

# THE MONTHLY RECORD



OF THE

## Church of Scotland in Nova Scotia and the adjoining Provinces.

"IF I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM! LET MY RIGHT HAND FORGET HER CUNNING."—PSALM 137, v. 6.

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### INTERESTING EXTRACTS.

#### Present Duty of the Church.

What, then, is there to be done, which, as members of the Church of Scotland, ought to do, and might properly and hopefully attempt to do, in order to restore peace and unity among the divided churches of the land? This is the question, and it may be briefly and plainly answered.

1. It ought never to be forgotten that it is the duty of the Church of Scotland to be the church of the whole community. We do not safely or properly occupy the position of a mere sect among other sects. If we surrender our right, or intermit our endeavour to be the church of the whole people, we virtually consent to the signing of our death-warrant, and open the floodgates of a tide of voluntarism, which as things stand at the present day, threatens to sweep away all truly national churches, and to leave every man to do what is right in his own eyes. Our counsels and our efforts, therefore, should be constantly directed to the point of bringing in those that are with us, and of undoing the unhappy work of secession and dissent that has now been going on for upwards of a century, by restoring a church national in numbers as well as in name. In regard to this, it is a hopeful fact, well worthy of being remembered, that so far as concerns the great majority of Christians in Scotland not belonging to our Church, no great sacrifice of truth or of principle, or even of profession, would be needed in order to re-incorporation,—that is much more a question of corporate pride than of Christian principle, of human opinion than of divine appointment, of earthly legislation than of heavenly counsel, that steps at least several of the seceding sections, separated from the parent stock; nor ought ever to be forgotten to us, that in a matter of mere dignity, or in regard to points of indifference, the Church of Scotland can

much better afford to make concessions than any of the bodies dissenting from her, seeing that these, in offering to yield one iota, would risk all their influence over their adherents. Remembering this, the Church of Scotland should, in all proceedings bearing on the public relations of the Church to the civil institutions of the country, keep in view the possibility of future incorporation with dissenters. And, more especially, in regard to legislative measures on such subjects as education, care should be taken so to shape them as to avoid all just causes of offence, and to spare, if we can, even what we may consider the pride and the prejudices of those who company not with us. For acting thus, we shall not only best fulfil the law of love, and exercise charity, which is the bond of perfectness, but we shall also best perform our part, and extend for good our legitimate influence as a great national institution. The points that separate us from our dissenting brethren are most of them, utterly insignificant, and such as one with the spirit of our old reformers, whose names are often conjured up as authoritatively forbidding all change on the structure of the institutions they left us, would at once sweep for ever out of the way of the accomplishment of a union among the churches. Would Knox, had we him for one hour amongst us permit such a thing as the present system of patronage, however well administered it may happen to be for the time to stand for one hour in the way of the return of those who have gone from us on that ground, Would he not, by one bold effective measure, put things on such a footing in that respect, that the Claim of Rights, if not answered, would be made obsolete by being more than satisfied, and the ground now occupied by sullen adversaries rendered utterly untenable; The time is peculiarly favourable for such bold comprehensive action. Statesmen, taught by former errors, into which they were misled mainly by some of our own body, are not unwilling to repair their errors by wise, liberal, large minded,

measures, and many of our Free Church brethren, adhering sternly to former principles on the subject of Establishments, but seeing the gulf of voluntarism into which the necessities of their present position are forcing them, are ready to aid and hail with delight any measures which may make their return to the National Church possible or proper. But the time may be short. Events hurry now with tremendous speed; and that which might easily be effected this year may be next year a thing utterly impracticable. Let us remember this. Let us think, too, how easily all other Scottish questions could be settled, did we only consent and try first to settle this question of differences among the churches. With a united church, the question of the education of the young would lose at once all its difficulties, and the means of evangelising the masses now perishing for lack of knowledge, would be infinitely multiplied. The strength now wasted in party rivalry would be all available for vigorous efforts to reform our criminals, to enlighten and elevate our labouring classes, to ameliorate the social condition of all classes, and to bring the Gospel to bear with effect on every stout-hearted sinner in our land. The Church of Scotland would again be what she once was,—the fairest of the daughters of the Reformation; our country would rejoice and blossom as the rose; and every son and daughter that went out from us to labour in the colonies, or to seek their bread on a foreign shore, would be a new centre of Christian influence to aid in evangelising the world. Oh! for some master spirit to arise and to shape the counsels of our Church so that, lopping off whatever is a bar in the way of the return to her communion of those who now stand aloof from or opposed to her, she might rally round her blue standard again the vigorous piety of all in the land. Oh! for a more abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of us all, that our petty jealousies and unwholesome prejudices may in no wise hinder