part of the congregation, it was agreed between these four representatives of the two parties, that the forces should be dismissed, that the Queen-regent should possess the town, that the French should be kept at a distance, that the inhabitants should be free to the exercise of their religion, and that all other differences between the parties should be referred to the meeting of parliament.

Unfortunately for her cause, the regent broke

this amicable arrangement, by admitting into the town the French soldiers, by whom a youth, the son of a respectable citizen, was shot. Not content with this open violation, she fined several of the townsmen, changed the magistracy, and re-established, by the force of a garrison which she left in the place, the popish religion. Argyle and Lord James, hearing of this violation of the treaty made by them under her commission, considered their honour involved, and, trusting no longer to such instances of perfidy, they forthwith joined the congregation.

The Laird of Dun having, with the rest of the leaders of the congregation, retired upon the treaty of Perth, soon received a message from the "Lords of the congregation," assembled at St Andrew's, to get his followers again in readiness and march to their assistance. Being accompanied by the Laird of Pitarrow and the men of the Mearns, he proceeded with all expedition to Fife, and found the Lords at Crail, where Knox had influenced the people to follow the example of Perth, and where they first cast the works of idolatry out of the churches, and afterwards demolished the buildings.

The same work of destruction having been next day completed at Anstruther, the heroic and valiant multitude, mistaking their indiscriminate outrages for religious zeal, cast their eager eyes upon St Andrew's, expecting there to triumph over the haughty metropolitan, by the overthrow of those splendid buildings which the piety and superstition of their ancestors had reared there. Nor were they disappointed: the archbishop's power was insignificant in their sight, and cathedral, palace, monastery, and chapel were soon levelled with the ground. The same spirit soon visited the other towns of Scotland; and Stirling, Edinburgh, and Linlithgow soon told by their ruins, that demolition, if not reformation, had been there begun.

The Queen-regent now became violent, not without some cause. The reformers, it is true, had been twice deceived, and they had lost all confidence in courtly promises; but still they trampled too roughly on her authority, and wreaked their vengeance upon those things, which to them appeared trifles, but which by her were revered with solemn awe. Had there been a necessity for such deeds, they would have been excusable, but without promoting the cause of religion, they only exas-

perated its enemies. The "last reasoning of kings"* was therefore now employed by Mary of Guise.

The lords of the congregation, hearing that Mary advanced against them, prepared to meet her, and, drawing up their forces upon a field in the neighbourhood of Cupar in Fife, they put themselves under the command of the Provost of Dundee, a man of virtue and conduct. Previous to the enemy's approach, spies had been sent to reconnoitre the army of the congregation, and, returning with a report, somewhat exaggerated, concerning its numbers and arrangement, the regent again thought it expedient to treat, and the congregation, after some stipulations, again trusted, and agreed to a short truce of eight days.

Having in vain attempted to establish a lasting peace, the army of the congregation, upon the complaint of the town of Perth (which was oppressed by the regent's garrison), went, after the expiry of the truce, to besiege the place. The garrison, confident of succour from the regent, refused to capitulate; but being assaulted with heavy pieces of artillery, they

* *Ultima ratio regum* was stamped upon the cannon of Louis XIV.

yielded upon capitulation, and were accordingly allowed to march in safety out of the town.

Despairing of being able to reduce the congregation by force of arms, the regent issued a proclamation, wherein she endeavoured to prejudice the nation against her opponents, by traducing their characters and imputing false motives to their actions. The congregation immediately repelled the insidious attack, and the regent, perplexed and baffled at all points, once more requested a conference. The congregation, whom Mary's unsuccessful schemes had rendered more bold and less ceremonious, refused to confer with her personally. She then named a committee to represent her, and the congregation having appointed another, (among whom was Mr Erskine,) a meeting took place at Preston, where, after a whole day's discussion, nothing was settled. So obstinate and unyielding were both parties.

Thus far we have followed the progress of public affairs, because thus far Mr Erskine was actively engaged in them. The kingdom continued neither at war nor peace, for the space of thirteen months. Conferences, treaties, truces, were made with little avail. The regent, defeated in all her purposes to re-esta-

blish the catholic and suppress the reformed religion, had only gained the character of an active but intriguing princess; a woman better calculated for government than any prince, who, either before or after her time, swayed the sceptre in Scotland, but imprudent in her conduct towards the reformers, owing, perhaps, less to her own zeal than to the persuasion of her relations, who were not only violent catholics from principle, but from policy. At her death, which happened in June, 1560, a truce was concluded between the contending parties.

CHAP. IX.

Mr Erskine relinquishes the sword—becomes a professed preacher of the Gospel—appointed superintendant of Angus and Mearns—his laborious exertions—his love of liberty of conscience—Queen Mary's predilection for him—his leniency—his celebrity as a preacher and a Christian—supposed instance of his prophetic gift—his generosity—asserts the prerogatives of the church.

IT was after the conference at Preston, that Mr Erskine, seeing the unfruitfulness of such measures, relinquished the sword. He wisely considered that he would be more usefully employed in superintending the progress of religion in his own neighbourhood, than engaging in debates and skirmishes, which, owing to the jealousy of the parties, and the fastidiousness of the majority of their leaders, led to no satisfactory result. Being ready at call, in case of alarm, he remained at the castle of Dun till the regent's death, occupied with his favourite

work of instruction and admonition; rightly judging these to be the best and safest methods of insuring any national benefit, as they prepare the minds of men for those advantages which they can enjoy only in proportion as they value.

At length, by the advice of Knox, who, in a great measure, directed the spiritual affairs of the congregation, the Laird of Dun was induced to become a professed preacher of the gospel. He was the more ready to lend a helping hand to his favourite measure, as he knew that the church was deficient of proper officers; and having, through a period of nearly sixty years, laboured to see a truly Christian and pure church established in the land, he was willing (seeing that his wish was now to be consummated) to become not only an honoured member, but an active minister in that church. Thus, disregarding the worldly honours, which his birth, fame, and learning could still have commanded, he began, at an advanced period of life, to enter upon the duties of an occupation, where much mental and bodily labour was required, and where his industry, though more useful to mankind, might appear less dazzling in their sight.

Soon after the treaty of peace, which took place on the death of the Queen-regent, the

most popular ministers of the reformed religion were appointed to their several districts. At the same time there were settled, in some of the bishops' dioceses, certain pastors who were called "superintendants," whose office was, in every respect, that of a bishop, save in the stipend. It was ordained that these superintendants should be preachers; that they should remain in one place three or four months at least; after which, they were to visit the diocese, preach three times a week, and be actively engaged in providing every parish with spiritual teachers. Mr Erskine was appointed superintendant of Angus and Mearns, and his diocese comprehended both these counties.

So arduous an undertaking at a time of life when most men who are independent of the world wish to retire from activity to ease and indulgence, proves the strength of Mr Erskine's zeal. He exerted the authority of this laborious but honourable situation with diligence, prudence, and justice, for the space of thirty years. By him most of the churches of Angus and Mearns were supplied with ministers of sound doctrine, and teachers of good morals and education. He transplanted those spiritual saplings, which had been reared under his care,

to the forest and the wilderness, so that, by his pious means, "the desert blossomed as the rose." Nor was he deficient in the other duties of Christian benevolence and charity; for he diligently inquired into the instruction of youth, and regulated, by wise and judicious measures, the provision made for the maintenance of the poor.

During the time of Queen Mary's government, Mr Erskine made several journies to Edinburgh; and, being personally acquainted with his royal mistress, he occasionally visited the court before it was yet charged with a more flagrant crime than that of popery. Adverse as he had proved himself to the religious persuasion of his Queen, he never assumed for her conversion that dictatorial spirit, which his more violent, but not more zealous friend Knox arrogated. The maxim which Mr Erskine seems to have preferred was liberty of conscience to all; and the weapon which he used for conversion, was persuasive argument; while Knox's enthusiasm led him to anathematize every religious doctrine which was not Calvinistic, and allowed him to "spare no arrows" against his opponents.

Although averse to the general doctrines of

the reformers, Mary objected not to receive instruction from the mouths of several popular divines; of these the Baron of Dun was her favourite; and Knox declares that she once said, "Above all others I would gladly hear the superintendant of Angus, Sir John Erskine, for he is a mild and sweet natured man, and of true honesty and uprightness."

After misfortune had pursued Mary into England, the country was divided into factions; the catholic party supporting the right of the Queen, while the protestants adhered to the administration of her brother, the regent, whose party was more popular as well as more powerful. Yet the catholics were sufficiently strong to disquiet their opponents, and keep up the animosity throughout the country. In order to reduce them to obedience under the regent's government a commission was sent from the General Assembly, which sat at Edinburgh, July, 1570, empowering the protestant noblemen and gentlemen to use all prudent and just means to persuade the Queen's party of their folly in adhering to so wretched a cause, and to bring them to a sense of their duty by obedience to the laws. The Laird of Dun was one to whom this commission was addressed; and

power was given to him to suppress, by the engine of excommunication, all those within the counties of Angus and Mearns who favoured the pretensions of the unfortunate Queen. This power ^{of} excommunication was, perhaps, too soon exercised by the reformed church, and savoured too much of the spirit of popish tyranny. On this occasion Mr Erskine seems to have been aware of its inefficacy against men who disbelieved its effects; for, although he used his utmost endeavours to quench the violence of party spirit, he wielded not those weapons which the church had put into his hands for the chastisement of its enemies.

In one instance he was obliged, by the commission which he had accepted, to perform a disagreeable duty, which the safety and the discipline of the church required. This was to assist in the deposition of five members of King's college, Aberdeen. Their crime was, their adherence to the popish religion; in other respects they appear to have been men of virtue and good conduct. Perhaps the most severe trial which a conscientious and feeling mind can undergo, is to execute a sentence, which, though just and necessary, is hard and oppressive, against men who have incurred the punishment

by those nice scruples of the mind which indicate honesty and uprightness.

The great celebrity of Mr Erskine, both as a preacher and as a Christian peculiarly favoured, brought him those honours which the enthusiasm of the times scrupled not to bestow upon the worthies of the Reformation. An instance of the superintendant's prophetic gift is recorded by Wodrow in these words: "The regent (Earl of Moray) had been over in Lochleven with the Earl of Northumberland, whom he had caught, after the rebellion raised by him and by other persons in England had been suppressed, and kept him as prisoner in Lochleven. He came from thence and was lodging with the superintendant of Angus in the house of Dun, where they yet show a large window at the end of the long hall which looked out to a pleasant green. The Earl of Moray and the Laird of Dun were standing at that window, conversing closely upon important matters, with their faces looking towards the green. And while the Earl was talking, the superintendant suddenly looked about to him, and, with tears in his eyes, after he had been silent for some time, at length interrupted the regent with these words, 'Ah! woes me, my Lord, for

what I perceive is to befall you shortly ; for in a fortnight's time you will be murdered !—Such hints of future things," continues the historian, "were not uncommon among the reformers. The regent had several other notices of his hazard, and too little regarded them." Without waiting to inquire after the authenticity of this prophecy, we would merely remark the inefficacy of such warnings. If it was decreed that the regent should be murdered, what prudence on his part could avert the blow, or what could the prophecy avail him, save to enable him to prepare for his entrance into another world ?

The nobility having got into their hands the greater part of the church patrimony, the ministers of the reformed religion had to perform their duties for very insufficient stipends. The superintendants (who were five in number) being chiefly men of independent fortunes, exercised their pastoral office without reward. Mr Erskine not only laboured gratuitously, but assisted, with his means, many of those preachers whom he had established within the bounds of his diocese ; a generosity which tended greatly to impoverish his estate, and which could not be expected from his successors in office. It was therefore deemed necessary to make some

arrangement to provide for the independence of the ministers, and likewise to remodel, on a better digested plan, the policy of the church. For this purpose an assembly was held at Stirling, August, 1571, at which a commission was given to Mr Erskine, along with the superintendants of Lothian and Fife, and some other ministers, to attend parliament, and plead with the estates in behalf of the church.

The death of the regent, (Earl of Lennox) which happened at this time, prevented the meeting of parliament till some months after; when it was found that nothing could immediately be done in church matters, owing to the violent state of parties, and the confusion of civil affairs throughout the kingdom.

During the short regency of the Earl of Mar, we find that Mr Erskine was busily employed in asserting the prerogative of the church. He addressed a letter to the regent, in which he laments the impolicy of "creating bishops, placing them, and giving them a vote in parliament as bishops, in despite of the kirk and in high contempt of God." The spiritual power of bishops he admitted to be right, for he himself exercised it; but he deprecated the temporal authority of these shepherds of the flock.

and considered the mitre and the pastoral staff as inconsistent emblems in the same person.

An assembly having been held at Leith, January, 1572, the members named Mr Erskine as one of six commissioners, who, with other six chosen by the council, were empowered to settle the policy of the church. After various meetings, at which there were many long and strenuous debates, certain articles were agreed upon for the appointment of the best qualified ministers to the offices of archbishop, bishop, dean, and curate, and for the maintenance of the king's authority under the exercise of the Earl of Mar. These provisions were necessary at all times, but especially then, when the catholics, reduced to a faction, but still possessing their intriguing spirit, were ever on the alert to undermine, with all their art, the constitutions of church and state.

Thus, by labour, perseverance, and the blessing of Heaven, had a reformation in the religion of the land been established against all worldly power; and the superstitious system, which had controlled the minds and persons of the people for a period exceeding a thousand years, had been overthrown in the short space of thirty! If the Reformation was not altoge-

ther complete, it wanted only those improvements which calm deliberation might, in a short time, have suggested ; if it was not general, it required only moderation and prudence on the part of its ministers to convince the popish bigots of their unprofitable errors. It may therefore be considered, at this period, as attained, though not perfected : the foundation had been laid, the superstructure was raised, and it only required some necessary bulwarks to secure its stability.

CHAP. X.

Return of Andrew Melville from Geneva--he questions the propriety of deputing to bishops and superintendants power over their dioceses—proceedings to which this gave rise—Mr Erskine's last attendance at the General Assembly—advantages resulting from the Reformation—instrumentality of Mr Erskine in promoting it---his death---sketch of his character.

THE policy of the reformed church continued to be of the episcopal kind till the return of the celebrated Andrew Melville from Geneva. That reformer began, soon after his arrival in Scotland, to question the propriety of deputing to bishops or superintendants power over their respective dioceses. Being a zealous disciple of Calvin and Beza, and admiring the form of church policy which these learned reformers had instituted, Melville laboured hard to induce the Scottish ministers to form their church government after the model of Geneva, considering that as the best kind of policy un-

der which a Christian church could flourish. Having spoken to this purpose in an assembly held at Edinburgh, where, besides several bishops, the superintendants of Lothian and Angus were present, it was agreed that three ministers, favourable to episcopal government, should confer with three of Melville's opinion, and report to the assembly the result of their disputations.

Accordingly the members of the conference presented to the assembly five articles, chiefly relating to the office of a bishop, which, they agreed, was a title that ought to belong to every minister, and consequently that every minister, in conjunction with his brethren, could lawfully exercise those functions hitherto vested in a bishop only.

It was remarked, that the bishops and superintendants who were present at this assembly said nothing in defence of their office at a time when it was voted to be useless and unnecessary. Some think that they depended upon the regent's protection, and hoped, by his influence, to obtain the security of parliament in their favour. But whatever may have been the reason of their silence, it is evident, on the part of the superintendants at least, that their

predilection for the episcopal form of government was conscientious and disinterested. Although their office was nothing better than gratuitous labour, they wished, perhaps from a feeling of honourable pride, to retain, during their lives, that station to which their merit as reformers had raised them.

The last assembly of the church which Mr Erskine attended was that which was held in June, 1587. He had several times been raised to the honour of moderator of the church, and his great influence in these assemblies was that of a man possessed of integrity, prudence, and zeal. As a baron he had discontinued his attendance in the civil courts for many years before, in order that he might bestow his whole time and attention upon religious matters.* And now, at the reverend age of seventy-eight, he, with some other ministers, was commissioned to collect all the acts of parliament which related to the affairs of the Reformation, for the purpose of ascertaining how far the law of the land had insured the privileges for which the reformers had laboured.

The desire which the leading members of the church had for inquiring into reasons of prefer-

* See Note U at the end.

ence, in respect to offices and their names, prevented them from settling more important affairs. They had banished popery from the kingdom, but they had left many large districts unprovided with protestant pastors. In the Highlands and Western Isles in particular, the priests were deposed, parishes, already too extensive, were united under one minister, and many of the isles were deprived of a resident instructor. It is true that the church was robbed of the greater part of its property by the rapacious hands of the nobility, and that it was not possessed of half the means which belonged to the papists; but the same law which afterwards insured the stipends of the established clergy, would have extended its influence over the Highland districts, wherever there had been found a minister to claim it.

Even at the present day the effects of this oversight have not been entirely removed; and though Gaelic Bibles have been published, and teachers appointed throughout the Highland counties, by the pious benevolence of religious societies, there still remains a paucity of ministers for performing parochial duties in those extensive and interesting districts.

The advantages which resulted from the Re-

formation are incalculable ; and whether we look upon it in a religious or a political light, we find that the benefits derived from this change of the creed and hierarchy are of the most important and exalted kind. Sound doctrine and the true worship of God have been thereby introduced. Instead of the cruel policy and coercive system pursued by the zealots of the ancient religion, the reformers employed those means which alone correct and prepare the mind for the establishment and maintenance of their doctrine and government.

It is true, that, at the first, they themselves became somewhat inimical to toleration, a principle which every good man, unbiassed by bigotry, must cherish ; but as their minds were at the time inflamed with an inordinate, though perhaps necessary degree of zeal, it is no small palliation to state that their intolerance was confined within moderate bounds, compared to the racks and the stakes of popish bigotry.

One of the greatest moral advantages resulting from the Reformation was the institution of schools throughout the parishes in Scotland.* By this simple and general measure was a certain degree of education brought within the

* See Note X at the end.

reach of the humble peasant. The qualifications of the schoolmasters were at first of a simple kind. To be capable of teaching to read in the vulgar tongue, and to catechise, was all that was necessary in country parishes: the other elementary branches of education have been gradually added, till, at length, the parish schoolmasters of Scotland have become, if not a learned, at least a well educated body of men, in whose hands the infant mind is confidently placed for the attainment of useful and necessary knowledge. The advantages of this system have been strongly felt and warmly acknowledged; and while Scotland, in proportion to her population, can boast of as many classical, mathematical, and philosophical scholars as the sister kingdom, we may safely assert that her sons, from the middle to the lowest ranks in society, have attained more useful knowledge, and more correct ideas of moral and religious feeling, than the same status of society has acquired in the seminaries of England, with all the advantages of endowments, exhibitions, and charitable foundations.

For these and many other blessings, we have, at this day, to thank the truly noble and pious reformers, who, in the hands of Heaven, were

instruments employed to clear the ground, and lay the foundation of such excellent institutions. Theirs was the true heroism, theirs the glory which knows no tarnish, and the honour which can never be traduced ; and, while ambition raises upon the sanguinary field, or the groaning nation, a name, a title, and a power for its own enjoyment, those wiser, better, and more prudent heroes have identified themselves with actions whose effects bless mankind, and increase the glory of their names with the progress of time.

Among those reformers there were none more upright, wise, and zealous, than the honourable and worthy gentleman whose public life we have attempted to trace. He engaged in his favourite work of the reformation in religion while the vigour of youth played within his veins ; nor did he in the least slacken his hand, when his head had become hoary with years. He had been educated in the popish religion—he therefore knew its doctrines ; and, without bribe, ambition, or vanity, he left them for the approbation of a good conscience. He had seen persecution raise her bloody hand to affright truth and crush religion ; but, instead of fainting in courage, his resolution to maintain, to

protect, and to disseminate the truth, increased. He had witnessed the baleful tyranny of Beaton, and had seen his wretched and miserable end; he had marked the chicane of the regent Mary, and had laboured successfully to oppose her. He had seen the splendour, the beauty, and the courtesy of his Queen in her happy days; he had witnessed her misfortunes, her disgrace, her imprisonment, and heard of her unfortunate and tragic death. He had lived to see four regents successively deputed to manage the government; and, at length, had beheld the young King take into his hands the sceptre of Scotland. Until he became a public ruler in the church, he employed himself in the most honourable and active civil stations; and, until that church policy which he cherished began to be changed, he continued to go hand in hand with the other founders and supporters of the Reformation.

- Moderate in his principles, and satisfied with the extent of difference between the old and new forms of worship and church government, he strictly prohibited all those measures which he looked upon as innovations from being adopted within the bounds of Angus and Mearns; and while the other churches in Scotland were

gradually changing into the model so warmly recommended by Melville and his friends, those under the superintendance of Mr Erskine remained in the state of the first Reformation. He thereby reserved to himself heavier duties, and a greater degree of responsibility; but it appears he derived pleasure from the extent of his administration, and found great satisfaction in fulfilling it with labour.

At length, the gradual decay of nature within him became apparent: without being afflicted with any particular disease, the frame of the last of the superintendants became feeble, and old age brought him to the grave. With that meekness and trust in Heaven, for which he was so conspicuous in his life, he yielded up his spirit, and slept in peace on the twelfth of March, 1591, at the advanced age of eighty-two years.

Thus lived and died John Erskine, Baron of Dun, a statesman, a magistrate, a soldier, and a reformer in religion; noble, just, brave, and pious, possessing high rank in the civil degrees of society, great celebrity among the learned, and honour in the most sublime work in which man can be engaged. Equal with the other barons, who gave their labour, their counsel,

and their means to the work of reformation; equal with the other preachers who sowed the seeds and gathered in the harvest of that glorious work, he stands before us in a double capacity, and in each he inclines to the same noble end. Than he, there was none more zealous in the cause, or more moderate in his measures for obtaining it; none more discerning of the best means of gaining both the law and the people, or more powerful by dignity and honour for protecting his brethren. In his general character as a reformer, he has been less known to posterity; not because he was less worthy, but because he was less obtrusive. Without the animation and somewhat vehement zeal of Knox, he possessed all the energy, learning, and piety which we look for among the reformers of that period, mixed with such a share of moderation and calmness, as may justly entitle him to the appellation of the Scottish Melancthon.* In his public life he was respected and admired among his coadjutors, being in all his various duties a man of talent and decision. Had he only been Baron of Dun, his name would have obtained a place in the history of

* See Note Y at the end.

our nation ; but, having improved the advantages which fortune bestowed upon him, by a patriotic, virtuous, and religious life, he has deservedly procured a niche among those worthy men, who, renouncing the allurements of life, have laboured to the death for the good of their country.

The first part of the report is devoted to a general
 description of the country, its climate, soil, and
 productions. It is then divided into several
 chapters, each of which contains a detailed
 account of the different parts of the country.
 The first chapter is devoted to the description
 of the country in general, and the second
 to the description of the climate. The third
 chapter is devoted to the description of the
 soil, and the fourth to the description of the
 productions. The fifth chapter is devoted to
 the description of the different parts of the
 country, and the sixth to the description of
 the different parts of the country. The seventh
 chapter is devoted to the description of the
 different parts of the country, and the eighth
 to the description of the different parts of
 the country. The ninth chapter is devoted to
 the description of the different parts of the
 country, and the tenth to the description of
 the different parts of the country. The eleventh
 chapter is devoted to the description of the
 different parts of the country, and the twelfth
 to the description of the different parts of
 the country. The thirteenth chapter is devoted
 to the description of the different parts of
 the country, and the fourteenth to the
 description of the different parts of the
 country. The fifteenth chapter is devoted to
 the description of the different parts of the
 country, and the sixteenth to the description
 of the different parts of the country. The
 seventeenth chapter is devoted to the
 description of the different parts of the
 country, and the eighteenth to the
 description of the different parts of the
 country. The nineteenth chapter is devoted to
 the description of the different parts of the
 country, and the twentieth to the description
 of the different parts of the country. The
 twenty-first chapter is devoted to the
 description of the different parts of the
 country, and the twenty-second to the
 description of the different parts of the
 country. The twenty-third chapter is devoted
 to the description of the different parts of
 the country, and the twenty-fourth to the
 description of the different parts of the
 country. The twenty-fifth chapter is devoted
 to the description of the different parts of
 the country, and the twenty-sixth to the
 description of the different parts of the
 country. The twenty-seventh chapter is devoted
 to the description of the different parts of
 the country, and the twenty-eighth to the
 description of the different parts of the
 country. The twenty-ninth chapter is devoted
 to the description of the different parts of
 the country, and the thirtieth to the
 description of the different parts of the
 country.

NOTES.

Note A. p. 15.

Dr Buckenham, prior of the Blackfriars' monastery at Cambridge, undertook to prove to his audience the pernicious consequence of permitting a translation of the Bible. "If that heresy," said the ignorant zealot, "should prevail, we should soon see an end of every thing useful among us. The ploughman, reading that if he put his hand to the plough, and should happen to look back, he was unfit for the kingdom of God, would soon lay aside his labour. The baker, likewise, reading that a little leaven will corrupt his lump, would give us very insipid bread. The simple man, likewise, finding himself commanded to pluck out his eyes, in a few years we should have the nation full of blind beggars."—To this nonsensical harangue

Bishop Latimer replied, that a figurative manner of speech was common to all languages, and that plain metaphors were easily understood. "Thus," said he, "when we see a fox painted in a friar's hood, nobody imagines that a fox is meant; but that craft and hypocrisy are described, which are so often disguised in that garb."

Note B. p. 15.

Boethius was a native of Dundee. He finished his studies at Paris, and was engaged to King's College, Aberdeen, at a salary of 40 merks Scots, or £2, 3s. 4d. per annum.

Note C. p. 16.

By the help of the telescope, then invented from an accidental discovery, he found that the planet Venus produced phases similar to those of the moon, thereby proving Venus to be an interior planet revolving round the sun, and thus establishing the Copernican system. Afraid lest discoveries of this kind should hurt the cause of their religion, by opening a road for

the march of science, the priests condemned the aged astronomer to a gloomy cell, until they succeeded in extorting from the infirm sage a denial of his discoveries.

Note D. p. 17.

A charter had been granted so early as the 12th century for a "*studium generale in collegio canonicarum Aberdoniensium*;" but the foundation of a regular college was not established till the time of Bishop Elphinston, 1506.

Note E. p. 23.

While on his way to the conferences at Spire, Melancthon paid a visit to his mother at Bretten. The mother and son were conversing upon religious subjects, when she very simply asked him what she must believe among so many disputes; and repeated to him her prayers, which contained her creed. "Go on mother," said the meek reformer, "believe and pray as you have done, and never trouble yourself about controversies."

Note F. p. 25.

He was a brother of the Laird of Lauriston, an estate situated on the coast of Mearns, about six miles distant from Montrose, and eight from Dun.

Note G. p. 28.

The estate of Dun, at that period, extended from the North Esk to the hill of Carcary beyond the South Esk, and was bounded on the east by the burgh property of Montrose. The old bridge over the North Esk, near Inglismaldy, was built by a Laird of Dun, who caused the family arms to be embossed on the parapets.

Note H. p. 32.

The Wisharts of Pittarrow had been proud to display their contempt for the papal authority and dignity, as appears from the following fact. "A few years ago, when the old mansion of Pittarrow was pulled down, upon removing the wainscot from the great hall, there

was discovered on the walls of the room, in a state of complete preservation, several beautiful paintings, of which no tradition remained. One, above the largest fire-place, represented the city of Rome and a grand procession going to St Peter's. The Pope, adorned with the tiara, and mounted on horseback, was attended by a large company of cardinals on foot, richly dressed, but all uncovered. Beyond them was the cathedral of St Peter, the doors of which were open, and below the painting were five lines of Latin verse, which were probably, at the time the picture was executed, extensively circulated, and generally current among the protestants; and which strongly show, that the possessors of the mansion in which it was found, had no partiality for the Pope, and attributed his exaltation to causes disgraceful to the occupiers of St Peter's." Cook's Hist. of the Reformation, Vol. I.

Note I. p. 33.

The vicar of Dollar was accused, in 1534, of preaching to his parishioners every Sunday from texts taken from the New Testament; and while he was defending the doctrines of the

Bible in presence of the Bishop of Dunkeld, the primate replied, "I thank God I have lived well these many years, and never knew either the Old or New Testament; I content me with my portuise and pontifical."—*Spottiswood*.—Another priest was summoned before his diocesan for celebrating mass more frequently than the church considered necessary.

Note K. p. 39.

The following is a copy of the "bill of complaint," the "King's charge," and the "summons of spulzie."

Bill of complaint, the burgh of Montrose to King James IV. 1st October 1493.

"Souerane Lorde, vnto your graciouss henes lamentabilli menis ande complenis zoure legis, ye hail communitie of zoure burgh of Montross upone Johnne of Erskyn, eldar of Dunn, of gret crimis, accione of injuris, hurtes, dampnages, and scatheys, done til vs be him ande his folkis, batht of alde ande of nev; ande nov of late he has causit his sone Johnne of Erskyn, Master Robert Erskyn, Vat Erskyn, and Thomas Erskyn, ande otheris with yaim, to dystroy ande ete all oure corne yat grew apone oure comone

lande. And, yarafter incontinent, yis beande done onder cilence of nycht, come bodyn with speris ande bovis to zoure saide burgh, and bos- tit oure alderman, he beande in his bed : say- and yai suld pul done his houss abuf his hede ; ande remaint to se gif ony of vs valde cum furthe till haf sclane vs. Alsua, Souerane Lorde, on Sant Ninianeis day last by-past, quhare oure fyschars, yier vyffis, ande seruandis vare gaderynde yair bate in zoure vatter has yai haf done sene zoure saide burgh vas fundit and antecedit, he sende his folkis, and spuyzeit yaim of yair claithis, ande withouldis ye samyn. Ande apone yir injuris, ande duiress oyers, ve vrate to my Lord Duk of Montross, with ane seruande of oure avne, callit John Spenss, for reformacion hereof ; yare cam apone him ane callit Vilzame Lyddal, duelland with Vat Erskyn his sone, and certane folkis bushit by, and has cruelly sclane oure saide seruande. And dayley ande nychtly sene syne, ande of be- fore, ye said Johnne of Erskyn's folkis rydis bodyn with speris ande bovis chakand and evatand vs apone, ye day w'toutht zoure toune, ande apone ye nycht within the toune, quhare yai may get vs at opin to stryk vs done. Ande has ane Innis within zoure saide toune, and

haldis ane seruande of his within ye samyn, to resaff yir saide folkis, invaderis of vs nychtly ande daly ; ande sua demanis vs, yat ve dar not pass na gate to exercise merchandice, for danger of ye saide Innis, and dredoure of oure lyffes. And has pendit folkis in ye saide Innis, and schapes to battail ye samyn anent zoure markat-cross, al vterly yai throw to halde vs ande zoure burgh perpetually ondere subbicione. Quarfare, ve beseik zoure gracious heness of remeide, yat ve may lyffe in pece, as oyeris zoure legis ande borrovis ; ande at ye saide Larde of Dune, his sonis, and househalde, remane at his aune place of Dune ; ande at ye saide Innis yat is withine zoure saide burgh be closit, yat ve may be quyrt of ye danger yaroff. Ande at ve may haf zoure gracious letteris directit to my Lorde Duk of Montross, zoure scherefs of Forfare ande Kyncardin, my lorde of Innervaectht, and oyer gret barons, to suple defende vs fra ye gret violence and injuris of ye saide Larde of Dune and his folkis, on to ye tymn yat zoure henes will declene to set zoure ayre of justry to remeid yer crimis ande injuris, with mony ande diverss oyeris done of alde to zoure said burgh be him ande his folkis, yis xxx. zeris bygane, ye quhilkis ve haff in ane other writ.

under oure secret seale; ye whilk is oure prolixit to shaw zours heness at yis tym. Bot gif it plesit ye samyn at ye reverance of God, to vaik yarto, ye quhilk byll ve sulde haff present to zoure heness in zoure last parlyament. Ande onder hope of reformacion ande gude reule in tym to come, ve sessit quhile nov of nev, he has broken apone vs, committand slauchter ande othir gret iniuris, as saide is. And zoure gracious ansuere ande deliverance herapon, mast humily we beseik at ye reverance af Almighty God, ande fore theill of zoure soule. At zoure burgh of Montross, onder our secret seil, ye first day of October, ye zere of Gode, ninety ande thre zeris."

Quarto Octobris.

"The Kingis Henes, with avis of his counsale, ordanis, yat summondis be geven upon ye Larde of Dune, to ansuere to his hienes upone ye committing of ye crimis ande iniuris within written. Ande alss, yat letteris be written to ye schereffis of Forfar and Kincarrdin and yair deputis, to serche ande seek ye committaris of yis slachter, and to tak souertie of yaim, ilk gentilman landit vynder ye pane of jc libri; ilk gentilman unlandit je merks, ilk zeman xl,

libri, yat yai sal compere before ye kingis justice ye third day of ye nist justice-are of Dunde, with continuacione of dais, to vnderly ye law, for yis slater ande crimis ; and gif yai be fugitive, or will nocht find ye said souertie, yat ye schereffis denunce yaim ye kinges rebellis, ande put yaim to ye horne, and eschete yair gudis to ye kingis vse, efter ye form of ye act of parliament. Ande als to tak souertie and lawborrows of ye Larde of Dune under ye pane of Vc libri ; ande of ilk ane of his sonis, vnder ye pane IIc libri ; ande of ye remnant of yair complices, ilk gentilman landit jc libri ; ilk gentilman unlandit jc merks, ande ilk zeman xl libri, yat ye burgesses ande communitie of yis burgh sal be harmless ande scatless of yaim ande al yat yai may let, but fraude or gile vyirwais, yan the courss of common law will.

“ CHEPMANE.”

*Sumons of Spulzie Burgh of Montrose, v.
Erskine of Dun, 4th Oct. 1493.*

“ James, be the grace of God, King of Scottis, tilloure scheref of Forfare ande his deputis, and tooure louittis, Alexander Bannerman, James Ramsay, and Johne of Strauchauchlin, and Andro Gardiner,oure schereffis in yat part, con-

junctlies and seuerallie, specialie constitut, greeting. Forsamekle as it is humily menit and complenit to vs be our louittis, the bailzeis burgessis, and communitie of our burgh of Montross, That now of laite, John of Erskin zounger of Dun, Maister Robert Erskin, Walter Erskin and Thomas Erskine, with their complices, household folkis, and seruatoris to John Erskine, elder of Dun, and, of his causing, has maisterfully eite and distroit all yair cornis yat grew yis zere upone ye comone landis of our saide burgh; and incontinent thereafter, ye saidis personis, with yair complicis bodin in fere of, were with speris and bowis come to oure said burgh vynder silence of nycht, for ye distruction and slauchter of oure leiges inhabitantis yairof, and bostit ye alderman of ye samyn, he being in his bed, sayand yai suld pul done his houss abone his hede. And alss, quhar ye fycharis of oure said burgh, yair wyffis and seruandis were now of laite gadarande bait to yir lynis, in our watter, likeas yai haff vsit and done but impedymment, sene ye first foundacion of our saide burgh, ye saide Johne Erskin, elder, send his seruatoris and folkis, and spoilzeit yame of yair clathis and as zit withhaldis ye samyn, and rydis bodin in fere of were nycht-

ly and daily waitis ye nyctburis of oure saide burgh, for yair vter distruction and slauchter; and haldis his folkis onbuschit in his Innis, within oure saide burgh, to invaid ye nyctburis yairof, in yat wise yat for dreid of yair lyffs yai dare nocht pass vtouth ye samyn to merkates nor nain by placis, bot ar opprescit and halden vnder subiection by ye saidis personis and yair complices by ye committing of yir inuris, and mony vyeris oppressionis upone yaim, bath of ald and nev, as diuress billis and complaintis present to vs, onder ye secrete sele of oure said burgh yerupon proportis, to ye gret lithtlying and derogacione of oure autorite riall it vat parte, yat is oblist to defend al oure legis fra oppressione batht to burgh and land within oure realme, and in evil example to vyeris to committ siclyke offenses, gif we suffer yir unpunish. Our wil is herefore, and we charge zou straitly, and commandis, yat ze peremptorie summonde, warn, and charge ye saidis Johne of Erskin elder, Johne of Erskin zounger, Maister Robert Erskin, Walter Erskin, and Thomas Erskin, to compere before us and oure counsale at Edinburgh, or quhare it sall happen us to be for ye time, ye secund day of Nouember nixt to cum, gif it be lauchful, and failzeing yairof,

the nixt lauchful day yairefter following, in the
houre of causs, with continacione of dais, to an-
swere to vs upon ye committing of ye saidis spoil-
zie, oppresssionis, and iniuris contenit in ye
saidis billis, upon our leiges inhabitants, our
said burgh batht of auld and nev, and upone ye
contempcionc done to our autorite riall yer-
throw. And in it yat we sall mak besaid to
yame yerfore, in our name, at yair cuming ;
and to answeere at ye instance of ye alderman,
bailzeis, burgessess, and comunite of our said
burgh, for the wranguiss dystruccionc of yair
saidis cornis, extending to xvi bollis of aitis,
with ye foder, price viii merkis, ande spoilzeing
and withhalding of ye saidis claithis fra ye
saidis fycharis, yair wyffis, and seruan-dis, ex-
tending to the avale of v libri, and ane mast of
a schip, with the tow and takle of ye samyn
spoilzeit fra yaim out of ye havin of oure saide
burgh by ye saidis Johne ande Johne, price xx
merkis, and for ye costis, dampnage, and scaitht
sustenit by yaim throw ye saidis oppresssionis
and iniuris ; and foryer, to answeere to vs and
to ye party, in sa fer as law will, making inti-
maccione to ye saidis personis, yat quheyer yai
compere or nocht, ye saidis day and place, with
continuacione of dais, ve will proceed and mi-

nister justice in ye said mater in sa far as ve may of law, and attour yat ye summond Thomas Scote, John Scote, Nycole Malcolme, Thomas Wowar and Alexander Liddale, to compere before us and our counsale ye saidis daye and place with continuacione of dais, to bear lele and suythfast witnessing, in sa far as yai know or sal be sperit at yaim in ye said mater, under al pane and charge yat efter may follow ; and attour yat ye pas and tak sikken sourte and lawborrows of ye saidis personis and yair complices yat sal be gevin to zou in bill, yat ye saidis alderman, bailzies, burgesses or communitie, will mak faitht before zou yat yai dreid bodily harm of yat is to say of ye saide Johne Erskin elder, under ye pane of five hundredth pundis, and of ilk ane of his saidis sonis ye libri, and ye remnant ilk gentilman landit jc libri, ilk gentilman unlandit jc merkis, and ilk zeman xl libri, yat ye saidis alderman, bailzies, burgesses and comunitie of oure said burgh sal be harmless and scaithless of yaim and al yat ye may lett but fraude, orgil, vyerwais, yau ye courss of comone law will, and yis ye do as ze will answerē to us hereapone. The quhilkis to do we committ to zou coniunctlie and seueralie, oure ful power, be yir letteris, delivering yaim

be you deuly execute and indorsate agan ze oyt berar. Gevin vnder oure segnete at Stirueling, the ferde day of October, and of oure regne ye sext zere.

Per S. D. N. Regem in persona propria cum avisamento concillii.

(Signed) J. CHEPMANE.

The x day of October ye zere of God nynte and three zeiris, I, Alexander Bannyrman, Scheref in yat parte, passyt at the command of yir our souerane lordis letteris, ande summond Jhonne of Erskyn elder of Dwne, and Jhonne of Erskyn zounger, feare of ye samyn, Master Robert Erskyn, and Thomas Erskyn, at yair dwelling placis of Dwne and Morfy, after ye tenore of yir our souerane lordis letteris, and al ye articulis and pontis contenyit in ye samyn, and yis I dyd before yir witness Henry Fettry, Andro Gardiner, Andro Forsytth, and Thomas of Myll, with oyeris diuress, and for ye mayr witnessing I haf to set my signet.

The xiii day of October, ye zere of God nynty and iij zeiris, and I, Jhonne Strathaquon, Scheref in yat part, passit at ye commande of yir oure souerane lordis letteris, to sumonde Jhonne Scot, Thomas Scot, Nycoll Malcum,

Thomas Woar, and Alexander Lyddail, at yair dwelling placis, after ye tenore and forme of yir our souerane lordis, to bere leyll and suthfest wytnessinge in ye acciones and causs within wrytinge, befor yir witness, Jamess Scot, Jamess Patrick, Andro Forsytth, and Adame of Murray, with oyers diuress, and for ye mair wytnessing, I haf set to my signet.

Quarto Julii presens cancellarius ex mandato Domini cancellarii de consensu presencium continuatur ad xx Octobris proximi futuri, cum continuacione dierum in eadem forma vt nunc est absque preiudicio parci-um.

(Indorsed)

Ane somontis passit vpone John Erskine of Dwne, off spoilze for ye etting of corin and wataking of fycheris cleis.

Note L. p. 49.

A short time prior to this, Cardinal Beaton and the regent Arran had paid an inquisitorial visit to Angus and Mearns, for the purpose of inquiring into the extent of heresy in that part of the country. Doubtless, upon this occasion,

the crafty churchman had planted spies in those places where he thought heretical opinions prevailed.

Note M. p. 49.

A cuningar is defined by Jameson, in his Scottish Dictionary, as a warren. The cuningar of Tayock, about a mile distant from Montrose, is a piece of sandy ground rising in small hillocks, and covered with furze and bent-grass.

Note N. p. 52.

It was a popular belief at the time, and is yet credited by many well-meaning persons, that Wishart, in his dying moments, prophesied the violent death of the cardinal. Modern prophecies, pretending to divine inspiration, must be received with great caution. Without such supernatural aid it was very evident to the martyr, that, by continuing in his cruelty, the cardinal would create to himself more enemies than friends, and that, as he would not likely be brought to punishment in the course of law, the fate of most tyrants would await him. Several martyrologists have represented Wishart

and other pious men as eminently endued with the gift of prophecy and spiritual visions, forgetting that such enthusiastic feelings, though harmless in these times, were the origin of many popish superstitions and pseudo miracles. The conquest which Mr John Semple, minister of Carsphairn, obtained over the arch-enemy of man, is equally absurd with St Dunstan's adventure with the same fiend; and yet there have been many staunch haters of popish superstition, who, despising the *saint*, have looked upon the minister as a man peculiarly gifted.

Note O. p. 53.

Mr J. Howie of Lochgoin, author of the *Biographia Scoticana*, in his preface, says, "Although toleration principles be now espoused, boasted of, and gloried in, by many, yea, by some from whom other things might be expected, yet it is contrary to Scripture." He then refers to Gen. xxxv. 2. Deut. xiii. 6. Ezek. xliii. 8. &c., and adds, "It is observable that where toleration and toleration principles prevail, real religion never prospers much." This writer surely means bigotry and violent zeal when he speaks of "real religion." Every

sectary imagines that his is the "real religion," and therefore, according to the duties laid down by this author, he ought to extirpate all churches but his own. The practice of more than a century has proved the benefits resulting from toleration; the faggots of the ancient martyrs being now left for the pulpits of polemical argument, and the sword of violent bigotry changed into the controversial pen.

Note P. p. 65.

From the great number of bones which have of late years been dug up in different parts of the Fort hill, in supplying vessels with ballast, it shows at least that many bodies have been interred there; and, as the few who fell on the side of the victors had been buried in the consecrated ground of the parish, it may be reasonably presumed that the Fort hill skeletons are those of the English invaders.

A few years since a gold ring was found on the Fort hill. It was purchased by the late Miss Erskine of Dun, and on being polished, was found to bear the arms of the family.

Note Q. p. 86.

With all their affected politeness and urbanity, the French have always been characterized by a peculiar levity, which has made them barbarous in the eyes of their more moral and sedate neighbours. This levity is of the most uncouth and savage kind ; and such as turns them, with little concern, from friendship to hatred, and from dancing to murder. Hence the kindness shown to the Scottish commissioners, followed by assassination ; hence the massacre on St Bartholemew's day ; hence the thrice guilty and thrice pardoned Prince Charolois ; and hence the festivity, gloom, fellowship, hatred, patriotism, and murder, incident to the French revolution.

Note R. p. 87.

A cenotaph to the memory of this aged martyr was erected, in 1818, in the church of Lunnan, by the late Reverend R. J. Gowans. It bears the following inscription :

M. S.

Reverendi Gualteri Mill

Hujus Ecclesiæ olim Pastoris eximii

Qui

Veritatis studiosus Jesu Christi

A Pontificiis

Ejusdem insectatoribus—jam major

Octogenario

In foro Andreapolitano

Igne crematus est

Tertio Kalendas Maii. MDLVIII.

Hoc pos : R. J. G. I. W. 1818.

Note S. p. 90.

Perhaps nothing tended more to prepare the minds of the people of England for the Reformation than the exposure, at the dissolution of the monasteries, of those "pious frauds" and "holy cheats," by which the monks had overawed the people. The image called the "Rood of Grace," the eyes of which moved at the approach of its votaries, was found to be a mechanical contrivance; and the sacred blood at Hales, which became visible only to those who had paid money for masses, was found to be inclosed in a phial opaque on the one side and

transparent on the other, and which the monks turned as circumstances suited.

Note T. p. 108.

The following order is from the lords appointed to suppress the instruments of popery.

*To our traist friends the Lairds of Airntully
and Kinvaid.*

Traist friends, after most hearty commendation, we pray you fail not to pass, incontinent, to the Kirk of Dunkeilden, and tak doon the hail images thereof, and bring them forth to the Kirkyaird, and burn them openly. And sicklyke, cast doon the alters and purge the kirk of all kind of idolatry. And this ze fail not to do as ze will do us singular impleasure, and so committeth you to the protection of God.

From Edinburgh xii of August, 1560.

ARGYLE.

JAMES STEWART.

WILLIAM RUTHVEN.

Fail not but ze tak guid heyd that neither the desks, windocks, nor duires be any way hurt or broken, eyther glassin wark or iron wark.

Note U. p. 129.

By an act under the privy seal, dated Nov. 21st 1574, the Baron of Dun, being superintendant of Angus, was not only indemnified for having absented himself from the sheriff courts, but exempted, during his continuance in his ecclesiastical office, from the labours of civil jurisdiction.

Note X. p. 131.

Although the legislature did not order the regular establishment of parochial schools before the reign of William and Mary; yet, by the discipline and rules of the church, drawn up by Knox and other reformers, this beneficial measure was agreed upon as necessary for the cause of religion and morality.

Note Y. p. 136.

Spottiswood compares him to St Ambrose, and mentions that he resembled that primitive father in many respects.