

NOVEMBER, 1877.

The Presbyterian Council.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

"Take seats for Melrose, please!" "All right!" So said the politest of guards at the Waverley Station, Edinburgh, at 9 15 a.m., one fine morning, the 11th July, 1877. On the previous evening we had taken a formal farewell of our friends in Council. To-day we are the invited guests of Lord Polwarth, and we are off on a holiday excursion—three hundred of us by actual count, including our friends. This special train has been chartered for our use. To begin with, we enter a tunnel. For a few moments we are in a bath of sulphureous vapours and spent steam, amid Egyptian darkness, but soon glad sunshine and green fields delight the eye as we speed through the Lothians and down the banks of Gala Water, through a lovely country. Every thing tends to heighten the enjoyment. Even the weather, which up to this time had been damp and dismal, smiles on our enterprise. And then, we are no ordinary tourists, but an eclectic band, gathered from all lands, exceedingly well pleased with ourselves and each other. Not a grumbler nor a croaker among us. All of us glad of this opportunity for social intercourse which we could not enjoy while the Council was in session. It was a happy thought of Lord Polwarth, and, this finishing touch will be remembered by all of us many days hence.

A full hour had been allotted us to do the venerable Abbey of Melrose. It is not far from the railway station, and immediately on our arrival we proceeded *en masse* in the direction indicated. Passing the old market cross, we defiled through a narrow street, in the suburbs of the quiet town, at the end of which we came upon the old gray pile, somewhat abruptly. The first view

we got of it was rather disappointing. Its immediate environs are not romantic. There is a want of foliage—not so much as a leaf of mantling ivy, so far as I remember; but all this of course we should have been prepared for by the poet's description:—

"If thou would'st see fair Melrose aright
Go visit it by the pale moonlight:
For the gay beams of lightsome day
Gild but to flout the ruins gray."

Still, we must not complain, for not far off is Abbotsford, and the silver Tweed: very near are the Eildon hills, and all about us classic ground. The site of the Abbey, it is said, was occupied by a Culdee House so long ago as 635. The Cistercian Abbey founded in 1136 gave way to another which was completed by Robert Bruce. This in turn disappeared, and the present edifice was erected a short time before the Reformation. Like many other noble buildings, it suffered at that time from ruthless hands, though it served as a place of worship until recent years. The walls and part of the main tower are still in good preservation, the whole profusely ornamented with exquisite stone carvings. Never since it was consecrated had so strange a congregation gathered within these walls, and all of us felt that there were sermons in these old stones if we could but hear them speak. While we seemed to listen for the text, Rev. Mr. Campbell, of Geelong broke the silence by reminding us that beneath the spot of ground on which we stood there was interred the heart of Bruce. This was immediately in front of where the high altar had been. Is there any truth in the most romantic legend that ever embellished the page of history? Or is it all a myth? At this sacred shrine, this much, at least, we believe may be true,—that when his brilliant career was ended, and the Bruce lay, a poor leper, at Cardross and nigh to death, he willed that his body