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THE WISDOM OF THE SCOTTISH REFORMERS.

Though we are not in favor of calling all the chief places of worship among Canadian Presbyterians by the somewhat blunt name—'Knox's Church'—we are unfeigned admirers of the man and the reformer, John Knox. For sagacity in counsel and thoroughness in action, Scotland has never known a greater man. Carlyle does him no more than justice when he says, "They go far wrong, who think this John Knox was a gloomy, spasmodic, shrieking fanatic. Not at all: he is one of the solidest of men. Practical, cautious, hopeful, patient; a most shrewd, observing, quietly discerning man. A certain sardonic taciturnity is in him; insight enough; and a stouter heart than he himself knows of."

An idea yet prevails, that Knox and his coadjutors were rough contentious men, who may have served their country well in breaking the yoke of Popery, but who were narrow in their views and harsh in their policy. This is one of those impressions which originate in ignorance and prejudice, but which in process of time assume an authority that it is very difficult to shake. Yet it is the historical fact, that the Reformers in question were in advance of their ecclesiastical successors; and that much that is now open to objection in Scottish Presbyterian usages is just what has been introduced in times subsequent to the Reformation, and is at variance with the ideal at which John Knox and his friends so strenuously aimed. The alterations of the post-reformation centuries in Scotland have in general been the opposite of improvements. And it sometimes tries one's patience to hear a zealous plea for the conservation of some injurious custom on the ground of its antiquity, when it is nothing better than a comparatively modern corruption of the original mode.

As the terror of innovation is very powerful in the Presbyterian community, and hinders many reforms, it may be well to look into history, to ascertain the views and usages of the fathers of the Church of Scotland on several momentous points,—views and usages, which, in later times, inferior men have changed. In many respects, the best reform that the Presbyterianism of the Scottish type at home and abroad could now have, would be a return to its own real antiquity.