their progress in, and conviction of the necessity and beauty of, say representation of minorities, free trade, Imperial federation, the building of the Pacific Railway by sections out of revenue, and their longing to follow Mr. Blake as leader. If any do not attend these meetings regularly or cease to work vigorously in the cause, he shall be admonished first, "borne with for a season," and then be removed from his place, and all trade or custom from his fellow reformers withdrawn from him. These reform classes and their leaders are again divided into districts, and a superintendent placed over them, who shall pursue the same tactics with these leaders as they with their classes, and see to it that they also are deprived of all patronage in trade or profession from the party when they show signs of lukewarmness in the common cause. This "superintendent" to be one selected from these "leaders," and raised into a still higher class of trained speakers, who have gone through a careful and searching examination as to their ability to defend, sustain, and convince of the main postulates of the party. All these trained speakers again subject to the orders of a conference committee selected from among them, who shall have absolute right to appoint their place and time of work; so that, knowing the whole field, they can set the strongest man to the weakest point, and place the weakest man at the strongest point. At the head of this conference place the Hon. Ed. Blake as president; and who shall say that he has not a *well organized* party? Even Conservatism itself might stand aghast with envy, more especially if Mr. Blake could contrive to add to the conditions of membership a clause prohibitive of marriage with any one not of sound Reform views, subjecting all contemplated matrimony amid his adherents to the ordeal of consultation with the leaders of the party, who in some cases might be permitted to relax their rules—of course only in cases of special hardship—so far as to permit the marriage of a member with a person who, although not wholly hand and glove with the party, still possessed decided "reform" leanings. The only defect in the system would be—wouldn't it?—that it was too much organized and somewhat too rigid. As reform politics are nothing, if not left free, the tendency might be eventually to eliminate from the party all possibility of progress, if the terms subscribed to by all, and thus rigidly enforced by this perfect system, were distinctly set forth as completed in the four articles first named, viz., representation of minorities, Free Trade, Imperial Federation, and the building of the Pacific Railway out of revenue.

Yet this is an exact counterpart of the "system" of "Methodism" if, for the four articles of Blake, be substituted the 25 of Wesley.

To this is to be added, ere the full force of its binding power can be quite realized, a few extracts from the questions put by, and the instructions given to, each candidate for the ministry, by the board of examiners. These ministers, it will be remembered, occupy in the Methodist Church the post correspondent to that of the "trained speakers" in our ideal Blake party.

Here are some of these selections :—

"The chairmen are required to examine into the case of every minister who has married during the year, whether the rule has been obeyed, which says: 'Take *no* steps towards marriage without first consulting your brethren.'"

"The chairman shall also examine every probationer for the ministry respecting his acquaintance with the books recommended to him. For this purpose every such probationer is required to deliver to the chairman of his district a list of the books which he has read since the preceding annual meeting."

Add to these the usual questions, to which a definite and confident answer is required :—

"Have you now *faith* in Christ, and are you going on to perfection?

"Have you attended regularly to private prayer, and to the devotional reading of the Scriptures and books of a spiritual and experimental kind?" &c.

"Have you visited the people at their houses, inquiring into their religious state?" &c. "and have you catechised the children of the schools, and those of your friends and hearers?" &c.

"Have you had fruit of your ministry during the year?" &c.

"What is justification? What is justifying faith?" &c., &c.

"Do you take snuff, tobacco, or drams?" [A distinct answer in the negative is required as a condition of continuing on probation.]

"Will you recommend fasting both by precept and example? What is your age? Are you engaged to marry?

"A probationer who marries while on trial *shall be dropped in silence.*

"Do you desire nothing but God?

"Have you a *just* conception of salvation by faith?"

Add to these the following extracts from the "rules of conduct for a minister or probationer for the ministry :—

"Take no step towards marriage without first consulting your brethren.

"As a son in the Gospel it is your duty to employ your time in the manner which *we* direct.

"We (ministers) should frequently ask each other: 'At what hour do you rise? Do you spend the day in the manner which the Conference advises?' &c.

"If we are united, what can stand before *us?* If we divide we shall destroy *ourselves*, the work of God, and the souls of *our* people.

"As often as possible rise at four; from four to five in the morning and five to six in the evening meditate, pray and read the Scriptures, and the closely practical parts of what *Mr. Wesley* has published.

"When a minister or probationer for the ministry holds and disseminates publicly or privately doctrines which are contrary to *our* articles of religion and doctrinal standards, let *the same* process (of discipline and trial) be observed as in cases of *gross immorality*.

"We judge pursuit of private emolument is incompatible with our ministerial duties. No minister or probationer who will not relinquish his trade of buying and selling, though it were only pills, drops, or balsams, shall be considered a minister or probationer any longer. *Selling our own books is an exception.*"

A careful, or even a very superficial study of these and other features of the system ought surely to be sufficient to convince us, that whatever the actual result may be, its *tendency* is to eliminate from its ranks all progress or reform. Reform would naturally place itself outside of it, so as to attain the plane of least resistance and most progress. Such a rigid system would in time be likely to cease to be a vital organism, and become a remarkably perfect skeleton. If haply the system continued to have any life in it, that life and progress would be aptly represented by a man on a treadmill going through all the motions of walking, without the slightest result in change of scenery or surroundings—unless he stepped off.

That the Methodist Church in Canada, and elsewhere, does not wholly justify this logical inference is not through any fault of its system, but solely because there are many good men within it, in whom the life of charity, the love of freedom and usefulness, are so strong, that the system, the discipline, is held only as a dead letter. But it is not so considered by all; and the evil of it is that when any of these men get beyond the bounds of the advancing life of the majority of their brethern, then these brethern are apt to fall back upon their cast-iron rules to crush out the growing life in him.

Cast-iron rules are dangerous; dangerous more to the society formed upon them, than to "the world" in this progressive age. Secular governments are more wise than the Medes and Persians, and *don't* make laws that cannot be altered. The children of this world *are* frequently wiser than the (so called) children of light. Pity 'tis that these same children of light are so slow to learn from them.

Spero.

RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN SCOTLAND.

II.—The United Presbyterian Church.

The U. P. Church was the first publicly to enter into conflict with the liberal spirit. But the form given to the progressive movement by its advocates was comparatively insignificant and barren of results of any consequence. A brief notice of it, therefore, will suffice.

A one-sided and literal interpretation of certain doctrines in the Westminster Confession of Faith, giving prominence to the more repulsive aspects of the Calvinistic system, issued in a demand for the revision of the church's creed. In reality, however, it was a claim for an amount of freedom already recognised by the church as practically existing. The end sought was partial only. No fundamental doctrine was attacked. The principle underlying the whole system of Protestant theology—the infallible authority of the Bible as a rule of faith—was preserved inviolate. No plea was urged for the abolition of creeds as such. The leaders of the movement asserted that the church's creed was antiquated. They demanded, therefore, that it should be made an expression of the church's living faith. So far they were the representatives of modern liberalism in theology. "Living faith," however, they applied only to the special doctrines under discussion—the nature of the atonement; whether it was available for all men; and the nature and duration of the punishment of the wicked—doctrines, which in view of the vaster and more profound problems agitating the minds of thoughtful men, sink into comparative insignificance. And by thus narrowing the more universal movement in which they shared, they descended to the level of mere doctrinaires. The revisers in the U. P. Church contended for a logically concatenated system of theology which should embody all the doctrines held by their church; a demand as impracticable, if not in present circumstances, as impossible of attainment, as it ran counter to the whole liberal spirit by which they professed to have been animated.

The demand, however, for a revision of the Confession, intensified by the prosecution of a prominent member of the church for heresy in connection with the contraverted doctrines, was so far yielded to that a Synodical Committee was appointed to consider the whole question and report. The outcome of the Committee's labours was a Declaratory Statement, passed into an Act by the Synod of 1878, which professed to set forth the sense in which the doctrines in dispute were to be held as understood by the U. P. Church. This Declaratory Act seemed to grant concessions to the liberal spirit, by allowing freedom from the literal interpretation of the account of the creation given in the Book of Genesis, and on other unimportant details, "not entering into the substance of the faith." But the concession was in name only. All the main doctrines of the Confession were emphatically reaffirmed. Indeed, at this distance of time, the whole affair seems a burlesque. The labour of the mountain issued only in a mouse. For it was expressly left to the majority of the Synod to define what was embraced within the term "the substance of the faith," and thus, in reality, things were left very much in the same position as before. This was made plain enough at the Synod meeting of the following year. The