

THE
PRESBYTERIAN RECORD
 FOR THE
DOMINION OF CANADA.

VOL. XIII.

FEBRUARY, 1888.

No. 2.

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1688-1888.

II.

WE cannot afford to forget the glorious struggles and the "faithful contendings" of our forefathers. Their history is part of our heritage, we claim it, and are thankful for it; and as we recall its darker scenes we unite in songs of thanksgiving for the brighter and happier times in which we live. Two hundred years ago in Scotland the penalty of death was attached to the crime of preaching in any "Presbyterian Conventicle"; and even to attend such a "Conventicle" in the open air was a capital offence which rendered Presbyterians liable to be shot down like beasts of prey, or to be banished and sold into slavery, or to be drowned.

The Episcopal Church in Scotland dates back to the Reformation, but it never included, and does not include now, more than an insignificant minority of the people. It was reactionary, and distrustful of popular rights and popular liberty. Episcopacy never appeared on Scottish soil except as the agent or ally of a persecutor; and the persecutions of the Stuart period were heartless, cruel, and unrelenting in the extreme. The Stuarts professed to favour the Episcopalian church, and James VI, seems to have done so in sincerity; but Charles I.

was not far from being a Roman Catholic; Charles II. was a Roman Catholic in disguise; and James VII. was a Roman Catholic without any disguise. He wished at first to force prelacy on Scotch people, and used the tortures of the thumbscrew and the boot for his purpose; but he came by and by to devote himself to the direct strengthening and establishing of the Roman Catholic Church. The former had, as he believed, paved the way for the latter. Prelacy had ministered to arbitrary power; the sturdy Presbyterians which had resisted such power, seemed crushed and almost annihilated.

Presbyterians still lived, though the foremost of them were in exile or in hiding in the moors and hills of Scotland. They still, at the peril of life, proclaimed that "God alone is Lord of the conscience;" "Jesus Christ is the only King and Head of the Church." They protested against tyranny in the state, and corruption, superstition, and deadly error in the Church.

When English Churchmen, from the highest to the lowest, submitted in silence to the decrees of the Stuarts; when even the sons of the Puritans were quiescent through terror of the tyrants' arm; when lords and earls, dukes and barons, bowed in servile obedience, a nucleus of sturdy, earnest, courageous, and God-fearing Presbyterians rejected all compromise with