

expounding and insisting upon its advantages before audiences that listened respectfully, but forgot incontinently. Where should we look for the parochial system of a Nova Scotian Church ten years after it had been instituted? Doubtless, as much would be expected of it in the cause of order, decency, and good government, it would be preceded by a flourish of ecclesiastical trumpets loud and long. Nevertheless, where would it be in the short space of five years? Embalmed in the records of the Synod and the Presbyteries, in minutes of Kirk-Sessions breathing important threats against contemners of authority, in disagreeable reminiscences of failure and defeat in the minds of the clergy—there, and only there. In America there is not, and there cannot be, unless a change (which we cannot at present foresee) takes place in the tendency of American ecclesiasticism, any arrangement approximating in convenience and efficiency to the parochial system of Scotland. The day has gone by when it was possible, and we seem in consequence to be condemned to endure all the evils engendered by a sectarianism most grotesque in its variety and most prolific in its growth.

What is a parish in Scotland? It is a civil, ecclesiastical, topographical entity. The word is derived from the Greek, and signifies the district which surrounded the house—the religious house or Church—and the parish was originally and solely an ecclesiastical device or invention. In days which reach far back into those dim centuries which immediately succeeded the period of our Lord's advent, the system took its rise. Perhaps the voice of an apostle—that voice which startled the ears of Athenian sages on Mars hill—first conveyed the glad tidings of salvation to the pagan savages of Britain, and pronounced the solemn words of the initiatory sacrament over the heads of the first British converts. Struggling with the darkness—with fierce Druid priests and hideous Druid superstition and powerful Druid craft—the light prevailed. A few adventurous spirits—the pioneers of Scottish christianity—from time to time penetrated into that region reputed to be so repulsive in its natural features, and peopled by a race so savage that the Roman eagles disdained the effort of conquering so pitiful a prey; so that in process of time the soldiers of Jesus accomplished what the soldiers of Caesar declined to attempt, or, attempting, failed to perform. The land was subdued to Christ. Churches, thatched with straw, floored with rushes, and daubed outside and inside with clay, now arose in considerable numbers, not only in the centres of population, but even in districts the most secluded and remote. Subsequent to the union of the Scottish and Pietish thrones, the land being in the enjoyment of comparative peace, more attention was bestowed upon and more honour accorded to the missionaries and their labours. A pious work, begun centuries be-

fore, was then completed,—a work which has survived the revolutions, social and political, of a thousand years, and which more than any other human device or institution characterizes the Scotland of the present day. The straw-thatched roofs, under which St. Columba and St. Kentigern and St. Regulus conducted the devotions of the half-savage multitudes who thronged around them, gave place to arches cunningly carved in stone and embellished with sacred emblems. The cathedral of St. Andrews rose over the waters of that stormy coast, a landmark to the passing mariner, a huge mountain of stone sculptured without and within with the rare skill of those ancient days. The Church of St. Mungo, on the banks of the Molendinar, still stands in all its original vastness and splendour, demonstrating to the busy city in its neighbourhood, amidst the intense worldliness of its daily life, the depth and power of that religious instinct of which it is at once a monument and a proof. Melrose, Iona, Moray, and many a sacred spot besides, still attest, in their fragments of gorgeous ruin, the devotion of that olden time. The cross of Christ overshadowed the entire land, and impressed its image and superscription on all that it contained. All ranks and degrees did homage to it, vied with each other in expressing their grateful acknowledgment of the struggle and triumph which it represented. Wealth poured into the lap of the Church on every hand and from many sources. Serfs came with their humble offerings, nobles gave princely donations, kings esteemed themselves thrice blessed in being permitted to share their patrimony with the servants of Christ. Out of the darkness of that time gleam forth at intervals from the high places virtues the most saintly, combatings of evil, strivings after good the most heroic and illustrious. It is recorded of Margaret that she was a most exemplary queen and christian, a benefactor to the poor, a munificent friend to the Church. It is said of David the First that, of all contemporary sovereigns, none excelled him in the purity of his life and the splendour of his charities. Historians have compared him to St. Louis of France, to St. Edward the Confessor of England; and one of the ablest and best of his successors on the throne of Scotland, too generous to detract from the fame of his predecessor's virtues, yet ruefully conscious of the poverty which they had entailed upon himself, is said, on one occasion, to have remarked, that though St. David must surely have been a saint, he was a sore saint for the Crown.

Thus was the Church of Scotland equipped for her remarkable and eventful career. The process was exceedingly simple. The lord of a manor, or *laird*, as he is termed in Scotland, anxious to secure the good offices of the Church and to supply the spiritual wants of his vassals and retainers, erected, on some convenient site, a Church,—those for whose