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iii.

THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY: ITS PLACE OF
MEETING, ITS PROCEEDINGS, AND ITS PER-
SONNEL.

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ANALYSIS.

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III.

THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY: ITS PLACE OF MEETING, ITS PROCEEDINGS, AND ITS PERSONNEL.

THE visitor to Westminster Abbey, as he approaches its western or principal front, is struck with what at first view seems a singular blemish upon architecture otherwise faultless and imposing. Immediately in front of the lofty façade, clinging like a barnacle to its base, is a small rectangular structure, humble of proportion and homely of style, which begins just south of the great central doorway of the cathedral, and extends across the entire southern part of the front, connecting itself with a larger building on the right, of which it forms a part, and which was originally the "Abbot's Place," or home of the abbot and his Benedictine monks. The little structure, though it does obstruct, as far as its poor altitude will allow, the view of the stately cathedral, has, nevertheless, a real significance in art. It serves as a foil to set forth more conspicuously the loftiness of the cathedral, and to heighten our impressions of its grandeur, the little homely structure fitly representing the humble abode of man; the lofty cathedral with magnificent reach of tower and arch, of gable and spire, an appropriate symbol of the sublime dwelling-place of God.

And now, if we turn but a step or two to the right from the walk leading to the great central doorway, we shall find a modest door opening into this little building,

and if we are so fortunate as to gain admission, shall find ourselves in the celebrated Jerusalem Chamber. It is a narrow, rectangular room, running north and south, about forty feet in length by twenty in breadth. The small door, at which we suppose ourselves to have entered, is on the western side of the room and very near its northern end. As from our point of entrance we look down the long room, we see that its western wall is pierced at the centre by a large double window, the only one opening into the room, and, indeed, the only one needed, as it pours in a great flood of light. Immediately opposite this window, on the eastern side of the room, is a great fireplace with its open grate, the genial warmth from which attracted the Assembly to this chamber as a meeting-place when the chapel of Henry VII. had become uncomfortable by reason of the cold. Beyond the fireplace, and almost at the end of the room, opens a doorway, the principal one in size and importance. It leads through an ante-chamber, and by connecting hallways, into what was once the refectory or dining hall of the Abbey. The chamber in which we stand was in the ancient days of monastery the "withdrawing-room" or private apartment of the abbot, to which he retired for meditation and prayer; and the small door through which we suppose ourselves to have entered opened into his conservatory or garden. The name, Jerusalem Chamber, was derived from the tapestries with which the walls were hung in earlier days, and which portrayed different scenes in the siege of Jerusalem. The visitor to-day finds the walls hung with tapestries, but not with those which originally gave the name. Indeed, even when the Westminster Assembly held its sessions, the original tapestries had given place to others representing the history of the

planets. The latter, which have since given place in their turn to others, must have been attractive, for old Robert Baillie, "the Boswell of the Assembly," whose eye nothing escapes, tells us in one of his inimitable letters that the room was "well hung," as he also tells us that the light from the great window was softened by "curtains of pale thread with red roses," and that the room "has a good fyre, which is some dainties at London."

What memories cluster about these walls! The painting over the fireplace, with its encircling Scripture texts, reminds us that it was in this chamber that Henry IV., the grim old warrior, put off his crown at the touch of death. For when, in his extreme old age, he had thought to do penance for his usurpation by a crusade for the recovery of the holy sepulchre, and when, with the royal galleys in port, ready to bear him to sea, he had come to pay his parting devotions at the shrine of Edward the Confessor, he was seized with a chill, and borne into this chamber and laid before the fire on a pallet until a chamber could be fitted for him. And when he had been borne to his bed in another room, and realized that the end was at hand, there occurred the scene which Shakespeare has dramatized for us in immortal verse:

"KING HENRY: Doth any name particular belong
 Unto the lodging where I first did swoon?
 WARWICK: 'Tis called Jerusalem, my noble lord.
 KING HENRY: Laud be to God! even there my life must end.
 It hath been prophesied to me many years,
 I should not die but in Jerusalem;
 Which vainly I suppos'd the Holy Land.
 But bear me to that chamber; there I'll lie;
 In that Jerusalem shall Harry die."

In this chamber Sir Thomas More was confined for four days on his way to the Tower, where he was held

in cruel imprisonment by Henry VIII., and from which he was led forth to execution. Here lay in state the body of Dr. Robert South, the greatest and wittiest of English court preachers. From this chamber was carried forth, after lying in state for four days, the body of Addison in that memorable funeral procession at dead of night which Lord Macaulay has so graphically described, when "Bishop Atterbury, one of those Tories who had loved and honored the most accomplished of the Whigs, met the corpse and led the procession by torchlight round the shrine of St. Edward and the graves of the Plantagenets to the chapel of Henry VII.," Whig and Tory vying with each other to do honor to England's illustrious essayist and *litterateur*.

Here, also, lay in state the body of Sir Isaac Newton, wept by the whole world, and followed forth by the leading members of the Royal Society as its escort, to be buried, as the *London Gazette* of the following week informs us, "in a spot in front of the choir, which, being one of the most conspicuous in the Abbey, had been previously refused to various noblemen who had applied for it." Nor are the associations with the Jerusalem Chamber altogether sad. Twenty years or more before the gathering of the Westminster Assembly the Abbey became the residence of John Williams, one of the most notable men of his day, who was at once Dean of Westminster and Archbishop of York, "the last churchman," says Dean Stanley, "who occupied at once an archbishoprick and a deanery, one of the few eminent Welshmen who have figured in history." Dean Williams was possessed with a noble passion both for architecture and for music. He expended several thousand pounds in the repairing and beautifying of the Abbey, using only his own private means; "neither," says the chapter-



WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

house record, "would he impatronize his name to the credit of that work which should be raised by other men's collatitious liberality." The Jerusalem Chamber was his special delight. The attractions which drew the Assembly to it were largely due to his care. Here he gave musical entertainments which were the delight of London, as "he made the Jerusalem Chamber a volary of the choicest singers that the land had bred." Here, also, he gave royal banquets, and when, in 1624, the ambassadors from the court of France were present to arrange for the ill-starred marriage of Charles I. to Henrietta Maria, a banquet was ordered to be given by the dean in their honor; and so, as Bernard, the old chronicler, tells us, "the king's will signified, the invytement at a supper was given and taken, which was provyded in the colledge of Westminster, in the roome named Hierusalem Chamber."

Thus, through scenes alternatively of sorrow and joy, the old chamber passed as the generations rolled by, but for all time its chief claim to historic interest will arise out of its connection with the proceedings of the Westminster Assembly, to which we will now direct our attention.

The ordinance convening the Assembly passed both houses of Parliament and became a law on the 12th of June, 1643. It was entitled "An Act for the Calling of an Assembly of Godly Divines and Others." It directed that they should meet "at Westminster, in the chappell called King Henry the Seventh's Chappell, on the first day of July, in the year of our Lord, 1643 to conferre and treat amongst themselves of such matters and things touching and concerning the liturgy, discipline and government of the Church of England, or the vindicating and clearing of the doctrine of the same from all

false aspersions and misconstructions, as shall be proposed unto them by both or either of the said houses of Parliament, and no other; and to deliver their opinion and advices of, or touching, the matters aforesaid, as shall be most agreeable to the word of God, to both or either of the said houses from time to time, in such manner or sort as by both or either of the said houses of Parliament shall be required; and at the same time not to divulge by printing, writing, or otherwise, without the consent of both or either houses of Parliament."

In obedience to this ordinance, on Saturday, July 1, 1643, the Assembly met in the Abbey in the face of a great company, and its proceedings were opened with a sermon by Rev. William Twisse, D. D., the prolocutor, from the text, John xiv. 18, "I will not leave you comfortless," "a text," says the old chronicler of that day, "pertinent to these times of sorrow and anguish and misery, to raise up the drooping spirits of the people of God who lie under the pressure of popish wars and combustion." Immediately after this service, in which both houses of Parliament were present and took part, and which was probably held in the choir of the Abbey, the members designated to the Assembly ascended the steps of the Chapel of Henry VII., and there the enrollment was made.

The ordinance constituting the Assembly called for two divines from each county of England and one from each county of Wales. To these were added four from the city of London, two from each of the two universities, two from Ireland, and others from important boroughs, so that the whole number of divines named in the ordinance was one hundred and twenty-one. If all had attended there would have been a fair representation of all shades of Protestant belief in the land, except

that of the extreme high-churchmen represented by Archbishop Laud on the one hand, and that of the extreme Independents on the other, who really believed in no form of church government. In point of fact the advocates of an episcopal form of government, including Archbishop Ussher, Bishops Brownrigge and Westfield and many others, were, for the most part, royalists, and as the king, by royal proclamation from his camp, forbade the gathering of the Assembly, they all, with the exception of Bishop Westfield and Dr. Featley, declined to attend. The former of these two died very soon after the sitting of the Assembly, and the latter, having violated the ordinance of Parliament in reference to divulging the Assembly's proceedings, was, by order of that body, expelled before Dr. Westfield's death. Those who actually attended and took part in the proceedings, about eighty-five in all of the original one hundred and twenty-one, together with some twenty or thirty others whose names were added by Parliament from time to time to fill vacancies occasioned by declinature or by death, were, with few exceptions, Presbyterian in views of church polity, though regularly in orders in the Church of England.

To these divines, the number of whom from first to last amounted to something like one hundred and fifteen, must be added thirty "lay assessors" as they were called, twenty of whom were members of the House of Commons, and ten of the House of Lords. Of the ten peers very few attended with any regularity, and none took any prominent part. Of the commoners, however, many were constant and interested attendants, and a few amongst them took free and active part in the discussions, although one of the latter class, the illustrious John Selden, says facetiously, in his *Table Talk*, that

the lay assessors were sent not to do work, but merely "to overlook the clergy, just as when the good woman puts a cat into the milkhouse to kill a mouse she sends her maid to look after the cat, lest the cat should eat up the cream." Nor must we fail to add the small, but most potent Scottish contingent; the General Assembly of Scotland, having, in view of the prospective adoption of the Solemn League and Covenant for uniformity of religion throughout the realm, named four of her ablest divines, and three of her most illustrious laymen, as Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly. Five of these, four ministers and one layman, appeared and took their seats, and, though declining to vote, took very active part in the discussions and debates, and, as the results show, really exerted a moulding influence upon all the work of the Assembly.

When we inquire into the doctrinal beliefs of these men from all parts of the realm, and all, with the exception of the Scotch Commissioners, and a few Independents, in the regular communion of the Church of England, we may be surprised to be told that they were, to a man, and through and through, Calvinists. If there was an Arminian in all the body he did not have the courage to lift his head. Nor should this surprise us, for the Church of England, in all the days of its noble struggle for civil and religious liberty, was, in its best elements, as intensely Calvinistic as the Church of Scotland, or that of Holland. All the great English Reformers, Anselm, Bradwardine, Tyndal, Wycliffe, Ussher, Whitgift, and others, were Calvinists. Men may play with Arminianism in times of peace, but in the great crises of spiritual conflict there is nothing but the solid bedrock of the eternal sovereignty of God on which the foot can rest with any sense of security; and in times

like these, churches, as well as individuals, unconsciously become Calvinists. The Westminster Assembly was not called together to formulate a creed. It already had one, clearly enunciated, universally accepted—the one Calvinistic creed of the great Reformed Church in all its branches. The language of their commission was, as we have already quoted it, very explicit: “For the vindicating and clearing of the doctrine of the same (the Church of England) from all false aspersions and misconstructions.” They were not to frame a creed, but to state the accepted creed of the church in language that would not be open to the aspersions of the cavilling, or to the misconstructions of honest inquirers after truth.

In the matter of church polity, on the other hand, the Assembly was greatly divided. First, as to the proper form of church government, at least five parties come into prominence in the discussions. On the one extreme are a few advocates of episcopal government, pure and simple, as we have it in the Church of England at the present time. On the other extreme are a few Independents, numbering amongst them some of the ablest men of the body, especially those known as “the five dissenting brethren,” Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, William Bridge, Jeremiah Burroughs, and Sidrack Simpson, all recently returned from exile in Holland, and recognized as amongst the ablest debaters and most learned men of the body. They are in favor of a purely congregational form of government, as we have it in our Baptist and Congregational churches to-day. Between these extremes are three other clearly-defined parties. Leaning toward the Episcopalians, and constituting what we may call the right centre, is a very strong party, including the Prolocutor, Dr. Twisse, Mr. Gataker, Mr. Palmer, Dr. Temple, and many other eminent men, who incline

to a Presbyterianism, with Sessions, Presbyteries, and Synods, but modified by an order of superintendents who shall really have many of the functions of bishops, but without the name. Over against them, constituting what we may call the left centre, were the Scotch Commissioners, and the English divines and laymen of the school of Cartwright, who contended with all their eloquence, learning, and genius, for a *jure divino* Presbyterianism, as explicitly ordained in Scripture. Between these, as the true centre of discussion, was the large body who held to a Presbyterian form of government, not as authoritatively ordained in Scripture, but as consistent with the teaching of the word of God, and as conservative of the spiritual liberties of the people. It was upon this centre that the Assembly finally rested, its Book of Discipline containing a Presbyterianism pure and unmodified, not as *jure divino*, but as "lawful and agreeable to the word of God."

In the matter of church discipline there was wide divergence, leading to prolonged and heated debate. There was a party of Erastians in the Assembly, small in number, but containing some of the ablest and most illustrious men, not only of the Assembly, but of the age in which they lived. It is only necessary to recall the names of Selden, Lightfoot, and Coleman to exhibit something of its strength; and, strong as it was in the ability of its defenders, it was still stronger from the well-known sympathy and support of the Parliament; for although that body had unceremoniously stripped the king of all ecclesiastical authority, it had done so with the express purpose of retaining in its own hands the power of administering discipline for spiritual offenses, so that the Erastians of the Assembly counted on the weight of the Parliament's well-known support.

Having thus indicated the lines along which discussion would naturally run, it may be interesting to look in for a moment upon the working of the Assembly itself. The Jerusalem Chamber has been specially fitted to receive the body. At the northern end a platform, a foot in height, has been erected to receive the chair of the Prolocutor, or, as we would say, Moderator of the body. Immediately in front of this platform, upon the floor, one to the right and the other to the left, are two chairs for the two "Master-Assessors," or, as we would say, Vice-Moderators. Beginning a little in front of the Moderator's platform, and extending down through almost the entire length of the chamber, is a long, narrow table, and at the upper end of this are two chairs, for the two "scribes," or, as we would say, clerks of the Assembly. Along the western side of the room, beginning near the long table, and extending upward to the wall, are several of what Robert Baillie calls "rankes of formes," or what we would call tiers of seats, each tier seating comfortably ten or twelve persons. The seats on the lowest tier, and on the end nearest the Prolocutor, are given, as the place of honor on the Prolocutor's right to the Scotch Commissioners; the remaining seats in all the tiers are reserved for the members of the House of Commons. To the Prolocutor's left, running along the eastern wall, as far as the fireplace, are similar tiers of seats; and at the extreme end of the room, along the whole southern wall, are similar tiers also. These two divisions of seats are occupied by the English divines, who fill them pretty closely. An open space is left about the fireplace, and there, on comfortable chairs, which they can move about at will, sit the members from the House of Lords, whenever it pleases their lordships to be present.

It is an interesting sight to stand by the Prolocutor's

chair and look over the body, the lords with their jaunty cloaks and their dangling swords; the English divines in their black gowns and Geneva bands; here and there a churchman in his full canonicals; the commoners with their short cloaks, knee breeches and silken hose, the sombre colors contrasting notably with the gay foppery of the lords; and then, the Scotch Commissioners, clean shaven and close shorn, with waistcoats buttoning closely up to their chins, snugly-fitting coats, knee breeches and silver-buckled shoes.

The Assembly sat every day in the week except Saturday. Its usual hours were from 9 A. M. to 3 P. M. It was broken up into three great committees, on one or the other of which every member's name was enrolled. To each committee one section was assigned of the work to be done. When this committee had prepared the section carefully with all the Scripture proofs bearing upon it, it reported to the Assembly and another section was assigned. Nothing could come before the Assembly that had not first been carefully digested and formulated by one of the committees. At the hour fixed for assembling, the Prolocutor took his seat and opened with prayer. Forty constituted a quorum. If that number were present, the proceedings of the previous day's session were read, and the business proceeded. If a quorum were not present, the body resolved itself into a committee of the whole for informal conference and discussion until a quorum was had. Then Mr. Byfield arose, read the section or paragraph under discussion, then the first passage of Scripture in its support, and the issue was joined. The rules of procedure were similar to those in one of our presbyteries, with a single notable exception: if two or more speakers sought the floor at the same time, instead of the presiding officer, as with

us, deciding the question of right to the floor, the decision was left to the body of the Assembly, each member shouting vociferously the name of the one whom he desired to hear; and so, amidst a din well represented in the engraving of the Assembly, which some of us may have seen, entitled "Cry him down," "the divines," as old Robert Baillie tells us, "confusedlie call on his name whom they desire to heare speake, and on whome the loudest and maniest voices call, he speakes."

In an Assembly full of men of striking personality, and of prominent relation to the stirring events of the time, it is difficult to decide what particular characters it may be most interesting to study. Let us begin with the Prolocutor, Rev. William Twisse, D. D. He was one of the notable men of his day. A man of sixty-eight years of age, a scholar crowned with the highest honors of the University of Oxford, a high Calvinist of the supralapsarian school, and a theologian of such profound erudition and such speculative genius that his great Latin folios as they came forth, one after another, filled all the continent of Europe with his fame, so that it has been said that he was better known and more honored abroad than at home, he was, nevertheless, so modest and retiring, so wedded to the seclusion of his study and so indifferent to fame, that he declined all offers of promotion and remained to the day of his death in an humble vicarage at Newbury. Appointed by Parliament to the prolocutorship of the Assembly, no position could have been given him for which he was less fitted or whose duties were more irksome to him. Unskilled in parliamentary law, diffident of his own judgment, incapable of strong self-assertion, dreamy and absent-minded in the midst of the long debates, he strove to do his duty in an office which he would have been only too

glad to demit, but to which he was held by the order of Parliament, it being, says Dr. Baillie, "the canny conveyance of those who guide most matters for their own interest, to plant such a man of purposes in the chair."

In one respect, however, he was admirably fitted for his office. One of his duties was to make both the opening and closing prayer at every meeting of the Assembly; and, being a man of intense fervor and consecration, twice a day he carried the Assembly, with all its cares and burdens, on his great heart up to the throne; and it was while thus importunately pleading that he was stricken with his last illness, and, falling back in his chair, was carried to his bed to rise no more. A touching revelation of his true character appears in the statement of his biographer, that, when informed that the end was near, a smile irradiated the face of the old scholar and theologian, as he exclaimed with animation, "Now, at length, I shall have leisure to follow my studies to all eternity."

Turning from Dr. Twisse to the Master Assessor, who occupies the chair in front and to his right, we find a man of altogether different mould. Dr. Cornelius Burgess is not wanting in scholarship and learning, for he has taken both degrees in divinity at Oxford, and is recognized as one of the most learned divines and most powerful preachers in London; but, unlike Dr. Twisse, he is every inch a soldier. A man of fifty, with iron-gray hair, shortly cropped, erect and stalwart frame, he comes in with the step of a soldier, makes a military wheel as he takes his chair, looks with the eye of an eagle over the Assembly, and, when he speaks, speaks with the impetuosity of a mountain torrent. As early as 1627 he had been chaplain to Charles I. In the conflict between Charles and the Parliament he had thrown

himself with all his fiery energy into the cause of the Parliament. He has been four times before the Court of High Commission, and now as he sits in the Assembly he is chaplain to the Earl of Essex's regiment of horse in Cromwell's army, and is now and then absent from his seat as he goes to the front and ministers in true Puritan style to the men of his command in bivouac or on the battle-field.

How different from either of those mentioned the man who occupies until his death the other assessor's chair, Mr. Herbert Palmer, sitting in place of Mr. White, whose health has never permitted him to attend. Diminutive of stature, he is known as "the little Mr. Palmer"; but, though small of body, he is a man of gigantic intellect, and of such nobility of nature and greatness of soul as to win universal admiration and love. He is, perhaps, the most accomplished in polite literature of the English divines. So fluent and graceful is he in the use both of the French and Latin tongues that he is charged with the conduct of the foreign correspondence of the Assembly. He is master of Queen's College at Cambridge, and university lecturer, a man of independent fortune, who delights to use it in the education of young men for the ministry and for other good causes. But his chief attraction for us is the fact that he may truly be called the "Father of the Shorter Catechism." He was noted long before the meeting of the Assembly for his devotion to catechetical instruction. He had prepared a number of catechisms, the most important of which was in its fifth edition when the Assembly convened. He was chairman of the Committee on the Directory, and had the subject of catechising especially assigned to him by the committee. He was chairman of the Committee on the Catechism until his

death, and, though the finishing touches to the Catechism were given after his death by Anthony Tuckney, who succeeded him, yet a comparison of our present Larger and Shorter Catechisms with the last edition of the Catechism of Mr. Palmer will show how largely we are indebted to him for those incomparable summaries of doctrine which grow only the more priceless with the lapse of years.

Passing over for the present the Scotch Commissioners, let us recall one or two of the members of Parliament, as they sit over on the right. There, *facile princeps*, is John Selden, the "learned Selden," "the glory of the British nation," as Grotius terms him, *Antiquariorum Coryphæus*, as he is styled upon the tablet erected to his memory at Oxford. He was, for the extent of his erudition and the versatility of his genius, incomparably the foremost scholar of his age. As a lawyer he was without a peer at the English bar; whilst as a historian, as a theologian, as an archæologist, a linguist, an antiquary, he enjoyed a reputation fully as great. He was a recognized authority in civil law, in canon law, in rabbinical law, indeed was master of all rabbinical lore. His sway was equally felt in philology, in heraldry, and in all departments of literature. Representing the University of Oxford in the Long Parliament, he spared time to attend the sessions of the Assembly only when some question was up for discussion that specially interested him; and when it was known that he was to speak every ear was attent, his great eloquence and commanding genius swaying the Assembly as the wind bows the trees of the forest.

Not far from Mr. Selden sits another member, a deeply-interested listener, and often an earnest participant in the debate. I need only call the name, John Pym, and

there arises before you the figure of the great Puritan patriot, the matchless leader of the parliamentary party in its struggle for constitutional liberty against the tyranny of Charles I. He was the one man who had the sagacity to see that the Earl of Strafford, the king's chief counsellor, was, with his sullen determination, and his power of intrigue, the Richelieu upon whom Charles leaned. He was the only man in the realm who had at once the courage to move the impeachment of the Earl, and the magnetic eloquence with which to arraign him at the bar of the House as the "great promoter of tyranny in the realm"; and to carry by an overwhelming vote the order which led the great leader to the scaffold, and gave the death-blow to schemes of oppression which only his resolute courage and inflexible will could have carried to success.

One more of these commoners must receive at least a passing notice. Sitting quietly there, taking an intelligent interest in all the discussions, is Francis Rouse, author of the well-known Rouse's *Version of the Psalms*. When he came into the Assembly the psalmody in use was the old rugged one of Sternhold and Hopkins. Mr. Rouse had already prepared a metrical version of the Psalms, and, by request of the Assembly, revised it for use in its services, and it is this version, afterwards amended from time to time, that is still in use amongst the "psalm-singing churches" of Scotland and of this country. It is an anomaly, as strange as it is interesting, that those rugged old paraphrases, with what Rufus Choate calls their "uncommon pith and gnarled vigor of sentiment," and what Sir Walter Scott characterizes as "a rude sort of majesty which perhaps would be ill exchanged for mere elegance"; that those old psalms which were the heritage of our Scotch fathers for so

many generations, and to the music of which the heroic Covenanters marched to the battle or to the stake, were composed by a South-of-England man, who possibly never was in Scotland, and were first wafted to God in song, not upon the moors of Scotland, or in the Greyfriars or Old St. Giles, but amidst the stately columns and under the fretted arches of an English cathedral.

It would be interesting, if we had time, to sketch the characters of a few at least of the English divines, such as John Lightfoot, the world-renowned author of the *Horæ Hebraicæ et Talmudicæ*, and Thomas Gataker, distinguished both in oriental and in classical research, and Stephen Marshall, the popular preacher and renowned ecclesiastic, with his colleagues of the famous Smectymnuus, all of whom were members of the Assembly. There were also Arrowsmith and Tuckney, professors of divinity at Cambridge; Hoyle, professor of divinity at Dublin; Wallis, professor of geometry at Oxford, the first mathematician of his day, and a host of other men of note.

We pass, however, to those in whom we are most interested—the Scotch Commissioners. First amongst them, indeed the foremost man, after John Knox, of the Church of Scotland, is Alexander Henderson. The providence that gave him to the church as a leader was wonderful. About the year 1615 Robert Bruce, the distinguished preacher, held a communion service in the vicinity of the parish church of Leuchars. That church was being served at the time by a young divine of the Established Church, who had been imposed upon the church by the bishop over the protest of the congregation. On the day for his induction, the congregation, with true Scotch tenacity, had locked the doors of the church, so that when the bishop and attendant ministers

came to conduct the installation they were unable to enter, until the young minister who was to be installed climbed up to one of the windows, and, breaking his way in, succeeded in forcing the doors so that the farce of installation might proceed. This young minister, who was no other than Alexander Henderson, having heard of the great fame of Mr. Bruce, and being curious to hear him, attended his service, seating himself in a retired place where he supposed his presence would not be observed. When the assistant minister had finished the preliminary service, Mr. Bruce came forward, and after a solemn pause, as was his custom, uttered most impressively the words of his text, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."

The words of the Master, so singularly appropriate and so solemnly uttered, were carried home with resistless energy by the Spirit. The unspiritual nature of his whole past ministry appeared to Mr. Henderson with appalling distinctness. By God's grace he came into a new life; and with this new experience came, under closer study of the word, a conviction of the divine right of Presbytery, and Alexander Henderson stepped forth from the scholarly retirement to which he had devoted his life to become the great leader in the sanguinary strife for Christ's crown and covenant. He combined rare gifts as a leader, and perhaps in no other way can I better exhibit to you that remarkable combination of endowments which gave him unparalleled influence in Scotland than by depicting a scene in which all his marvellous powers were put to the fullest test. It was at the celebrated General Assembly of Glasgow in 1638, over which, as over several successive assemblies in

those stormy times, he was called, in deference to his great powers as a leader, to preside. The avowed purpose of this Assembly being to abolish episcopacy, and a number of bishops having sent in their declination to recognize the authority of the Assembly, Charles I. determined to interpose in their behalf, and sent the Marquis of Hamilton as his commissioner, with authority and instructions to dissolve the Assembly if it should undertake to deal with the refractory bishops. The intense excitement may be conceived when the hour arrived for the consideration of the answer of the bishops. The Marquis of Hamilton, a distinguished soldier, fresh from the camp and in military dress, occupied a conspicuous chair in front, and a great concourse of people filled the hall. The answer of the bishops having been read, Mr. Henderson, with that stately dignity and over-awing gravity which were characteristic of him, arose and asked if it was the pleasure of the Assembly to proceed to the trial of the bishops. On this the Marquis of Hamilton sprang to his feet and declared that it was not in accordance with the pleasure of his majesty, King Charles, that the relations of the bishops should be disturbed, and he was present in the king's name to interdict any proceedings in that direction. Mr. Henderson, in a very courteous and well-considered address to his grace, expressed the thanks of the Assembly to King Charles for having convened them, and gave assurance of their loyalty and their desire to conform themselves as far as possible in all things to the king's will, but reminded him that being now constituted as a court of the Lord Jesus their first allegiance was to him and his law, and then calmly, without the least sign of perturbation, put the question again as to whether the Assembly was ready to proceed with the trial of the bishops.

Astonished beyond measure at what seemed the audacity of the moderator, but, controlling himself as well as he could, the Marquis arose and declared that such proceedings would be revolutionary, and if persisted in would necessitate his immediate withdrawal as the representative of the royal court. With a manner as bland as a summer day, the moderator replied to his grace that it was a great pleasure to the Assembly to have his distinguished presence, that they should exceedingly regret his withdrawal, and trusted he would consent to remain, as nothing treasonable or disloyal was in any of their hearts, and then resolutely put, the third time, the question, "Is the Assembly ready to proceed with the trial of the bishops?" The commissioner now sprang to his feet in a towering rage, drew from his pocket the written instructions of the king, and declared that he would immediately dissolve the Assembly if another word were spoken on this subject. Above all the din of confusion throughout the hall the calm, courageous voice of the moderator was heard. Standing in the high pulpit, far above the heads of the people, his majestic form looming up, and a light as from the throne irradiating every feature, he seemed a fitting representative of the court of heaven as he looked down, with an air almost of patronage, into the face of the commissioner of an earthly sovereign, and kindly but firmly told him that the Assembly could not and would not, even upon pain of the king's displeasure, prove disloyal to the King of kings. Then came the supreme moment, when, amidst a wild turbulence that even the calm voice and majestic mien of the moderator could but partially suppress, the Marquis of Hamilton stepped to the front, in imperious tones declared, in his majesty's name, the Assembly dissolved, proceeded to discharge every member under highest

pains and penalties from taking further part, and then, calling upon every loyal subject of the king to follow him, stalked down the aisle and out of the door, his sabre rattling behind him.

When the door had closed, Mr. Henderson's wonderful self-possession and genius appeared. Calming the turbulence of the excited throng that was ready to pursue the Marquis with personal violence, Mr. Henderson commended him for his fidelity to his sovereign, and for carrying out the instructions given him to the letter; then, turning, reminded the Assembly that they were commissioners of a greater King, and urged them by the example of the king's servant and representative, to obey, even to the death, the inspired and authoritative instructions of King Jesus. The effect was magnetic; the bishops were brought to the bar, convicted of contumacy, and deposed, Mr. Henderson conducting the ceremony of deposition amidst a solemnity and awe that would have befitted the judgment day.

Another wonderful man is George Gillespie, the youngest, and in many respects the most remarkable member of the body. Born in 1613, in the little town of Kirkcaldy, on the Firth of Forth, the son of a humble, consecrated minister, he was sent to the University of St. Andrews (to the praise of beneficiary education be it said) as "Presbytery's bursar" or beneficiary. Graduating with distinction in his seventeenth year, he completed his theological course just as the great struggle was on for the divine right of Presbytery, and refused Episcopal ordination, vowing that he would never be ordained while the world stood, except by a scriptural presbytery. Serving in obscurity and without ordination, as the private chaplain to Lord Cassilis, in that same memorable month of July, 1637, when Jennie Geddes, in

the cathedral of St. Giles, threw her stool at the head of the Dean of Edinburgh for presuming to "say mass at her lug," this unknown youth was sending through the press in Holland, because it could not be published in Britain, a work entitled, *A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies, Obtruded upon the Church of Scotland*, a book which immediately lifted him into fame, which probably did more even than the stool of Jennie Geddes to overthrow prelacy in Scotland, and to whose matchless learning and resistless logic no answer was ever attempted by the prelatists, except the cheap one of commanding every copy of it to be burned at the stake.

Young as he was, Mr. Gillespie was one of the foremost men of the Assembly. All are familiar with the incident recorded of him, disputed by some, but seeming to have historic ground, that when the Committee on the Catechism had found themselves unable to construct a satisfactory answer to the question, "What is God?" and, referring it to the Committee of the Whole, that also had failed, it was proposed that Mr. Gillespie, as the youngest member, lead in prayer for the special aid of the Spirit, and when he had begun his prayer with the words, "O God, who art a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in thy being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth," the body felt that their prayer was heard, and the coveted answer sent, and so entered that incomparable answer which can never be improved upon to the end of time.

The chief reputation of Mr. Gillespie rests upon the marvellous breadth and readiness of learning, and the wonderful genius and power of debate, which made him, young as he was, the mainstay of the Assembly in its hard battle with the forces of Erastianism, led on by

Selden and Lightfoot and Coleman, intellectual giants, and supported by all the prestige and influence of the Parliament. On a memorable day, when, in framing the Book of Discipline, the subject of excommunication had been reached, and the committee was ready to report, affirming excommunication to be an exercise of spiritual function, and therefore to be administered by the church through spiritual courts, and not by the civil magistrate, Mr. Selden left his seat in Parliament and came to the Assembly for one of his greatest efforts. It was known that he would speak, and the Jerusalem Chamber was thronged; the lords in their chairs, every member in his form, and all spectators who could procure a "writ of invytment" from Parliament (for none could enter, "either to see or to heare, lett be to sitt," without written permission) were occupying the extra seats. The passage of Scripture under consideration, as supporting the spirituality of excommunication was that in Matthew xviii. 15-17, "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee," etc. As Mr. Byefield read the passage, every eye was fixed upon Mr. Selden, who arose with the dignity and affability that were natural to him, and proceeded to argue that excommunication was a purely civil penalty amongst the Jews, that the word translated *church* in the original Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, referred to a civil, not to an ecclesiastical tribunal; and then, with a little jocular reference to the men who "carried their little gilt-edged English Bibles in their pockets, and were always quoting from them," he began to quote, with a fluency and copiousness that seemed amazing, from the original Hebrew of the Old Testament, from the Chaldee Targums, from the rabbinical Hebrew of the Mishna, and the Gemara, from Josephus and Philo, from orientalists and scholars, until his oppo-

nents and their cause seemed hopelessly buried under the mass of Hebraic and Talmudic literature with which he had overwhelmed them.

At the close of his most subtle and powerful argument the Assembly seemed dazed. Herle and Marshall made attempt to reply, but failed to make any impression. It looked as if the cause of spiritual independency was lost, when Samuel Rutherford turned to Gillespie, and said, with intense earnestness: "Rise, George, rise up, man, and defend the right of the Lord Jesus to govern, by his own laws, the church he has purchased with his blood." Under this strong appeal the young man arose, and without a note before him proceeded to analyze the speech of his learned opponent, stripping the argument of all the vast rubbish of learning in which it was encased, exhibiting its inherent weakness; and then, in a masterly exegesis of the passage, showed by seven distinct lines of argument, that the excommunication referred to was spiritual. The offence, a trespass, was spiritual; the offended stood in spiritual relation as a brother; the end aimed at was spiritual, to gain him; the method of procedure was spiritual, telling it to him alone; the court, a spiritual court; the censure, a spiritual censure; the effect, exclusion from spiritual interest and privilege. With such acuteness, fervor, sincerity and eloquence did he argue, that before he had gone far he was producing a profounder impression even than that of Selden; and when he concluded, not only had he carried the Assembly with him, but Selden himself is said to have exclaimed, with mingled admiration and chagrin, "That young man has, by a single speech, swept away the learning and labor of ten years of my life."

Time will permit me to allude to but one man more, and I refer to him simply as illustrating the marvellous

versatility of character and gift of these men. Who has not heard of Samuel Rutherford? Who that has read his almost inimitable "Letters" has not come to think of him as some sweet, saintly soul, like St. Bernard or Thomas A'Kempis, wrapt in quiet contemplation of the Master, or absorbed in pleading at the throne for the souls of men. Who thinks of him as a scholar of such repute throughout all Europe that he is time and again called to chairs of divinity in the leading universities on the continent? Or who thinks of him as one of the war-horses of his day? Let a single scene, by way of illustration, suffice. We are all familiar with the sweet hymn of Mrs. Annie Cousins, in which she has so exquisitely paraphrased the words of Rutherford on his death-bed. We love to think of the sweet, saintly man as his seraphic piety breathes in these words:

"Oh! Christ, he is the fountain,
The deep, sweet well of love;
The streams on earth I've tasted,
I'll drink more deep above.
There to an ocean fullness
His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

But let us not forget that it was while on the same death-bed, and only a short time before, that a message came from Charles II. summoning him to appear before the next Parliament on the charge of high treason. Lifting himself from his couch, and pointing with his bony finger, he said to the messenger, "Go, tell your royal master that it behooveth me to appear before a higher judge and judicatory than his, and ere a few days arrive I shall be where few kings or great men ever come."

I have drawn deeply, almost inexcusably, upon your

patience; let me, in conclusion, dwell for a moment upon the character of the Assembly as a body. It has met with very varied estimate. Lord Clarendon, in his self-styled *History of the Rebellion*, has given to the whole history and work of the Assembly but a single paragraph, and that as contemptuous as language could make it; but this paragraph was written after he had sought in vain to bend the Assembly to his will. Milton, in a grim play of humor in his *Paradise Lost*, has evidently made the sitting of the Assembly the basis of one of his pictures of the infernal world, as, speaking of the employments of the fallen angels, he says:

“Others, apart, sat on a hill retired,
 In thought more elevate, and reasoned high
 Of Providence, foreknowledge, will and fate;
 Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute;
 And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.”

But Milton wrote this and all his criticisms after the Assembly had condemned his work, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, which he had dedicated to that body with words of very highest praise.

The satirists and punsters of the day found in the Assembly, of course, a tempting subject for their jests and jibes:

“Pretty Synod doth it sit,
 Voyd of grace, as well of wit,
 And make no canons;
 But such as ordinance are called,
 Which have the very souls enthralled
 Of every man on 's.

“Now from black Tom and blacker Noll,
 That kill and flay without control,
 Thereby to end us;
 From Synod's nonsense and their treason.
 And from their catechistic reason,
 Good heaven, defend us!”

But in the face of all prejudice and calumny, as the years move on, men will come more and more to the judgment of a contemporary, Richard Baxter, who had reason to be impartial, when he says: "The divines there congregated were men of eminent learning and godliness and ministerial abilities and fidelity; and, being not worthy to be one of them myself, I may the more freely speak that truth which I know, even in the face of malice and envy, that as far as I am able to judge by the information of all history of that kind, and by any other evidence left us, the Christian world since the days of the apostles had never a synod of more excellent divines (taking one thing with another) than this Synod and the Synod of Dort."

There are two things, which, in addition to their learning, genius, and intrepid courage, must ever commend them to our admiration. The first is their reverence for Scripture. Not only did they give it "the first place, the place of honor," in the Confession of Faith, but a cardinal rule of the Assembly was that, "What any man undertakes to prove as necessary, he shall make good out of Scripture," and an examination of the published proceedings will show that the authority of Scripture as the inspired and infallible word of God was in every case bowed to with reverence and submission as the arbiter of all controversy and the basis of all belief.

The second characteristic is the sense of humble dependence on God, as seen in the prominence given to prayer. Not only were the daily sessions opened and closed with prayer, and often interspersed with prayer for specific objects, but once a month all business was regularly suspended, that a day of fasting and prayer might be observed in concert with the two houses of Parlia-

ment. And what days they were! We read, for instance, in Lightfoot's Journal, that on Friday, October 13, 1643, the order is taken for the fast on the following Monday in these words: "The time to be from nine to four; the exercises to be the word and prayer, three to pray and two to preach. Dr. Burgess, Mr. Goodwin, and Dr. Stanton to pray, and Mr. Palmer and Mr. Whittacre to preach."

And then on the following Monday we have this record: "Monday, October 16th. This day we kept a solemn fast in the place where our sitting is, and no one with us but ourselves, the Scotch Commissioners, and some Parliament men. First, Mr. Wilson gave a picked psalm, or selected verses of several psalms, agreeing to the time and occasion. Then Dr. Burgess prayed about an hour; after he had done, Mr. Whittacre preached upon Isaiah xxxvii. 3: 'This day is a day of trouble,' etc. Then, having had another chosen psalm, Mr. Goodwin prayed; and, after he had done, Mr. Palmer preached upon Psalm xxv. 12. After this sermon we had another psalm and Dr. Stanton prayed about an hour, and with another psalm and a prayer of the Prolocutor, and a collection for the maimed soldiers, which arose to about £3, 15s., we adjourned until to-morrow morning."

It seems almost incredible to us that men should have remained continuously in devotional worship from 9 A. M. to 4 P. M., and that, as Dr. Baillie tells us, a single prayer was sometimes two hours long; but in those times, when all the interests of the kingdom of Christ seemed to be in peril, men felt their dependence on God, and when once at the throne of grace knew not how to come away until the blessing was obtained.

Rugged men in sooth they were, but the times were

rugged, and the characters of the men were suited to the times in which they lived. Go around upon the windward side of one of our sea-girt islands, where the storm breaks in its wildest fury, and the waves roll in mountain high. Look at those tall cliffs that rise perpendicularly out of the sea, as if they had advanced to meet it in its tempestuous rage. God's great breakwaters for the protection of the sunny isle behind them, they bare their breasts by day and night to the storm, and hurl back waves that toss the mightiest ships like straws upon their bosom. You do not expect to find on the face of these cliffs the fair verdure, the delicate flowers, or the softened outlines of the hills over on the leeward slope. The only lines of architecture you expect to find on these granite cliffs are the rude ones cut by the chisels of the tempest; but as you look up to them and think of the mighty forces of night and storm with which they have contended, and the steadfastness with which they have repelled every invading foe they seem to you all the more glorious, and fill your soul with all the more reverence, because of their rugged simplicity, God's great bastions against the encroaching sea.

And so, as we contemplate the lives and characters of these illustrious men, whose lot was cast in the midst of the storms of political and ecclesiastical revolution, who heroically bared their breast to the tempest, receiving in full shock, and hurling back in defiance the waves of despotic absolutism in the state, and hierarchical oppression in the church, their majestic forms loom up before us in the thick of the conflict for the defence of the civil and religious liberties which we enjoy, and there is a majesty and a sublimity in the rugged grandeur of their natures that overawe us. We uncover our heads with reverence before them, and our souls thrill with emotions

of gratitude, admiration, and love, as we remember that it was because they stood breast-deep amidst the waves, and maintained their position, inflexible and unawed, under all the fury of the tempest, that we are to-day in the midst of a Presbyterianism, which under the soft sunlight of God's truth, covers all its fair fields with verdure, bids the fragile fern unfold upon the barren cliffs its graceful fronds, and fills the world with the delicate aroma of its flowers.