

tor to succeed me in this chair. The position in which the last General Assembly did me the honour to place me was one which I certainly thought myself little worthy of; but I have now great pleasure in proposing to you, according to the privilege hitherto granted to my predecessors, one whom I am certain every member of this Assembly will concur in thinking worthy to fill this chair—namely, Dr James Robertson, Professor of Church History in the University of Edinburgh—(loud applause)—and what gives him a still stronger claim on your attention and favour, he is the Convener of our Endowment Scheme, in which, as is known to all the Church, he labours most energetically. (Applause).

The nomination was unanimously agreed to. Dr Robertson was then introduced to the Assembly, and took his seat in the Moderator's chair, amid the cordial applause of the House.

The Royal Commission and letter appointing Lord Selkirk as her Majesty's Representative at the Assembly were then read. In the latter communication, her Majesty expressed her confidence that the deliberations of the House "would be guided by a spirit of enlightened wisdom and Christian charity, and that they would be marked by an earnest desire to promote the best interests of the people committed to their charge."

His Grace the Commissioner then rose, and addressing the House, said: Right Reverend and Right Honourable—Her Majesty having been graciously pleased to appoint me her Representative to your venerable body, I desire to congratulate you on this meeting of the General Assembly. Her Majesty has, at the same time, commanded me to assure you of her unaltered resolution to maintain the Church of Scotland in all its just and constitutional rights and privileges—(applause)—and at the same time has instructed me to present you with her usual Royal gift for the promotion of religious instruction in the Highlands and Islands. Right Reverend and Right Honourable—I have only further to add, that it shall be my pleasing duty to do everything in my power which can promote your comfort and convenience during the sittings of the Assembly; and I shall at all times be happy to receive any communication that you may please to bring before me on that or any other subject.

The Moderator then said: May it please your Grace.—We, the ministers and elders met in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, esteem it a high privilege to be assured that our meeting has the approbation and sanction of our most gracious Queen. In her Majesty's necessary absence, we regard her selection of your Grace to represent her Royal person in this Assembly as a fresh mark of her attachment to our national Church. Your Grace is felt by us to have every claim upon our confidence and affection that can be conferred by distinguished descent, by high hereditary rank, and the personal virtues that best support and adorn it, by enlightened and firm attachment to the principles of our Presbyterian policy and by the full experience which we have uniformly had in former Assemblies of your condescending courtesy, and kindness. The confidence which her Majesty has been pleased to repose in us, that our deliberations will be guided by a spirit of enlightened wisdom and Christian charity is deeply gratifying to us. We have received with the liveliest emotions of gratitude, also, the renewed assurance of her Majesty's regard and affection for the Church of Scotland, and of her gracious determination to maintain its just and constitutional rights and privileges. These proofs of

her Majesty's royal good will and favour we regard as an urgent call addressed to us to give all diligence to make the distinguished privileges which we enjoy conducive to the end for which they have been conferred upon us—the instruction of the people in righteousness. This end we fervently cherish as of itself of inestimable worth, and at the same time, the best bulwark of the throne—the best guarantee of the high estates of the nobles of the land—the best safeguard also of the precious rights and liberties of the whole community—as, indeed, the only sure bond of national greatness; and we beg, therefore, to assure your Grace that it will be our earnest endeavour, in humble dependence on the Divine assistance and blessing, to promote, by every means in our power, the social, moral and religious cultivation of the people committed to our charge. It will be our constant care that they shall fear God and honour the Queen. We accept with gratitude her Majesty's munificent donation for the propagation of the Gospel in the Highlands and Islands; and we trust to be enabled to apply the bounty in such a manner as shall best promote her pious and benevolent purpose in bestowing it. We hope to justify the confidence with which your Grace relies on our conducting all our proceedings in a spirit of wise moderation becoming our profession, and with a due regard to the solemn interests with which we have to deal. We do indeed claim for ourselves perfect liberty of speech, but we claim this liberty not to use it for a cloak of maliciousness, but in vindication of our right and our duty to give free utterance, as becomes the servants of God, to that which shall approve itself to our consciences as God's truth. Humbly purposing to guide ourselves by this truth, we are not without an encouraging hope that your Grace may feel authorised at the conclusion of our labours, as in behalf of former Assemblies, to make a favourable report to her Majesty of the enlightened and temperate zeal with which we have prosecuted them. We beg to tender to your Grace our most respectful and grateful thanks for the desire which you have so kindly expressed to promote, so far as you shall have the means, our comfort and convenience during the sittings of the Assembly.

A committee was then appointed to draw up a reply to the Royal Letter. The same committee was instructed to prepare congratulatory addresses to the Queen and Prince Albert on the birth of a Princess.

The Assembly adjourned at a quarter past four o'clock.

FRIDAY, MAY 22.

The Assembly met to day at twelve o'clock.—Rev. Dr Robertson, Moderator—and was engaged for some time in devotional exercises.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS.

Dr Cook of St Andrews read the Report of the committee on parochial Schools after expressing their regret at being unable to report that any progress had been made since last General Assembly towards the further improvement of the Parish schools, and a better provision for the schoolmasters, the Committee gave a narrative of the proceedings taken by them in opposition to the Parochial Schools Bill in 1856, and of the reasons put upon record by the House of Lords for not agreeing to the bill as amended by the House of Commons, which led to the abandonment of the measure.

Dr Cook, after reading the Report, said,

he scarcely required to inform the Assembly that since the Report was prepared the Lord Advocate had announced that it was not his intention to introduce an education bill during the present session of Parliament.

Dr Crombie of Seabone, in moving the adoption of the Report, said they had deeply to regret that nothing had been done to improve the status of the parochial schoolmasters, and after referring to the benefits conferred upon the country by the parochial schools, and expressing a hope that they would long continue to flourish, he concluded by proposing the following motion.—“That the General Assembly approve of the Report and of the diligence and fidelity of the Committee in the matter entrusted to them, and thank the Committee. The General Assembly express their most lively sympathy with the schoolmasters of Scotland in the peculiar and trying position in which they have been placed, and their earnest desire to co-operate in any measures which may be found conducive to their benefit or to the further efficiency of a system which has conferred so great blessings upon Scotland.” The General Assembly confidently trust that the heritors of Scotland will continue to give their valued support to the parochial schools and schoolmasters; re-appoint the Committee—Dr Cook and Mr Smith, Conveners,—and instruct the Committee to watch any measure that may be brought before Parliament on this subject, and to omit no opportunity of endeavouring to promote the success of any measure that may be calculated to promote the efficiency of the parochial schools and to benefit the interests of schoolmasters, consistently with the instructions given to the General Assembly's Committee.

The Moderator, in thanking the Conveners of the Committee, expressed his conviction that right views of the question were growing in the country, and that discussion had in this, as in most instances, been favourable to the development of the truth. He felt sure that at a day not very distant, the Church of Scotland would have to congratulate itself upon the adoption of a measure by the Legislature of the country which should substantially carry through the great principles for which they had been contending, as necessary to the godly training and upbrining of the young.

JEWISH MISSION.

Professor Mitchell, of St Andrews, then presented and read the report, on this subject. It gave a detailed report of the operations of their agents and missionaries employed by the committee at their various stations in the East and in Europe.

Dr M' Pherson, Aberdeen, moved the approval of the report, and went over its statements *serialim*.

The Rev. Dr. Nisbet seconded the motion in an eloquent address.

The Moderator, after passing a high eulogium on the diligence and zeal of Professor Mitchell and the committee, conveyed the thanks of the Assembly to them for the admirable and encouraging report they had submitted to the Assembly.

The Assembly then engaged in devotional exercises, and adjourned at half-past three o'clock.

SATURDAY, May 23.

The Assembly resumed to-day—the Moderator presiding.