

THE PRESBYTERIAN

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JOHN KNOX.

But again the scene changes. Released from bondage we find John Knox spending the next eight years of his life partly in the continent of Europe and partly in England. We find him at Geneva with the great Calvin, the wonderful Frenchman whose works have passed through a thousand editions, and who at the age of 22 was considered the most learned man of his day. By and by we find him in England where Edward the sixth of blessed memory was reigning, and reigning in the interest of the Reformation. In his sight he quickly rose to distinction and became one of the six royal chaplains, and as such, wielding an influence in England not inferior to that which he wielded in Scotland. We trace his hand in the preparation of the English prayer book, and we hear his voice in the councils of nations, and whenever he appeared, and wheresoever he went, there was a crowd, a sensation.

But England was not his home, not his proper element. He longed and longed, like a caged eagle to return to Scotland and prosecute the work that was so dear to his soul, and on which he had just entered when seized in the castle of St. Andrew's and doomed to work as a galley slave.

But how could he return to Scotland seeing Mary of Guise was still reigning as Regent, with all the power of France at her back, ready to crush the slightest movement that might be made in the interest of the Reformation? Nevertheless he did return, landing at Leith on the 2nd May, 1559, at the very time when Mary was sitting in Council in Edinburgh. And it shews how much his name was dreaded, that a messenger having entered the hall where the Council was sitting, that Council at once broke up in confusion. According to the accounts of the time, the messenger

came rushing in with pale face, and with faltering accent exclaimed: "John Knox is come. He is come. He slept last night at Edinburgh!"

Forthwith John Knox determined upon resuming his labours, and to occupy the pulpit of St. Andrew's, but the R. C. Archbishop hearing of his intention to preach there, gathered an army and sent him word that if he would dare to do so, that he would be shot in the act. And this was no idle threat for the Archbishop with the soldiers on the very first occasion proceeded to the church with their arms. There is a picture, it is said, in the National Gallery representing the whole scene, and a very impressive scene it is. There is the great preacher in the pulpit, his face all aglow with celestial fire, and there the great multitude hanging upon his lips as if spell-bound by the grandeur of the theme. And there in the remote part of the church, the soldiers, one of them levelling his musket and looking at the false priest for the assenting nod. What was John Knox preaching about that day? It was about Christ cleansing the temple, *driving out the money changers and those that sold doves saying: My Father's house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.* And we can well suppose that in his terrible denunciation he would not forget to set forth the perfect freedom wherewith Christ has made us free; that man can enter into the sacred presence of the Eternal without the word of the priest or the benediction of the bishop, and find mercy to pardon and grace to help him in every time of need.

It was indeed a great trial of his courage that John Knox should have gone to the Abbey and preached in such circumstances, and preached too on such a theme. The threats of enemies on the one hand, and