

The Record.

DECEMBER, 1860.

THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION.

By appointment of Synod the several ministers of our church have to call the attention of their congregations to the subject of the Reformation in Scotland, on the Sabbath preceding the 20th of the present month. We have no doubt the duty will be performed with fidelity and zeal, and that from the various pulpits in our church, as well as those of sister churches, a faithful testimony will be borne to those glorious truths, which the Reformation was the means of exhuming from the tomb to which Popery had consigned them, and of bringing prominently forward for the instruction and spiritual enlightenment of the people. The work of the Reformation had been going on in Scotland for some years previously. The first covenant had been entered into in 1557; the second had been entered into in 1559. The good seed of the Word has been widely scattered. The leaven of the Gospel had diffused its influence extensively throughout the mass of society. A Confession of Faith, drawn up by Knox and others was ratified, on 17th Aug., while on 20th December, the church saw her *First General Assembly* convened, without, it is true, royal proclamation, or royal commissioner presiding, but with the evident presence, sanction, and blessing of the great King and Head of the Church. We do not say that the Church of Christ then commenced its career in Scotland. The Church of Christ had been planted in early times. Even in the dark ages, light not only lingered about Iona and other centres of evangelical truth, but was diffused from these centres, gladdening many souls, and cheering many weary pilgrims. The light was never entirely extinguished. God did not leave himself entirely without witness, even in times of great darkness and superstition. But now the scattered beams of light were collected and concentrated. The candle was trimmed, and brought out to give light and knowledge and salvation of the people at large. The load of superstition and error which had been accumulating for ages was thrown off, and the church stood forth arrayed in her beautiful garments, to bear witness for the Saviour before the world.

Apart from the precious truths which were nobly vindicated by the Reformers, there are many things in connection with the great movement which should call forth our special gratitude. We have reason to thank God for the noble agents whom, in His

providence he had ready for the accomplishment of his own work. Enemies and detractors may aim many blows at Knox and his goodly associates, but their assaults are powerless. In regard to intellect, far-seeing prudence, large and liberal views, as well as in regard to grace and personal piety, the Scottish Reformers were highly distinguished. They were far in advance of their age; their qualifications indeed pre-eminently fitted them for the work to which they were called.

We have reason also to be thankful when we consider the means employed for the accomplishment of the Reformation in Scotland. In some countries, even in England, the means were very different from those employed in Scotland. Here the preaching of the pure gospel, the circulation of the Word of God, the promotion of education among the general body of the people, were the principal means employed, means not only best calculated for the immediate object in view, but which tended more than anything else to form the habits and mould the characters of the people, and to influence the Institutions of the country even down to the present time. What would have been the condition of the country without the Bibles and the churches and the schools which the Scottish Reformers gave to the people? It is not too much to say, that the effects of these things have extended far beyond the geographical limits of Scotland, and have told on the liberties, and the civil and religious privileges of Britain and of the World.

We have reason to thank God for the success which attended the labours of the Scottish Reformers. It is true their labours were not without opposition. They had to suffer much from the treachery and rapacity of the nobility. The goodly vine which they planted was not without the rude assault of many a strong blast, and the scorching heat of many a devastating fire. But their work was not in vain. The vine, which they were employed to plant, took deep root and filled the land. Though exposed from age to age to the flames, it has never been consumed, while its fruit even in this remote land, and in many other remote lands, are freely enjoyed. We may well then unite in offering up our warmest thanksgivings for that Reformation, the consummation of which we are to commemorate in the course of a few weeks.

But surely our thanksgivings should not all evaporate in mere commemoration services, and public celebrations. Let us cling still closer to those doctrines and principles for which the Reformers contended. Let us seek to be personally influenced by them, and to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. Let us remember too, that we have to bear a part in the work in which

the Reformers were engaged. The battle is not over, the struggle is not at an end. We cannot be neutral. We dare not refuse to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Let us see that we are valiant for the truth, doing what in us lies for the vindication and extension of the truth as it is in Jesus. In this land we have perhaps been too backward in giving prominence to the principles and doctrines for which the reformers contended, and in seeking to counteract the influence of Popery, which here wields such an influence. Let the memory of the past—of the struggles and triumphs of our reforming fore-fathers,—as well as a right appreciation of our own privileges, quicken our zeal, that with fervent love, but at the same time with deep earnestness, we may contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints.

We observe that in Scotland something practical has been done. They had enthusiastic gatherings, and eloquent addresses, and heart-stirring discourses, delivered by some of the noblest of the leaders of evangelical doctrine. But this was not all. They founded a PROTESTANT INSTITUTE, the establishment of which, will, we doubt not, largely tend to the upholding and extension of the principles of the Reformation. We may not do the same, —we may not be in circumstances to erect such a building as is contemplated in Edinburgh, and to establish such means and appliances as are proposed to be put into operation there. But might we not take advantage of the interesting occasion for the formation of a Protestant association. We believe such an association might, by the blessing of God, be eminently useful in such a country as this. Will not some decided steps be taken for the accomplishment of this important object?

PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL IN POPISH LANDS.

Amidst the political revolutions which are taking place at present in some of the chief seats of Popery on the continent, it is interesting to observe that the gospel is quietly making its way. As one door after another is opened, the Bible is introduced, and forthwith the leaven begins to operate and spread. With the exception of Rome and the territory immediately around (to which narrow limits the Papal dominions have now been reduced) the whole of Italy is now more or less open to the Gospel. While this is the case, it is pleasing to know that provision is not wanting, to some extent, at least, for preaching the Gospel, and diffusing the light of divine truth among the people. The Waldensian church, preserved, no doubt, by the providence of God for such an opportunity as this, is doing much to evangelize the emancipated Italians. In