JOHN WELLWOOD

NORMAN MACLEOD

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INTRODUCTION

If any modern minister has a place, though it were the least, among the worthies of his nation, he must have been a surprising personality. When Scottish life was based on Calvinism, and there was a Stuart deforming the Kirk at the sword's point, a preacher might rise to be a leader of the people, if not a virtual ruler in the kingdom. From Knox to Carstairs the line of famous Scots (such as they are) is black with Geneva gowns. But for two hundred years the Protestant spirit has gone all to democracy and the march of intellect, while the clergy have stood by the vacant symbol, exiled—

'From the dragon-warder'd fountains
Where the springs of knowledge are,
From the watchers on the mountains
And the bright and morning star.'

So the Church has come down in the world. Her affairs are her own, and subject to journalistic irony; with few exceptions her leaders, for all the noise they may make in their day and generation, have only to die to be forgotten. One calls to mind certain men who were not in holy orders, mere sages or poets, and knows them for the real teachers of their times. In Norman Macleod the hero as priest reappears, but at some cost to the clerical tradition. Making little of dogma, and less of rites, he went deep down into the common heart for his ground of appeal, and on his lips love, divine and human, was a tale to move the philosopher and win the crowd. His work in the world was to make men good after the pattern of Jesus, and to that work he brought a burning belief, a boundless sympathy, and rare oratorical and literary gifts. One in the throng at the funeral of this great minister was heard to say, 'There goes Norman Macleod. If he had done no more than what he did for my soul, he would shine as the stars for ever.' And the like might have been confessed by thousands; nay, many who never heard his voice nor saw his face were better for the rumour of such a man. His name went from the Church to the nation, and over all English-speaking lands; and with that of Chalmers has endured.

CHAPTER I
1812-1837
DESCENT—BOYHOOD—STUDENT YEARS

Nothing astonished Dr. Johnson so much, when he was roving in the Hebrides, as to find men who lived in huts and quoted Latin. These were the 'gentlemen tacksmen,' and no more remarkable tenantry was ever seen on any soil. What they did for agriculture I cannot say; as much, perhaps, as their destroyers, who made a solitude and called it sheep: but they had bread to eat and raiment to put on (though they *might* sometimes sleep with their feet in the mire), and their praise is that they sent forth a splendid race to the fields of honour. Their sons, scant of cash, yet with the air of nobles, thronged the colleges, nor was there any career in which laurels were not won by men from the mountains and the isles. Picture some judge or general gazing at the ruins of a shieling, and then sneer at the old Highland tacksmen. From this class Norman Macleod was descended. His great-grandfather, the earliest ancestor of whom we have any record, lived in Skye, at Swordale, near Dunvegan Castle, about the middle of last century. The tradition is that he was a good man and the first in his neighbourhood to introduce family worship. His dearest wish was to see his first-born a minister of the Church of Scotland. The estate of the Laird of Macleod was then a sort of feudal Utopia, in which the ruling idea was the advancement of the youth. There was a conspiracy of education. After the schoolmaster (a good hand at the classics for certain) came a college-bred tutor, who was maintained by a number of families in common. Then the Chief made interest at the University for his lads, and in the vacations entertained the professors at his castle, where they met their students as fellow-guests. No wonder so many notable lines sprang from Skye, if, as was said, these students were all gentlemen.

Norman Macleod, Swordale's eldest son, having finished his studies for the Church, acted for some time as tutor in his native district. Thus he was at home in *September 1773*, and, being a favourite at Dunvegan—you understand? Yes, he met Dr. Johnson. 'And he used to tell, with great glee, how he found him alone in the drawing-room before dinner, poring over some volume on the sofa, and how the doctor, before rising to greet him kindly, dashed to the ground the volume he had been reading, exclaiming in a loud and angry voice, "The author is an ass!"' In the following year this young man was preferred to a parish which to name is to spring all the romance of the Highlands, —*Morven*. Upwards of six feet in height, and of a noble countenance, the stranger from Skye would be welcome as at least 'a pretty man'; but was there none, in that land of seers, to foretell how this minister should reign in Morven, and his son after him, each for half a century or more, and how he should be the founder of a clerical dynasty that would last for ever? Norman the First presents a rare figure in an age in which the clergy were noted for anything but ecclesiastical zeal. He had all the culture that was going, but did not prefer Horace to David, nor Virgil to Isaiah, and could hate fanaticism without reducing religion to a cauld clash of morality. He was the ideal of a Highland minister, daring the stormy strait and the misty mountain, swaying the wild Celtic heart by tender or fiery appeals, and drawing the poor and the troubled to his door from the remotest glens. The living was of the smallest, but he acted upon the precept, 'Do what you can, and leave the rest to God.' He had a large family of sons and daughters, and there were various workers and dependents settled on the glebe. So at Fiunary, above the rocky shore of the Sound of Mull (not far from the inn where the Lad with the Silver Button had to go from the fireside to his bed, wading over the shoes), there was a little community by itself, living a beautiful and wholesome life. The glebe was a scene of cheerful industry, and, labour done, the bagpipes would be skirling. In the manse there might be a tutor and a governess, but the daughters were their own dressmakers, and the sons worked in their father's fields. But the chief part of their education was play; they all rejoiced in the open air, and Morven entered

into their blood. The boys went fishing and sailing, hunted the wild cat and the otter, and roamed the heather in quest of game. By the winter hearth what singing of Gaelic songs! The minister himself played the fiddle, and liked to set his children dancing of a night. In this family religion was no formal lesson: it was the atmosphere they breathed.

One summer day in the closing year of last century, General Macleod, chief of the clan, visited the manse of Fiunary, and took away with him to Dunvegan his young namesake, the minister's eldest son, Norman the Second. Nothing could have been more delightful to the boy, who cared little for study, preferring any day the seas and the hills, and was already at sixteen a Highland patriot, with his head full of the legends of that old castle in the shadow of which his ancestors were born. The reception by the clan, especially the piping of a Macrimmon, was never to be forgotten. During his stay at Dunvegan, where he was treated like a son, he met many chiefs, some of them distinguished soldiers home from the wars. So he returned to Morven more a Highlander than ever, and with a double measure of the martial spirit that was then abroad in his native county. He joined the Argyllshire Fencibles, and rose to the rank of corporal! If this is an anti-climax, suppose that he was moved less by military ardour than the love of manly exercises. At all events it was as an athlete that he chiefly excelled in his youth. The glory of his college days was that in physical contests he alone could rival John Wilson, who was to be known as Christopher North. And remembering the influences by which his character was moulded at home, have we not here the promise of a fresh type of the Christian priest? After serving for about two years as assistant at Kilbrandon in Lorn, he became in 1808 minister of Campbeltown. Hardly was he settled in his place when a little crisis occurred in which his mettle was revealed. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was at hand, and Macleod thought it necessary to have services in the open air as well as in the church. His fellow-presbyters, all but one, refused to assist him in what they regarded as juvenile folly. Nothing daunted, the young minister had a tent set up, and on the Sunday morning preached to four thousand. In the church he held five communion services, while his friend in turn officiated at the tent. Towards the close, when the church was crammed,—passages, stairs, and all,—some of the fathers and brethren appeared, but their proposals of help were declined. In a short time his popularity had become such that, when there was a rumour of his going away, the dissenters offered to contribute, equally with his own people, for the augmentation of his stipend. He was to rise to honour in the Church, and be adored throughout the Highlands; but long before he died he was effaced by his son.

At Aros, in Mull, lived Mr. Maxwell, the Duke of Argyll's chamberlain, a person of note in his day and place, and a fine man at home. He traced his descent to a youth who had fled from the Border, all the way to Kintyre, before the soldiers of Claverhouse; and in his choice of reading (for one thing) he betrayed the Lowland strain. His daughter Agnes passed her early girlhood in Knapdale, where she was educated by old songs and ballads, and the rapture that was on the lonely shore. For the rest (not to speak of the inevitable finishing in Edinburgh), imagine Aros such another home school as Fiunary. The two houses stood facing each other on opposite sides of the Sound, and the minister's son—Leander in a boat—married the chamberlain's daughter.

The eldest child of this pair, the third Norman, who may be called Norman the Great, was born in Campbeltown on June 3, 1812. From his earliest years he was remarkable for ardent affections, the eager interest he took in everything, and the humour and imagination with which he seized his little world. Talking and telling stories at the nursery fire, his tongue never lay. When only six he could mimic various characters of the town; and, later, he had an attic fitted up, in which he and his companions acted plays. For study he had no aptitude, and at the burgh school the classics were ill taught; but he entered with a will into the life of the boyish community, making passionate friendships, contending with the 'shore-boys,'—those raiders of the playground,—and heading expeditions against the French, and chasing pirates in a punt. But his great delight as a boy was to visit the vessels at the quay; he would spend hours on board, learning the name and the use of everything, and consorting with the sailors,—all in a world of romance. Other savours of life on the ocean wave he had in society,

which abounded in naval officers, some attached to the revenue cruisers, some 'half-pays' who had, perhaps, fought with Nelson. There also were two or three retired soldiers of distinction, and as many aristocratic spinsters (drifts from the county), living on their annuities, and the sheriff with his top-boots and queue. These, with several old families of the place, and the usual dignitaries of a burgh, were the quality; and, cut off as they were from the rest of the world (Campbeltown being then as an ocean isle for isolation), they make a quaint picture, like a set in some ancient novel. Norman mixed in this company, and the heroes of the services, and the queer old maids—he *saw* them every one, and was glad. Not less did he mark the fishermen's sons, with their 'codlike faces and huge hands like flat-fish,' or the fools and beggars that were the heroes of the streets. This varied and stirring experience, which was of inestimable account in the making of the man, fell in with the ideal of training that had been set at Fiunary.

But in Campbeltown the boy could not grow up to be a Highlander after his father's heart; so in his twelfth year he was sent to Morven. The old minister was now gone, and his youngest son was reigning in his stead. Norman was boarded with the parish schoolmaster, his business being to learn Gaelic and get acquainted with the peasantry. Many an evening he spent in some hut,—the floor the bare earth, the ceiling a roost for hens; around the fire (which was in the middle of the apartment, the smoke escaping through a hole in the roof) a group would gather,—the lasses knitting, the lads busking hooks; and, heedless of the storm, they made the hours fly, telling tales and singing songs of their land. He gloried in the shore, and was to be seen perched upon a rock, fishing the deep pools. With his relatives, again (who claimed him when the school-week was over), he wandered on moor and mountain, or if they went sailing in the Sound, they would sometimes camp for the night on some distant island, and see the loveliest dawns.

Here the romance of Norman's boyhood came to an end; he was to exchange Morven, not for ships and sailors, but for a far other environment in the Lowlands. In 1825 his father was presented by the Crown, on the recommendation of all the principal heritors, to Campsie, a parish in Stirlingshire, within twelve miles of Glasgow. The minister accepted the living for the sake of his family, but it cost him some pangs to leave his congregation. 'I preached my farewell sermon,' he says in his fragment of autobiography, 'and could I have known beforehand the scene which I then witnessed, and the feelings that I myself experienced, I do believe that no inducement could have tempted me to leave them.' In his new parish there was a large manufacturing population; yet he might almost have forgotten that he was not in the Highlands, the rural part being a mountainous wild, and the manse near that goal of excursions, Campsie Glen. The church was a wretched little structure, and away in the country; but the minister set to work, and, after much trouble, had a new one built in the town. For the sake of his countrymen, of whom there were many in the parish, he held special services in their native tongue; and it was during this period of his ministry that he began his career as a literary apostle to the Gaelic-speaking race.

Of Norman as a boy in Campsie there is nothing to tell, except that he attended the parish school; nay, and there is a letter in which he complains, with a twinkle in his eye, of having salmon and legs of roasted lamb crammed down his throat. 'O my dear mamma, it is only now that a fond mother is missed, when dangers and misfortunes assail us.' Hardly less meagre is the record of his early college life; indeed, before we get a full view of the student he is a man, and the strange thing is not that he was undistinguished in his classes, but that (so far as appears) he was not even interested in the academic scene. In 1827, when he entered the University, the old College of Glasgow—now a railway station—and the old High Street—now a sanitary thoroughfare—were as they had been in the days of Andrew Melville,—the one with its hoary walls and turrets, the other with its picturesque narrows; and in the grounds there was still that 'sort of wilderness' where the duel of the two Osbaldistones was stopped by Rob Roy. But Norman, the most voluminous of diarists, has no word of the history or romance of the place; nor of his fellow-students, though he might have remarked one Tait (already with the grave brows befitting an archbishop), and a certain youth in homespun, with wild eyes and flaming hair,

George Gilfillan; nor yet of his professors, among whom at least three were worthy of note,—Sir Daniel Sandford, the brilliant Grecian and fervid orator, Robert Buchanan, of whom, under the name of 'Logic Bob,' reminiscences may be heard to this day in manses, and one less distinguished in his place, but likely to be remembered longest, because he was the friend and biographer of Burns, Josiah Walker. Macleod was nicknamed 'the sailor'; he wore the dress and affected the gait of a Jack tar. For learning, he dabbled in science and read poetry, especially Shakespeare and Wordsworth. At home, whither he repaired on the Fridays, he was all fun and frolic, and carried mimicry so far that he would speak in any character but his own. 'Cease your buffoonery,' his father wrote, and (unkindest cut of all) 'I was much pleased with the manner of the Stewart boys.' But this humour was an extravagant form of that sympathy which was to make him great. Good Stewart boys! 'on'y,' as Long John says, 'where are they?' In after years Macleod bitterly regretted his neglect of scholarship, feeling himself at a certain disadvantage in an age of intellectual ferment. But every man to his vocation, and that of Norman Macleod was the therapeutics of religion. For that he was unconsciously preparing himself by his absorption in the panorama of existence. He knew he was to be a minister, but he could never have been the man his country admired, had his boyish thoughts been focused on his destination, and not taken up with comrades, and the appearances of life.

Soon he was to hear, in the lectures of Chalmers, a trumpet call. Having finished the curriculum of Arts, he proceeded in 1831 to the Divinity Hall at Edinburgh, where, at the feet of the first of Scottish ministers and men, he awoke to the seriousness and mystery of life, and anticipated with joy his part in the evangelical crusade. Chalmers, alike by his teaching and his character, was singularly fitted to be the spiritual master of Macleod. Almost at once they recognised each other for kindred natures, and the sympathy of the pupil was repaid by the professor's trust.

Another influence at this period went to deepen his religious feelings, the death of a brother. He had that passionate attachment to relatives in general which marks the Celt, and between Norman and James there had been a peculiar bond of affection. On the last occasion of their meeting, Norman had engaged in prayer (for the first time in company), and the invalid had said, 'I am so thankful, mother; Norman will be a good man.' The death of James was not only an awful blow at the moment, it marks an epoch in the other's life. Immediately after the bereavement, Norman wrote—'I know not, my own brother, whether you now see me or not. If you know my heart, you will know my love for you, and that in passing through this pilgrimage, I shall never forget you, who accompanied me so far.' Nor did he ever forget; again and again, and long years after, he recalled that pale face, and thought of immortality.

On the recommendation of Chalmers, Macleod had been appointed tutor to a young English gentleman, the son of Henry Preston, of Moreby Hall, Yorkshire. In the spring of 1834, at the close of his theological course at Edinburgh, he went with his pupil to Weimar, carrying letters for the ducal Court. These were from Lady Vavasour, who had drilled him 'how to speak to Her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess, sister to the late Empress of Russia.' The Court of Weimar! that was indeed a change. But there and thereabout he was to be for a whole year, mixing in the very society which, a few years before, had been adorned by Goethe. 'There are indeed many advantages for young men here,' the seer wrote to Carlyle in 1828, 'especially for those of your own country. The Double-Court of the reigning Grand Duke and the Hereditary Family, at which they are always kindly and generously received, constrains them by this mark of distinction to a refined demeanour at social entertainments of various kinds.' Imagine Norman waltzing at the State balls, dressed in cocked hat and sword, with silk stockings and buckled shoes, and haunting the gardens, the cafés, the theatres, and the glorious park 'where the nightingales never ceased to sing.' Nevertheless he kept his head, constituting himself mentor (always a favourite rôle of his) to the young English residents. As he observed the German laxity he called for a new Luther, though he condemned the contrary vice of the Church at home, that would measure his piety by his reading a newspaper on Sunday. He made excursions, one as far as the Tyrol, in the course of which he visited the picture galleries of Vienna,

Munich, and Dresden. But the great event of his life in Weimar was his falling in love with the Court beauty,—'La Baronne,' he calls her,—which he did in a fashion of poetic worship, worthy of a hero of romance or song. For years afterwards, let him hear old Weimar tunes upon the piano, and his heart will overflow with thoughts that he cannot utter; a German waltz, and his brain will reel.

In the autumn of 1835, after a residence of some months at Moreby Hall, where he mingled with the local squires, and met certain legislators fresh from St. Stephen's, he entered the Divinity Hall at Glasgow. But he did not now cross the quadrangle as if it were a ship's deck. For one thing, he was no longer an idle student, but rose at unearthly hours to grind, or if he did not, his conscience put in for damages, which took the form of pages of eloquent remorse. Besides, he was a great handsome fellow, and, not to speak of his inner life,—so vitalised by various experience,—he had seen more than most Scottish students. Add his conversational powers and boundless vivacity, and he should be something of a lion in college society. He became the leader of the Tories, and it was in that capacity that he had his first taste of fame. At the Scottish Universities there falls to be elected by the students, once in three years, an honorary official called the Lord Rector. The candidates are usually leaders in the rival political camps. In Glasgow there seemed to be no chance for a Tory,—men like Jeffrey, Brougham, Cockburn, and Stanley having carried the day time out of mind;—but in 1836, under Norman Macleod's leadership, the Whig tradition was broken by the triumphant return of Sir Robert Peel. At the Peel Banquet, which is almost historical, as the rise of the Tory tide dates from the oration delivered by the honoured guest, Norman made his first public appearance, replying to the toast of the Conservative students. 'I think I can see him now,' says Principal Shairp, 'standing forth prominently conspicuous to the whole vast assemblage, his dark hair, glossy as a black-cock's wing, massed over his forehead, the purple hue of youth on his cheek.' His speech was striking, and impressed even Peel. Thus, if the first period of his college career was obscure, the last ended in a blaze of glory.

The family were now resident in Glasgow (his father having been translated to St. Columba's), and in the house a number of young gentlemen, some of them boarders, pursued their college studies under Norman's supervision. The scene of their work was 'the coffee-room,' and it was always a great moment when their tutor burst in upon them from his own den, radiant with life and joy. Among them was John Macintosh and John Campbell Shairp. Macintosh had come from Edinburgh with the laurels of first pupil of the New Academy. In Glasgow College he was at the head of all his classes, and his scholarship was not more remarkable than his piety. He was the sort of boy that takes all the prizes, including the prize for good conduct. As for Shairp, there is no one with a knowledge of the best Scotsmen of the last generation but reveres and loves the memory of that gifted and high-souled man. Though Macleod was more impressed by the saintly Macintosh, he found in Shairp, owing to the wider range of their mutual sympathies, a fitter companion. They were both Wordsworthians. Macleod could tell how his enthusiasm had once carried him to Ambleside, how he had seen and talked with the poet, how the old man had appeared in a brown greatcoat and a large straw hat, and had read 'in his deep voice some of his own imperishable verses.' The two students, many a night under the frosty starlight, walking home from the Peel Club (of which Macleod was president), kept firing at each other quotations from their favourite bard.

For Wordsworth's poetry Macleod had been prepared, because its materials were within his own emotional experience. Passage after passage only interpreted and defined for him feelings which he had long known in the presence of wild nature. Of the influences that went to form his moral constitution not the least marked was that of Highland scenery. Even amidst the gaieties of Weimar, he would shut his eyes, and, whistling a Highland tune, see the old hills. The autumn after he was licensed—1837—the last before his life-work began—was spent in Morven and Skye. He speaks of 'passionate hours in the lonely mountains,' and, to judge from his journal, his excitement in these scenes was wonderful, varying from ecstatic delight to solemn awe and worship. On a peak of the Coolins he burst out singing the Hundredth Psalm. Along with this must be taken his keen

consciousness of the hereditary associations. During his holiday he preached in ‘the same pulpit where once stood a revered grandfather and father.’ ‘As I went to the church,’ he writes, ‘hardly a stone or knoll but spoke of something which was gone, and past days crowded upon me like the ghosts of Ossian, and seemed, like them, to ride even on the passing wind and along the mountain tops. What a marvellous, mysterious world is this, that I in this pulpit, the third generation, should now, by the grace of God, be keeping the truth alive on the earth, and telling how faithful has been the God of our fathers.’

CHAPTER II
1838-1843
LOUDOUN—NON-INTRUSION CONTROVERSY

Just after his return from this tour, Macleod was presented, virtually at the instance of Chalmers, to the living of Loudoun, in Ayrshire. On March 5, 1838, he was ordained. From this time onward his private journal is largely the record of religious introspection. With the other earnest ministers of that period, he took up the feelings and the language of the old Puritans. One cannot forget Robertson, on his appointment to the charge of Ellon, pacing the room for hours in the silence of the night, 'and, all unconscious of being overheard, praying for mercy to pardon his sin and grace to help him in his embassy for Christ.' This is good to know, but a little of it goes a long way. When my brother has entered into his closet and shut the door, I do not wish to spy upon his spiritual straits, or listen at the keyhole to his penitential groans. That Macleod, on assuming his first ministerial charge, deeply felt his responsibility, is clear from his doings as well as from his diary. The young minister had never doubted the truth of the religion which, more by example than by precept, had come down to him from his fathers. And the doctrines of Christianity were to him not merely true, they were vividly realised in his heart and imagination. In criticism, at this time, his highest flight was to name certain antinomies of Calvinism as nuts to crack. On the other hand, in his frank acceptance of the goodly world, and in his passion for characters (which was such that he would go scouting for the ludicrous), he seemed to have more of the humanist than the saintly temperament. Nothing could have been more alien to him than the plaint of a latter-day poet—

'Strange the world about me lies,
Never yet familiar grown,
Still disturbs me with surprise,
Haunts me like a face half-known.'

And he had met in Germany, somewhat to his astonishment, men who danced on a Sunday, and still showed Christian graces; nay, men who were reverent and pious, though they could not have subscribed to the Westminster Confession.

The parish of Loudoun is a broad green wooded valley, through which runs the Irvine Water, celebrated in song. At one end, on a pleasant slope, the towers of the castle shine out above the trees; at the other, several miles distant, lie the villages of Newmilns and Darvel, where the mass of the population resided. The farmers were a sturdy, pious race, as befitted the descendants of the Covenanters; but in the weavers Macleod encountered a new and formidable type of sinner. The eighteenth century had spoken to their fathers; on matters of religion their authority was Tom Paine; of politics, Robespierre qualified by Chartism. Thus the minister, whose business, as he conceived it, was to pilot souls to heaven, had no sooner taken the helm than he found himself among rocks and breakers. He was little of a politician, and no priest, which was fortunate, as a formal defence of the Church or of Toryism against such antagonists would have been the worst tactics; but, being a *man*, he got hold of many of the weavers in the end. "Poor souls!" he could say; "how I do love the working classes!" and that was a note he never lost. Besides the human, he approached them on the secular ground. On geology, which was then a fine new weapon to the adversaries of the Church, he gave a course of lectures which made a sensation, particularly among the hand-loom atheists, many of whom became communicants.

The moral condition of Newmilns was terrible in the young pastor's eyes, and he would sometimes despair, thinking that all his efforts were in vain. There was in him some touch of the

divine yearning, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!' If he woke in the night-time, he communed with God. Far from flagging, the ambassador for Christ piled agencies on means, and, as it were, took the place by storm. The church was crowded to suffocation; he preached on week-days in various parts of the parish, instituted Sunday schools, prayer meetings, and meetings for young men; and, for the sake of the poorest of the poor, held services to which none were admitted who wore good clothes. In the course of a year he would visit several thousand families, and as in public he denounced evil-doers in general, in private he singled them out for rebuke and exhortation.

In his Loudoun ministry there is just perceptible an official smack, a note of externality; he has not yet entirely freed himself from the mechanical theory of salvation. For example, he was much taken up with the work of winning or, if need were, extorting confessions of repentance and faith from dying unbelievers. There was one with whom the zealous young ambassador strove hard, all to induce the invalid to speak. 'Before I go have you nothing to say?' The man lifted up his skeleton hand and panted out—'No, no, noth—nothing.' At a later period Macleod would rather have sympathised with the poet, who wanted no priest—

'—to canvass with official breath
The future and its viewless things,
That undiscovered mystery
Which one who feels death's winnowing wings
Must needs read clearer, sure, than he.'

The manse of Loudoun is a little way out of Newmilns, in the direction of the castle, and overlooking the road; on one side, a pretty garden, and at the back the glebe, a beautiful brae. In that very house Robert Burns once spent a night. Coming down in the morning, he was asked whether he had slept well. 'I have been praying all night,' the poet answered; 'if you go up to my room you will find my prayers on the table.' He had been thinking of the sweet life of the household and all he might have been. But this tradition did not move Macleod; indeed, at that time he was unjust to the poet, as what cleric was not? Invited to take the chair at a Burns Festival in Newmilns, he replied (disloyal to Wordsworth for once) that he could not, dared not, as a Christian minister, commemorate such a man.

His life at Loudoun, notwithstanding his professional industry, was full of brightness and charm. Much of his leisure was passed among his flowers, or he went into the woods and sat listening to the birds. In the winter evenings, to his sister Jane, who kept house for him, he read aloud from the works of Shakespeare, Scott, and, a new writer, Dickens; and she in turn entertained him with German sonatas and Gaelic songs. At Loudoun Castle, then inhabited by the Dowager Marchioness of Hastings, widow of the celebrated Governor-General, he was not only a welcome guest, but a trusted friend. His conversational gifts might account for his acceptability at the tables of the great, but he was never the mere diner-out, still less the nice chaplain. In any company he would speak, when occasion offered, from the heart to the heart, and it was at first startling to see the laugh die out of the face of the big jolly parson, and hear sudden lessons or tales that shook the inmost soul, and drew the awkward tear. Lady Hastings gave him the key of a vault in Loudoun Kirk where lay the right hand of her dead husband, which had been sent from Malta; and, sure enough one morning, as the Marchioness lay dying, he was summoned to fetch the relic that it might be buried in her grave.

The 'coffee-room fellows' held reunions at Loudoun. Referring to one of these, Shairp says: 'We wandered by the side of the Irvine Water, and under the woods, all about Loudoun Castle, and Norman was, as of old, the soul of the party. He recurred to his old Glasgow stories, or told us new ones derived from his brief experience of the Ayrshire people, in whom, and in their characters, he was already deeply interested. All day we spent out of doors; and as we lay, in that balmy weather, on the banks or under the shade of the newly-budding trees, converse more hearty it would be impossible to conceive.'

Through Shairp (who was now a student of Oxford) he was kept abreast of the Tractarian movement; not to his peace of mind, for he was protestant and presbyterian to the core. Once, while staying at Moreby, he had attended a magnificent confirmation ceremony in York Minster, but his raptures over the stained windows and 'the great organ booming like thunder through the never-ending arches' suddenly vanished in the recollection of a sacramental scene which he had witnessed in the Highlands—'no minster but the wide heaven, no organ but the roar of the eternal sea, the church with its lonely churchyard and primitive congregation.' So far from having any leanings to High Churchism, he saw no harm in a layman administering the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Another sign is that, Highlander as he was, he had no sympathy with the Jacobites; he said that Charlie was never his darling, and spoke of the low cunning and tyrannical spirit of the Stuarts. The Anglo-Catholic movement he simply abhorred. 'Well,' he wrote to Shairp, 'what think you of Puseyism now? You have read No. 90, of course,—you have read the article on Transubstantiation,—you have read it! Great heavens! is this 1841?' Shairp, who wet his feet in the rising tide, piped in vain to his friend about the greatness of Newman. Macleod could not understand a beautiful soul who spent his mornings in idolatry, a sage of the nineteenth century for whom the only question was—Anglican Church or Roman?

Into what hole, Bezonian? speak or die.

Protestantism is more than a creed. Men may rail at the Scarlet Woman, and yet, in the matter of ecclesiastical claims, be little Beckets. In the non-intrusion controversy, such as it was in the end, Macleod's attitude was partly determined by his dislike of sacerdotal pretensions. Since the law courts had declared the measures of the General Assembly illegal, the non-intrusionists intrusionists had set themselves up against the judges, and in the course of their defiance were justifying, by word and deed, Milton's saying, that 'new presbyter was just old priest writ large.' The question was not now of patronage, but of the Headship of Christ, the crown-rights of the Redeemer; practically the old quarrel between priests and kings.

As to the necessity of checking the power of the patron there was not from the first any difference between the two sides. Everybody recognised that the people, having won political freedom, would have a voice in the appointment of ministers. To patronage, indeed, the Scots never consented, were never reconciled; they always looked upon it as a wrong, they could always say, 'An enemy hath done this.' Both Knox and Melville asserted the right of the people to elect their ministers, and the Kirk, as often as it had the chance, got rid of patronage. The evil seemed to be cast out for ever at the Revolution, but in 1712 it was surreptitiously restored. The Act of Queen Anne, which was nothing but a Jacobite intrigue, handing over the Kirk to the Pretender's friends, was introduced behind the nation's back, and passed in spite of the strenuous opposition of the General Assembly. For many years and in various ways the Kirk tried to get it repealed. In a single decade there were upwards of fifty disputed settlements before the courts, and about the middle of the century the dissenters numbered a hundred thousand. To make matters worse, the party which, under the name of Moderates, systematically championed the patrons, rose to absolute power in the Kirk. Before a presentee could be settled he had to receive the call, a document in his favour signed by the heads of families: this the Moderates treated as a mere form, and minimised it more and more till they got quit of it altogether—except the name. Ministers were inducted with the military at their back. At length, weary of the struggle, the people gave in, and the descendants of the Covenanters endured intrusion almost dumbly for twenty years, under the iron rule of Robertson. As Dr. Chalmers said in his grandiose way: 'The best, the holiest feelings of our Scottish patriarchs, by lordly oppressors, sitting in state and judgment, were barbarously scorned.'

After the French Revolution the awakening of man's spirit, extending from letters and politics to religion, led in Scotland to the rise of the Evangelical party. They had lofty notions of ecclesiastical

authority, and manifested their pious zeal in prosecuting men whose holiness was qualified by originality, such as Macleod Campbell, whom they incontinently deposed. But, for all that, they were the best of the clergy, because they were in vital earnest with the highest things.

What was their policy on the question of intrusion? In some way it should prevent the patron from thrusting in a minister against the will of the congregation. The General Assembly of 1834, the first in which the Evangelicals outnumbered the Moderates, conferred upon the majority of heads of families (being communicants) the right of vetoing, without assigning reasons, the settlement of a presentee. Now it is conceivable that one might be eager for reform, and yet disapprove of the Veto Law. To be sure it was fitted to stop intrusion, but, as the records of its operation show, it would have led to another evil, the vetoing of presentees on trivial and absurd pretexts, rejection for rejection's sake. Popular election entails complete responsibility, but when men have to take their ministers from a patron, and yet can refuse one presentee after another without saying why, they will be apt to use their licence to make up for their slavery. This were hardly worth remarking but for the assumption, conveyed in many an oration, that the policy was as admirable as the principle which it embodied. Let the non-intrusionists have all the praise of meeting, in some sort, the just claim of the people.

The General Assembly, however, had gone beyond its powers. Both the House of Lords and the Court of Session pronounced the Veto Law to be *ultra vires*, the judges holding that the presbytery was bound to take on trials any presentee to whom there was no objection on the ground of morals, scholarship, or doctrine. Notwithstanding this, the General Assembly stuck to the veto. So there would be rejected presentees demanding, in accordance with the law, to be taken on trials, and presbyteries at their wits' end, pulled one way by the General Assembly, and another way by the civil Court. The General Assembly ordered the presbytery of Strathbogie not to take on trials a certain presentee who had been vetoed. The presbytery obeyed. But the Court of Session declared the order of the General Assembly to be illegal. Thereupon the presbytery, by a majority of seven, admitted the presentee. For that the seven were deposed. And now came the event which was the cause of the Disruption. The minority in the General Assembly, failing to see how it could be rebellion to obey the law of the land, treated the deposition of these men as null and void. The question then was, which of the two sides was the Church of Scotland? Parliament, all the time, was trying to reconcile parties by changes in the law, but as it always insisted on making the presbytery the final judge of the fitness of presentees, the non-intrusionists would not hear of legislation.

It was not till near the end of the struggle that the minister of Loudoun turned his eyes upon the field. The thunder of the captains and the shouting had been long in his ears without stirring him to action. He was all in his vocation, the cure of souls,—the mystery of existence ever for him insurgent, whether he looked on life and death, or remembered his days upon the hills. 'I wished,' he said, 'to keep out of this *row*, and to do my Master's work and will in my dear, dear parish.' Some clerics are listless in religion; but when a question of church politics is raised, alert as a horse at the sound of the trumpet. Macleod hated controversy, and said it was the worst way of doing good. Of the two parties in the Church he might have sung, 'How happy could I be with *neither*!' In him the opposing types were blended; he had all the humanism which marked the one,—the love of letters, the relish of things, the superiority to clerical prejudice,—with all the zeal of the other for the cause of the gospel. But, called to choose between extremes, he preferred 'the cold gentlemanly Moderate' to 'the loud-speaking high professor.' And the non-intrusionists were claiming to be the only true Christian ministers in the land, nay more, the chosen of Heaven. They declared that they were raised up by God, they called themselves the fitting instrument of the Lord. They invaded the parishes of the Moderate clergy, and preached, telling the people that now, for the first time, the gospel was in their ears. 'The Lord Jesus Christ,' they said, 'will have left the Church when we go.' In a pamphlet written by Macleod, 'A Crack about the Kirk for Kintra Folk,' which had a large sale, *Saunders* observes: 'I ken mony that are foremost eneuch in this steer that in my opinion hae little o' the meekness and gentleness o' Christ.' He must have been thinking of the minister who said that 'the devil was preparing a cradle

in hell for the opposition.' Everything in the popular cause was exaggerated. Patronage was 'earthly, sensual, devilish'; *vox populi, vox Dei*, and no mistake. The struggle against the civil courts was 'one of the most illustrious conflicts for the spirituality and liberty of the Church of Christ of which any record can be found either in modern or in ancient times.' What Macleod could least endure in the non-intrusionists was their sacerdotal temper. They insisted on remaining in an Established Church, while flying in the face of the law by which it was established. The Headship of Christ was bound up with the resolutions of the General Assembly, and to obey an order of the Court of Session was to crucify the Lord afresh.

As for patronage, Macleod was probably willing that it should be abolished altogether, but he could not support the veto in defiance of the declared law of the Church. 'I'm desperate keen for gude reform,' says *Saunders* again, 'and would like the folk to hae mair poo'er, but I would like to get it in a legal way.' Macleod believed that the Establishment was necessary for the religious welfare of the country, and saw nothing that was worth the risk of its existence. Not till it became evident that the non-intrusionists were bent on destroying the Church did he join in the conflict. 'It will be our bounden duty,' one of the leaders had said, 'to use every effort that if we be driven out, they shall be driven out too; it is our bounden duty to bear this testimony that the Church ought to be established on the principles which we are contending for, or that there should be no establishment in the land at all.' When things like that were being said, Macleod, in alarm, plunged into the whole literature of the controversy. The position he reached was this, that when there was a dispute as to the privileges granted by the State to the Church, it was for the civil court to interpret the terms of the contract. He became one of the Forty, a set of Independents, whose chief distinction is that they promoted parliamentary legislation for the reform of patronage. While opposed to the revolutionary policy, they were not Moderates, for they countenanced some of the acts of the majority. They were as little for Erastus as for Hildebrand.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.