

PRESBYTERIAN UNIONS.

The cry for *uniformity* among Protestant Churches, so common in our day, is not without some danger. In his essay, "On unity in religion," Lord Bacon says that "certain Laodiceans and lukewarm persons think they may accommodate points of religion by middle ways, and taking part of both, and witty reconcilements, as if they would make an arbitrament between God and man." "To accommodate points of religion by middle ways," that is by religious *trimming*, has not by any means been the manner of the Church to which we owe our heritage of truth and liberty. "There is no such acceptable service to God," Owen remarks, writing of the translation of Enoch and Elijah, "none that he hath set such signal pledges of his favor upon, as zealously to contend against the world in giving witness to his ways, his worship, and his kingdom, or the rule of Christ over all." If the matter were looked into narrowly, it might be found that truth has suffered as much from lukewarm compromises as by hot contentions.

It cannot, however, with truth be said that "middle ways" and "witty reconcilements" have been the besetting sin of Presbyterians. Whether from their acuteness, or their conscientiousness, or their fiery temper, or their love for "lifting up a testimony," or a mixture of all these, certain it is that the history of Scottish Presbyterianism is rather warlike. The war has not indeed been without its good fruits. It has served to settle, we should think forever, to the Presbyterian family, questions of some difficulty and value. Our internal contentions have settled, pretty satisfactorily to ourselves at least, that our church government and our doctrine are sound, practical, and scriptural. We know now, as the price of keen debate and painful separation, what the State's duty is to the Church, and what the duty of the Church is to the State, the powers of Church courts and the rights in relation thereto of congregation and individuals. These and kindred doctrines have been defined, established and strengthened, as so many forts round our common citadel, by earnest workmen who too often frowned defiance on each other while laboring for the common good. But is it not time now to surround these old forts with a circumvallation of a wider range?

It is to the credit of the Colonies of Britain that they have been the first to draw the lines of this outer wall that will soon, according to present appearances, include within its range all the States of the Presbyterian federation. The first union in a series of eight that have taken place within the last eleven years, was effected in the Australian Colony of Victoria in 1859, on the broad ground of Calvinism in doctrine and Presbyterianism in church government. On this Basis four Presbyterian Churches were formed into one Synod, under the title of the "Presbyterian Church of Victoria." The following year, 1860, the Free and United Presbyterian Churches of Nova Scotia united on a Basis differing from the Victoria Basis only in its attempt to harmonize differences on the voluntary question. On a Basis constructed very much on the same principle, the Free and United Presbyterian Churches of what was then Upper and Lower Canada united, in 1861, into what is now called the "Canada Presbyterian Church." In 1862, the Established, Free, and United Presbyterian Churches of New Zealand united on a Basis very similar in meaning, language, and brevity to that of Victoria, to form the first "General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand." In Queensland, the union of the three sections