

it did to those who could only read the report given in the newspapers. To very many at a distance it seemed a harsh attack upon the Westminster Confession by those who had subscribed it and with us here it made a very bad impression and drew forth many unpleasant comments on the part of friends and foes to the Protestant religion. To say; "that it contrasts favorably with the most renowned Synods of the ancient church and with the Synods of Dort and Westminster" is unjust to that assembly, whose work alone is under discussion. Some of the ancient councils were indeed turbulent but that of Dort was also tyrannical and it was followed by proceedings disgraceful to the Christian religion. From Gillespie, Lightfoot, Baillie and the one published volume of the Minutes we have a view of the Assembly which does not bear out this comparison. Their debates were often long, but Baillie, who in his effusive style seems to tell all he knew and who remained till near the close, was greatly impressed with the reverent and orderly manner of debate, of the rules of which he gives a minute account. Thus he says: "The like of that Assembly I did never see and, as we hear say, the like was never in England nor anywhere is shortly like to be." There were two very small parties; one of about twelve Independents and the other of two or three Erastians; and, if the majority had chosen to crush opposition, they need not have suffered the discussions to be protracted. On Presbyterian Government alone they debated for thirty days—a fact which is sufficient to prove their patience and respect for the rights of the minority. Their rules of procedure were prescribed in an ordinance of the Long Parliament. The solemn oath taken by each member before he entered upon his duties and the ordinance are usually published along with the confession. Much of their time was spent in united prayer. In a time when the whole island from north to south was bleeding at every pore and nothing was heard but the agonising cries of civil strife, this remarkable Assembly sat for *five* years calmly elaborating to the best of their knowledge the most accurate expression of the doctrine of Holy Scripture. This fact is a memorable example of the moral sublime which cannot be placed on a level with the history of any other council in ancient or modern times. Had the Royalist armies, conquered in the strife that continued during the whole time of the Westminster Assembly, the Divines