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THE
LIFE OF JOHN KNOX:
CONTAINING
ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE HISTORY
OF THE
REFORMATION IN SCOTLAND
WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES OF THE PRINCIPAL REFORMERS, AND
SKETCHES OF THE PROGRESS OF LITERATURE IN SCOTLAND.
BY
THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D.
WITH
NUMEROUS ADDITIONS, AND A MEMOIR OF DR. M'CRIE,
BY
ANDREW CRICHTON, LL.D.

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MEMOIR OF DR. M'CRIE.

by

ANDREW CRICHTON, LL.D.

1847AD

THE Reverend Dr. THOMAS M'CRIE, so well known by his Life of John Knox, and other historical productions, was a native of Berwickshire. He was born in November 1772, in the town of Dunse, where his father and grandfather had resided. If compared with the celebrity which his name has acquired in the literature of Europe, his origin may be regarded as humble; his parents having belonged to that class which may be called respectable rather than affluent. What he says in reference to the pedigree of our great Reformer, applies with equal justice to himself: "Obscurity of birth can reflect no dishonour on the man who has raised himself to distinction by his virtues and talents; and though his parents were neither great nor opulent, they were able to give their son a liberal education."

His father, Thomas M'Crie, was a linen weaver, and rather eminent for his superior skill in the manufacture of napery. He likewise dealt in flax, garden and agricultural seeds, &c. and was proprietor of one or two houses in the town, and of a piece of land in the neighbourhood, which he sold to Hay of Dunse Castle, as it lay contiguous to that gentleman's estate. He afterwards purchased property or farm in the parish of Coldingham, which he let on lease; so that in respect to worldly matters, he appears to have been in good circumstances. This latter property he retained till his death, when it was sold. His wife's name (mother of the Biographer of Knox) was Mary Hood, daughter of a respectable farmer in the vicinity of Dunse. The family consisted of four sons and two daughters. The eldest was Thomas, the subject of this Memoir; of the remaining brothers, John died in Dunbar, James in Dunse, and George in the West Indies. By a second marriage, there was one daughter, who married and resided in her native place. The character borne by the father was that of a man of strict moral principles, of unblemished integrity in business transactions, and firmly attached to the communion of Original Seceders from the Church of Scotland, then known by the name of Anti-Burghers. He was a member (we believe an elder) of the congregation at that time under the pastoral charge of Mr. Thomson in Dunse.

Trained under the paternal roof, and deeply imbued, both by precept and example, with the peculiar tenets of the denomination to which he belonged, the foundation was thus early laid in the mind of Dr. M'Crie, of that unflinching adherence to his original principles, which he maintained with Roman heroism throughout the whole course of his public life. When many of his brethren in the same faith separated from him,—when a portion of his own flock deserted him,—when he was persecuted, excommunicated from the religious body with whom he was in communion, and had to bear the scorn and obloquy of suffering for opinions deemed trifling in themselves, and marring the general harmony of the Secession by keeping up factious and narrow-minded differences: he continued, nevertheless, firm in his attachment to his

own creed, and the convictions of his own judgment; braving the trials and difficulties he had to encounter, with a moral courage that might have done honour to the first Christian martyrs. This feature in our author's religious character is to be ascribed to the force of early impressions acting on a mind naturally strong, and conscious of the single-hearted honesty of its own views. The lessons he imbibed in his father's house, of reverence for the belief in which he was nurtured from infancy, he practised before the world, and carried with him unsullied to the grave.

The simple unsophisticated piety of the parents, which seems to have been largely communicated to the son, may be illustrated by a homely anecdote. It is well known, that among Dissenters, as was the case among our Covenanted-forefathers, all such recreations as dancing, music, and card-playing, are held in abhorrence, and laid under the ban of the Church, as tending to corrupt morals, and exceedingly sinful to be tolerated in any community of professing Christians. Some youths, acquaintances of the family, happening to be rather suddenly interrupted while engaged in this sort of contraband amusement, in their hurry to conceal the offence, slipped the pack of cards into the pocket of a coat which was hanging in the room, and which offered the only receptacle at hand for preventing immediate discovery. The horror and amazement of the stern Seceder may be conceived, when, on a visit a few days thereafter to the house of his pastor, in drawing out his pocket-handkerchief, the floor was strewn with the implements of iniquity, the artful devices of Satan for entrapping and ruining the souls of men. The mystery was easily cleared up, but the very possibility of such an accident might have endangered the reputation of any other member of the congregation whose character for probity and piety was less firmly established than that of Thomas M'Crie.

Another anecdote has been told on the authority of our biographer himself. When first leaving home, and setting out in the world, probably to attend his studies at college, he was accompanied part of the way by his mother, whose heart doubtless was swelling with those emotions of maternal pride and anxiety which such an interesting occasion was apt to call forth;—pride that she had a son dedicated to the holy ministry, and anxiety that he might prove himself worthy of the high vocation. Before parting, she took him aside into a field off the road, and kneeling down together in prayer, she solemnly devoted him to God, as Hannah did Samuel; and it may be said of her as of the "Hebrew woman," that the gift was accepted, for he "ministered at the altar almost from his youth," and was "raised from the dust to sit among princes." The affectionate parent could not then foresee the destiny of her wayfaring child, or anticipate even in her utmost hopes the rank he was to hold, not in his own profession only, which was comparatively obscure, but in the great temple of letters; where his name will stand recorded, illumined by the torch of the Protestant Reformation, as long as the English language is read or understood. It is, however, upon the whole a wise dispensation of Providence that conceals from mortals the events of the future; for as evil greatly preponderates in the world, such knowledge would cause a larger amount of pain than of pleasure, and even destroy happiness by taking from it what constitutes its principal charm—our ignorance what is to be.

The rudiments of his education our author received at the excellent grammar school of his native town, first under Mr. Dick, and afterwards under his successor, Mr. White. The acknowledged efficiency of our parochial system of

education, and the general celebrity which our burgh schools have long enjoyed as first-rate classical academies, may be taken as a guarantee that no boy can pass through the common ordeal of these seminaries, without bringing with him a competent share of scholarship, and the means of attaining, if pursued, the highest literary eminence.

On leaving the school at Dunse, which must have been about the year 1787, he prosecuted his academical studies in the University of Edinburgh. It may be proper to observe, that with regard to the admission of Dissenters, the constitution of the Scottish Universities differs entirely from those in the sister kingdom. In Scotland, no religious tests are exacted, no subscription of articles of faith is required. The literary, philosophical, and medical classes, are open to all comers; and it is not until the student enters the Divinity Hall, that any inquiry is made into his creed, or any evidence demanded for ascertaining his adherence to the standards and government of the Presbyterian Church. The reason of this is obvious. Enrolment in our college albums, is nothing more than a simple matriculation; it confers on the student none of those rights and privileges over the management, patronage, or property of the University, as is the case at Oxford and Cambridge, where all are obliged to subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles, because conformity to the Church of England is made the title and condition upon which certain important civil and academical rights are acquired and exercised. With us, the *Civis Academicus* is entitled to no such privileges, and hence religious tests are dispensed with until his studies in theology commence.

At the time when Mr. M'Crie attended the University, the Humanity Class was taught by Dr. John Hill, the Greek by Mr. Andrew Dalzell, Logic by Dr. James Finlayson, Mathematics by Mr. John Playfair, Moral Philosophy by Dugald Stewart, and Natural Philosophy by Mr. John Robison. His name stands on the matriculation books, as having attended the advanced classes of Dr. Hill and Mr. Dalzell in the session 1788-89; and in 1790-91 he completed his curriculum under Professors Stewart and Robison. We are not aware that any evidences or specimens exist of the proficiency which the future historian of the Reformation made in philosophy or the classics; for we believe the method now adopted of calling forth the talents and energies of the student by means of essays and prizes, was not then in use. But judging from his habitual industry, as well as from the powers and capacities of his genius, there can be no doubt that his attainments were in all respects highly creditable both to himself and his teachers.

It was about this period of his life, that he was employed a short time as usher in a school at Linton, in East-Lothian; and afterwards in the Grammar School at Musselburgh. In the autumn of 1791, he went to Brechin as assistant to Mr. Gray, a Dissenting clergyman who kept a private academy or boarding-house; he likewise opened a school in that town in connexion with the congregation of the Associate Anti-Burghers. In these avocations he was employed about three years; excepting the short time required annually for attending his theological studies at Whitburn. The practice was then, as now, quite common among students intending for the ministry, both in the Church and the Secession, to engage in the duties of tuition, publicly as well as privately—a practice which has the double advantage of improving their scholarship, and adding to their finances. When assistant at East-Linton, our author must have been very young, as it is recorded of him, that during the intervals of school hours,

he used to join in the games and amusements of his pupils.

Having finished his academical education at the University of Edinburgh, he commenced the study of Divinity in the year 1791, under Mr. Archibald Bruce, who was then Secession minister at Whitburn in West-Lothian, and Theological Professor in connexion with the General Associate or Antiburgher Synod. This reverend functionary appears to have been as decided in his adherence to the original views of his sect, as was his illustrious pupil; for we find that when a schism afterwards took place with the general body of that communion, he was among the few who preferred separation to what they conscientiously believed to be a dereliction of principle. It belongs not to the province of this Memoir to enter deeply into a discussion of the questions as to the power of the civil magistrate, which then had begun afresh to agitate the Secession Church, and which led to heats and divisions that threw both the courts and the congregations of that body into a ferment of bitter and protracted controversy. It will be enough to state the main points at issue, and explain briefly the general views of the contending parties.

To those who have even but a cursory acquaintance with the ecclesiastical history of Scotland during the last century, it must be well known, that at the first outbreaking of the Secession in 1732, those ministers who had withdrawn from the establishment, in consequence of the sentence of ejection pronounced against them by the Commission of the General Assembly, protested that they did not dissent from the principles and constitution of the Church of Scotland, to which they declared themselves firmly attached, but from the arbitrary power claimed and exercised by the Church Courts, which had thrown them out from ministerial communion. They deplored the necessity which had driven them to this step; and expressed their willingness, on certain terms, to return again to the bosom of the Church, to whose doctrines and standards, as contained in the Westminster Catechism and Confession of Faith, they adhered. Their terms not being promptly complied with, the ejected ministers, eight in number, formed themselves into an Ecclesiastical Court, which they named the Associated Presbytery; and still continued to preach, as if no sentence had passed against them. They also published what they called an Act, Declaration, and Testimony to the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the Church of Scotland, and against several instances of alleged defection from these standards, both in former and in their own times.

Their numbers increased considerably; and in 1745, they erected themselves into three different presbyteries under one synod, when a very unprofitable dispute split them into two parties. The cause of this schism was the Burgess oath in some of the royal burghs, which contained a clause, binding the swearer to profess the religion established by law, and to abide in and defend the same. This oath, one part of the Dissenters thought they might lawfully take, as it seemed to them no way contrary to the principles upon which the Secession was formed. Some, on the other hand, contended that the swearing the above clause was a virtual renunciation of their testimony; and the consequence was, that after a keen controversy, the body divided; those who asserted the lawfulness of the oath, took the name of Burghers; while the section who condemned it were called Anti-Burghers. As each party claimed to itself the constitution of the Associate Synod, the Anti-Burghers excommunicated the Burghers, on the ground of their sinful laxity of principle, and contumacy in refusing to be converted. This rupture took place in 1747, and continued till

the year 1820, when a re-union was effected. During the whole of that long period, the parties remained under the jurisdiction of their respective synods, and held separate communion; although much of their early asperity had been laid aside.

The Anti-Burghers, as may readily be supposed, considered their opponents as too regardless of principle, and not sufficiently steadfast to their testimony; while the Burghers maintained that their nonjuring brethren were too rigid, and had introduced new terms of communion into the society. Down to the time when the subject of our Memoir appeared in the ecclesiastical arena, the question concerning the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, had continued to agitate the Secession; and when the alarm caused by the French Revolution called upon every loyal man to defend and maintain the British constitution against all, at home or abroad, who might attempt its subversion, a new impulse was given to the controversy. One portion of the Seceders professed scruples of conscience to subscribe any declaration of unqualified attachment to the British constitution, as composed of King, Lords, and Commons; on the ground that such an act might ensnare them into an implied approval of the English hierarchy, with all its prelatic usurpations; and an acquiescence in the spiritual supremacy claimed and exercised by the sovereign, as head of the Church, and an essential branch of the constitution.

Besides these political objections, another “rock of offence” was contained in the language of the Confession of Faith upon this subject; which was objected to by many, as ascribing to the civil magistrate a power in matters spiritual that did not belong to him, especially in giving him authority “to suppress blasphemies and heresies; to prevent or reform all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline; to call to account persons publishing erroneous opinions; and to exercise control over the deliberations of Synods;” for the Confession (chap. xxiii. sect. 3.) expressly says, the magistrate “hath power to call Synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them, be according to the mind of God.” The precise extent of the secular jurisdiction implied in this clause, gave rise to much disputation; and conscientious scruples were entertained about giving an unlimited assent to those passages where similar language is employed. So early as 1743, (in their controversy with Mr. Nairn,) the Associate Presbytery, in their declaration and defence of their principles concerning civil government, had explained that “the great and sole end of the magisterial office is the glory of God;” that its cognizance extends civilly “only over men’s good and evil works;” which power it ought to exercise for the public good, “without assuming any lordship immediately over men’s consciences, or making any encroachment upon the special privileges or business of the Church.”

This explanation was intended to satisfy those who demurred to the giving an unqualified answer to one of the questions (the second) put to probationers before receiving license, and to ministers and elders before being ordained; namely, “Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith?” &c. An affirmative answer to this question, without any limitations, was considered as implying that entrants into these offices gave a full assent to the doctrine as to the power of the magistrate in suppressing heresies, and controlling the proceedings of Synods. In cases of more tender consciences, the qualifying exposition referred to, was understood to provide a remedy; and when candidates for the ministry expressed a wish to any

of the judicatories, to know in what sense they were to understand the two doubtful declarations, they were uniformly told, "that they were to understand them only in such a sense as corresponded with the explanation given in the Presbytery's answer to Mr. Nairn."

There were some, however, who viewed this distinction as too casuistical, and thought that in a matter so important, a mere verbal interpretation was not quite satisfactory. They disliked the idea of having even the appearance of assenting to one thing and believing another; of taking qualifying exceptions to the Confession, in their private transactions with the Presbytery, and yet asserting their belief "in the whole doctrine," at their ordination, and in presence of the people. The General Synod saw the propriety of removing this ambiguity, and at their meeting in 1791, an overture on the subject was transmitted from the Glasgow Presbytery; but excepting the appointing of a committee, nothing was done in the matter for a considerable time afterwards.

It was at this stage of the controversy, that a reference from the Presbytery of Edinburgh brought before the Synod the case of two licentiates, who were about to be ordained, and who declared that their doubts concerning the doctrine taught in the Confession of Faith, regarding the power of the magistrate in matters of religion, were so strong that they had not freedom to give an unlimited answer to the second question in the formula, and would not submit to ordination unless the moderator of the presbytery was allowed, when proposing the question, to intimate that they were not to be understood as giving their sentiments on that point." The two young men, whose scruples were so unbending as to render necessary this particular application to the General Synod, were Mr. Thomas M'Crie, and Mr. William M'Ewen; the former being about to be ordained at Edinburgh, and the other at Howgate. The case had been considered in the Presbytery of Edinburgh, but being a subordinate court, they did not think themselves at liberty to grant the dispensation claimed, or to make any alteration in the public profession of the religious society to which they belonged. It was on this ground that the matter was referred to the Synod, in May 1796, when a committee was appointed to deliberate what ought to be done for removing the difficulties of the two candidates for ordination. A declaratory act was immediately adopted, (May 3d,) which, after recapitulating the interpretation as to the power of the civil magistrate, already laid down in their declaration and defence, and avowing their adherence to the doctrine on that point, concluded by insisting that the second question of the formula should be answered, "as the said Confession was revised and approved by an act of Assembly 1647, and according to the declaration of the General Associate Synod of 1796."

This resolution so far overcame the scruples of Mr. M'Crie and his friend, that they consented (May 26th) to receive ordination. Our author then became pastor to the Secession congregation which met in the Potterrow; and there he continued for ten years to perform the duties of his office, until the controversy, which raged with increasing keenness, rendered a breach of connexion with the Synod unavoidable. The Rev. Mr. Chalmers at Haddington delivered the sermon and address at his ordination.

From the period when Mr. M'Crie entered on his ministry, till the time of his separation from the majority of his brethren, the Associate Church Courts became the arena of fierce and furious disputation; of harangues offensive and defensive; and multitudes of dissents and protests entered upon the records by

both the Burgher and Anti-Burgher sections, each professing to occupy more scriptural ground than the other, and to lift a purer testimony for the truth. The great bone of contention was still the civil magistrate, and those passages in the Confession touching his interference in matters ecclesiastical.

One main branch of this “weighty work,” was the remodelling and extending the Testimony, so as to adapt it to present circumstances; to make a more explicit avowal on certain debateable points, which they alleged conveyed a meaning different from that held by the great majority of the Synod; and also to include a denunciation of those errors and corruptions which had sprung up, both within and without the Church, since the original declaration of their sentiments. With regard to the Westminster Confession, they acknowledged it as a rule of faith distinct from the Scripture, but declared that their adherence to it was not to preclude them “from embracing, upon due deliberation, any further lights which might afterwards arise from the Word of God, about any article of divine faith.” On the cardinal point of magisterial jurisdiction, the new Testimony took very decided ground. It explicitly condemned the connexion between Church and State, employing language similar to that which the Voluntary controversy has now rendered familiar to the public.

On various other matters, regulations were laid down; amongst which was an enactment allowing presbyteries to admit on trial for license, in the *interim*, those students of Divinity who had passed the Hall, “even though they did not join in the bond for renewing the Covenant.” The “Acknowledgment of Sins,” and the “Engagement to Duties,” likewise occupied much discussion, so that it may easily be imagined the Synod had enough of business on hand. The new Narrative and Testimony which they were drawing up, included all the controversial points on divinity and church government, that had been debated in this country for successive generations. The Acknowledgment of Sins contained a summary account of all the defections and errors that had prevailed in the different sections of the Church since the period of the Reformation, so that it was not without good reason that they termed it “a weighty work.” It employed them eight years, having begun in October 1706, and ended in May 1804, when the revised Testimony was adopted.

At different stages of the process, dissents and protests were given in by Messrs. Bruce, M’Crie, and one or two others. The Declaration of 1796, concerning the power of the civil magistrate, the enactment allowing students to be taken on trials, who had not joined in the bond for renewing the Covenant, and sundry other changes “introduced in a rash and scandalous manner,” were strongly opposed by the dissenting minority. During 1800, and the two following years, they continued to remonstrate and protest; and committees were appointed to answer them, but all their efforts were unable to remove the scruples of the dissentient brethren.

At length, in the month of May, 1806, they presented the following paper, virtually declaring a separation from the Synod; in which, indeed, they never again took their seats:

“We, the subscribers, do protest, in our own name, and in name of all who may see meet to adhere, against these deeds, as now made final; and that every one of us shall be free from the operation of these acts, and from all obligation of being responsible to this, or inferior judicatories, from acting in opposition to them, so far as they are inconsistent with our former profession and engagements, holding any power that may be claimed or exercised by this Synod, for compelling us to conformity to these new principles and constitution, as unwarrantable; and that we shall account any censure that may be inflicted on us, or on any adhering to us, of

such a tendency; or for restraining or hindering us in the discharge of any duty or office we may have a call to perform, individually or conjunctly, in maintaining our common profession, or fulfilling our solemn engagements. We protest we must hold our right to the exercise of ministerial and judicial powers, full and entire, whether we shall see it expedient to avail ourselves of the right protested for or not, in our state of separation and exclusion from present communion with the prevailing party in this Synod, in their present course, into which, to our grief, we are reluctantly driven; which suspension of wonted fellowship in the Lord, and in the truth, we hope and pray, may be but temporary and short. We renew the declaration made last year against any intention or course that may increase lamentable divisions, or promote any schismatical separation from the Reformed and Covenanted Church of Scotland, the Original Secession Testimony, or the Associate Synod, in adherence to it. The multiplication of sects and schisms we consider as among the prevailing evils of the age, against which we have solemnly avowed, as well as against other evils; and it is one great reason for our not concurring with our brethren in this new scheme, that it is of a schismatical tendency, and inconsistent with the promoting of a covenanted conjunction and uniformity. We shall endeavour to have the great end of an union among evangelical ministers and Christians in view, and will be ready to encourage correspondence with any belonging to this Synod, or other denominations, who still profess regard to the Westminster standards of uniformity, and Presbyterian principles, with a view to have subsisting differences removed in a Scriptural manner.

“In the mean time, we think we have reason to complain, that our brethren, with whom we have been joined in close and comfortable communion, have, on their part, broken the brotherly covenant, and laid a great bar in the way of promoting such a desirable union and uniformity; and we would remind them of the clause of the oath they had sworn, never to give themselves to indifference or lukewarmness, in the public cause, but encourage one another in prosecuting the end of their solemn covenant.

“And we leave the consequences of these our contentings and desires to Him who has the disposal of all events, who sits above the floods, and who often hath stretched out his glorious arm in these isles of the sea, in behalf of the cause of Reformation, for which we have all been professing to appear, and who hath said, ‘ Now will I arise, now will I be exalted, now will I lift up myself, when he seeth their strength is gone, and there is none shut up or left.’ May he speedily arise, and have mercy upon Zion.

“ARCHD. BRUCE, minister at Whitburn.

“JAMES AITKEN, minister at Kirriemuir.

“JAMES HOG, minister at Kelso.

“THOS. M’CRIE, minister at Edinburgh.”

The consideration of this paper, and of certain other matters, was postponed until next Synod, which met at Glasgow on the 26th of August. Without waiting, however, for the result of any deliberation on their protest, the four dissentient brethren met at Whitburn on the same day that the Court assembled at Glasgow; and after solemn conference and prayer, they constituted themselves into a presbytery, under the name of the Constitutional Associate Presbytery; indicating by that designation, their strict adherence to the original principles of the Secession. Professor Bruce acted as moderator on the occasion, and Mr. M’Crie was appointed to officiate as clerk. The reasons they assigned for this proceeding were similar to those already stated in their remonstrances and protests.

A Deed of Constitution was afterwards drawn up and published, wherein they charge the Synod with defection in adopting a new Testimony and Declaration of principles, in altering the creed for public covenanting, and in authorizing a new formula of questions for entrants into office, “by which (they complain) some important doctrines in the Confession of Faith, and different articles in their Testimony and principles, formerly subscribed, are renounced and dropped, and opposite sectarian errors introduced.” The chief and most objectionable of these innovations were specified in the following passage:—
“Particularly the duty and warrantableness of civil rulers employing their au-

thority in an active support of the interests of religion and the kingdom of Christ, and in promoting Reformation (which was an eminent part of the Testimony and contendings of the Church of Scotland in behalf of the Reformation of our native land, civil and ecclesiastical, explicitly approved by the Secession,) are, by the new deeds, denied and set aside; as also, that all covenants of a religious nature, entered into by nations in their public capacity, or in conjunction with churches, and in so far the national Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms, in their proper import, matter, and form, as well as in the manner of ratifying and enjoining them, are either directly or by native consequences condemned.”

In this charter of their institution, the protesting brethren find and declare that the General Associate Synod, and such inferior judicatories as concur with it, can no longer be acknowledged as faithful or rightly constituted Courts of Christ; that they can take no share with them in the exercise of government and discipline; that it is therefore “warrantable and needful for them to associate together, not only for the administration of the Word and Sacraments, and for occasional consultations, but also for the regular exercise of government and discipline, as Providence may give them opportunity.” Their acting in this capacity, they farther declared to be necessary for supporting the public cause for which they were contending; as otherwise various articles of the Reformation Testimony would be in great danger of being dropped and lost for the present in the Associate body.”

With regard to other Presbyterian bodies, who profess adherence to the whole doctrine of the Westminster Confession and other subordinate standards, they affirmed “that there are none with whom they have freedom to form a junction at present, so that they reckon themselves shut up to the necessity of meeting apart; waiting for the time of healing, if haply some bars and offences subsisting among the remaining friends of evangelical truth, may be removed.” Finally, in vindication of their separation, they pleaded their ordination vows, in which they declare, “they acknowledged Presbyterian Church government and discipline to be of divine institution; and promised never to endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion thereof; but that they would, to the utmost of their power in their station, during all the days of their life, maintain, support, and defend the same against every other form of government.” From these reasons, which the protesting brethren assigned for erecting themselves into a separate Presbytery, a sufficiently distinct idea may be formed of the various grounds upon which they renounced their connexion with the general body.

When the Synod met at Glasgow, the case of Messrs. Bruce and M’Crie was brought before them by a reference from the Presbytery of Edinburgh, complaining, that though duly summoned to attend their meetings, they had not obeyed, but had sent in letters containing answers to the charges preferred against them, of holding sentiments in opposition to the principles of the General Synod, and tending to produce schism in the Association. Along with that reference, there was produced a document from Mr. M’Crie’s congregation, craving that the Synod would consider in what way they (the congregation) “might, consistent with truth, still enjoy the labours of their minister in connexion with the Synod;” and representing “the necessity of a speedy deliverance from their present distracted condition.” Another portion of the congregation also presented a paper, remonstrating against the statement of the Synod’s

principles, as set forth in the Narrative and Testimony. These documents gave rise to a considerable discussion, and at first the Court came to a decision to delay passing censure on Mr. M'Crie; but on the second week of their meeting, they reversed the previous sentence; and the question being put, "Depose," or "Suspend," the former was carried by a majority of votes; and accordingly Mr. M'Crie was deposed from the office of the ministry, (Sept. 2d.) "and suspended from all communion in the sealing ordinances of the church." Soon afterwards Messrs. Bruce and Chalmers at Haddington, were also deposed; and the like sentence would have been pronounced on Mr. Hog at Kelso, had not the proceedings against him been terminated by his death. The office of theological teacher which Mr. Bruce had held, was bestowed on Mr. Paxton, minister at Kilmaurs, who commenced his labours as professor of divinity in September 1807.

Such is a brief account of the proceedings that led to an important schism in the Secession. In respect of numbers, the division occasioned by this dispute may be considered insignificant, as not more than five ministers left the Synod, exclusive of Mr. Whytock at Dalkeith, who died during the progress of the controversy. Their adherents, however, gradually increased; and at present the Associate Synod of Original Seceders, as they now designate themselves, comprehends four presbyteries, and between thirty and forty ministers.

Mr. Bruce, it may not be improper here to add, died on the 18th of February 1816. The affecting terms in which Dr. M' Crie alluded to that event, in writing to a friend, showed how deeply he felt the loss, and revered the character of his early instructor. "I cannot," says he, in addressing the late Rev. Mr. Aitken of Kirriemuir, who was one of the five deposed ministers, "describe to you the situation in which I am. My heart felt for some time as a stone, and even yet, when I have recovered somewhat from the shock, there remaineth no strength in me. The early reverence which I felt for him as a teacher, mellowed by the familiarity and intimacy to which I have since been admitted with him—the increasing knowledge I had of his worth and talents—the interest which he condescended to take in my affairs, and which he allowed me to take in his—and the benefit which I derived from his conversation and his correspondence, have all contributed to make the stroke in some respects more heavy to me than perhaps it is to any of his brethren; and gave him a place in my affections, of which I was not fully aware, until I was told that I could no longer call him by the name of friend or father. My heart breaks when I think of the poor little flock of students, from whose head the Lord hath taken away their master."

The proceedings in the Secession, as narrated above, and which ended in the separation of the remonstrating brethren, occupied a considerable share of public attention at the time, under the familiar name of the "Old and New Light" controversy. The main points of difference between the parties have been stated at sufficient length to enable the reader to comprehend the nature of the questions so long and so keenly contested. The deposed ministers regarded themselves in the honourable light of witnesses for the truth,—as martyrs suffering in a righteous cause. They complained of the conduct of the Synod at Glasgow, as rash and violent. They denounced the treatment they had received, as in the highest degree tyrannical and unjust. A narrative was drawn up by Mr. M'Crie of the whole proceedings adopted against them; and in that document, speaking of the causes of their rupture with the Synod, they

declare that “additional grounds had been given for their separation, by the violent measures which have been pursued during the course of this year, in attempting to suppress due ministerial freedom, and violating justice, constitutional principles, and Presbyterian order; and in the processes managed by the associate judicatories, and the censures which they have pretended to inflict upon the protesting ministers, merely for adherence to their profession, and taking measures to support it, after it was relinquished by the Synod, against which censures they had previously protested, and continue to protest, as null and void; and such as, with respect to grounds, manner, and certain circumstances accompanying them, will be found unequalled in the Presbyterian Church, &c. By their conduct in this matter, the guilt of the judicatories has been highly aggravated; they have crowned their defection by persecuting those who opposed it, and have aimed a deadly stroke not only against the character and usefulness of a few ministers, but against the public cause, for which they were contending.”¹

In his Statement, setting forth the grounds of separation, Mr. M’Crie charged the Synod with departing from the standards of the Church of Scotland, and introducing new terms of communion, inasmuch as their recent Narrative and Testimony was very different from the original Secession Testimony. “The latter,” says he, “was formally and specifically a Testimony for the religious profession of the Reformed Church of Scotland, or for the true religion as attained by and fixed in that Church;” whereas the New Testimony “is drawn up upon the principle that the Church’s Testimony ought to be taken immediately from the Scriptures, without reference to the attainments of former times, &c. Besides, it contains doctrines that are contradictory to those of the Confession of Faith, and which were never received into the confession, or form of communion of this or any other Presbyterian Church. In all these respects, it is different from the original Testimony of Se-ceders, and cannot be looked upon as a Testimony for the doctrine, &c. of the Church of Scotland, in any other sense than as it may contain materially the same truths, in most instances, with her Confession and Catechism; which is true as to the Confessions, or declared principles of different religious bodies, and even of those of independent persuasions.”

On the great point of controversy—the power of the civil magistrate—Mr. M’Crie and his adherents maintained opinions very different from those avowed by the Synod in their Testimony, which held the connection between Church and State to be unlawful. While asserting the spiritual Headship of Christ to its full extent, and the right of his ministers to exercise their functions in the proper line of their office, independently of any earthly prince or legislature, our author, speaking in his own name and in that of his brethren, goes on to say: “But, in full consistency with these principles, they think they can maintain that civil authority may be lawfully and beneficially employed in the advancement of religion and the kingdom of Christ. The care of religion, in the general view of it, belongs to the magistrate’s office; and it is his duty to watch over its external interests, and to exert himself in his station, to preserve upon the minds of his subjects an impression of its obligations and sacredness, and to suppress irreligion, impiety, profanity, and blasphemy. It is also the duty of civil rulers, and must be their interest, to exert themselves to introduce the Gospel into their dominions, where it may be but partially enjoyed, and by salutary laws and encouragements, to provide them with the means of instruc-

tion, and a settled dispensation of ordinances; especially in poor and desolate, or in ignorant and irreligious parts of the country; all which they may do, without propagating Christianity by the sword, or forcing a profession of religion upon their subjects by penal laws. When religion has become corrupt, after it has been received and established in a nation, and has degenerated into a system of falsehood, superstition, idolatry, and tyranny, carried on by churchmen, aided by the civil powers; and where various abuses of this kind are interwoven with the civil constitution and administration, an eminent exercise of civil authority is requisite for the reformation of these; not by the abolition of all laws respecting religion, as a matter which civil government has no concern with, and by leaving everything to individual exertion or voluntary associations, which only breed anarchy and endless disorder, but by magistrates taking an active part in prosecuting a public reformation, removing external hindrances, correcting public and established abuses, allowing, and in some cases calling together and supporting ecclesiastical assemblies, for settling the internal affairs of the Church and of religion, ‘that unity and peace may be preserved,’ as ‘was done by the rulers of different countries, at the period of the Reformation from Popery, and in Britain at the time of the Westminster Assembly. In an ordinary state of matters, they also judge that it is the duty of civil rulers to maintain and support the interests of religion, by publicly recognizing and countenancing its institutions, giving the legal sanction to a public profession or confession of its faith, a particular form of worship, and ecclesiastical discipline, which are ratified as national; and by making public and permanent provision for the religious instruction of their subjects, and the maintenance of divine ordinances among them.”²

A broad and clear line of demarcation is here laid down between the principles avowed by Mr. M’Crie and his brethren on this head, and the doctrine of the remodelled Secession Testimony, which disallowed the union betwixt Church and State. This difference appeared to them to be a “practical point of deep and serious consideration,” which amply justified them in breaking off all connection with the Synod. They had no idea of going the length of contending for the entire emancipation of the Church of Christ from the authority of the State; or of substituting the voluntary contributions of the congregation, for a public and permanent provision to maintain the stated ordinances of religion.

However widely opinions may differ as to the sufficiency of the reasons advanced by the minority for seceding from the communion of their brethren, there can be no doubt as to the sincere, conscientious, and honest motives of those who felt themselves compelled to withdraw. That the Synod could not pass, without judicial notice, the conduct of those members who had called in question its orthodoxy and declined its jurisdiction, will be readily admitted; but whether the extreme sentence of deposition, in the circumstances of the case, was a prudent or a necessary step, is a matter upon which the judgment of the public will not be so unanimous. That in the case of Mr. M’Crie, “the sentence was too hastily pronounced,” is confessed even by his opponents. A recent historian of the Secession Church says, in commenting upon this schism, “whether he (Mr. M’Crie,) chose to avail himself of it or not, an opportunity ought at least to have been given, of making such explanation or vindication of his conduct, as might appear to himself proper. A summons had indeed been given him by the Presbytery to appear before the Synod, and he

refused to obey it; but he had a right to expect that the Synod, before pronouncing upon him the sentence of deposition, should have summoned him before them to answer for that part of his conduct, on account of which such sentence was pronounced.”³

The stern, unflinching character of Mr. M’Crie, in this act of separation, cannot be fully appreciated, without taking into account the important sacrifices that he made. Not only had he to brave the obloquy of being denounced as factious and schismatical, but he had to encounter the melancholy prospect of being left without the means of subsistence, and compelled perhaps to earn a livelihood by resorting to some less honourable avocation. The despondency of his mind must have pressed upon him the more acutely that he was now settled in life, and become the father of a family. Soon after his ordination, he had married Miss Dickson, the daughter of a respectable farmer in the vicinity of his native town, and by her he had five children, four sons and one daughter. The writer of a short biographical notice at the time of his death, in alluding to this trying incident in his life, says, “perhaps no man with so unblemished a character, ever fell so low in general contempt as our townsman did, when excommunicated from the religious body to which he belonged, and set adrift on the wide world with a wife and family, because his judgment was too acute not to see the whole mischief involved in the New Light doctrines of the body that expelled him, and his honesty too downright for a moment to conceal the convictions of that judgment. He was actually the only evangelical minister in Edinburgh who was not asked to join the committee of the Bible Society when first instituted here; so blind were we all to his true character, and the sterling value of his opinions. But more than Roman courage was required for the result. Christian faith led him boldly to take his own course, heedless alike of the smiles and frowns of the world around him. Upheld and led by that unerring principle, his fame has, in the course of less than thirty years, so grown with his usefulness, that in both respects he has left all his former despisers infinitely behind.”⁴

Independently of these considerations, another source of perplexity arose from his connexion with the flock among whom he ministered. One part of them, including several of the elders, were disposed still to adhere to the Synod; the rest preferred to cleave, through good and through bad report, to their beloved pastor. In consequence of this division, a dispute arose as to the right of property in the chapel where they met for worship.⁵ Those who followed Mr. M’Crie, claimed it on the ground, that they constituted the majority of the male members, to whom, by the trust-deed, the property was alleged to belong: the opposite party also claimed it, on the ground of their remaining in communion with the General Associate Synod. Mutual bills of suspension were presented to the Court of Session, and shortly afterwards two actions of declarator were raised, in which each party concluded that the property ought to belong to them. The litigation was continued for nearly three years, when at length the Court found (24th February 1809) the party adhering to the Synod entitled to the property of the chapel; but the defenders obtained pecuniary compensation.

Meantime, Mr. M’Crie had been interdicted from officiating, except one-half of the day, to those members of the congregation who remained attached to him; and when the law-suit was decided, he obtained a temporary accommodation for his flock in the Cameronian Meeting-house, Lady Lawson’s

Wynd; and afterwards in Carrubber's Close, until the new chapel was erected in Davie Street, which was opened in May 1813, and continued to be the scene of his ministerial labours till the time of his death.

Hitherto the name of Mr. M'Crie was scarcely known beyond the precincts of his own communion, or in connexion with the disputes that had led to his separation from them. He was soon, however, to burst from this obscurity, and take that place in the literature of the age which has extended his fame to every region of the globe. It was while tried in the furnace of so many worldly perplexities, that he collected the materials, and achieved the completion of his immortal work the LIFE OF JOHN KNOX. Adversities so complicated and so discouraging, must have overwhelmed a mind endowed with less fortitude and perseverance than his; but so far from crushing or distracting his spirit, they served only as a school for training him to those habits of patient industry, deep research, and acute discrimination, for which all his writings are distinguished. The controversies in which he had been engaged with the Synod, and the necessity that obliged him to examine and defend the grounds of his own principles, naturally directed his studies back to the times and opinions of the Fathers of the Protestant Reformation. There lay the elements out of which the fabric of Presbyterian doctrine and discipline had been constructed; and there were to be found the models to guide future inquirers respecting the constitution and government of the Church of Scotland. These models, our author's subsequent writings show that he had carefully and deeply investigated; and such are the apparently capricious turns in human fate, that the same controversy which threatened to reduce him to want and misery, became the source of his future greatness—the basis on which were reared so many splendid monuments to his literary fame.

From the time of his disunion with the Synod, until the appearance of his first great work, he had been in the habit of contributing to the periodicals of the day, biographical notices of some of the Fathers and early leaders of our Church; and it was while prosecuting these investigations, that he seems to have formed the design of drawing up memorials of our national Reformer, "in which his personal history (to quote the words of the PREFACE) might be combined with illustrations of the progress of that great undertaking, in the advancement of which he acted so conspicuous a part." His original intention seems to have been to write a Life of Alexander Henderson, who was Moderator of the famous General Assembly held at Glasgow in 1638; and a sketch of this eminent divine, from his pen, appeared in a monthly publication, in connexion with the Secession, called "The Christian Magazine," of which Mr. M'Crie was editor for some time about 1805 or 1806. This work was enriched with a very considerable number of his articles; and so early as 1802, it contained a translation of part of Smeton's Life and Death of John Knox, from the Latin published in 1579, most probably furnished by Mr. M'Crie. His contributions to this periodical, which shall be afterwards noticed, were chiefly historical and biographical sketches. He also published occasionally during this period, able pamphlets on some of the gravest and most difficult subjects of theological and ecclesiastical inquiry.

The LIFE OF KNOX, in which he must have spent several years, was published in November 1811. It placed him at once in the first rank of authorship. There are certainly few examples of any modern writer emerging at once from obscurity, to the possession of such high and lasting celebrity. So little was he

known at that time, even in Edinburgh, except to those who took an immediate interest in the controversies of the Secession, that the great Coryphaeus of criticism, the Edinburgh Review, which professed to extend its quarterly inspection over the world of letters, was then unconscious of the name of M'Crie. "It affords us very great pleasure," says the reviewer of Knox, "to bear this public testimony to the merits of a writer who has been hitherto unknown, we believe, to the literary public either of this or the neighbouring country; of whom, or of whose existence, at least, though residing in the same city with ourselves, it never was our fortune to have heard, till his volume was put into our hands; and who, in his first emergence from the humble obscurity in which he has pursued the studies, and performed the duties of his profession, has presented the world with a work which may put so many of his contemporaries to the blush, for the big promises they have broken, and the vast opportunities they have neglected."⁶

It would exceed the limits within which a biographical sketch of this kind is necessarily circumscribed, to enter into any critical dissertation on the merits or defects of the Life of Knox. Though it did not altogether escape censure, it had the rare fortune of meeting a more than usual share of public applause. The Edinburgh Review, though its opinions may perhaps have been favourably biased by its advocacy of similar sentiments as to political and religious freedom, spoke of the work in a strain of high panegyric; as "a book which has afforded us more amusement and more instruction, than any thing we ever read upon the subject; and which, independently of its theological merits, we do not hesitate to pronounce by far the best piece of history that has appeared since the commencement of our critical career. It is extremely accurate, learned, and concise, and at the same time, very full of spirit and animation; exhibiting, as it appears to us, a rare union of the patient research and solid judgment which characterize the more laborious class of historians, with the boldness of thinking and force of imagination which is sometimes substituted in their place." The reviewer finds fault with the style and diction of the author, as abounding in Scotticisms, and frequently deficient in verbal elegance and purity. This censure is not perhaps altogether unfounded; but they are trivial blemishes, and far more than redeemed by the vigour, vivacity, and accuracy for which the work is particularly distinguished.

A writer of opposite principles in the Quarterly Review, though he accuses our biographer of palliating the ruder features in Knox's character, and wanting in due candour and courtesy towards the sister establishment of Episcopacy, bestows a high encomium, nevertheless, on the author's talents, industry, and power of discrimination as a historian. "He is a warm but an honest man. With great power of expression, as well as considerable heat of temper, he never descends to railing. He detests the Church of Rome; he loves not the Church of England; but he exposes the enormities of the former with fidelity and force, though not with malignity; and he censures what he conceives to be imperfect in the reformation of the latter, with an effect that would have been lessened by indecent invective. A vein of sarcastic wit alone now and then betrays him, as it did his master, into undue asperity as well as levity of expression."⁷

The reviewer, after avowing his opinion that neither Luther, nor Calvin, nor Erasmus has yet found a biographer equal to M'Crie, proceeds with his critical remarks on our author's character and manner:—"compact and vigorous, often

coarse but never affected, we can scarcely forbear to wonder by what effort of taste and discrimination the style of Dr. M'Crie has been preserved so nearly unpolluted by the disgusting and circumlocutory nonsense of his contemporaries. There is no puling about "the interesting sufferer,"—"the patient saint,"—"the angelic preacher." Knox is plain Knox—in acting and in suffering always a hero; and his story is told as a hero would wish that it should be told,—with simplicity, precision, and force. The author's materials are both ample and original; and to these he has brought a power of combining and enlivening them, peculiar to himself. He has many points of resemblance to his hero: a fortitude of mind which, on subjects exploded and derided, dares to look modern prejudices in the face; a natural and happy eloquence, with a power of discussion on questions of casuistry and of politics, not inferior to that of the great leader of the Reformation in Scotland; though restrained by a decorum of expression to which the Reformer's age, as well as himself, were strangers."

The justness of these observations will be allowed by every dispassionate reader of Knox's Life. Nor is the complaint of the Quarterly reviewer without some foundation, that our author entertained unreasonable prejudices against Episcopacy, and spoke of surplices and rochets with a vehemence of indignation scarcely to have been expected in a man of his enlarged understanding. But this fact is to be accounted for by his thorough conviction in the rectitude of his own principles, as well as by the belief which he cherished in common with the Scottish Reformers, that the Presbyterian polity was of divine institution, and ought to be maintained and defended against every other form of church government.

There are some other prepossessions of our biographer, which cannot perhaps he so satisfactorily explained or vindicated. His unbounded admiration for the character of Knox, and the overwhelming importance he attached to his services, as instrumental in working out the civil and religious liberties of his country, led him to touch with too gentle a hand some of the rougher points in his history, and to stretch the mantle of a too charitable construction over actions and doctrines that admit of no defence, and cannot be justified even by the unsettled and barbarous state of society in which they were perpetrated. The arguments of Knox, drawn from heathen antiquity, to palliate the assassination of Cardinal Beaton, the ill-timed merriment he displays in relating that foul deed, and the countenance which his comments upon that act were calculated to give, in a fierce age, to promote murder or unrestrained vengeance,—deserved, upon the whole, a severer reprehension, a more decided condemnation than they have found in the pages of his biographer. Allowing that the Cardinal's death was a benefit to his country; that it prevented, in all human likelihood, a long course of bloodshed and cruel persecution; and that by one desperate blow it removed the great impediment to the Reformation; still the manner, the motives of its accomplishment, must be reprobated as an assumption of power to inflict punishment on a heinous offender, which ought never to be wrested from the hands of the civil magistrate. It was the supplanting of law and justice by the wild revenge of brutal passion, and misguided opinion.

No one who knew Dr. M'Crie can for a moment suppose that he advocated such pernicious doctrines, or meant to encourage the commission of such atrocious crimes. The mere suspicion of such a possibility would have revolted

every feeling of his heart, every principle of his nature. All that can be said therefore is, that his condemnation of that individual act is not sufficiently explicit—that in his anxiety to vindicate the conduct of his hero, he has attempted to draw a distinction between that particular crime and ordinary acts of private assassination; and to show that we may disapprove of the deed, while we scruple to load the memory of the actors with an aggravated charge of murder.

The lenient pen of the biographer appears in the description of another important event in Knox's life—his interviews with Queen Mary. It has been the fashion with some, to represent our Reformer on that occasion, as a savage whom the tears of beauty could not melt, or the winning smiles of majesty soften into good manners. To these charges of rudeness and irreverence towards his sovereign, our historian has replied in terms flattering to Knox, and measured rather by his own views of the politeness due to a Popish Queen from the leader of the Protestant Reformation, than by the courtesy and respect which every subject, however exalted, owes to the royal presence. It is true that Knox addressed Mary with a plainness to which crowned heads are seldom accustomed; but that he did not exceed the limits of courtly etiquette, or officiously intermeddle in matters touching the conscience and domestic concerns of his sovereign, will hardly be maintained by any who have read his own account of the different conferences he had with the Queen in public audience.

The best, indeed the only apology that can be offered for Knox's harsh demeanour in the presence of Mary, is the license of the age; and the prevailing impression that the power and authority divinely bestowed on the inspired prophets, under the Old Testament dispensation, were conferred on the ministers and preachers of the Reformed doctrines.

In vindicating the character of our Reformer from the charge of having inflicted an irreparable injury on literature, by causing the destruction of the monastic libraries, Mr. M'Crie was eminently successful. The evidence he adduced of the miserable poverty of those reputed treasuries of knowledge, completely put to silence all complaints and accusations about the losses which learning had sustained from the Vandal fury of the Protestant Reformers. We do not, however, think our author entitled to equal praise, in his reflections upon the violent and needless demolition of the cathedrals, and other sacred edifices throughout the country. It may have been good policy to pull down the images and monuments of idolatry; and perhaps the maxim of the Reformer was true—that the best way to keep the Popish rooks from returning, was to destroy their nests. Yet this will not justify the havoc committed on so many noble buildings; nor does it afford matter for jocular and sarcastic exultation, that posterity, instead of blaming Knox, are indebted to him for having ministered to the gratification of the antiquary and the artist, by producing so many picturesque ruins.

Of the share which our Reformer took in some of the political intrigues of the time, especially in applying to the Court of Elizabeth for troops to assist the Congregation, when such aid could not be granted without dishonour, and in breach of the treaty between the two kingdoms, Mr. M'Crie speaks with becoming reprehension, and in the stern language of an impartial historian. But it is unnecessary to dwell longer on the merits or faults of this popular work, which has long ago taken its niche in the temple of European literature. Its excellences are universally acknowledged, while its defects are but as tele-

scopic spots on the solar brightness of its author's fame.

The full amount of the benefit conferred by this production on Scotland, and the cause of the Reformed religion, can only be estimated by a comparison of the ignorance and prejudice in which the true character and history of the Reformers were previously enveloped. Among those who suffered by this misfortune, there was none perhaps to whom a harder measure of injustice had been dealt than John Knox. On the Continent, he was seen chiefly through the medium of Popish calumnies. In England, no honours, no veneration, attended his memory; "his apostolic zeal and sanctity, his heroic courage, his learning, talents, and accomplishments, were coldly forgotten, while a thousand tongues were ready to pour out their censure or derision on his fierceness, his ambition, and his bigotry." Among his own countrymen, similar delusions prevailed. He was known, less as an enlightened Reformer than as a violent and gloomy fanatic, equally a foe to polite learning and innocent enjoyment. How totally incorrect and unfair these representations were, it remained for Mr. M'Crie to demonstrate. Under his hands, our great Reformer became not merely a new character, but a new creature. The clouds of obloquy and vulgar error that obscured his name, were completely and for ever dissipated. The disjointed fragments that lay buried in rubbish or scattered in libraries and manuscripts, were collected, and garnished, and framed into a magnificent monument.

But the justice done to the memory of our national Reformer, was not the only benefit which the Life of Knox conferred on this country. It removed many misconceptions as to the literature and accomplishments of our countrymen in the sixteenth century. Until that time, the first instruments of the Reformation in Scotland were generally regarded as Goths and barbarians—men of strong mind, of ardent zeal, of rude and powerful eloquence. But Mr. M'Crie proved that they were sound and elegant scholars—men who, in the midst of popular ignorance, and under an unsettled government, sacrificed to the muses and the graces of antiquity, till they learned to compose in the Latin tongue with an ease and classic purity, unknown since the days of Augustus.

It must have been peculiarly gratifying to the Author of the Life of Knox, to find that the measure of popularity and respect awarded to him by the public was commensurate with the merits and value of the work. The University of Edinburgh conferred on him the degree of Doctor in Divinity, (Feb. 3, 1813,) an honour the more distinguished in the case of Mr. M'Crie, and equally creditable to his Alma Mater, since it was one of the first instances of such a title having been bestowed on any beyond the pale of the Established Church. The book was in everybody's hands, its praises were in everybody's mouth; and the humble pastor of a Secession congregation, scarcely known beyond the precincts of his own religious communion, rose at once to the pinnacle of literary fame, and took his place in the first rank of historical writers.

At an interval of eight years, appeared another important volume from the pen of Dr. M'Crie, the Life of Andrew Melville, who may be called the second founder of our Presbyterian Church polity. This work, though it possesses a less attractive title, is in no respect inferior, either in point of ability or of interest, to the biography of Knox. "It is indeed, (as a very competent judge has remarked,) the more curious and instructive production of the two; abounding with an endless variety of facts, illustrative of the progress of religion and learning, not only in Scotland, but in other nations. As Melville was

the most active instrument in maturing the ecclesiastical constitution of his country, and introducing that efficient system of general and scriptural education, which diffused such inestimable benefits over the whole mass of the population, the perusal of the work furnishes the surest means of becoming fully acquainted with all the peculiarities of the Presbyterian Establishment; while it imparts a vast store of instruction nowhere else to be found, on many collateral topics of the deepest interest. That the value of this book has never yet been sufficiently appreciated, is one of the many proofs of the frivolous taste of the age, which, having been accustomed to prefer superficial and showy acquirements, cannot be expected to derive gratification from the results of that elaborate research, which by its very magnitude, is apt to repel rather than to invite a closer intimacy. The subjects which are discussed by Dr. M'Crie in these volumes, throw the most important light on the principle of religious establishments; a question which no man was more capable of solving, and which he was accustomed to treat in a manner more favourable to popular claims, than speculative men in general have been accustomed to regard as being altogether consistent with the legitimate exercise of ecclesiastical authority, or with the implied alliance between the Church and any state in which republican principles do not predominate.”⁸

The opinion entertained of Melville by Dr. M'Crie was that, next to Knox, there was no man to whom Scotland was so deeply indebted. If the first Reformer was the great instrument of purifying and establishing the national religion, the second was the means of preserving its independence. Like his precursor, Melville was exposed to the calumnies of evil tongues. By the writers on Episcopacy, he was assailed in language rivalling in bitterness of abuse that employed by the Popish defamers of the first Protestant preachers. From their misrepresentations, others were led to regard him as the mere fiery and bigoted advocate of the peculiar form of Presbyterianism. But the fallacy of these views was completely dissipated by his biographer, who proved that the ecclesiastical questions, for the settlement of which he laboured and suffered, related not to matters only of form and ceremony, but that they involved the alternative,—whether the Church should be maintained in all the liberty and power with which her spiritual Head had endowed her, or be trammelled and manacled by arbitrary authority. As Dr. M'Crie remarks, “the immediate object of King James; by the changes which he made in the government of the Church, was to constitute himself dictator in all matters of religion; and his ultimate object was, by means of the bishops, to overturn the civil liberties of the nation, and to become absolute master of the consciences, properties, and lives of all his subjects in the three kingdoms. It was a contest, therefore, that involved all that is dear to men and Christians—all that is valuable in liberty, and sacred in religion. Melville was the first to discover and denounce the scheme that was planned for the overthrow of these; and he persisted in opposing its execution at the expense of deprivation of office, imprisonment, and perpetual proscription from his native country.” Considering the strong current of illiberal feeling against so obnoxious an individual, it required some degree of moral courage to defend his character, and the justness of his claims on posterity. But in this qualification, no one excelled Dr. M'Crie; the copious notices of Scottish literature contained in the Life of Melville, while they enhanced its value in the estimation of a certain class of readers, tended probably to obstruct the general popularity of the work; and hence the vindication of

Melville in the public mind, was not altogether so triumphant as that of Knox had been; although his claims to the gratitude of his countrymen, have been set on a basis as durable as the monument erected by the same hand to his more illustrious predecessor in the work of Scotland's Reformation.

The value of the "Lives of Knox and Melville has not yet been appreciated to its full extent; but this defect is perhaps to be ascribed more to the high price, which has acted as a barrier against their wider perusal, than to any want of desire or curiosity, on the part of the religious public, to become acquainted with the early historical character and transactions of the Church of Scotland. No two works have done more important service to the cause of our great Reformation. They have rescued, as has been already said, from unmerited obloquy the lives and actions of our leading Reformers. They have shown what a debt of gratitude is owing to their venerated author, not only on the score of Protestantism, but also of liberty and learning. They have dispelled the erroneous impressions produced on the minds of the last century by the statements of Hume and other historians, respecting the fierce and barbarous character of those who founded our Presbyterian Church polity; in short, they have thrown a flood of light on the transactions of the most interesting epoch in her civil or ecclesiastical annals.

In connection with these more elaborate works, an occurrence ought to be mentioned, which formed a kind of episode in Dr. M'Crie's literary career. The author of *Waverley*, whose fame was then rising to its meridian splendour, had happened to select as the theme of one of his most popular novels—*Old Mortality*—that well-known portion of Scottish history, comprehending the cruel and bloody persecution of the Covenanters under the Second Charles. So long as the Great Unknown was content to deal with civil rebellion; to depict the manners and customs of our peasantry, in *Guy Mongering*; or to amuse his readers with the foibles of the *Antiquary*, or the daring exploits of *Rob Roy*, no offence was taken at his portraiture of our national character. But when he ventured to trespass within the sacred pale of the Covenant, to depict our martyrs, in their glorious struggle for religious freedom, as fanatics, and bigots, and rebels, it was soon discovered that he had trodden on ground not to be intruded upon with impunity—that he had made encroachments upon the hallowed sympathies and recollections of Scotchmen, which even the apology of fiction could not extenuate or justify. Clergymen and laymen pressed into the arena, to vindicate the memory of the Covenanters from the aspersions cast upon them by the anonymous author of the *Tales of my Landlord*.

In this patriotic enterprise. Dr. M'Crie far outstript all his competitors. In the review of *Old Mortality*, which appeared in the *Christian Instructor* for January, February, and March 1817, he analysed with amazing accuracy and minuteness of research, the ingenious tissue of wit, ridicule, and misrepresentation, in which the author hath clothed those characters and incidents in history, which composed the scenes and personages of his fictitious narrative. Indeed, if anything could be objected to at all in this laudable vindication of historic truth and calumniated virtue, it was the overwhelming accumulation of learning, and zeal, and sifting exposure, which was brought to bear, in refuting statements, and descriptions, and exaggerations, that were partly designed to be imaginative. Scott's pictures of the Covenanters were expressly intended to be caricatures; his liberties with dates, and facts, were indulgences

which he claimed as a legitimate right of the novelist, and not meant to be scrutinized by the line and plummet of real transactions. To judge of such delinquencies, therefore, by the ordinary standards of authenticity, is to condemn fiction by a rule which ought in fairness to be applied only to true history. At the same time, it cannot be denied that truth suffers by caricature; that the best of characters may be disfigured or made odious by surrounding them with false embellishments. In this way, even the novelist has it in his power to do much mischief, from the engaging drapery in which he clothes his misrepresentations; and it was chiefly through this artifice, by softening the atrocities of persecution, investing tyrants and oppressors with the attributes of heroes, and traducing the principles and character of the conscientious Presbyterians, that the popular tale of Old Mortality was likely to disseminate erroneous views of the Covenanters and their times.

To stem the current of obloquy, the more dangerous from the lively and fascinating strain of humour in which it was conveyed, Dr. M'Crie boldly entered the field of combat; and never were exertions crowned with more signal success. Like Neale and Calamy, who defended the Non-Conformists of England, he gallantly rescued the honest fame of our brave and pious ancestors, when held up to buffoonery, and made a jest and laughing-stock for the amusement of novel readers.

In closing his elaborate review. Dr. M'Crie thus sums up the results of his critical dissertation:—"We flatter ourselves that we have satisfactorily established the two leading positions that we advanced at the beginning of the review—the gross partiality which the author has shown to the persecutors of the Presbyterians, and the injustice he has done to the victims of persecution. We have produced undeniable proofs of the former, in his withholding a just view of the severities and cruelties which they perpetrated; softening them in the representations which he has given, and exhibiting the character of some of the chief oppressors, in such a light as to recommend them to the admiration of his readers. We have examined his representation of the Presbyterians or Covenanters, and have found it in numerous instances to be unfair, false, and grossly exaggerated. Instead of being the ignorant, foolish, and violent fanatics which he has held them out to be, we have shown that information was extensively diffused among them; that they were a sober and religious people; that their contendings and sufferings were directed to the support of the kindred cause of religion and liberty; and that the instances of extravagance and violence really committed., were confined to a few, and extorted by grievous and insufferable oppression. These faults we have exposed with freedom, and sometimes with feelings of indignation, but, we trust, without passion or irritation, and without the slightest wish to lower the talents or the fame of the author, farther than was unavoidable in doing justice to the cause which we were bound to advocate, and to the memory of the men who suffered in its defence."

So generally was the historian of Knox associated with the vindication of religion against any wanton or profane attacks upon that subject in the literature of the day, that when the celebrated lampoon appeared in the seventh number of Blackwood's Magazine, under the title of "Translation from an ancient Chaldee Manuscript," which gave great offence to many, as an impious parody on Scripture, a series of letters was addressed, under the fictitious name of Calvinus, to Dr. M'Crie, and the Rev. Andrew Thomson, complain-

ing of the scandal thus cast on the oracles of divine Revelation, by turning their sacred language into a source of merriment, and a vehicle of party abuse.

The substance of the charge against the biographer of Knox was, that he was a contributor to the Magazine, thereby associating his name and character with the said obnoxious performance. "An article, (says Calvinus,) to which your name is subscribed, is inserted in the body of the work, almost in immediate contact with the insult to that religion of which you are so distinguished an ornament; and it has pretty generally gone abroad, that you mean, occasionally, to contribute to stock this Foundling Hospital of Wit with your productions, and thus grant to its management the implied certificate of your approbation. Nay, the parodist seems to have imagined that he could blind your eyes and pervert your judgment by the gift of his commendation; and, accordingly, in place of revilement from the scorner, (which your function teaches you to expect, and your character enables you to despise,) you, the historian of Knox, and the champion of the Covenanters, are accosted from the scorner's chair with the accents of good-fellowship, and described in the record of this impiety as an ally; while your humbler fellow-labourer in defence of the Covenanters, is lampooned beside you, and expressly lampooned as '*a man that feareth God!*' Now, Sir, highly as I venerate and admire your character, if I had thought that in this instance you had erred so far as to have for one moment consented to 'fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,' or permitted yourself to 'have pleasure in them that do them,' I should have said so without shrinking, and with as little apprehension of doing wrong, as of incurring your resentment. But I am as fully convinced as I am of my own existence, that not a breath of the scandal created by this performance can justly light on you; that the only error you have committed, is that of embarking rather too hastily in an adventure the nature of which you did not understand; and that your recent contribution to the Magazine was bestowed without the slightest previous surmise on your part, of the company into which it was to be introduced; and that nobody can feel more indignant than yourself, at so perfidious an attempt to dignify the profane by raising them to your level, or to degrade you by depression to theirs."

In the latter part of this censure, (which was wholly unmerited,) the inference of Calvinus is perfectly correct, that not a breath of the scandal merited by the performance alluded to, could justly light on the historian of Knox and the champion of the Covenanters. Nothing could be more natural than for Dr. M'Crie to give a contribution to a Magazine then newly started, the proprietor of which was his own publisher, and had the powerful rivalry of a long-established periodical to contend against. But this implied no certificate of his approval of everything that appeared in that production; far less could it associate his name or his character in any insult to religion, or any encouragement to profanity and impiety. It is the editor, not the contributors to a periodical, that must be held responsible for its contents; and the only course that either can adopt, when they conceive a breach of decency or propriety has been committed, is to withdraw their support from the publication.⁹

It so happened, however, that the articles furnished by Dr. M'Crie were strictly connected with his own literary researches. The one which appeared in the same number with the imaginary Translation, (October 1817,) was merely a short letter which he had addressed to a friend, with extracts from a manuscript of Bishop Leslie's History of Scotland, in the possession of the Earl of

Leven and Melville. Another article of his also, purely literary, was published in the third number, (June 1817,) some months before the Chaldee manuscript made its appearance. It gave a very interesting account of a MS. which had lately come into his possession, having been rescued by him from the hands of a merchant who had purchased it for waste paper. This document was described as a quarto volume, (of which nearly 300 pages remain,) bound in vellum, and written in a fine hand, about the beginning of the eighteenth century; it was entitled, "The History of Scotland, from the year 1660." On looking into the contents, Dr. M'Crie was led to suppose it to be part of a History of Scotland by Sir George M'Kenzie of Rosehaugh, who was Lord Advocate of Scotland in the reign of Charles II. and author of several treatises, professional and political, in reference to the affairs of his own times.

That conjecture proved to be correct, and in 1821 this curious fragment of Scottish history was published. In the preface, a relation is given of the singular circumstances in which the original work was rescued from destruction. "In the year 1817, (according to this account a large mass of papers was sold to a shop-keeper in Edinburgh; from these, his curiosity induced him to select a manuscript volume, which appeared to him to be something of an historical nature; and by another and equal piece of good fortune, he communicated this volume to Dr. M'Crie, the well-known author of the Lives of Knox and Melville. On examining this volume, Dr. M'Crie discovered that it was the composition of Sir George M'Kenzie, and that it must be a portion of that history of his own times which had been so long a desideratum in Scottish literature. Of this the intrinsic evidence was obvious and complete; and the manuscript, though written by one of the ordinary transcribers of that age, was distinctly identified, by numerous corrections and additions in the well-known handwriting of Sir George M'Kenzie himself."

Such being the accidental connexion of Dr. M'Crie with Blackwood's Magazine, and considering the importance of the literary treasure, of whose discovery he then for the first time communicated his suspicions to the world, it will hardly be thought reasonable that he should be condemned as having done aught unworthy of his fame, or inconsistent with his clerical character; far less that he should have been seated in the same chair with scorners and parodists of Scripture, or placed in any degree of affinity with the odium or criminality that attached to the Chaldee manuscript. In fact, the censures of Calvinus, however laudable his anxiety for the interests of religion might be, showed that his main object was to damage the reputation of the periodical in question, by representing it as undeserving the countenance or aid of the avowed supporters of moral and Christian purity. This conclusion will be found borne out by his Letters, which betray all the jealousy and asperity of a partisan writer.

The works and labours of Dr. M'Crie, already mentioned, related to the ecclesiastical history of his own country; but he soon gave proof to the world that his researches into the origin and early struggles of Protestantism, had taken a much wider range. In 1827 appeared his "History of the Progress and Suppression of the Reformation in Italy in the 16th century; including a Sketch of the History of the Reformation in the Grisons;" and two years afterwards, he published his History of the Reformation in Spain. In these productions, the biographer of Knox and Melville showed that he was no bigoted sectarian, whose intellectual pursuits had been limited and wasted in narrow-

minded controversies with his brethren of the Secession. If his former works had left any room for suspicions of this nature, they must have been entirely dispelled by these volumes, in which the author displayed a familiar acquaintance with the literature of Europe, and a sympathy with the struggles of Protestantism, in countries most adverse to its success. It may, perhaps, be proper to notice here, that in the summer of 1821, Dr. M'Crie had paid a short visit to the Continent, partly on the score of health—his eyes having been affected by incessant application to study; but chiefly in quest of materials for a Life of Calvin, which he had long meditated. In this tour he visited Amsterdam and Rotterdam, where he preached in the Scotch Church; but the greater portion of his time was spent in making extracts from the manuscripts and works which he found in the libraries at Leyden.

Dr. M'Crie states, in his Preface, that he was long convinced the Reformed opinions had spread to a much greater extent in Italy than was commonly supposed. This conviction he had made public, and at the same time expressed a wish that some individual who had leisure, would pursue the inquiry, and fill up what he considered a blank in the history of the Reformation. The task devolved upon himself; and he brought to its accomplishment, many qualifications in which others might have been found deficient. Besides the ordinary resources of books, he had enjoyed the opportunity, during the visit which he made to Holland, of examining several curious and valuable works—particularly in the library of the venerable Mons. Chevalier, one of the pastors of the French Reformed Church at Amsterdam, who not only gave him free access to his stores, but politely transmitted to him a number of extracts, which he had not time to make during his short stay in that city.

Accordingly, his work abounds with rare and valuable information upon matters which had hitherto attracted less public attention in the Reformed states of Europe than their importance deserved. The secular history of the Italian peninsula is familiar to every well educated reader; but seldom has there been heard of one who laboured to diffuse the knowledge of evangelical truth over the darkened regions that formed the central dominion of superstition and priestcraft; and who, like the Covenanters in Scotland, were doomed, for conscience sake, to suffer exile, imprisonment, and martyrdom. Yet the number of them was not small, nor were their labours unworthy of remembrance. The Reformers and martyrs of Italy were lost sight of amidst the pleasures and intrigues of courts, or the splendour of arts and letters. In reviving their forgotten annals, therefore Dr. M'Crie may be said to lead us over ground that was almost untrodden before, and to have opened up hidden vaults and chambers filled with Christian monuments, in the great pyramid of the Reformation.

The works of Luther easily found their way into the Papal States, where attention had already been drawn to Germany by the contest which Reuchlin maintained for Hebrew literature; and scarcely had the Court of Rome decided, or rather evaded, that controversy, when the new dispute respecting Indulgences was brought under its review. The writings of the Reformers were at first circulated openly, and afterwards under fictitious names. The influence which these produced, was aided by the attention bestowed on sacred literature; and the impressions then made on the minds of the learned, were strengthened by their intercourse with men of letters in other countries. Of the various editions of the Scriptures, both in the original language and in transla-

tions, which were published in Italy about the era of the Reformation, Dr. M'Crie has given a minute and interesting account.

It would be out of place here to detail the causes that led to the diffusion of the Reformed doctrines in Italy, or to follow our historian through the various cities and provinces in which he traces the progress of scriptural opinions. In Modena, Florence, Bologna, Faenza, Milan, Venice, Pisa, Lucca, Locarno, Sienna, Naples, Istria, and even Sicily, the preachers of the truth made converts, and in some instances established churches. In the language of a Popish writer, "the whole of Italy was infected with the Lutheran heresy, which had been extensively embraced both by statesmen and ecclesiastics." But the dawn that purpled the moral horizon, the morning that rose bright, and promised to scatter the thick mists of ignorance and idolatry, which so long had settled on that land, was soon overcast. The clouds gathered, the storm arose; in the year 1542, the Court of Rome took the alarm at the dangers that surrounded it; and from that period, till the close of the century, exile and imprisonment, the axe and the stake, torture and death, thinned the ranks of the hapless Protestants. We must leave it to Dr. M'Crie to narrate the melancholy tale of persecution, treachery, and barbarous cruelty, exhibited in the suppression of the Reformation. The Waldenses, and the martyrs in the valleys of Piedmont, have had their noble struggles commemorated; but it remained for our author to do justice to another class of persecuted Protestants of the Alps,—the Italian refugees who settled in the Grisons, on the south-east border of Switzerland, amidst those gigantic mountains, covered with perpetual snow, that tower above the source of the Rhine. This formed an interesting episode in the narrative of the Reformation in Italy.

Dr. M'Crie stated, that he had originally proposed to embody in the preceding volume, some account of the progress and suppression of the Reformation in Spain; this, however, was found to be impracticable, and accordingly it was reserved for a separate publication, which appeared in 1820.¹⁰ It formed an appropriate sequel to the work on Italy, and completed what the author intended as a contribution to the history of that memorable revolution in the sixteenth century; which more or less affected all the nations of Europe.

The introduction of the Reformed opinions into Spain, was effected by means similar to those which marked their rise and propagation in other Roman Catholic countries. The labours of Erasmus and Luther were extending the knowledge of truth and the principles of freedom over the Continent; but in the Peninsula, their beneficial operation was checked by the most vigorous opposition; and with the aid of the terrible Inquisition, the cloud of ignorance and superstition that had been dispelled from other parts of Europe, established its dark and pesthential influence on the devoted realms of Spain. So early as 1521, that tribunal had forbidden the perusal of all Protestant writings; and this prohibition was soon extended to every work that seemed fitted, in the remotest degree, to enlighten mankind. The translations of Scripture, above all, were interdicted under the severest penalties; even the geography of Pomponius Mela was proscribed; and to complete the entire restriction on religious or mental enlightenment, a law of Philip II. in 1558, decreed the punishment of death and confiscation of goods against all who should buy, keep, read, or look at the books prohibited by the Holy Office.

The doctrines of the Reformation, however, made considerable progress; and preachers were found bold enough, in the cause of truth, to set at defiance

the tortures of persecution and the fires of martyrdom. But the organised system of cunning and cruelty, the *autos da fe* in which hundreds were annually burnt, and thousands quietly consigned to dungeons and death, speedily arrested the dissemination of Protestant opinions. No argument was permitted, no appeal was listened to; the taint of heresy could only be wiped out with blood, and whoever incurred this fatal suspicion, was committed to the torments of the Inquisition or the silence of the grave. Within the short space of half a century from the year 1559, more than one hundred and twenty persons, many of them females, were annually burnt in the Fifteen Courts of the Inquisition in Spain; and for the same period, Llorente calculates the number of victims to these sanguinary tribunals, without including those who died from the effects of torture, or who were privately executed, at upwards of three hundred and forty-one thousand; of whom nearly thirty-two thousand were publicly burnt. The houses in which Lutheran doctrines had been taught were razed to the ground, and the memory and posterity of the unhappy sufferers were declared to be infamous. By means of these relentless persecutions, which almost freeze the blood to contemplate even in the pages of history, the reign of Popery and arbitrary power triumphed in Spain; and the Reformation was suppressed, not by confuting its principles, but by the extirpation of its professors.

In these works, as in those connected with Scottish history, Dr. M'Crie displayed an inexhaustible fund of learning, of minute and exact information, such as could only have been amassed by years of severe and patient industry. The same spirit, too, pervades them all—a conviction that Popery is a system opposed to the religion of the Bible, and hostile to the liberty and happiness of man. Nor do they bear the slightest trace of sectarian narrowness, or national prejudices. The author's Christianity takes a more comprehensive range. The artificial divisions of states and kingdoms, the separation of mountains and oceans, had no effect in impairing or interrupting his philanthropy. Wherever men lived and laboured, or suffered and died to communicate the knowledge of a purer faith, the various shades of opinion on minor subjects, never abated his esteem, or cooled his zeal to honour their memory. The Protestants of Seville and Valladolid, of Naples and Ferrara, of Frankfort and Geneva, were equally the objects of his veneration and sympathy, as those of London and Newcastle, Edinburgh or St. Andrew's. He honoured them all alike, whether as noble martyrs to the truth, or as the instruments and examples of the regeneration of the world.

It ought to have been mentioned that in 1825, he produced a volume, containing some interesting fragments of the history of the Covenanters. This work, which he edited, and illustrated with valuable notes and biographical sketches, was the Memoirs of Mr. William Veitch and George Brysson, written by themselves; a Narrative of the Rising suppressed at Pentland, written by Colonel James Wallace; and a Narrative of the Rising suppressed at Bothwell Bridge, written by James Ure of Shargarton. The Life of Veitch, who became minister first of Peebles, and then of Dumfries, after the Revolution, besides detailing his own adventures, which were not a little romantic, includes an account of the escape of the Earl of Argyle after his condemnation, and of the expedition to Scotland, in concert with that of the Duke of Monmouth to England, to oppose King James, which ended in the capture and execution of both of these unfortunate noblemen. The Narratives of Colonel Wallace and Mr. Ure refer to events well known, and constituting two of the darkest pages in

the heroic contendings of the Covenanters.

Most of Dr. M'Crie's other writings and publications were more immediately connected with his pastoral office; or with the controversies of the time, in reference to Secession principles. To the former class, belong his Lectures on the Book of Esther; and a volume of posthumous sermons which appeared in 1836. Among his earlier productions, was a Discourse, published in 1797 on "The Duty of Christian Societies towards each other, in relation to the measures for Propagating the Gospel, which at present engage the attention of the Religious World." This sermon was preached in the Meeting-house in Potterrow, on occasion of a collection for promoting a mission to Kentucky; and it is alleged that the author afterwards regretted its publication, as he had changed his views in reference to some opinions which he then entertained. A variety of articles, as has been already stated, were furnished by him to the Christian Magazine, and several other periodicals. It is not easy to ascertain exactly the number or titles of these contributions, as most of them were anonymous. It is understood, however, that the following may be ascribed to his pen, being furnished to the Christian Magazine about the commencement of the century. Between 1803 and 1806, he continued a series of papers in that work, under the assumed name of *Philistor*, (*a lover of History*,) viz.—"The History of the New Testament, confirmed and illustrated by passages of Josephus, the Jewish historian,"—"Memoir of Mr. John Murray, minister of Dunfermline,"—"Sketch of the Progress of the Reformation in Spain, with an Account of Spanish Protestant martyrs,"—"Suppression of the Reformation in Spain, &c."—"Illustrations of Scripture as to the grinding and parching of Corn,"—"On the Origin of the Taborites,"—"Life of John Wickliffe,"—"Life of John Huss,"—"Martyrdom of Jerome of Prague,"—"Martyrs in Britain, from the time of Wickliffe to the Reformation,"—"Influence of the opinions of Wickliffe upon the English Reformation,"—"Life of Theodore Beza,"—"Life of Dr. Andrew Rivet,"—"Life of Patrick Hamilton, the Proto-Martyr of the Reformation in Scotland,"—"The Life of Francis Lambert of Avignon,"—"Account of Bugenhagen, a German Reformer,"—"Life of Alexander Henderson, one of the Commissioners from the Church of Scotland to the Assembly of Divines at Westminster,"—"Historical Notices respecting learned Scottish Divines in England and foreign parts, during the sixteenth century."

From the simple enumeration of these earlier productions, it is easy to perceive in what way Dr. M'Crie had acquired that rich fund of literary and ecclesiastical information for which his subsequent works were so distinguished. It likewise shows that the peculiar bent of his genius was turned towards subjects illustrative of martyrology, and the progress of the Reformation throughout Europe. It is impossible for us to specify his contributions to other periodicals, such as the Christian Instructor, the Presbyterian Review, &c. but they are all characterized by the same master-mind. In Blackwood's Magazine, for March 1831, he paid an eloquent tribute to the memory of Dr. Andrew Thomson, a man to whom he bore a strong resemblance in the boldness of his character, and the uncompromising firmness of his principles. He also furnished to the Edinburgh Review, for April 1830, an article on the Memoirs of Sir James Turner, one of the notorious persecutors of the Covenanters. That curious work was printed from an original manuscript for the members of the Bannatyne Club. He was earnestly importuned to become the editor of Wodrow's History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, and even to write a new

work on that sanguinary period of our annals. But neither of these tasks were undertaken. The edition of Wodrow was superintended by Dr. Burns of Paisley, and appeared in four volumes octavo, enriched with a variety of notes and illustrations.

For the latter years of his life, he was engaged in a work which, if at all approaching to a complete state, will be second only to the biography of Knox in importance. This was the life of Calvin, of whose character, opinions, and labours, we yet possess no account worthy to be compared with that of our own two illustrious Reformers; although the writings and sentiments of John Calvin had a powerful influence on the Reformation, not merely in his own country, but in various parts of Europe, and especially in Scotland. We are not aware what progress Dr. M'Crie had made in this work at the time of his death; but it appears to have been sufficiently advanced to admit of publication. A well-informed writer, in allusion to this subject, says, "through his own indefatigable industry, aided by the activity and intelligence of one of his sons, a youth of great promise, who has spent many months at Geneva, he had accumulated such a mass of materials, and had made such progress in the composition, as to give good grounds for expecting that the work will soon be given to the world, in a state of maturity that will amply sustain the high reputation which has been earned by the splendid and successful exertions of a laborious life." It may be stated, in addition to this information, that the earlier portion of Calvin's life, down to the period of his entering on the scene of his pastoral duties at Geneva, is understood to have been nearly completed; while, for the remaining period, a large mass of documents had been collected, which will enable the editor to give the public the benefit of this most important biographical work, upon which the lamented author was, amidst numerous interruptions, assiduously engaged at the time when his earthly labours were brought to a premature and unexpected close. His son John, upon whom he had devolved the task of collecting materials, transcribing Calvin's original letters, &c. and who, for that purpose, resided several months in Geneva, was cut off in the prime of life, having held for some time the office of Rector of the Normal School in the city of Glasgow.

Turning from Dr. M'Crie's literary labours to his private and domestic life, it may well excite our surprise, how he could devote so much of his time to the public, and yet discharge the onerous duties which his official situations devolved upon him, as pastor of a large congregation, and Professor of Divinity to the body of Seceders with whom he was connected. Such, however, were the powers of his superior mind and indefatigable application, that he accomplished one and all of his numerous avocations faithfully and efficiently. The writer of a short obituary notice at the time of his death, says, in allusion to this diversity of employment, "the wonder is, that any physical strength could have held out so long under such incessant pressure. Times past, and times present—interests the most remote, and interests close at hand—counsels to churches and nations, and counsels to the humblest members of a humble flock—correspondence with the living, and fatiguing researches into the cross lights and casual glances at forgotten facts, in the letters of the long-departed dead—languages dead and living—opinions old and new—parties, schools, and sects of all times and descriptions—well may we stand aghast at the contemplation of demands so manifold and various on the time and thoughts of this withal thoroughly domestic man and faithful Christian minister." It has

been incidentally noticed, that Dr. M'Crie held the office of Professor of Divinity to the body of the Secession with whom he was connected. To his situation he had succeeded on the death of Mr. Bruce, and he commenced his lectures in 1817. He continued to discharge the duties of the chair with great ability till 1827, when he resigned it to Professor Paxton, in consequence of the re-union of those members of the Anti-Burgher Synod, who had protested against and declined participating in the union of 1820, between the two main bodies of the Dissenters. The difference of sentiment appeared so trivial between these dissentients and the Constitutional Associate Presbytery, that a junction was proposed and effected in May 1827—the Articles of Agreement, and the Overtures of a Testimony, &c. being drawn up by Dr. M'Crie on the one side, and Professor Paxton on the other.

The effect of these protracted and sedentary occupations must, no doubt, have tended to weaken and undermine a constitution which does not seem to have been naturally robust. In his latter days, his appearance was that of a laborious, plodding, hard-wrought student; yet his general health was never so far impaired as to incapacitate him for the discharge of his official duties. For some days before his death, he had been complaining; but was so far from being seriously indisposed, that he not only preached the whole of the preceding Sabbath, but went out on Tuesday to take his usual forenoon's walk. Towards the evening, however, he was taken alarmingly ill, and between ten and eleven o'clock he fell into a stupor from which no medical means had any effect in recovering him. He expired next day about noon, being Wednesday the 5th of August, 1835. This event took place at his house, Salisbury Place, Newington, and spread a deep and general feeling of grief and regret; all classes uniting in deploring the loss which the cause of Christian truth, and the literature not of Scotland only but of Europe, had sustained by the sudden decease of him who had been the bold advocate of the one, as he was the bright ornament of the other. His death may be considered premature, as he was only in the sixty-fourth year of his age. He was buried in Greyfriars' Churchyard; and as it happened that the Commission of the General Assembly was met on the day of the funeral, (May 12th,) a deputation, consisting of the Moderator and several of the leading members, on the motion of Dr. Cook, joined the procession, as a mark of respect due to one who had done so much for the Church by his writings, and by his consistent adherence to her establishment.¹¹

The leading features of Dr. M'Crie's character, both public and private, were strongly marked. Some might suppose that a man whose days and nights had so long been passed in arduous and abstruse investigations, and whose opinions, always decided and often unfashionable, were defended with uncompromising firmness, would possess little aptitude for ingratiating himself with people of ordinary attainments. No conjecture could be more groundless. In private life he was bland and amiable, far beyond what strangers might have been led to infer from the sternness of his principles on controverted points of ecclesiastical polity. In the family circle, and in all the relationships of society, none displayed more than he did of the milk of human kindness. To that native modesty and simplicity of disposition, which is the sure indication of a great mind, he added an unaffected benevolence and cordiality, which could not fail to gain the hearts of the youngest and least experienced of those who applied to him for counsel or for comfort. He was peculiarly accessible to all who were addicted to studies akin to his own, and was ever ready to refer

them to the best sources of information. Indeed, none could behold without esteeming his affability and gentleness to all with whom he held intercourse—his unostentatious piety—his homely wisdom—the uniform cheerfulness of his temper and conversation, which neither bodily pain nor mental anxiety seemed capable of disturbing. He was often in the course of his life brought into circumstances fitted to put the strength of his Christian principles to the test, and he as often showed that he could rise above the vexations of hostility and persecution—that neither personal ease, nor the ambition of worldly applause, was so dear to him as truth and a good conscience.

If his private character was irreproachable and eminently exemplary, it was but a living illustration of what he so ably taught from the pulpit and the press. As a minister of the gospel, he was diligent, faithful, and conscientious. Amidst all his attentions to the claims of private friendship, and the pursuits of those historical labours which shortened his days, he never lost sight of the prominent value of the pastoral office to which he had originally devoted his talents; in the exposition of divine truth, he was perspicuous and convincing, bringing forth things new and old from the treasury of his theological learning, which was extensive in every department, but especially so in that most essential branch which furnishes the best aids for the skilful and profitable interpretation of Scripture. His style of preaching was not that which is commonly called popular, nor was his eloquence of the kind that has of late years become fashionable in Scotland. His discourses were remarkable for their solid sterling worth, rather than for their showy qualities. A rich and exalted tone of doctrine, a calm and affectionate earnestness, a chaste yet forcible simplicity of diction, and a skilfulness of practical application to the hearts and consciences of his hearers, these were the prominent characteristics of his ordinary pulpit administrations.

Though a seceder from the Church of Scotland, he did not, like the great body of Dissenters from whom he had separated, convert that disunion into a ground of hostility and persecution against her; far less did he seek, on that account, to compass the entire overthrow of her establishment. To her doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, he was warmly attached; and that attachment he retained undiminished until the day of his death. While he regretted the existence of certain evils and abuses in her system of administration, which still prevented him from joining her communion, he looked forward with hope to see the time when those barriers of separation should be removed. In a sermon, preached in May 1834, in reference to ecclesiastical proceedings, he says, “Nothing on earth would give more joy to my heart than to see sure and decided symptoms of reformation in the National Church of Scotland. I would go seven times to the top of her highest mountain to look out for the harbinger of her relief, though each time I should have to return with the message—‘there is nothing;’ provided at last I could hail the appearance of ‘the little cloud out of the sea like a man’s hand,’ the sure prelude of the plentiful rain which shall refresh the weary inheritance, make her wilderness an Eden, and her desert as a garden of the Lord.”

The recent proceedings in the Church Courts, for giving more effect to the popular will in the choice and settlement of their pastors, had but his partial approbation. The celebrated Veto Act, which the Liberal party introduced in 1834, with a view to limit the power, if not to frustrate and indirectly supplant the rights of patrons, he regarded with cold suspicion, as a worthless boon, so

long as lay patronage was permitted to exist. His sagacity foresaw the collision that must inevitably arise, and which has now arisen with a violence of contention that sets the courts of law at defiance, and threatens another Secession—from the attempt to bring two incompatible and repugnant rights to work together in a system of harmonious parish settlements. While the advocates of the Veto boasted that they had muzzled the monster of patronage, the more clear-sighted Dissenter told them they were mistaken,—“they had only muffled him, but they had muzzled the people.” In alluding to the Veto Act, in the sermon already quoted, he says, “The decision on Calls, so much applauded by many, together with its strange but not unsuitable accompaniments, I can look upon in no other light but as an attempt to gull the people with a show of privilege, while it subjects them to be fettered at every step in the exercise of it, and involves them in the inextricable meshes of legal chicanery; and this boon is presented to them by the hands of those who have scornfully thrown out and rejected their petitions for relief from a grievance (patronage) of which the Church of Scotland has always complained.” This was the language of Dr. M’Crie in 1834; and looking to what has since taken place—to what is now (in 1840) the position of the Church, with her Veto Act declared illegal by the House of Lords—her law-suits for damages for refusing to comply with the decisions of the Civil Courts—her interdicts in the matter of parish settlements—the suspension of numbers other clergy—her non-intrusion agitation which shakes the Establishment to its base;—looking to these facts, we cannot but feel surprised at the accuracy with which his sagacious mind predicted the futility of attempting to introduce the free exercise of popular rights, so long as the law of patronage was left unrescinded.

On the whole, in whatever light we view this eminent man—whether we regard his personal character or his literary talents—whether we look upon his writings as connected with the spread of the Reformation in Europe, or with that interesting period in the history of the Church of Scotland;—it will be admitted that he was a man of no ordinary attainments, endowed with a singular acuteness of intellect, and habits of indefatigable research. His fame as an author has extended far beyond the limits of his own country; and his works will continue to be read, probably with increasing admiration, wherever men are found to take an interest in the cause of Reformed Christianity, or in the memory of the sufferers for religious liberty.

FOOTNOTES

1 Declaration appended to Mr. M'Crie's Statement of Difference, &c. p. 216. See also Review of the Proceedings of the General Associate Synod, by *Professor Bruce*.

2 M'Crie's Statement of the Difference, & c., pp. 79-80.

3 M'Kerrow's History of the Secession Church, vol. ii. p. 148.

4 Edinburgh Christian Instructor for September 1835.

5 The congregation was formed in 1791, and the chapel in Potterrow built in 1792, but Mr. M'Crie was their first settled minister.

6 Edinburgh Review, July 1812. The able critique upon Knox's Life is generally ascribed to Mr. Jeffrey, the editor.

7 Quarterly Review, July 1813.

8 Blackwood's Magazine, Sept. 1835.

9 It ought to be mentioned, to the honour of Mr. Blackwood, that in consequence of the offence taken at the Chaldee MSS. which was merely intended as *jeux d'esprit*. it was suppressed immediately, with an apology that if what had happened could have been anticipated, the obnoxious article never would have appeared.

10 So far back as 1804, he had contributed to the Christian Magazine some articles on the Progress and Suppression of the Reformation in Spain, with an account of Spanish Protestant martyrs.

11 Nor was this the only testimony of respect which the Church of Scotland showed to Dr. M'Crie. The writer of this Biographical Notice happened to be present in the General Assembly, several years after the publication of Knox's Life; and, as a keen debate was expected on some popular topic of the day, the galleries were crowded to excess. Many who could not gain admission there, found their way into those seats in the body of the house usually appropriated to ministers not being members. Complaints being made by the clergymen thus excluded, it was found necessary to order the house to be cleared of strangers. When it was discovered that among the strangers was Dr. M'Crie, the Assembly rose up spontaneously, and the clerk, Dr. Macknight, was requested to announce, that the author of the *Life of John Knox* should remain in his place.