

JOHN KNOX

HIS FIELD AND WORK

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Perhaps they may still be able, in the town of Haddington, in the county of the same name in the Southeast of Scotland, to point out to the interested stranger the house in which John Knox was born. And yet, in the face of this significant fact, highly trustworthy writers assert that he was born in the neighboring village of Gifford. Fortunately the place of his birth is not the matter of prime importance, but the fact that he was born, and about this there is not likely to be any serious question for some thousands of years to come. The month and the day of his birth have been lost from history, and even the year has been disputed, but, as we think, without good grounds. In this year of our Lord 1905 we rightly celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of his birth.

That was not, from many points of view, a happy time in which to be born in any part of the world. Luther, with a voice of marvellous sweetness, was still singing songs to the virgin, and the tyrant of the triple crown was peacefully laying the foundations of St. Peter's at Rome "with none to molest or make him afraid." Only seven years before the birth of Knox, Savonarola, whose prophecies startled Italy, and revolutionized Florence, was strangled and burnt; and the most wicked Pope that ever disgraced the Holy See could luxuriate in crime, and no voice in all the circle of Christendom be lifted up in effective protest.



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Especially was the beginning of the 16th century an unhappy time in which to be born in Scotland. The light of the "new learning" had dawned on Southern and Central Europe, and even in England such scholars as Colet and More were diffusing a light that gave promise of approaching day; but on Scotland the long night of the middle ages still lay in dense folds, the darkness relieved only by the twinkling of a few faint stars. Half the wealth of the land was in the hands of the clergy, and was made to minister to avarice, ambition and coarser forms of depravity. While sworn to lives of chastity, priests and Bishops gave themselves up to lives of shameless profligacy. So debased was public sentiment that they were permitted to rear their illegitimate children in their homes, and employ the patrimony of the Church for the purpose of marrying them into noble families, or of erecting baronages for them.

The secular nobles were steeped to the ears in the absurd superstitions of an apostate church, and atoned for lives of gross immorality by building and endowing monasteries to be the nurseries of indolence and vice. "The country swarmed with ignorant, idle, luxurious monks, who, like locusts, devoured the fruits of the earth, and filled the air with pestilential infection." (McCrie.)

The land itself was hard of visage. The bleak and barren moors, the rugged and rocky highlands, the ragged and storm-swept coast lines, were in themselves a grim challenge to battle.

Could any worse hap befall a man than to be born in such a country at such a time? What hope could the future hold for him? If we would know who John Knox was, and what he did, we must keep in

mind the barriers of circumstances that girdled his cradle.

On the other hand, some compensations were preparing for the babe who was so unfortunate as to be born in 1505. Luther will soon be singing songs of a different tenor from those he sang for the dole of charity in the streets of Eisenach. In a little while his historic hammer will be nailing the guage of battle to the door of Wittenburg Cathedral. Zwingli will, at the same time, be hurling thunderbolts of denunciation at the Pope's recruiting agents in Switzerland. The prophets of Zwickau will be rudely disturbing the slumbers of indolent priests. The peasants of Swabia, oppressed beyond the point of endurance, will be asserting the little remnant of manhood that is left in them, and shouting, "On, on, while the fire is hot! Down with the castles and their inmates! God is with you; on, on!" The Anabaptists, throughout all the countries of Northern Europe, sometimes with wild and fanatical excesses, always with an energy that no tortures could subdue, will be shaking the foundations of civil and social order, and threatening to bring down the whole superstructure in tumultuous ruin. Henry VIII will sever England from the papal power, and open a strange chapter in the history of royal despotism.

By the time that John Knox has travelled from the cradle to the maturity of manhood, throughout Christendom there will be wars and rumors of wars, prophetic of the on-coming of the new and wonderful era. There will be an urgent demand, such as the world has seldom known, for men of brave heart and strong arm, for men who fear God and naught else. There never was such a time to be born if

only God will touch the heart and inspire the soul with martial heroism. That rude age and that rough country of Scotland furnished such an opportunity as has rarely been afforded for God to show what he could do with such an one as John Knox.

The best natural blessings that fell to the lot of Knox were honest, sensible parents of humble station, but willing and able to give their boy the best education in reach. After preparing in the grammar school at Haddington, he entered the University of Glasgow in his eighteenth year. It is doubtful whether he took the Master's degree; but whether he did or not, he took away with him the benefit of a well trained mind and a good foundation for future building.

About the year 1530, he entered the priesthood, and is then lost to sight for some dozen years. What he did as a priest of the Romish Church to make the world either better or worse is buried in oblivion.

The interesting phase of Knox's history begins with the year in which he attached himself to George Wishart, a man whom Knox describes in his history as "of such graces as before him was never heard within this realm; yea, and are rarely to be found yet in any man, notwithstanding this great light of God that since his days has shined on us." To this man Knox was drawn as steel to the magnet, and attended him from place to place during the year 1545, bearing a two-handed sword for his defense. Only the next year, however, Cardinal Beaton, an enemy too powerful to be warded off by a sword in the hands of a poor, wandering, homeless scholar, laid hold of the gentle and noble young preacher, and burnt him at the stake near to the priory of St. Andrews with

all the guns of the castle trained on the spot to prevent his rescue. But the Cardinal was too late. The saintly Wishart had done his work—he had planted the seeds of truth in the heart of the homeless, wandering scholar, where its expanding power will work terrible havoc to the cause of the Cardinal. What a master stroke, if he had burnt Knox at the stake! But his eyes were holden. He chuckled over his clever deed in putting the amiable preacher out of the way, and stupidly suffered the poor schoolmaster, who held the fate of Scotland in his hands, to go his way unharmed.

Not even did Wishart die in vain. The true light was now shining, and people could not but note the contrast between the character of the lovely victim and that of the dignitary who burnt him. A few resolute spirits determined that the tyrant should pay for the life of the martyr with his own life. So they broke into the castle and coolly assassinated the Cardinal, insisting that in so doing they were not gratifying personal revenge, but executing the righteous sentence of God. They then seized the castle and defended themselves against the government. Knox, knowing that his life was in danger, took refuge with the assassins in the castle, carrying with him a class of boys whom he had engaged to teach. The French sent a fleet to assist in the siege, and soon the castle was forced to surrender. Knox was carried a prisoner to France, and, in violation of the terms of surrender, he and some of his fellow prisoners were forced to row in the galleys. This was a method of punishment, corresponding in its cruelty to our modern chain-gang. For nineteen months, with heroic fortitude, he endured the painful labor, his

suffering aggravated by sickness which at one time threatened to prove fatal.

Being released in 1549, he went to England, where the precocious and frail boy King Edward VI was giving himself with commendable zeal to the reformation of the Church, under the special guidance of Thomas Cranmer. Knox met with a cordial reception, and was the recipient of high honors, among others things being appointed chaplain to the King. Most of his time, while in England, was spent in preaching in the northern counties, especially at Berwick and New Castle. The reign of the pious young King was all too brief. On his death "Bloody Mary" succeeded to the throne. England was too small to hold her and John Knox. Urged by his friends he crossed to the continent, where he spent nearly five years in exile, the greater part of the time at Geneva. There he met the illustrious Calvin, who was four years his junior, but to whom he paid the deference which he felt was due to the loftiest genius and the most majestic character of his age. Calvin was just winning his last battle in the long and sometimes doubtful struggle with his enemies, and was, therefore, at the zenith of his power—the uncrowned King of Geneva, the peerless counsellor of Reformed Christendom.

Knox made one visit to his native land during these five years. This visit lasted from September, 1555, to July, 1556. It brought to him a great, glad surprise. The reformed doctrines had made wonderful progress since the day, six years before, when he had been carried off a prisoner by the French fleet. He wrote from Edinburg: "If I had not seen it with my own eyes, in my own country, I could not have believed

it." He visited different parts of Scotland, being hospitably entertained by those of the nobles who were friendly to the reformed faith, preaching and administering the sacrament in private houses—thus concealing his movements as far as practicable from his enemies. But "a city sit on a hill cannot be hid." On his return to Edinburg he wrote again: "The trumpet blew the old sound three days together, 'till private houses of indifferent largeness could not contain the voice of it. God, for Christ His son's sake, grant me to be mindful that the sobs of my heart have not been in vain, nor neglected in the presence of His majesty. O sweet were the death that should follow forty days in Edinburg as here I have had three! Rejoice, the time of our deliverance approacheth."

This visit, lasting nearly a year, was of incalculable value to the cause of reform. One notable feature was the winning over to the side of evangelical truth quite a number of the great lords, and among them some who in after years occupied positions of great power.

In the midst of his joyous and fruitful labors, a summons came for him to return to Geneva. Judging that the time was not ripe to join in a death grapple with his adversaries, he and his friends thought it wise for him to heed the call. He went by way of his old parish at Berwick, where he was married to Marjory Bówés, and had the happiness of taking both wife and mother-in-law along with him to Geneva. The next three years were perhaps the most peaceful and in some respects the most pleasant that he ever knew. Two sons were born to him; and in the midst of domestic quiet, with leisure for study,

with daily opportunity to sit at the feet of Calvin, and in constant association with many of the ripest scholars and saintliest spirits, who like himself were seeking refuge from persecution, he found this indeed an oasis of varied delights. Not the least of these was the religious atmosphere of the place. He writes to a friend: "Here is the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on the earth since the days of the apostles. In other places I confess Christ to be truly preached; but manners and religion to be sincerely reformed, I have not yet seen in any other place beside."

But with all these elements of enjoyment to make him desire that the days of his exile should be prolonged, his heart was with his brethren in Scotland. No sooner, therefore, was the way opened for his return by the death of "Bloody Mary" than he promptly accepted an invitation, and reached Edinburg on the 2d of May, 1559. His arrival was not a day too soon, for affairs had reached an acute crisis. The Queen Regent had dealt leniently with the reformers during the reign of Mary in England, had even permitted Scotland to become an asylum for those who fled from the fires of Smithfield. This was not because she hated Protestants less, but because she hated Mary and her Spanish husband more. Now, however, that a Protestant princess was on the throne of England, her policy changed. She filled the land with French troops and began an aggressive course against the "Lords of the Congregation," as the Protestant leaders were called. These showed a bold front and prepared to meet force with force. Knox threw himself with all the energy of his being into the conflict, and "his voice," according to the

testimony of Randolph, the English Ambassador, "was able to put more life into men than five hundred trumpets continually blustering in their ears." The civil strife lasted for a year and was terminated by the death of the Queen Regent. By the treaty of Edinubrg, the French troops were withdrawn, and the Protestants were left in possession of the government.

Parliament met August 1, 1560. It stuck the knife deep and performed some radical surgery. Not content with removing certain offensive excrescences from the old system, it proceeded to cut it up by the roots. It abolished the power of the Pope, repealed all the laws that gave validity to the papal hierarchy, and enacted the death penalty for the third offence of celebrating Mass. On the 17th day of the month, the Confession of Faith was ratified, and the Protestant religion formally established. The first General Assembly of the Reformed Church met on the 20th of the following December, and the machinery of the Church was put into effective operation.

From this time until his death in 1572, Knox was pastor of St. Giles, Edinburg; but his services were frequently demanded by the Assembly for various missions in different parts of the Kingdom. His wife having died in the close of the year 1560, he was married a second time at the age of fifty-nine in 1564. Illustrating the adage that "there is no fool like an old fool," he married a girl only sixteen years of age. Three daughters were the fruit of this union, one of whom, Mrs. Elizabeth Welsh, became famous for the strength and heroism of her character.

While life lasted Knox had a sore fight of it, wrestling with an unscrupulous queen, with selfish and

treacherous nobles, with an ignorant and superstitious populace. But there was never any abatement of courage, or of determined energy. He ran not as uncertainly; he fought not as one beating the air.

So much for the field in which John Knox wrought. What about the character of the work?

I. *John Knox, the Reformer.*—His work, as a reformer, was remarkable chiefest of all for its thoroughness. When in the Castle of St. Andrew's he was brought face to face, for the first time, with what he felt to be his high calling of God, he was dazed and for a time almost overwhelmed by its tremendous import. He had, in a sense, to be forced into it, after the manner of Calvin at Geneva. A conspiracy was formed against him by the inmates of the castle. According to his own account of the incident, on a day fixed for the purpose, John Knox preached a sermon, and at its conclusion, turning to Knox, he addressed him in these words: "Brother, you shall not be offended although I speak unto you that which I have in charge, even from all those who are here present, which is this—in the name of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the name of all that presently call you by my mouth, I charge you that you refuse not this holy vocation, but as you tender the glory of God, the increase of Christ's Kingdom, the edification of your brethren, and the comfort of me, whom you understand well enough to be oppressed by the multitude of labors, that you take the public office and charge of preaching, even as you look to avoid God's heavy displeasure, and desire that He shall multiply grace unto you." Then addressing himself to the congregation he said: "Was not this your charge unto me? and do ye not

approve this vocation?" They answered: "It was and we approve it." Overwhelmed by this solemn and unexpected charge, Knox, after an ineffectual attempt to address the audience, burst into tears, rushed out of the assembly and shut himself up in his chamber. "His countenance and behavior from that day 'till he was compelled to present himself in the public place of preaching did sufficiently declare the grief and trouble of his heart; for no man saw any sign of mirth from him, neither had he pleasure to accompany any man for many days together."

The despotic grip in which the Church of Rome had for centuries held all classes of Scotland, from the monarch to the peasant, was not at that time perceptibly relaxed. He was assured in his own mind that for him to enter the pulpit meant for him to enter on a conflict which could only terminate in his death at the hands of Rome, or the death of Rome's dominion at his hands. For Knox there could be no compromise, no giving place, no not for one hour, to this cruel and remorseless power. Already had he stripped himself of every rag of Popery, and had exorcised from his mind and heart every superstition which had been instilled into him by his early teachers. Not only had he outgrown all faith in the Church in which he had been born and reared, but all reverence and respect for it, and in place of these sentiments he had come to cherish an aversion toward it so strong that no language could exaggerate it.

In the dark days, when it seemed that Mary Stewart, by her blandishment and her intrigues, was about to win away the strongest supporters of the reformation, and through their treachery restore

again the Romish Church, he declared: "As from the beginning we have spared neither substance nor life, so mind we not to faint unto the end. We are determined never to be subject to the Roman Antichrist, neither yet to his usurped tyranny; but when we can do no further to suppress that odious beast, we mind to seal it with our blood to our posterity that the bright knowledge of Jesus Christ hath banished that man of sin and his venomous doctrine from our heart and conscience."

In his first sermon preached while still a refugee in the Castle of St. Andrews, he used for a text Daniel's vision of the four beasts, and devoted his strength to proving that the fourth beast was the Romish Church. He claimed that "all the notes which God had shown to the prophet pertain to it alone, and do so properly appertain to it that such as are not more than blind may clearly see them." This sermon was preached in the presence of members of the University, the sub-prior of the Abbey, and a great number of canons and friars of different orders. The boldness of the preacher's position created much excitement and called forth much speculation. Some said: "Others hewed the branches of papistry but he striketh at the root to destroy the whole." Others said: "If the doctors and our magistrates defend not now the Pope and his authority which in their own presence is so manifestly impugned, the devil have my part of him and his laws both." Others said: "Mr. George Wishart spake never so plainly, and yet he was burnt, even so will he be in the end."

This first sermon struck the keynote of his whole career as a reformer. Indeed, his work can hardly,

with propriety, be called a work of reformation. He saw nothing in the Romish Church to reform. Consequently the task to which he addressed himself was that of extermination. He had a vision of the Church as it came forth from the hands of Christ and His Apostles, with its one foundation laid, and all the lines of its development clearly marked out. His soul was ravished with the vision, for he saw a Church capable of filling his beloved Scotland with the blessings of peace and piety; but he could see no kinship, even most remote, between the Church of his vision and the Church of Rome. The one he called the chaste bride of Christ; the other, the Babylonian harlot.

So far as we know, never for one moment did he swerve a hairs-breadth from his first position. No pressure of circumstances could secure from him the slightest compromise or concession. He preached for some years in England, and enjoyed many marks of favor at the hands of King Edward, his ministers of State, and the distinguished Churchmen whom the young King had gathered about him. At the imminent risk of losing the favor which he had won, Knox stood boldly to his guns, and stoutly maintained that everything which savored of Popery should be swept away. He not only refused a bishoprick, but, also a living in London which was tendered him, and he based his refusal expressly on the ground that he had not freedom in his mind to accept of a fixed charge in the present state of the English Church. He was cited before the privy council to answer for this speech, and frankly told his interrogators that there were many things in the English Church which needed reformation, and that unless they were re-

formed ministers could not, in his opinion, discharge their office conscientiously in the sight of God.

Under yet more trying circumstances he refused to temporize in the least. When Mary Stuart came over from France to assume the reins of government, being emboldened by the cordial reception given her, she ventured, on the first Sabbath after her arrival, to have Mass celebrated in the chapel of the palace, in plain violation of law. It created widespread alarm among the more zealous Protestants, and on the following Sabbath Knox concluded his sermon in St. Giles by saying that "one mass was more fearful unto him than if ten thousand armed enemies were landed in any part of the realm of purpose to suppress the whole religion." Soon he was summoned to the presence of the Queen, and a stormy interview took place. In the course of the interview, he told her that for a Queen to be subject to the Church and to be a nursing-mother to God's people was the "greatest dignity that flesh can get on the face of the earth." "Yea," exclaimed the Queen in hot indignation, "but ye are not the Kirk that I will nurse. I will defend the Kirk of Rome, for I think it is the true Kirk of God." Imagine, if you can, the sensations of this spoiled child of fortune, who, in the gay court of France, where she had been reared, had never heard aught but fine words of flattery, when the relentless preacher replied: "Your *will*, madam, is not reason, neither doth your *thought* make the Roman harlot to be the true immaculate spouse of Jesus Christ. Wonder not, madam, that I call Rome an harlot, for that Church is altogether polluted with all kinds of spiritual fornications, both in doctrine and in man-

ners." He then declared himself ready to prove that the Roman Church had declined further from the purity of religion taught by the Apostles than the Jewish Church had degenerated from the ordinances which God gave them by Moses and Aaron at the time when they denied and crucified the Son of God.

In the all comprehensive sweep of his design, and the radical character of his work, John Knox stands out in marked contrast to both the German and the English reformers. These later took the Bible as a rule for correcting abuses, and were content to leave untouched what was not positively contrary to its teachings. Knox took the Bible as a rule for constructing anew, and would suffer nothing to remain which the Bible did not positively approve. The churches must be swept clean of everything which would even suggest the impure rights of the spiritual Babylon. He would not allow the laying on of hands in ordination, because this ceremony had been perverted by its connection with the sacrament of orders.

Did he believe it possible to accomplish the task which he assigned himself? If ever he despaired, or even doubted of ultimate victory, he gave no note of it to the public ear. Often fleeing for his life, frequently deserted by faint-hearted allies, sometimes shattered in health, yet always his voice was like the bugle blast calling to battle. He did believe with an audacity of faith that has seldom been paralleled in the success of his cause. He believed that the mighty superstructure of Rome, strong with the accumulated growth of centuries, could be shivered to atoms by simply preaching Christ's Gospel. In a letter written in 1557, he says: "Satan, I confess,

rageth, but potent is he that promiseth to be with us in all such enterprises as we take in hand at His commandment for the glory of His name, and for maintenance of His true religion. And, therefore, the less fear we any contrary power; yea, in the boldness of our God, we altogether contemns them, be they Kings, emporers, men, angels or devils. For they shall never be able to prevail against the simple truth of God which we openly profess. By the permission of God, they may seem to prevail against our bodies, but our cause shall triumph in despite of Satan." No matter from what quarter the wind of adversity blew, nor how roughly it blew, he never laid aside this tone of haughty defiance and of assured confidence.

II. *John Knox, the Churchman.*—The work of destruction was but a part of his task. With equal earnestness he set himself to clearing away the rubbish, and restoring the true "household of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner-stone."

The parliament which met in 1560 appointed John Wynram, John Spottiswood, John Willock, John Douglas, John Row and John Knox to draft a confession of faith. All of these were Johns, and all were men of note in their day; but after the lapse of three and one-half centuries, five of them have no glory "by reason of the glory that excelleth." It is customary to speak of this confession as if it were the work of John Knox alone. We may thus do an injustice to his colleagues, but, no doubt, we find in this confession a true exposition of Knox's views. The confession is brief and moderate in the exposition of those doctrines which we designate Calvin-

istic. It is full and strong on the doctrine of the Church, making the marks of the true Church to be these three: 1st, The true preaching of the word of God; 2d, the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus; and, 3d, ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered, as God's word prescribes. Surely we can but admire the strong hand that could sweep away all the accumulated rubbish of centuries and lay down these few, simple, scriptural marks, on which the succeeding centuries have been able to make no improvements. How impossible to associate with these marks any narrow, sectarian bigotry, or denominational exclusiveness!

The most important work of the first General Assembly, which met in December, 1560, was the adoption of a Book of Discipline, which had been prepared by the same six Johns who drafted the Confession of Faith. This book defined what doctrine should be taught; what qualifications must be possessed by those admitted to the ministry; how these should be settled in their charges; what other officers should be appointed in the Church; how the ministry should be supported; discipline administered, marriage regulated, and the sacraments dispensed.

The first Assembly was composed of forty members, only six of whom were ministers of the Gospel. The explanation is that "there were but twelve Protestant ministers for the whole of Scotland." This lamentable destitution caused Knox and his colleagues to introduce two novel features into their polity. One was a provision for the appointment of the "most apt men that can distinctly read the Common Prayers and the Scriptures," to hold services in those churches where no ministers could be had.

It was expected that these "most apt men" would develop from mere readers into exhorters, and from exhorters into expounders of the Scriptures, and finally into ordained ministers. The other novel feature was a provision for dividing up the kingdom into 10 or 12 districts, and the appointment over each of a superintendent. This superintendent was to be "a learned and godly minister," who should have charge of one particular church in his district, but in addition to this should make regular visitations of all the churches in the district, and exercise episcopal authority in "planting and erecting churches, appointing ministers to vacant charges, examine the life, diligence and behavior of the ministers, and the manners of the people."

These novel features testify to the fact that John Knox was no slavish copyist. He had enjoyed exceptional facilities for acquainting himself with the different polities adopted by the leading churches of the Reformation. He had studied at first hand Episcopacy in England, Lutheranism in Germany, Zwinglianism in Switzerland, and Presbyterianism in Geneva. There can be no doubt as to which system he preferred; but he was not so wedded to a theory, even though that theory was based on Scriptural principles, as to sacrifice to it the spiritual welfare of the people. He believed that Church polity was for the people, and not the people for it. Hence in the application of principles he had respect to circumstances. Competent ministers could not be had; but the people must not, for this reason, be deprived of all the public ordinances of God's house. Church courts could not be organized and so arranged as to exercise an adequate episcopal oversight of churches

and ministers. Hence episcopal powers must be entrusted, with proper safeguards, to the hands of a few preachers. All praise to John Knox for his broad and flexible Churchmanship!

In his recent book on John Knox, Dr. Stalker, commenting on the First Book of Discipline, says: "An omission which must strike every reader is the almost total absence of the Presbyterian system of Church Government." We think this statement too strong. The government provided was altogether Presbyterian, but with deviations from the normal type to adapt it to the peculiar necessities of time and place. Each congregation was committed to the care of a Kirk session. This is pure Presbyterianism in its germinal form. It was impracticable to set in operation a fully developed Presbyterianism, and Knox was content to provide for the present and leave to his successors to provide for the future.

The Book of Discipline covered broader grounds than the name would indicate. One of the subjects on which it enlarges and speaks with strong emphasis is education. "Because schools are the seed of the ministry diligent care should be taken over them that they be ordered in religion and conversation according to the word. Every town should have one schoolmaster, and in every rural parish the minister or reader should teach the children that come to them. Men should be compelled by the Kirk and magistrates to send their bairns to school. Poor men's children should be helped. Three universities should be erected in this realm, St. Andrews, Glasgow and Aberdeen."

Another matter treated at large was the "rents of

the Kirk." "The whole rents of the Kirk, abused in Papistry, shall be referred again to the Kirk that thereby the ministry, the schools, and the poor may be maintained within the realm according to their first institution."

While the First Book of Discipline is very defective when compared with that which succeeded it six years after the death of Knox, yet from it we are able to get a clear conception of the Church of Knox's vision. It was a Church in which the pure word of God should be faithfully preached, the sacraments properly administered, and strict and impartial discipline maintained; a Church which tenderly cared for the poor, whose ministry should be adequately supported, and their families provided for after their death; a Church which provided a school in every parish, a college in every considerable town, and three universities to furnish facilities for higher education to the whole realm. It was to realize this vision that Knox gave himself unsparingly, first, to pull down the old fabric that cumbered the ground, and second, to the upbuilding of the new. He lived to give Popery its death-blow in Scotland; but he did not live to see his hopes for the true Kirk perfectly realized. His failure in the work of construction was due, in a large part, to the selfishness and sordidness of the nobles. They would not consent to see all the rich revenues of the old Church turned into the beneficent channels that Knox had marked out for them. Long before the victory over the Papacy was won, "the gaunt and hungry nobles of Scotland, careless, most of them of God, or devil, were eyeing the sleek and well-fed clergy like a pack of hungry wolves." (Froude.) They had looked

across the border to the South, and had seen how the English lords had grown fat on the rich spoils which were brought to the public coffers when Henry the VIII threw off the Papal yoke. Such a reformation as that in England was far more to their tastes than this which Knox was outlining, in which the new Church was to fall heir to all the wealth of the old, and was to use it, not for building lordly manors, and adding broad acres to private estates, but for purposes exclusively religious, charitable and educational. Hence it was that the privy council refused to ratify the Book of Discipline; and Knox was constrained to fight through years a losing battle against the avarice of those who were formerly his powerful allies. The poor were neglected, the ministry badly paid, and the great educational scheme, which he had minutely outlined, languished for the want of funds. The Book of Discipline concludes with this address to the nobles: "If God shall grant quietness and give your wisdoms grace to set forward letters in the sort prescribed, ye shall leave wisdom to your posterity, a treasure more to be esteemed than any earthly treasure you are able to provide for them."

The glory of Knox as a Churchman is that, having found in the word of God the marks of the true Church, he outlined for it a sphere of activity; provided for it an administrative policy; and sought for it ample revenues, in order that it might confer upon generations then present and on their posterity to the latest times all the blessings that flow from Scriptural piety coupled with national education.

III. *John Knox, the Statesman.*—When the Papacy was in control in Scotland, Church and State were

so wedded; so blended in their administration of affairs, that it would have been utterly impossible to touch the one without touching the other; utterly impossible to revolutionize the one without revolutionizing the other. Consequently, John Knox had of necessity much to do with civil affairs. Had he desired to hold aloof, he could not have done so; but he had no desire to hold aloof. A complete separation of Church and State, which seems to us to be so manifestly the proper thing as to admit of no discussion, has been called by one of our statesmen "the chief contribution of America to the science of government."¹ It is a doctrine which has not yet been popularized in Europe. In the days of Knox it was regarded as one of the pernicious heresies of the Anabaptists. Accordingly, in his conception of the office which he held as minister of the Gospel, he was as much God's ambassador to the State as to the individual. He felt called upon to admonish rulers in respect to the functions of their office; to seek the abrogation of all unjust, or unwise legislation; and to exert himself to promote in every way civic righteousness.

It may be worth while, therefore, to inquire into the political opinions by which the great reformer was guided. By a providence somewhat remarkable, when John Knox was a pupil in the University of Glasgow one of his teachers inculcated doctrines, both ecclesiastical and political, far more liberal than were common in their day. This teacher was John Major, who had been educated principally in France, where he served himself heir to the teachings of the great ecclesiastics, John Gerson and Peter D'Ailly, and where it seems that he also em-

braced the political principles of Marsilius of Padua, and William of Occam. Major's opinions respecting civil government have been summed up in the following statements: "He taught that the authority of kings and princes was originally derived from the people; that the former are not superior to the latter, collectively considered; that if rulers became tyrannical, or employ their power for the destruction of their subjects, they may lawfully be controlled by them, and proving incorrigible, may be deposed by the community as the superior power; and that tyrants may be judicially proceeded against, even to capital punishment." These doctrines in the mind of John Major, mixed up as they were with a lot of superstitious rubbish, were giving neither popes nor kings any trouble. But they found in the soul of John Knox a fertile soil, which bore fruit that made tyrants tremble. In his soul, they were associated with a courage that dared to avow them in any presence, and with an eloquence that won for them a hearing among all classes. It was his unhappy lot to live through the most critical years of his country's history, under the reign of a sovereign who both hated and feared him, and who tried to have him convicted of treason and put out of the way. But so dominant did his influence become that the Queen, at times, was constrained to veil her hatred, and seek his approval of measures which she wished to carry.

No man realized more clearly, or taught more strongly the duty of obedience to the powers that be. He preached this duty to nobles and to peasant, and exerted himself to prevent the discontent of the people from crystalizing into conspiracy or bursting

forth into revolts. But he taught the duty of obedience with qualification. Obedience on the part of the subject implied a reciprocal duty on the part of the ruler. In one of his many interviews with Queen Mary, he insisted that duties were not altogether with subjects, and rights altogether with rulers. "It will be profitable for your majesty to consider," said he, "what is the thing your grace's subjects look to receive of your majesty, and what it is ye ought to do unto them by mutual contract. They are bound to obey you, but only in God; ye are bound to keep laws to them. Ye crave of them service; they crave of you protection and defence against wicked doers. Now, madam, if ye shall deny your duty unto them, think ye to receive full obedience of them? I fear, madam, ye shall not." He questioned not for one moment that the powers that be are ordained of God; nor did he question for one moment that these powers were ordained to be a terror to evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. He judged, therefore, that obedience was rightly conditioned on the fidelity of governments to the purpose for which they were divinely ordained.

The most noted of all Knox's political pronouncements was a treaty which he wrote during his exile, and which he called "The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women." In this he argued at length and strenuously to show that for a woman to exercise rule over man is contrary to both reason and Scripture. This effort of his pen was inspired by the career of "Bloody Mary," who was keeping the fires of Smithfield fed with the bodies of England's most illustrious saints. But before the sound of his trumpet reached England, Mary

had exchanged her royal robes for her burial shroud, and Elizabeth had stepped into her place. The latter came to the throne just in time for the terrific blast to strike her with full force. The result was an undying hatred for the author. Shortly after the blast had gone forth, Knox was recalled to Scotland. He asked permission to pass through England, and was sternly prohibited from setting foot within Elizabeth's realm.

It seemed the irony of fate that the only sovereigns to whom Knox ever afterwards owed allegiance were women—first, Mary of Guise, the Queen Regent, and next her daughter, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. He had not been long returned from his exile when the latter summoned him into her presence to answer for proclaiming doctrines calculated to loose the bonds of her government and set her subjects against her. He handled the matter with great tact and courage, recanting no statements which he had made in his published writings or in his sermons, but assuring the Queen that he had not permitted his theory to influence his practice in respect to her government.

It may be said that among the many benefits which Knox conferred on his countrymen not the least was his teaching them their rights as men made in the image of God. He instilled into their bosoms the conviction that no one was born with a hereditary right to oppress them; that the accident of wearing a crown carried with it no authority to lord it over their consciences; and that the divine right of kings was the exalted privilege of promoting both the temporal and spiritual welfare of their subjects. Had the Stuart dynasty had the grace to profit by his

doctrine, its reign would have been a blessing instead of a blight, and Charles the First would have carried his head on his shoulders to an honorable grave.

IV. *John Knox, the Man.*—The foregoing sketch of the reformer's labors has been too brief and fragmentary to reveal all the features of his character. We must add, therefore, a word on John Knox, the man.

When times change and manners soften, the standard for measuring men also changes. Those who live in a civilization that has ripened into a condition of wealth, culture and luxury may easily misjudge those who were just emerging from the semi-barbarianism of the Middle Ages. As we look at John Knox, through the distance of four centuries, with the light of our more refined and polished age falling on him, he may seem to us a man of harsh, acrid, narrow and intollerant nature. But let us not judge hastily. Intollerant he no doubt was; but intollerance at that time was a doctrine, not a disposition. It was a doctrine which had been driven deep into the heart of that age by the impact of a thousand years. Few called it in question. It was held as tenaciously by the timid and pliant Cranmer, by the gentle and mild Melancthon as by Cardinal Beaton and Pope Paul IV. That Knox believed in the forcible repression of those whom he denounced as idolaters is no more evidence against the benignity of his heart than is the fact that George Washington signed the death warrant of Maj. Andre an evidence against the kindly disposition of the Father of his Country. Cruel dogmas were a common inheritance from a former age and an apostate church; and

while they no doubt affected to some extent both conduct and character, they were no true index of the essential qualities of the heart.

Obviously that which above all else has created a popular impression unfavorable to Knox was his persistent attitude of hostility to his sovereign, that unhappy Queen around whose life and death gathers so much of tragic interest. The literary champions of Mary Stuart, who, with a chivalry worthy of a better cause, have determined, at all hazards, to make a heroine of her, have found it necessary to paint in revolting colors the character of her great antagonist. Dr. Thos. McCrie, in his classic life of Knox, quotes from one of these champions, who calls Knox "a fanatical incendiary, a holy savage, the son of violence and barbarism, the religious Sachem of religious Mohawks." To show that this is not John Knox, but a hideous caricature, it is needful but to paint Mary, Queen of Scots, in her true colors. It is to be borne in mind that before Mary was recalled from France to occupy the throne of Scotland the Roman Catholic Church had been abolished, and the Reformed Faith adopted by act of Parliament as the religion of the country. Yet she came "with a purpose fixed as the stars to trample down the Reformation and to seat herself at last on Elizabeth's throne." (Froude.) She was playing for a political prize, but she could only hope to win this by a counter revolution in religion. Hence she refused to ratify the acts of Parliament overthrowing the Papal and establishing the Protestant Church. She secretly put heart into the large contingent of Catholics who were scattered throughout the realm. Hiding her deep designs under a pleasing exterior, she threw a

spell of enchantment over all the courtiers whom she gathered about her. Very soon her seductive methods began to tell. Many eminent Protestant nobles became her apologists, and the Papists were emboldened to begin an active propagandism. Just what the result might have been had she continued as she began, cannot, with certainty, be conjectured. But unquestionably her influence was growing, and the reaction toward the old order was assuming a somewhat alarming aspect. Fortunately for the Reformation, Mary suddenly threw prudence to the winds and gave herself up to the lead of wild and wayward passion. By two marriages, in which folly and crime strove for precedence, she alienated all classes of her subjects, and precipitated herself headlong to ruin.

John Knox was the one man whose sagacious eyes saw from the first through the fascinating arts by which she veiled her intrigue and sought to execute her purpose. His comment on leaving her presence after their first interview was: "If there be not in her a proud mind, a crafty wit, and an indurate heart against God and His truth, my judgment faileth me." Events soon demonstrated that his judgment did not fail him. With all those blandishments which her youth and beauty, her wit and cleverness made so effective, she was striving to overturn the law of the land and the Church of Christ. Holding the view, which is our view, that princes are as truly amenable to God's law and to the "powers that be" as their subjects, what was he to do as a patriot and a Christian but to resist her to the utmost? He had no weapon but his tongue and no resource but the truth. There is no evidence that in the use of these he was

needlessly harsh and cruel towards the Queen. In one of their interviews, in which she wept so profusely that "scarcely could Marnock, her secret chamber-boy, get napkins to hold her eyes dry for the tears," he solemnly asserted: "Madam, in God's presence I speak; I never delighted in the weeping of any of God's creatures; yea, I can scarcely well abide the tears of my own boys whom my own hand corrects, much less can I rejoice in your majesty's weeping. But seeing that I have offered unto you no just occasion to be offended, but have spoken the truth, as my vocation craves of me, I must sustain (albeit unwillingly) your majesty's tears rather than I dare hurt my conscience or betray my Commonwealth through my silence." Her persistent use of Popish ceremonies meant to Knox persistent idolatry, and he and his fellow countrymen had pledged themselves and entered it upon the statute book of the realm to keep no terms with idol worship. The fact that many of his colleagues were conniving at Mary's papistry and apologizing for the fair criminal made it all the more incumbent upon him to be stern and inflexible. Looking at this aspect of his character Froude says: "He was no narrow fanatic who, in a world in which God's grace was equally visible in a thousand creeds, could see truth and goodness nowhere but in his own formula. He was a large, noble, generous man, with a shrewd perception of actual fact, who found himself face to face with a hideous system of iniquity. He believed himself a prophet with a direct commission from heaven to overthrow it. The penetrating genius of Carlyle saw the same kind of man. "They go far wrong," he says, "who think this Knox was a gloomy, spasmodic,

shrieking fanatic. Not at all; he is one of the solidest of men—a most shrewd, observing, quietly discerning man—brother to the high, brother also to the low; sincere in his sympathy to both; a cheery, social man with faces that loved him. An ill-nature, decidedly, he had not; kind, honest affections dwelt in the much-enduring, hard-worn, ever-battling man."

It is not in the fierce conflict with foes, but in the free, confidential intercourse with those whom he loved that the fullest disclosures of his real self are made. In his letters to his mother-in-law, to whom he was devotedly attached, he lets us see that the thunderbolts which he hurled at other sinners fell with telling effect upon his own heart. "I am compelled," he writes, "to thunder out the threatenings of God against all rebels; in doing whereof I am sometimes wounded, knowing myself criminal and guilty in many, yea, in all things that in others I reprehend. Judge not, mother, that I write these things debasing myself otherwise than I am. No! I am worse than my tongue can express." The tenderness of his sympathy is revealed in another letter to the same person, in which he speaks of mingling his tears with the tears of certain poor penitents who came to him for counsel.

Vehement no doubt he was; but vehemence is not a matter of temper, but temperament. His soul was charged with volcanic fires; these, however, were kindled not from below, but from above. His speech flowed like a flood, but the pressure behind it was zeal for God's glory and love for His truth.

Contrary to the impression which his strenuous life makes upon us, "he was of small stature and of a weakly habit of body." As in the case of Calvin,

whom he much resembled, the energies of heart and mind were too great for the body, wearing it out prematurely, so that he died as an old man at the age of sixty-seven. He preached his last sermon on the 9th of November, 1572. It was at the installation of his successor. As he went trembling down the aisle, out at the door, and down the street to his home, leaning on his staff and on the shoulder of his faithful servant, the great throng watched him with tender and pathetic interest, feeling that it was the last time. On the following Tuesday he was seized with a cough, which greatly affected his breathing. From that day forth he knew that the time for his departure was at hand. Never did the worn and scarred veteran look forward with more eager longing to quitting the tented field than he for his release. "The day approaches," said he, to the session of St. Giles, "for which I have frequently and vehemently thirsted, when I shall be released from my great labors and innumerable sorrows, and shall be with Christ." It pleased God to give him a little rest, and a taste of the joys to come before translating him. There in the hush of the death chamber, with a few friends keeping watch by his bed, he had some sore wrestlings with satan, but these were followed by glorious victories. Just before the end, when asked if he had any pain, he replied: "No more pain than He that is now in heaven. I am content, if God so please, to lie here seven years." At the last, when the power of speech had failed and the flame of life was flickering, he made a sign as agreed upon, by lifting his right hand that all was well between him and Christ.

"E'en now the sight fails from his eyes,
And now 'tis come at last!
With lifted hand—with two deep sighs,
That kingly soul hath passed."

