

THE VOLUNTARIES AND THE COURT OF SESSION.

For many years past both the Voluntaries and the Free Seceders have been in the habit of arguing the great question of religious liberty in Scotland on the assumption that it was controlled by the civil power and the Court of Session. First the one, and then the other, laboured hard to convince us, perhaps without convincing themselves, that we were clothed in the livery of the legal authorities, and the Court of Session—without our consent or their own consent, but to suit the denominational or sectional views then propounded and embraced by these parties—was truly, or at least virtually, the “head” of our national Church. This was a most fool-hardy as well as spiteful-tempt on the part of our opponents, and rests entirely on that kind of logic or reasoning which would make Tenderden steeple the cause of the Goodwin Sands, or trace the rise of the Trojan War from Leda’s eggs. If the Court of Session ever interferes with religious bodies of any denomination, it is not a spiritual interference, but generally a necessary or ministerial interference, in order to attain to a right interpretation of the laws of the land affecting property—for most religious bodies are now possessed of property—where things carnal are unavoidably mixed up with things spiritual,—just as in the case of professors themselves, whether they be of the United Presbyterian body, of the Free Church, or of the Church of Scotland. An interference with the laws which affect the property of the Church, is an interference neither with the Church nor with the laws of the Church. There is nothing spiritual in questions about the ownership of stone and mortar, about a grass or grain glebe, or so many chalders of victual. If a Church has property, so far she comes within the competence or jurisdiction of that court which has a right to decide as to the laws affecting property; and if, because the Court of Session exercises this jurisdiction, it is therefore the “head” of our Church, then is that Court the “head” also of all other Churches and more especially of the United Presbyterian Church, as may be clearly seen in the case now pending before that Court, at the instance of Dr. Marshall of Kirkintilloch, and others. Of course, we enter not at present into the merits of that case, nor will we insinuate anything as to its probable results, before the decision of the Court be known, which will not be till after the recess. All that we now aim at is the announcement of the “great fact” that the Voluntary party—yes, the veritable Voluntary Church in Scotland—is now itself within the grasp of the Court of Session; that the morn which ushers in the dawn of the first year of the second half of the nineteenth century will see these great spurners of the State, and fierce contemners of the secular authorities, themselves at last in the power of the civil magistrate, and in patience and in silence awaiting the final sentence of the civil judge.

When the Kirkintilloch case is fully settled, we certainly intend to enter upon it, on its merits—but, meanwhile, we cannot help pointing out how much more the National Church is independent of the Court of Session, that the churches of the Secession. In the litigations which of late have been going forward as to our *quoad sacra* churches, have the creed or principles or spiritual things of the Church of Scotland ever formed elements in the matter of dispute? Would Free Church principles be pled, or if pled, for a moment listened to, as an excuse for retaining these churches? In that respect we are clear of the law, while those who cry so loud and so often about the power of the civil magistrate cannot separate their doctrine from their worldly “goods and chattels,” and are therefore subject to be arraigned and judicated in, in each or both, which is by no means the case with the Church of Scotland. By our union with the State we give up none of our spiritual rights—we only secure them. The State did not make or fashion our creed, and then give it to us, but we made and fashioned it, and then gave it to the State,

and thereby made it both their creed and our own, at least so far as Scotland is concerned. There is no Erastianism here. Let the decision in the Kirkintilloch case, be what it will,—either way will equally answer our purpose,—their creed has been weighed in the balance of the civil magistrate, and we wait the result with patience. We must add, however, that after the very same fashion may the Free Church creed to-morrow be tried.—*Edinburgh Evening Post.*

DEATH OF DR. PATRICK M'FARLAN.—It is with sincere regret we find ourselves called upon to announce the death of this distinguished clergyman, which took place at his residence in Greenock, on Tuesday, in the 69th year of his age. The Rev. Doctor had been in the enjoyment of his usual health till about ten days ago, when he became affected with constipation in the bowels, which was the immediate cause of his death. Dr. M'Farlan was ordained to the ministry of the Church of Scotland in 1806, in which he continued till the memorable period of the Disruption in 1843, when he abandoned his living, and became a minister of the Free Church. Previous to that period, Dr. M'Farlan was always considered to have held rather moderate opinions on ecclesiastical polity, so much so that he was regarded by the public simply as a Non-Intrusionist, he never having gone the length of advocating the entire abolition of patronage, but only a wholesome check put upon its operation in the shape of an efficient Veto Act. The Rev. Doctor, who was, during the time of the Non-Intrusion controversy, minister of the West Parish of Greenock (the richest benefice in the Church), defended that act with great talent and ability, both in the Church Courts and on the platform, even after it had been declared illegal. His earnest advocacy of the cause, taken in connection with his high standing in the Church, as a minister and a scholar, gave a powerful stimulus to the Non-Intrusion party. No man, however much they might have differed with the Reverend Doctor at that time, could but admire the candour, straightforwardness, and purity of motive, which characterized all his proceedings. The result is well enough known. Dr. M'Farlan became a minister of the Free Church, and occupied, as he did in the Church of Scotland, a highly honorable position in connection with that body. He was one of the earliest Moderators of the Free Church Assembly, and his death, we are certain, will be deeply deplored throughout the entire bounds of that Church, as well as by other denominations of Christians.—*Glasgow Herald.*

CAMPBELL'S DEATH BED.—12th June, 1844—He has passed a tolerable night—sleeping at intervals. By his desire I again read the prayers for the sick—followed by various texts of Scripture, to which he listened with deep attention—suppressing, as much as he could, the sound of his own breathing, which had become almost laborious. At the conclusion he said—“It is very soothing!” At another time I read to him passages from the Epistles and Gospels—directing his attention, as well as I could, to the comforting assurance they contained of the life and immortality brought to light by the Saviour. When this was done, I asked him, “Do you believe all this?” “Oh yes,” he repeated with emphasis—“I do!” His manner all this time was deeply solemn, and affecting. When I began to read the prayers, he raised his hand to his head—took off his nightcap—then clasping his hands across his chest, he seemed to realise all the feeling of his own triumphant lines:—

“This spirit shall return to Him
Who gave its heavenly spark;
Yet think not, Sun, it shall be dim
When thou thyself art dark.
No! it shall live again, and shine
In bliss unknown to beams of thine,
By Him recall'd to breath,
Who captive led Captivity,
Who robb'd the Grave of victory
And took the sting from Death!”

Later in the day he spoke with less difficulty—he said something to every one near him. To his niece who was leaning over him in great anxiety,

and anticipating every little want, he said,—“Come—let us sing praises to Christ”;—then pointing to the bed-side, he added—“Sit here.”—“Shall I pray for you?” she said—“Oh, yes”—he replied:—“Let us pray for one another!” In the evening, a relation of my own, whom he had known many years, and who accompanied us from London on this visit, read prayers from the Liturgy at his bed-side,—and that Liturgy, of which the Poet had so often expressed his admiration in health, was a source of comfort in the hour of sickness. He expressed himself “soothed—comforted;” and, after a few words uttered in a whisper, he fell into a quiet slumber. As we sat by his side—reflecting on what had passed—we thought with Rogers:—

“Through many a year
We shall remember with a ‘sad’ delight
The words so precious which we heard to-night!”
June 14th—At a moment when he appeared to be sleeping heavily, his lips suddenly moved, and in a slow distinct whisper, he said—“We shall see * * * to-morrow!” naming in the same breath a long departed friend. After giving him a tea-spoonful of some liquid at hand, he moistened his lips with it—adding as usual—“Thank you—much obliged;” and these were the last connected words we heard from him. Next day, June 15th, 1844, he expired.—*Dr. Beattie's Life of Thomas Campbell.*

MONUMENT TO RALPH ERSKINE.—The inauguration of the statue of Ralph Erskine, one of the Fathers of the Secession Church in Scotland, which has been in contemplation for some time past by the United Presbyterian Church, took place on Wednesday afternoon in front of Queen Anne Street Church, Dunfermline, of which he was long the minister. The statue, which is of white freestone, was executed by Alexander Handyside Ritchie, Esq., and reflects the highest credit on the taste and skill of that distinguished sculptor. It stands on a pedestal made of the same material, chastely adorned near the top with an elegant wreath of flowers cut in the stone, on which are inscribed the words “Ralph Erskine.” Erskine is represented in the costume of the period, which is at once sculpturesque and graceful. The single-breasted coat with the large slashed cuffs, the knee breeches, silk stockings, and buckled shoes, have been sculptured with wonderful fidelity, and, while an innovation on what is termed classic art, this fine work proves that genius can arrange modern costume in sculpture in a manner to harmonise with the most refined ideas of beauty. The figure, which is colossal, is cut from a fine block of stone from Bavelaw Quarry. We understand this monument will cost altogether between £160 and £170. At the inauguration ceremony, which was conducted with masonic honours, the concourse of spectators was considerable, notwithstanding the occasionally unfavourable state of the weather, and letters of apology for absence were read from various individuals. After the statue was exposed to the view of the assemblage, the Rev. Dr. Kidston of Glasgow offered up an appropriate prayer, which was followed by the singing of the 64th paraphrase, the composition of Ralph Erskine.

KNOX'S HOUSE.—At the weekly meeting of ladies—promoters of the fund for reviving Knox's House—it was reported that the donations since last meeting amounted to about £70, in which were included contributions from various parts of the country, from £10 downwards; and at the same time, notice was received of contributions coming from several congregations. The Committee were given, at the same time, to understand that Mr. James Smith had been strengthening and repairing the house, so as to make it not only free of danger, but certain to remain standing for many years. The tenants had been temporarily removed, and, while nothing of an expensive or decorative kind had been done, seeing that he had been limited to a precise and very moderate sum, yet the building had been made quite safe. This is said to put an end to all law proceedings, either in superior or inferior Courts.—*Edinburgh Advertiser.*