

Sketches of the Covenanters eBook

Sketches of the Covenanters

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I.

The land of the covenants.

All history is interesting and much of it is inspiring. Scotland furnishes a large measure of that quality of history, that awakens the soul, and appeals to the faculties by which life is transfigured with moral grandeur.

History yields its best results when we use our best powers in pursuing its paths. Let the creative genius, a healthy imagination, be employed restoring the scenes of former times, mingling with the people and participating in their high endeavors; then will the quiet page of history become a world of thrilling activity. In this manner let us here endeavor to follow the chain of events which gave Scotland two Reformations and a Revolution. Let us keep our horizon wide by resuscitating the former generations and associating with the Covenanted fathers, who, in their faithfulness to God and loyalty to Jesus Christ, were like the burning bush, enswirled with fire but not consumed.

Scotland—the very name awakens fondest memories, revives holiest scenes, makes dearest associations throb with life. Scotland—charming in her romances of love, mighty in her struggles for freedom, pathetic in her sufferings for Christ, and glorious in her oft-renewed covenant with God—Scotland in many respects is incomparable among the nations. The Covenanted Church of Scotland, coming up from the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved in holy dependence and dauntless faith, while heaven looks down with admiration—how beautiful, how instructive, how inspiring!

Extending from the north boundary of England, Scotland thrusts her rocky shores with rugged irregularity into the deep sea on three sides. Her granite cliffs, resisting the ceaseless waves, teach her people the lesson of constant vigilance and unconquerable courage.

In this country the summer days are long and delightful, the echoes of good-night linger till the voice of good-morning may be heard. The days almost touch each other, twilight scarcely leaves the sky. The winter reverses the order, making the path of the sun short and, bringing it down close to the hilltops. The storm loves the long night; the winds rise and sift the treasures of hail and snow over mountain and meadow.

[Illustration: *In the highlands*

In visiting the places of deepest interest to Covenanters, the journey in our day may be made with little fatigue and much comfort. This makes the wanderings of the persecuted Covenanters to appear in pathetic contrast which touches the heart with sadness. The scene presented here is Loch Lubnaig nestling in the bosom of the highlands. The view is charming, especially while the historic events are revived by a

guide like Rev John McDonald, B D, who is here seen in the motor car, accompanied by Mrs McDonald and Mrs McFeeters.]

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Scotland contains about 30,000 square miles and 4,000,000 souls. The shores, especially the western and northern, are beautifully fringed with narrow lochs and steep indentures of the sea, making the coast picturesque beyond description. The surface is mostly mountainous and rugged, presenting to the eye natural scenery, which for beauty and magnificence can scarcely be surpassed. On the mountain side mists suddenly form, dense as thunder-clouds and bright as snow-drifts. We were one day pointed to a certain hill where, it is said, Peden was hunted by dragoons, and found shelter in the heart of a mist-cloud, which he called "the lap of God's cloak." In answer to prayer he thus found safety in the secret place of the Most High; heaven seemed to touch earth where he knelt upon the dripping grass.

These mountainous grounds furnish luxuriant pasture for numerous flocks of sheep. Here is the shepherd's paradise, who, with his dog and crook, keeps careful watch. While the brow of the mountain is white with mist, its cheeks are often crimsoned with heather, and its breast verdant with pasture. The associated colors are very grateful to the eye, while the sublimity ennobles the heart.

Many picturesque lochs nestle among the hills, in whose placid waters is mirrored the sky in the brilliant variations of day and night. Poets and novelists have thrown a charm over these waters, and their shady isles—and deep coves, relating the stories of love and the tragedies of war. Castles, some in ruins, some in excellent preservation, dot the country from sea to sea, crowning prominent hill tops, and grimly telling of the era of savage strife and imperiled life. Splendid cities, thrifty towns, and modest country homes are an index of the present prosperous and peaceful conditions. The industry, intelligence, and happiness of the people are everywhere apparent. Numerous churches, schools, and colleges bear testimony to the high tide of Christian civilization, which, through the labors and fidelity of the fathers, have carried the present generation into enviable prominence.

The climate is pleasant and healthful. The asperity of winter is softened by the ocean streams coming from the south; the heat of summer is reduced by the high latitude and the mountains. Withal the Lord has blessed this celebrated country with rare natural advantages for producing an indomitable and resourceful race. Something in their environment seems to have given the people more than ordinary qualities of mind and heart. Through the centuries they listened to the deep music of the sea, gazed upon the majesty of the mountains, meditated upon the solitude of the moors, kept vigil over their flocks in the fields, laboriously tilled the rugged soil; and grew solemn, vigorous, magnanimous, and unconquerable; they became a distinguished people.

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But above all this, God in the early ages gave them the Scriptures, and the Truth made them free. From the dawn of the evangelization of Scotland there has ever been a band, and sometimes a host, whose heart God touched, whose lives He enswathed with the fire of zeal for Christ and His royal rights. They grasped the meaning of the Word of God, heard His voice calling them into the marvelous light, and lived in the radiance of His dreadful presence. They stood upon the solid foundation of the infallible Book, and grew solid as the rocks of granite in their conviction of truth and right. How much of this Scotch granite is apparent in the faith and firmness of the present generation?

The matchless inheritance we have received from our Covenanted ancestors, an inheritance of truth, liberty, and high example, should be more inspiring to us than nature's grandest scenery. Our eyes should be open to the moral significance of present conditions. We should be alive to the weighty obligations transmitted by the fathers to their children. Filled with the spirit and power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and enthusiastic in our work for God, we should throw our strength into the service of our Lord Jesus, striving to bring all people into Covenant with God. The Covenant relation is the normal state of human society.

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. Locate Scotland on the map.
2. What is the size? What the population?
3. Mention the main physical features.
4. Give some characteristics of the people.
5. What contributed much to their prominence in history?
6. What moral inheritance did the Covenanted fathers leave their children?
7. What obligation comes with the inheritance?
8. How should the obligation be met in our day?

II.

The battlefield of Presbyterianism.—A.D. 200.

The beginning of Scotland's evangelization is pre-historic. The records fail to give any satisfaction concerning the entrance of the Gospel into that lovely land. The ruins of numerous altars of stone bear grim testimony to the idolatrous worship practiced by the early inhabitants. These are known in history as the Druids. They held their religious meetings in groves, and evidently offered human sacrifices to their gods. The oak was accounted by them a sacred tree, and the mistletoe, when growing upon it, was worshiped. Thus the land of our forefathers, in the far off ages, was without a ray of Gospel light. The people sat in darkness, in the region and shadow of death.

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In the first three centuries of the Christian era, the successive persecutions at Rome drove many Christians out from that Gospel center, to wander in all directions over the world. They suffered banishment for Christ's sake. In their wanderings they became great missionaries. They loved Jesus more than their lives, and their religion more than their homes. By them the Gospel was carried to the ends of the earth. It seems that some of them drifted into Scotland and brought to that land the bright morning of a day that carried storms in its bosom, and after the storms, peace, quietness, prosperity, Christian civilization—an inheritance of light and liberty unparalleled in history.

As these witnesses of Jesus told the story of God's love and of Christ's death, the Holy Spirit came down with power and wrought wondrously upon the people. They readily believed the faithful saying, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

In the later centuries the Gospelized communities developed into an organized Church, with doctrine, worship, and government based upon God's Word. These primitive Christians were careful to preserve the apostolic simplicity, purity, manner, and substance, of Divine service. The Infallibility of the Bible, the Divinity of Christ, the Inspired Psalmody, and the Presbyterian form of government, were fundamentals in the faith of the Church of Scotland from her youth. She appears exceedingly beautiful in her first love, coming up from the wilderness with her right hand taking firm hold upon the Lord Jesus Christ, her gracious Redeemer and mighty Protector.

The Church of Scotland was then known as the Church of the Culdees. They had a flourishing Theological Seminary on the Isle of Iona. The ruins of it still remain.

Papal Rome however quickly scented this noble vine, with its rich, ripe clusters of grapes. Embassies were sent to win these children of light over to the Papacy. But they had tasted of the freedom and blessedness in Christ and refused. A long sanguinary struggle ensued, which resulted in the apparent suppression of the Protestant faith in the Twelfth century. The ministers in general, under the severity of prolonged persecution, surrendered their liberty and became servants of the Roman pontiff.

Yet were there always some to resist the cruel conqueror. The excellent of the earth are always to be found at their unpurchasable value, when mankind is on the market selling cheap. These had the courage to challenge popes and kings, who dared to assume the power or the prerogatives of Jesus Christ. They believed that Christ was the Head of the Church, and were willing to yield up their lives rather than their convictions. The doctrine of Christ's supremacy was incarnated in these worthies, and they became invincible in its defence. As the granite rocks, beneath whose shelter they worshiped, withstood the blasts of winter, so these insuppressible men withstood

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the storms of persecution. The sovereignty of Christ over Church and nation was dearer to them than life. They saw the glory of God involved in this fundamental truth, also the honor of Jesus Christ, and the liberty, purity, and permanence of the Church. They counted the pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus Christ worthy of every sacrifice. They suffered bonds and imprisonment, exile and slavery, torture and death, for its sake. Their blood watered the moss of the moors and the heather of the mountains. Thousands and tens of thousands of Scotland's noblest sons and purest daughters gave their lives freely for the contested doctrine of Christ's crown rights and royal supremacy. As these valiant soldiers of the cross fell, their children arose, and, grasping the banner of the Covenant crimsoned with the blood of their fathers, carried it defiantly along the firing line of the fierce battle. The dreadful conflict continued while century followed century.

[Illustration: This old Banner is yet to be seen at the home of Mr. John Howie of Lochgoin. It has its own unwritten history. As we placed our hands on the precious folds, the heart was asking about the brave standard-bearers who carried it in the hard-fought encounters, and the fearless Covenanters who followed it unto death.]

Victory finally crowned the martyrs' cause, and peace spread her white wings over the crimson field, which in our day yields a rich harvest of happiness and prosperity. Out of that great struggle we have inherited the civil and religious liberty, which to-day is the crowning glory of Great Britain and America.

But the victories of our fathers were not final: they only placed us on vantage ground to continue the struggle, until the whole world shall be redeemed from every system of false religion and despotic power. Much land yet remains to be possessed. Animated by their noble example and encouraged by their success, we should press forward in the same cause, for the glory of Christ and the salvation of souls. How can we hesitate? Great obligations have descended from the fathers to us as their successors; future generations are dependent on our faithfulness.

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. Describe the religion that prevailed in Scotland before the Gospel was introduced.
2. What is known concerning the beginning of the Church in this country?
3. What was the success of the Gospel during the early centuries?
4. What were the chief doctrines of the Church in those times?



5. What foe attempted her suppression?
6. Describe the resistance offered by the martyrs.
7. What was the great doctrine around which the battle was waged?

III.

Some early martyrs.—A.D. 1200.

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The Roman hierarchy, having gained a foothold on the shores of Scotland, pushed hard for the ascendancy. At length the Papal religion prevailed. The black wings of apostasy, as of an ominous bird, were stretched from sea to sea. Dense darkness fell upon Scotland. The Thirteenth century was the horrible midnight, during which the people slept helpless in the grasp of a terrorizing nightmare. Kings combined with priests to crush all who asserted their right to a free conscience in the worship of God. The Bible was officially condemned and publicly burned; its perusal by the people was accounted a crime worthy of death. Poor Scotland! how ruinously overwhelmed beneath the briny waters of adversity.

The providences of God are mysterious. We become mystified and distressed when we ask for reasons. God's circles are vast; we cannot take in His horizon. We know however that all His works are done in truth and righteousness. The wheels of Christ's chariot never move backward. In getting over the rough places, progress may seem to be reversed, yet this is an illusion. In every such case the mysterious operation of providence is merely preparation for advancement. The great work of redemption goes forward through all stages to perfection. The storms that dash against the face of spring prevent not the coming of summer with its abundant harvests and songs of joy.

The light of the Gospel seemed to have been quenched beneath the seething tide of Papal corruption. Still there were incorruptible men and women here and there, who devoutly worshiped God according to His Word. Their hearthstone was their church. There may have been many in those days deeply rooted in the faith, but for most part they remained invisible. To be known as true to Christ imperiled life. Not many had the courage to publish their convictions. Yet there were some who arose in the majesty of redeemed manhood and confessed Jesus, testifying to His truth in defiance of the powers of darkness. To them truth was sweeter than life.

John Resby is on record as one among the first witnesses, who heralded a glorious reformation for Scotland. He was a voice crying in the wilderness, proclaiming the sovereignty of Christ over the Church and denouncing the pope who claimed to be the representative of the Lord Jesus. He was quickly silenced by death at the stake. This occurred in 1407. The spirit of religious liberty was thereby crushed and disappeared for twenty-five years.

Paul Craw was the next to be lifted into prominence by the power of the Gospel, and thrust into publicity by the courage of his convictions. The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him. His love for the truth of the Gospel filled him with abhorrence of Roman errors; his pity for souls carried him into the fight for their freedom. He testified boldly against Papal idolatry, prayer to saints, and the confessional. For this he was sentenced to suffer in the flames. His martyrdom took place in 1432.

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Patrick Hamilton was another distinguished hero in this age of darkness. Nearly a century had passed between the last mentioned martyr and this. Doubtless lesser lights had appeared, for the record cannot possibly be complete. Winter snows and summer showers often fell on smoking embers, where the charred bones and precious names of martyrs are now forgotten, and the annual sward of green conceals the sacred grounds from the knowledge of man. Hamilton was a young man of education and refinement having fairest worldly prospects. However, the Lord showed him “the way, the truth, and the life,” and his soul was fired with the love of God. He counted all things but “loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.” His enthusiasm carried him boldly into controversy with the enemies of his Lord, and won for him the honors of a noble martyr. As the flames leaped around him at the stake, his voice rose calm and clear on the crisp winter air, exclaiming, “How long, O Lord, shall darkness cover this realm? How long wilt thou suffer this tyranny of man?” This man was sacrificed in 1528.

The light was rising; spring-time was coming, the early rain of God's grace was falling upon Scotland. Godly lives now sprang up thick as flowers in the meadow. They must be uprooted in bunches, thought the Romanists, or the people, gaining light, will cast off the Papal religion and be free to worship God according to His Word. During the next few years many were condemned and executed for their faith.

Helen Stark deserves honorable mention. She and her husband were sentenced to death for their fidelity to Jesus. She begged for the poor consolation of dying with her husband, pleading that the flames that would consume his flesh might also consume hers. The privilege was denied. She stood by him while the fire did its work, and the chariot of flame bore his soul to heaven. She encouraged him to endure bravely and glorify God. When life had departed from his quivering body, she was pushed aside and hastened to a pond of deep water. Withdrawing a babe from her warm breast where it would never again rest, she gave it to a woman near by, resigning it to the loving Father of orphans. She was then plunged into the water where death quickly ended her sorrows. This martyrdom was in 1543.

[Illustration: *George Wishart*.

George Wishart was a burning and shining light in darkest times. His pure and vigorous life was lifted up into the presence of God and devoted to the glory of Jesus Christ and the emancipation of souls from the bondage of Satan, through the preaching of the Gospel. He finished his work, a great work, while he was yet a young man. His enemies burned him at the stake, in 1546, for his faith in Jesus Christ.]

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George Wishart arose at this time in the spirit and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, and displayed the banner of truth with an invincible faith. His heart was true, pure, fresh, and fragrant as the heart of a rosebud, through the indwelling Spirit of God. His life was wonderfully attractive. His eloquence was seraphic; his lips had been touched with a live coal from the altar of God; his soul was aflame with the Gospel. He was animated with transfiguring revelations of Christ and His redeeming truth. He was a burning and shining light. The light he shed was too bright to last long in those dangerous times. The cardinal, prelates, and priests consulted for his overthrow. He fell suddenly into their hands and his death was decreed. To the stake he was hurried where the flames once more did their work, and another faithful soul appeared before the Throne, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and arrayed in a white robe, rejoicing in the victory won through Jesus Christ. At the stake his executioner begged forgiveness. Wishart kissed his cheek, saying, "Go, here is a token that I forgive thee; do thine office." One standing near said to him, "Be of good courage." He replied, "This fire torments my body, but in no way abates my spirit." This execution was in 1546.

The success of life is not measured by the years we live, but by loyalty to Jesus Christ and service in the Gospel; the might of our faith, the healthiness of the soul, the greatness of the heart, and the intensity of the light shining from a character radiant with the presence and glory of Jesus Christ.

Are we every day trying to make our lives rich, radiant, successful, and certain of reward, through earnest effort to bring others into the possession of the blessings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. What was Scotland's condition when over-ridden by the Roman religion?
2. How was the true Church kept alive?
3. Describe the sufferings endured by the witnesses of Jesus.
4. Give the death scene of John Resby, Paul Craw, Patrick Hamilton, Helen Stark, George Wishart.
5. How may the study of the martyrs' lives purify, strengthen, and ennoble our lives?

IV.

Knox in the field of conflict.—A.D. 1547.

“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” This crimson adage is a striking truth. “If ye burn any more,” quaintly said one who had observed the effects of the martyrdom of Wishart on the public mind, “burn them in your cellar, for the smoke infects all upon whom it is blown.”

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John Knox was then a young man preparing for service in the priesthood of Rome. He had met Wishart and felt the glow of his warm heart and the power of his inspiring fellowship. He was a man of eminent natural abilities to which was added a liberal education. He was recognized as one who would be a mighty champion on whatever side he took his stand. God was rich in mercy to Scotland when He caused the Gospel to shine into the heart of Knox, giving him “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” His towering intellect, through the study of the Word of God, caught the morning glory of the Reformation, like a mountain that catches the first rays of the rising sun. He broke all the bonds that bound him to Papacy, and entered into the liberty of the children of God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When Knox received his first call to become a pastor, he was overwhelmed with anxiety at the awful responsibility of preaching the Gospel. He stood in amazement, but dared not refuse. His humility and self-abasement prepared him, through the grace of the Lord Jesus, for heights of power and honor seldom reached by ministers. From that crucial day he devoted all the energies of body and soul to the preaching of the Word of God. His public services covered a quarter of a century.

This mighty man of valor threw himself immediately into the thickest of the fight against Romanism. He struck at the root of the evil. Instead of skirmishing along the borders about rituals, ceremonies, and perversion of doctrines, he boldly challenged the Papal system as Antichrist, and the Pope as “The man of sin.” In his estimation the Romish Church was a fallen Church and had become “The Synagogue of Satan.” He entered the field of conflict clad in the armor of God and wielded the sword of the Spirit with precision and terrible effect. In prayer lay the secret of his power. He knew how to take hold upon God, and prevail like a prince. The Queen Regent, who in those times mustered the forces of the government at her pleasure, said, “I am more afraid of the prayers of John Knox than of any army of ten thousand men.”

The very name of Knox was enough to strike terror into the hearts of his enemies. On one occasion, having been in Geneva for a time, he returned unexpectedly. Just then a number of the Reformed ministers, who had been arrested for preaching against Popery, were approaching their trial. The court had assembled and were attending to the preliminaries. Suddenly a messenger rushed into the hall of justice, breathless with haste, exclaiming, “John Knox! John Knox is come! he slept last night in Edinburgh!” The court was stunned and immediately adjourned.

The life of Knox was often in danger. Once as he sat in his room reading by candle light a shot was fired at him from the street through the window. It went harmlessly past him and struck his candle.

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He received a request on a certain occasion to preach in a city that was a stronghold of Romanism. He accepted, glad of the opportunity, knowing also the peril. The archbishop of the city, having an army at his bidding, sent Knox a warning, saying, that if he preached, the soldiers would receive orders to fire upon him. His friends urged him not to go. He replied, "As for the fear of danger that may come to me let no man be solicitous, for my life is in the custody of Him whose glory I seek. I desire the hand and weapon of no man to defend me. I only crave audience, which, if it be denied here unto me at this time, I must seek farther where I may have it." He went and preached and returned unharmed. His great courage infused itself into other hearts, and a multitude of invincible men stood forth with him in the struggle for liberty and conscience, which he so fearlessly advocated. Every sublime life is a mighty power for the uplifting of others into the same region of healthy action.

The throne of Scotland, with its machinery of government, was against Knox all his days. Queen Mary was determined to keep the people in subjection to her own arbitrary will, and the Church subject to her authority. Knox had several personal interviews with her, taking occasion at the risk of his life to speak candidly and solemnly, applying the Word of God to her life and conscience. At one time, remonstrating against her persecuting rage, he said to her, "Even so, Madam, if those who are in authority, being stricken with a frenzy, will murder the children of God, who are their own subjects, the sword may be taken from them, and they may be imprisoned till they be brought to a sober mind." The queen was much amazed and her face changed color, but she was powerless to do him harm.

During the lifetime of Knox, the Church of the Reformation grew rapidly and became mighty in numbers and influence. The first General Assembly was held in 1560, having 6 ministers and 32 other members, 38 in all. In 1567, just seven years later, the Assembly numbered 252 ministers, 467 readers, and 154 exhorters. This, too, was in a time of distress the conditions were unfavorable, the opposition was very strong. How account for the success? "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

[Illustration: *Knox administering the lord's supper.*

John Knox led the Church in the great struggle for pure doctrine and worship. The vain heart of man is ever inventing additions and variations in the services of God's house. Many devices had been thrust upon the early Church of Scotland. Here we see this servant of Christ, in the administration of the Lord's Supper, giving the people the bread and the cup as Jesus directed.]

The Church contended for the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ, even unto death.

The Church pursued unswervingly the course marked out for her in the Word of God, in doctrine, worship, and discipline, not troubled at the cost nor fearing results.

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The Church refused to be guided by human wisdom or temporizing methods, either to win numbers or gain favor, depending for success upon the wisdom that cometh from above.

The Church sought to glorify God with simplicity of faith, holiness of life, purity of worship, and loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence the invincible energy, the wonderful achievements, the magnificent victories, and the amazing increase. Would not the Church of Christ take on like activities, proportions, and strength, by following the same course of fidelity in our own times?

John Knox died in 1572, at the age of 67. His last words were, "Come, Lord Jesus, sweet Jesus; receive my spirit." His latter end was peace.

Will we strive to emulate Knox in prayer, courage, self-denial, and pure-heartedness? Will not his example be to us an inspiration to work with faith and might, to build up the Church and enlarge the Kingdom of Christ? He was great because he was humble and trusted in the Lord. The same way is still open to all who would do great things for God. Humility, prayer, faith, activity, courage, honor, glory—these are the successive steps upward. There is yet room in the high places. Knox's place seems to be vacant. Who will fill it? What an opportunity for young men to bring their noblest powers into action!

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. What great reformer appeared at this stage of the conflict?
2. What was the attitude of Knox toward Romanism?
3. How was his power dreaded by his enemies?
4. What was his demeanor in danger?
5. Describe his interviews with the rulers.
6. Tell how the Church prospered during his ministry; explain the cause.
7. What effect should such a life have on us as we study it?

V.

Foundation stones.—A.D. 1550.

During the first half of the Sixteenth century the Church struggled strenuously for a more complete organization. The Word of God was quietly circulated and believers in Jesus Christ were growing numerous. But hitherto they had to worship God at their own fireside or burn at the stake. In the humble cottage, while the raging storm kept spies away, the father read from the Book of God to his children as they huddled around the turf fire, and the mother sang Psalms to the little ones as she knit their stockings or baked the oaten bread. Thus pious parents instilled into their sons and daughters the truth of Christ which stirred their blood, and prepared a generation to emerge from the bondage of Papacy.

THE FIRST COVENANT—1557.

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During these times the Church was found chiefly in groups of Christians who met secretly for prayer. A company of devout believers came together to spend the evening hours, or the Sabbath day, in the worship of God. The meeting was called a Society. In these places prayer was offered in faith, the Psalms were sung with grave melody, and the Bible was read with reverence. These hungry souls fed upon the Word. Sometimes the meetings were held in caves for fear of the enemy. Once a minister, being pursued, entered one of these caves for safety. As he sat down in its shelter, he was surprised at hearing soft melody farther back in that dark retreat. Following the sound of the voices he found a company of devout worshippers.

In those troublous times the Holy Spirit, in His own mysterious way, electrified the hearts of these hidden ones with the thought of Covenanting with each other and with God, to stand for life, liberty, and religion. A day was set and a place appointed for entering into the holy bond. Notwithstanding the danger incurred, a large concourse of people assembled and solemnly entered into the Covenant. This occurred in the city of Edinburgh, December 3, 1557. This Covenant embodied their purpose, thus, "We by His grace, shall, with all diligence, continually apply our whole power, substance, and our very lives, to maintain, set forward, and establish the most blessed Word of God and His Church." This is known as The First Covenant of Scotland. Two years later, another bond of agreement was subscribed, on behalf of the Church, by her most prominent leaders, which was called The Second Covenant.

[Illustration: *Mary, queen of Scots.*

Mary, Queen of Scots, came to the throne young, beautiful, aspiring, and unscrupulous. She selected for her counselors, those who were devoted to the Papal religion. She employed the government, the army, and the French forces, to suppress the Reformers. The tide of power was against her. She lost her throne and kingdom, and fled the country. She was finally beheaded in London.]

THE FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY—1560.

The First Covenant was a formidable bulwark of defence against Papacy. The young Protestant Church found in it a strong tower. The battle grew fiercer. Many of the nobles joined the Covenanted ranks. Two years later this Covenant was renewed and the cause gained great strength. Among other leaders Lord James Stuart, the queen's brother, subscribed. He was a daring defender of the Reformed faith. He stood as a wall of adamant between the Reformation and his sister, Mary, Queen of Scots, who employed the government and army to destroy it. After her overthrow he became regent, ruling the nation with kingly power and extraordinary ability, having the fear of God and the welfare of the people at heart. His home was like a sanctuary; the fire burned on the

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family altar, the Bible was read at the table, the beauty of holiness graced the household. In history he is known as Lord Murray, the “Good Regent.” He was assassinated by an ingrate, whom he had pardoned and saved from execution. Much credit for the First Reformation must be given to Murray in the State and Knox in the Church, each peerless in his place. In their day the Church became an organized power and assumed the appearance of “an army with banners.” The First General Assembly met in Edinburgh, December 20, 1560. The purpose was, “To consult upon those things which are to forward God’s glory and the well-being of His Kirk.” The glory of God! the honor of Christ! the exaltation of the supreme Name! that is the purpose that sends fire through the veins and sweeps the soul with holy flames. Give this its true place, and the best work of life will be done. Then did the Church arise and shine in the glory of the Lord. Then did she develop in size, strength, and courage, as in the days of the apostles. Seven years later when the General Assembly met, the members numbered 773, with a prosperous Church of proportionate size. The Reformers entered into the work of the Lord with heartiness and reaped a plentiful harvest.

THE FIRST BOOK OF DISCIPLINE—1561.

The high principles governing the First General Assembly are seen in the effort to preserve the purity of the young Church, springing up under the care of these “valiant men of Israel.” One of the first steps taken was the appointment of a committee to prepare a Book of Discipline. These devout men copied from no existing form of Church government. They did not draw even upon Holland or Geneva for resources. They went directly to the Word of God, as the fountain of all knowledge for the task on hand. They took counsel and instruction from God in prayer, placed mind and heart under the guiding power of the Holy Spirit. The book that came forth was such as we would expect at the hands of such men, working with such spirit and purpose. Its statements were truth; its rules were wisdom; its censures were a sword; its authority was Christ. The General Assembly adopted it. However, it was not in favor with all. Its standard of doctrine and discipline was too high to please some. Knox gives the reason: “Everything that impugned their corrupt affections was mockingly termed ‘devout imaginations.’ The cause was, some were licentious, some had greedily gripped the possessions of the Church, and others thought they would not lack their part of Christ’s coat.” Discipline was applied to the Church according to the book. The unworthy were suspended, and those who failed to measure up to the standard of knowledge, character, and spiritual life, were refused. Could there be a clearer demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit and the presence of Jesus Christ, than the discipline that removed the unworthy and refused the unfit, when the Church was so weak in number and assailed by hordes of enemies? Yet during the first seven years of this Book of Discipline, the General Assembly grew from 6 to 252 ministers, and the

Church in the same marvelous proportion. Behold God's seal placed on strict discipline. There is power in purity; vitality depends much on sanitation.

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THE FIRST SCHOOLS—1561.

The Public School system is the offspring of Protestantism. The human mind, when liberated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, aspires after education, as the eagle soars into the upper air when set free from its cage. Freedom in Christ Jesus awakens consciousness of rights, powers, privileges, obligations, and the immeasurable boundaries of mind and spirit. With such breathings and aspirations these Presbyterian fathers planted free schools over their country and set the example for the world. The General Assembly authorized a school for every “parish”, and made attendance imperative. The children of the poor were instructed free, the rich contributed support. The studies covered “religion, grammar, and Latin.” Also in every “notable town, a college was to be erected for instruction in logic, rhetoric, and the learned languages.” Such was the work of the General Assembly in the year of our Lord 1561. Our system of Public Schools is but the extension of the orchard these fathers planted, in their far-reaching plans and great-hearted purposes.

Such were some of the steps taken by the fathers, in the Church of Scotland, at the dawn of the First Reformation. They were master builders in laying foundation stones. They were preparing for the onward movement, which gave to the world the most brilliant example of Church and State in Covenant with God. The like has not been witnessed since the days of Jesus of Nazareth. These beginnings were the stately steppings of God within His sanctuary. The Lord raised up men after His own heart, and empowered them by the Holy Spirit to perform this stupendous task. They were men of like passions with others, yet possessing the rare quality of an inviolate conscience. They were governed by principle, not expediency; were guided by truthfulness, not diplomacy; consulted God’s law, not convenience; accepted duty at God’s command, not at man’s dictate. Not all who were enrolled in the Church stood the test; some grew faint and fell back from the firing line. But enough were ever there to glorify God and do His service at any cost. Scotland’s First Reformation reached its climax in 1567.

The diligence and success of the fathers in the Lord’s work should inspire us to do the best within our power for the enlargement of the Church. Are we building, as they built, upon the true foundation, which is Jesus Christ? Is our building material like theirs—gold, silver, and precious stones? Are we zealous in making the Church of Christ appear the glorious Temple of truth, the Sanctuary of the living God, the Habitation of the Holy Spirit? Are we so consumed with the holy passion of love, that we cannot rest till we bring others into the house of God? Are we worthy of our relation to the Covenanted fathers?

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Points for the class.

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1. Give an account of the First Covenant.
2. Describe the First General Assembly.
3. What was the value of the First Book of Discipline?
4. Describe the founding of Public Schools in Scotland.
5. When was the First Reformation at its climax?
6. How should the success of the fathers inspire us?

VI.

Scotland's national covenant.—A.D. 1581.

During the sixties of the Sixteenth century, the Presbyterian Church had her beautiful summer. The winter seemed to be past and the storms over and gone; the time of the singing of birds had come.

Hitherto the Church had been as a lily among thorns: now instead of thorns were fir trees, and instead of briers, myrtle trees, to the glory of the Lord, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.

Among the matchless sayings of Jesus, one specific word resounds through all the ages and falls upon listening ears like thunder from heaven: “*Watch*”. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, the price of purity, the price of honor, the price of every thing worth having. The young Church, vigorous, victorious, and enthusiastic, seems to have been off her guard at a critical moment and while she slept the enemy sowed tares among the wheat.

The regent, the person who was acting as king while the coming king was a child, called a convention of ministers and others who favored the king’s supremacy over the Church. The convention at his dictation introduced Prelacy. This occurred on January 12, 1572, a dark day for Scotland.

Prelacy is little else than Popery modified; Popery in another dress, trained and taught to speak a softer dialect. The power of Popery had been broken, but the residuum still remained, and now there appeared “the strange heterogeneous compound of Popery, Prelacy, and Presbyterianism” in the Church.

The Church awoke to find herself in the grasp of a horrible octopus, from which she did not escape for three generations, and only then at the loss of much precious blood.



The first effort of the Church, when awakened to her real condition, was to control the bishops that had come into her ministry, and whom she was powerless to remove. The next step was to attempt their removal, on the ground that the office of the bishop was unscriptural. Difficulties rapidly increased; opposing forces were daily growing stronger; the Civil government was against the Church; the regent, Scotland's chief ruler, bent all his energies in the defence of the bishops. From whence shall light and deliverance now come? Listen to the words that seem to be on ten thousand lips: "The Covenants; the Covenants shall be Scotland's reviving!" "The Covenants" now became the watchword of the faithful. A wave of hopefulness and enthusiasm spread over the Church; gladness wreathed the faces that had gathered blackness, and strength throbbed in hearts that were faint.

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The General Assembly, given strength from the Lord for the occasion, adopted a form of Covenant for the nation. The Covenant, as written by Rev. John Craig, was the product of a cultured brain and pious heart. It is unsurpassed in clear diction, high purpose, majestic spirit, heroic decision, and solemn appeal to God. It became the ground-work of all Scotland's subsequent Covenants.

But Craig had to meet the test of faith required by his own Covenant. King James VI., who was now on the throne, after subscribing the bond, repudiated it, and commanded its author to do the same. Craig replied that he would never repudiate anything approved by the Word of God. The Court, in which he was on trial, ordered his head to be shaved, and other indignities to be done to his person.

Again when on trial he was treated with utmost contempt by his judge, to whom he said, "There have been as great men set up higher than thou, that have been brought low." The judge, mockingly, sat down at his feet, saying, "Now I am humbled." "Nay," said Craig, "mock God's servants as thou wilt, God will not be mocked, but shall make thee find it in earnest, when thou shalt be cast down from the high horse of thy pride." A few years later he was thrown from his horse and killed.

The fervor aroused by the Covenant swept the Church like a Pentecostal fire, and spread over all the kingdom as a storm of holy excitement. The Covenant bond, being signed by the king, the nobles, and a great multitude of people, was called, The First National Covenant of Scotland.

No greater event had ever stirred the kingdom, no deeper joy had lighted up her coasts, no higher honor had exalted her people, no brighter glory had overspread her mountains and moors. That holy Covenant had lifted her into relationship with God; the kingdom had become Hephzibah, and the land, Beulah; the nation was married to the Lord.

The Covenant bound the Covenanter, the Church, the nation, and posterity, under a solemn oath,—

To adhere to the Reformed religion with all the heart through all time to come;

To labor with all lawful means to recover the purity and liberty of the Gospel, by removing all human innovations from the Church;

To abhor and detest the corrupt doctrines and practices of Romanism;

To resist under the oath of God all the evils and corruptions contrary to the Reformed religion;

To defend the country and support the government, while country and government defend and preserve true religion;

To stand in mutual defence of one another in maintaining the Gospel and the Reformed Church;

To permit nothing to divide the Covenanted ranks, or diminish their power, or swerve them from their high purpose;

To become good examples of Godliness, soberness, and righteousness in the performance of every duty due to God and man;

To fear none of the foul aspersions that may be cast upon this Covenant, seeing it is warranted by the Word of God, and is for the maintenance of His Church;

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To recognize the *living god* as the Searcher of hearts, and Jesus Christ as the Judge, before whom all shall stand in judgment.

Such was the high range of thought, motive, purpose, and action reached by this Covenant of the fathers, who called upon God in the day of trouble, and were heard in that they feared. The men who led in this solemn transaction were distinguished for learning, piety, high-souled purpose, devotion to their country, and zeal for the glory of Christ. They were among the excellent of the earth. But the mighty current of religious enthusiasm that had set in drew to itself, and carried on its bosom, multitudes who were superficial and vacillating. These quickly fell away when the counter current set forward; some of them even became violent persecutors of the Covenanters.

[Illustration: *King James VI.*

King James VI. came to the throne of Scotland in 1578, and reigned till 1625. He was crowned when a boy of 12 years. He subscribed the National Covenant, saying, "I praise the Lord that I am king in such a Kirk, the sincerest Kirk in the world." He soon forsook the "Kirk"—the Covenanted Church—and became a violent persecutor.]

The king was among the first to vitiate his oath, and break the Covenant. His weakness was pitiful; he seemed to turn with every gale that struck him. The next year he mustered the strength of his government to overthrow the Presbyterian Church, and reverse the workings of the Covenant. The Church was aroused and resolute, Andrew Melville being her recognized leader. A delegation was sent to the king to remonstrate; Melville was the spokesman. The king was confronted like a lion in his den. He listened to the following message: "Your majesty, by device of some counselors, is caused to take upon you a spiritual power and authority, which properly belongs unto Christ, as the only King and Head of the Church. Through your highness, some men are trying to erect a new Popedom, as though your majesty could not be king and head of this commonwealth, unless the spiritual sword, as well as the temporal, be put into your hands; unless Christ be bereft of His authority, and the two jurisdictions which God separated be confounded. All this tends to the wreck of true religion."

Melville sent the truth, like a lancet, into the inflated ambition of the young king. He winced in the agony of the keen surgery. But Melville had to meet the consequences of his faithfulness. He was taken to the tower of London, where he lay in a dismal cell four years. He was afterward banished and died in a strange land.

This Covenant of 1851 placed posterity, equally with the Covenanters of that day, in oath-bound relation to God. A Public Covenant with God continues in its moral obligation until its terms are fulfilled. Are we lifting up our lives into relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ through our inherited Covenant? Are we fulfilling our sworn duties to our country, our Church, and our Lord? Are we using all lawful means to cause true religion to prevail? Are we employing our strength against all opposing evils? Are we

keeping step in the Covenanted ranks that are marching on, assured that the principles of the Reformation will yet prevail in every land?

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Points for the class.

1. What was the condition of the Presbyterian Church during 1560-1570?
2. How did the Church thereafter decline?
3. To what did the Church resort for her reviving?
4. What effect had the Covenant on the Church?
5. Mention some of the main points in the Covenant.
6. How did the king regard the Covenant?
7. How was his opposition resisted by the Covenanters?
8. In what way do the former Covenants bind the present generation?

VII.

Contending with the king—A.D. 1582.

The Covenanted Church flourished under the care of the General Assembly like a well-watered garden. The small band of ministers and elders, who had organized the Assembly, were richly blest in their labors. They had assembled at the risk of their lives to give the supremacy of Jesus Christ its loudest utterance, and the unity of the Church its grandest expression; and the signal favor of God was their reward. The first ten years of the General Assembly were the halcyon days of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Under the showers of the Holy Spirit, pious people sprang up “as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses.” The power of the Papacy was broken and its horrors checked.

The clear sky, however, soon gathered blackness. The first cloud was, in size, and in cunning, too, as a man’s hand. The national government had condemned Popery as a religion, and had confiscated the vast wealth which the priesthood had amassed and had long enjoyed. This immense property, including rich revenues, large buildings, broad fields, and annual harvests, was held for distribution. How shall it be distributed? That was the burning question of the day, and it started a conflagration in the Church, that kindled many a fire at the stake. The Civil court decided that one-sixth should be given to the Church. The Church accepted the allowance. It was a sweet morsel in her mouth; but bitter, oh, how bitter in her bowels!

Regent Morton held the reins of government at that time. That cunning ruler in bestowing this gift expected large returns. If the Church get gold at his hand, she must make concessions on his demand. From that day the Covenanted Church was in trouble. She was compelled to keep up a constant warfare for her heaven-given independence, a bitter fight at the cost of much blood for the right of self-government under her Lord. The Bride of the Son of God had linked arms with an earthly suitor, and leaned on him for support, to her shame and sorrow. The Church of Christ, free-born and independent, endued with divine power, enriched with the indwelling Spirit, and sufficiently resourceful for all conditions and obligations, now depended on the State for financial help. The mistake grew more evident, and its correction more difficult, as time rolled on.

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The sovereignty of Jesus Christ is one of the cardinal doctrines of Presbyterianism. Christ in this form of Church government is glorified as Lord over all, and blessed forever. Enthroned on the right hand of the Majesty on high, He rules over a dominion whose limits include the utmost bounds of creation. On earth He has organized the Church, of which He is the only Head and King. He has also established the State, of which He is both King and Judge. The Church and State under Jesus Christ are mutually independent; each should be cordial and co-operative with the other; both are directly accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Morton saw his opportunity when the Church took the money. In those days the ruler of Scotland insisted on being recognized as the head of the Church. Morton put forth his claim of control; the faithful ministers of Christ resisted. Since the reign of Henry VIII., the Episcopal Church has acknowledged the reigning sovereign as supreme in her government. In this position the ruler can use the Church as an arm of his government, a handmaid in his administration, an instrument in carrying out his designs, an ally in supporting whatsoever may originate in his heart.

Morton attempted to introduce Episcopacy into the General Assembly. Even there he found some ready to do his bidding; and thus began the long controversy between Presbyterianism and Episcopacy. The struggle of Protestantism with Romanism had well-nigh disappeared; the fight was now between the Presbyterian and the Episcopalian.

Morton's leaven quickly did its work; the Assembly became deeply infected. For more than an hundred years the terrible struggle continued. In the early years of this fierce conflict, Andrew Melville, mighty in the power of Jesus, stood in the forefront of the battle. Melville was scholarly, intrepid, adventurous, highly emotional, and vehement in the cause of the Church's independence. He had some sharp encounters with Morton. Morton in a rage said to him one day, "The country will never be in quietness till half a dozen of you be hanged or banished." Melville, looking him in the face with his piercing eyes, replied, "Tush, man, threaten your courtiers after that manner. It is the same to me whether I rot in the air or in the ground. The earth is the Lord's. My country is wherever goodness is. Let God be glorified, it will not be in your power to hang or exile His truth." Morton felt himself outdared and outdone by the courage and calmness of this humble servant of Christ.

Morton resigned the regency in 1578, to make way for James VI. to ascend the throne, who continued the war against the Presbyterians. He asserted that his crown depended on the office of the bishop. "No bishop, no king," was his motto. He aspired to become dictator to the Church. The General Assembly resisted his claim. A delegation was sent to the king with a strong remonstrance against his tyrannic course. Melville was a member of

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the delegation, and his energetic spirit constituted him speaker. The delegation appeared in the royal court where the king sat among his advisers. The remonstrance was read; it filled the king with rage. "Who dare subscribe this treasonable paper?" was asked. "We dare," replied Melville, taking hold of the pen and calmly writing his name. The others followed the bold example. The king and his company were overawed by their holy bravery.

[Illustration: *Melville before king James.*

Andrew Melville was able to stand before the king because he habitually stood before God. He was wise and strong to give advice and warning in the name of Christ to the sovereign of the nation, because he took his orders from Jesus Christ, the *king of kings* and *lord of lords*. He was banished for his faithfulness, and died in France, in 1622, being 77 years old.]

At another time Melville became so animated in his remonstrance against the despotic monarch, that he took hold of his arm, and gave him an admonition such as few kings have ever heard. His passionate eloquence flowed in a torrent: "I must tell you, Sir, there are two kings, and two kingdoms in Scotland. There is King James VI., head of the commonwealth; and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the Church, whose subject King James is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member. Sir, when you were in your swaddling clothes, Christ Jesus reigned freely in this land, in spite of all his enemies." The words penetrated the guilty soul like flashes from the eye of God. For the time the men had exchanged places; Melville was king.

Melville suffered for his faithfulness; he was banished. Yet he was rewarded with a green old age and a triumphant death. At the age of sixty-eight he wrote from the land of his exile, "I thank God, I eat, I drink, I sleep, as well as I did thirty years bygone, and better than when I was young. My heart is yet a Scotch heart, and as good, or better than ever, both toward God and man. The Lord only be praised for this, to whom belongs all glory." He died in France in 1622.

The supremacy of Christ is the glory of the Church. Jesus is the Fountain-Head of life, love, law, government, and authority. Are we maintaining this exalted truth with the courage of our ancestors? The zeal of our fathers, if revived in these days, would electrify the world.

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Points for the class.

1. What financial question in those days ensnared the Church?

2. How was her independence affected by state patronage?
3. What was the great question in controversy?
4. How did the state make use of Episcopacy in the battle with Presbyterianism?
5. How did Melville resist the king's attempt to rule the Church?

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6. What did Melville's faithfulness cost him?
7. What need now to advocate the supremacy of Jesus, and the independence of the Church?

VIII.

Men of might.—A.D. 1596.

Jesus Christ is “the King of glory; the Lord strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle.” His servants, filled with the Holy Spirit and devoted to His cause, grow like Him in moral courage and irresistible action. Every age supplies the opportunity for heroic service.

The Church has always had mighty men willing to venture their lives, when religion and liberty were attacked; but at no time has there gone forth a more illustrious band whose heart God touched, than in the last years of the Sixteenth century. The tide of defection was then rolling in upon the Church with desolating violence. The truth of Christ's supremacy was being submerged beneath the waves of Episcopacy. The right of Christ to rule His Church was disputed by King James, and claimed as his own prerogative. The true servants of God writhed in shame and sorrow, as they saw the diadem of Christ snatched from His brow and clutched by a presumptuous man. The times demanded men who would not quail in the presence of the sceptered monarch; or at his threats of imprisonment, banishment and death. The soldiers of the cross stepped forth. The “threescore valiant men of the valiant of Israel” were there, standing about the *king of kings*; “every man with his sword on his thigh, because of fear in the night.”

Andrew Melville was chief among the captains in those days. His face was luminous with an inner light; his eye pierced through the countenance of his adversaries; his bearing overwhelmed his enemies with the innate majesty of truth and holiness. What a torrent his electrified soul poured forth when he opened his mouth and protested against the wrongs done to Jesus Christ and the Church! His eloquence was like a rushing river, an irresistible Niagara. Like Knox, it was said, “He never feared the face of man.” In private and in public, in the pulpit and through the press, he reproved kings, princes, judges, and nobles for their sins. He did his best work when he met them face to face. The dishonor done to Christ by denying His royal rights made his blood boil, and fired his soul with vehement love in defence of his Lord and Master. But he suffered for his faithfulness. He was imprisoned; yet four years spent in jail, eating bad bread, breathing foul air, sleeping on a hard bed, groping in the darkness, lonesome in the pest-room, brought him no regret for preaching Christ. From prison he went into banishment, and from banishment, home to heaven. In his last illness he was asked if he desired the return of health. “No, not for twenty worlds,” was his spirited reply.

[Illustration: *Edinburgh castle.*



The Castle is built on a rock that rises with rugged abruptness 300 feet high. It is inaccessible except on one side, which opens upon the esplanade, on the foreground of the picture. In this Castle, many notable martyrs were imprisoned, and there awaited their execution.]

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John Davidson also shines in history as a minister of dauntless courage. He breasted the destructive flood of declension, and endured the buffeting of the waves. His humility prepared him for great service in the kingdom of God. He was deeply grieved by reason of the loose doctrines and practices prevailing within the ministry. The Church was infected and corrupted with the inventions of man. Through his effort the General Assembly held a special meeting in 1596, to observe a fast and renew the Covenant of 1581. The meeting was held on the 30th of March of that year. The showers of spring were falling, the mountain streams were flowing, the fields were putting on their soft verdure, the flowers were appearing in their beauty—all nature seemed to be breaking forth into holy laughter through her tears. How impressive this emblem of the memorable meeting, where earnest men prayed and wept and sobbed and sat in sadness and silence, in the presence of God confessing their sins! Then, with uplifted hands, they “made promise before the Majesty of heaven to amend their ways.” A great reviving followed, and many hearts were made glad. Two years later Mr. Davidson met the king, and, refusing to submit conscience to his tyrannic will, was cast into prison.

John Welch, too, is found in the front ranks of the Church’s noblest defenders. His wife, Elizabeth, daughter of John Knox, was his equal in courage and steadfastness. His life caught high inspiration from her faith, and her heart gloried in his heroic spirit; the two mountains were alike high.

King James had determined to crush the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. That Assembly stood in his way as he strode toward despotic power. He must remove the hindrance, or fail in his ambition. He commanded the Assembly to hold no more meetings, except by his permission. Against his royal decree, a few bold-hearted men met on the first Tuesday of July, 1605. This was the last free General Assembly for a whole generation. In 1618 this court of God’s house disappeared altogether under the king’s despotic rule, till 1638, when Scotland arose once more in the power of the Lord, and renewed her Covenant.

John Welch was one of the few ministers who braved the king’s wrath, and approved of the forbidden meeting. Within a month he was in jail. The place of his detention was called “Blackness.” In his little cell, damp, dark, foul, and lonely, he had time to reflect. He remembered his happy home, faithful wife, loving children, garden walks, sweet sunshine, soft breezes, pleasant Sabbaths, inspiring pulpit, glowing audience—he could now think of all, and see the cost of fidelity to Jesus. Did it pay? He could lay his aching head on its hard pillow, and dream of the happiness that was gone, and awaken to ask if it had been worth while. Did it pay to be true to Christ? Listen; he speaks from his prison: “We have ever been waiting with joyfulness to give the last testimony of our blood to Christ’s crown, scepter, and kingdom.”

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Welch found his great strength in prayer. Prayer to him was conversation with God. His soul was familiar with Jesus. He often arose from his bed to talk with God. He kept a shawl at hand, when at home, to cast over his shoulders during these rapturous hours. In the summer nights he spent much time under the trees in communing with the Lord of heaven. To him the stars lost their brilliancy in the presence of the Bright and Morning Star. His soul took many a bath in the ocean of eternal light. On one occasion his wife listened to his mysterious talk with God. He was in the agony of earnestness. "Lord, wilt not Thou give me Scotland?" he cried. Then followed the outpouring of contentment: "Enough, Lord, enough." At another time, the awful glory of the Lord was let in upon his soul, till he called out, "O Lord, hold Thy hand; it is enough; Thy servant is a clay vessel and can hold no more."

Mrs. Welch was as heroic as her husband. When she pleaded with the king for his release, he consented, on condition that Welch would recede from his position. Mrs. Welch, lifting up her apron in the presence of the king, replied, "Please, your majesty, I would rather keep his head here!" referring to the axeman's block, and the head rolling from it into her apron.

The sovereignty of Jesus calls for heroic lives. This royal truth, defended by the fathers, at the cost of much blood, must yet be lifted up in the sight of the world. Brave men and women are needed now as much as ever, even those who count the honor of Jesus worth more than life, yea, more precious than all that the heart holds dear on earth.

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. What great principle in the Church was here at stake?
2. How did Christ's servants contend for His supremacy?
3. What notable men did God raise up for the occasion?
4. By what means was the Church again revived?
5. What violence did the Presbyterian Assembly suffer by the king?
6. How long was the Assembly suppressed?
7. What was the secret of power in these defenders of the truth?
8. State the present need of moral heroes.

IX.

Darkness brooding over the land.—A.D. 1600.

The Seventeenth century dawned upon Scotland amidst ominous clouds. Storms were gathering that swept the land for more than eighty years—storms of “fire, and blood, and vapors of smoke.” The intervals of sunshine were few. The flock of God, the beautiful flock, suffered grievously by reason of wolves that entered into the fold in sheep’s clothing.

“No bishop, no king,” cried King James. He evidently meant, “No Prelacy, no despotism.” He made the Prelatic form of Church government, of which he was the recognized head, the bulwark of his assumed supremacy over the Church and his tyranny over conscience, and took every occasion to assert his power.

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The General Assembly had appointed the date and place for a meeting in 1604. The king arbitrarily postponed the meeting one year, and at the expiration of the year postponed it again. But there were high-principled men who resisted the domineering monarch. Nineteen faithful ministers had met with a number of elders, just as fearless and faithful as the ministers, and constituted the Assembly against the king's specific orders. Their defiance of the king's authority was at the risk of their lives. This was their last free Assembly for thirty years. These men were haled before the judges, and, being found guilty of disobeying the king, were sentenced. During the next twelve years the king dominated the Assembly, after which he dissolved it, permitting no more meetings while he lived. The Prelatic party henceforth held the power and ruled the Church with a high hand.

[Illustration: *Souvenirs of the Covenanters.*

Battle-flag, carried at Drumclog; drum, seen at Lochgoin, said to have been in use at the battle of Bothwell Bridge; Captain Paton's Bible, which he gave his wife from the scaffold; his sword, which he wielded with terrible effect; and a powder horn used in those times.]

The form of worship was changed; human devices, in place of God's appointments flooded the Church. Departure from the old ways was especially marked by a measure known as the "Five Articles of Perth." These were sanctioned by the king, and rigorously enforced in his effort to subdue all who resisted or protested. Henceforth Presbyterians had to conform to the new mode of worship, or feel the weight of the law in confiscation, imprisonment, banishment, or death.

These Articles of Perth were sanctioned by the Parliament. This act of ratification was accompanied by a remarkable demonstration of Providence. Parliament was then evidently carrying out the will of the king, for the subversion of the Presbyterian Church, the Reformed religion, the liberty of conscience, and the rights of the people. Parliament met for this purpose in Edinburgh, August 4, 1621. The morning was gloomy. With the advancing hours the clouds grew denser and darker; the whole sky became covered with blackness; a storm of divine wrath seemed to bend the very heavens with its weight. Just at the moment when the Marquis of Hamilton, performing the final act of ratification in the name of the king, touched the official paper with the scepter, a streak of lightning blazed through the gloom, and another, and a third, blinding the guilty men in the presence of their awful deed. Three peals of thunder followed in quick succession, making every heart tremble. A momentary pang of conscience must have been felt, while the *king* of heaven spoke in thunder that made their ears tingle, and in flames that dazzled their eyes. This dismal day, July 25, 1621, is remembered in Scotland as "Black Saturday." Oh, how black with storm clouds, with man's guilt, with heaven's rebukes, and with apprehensions of sorrow and suffering!

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These were the days of Melville, Welch, and Boyd, who, with other men, mighty in the Lord, withstood the king to his face, and the government with its threats and penalties. When the Church was in jeopardy, the Lord Jesus Christ had His chosen servants, able and willing to defend the faith. Like the prophets of old, they lifted up their voices in the high places, wrestled with principalities and powers, uttered their testimony as with the voice of thunder, and cheerfully sealed their testimony with their blood.

Among the champions of that day, Robert Bruce, an eminent minister of the Gospel, took his place in the thickest of the fight. He was a large man, dignified and commanding in appearance; the countenance, physique, intellect, and spirit denoting true kingliness and strength. He may have been a descendant of his famous namesake, Robert Bruce, one of Scotland's great kings; his heart was just as heroic and patriotic. This soldier of the cross was strong because he lived in the bosom of God's love; his life was fragrant with heaven's atmosphere. He had a keen conscience. When urged to accept the ministry he at first refused, but that refusal caused such remorse that he said, he would rather walk through half a mile of burning brimstone than have the mental agony repeated.

Bruce, during his early ministry, was greatly beloved by the king. Such was his delight in him that he was chosen to anoint the king's bride and place the crown on her head. Three years after this pleasant event he incurred the king's wrath by discountenancing his majesty's authority over the Church. Being commanded to perform a certain service in the pulpit he resolutely refused. To forfeit thus the royal good will, and take the risk of consequences, required courage of the highest type. But Bruce was a man of public spirit and heroic mind, equal to the occasion, through the abiding Spirit of God, that wrought mightily in him.

When matters were going from bad to worse, in his relation to the king, he attended a meeting with a few other ministers, contrary to the king's proclamation, to take counsel concerning the Church. A delegation was appointed at this meeting to wait on the king, and urge their plea for relief. Bruce was the spokesman. The king received the delegates, but listened with impatience. He was in bad humor; anger flushed his face. "How durst you convene against my proclamation?" he said. "We dare more than that, and will not suffer religion to be overthrown," was the swift reply. Bruce, after this interview, quickly felt the power of the law. His property was seized; he was driven from home; and, on permission to return, was required to cease preaching. This he refused to do, finally consenting to quit for ten days. That night he fell into a fever, and suffered such terrors of conscience, that he resolved that he would die ere he would make a promise like that again.

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Bruce's strength lay in his familiarity with Jesus Christ. His preaching was with power, because Christ was with him. On one occasion, being late for the service, a certain person reported, saying, "I think he will not come to-day, for I overheard him in his room say to another, 'I protest I will not go unless thou goest with me.'" He was talking with Jesus about going to preach. In his prayers he was brief, but "every word was as a bolt shot to heaven;" and in preaching he was slow and solemn, but "every sentence was as a bolt shot from heaven." He, having finished his work, entered into glory, saying pleasantly to his children, as the dying hour drew near, "I have breakfasted with you this morning, and I shall sup with my Lord Jesus Christ this night." That night he entered the heavenly city.

They who are truly alive to the holiness, justice, and goodness of God, and dwell in the radiance of His blessed face, will get views of the Church and her mission, that will inspire to greatest service and noblest sacrifices for Christ and His cause. They will arise far above ordinary life, in effort, enthusiasm, power, and stability in the Lord's work.

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Points for the class.

1. Why did the king insist on having bishops in the Church?
2. How did the Presbyterian ministers oppose them?
3. In what way did the king authorize that which corrupted Church services?
4. What device for public worship was ratified by parliament?
5. What significant providence accompanied this daring act?
6. What champion of freedom arose at this time?
7. Wherein lay Bruce's great strength?
8. How may we, too, become inspired for service?

X.

Approaching A crisis—A.D. 1622.

The Church confronts greatest temptations and dangers when at peace with the world. A period of outward prosperity is almost certain to result in moral deterioration and produce membership of inferior mould. The appointments of God in divine worship

being few, simple, and spiritual, are likely to be displaced by the showy, deceptive, sensuous inventions of man when the Church is honored with success. The Holy Spirit then withdraws in measure; frigid formality quickly follows; the services, however beautiful, become artificial and spiritless.

God has good reason for sending upon His Church periodical trials, hardships, persecutions—storms that winnow the wheat, fires that melt the gold. Such tests of faith purify the Church, run off the dross, throw out the counterfeits, break off the dead branches. The people of God are then distinguished; their heroic qualities are called into action; they become burning and shining lights in the surrounding darkness. This severe process may reduce the enrollment, yet it mightily strengthens the ranks. The Lord Jesus would rather have one of ten if true, than all the ten yea, ten times ten if untrue. Christ Jesus prefers 300 who can wield the sword of the Lord and of Gideon, to 30,000 who are indifferent or faint-hearted.

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The Presbyterian Church made great progress under the Covenant of 1581 and overspread the kingdom. After ten years of prosperity came another declension. Again she was reclaimed and revived by the renewing of the Covenant of 1596. Once more she became exceedingly prosperous and popular; but her popularity resulted in weakness. Multitudes "joined the Church" merely for place, privilege, and power. These soon made themselves felt on the wrong side: they controlled the courts of God's House. Faithful ministers contended for the truth, resisted the innovations, protested in the name of Jesus, and suffered because they would not consent to do evil. They were overpowered and sometimes were displaced, sometimes imprisoned, sometimes banished. Their farewell sermons were heart-rending. Amid the sobs and wails of the affectionate people, the farewell exhortations came from these devoted men of God as words from heaven. Great excitement and sorrow prevailed in the churches, as the stricken congregations took leave of the pastors who loved the truth more than their own lives. Who can wonder at the indignation that arose like a storm, as the congregation witnessed their beloved pastor and his wife and children leave their home, and go forth to wander under the skies of summer or through the storms of winter, not knowing whither they were going! Should the people be censured for nailing the church doors against intruding ministers, and refusing to hear the hirelings sent to fill the pulpit against their will?

The Five Articles of Perth, adopted by those who were in power in the Church and enforced by Civil law, became the pastor's test. The Presbyterian minister who would not approve of the Five Articles was deposed. But how could a Covenanter give his approval without perjury? The Five Articles of Perth were these:

Kneeling at the Communion;

Observance of Holidays;

Episcopal Confirmation;

Private Baptism;

Private Communion.

The first implied the worship of the bread; the second, the homage of saints; the third, the approval of Prelacy; the fourth, that baptism was necessary to salvation; and the fifth, that the communion opened heaven to the dying; all savored of Popery.

What minister having any regard for conscience could sign this list of errors, after swearing the Covenant? Would he not immediately feel his spiritual life sink below zero? Would not his heart chide him bitterly for the degradation of his office and manhood? And God is greater than the heart.

David Dickson was one of the ministers who had strength to endure, rather than bend. He was a young man full of fire and holy power. He had charge of a flourishing congregation at Irvine. His preaching swayed the people. They crowded the church to hear him. His appeals melted the heart and watered the cheeks. He was bold to denounce the Articles of Perth. The authorities called him up and commanded him to retract; he refused. A sad farewell to his flock followed. Rather than support error, however popular and profitable, he would sacrifice the dearest ties on earth and journey to parts unknown. And this he did.

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Alexander Henderson, another minister, encountered the displeasure of the men in power and suffered much at their hands. In his early life he accepted the Prelatic creed and entered the ministry in favor with the party. He was sent to a church which, a short time previous, had experienced the violent removal of their beloved pastor. The people were indignant at Henderson's coming. They barricaded the door of the church. The delegates that had come to ordain him, not being able to effect an entrance through the door, entered by a window. Henderson was that day settled as the pastor of an absent congregation. In the lapse of time he won the people. He was faithful and powerful as a preacher of the Word, and the Lord Jesus honored him in the eyes of large audiences.

[Illustration: *Alexander Henderson*.

Alexander Henderson was born in 1583, and died in the 63rd year of his age. He began his ministry in the Prelatic Church. Under a sermon by Robert Bruce, he was convinced of the error of that system—and became a powerful defender of the Presbyterian faith. He became a distinguished leader of the Covenanters, taking a prominent part in the Covenant of 1638, in the Solemn League and Covenant, and in other notable events. His grave is in Greyfriars' churchyard.]

One day Henderson went to hear a Covenanted minister, Robert Bruce, at a communion. He was shy and concealed himself in a dark corner of the church. Mr. Bruce took for his text, "He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." The minister having read his text paused, and in dignified posture, with head erect, scanned his congregation with eyes that gleamed with holy fire. Such was his custom before beginning his sermon. Henderson felt the blaze of those eyes. He seemed to be the very man for whom they were searching. The recollection of having entered upon his ministry by climbing through a window horrified him. He went from that meeting determined to investigate Prelacy in the light of the Scriptures. The result was conviction of the truth and conversion to the Covenanted cause. Deportation from his devoted flock quickly followed. He was thereafter found in the forefront of the fight against the supremacy of the king over the Church, and against Prelacy that upheld the king in his arrogant assumption of the royal prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The minister of Christ is the watchman of the Church. He is placed upon Zion's walls to sound an alarm at the approach of danger. He is charged with responsibility for the people. If they perish through his neglect to give warning of dangers, his life for theirs. Faithful preaching may not be pleasant or profitable to the minister. Declaring the whole counsel of God may involve the pastor in trouble, demand sacrifices, result in hardships, controversies, separations; yet the Lord requires it, the people need it, no safety without it for either the flock or the shepherd. Without fidelity no power with God, no comfort of the Spirit, no approval from Christ. Are they who serve as ministers of Christ willing to sacrifice ministerial support, relationship, popularity, applause—everything temporal, rather than one jot or one tittle of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

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Points for the class.

1. Why does God send trials upon His Church?
2. Mention some of the fluctuations in the Church's condition.
3. What class of ministers then had the ascendancy?
4. How did the faithful ministers suffer?
5. What became the test for the pastorate?
6. What faithful young minister declined the test?
7. What was Alexander Henderson's experience?
8. Explain the responsibility of ministers.

XI.

The advance guards.—A.D. 1630.

King James VI. continued his warfare against Presbyterianism until his death. This occurred March 27, 1625. With advancing years he grew more bitter, using every means to coerce the Covenanters and bring them into submission. They stood as a wall of fire between him and his cherished ambition to rule supreme over Church and State. He resolved to break down that wall and quench that fire.

Covenanted Presbyterianism has always stood for liberty, conscience, enlightenment, progress, and exalted manhood, resisting all tyrants and oppressors. Presbyterianism recognizes as the crowning glory of man, his relation to God, all men alike being subjects of His government and accountable at His throne; all being under law to God and under law to no man, except in the Lord. Presbyterianism honors every honest man as a real king, clothed with innate majesty, crowned with native dignity, and exalted far above the conventional office of earth's highest monarch. Yet does Presbyterianism sustain all rightful rulers as ministers of God, and enjoin upon all people submission in the Lord.

In the beginning of 1625, while the snow was yet mantling the mountains in white, the symbol of moral purity and goodness, the king was grimly planning to debase and corrupt the best people in his realms. He gave orders to celebrate Easter with a Communion according to the Articles of Perth, announcing a severe penalty against all



who would not comply. The decree was not enforced, for the Lord came suddenly to the unhappy monarch, saying, "Thy soul is required of thee." Easter came with its soft winds and opening buds, its singing brooks and flowery nooks, but King James was not there; the Judge had called him, death had conquered him, the grave had swallowed him; his miserable life was broken off under sixty years of age; and after death, eternity; the long, long eternity.

His Son, Charles I., inherited the father's troubled kingdom, despotic principles, and wilful doggedness. The young ruler began his reign by breathing out threatenings against the Covenanters. Yet the Lord in many ways strengthened His people. He gave them at this time some remarkable Communion and memorable seasons of refreshing. He pitied them for they were nearing the fiery trials that would try their faith to the utmost. To prepare them for the testing times. He led them up into the mountain of His loving favor and gave them another memorable privilege of renewing their Covenant.

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John Livingston, an honored minister of Jesus Christ, was of great service to the Church at this time. He preached Christ and his contested truths with power and striking effect. He stood in the strength and majesty of the Chief Shepherd and fed the flock given into his care. This flock was very large. Multitudes gathered about him waiting for the Word at his lips; the church could not hold them. God gave the people spiritual hunger that brought them from afar; they came over the hills and along the vales, converging upon the place of worship as doves fly to their windows. They journeyed solemnly from their homes to the House of God, both in the calm of summer and in the storms of winter. They came in the dew of the morning and tarried till protected by the gloaming. Men and women, old and young, gathered around this man of God who ministered comfort, strength, and eternal life, through Jesus Christ, with wonderful power and grace unto their troubled souls.

Our Monday service of the Communion originated under Mr. Livingston. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper had been administered to a large congregation. The preaching and serving of tables filled the long summer Sabbath. It was June 20, 1630. The great congregation had come with souls lifted up to God in prayer; the church was not large enough to hold the people, and the churchyard was filled with devout worshipers. They sat upon the grass like the thousands that were fed by Christ in the days of old. The soft wind blew upon them as it listed, and the Holy Spirit, too, came with mysterious power; the vast assembly was deeply moved. The long Sabbath was followed by a short night. Monday came, and the people, having been profoundly affected by the services of the preceding day, were again early on the grounds. They felt that they could not separate without another day of worship—a day of thanksgiving to the Lord for the wondrous revelations of His love at His holy table. Mr. Livingston was constrained to preach, and that day proved to be the great day of the feast. An unusual awe fell upon the preacher and his hearers; the Holy Spirit wrought marvelously, melting the hearts of the vast congregation and filling them with comfort, strength, and thankfulness.

Mr. Livingston and his people declined to conform to the “Articles of Perth.” A goodly number of other ministers and their churches likewise refused. The king determined to force them into submission by authorizing a “Book of Public Worship”, called the Liturgy. July 23, 1637, was the day appointed for its introduction. An attempt to force a mode of worship upon Scotch Presbyterians! No experiment could be more perilous to the king; it was indiscretion bordering on insanity. The very announcement produced an underground swell such as precedes a moral earthquake. Murmurings, groanings, threatenings, dark forebodings swayed the nation. These were gusts fore-running the storm.

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The day for testing the Liturgy arrived. Attention was chiefly concentrated upon the Church of St. Giles at Edinburgh. The large auditorium was filled with Presbyterians who were accustomed to worship God in the plain, solemn manner of the apostles. The suspense preceding the service was painful. Each heart was beating fast, repressed emotion was at white heat, the atmosphere was full of electricity, no one could tell where the fiery point would first appear. At length the dean stood in the pulpit before the gaze of his insulted audience. He opened the new book and began. That was enough, the spark struck the powder, the explosion was sudden. Jean Geddes, a woman whose name is enshrined in history, and whose stool is a souvenir in the museum,—Jean, impelled by a burst of indignation, bounced from her seat and flung her stool at the dean's head, crying with a loud voice, "Villain, dost thou say mass at my lug?" The unpremeditated deed acted as a signal; the whole congregation was immediately in an uproar; the dean fled and the service came to an undignified conclusion.

The indignation manifested itself in many other places that Sabbath. In the Greyfriars' Church, there were deep sobs, bitter crying, and wails of lamentation. Over the entire kingdom the excitement was intense. The Scotch blood was stirred; the king had outraged the most sacred feelings of the people. They held meetings, prayed to God, and petitioned the king. The king replied to their petition, like Rehoboam, with blustering insolence. The Covenanters were not intimidated, their determined resistance was contagious and stirred vast communities, national sympathy was aroused; the Holy Spirit wrought mightily upon multitudes. Three days after the king's haughty reply had been received, a procession, including twenty-four noblemen, one hundred ministers, and bands of commissioners from sixty-six churches, marched boldly into Edinburgh and enforced their petition by a demonstration of strength, with which not even the king could afford to trifle.

[Illustration: *Jean Geddes throwing her stool.*

Jean Geddes sat convenient to the pulpit on the eventful Sabbath, when the dean attempted to introduce the new "Prayer Book" in St Giles' Church. The innovation had by anticipation filled the people with intense indignation. A storm was brewing. This heroine, unable to restrain herself, sprang to her feet and hurled her stool at the dean's head, exclaiming. "Villain, dost thou say mass at my lug?" The dean dodged the stool and escaped. Confusion followed, and the service for that day was abandoned.]

Do the children of these Covenanters appreciate the value and power of the truth? Have the fundamental principles of the kingdom of Jesus Christ become incarnated in our lives? Do the doctrines of the Word circulate in the blood, throb in the heart, flash in the eye, echo in the voice, and clothe the whole person with strength and dignity? Is the Covenant of these ancestors a living bond that binds the present generation to God, through which His energy, sympathy, purity, life, love, and glory descend upon us in continual streams of refreshing? Then will our mission on earth be fulfilled, our work in

the Church will be blessed, our testimony for the Lord will be powerful, and our efforts to win others for Christ will be fruitful.

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Points for the class.

1. When did King James VI. die?
2. What was he planning when death claimed him?
3. Who was his successor?
4. What course did his son Charles pursue?
5. How did God prepare His Church for the approaching trials?
6. How did Communion Monday service originate?
7. How did the king try to enforce uniformity on the Church?
8. How was the Liturgy received by the Presbyterians?
9. What demonstration of strength by the Presbyterians?
10. What practical lesson here for us?

XII.

Gathering of the hosts.—A.D. 1637.

“Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?” What a beautiful and striking portrait of the Church in her militant character and service!

Terrible as an army with banners! The Church is mighty to subdue the strongholds of Satan; powerful in the use of spiritual weapons; invincible in the presence of her enemies. She fights the battles of her Lord, and though often defeated, moves steadily forward assured of final victory. How terrible her warfare in the sight of enemies! how admirable in the eyes of heaven!

The first impressive demonstration of numbers, power, and resolution, given by the Church of Scotland, was in 1637. The king and his advisers had attempted to force upon the Presbyterians the “New Prayer Book” against their will. The attempt was as insane as it was despotic. As well might the king have tried to change the song of the sea or the course of the stars. The Scotch conscience, enlightened by the Word of

God, strengthened by the Covenant, and guided by the Holy Spirit, was like Scotland's granite, upon which the storms spend their force to no effect.

To resist the king's purpose, the Presbyterians poured into the Capital from all directions. Home and flocks were left in the care of the mother and children, and the crops lay ripening in the warm September sun. The freedom of the Church was the supreme interest that stirred the blood of these men. They filled the streets of Edinburgh, thousands moved determinately and irresistibly through the chief thoroughfares of that awakened city. There was no confusion, this was not a mob. These were men of mind, purpose, prayer, and peace; they knew their rights and commanded respect. They carried their Bibles to show their authority. Resolution gleamed in the face of the grey-headed and flashed from the eyes of the young men as they stood side by side. Their adversaries were overawed and made conciliatory promises. The Covenanters therefore withdrew.

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The promises were quickly broken. One month later, a fresh attempt by the king and his counselors to trample the heaven-given right to worship God with a free conscience stirred the country. The Covenanters were alert, they were not caught napping. They concentrated their strength upon the Capital once more, and this time with a speed that surprised the government. Their number was greater than before; hundreds of ministers, and hundreds of noblemen, with strong delegations of elders from many congregations assembled for the occasion. The vast concourse of people was too unwieldy to meet in one place; they therefore divided into four sections, each going in its own direction. They held meetings for prayer and consultation, realizing deeply the dangers that were converging upon their Church, their homes, and their persons. They prepared petitions to be presented to the king. Once more they received assurance of relief, and quietly returned to their homes.

The months rolled past heavily. Mild September had seen the country greatly agitated; bountiful October had witnessed the recurrence and increase of violent measures; November now came, chilled with sleety storms, and vexed with man's perfidy and cruel attempt to crush conscience. More desperate efforts were again in progress by the king and those who supported him in his claim of supremacy over the Church and power to regulate her worship. The Covenanters were apprised, and for the third time the roads converging upon Edinburgh were filled with their dauntless ranks. They came on foot, on horses, and in wagons; old men with white locks and young men with iron nerve; ministers and elders, noblemen and commoners. These were men who were exalted into Covenant with the Almighty; they had tasted the sweetness of the liberty of the sons of God; they had felt the energy of the Holy Spirit throb in their hearts; they had visions of the *king of kings* in His transcendent glory. They came with one resolve—that Jesus Christ must not be superseded by the king of Scotland in the government of the Church. They poured into the Capital in strong, living streams, till the city was almost deluged with their number. The king's officials were alarmed. Feigning a bold spirit they commanded the Covenanters to depart on pain of rebellion. The Covenanters, knowing their rights and power, refused. After preparing a respectful petition to the king, and a strong remonstrance against the wrongs they suffered, they elected a permanent commission of sixteen men to remain in the Capital, to protect their interests and give notice when danger appeared.

[Illustration: *Greyfriars' church*.

Here the Covenanters gathered to renew their Covenant in 1638. The house was crowded to its utmost capacity with renowned minister, elders, and nobles. The oath was taken and the Covenant signed in the most impressive manner. The churchyard contains many graves of celebrated martyrs.]

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The new year followed the old carrying trouble in its bosom. The mid-winter storms drove the flocks to the fold and the shepherd to the cot; all nature rested from labor, awaiting the coming of summer; but hostilities against the Presbyterian Church took no rest. The king's Council was removed from Edinburgh to Stirling; from thence they thought to spring a crushing surprise upon the Covenanters. The news of this intention spread as if on the wings of lightning. One day was enough to give the alarm. The Covenanters were minute-men, with the heart of a lion, the eye of an eagle, and feet swift to meet the battle call. Before the sun was hot, the morning after the news, the Covenanters had crowded Stirling. The city authorities seeing their strength meekly besought them to disband and return home. These Covenanters were patient, long-suffering, full of charity, believing all things, hoping all things. Receiving the promise of better treatment, they drew off as quickly as they had come. They refused to leave Edinburgh when threatened; they consented to leave Stirling when requested. Behold the spirit of these Covenanted Presbyterians!

But no confidence could be placed in the king or his representatives. The land was greatly troubled by the wickedness of its rulers. One wave of commotion followed another; there was no peace, no safety, no security. Many weary hearts were crying out, "How long, O Lord?"

The Covenanters saw that the king was determined to crush their Church. The General Assembly had not met for twenty years; that court of God's House had been stamped out beneath the iron heel of despotism; the lesser courts had been corrupted; the king had resolved on the subversion of all. Will not ministers and elders soon be worn out by the incessant and desperate attacks? The sea is roaring, the waves are raging, will Presbyterianism be engulfed? will the supremacy of Jesus Christ go to the bottom? Strong hearts are trembling; much prayer is arising to heaven; from faithful pulpits fervent appeals are ascending to God. What shall be the end of these things? Is there no remedy to be found? "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" Must these spirited men bow to the will of the tyrant and see their Church brought into bondage? There were great searchings of heart.

"The Covenants! the Covenants!" This has been repeatedly the watch-cry of Scotland in the throes of distress. The Covenants have been the glory and strength of the Church in the past; will they not be safety and stability to the Church in the present? Such was the thought that throbbed in many hearts at this critical moment. The Holy Spirit was now clothing Himself with Henderson, Warriston, Argyle, and other princes of God, preparing them to lead the Church into the renewal of her Covenant with God.

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The right to worship God according to conscience, when conscience is set free by the Spirit and enlightened in the Word, must be jealously guarded. Every attempt to introduce the devices of man into the service of the Church should be strenuously resisted. Each innovation in the worship of God does violence to the most delicate and sacred feelings of the human heart, and is a reflection on the wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has ordained all the services of His House with utmost care and precision. If the Covenanted fathers protested unflinchingly against a man-made Prayer Book, what would they have done at the appearance of a modern pulpit programme of music and hymns?

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. Describe the militant character of the Church.
2. What three successive demonstrations of strength did the Covenanted Church give against the new Prayer Book?
3. What was the great issue?
4. How should the Church guard divine worship against corruption?

XIII.

Renewing the covenant.—A.D. 1638.

King Charles believed in the divine right of kings, and the Presbyterians believed in the eternal right of Christ to rule kings. The two beliefs could not be reconciled; hence the great struggle. The attacks on Presbyterianism came in rapid succession and with increasing violence. The Covenanters sternly resisted these attacks. The nation seemed to be on the verge of civil war.

The leading Covenanters saw in the war-cloud, that which blinded eyes could not see—the hand of the Lord lifted up against the nation. Henderson, Rutherford, Dickson, and others of penetrating mind discovered the moral cause of the troubles and trembled for their country. The Lord was meting out judgment against sin. Divine wrath was falling upon the people. Judgment had already begun at the House of God. The King of Righteousness was girding His sword on His thigh for action. Who will be able to stand when He arises in wrath to vindicate His own royal rights? These men feared God and trembled at His word.

A day of humiliation and fasting was appointed, many came together for prayer. There were deep searchings of heart followed by pangs of conscience and cries for mercy.

God gave an alarming view of sin. The defection of the Church and perfidy of the nation seemed to fill the sky with lurid flames of divine vengeance. The former Covenants had been broken; the oath was profaned, the obligations denied, the penalty defied; the Lord had been provoked to pour out His wrath upon the Land. The day of reckoning seemed to have come. The sense of guilt and the weight of wrath bowed many souls to the earth. One supreme desire seemed to prevail—that they arise and return to Him, from whom they had so deeply and shamefully revolted.

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"The Covenants! The Covenants!" This was now the national cry. The Covenants have ever been Scotland's hope, strength, and glory. The cry went from house to house, from church to church, from earth to heaven. It was on the lips and in the prayers of men, women, and children. Hope revived, enthusiasm spread like flames, the nation was rapidly prepared for the high honors that were awaiting her. The people in large numbers were fired with a passion to renew their Covenant with God!

The Holy Spirit fell mightily upon many, causing a floodtide of spiritual life to sweep the country. The leading Covenanters were endowed with wisdom and courage to direct the holy enthusiasm into the right channel. It had to be turned by prompt action, to present use, and conserved for the generations to come, or its strength and volume would soon be lost. On Sabbath February 25, 1638, the ministers preached on Covenanting. Next day the people met in their churches and received notice that, on Wednesday following, their Covenant with God would be renewed in Edinburgh. The announcement struck a responsive chord. The country was astir early on the morning of the appointed day. Doubtless many had spent the preceding night with the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer. While the stars were still shining, many households, we may be assured, were called around the family altar, that the father might bless his house and hasten to Edinburgh. The commissioners who had been appointed to lead the people in Covenanting were on the ground at break of day.

The Covenant of 1581 was chosen for the present occasion. Two generations had passed since that solemn bond had lifted the kingdom into holiest relation with God. Nearly all the Covenanted fathers of that event had finished their testimony and were gone; only here and there a patriarchal voice was heard telling of that solemn day and deed. The grand-children had lost much of the fervor, power, purpose, holy enthusiasm, dread of God's majesty, fellowship with Jesus Christ, and raptures in the Holy Spirit—had lost many of the countless and unspeakable blessings descending from the sure Covenant made with God and kept by their fathers. Fifty-seven years had elapsed and many changes had occurred. Henderson, by appointment, added to the Covenant what was necessary to make it applicable to their times.

The Holy Spirit came in great power upon thousands and tens of thousands on that eventful morning; the day was bringing heaven's best blessings to the Church and the nation. It was still winter; but not frozen roads, nor drifting snows, nor lowering clouds, nor biting winds, could stay the people. Many men and women, old and young, were far on their way before the sun had softened the rasping air. They came on foot and on horses, in carriages and in wagons, through the valleys, over the mountains, along the highways and the lanes, pouring into the jubilant city from all directions as rivers of enthusiastic

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life. It has been estimated that sixty thousand came that day to take part in the renewing of the Covenant, or to give countenance and influence to the solemn deed. To these spirited people the winter was over and gone, though February still lingered; the time of the singing of birds had come, though the earth was clad in her mantle of snow. The season had lost its rigor upon these Covenanters; their cheeks were red, but not so much with wintry blasts as with holy animation. It was a summer day to them.

[Illustration: *Signing the covenant.*

The Covenant of 1638 was signed first by those who filled the Greyfriars' Church. The parchment was then brought outside and laid on a flat tombstone, where those who had assembled in the churchyard eagerly embraced the opportunity to add their signatures. The people were deeply moved, as they thus joined themselves and their children to the Lord, in an everlasting Covenant never to be forgotten.]

At the appointed hour, Greyfriars' Church and churchyard were crowded "with Scotland's gravest, wisest, and best sons and daughters." Alexander Henderson constituted the meeting with prayer. His earnest words were deeply felt, they seemed to bring the Lord of glory out of heaven. The Earl of Loudon made a solemn address, appealing to the Searcher of motives. Archibald Johnston unrolled the vast parchment and read the Covenant in a clear voice. Silence followed—a dreadful pause during which the Holy Spirit was doing great work on all present. The Earl of Rothes broke the silence with a few well-chosen words. Another solemn pause ensued, while all eyes watched for the next act in the sublime programme. The Covenant was ready for signatures. What name will have the honor of heading the list on that white parchment? At length the Earl of Sutherland, an aged elder, with much reverence and emotion, stepped forward and taking the pen with trembling hand subscribed his name. Others rapidly followed. The heart went with the name, the blood was pledged with the ink, the Covenant was for life even unto death. When all in the church had subscribed, the parchment was carried to the churchyard and placed on a flat tombstone, where the people outside added name after name till there was no room, no, not for an initial letter. The scene was impressive beyond description; the people gave themselves willingly unto the Lord. Many wrote through blinding tears and with throbbing hearts; some added the words, "Till death"; some drew blood from their own veins for ink. Then as the sun was westering in the cold sky, they lifted up the right hand to Almighty God, the Searcher of hearts, avowing allegiance to Him with the solemnity of a most sacred oath. Surely this was Scotland's greatest day. The Church may now be called Hephzibah, and her land, Beulah. Immanuel is the name of her Covenant Lord. "Glory, glory, in Immanuel's land!"

The evening drew on; the spirited demonstrations of that eventful day, like a glorious sunset, melted away; but the Covenant, in all its sacredness, substance, obligations,

and strength, remained for the next day, and the next generation, and all generations to come. Thus was Scotland's National Covenant renewed in 1638.

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Let the children of these Covenanters not forget, nor lightly esteem their Covenant inheritance and obligations. How great the honor! Remember the accountability, withdraw not from the bond. Relation to the Lord Jesus Christ by means of the Covenants of the fathers loads descendants with heavy duties, endows them with bountiful blessings, entrusts them with the welfare of coming generations, crowns them with high honors, and brings them into judgment to account for all these advantages and obligations. Let the children of the Covenants take heed lest they forget the duties, forfeit the blessings, prove themselves untrustworthy, and trample their heavenly crown in the dust. Let them fear lest being exalted to heaven they be cast down to hell. The Covenants of the fathers bind the children.

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Points for the class.

1. What new danger was now threatening Scotland?
2. In what way did the Covenanted ministers explain the trouble?
3. To what did they resort for deliverance?
4. How were the people prepared for Covenanting?
5. How was the nation stirred at the prospect of renewing the Covenant?
6. Describe the great gathering of people in Edinburgh on the appointed day.
7. Describe the solemn act of Covenanting.
8. What obligations descend from that Covenant upon the present generation of Covenanters?

XIV.

The Covenanters at work.—A.D. 1638.

Wednesday, February 28, 1638, was one of Scotland's greatest days. No victory on any battlefield is more worthy of anniversary honors. No birthday of statesman or warrior, no discovery in science or geography, no achievement in ancient or modern civilization, is more entitled to a yearly celebration. The notable event of that day is the high water mark of true greatness and moral grandeur in national life; nothing exceeds it in the world's history.



As the evening drew on, the vast multitude that had congregated in Edinburgh melted away. The sublime transactions in which they had been engaged had filled them with awe; the shadow of the Almighty had overspread them, the glory of heaven had descended upon them, and, being filled with the peace of God and joy unspeakable in the Holy Spirit, they departed from the city as quietly as they had come and returned to their homes. The stars were again out while many were yet traveling, but the great light that fell upon them was the glory of the Lord, as they carried the brilliant scenes of the day in their hearts. Every heart-beat had the solemnity of a vow, a prayer, a song of praise, a psalm of thanksgiving. What devout worship in those homes that night when the fathers told the touching story of the Greyfriars' Church and of Covenant.

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Within a short time the delegates had reached their respective churches, in which they rehearsed the renewing of their Covenant with God. The people were deeply moved, the Holy Spirit fell upon them. The interest became intense; the fires arose into flames; a Covenanting passion swept the kingdom; the enthusiasm knew no bounds. The Covenant was studied, accepted, and subscribed by ministers and magistrates, men and women, old and young, throughout the four quarters of the kingdom. There was a voice heard throughout the land, as the “voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.” The Lord Jesus Christ was glorified in His people, honored by His Church, and exalted supremely above the nation’s haughty monarch.

Yet the Covenant had its enemies; but they were apparently few and for a while very quiet. These anti-Covenanters stood with the king in his effort to foist Prelacy upon the people. These he repaid with political preferments. Hitherto they had claimed to be in the majority and therefore assumed the right to rule over the Presbyterians. But the year of Jubilee had come; the Covenant proclaimed “liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.” This Covenant with God revealed to the people their dignity, privileges, rights, power, and freedom in Christ Jesus, *king of kings* and *lord of lords*. In that light which fell like the glory of heaven upon Scotland, Episcopacy appeared in its real strength, or rather in its weakness; in comparison with Presbyterianism it was a mere faction.

King Charles ruled Scotland from his throne in London. The Covenanters were his most loyal subjects, devoted to him on every principle of truth and righteousness; yet by no means would they permit him to assume the rights of Jesus Christ without their earnest protest. They hastened to report the Covenant to the king at London; their adversaries sent delegates with equal haste. Both sides tried to win the king. As might have been expected, the Covenanters failed. He was exceedingly wroth. He branded the Covenant as treason and the Covenanters as traitors. “I will die,” said he, “before I grant their impertinent demands; they must be crushed; put them down with fire and sword.”

The king appointed the Marquis of Hamilton to represent his majesty in Scotland and to subdue the Covenanters. Hamilton accepted the commission and entered upon his stupendous task. He was authorized to deceive and betray, to arrest and execute, to feign friendship and wage war—to use discretionary power; the manner would not be questioned if the Covenanters were subdued.

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Hamilton announced his intention to enter Edinburgh, as the king's High Commissioner, on the 19th of June. Less than four months previous, the Covenant had been renewed in that city amid transports of joy; must it now be trampled in the dust? The effects of the Covenant had fallen upon the kingdom like spring showers that fill the land with songs and flowers; must the glory be blighted ere the fruitage be matured? The day set for the commissioner's coming was perfect. The bright sun, clear sky, blue sea, green fields, purple hills, soft winds, fragrant blossoms, tuneful birds—all united to make the coming of his majesty's commissioner a delight. Nature was in her gayest attire.

The road chosen for his journey to the city lay along the strand. He came in a stately carriage. His official dress was brilliant and imposing. His associates followed, while a strong military guard added dignity and a tinge of terribleness to the procession. It was Hamilton's day of high honor. The proud sea rippled its welcome; the mellow winds floated the national emblem from many a window; the city was gaily decorated. The king's sympathizers had done their best for the occasion, but the Covenanters had excelled them all.

The Covenanters were by no means ignorant of Hamilton's power and purpose; yet they recognized him as the king's representative, and therefore they would do him honor. They were truly loyal. No taint of treason had ever mingled in their blood. They resolved to give the commissioner every opportunity to do his duty as ruler, yet stood ready to resist if he did wrong. They came to the city in force; their number was estimated at sixty thousand. They thronged the road over which Hamilton passed, banked the hillsides with earnest faces, raised their caps in sincere respect for the commissioner, and lifted up their voices in prayer for their king and their country. When Hamilton saw the great-heartedness of the people, whom he came to crush, he wept.

The Covenanters had requested two things: a free General Assembly and a Parliament. The Church must have the first; the nation must have the second. The commissioner, in the name of the king, refused both. King James had abolished the General Assembly in 1618; there had been none for twenty years. The Covenanters, braving the king's wrath and the commissioner's power, appointed a meeting of ministers and elders to be held in Glasgow, November 21, 1638, five months hence, to re-organize the General Assembly. A cloud of war immediately darkened the heavens. Had the king's wrath been lightning, the meeting-place would have been struck; but his rage was impotent.

[Illustration: *Archibald Johnston*.

Known also as Lord Warriston. He took a prominent part in the renewing of the Covenant in 1638; was chosen Clerk of the General Assembly, that same year, and continued in this office several years. He was an able defender of the Covenanted Church. He attained also to high earthly honors, yet held fast his integrity, and, when

far advanced in years, suffered martyrdom for adherence to the cause of Christ and His Covenant.]

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When the day for the re-organization of the General Assembly arrived, the delegates from the Covenanted churches were on the ground. The house was filled with able, earnest, resolute men, true servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. They had come in His name at His call to do His work. Each breathed deeply the spirit of reverence; they felt the presence of God; holy dignity rested on every brow. They had come in the strength of the Lord and were ready for duty and its consequences.

Hamilton with his friends also appeared. He immediately began the work of obstruction. Alexander Henderson was chosen moderator, and Archibald Johnston, known also as Lord Warriston, clerk, both of whom had taken an active part in the renewing of the Covenant. Hamilton made certain demands all of which were refused. He then attempted to dissolve the meeting but failed. In a storm of passion and with vigorous threats he withdrew, leaving the Assembly to pursue its own course. Can we conceive of sublimer courage than these Covenanters exhibited in standing by duty, conviction, and principle, owning their Covenant and honoring Christ Jesus, in the face of the king's wrath? The Assembly continued its sessions one month. The work was stupendous, and it was thoroughly done. The Church was cleansed, the ministry purified, true worship restored, and enactments adopted for the protection of the Reformed religion. After pronouncing the final benediction, the moderator said, "We have now cast down the walls of Jericho; let him that rebuildeth them beware of the curse of Hiel the Bethelite."

Behold how these fathers stood at the risk of their lives for the sovereignty of Jesus Christ! What devotion, what courage, what self-immolation! How great the moral grandeur of those lives, lifted up in the service of Christ far above the fear of man! They felt deeply the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, giving them wisdom, peace, joy, and success, in their tasks! Had we the same enduement of the Spirit of God, surely the Lord's work would prosper in our hands! May God grant it.

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Points for the class.

1. In what spirit did the people retire from the Covenant Convention in Edinburgh?
2. How was the Covenant received by the nation?
3. How did King Charles regard it?
4. How did he attempt to counteract its power?
5. In what manner did the Covenanters receive his commissioner?
6. When and where was the General Assembly reorganized?



7. With what interference did it meet?
8. What good work did it accomplish?
9. What trust did it commit to future generations?

XV.

The king Wages war.—A.D. 1639.

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The year of our Lord, 1638, exalted the Covenanted Church into prominence and power. The Covenant in the beginning of the year, and the General Assembly at the end, were achievements that arose in sublimity and moral grandeur like mountains, and all the months between, being filled with spiritual refreshing, were like table lands covered with the glory of the Lord, and shaking like Lebanon with prosperous fruit. “The light of the moon was as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun sevenfold, as the light of seven days.”

During the next ten years the Church experienced rapid growth. The Covenant always seemed to give the Church about ten years of extraordinary prosperity. The Holy Spirit descended in power, multiplying the ministry and membership exceedingly. New congregations sprang up in the towns and in the country, and were shepherded by faithful ministers. True religion, bringing peace, comfort, and gladness, entered the homes of the people and lodged with them. The melody of joy and health was heard in their dwellings. The family altar made the humblest house the Holy of Holies where God was enthroned on His Mercy Seat, and the lowliest family was a royal priesthood ministering unto God in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Yet all this time the Church suffered violence. She had become a bright target upon which Satan concentrated the fire of his heaviest artillery. One onslaught followed another with vengeful malice. The gates of hell opened wide and the floods dashed fiercely against her; but she was built upon a Rock, and that Rock was Christ. She was in alliance with the Lord. Her people were steadfast in their Covenant; they were united, full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; therefore the distresses resulted only in her growth.

When the king heard that the General Assembly was in session contrary to his will and acting directly in violation of his decree, he was filled with wrath. Having sent Hamilton to use policy and craftiness, and thereby gain time, he mustered an army of nearly 50,000 men, with which to punish the Covenanters. He also sent a fleet to co-operate with the land forces. Absolute subjugation was determined. These people must be despoiled of conscience, liberty, divine worship, religious rights—all that is most sacred to the human heart. The army is coming. Men, women, and children must feel the weight of the horses' hoofs and the warriors' boots, just because they have joined themselves to the Lord in a Covenant, and are living the life of faith on the Son of God.

The Covenanters were not dismayed, yet they hesitated to accept war. Would it be right to take up arms against the government? Ought they to go forth against their king in battle? Should they use the weapons that are carnal, and engage in the shedding of blood? Such questions lay heavy upon their hearts. They pondered, prayed, and fasted, that they might reach a decision in the fear of God.

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Finally they resolved to make their defence by force of arms. Their cause was just. Momentous issues were involved; their Covenant with God, the supremacy of Jesus Christ, the independence of the Church, the liberty of conscience, the purity of Divine worship, the rights of citizenship, the heritage of future generations, the progress of Christian civilization—all this appealed to the Covenanters for defence. The trumpet of war sounded, and the sturdy sons of the Covenant quickly responded.

General Alexander Leslie was at the head of the Covenanted army. He led his forces with rapid marches to meet the king. Friendly troops converged upon him on the way from all parts of Scotland till his command numbered 24,000 men. They presented a formidable array. These soldiers of the Covenant were marching to victory or to death. Courage in the countenance and firmness in the step told of an unconquerable purpose. Onward moved the resolute columns. Every day brought them nearer the royal hosts that would test their strength. The sight was thrilling; solid ranks of infantry, sword-girded cavalry, stalwart cannoneers, and floating banners. The Psalms reverberated among the hills in worship morning and evening. Well might King Charles pause ere he strike against this host of God.

[Illustration: *Memorial stone of captain Paton.*

Captain Paton was a brave defender of the Covenanters. His exploits in different battles are noted as extraordinary. Finally he was captured and, on May 9, 1684, executed in Edinburgh. In his last words he exhorted the people, saying, "Let your way be the good old path, the Word of God." His joy on the scaffold was triumphant. This memorial stone is at Fenwick.]

One day the Covenanters from an eminence beheld their enemy at a distance of six miles. General Leslie halted, arranging his troops on sloping grounds, facing the foe. There he prepared for action. Forty pieces of cannon bristled along the oval summit; the musketry and swordmen were placed on the hillside and outstretching plain. The encampment presented an appearance unusual in warfare. At the tent-door of each captain the ensign of the Covenant was unfurled. On the banner was inscribed in letters of gold the soul-stirring motto:

For Christ's crown and covenant.

As the flag rose and fell on the soft summer winds, the men were reminded of the sacred cause which they loved more than their lives. A chaplain of highest character was assigned to each regiment. Every morning and evening the men were summoned by the beat of drum for the worship of their God. Such were the Covenanters as they waited in the presence of their foes for a sanguinary struggle. How often they sang the

3rd Psalm, the 27th, and the 72nd, we know not. The Psalms were the lion's marrow upon which these lion-hearted heroes fed.

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The Covenanters did not want to give battle; they were merely on the defensive. They loved peace and longed for it. They shuddered at the horror of civil war and would avoid it if at all within their power. They sent an embassy asking for a conference. The king, knowing the spirit and power of the men with whom he had to deal, consented. During the negotiations for peace, the king hesitated to grant the Covenanters their demand. They would have nothing less than a free General Assembly and a Parliament. The king would not consent. Gen. Leslie replied by announcing his intention to advance his army within gunshot of the king's camp. This persuaded the king to come to terms, and a treaty of peace was ratified, by which the Covenanters received, on paper, all they asked. The Covenanters returned to their homes rejoicing in their Covenant Lord, who had given them the victory without the cost of blood, and in their homes profound gratitude arose to God in their morning and evening service of worship.

The people continued steadfast in their Covenant, enjoying the rights and privileges of the children of God for a time. The Lord showered His blessings upon them. Their increase in power and numbers was marvelous. The king again became alarmed. He resolved on war once more, and within a year was at the head of another army, determined to reduce the Covenanters and bring them into subjection to his arbitrary will.

The Covenanted fathers would surrender nothing in which the honor of the Church and the glory of Christ were involved. They were very jealous concerning all moral obligations and religious truth. They had convictions, conscience, intelligence, and the fear of God, and dared to fight for the right. They distinguished pillars of granite from columns of brick, and were not confused. They knew that gold dust was gold, and saved the dust as well as the ingots; they would sacrifice nothing. Can not we get a lesson here that will make the heart throb and the cheeks burn, as we view the faithfulness and heroism of these Covenanted ancestors?

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Points for the class.

1. What two great events in the Church transpired in 1638?
2. What growth did the Church experience in the next ten years?
3. What new danger loomed up?
4. How did the Covenanters meet the king's army?
5. Describe the army of the Covenanters.
6. How was this struggle ended?



7. How did the king keep his promise?
8. What lessons may we derive from the fathers?

XVI.

The solemn League and covenant.—A.D. 1643.

The Solemn League and Covenant touches a tender chord in the heart of every true Covenanter. It is a solitaire of statesmanship; a precious jewel of international law, unique and alone; there is nothing like it in the world. The historical setting of this lustrous stone is intensely interesting. Out of what mine did the priceless diamond come? By whose skill was it so admirably cut and polished? By whose hand was it set in its own historic foil? Such questions are worthy of serious and earnest thought.

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King Charles' war flurry against the Covenanters, in 1639, brought him no honor. Out-matched on the field, outdone in diplomacy, and utterly defeated in his purpose, he returned to London greatly humiliated. The journey was long and dreary, even though he rode in his stately carriage and behind swiftest horses, for he was chafing over his failure to reduce the Covenanters. In his palace also he found no comfort, his magnificent apartments brought him no restfulness. He brooded over his ill-fortune till his blood was tintured with acid and his heart soured; a malignant spirit spread its dark wings over him. He had failed in his military operations; the Covenanters were stronger and more independent than hitherto; his Prelatic friends were aggrieved with his treaty of peace; his power to tyrannize over the public conscience was waning. Such thoughts racked his brain and wrecked his peace of mind. He grew sullen, miserable, desperate. It was this passionate and despotic temperament that carried him into the second war with these Covenanters whom he so thoroughly hated.

The Covenanters were yet truly loyal to their king. Their loyalty was high-principled and self-sacrificing, yet at the same time discriminating. They bound themselves by their Covenant to be true to their king and their country. The Covenant recognized the king and the people to be equally under the law of God, subjects of the moral government of Jesus Christ. While he occupied his rightful place and exercised legitimate power, they would stand by him till their blood and treasures were alike exhausted. Such was their oath of loyalty, and it was kept with sacred care. But they resisted his authority at the point where he attempted to crush conscience, rule the Church, and usurp the royal prerogatives of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is *king of kings*. There they drew the line, and drew it so clear, that all the world might see it, and the blindest king might pause, consider, and not pass beyond. There they uttered their solemn protest with the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other. Such encroachments on their rights and liberties, and upon the honor and supremacy of Jesus Christ, they met on the battlefield, when peaceful measures had failed. While these interests were at stake they counted not their lives dear.

[Illustration: *The martyrs' monument, Edinburgh.*

This monument honors the memory of the martyrs who were executed at the Grass Market. It stands in Greyfriars' churchyard at the head of a small plot of ground, where about 100 bodies were at sundry times heaped together. Here lies the dust of Argyle, Guthrie, Warriston, Cargill, Renwick, and others of equal fame and faithfulness in the Covenant.]

The king on this second occasion collected an army of 21,000 men—all he could then muster—and hastened to punish the Covenanters. He was not able at this time to rally the hosts of England; that kingdom was not in sympathy with his enterprise. His haughty will and arbitrary measures had alienated the strength of England from his support. The English Parliament was like a trembling volcano, ready to break out and

involve his throne in ruins. A revolution from monarchy to democracy was sending its advance swell over the land like a tidal wave.

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The Covenanters, ever loving peace and hating war, had exhausted all honorable measures to avoid a conflict with their king on the battlefield. Their efforts however having failed, again the call to arms resounded through their peaceful glens and over their granite hills. The shepherd again left his flock, the workman closed his shop, the plowman released his team, and the minister took leave of his people to follow the fiery war-cloud. Again the banner was unfurled for *Christ's crown and covenant*; the silken folds rose and fell on the breeze; the golden letters and sacred motto flashed upon the eyes of the men who were willing to follow where it led. Gen. Leslie was again in command. He boldly crossed the Tweed and hastened to give the king battle on English soil. The armies having come within range of each other, the usual lull before the battle ensued. The Covenanted columns, standing under their colors and gleaming with arms and armor in the bright August sun, struck terror once more to the king's heart. He dreaded to meet this sea of living, fiery valor, rolling its waves into his very camp. He saw, as on the first occasion, that a treaty was the better part of valor and offered peace. The terms being concluded, the Covenanters returned to their homes, not knowing how long the peace would last.

England, too, was at this time greatly agitated. She was making a desperate effort to throw off the galling despotism of King Charles. The spirit of progress, enlightenment, and liberty was deeply stirring the people; they were eagerly reaching after a higher and nobler life. The grand possibilities of improvement and happiness filled them with visions of better things, and they grew desperate in their purpose to obtain freedom. Continued subjection to the heartless autocrat became intolerable.

There was public indignation likewise against Prelacy, for by it the king was inspired and upheld. In the State the revolt was from monarchy to democracy: in the Church, from Episcopacy to Presbyterianism. The king, as the head of the Episcopal Church, not only exercised jurisdiction over her, but used her as an instrument to enforce his arbitrary will over the people. The king mounted his war horse once more. This time it was English against English. Strong armies were mustered on each side. For four long years a civil war swept the unhappy kingdom, victory perching alternately on the opposing banners. This was a war of the Parliament against the king, British rule against brutish rule, humanity against despotism. Scotland watched the struggle of her sister kingdom with deepest interest. On the one side she was attached to her king, notwithstanding his incorrigibleness; on the other, she was devoted to the principles involved, including the independence of the Church.

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While the war-cloud was thickening, the English Parliament sent a delegation to Scotland to consult with the Covenanters in expectation of receiving aid. The question was entrusted to a Joint Commission. The deliberations were deep and far-reaching; the men in council were among the wisest and best in the two kingdoms. They weighed the momentous interests involved in the pending war, that eventually convulsed England and watered her soil with fraternal blood. The liberty of both kingdoms, the progress of the Gospel, the purity of religion, the independence of the Church, the inheritance of the Covenants, the onward movement of Christianity—yea, their own homes, possessions, liberties, and lives—all were at stake in the crisis that darkened the land. These men turned to God in prayer to meet the task that burdened their hearts and taxed their wisdom.

Dangers, too, were thickening around Scotland as well as England, like storm-clouds concentrating for a destructive outburst. The king was planning to restore the Scottish Prelacy to power; he still hoped to fight his way victoriously into Edinburgh; he had hired an army of 10,000 men to invade Scotland; he had watched with apparent complacency, we will not say his sanction, the slaughter of 200,000 Protestants in Ireland by the Papists. Such were the conditions in both kingdoms, which these counselors had to face. Dark were the days when this Joint Commission was in session. Scotland was harassed by internal foes, England was convulsed in a dreadful strife, and poor Ireland lay bleeding from a thousand wounds. But here was a band of men whose hearts reached up to God for counsel, and they were made equal to the occasion. They knew how to take hold upon Omnipotence and secure the help of heaven. They had access to the Eternal Throne, and were able to call into service God's chariots and angels, and fill the mountains with armies which, though invisible to mortal eyes, were invincible in the presence of all the hosts of the king, and all the legions of Satan. Listen to the cry that goes up from that Council Chamber—"The Covenants! The Covenants!"

Scotland had a beaten path up the mountain of God, leading to the ever-available Covenant. Again she climbs the heights, and this time leads her two trembling sisters, England and Ireland, by the hand. And there, on the top of the mountain where the glory of the Lord shines like the sun in his strength, the three kingdoms, Scotland, England, and Ireland, enter into *the solemn League and covenant*.

We would appreciate our Covenanted privileges more highly, if we considered more carefully the difficulties our ancestors overcame in reaching the Covenant heights. Let us take heed lest, like a foolish heir squandering his father's wealth, we waste our inheritance, which is more precious than gold, more priceless than life.

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Points for the class.

1. How did the Covenanters meet the king's second appeal to arms?
2. How was England disturbed at this time?
3. What Joint Commission was then created?
4. What was its purpose?
5. What did it accomplish?
6. What was the intention of the Solemn League and Covenant?
7. Why should we appreciate our Covenanted inheritance?

XVII.

High ideals by the covenanted fathers.—A.D. 1643.

The Solemn League and Covenant of Scotland, England, and Ireland is the high-water mark in the moral progress of nations. But the flood of Divine glory, which then covered these three kingdoms, quickly subsided and has remained ever since far below that conspicuous mark. God honored these nations with the greatest privilege accorded to Civil society, and brought them into the most blessed relation to himself. But they lightly esteemed the favor and revolted from the Covenant. He therefore hid His countenance, withdrawing the assistance and protection which they so gratefully accepted in distress, but deceitfully rejected when prosperity returned. The relapse threw them suddenly into direful conditions of misrule, oppression, and profuse bloodshed, which continued nearly half a century.

The Covenant of the three kingdoms, though short-lived in its beneficent effect, was of immense value to the world. Like the morning star, it heralded the coming of a bright day to all nations. The star may be hidden by thickening clouds, but the sun will not fail to rise. This Covenant stands as a pledge of the ultimate condition of all nations, points the way into the shining heights of God's favor, and warns against the aggravated sin of breaking relation with the Lord. It was the first blast of the trumpet that will one day announce the submission of the kingdoms of the world to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Scottish fathers evidently regarded Covenanted union as the normal relation existing between God and man, God and the Church, God and all the nations. Any thing less than this was, in their estimation, sub-normal, imperfect, unworthy, dangerous, disastrous to man, and offensive to God. They loved their Covenant, flew to

it in times of danger as doves to the clefts of the rock, and reproached themselves for lightly esteeming the inestimable privilege.

These Covenanters took their position at the throne of the Lord Jesus, and contemplated with rapturous delight His many crowns and the magnificence of His kingdom. Their vast horizon took in heaven and earth, time and eternity, God and man. In their eyes the affairs of the world fell into subordinate relations, while the interests of the Church loomed up in over-awing proportions.

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The high ideal for nations entertained by the Covenanters of Scotland will hardly be excelled while the world lasts. The Lord gave them a vision of what their country should be: enlightened with the Gospel, governed in righteousness, protected by Omnipotence, adorned with churches, a school in every parish, and a college in every city. The land in that vision was married to the Lord—Beulah was her name. All destroying vices had fled, all public evils were rooted out. The heavens were beneficent, the soil yielded its increase, business was prosperous, the armies were victorious, the rulers were God's ministers, the homes were filled with peace and plenty, and resounded with the melody of praise. Such was their conception of the blessed nation whose God is the Lord.

[Illustration: *Rutherford in prison.*

Samuel Rutherford was a devoted minister and faithful Covenanter. He had charge of a congregation at Anwoth, from whence he was driven by persecution. For a time he was compelled to abide in Aberdeen. Here he wrote the famous "Letters" that sparkle like rubies, with precious thoughts. Out of his heart flowed "rivers of living water." Such spirituality is seldom seen in mortals. His enemies sought his life, yet God permitted him to die on a peaceful deathbed. A vision of heaven seemed to break upon his soul in his last moments, and he died, exclaiming, "Glory, Glory in Immanuel's land."]

All this was embodied in the Solemn League and Covenant. By analyzing that international bond we find that it expresses or implies the following:

Nations originate with God, are dependent on His will, subject to His authority, and accountable at His throne.

They are placed under Jesus Christ to be employed by Him to the glory of God the Father.

The chief end of Civil Government is to suppress wickedness and promote righteousness, and thus prepare the way for the coming of the kingdom of our Lord.

Civil rulers are God's ministers, and as such, should serve the Lord Jesus Christ by conserving true religion.

Civil rulers should be interested in the union of the Churches, in Doctrine, Worship, Discipline, and Government, according to the Scriptures.

Civil Government should suppress in Church and State all features of society that are openly criminal or publicly injurious.

The people should enter into a solemn Covenant with their rulers and with God, to place themselves and their possessions in readiness to sustain the government in its legitimate work.

The nation that keeps Covenant with God shall dwell in safety, grow in power, and enjoy enduring prosperity.

Such was the Solemn League and Covenant.

Have the principles of Civil government ever had an enunciation so candid and heroic, so sublime and comprehensive, so ennobling to man and honoring to God? These principles were not flashes of a high-wrought imagination; they were practical. The Covenanted fathers reduced them to practice. These nations embodied them. The time was short, yet long enough for a demonstration.

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What dignity rests on the State that is federally and loyally connected with the empire of the Lord Jesus Christ! How great the security and excellence of the government that abides under the banner of Christ! How powerful and happy the people who are exalted into favor with heaven by a Covenant that binds God and man! Such was the ideal entertained by the Scottish fathers; and by heroic self-sacrificing effort, they exalted the three kingdoms into the untrodden heights. These nations caught glimpses of the glory, basked for a season in the brilliancy, tasted the sweetness of the banquet, breathed the exhilarating air, then fell back. By the perfidy of man the vision was shattered and the idealization wrecked.

We shudder at the loss incurred by these kingdoms in their decline from their Covenant. What would have been their eminence among nations had the terms of the Covenant been fulfilled? What would have been their power and prestige had they, by keeping their Covenant, been sheltered for the last two and a half centuries from the ravages of rum and Rome, misrule and tyranny, the violence of unscrupulous men and the wrath of the offended Lord? What numerous posterity! what fruitful fields! what prodigious wealth! what industrial prosperity! what educational institutions! what unparalleled progress! what inexhaustible resources for development at home and achievements abroad! Enjoying the glorious millennium two hundred and fifty years ahead of the rest of the world—what such a start would have done for the British Isles is past finding out.

Priest-ridden Ireland failed because at that time her best blood was soaking the roots of her green meadows; the massacre of her Protestants by the Romanists had left her low. Half-hearted England failed because treachery was lurking in her ranks from the beginning. But Scotland! Oh, Scotland, wherefore didst thou doubt? Wherefore turned ye back, ye sons of the mighty, lacking neither bows nor other arms? Heroes of the Covenant, why fainted ye in the day of battle? Shame on Scotland. The high places of the field, where once the banner for Christ's Crown and Covenant triumphantly waved, testify against thy treason.

But the Standard unfurled by the Covenanters of Scotland has not been altogether forsaken. A devoted band of Christ's soldiers still remain underneath its waving folds. Few, yet fearless, they hold the ground. There they sustain, day and night, the attacks of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Their position is ridiculed as impractical; they are galled by the fire of deserters; they are assailed by the arguments of statesmen; they are reproached by their own brethren; they are shelled by Satan's heaviest guns. A thousand voices are shouting, "Abandon your impracticable position. Come down; ye men of the Covenant, come down." But the reply is returned in unfaltering tones, "We will not; we cannot. These heights of righteousness have once been reached by three kingdoms; they will yet return to the Lord and renew their Covenant, leading other nations in triumphal procession. They are coming; they are coming. 'All the kings of the earth shall praise thee O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth; yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord.'"

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Alexander Henderson, who wrote the Solemn League and Covenant, displayed therein statesmanship of the highest order. Great men are scarce who can be compared with Henderson to advantage. Wellington, Nelson, Howard, Gladstone, and Livingstone; these form a brilliant constellation; but Henderson is bright as a morning star. He set the pace for the future statesmen, who will yet lead the nations to God in Covenant and place the crown of national homage on the head of Jesus Christ.

The Covenanter who abides by his Covenant is the truest patriot. The greatest service that can be rendered to the country is the presentation of God's ideal for nations.

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. How long did the Solemn League and Covenant remain in force?
2. What is its permanent use to the nations?
3. What was the Covenanters' ideal for nations?
4. Give the substance of the Solemn League and Covenant.
5. What caused these nations to abandon the Covenant?
6. Is the Covenant position still held by any?
7. How is truest patriotism best displayed?

XVIII.

The Westminster assembly.—A.D. 1643.

The Covenanted Church is much indebted to the Westminster Assembly, for its magnificent contributions to the Reformed religion. Presbyterian Churches of every name have reaped rich harvests from the seed sown by this Assembly.

Nothing has done more, if the Covenants be excepted, to give the Covenanted Church decision, stability, permanence, spiritedness, and undecaying strength, than the superlative formulas of truth produced by this illustrious Assembly. Our inheritance received from their hands should awaken our admiration for the men and our interest in their work.

ORIGIN.

This Assembly came into existence in peculiar times and for a remarkable purpose. England was goaded to desperation by the despotism of King Charles. As king of that nation and head of the Episcopal Church, he attempted to stifle liberty and conquer conscience. He clashed with his parliament in London. A great awakening had suddenly spread over all England. New ideas of life electrified the people, and they arose in the majesty of their inalienable rights to realize their ideals. The action and reaction became terrible. The king and the parliament called out their armies each against the other. England was plunged into a horrible civil war. The parliament, perceiving that Episcopacy was the bulwark of the king's tyranny and hostile to the interests of the people, attempted to abolish that system of Church government. But this destructive act necessitated a constructive work. Accordingly parliament, by an ordinance, created an Assembly for "settling the Government and Liturgy of the Church of England."

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CHARACTER OF THE MEMBERS.

The ordinance provided for an Assembly of “learned, Godly, and judicious divines.” Milton, while not in sympathy with their work, called this “The Select Assembly.” Baxter, another disapproving contemporary, said, “that in his judgment the world, since the days of the apostles, had never a Synod of more excellent divines than this and the Synod of Dort.” Abundant evidence certifies that in Westminster Hall, in those days was seen a rare combination of native talent, classic learning, sanctified conscience, spiritual illumination, and devotion to the truth as revealed in the Word of God.

ENROLLMENT.

The complete number of members was 174, of which 142 were ministers, and 32, elders. Of this number, four ministers and two elders were commissioners from Scotland. The Scottish delegation of divines were men mighty in the Scriptures and powerful in debate. Their influence in making Scripture truths lucid, and thereby directing the Assembly to right conclusions, was deeply felt and cordially acknowledged. They declined to sit as regular members of the Assembly, content with the humbler position of consultative members. They would not by incorporation become responsible, personally or representatively, for the deliverances of an Assembly selected and erected by parliament. These Scotch ministers form a brilliant constellation; let their names be written in capitals:

Alexander Henderson
Gillespie

Robert Baillie
Samuel Rutherford

George

“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” The Scottish elders were John Maitland and Archibald Johnston. Maitland in after years renounced the Covenant and became a powerful foe of the Covenanters.

[Illustration: *Westminster assembly.*

The Westminster Assembly met in London in 1643. The roll of members contained 174 names, of which 142 were divines and 32 selected from parliament. The Covenanters of Scotland were represented by 6 commissioners, of whom 4 were ministers. This Assembly produced the Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Directory for Public Worship, and the Form of Church Government. These excellent formulas of Divine truth are carefully compiled and finely polished, and, being true to the Bible, they will scarcely ever be surpassed.]

ORGANIZATION.

The Assembly met according to the call, July 1, 1643, in the Church of Westminster. Dr. William Twisse, President, preached the opening sermon from Christ's precious promise, "I will not leave you comfortless." These words were as apples of gold in pictures of silver, in those days of woeful distraction. One week later they met again, when the oath was administered to every member present, in the following words:

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“I,-----, do seriously and solemnly protest, in the presence of Almighty God, that in this Assembly, whereof I am a member, I will not maintain anything in matters of doctrine, but what I think in my conscience to be truth; or in point of discipline, but what I shall conceive to conduce most to the glory of God, and the good and peace of His Church.”

This oath was read every Monday morning to refresh memory and revive conscience. These men were working for the Kingdom of Christ, in the presence of the great white Throne; its brightness was flashing constantly upon their eyes.

THE WORK.

The work, to which the Assembly gave its attention, as specified by parliament, was “(1) A Confession of Faith, (2) A Catechism, (3) A Platform of Government, (4) A Directory for all Parts of Public Worship.”

The Confession of Faith: The first attempt was to revise the old creed of the Church of England. This was abandoned at the Fifteenth Article. A New Confession was then prepared having Thirty-three Articles, all of which are pillars of truth, every one ponderous, polished, and precious, revealing the quarry out of which they were hewn, and the skill of the workmen by whom they were chiselled. Henderson has been credited with the honor of preparing the first draft.

The Catechisms: The Shorter Catechism was prepared as a summary of Biblical instruction, appealing even by its literary construction and elegance to the heart and memory for lodgment. This golden chain is an ornament of grace that should be worn by every son and daughter of the Covenant. Rutherford seems to have been the original writer. The Larger Catechism is an expansion of the Shorter.

The Form of Church Government: The Divine right of Presbyterianism occasioned much discussion. The adoption of this principle was a deadly blow struck at the theory of Episcopacy—official ranks, tier above tier, in pyramidal form with the people beneath the pyramid. Equal authority of ministers in the administration of the Gospel of Christ, and equal authority of ministers and elders in administering government in the House of God—these were the great truths announced by the Assembly with clearness and solemnity, as the voice of God speaking in the holy Scriptures.

The Directory for Public Worship: This Directory superseded the Liturgy. The Liturgy had been condemned for “giving encouragement to an idle and unedifying ministry, who had chosen rather to confine themselves to forms, made to their hands, than to exert

themselves in the gift of prayer, which our Saviour furnishes all those He calls to that office." A warm discussion arose concerning the mode of receiving the Lord's Supper. "The communicants orderly and gravely sitting round the table," was the expression adopted. Successive tables received sanction from this expression.

PSALMODY.

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Sir Francis Rouse, a member of the English Parliament, had recently produced his Metrical Version of the Psalms. It was fresh and fragrant and greatly admired. The Assembly after a careful revision adopted it. Five years later, having passed through the purifying furnace of revision at the hands of the General Assembly of Scotland, it was authorized as "The only paraphrase of the Psalms of David to be sung in the Kirk of Scotland." The New Version superseded the Old and took its place in Divine worship on May 1, 1650, the day appointed for its introduction by the Assembly.

The Westminster Assembly convened July 1, 1643, and adjourned February 22, 1649, covering 5 years, 6 months, and 22 days, having held 1,163 sessions. They met at nine o'clock in the morning and sat till three in the afternoon. Each member received four shillings a day, and were fined one shilling for absence. They kept a solemn fast monthly, at which occasionally a single prayer lasted two hours. These men knew how to pray. They became absorbed in prayer and talked with God while He strengthened them to stand in His presence and receive His answer.

Such was the famous Assembly of Westminster divines. The magnitude of their work can never be measured. Their building is imperishable. Familiarity with these manuals of doctrine will deepen, broaden, strengthen, and exalt the human mind. Herein the truth of Christ appears in the symmetry, significance, magnitude, and omnipotence of a complete system. One truth may take us to heaven, but the system of truth treasured up in the heart, will bring heaven to us. Let us study the system.

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. What event called the Westminster Assembly into being?
2. What was the character of the members?
3. How many were enrolled?
4. Who were the Scottish commissioners?
5. What was the oath of membership?
6. What was the work assigned to the Assembly?
7. How long did the Assembly sit?
8. What benefit derived from the study of these manuals?

XIX.

Division in the covenanted ranks.—A.D. 1648.

The 1638 Covenant produced gratifying results in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. She was revived, enlarged, strengthened, consolidated, and fortified beyond precedent. Ten years of marvelous prosperity followed, and yet she had no easy road to travel. She was still beset by dangers; enemies were plotting her overthrow; wars were convulsing the country; the external conditions were extremely adverse; yet she grew, waxed mighty, and became irresistible in the work of the Gospel. The Church honored the Lord in His holy Covenant, and He honored her with growth, success, and victory in the presence of her foes. He was a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst thereof. These were years of phenomenal power and splendor unto the Covenanted Church.

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Then followed the gloaming. The evening of that prosperous day grew very dark; the darkness increased for forty years; ten thousand midnights seemed to have condensed their horrid blackness upon Scotland and her prostrated Church. At length the storm of fire and blood exhausted itself, but not till a whole generation had wasted away in the anguish of that protracted persecution. The steps that led to the Church's prostration and decimation, we may trace with profit; but as it is crimsoned with the blood of the brave, and marked with many a martyr's grave, the eye will oft be moist and the heart sick.

While the Church stood to her Covenant, she was like an impregnable fortress, or an invincible army. While she held the truth tenaciously in her General Assembly, presbyteries, and sessions, and applied it effectively, she spread forth her roots like Lebanon. But when doubt and fear, plans and policy, compromise and temporizing entered into her councils, her gold became dim and her sword pewter. The Lord went not with her armies into the battle, and they fainted and fell on the field. A brief review is necessary to understand the situation.

The Solemn League and Covenant, in 1643, gave the Covenanted Church of Scotland a mighty impetus in the right direction, but its effect for good was brief. The League united the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland; and the Covenant placed them under obligations to one another and to God. These kingdoms were thereby exalted beyond measure in privilege. The sacred bond had been prepared by the Joint Commission that represented England and Scotland, the initial step having been taken by the English Parliament. The king and the parliament were then at strife. The dominating spirit of Charles, which harassed Scotland had provoked hostility in England; the strength of that kingdom was nearly equally divided between the two parties. The people of England, who aspired after liberty and felt the throb of nobler manhood in their pulse, had asked Scotland to combine forces against the oppressor. The outcome was the Solemn League and Covenant which united their armies for the conflict.

This sacred bond was adopted by the General Assembly of Scotland, the English Parliament, and the Westminster Assembly of divines. Afterward it received a prodigious number of signatures by the people in public and private life, and became quite popular. These kingdoms were thereby placed under solemn obligation conjointly to conserve the Reformed religion in Scotland, to reform the religion of England and Ireland, and to root out all systems of evil in Church and State.

Scotland was far in advance of the other two kingdoms in enlightenment and liberty. The Covenanted Church had exalted the Lord Jesus as her Head, and He had exalted her as the light, life, and glory of Scotland. The vine had spread its branches from sea to sea. The two sisters were far behind. She undertook to lift them up; the burden was too heavy; they dragged her down. She was unequally yoked, and the yoke pushed her

astray. Doubtless there were reasons that justified the course she had taken, but that course led her into a “waste and howling wilderness.”

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Scotland sent her army to help the English Reformers in their fight for liberty. The soldiers coming from Covenanted homes, marched, as was their custom, under the banner emblazoned with the inspiring-words:

FOR CHRIST'S CROWN AND COVENANT.

They were led by General Leslie. Victory followed victory until King Charles, overwhelmed with defeat, rode into Leslie's camp in disguise and surrendered as his prisoner.

What now shall be done with the royal captive? This was the question which called for the wisdom of both nations. The Covenanters urged him to subscribe the Covenant and return to his throne. He refused. They pleaded, promising that their flag would lead the forces of Scotland in his support. He yet refused. They prayed and entreated him with tears to accept the Covenant and continue his reign. He would not. What could they then do, but deliver him up to the English army, whose battles they were fighting?

General Leslie led his command back to Scotland. It was disbanded, for the land again had rest. The suspense, however, concerning the king was painful. The Scottish heart yet loved Charles. Though he was false, cruel, treacherous, and tyrannical, the Covenanters were still devoted to him as their own king. They prayed, took counsel, sent delegates, did everything in their power to have him restored. All they asked was his adherence to the Covenant, their national Constitution of government. Let him subscribe to this, and Scotland's bravest sons will rally around him; the Blue Banner will wave over him in bold defiance of every foe. But he would not yield.

[Illustration: *King Charles I.*

King Charles I. came to the throne in 1625, and reigned over Scotland, England, and Ireland, 24 years. His despotic will carried him into great excesses of cruelty, and brought upon him mountains of trouble. In Scotland the Covenanters firmly resisted his encroachment upon their rights and liberties. He was beheaded by the English Parliament in 1649.]

The king was now a prisoner in England. While he lay at Carisbrooke Castle, the Earl of Lauderdale, a Covenanter of some eminence, accompanied by the Earl of Lanark, was stealthily admitted into his presence. These men succeeded in making a compromise. Lauderdale and Lanark agreed to raise an army to bring the king back. The king in turn agreed to confirm Presbyterianism for three years; the permanent form of Church Government to be then determined by an assembly of divines, assisted by twenty commissioners to be appointed by the king. This private treaty is known in history as "The Engagement." It contained the elements of a base and disastrous surrender of principle. Presbyterianism on probation! Built upon the rock of truth, it

lasts while the rock endures. Presbyterianism to be succeeded by an uncertainty? How could the Church entrust the government of God's house to the king's commissioners?

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When “The Engagement” became public, the Covenanted Church was plunged into a debate that wrought havoc. The peaceful sea was struck with a storm; the angry waves lashed every shore. The compromise failed, but the Church was infected, weakened, rent, in twain, and for forty years was unable to stand in the presence of her enemies. Henceforward there were two parties: those who held to the Covenant, in its clearness, fulness, pungent energy, and logical deductions; and those who trimmed, modified, and compromised divine truth, for the sake of numerical strength and temporal advantage. One party was governed by principle; the other by expediency. The entering wedge was followed by other wedges, until the glorious Church of Scotland was chopped and split, and thrown about into endless disorder,

“As wood which men do cut and cleave
Lies scattered on the ground.”

The Church of Jesus Christ may never traffic in the truth. The least compromise of Gospel principle is treason against the King of heaven. The terms offered to the world, while in rebellion against Christ, should be those embodied in General Grant’s famous demand—“Unconditional Surrender.” Anything less than this is treachery. The truth of the Lord Jesus, which cost His blood in its purchase and the blood of martyrs in its defence, should be maintained to the very last shred, with the tenacity of unconquerable faith. Unfaithfulness in the least degree may result in greatest disaster. Once a ship was cast upon the rocks, and the lives of the passengers were jeopardized simply because the compass varied, it was said, a millionth part of an inch. It requires “hair-splitting” to measure a millionth part of an inch, and in certain cases it is worth while.

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Points for the class.

1. What reaction followed the ten prosperous years after the Covenant of 1638?
2. Trace the cause of the great distress that befell the Church
3. Why did Scotland aid England with her army?
4. What were the results of the war?
5. How did the Covenanters treat their captive king?
6. What was the agreement known as “The Engagement?”
7. How did it divide the Covenanted Church?
8. What dangers arise from the surrender of truth?

XX.

Crowning the prince.—A.D. 1651.

The reign of Charles I. came to an unkingly end. The war between him and the English Parliament resulted in his utter defeat. He delivered himself up as a prisoner, and “because he mercy minded not but persecuted still,” mercy refused to spread her white wings over his guilty soul. He was tried for treason by the British Parliament and sentenced to death. The trial continued one week, during which the recital of his misrule and cruel deeds must have intensely harrowed his soul. He yielded up his life by laying his head upon the block to receive the executioner’s axe. One stroke did the fatal work.

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The death of the king was not with the consent of the Covenanters; to them it was a poignant grief. With all his faults they loved him still as their king. Had he accepted the Solemn League and Covenant when a prisoner in their hands, they would have been at his service to restore his power and kingdom. They still hoped for his reformation, entreated him to take the Covenant, and pointed him to a triumphal entry into Edinburgh. They pleaded with the English Parliament to spare his life, and sent commissioners to prevent his execution. Through his obstinacy they failed. But that obstinacy he accounted kingly dignity and inviolable honor. The Covenanters upon hearing of his tragic death hastened to proclaim his eldest son king in his stead, granting him the throne on condition of accepting the Solemn League and Covenant, and ruling the kingdom according to its terms. He was a young man of nineteen years; “a prince of a comely presence; of a sweet, but melancholy aspect. His face was regular, handsome, and well-complexioned; his body strong, healthy, and justly proportioned; and, being of a middle stature, he was capable of enduring the greatest fatigue.”

Charles II. while emerging from his teens faced a golden future. The providence of God spread before him prospects of greatness, honor, and success, which the most exalted on earth might have envied. His heart in its highest aspirations had not yet dreamed of the moral grandeur and kingly possibilities, that were granted him when the Covenanters called him to rule their kingdom. Even Solomon, accepting a crown at the same age, was not more highly favored. Scotland at this time was exalted into close relation with heaven; the National Covenant had lifted the kingdom into alliance with God; the people had been emancipated from darkness, Papacy, and Prelacy; the Gospel of Jesus Christ had overspread the land with light. The Covenanted Church had flourished marvelously during the last decade, notwithstanding the storms that swept her borders; her branches veiled the mountains, and her fruit overhung the valleys; every parish was adorned with a schoolhouse, and the cities with colleges. What sublime possibilities for a king at the head of such a nation! Oh, that the young prince might have a dream in the slumbers of the night and see God! Oh, for a vision, a prayer, and a gift, that will fit him for the glory-crested heights of privilege and power to which he has been advanced! Charles II. failed, and fell from these heavens like Lucifer.

The young king was crowned by the Covenanters January 1, 1651. The Crown of Scotland, sparkling with precious stones deeply set in purest gold, was his splendid New Year's gift. But the gift was more than a crown of gold and precious stones; it was a symbol of the nation's power, wealth, people, Covenant, honor, and high relation to God, entrusted to his keeping.

The coronation took place in the dead of winter. The country was gowned like a bride in white. But the white on this occasion was not the emblem of purity; rather was it the pallor of icy death. The rigorous storms seemed to prophesy of trouble; the very winds

were rehearsing a dirge to be plaintively sung over mountains and moors in the coming years.

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A large assembly of Covenanters met at Scone for the crowning of the new king. There was much enthusiasm, yet beneath it all there flowed a deep undercurrent of doubt and fear. Rev. Robert Douglas preached the coronation sermon. The king listened to deep, penetrating, practical words from the Book of God. The Solemn League and Covenant was read. He gave his assent to it with an overflow of vehemence. Archibald Campbell, the Marquis of Argyle, a prominent Covenanter and statesman, then took the crown in both hands, and, lifting it above the prince with great solemnity, placed it upon his head, accompanying the act with an appropriate exhortation. While the oath of office was being administered, the prince kneeled in apparent humility, and lifted up his right hand in a solemn appeal to God. At this point he uttered the awful vow in the presence of the people: "By the Eternal and Almighty God, who liveth and reigneth forever, I shall observe and keep all that is contained in this oath." He also said: "I will have no enemies, but the enemies of the Covenant—no friends, but the friends of the Covenant." Thus King Charles II. became a radical Covenanter by profession and protestation in the most solemn manner. Time proved his guilty duplicity.

The English Parliament, after the execution of Charles I., had passed an act making it treason to proclaim this prince king. The Covenanters, having thus elevated Charles to the throne, must now settle accounts with England on the battlefield.

[Illustration: *Archbishop sharp*

James Sharp was a young Covenanted minister in 1661, but withdrew from the Covenanters and became a persecutor of the most virulent type. The land could not bear his cruelties. He lost his life at the hands of a few men, who had been goaded into desperation by his atrocities. He was slain while driving across Magus moor in 1679.]

Oliver Cromwell invaded Scotland with a strong force, determined to unseat Charles. The Covenanters rallied in defence of their king. Alexander Leslie was once more in command. The two armies were soon facing each other, but hesitated to strike. Both armies were made up of soldiers of the cross; both had fought for the Solemn League and Covenant; prayer ascended habitually from both camps; the singing of Psalms aroused the heroic spirit in each. What wonder if they feared the shock of battle! At length Leslie moved down from his advantageous position, and Cromwell ordered an attack. The Covenanters were put to flight with terrible slaughter.

Had the sweet singer of Israel been on the field after the clash of arms, doubtless he would have repeated his wail: "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" The Covenanters defeated! How! Why! Ah, there was an Achan in the camp. The king was already perfidious in the Covenant. His perfidy had blighted the nation, and smitten the army. Hitherto God had led the armies of the Covenanters; they had won easy victories, and sometimes bloodless triumphs. But now the Lord turns His back upon the banner unfurled for His Crown and Covenant.

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The dread disaster-sent a wail through all Scotland. The grief was great and the penitential searchings deep. The pious and prayerful inquired of the Lord to know the cause of His wrath and the way of deliverance. The eyes of many were opened to see the shadow of greater calamities approaching. Argyle, Johnston, Rutherford, Gillespie, and others of kindred spirit, saw in the last battle the stroke of the Lord for the sins of the nation. The wrath of God, like a bolt of lightning, had struck that field and thousands lay dead. Greater retributions were coming; repentance alone could save the country.

The king attempted to rally his shattered forces. He raised his standard at Stirling. His army was small; he wanted more men. Hitherto the army had been recruited from the homes of Covenanters; the rank and file were the resolute sons of the Covenant. The Scottish Parliament in bygone years had made a law called the “Act of Classes”, by which only those who had taken the Covenant were eligible to office in the government, or position in the army. The statesmanship of the Scottish fathers was profound; their military wisdom was from above. Civil government is God’s gift to man. Why entrust it to other than His people? The military power is to guard this trust. Why commit the guardianship to any but the loyal servants of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The king had the Act of Classes repealed that he might increase his army. He multiplied his regiments, but forgot “The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.” Three hundred may be better than thirty thousand. He accepted battle once more with Cromwell, suffered a terrible defeat, escaped from the country and remained an exile nine years. All honor to Gen. Leslie, and other faithful officers, who refused to serve after the ranks had been filled with men who feared not God nor regarded His Covenant!

Can we here find a lesson to lay upon our hearts? Covenanting with God is, possibly, the highest privilege on earth; Covenant-breaking is, possibly, the most dangerous sin. What can be worse? The Covenant-breaker destroys much good; brings wrath upon himself, and defeat, sorrow, and distress upon those whom he represents.

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. How was the reign of King Charles I. ended?
2. What effort on the part of the Covenanters to secure a successor?
3. What were the prospects of the young prince?
4. What brought ruin upon him?
5. Why were the Covenanters now compelled to meet the English in battle?
6. With what result?



7. What was the “Act of Classes.”
8. Why was it repealed?
9. What was the effect?
10. What heinousness lies in Covenant-breaking?

XXI.

A sifting time—A.D. 1653.

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We now enter the most serious period in the history of the Covenanters. Hitherto we have been on the skirmish line. All we have yet reviewed has been leading up to the desperate and sanguinary struggle, which lasted twenty-eight years, costing treasures of blood and indescribable suffering, yet finally resulting in the wealthy heritage of liberty, enlightenment, and religion, which we now enjoy.

Oliver Cromwell, having defeated King Charles, ruled Scotland five years. He was titled “Lord Protector”, but in reality was a Dictator. The government was centered more than ever in one man. Many strange qualities blended in this austere autocrat, some of which command our admiration. He was stern and painfully severe, yet much sagacity and justice characterized his administration. During his sway of power the Reformed Churches in his own realms and on the Continent were by him heroically defended. He became, in the hand of the Lord, “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” The persecuted found shelter under his shadow, in the providence of the Lord. He avenged the massacre of the Protestants in Ireland, halted the persecution of Christians on the Continent, and gave Rome the alternative, to cease the work of slaughter, or listen to the thunder of his legions at her gates.

The Church of the Covenanters however had strange experience at the hands of Cromwell. In a ruthless and despotic manner he dissolved the General Assembly, put the Supreme Court of God’s house out of existence to appear no more for thirty-five years. The meeting previous to this act of violence had been held in the mid-summer of 1653. The ministers and elders had come from all parts of Scotland, to sit in counsel, or rather in debate, concerning the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. The salubrious air and genial sky of Edinburgh united with, the sacred and exhilarating interests of the Gospel to arouse all that was noble, and divine in every heart. The Moderator reverently led the Assembly in prayer and constituted the court most solemnly in the name of Jesus Christ. Such a prayer should overwhelm the soul with God’s presence, burden the conscience with responsibilities, make the spiritual world dreadfully visible, and bring God’s servants close to His throne of judgment.

The Assembly had met last year in this prayerful and solemn manner, but the business of the Lord Jesus soon degenerated into an acrid, harmful discussion, that lasted two weeks and ended in confusion. The debate evidently was now to be renewed with the additional bitterness and vehemence that had accumulated during the ensuing year. The ministers and elders having convened, the regular business was under way, when suddenly the Assembly witnessed what was unexpected—a regiment of soldiers in the churchyard. Cromwell had sent them. The soldiers, in bright uniform and bristling with swords and guns, struck amazement into the hearts of the delegates. The colonel ordered them to leave the house. They walked out in front of the soldiers and, being escorted beyond the city limits, were sent home, not to return, under pain of punishment.

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The General Assembly had fallen into a state of bitter strife—the snare of Satan. There were two parties and these were quite well balanced. Their power for good was greatly neutralized by one another; their influence for harm was incalculable; the baneful effect spread like a withering shadow over the land. The two parties, at the beginning, chiefly differed in the methods employed to accomplish the same end. The one was governed by expediency; the other by principle. Expediency drew the majority; principle held the remainder. The majority discounted the obligations of the Covenant; the minority held to the spirit and letter of the sacred bond. The party in power precipitated the direful conditions. This they did by repeated breaches of the Covenant. The responsibility for the disgraceful proceedings, and the shameful termination of the Assembly, must be attached to these who made the discussion a moral necessity.

The first shadow that darkened the General Assembly was the discussion of “The Engagement.” Two unscrupulous men—one of them a Covenanter—had made a secret engagement with Charles I. in his captivity. They had promised to seat him, if possible, again on his throne; he in turn had engaged to favor Presbyterianism three years. The Engagement aroused earnest and violent discussion in the Assembly. The element of strife had now entered the Supreme Court of God’s House, and the downward trend was deplorably rapid.

The next vexation was the abolition of “The Act of Classes.” The Act of Classes guarded all places of trust in the government and army. None but those who expressed sympathy with the National Covenant were eligible to places of trust. Here was an unparalleled state of civil affairs; the world had never seen the like. This was a marvelous stride toward the Millennium. The fathers are worthy of all praise for this unprecedented effort to build the national government upon the true foundation of God’s will, and administer it by men in Covenant with Jesus Christ, the *king of kings*. This was the first attempt to erect a Christian government, in which the fear of God should pervade every department and characterize every official. The abolition of the Act of Classes involved a great moral issue which the General Assembly had to meet. Strangely, the Assembly was divided in the discussion; the debate waxed vehement and bitterly passionate. The majority favored abolition, thus opening the flood-gates of moral laxity in official stations. These were called “Resolutioners”, because they offered the resolution to this effect, and supported it: the minority were called “Protesters”, because they protested against it.

[Illustration: *King Charles II.*

King Charles II. ascended the throne in 1651, but was soon defeated and driven from the country by Oliver Cromwell. In 1660 his kingdom and power were restored and he reigned till 1685. His death was sudden and mysterious, poisoning by his brother, the Duke of York, having been suspected. He died at the age of fifty-five. He was called the “Merry Monarch,” though his reign was characterized by atrocious cruelty. Under

him the persecution waxed so violent that some of these years were called “The Killing Times.”]

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The discussion continued year after year till all other interests in the General Assembly were overshadowed. The voice of the Church, once powerful in guiding public issues, was now despised; the tones were guttural, sepulchral, alarming, making the blood run in chills. Then came Cromwell and snuffed the Assembly out like a candle. It was sending forth ill—odored smoke and but little light. Are we surprised that God permitted him to quench the noisome spark?

The Protesters stood for all that the Covenant embodied. The Covenant lay heavy upon their conscience; they trembled at its violation. They saw in the breach of the Covenant the wrath of God against themselves, against the Church, and against the nation. They believed that nothing could compensate for the loss incurred by forsaking the Covenant. They trusted in God with absolute faith; would not resort to expediency for any purpose; temporized with no principle, no, not for greatest advantages. They knew that God could send peace, victory, and prosperity to their country through the Covenant; and that He would send defeat, distress, and desolation through the breach of it.

The Resolutioners grew more and more lax. They may have dreaded to be termed narrow-minded; they may have sought to be reputed broad and charitable. They weakened in morals and influence, and lost power and position when tried by the fires of persecution. They finally melted away and disappeared among the enemies of the Covenant, as snowflakes falling on the mire.

The Protesters were the Covenanters who continued with the Lord Jesus Christ in His temptation. When the Covenant called for martyrs, they were the martyrs. When the cause of Christ demanded witnesses, they were the witnesses. They gave their testimony with a clear voice, and sealed it with their blood. These are they whose crimson path we will now follow, our Lord Jesus permitting, till we come to the last of Scotland's honored roll—the pleasant, youthful, innocent James Renwick.

God requires His Church to receive, proclaim, and defend the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as it is in the Lord Jesus Christ. This obligation is weighty, and the duty is difficult, yet no release is granted. The Church that holds most truth should draw most people; the Church that abandons any truth for any reason must be unsatisfying to honest souls. The organization that embodies the largest measure of God's Word is the largest Church; that which contains the smallest is the least. "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." These are the words of Jesus. In His sight a Church is measured, not by the number enrolled, but by the truth professed, incarnated, and proclaimed.

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. How long did Oliver Cromwell rule Scotland?

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2. How did he deal with the Covenanted Church?
3. How had the General Assembly previously deteriorated?
4. Give the downward steps.
5. What two parties henceforth in the Church?
6. By whom was the truth preserved?
7. What principle governs the true followers of Christ?
8. What distinguishes the largest Church?

XXII.

An illustrious martyr.—A.D. 1660.

Archibald Campbell, the Marquis of Argyle, was the first martyr to suffer at the hand of King Charles II. Twenty-two years had this illustrious nobleman been in special training for the honors of a martyr. He became identified with the Covenanters at the General Assembly of 1638. From that time he brought his influence, wealth, power, and office into the service of his Covenant Lord, and grew mighty in the cause of God. He ripened early in convictions and hallowed experiences, which won for him the highest distinction conferred upon mortals—martyrdom. He was in the prime of his years, at the summit of his earthly career, when he gave his life for the cause of Christ. He was a true warrior; every drop of his blood was electrified with heroism. In meeting death he felt the military spirit throb, but suppressing it he calmly said, “I could die as a Roman, but choose to die as a Christian.”

This was a cedar of Lebanon, a choice tree of God, distinguished for its grace, strength, and height, towering above the trees of the forest. Therefore the first blast struck it with such deadly force. Then descended the terrific storm upon the lesser trees, and the mountain of God's house was strewn with them. The next twenty-eight years were filled with lamentation, and mourning, and woe. Let us look at the condition of the Covenanted Church, as this age of horror settles down upon Scotland.

When Cromwell had reduced Scotland, he attempted to convert the Covenanted Church to Congregationalism. Though he possessed some amiable qualities, yet this ignoble work was attempted in the spirit of a Turk—with the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other. A resolution in favor of Congregationalism was introduced in the General Assembly of 1652. This was voted down. The military suppression of the Assembly at its next meeting was Cromwell's bitter revenge. Yet we must not fail to see the hand of God in the overthrow of the Supreme Court of His House. As with the Temple at

Jerusalem before its destruction, this Temple was already desolate; the glory had departed ere the storm of Divine wrath smote it. The resolution of the "Resolutioners," some years previous, favoring the repeal of the "Act of Classes," was a gross violation of the Covenant, and the proceedings in the Assembly had thereby degenerated into bitter debate. The Assembly had lost its power for good and, therefore, its right to exist; this part of the golden candlestick had exhausted its oil and God removed the useless part.

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The Church did not seem to be seriously affected by the abolition of the Assembly. The process was more like the removal of a tumor than of a vital organ. God can do without the most excellent parts of the Church's organization, when they become diseased and endanger the system with blood poisoning. During the rule of Cromwell, the subordinate courts were mostly unmolested. The synods flourished; the presbyteries were uninterrupted in their work; the congregations enjoyed quietness and refreshing. The strife that existed in the Church was chiefly among the shepherds, not among the sheep. There were 14 synods, 68 presbyteries, and 900 congregations, when the persecution began under King Charles II.

During Cromwell's administration the land had rest; unusual quietness prevailed among the clans; there was a great calm. The four angels were holding the four winds of the earth, till the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads. The people were diligent in waiting upon the Lord; the Holy Spirit fell upon them with power, they became intensely interested in the ordinances of grace. They clustered around the family altar, through the House of God, hallowed the Sabbath, observed the Sacraments, and tarried much in secret prayer. Thus they were unwittingly preparing to enter the dreadful cloud. The vine was taking deep root, anticipating the storm that was in the air.

When Cromwell died the public mind experienced a strange reaction. The politicians of the two kingdoms, Scotland and England, reverting from the severe discipline of the "Protector," launched into every excess of luxuriousness and dissipation. A cry for the return of the profligate king swept the country from London to Edinburgh. Even the Covenanters were loud in calling for the banished monarch. They determined not to be last in bringing back the king. They would, however, renew their allegiance to him only on condition that he would renew the Covenant with them. From France, where he had found an asylum, came his captivating reply, "I am a Covenanted king." He was received with enthusiastic demonstrations.

King Charles organized his government in Scotland by immediately placing in power the most virulent enemies of the Covenanters. Within one month they were ready to execute whomsoever they would. The Earl of Middleton was the head official. When off his guard by indulging in drink, he divulged the king's secret instructions, confessing that he had been commissioned to do three things: (1) Rescind the Covenant; (2) Behead Argyle; (3) Sheath every man's sword in his brother's breast.

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Argyle in those days was one of the great men of Scotland, if not the greatest. He was recognized in the Council as overshadowing his associates, in personal excellence, public-spiritedness, trustworthiness, and executive ability. He was a fine scholar, masterly statesman, wealthy landlord, brave soldier, and faithful Covenanter. His magnificent estate lay in Argyleshire, where the mountains are fringed with lochs in the most picturesque manner. The scenery is charming. One summer evening as our ship passed along the broken coast, a sunset of surpassing beauty scattered its blending colors in rich profusion over clouds, hills, vales, and lochs. The scenery was panoramic and enchanting. But greater gorgeousness than a thousand sunsets fell upon the outlook, at the remembrance of the famous Argyle, himself and his wife and children; his home, hearth, altar, Covenant, and martyrdom. What incomparable grandeur where such hallowed associations throw their colors!

When Charles had first been placed on the throne, ten years previous, Argyle had the honor of setting the crown upon his head. The king at that time feigned great friendship and respect for him. He sought, and received, counsel from Argyle in apparent meekness and with evident appreciation. On one occasion he remained nearly all night with him in prayer, for preparation and fitness to rule the kingdom. He even sought Argyle's daughter in marriage. Such was the former intimacy of the king with Argyle. But once again on the throne, he determined to crush the Covenanters, and Argyle was his first victim.

When Cromwell was conquering Scotland, Argyle fought him till further resistance was useless. He even then refused to sign the declaration of submission, but agreed to keep the peace. This agreement with Cromwell was the main charge preferred against Argyle. He was tried and convicted. The sentence was passed upon him on Saturday; he was executed on the following Monday. He eloquently defended himself. It was a scene highly tragical—this calm, innocent, dignified man, looking into the face of his accusers and over-awing them with his bold vindication, and pathetic appeal for justice. Kneeling down he received his sentence, which was death by decapitation, his head to be placed above one of the city gates, as a gruesome warning to all Covenanters. Argyle arose from his knees and, looking upon his judicial murderers, calmly said, "I had the honor to set the crown on the king's head, and now he hastens me to a better crown than he owns." The real cause of his death was his devotion to the Covenant, and the solemn admonitions he had tendered the king.

His wife, hearing of the decree of death, hastened to his prison. "They have given me till Monday to be with you," said he. The stricken woman was overcome. "The Lord will require it; the Lord will require it," said she in tumultuous grief. "Forbear, forbear!" replied Argyle, "for I truly pity them: they know not what they do." He was filled with inexpressible joy at the thought of honoring Christ with his blood. The fear of death was gone. Heaven was so near; glory was ready to break upon him; the Lord was soon to be seen face to face. He went to his execution like a prince to his coronation. This was the Stephen of that age, and this the persecution that scattered the Covenanters.

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[Illustration: *Argyle's daughter pleading*

Argyle had two daughters, Anne and Mary. The young king, after having engaged to marry Anne, forsook her. She became despondent and lapsed into insanity. Mary, after her father's martyrdom, went to Middleton, the king's commissioner, and on her knees begged the privilege of taking her father's head down from the Netherbow Port, a gate of the city, to bury it with the body. She was refused. Middleton, pointing her to the door, rudely asked her to leave his presence in haste.]

We are soft and puny for lack of hardships. The difficult places and dreaded conditions, through which Christians pass, make life strong, sublime, triumphant, fruitful in good work, resourceful in the Holy Spirit, and glorifying to God.

* * * * *

POINTS FOR THE CLASS

- 1 Who was Marquis Argyle?
- 2 What service had he formerly rendered the king?
- 3 Describe the return of the king from banishment.
- 4 How did the Covenanters receive him?
- 5 What was the nature of the government he established?
- 6 What was his attitude toward the Covenanters?
- 7 Who was his first victim?
- 8 Describe Argyle's trial and execution.

XXIII.

Resisting unto blood.—A.D. 1661.

King Charles had put Argyle to death. The head of the martyred nobleman had been placed above the prominent gate, called the Netherbow Port of Edinburgh. There it remained four years, meeting the public gaze in the glare of day and in the gloom of night. And yet the sight had its charms. The broad brow and beneficent countenance still retained the expression of goodness and greatness. The sun-browned features and the wind-shaken locks, the motionless face and silent lips, made a touching appeal to

the passers-by as they filed through the gateway. Many hearts were softened, many eyes were moistened, many serious thoughts were awakened.

The death of Argyle only fired the ferocious spirit of the king. The tiger had tasted blood; now he must drink deeply of the crimson flood and satiate his cruel heart. With vengeful hatred he reached for Samuel Rutherford, the venerable minister of Anwoth. Neither feeble health nor grey hairs could elicit, the king's compassion. A rock never pulsates with kindness. But ere the officer could lay his hand upon this man of God, his Lord and Master took him home to heaven.

James Guthrie of Stirling, a distinguished minister of Christ, was the next upon whom the king set his cruel eyes. He was seized and thrust into prison to await trial for "high treason." High treason! What was high treason in those days? What had Guthrie done to merit the king's mortal displeasure? Here is the sum of his crimes:

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James Guthrie had preached, spoken, written, voted, and protested against the “Resolution” and the “Resolutioners,” because they had approved of the suspension of the Moral Test for office.

He had written and published a message to the nation, entitled “The Causes of God’s Wrath”, pointing out the many breaches of the Covenant, and pleading for repentance.

He had declined the king’s authority, when cited to be tried for ministerial services which his enemies accounted treasonable.

He had advocated Christ’s supremacy over the Church and over the nation, and had disputed the king’s authority in ecclesiastical matters.

For pursuing this course of action, James Guthrie was charged with “high treason.” But the rudest terms of the world and the basest charges made by men are often turned into heaven’s fairest badges. The iron chains that manacled Rutherford he called “gold”; he called his prison “The King’s Palace.”

How could Guthrie have done otherwise, as a faithful minister of Christ Jesus, in the high calling of the Gospel? Was he not responsible for the honor of the Church? Was he not entrusted with the truth and claims and glory of Christ? Was he not accountable for the souls that waited on his ministry?

Guthrie had an exalted view of the Gospel ministry. He had the eagle’s eye to take in a wide horizon, and the lion’s heart to meet dangers and difficulties. He took his instructions from the Lord, and stood above the fear of man. He lived with the open Bible in his hand; his soul delighted in the deep, broad sublime truths of salvation. The ministers of the Covenant in those days dwelt in the bosom of Jesus Christ, breathed His spirit, saw His glory, pulsated with His love, and were irresistibly carried forward in the discharge of the duties of their high office. They served as the ambassadors of the King of heaven. Only by dishonoring their office, vitiating their conscience, shrivelling their manhood, disowning their Lord, and imperiling their souls, could Christ’s ministers do less than James Guthrie had done. Yet he was charged with “high treason.”

The trial was set for April 11, 1661. Guthrie came before the tribunal, full of peace and comfort. He answered for himself in a masterly speech. His pleading was deeply felt; some members of the court arose and walked out, saying, “We will have nothing to do with the blood of this righteous man.”

He was urged to retract. He was offered a high office in the Episcopal Church if he would accede to their terms. Such inducements he held in contempt. Neither threat nor reward could weaken his loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Covenant. The closing sentence of his defence was tender, fearless, and sublime:

“My lords, my conscience I cannot submit; but this old crazy body and mortal flesh I do submit, to do with it whatever ye will, whether by death, or banishment, or imprisonment, or anything else; only I beseech you to ponder well what profit there is in my blood. It is not the extinguishing of me, or many others, that will extinguish the Covenant and the work of Reformation. My blood, bondage, or banishment will contribute more for the propagation of these things, than my life or liberty could do, though I should live many years.”

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The death sentence was passed upon him. He was condemned to be hanged, his head to be placed above the city gate beside Argyle's. He received the sentence with great composure. The execution was fixed for the first day of June. To those who sat in judgement on his case, he replied:

"My lords, let this sentence never affect you more than it does me; and let my blood never be required of the king's family."

In such cases doubtless the wife through sympathy is the greater sufferer. But Mrs. Guthrie was strong in the Lord, and had courage equal to her trials. She was her husband's faithful helper in the difficult places. Once when duty imperiled his life, and he was in danger of halting, she urged him on, saying, "My heart, what the Lord gives you light and clearness to do, that do." Noble words! nothing wiser or greater could come from consecrated lips.

Just before his death Guthrie was permitted to see his son, Willie, at that time five years old. The father tenderly fondled his child, so soon to become an orphan, and spoke words adapted to the innocent heart. So little did the child comprehend the terrible tragedy, that he could scarcely be restrained from playing on the street while his father was dying. But the meaning soon dawned upon him with melancholy effect. It is said that he never played again.

The execution was public and the streets were thronged. Guthrie mounted the scaffold with a cheerful spirit. He spoke with great deliberation and earnestness for one hour to the immense throng that crowded close to hear his last words. He then yielded himself to the executioner, who placed the death cap over his face. But, as the light of that bright June day was shut out from his eyes, a vision of entrancing joy seemed to break upon his soul. In that flash of inspiration he saw Scotland: The land was covered with the glory of Christ; peace filled all her borders, and prosperity crowned her industries; churches and schools adorned her hills and valleys; the mountains and moors were filled with devout worshipers; the Sabbath poured forth its weekly blessings; the Psalms arose with solemn music in praise to the Lord Jesus. The Covenanted Reformation, in that vision, was triumphant. Lifting the cap from his eyes, he exclaimed with the rapture of a prophet, and with the shout of a conqueror:

"The Covenants, the Covenants shall yet be Scotland's reviving."

[Illustration: *James Guthrie.*

Guthrie was an eminent minister of Christ, and valiant defender of the Covenant, in the reign of King Charles II. He was the second victim sacrificed to the king's rage against the Covenanters. On the day of his execution he wrote a very touching letter to his wife. One quotation: "My heart, I commend you to the eternal love of Jesus Christ.

Pray for me while I am here, and praise with me hereafter. God be with you!" He died on the scaffold June 1, 1661.]

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Thus he died in the full assurance of victory. His head was affixed over the gate, where it remained many years. The sun bronzed the face, the storms smote it, the rains drenched it, the snows dashed against it, the winds swirled the white locks, the stars looked down in silence, the people looked up in sadness, but James Guthrie was heedless of all. The soul was mingling with the redeemed in heaven and rejoicing in the presence of God. Guthrie had gone home to be forever with the Lord.

Little Willie often came and sat near the gate, gazing up at the silent motionless head. He would stay there till night veiled the sombre features of his father. He seemed to be communing with the spirit that now lived above the stars.

"Where have you been, Willie?" his mother would say, on his return. "I have been looking at father's head," he would sadly reply. The intense strain sapped his vitality and he died in early manhood.

Have we a conscience like that of the Covenanted fathers? a conscience that cannot submit to a man? a conscience that can take instructions only from God? The surrender of conscience to man imperils the soul.

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. How did Argyle's death seem to affect the king?
2. Whom did he seize next?
3. What charge was preferred against Guthrie?
4. What was the nature of that "high treason?"
5. How did he defend himself in court?
6. What sentence did he receive?
7. How did he reply?
8. Relate an incident about his wife; his child.
9. What was his death cry?
10. What lesson here regarding a pure conscience?

XXIV.

Source of the Covenanters' power.—A.D. 1661.

The death of Marquis Argyle was the signal for the utter overthrow of the Covenanted Church in Scotland. He was chief among the nobles who in those days stood by the Covenant, and James Guthrie was chief among the ministers. These mighty men quickly followed each other in watering God's vineyard with their own blood.

The issue now between the king and the Covenanters was clear, direct, unmistakable, beyond the possibility of evasion. Both parties set themselves for the desperate struggle; henceforth compromise was out of the question.

The king was determined to abolish the Covenant, obliterate Presbyterianism, establish Episcopacy, and assume to himself the place, power, and prerogatives of the Lord Jesus Christ, as head of the Church.

The Covenanters disputed his right to these pretentious claims at every point. Especially did they challenge his authority over the Church, and testify against his blasphemous presumption. They looked with horror upon his attempt to grasp the crown of Christ, that he himself might wear it. This they resented and resisted as treason against the *king of kings*. They could not submit to the man who clothed himself with Christ's supremacy; that robe of royal priesthood must not be worn by mortal man.

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The Covenanters grew very spirited and fearless in defence of the independence of the Church. When these two leaders, Argyle and Guthrie, had been sacrificed, their enemies doubtless thought the people would be as sheep scattered upon the mountains without a shepherd. But the Good Shepherd was ever with them and gave them faithful ministers, who fed the flock amidst their wintry desolations. The Covenanted Church had noble sons to lift up the head of their fainting mother even when persecution was at its worst.

The Church of Christ was very dear to these Covenanters. They gazed with rapturous eyes upon her high origin, her mysterious character, her indescribable glory. She dwelt in the very heart of God; she was the Bride of the Son of God; she was clothed with the righteousness of God; she was adorned with all the excellencies of character God could lavish upon her. The Church was the habitation of the Holy Spirit. The Covenant was the marriage bond joining her to her Lord and Husband. The love of the Covenanters for the Church of the Lord Jesus arose in flames of jealousy when they saw a mere man, a dissolute and sinful man, attempt to woo her heart and alienate her affections from her Lord and King. They could not endure it. Her honor and purity were worth more to them than life itself.

The testimony of the Covenanters against the wrongs done the Church was both pathetic and vehement, ranging all the way from tender tearful supplication, to pointed fearless denunciation. At times they spoke with meekness and hope, as if standing on the Mount of Beatitudes; again with severity and sadness, as if the voice came from the fiery summit of Sinai. Their eloquence in the sacred office matched the tenderness of the dove and the terribleness of thunder; distilled like the dewdrop and smote like pointed lightning. The sword of burnished steel they wielded to good purpose in self-defence, and the sword of the Word they used with telling effect in the spiritual warfare for their Lord and His Church.

The strength which the Covenanters possessed and employed in battling for the rights of the Church, and the prerogatives of their Lord, amazes the contemplative mind. Their power was always sufficient, new every morning, fresh every hour, inexhaustible under most excessive strains, and mighty to win moral victories everywhere. Whence the power? What was its source?

Explain as we may the fortitude, inspiration, enthusiasm, exalted purpose, indestructible hope, and unconquerable faith of the Covenanters under the cruel treatment and prolonged persecution they endured, we must reach the conclusion that their strength lay in their Covenanted union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Being thus united, the God's strength was theirs.

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Their Covenant they cherished with holy awe; its sacredness lay heavy upon their hearts. It lifted the conscience up into the presence of God. His throne of judgment was continually flashing its brightness upon their eyes. A deep consciousness of God's presence, power, and approval, grew upon them. The dreadful majesty of God overawed them. The sacrificial love of Jesus Christ set their hearts on flames. The Bible to them was teeming with promises, shining with doctrines, and terrible with fiery warnings. They walked on the border line, being often times even more in the other world than in this. The glory of the Lord fell upon them, till some of them were compelled to cry out, "Withhold, Lord; it is enough." Their trials drove them into the arms of their Father; and, oh, how sweet it was to lie on His bosom when cold and hungry, weary and sobbing, amidst the sorrows of this world!

But was this the happy condition of many, or merely of a few, in those days of sad adversity? How with the 100,000 Covenanters while suffering in their homes, or roaming through the mountains, or hiding in the caves? We have a record of a few only, but we are persuaded that many others enjoyed an equal portion of the abounding love of Christ. The promise of God is ever sure: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Terrible days insure extraordinary strength. The Lord had a great harvest in those times, ministers and people, men and women, parents and children—a generation of honored worthies.

[Illustration: *The Grassmarket*.

The Grassmarket was the place where many martyrs were executed. The spot where the gallows stood is now marked by a circular pavement on the street. Here Cargill ascended the ladder, saying that he had less disturbance of mind than when he was ascending the pulpit. From this grim elevation the martyrs made many a touching address, as they uttered their last words, and bade farewell to earth and welcome to heaven.]

Samuel Rutherford was one of that mighty host. His life reveals the secret and source of the Covenanter's strength. He was a small man, not built to endure hardships. He was of a fair complexion, denoting gentleness and a tender heart. He was roughly tossed from his earliest years upon the billows of trouble. An invalid wife claimed his kindest attention and received it with utmost care. The children were laid in short graves, one after another till only a little daughter remained. The persecutor drove him from home, and Church, and people, to live an exile in an unfriendly city. At the age of sixty-one, the wrath of King Charles fell upon him and his life was demanded, but God sheltered him from the gallows.

Through all these trials the heart of this little fair man, with shrill voice, rapid step, and quick eye, was ever an overflowing well of joy and praise. He seemed to live in the very heart of God, walked hand-in-hand with Jesus Christ, and was continually wrapped in the flames of holiest love. It is said that he rose at three in the morning to have five

hours of prayer and study of the Word in preparation for the day's work. He seemed to be always among his flock, yet was he ever ready for the pulpit.

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This minister, like his blessed Master, could be seen, early and late, “leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills,” in his eagerness to visit his people who were scattered widely over the country.

As he walked, his head was erect and his face heavenward; his eyes were feasting on the glory above the sky. His musings cast him into transports of joy in Christ. His Covenant with God exalted his soul into sweetest familiarity with the Lord. The Holy Spirit came upon him in great power and with superabundance of gifts.

Rutherford, having a high-keyed voice, was a poor speaker; but that did not prevent him from holding multitudes spell-bound. They came from afar to hear him tell of the love of Christ. He gazed upon visions of Christ’s loveliness, arose in raptures of joy as he discoursed on Christ’s glory, and seemed at times as if he would fly out of the pulpit in his animation. He was so full of life, of power, of heaven, of glory, and of God, that his words and thoughts and teachings were pictures, revelations, inspirations, apocalypses, scenes in the eternal world, glimpses of the glory of Immanuel and Immanuel’s land.

Here are some of his spiritual chromos as they took color and language from his soul:

“My one joy, next to the flower of my joys, Christ, was to preach my sweetest, sweetest Master, and the glory of His kingdom.

“I would beg lodging, for God’s sake, in hell’s hottest furnace, that I might rub souls with Christ.

“Were my blackness and Christ’s beauty carded through other, His beauty and holiness would eat up my filthiness.

“Christ’s honeycombs drop honey and floods of consolation upon my soul; my chains are gold.”

When Rutherford was on his deathbed, his enemies sent for him to stand trial for treasonable conduct. His treasonable conduct was his fearless preaching of the Gospel and heralding the royal glory of Christ, which included severest denunciation of the king’s arrogant claim of authority over the Church. He replied, “Tell them I have got a summons already before a Superior Judge, and I behoove to answer my first summons; and ere your day come, I will be where few kings and great folks come.” As he lay dying, he opened his eyes, and his familiar vision of Christ and the world of glory breaking upon him with unclouded luster, he exclaimed: “Glory, glory in Immanuel’s land.” With this outburst of joy on his lips, he joined the white-robed throng to take up the heavenly song.

The same source of strength is yet available. Power comes through holy familiarity with God, personal relation to Christ, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Are we full of power in the Lord's service?

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. What event intensified the issue between the king and the Covenanters?
2. Wherein lay the moral strength of the Covenanters?



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3. How did they show their love for the Church of Christ?
4. What aroused their jealousy for the Church?
5. How numerous were the Covenanters at this time?
6. Give the character of Rutherford as a typical Covenanter.
7. Quote some of his sayings.
8. Relate his triumphant death.
9. On what condition may we expect to be strong in the Lord?

XXV.

Expelling the ministers.—A.D. 1662.

“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” In the martyrdom of Argyle and Guthrie blood of the best quality had been shed, and the most precious seed had been sown. Therefore the harvest will surely be great, the field will yield an hundredfold.

The fidelity of Argyle and of Guthrie, their devotion to Christ and the Covenant, reappeared in hundreds of noblemen and in hundreds of ministers all over Scotland. Overawe and subdue the Covenanters by sacrificing their prominent leaders? Their foes mistook their spirit and underestimated their strength, knowing little of the deathless principles of the Covenant that carried them into the service of the Lord, not counting their lives dear for Christ's sake. The Covenanters overawed! Will the sun faint and fail beneath the gale? Will the oak wither at the loss of a few boughs? Will veterans recoil at the first fire? Rather, will not the fighting spirit be roused?

At this time the Covenanters numbered about 1,000 ministers, and 100,000 communicants. They had 900 congregations. The ministers were not all staunch; the leaven of compromise had been working; half the number had become more or less infected. They had weakened in the Covenant and yielded to King Charles under his vicious administration. The political whirlpool in its outside circles was drawing them slowly yet surely toward its horrible vortex.

The sifting time had come for the Covenanters. God knows how to shake His sieve to clean the wheat. He seeks not bulk, but value. Numbers are nothing to Him; character is everything. He would rather have Gideon with 300 men up to the standard, than thirty regiments below it. He preferred one-tenth of Israel to the whole number, and sifted the nation in Nebuchadnezzar's sieve to get the good wheat separated from the inferior.



The Covenanted Church became loaded down with chaff, weevil, shrunken grains, and broken kernels—low grades of religious life—and the Lord shook the bad out of the Church by making it exceedingly painful and difficult to stay in. The way of faithfulness was filled with hardships. God made Covenant-keeping dangerous and expensive. The followers of Christ were compelled to take up the cross and carry it. If true to their Lord, they must go outside the camp, bearing His reproach. If they keep conscience pure, they must accept cruel mockings, scourging, imprisonment, banishment, and death. In this way would God separate unto himself a “peculiar people, zealous of good works.” The others may be of use in degree, yet to prevent general defection and universal declension, God winnows the wheat.

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But who were thrown out of the Presbyterian Church in the reign of Charles II.? Were they not the strong, unyielding, uncompromising Covenanters? Who are these separated from their brethren, and driven like chaff before the wind over mountains and moors? Are they not the zealous defenders of the Reformed faith? the true soldiers of Jesus Christ? To the casual eye the scrupulous, strong-headed, hard-fighting Covenanters were tossed out, and the rest remained at home to distribute the prey; the lax party had the organization and held the Church; the strict party suffered disintegration and were banished. But such a view is only superficial; yea, it is a visual illusion.

The Church of Christ depends not on external organization. She can live without assemblies, presbyteries, or sessions. She can enjoy the fullest measure of the love of Christ without chapels, masses, or glebes. She can have power and render service in any community, without ministers, elders, or deacons.

When the Covenanters were driven out by the persecutor, the Covenanted Church went forth into the wilderness, leaning upon the Lord Jesus Christ her Beloved. She brought with her all the essentials. She had the Bible, the Covenant, the faith, the sacraments, the Holy Spirit, the love of God, and the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The valleys were her places of worship; her meeting houses were fitted up with stone seats, rock pulpits, granite walls, green carpets, and azure ceilings. A row of stones was her sacramental table, and the purling stream her baptismal bowl. The mountains round about were filled with angelic hosts, and the plains were covered with the manna of heaven; the banner of Christ's love waved over the worshipers, and the glory of God filled the place. Such was the Church of the Covenanters in the times of persecution.

The king and his advisers in 1662 required of the Covenanted Church what no faithful self-respecting Covenanter could render. The demands in substance were:

That the oath of allegiance, embodying the king's supremacy over Church and State, shall be taken.

That the ministers in preaching and praying shall not refer to public sins, whether committed by the king or his parliament.

That the administration of the Church shall be, to some extent, according to the Prelatic form.

That the edicts of the king and the enactments of parliament shall not be questioned, even in the light of God's Word.

That the ministers shall comply with these demands, or be banished from their respective homes, parishes, and presbyteries.



Such was the sieve that did the work. What loyal heart could brook these terms? What minister of Christ, bent on preserving honor and conscience, could remain in charge of his church? In comparison with the Covenant, all earthly inducements were as rotten straw, in the judgment of those whose eyes took in the world of glory and rested on the Lord.

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Two hundred Covenanted ministers quietly accepted the penalty. On the last Sabbath of October, 1662, they preached their farewell sermons. The churches were crowded; the grief of the people was indescribable, heart-groans broke into loud lamentations. "There was never such a sad day in Scotland as when the poor persecuted ministers took their leave of their people." Two hundred more stood their ground and fought the battle a little longer. These were forcibly ejected. Thus that desolating blast smote four hundred congregations of Covenanters.

The minister with his wife and children departed in deep sorrow from the pleasant manse and the loving people. Tender ties were sundered and holy endearments sacrificed; the comforts of life were abandoned, and safety, shelter, and supplies left behind. The minister could have retained all had not his conscience been so tender. But the servant of the Lord may not be bribed. Offer the true minister of Jesus Christ money, comfort, pleasure, honor, houses, lands—all that the world can give to corrupt his conscience in his calling, and you will get a laugh of scorn that will freeze the blood.

[Illustration: *John Welch, ejected from his church*

John Welch, of Irongrey, was a grandson of the famous John Welch, of the First Reformation. He was one of the 400 Covenanted ministers who were driven from their pulpits by the king's edict in 1662. His congregation, overwhelmed with sorrow, followed him till they came to a brook where they kneeled down and prayed. Mounting his horse he rode away while they rent the air with their bitter wails.]

The winter storms were descending upon the man of God and his unprotected family, as they walked across the glebe to return no more. They went out, not knowing where they were going. Night may fall upon them in a dreary place; to-morrow may come to them without a roof, or a table, or a fire. Winter may drive them into a cold cave, where possibly some good-hearted shepherdess may find them, and share with them her pail of milk and oaten cakes. Withal no complaints. They have taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods for the sake of Christ. By them the reproach of Christ was accounted better than the riches of Egypt.

Alexander Peden was one of the fighting ministers. He preached till forced to leave his pulpit. On the day of his farewell service the congregation was convulsed with grief. Peden had to restrain the wails of the people again and again. Coming down from the pulpit after service, he shut the pulpit door and struck it three times with his Bible, saying with great emphasis, "I charge thee, in my Master's name, that no man ever enter thee, but such as come in by the door as I have done." The pulpit kept the solemn charge; no one entered there till after the persecution; it remained empty twenty-six years.

Prelatic ministers were sent to fill the 400 vacant pulpits, but the people refused to hear them. The time of field-preaching had now come; the Conventicles in the mountains and moors became the order of the day.

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The ministration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—that river of God which makes glad the city of the Lord—had now reached the precipitous places where it was broken upon the rocks; yet it continued to flow, and even increase in volume and strength. The preaching by these ministers in the desolate places was powerful, impetuous, majestic, thunder-like amid the mountains, making the kingdom tremble. Great trials make great men.

We live in an easy age. Ministers may now have pulpit and salary on easy terms. They can preserve a good conscience without special self-denial. No providential issue now to separate the false from the true. But the ease of conscience in the Church's ministry, and the easy terms of communion in her membership, may change God's gold and make it dim with dross, and thus necessitate a furnace. The Lord may suddenly spring an event upon His Church, that will compel the true to be very true, and the false to be very false. Where will we stand in case the trial come?

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. What effect had the death of Argyle and Guthrie on the Covenanters?
2. How does God keep His Church pure?
3. Why is the sifting process needed?
4. Can the Church survive the loss of her external organization?
5. Describe the Covenanted Church in the mountains and moors of Scotland.
6. What did the king require of the ministers?
7. How did the Covenanters receive his restrictions?
8. How many pastors were driven from their churches?
9. What may again occasion a sifting time?

XXVI.

The field-meetings.—A.D. 1663.

Middleton, the king's commissioner, had dictated to the Covenanted ministers how they should conduct their ministry. They boldly declined his authority over their work in the Gospel. He then laid down conditions upon which their pastoral relation must depend.

These conditions have been stated in the foregoing chapter. They may be summed up in three brief sentences: Acknowledgement of the king's supremacy over the Church; Agreement to refrain from all public criticism of the king; Willingness to conduct public worship as the king directed.

Such were the terms on which the Covenanted ministers might continue their work. They were given one month to reach a decision. The conflict of interests that tried the famous 400 ministers none knew but God. Home, wife, children, salary, comfort, tender ties, future supplies, and the welfare of the congregation—oh, how much was involved in that decision! Can the husband, the father, the shepherd, the watchman arise and forsake all? Can he suspend the high calling, sunder the holy ties, abandon the field and flock, and go forth, not knowing whither he goeth? can flesh and blood endure the ordeal?

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But look at the other side. Will the servant of the Lord take orders from man? Will the ambassador of God submit to be muzzled? Will a pastor of Christ's flock hold his position for what he finds in the flesh-pot? Will the preacher of righteousness connive at wickedness? Will the herald of Gospel liberty become a slave to vilest men? Such was the other outlook. Which way will the man of God take?

The Lord made the way of faithfulness hard to travel. Only they, who, like Caleb, followed the Lord wholly, could walk therein. To make this choice, the love of the Lord Jesus Christ had to arise in the heart and surge through all the veins, above love for wife, or children, or house, or lands, or brethren, or sisters, or self; and it must consume all these in the flames of its vehemence.

And the Lord made the wrong way, also, hard to travel; yea, impassable, except for those whose sin against light made them exceeding sinful. What more vile, degraded, contemptible, and criminal, than a minister of Christ, that is leased to an earthly power, purchased with things that perish, and controlled by designing men? In this manner would God separate the precious from the vile and put them far apart.

[Illustration: *Preaching in the mountains.*

The Conventicle preachers were men of dauntless courage. Their souls had firmly grasped the tremendous verities of the Gospel and Kingdom of Christ, and the Word of God was as fire in their bones. They chose texts that resounded like artillery. Just before Cargill was offered up, he preached from the words: "Gird Thy sword on Thy thigh, O Most Mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty!" How that seraphic preacher swayed the people with that discourse has not been told.]

On November 1, 1662, three-fourths of the Covenanted ministers were brought to this valley of decision. The king's edict took effect upon those who had been settled within the past thirteen years; the others, for the time, were exempted. About 700, therefore, stood at the parting of the ways. Of this number about sixty per centum chose to suffer with Christ, that they might reign with him; the rest, being faint-hearted, abode by the stuff. All honor to the Church that could muster such a proportion of self-sacrificing, ministers! These men accepted the challenge and went forth, like soldiers, into the field of action, saying, "We will continue the conflict till we overcome, or hand it down in debate to posterity."

Four hundred ministers expelled from their congregations! four hundred churches left vacant! four hundred families rendered desolate! forty thousand of God's sheep, and as many lambs, left to wander in the wilderness without a shepherd! who can estimate the extent of such a calamity? who can reckon the sorrows, sufferings, and stupendous losses, public and private, caused by this iniquitous act of the king?

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But the four hundred ministers were not silenced. Who can silence tongues of fire? They were scattered, but not conquered. They took shelter where it could be found—under friendly roofs, within dismal caves, under dripping moss-hags, in the open fields, and on mountain tops. They wandered over desolate moors and on lonely ridges. They suffered hunger, weariness, sickness, exposure. The rains of summer drenched them and the snows of winter stiffened them. They were clothed with plaids, shawls, and threadbare garments. They hastened from place to place to elude pursuers, and wherever they went they carried their Bibles. The Bible to them in their desolation was meat, drink, light, shelter, fellowship,—everything the soul could wish.

These men of God were devoted preachers, they loved to preach, had a passion for preaching. The Word of God that carried them into such excess of suffering was in their bones as fire, an unquenchable flame; and in their hearts as rising waters, an overflowing river. As Christ their Lord and Master preached in summer and in winter, in the house and in the field, to as many as came, so preached they to one soul, or to ten thousand.

The king sent detachments of his army over the country to compel the people, who had lost their pastors, to attend services under the ministers of the Episcopal Church. They refused. The new clergymen preached to empty pews in many of the Covenanted parishes. The Covenanters instinctively discovered the haunting places of their own ministers, and thither they repaired for their preaching. They traveled far that they might hear the precious Gospel, in its richness and fulness from consecrated lips. They were hungry for the Word of God and willingly incurred hardships and dangers to get a feast. These meetings at first were small; in time they developed into the great Conventicles at which thousands assembled to worship God.

A Conventicle Sabbath was a solemn day. The time and place having been fixed beforehand, the people were notified in a very private manner. A kind of wireless telegraphy seemed to have been operated by the Covenanters. The news spread and thousands came at the call. The place selected was usually in the depression of a lonely moor, or under the shelter of a desolate mountain; yet any spot was dangerous. The king had issued successive proclamations against the Conventicles, and his troops were constantly scouring the country in search of them.

The services were of necessity sensational. At the appointed time the people were on the ground. Many came a great distance, some of them traveling under the shades of night. From every direction they converged. Fathers and mothers with their sons and daughters were there. The young and the old were equally full of zeal, and the women were courageous as the men. On the way they would cannily scan the country from the hilltop, to see if the dreaded dragoons were in sight.

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The hour for the service having arrived, the audience sat down upon the grass or on the rocks. The minister took his stand on a prominent spot. Sentinels occupied elevated points, from whence they could detect and report the approach of troops. The mountain extended its friendly shelter over the congregation. The sun shed its light upon them like the smile of their heavenly Father. The sky spread over them as the canopy of God's high throne. The winds swept through the bushes and over the heather with regaling freshness. This was God's sanctuary built without hands; here His people worshiped in spirit and in truth.

The minister from his granite pulpit would catch the inspiration. The waiting people, the earnest faces, the gleaming eyes, the solemn hour, the charming scenery, the occasion, the danger, the privilege, the responsibility, the presence of God, the nearness of heaven—how much here to awaken all that was noble, courageous, and overpowering in God's messenger! The fiery, pathetic, powerful eloquence, that echoed among those rocks and swept through the coves, was beyond the reporter's skill. Here heaven touched earth; eternity overlapped time; glory overspread the worshipers. These were days when that which is most sacred, awful, and sublime burdened men's souls. Here holy oratory distilled like dew, breathed like zephyrs, crashed like storms, leaped like devouring flames. The recorded sermons of these ministers are yet regarded as the very marrow of Christian literature.

Have we the zeal of these fathers for the house of our God? Are we carried to the place of worship at the appointed hour by our love for Jesus Christ? One glance at the enthusiasm of the Conventicle Covenanters would surely make the present generation blush.

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. State the demands Commissioner Middleton made upon the Covenanted ministers.
2. How would such a demand agitate the mind?
3. How long had they to decide?
4. What proportion remained faithful under the trial?
5. In what way did these continue their ministry?
6. Describe a Conventicle service.
7. How will present zeal for Divine services compare with their zeal?

XXVII.

The Covenanters' communion.—A.D. 1664.

The Lord Jesus Christ loves His Church with love that arises into flames. "I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy." The Church is His Bride, His well-beloved, His only one; He has bestowed His heart upon her.

The love of Jesus for His Church has ever been excessive in intensity. His blood was shed for her redemption. Love laid Him on the altar, where His life was consumed for her sake. It laid all Covenant blessings at her feet, placed the angelic hosts at her service, made the universe tributary to her welfare, opened heaven for her admission, prepared her throne at the right hand of God, and gave the eternal ages to her for service and enjoyment, in Jesus Christ her Lord. And this love has never abated; His voice resounds across the centuries, falling upon her ears in sweetest accents, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

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The Lord Jesus asks the Church for reciprocal love. It is His due; Christ is worthy; nothing less than vehement love will satisfy the Divine heart. The apostle, in dread of its subsidence, cries out, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." How readily the Church, in interest and zeal, becomes cold. Her spiritual pulse sinks till it is scarcely perceptible; the flames disappear, and the coals lie hidden in their own grey ashes.

With such conditions the Lord is vexed. He gently chides His inconstant Bride, saying, "Thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen; repent, and do the first works." Then in unwaning faithfulness He tenderly soliloquizes: "Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her; and she shall sing as in the days of her youth." The Covenanted Church was now in the wilderness; the Lord had brought her hither, that He might woo her back to Himself, and revive her first love. Here He spake to her heart the words that rekindled the fires of her earliest and strongest devotion to the Covenant, that holy contract of her marriage to the Lord.

The loving fidelity of the 40,000 Covenanters, or more, who had been deprived of their ministers by King Charles, was severely tested. The Lord Jesus, in His crucial providence, was to them as a refiner's fire; their love was sorely tried in the terrible heat.

The first question that appealed to the heart was concerning comfort and convenience. Their churches were occupied by other ministers. There the people could have preaching, hear the Word, listen to prayers, sing Psalms, and receive baptism and the Lord's Supper. True, the services were spiced and ornamented with details, which the Covenanters disliked, because they were unscriptural. But could they not find hidden manna on the sand, and kernels of wheat in the chaff? Could they not get sufficient food in the new ministrations to sustain their souls? Could they not reach heaven by the new road as certainly as by the old? Such were the inquiries that appealed to their love of ease. These sturdy sons of the Covenant said, "No." They said it, too, with emphasis like the lightning that strikes the oak. They said, "Public worship, not in all parts according to the Book of God, is corrupt; we will not participate in such services, for the Lord has said, 'Cursed be the deceiver, that sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing.'"

The second question was concerning the imminent dangers that attended their own services. Their meetings were held in distant places; in the lonely mountain, on the homeless moor, in the swampy moss, in the dark glen, among the rugged rocks, and in the dreary cave—just wherever they could find a place to worship God in peace. They had no roof for shelter, no walls to break the storm, no fires for heat. Attending these meetings involved travel, weariness, hunger, exposure, loss of sleep, shivering in the cold, every

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physical strain, besides the risk of life, liberty, and property, at the hands of the enemy. These heroic sons and daughters of the Covenant said, "We will go; if we perish, we perish; though He slay us, yet will we trust in Him." These Covenanters would not habituate themselves to sinful conditions, nor permit their conscience to be drugged with the love of ease. They had much of the spirit of Paul; they counted all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. They consulted not with flesh and blood; not even with their own flesh, which was often wasted with hunger, fatigue, and pain; nor with their own blood, which was frequently sprinkled on the heather and mingled with the mountain rill.

The Conventicles, held in these desolate resorts, were awe inspiring, especially the Communion. Many of the people journeyed at night toward the selected spot, for troops were overrunning the country to shoot them down, and day travel was extremely dangerous. They therefore followed their path in the light of the stars, or under the pale moon. They came from all directions, converged like streams at the place appointed, and spread out like an overflowing tide. Sometimes they numbered 5,000, and more. Men and women, young and old, came and sat down on the broad green, in quietness and with unwonted gravity. The men in their kilts, plaids, and caps; the women in shawls and plain clothes; the boys and girls beaming and bright, and dressed in their best—all gathered together, sitting down on the grass or on the rocks. What an inspiration to the minister, when opening his Bible he gazed upon the earnest faces and caught the gleam of those expectant eyes!

[Illustration: *The Covenanters' communion.*

These communions were very spiritual and solemn. The people came in great numbers into the solitudes of the mountain and moorlands, and there renewed their Covenant at the Lord's Table. The danger added much to the awe and reverence of these meetings.]

Saturday was Preparation day for the Communion. Preparation services sometimes lasted till sunset. Several ministers were usually in attendance. At night the grave old elders would meet in clusters, under the shadow of a rock, or in a cave, or beside the murmuring brook, and spend hours in prayer. With the dawn of Sabbath the people were astir, and soon appeared again on the grounds. Then began the solemn services that lifted their souls into the heavens of joy, and brought them into the glorious presence of Jesus Christ.

We may receive an impression of the greatness of these occasions, from memorials yet to be seen on some of the sacred places where the Communion was held. Certain stones near the town of Irongrey remain as witnesses of these inspiring solemnities.

The stones were evidently on the ground, as witnesses of the wonderful doings of God and His people, in the days of the Conventicles. Oh, that they could

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speak! This place is in the bosom of a mount. Here we find an open space, like unto an amphitheater, large enough to seat thousands. On this ground are two rows of stones each row high enough for a seat, and long enough to accommodate fifty persons. Between them, other stones stand upright, which evidently supported planks, on which the bread and wine were passed in front of the communicants. At a little distance are two other rows of similar construction. Here were accommodations for 200 at one table service. On one occasion, it is said, sixteen tables were served, the number of communicants on that day being no less than 3,000.

At one end of these four rows stands a small table of stone, from which, no doubt, the minister gave the bread and wine to the people. Here he made the table addresses, that were so sweet and refreshing to these weary souls. What solemn days these must have been. Hungry hearts found a feast in the desert. The wells of salvation overflowed; the palm trees of sacred ordinances shed their sweet fragrance, spread forth their shade, yielded their fruit, for these followers of the Lamb. The presence of the Lord was deeply felt. These Covenanters worshiped here in spirit and in truth. Their prayers ascended on the wings of the winds; the sound of the Psalms mingled with the song of the birds and the chant of the brooks. The eloquence of the preacher—now rising like the storm, now falling like a spring shower—now consoling the sad, now arousing the strong—now exhibiting the loveliness of Jesus, now depicting the woes of the lost—in its ever-varying notes of tenderness and power, echoed along the hillside, and died away in the distance. Some of these sermons are yet in print.

These have been regarded, by certain writers, as the greatest days of the Church since the times of the apostles. How bright and refreshing the sunshine that poured down from the spiritual heavens upon these Covenanters! The desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose. Heaven was very near. One who survived the persecution said, that if he had any part of his life to live over again, he would choose these years.

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. How should the Church respond to the love of Christ?
2. In what way does her love often fail?
3. How does Jesus reprove His people for growing feeble in love?
4. How has He sometimes undertaken to revive His Church's fidelity?
5. What two questions did the Covenanters face in attending Conventicle services?



6. Describe a Conventicle Communion.
7. What memorials are found at Irongrey?
8. How may we have the same rapturous joy at communions now?

XXVIII.

The home invaded.—A.D. 1665.

Home, by Divine appointment, is a haven of rest for the weary father, a palace of honor for the virtuous mother, a citadel of defence for the helpless children. How sacred, pleasant, and ennobling is the Christian home, when modeled after the Divine pattern! It is a little paradise, a miniature heaven, a vestibule of the everlasting habitation; it fronts on the borders of the glory-world.

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The home of the Covenanters in those days was mostly the abode of virtue and intelligence, of comfort in the Holy Spirit and abundant grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. The knowledge of God was the light in which the household dwelt. The language of the Shorter Catechism was the mother tongue; the children were dieted on Psalms and porridge; the family altar was indispensable; the Holy Bible was appreciated more than bread, and King David's poetry more than roast lamb. The father's prayer at the hearthstone was vital to the household as the breath of their nostrils; morning and evening the voice of parents and children mingled together in the worship of God.

To the family that kept Covenant with God the Sabbath came with peculiar loveliness and inspiration. On Saturday evening special preparation was made for the coming of the Lord's Day; even the turf was piled beside the fire, the potatoes were washed and in the pot, and the water carried from the spring; "the works of necessity and mercy" were reduced to a minimum. A solemn hush fell upon the fields, and a heavenly light gleamed upon the house, as the sun ascended the sky. The noise of labor had ceased, and the human voice was suppressed. The notes of a plover, or the bleating of a lamb, or the lowing of a cow, might be heard making the quietness all the more impressive. The morning came pouring out blessings upon the people, like Christ Jesus on the Mount of Beatitudes, filling every open heart with sweetness, holiness, and inspiration. The blessed morning came to lead the father and mother, with their sons and daughters, up into the mountain of God's House, to stand in the presence of the Lord of glory, and absorb the brightness that would shine in their faces for many days to come. The Sabbath was the great day of the week in the Covenanter's home.

Let us get a glimpse of these homes of the Covenanters, as they suffered when the storms of persecution swept the land. But will not the dwelling-place of the righteous be protected from harm? Will not the Lord, in His glorious presence, hover over them as a cloud by day and as a flaming fire by night? Hath He not said, "Upon all the glory shall be a defence?" Shall the cruel persecutor then have power to tread on that sacred threshold? May the ruthless slayer enter this little sanctuary, where God and His children dwell together in mutual and unquenchable love? Will the wicked be permitted to draw the sword, and quench the coals on the hearth, and the fire on the altar, with the blood of the worshipers? The answer is found in the story of the sufferings of the Covenanters.

God had now begun judgment at His own House. He was testing the fidelity of His people. The test must touch every point, cover every relation, and reach the degree of suffering that satisfies His mysterious will. God cares much, even for houses, fields, harvests, garners, comforts, conveniences, earthly ties—He cares much for all these as they affect His people. He cares infinitely more, however, for their moral cleanness, spiritual growth, untarnished fidelity, unconquerable faith, and everlasting honor. Therefore He permits the furnace to be heated, and sometimes heated sevenfold; yet He brings them out of the flames without the smell of fire on their garments.

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The persecutors, heartless as the rocks and frigid as the iceberg, had equal disregard for the rights of men, the delicacy of women, and the innocence of children. A few incidents will show the general conditions. Nor are these exceptional cases; thousands, yea, tens of thousands suffered in like manner.

[Illustration: *The Howie home, Lochgoin.*

The house is located in one of Scotland's solitudes. Here the Howies have lived for 28 successive generations, keeping the altar fire burning since 1178. The present house is modern, bearing the date 1858; John Howie, the present occupant, (1912), is the 28th lineal descendant of one of the first settlers. We had the pleasure of meeting this genial Scotchman in his meadow, as he was making hay one fine August day. He immediately laid his fork aside, and brought us to his house, where we were deeply interested in a fine collection of souvenirs of the martyrs and their times.]

A Home at Lochgoin. This is a very ancient residence of the Covenanters. The Howies have lived here since 1178, the twenty-eighth generation now occupying the house. The building is stone, one story high, with a loft. While the persecution raged, this was a chief resort of the Covenanters. Occupying a solitary place, with a vast out-stretch of waste moorland on every side, this house was like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land: the pursued often found shelter under its roof. Hither Peden, Cameron, Renwick, Paton, and many others repaired, and found a cordial welcome. On one occasion a group had come to spend the night in prayer. They felt comparatively secure, because a storm was raging over the moor. The clouds were pouring down torrents, and the fitful gusts were playing wildly across the broad expanse of moss and heather. These men of God knew how to wrestle with the Angel of the Covenant, and betimes continued their prayers till the break of day. The pursuers had scented their game; in the morning a detachment of cavalry rode up to the house. The Covenanters escaped through the back door. To give them more time, Mrs. Howie stood in front of the soldiers, and disputed their entrance into the house. A burly dragoon attempted to push in. She grappled him by the shoulder, whirled him about, and shoved him out with such force that he fell to the ground. Her Covenanted guests all escaped, and the soldiers, after a fruitless pursuit, withdrew. For this heroic service Mrs. Howie suffered much and her life was sought. Often she had to leave her home, and spend whole nights in the cold, damp moor, with a tender babe on her breast.

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A Home near Muirkirk. James Glendinning was a shepherd whose humble cottage escaped not the notice of the persecutor. Knowing the danger that enshrouded his home, he arose one evening from his knees after family worship, and, walking softly across the floor, uncovered the cradle and gently lifted the babe, which he tenderly placed on the mother's knee, saying, "I commit you, my dear wife, and this sweet babe to the fatherly care of the Great Shepherd of Israel. If my days be cut short, God, the God under whose shadow we have taken refuge, will be to you a Husband, and to this child a Father." Not long after this, the home was beset by a company of soldiers. That very night his wife had constrained him to retire to his hiding-place near by. The soldiers rudely rushed into the house, expecting to pounce upon him as their prey. Not finding him they were enraged. Seizing the infant, they held the struggling form up in the face of the frantic mother, and, flashing a glittering sword, threatened to cut it into pieces, if she did not reveal the hiding-place of her husband. At that moment the father, who had been attracted to the door, seeing the manoeuvres, rushed in. His soul was on fire; he was just then strong as ten men; he feared not consequences. "Hold, ye murderers! Back! back!" cried he, waving his sword in their faces. He sprang toward his babe and rescued it, while he used his sword with telling effect upon the intruders. The soldiers retreated, leaving the floor sprinkled with their blood. The family soon afterward removed to Holland.

A Home near Closeburn. James Nivison was a farmer whose hospitable home afforded comfort and shelter to many who were houseless. He was an unbending Covenanter. Nothing could daunt his noble soul. Being threatened with trouble and loss, he once replied, that if the turning of a straw, in obedience to unprincipled and arbitrary rulers, would save him from harm, he would not comply. His wife was of equal heroism. His home was so often beset by soldiers in search of him, that he had to retire to the solitudes. He one day said to his wife, "My dear wife, stern necessity demands our temporary separation. God will be with us both—you at the home, and me in the wilderness." "I will accompany you," she firmly replied; "I will accompany you. If the archers hit you, I will be there to staunch your wounds and to bind up your bleeding head. In whatever danger you may be, I will be at your side, your affectionate wife, in life or in death." They went out together. Sadly they closed the door of their pleasant home, to wander, not knowing where. The mother carried a tender little babe in her bosom. Their first retreat was found in the woods, then in different caves. They made a basket of twigs for the infant. The mother, sitting in the mouth of the cold cavern, would rock her little darling, and sing the soft lullabies that mingled with the sighing of the winds. They survived the persecution.

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Sweet home! The Covenanted home is but an annex of heaven. Home is God's institution, endowed by Him with the wealth of infinite grace, furnished with holy ordinances, and consecrated with the blood of Christ. Do we appreciate the value, the dignity, and the advantage of a Covenanted home? Do we keep the home bright, cheerful, and inspiring, by worshiping our Covenant God, and honoring the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ?

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. Describe a Covenanted home of the olden time.
2. What distresses fell upon these homes?
3. Can we account for these afflictive providences?
4. What is the explanation?
5. Give an incident at Lochgoin; Muirkirk; Closeburn.
6. How should a Covenanted home be appreciated?

XXIX.

The battle of Rullion green.—A.D. 1666.

A young Covenanter once stood on the battlefield of Rullion Green, pensively pondering over the battle and the heroes whose blood had watered this soil. Two centuries and more had fled since the engagement, yet the field appealed to the responsive heart with powerful eloquence. The beautiful slope, the verdant pasture, the grazing flocks, the broad valley, the distant hills, the expansive sky, the summer charms—all blended into a strange enchantment around the young man's soul. The quiet meditation quickened the heart; the heart aroused the imagination; the imagination revived the scenes of November 28, 1666, by which this field was made memorable in the struggle of the Covenanters for civil and religious liberty. He was deeply impressed with the value of the Covenant, which was sealed with the blood of the noble warriors who sleep on this hillside. There he vowed, that if God would ever give him a home of his own, the home would be called *Rullion green*. God gave him a home; a beautiful residence, adorned with this name, graces the city of Airdrie to-day.

The battle of Rullion Green had its cause many days previous to the actual engagement. We will get the better view by following the chain of events.

Four years before this, to the very month, four hundred ministers had been expelled from their churches, because they would not forsake their Covenant, renounce Presbyterianism, and follow the instructions of King Charles and his Council, in the administration of God's House.

The Covenanted people, deeply in sympathy with their ministers, refused to wait on the preaching of the curates—the ministers of the Episcopal Church sent by the authority of the king to supply the vacant pulpits.

A series of proclamations was then issued to bring the Covenanters into subjection, each proclamation being severer than the one preceding.

The people were enjoined to attend their own parish church, warned against going to the Conventicles, and threatened with fines, imprisonment, and exile for frequenting what the king termed “unwarrantable preaching.”

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To enforce the royal will and overawe the Covenanters, troops were stationed among the people and commissioned to plunder and kill the disobedient at will.

The sufferings of the Covenanters, at the hands of the soldiers, were indescribable. Their homes were invaded; their property was confiscated; their flocks and herds were driven off; their families were broken up; the aged and delicate, the women and children—all who would not yield to their demands endured personal violence. The country groaned and staggered under the cruelty authorized by King Charles, and practiced by his agents.

Conditions became desperate; the wise were driven mad; patience ceased to be a virtue; endurance was at the point of conflagration. Thousands had to flee and keep in hiding, to escape personal harm and even the shedding of their blood.

At this juncture of events, four young Covenanters, fleeing from place to place for safety, came to a dwelling, where they found four dragoons preparing to roast an old man on a gridiron, to extract information concerning his money. The sight shocked every noble feeling; their manhood was aroused, and their courage was greater than their prudence. They challenged the conduct of the soldiers, and were answered with drawn swords. The Covenanters came off best. They rescued the aged victim, disarmed the soldiers, and marched them off at the point of their own sabers. In the fight one of the Covenanters fired a pistol, wounding a dragoon. That was “the shot that echoed around the world,” and re-echoed, till it resounded over the green valley of the Boyne, among the rocks of Bunker Hill, and along the banks of the Appomattox.

The Covenanters knew that they had now precipitated a conflict, that would call armies into the field. The king’s measures have hitherto been severe, but now the furnace will be heated seven fold. The Covenanters must now meet force with force, or be utterly crushed. They attempted to raise an army. Next morning, the four men were increased to ten, and a second encounter resulted in the capture of a detachment of the king’s regulars, with one dead. The second day volunteers swelled the number to 250; the prospects were growing bright. Another engagement resulted in the surrender of Sir James Turner, the local commander of the royal forces. Thus far the operations greatly encouraged the Covenanters; they now hoped to be able to redress their grievances, and compel the king to withdraw his army, thus bringing the horrors of those times to an end.

King Charles hastily prepared to meet the new conditions. He termed the uprising, “A formidable insurrection.” He massed his troops to crush “the rebels.” The Covenanters spent their time moving from one town to another to increase their forces. Colonel James Wallace, a brave officer of considerable military experience, was chosen commander. The recruits were not numerous. They were also without discipline, and inefficiently armed, carrying muskets, pistols, swords, pikes, scythes, pitchforks, and flails.

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[Illustration: *Gravestone at Rullion green.*

The stone, three feet by two, stands at the head of this battlefield. Beautiful firs pensively wave their soft branches over the grave. Here lies the dust of the 50 Covenanters who fell on the sloping field in front of the stone. On that day it was covered with sleet. The fallen lay all night, some stiffened in death, and others benumbed with the Sharp November winds. The next morning, the good women of Edinburgh came, with shrouds for the dead, and blankets for the living, all having been stripped by the foe.]

At Lanark they remained a day, renewing their Covenant and issuing a Public Declaration, stating that the object of their appeal to arms was the redress of their grievances. The next day they manoeuvred, coming in contact with detachments of the enemy. The weather was unfavorable; rain, snow, sleet, and wind united in drenching, chilling, and depressing the unsheltered and underfed men, and turning the roads, over which they marched, into deep mire. When the morning of the 28th arrived, the day of the battle, Colonel Wallace had only 900 men at his command.

The Covenanters were moving around the foot of the Pentland hills, a few miles from Edinburgh, when General Dalziel, with 3000 of the king's troops, emerged from a pass behind them, and offered battle. Wallace accepted the challenge. He formed his men for action on the hillside, having the advantage of the higher ground. The gentle slope extended down to the spot where Dalziel's war-horse was pawing the ground. The sun was sinking behind the hills. The day was cold and the country was covered with sleet.

Dalziel ordered an attack by his cavalry. The horsemen formed, each with blade in hand, and moved rapidly up the rising ground. Colonel Wallace immediately placed his mounted men in readiness to receive them. The space between the armies was about half a mile. The Covenanters grimly watched their approach. The waiting moments were burdened with awe, but the Covenanters knew how to turn awful moments into power. They carried the Psalms in their hearts. Some one began to sing. The Psalm was pensive and the tune solemn. All hearts were responsive; from 900 voices a wave of sacred music rolled up the mountain-side against the heavens. The very sentiment seemed to be the stirring of hearts, that were consciously entering into a forlorn battle:

"O God, why hast Thou cast us off?
Is it for evermore?
Against Thy pasture-sheep why doth
Thine anger smoke so sore?"

They sang three stanzas. While the echoes were dying away, the brave Colonel ordered a charge. Adown the field his horsemen dashed. They struck the enemy with terrific force, broke their ranks, and hurled them back upon their own base.

Dalziel ordered another charge. The troops plunge forward to retrieve their lost honor. Over the blood-stained snow they gallop; nearer and nearer they approach the stern line awaiting them on the hillside. Wallace gives the word, and the Covenanters again strike the gleaming column with clash of swords, once more rolling it back upon itself in confusion.

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A third time the cavalry charged up the hill, and a third time the Covenanters hurled them back. Dalziel at last moved his entire force forward, which, like a tidal wave, carried all before it. The Covenanters were swept from the field leaving 50 dead. The battle was lost, but not the cause. These heroes fought well. The defeat was certain, in their own minds, even before a shot was fired; but believing that the cause of liberty now demanded a sacrifice, they freely offered up themselves on the altar.

Rullion Green! How euphonic the name! What music in the words! What clustering memories to awaken all that is heroic and ennobling in our hearts! De we appreciate the fruits of the fields, fertilized with the blood of the fathers? Are we loyal as they were to the Covenantants? Do our lives arise into the heroic spirit, and take on the moral grandeur exhibited by them?

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Points for the class.

1. What led to the battle of Rullion Green?
2. Who commanded on each side?
3. What was the respective strength of the forces?
4. Where was the engagement fought?
5. Describe the battle. How did it issue?
6. For what were the Covenantants contending?
7. What fruits of their sufferings do we now enjoy?

XXX.

The oppressor's revenge.—A.D. 1667.

The sun was sinking behind the Pentland hills, when the last assault was made upon the Covenantants at the battle of Rullion Green. They, being driven from the field, were pursued without mercy till night kindly threw its shadow over the scene of carnage. About 30 were slaughtered in the flight, and 50 taken prisoners; many of these were speedily executed.

The stars timidly arose and shed their pale light over the crimsoned field. The night was bitterly cold. The dead lay scattered over the frosted ground, and the air was burdened with the groans of the dying. All had been barbarously stripped of their clothing by the

ruthless conquerors. The blood of the dying was chilled in their veins, ere it oozed from their wounds and froze upon the ground. The tender-hearted women of Edinburgh came the next day, with clothes for the living and winding sheets for the dead. An upright stone, two feet by three, marks the place where these soldiers of Christ, in number about 50, calmly sleep, awaiting the resurrection of the just. Beautiful fir trees swaying their soft branches over the grave seem to be singing the dirge of the fallen heroes.

Heroes! This was a forlorn battle. The battle that must be lost, that other battles may be won, demands heroes of the noblest type; and here were the men. They were willing to fight in the presence of defeat. Listen to their resolution just before the battle: "We will follow on, till God shall do His service by us; and though we should all die at the end of it, we think the giving of a testimony enough for all."

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The little army of the Covenanters, broken and bleeding, was now scattered upon the mountains and completely disorganized. One of these men, wandering alone, came to a cottage at midnight. He was bleeding, hungry, weary, utterly exhausted, ready to die. He asked for food and shelter. The pitiful request was denied, for such kindness, if the authorities were informed, would endanger the family; and the penalty might be expulsion, imprisonment, or death. No cup of cold water for this thirsty soul; no spark of charity to warm this shivering child of the Covenant. Feeling the chill of death already creeping through his veins, he touchingly said, "If you find me dead in the morning, bury me on the hillside, looking toward my home beyond the valley." In the morning he was found dead, under an oak beside the house. He was buried as he had requested. A stone, with an interesting inscription, marks the grave.

After this battle the Covenanters were subjected to a period of horrors that exhaust description. This brief warlike demonstration was by the government called "The Pentland Rising." The men who had placed themselves under Colonel Wallace, for the redress of their wrongs, had come from the adjacent counties. General Dalziel was immediately sent with an army to punish the people of these districts. Here we must draw a veil and cover the more shocking barbarities and hideous indignities; the unmentionable crimes practiced upon these Covenanters, who already had suffered beyond the limit of patience; upon the men, women, and children who were as inoffensive, as they were helpless, beneath the monstrous tyranny of King Charles and his brutal soldiers.

The story of pillage may be painted in flames; the story of revenge may be recorded in vitriol; the story of carnage may be written in blood; but the story of the horrors that befell the Covenanted families, especially the delicate and helpless members of the household, must not be told. The manner in which fathers, husbands, and brothers stood and died on the door-step in defence of mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters may be related; but the inhumanity that followed must not be mentioned. Purity shudders at the horror; the heart sickens at the thought; the eyes instinctively turn away.

General Dalziel quartered his army upon the Covenanters, sent troops in all directions to raid the country, disinherited those who were engaged in the "Uprising", subjected to arrest all who were suspected, and reduced the people to extremest poverty. The soldiers lived in the homes of the Covenanters, compelled the family to provide boarding, and proudly tyrannized over the household. They devoured, or destroyed the crops; slaughtered, or drove off the flocks and herds; tortured, imprisoned, and shot the people according to their pleasure. The prisons were overcrowded with old and young, men and women, the sickly and the dying.

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Three men under the king were chiefly responsible for these atrocities, and all three were reprobate Covenanters. Their names can be mentioned only with abhorrence and detestation; the Earl of Lauderdale, the Earl of Rothes, and Archbishop Sharp. Lauderdale, formerly known as John Maitland, one of the Scotch Commissioners at the Westminster Assembly, shined in that bright galaxy as a morning star; but like Lucifer, son of the morning, he fell from the glory-crested height. Rothes was the son of the Earl of Rothes, celebrated for his active part in the Covenant of 1638. Archbishop Sharp was a Covenanted minister, previous to the restoration of King Charles. Such were the chief actors in these scenes of infernal cruelty practiced upon the Covenanters. Surely they could not have been so atrociously wicked, had they not been previously exalted to heaven in privilege and by profession. Satan could not have been the devil, had he not first been an angel.

[Illustration: *Rutherford's monument at Anwoth.*

Rutherford's pastorate at Anwoth was pleasant and prosperous. His church was filled with people, and his home was the abode of peace. Yet that blessed home was disturbed by the persecutor. Rutherford was condemned, and compelled to abide at Aberdeen as a prisoner, "six quarters of ane yeir." The glory of the Lord was there upon him, and he called his prison, "Christ's Palace."]

Some prisoners taken at Rullion Green were, after their execution, utilized by the government, for the intimidation of the Covenanters. Their heads were set up in public places in various cities, as a gruesome warning to all others. These men, when on the way to Rullion Green, had paused at Lanark to renew their Covenant. There they lifted up the right hand to heaven, making their appeal to God. Now those right hands are cut off and set up on spikes over the gates of the city—a grim admonition to the living.

Some of the prisoners were reserved for the slower process of law, and the severer operations of cruelty. John Neilson became conspicuous through the tortures he endured, the noble spirit he displayed, and the death by which he glorified God. He was a man renowned for his wealth, as well as for great-heartedness. The preceding year Sir James Turner, when commanding the king's troops, despoiled him of his property; yet when that lawless officer had been taken prisoner by the Covenanters, Neilson pleaded for him and saved his life. Now Neilson is in his hands. Will the kindness be returned? Ah, kindness returned! Rather feel for a pulse in the cold granite or look upon the white marble for a loving smile.

The Court questioned Neilson, but his answers were not satisfactory. They tortured him, but could extract nothing further. They thrust one of his legs into an iron boot, and crushed it with a wedge, driven between the flesh and the iron; yet nothing but groans were extorted from him. Filled with wrath, because a confession involving others could not be elicited, they passed the death sentence on him. He went cheerfully to the scaffold.

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Hugh M'Kail, a young minister of Jesus Christ, was another victim. He was a man mighty in the Scriptures and full of the Holy Spirit. His lips were touched with a live coal from the altar of God, his eloquence was seraphic. In one of his impassionate outbursts he had said, "The Church in all ages has been persecuted by a Pharaoh on the throne, a Haman in the state, and a Judas in the Church." Archbishop Sharp heard of the terse statement. The lightning had struck the mark. Sharp appropriated the caricature, and saw Judas personified in his own character. He never forgave the young minister.

M'Kail was put on trial for his connection with the Pentland Rising. He candidly confessed his part in the insurrection. The Court then demanded information concerning the leaders; he had none to impart. They then tortured him with the iron boot; the only response was groans. He swooned in the dreadful agony.

This noble young minister was sentenced to die. He received the sentence with serene happiness. When on the scaffold, he was filled with unutterable joy; his victory over fear and death was complete; his soul was clothed with immortal bliss. His highest hopes were now turning into realizations that were ten thousand times brighter and more glorious than his most sanguine expectations. The Lord Jesus was at his side; the heavens were opening to receive him; in a few moments his face would shine in the light that dazzled angels, and his voice would mingle in the chorus of the redeemed round about the throne. What wonder that he poured forth the ecstasy of a transfigured soul in these his last words: "Welcome, God and Father; welcome, sweet Jesus, the Mediator of the new Covenant; welcome, blessed Spirit of grace, and God of all consolation; welcome, glory; welcome, eternal life; welcome, death. O Lord, into Thy hands I commit my spirit; for Thou hast redeemed my soul, Lord God of truth."

These were the winter days of the Church. But the winter was like summer in fruitfulness. How nobly did she endure the inclement season and produce fruit of excellent quality! We are enjoying the summer time of peace and comfort, of privileges and advantages. How much more abundant should be our labors of love than even theirs, in the Lord Jesus Christ! A comparison, we fear, would put us to great disadvantage, perhaps to shame.

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. What cruelties practiced on the Covenanters on Rullion Green field?
2. Describe the wounded Covenanter seeking shelter.
3. What horrors followed the battle?
4. What atrocities committed by Gen. Dalziel's troops?



5. What three men were in great part responsible for the cruelties?
6. Describe the sufferings of John Neilson.
7. Relate the sufferings of Hugh McKail.
8. How did he meet his death?

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9. What special advantages have we for serving God?

XXXI.

Indulgence, the six-fold snare.—A.D. 1665.

The Covenanters, after the Pentland Rising, were placed under martial law. Every district was garrisoned and overrun with troops. The military, having been empowered to plunder, pillage, and punish at their caprice, did not hesitate to shoot down innocent people without trial, leaving them weltering in their own blood. King Charles accounted the Covenanters rebels to be subdued with fire and sword. He was determined upon their subjection, or destruction. “Better,” said one in his service, “that the land bear whins than whigs.” The Covenanters were called whigs; the whins were worthless bushes.

The Covenanters rebels! Be it remembered that Scotland was under a Constitutional government, and the Constitution was embodied in the Covenant. Also, the king and the people had accepted the Covenant on oath. Yet in the face of all this, King Charles attempted to rescind the Covenant, destroy the Constitution, and assume absolute power. Ah, was not Charles the rebel? Was not he the traitor, the revolutionist, the autocrat who attempted to turn things upside down? The Covenanters were the Old Guard, who stood for law, justice, government, and constitutional rights, on the accepted basis—God’s law and Covenant. Nor did the Old Guard ever yield the field; they occupy it yet.

True, the Covenanters did decline the king’s authority in certain particulars! But were they not justifiable? A glance at the situation will solve the question.

The king, having expelled the Covenanted ministers, substituted others of his own choice. The Covenanters refused to hear them.

The king restricted the Covenanters to their own parishes in public worship. They went where they pleased.

The king forbade marriages or baptisms, except by Episcopal ministers. The Covenanters went to their own ministers for these services.

The king ordered them to observe the Episcopal form of worship. They believed this to be unscriptural, and refused.

The king commanded the people to deliver up their ministers to the authorities for punishment. This they would in no wise do.

The Covenanters rebels, because they declined the king's authority in matters like these? How could they have done otherwise? Two courses lay before them; resist the tyrant's will, or submit as his slaves. Blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave them light, strength, courage, and victory. These fathers of the Covenant chose to suffer and be free; to endure the king's wrath and keep a pure conscience; to disdain every suggestion of compromise and continue the conflict. The invitation to come down, and consult on the plains of Ono, was answered by its own echo—O, no.

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The Covenanters, like the Israelites, flourished while in this great tribulation. They were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. The more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew. Their ministers were numbered by hundreds; the people, who assembled in Conventicles, by tens of thousands. Oppression could not crush them; the furnace, though heated seven times more than it was wont, could not singe their garments. Their adversaries became alarmed and began to devise other measures. Their device was diabolical wisdom. Satan, having had more than three thousand years since he failed on Israel in Egypt, was now better up to his work. The king proposed to indulge the ministers. The royal indulgence was surely a product of the bottomless pit. The snare was laid six times and caught many unwary souls.

[Illustration: *Anniversary of A conventicle.*

The people of Scotland delight to do honor to the memory of the martyrs. In many places they hold anniversary meetings on the grounds made memorable by some signal event in the times of persecution. Here is the picture of one of these thrilling meetings, held on the scene of a Conventicle near Loudon-hill.]

The First Indulgence was granted in 1669. The expelled ministers were offered pardon, and permission to return to their churches on certain conditions stipulated by the king. Forty-two accepted the Indulgence, and by that very act conceded the king's right to expel, and to recall, the ministers of Christ, at his own pleasure. The great principles for which they had suffered were thereby sacrificed—the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ over His Church, and the Church's independence under Christ.

What were the conditions upon which these ministers returned? We give them in substance:

1. They must attend the meetings of the Prelatic ministers.
2. They must permit none of the people from other parishes to attend their services.
3. They must refrain from speaking or preaching against the king's supremacy.
4. They must not criticize the king or his government.

The Indulgence, with such conditions, was accepted by forty-two ministers. Are we surprised? Do we wonder that so many relaxed under the strain of persecution, and returned to their own vine and fig tree? Let not censure, from her bowers of ease, be too severe. The hardships of these men were great, the sufferings excessive, the outlook dark. They were worn and sickly; they were filled with pain by exposure to storms, living in caves, and sleeping on the ground. Their lives were in jeopardy every hour. Yet it must be said that these ministers sacrificed much for which they had long

and nobly battled; they capitulated on terms dictated by the enemy, surrendered their rights as the ambassadors of Christ, and accepted conditions that made them bond servants of King Charles. They were caught in the snare.

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The Second Indulgence was issued in 1672. Eighty ministers were selected by the king for this bait, and most of them swallowed it. Yet among the eighty some inflexible men were found on whom the deceitful offer had no effect. They knew how to endure hardness as good soldiers. One of them on receiving the legal notice at the hand of an official said, "I cannot be so uncivil as to refuse this paper offered me by your lordship." Then letting it fall to the ground, he added, "But I can receive no instructions from you, regulating my ministry; for then I would be your ambassador, not Christ's." He was immediately thrust into prison, and continued there till death. The Third Indulgence was another snare, equally deceitful and injurious.

The other three were offered by King James VII., and all were of the same nature, only each being more lenient, seductive, and Satanic, than the one preceding. The Indulgence was a dragnet, drawing large hauls of hungry fish, and leaving them to squirm on the shores of sinful compromises.

The Covenanters who remained faithful were greatly diminished. The ministers were decimated until few were left. Yet as the banner of the Covenant fell from the hand of one, it was snatched up by another, and defiantly given to the breeze. At no moment did the battle cease for lack of heroes.

The Indulgence did what sword, pillage, prison, torture, exile, gibbet—all could not do; it shattered the Covenanted forces and wasted their power. The fiercest fires of persecution only fused the elements, and consolidated the mass of metal. But the fruit of Indulgence was debate, dissension, distraction, division, and decimation. The tree is known by its fruit; the fruit was bad, very bad. The non-Indulged charged their brethren with betrayal of Christ and His cause. The Indulged retorted, that the king's offer opened the way back to the churches, and refusal to accept protracted the evil times. Thus the host of God was divided against itself; Judah against Israel, and Israel against Judah. Archbishop Sharp had boasted, that by the Indulgence he would throw a "bone of contention" among the Presbyterians. He judged rightly.

The cause of Christ still demands self-sacrifice. Fidelity to Jesus Christ is hard on the flesh; it always has been and always will be. The friendship of this world is enmity against God, and against all who sincerely love God. To make terms with the world is to forfeit God's love. The Church has lost much of the heroic heart, the militant power, the iron nerve, and the fire of the Holy Spirit, by reason of ease, indulgence, compromise, and inordinate desire for the friendship of the world. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us."

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. Why were the Covenanters styled rebels?

2. How did the king try to suppress them?

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3. On what points did they refuse to obey the king?
4. Were they justifiable? On what grounds?
5. How did the persecuted people increase?
6. What new attempt to divide and destroy them?
7. How many Indulgences were offered?
8. On what terms were ministers permitted to return home?
9. What effect had the Indulgences on the Covenanters?
10. What present danger along the line of Indulgence?

XXXII.

The field meetings under fire.—A.D. 1679.

The king's Indulgence did double work on the persecuted ministers. The Indulgence was a surgical knife that removed the spinal nerve of the Indulged; and it was a sharp sword launched at the heart of those who refused the Indulgence. The proclamation that offered pardon announced desperate measures against all who declined the offer. The persecution thereby grew fiercer and the sufferings more insufferable.

The Indulgence thinned the Covenanted ranks; many ministers withdrew from the Old Blue Banner with its golden motto: "*For Christ's crown and covenant.*" Home! sweet, sweet home had charmed the heart. The Indulged were no more worthy of being called Covenanters. They had lost zeal, courage, place, and name among the worthies. Some however repented and returned to the solitudes. Their home, as they had crossed the threshold, was to them no more like home, but a gloomy prison, a dreary waste, an intolerable place, because the heart condemned them, and God was greater than the heart. These went back to their brethren, to endure hardness as good soldiers for Christ's sake. Persecution with all its hardships, in comparison with the Indulgence, was a paradise while the love of Jesus Christ enamored the soul.

The ministers who remained loyal to the Lord and the Covenant were pursued by men who drove like Jehu. The Conventicles, however, continued. The Covenanters swarmed on the grounds where the preaching was appointed. They refused to hear the curates of the Episcopal Church, and likewise the ministers who had returned through the king's Indulgence. The latter had forfeited their confidence and respect. The people, forsaking the parish churches, traveled to the moors and mountains for their

preaching. There they found their own ministers, the unconquerable ambassadors of Christ, the uncompromising messengers of God.

A price was placed upon the heads of these ministers, by the government of King Charles. They were hunted like partridges upon the mountains. Let them be brought in, dead or alive, and the prize will range in value from \$500 to \$2,000. The people were commanded to refuse them bread, lodging, fellowship, all kindness and support, that they might perish without a helping hand or a consoling word. To attend their preaching was accounted a crime to be punished by the judges, an act of rebellion worthy of imprisonment or death.

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The ministers were not overawed, nor were the people intimidated. Field-preaching characterized the times. Conventicles were more numerous and the attendance larger than hitherto. It was estimated that, on a certain Sabbath, an aggregate of 16,000 attended three meetings held in one county. Men, women, and children traveled miles and miles to these sequestered spots among the hills and on the moors, in defiance of all threats and in face of all clangers. There they stayed through the long Sabbath hours, listening to the rich, sweet Gospel of Christ, while the ministers spoke with earnestness as from the very portals of eternity.

The Conventicles flourished in spite of every effort to suppress them. The king and his counselors became alarmed and sent the "Highland host," a vicious army of 10,000 strong, to extinguish these hated Field-meetings. The Covenanters suffered at their hands, as by a foreign invasion. The military atrocities, horrible before, were now barbarous in the extreme. "Fire, and blood, and vapors of smoke" marked the path of these brutal men as they raided the country. Yet the Conventicles were not extinguished.

To meet the conditions of increasing terror, the Covenanters came to the Field-meetings armed and ready for self-defence. Sentries were stationed on the hills that towered above the worshipers, and the discharge of a gun was the signal of danger. At the approach of soldiers, the people quietly dispersed, if escape were possible; if not, then the armed men drew out and lined up for battle. Many a time the worship of God was suddenly turned into the clash of arms.

The Lomond-hills formed good places for these meetings. On one occasion, a large concourse of people had assembled amidst these sheltering heights. Rev. John Wellwood, a young minister whom the soldiers could not catch, was feasting these hungry souls with the Word of life. Some of his sermons are still extant. They are rich in nourishment, nervous with earnestness, and flashing with fiery eloquence, he lived in the dark days, but died exclaiming, "Now, eternal light! no more night, nor darkness to me." While the people this day were feasting on his words, the signal announced the approach of the dragoons. The people quietly moved up the "brae." The soldiers rode up and delivered five volleys into the crowd. The balls whizzed among the men, women, and children, but none were hurt. A ledge of rock prevented an attack. The captain commanded them to dismiss. "We will," they replied, "when the service is over, if you promise us no harm." The promise was given, yet the treacherous troops dashed upon the hindmost and captured eighteen.

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An attack was made also on a Conventicle held at Lillies-leaf moor. A large number of people had assembled. The famous John Blackader was preaching. The alarm shot was fired when the minister was in the middle of the afternoon sermon. He at once closed the service with a few words to allay fear. The people stood in their places, showing no excitement. The troopers came up at full gallop and formed in battle line in front of the Covenanters. The soldiers were astonished at the calmness of the people. A sullen pause followed; not a word, not a movement. The officer broke the silence, shouting, "In the name of the king, I charge you to dismiss." The reply was immediate: "We are here in the name of the King of heaven, to hear the Gospel, and to harm no man." Such unexpected calmness and fortitude wilted the officer. Another painful pause. What next? No one knew. The suspense was suddenly broken by a woman who stepped forth from the midst of the Covenanters. She was alone; her movements showed decision; her eyes were flashing; her face was flushed with indignation. She went straight for the officer, seized the bridle close to the horse's mouth, and wheeled him about, vociferating, "Fye on ye, man; rye on ye; the vengeance of God will overtake you for marring so good a work." The officer was dazed as by an exploding shell. The woman was his own sister. He was crest-fallen, and withdrew the dragoons, while the people went home unharmed.

[Illustration: *Battle of Drumclog*.

The battle of Drumclog was fought on Sabbath, June 1, 1679 Claverhouse with 240 dragoons attempted to break up a Conventicle near Loudon-hill He was met by 250 Covenanters under Hamilton, and put to rout, leaving 20 dead on the field. The Covenanters had 1 killed and 5 wounded.]

One of these armed Field-meetings was held at Drumclog. It was a sweet summer Sabbath, June 1, 1679. The Covenanters had come in large numbers They covered the green sward, sitting among clumps of moss and heather. They were far from the abode of man; nothing there to break the solemn stillness of the Lord's day, except the notes of the heather-cock and the plover. Loudon-hill stood near like a mighty champion. The air breathed softly across the field, and the sky bent silently over the worshipers; the hearts of the people were lifted up in sweet Psalms that echoed over the hills, and a serene joy filled all The Holy Spirit came mightily upon the people; the Lord was among them. Thomas Douglas was the minister. He was one of the three mighties, who afterward issued the Sanquhar Declaration disowning King Charles II. as a tyrant. The sermon was half finished when a signal shot was heard. Mr. Douglas immediately closed the Bible, saying, "You have the theory; now for the practice." 250 resolute men hastily sprang to their feet, lined up, and marched off to meet Claverhouse who was coming with 240 dragoons. The Covenanters halted on an elevation to await the attack. While waiting they sang the 76th Psalm to the tune of "Martyrs." The Psalm was very appropriate; well fitted to arouse the military spirit:

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"In Judah's land God is well known,
His name's in Israel great;
In Salem is His tabernacle,
In Zion is His seat."

The troops galloped forward and fired. Their fire drew a vigorous response. The Covenanters aimed with deadly precision; the fighting was desperate; hand-to-hand encounters were frequent. The troops broke and fled, leaving 20 dead on the field. The Covenanters had 1 killed and 5 mortally wounded. Hamilton, Hackston, Paton, Balfour, Cleeland, and Hall were the noble captains that won the day in the name of the Lord of hosts.

These fighting Covenanters, who could fight as well as pray, have won for their posterity the privilege of worshipping God in peace. There is nothing now to hurt or annoy in God's mountain. How punctual, diligent, and appreciative ought we to be in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ!

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. What was the double effect of the Indulgence?
2. What new effort to suppress the Conventicles?
3. Give the character of the Highland host.
4. How did the Covenanters prepare for self-defense?
5. Describe the Conventicle at the Lomond-hills; Lillies-leaf moor; Drumclog.
6. Who were the Covenanted captains at Drumclog?
7. How should we appreciate peaceful worship?

XXXIII.

A massacre.—A.D. 1679.

The victory at Drumclog was followed up by the Covenanters with vigor. Claverhouse, with his broken ranks, was hotly pursued. He fled from the field on a wounded horse; nor did he halt till he reached Glasgow, 25 miles away. The pursuers followed him half the distance. He began that Sabbath with the beat of drums, and ended it with defeat and shame.

Next morning these Covenanters had doubled their number; 500 men stood harnessed for war, determined to overtake the foe, renew the fight, and win other victories. That forenoon, with Hamilton in command, they boldly dashed into Glasgow to strike the broken forces of Claverhouse; but they were repulsed. They retired to an encampment much dispirited. As was usual with the Covenanters, they began to enquire into the moral cause of this reverse. They felt that God for some reason was displeased. The investigation revealed the fact, that Thomas Weir, who had joined them with 140 horsemen, had been a dragoon in Dalziel's ranks at Rullion Green, where the Covenanters were defeated.

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A committee was appointed to wait on Weir and investigate his case. They were roughly received. He gave no satisfaction for having been on the enemy's side on the former occasion. The Covenanters were quick to reach Bible conclusions and at once classed him with Achan who in the days of Joshua brought defeat upon Israel. Weir with his detachment was summarily dismissed. A resolution was then adopted that none, who had forsaken the Covenant or were guilty of the sins of the times, be admitted into the army. This was a heroic step, a return to the solid basis, the old Covenant grounds that had been abandoned in 1650, when the "Act of Classes" was rescinded, and the doors opened to admit unfaithful men into places of public trust. Sir Robert Hamilton, at the head of half a regiment of Covenanters, thus nobly attempted to rebuild the walls of Zion and set up the gates, even in troublous times. These were men of God who knew the Lord of hosts, in whose eyes fidelity is everything and numbers are nothing. They were afraid of nothing but sin.

The martial spirit of the Covenanters rapidly spread during the week; they flocked to the standard that was again lifted up for *Christ's crown and covenant*.

Beneath the waving folds of the Blue Banner 5,000 men had rallied when Saturday's sun was sinking in the west. They had unbounded confidence in the cause for which they adventured their lives; a holy enthusiasm knit them together. They were ready for battle "with hand strokes," as they said to Hackston, one of their noble captains. They had accepted the responsibility of war and were determined to win or die. The Sabbath was approaching. They planned to enter into its sweet rest and offer the appointed worship; then on Monday morning, march upon the enemy and strike for freedom. But, alas, how quickly fairest prospects may be covered with darkness! The sun set that evening behind an ugly cloud.

Hamilton had held a council of war on Thursday. He had the benefit of the wisdom and advice of Donald Cargill, Thomas Douglas, John King, and John Kidd, ministers eminent among the Covenanters. That Council adopted a public Declaration, stating their reasons for taking up arms. This statement embodied:

1. Their purpose to defend the true Reformed religion;
2. Their adherence to the Solemn League and Covenant;
3. An acknowledgment of public sins and duties;
4. A denunciation of Popery, Prelacy, and Erastianism.

The Declaration was proclaimed to the army and published to the world. On these impregnable grounds the little army was consolidated; they felt themselves strong in the Lord, and able in His name to fight His battles.



On Saturday night, when quietness had fallen upon the camp, John Welch arrived with an additional force of 440 men. This should have been an inspiration, but it was the very opposite. Welch was a prominent Conventicle minister; “a diligent, fervent, successful, unwearied preacher.” He was a fearless man; a price equal to \$2,000 had been set upon his head by the government. Such a man should not be disparaged. Yet, he it was who introduced the confusion of tongues that resulted in the utter dissipation of the army, and the consequent defeat of the Covenanters at Bothwell Bridge.

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Welch was dissatisfied with the Declaration. It was too forceful for him. He would tone it down, that it might soothe the king, placate the Duke of Monmouth, condone the Indulged ministers, and restore Weir to the ranks. He presented a new Declaration as a substitute for the one already in force. For two weeks, even till the enemy was lining up for battle, he agitated the question. The majority was always against him. At last Hamilton, the commander, contrary to his convictions, yielded for the sake of peace. He hoped by this means to save his distracted army, that with solid ranks he might meet the foe and win the fight. But he sadly mistook policy for wisdom. The battle of Bothwell Bridge was lost that moment. The battle was lost before a shot was fired. Hamilton surrendered before he met Monmouth. He had displaced the truth for the sake of harmony. His flag is already furled, there will be no fighting now except by the heroes of the van-guard. The Divine favor that gives victories has been withdrawn. The martial spirit has fled from the leader and his men are weak as women.

On Sabbath morning, June 22, 1679, the king's army, 15,000 strong, was massed on the north bank of the Clyde; on the south side, the Covenanters numbering 5,000 confronted them. The narrow bridge lay between them. Hackston, Paton, and Balfour, with 300 Covenanters stood at its south end. The rest of the army was behind them on the moor with gunshot, standing in eleven solid squares; six banners waved proudly over them. They had one cannon, two detachments of cavalry, and a body of skirmishers.

Monmouth orders his troops across the bridge. A solid column pushes forward broad as the bridge is wide; step follows step in that dread procession, when lo, a spreading puff of smoke rises on the bank in front, and a cannon ball is hurled among them, while muskets pour forth volleys of death. The bridge is strewn with bleeding men and the broken ranks fall back. The Duke orders another charge. A second column moves hurriedly over the gory path of their fallen comrades to meet the same fate. Again and again, the attack and the repulse. They attempt to ford the river, but Balfour with his sharpshooters hurls them back, while many a brave man lies down in the cool stream to rise no more. The bridge drips with blood; the Clyde is crimsoned. After three hours the Covenanters' ammunition fails, and Monmouth rushes the bridge. The Covenanters meet them with swords, but are overpowered; they fall back upon the main body and find it unfit for action.

[Illustration: *The battle of Bothwell bridge.*

The Battle of Bothwell Bridge was fought on Sabbath, June 22, 1679 The king's forces numbering 15,000, under the Duke of Monmouth, assailed 5,000 Covenanters under Robert Hamilton. For three hours Captain Hackston, with 300 Covenanters, held the bridge. At length their ammunition was exhausted, and the royal army forced their way across. The Covenanters took flight and were savagely slaughtered in the stampede 400 were slain, 1,200 captured, and the rest scattered. A granite monument has been erected at the bridge in honor of the Covenanters.]

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The royal army was soon across. They line up for the general engagement, but hesitate to give battle; they have tested the courage of the Covenanters, and have a dread of results. Hamilton is awaiting his opportunity. His intention is to rush the enemy into the river. He orders a forward movement, but the order fails. Wherefore does his army hesitate? Ah, many of the officers have disappeared. Terror is creeping over the masses like a death chill. Welch and his friends have left; Weir with his 140 horsemen takes fright and flees; Hamilton loses his head and his cavalry stampedes; the army is thrown into confusion; all is lost. In the fight only 15 were killed; in the flight 400 were slaughtered.

Monmouth, seeing the panic, ordered a pursuit which resulted in a running butchery, a horrid massacre. A body of 1,200 surrendered; these were compelled to lie flat on the ground all night. If in their wounds or aches they moved head or hand, an admonition was delivered from a musket. A change of posture, then a sharp crack, a whizzing bullet, a bleeding victim, a death struggle, a pallid corpse.

That was a sad Sabbath for the Covenanters. Defeat, dishonor, and distress turned the day into a painful memory. The calamity, doubtless, arose out of the compromise of Covenanted principles. Welch's wisdom proved to be foolishness; Weir's strength, weakness; Hamilton's compliance, defeat.

The sacrifice of truth can never be productive of good. Loss, sorrow, defeat, and death are in the train of any policy that buries principle.

Points for the class.

1. How did the Covenanters follow up their victory at Drumclog?
2. What reverse did they suffer?
3. How did they account for it?
4. What was the growth of their army?
6. Who introduced confusion into their ranks?
7. What was the subject of debate?
8. How did it terminate?
9. Describe the forces at the battle of Bothwell Bridge.
10. Describe the battle and its issue.
11. What lesson may we learn from this defeat?

XXXIV.

The Covenanters' prisons.—A.D. 1680.

“They who profess Christ in this generation must suffer much or sin much,” exclaimed one of the Scottish martyrs. The enemy was in power and every means was employed to compel the Covenanters to abandon their Covenant with God, break relation with Jesus Christ, and thus destroy their testimony. To accomplish this, the king and his courtiers subjected these inoffensive people to cruelties most shocking. While they remained steadfast in their Covenant, the violence increased; when any of them relaxed, one step of defection necessitated another, till they stood in the enemy's camp. The same process is ever true.

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The massacre at Bothwell Bridge brought upon the Covenanters extreme distress. Their sufferings hitherto had been as a continual dropping on a very rainy day, with fitful gusts striking here and there; now a hurricane sweeps the country, bringing ruin and desolation in its broad path. Every available force was put in operation for the utter annihilation of the Covenanters. Their ardor for Christ and His royal rights must be quenched in their blood, and their testimony to the truth must be silenced. The king, the courts, the army, the bishops—all were combined for the overthrow of the Presbyterian system of faith and the Covenant of God. Upon the ruins of the temple of liberty, erected by the Reformers, King Charles had determined to build his castle of absolute despotism. He knew that the glory of Christ's supremacy would never fade out of the skies of Scotland, while Covenanters preached, prayed, and sang Psalms; nor would his despotism flourish while there were Covenanters to challenge his impious claim of authority over the Church, and iniquitous attempt to rule man's conscience. Hence the desperate attempt to overawe and suppress them.

After the battle of Bothwell Bridge, the first stroke of excessive cruelty fell upon the 1,200 prisoners who had surrendered on the field. They lay all night upon the cold ground huddled together like sheep, surrounded by a strong guard. It was a night of horror. The sentinels watched every motion, and shot at any hand or head that dared to stir. In the morning they were marched from their mossy bivouac, leaving the green field dotted with crimson pools, and strewn with the dead who had received fatal shots; there they lay in garments rolled in blood.

The prisoners were tied together, two and two, and driven to Edinburgh, as cattle to the slaughter. The journey was dreary, during which they suffered from hunger, weariness, cruel mockings, and barbarous treatment. In the Greyfriars' churchyard, there yet remains the small enclosure, into which these prisoners were driven like so many dumb animals. Here they were kept to await their sentence. Twelve hundred men, with scarcely comfortable standing room, without decent clothing, without sanitary accommodations, without proper food, without shelter, detained for months within these stone walls under a merciless guard—who can conceive of their sufferings? They had been stripped, all but naked; the hard ground was their bed; the sky was their roof; they were exposed to the heat of day, and the chill of night; the rains of July drenched them; the snows of November blanketed them.

During these wearisome months the number of prisoners constantly grew less, and mostly by melancholy means. Some of them subscribed a bond confessing themselves to be rebels and promising unconditional obedience to the king. The hardships of their condition, the threats against their lives, and the entreaties of relatives overpowered conscience. They were released only to be reproached, distressed, tormented, and pillaged at home, by the soldiers who overran the country. Their unholy bond sacrificed their peace with God, and brought no protection from man. Such is the effect of every compromise of God's people with the world.

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Disease also reduced the number. Sickness arising from exposure, neglect, and ill fare, wrought havoc with their lives. The living watched carefully over their dying companions, as they lay on the cold hard ground, destitute of every earthly cordial and comfort. But the Balm of Gilead they had in plenty; the consolations of God were abundant; the promises distilled sweetness upon their lips; prayers filled the place with incense; the Psalms were as the music of heaven in their ears; the gates of glory opened wide for the dying; pain, sorrow, and darkness vanished from the soul, as it went forth from the earthly tabernacle to enter into the Eternal City.

Quite a few were condemned to death and executed on the scaffold. Prominent among these, were John Kid and John King, two ministers of Christ. They received their sentence with serenity and went hand in hand, to the place of execution. Their conversation was cheerful. Their outlook was far beyond the scaffold, and the city towers, and the high hills outlined on the sky, and even beyond the glowing sun that was then smiling in the west. What magnificent scenery their eyes must have rested upon, as they now had come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the innumerable company of angels, the spirits of just men made perfect! Already in triumphant faith they were walking the golden streets, with palms in their hands crowns on their heads, and songs in their hearts. Kid was a witty man, usually overflowing with innocent mirth; even in sight of the gallows his humor was insuppressible. Looking into King's face he made a pun on their own names, saying, "I have often heard and read of a kid sacrificed, but I seldom or never heard of a king made a sacrifice."

Four hundred of these Covenanters remained unmoved by threats, promises, sufferings, or protracted hardships. The painful weeks and months might wear them out, but they continued firm in the faith and testimony, resolved to honor their Lord and His Covenant while they had breath. They remembered the promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." They were of the unbending type.

The king's council, hopeless in attempting to bring them to terms, resolved to finish the irksome task by shipping all to distant lands. They placed 243 on a small sail-ship, which was tossed on the Atlantic ocean until engulfed amidst the waves. The remainder were never transported.

Many Covenanters were confined in places even more intolerable than this. Dunnottar Castle became one of these notable spots. The castle stands on a rock that projects into the sea. Here still exists a deep dark room, called the "Whigs' Vault," where 167 Covenanters were crowded together. Forty-five of these were women. The room is 56 feet long, 16 wide, and 12 high, having two small windows. This outrageous disregard for sex, decency, health, and every natural right, aroused even the indignation of the governor's wife, at whose

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request the women, after some days, were removed to another vault. The prisoners suffered the horrors of these dark foul pits three months. But the Lord Jesus Christ did not forsake them; they were sustained by His abundant grace. He heard their mournful cries and upheld their faith. Some breathed out their lives on the hard stone floor, with no pillow on which to rest their aching heads. Blessed termination of the horrid cruelty! Even there the “pearl gate” opened wide, and the ransomed soul arose in power, and walked forth into the marvelous light of the world above. They who survived death were offered liberty on condition of taking the king’s oath, and acknowledging his supremacy over Church and conscience. They persistently refused to do this. How great the loyalty of these men and women to the Lord Jesus Christ! Imprisonment with all its bitterness was sweeter to them than liberty with a defiled conscience.

[Illustration: *Dunnottar castle.*

The castle rock projects into the sea, on the east coast of Scotland, and rises with rugged sides out of the water to the height of 160 feet. It is connected with the mainland by a narrow neck. Here is the “Whigs’ Vault,” a dismal underground room, hewn out of the rock, where many Covenanters suffered imprisonment.]

The Bass Rock, too, was a penitentiary for the Covenanters. This is a lofty green rock arising boldly out of the sea near Edinburgh, having steep rugged sides, being accessible only at one point. Thither they brought, in the latter years of the persecution, the overflow of prisoners after the inland jails had been crowded. The rock is very desolate. This was the Covenanters’ Patmos. Here Alexander Peden, John Blackader, and many others spent months and years, walking round and round over the storm-battered cliffs, or sitting on the ledges looking landward thinking of the desolated home, the broken family, the wasted Church, and the guilty land. When the waves dashed against the rock, and the breakers leaped high; when storms darkened the land, and billows whitened the sea; when nothing was heard but the noise of the waters, the roar of the tempest, and the scream of the sea-fowl, even then was the Holy Spirit there to illuminate these prisoners of hope. They held communion with God; visions of glory lighted up their dreary home; they moved amidst the scenery of heaven; the Bass rock was peopled with angels. Blackader has left on record some rich experiences he there enjoyed.

We are free to worship God according to conscience and the Word. But let us not forget that our liberty is the blossom, and our privileges the fruit, of the rough black root of persecution suffered by our forefathers. Had they not been faithful, we would have had to fight the battles they fought, and suffer as they suffered, or have perished in darkness. Will not we, for the sake of coming generations, be likewise faithful? The Lord Jesus grant us strength and success.

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Points for the class.

1. What was done with, the prisoners taken at Bothwell Bridge?
2. How did they suffer in Edinburgh?
3. Describe their prison, and their hardships.
4. What two of their ministers were executed?
5. Describe Dunnottar Castle.
7. Describe the Bass Rock.
8. For what was it used in those times?
9. How may we meet the obligations descending from the fathers?

XXXV.

Declaration of independence.—A.D. 1680.

The persecution of the Covenanters under King Charles II. had now continued twenty years. These were years of slaughter, and the horrors were still deepening.

The battle of Bothwell Bridge was followed by a climax of suffering and sacrifice. The wrath of the king, vented through the dragoons, fell upon every district where the Covenanters were located and followed them into their hiding-places. They were required to take the oath of loyalty, or suffer the direful consequence. Some were haled to the judges to be sentenced, others were shot like game where they were found. Like a fire that breaks out in a city and mercilessly devours while the flames find fuel, so this fire seemed destined to spread and devour till the last drop of Covenanted blood would sizzle on the coals.

The persecutors were in degree successful. Four hundred ministers, in 1662, had refused to receive orders from the king for the exercise of their ministry; they gave up home and all its comforts, rather than admit the king's claim of supremacy over the Church of Christ. These were now reduced to less than one hundred. Some were martyred, some were banished, some had died of old age and some of exposure; but many, if not most, had been constrained to accept the Indulgence and were gone back home. Their first love had been chilled by the wintry blasts. Their zeal for the Lord Jesus and His testimony abated as the hardships increased. Worn with suffering,

emaciated with hunger, exposed to danger, grey with sorrows, and the darkness deepening with no relief in prospect, they weakened and accepted the terms of a false peace. But let them not be judged with harshness. Our Lord has said of such, "The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak." The struggle lasted eight more years, during which time there were sixty ministers standing by their Covenant instead of four hundred, and even these sixty, almost to a man, counted it expedient to suspend their testimony and keep silence.

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The real Covenanters however were not conquered. Death had slain thousands, and defection tens of thousands, yet the faithful had not lost heart. There was still a vigorous force of loyal men and women, earnest quiet people, who stood fearlessly by the Covenant and Testimony of Jesus Christ. They were called, "The remnant." With these the Holy Spirit was pleased to clothe Himself, for the good fight of faith which they continued with unabated ardor. They stepped into the firing line where the shock of war was heaviest, and became the aggressive party, demanding from the king their Covenanted rights. The Lord was ever with them; they heard Him saying, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Their zeal and energy were but the crested waves of Omnipotence, the Lord's own strength surging along the strand of time, and dashing against the rocks of wickedness and misrule—waves of Divine energy that must yet overflow every land, overcome the whole world, and cover the earth with glory, as the waters cover the sea.

[Illustration: *Claverhouse*.

Claverhouse was a captain of dragoons, who pursued the Covenanters and slaughtered them with savage atrocity. He outlived the persecution, but was killed the next year, 1689, at the battle of Killiecrankie, fighting against the accession of the Prince of Orange. "A shot in the left eye" sent the reeking soul into the presence of God, whom he, in awful blasphemy, had promised to take into his own hands. He died at the age of forty-six.]

These strong-spirited, unbending Covenanters believed that the time had now come for a forward movement, and they accepted the task as from the Lord. They were not merely unconquerable; they were determined to conquer. At the beginning of the persecution they were passive, meekly submitting to reproach, spoliation, imprisonment, and death, for Christ's sake. This continued till patience was exhausted.

Their second attitude was that of self-defence. Oppression maketh a wise man mad. The people came armed to the Conventicles, and with swords and muskets met the troops that attacked the meetings. These acts of self-defence developed into two distinct efforts to raise an army for the redress of grievances. All this time the Covenanters recognized Charles II. as their king.

The third attitude was that of revolution. They now had reached this point. They challenge the king's right to reign. They resolve to take the crown from his head, and place it upon the brow of a man worthy of the honor, one who "feared God, and hated covetousness." What a daring task! what courage exhibited by these men! what unbounded confidence in the righteousness of their cause as they against all odds, all earthly advantages, and all human wisdom, proclaim the king's forfeiture of the throne, and face the consequences of that proclamation!

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This was a forlorn battle. The distant outlook was hopeful and the final success was assured; but the present struggle must be sanguinary and the sacrifice of life dreadful. Every man that enlists in the army at this stage must expect to die on the field. This bold position of the Covenanters will surely be met by all the powers of darkness that can be massed against them. They now unfurl the Banner for Christ's Crown and Covenant on the very highest grounds; the persecution will therefore be waged, if possible, with tenfold greater fierceness. The king with all his engines of destruction will fight them most desperately; Satan with all his hosts will assail them ferociously. How can the noble band escape annihilation?

But who will lead the Covenanters in such a struggle? Who will command these "little flocks of kids," when the hosts of Syria fill all the country round about? Where are the ministers now, when the trumpet blast proclaims a revolutionary war against the king? While the dread notes echo from mountain to mountain, the most of them are in caves, hidden—like Obadiah's prophets. Three, only three, step forward. These lions of the Covenant are Cameron, Cargill, and Douglass. They grasp the old battle-banner, and carrying it to the new position call upon the Covenanted sons of freedom to rally under its floating folds. The "remnant" gave a noble response.

This self-sacrificing band was merely the advance guard of a great army that was now mustering in the providence of God for the restoration of civil and religious liberty. Little did they expect to win under existing conditions, but they could hold the hordes of darkness back, till the Lord Jesus would bring up His mighty forces for the decisive battle. They could throw themselves upon the enemy, and with the impact stay their progress. They laid down principles and began action that eight years later resulted in the Revolution under the Prince of Orange. Cameron, Cargill, and Douglass began the Revolution, and William, Prince of Orange, finished it.

The Covenanters engaged in this forward movement were henceforth called Cameronians. Richard Cameron was the leader. On the first anniversary of the battle of Bothwell Bridge, June 22, 1680, he with 21 mounted men rode into the quiet town of Sanquhar. They came in a martial spirit; each horse carried a Christian swordsman; they were armed for war. Reaching the heart of the town, they dismounted and reverently offered prayer. They then read aloud a Declaration of War against King Charles. This they nailed to the post at the crossroads. What a heroic celebration of the first anniversary of their greatest defeat! The paper carried this declaration:

"We do disown Charles Stuart as having any right, title to, or interest in, the crown of Scotland for government.

"We, being under the Standard of our Lord Jesus Christ, do declare a war with such a tyrant and usurper, and all the men of his practices as enemies to our Lord Jesus Christ and His cause and Covenants."

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The men then quietly rode away, while the people read the Declaration with mingled joy and terror. The lions roared on the hills of Sanquhar, and the king's throne trembled; within a few years the monarch and his dynasty had disappeared from the earth.

These Covenanters prepared also another declaration which was called the Queensferry Paper. It contained the following statement of the principles, for which they contended:

"The avowal of the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and action;

"The promotion of the Kingdom of God by every possible and lawful method;

"Adherence to the Covenanted Reformation of the Presbyterian Church;

"The disowning of all authority which opposes the Word of God!"

With deathless bravery, they added the following:

"We bind and oblige ourselves to defend ourselves and one another, in the worship of God and in our natural, civil, and divine rights, till we shall overcome, or send them down under debate to prosperity, that they may begin where we end."

The fathers have finished their work. They nobly sustained the cause in their day; they gave their blood freely for its success; but they were not permitted to see the ultimate victory. The Covenant principles for which they contended are the hope of the world. The Covenant holds forth the highest standard for the Church and the nation. This standard must be reached, or prophecy must fail. The struggle has descended upon us in "debate." Will we be true to the task laid on us by the fathers, who unfalteringly carried the Banner of the Covenant amid fiercest battles? Will we be a strong link, or will we be a broken link, connecting the worthy past with the golden future? Which?

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Points for the class.

1. How did the true Covenanters become diminished?
2. With what spirit did the "remnant" sustain their trials?
3. What successive attitudes toward the king did they assume?
4. When did they proclaim a revolutionary war against the king?
5. Who were their leaders?



6. Where was the declaration of war issued?
7. What was the nature of the Queensferry declaration?
8. Under what obligations were future generations placed?
10. What task here has fallen to us?

XXXVI.

Ayrsmoss.—A.D. 1680.

Ayrsmoss is a household word among Covenanters. Here is one of the numerous spots where temporary defeat has been transformed into permanent glory. A granite monument with suitable inscription marks the place and honors the fallen heroes. This is the field where Richard Cameron with a hardy group of Covenanters met the foe, and fought the first fight of Scotland's Revolutionary war against King Charles II.

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Ayrsmoss lies in the heart of a wide solitude. The eye takes in a wild, broken surface in all directions. Loneliness broods in the very air. The heart grows heavy and the eyes dreamy, while we sit on a tuft of rushes and gaze at the monument that bears the names of the worthy dead. Reverie readily rehabilitates the landscape, and, in vision, the field is covered again with the horrors of the engagement. The horsemen are dashing upon each other, the air is shattered with the discharge of guns, swords are flashing in the evening sunlight, men are falling, blood is flowing, the Covenanters are fleeing, and—Cameron lies on the field dead.

Richard Cameron had sounded the keynote of freedom, that reverberated all over Scotland, and down into England, and over into Holland, and at length struck the ears of William, Prince of Orange. Cameron and his Covenanted associates, having disowned the authority of King Charles, disputed by force of arms his right to reign. They had preferred three charges against him. These were:

(1) Perjury; (2) Usurpation; (3) Tyranny.

The king had grossly violated the Covenant to which he had given his oath. The Covenant was the Scottish Constitution of government, and the wilful subversion of it was treason.

He had usurped authority over the Church, posing in the prerogatives of the Lord Jesus Christ and trampling on the people's rights in the worship of God.

He had impoverished, imprisoned, exiled, and even slaughtered his subjects in great numbers, without other fault than their refusal to submit conscience to his tyrannic will.

Therefore, as perjurer, usurper, and tyrant, he must face the arbitrament of war. The proclamation has been published; the dauntless sons of the Covenant have forced the issue. In the name of the Lord of hosts they have unfurled the Banner for Christ's Crown and Covenant. It may often be torn with bullets and stained with blood, but it will never be folded till the cause of Christ and freedom prevail. These Covenanters have resolved "to continue the struggle till they overcome, or hand it down to posterity, that each generation may begin where the last ended." Such was the solemn bond that bound these Covenanters by their own voluntary action one to another, and all to God and freedom in the worship of God through Jesus Christ. It also joined all coming generations into an indivisible and invincible solidarity for the defence of liberty, the triumph of righteousness, and the glory of Christ in His Church.

The Declaration of war had been proclaimed in Sanquhar. There Cameron with his band of twenty-one men appealed to the God of battles and grasped the sword. They stood a few moments gazing solemnly at their Declaration, now nailed to a post and speaking to the nation. Holding their horses by the bridle, they tarried long enough to sing a Psalm to the God of nations, then mounted. Ere the tramp of their steeds had

died away on the streets of Sanquhar, the news of the daring deed was spreading over the hills. The royal army, more than 10,000 strong, was quickly on the track of these daring revolutionists.

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Cameron quailed not at the consequences of that day's work. His soul was on fire for the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had expressed a desire to die fighting against the avowed enemies of his Lord. He never doubted the final issue; victory was sure in the end, whatever might be the reverses at the beginning and the losses by the way. "*Let Christ reign*," he exclaimed with prophetic fire; "*Let Christ reign*, is a standard that shall yet overthrow all the thrones of Europe;" and he spoke as if his flashing eyes saw the thrones reel, and his quick ears heard the crash of their fall.

One brief month lay between Sanquhar and Ayrsmoss. Cameron and his little company moved cautiously over the desolate places. They roamed across the dreary moorlands, slept amidst the flowering heather, and pillowed their weary heads on the moss. The cold ground was their mattress; the chilling mist was their covering; the arching sky was their roof; the silent stars were their sentinels; the Lord God Almighty was their keeper. Thus they awaited the day of battle. Cameron betimes enjoyed the hospitality of friends who risked their lives in receiving him under their roof.

July 22, 1680, was the eventful day. The little band had strolled into the heart of this waste moor. Here were threescore valiant men, of the valiant of Israel. "They all held swords, being expert in war: every man had his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night." The actual number was sixty-three, twenty-three men were mounted. They hung about Cameron who never wearied in preaching Christ to their hungry souls. This day his voice was unusually solemn. He had an inward assurance that the sun, which was now flooding the landscape with glory and taking the chill of the night out of his veins, would glance its setting rays upon his blood and theirs, poured out upon that field. It was now 4 o'clock; the men were resting on the little knolls that studded the moor; their horses were grazing by their side; all eyes were often scanning the horizon; any minute danger might loom up.

"They come!" cried one who saw a troop verging on the moor. In a moment the sixty-three were on their feet; the horses were mounted and every man drew his weapon. Captain Hackston, a veteran in the Covenanted cause, took command. Cameron offered a prayer; his recorded prayer was not a plea for safety nor for victory, but that God would "spare the green and take the ripe." They chose their ground, and waited the coming of Captain Bruce with 120 troopers. With grim determination they watched the dragoons cover the ground. Every man was ready, every nerve was steady. The Covenanters had the courage of conscience; they knew they were in the right; their hearts sustained them; their Covenant reinforced them; they were assured of ultimate success. They will certainly achieve all that is best for this time, and for this occasion. Even a crushing defeat will be a moral victory. The outcome will be according to the will of God, and a necessary event in the progress of Christ's kingdom.

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[Illustration: *Monument at Ayrsmoss.*

This monument marks the grave of Richard Cameron and eight other Covenanters, who fell on this moorland fighting for religious liberty. The place is reached by passing from the road over a wide mossy field. The solitude is oppressive with solemn tragic memories. These heroes were martyrs who faithfully sealed their testimony with their blood. This battle was fought on July 22, 1680.]

These men were sent forward, to stand on the firing line, and show the spirit, the courage, and the faith of the soldiers of Christ; behind them the spiritual world was filled with the armies of God. His twenty-thousand chariots and thousands of angels, were coming up for the successive engagements, that will yet fill the world with righteousness and the heavens with praise.

Bruce and his troop were received with a deadly volley; many of their saddles were emptied. Hackston led his horsemen in a desperate charge; he almost split the enemy's force in two; but his men being few, the dragoons enveloped him. His horse bogged; he dismounted, and used his sword with fearful effect. At last he fell, bleeding from many wounds. The Covenanters were overwhelmed and driven from the field. Nine lay dead, among whom was Richard Cameron. Twenty-six were killed on the other side, so steady the nerve and deliberate the aim of the Covenanters in the face of crushing odds. The war for freedom was now on; the first blood was shed and had consecrated Ayrsmoss. But the prize of liberty was of high value; other fields must yet be crimsoned with streams flowing from many a heart.

Our enjoyment of civil and religious liberty is so constant and ordinary that we scarcely wait a moment to think of the original cost. What pangs of sorrow, what years of hardships, what streams of blood our fathers paid for the inheritance of truth and freedom they have left their children! Let us be careful to appreciate the blood-bought blessings lest they flee away.

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Points for the class.

1. What monument has been erected at Ayrsmoss?
2. What previous proclamation occasioned this battle?
3. What charges did the Covenanters prefer against the king?
4. How long after the declaration till this fight occurred?
5. How did Cameron and his associates employ their time?



6. Who appeared in search of them?
7. How many men were on each side?
8. Who won the battle?
9. How account for God's people suffering defeat?
10. What was the cost of the liberty we enjoy?
11. How should we guard it for other generations?

XXXVII.

The Cameronians.—A.D. 1681.

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Richard Cameron had fallen in the battle at Ayrsmoss; but the cause had not failed, nor would he be forgotten. "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." His years were brief, but his work was great. He was fresh and hearty, in the very prime of his life when he met death. The sun had only reached the meridian of his sky. While his powers were glowing with divine energy, and his ministry was making the deepest impression, the Lord called him home to glory. The translation from earth to heaven was sudden and sublime. One of the poets has painted his own conception of the event in a brilliant poem, entitled, "The Cameronian's Dream." That noble life, so full of zeal, action, and power, left a lasting imprint on the Church of the Covenanters. So mighty was his influence that the people who stood strictly to the Covenant were henceforth called Cameronians.

The field of Ayrsmoss presented a sad sight that evening. The departing day may have flung over it a glowing sunset, but nothing could relieve the gloom. The light was fading as the dragoons left, taking with them Captain Hackston and a few other bleeding prisoners. Night settled softly upon the moorland; the shout of the captains had given place to the stillness of death. Nine noble defenders of the Covenant lay pulseless in the dewy grass. The friends, soon as safety permitted, came and, gathering the bodies together, solemnly and sadly buried them in one broad grave. The present monument marks the spot where the precious dust awaits the resurrection.

The head and hands of Cameron were cut off and carried in ignoble triumph through the streets of Edinburgh. The head was elevated on the point of a spear and borne in front of the prisoners to the city jail. Cameron's father was a prisoner there at that time. The head and hands were presented to him, with the sneering question, "Do you know them?" The awful shock quickly gave place to a gush of fatherly affection. The blood, the pallor, even the stare of the lifeless face, seemed to disappear in the heart-kindlings of the aged parent; to him the countenance was sweet as ever, the eyes were beaming, the lips were vocal, the brow was wreathed with holy dignity. A thousand tender scenes of the past must have rushed in upon the soul of the agitated father. He took up the cold pieces, dearer to him than his own flesh and, while tears flowed plentifully, kissed them, saying, "I know them; they are my son's; my own dear son's: the Lord can harm neither me nor mine; good is the will of the Lord."

Cameron lived in the most critical period of the Covenanted cause. His life of service and sacrifice arose into gigantic strength just when the Covenanted Reformation seemed to be ready for burial. The floodtide of Indulgence had almost submerged the testimony of the Covenanters. Many of the ministers had been caught in that Satanic snare. The remainder were overawed, or disabled with disease and old age. Yet there was a host of brave men and honorable women, thousands in number, who without a leader faced the increasing' fierceness of the persecution, and continued their testimony for Christ in defiance of the king's wrath. These were called the Society People, and Cameron during his public ministry was their standard-bearer.

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Cameron and the Society People, afterward known as the Cameronians, have been severely criticised for their exclusiveness. They refused to hold fellowship with the Indulged ministers who had assented to the king's supremacy over the Church, and likewise with the Field-ministers, who had become mute on the Covenanted testimony. They are often represented as having been stern, censorious, and uncharitable in the extreme. A glance at Cameron's commission will show how baseless is the charge.

Richard Cameron received ordination in Holland, four months after the battle of Bothwell Bridge. The ordination service was very solemn and touching. The presbytery felt that they were commissioning a servant of God to do a work that would cost his life. While the ministers rented their hands on Cameron's head in the act of ordination, he was told by one of them, that the head whereon their hands were laid would one day be severed from his body and set up before the sun and moon for public view. Such was the vision of blood that moved before his eyes during the eight months of his ministry. At that same time he received also the exhortation: "Go, Richard; the public Standard of the Gospel is fallen in Scotland; go home and lift the fallen Standard, and display it publicly before the world. But before you put your hand to it, go to as many of the Field-ministers as you can find, and give them your hearty invitation to go with you."

True to his commission Cameron went. He sought out the Field-ministers. They now numbered about sixty. These were keeping close to their hiding-places; their voices scarcely went beyond the mouth of their caves; they counted their blood more valuable than their testimony for Christ and His Covenant. Twenty years of unabating hardships had unnerved them; the late avalanche of the king's wrath had overwhelmed them; they were mostly mute in witnessing for Christ, as the rocks behind which they were hiding.

Of the sixty ministers Cameron found only two who were willing to stand with him and hold up the Banner of the Covenant before the eyes of the nation. One of these, Thomas Douglas, quickly disappeared leaving Cameron and Cargill alone to lead the Covenanted people of God in the fight that was growing harder every day. These two dauntless ministers of Christ accepted the responsibility, knowing too well the price to be paid was their own blood. And they have been censured for their exclusiveness.

Twenty years previous, the Covenanted ministers numbered one thousand. More than half of these had violated the Covenant by a resolution in 1650, to open the offices of public trust to men without moral qualification. Will the minority be censured for not following them? In 1662, the ministerial brotherhood was again rent in twain by the king's decree requiring them to submit, or quit the manse. Four hundred refused to comply. Will they be censured for withdrawing from their brethren who remained? In later years the Indulgences followed, one after another, capturing all except sixty. Will the sixty be censured for not following the others in submitting to the king's supremacy over the Church? And now all but two suspend the public testimony for Christ's crown. Will the two be censured for separating from the sixty, and holding forth the Banner of Christ?

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[Illustration: *Four young Covenanters discovered*

These young men had left their homes to save their lives. They lived among the hills, hid in the caves, slept on the ground, had little to eat, and were always in danger. They evidently had come here to sun themselves after a chilly night, and to comfort one another in Jesus Christ. They were found and sentenced to be shot. They said to their accusers, "If we had a hundred lives, we would willingly quit them all, for the truth of Christ".]

Cameron and Cargill, with the Society people, stood on a basis separated from their brethren who had stepped off the basis, and had left them to struggle alone against mighty odds and fierce enemies, for the Covenanted Reformation to which all were bound by a solemn oath. These men, with the Society people at their back, stood by their Covenant and the oath of God, the others had departed. Censure the Cameronians for exclusiveness? Rather, be sincere and censure them for not slipping, and stumbling, and falling away, like their brethren from Covenant attainments. These worthies stood on the heights from which the others had departed, and waving the old battle-worn colors of the Covenant appealed unto them to come up and occupy the ground where they had formerly stood.

The Cameronians maintained a high position; but it was not chimerical or theoretical; it was practical and Scriptural; here was solid ground, a rock-foundation. On it were no sidings, no off-sets, no bogs. The truths they held were clear, clean-cut, adamant, foundational, and unchangeable. Their oath bound them to defend the sovereignty of Christ, the kingdom of God, and the Reformed religion.

The banner still floats up there in the care of a few successors. Under the Lord of hosts, the Captain of the Covenant, they continue to this day without a thought of retreating, and trailing their colors in the dust. They are confident that Churches and nations will yet reach the heights of Covenant doctrine and fidelity under Jesus Christ. The bane of the Churches to-day is the slanting ground, adown which an evil influence is steadily drawing the people lower and lower. But in the last days the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh; then shall the world have a spiritual resurrection, and a glorious ascension to Covenant grounds, through the Lord Jesus Christ, "to whom be dominion and majesty for ever and ever." "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains; and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."

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Points for the class.

1. Describe Ayrsmoss on the night after the battle?

2. What did the enemy do with Cameron's body?
3. How did Cameron's life and death impress the Covenanters?
4. Why were the Cameronians called extremists?

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5. Were they justifiable in separating from others?
6. Who joined Cameron in carrying out his commission?
7. What is the true position of Covenanters?
8. What is their mission in the world?

XXXVIII.

The lone star.—A.D. 1681.

Donald Cargill was at this time the only minister of the Society people. He was the Lone Star appearing in the firmament of the Covenanted Church. The night was very cloudy. The storm of persecution had darkened the land; the defection of the Church had deepened the darkness; the wrath of the Lord, against the persecuting nation and the Covenant-breaking Church, had covered Scotland with a woeful night. The stars had disappeared till one alone, a solitary orb, had power sufficient to pierce the deadly gloom with its lustrous rays.

Donald Cargill was the Elijah of his day, the solitary standard-bearer of the Covenant after the death of Cameron. Doubtless there were seven thousand, yea, seven thousand twice told, who had not bowed the knee to Baal; but they were hidden in caves and in holes of the rocks, waiting for some terrible display of the power and glory of the Lord. There were many stars, but the night was too dark for them to shine; also they had become almost nebulous. Even Alexander Peden, Scotland's fiery prophet, who never weakened in the Covenant nor waned in his brilliant career—even he did not identify with the Cameronians in the declaration of war against King Charles and the demand for his abdication. Cargill was the lone leader of the dreadless Covenanters in their new and aggressive movement.

The last years of Cargill were his best, and his last services were his greatest. He grew like the cedar, increasing in strength, usefulness, and dignity till cut down by death. His zeal leaped into flames with the adverse winds: he did his noblest works when he was most sorely pressed. He conducted divine services even when wounded and bleeding; he carried the gashes of the sword into the pulpit and the scars of battle down to the grave. A glance at his wonderful career should be inspiring.

Even in childhood Cargill was noted for prayer. He grew up on a beautiful farm where the fields dip into the shady valley and ascend the lofty hills. Rugged nature taught the opening child-life to take on much beauty, grandeur, and dignity. He loitered often on the confines of the higher world in his meditations and in prayer. But especially the altar of worship, the family Bible, the fireside catechising, the stern discipline, and the solemn Sabbaths moulded the boy and awakened the powers that distinguished the man.

Family religion, which was strict, solemn, and awe-inspiring made heroes of the men of the Covenant. Without family religion the children may be expected to become moral imbeciles and spiritual ciphers.

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When Cargill was yet a youth, he was known to spend whole nights in prayer. What those nights must have been to that young heart! What unfoldings of the Gospel and of the love of God! What revelations of the beauties of Christ, the preciousness of His blood, and the treasures of His Covenant! What insight into the value of the soul and its commission from God! What views of stewardship, accountability, rewards, punishments, destiny, eternity! What visions of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, His royal rights, His glory and majesty, His jealousy over the Church, His indignation against evil, His vindication of right! What those nights of prayer must have been to that boyish heart! The Holy Spirit came down upon the tender suppliant; the glory of the Lord shone round about him; the heavens bent and burst with blessings above his head; he made many an incursion into the upper world. What a wonderful life we may expect to arise out of a beginning like this! Look out for the boy that spends whole nights in prayer, or even whole hours talking with God! Assuredly the outcome will be amazing.

Courage was prominent among the qualities that brought Cargill to the front and made him one of Scotland's many mighties. He was afraid of nothing except God's displeasure. His towering intellect, polished with education, instructed in the Bible, and irradiated with the Holy Spirit, gave him a wide horizon. He made the throne of the Lord Jesus Christ his viewpoint, and therefore saw things in their true relation. He had a strong, spiritual grasp of the truths of Christ and His universal dominion. He saw Jesus crowned with many crowns; the Church united to Christ in marriage; and all the universe subject to Christ for the Church's sake. Cargill's clear and comprehensive view of Christ and His universal dominion enabled him to take the right side in the great struggle that was then shaking Scotland's foundations. He wisely chose the strong side. He cast his lot in with the poor "remnant," who were hunted, captured, and executed as fast as the bloodhounds of King Charles could do their cruel work. Most men called this the weak side, but Cargill's eyes took in the spiritual world. He gazed upon the infinite power of God, the omnipotence of truth, the armies of heaven. He knew that all the forces of righteousness were moving forward in matchless harmony in support of the "remnant" who kept faith with the Lord Jesus Christ. In the consciousness of this almighty strength, which was at his back, how could he be afraid?

Cargill accepted the office of the Gospel ministry with a deep sense of unworthiness. When urged to enter the ministry he hesitated and spent a day in fasting and prayer to discover the mind of the Lord. God spoke to him by sending into his heart the irresistible command: "Son of man, eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel." He took this to be the answer, as these words rang in his ears day and night. He hesitated no longer; from that time he was consecrated to the work of the Gospel, and his zeal made him a bright target for the foe.

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His regular service on one occasion fell on the anniversary of the king's restoration to the throne. The house was crowded; the country was rejoicing with the king, though he had already launched upon the crimson tide of persecution. Casting a glance over the audience and judging that many had come to do the king honor, his soul flamed into indignation, and his eyes flashed with scorn for the crowned murderer. "We are not here," said he, "to keep this day as others keep it. We thought once to bless the day when the king came home again, but now we have reason to curse it. If any of you have come to solemnize this day, we desire you to remove." Then arising into passionate vehemence, he cried, "Woe, woe, woe unto the king! His name shall be a stench while the world stands, for treachery, tyranny, and lechery." From that day they sought his life to take it away; yet he lived and preached twenty more years.

[Illustration: *Donald Cargill*.

Donald Cargill received the martyr's crown in 1681, after passing through 20 years of persecution. He died on the scaffold at the age of 71. Standing beneath the rope he exclaimed, "This is the sweetest and most glorious day that ever mine eyes did see." He sang Psalm 118, from the 16th verse. Then crying out in a rapture of joy, "Welcome, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, into Thy hands I commit my spirit," he entered within the veil.]

Cargill's life was tossed about on roughest waves. He made many narrow escapes. Near his early home lies a deep valley, adown which a mountain stream rushes within a rock-rimmed channel, churning itself into milky whiteness. On one occasion he was pursued by soldiers all the way from Dundee, nine miles distant. He fled down the steep cliff and leaped the chasm. The soldiers following him came to the spot but dared not to jump. Cargill walked up the opposite embankment and escaped. Being reminded one day that he had made a good leap he humorously replied, "Yes, but I had a good run before the leap."

At another time he saw a group of soldiers approaching in search of him. He coolly walked forward and, taking a square look at them, went on. They not knowing him personally never once thought that a man of such an airy countenance could be the one for whom they were searching. At Queensferry the house still stands where he and Captain Hall were arrested. The brave Captain threw himself between Cargill and the officer. The struggle was a tough one; Hall was mortally wounded; Cargill, too, was much hurt but escaped. But this did not prevent him from keeping his engagement at a Conventicle; he preached in his wounds. Nothing but death seemed able to check this man of God in the work of the Gospel. His greatest service however is yet to be related.

Have we incorporated the element of Divine strength into our lives? Do we make the throne of Jesus our viewpoint, from whence we see all things related to Him, and through Him to each other? Do we stand for the right, however weak that side may seem, knowing that all the powers that be of God are on that side? The times call for

heroic lives, men who will not flinch under reproach, nor apologize for their convictions; men who will support the truth at any cost, and denounce sin at every hazard. Can the Church now furnish such men?

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Points for the class.

1. Who succeeded Cameron as leader of the Society people?
2. Tell something about Cargill's early life.
3. How was he influenced to become a minister?
4. What objection had he to the king's anniversary?
5. What dangers did he meet?
6. How did he persist in the work of the Gospel?
7. Describe the strong side of every good cause.

XXXIX.

An extraordinary service.—A.D. 1681.

The severity of the persecution had now driven the Conventicles into the most solitary places. Very few ministers at this period ventured, under any circumstances, to preach at the Field-meetings. Cargill survived Cameron a little more than one year. They had been accustomed to attend these meetings together; their fellowship in the ministry of Christ was a mutual joy. They were equally yoked and made a strong team. Where the two preached the people had a great feast. But death had separated them; Cargill keenly felt the bereavement. He was thereafter like a dove mourning the loss of its mate. He preached a touching sermon on the Sabbath after Cameron's death, taking his text from King David's elegy over the death of Abner: "There is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel."

Cargill was now seventy years old; grey, worn, and weakened with the terrible experiences that had crowded into his persecuted life. His last year was a fitting climax, the best of all his years in the Lord's service. The notes of his trumpet were always vigorous and decisive; one blast, however, was especially loud, long, and clear, the like of which the world had never heard.

This preacher of righteousness denounced sin with unsparing keenness. He was no respecter of persons; the king got his share of reproof and admonition, equally with the lowliest in the land. He was very jealous for the Lord God of hosts, and could brook no indignity to Christ.

King Charles had done dishonor of the darkest kind to the Lord Jesus. He had grasped at the Crown of Christ, had broken the holy Covenant, had crushed the Church, and had shed the blood of the saints. The sight of such horrible wickedness made Cargill's blood boil, and his sermons arose betimes in passionate eloquence against the guilty king. On one occasion he poured out upon the royal head a triple woe. This could never be pardoned by the crowned murderer of God's people. The king pursued him with vengeful wrath. A price equal to \$1,200 was offered for his head, alive or dead. Twenty years and more the bloodhounds of persecution were on his track. Twenty years, with the sword hanging over the head, makes a solemn life. Twenty years, amidst the hardships and horrors of persecution, gives a rich experience. Twenty years, in the furnace heated

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seven times more than it is wont, makes a pure soul. Twenty years, hiding under the shadow of the Most High, makes a powerful preacher. It was said of him, as of his Master, though in a lesser sense, "Never man spake like this man." His voice reached wide circles, resounded across broad glades, and echoed from rugged mountain sides. Thousands were melted by his tender words, and many were swung into line with the Covenant by his forceful logic. He spoke out of deep experience, pleading as a man who stood in the glare of Christ's judgment seat. While he preached, the eternal world seemed irradiant about him. Some of his discourses have been preserved by the press.

Cargill's sermons and prayers were usually short. He once received a gentle reproof for his brevity. He was holding a Conventicle; the people had come a long distance for the preaching; they hungered and thirsted for God and His Word. The great congregation was feasting on the rich abundance of the Gospel, and hanging on the lips of the minister, when he suddenly stopped. He had finished. One of the hearers, who felt that only a slice of bread was given, when a loaf was needed, approached him and said, "Oh, sir, 'tis long betwixt meals, and we are in a starving condition, and it is sweet and good and wholesome which ye deliver; but why do ye straiten us so much for shortness?" Cargill replied, "Ever since I bowed the knee in good earnest to pray, I never durst pray or preach with my gifts; and when my heart is not affected, and comes not up with my mouth, I always thought it time for me to quit. What comes not from my heart, I have little hope that it will go to the heart of others." He was able to distinguish between the product of his own gifts and that of the Holy Spirit. The one is like bubbles on the water for hungry souls; the other like the grapes of Eschol.

[Illustration: *Earlston castle*

This castle is very ancient. The Earlstons were zealous reformers for many generations. They suffered much in the persecution, and furnished at least one martyr, William Gordon, a young man who was apprehended on his way to the battle of Bothwell Bridge, and shot on the road.]

The most notable event in the career of Cargill was the excommunication of the king, and six of his accomplices, from the Covenanted Church. These seven men were the chief persecutors at that time. Formerly they had been Covenanters, but had abandoned the Covenant, and had fallen into excessive wickedness. The Church had never dealt with their cases; she had lost the power. The Church courts were controlled by the king. But shall discipline, therefore, fail? Can the Church no more sustain her laws, and administer her censures? Is she incapacitated? Extraordinary conditions justify extraordinary methods. Cargill conceived the bold purpose of issuing these cases, and inflicting the censures, solitary and alone, as a minister of Christ Jesus. Not in the spirit of revenge, nor as a vain anathema, but by the authority of God, in the name of Christ, and with profound sense of responsibility did he mete out the spiritual penalty

unto these blood-stained and impenitent transgressors. The indestructible vitality of the Church thus reappeared in that dread act.

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This action was taken at a Conventicle held at Torwood early in the autumn of 1680. The attendance was large. The people knew not what was coming. Cargill was much animated. After a powerful sermon, he proceeded with the act of excommunication. The form was this:

"I, being a minister of Jesus Christ, and having authority from Him, do, in His name, and by His Spirit, excommunicate, cast out of the true Church, and deliver up to Satan, Charles II., upon these grounds: (1) His mocking of God; (2) His great perjury; (3) His rescinding all laws for establishing the Reformation; (4) His commanding armies to destroy the Lord's people; (5) His being an enemy to true Protestants; (6) His granting remission and pardon to murderers; (7) His adulteries."

Cargill knew that he would be adversely judged, by future generations, for what he had done; many would regard the excommunication as unreasonable and unwarrantable. He, therefore, adventured his reputation and authority on a prophecy, which he uttered in his sermon on the next Sabbath: "If these men die the ordinary death of men, then God hath not spoken by me." King Charles was poisoned; the Duke of York died raving under the sentence; McKenzie died with blood flowing from many parts of his body; the Duke of Monmouth was executed; Dalziel died while drinking, without a moment of warning; Lauderdale sank into dotage through excessive indulgence; the Duke of Rothes passed into eternity in despair. The prophecy had its terrible fulfilment, to the last man. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Not much now remained for Cargill to do. A few more Conventicles, the acknowledgment of Christ's supremacy before the judges, a public testimony on the scaffold; then the blood can flow, and seal the truth, which he loved so well to preach. His pursuers at length discovered him. Great was the rejoicing of his enemies when he was found, and bound, and hastened to prison. His trial was swift, issuing in the death sentence. His execution quickly followed. When he came to the gibbet, he placed his back against the ladder, and addressed the throng that had gathered to witness his last struggle. The venerable face beamed with happiness. That morning he had written some of his flowing thoughts. Here is one of them: "This is the most joyful day I ever saw; my joy is now begun never to be interrupted." His soul was stirring with divine raptures; the glory of heaven was breaking around him. The thrill of youthful life again quickened his pulse; he wheeled about and mounted the scaffold, saying, "The Lord knows I go up this ladder with less fear and perturbation of mind than ever I entered the pulpit to preach." Having reached the platform, where the rope was waiting for his neck, he bade adieu to earth, and welcome to heaven. "Farewell," he exclaimed; "Farewell, all relations and friends in Christ; farewell acquaintances and all earthly enjoyments; farewell reading and preaching, praying and believing, wanderings and reproaches and sufferings. Welcome joy unspeakable and full of glory. Welcome Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! into Thy hands I commit my spirit." What was death to a man like that but the beginning of glory! The black scaffold was lighted up with the radiance that streamed through the pearl gates.

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How much does the spirit of zeal, courage, witness-bearing, and discipline, stir the descendants of the martyred Covenanters in the present day?

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. What may be said of Cargill's last years of service?
2. How many years of persecution did he suffer?
3. What aroused him against the king?
4. What official act did he perform on the king and six others?
5. What was the nature of this excommunication?
6. How did he protect himself against wrong criticism?
7. Was his prophecy fulfilled?
8. How did Cargill die?
9. What service is much neglected in the Church in our day?

XL.

The societies.—A.D. 1682.

After the death of Cameron, the Covenanters of the Cameronian type formed themselves into societies for the worship of God, for their own spiritual edification, and for the defence of the Covenant. Half a dozen families or more, having the same faith, spirit, and purpose, met together on the Sabbath day, to engage in social worship. This was called a society.

Those were days of woeful declension. Defection had swept the great body of Covenanters from their basis. Under the strain of persecution and the snare of the royal Indulgence, many ministers and people had abandoned wholly, or in degree, Reformation grounds. The Society People alone refused to make concessions by which truth would be suppressed, conscience defiled, or any divine principle surrendered. They stood by the Covenant, and accepted the consequences, including hardest service and greatest sufferings.

The Society People have been censured for exclusiveness; they refused to associate with others in the worship of God, and would hear no ministers except their own. But why? Consider their reason, then let them be judged. These people stood alone simply because they had been left alone; these soldiers of Christ had been deserted while holding the ground won by their fathers at the cost of much blood. They stood where the Lord Jesus Christ had placed them, giving them a solemn charge to keep the oath, and defend His royal rights. Should they then be reprimanded, for not joining in the general stampede? What saith the Lord? "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

From the fortress of the Covenant these veterans of Christ heroically waved the Blue Banner, declaring to their brethren, and to the world, that by the grace of God they would never surrender. They were the real Covenanters, the true blue, the old stock. They were not a faction; they were the remnant. They stood on the original ground; the others had broken the Covenant and had departed. These were the core, the center, the substance, the personnel, the integral force, the organized body, the visible form, of the Covenanted Church in those days. The Societies were the continuity of the Church that had flourished in the days of Knox, and took on later and greater glory in the times of Henderson. They were the same Church, holding the same faith, the same Covenant, and the same services.

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The Society People were not the branch; they were, the trunk from which the branches had fallen. The branches were strewn around; but the trunk, though broken and disfigured, was still deeply rooted in Covenant soil, and full of life.

The persecutors more than ever concentrated their fire upon these people. They were pursued and shot like game. Liberal rewards were offered for their leaders. Yet they stood by their Covenant; they would not yield an hairbreadth. Fidelity to Christ swallowed up every other consideration; it was the burning passion of their lives.

These societies were numerous, extending over a wide area. They were held together by delegations which met quarterly. By this means harmony of spirit, purpose, and action was preserved. They stood like a square of veterans, facing the enemy on every side. They even took aggressive steps, delivering in the most public manner their testimony against the tyranny of the king and the defection of the Church. The minutes of these General Meetings have been preserved; they furnish interesting reading.

After the death of Cargill these people had no minister. A few ministers, like Alexander Peden, were still untainted, but they would not join these strong-headed Covenanters in their war against the king. They regarded the Society People as extremists and fanatics. The societies suffered more seriously from reproach and misrepresentation by the brethren than from persecution, though that was growing fiercer every day. But these were men who reckoned with conscience and with God; not with consequences nor with man. Fidelity to Christ was their first and only choice.

These immovable Covenanters were now undergoing the severest trial of faith. They were hunted, seized, tortured, shot, hanged, destroyed, in the most infernal manner. They were shown neither mercy nor justice. But the most crushing distress was the reproach heaped upon them by retrograde Covenanters. By these they were defamed as dangerous men, disloyal to their country and a disgrace to religion. All the ministers, through fear or with scorn, had forsaken them. This was harder to endure than fire, gibbet, and sword combined. They issued a pathetic call to the pastors to come back and tend this flock of God. The call was like the wail of lost children crying for a father's care and pity. It contained these assuring words:

"We will hear all ministers, whether in houses or fields, who will preach according to the Word of God, our Covenants, Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, that will embrace this, our call."

The call was presented to as many as could be found, and was declined by every one. These that declined their call were the ministers who, twenty years previous, had been expelled from their churches, because they would not abandon their Covenant and submit to the king. And these were the people who had followed them into the wilderness, gathered about them in great Conventicles, enjoyed wonderful Communion

under their ministry, and adventured their lives in their defence. Now the flock was forsaken; the shepherds had fled.

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These people, however, were not to be despised. They were numerous; a few years later, upon an emergency, they mustered a regiment for their country's defence without the beat of a drum, and announced that another regiment or two would follow if needed. They were courageous; they gave a most aggressive testimony at Lanark against the king and the defections of the times. They were intelligent; they ably defended their principles and position both in speech and in print. They were consecrated; they made their appeal always to God, to the Covenant, to conscience, and to the enlightened judgment of Christendom.

The General Meeting resolved, in 1682, to educate four young men for the ministry, among whom was James Renwick. These were sent to college. Renwick was ordained in 1684.

Each society endeavored to hold a meeting every Sabbath for Divine worship. This went far to supply the spiritual nourishment which the ministers had failed to give. The "Society" is a sweet memory, lingering still in the hearts of some of our aged people. There are Covenanters who can yet recall the old-fashioned prayer meeting, then known as the Society which descended from the times of persecution. They can remember how half a dozen families, sometimes more, sometimes less, came quietly together on Sabbath morning to one of their homes. The atmosphere, within and without, was pervaded with holy awe. A quiet joy, subdued with gravity, beamed in all faces. The largest room in the house was crowded with men, women, and children; the chairs were supplemented with boards, cushioned with quilts, for seats. At 11 a.m. the worship of God began.

[Illustration: *St. Sebastian church, Rotterdam, Holland.*

In the times of persecution many Covenanters fled to Holland for safety. Here they found a city of refuge. The city council gave them the use of this church for worship. The building is very ancient, and yet it is in a good state of preservation.]

Order of exercises:

A Psalm announced, a blessing invoked singing the Psalm, reading a chapter, and prayer by the leader.

Bible verse announced, statement of doctrine and remarks.

A second Psalm, chapter, and prayer.

Reading in the Confession of Faith or in a sermon.

A third Psalm, chapter, and prayer.

The children reciting Psalms and Questions.

The Shorter Catechism recited by the whole house.

A fourth Psalm, followed with a short prayer.

Adjournment at 3 p.m.

These societies were the deep roots of the Covenanted Church. By means of them, she became thoroughly indoctrinated in the Word of God and His holy Covenant. In these meetings the elders became like ministers in the knowledge of Christ, and the people like elders. The feeble in Israel waxed strong as the house of David, and the house of David as the angel of the Lord. There were giants in those days.

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The Covenanted Church must revive the society spirit and exercises, if she would recover her vitality; she must resume these spiritual athletics if she would feel the glow of healthy vigor. These roots have suffered decay; therefore the trees are easily upturned. When Social worship of God characterizes the Church, the people will take on strength and be able to stand amidst the spiritual landslides and general defection that characterizes the times in which we live.

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Points for the class.

1. How did the Covenanted Societies survive the general defection?
2. How did they succeed when they had no ministers?
3. What separated them from others in worship?
4. What caused them the greatest grief?
5. How did they entreat the ministers to come to them?
6. On what terms would they have received the minister?
7. How were the societies unified?
8. How did the General Meeting provide a ministry?
9. Give a description of an old-time prayer-meeting.
10. Why should these exercises be revived?

XLI.

The daughters of the covenant.

The persecution of the Covenanters brought into display the rarest virtues and highest qualities of womanhood. Many women chose to give up their happy homes, and wander in solitudes, dwell in caves, suffer in prisons, hear the death sentence, and go to the gallows, rather than violate their Covenant with God. They cheerfully accepted their full share of service and sacrifice in Scotland's struggle for civil and religious liberty. They faced the terrors of that conflict with a noble spirit; they were man's worthy helpers in those trying times. Thousands of incidents of feminine heroism might be cited; we have room for merely a few.

The Covenanter's marriage, in those days, was both serious and romantic. The bride always loves to open her eyes upon rosy prospects, but persecution in that generation shattered the beautiful dream. Her future was then like a landscape, over which storm followed storm, with only alternate blinks of sunlight. Husband and wife were in jeopardy every hour; to-morrow the wedding gown might be the winding sheet. When John Knox found the woman of his choice, he said, "My bird, are you willing to marry me?" She replied, "Yes, Sir." Then tenderly and firmly he added, "My bird, if you marry me, you must take your venture of God's providence, as I do. I go through the country on foot, with a wallet on my arm, and in it a Bible, a shirt, and a clean band; you also may put some things in for yourself; and you must go where I go, and lodge where I lodge." "I'll do all this," she blithely answered. They lived long, and were happy in the bonds of that blessed wedlock. Once as they journeyed across the county she took the hand-baggage, and hastening ahead sat on the hilltop awaiting his coming. As he came up she humorously said, "Am not I as good as my word?"

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The women often showed fidelity to Jesus Christ and His Covenant that amazed the persecutors. They scorned the suggestion of relief for themselves or their families that would compromise the truth of Christ. John Welch, of Ayr, lay in prison fifteen months because his preaching did not please the king. The dungeon in which he was confined is yet pointed out in Blackness Castle, a dark, dismal, pestilential vault. A recent traveler said that he had gotten enough of its horrors in five minutes to do him. But poor Welch had to abide there “five quarters of ane yier.” Mrs. Welch visited the king in person to plead for his release. “Yes,” said the king, “if he will submit to the bishops.” “Please Your Majesty,” said Mrs. Welch, holding up the corners of her apron, “I’d rather kep his head here.” The faithful wife was willing to witness her husband’s execution, rather than have him betray the cause of Christ or break his Covenant with God.

Many a martyr got his inspiration for duty from God, through his noble wife. When James Guthrie came to a difficult task, he seemed to hesitate. Great interests were involved. May he not modify a certain ministerial action so as to save his life, provide for his family, and continue to shepherd his flock? Who would not pause in presence of such a serious consideration? His wife, observing his perplexity, came into his presence with a cheery countenance and an assuring voice, saying, “My heart, what the Lord gives you light and clearness to do, that do.” The light carried him into the service; the conscience was set free from the temporary disturbance; yet the decision brought him to the scaffold; it placed upon his brow the martyr’s crown. The worthy wife sadly went into widowhood, and the children into orphanage, through that strong, womanly spirit which could brook no deviation from duty.

The women frequently were placed in embarrassing positions. In marriage they were not always equally yoked. When the husband was a persecutor, faithfulness in the house and fidelity to Jesus required the highest wisdom on the part of the wife. Lady Anne Rothes occupied such a home. Both she and her husband were born Covenanters. The Covenant principles were bred in the bone, instilled into the thoughts, and impressed on the conscience, at the parental fireside, at the family altar, in the house of God, and at the Table of the Lord, while they were under the care of their parents; but the young man forsook his father’s God, dishonored the Covenant, and cast off religion. He became a profligate and persecutor. The woman, through the abundant grace of God, remained true to the Covenant. Her position, however, involved her in many a dilemma. The wedlock that promised to be a blessed union proved to be a galling yoke. The husband was placed in power by the king, and granted the title of duke. On one occasion, when entertaining Archbishop Sharp, the two grew merry over their plan to put certain Covenanters to death. The tender-hearted

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woman, sitting with them at the table, was greatly distressed, yet she wisely concealed her feelings. Having the information, however, she was able to send out timely warning to the Covenanters. In this way she saved their lives, not once, nor twice. Rothés, too, in his better moments, assisted her in protecting the persecuted. When about to send his soldiers to apprehend the Covenanters, at times he would say to her with a twinkle in his eye, “My lady, the hawks will be out to-night, so you had better take care of your chickens.”

The women of the Covenant were compelled to pass through many painful scenes. Often their hearts were heavily burdened, yet they were mightily sustained by the Holy Spirit. Captain John Paton, after a wonderful record on the battlefield in defence of the Covenant, won his last fight on the scaffold. He went joyfully to his death, glorying in victory through his Lord Jesus Christ. As he stood on the platform from which he would soon step into eternity, he held forth his well-worn Bible, from which he addressed the crowd that stood around the gallows. Then bidding farewell to earth, and welcome to heaven, he commended his wife and their six children to the care of his Covenant God. At that moment, the sorrow-stricken woman, reaching up her trembling hand, received from him his Bible with a blessing—a double token of her husband’s deathless love. Then in the twinkling of an eye, she saw his body twirling in the death struggle, while his soul entered into glory. That Bible is still preserved at Lochgoin.

The horrors which women deliberately faced, in their devotion to Christ and His servants, seem almost incredible. How great the love of woman whose heart God’s love has filled! How deep, how tranquil, how inexhaustible, how majestic, how like the love of Jesus is the love of that woman whose heart rests in her Covenant God! It is measured in part by the stupendous tasks she accepts and the crucial emergencies she endures for the sake of others. When Robert Baillie, burdened with years and weakened with disease, lay in prison waiting for his sentence, his wife was ill and unable to visit him. But the angelic heart of her sister, Lady Graden, then found its opportunity. The authorities would permit her to visit the dying man, only on her consent to become a prisoner with him. She agreed to the conditions, and entered the dark sickly cell. His pale face was quickly lighted up with her presence, and the Word of God, which she read to him in the dim candle-light. Night and day she watched over him with sympathetic interest. At length he was brought out for trial, and sentenced to die. She accompanied him to the gallows, stood by him when swung off; saw him cut down, watched while his body was quartered and prepared for shipment, to be placed on exhibition in four cities. And when the service of love was fully finished, and neither hand, nor tongue, nor eye could do anything further, she went home to console her sick sister.

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[Illustration: *Consolation in prison.*

Helen Johnston, afterward Lady Graden, was the daughter of the celebrated Archibald Johnston, who sealed the Covenant with his blood. Through much tribulation she learned to sympathize deeply with those who were condemned to die for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here she is seen visiting an aged prisoner of Christ, Robert Baillie. She is leading the Bible, and conversing upon the consolation of God's grace. She attended him on the scaffold, where he gave up his life for the truth.]

And what shall we say more of Isabel Alison, Marion Harvie, Margaret Dun, Barbara Cunningham, Janet Livingston, Anne Hamilton, Margaret Colville, Marion Veitch, and the long list of worthy women, which the pen of man will never complete?

The Covenanted Church is largely dependent on the women for spirit, courage, fidelity, and activity in the service of Christ. The grace of God, abounding in the women, will cause the Church to arise and do valiant work. When mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters beam with devotion to Christ and His Covenant; when their voice is resonant with holy courage in the Lord's cause; when their lives are sublime with deeds of heroic faith; then will the Church become "beautiful as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Jesus said unto her, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. In what spirit did the women endure the persecution?
2. Give an incident in courtship.
3. Describe the loyalty of Mrs. Welch, both to her husband and to the Covenant.
4. Relate Mrs. Guthrie's spirited advice to her husband.
5. Tell about Mrs. Paton.
6. What were some of the difficulties faced by Lady Rothes?
7. Describe the service of devotion by Lady Graden to Robert Baillie.
8. How is the Church dependent on woman, for spirited and successful work?

XLII.

Young life under persecution.

When the shepherd is smitten, the sheep will be scattered. When the father is persecuted, the family will suffer, the mother and children cannot escape. The fire that enfolds the oak with a sheet of flame will not pause at the more beautiful maple or the flowering shrubs.

God's Covenant with the fathers included mothers, sons, and daughters. It also embraced future generations. "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." The Covenant of our fathers was their acceptance of God's promise on His own terms. The terms were these: unswerving fidelity to His truth, and steadfastness in His service. They who were

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true in spirit, honest at heart, firm in purpose, and consistent in life, were able to enter into the deep, broad, marvelous meaning of the Covenant. The secret of the Lord was with them. The Holy Spirit came upon them with power, shed light, gave strength, ministered comfort, inspired hope, produced courage, wrought wonders. In their presence the wilderness blossomed as the rose; gardens sprang up in the solitary places; the apple tree bore fruit in the woods. The Lord Jesus Christ was with them in the rich abundance and wonderful variety of His grace; they dwelt in the heavenly places; glory covered the ground whereon they trod.

The children of the Covenanters, being included in the Covenant, suffered with their parents in the persecution, and received also the recompense of reward. A few of these lovely lives may be mentioned, but the fascinating story of thousands will never be told. The few, however, will suggest the many. We look at a bunch of violets, then think of the acres of delicate beauty bathing in the warm sunbeams and fluttering in the soft winds.

The young Covenanters in those days confronted severest conditions and learned hardest lessons in discipleship. Sometimes they had to forsake father and mother to prove themselves worthy of Christ. Andrew Forsyth, verging on manhood, was required to drink this bitter cup. The family had not yet espoused the Covenanted cause. One day Andrew was entrusted with a flock of sheep for the market. He was over night on the way. As he lay that night guarding his sheep in the field, he heard solemn music. Following the sound, he came to a moss-hag, where a group of Covenanters were worshiping God. A moss-hag is a cut on the hillside, formed by frost and rain; and overhung with moss, heather, and other growths. In such places the pursued Covenanters often hid themselves. The cold grotto was their house; the damp earth their bed; the hole cut out of the hill without hands their sanctuary. Andrew listened with breathless interest. They were singing a Psalm of David. Then followed an earnest prayer. Tie could not endure the suspense, but revealed himself to the little company. They received him gladly, and spent hours talking of Christ, His precious blood, His amazing love, His royal glory, and His unrivalled supremacy. Andrew was a Covenanter when he went home. His father was angry, his mother was sorry, and he had to leave. In a distant moor he made himself a bed under a booth of heather and moss, and supported himself by working for the neighboring shepherds. The dragoons heard of his affiliation with the Covenanters, and were quickly on his path; his life was ever in danger. One day they fired on him, but he escaped and reached his mossy den, carrying a bullet wound received from their fire. There he lay several days, suffering, bleeding, hungry, lonely, and helpless, yet full of peace and joy in the Lord. Often did he think of his father's house, and his mother's

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love; of the gentle hands that had in other days smoothed his bed and made his bread; yet his heart bloomed with thoughts of the love of Jesus Christ and His sweet promises. His religion had cost much, but he never regretted the bargain by which he had lost the world and gained his soul. At length a shepherd found him, and kindly ministered to his wants. This good boy lived to be an old man, whose grey hair was a crown of glory.

The young people often manifested presence of mind equal to those of riper years. Bessie Willison was one of those brilliant characters. Once she heard of a Field-meeting to be held under trying circumstances and resolved to attend it. It was winter; the ground was covered with snow; the place was distant and difficult to reach; the weather was rough; the journey was perilous; dragoons might be met at any turn of the road. What girl would brave such hardships for a day's preaching? Bessie arrayed herself in her winter wraps, and started early in the morning. She was willing to endure hardness for the Lord's sake. She could face the driven snow, or sit on an icy stone, or laugh at the blasts that reddened her cheeks, in order to hear the Word preached by a true servant of God. She walked alone; yet not alone, for her heart burned within her while the Lord talked with her by the way. As the road led around a hill, she suddenly came upon a troop of dragoons. They drew up their horses, soldier-like, and spoke rudely to her; she replied with much dignity. They persisted in their vile language, taunting her and railing on the Covenanters. But even with their horses, guns, swords, and rough speeches, they were unable to daunt the lonely girl. Conscious of purity, and flaming with indignation, her eyes flashing into their faces, she administered a reproof that cut like a lancet. They shrank and made room for her to pass on without further molestation. What inspiration would come to the Field-meeting from the presence of a Covenanter like that! The Lord was with her, and therefore she brought joy and strength to others.

The little children, too, had their difficult places in Scotland's hard fight for liberty. The persecution still increased in violence. At length when for any reason a town had fallen under the king's displeasure, all the inhabitants were subject to punishment. On one occasion, the people had been warned of the coming of dragoons. The parents, not being able to take their children with them, and hoping the "bairns" would find pity, left them and fled to a hiding-place. The children were sharply interrogated by the soldiers concerning their parents, but gave no satisfaction. They were then led to a field and placed in front of the soldiers. This greatly terrified them, but they would reveal nothing. The officer commanded his men to take aim. Up went the guns; the sight was dreadful for children; yet they would give no information. "Lead us to the hiding-place, or you will be shot," cried the officer. There were sobs, tears, and trembling, but no response.

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[Illustration: *Andrew Hislop's martyrdom.*

Andrew Hislop was but a youth when he suffered death for Christ's Crown and Covenant. He was taken while crossing a field, and sentenced to die on the spot. He bravely faced the guns that were levelled at his brow. Many, other boys of that period were equally heroic. Four of them, who were captured in a group, replied thus to their captors, when told that they must be shot: "We are to die, you say? Glorious news! Christ is no worse than He promised."]

"Will it hurt much, Janet?" said a little boy, as he clasped the hand of his sister.

"I dinna ken, Willie," replied the sister tenderly, "but I'm sure it will na last lang."

"Fire!" shouted the officer. The terrible volley flashed from every gun. Some of the children dropped, thinking they had been shot. The soldiers had been told to shoot over their heads to frighten and not kill. The officer, outmatched by the brave children, and we hope heartily ashamed of himself, led his men away. As they rode off, the children sang:

"The Lord's my shepherd; I'll not want;
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green; He leadeth me
The quiet waters by."

Their sweet voices mingled with the dying clatter of the horses' hoofs.

The young bridegroom and his bride were also involved in hardships that tried their souls. The soldiers that raided the country had equal disregard for old age, youth, and infancy. The mother, whether surrounded by a houseful of children, or clasping her first infant on her bosom, found no pity. One morning the dragoons surrounded the house of a happy couple, John and Sarah Gibson. They had come to seize both, whether to kill or imprison was not yet determined. John was absent; Sarah, seeing the troopers gallop toward the house, poured a prayer over her babe, as it lay asleep in the crib, and fled in terror, hoping that sweet infancy would appeal to their hearts. A ruffian rushed in, and grasping the babe, shouted, "The nurse is not far away." He made it scream, to bring the mother back. She heard its pitiful cry; her heart was breaking, yet she was utterly powerless. She might expose herself, but she could not help the infant. They carried it away. She was almost insane with grief. The soldiers, going back from the house, met the father, but he was not identified. They, being bewildered on the moor, compelled him to be their guide. He saw the child, but did not recognize it as his own. The officer, ashamed of the cruel deed, ordered the man who had carried off the babe to take it back to the house. He galloped off and laid it again in the crib. The mother quickly clasped it to her bosom. That night the father returned. Telling of his

adventures, he mentioned the babe he had seen with the soldiers. The mother, bursting into tears, arose and laying the infant in his arms said, "This is the babe you saw."

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The young people are the hope of the Church. The congregation whose young people are loyal to Christ and true to the Covenant is greatly blessed of God. The Covenant embraces children, claims their allegiance, calls for their service, honors them with responsibilities, and lays at their feet the privileges and beatitudes of the kingdom of heaven.

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. Does the Covenant of the fathers include posterity?
2. How did the children suffer in the persecution?
3. Describe the case of Andrew Forsyth.
4. How did Bessie Willison meet her trials?
5. Tell about the little children of a persecuted town.
6. Describe the cruelty done to the babe of Mr. and Mrs. Gibson.
7. What may the Church expect, when her young people are true?

XLIII.

The Covenanters' Bible.

The Covenanters dearly loved the Bible. They esteemed it very highly for the sake of God, its Author. They believed in its inspiration, genuineness, infallibility, majesty, and power. The Bible inspired? Yes, the Covenanters had no troublesome thoughts on that question. The Holy Spirit, in their estimation, was the source of that Book; the contents were all His own. He produced every sentence, formed every clause, chose every word found in the original Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, and filled all brimful and overflowing with God's own meaning. He did all this through the men who were employed as the inspired writers. The Covenanters believed in the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible.

They discovered also a second inspiration. The Holy Spirit inspires the devout reader. He opens the heart to receive the Scriptures, and He opens the Scriptures to yield their meaning. Then, and only then, the Bible appears in its true greatness. Then is it the effective voice of God, tender as the sob of a babe, and majestic as thunder; it then is the temple of living truth, filled with the glory of the Lord's presence; it then is the revelation of the eternal world, showing the beauty of holiness, the mystery of the cross,



the conquest of death, the horrors of sin, the doom of the lost, the joy of the saved. Oh, what a Book the Bible is to the inspired reader! It becomes transparent. The light of the face of Jesus flashes from the lines and between the lines, through the words and amidst the letters, turning the page into heaven's bright scenery, and the chapters into the unveiling of the wonders of redemption. Such was the Book of God to the Covenanters, as they passed through the fires of persecution.

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The homeless Covenanters, wandering from place to place, carried the Bible with them. It was their faithful guide and constant companion. When they were hungry, it was their food; when thirsty, it was their drink; when forsaken, it was their friend; when wounded, it was their balm; when pursued, it was their refuge; when condemned, it was their advocate; when executed, it was their welcome into heaven. When they retired to the darksome caves, its promises made the dripping stones shine; when they sought shelter in the mountains, the music of the Psalms cheered their hearts; when their blood bedewed the moss, the loud cry on Calvary sanctified their pain; when they sat on the Bass Rock begirt with waves and swept by storms, the visions, creations, and tumultuous grandeurs of Patmos were reproduced in the spiritual experience of these illuminated sufferers, by means of the Word of God. To these devout Covenanters, the blessed Book yielded up its wealth, breathed its deepest love, revealed its hidden glory. In their spiritual visions, the desert blossomed at their feet, gardens flourished around them, harvests ripened for their sickle; summer drove back the dreary winter; they verily dwelt in Immanuel's land.

The Covenanters loved the Bible more than their lives. In it they found eternal life, and counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Many instances are on record, showing their willingness to die, rather than abandon, or conceal, the Book of God. One man, M'Roy by name, was shot on the spot, because he was found reading his Bible. It was Sabbath, a sweet summer day. That morning he drove his cows to pasture, carrying the sacred Book with him. The field is a beautiful place for personal devotions. Here the soul can luxuriate in prayer and meditation, holding fellowship with heaven. A solemn stillness had fallen upon the broad landscape; nothing was heard but the notes of the plover, the bleating of the lambs, and the grazing of the cows. M'Roy sat down on the soft grass, and opened the Book of God. He was then in his element; he delighted in the law of the Lord. The sun poured down its blessings upon the fields, and a light much brighter spread around his soul; the fragrant air fanned his brow, and sweeter aroma from the "mountain of myrrh" refreshed his spirit. His heart was beating fast with the joys that were crowding into his inner life. He was preparing, though he knew it not, for a crisis. Suddenly and rudely the spiritual reverie was interrupted. Captain Lagg, with a company of horsemen, was dashing across that field, when their eyes fell upon the lonely herdsman. They galloped to the spot where he sat in solemn composure.

"What book is that you are reading?" Lagg gruffly asked.

"It is the Bible, Sir," meekly replied M'Roy, looking up into the face of the rough soldier, who held his weapon ready for action. The confession sealed his death.

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“Your cows must find another herdsman,” sternly returned Lagg, who immediately delivered the fatal shot. The bleeding body struggled a moment on the heath, then the ransomed spirit took its flight to brighter realms.

The Bible won the young, as well as the more matured. It warmed, strengthened, purified, and ennobled the hearts of sons and daughters, affording comfort and arousing heroism equal to that of fathers and mothers. Andrew Hislop, while yet a youth, was overtaken as he hastened to a hiding-place, and was put on trial for his life, while he stood before the soldiers in the field across which he was running. His Bible was found on his person. His mother’s home had been demolished by Claverhouse some time previous; she and her children had been compelled to face the future without food or shelter. She had been charged with harboring Covenanters; therefore her residence had been destroyed, her provisions seized, and her children scattered; all were now being hunted for their lives. Claverhouse had found Andrew. He was allowed a short time for prayer. His prayer brought the needed blessing with more than lightning-speed; sufficient grace and strength were immediately given. His face shined with courage; his eyes gleamed with contempt for danger and death; a halo of victory seemed to wreath him; the Holy Spirit filled his soul with joy; his lips took up the Psalmist’s inspired challenge, and the solemn music smote the ears of his foes, as he sang—

“The mighty Lord is on my side,
I will not be afraid;
For any thing that man can do
I shall not be dismayed.”

The dragoons were unable to endure the glory of that face, or the sweetness of that voice. He was ordered to draw down his “bonnet” over his eyes, and receive the volley. He sternly refused, lifting it higher on his dauntless brow, and affirming that he could look the musketeers in the face, while they delivered the murderous fire. Then holding out his Bible, he haled them to the Judgment-seat, where they would be judged by that Book.

[Illustration: *Covenanters Bibles*

In this group of Bibles, Peden’s is the largest; Cargill’s is underneath it, and Captain Paton’s to the left. We had the privilege of using Cargill’s Bible in 1896, at a Conventicle service held on the Cargill farm. We felt deeply impressed, while reading from the pages upon which the piercing eyes of the martyr had often flashed. The book still bears the marks of rain-drops, received, doubtless, while being used in the outdoor meetings held by the Covenanters.]

“Shoot,” cried Claverhouse. Not a gun was discharged. The men were overawed by the sweet innocence and intrepid spirit of the youthful Covenanter.

“Shoot that bonnie young man!” exclaimed the officer, who had charge of the men appointed to do the bloody work. “I’ll fight Clavers and a’ his men first.” Three others were found sufficiently hardened to do the cruel deed. The young hero fell, and expired. As the horsemen rode away, the stricken mother hastened to the spot. The young heart had ceased to beat; the eyes opened no more upon her kindly face. Sadly she gathered up the oozing brains, for which she had brought a clean napkin, knowing too well what had occurred; she then prepared the body for burial.

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The Covenanters endeavored to keep the Bible ever close at hand. It was the open book in the house the desk-book in the shop, the pocket-book in the field, the guide-book on the road. When they had a breathing spell at their work, they inhaled its fragrance, fed upon its manna, drank from its wells of salvation, plucked the ripe fruit of its orchards. A glance at its sacred pages, now and then through the day, supplied strength, wisdom, comfort, and courage so much needed. But this pious habit imperiled life. Arthur Inglis one day, while resting his team at the plow, sat down on the furrow, with his open Bible. He was suddenly sighted by the wary dragoons, who were scouting the country. They spurred their steeds, and were quickly drawn up around their victim. The fact that he was reading the Bible was sufficient to convince them that he was worthy to die. Neither judge nor jury was necessary for conviction. He received the deadly volley and fell, expiring in the furrow where he sat.

The Bible, how we should prize it! Our fathers, when they opened the Book of God, knew not but ere they closed it their blood would stain the page upon which the eyes were feasting; yet they relished it more than their necessary food. How will our delight in the Word of God compare with theirs?

POINTS FOR THE CLASS.

1. How did the Covenanters esteem the Bible?
2. What kind of inspiration did they ascribe to the Bible?
3. What second inspiration needed to understand it?
4. What was the Bible to these sufferers?
5. Describe their devotion to the Word of God; the experience of McRoy; Andrew Hislop; Arthur Inglis.
6. How ought we to esteem the Bible?

XLIV.

The Scottish seer.—A.D. 1685.

Alexander Peden was a burning and a shining light in the dark night of Scotland's persecution. His career in the ministry of the Gospel glowed with mysterious splendor. His natural powers flashed with supernatural glints, or rather, with excessive spiritual light, by the indwelling Holy Spirit. God, through persecution, made many mighty men.

Peden was born in 1626, when King Charles was trying hard to stamp out Presbyterianism. He was twelve years old, when the Covenant renewed at Greyfriars' Church thrilled the kingdom. He was twenty-four when Charles II. took the throne, and wrought havoc with the Reformation. When thirty-six, he was driven from his church at Glenluce by the wrath of the king. When forty-eight, he was banished to the Bass Rock, where he rested, like an eagle on its aerie, his soul betimes soaring above all clouds, and calmly viewing the ransomed in presence of the eternal Throne. At sixty, he gave death a royal welcome, uttering predictions, bestowing blessings, and giving signs, like one of the prophets of old. Thus his singular life fell into periods of twelves, each arising above the other, like mountain upon mountain, in ruggedness and majesty, until his noble spirit took its flight from the scenes of earth.

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A great distress befell him on the day appointed for his licensure. A serious charge was preferred against him, affecting his moral character. His licensure, therefore, was deferred. Greatly humiliated, he withdrew to a solitary place, and spent twenty-four hours in prayer. He was all night alone with the Angel of the Covenant, and wrestled till he got the blessing. A prayer lasting twenty-four hours, poured forth from the heart, will work wonders. He has not told us how he sat by the murmuring waters, pouring out his complaint; nor how that day was to him like night, and the night like outer darkness; nor how he mingled his sighs with the moaning of the winds, and his tears with the drops of the night; but he has told how that the Lord answered him. Returning to the house he said, "Give me meat and drink, for I have gotten what I was seeking; I will be vindicated." His innocence was soon made clear by the criminal making a public confession of guilt.

Peden was called to the church of Glenluce, where he remained as pastor three years. His preaching was earnest, pointed, and powerful. He was greatly beloved by his flock, and the work of the Lord prospered in his hand. But his ministry in that field was violently interrupted by the vengeance of King Charles, which fell upon the Church in 1662, driving 400 ministers from their parishes. Peden possessed a militant spirit, and ignored the day set by royal authority for the arbitrary vacation. He boldly continued overtime. At length the strain was so great that he had to go. His farewell sermon was preached from Acts 20:31: "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." The text was peculiarly appropriate to the occasion. The house was crowded; tumultuous emotions surged through the audience; the anguish found vent in weeping, wailing, and loud lamentations. The sermon was frequently interrupted with the grief. The service continued until night. He never again preached in that pulpit.

The gift of prophecy distinguished Peden in a striking manner, giving him a unique place in history. He spoke with accuracy of many events, without information other than that received directly from God. But this will astonish no one who is acquainted with man's power in prayer. Prayer was the secret of Peden's prescience. God proceeds on established principles, in His dealings with His people. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Peden's prayers on certain occasions lasted all night. Communion with God was his delight; he lived in the presence of the Almighty; his hiding-place was in the brightness of the light shining from the face of Jesus Christ. His heart was burdened with the interests of Christ's kingdom. Therefore God gave him eyes to see much that was hidden from others.

He was sixty miles away when the Covenanters fell on the field of Rullion Green. News then traveled no faster than a horse. That evening he was sad. A friend inquired the cause. He replied, "To-morrow I shall tell you." That night he retired to his room, but went not to bed; he spent the hours in prayer. Next morning he said, "Our friends, that were in arms for Christ's interest, are now broken, killed, taken, and fled, every man."

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He was forty miles away on the dismal Sabbath, when the Covenanters were slaughtered at Bothwell Bridge. He had an engagement to preach. The people assembled in a solitary place for the service. They were hungry for the Word of God, but Peden did not appear. At noon they sent to know the cause. He replied, "Let the people go to their prayers; I neither can, nor will preach this day, for our friends are fallen and fled before the enemy; they are haggling and hacking them down, and their blood is running like water."

[Illustration: *Peden at Cameron's grave.*

When Peden was old, he wandered one day to the grave of Cameron. There he sat down in deep meditation. Desolation brooded over the scene. The solitude of his life, too, was crushing. His dearest companions in persecution had fallen in the hard-fought battle. They had received their crown, and were with the Lord in glory, while he was yet pursued like a partridge on the mountains. His heart heaved a heavy sigh, and from his lips came the memorable words, "O, to be wi Richie."]

One day while preaching, he arose in a flight of inspiration, exclaiming, "I must tell you, in the name of the Lord, who sent me unto you this day, to tell you these things, that ere it be very long, the living shall not be able to bury the dead in thee, O Scotland; and many a mile shall ye walk, or ride, and shall not see a farm-house, but ruinous wastes, for the quarrel of a broken Covenant and wrongs done to the Son of God."

This servant of God had profound knowledge of Bible doctrines. He had a masterly conception of the crown rights of Jesus Christ, and the fundamental principles of His kingdom. He had vivid views of the excellence of holiness, and the atrocity of sin. This filled him, like the Psalmist, with horror at the doom of transgressors. His inner life was fiercely swept with the contrary passions of love for righteousness, and hatred for iniquity. His soul was the scene of terrific conflicts. His preaching and praying against the powers of darkness often revealed an internal tragedy. One night while preaching to the Covenanters who had assembled in a sheep-house, he cried out, "Black, black, black will be the day, that shall come upon Ireland; they shall travel forty miles, and not see a reeking house, or hear a crowing cock." Then, clapping his hands with dramatic effect, he exclaimed: "Glory, glory to the Lord, that He has accepted a bloody sacrifice of a sealed testimony off Scotland's hand."

Peden could not brook any departure from Christ and His Covenant. Covenant-breaking was, in his eyes, a most aggravated sin. He was quick to see the Lord coming to avenge the quarrel of His Covenant, and his soul was filled with dread.

Here are some of his utterances:

"Oh, my heart trembles within me, to think what is coming on the backsliding, soul-murdering ministers of Scotland!

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“He is not worth his room, that prays not half his time, to see if he can prevent the dreadful wrath, that is coming on our poor motherland.

“Thirty-six years ago our Lord had a numerous train of ministers in Scotland, but one blast blew six hundred of them away, and they never returned.

“I shall tell you the right way of covenanting with God; it is when Christ and believers meet; and our Lord gives them His laws, statutes, and commandments; and charges them not to quit a hoof of them; no, though they should be torn into a thousand pieces. And the right Covenanter says, Amen.”

Peden never married. During twenty-four years of wanderings, his life was pathetically lonely. When death was approaching, he returned to the old home, to spend his last days amid the scenes of his childhood. His brother still dwelt there. He received a cordial welcome, though his presence imperiled the family; for the dragoons were still pursuing him. To that true and tender soul, how beautiful must have been the green fields, the rippling brooks, and the familiar hills, where he had roamed when a child! They made him a cave on the hillside; a bush covered its entrance. There he was hidden from the enemy, and there he lay in his last illness, and ripened for heaven.

When near his end he predicted, that, bury him where they would, the enemy would lift his body. Forty days after his burial, the spiteful foe raised his body, and buried it among the graves of criminals. Thus they attempted to disgrace this servant of Jesus Christ. But in later years his memory was so dearly cherished, that many good people requested to be interred beside him, and the grounds around that grave in time became a beautiful cemetery.

Communion with God is the secret of power, and of spiritual vision; and faithfulness in God's Covenant is the secret of Divine communion. The possibility of living in holy familiarity with God the Father, and with our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit, learning the thoughts of God, feeling the thrill of His power, viewing His far-reaching plans, and co-operating in His glorious work—is this only a fascinating dream? Nay, the Covenanters of the martyr-spirit found it to be a realization. Do their children strive after the same attainment?

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. What gift specially distinguished Peden?
2. What distress did he meet at his licensure?
3. How did he overcome it?



4. Where was his first pastorate?
5. Why did he leave Glenluce?
6. What remarkable prophecies did he utter?
7. Repeat some of his sayings.
8. What occurred to his body after burial?
9. How may we attain to a similar familiarity with God?

XLV.

Scotland's maiden martyr.—A.D. 1685.

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King Charles II. died February 6, 1685. Few tears were shed, many hearts were glad, at his departure. He was called the "Merry Monarch," in allusion to his frivolous spirit and gross dissipation. "Wherever you see his portrait, you may fancy him in his court at Whitehall, surrounded by some of the worst vagabonds in the kingdom, drinking, gambling, indulging in vicious conversation, and committing every kind of profligate excess."

Charles left behind him a gory path. Pools of blood, precious blood, the blood of the saints, marked it all the way through the twenty-five years of his reign. Where did that horrible path lead? We shudder at the answer; we draw a veil over the scene; we are careful not to speak our thoughts. But the strong-hearted martyrs followed the vision to the end. "Would you know what the devil is doing in hell?" exclaimed John Semple, one of the Covenanted ministers. "He is going with a long rod in his hand, crying, Make way, make room, for the king is coming; and the other persecutors are posting hither." How like the scathing irony of Isaiah, in describing the death of the king of Babylon! "Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming." An ovation in the lower world! What horrid mockery there awaits the chieftains of crime!

A curious coincidence occurred at this time. Alexander Peden, on a certain night, was conducting family worship. He was hundreds of miles distant from the king. While reading from the Bible, he suddenly stopped, and exclaimed, "What's this I hear?" He uttered the strange words three times. Then after a brief pause, he clapped his hands and said, "I hear a dead shot at the throne of Britain. Let him go; he has been a black sight to these lands, especially to poor Scotland. We're well quit of him." That same night the king fell in a fit of apoplexy, or as some say, by a dose of poison, and died within five days. His brother, the Duke of York, succeeded him on the throne.

James VII, the new king, inherited Charles' work of slaughter, and continued it with revolting savagery. He, too, was infatuated with the thought of being supreme over the Church, and became infuriated with the purpose of overthrowing Presbyterianism, and suppressing the Covenanters, now called "The Cameronians." Had he paused to consider, surely he would have hesitated to follow the man, who had gone to meet his Judge, to answer for the blood that was crying against him for vengeance. We tremble at the thought of the naked soul facing the accusations of the slain, and receiving righteous retribution for its cruel deeds. How great the infatuation of the successor, who determined to follow the same path!

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Among those who suffered under king James, the family of Gilbert Wilson is worthy of special notice. Neither Gilbert, nor his wife, had espoused the Covenanters' cause; but they had three children who claimed the enviable distinction; Margaret, aged eighteen years, Thomas, sixteen, and Agnes, thirteen. These children had been deeply moved by the stories of bloodshed, that were then recited, night by night at many a fireside. Their sympathy with the persecuted was aroused unwittingly, and they absorbed the principles of the Covenant; somehow, and it could not be explained, they became Covenanters, and that of the noblest type. Their parents were shocked, for their property, and freedom, and even their lives were involved. The children were required to abandon the Covenant, or quit their home. They chose the latter, sad and terrible as it was. These young hearts had grasped one of the highest and hardest truths in the religion of Jesus Christ—"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."

[Illustration: *Choosing death rather than life*

Margaret McLaughlin was a widow, 63 years of age; Margaret Wilson a girl of 18. False accusations were preferred against them, but the real ground of their death was their faith in Jesus Christ and piety before God. They were offered life, if they would renounce the Covenant. They chose death rather than forfeit God's favor, by breaking Covenant. Several costly and beautiful monuments have been erected in Scotland to their honor. The strand where they died is still marked by stakes, which are replaced from time to time. The place is near Wigtown, in the south of Scotland.]

One day they walked slowly and sadly away from their beloved parents, and their pleasant home. From a distance they cast a farewell glance upon the scenes of their childhood, then quickened their pace to reach the solitudes and escape the soldiers. The dragoons came to the house, but missed their prey. They were very angry, and enjoined the parents, under a heavy penalty, to refuse their children food and shelter; yea, all human kindness. The children pursued their way, not knowing whither they were going. The desolate moors, the dreary mountains, the damp caves, the chilly moss-hags were before them, but their resting-place this night must be determined by the setting of the sun. We have not been told where they wrapped themselves in their plaids for sleep, but it was likely on the ground. They sadly missed the cozy bed their mother used to make. Where they had to stop was so shelterless, silent, chilly, and lonely. They were weary, hungry, defenceless, trembling like nestlings cast violently out of the nest. Margaret the oldest was a mother to the others. She loved her Bible. It contained God's many promises, one especially precious on a night like this: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." With such assuring words, they fell asleep in each other's arms, their heads resting on the bosom of Christ's everlasting love. The sun arose, and they, wandering on, found the Covenanters, with whom they shared the privations, yea, also the consolations, of persecuted life.

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Having heard that King Charles was dead, the two sisters supposed that the persecution had abated, and ventured to the house of Margaret McLaughlan, an old faithful friend. Here they were discovered and arrested; and, with this aged widow, were cast into prison. Agnes was ransomed by her father, at a price equal to \$500. The two Margarets were sentenced to die. The manner of their death was peculiar and very shocking.

On May 11, 1685, they were taken to the sea-shore to be drowned. While the tide was low two stakes were driven deep into the oozy sand, one close to the water, the other nearer the shore. To the first Margaret McLaughlin was bound; to the second, Margaret Wilson. The shore was crowded with people. Major Windram, with his troop, had charge of the execution. This man himself like Gilbert Wilson had two daughters and a son. They, too, like the Wilson children, had become aroused at the deeds of blood, and remonstrated with their father against his atrocious cruelty, in persecuting the Covenanters. One after another they had sickened and died, each charging their death on him, as God's vengeance upon his deeds. This man, after all his bitter experience, was hard enough to watch these women die beneath the briny waves, and show them no pity. The tide slowly recovered its strength; higher and higher it arose around the more distant woman—up to her face—over her head—then a death-struggle. "What think you now of your companion?" said a soldier to the young maiden, as the head of the aged martyr rose and fell on the waves. "What do I see but Christ, in one of His members, wrestling there," she calmly replied. "Think you that we are the sufferers? No, it is Christ in us; for He sends none a warfaring on their own charges." The tide crept up upon this second martyr like the death-chill, but her heart was strong and fearless in the Lord. Her voice arose sweetly above the swash of the waves, reciting Scripture, pouring forth prayer, and singing Psalms. The tide swelled around her bosom, ascended her naked neck, touched her warm lips, yet the heavenly music continued. But now a breaker dashes over the uplifted face; the voice is silenced; the head droops upon the water. At this moment a soldier rushed forward, and dragged her to the shore, hoping that she had received enough of the sea to frighten her into a confession, and thereby securing her release. The gasping girl was asked to renounce her Covenant. She refused. "Dear Margaret," said a friend in melting tones, "Say, 'God save the king!' say, 'God save the king!'" With sweet composure, she answered, "God save him if He will, for it is his salvation I desire." Her friends, rushing up to the officers, exclaimed, "O, Sir, she has said it; she has said it." "Then let her take the oath, and renounce her Covenant," he replied with cruel harshness. She answered with emphasis, "I will not; I am one of Christ's children; let me go." They plunged her back into the heaving waters; the struggle was brief. The lifeless form was cast upon the strand, and soon borne off by loving hands. The limp body was now free from all sorrow and suffering. The beautiful casket was empty; the shining jewel had been taken to adorn the crown of the *king of kings*, and to flash forever in the glory of heaven.

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"The tide flowed in, and rising over her lips,
She sang no more, but lifted up her face,
And there was glory all over the sky,
And there was glory all over the sky,
A flood of glory—and the lifted face
Swam in it, till it bowed beneath the flood,
And Scotland's Maiden Martyr went to God."

The young people who are governed by the Word of God, and strengthened by a Covenant with God, and steadfastly aim at the glory of God, will have the Holy Spirit in rich abundance. When love to Jesus arises into a holy passion, subordinating all earthly interests and relations, be assured that extraordinary services, sacrifices, achievements, victories, and honors are awaiting.

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. When did King Charles die?
2. What terrors must such a man have to meet at death?
3. Who was his successor on the throne?
4. What was his character?
5. What notable family suffered under him?
6. Relate the sad circumstances of the Wilson children.
7. What happened to the sisters and their elderly friend?
8. What was the manner of the death of the two Margarets?
9. Describe the martyrdom of Margaret Wilson.
10. How may the young people arise in strength for church service?

XLVI.

The eldership—A wall of defence.—A.D. 1685.

The eldership has ever been a tower of strength in the Covenanted Church. The elders have been pilots at the helm, when the ship was driven by fiercest storms, and the

ministers had altogether disappeared. They have been the homeguards, when the most desperate assaults were made upon their beloved Zion. They have been leaders, moving forward with wise, fearless, and persistent step, when Christ's cause demanded aggressive testimony for down-trodden truth, and against uprising error.

The Presbyterian Church has derived her distinctive name from the office of the elder. Elder, Presbytery, Presbyterianism, Scriptural Church Government, Christ's supremacy unlimited and unrivaled—these thoughts are links in a chain, all made of the same gold. Presbyterianism is the doctrine of Christ's sovereignty, crystalized into form, and reduced to practice; the Headship of Jesus over His Church finds therein its grandest expression.

The Covenanted Presbyterians recognized only one form of Church government as Scriptural—that invested in the elders. They rejected all other forms, as human inventions, without Divine warrant, an injury to the Church, an infringement upon Christian liberty, a seizure of Christ's crown rights and a blot upon His royal glory.

The elders are Christ's delegates, appointed to administer His government in the Church. They are empowered by His will, accredited by His Spirit, directed by His Word, entrusted with His authority, and accountable at His throne. To the elders are committed, directly or indirectly, all the interests of Christ's Church. What awful responsibility! Surely the elder may pause at the threshold of the sacred office, and, with trembling lips exclaim, "How dreadful is this place!"

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The Presbyterian Church of Scotland, in her palmy days, numbered about 1,000 congregations, each under the care of a session. The elders may therefore be estimated at 6,000 effective men, when the twenty-eight years' persecution struck the Covenanters. The value of this force can never be known, in advising, comforting, defending, and leading the broken congregations of God's people, amidst the storms that desolated their beloved Zion.

The minister, being assisted and encouraged by a faithful band of elders, was able to do great work in his parish, and the Church flourished exceedingly between the Covenant of 1638 and the persecution which began in 1660. During the persecution, the order of the Church being broken up, the election and ordination of elders had almost ceased. Yet, as the regular eldership melted away by death and defection, there were other sons of the Covenant, who, in spirit, service, suffering, and leadership, became elders in fact, and were duly recognized and honored.

The service of the elders in those days appeared in many forms. Captain Henry Hall, of Haughhead, did splendid work in a variety of ways. He often placed himself between the enemy and the field-meetings, in defense of the Covenanters. He was a large man, formidable and fearless. Many a time, with sword in hand, he rode his dashing charger upon the king's troops, occasionally breaking their ranks. He was chiefly distinguished, however, for his willingness to sacrifice all he possessed, in the interest of the Church. He opened up his house for the licensure of Richard Cameron, when such a meeting jeopardized his life, family, and property. He also opened up his farm for field-meetings, despite the wrath of the king, and the danger of being raided by the troops. A Communion, held on his grounds, was long remembered for the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. George Barclay was the minister on that occasion. The people had come from their rocky retreats and distant homes in great numbers. The preaching was refreshing, and the Lord's Table furnished a great feast for hungry souls. The people, not fully satisfied with the bountiful provisions of the Sabbath, came again on Monday, and swarmed over the green field, waiting for another service. During the sermon a shower descended, but the audience did not seem to mind it. The minister himself was quite pleased, remarking while the rain was falling, "I am as sensible of the drizzle of the dew of heaven upon our souls, as of the rain upon our bodies." Elder Hall died of wounds received while defending Donald Cargill, June 3, 1680.

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The elders of those times were profoundly intelligent in the principles of the Covenant for which they suffered. They were Bible men, who delighted in the law of God, and drank deeply at the fountain-head of knowledge. They were experts in the Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and the Church Covenants. John Nisbet, of Hardhill, was a hero on many a field, defending minister and people from the merciless troopers; but his greatest service was in the use of the sword of the Spirit. His last testimony abounds with lovely passages of Scripture, beautiful and fragrant as a bush abloom with roses. His witness for the truth came from a rich heart; his protest against error was solemn as an affidavit. His testimony shows deep experience in the Lord, and gives faithful warning to Covenant-breakers. Here are some of his words: "I close with Christ in that way of redemption, which He hath purchased. I give my testimony to the Holy Scriptures, for they are the rule men are to walk by. I leave my testimony against all wrongers of my Lord's crown." This man died on the scaffold; he ascended the ladder, rejoicing and praising God, saying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord; my soul doth magnify the Lord. I have longed, these sixteen years, to seal the precious cause and interest of my precious Christ with my blood" He suffered December 4, 1685.

[Illustration: *John Brown of Priesthill*

John Brown was notable for meekness, intelligence, and fervent love, in the Lord Jesus Christ He studied for the ministry, but an impediment in his speech turned him from that path He became known as the "Christian carrier"—an expressman, in modern language. His devotion to the Covenant secured for him the martyr's crown. He was shot in his own dooryard, May 1, 1685.]

Many of the elders were filled with spiritual enthusiasm. They had such vivid views of the Lord Jesus and of the glory of the world to come, that their souls were poured out in exclamations of wonder. Robert Garnock, of Stirling, seemed at times to be caught up to the third heaven, where he saw and enjoyed what he was unable to utter. He could express the inexpressible only by the repetition of Oh! Oh! Oh! Referring to a season when no one was permitted to see him in prison, he said, "Oh, but I had a sweet time! The Lord's countenance was better unto me, than all the company in the world." In his dying testimony, he pleaded in the following manner: "Oh, will ye love Him? Oh, He is well worth the loving, and quitting all for! Oh! for many lives to seal the sweet cause with! If I had as many lives, as there are hairs on my head, I would think them all too few to be martyrs for the truth. Oh, if I could get my royal King Jesus cried up and down the world! Oh, but I think it very weighty business, to be within twelve hours of eternity! I will get my fill of love this night, for I will be with Jesus in paradise. Welcome, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; into thy hands I commit my spirit."

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Those elders were men of hope. They were enlisted in a winning cause, and knew it. In the thickest of the fight, the cloud was dark, and the thunder deafening; yet they knew that victory would ultimately perch on their banner. Their triumph was assured in Christ, who had said, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Robert Miller, of Rutherglen, was, by his courageous hopefulness, an inspiration to the afflicted Church. Pointing to the future, he exhorted his fellow-sufferers to hold out, for glorious days were coming. "And now I dare not doubt," said he, "but Christ is upon His way to return again. Oh, be earnest with Him! Employ your strength holding up the fallen-down standard of our Lord. If ye be found real in this duty, ye shall either be a member of the Church Militant, and see the glory of the Second Temple, which shall be a glorious sight; or else ye shall be transported, and be a member of the Church Triumphant; so ye shall be no loser, but a noble gainer, either of the ways." He was martyred one winter morning, in the early dawn; the shadows of night still lingered, for the murderers may have dreaded the light. Before the sun had risen, his spirit took its flight to the realms of eternal brightness.

Are the elders of the Covenanted Church worthy of their predecessors? Do they measure up to the standard of fortitude in the faith, self-immolation for the truth, intelligence in the Scriptures, enthusiasm in Christ, and hopefulness that has no sunset? Are they leaders of the people in every good enterprise? Are they defenders of the flock against all defection? Are they carrying the banner of Christ forward, even beyond the ministers, where the testimony for King Jesus requires it? For all faithful elders, seats in glory are prepared round about the throne of God.

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. Whence did the Presbyterian Church get its name?
2. What is the only Scriptural form of church government?
3. What dread responsibility attached to this office?
4. How did the persecuted Church keep up her force of elders?
5. Describe the service some of them rendered; Hall, Nisbet, Garnock, Miller.
6. What questions should our elders apply to their own conscience?

XLVII.

A home desolated.

“See the top of yon hill?” said the shepherd’s wife, pointing to the highest crag of Cairn Table. “Keep that in yir e’en, and ye’ll come to John Brown’s grave.” Our way lay through a pathless moor, covered deep with grass, rushes, and moss; and we had asked direction to the spot where the martyr’s body sleeps.

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The day was wet, the pasture was beaded with drops, and the rushing streamlets disputed our crossing yet a passionate longing to see the place where John Brown, known as the "Christian Carrier" had lived, and was buried, overcame every difficulty. The walk covered three miles. At length we ascended a knoll, and, lo, the monument stood before our eyes, and almost at our feet. Now we were on ground, where one of the most tragic scenes of Scotland was transacted. Cargill very beautifully said, "The moors are flowered with martyrs' graves." Here is one of these flowers; a century plant it is, watered with precious blood, and abloom in sweet solitude.

The buildings are gone; not a trace of them is left. The grave was made, it is said, where the martyr fell, in front of his cottage. It is enclosed with a stone wall breast high. A flat stone lies over the remains, bearing a copious inscription. The solitariness is oppressive; death and desolation here bear undisputed sway. The blood ran in chills, as the cold grey stones gave their testimony, amid the gusts that played with the heather, and the drizzle that sprinkled our bare heads. The thoughts of the heart played wildly; imagination refused to be bridled; in a moment former conditions were, in vision, revived. The monument had given place to the dwelling, and the dreariness was astir with the scenes of busy life.

The country around, was then, as it is now, somber as a desert. The silence is solemn; we bated our breath; the lips shrank from speaking; aught except a prayer, or the melody of a Psalm, seemed out of place. The outlook on every side is without an inhabitant; yet, even here, the persecutor sought his prey, and did his cruel work.

Many years had this home been a sanctuary in the wilderness, and a refuge for the hunted Covenanters. John Brown and Isabel, his wife, were like Zacharias and Elizabeth, "both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." They had two children, a babe in the mother's arms, and Janet, five years old, a child by a former wife. Morning and evening God's worship perfumed their humble dwelling. These hearts, filled with the love of Jesus, poured forth His praise every day, but especially on the Sabbath, which they kept with great care. Their hospitality was munificent: they entertained angelic strangers. The latch-string was on the outside, and many a Covenanter, driven by storms, or hunted by dragoons, found a welcome here. They came wearied with journeying, wasted with hunger, weakened with sickness, and worried with trouble, and found rest, comfort, and inspiration in this habitation, where God was pleased to dwell.

A society of Covenanters held its meetings in this home. Several families came across the broad moor on Sabbath morning, and remained till evening. Sometimes they traveled both ways under star-light, for fear of the enemy. The day was devoutly spent in prayer, reading the Word, singing Psalms, and conversing on the heart-stirring doctrines of redemption. They spoke much concerning the duties and dangers of the times. This society continued to meet, till broken up by the martyrdom of its men; one after another was pursued and shot down like game on the mountains.

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John Brown's home became a rendezvous for the Delegated meetings of the United Societies. This thickened the dangers that were gathering around his life. He had a presentiment that his blood would be shed for the cause of Christ, yet he accepted duty at every hazard, and rejoiced in privileges however perilous.

After the death of Donald Cargill, the Cameronians for a while had no ministers. They stood, however, unfalteringly by their Covenant. They even grew aggressive in their testimony; hurled new challenges at the king; took forward steps in the battle for conscience, liberty, and the royal rights of Christ. The societies, numbering several hundred, were able to unify and utilize their strength, by means of the Delegated meetings. The second meeting of these delegates was held in this consecrated home. Sixteen men, representative Cameronians, competent and fearless elders, gathered around this hearth, where the turf-fire glowed, while the March storms swept the moorland. Here they deliberated how the Covenanters might continue the struggle, and intensify it by striking harder blows against error, and giving stronger testimony to the rights of their kingly Saviour. They were at no time planning for ease, safety, or deliverance. "We only fear," said one, "that our sufferings will end before the reformation begins." The glory of Jesus Christ was their objective point.

Alexander Peden in his wanderings, drifted into this home, on the night previous to the awful tragedy that occurred in the front yard. How surpassingly kind is God's providence! Surely Peden was sent of God to fill these hearts with comfort, courage, and triumph in Jesus Christ, for the trial, which was now at their door. Peden held John Brown in highest esteem. Of him he said, "He was a clear, shining light, the greatest Christian I ever conversed with." What a night of prayer and inspired fellowship those men must have had together. Their souls were then in a state of highest tension; both were fired with zeal for the Covenant of the Lord, and melted with sorrow for the desolated Church.

[Illustration: *A Widow's sorrow*

Claverhouse and his troopers found John Brown on his farm digging turf. It was in the morning. His fields were still dripping with dew, and his soul moist with distillings of the 27th Psalm, which he had sung at family worship. He was brought home, and shot at his door, in presence of his wife and child. Mrs Brown suffered "neither fainting nor confusion, but her eyes dazzled when the shots went off," according to her own story.]

Next morning, May 1, 1685, they were up at dawn for family worship. The first verses of the 27th Psalm were sung. How wonderfully appropriate for such a morning! The Psalm is the shout of faith:

"The Lord's my light and saving health,
Who shall make me dismayed?"

My life's strength is the Lord; of whom
Then shall I be afraid?"



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John Brown then went to the field, spade in hand to dig turf. Peden lingered; he was sad; the shadow of the great distress had fallen on his tender spirit. Taking his farewell of Mrs. Brown, he paused and said, as if to himself, "Poor woman; a fearful morning; a dark, misty morning!" He then went his way.

"Oh, mother, a great many horsemen are coming down the hill with father," cried little Janet, rushing into the house.

"The thing that I feared is come upon me," cried the mother, "O, give me grace for this hour," she prayed, lifting her eyes to heaven. Then taking her babe in her bosom, and Janet by the hand, she went out to meet the soldiers, praying as she went. Claverhouse was in command. She pleaded that her husband's life might be spared; but not words nor tears could move the hardened man.

"Will you pray for King James and his supremacy?" said Claverhouse to his prisoner.

"Jesus Christ is the Supreme Head of His Church," was the fearless reply.

"Will you attend the curate's service?" continued Claverhouse.

"I cannot attend where God's law is not honored," responded Brown.

"Go to your prayers, for you shall immediately die," cried Claverhouse. Even the soldiers were horrified at the awful threat.

"Isabel, this is the day I told you of, before we were married," said he tenderly to his wife. "You see me now summoned to appear before the Court of heaven, as a witness in our Redeemer's cause. Are you willing?"

"Heartily willing," she answered, her voice tremulous with affection for him and submission to God. Her heart was breaking, yet she would cheer up the martyr spirit of her husband.

"That is all I wait for," he said, then added in a rapture of joy, "O, death, where is thy sting? O, grave, where is thy victory?" He prayed for Covenant blessing upon mother and children, soon to be left so lonely; adding, "Blessed be thou, O Holy Spirit, that speaketh more comfort to my heart, than my oppressors can speak terror to my ears."

"Shoot" said Claverhouse to the soldiers, drawn up for the bloody work. Not a gun was discharged. The brutal leader then fired the deadly shot. The martyr fell at the feet of his wife, and after a brief struggle the noble spirit departed. "What think you of your husband now?" said Claverhouse to Mrs. Brown. "I always thought well of him, but more now than ever," she quietly replied. "You deserve the same fate," said the brutal man. "And if you had the power, I would receive it," she defiantly responded. "But O, how will you answer for this day's work?" she continued. "I'll take God in my own hand,"

he replied. The soldiers silently and sullenly rode away, ashamed of the horrible deed. Mrs. Brown, with her children, sat down beside the outstretched martyr, and poured out her great sorrow.

John Brown might have saved his life, and his family, by relaxing in his Covenant, and joining another Church. The family that keeps Covenant with God will surely be tried; difficulties and hardships must be met. But the victory is always to them who cling close to the Lord, in personal holiness, in family worship, and in Covenant-keeping.

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Points for the class.

1. Describe the location of John Brown's home.
2. What meetings were held in this cottage?
3. What interests were here under deliberation?
4. Who visited the home the evening before the sad event?
5. How was John Brown captured?
6. Describe the death of this martyr.
7. How could John Brown have saved his life?

XLVIII

Last, but not least.—A.D. 1688.

James Renwick was the last martyr publicly executed for adhering to Scotland's Covenant. He was a child of maternal vows. His mother dedicated him to the Lord, praying that he might live, and do worthy service for Christ. She saw her prayer answered; yea, more than answered; it became, also, a sword that pierced through her own soul. She had not asked too much; but great prayers always imply self-immolation.

The Renwick home was beautiful for situation. It was located near the quiet town of Moniaive. The building is gone, but the place is kept in remembrance by an attractive monument. The cottage stood on a hillside, overlooking a charming valley, and beyond the valley, a range of mountains reaching to the clouds, glistening with snow in the winter, and purple with heather in the summer. Young Renwick was a passionate lover of nature. Oft did he sit on this grassy slope, where stands the monument, and gaze, and ponder, and dream, till filled with amazement. Well did he know, that all the magnificence of earth and sky was but the shadow of the glory beyond, the frills of the Creator's robe, the evidence of a personal God. This boy, like young Samuel, did not yet know the Lord. He knew his Bible, his prayers, his Catechism, his Psalm-book, and his church; but he had no personal acquaintance with God. This he eagerly sought. One day, as he gazed upon valley and mountain, a wave of melancholy dashed upon his soul, and he exclaimed, "If these were devouring furnaces of burning brimstone, I would be content to go through them all, if so I could be assured that there is a God." Such agonizing for an experimental acquaintance with God is sure of reward. God revealed Himself. No great light breaking through the sky fell upon him; but there came

an inner illumination by the Holy Spirit, which increased till his penetrating eyes saw God in everything; every bush was burning with His glory; every mountain was clothed with His majesty; all the heavens were speaking His praise; and yet he saw a thousand-fold more of the beauty of the Lord in the holy Covenant, and in the poor despised Covenanters who kept the faith, than in all the grandeur of nature. Renwick in this deep experience had his introduction to God. Oh, what a life we may expect of such a man! An introduction to God must result in a wonderful character. Look out for the boy, who says that he must find God; his life will yet be transfigured with real greatness and moral grandeur.

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At the age of nineteen Renwick finished his university education. That year he witnessed the affecting sight of Donald Cargill's martyrdom. The execution was public; curiosity and sympathy had collected an immense throng around the scaffold, to see the old minister die. Renwick was in the crowd. He was not yet a Covenanter. He pressed forward to hear and see all he could. The sight was deeply affecting. The venerable man of God walked triumphantly to the place of execution. His hair was white with years and cares, his face serene as an angel, and his voice clear and strong in his last testimony. He ascended the ladder with firm step, and joyfully sealed the Covenant with his blood. Renwick gazed and trembled; his heart beat fast, and his eyes grew moist. From that day he was a Covenanter. He there, and then, resolved to give his life for the same noble cause.

The first notable service Renwick rendered to the Covenanters was his part in the public testimony given by the Society People, at Lanark, January 12, 1682. The death of Donald Cargill had bereaved the societies of their only pastor. They had no minister now, who would grasp the fallen Banner of the Covenant, and hold it forth, in defiance of the persecutor's rage. These people were the real Covenanters; they counted the Covenant of their Lord more precious than all the blood that could be poured out for its sake. Nor were they to be despised. They numbered at least 12,000. These were men and women noted for high principle, public spirit, intelligence, and courage. They seized the Banner of the Covenant, and kept it unfurled with utmost fidelity, while waiting for God to send them a standard-bearer. The persecution waxed hotter and hotter. The murderous guns were ever echoing over moors and mountains, in the desperate effort to exterminate the unconquerable societies. Yet they grew bolder, and more aggressive, in their testimony against the king, the Episcopacy, the Indulged ministers, and the silent shepherds. It was in mid-winter, when storms were a shelter from the foe, that forty armed Covenanters, including James Renwick, entered the town of Lanark, and there delivered a new Declaration of rights and wrongs, that made their enemies gnaw their tongues for pain.

[Illustration: *James Renwick*.

James Renwick was the last martyr of the Covenant, who suffered by public execution. His short life was a miracle of devotion to the Societies, whose fidelity to Christ and their Covenant had inflamed the enemy with rage, and thereby greatly increased the violence of the persecution. He had a marvelous victory over death, being in a transport of joy on the way from the prison to the scaffold. His soul was overflowing with happiness, in anticipation of the marriage supper of the Lamb, of which he was about to partake.]

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We find Renwick, soon after this, studying theology in Holland. After twenty months he appeared before Presbytery for ordination. This is the man who has had his introduction to God. Now we will see what his acquaintance with God will do for him. Acquainted with God! Oh, how singular that will make any man! Acquainted personally with God, with His sovereignty, His holiness, His love of righteousness, and His hatred of sin! The man who is thus honored will be peculiar indeed. He will have deep insight, unswerving purpose, strong character, unhesitating courage. He will not deviate an hairbreadth from the law of God, as he sees it. He will not yield his convictions for any consideration. He will stand alone against the forces of all worlds combined, rather than compromise one jot of revealed truth. The pleading of friends and the threats of enemies will alike fall heedlessly upon his ears. He will consider every word of Christ, and every gem in His crown, worthy of all the blood that may flow for its sake. Such was James Renwick at this time.

There were no ministers of his own denomination to ordain him. The Church in Holland was not a Covenanted Church, but a branch of the Presbyterian Church, and at that time it was burdened with corruptions. But it was not guilty of Covenant-breaking, like the Church of Scotland. Therefore he sought ordination in Holland. Now, this is the man who is acquainted with God. Observe what he does. In his trial sermons, he laid bare the errors and faultiness of the Holland Church. What a daring step for a student of theology! What a breach of ordinary courtesy! He placed conventional etiquette on the altar of truth, and consumed it in the flames of zeal for God's House, and the purity of Divine worship. He would, then and there, give faithful testimony; for the opportunity might no more return. Presbytery listened with amazement; yet his arguments were so Scriptural, and his manner so gracious, they cordially sustained him. Next came the act of subscribing the creed before ordination could be granted. This he positively refused to do, for it had not the approval of his conscience. They yielded here also, permitting him to sign the Standards of the Church of the Covenant. He won his way. Decorum was nothing to him, in comparison with conscience and God. He then came back to Scotland, and visited the ministers, pleading with the Indulged to return to the Covenant, and entreating the silent ones to come out of their caves, and make the land ring again with their voices. He was small in person, slender and delicate, and scarcely yet out of his boyhood. He everywhere met with repulse. Vexed and disappointed, he went alone, in the strength of the Lord, to the little flocks scattered over the wilderness. The societies gathered about him; the Field-meetings were revived; the Lord poured out His Holy Spirit in great power; the shout of a king was again heard in the camp of the Covenanters.

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Renwick's ministry lasted about four years. During this time he seemed to be the most hated man in the world; reproach, revenge, and hatred rolled over his head like breaking waves. He was called a deceiver, a fanatic, a schismatic, a traitor. He was pursued by malicious rumors to blacken his name, and by armed men to shed his blood. Yet he continued steadfastly on his way. Winter storms and summer rains could not abate his ardor. Neither the advice of friends, nor the wrath of foes, could swerve him, no, not one moment, nor one hairbreath. His spirit was on fire while his body was emaciated. A thousand arrows were flying around this dove, some of them drinking its blood, yet was it singing.

One night he appeared at the door of John Brown. He was graciously received. A storm was sweeping the moor. As he sat by the glowing fire, drying his dripping garments and warming his shivering body, he remarked, "Reproach has not broken my heart; but the excessive traveling, and many exposures, have weakened my body."

His mother and sisters visited him when in jail, awaiting his execution. Looking into their sad faces, he cheered them up, by exclaiming, "Oh, how can I contain this, to be within two hours of the crown of glory! Let us be glad, and rejoice. This death is to me, as if I were to lie down on a bed of roses." When the drum sounded the signal for the execution, he cried out, "Yonder, the welcome warning; the Bridegroom is coming; I am ready, I am ready." He died with the words of assurance on his lips: "Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

Are present Covenanters acquainted thus with God? Have they the all-inclusive view of His glorious Trinity, His personal presence, His revealed will, His exacting requirements, His omnipotent grace, His redeeming love, His mediatorial kingdom, His everlasting Covenant? Have they the view that will keep them steadfast, progressive, and enthusiastic in His service? They, who have an abiding acquaintance with God, will eventually develop a life, that will be clear as the sun, deep as the sea, firm as the rock, and strong as the cedar.

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Points for the class.

1. Where was James Renwick born?
2. How was he troubled with doubts regarding God?
3. How did the death of Cargill affect him?
4. What was his first notable service in the Covenant?
5. Where did he study theology?



6. How did he testify against the errors of the Church of Holland?
7. What success did he have in his ministry?
8. What was his great sorrow?
9. Wherein lay his unwavering strength?

XLIX.

The Shepherdless flock.

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Renwick received the martyr's crown at the age of twenty-six. His limp body was borne from the scaffold to Greyfriar's churchyard. A spot of ground, a few yards square, had been allotted there for criminals. The Covenanters in these days were accounted criminals by the civil authorities. Here the ground was stirred again and again, till the bodies of 100 martyrs were heaped together, and Renwick's was the last. A suitable stone bearing his name, and referring to the others, now graces this hundredfold grave. What a cluster of gems the Lord will find here, in the day when He makes up His jewels!

When the Blue Banner fell from Renwick's lifeless hand, Alexander Shields grasped it. He was scarcely worthy. Though he had served well and suffered much in former years, yet once he had lapsed. This temporary defection, while pardonable, proved to be a symptom of inherent weakness that unfitted him for leadership. For his fault he shed tears, but they could not remove the stain, nor restore confidence. The fearless Covenanters continued the struggle, their own spiritual momentum being sufficient to carry them forward with or without leaders. The persecution had now reached its eventide; the sunset was showing some rosy tints; a bright day would soon be dawning. This year, 1688, William, Prince of Orange, with an army of 15,000, disputed the right of King James to the throne. The persecutor was able to give the Covenanters no more attention. The coward fled without a battle. He lost his kingdom, and, with his fall, the house of the Stuarts sank into oblivion, as had been predicted by the Covenanters.

The Revolution filled the Covenanted Societies with high hope. They became enthusiastic supporters of the new king, expecting him to inaugurate a reign of righteousness. A Convention of statesmen met in Edinburgh, to readjust public affairs and restore peace. Claverhouse, too, was there, still dripping with the blood of the martyrs. He had dashed suddenly upon the scene with his troops to break up the Convention, and give battle to King William's supporters. The Convention was without a sufficient guard. The delegates were in danger. To whom could they look for protection? Listen! The call is to the Cameronians; to the men who have borne the brunt of persecution for twenty-eight years, and are now quietly returning from the moors and caverns to their desolate homes. To these who have been hated and hunted and tortured and hacked to pieces—to these the government now appeals for help. These, after all they have suffered, are the Reliables. They are the recognized patriots, who stand ready for any sacrifice, and are worthy of any trust, in the name of liberty and righteousness. "We are coming," was their quick reply. A regiment was mustered in one day without the beat of a drum; two others were offered. The poor Covenanters were not now despised.

[Illustration: *The martyrdom of Renwick.*

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James Renwick went to the scaffold in triumphant joy. There he read the 19th chapter of Revelation—the prophecy of Christ’s great battle and victory—and sang part of the 103rd Psalm. He then lifted his eyes heavenward, and said, “And now, Lord, I am ready. The bride, the Lamb’s wife, hath made herself ready.” He suffered February 17, 1688, aged twenty-six years. It was said by his enemies that he was the “stiffest maintainer of Covenanted principles.”]

The persecution being over, the Church endeavored to resume her operations. The General Assembly convened October 16, 1690, after a violent suspension lasting forty years. This Assembly was most remarkable for its membership. There sat together three active Cameronian ministers, threescore other ministers pale from their hiding places, a large group of the Indulged ministers who had gone home years ago, a number of curates who had slipped into the vacancies, and a list of bishops who had been in the service of the persecuting government. Such being the blend, the aroma was anything but sweet. Alexander Peden had prophesied of this Assembly years before. He said, “The Indulged, and the lukewarm ministers, with some young things that know nothing, will hive together in a General Assembly; the hands red with blood, and the hands black with defection, will be clasped by our ministers; and ye will not ken who has been the persecutor, and who the sufferer; and your testimony will be cut off at the web’s end.” How true the prediction!

Rev. Hugh Kennedy was chosen Moderator. The choice indicated the spirit of the Assembly. This man had accepted the Indulgence, had given thanks for the Toleration, and had debarred from Communion the Covenanters who had fought at Bothwell Bridge. The liberals had the meeting. Moderation, compromise, unionism, a nauseating agreeableness pervaded the Court, like the miasma that broods over a stagnant pond.

The three Cameronians, Alexander Shields, Thomas Linning, and William Boyd, had courage to represent the Covenanted Societies, by presenting their petition for the restoration of the General Assembly on Reformation grounds, according to the Covenant of 1638. The petition was treated with contempt; it was not even read in the Assembly. The three ministers winced, faltered, yielded. They fell beneath the popular wave, to rise no more. These men, who had bravely faced persecution, were at last overcome by blandishment. The Covenanted cause was at stake in that Assembly, as truly as it ever had been in the presence of Claverhouse and his dragoons; and here the leaders surrendered.

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The Covenanted Societies refused to follow their faithless guides into the General Assembly, to disappear there in the strange blending of religious forces. These were men of conviction; they did not vary with the weather; they thought for themselves. Some of them were aged and had seen the Covenant Temple of 1638, with its strong foundation and imposing structure. They had seen the Reformation in its glory—the Covenanted Church of Christ, purified, strengthened, and exalted, under the care of Henderson, Johnston, Guthrie, Argyle, and others whose hearts God had touched; and now they saw this reconstruction. Ah, how inferior! it was far removed from the true foundation; it was conspicuous only for its hay, wood, and stubble; they saw and wept. The Covenanted cause was practically abandoned. What Satan could not win by fire and sword, he had won by the enchantments of peace.

The Assembly submitted to the king's supremacy over the Church. King William, like the former rulers, had seized the gem of Christ's authority and set it in his own crown. For this royal truth the martyrs had died. Now their blood was reckoned an unnecessary expenditure. The Covenant was ignored, and its principles set aside; the Church was placed on a new basis. Thus the glory of Scotland's Reformation sank behind a fog-bank that has never yet cleared away.

The Covenanted Societies resolved to maintain their organization, as the true representatives of Scotland's Reformation Church; the legitimate successors of Knox, Melville, Guthrie, Cameron, Cargill, and Renwick; the rightful heirs of the Covenant, its obligations and blessings; the devoted witnesses of Jesus Christ, going forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. They had much for which to contend. The supremacy of Christ, the independence of the Church the Covenant of the fathers, the testimony of the martyrs, the purity of Divine worship, the dignity of Church discipline—all had suffered at the hands of this Assembly. Against the great defection they resolved to lift up a testimony. They would not deny their Covenant Lord, by entering into relation with Church or State, as at that time constituted and administered. These Covenanters were ridiculed as a fanatical, narrow-minded faction. James Renwick had been taunted with the question, "Do you believe that none, but those of your principles, can enter heaven?" "I never said so," he replied; "but I do say, These are principles worth suffering for." A noble reply to the sarcastic question which often reappears.

Narrow-minded! Breadth may be viewed from various positions. He, who attempts to broaden himself by accepting error, becomes the narrow man. Every error adopted means a truth rejected. This process may continue till the heart is so contracted that there is no room for either God or man. Ah, the irony of such broadness! How different with him who will not surrender a hairbreadth of truth! He is the broad man; broad as the law of God, broad as the Gospel of Christ, broad as the principles of the everlasting Covenant, broad as the kingdom of heaven. Those Covenanters were the broadest men of their day.

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The Covenanters would not receive Gospel services from ministers who had broken Covenant with them and with God. Sixteen years this flock was in the wilderness without a shepherd. They came together in societies for spiritual fellowship and the worship of God. The Lord sustained them, and maintained their cause. At length He sent them a minister, John McMillan; and thirty years later another, Thomas Nairn. By these the Reformed Presbytery was organized, August 1, 1743.

Sir Robert Hamilton was the peerless champion of the pastorless people. He exhorted them, saying, "Labor to keep the good old way, seeking to be found in His way when He cometh, keeping the Word of Christ's patience, standing fast to your post, and close to your Master, in readiness to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; for the winds are now let loose; and it is to be feared, many shall be blown away."

And the pastorless people spake often one to another, saying, "Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach."

And Jesus encouraged them, saying, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with, my Father in His throne."

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Points for the class.

1. Who succeeded Renwick as leader of the Covenanters?
2. What was his character?
3. When did the Revolution take place?
4. How did the Cameronians regard it?
5. When was the General Assembly reorganized?
6. What was its general character?
7. How many in it represented the Covenanted Societies?
8. What course did they take?
9. What line of action did the Societies follow?

10. Who were the men of broad principles in those times?
11. By whom was the Reformed Presbytery organized?

L.

The voice of the martyrs' blood.

The mountains and moors of Scotland are decorated with the tombstones of the martyrs. The descendants of the Covenanted fathers have erected many memorials in the places made sacred with the blood of the martyrs. The memorials range from the humble stone to the costly monument. The fathers have not been forgotten; yea, they are still highly esteemed for the heroic struggle, by which every son and daughter has a birthright to the richest inheritance of Christian liberty on earth.

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The persecution lasted twenty-eight years, with few “blinks” to take the chill of horror out of the air. During this time, 18,000 persons, it is said, suffered death, or utmost hardships, for their faith in Jesus Christ. Of this number, 7,000 went into voluntary banishment; 2,500 were shipped to distant lands; 800 were outlawed; 680 were killed in battle, or died of their wounds; 500 were murdered in cold blood; 362 were, by form of law, executed. We have no account of the number that perished in shipwrecks, or succumbed to the horrors of transportation; nor of hundreds that were shot at sight by the soldiers who ravaged the country for years; nor of the thousands who wasted away through cold, hunger, and exposure in the mountains and moors. Gloomy caves, dripping moss-hags, and unmarked graves, were asylums of mercy to multitudes, who are without any earthly record; but their names are written in heaven. Truly Scotland has been consecrated to the Lord. The blood of the martyrs has watered her heather, crimsoned her streams, stained her streets, and bedewed her fields. Scotland is the Lord's. The blood means much.

THE BLOOD EMPHASIZES THE TRUTH OF CHRIST.

The blood of the martyrs testifies to the value of the truth—the superlative importance of all revealed truth. Their blood placed emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the supremacy of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, the preciousness of the Gospel, the independence of the Church, the liberty of conscience and the thousand and one co-related doctrines of salvation. These Covenanters took their position at Christ's throne, where the rainbow of the Covenant arches the heavens; and from that point of view the plan of salvation lay before them, in matchless detail and glorious perspective. These men received enlightenment from the Holy Spirit, and thereby had a broad, clear, rapturous vision of God and His redeeming grace. They saw the truth in the harmonious teachings of the Bible, and esteemed it as God's sanctuary, filled with the presence of Jesus Christ. These Covenanters found Christ in every particle of revealed truth, in every “jot,” and in every “tittle” of the Word of God. Christ's life was throbbing in it, His glory was streaming through it, His energy was radiating from it. They were willing to lose the right eye, the right hand, the right foot, yea, life itself, rather than lose the least fragment of the Scriptures. Rather would they be jostled out of their homes, and wander in deserts, than depart from Bible doctrines. James Renwick was offered his life, if he would let a drop of ink fall on a sheet of paper. He chose death in preference to that compromising act. Is the truth, the entire system of truth, every stone in the temple of truth, thus dear to us?

A WITNESSING CHURCH IS NEEDED.

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The blood testifies to the need of a witnessing Church. While Satan remains above the pit, and iniquity abounds in present proportions, a faithful and fearless testimony for Jesus Christ, and His glorious Gospel and royal rights, will be a moral necessity. God has His own way of calling out His witnesses, and assigning service to them. The Church, as a whole, has invalidated and incapacitated herself for this responsibility, by weakness, declension, and compromise. God does not commit His testimony to the Church, while in such condition; nor to the faithful in the Church, whose voice and actions are weakened or neutralized by majorities. This important and hazardous task throughout the ages has not been committed to a Church, that is recreant at any point; nor to individuals, that are true at every point; but to a distinctive body of earnest, faithful, and fearless believers. For this purpose the Lord has divided, and sub-divided, His people time and again. He will have a testimony by a Church that is distinct from every retrograde organization. While the Covenanted Church was faithful under Henderson, Johnston, Guthrie, Gillespie, and other worthy leaders, she was united, happy, and prosperous; "she was beautiful as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." But when she suppressed, by resolution, one principle of the Covenant, God drew the dividing line. He sent the persecution that brought out His witnesses, four hundred ministers, and people in proportion. And when these ministers weakened under the royal Indulgences, He intensified the persecution and called out the "Cameronians." These witnesses He qualified to see the truth in its vast proportions and feel it in its divine dreadfulness. They became the embodiment of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; they were the incarnation of the doctrines of His kingdom on earth. They dwelt in the presence of God, lived on the hidden manna, and pulsated with the power of the endless life. Such were the martyrs who defied death and all the instruments of torture. Have the Covenanters of to-day spirit, power, and character like this?

[Illustration: *The burial.*

The burial service was peculiarly sad and solemn, in the times of persecution. The deceased Covenanters were, in many cases, buried at night, for fear of the enemy. The friends, with breaking hearts, gathered around the new grave, and waited under the dim star-light, while the minister, with the use of a flickering candle, offered consolation from the Word of God. Great was the grief when one of the leaders had fallen in death.]

A CRY FOR VENGEANCE.

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The blood of the martyrs cries unto God for vengeance. "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Such was the cry of them that were "slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held." Vengeance in the Gospel! Vengeance in Jesus Christ! Vengeance in the heart of God! How we are shocked! We try to veil our eyes and shut out the dreadful fact. We attempt to explain away the terrible doctrine. Yet there it is. A sharp sword is sheathed in this scabbard, and it will yet be drawn for dreadful work. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." "And shall not God avenge His own elect? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." God is just as well as merciful; yea, necessarily just, but conditionally merciful. Justice is an essential attribute of His life; mercy is volitional. The blood of the martyrs, their groans, tears, wanderings, the desolation of home, the cries of mothers and children, the horrors worse than death—all are ever before His face; nothing is forgotten. Without repentance, no remission; sin does not grow feeble with, years, nor die of old age. Judgment must be meted out, or rectitude would forsake the universe; the whole structure of God's kingdom would fall into ruins. The guilty must suffer. The individual perpetrators of these horrid crimes have suffered already; they have appeared personally before Christ's tribunal. But the State! Oh, the guilty State! The State was the chief party in the slaughter of these innocents. True, she has ceased to shed the blood of saints; but has she repented of the blood she has shed? Her eyes are dry; her brow is brass. Her children build monuments, but her hands are still red; the blood that once dripped is now dried, but it is still on her hands. Genuine repentance means reformation. The Reformation is under Scotland's feet. The twenty-eight years' struggle is to her a splendid drama; the principles are amusing. When He inquireth after blood, what shall Scotland do? The angel answers in the Revelation: "They have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink."

WEIGHTY MORAL OBLIGATIONS.

The blood of the martyrs imposes obligations upon posterity from generation to generation. The martyrs deeply felt their responsibility for the Church, her purity, doctrines, discipline, membership; for her loyalty to Christ, her separation from the world, and her administration in the Holy Spirit. Their zeal for the House of God brought them to the front; their passionate love for Jesus Christ placed them on the firing line. There they met every attack made upon Christ and His House; there they stood for the royal rights of Jesus and the honor of His kingdom; there they fell under the murderous fire, giving place to their successors. These soldiers of Jesus knew how to die, 'but not how to retreat.

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They did their work well, yet necessarily left it unfinished. The victory was assured, though not in sight. The death-stricken hand reached the blood-stained banner out to another to be carried forward. This war still rages. The supremacy of Jesus Christ is yet disputed; His royal rights are yet usurped by mortals; His Bride, the Church, still halts amid many opinions; the ordinances of grace are unblushingly corrupted; the teachings of the Gospel are adroitly doctored. The attacking forces are active, determined, and numerous, as in the days of the martyrs. The tactics differ, but the fight goes on. Heavy, heavy are the moral obligations, that fall to the successors of those who gave their lives for the truth. To recede would be cowardice, desertion from the ranks, perjury within the Covenant, treason against Jesus Christ. Is this too strong? Listen: "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Surely the times call for Christian soldiers; yea, heroes; possibly, martyrs. Do Covenanters feel their obligations to the Lord?

* * * * *

Points for the class.

1. How long did the persecution last?
2. What is the estimated number of those who suffered?
3. What significance is attached to the martyrs' blood?
4. How does it show the value of Gospel truth?
5. In what manner does the blood cry for vengeance?
6. How does it lay obligations on posterity?

LI.

The old blue banner yet.

The Covenanters in Scotland's struggle for liberty carried a significant banner. Letters of gold, on a field of blue, displayed the soul-stirring motto: "*For Christ's crown and covenant.*"

The men of the Covenant unfurled their colors with dauntless spirit, and went forth in the name of the Lord, conquering and to conquer. And this is the victory by which they overcame the world, even their faith.

The Covenanters carried their banner as an emblem of the truth in Jesus Christ. The Bible focussed its light in the burning words that flashed on their ensign. These fathers accepted the Bible without reservation or apology, as God's Book, inspired, inerrable, authoritative, the rock foundation of faith, and the supreme law of life. They grasped the wondrous system of redeeming truth, as bearing on their own lives, on the Church, on the world, and on all generations to come. They embodied it in their Covenant, and wove it into their flag. They saw all Bible truth converge in Christ, the Only Begotten of the Father, the Mediator of the Covenant of grace, the crucified and risen Redeemer, the exalted Prince and Saviour; and on their banner they emblazoned their faith. But while their profession was embroidered on their colors, their creed was pulsating in their

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veins. This standard they carried boldly into the battle in defence of Christ and His Church. The deadly missiles that tattered its folds, and plowed through their flesh, could not subdue their spirit. Their blood often stained it, but it was never surrendered. One standard-bearer fell, and the flag-staff was grasped by another. Thus the Old Blue Banner, in all its significance, has come down through the ages; it is the Covenanter's banner yet.

THE COVENANTERS' STANDARD OF RELIGION.

The standard of truth is the real banner of the Covenant. The standard of religion in the Covenanted Church exalts the truth of Christ, and makes it most conspicuous. Nothing in a nation so public as her colors. Where the flag flies, the power, honor, and greatness of the country are represented by the folds that flap on the winds. The Covenant commits the Covenanted Church to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth of God's Word. This obligation, when honored, carries the Covenanter into all truth, and all truth into the Covenanter. The doctrines of grace will throb in his heart, flow in his veins, illumine his mind, dominate his thoughts, deepen his life, enlarge his capacities, control his actions, and purify all the fountains of his being. To all such the truth is concrete, not abstract; it has form, color, action, energy, atmosphere, horizon, immensity: To the true Covenanter, knowledge is experience; he deals with God, worships in spirit, battles with sin, glories in Jesus, and listens to the Eternal Spirit. His faith is power; his love is life; his hope is realization. The invisible world looms up with awful visibility before him. Such is the life that is distinguished by Covenant fidelity; in it the truth of God has grandest publicity. It shines like the sun. The voice of that life has the majesty of thunder, testifying for Christ. They who are thus animated with the truth cannot hide the great principles of the Church. They will glory in her Covenant and publish the truth. Behold the martyrs, how they witnessed for Jesus Christ, while fire and sword had no more power over their faith than over the stars. The truth demands publicity. Our poor, deceived, demon-ridden world needs the truth, Gospel truth shining like the sun, convicting truth pointed like lightning; the sweet truth of love and the fiery truth of wrath; truth that reveals life, death, immortality, judgment, heaven, hell, and eternity. The world needs the truth that will rend the heavens with prayer, and make the earth quake with fear.

[Illustration: *The banner of the covenant.*]

THE HIGHEST TYPE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE.

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The standard of religion adopted by the Covenanted Church demands that Covenanters possess the noblest spirit. They, who rally in earnest under this banner, will be men after God's own heart. Such were the martyrs: kind, patient, self-sacrificing, passionately in love with Christ, and laboring diligently to bring others into the same sphere of blessedness. They were strong, heroic, and unconquerable; affectionate, intelligent, filled with veneration for God, and aflame with zeal for His House. Those Covenanters knew that they were redeemed, and gloried in their relation and obligation to the Lord Jesus Christ, their Almighty Redeemer. They flew into every service at His command. Their obedience was accompanied with much assurance of salvation. They had heaven on earth. The heaven of glory was merely an extension of their vista, an enlargement of their horizon, higher up the mountain that they were climbing, more spiritual ozone in the air they were breathing. They dwelt with God, lived in Jesus Christ, felt the raptures of the Holy Spirit; they knew the mystery of the cross, the value of the Blood, and the power of the spiritual resurrection. Therefore were they swallowed up in love to God and man. Are we amazed at the divine beauty of the martyr's life? Let us have the same heartiness, the same vision of God, the same joy in the Holy Spirit, and we will have the key to the nobleness of the martyr. The Covenant with God, when kept, produces holiness, tenderness, charitableness, and divinest sympathy; turns life into an overflowing fountain of goodness. They, who follow the Banner of the Covenant in spirit and in truth, will aim at the very climax of Christian character, moral culture, and heroic service through Jesus Christ.

THE EMBLEM OF WAR.

The standard of religion in the Covenanted Church recognizes an uncompromising conflict in the world. Where hostile forces are encamped, the banner means battle. The martyrs were carried into this conflict, by their zeal for God's House and love to Jesus Christ. Their fight was against the tyranny of Civil government and the corruption of the Church. They fought well, resisting the aggressor at every point of attack.

We must open our eyes wide, to see the forces on either side. The persecution was merely the crimson line, along which the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan came into collision. These kingdoms stretch beyond our vision, far away into the spiritual world, each having immense resources and innumerable battalions for the war. The firing lines are merely the visible places that project themselves upon our horizon. The human struggle, the din of battle, the blood, the groans, the graves, are merely the evidence of the momentum of these tremendous powers, grinding each other at the points of contact. It is Satan against Christ, in his effort to waste the Church, suppress the truth, crush mankind, and despoil Jesus of His crown, people, and kingdom. It is Christ against Satan, determined to resist, defeat, enchain, and imprison that old dragon.

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This war still rages. The powers are the same as in the days of old, though the methods of warfare be changed. Christ still calls for soldiers of the Covenant, men of spirit, courage, and unshaken faith. He needs consecrated men, to hurl them against the organized powers, and inbreaking hordes, that are desecrating the Sabbath, corrupting the Church, maiming the truth, debauching morality, bribing conscience, licensing drunkenness, desolating the home, adulterating religion, worshiping wealth, crushing the poor, chaining manhood to secrecy, denying God in government, and the Lord Jesus Christ on His throne. Men are needed, men of the martyr type, men who count not heads, but principles. Men are in demand, men who find victory in defeat, men who see the mountains filled with horses and chariots, the mighty host of God.

THE GREAT INHERITANCE.

The Church of the Covenanters has a precious inheritance. The achievements of the past, the privileges of the present, and the victories of the future—all, all are hers, if she be faithful. The Old Blue Banner leads to the world-wide triumph of the principles it represents. This is no presumption; it is a foregone conclusion, the very language of logic. The certainty is based on God's revealed purpose, and glows in the richest hues of prophecy. Humility forbids boasting; we have not said that the Covenanted Church shall have this honor. But the Banner of the Covenant, by whomsoever borne, will surely be glorified with victory, as Jesus Christ, the great Captain, leads His conquerors to universal conquest.

The Covenant contains all Bible principles that apply to Church and State; it is neither sectarian nor sectional. The Covenant abhors sectarianism. It contains the universal principles which must become universal in practice ere the world bask in Millennial glory. The true Covenanter is no sectarian. He occupies the center of a circle that contains all revealed truth, and he is pledged to all known duty.

The martyrs died in the assurance of the triumph of the cause for which they suffered. "Do not weary to maintain the present testimony," said dying Renwick. "When Christ goeth forth to defeat anti-Christ, with that name written on His vesture and on His thigh, *king of kings and lord of lords*, He will make it glorious in the earth."

Marriage with the Son of God awaits the Church. Covenanting with the King of glory awaits the nations.

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.

“Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

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Points for the class.

1. Describe the Banner of the Covenant.
2. What motto on the Covenanters' Banner?
3. What large meaning in the motto?
4. Why ought the truth of Christ have wide publicity?
5. What should be the spirit and character of Covenanters?
6. What hope is there of the world-wide success of Covenanted principles?
7. What is the duty of the present generation in the great conflict?

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