

Our Contributors.

"The Land O' The Leal,"

BY REV. W. M. CLOW, B. D.

The Baroness Nairn has set this musical and pathetic Scottish phrase in her tenderest song, and by her genius has made it almost as sacred as a Scripture in the ears of her fellow countrymen. How many of them think of the fine significance of this name for the world beyond? To most of them, "The land o' the leal," suggest only the abode of pallid souls, of ghostly shades, who have worn away, as snow vanishes in the sun, to the unseen, unreal world. I once asked a bright young Scottish girl the meaning of the word "leal," and she replied that she supposed it meant the silent dead. But "leal" is simply loyal—the land of the loyal in the faith and the loyal to it—the witnesses "faithful and true."

No other race, so far as my knowledge goes, has so conceived heaven. Others fasten upon its rest, its triumph, its delight, its open vision of Jesus, its constant presence of God. No other thinks of it as the land of the loyal. How deeply that goes down into Scottish character! If there be any quality in which the Scot can confidently claim pre-eminence, it is his loyalty. He is not given to oily phrases; he does not wear his heart upon his sleeve; he cannot quickly transfer his affections; but in peace or war, though ill report or good report, he is loyal. Think of Prince Charlie, wandering among the Highlands, amidst a poverty-stricken, hunger-bitten people with £30,000 set upon his head, and yet there never came a whisper of betrayal. Recall the evictions in Appin, when the people came to the ships in which they were deported for America with bitter wailing, and crooned "Lochaber no more," long after their barren hills had sunk below the horizon. The record says that the older men never smiled in the new land lest they should be thought disloyal to Scotland.

But this fine flower of Scottish character grows lowliest when it breathes the air of his religion. We sometimes remember with tears, the keen, embittering, ecclesiastical controversies, yet they are all due to loyalty to convictions, staunch adherence to some small persecuted sect, zealous maintenance of some cherished doctrine or endeared custom of worship—for which men and women have not only stood on the moors under wintry skies, but have reddened the heather with their blood. Sir Walter Scott did the Covenanters many injustices. He never understood them. But he never drew one of them disloyal. Sometimes this Scottish religious loyalty is quaintly beautiful. A devout woman who belonged to the Relief section of Presbyterianism married a member of the Secession. Not even the most ardent Scot can make clear to the ordinary English mind the difference between these two religious bodies either in doctrine or in practice. Yet after marriage they agreed, in perfect love and in deep and secret admiration for each other, that they should be loyal to their own denominations. When in 1847 the Relief and Secession united, they felt that there was no longer any reason why they should worship in different churches, and the loving and submissive wife turned her face west to accompany her husband to his place of worship, instead of east to her own. Yet she confessed she felt it to be a real trial, for it seemed to savour of disloyalty. The keenest reproach

given to a young minister who had left one of the smallest denominations in Scotland to join a larger one of ampler liberty and wider opportunity, was that of an old elder, who came and said in a few slow words, "Good-bye, God give you His grace. But I thought you were loyal—like your father." "He stabbed me to the heart," said the young man, "and the wound will never heal."

Loyalty is one of the most searching tests of the Scot, especially loyalty to his historic faith. To the true Scot, Presbyterianism is the only mode of church government. Those of them in Scotland who are found in other denominations have reasons for their change—sometimes most honourable, sometimes base. But even these are always trying to impart Presbytery into the new order they have joined. The Scot is loyal to it because he believes it to be Scriptural, and the reason still has weight in Scotland. What is the "hedge which a certain man planted round his vineyard?" was the question proposed at a fellowship meeting. "What can it be," said the wisest expositor present, "but the divine order of Presbyterian church government? what else has kept out the Romish wolves and the prelatical robbers?" One of Professor Marcus Dod's sermons is entitled, "Presbyterianism older than Christianity." The comment of an old worthy was that he ought to have said that it was older than Creation. The Scot has no doubt but that it is the only Apostolic form. He knew that a so-called historic episcopate was an invention of the second century long before Bishop Lightfoot and Canon Hatch gave that fact scholarly vindication. He is loyal to it because, with his practical genius, he sees it to be best adapted to modern needs, and to fully and wisely employ the energies of a Christian congregation. "Gang awa' to Episcopacy, Jamie," said an old father, to a son whose English wife had beguiled him to join her sect. "Maybe they'll make ye a church warden, and that's just a kind o' upper class beadle. But it's mair like they'll just gie ye a seat behind some big pillar, and ask ye to make yourself as small and useless as possible." The Scot believes Presbyterianism to be representative Parliamentary government applied to the things of the church.

All these things strengthen its hold upon him, but no one is its tap root. That tap root is his loyalty to it as his national form. He knows that it has written the most glorious pages in his history. He knows that it has fostered the education of the young, stamped its logic upon the mind, and its noble theology and high seriousness of life upon the heart, of the people, and trained four centuries of men to honesty, patience, courage, and self-denial in the fear of God. All the really great names of his history belong to it. Wherever he goes, whether to Ulster or to Canada, or to the wide world in the Southern seas, he takes his faith with him, and finds it exalting him to honor. No Scotsman ever leaves it without a stumbling, stammering excuse on his lips. He never returns to it without a deep feeling of rest and satisfaction. Sometimes men have been driven out because their taste has been outraged or their moral sense has been shocked by what are called elsewhere, "criminoes clerks," or their desire to exercise their rights has been overborne by some arbitrary and imperious man in the ministry or in the eldership. But when they have been driven out, and not gone for some snobbish reason, for the sake of social

advantages, or for greed of gain and place, they have always come back like a dove to her window again. The Scotsman (or the Scotsman's son or daughter) who turns his back on Presbyterianism, is disloyal to the noblest traditions, the most inspiring history, the deepest affections and the holiest sacrifices of his forefathers. The people of Scotland are as loyal as their fathers. As Dr. John Ker finely says, "Before the Scottish people can be driven away to rites and ceremonies every stone must be dug up from the green hillsides which shows where martyred dust is sleeping."

Sparks From Other Anvils.

Presbyterian Banner:—The minister above all other men should strive to build up a strong rich personality and should put his soul into his sermon.

Presbyterian Witness:—We have never attached much importance to "Christmas" or "Good Friday" or "Saints' Days." We have not encouraged the observance of these as sacred days, just because we believe the One Day in seven stands pre-eminently as the Holy day which is intended as a boon to all.

Michigan Presbyterian:—Instead of asking, "What would Jesus do?" a better question is "What did Jesus do?" It is not always easy to answer the first question. The answer to the second can be easily found. And a thorough study of what Jesus did would be the best preparation for answering the other question.

United Presbyterian:—How long shall we wait for the answer to our prayers? God has not opened to us his calendar of dates, and we cannot say. He asks us to wait. It is for us to pray, for him to answer. We should take note, however, of the fact that he sometimes refuses to give what we ask, and when this is made clear, we should cease to pray for it. There are other blessings which we need.

Sunday School Times:—A bright mind is quick to comprehend what is said by another, but a dull and sluggish mind demands more effort and keener speech before it catches the force of another's words. Hence the saying that there is most need of wit in talking to a fool. We must remember this as we talk with others, for not all whom we meet have bright minds; while, unfortunately, many of us have not enough wit to meet the fool standard.

Christian Observer:—Let pastor and physician realize that they are mutual helpers. The pastor ought not to exclude the physician, even if he be a man of heretical views. And the responsibilities of the two professions, one to the other, are reciprocal. But let it be remembered that the time when the pastor's work is most effective for good is not in the hour of dissolution, when the patient is too feeble to listen or to think, but in the earlier hours of suffering.

North and West:—It is pitiful to see five or six churches struggling for the barest existence in a field capable of supporting only one creditably. The air is full of combination in the industrial and commercial world for the purpose of restricting competition and lessening the cost of administration. But the Church is slow to recognize the great principles underlying this modern movement and in answering the prayer of Christ that his disciples should be one in purpose and effort.