

find in the history of the Church there, a progression from age to age. Conservative in doctrine it is true it has ever been, but yet exhibiting a development in christian life and liberty which no barriers have been able to arrest. From the year 1560 when the first General Assembly of the National Reformed Church of Scotland met, down to the present time, there have been constant stages of Presbyterian progress. John Knox and his devoted brethren set up the polity; Melville and his no less brave and daring coadjutors finally and forever rid it of prelatie elements, and made it in reality the Church of Christ's people. In 1592, it had grown so much in strength that the estates of parliament recognised its doctrines, and protected its liberties by statute. It had subsequently a long battle to fight with the miserable and contemptible dynasty, of the Stuarts; but over prelatie persecutors and pretensions it triumphed as it had done over the iniquities of the Papacy. Worn out and wearied with its conflicts, and many of its veterans longing for rest and peace, it permitted itself to be beguiled out of some of its liberties at the revolution settlement of 1688. Still this settlement was upon the whole the maintenance of its position of 1592, with, if anything, a step in advance of that. The Church, however, did cramp itself and did limit the people's just liberties by that settlement, and did not assert for itself all that it had a right to claim, as the free Kingdom of God. The result of this compromise, and of the spirit which it fostered, was the statute of 1711, restoring the absolute power of patrons which we can never think of without regarding it as an act of perfidy on the part of the English parliament. Thank God, however, our Presbyterianism never embraced its chains or recognised the right of any parliament to interfere with its liberty. It protested, it grumbled, it resisted, and it rebelled. Relief and Secession Churches arose in rapid succession. The Church finally aroused itself from Berwick on Tweed to Ultima Thule, and resolved that it must be free, and must not be hindered any longer by political restrictions from expanding itself as a living Church of Jesus Christ. The result of this has been the secession of a multitude of its adherents,—not from the confession—not from the polity—not from the worship or ecclesiastical practice of presbyterianism,—but from the political adjuncts and thralldom into which it had been brought by the Episcopalian tendencies of the English prelatie Government and Legislature. Deny it who may, this secession has been a *disruption* of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland. The *party of progress* by this step has advanced towards the perfect liberty and life of the Church. The conservative element remains behind. Conservative of the good old doctrine and polity we grant, but yet conservative also of the *civil disabilities* under which, from at least the year 1711, the Church has groaned and travailed as in birth. We don't believe that the *party left behind* can stand long in its present position. There is a recuperative energy in the Calvinistic Presbyterian System in which we have faith. It may be bent into abnormal shapes, still it resists. Like a piece of genuine whale bone, it will endure longer than the cord that binds and bends it, and it will one day, with an exulting snap, resume its normal rectitude.