

with their authority the Book of Sports. The merry, unthinking serfs, who, early in the reign of Charles the First, danced on Sabbaths round the Maypole, were afterwards the ready tools of despotism, and fought that England might be enslaved. The Ironsides, who, in the cause of civil and religious freedom, bore them down, were staunch Sabbatarians.

In no history, however, is the value of the Sabbath more strikingly illustrated than in that of the Scotch people during the seventeenth and the larger portion of the eighteenth centuries. Religion and the Sabbath were their sole instructors, and this in times so little favorable to the cultivation of mind, so darkened by persecution and stained with blood, that, in at least the earlier of these centuries, we derive our knowledge of the character and amount of the popular intelligence mainly from the death-testimonies of our humbler martyrs, here and there corroborated by the incidental evidence of writers such as Burnet.* In these noble addresses from prison and scaffold, — the composition of men drafted by oppression almost at random from out the general mass, — we see how vigorously our Presbyterian people had learned to think, and how well to give their thinking expression. In the quieter times which followed the Revolution, the Scottish peasantry existed as at once the most provident and intellectual in Europe; and a moral and

* Burnet, afterwards the celebrated Whig Bishop, was one of six divines sent out by Archbishop Leighton, in 1670, to argue the Scotch people into Episcopacy. But the mission was by no means successful. "The people of the country," says Burnet, "came generally to hear us, though not in great crowds. We were indeed amazed to see a poor commonalty so capable to argue upon points of government, and on the bounds to be set to the power of princes in matters of religion. Upon all these topics they had texts of Scripture at hand, and were ready with their answers to anything that was said to them. This measure of knowledge was spread even among the meanest of them, — their cottagers and their servants." (Memoirs, vol. i. p. 431.)