

THE

COVENANTER.

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HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND.

Early in the seventeenth century, the province of Ulster was extensively planted by Scotch and English settlers. These were among the most unsettled, reckless, and irreligious of their respective countrymen. But the great encouragements which this plantation afforded, and the repelling influences at work in Scotland at that time, led several faithful and earnest Presbyterian ministers to visit the country. By the blessing of God upon the indefatigable labours of these men, a deep seriousness and concern about religion were speedily produced and fostered into an extensive and memorable revival. True religion gained a remarkable ascendancy, and the simple forms and principles of Presbyterianism secured at once abiding sway over this spreading and prosperous colony. This glorious work was not long to continue undisturbed. Wentworth, Charles's deputy in Ireland, inspired by Laud, and assisted by the Bishops and the High Commission Court, soon forced the Presbyterian ministers from their posts, and drove them with many of their best people to seek temporary refuge in Scotland. Then followed the wild Popish Massacre of 1641, which broke like a volcano over the land, and, concentrating all its violence upon the north, left nothing but blood, ruin, and consternation behind. In singular retribution the brunt of this furious storm fell principally upon the heads of the Episcopal ministers and gentry, while the Presbyterian people passed comparatively unscathed.

Subjected for years to a most heartless persecution, gradually left destitute of ordinances, and now appalled and confounded by the sudden wildfire of indiscriminate slaughter, raging and devastating all around, they resorted—as God's people have always done in such circumstances—to small private meetings for prayer and religious fellowship for that help and consolation they so much required. It is believed this was the first extensive and permanent organization of such *Societies* in these three kingdoms. Like the young prairie grass, which springs at once from the black and wreathing sward, just swept by the devouring fire, and soon conceals every trace of former ruin, so the awakened principle and piety of the land, incorporating themselves into these Societies, were preserved amidst the general havoc, and then bursting into wild and luxuriant verdure, flourished on the scenes of yet undissipated horrors, presenting to posterity a resort and asylum

invaluable service. Why should there not be a ruling elder—and in that character a physician might be sent, and perhaps ought to be sent—as well as ministers in the service of the church abroad?

As to the ability of the church to sustain additional missionaries in the field, there is, and can be no doubt. It is not doubted, however, that the medical department of the mission might, in the course of a few years, in a city like Damascus, become self-supporting. We ought to add that our missionaries themselves are most anxious that a physician should be sent; and in this desire they are joined by others whose opportunities for knowing the importance of the matter, have been better than even theirs.

SAMUEL O. WYLIE, *Chairman of Board of Missions.*

JAMES M. WILLSON, *Secretary.*

SLAVERY—THE SUPREME COURT.

The slave power goes on apace. Step by step, it marches on to the entire control of the policy and laws of the country. Intrigue and violence, unprincipled legislation and judicial iniquity, are each employed as circumstances seem to require. It never retreats. Strong in its own unanimity and in the thorough demoralization of its Northern allies, it laughs at opposition, and treats with undisguised contempt the conscience and the struggles of the subjected minority which seeks to restrain its growth—which still retains some regard for human rights. As it gains strength and courage, it throws aside as a mere “rhetorical flourish,” the principle once regarded as fundamental, that “All men are born free and equal,” and openly advocates class distinctions. It calls free society “a failure,” and inquires whether “labour” should not be “owned” by capital—not hired. It boldly avers that the Scriptures sanction, not only negro slavery, but the enslavement of the white race. It claims, as on its side, nature, and the “common law”—scornfully repudiating the doctrine that slavery is the creature of State or municipal authority. It demands a recognition of the slaveholder’s title to his slave as identically the same with our right to our houses and cattle. It denies the right of a State to emancipate by law, and stands ready to put in its claim to override all legislation in favour of liberty.

It is likely to succeed. Whatever other nations may do, it now feels sure of converting the United States into a vast slaveholder’s paradise—as they would style it; or as we would say—a vast den of thieves. It has just taken its largest stride. The Supreme Court of the land has at last made a decision which meets the whole case. Dred Scott sued for his freedom and that of his family in the District Court of Missouri, on the ground that having been taken by his master into the State of Illinois, where he resided for several years, he was of right free by virtue of the laws of that State, and could not be again held as a slave. The decision was against his claim. On his appeal to the Supreme Court, the case was dismissed, on the ground that, inasmuch as he was of African blood, *he could not enter suit in a United States’ Court!* Not satisfied with this, the Court—two Justices, M’Lean and Curtis, dissenting—proceeded to declare any attempt to restrict slavery by law unconstitutional, and that the laws of

a free State have no power to alter the condition of a slave voluntarily taken into its bounds by his master.

These are astounding doctrines. The country has heard them with astonishment, and all the friends of liberty with dismay. That the Constitution recognises slavery in the States, *where it exists*, we do firmly believe. That it contains provisions most iniquitous, as in the article regarding the return of fugitives, and the three-fifths principle, we have ever maintained; but in this decision we do as firmly believe there has been reached a deeper depth of iniquity. Can any thing be more monstrous than the assertion—and it must now be regarded as a part of the established law of the land—that a man who has in his veins a drop of negro blood, is no citizen—not even so much of a citizen as to be entitled to sue in the courts of the general government? That such a man is an outlaw? That he has no opportunity of redress for any wrong inflicted upon him in any case in which suit must be brought, if at all, in a United States' Court? A coloured seaman may be maltreated now, on board ship, to any extent, short of taking his life, and he has no redress. He "cannot sue." In a foreign port he can claim no protection from a United States' Consul. A Northern freeman of colour may be kidnapped and sold to a slave State. He has no redress from the United States. He cannot sue.

It seems to us that the cup of the nation's iniquity must be nearly full. Even foreigners may sue in the courts of the federal government; but a man of colour—born upon the soil—cannot. He may have shed his blood on the field of battle, as many of them have done—his father may have done so before him—still he is an outlaw. Six hundred thousand human beings not only disfranchised, but put out of the pale of law, so far as the Supreme Court of the country can do it, by one fell swoop! Before the iniquity of this act, common sins become mere peccadillos. Are we a nation of Algerines—of pirates? Most certainly we are, if this be law.

Nor is this all. When the Court decided that the coloured man is to be regarded as property, *and as property only*—for this is the essence of the decision—what becomes of the laws of the free States forbidding slavery? They are all unconstitutional, and will be declared so, whenever a case comes up: for any law forbidding men to hold horses as property in any State, would be unconstitutional; but if slaves are property, in the same sense, and to the same intents and purposes by "common law," no State enactments could set them free. Still more: on the same principle, the slave trade must be declared constitutional so soon as the question is tested. In a word, establish the principle, which this decision has made the law of the land—that slaves are property—not only by State law, but by natural law, and there is no stopping place—the system may be carried any where—the slaveholder and the slave-trader may hold, buy, and sell, in any district, State, or market within the limits of the entire country; slave coffles may be driven through the streets of New York and Philadelphia. We do not hesitate to say that this decision is far worse than the Constitution itself—bad as that is. It does deep dishonour to the generation which fought the war of the Revolution under the motto—"All men are born free and equal." It has fixed the brand of indelible disgrace upon the country, and will send down the names

of the perpetrators of the deed with infamy to coming ages. Still, we are free to say that the guilt rests upon the Constitution in part. Slavery has a place there. It was *allowed* a place there. The country has shut its eyes upon the fact. It would not see. It *would* laud the Constitution as a perfect instrument, while, all the time, it was sapping, by its omissions, and by its pro-slavery clauses, the very "foundations"—the fear of God and regard for human rights. Under its ægis the merciless slaveholder has pursued his schemes for territorial aggrandizement, and his determination to humble the Northern States. Success has crowned his efforts; and now, all law, all tradition, all right, all honourable principle, have been set aside, and slavery, *as an existing principle of law*, has taken possession of every inch of United States' territory.

Is there no remedy? We know of none but the destruction of the Constitution. So long as the Constitution binds the free States, so long this iniquity will have no end. The free States off, the slaves would see to the rest. We do not despair. As things become worse, they are the more rapidly hastening to a turn for the better. It is darkest just before day. "I saw," says the wise man, "under the sun, the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, (where it ought to be,) that iniquity was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time for every purpose, and for every work."

A F F A I R S A B R O A D .

China.—We have given, of late, tolerably full accounts from China, but we add the following from the pen of T. T. Meadows, "Chinese Interpreter" in the service of the British government, no doubt a competent witness:

"*The Eastern Prince has stated, in writing, that under the rule of the Tae Pings the Bible will be substituted for the Sacred Books of Confucianism, as the Text-book in the Public-service Examinations.* I fairly despair of imparting an adequate idea of the importance of that resolve of the Tae Pings, or of the immense significance which it gives to the piece of yellow shading in the middle of the accompanying map of China. Upon the gradual extension or diminution of that piece of shading, during the next, ensuing years, it depends whether or not, in a prosperous population of three hundred and sixty millions of heathen, all the males who have the means, and are not too old to learn—all the males, from boyhood to twenty-five or thirty years of age who can devote their time to study—will be assiduously engaged in *getting the Bible off by heart, from beginning to end.* Should the thing take place, it will form a revolution as unparalleled in the world for rapidity, completeness, and extent, as is the Chinese people itself for its antiquity, unity, and numbers. The resolve of the Tae Pings to make the Bible the text-book at their Public-service Examinations, will cause a number of intelligent Chinese—private gentlemen, as well as officials, and all of them masters of their own language—to devote themselves to the study of Hebrew and Greek, in order to read the book in the original languages. And as, in order to do this, they will, in the first place, learn the English, the common language of the two great peoples with whom they have most intercourse, numbers of channels will thus be opened through which will pour into China constant streams of Anglo-Saxon literature and Anglo-Saxon ideas, mingling, at the very fountain head, with the flow of Chinese mental life. A prospect is hereby disclosed of a rapid assimilation of fundamental beliefs, and a consequent peaceful and mutually beneficent extension of free intercourse and free trade, which, I repeat, it is in vain to hope for in any other way."

Turkey.—Much difference of opinion has existed, in well-informed quarters, in regard to the effect of the late decree of the Turkish government allowing religious liberty to a larger extent than heretofore, and, in other respects,