

THE  
CANADIAN PRESBYTER.

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POPULAR FALLACIES.

We have casually seen a little volume, published in London, bearing the following title: "Popular Errors explained and illustrated, by John Timbs, F.S.A." The idea was probably suggested by the quaint old book of Sir Thomas Browne on "Vulgar and Common Errors." The author undertakes to specify and correct several hundreds of long-prevailing errors in history, science, and the range of "common things." In looking over the book, which seems to perform its promise well, we have wished for some competent person to take up the subject of ecclesiastical errors, and handle it with intelligence and independence. It is a topic that would require for its treatment, not only the industry and perseverance of the gentleman who bears the unfortunate name of Timbs, but also a keen discrimination, a vigorous judgment, and a strong grasp of the ecclesiastical principles sanctioned by the New Testament.

Not pretending to the possession of these qualifications, and writing as we do, not a volume, but a short article, we are content to refer to a few fallacies which we know to prevail, and some of which tend to serious mischief. The nature of our subject does not admit of any close logical arrangement. We can afford space to mention no more than five "popular fallacies," selected from the field of ecclesiastical opinion.

I. *That Presbyterianism is a Scotticism.* This notion prevails extensively among Englishmen, especially among those who have not widened their minds by travel, and by intercourse with others. Presbyterianism they suppose to be like the Scottish heather, congenial to "Caledonia, stern and wild," but quite unsuited to other climates and soils. They take it to be a hard, rough, inexorable thing, peculiar to the stubborn Scots.

Now, without entering here into any argument on the Scriptural authority of the Presbyterian system, it is easy to show that it is, at all events, no Scotch peculiarity. A Presbyterian government of the Church was the form generally adopted by the Reformers from Popery. It was England that broke