

CHAPTER II.

“Nor shall the eternal roll of praise reject
Those Nonconforming, whom, one rigorous day,
Driven from their Cures, a voluntary prey
To poverty and grief and disrespect,
And some to want, as if by tempests wreck'd,
On a wild coast, how desolate! did they
Not feel that conscience never can betray,
That peace of mind is virtue's sure effect.”

—Wordsworth.

In 1660, after the death of the Protector and the restoration of Charles II., a second period of persecution set in which was specially directed against the Independents, though all Nonconformists suffered for over 160 years under the Acts then passed. Indeed for nearly 200 years to be an Independent in England or in Canada was to be one of a poor, despised, suspected, and hated class of Britons, who were disqualified for service of the State and honors in the United Kingdom or the Dominions overseas. The feeling was shown in Canada by an attack upon the Independents in the Church Magazine of 1842 to which our own Dr. Lillie replied so well in our early magazine of “The Harbinger.”

In 1661 the Corporation Act was passed which disqualified Nonconformists for all municipal offices.

In 1662 the Act of Uniformity was passed which drove upwards of 2,000 ministers out of the Church and silenced all who did not conform.

In 1663 the Conventicle Act was passed which prevented Nonconformist congregations meeting; not allowing more than 5 persons beyond the family to be present at once.

In 1665 the Five Mile Act forbade nonconforming ministers to come within 5 miles of any corporate borough.

In 1670 the Conventicle Act was made more rigorous.

In 1673 the Test Act made Nonconformists ineligible for offices, civil, naval, or military under the Crown, so that the English navy, under the successors of that great Nonconformist, Admiral Robert Blake, was swept from the seas—Van Tromp, the Dutch Admiral, sailed up the Thames and sailed the Channel with a broom at his masthead; while the English monarch became a pensioner and tool of the French King.

These Acts were not repealed in England till 1828, when Lord John Russell repealed them; and owing to a judgment given against law and justice in Canada in 1804 they had a still longer vogue in this country. The Rev. Mr. Benton, M.D., a Congregational minister sent out by the London Missionary Society to Montreal, was fined £50 in that year, and imprisoned for six months, for protesting against being deprived of the license to baptize, marry and bury the members of his congregation. Independents were deprived of their rights in Canada till they were