

rising demand. But it is the low state of the Fund at all times that makes even any diminution, however small, to be deplored. It is its chronic condition which is after all the evil and the danger. That is such that the abstraction of even the smallest coin can ill be spared, and makes one fear that, the tide being turned, though the first receding wave be small, yet it may be followed by another and another still, till the issue be fatal, and the majority of our ministry be left high and dry upon a deserted beach. When the boat's edge is already down to the water's brink, the smallest wave may sink it. A single drop makes a full cup run over, and it is the last stone that kills the camel. Let us seriously think of this miserable pittance when offered, as in many cases it is, as the only provision for themselves and families to the ministers of the Free Church, all of whom are educated men—educated at great cost—at a cost which would be a large capital, if embarked in business—all of whom must appear as gentlemen and mingle with gentlemen, and many of whom have long known the substantial comforts, if I might not say the modest elegancies, of the country manse. Why, Sir, it is not merely far beneath what is received by such persons as railway clerks in the present state of the labour market, but even beneath what the family of one of the better sort of mechanics will bring into the common store; and that not in Australia merely, where any day-labourer can realize in the year what would look a fortune by the side of our dividend, but in this country, too, in such places as Manchester, for instance, where in a cotton mill one man was lately pointed out to me, who, with his family, was drawing nearly £300 a-year; or Hawick, where, I am given to understand, there are similar instances of families bringing in their £100 and £150. Now, in contrast with this, there were lately at least—there are still, I believe—430 ministers in the Free Church—all of them educated men, all of them from their position compelled to live as gentlemen do, many of them with families to support—the whole of whose income does not amount to £150! Many of them have not nearly this sum, these being the wealthier brethren of this poor guild. Eighty of them are under £140—seventy of them under £130. Not a few—nay a great number—are doomed to cleanness of teeth and the simple dividend, which, deducting the Widows' Fund, just leaves £113 a-year for the subsistence of themselves and families! But take the larger sum—the £150. Even this sum would to them be much if it were all available to the proper purposes of life. But from it many deductions must be made before it can go to feed the mouth, or clothe the back, or educate the child, cover the table, or kindle the fire of the manse. Many Disruption ministers had in their former state effected a life insurance. All they have paid for years for this must either be forfeited, or out of their £150 must go some £20 or £30. Then comes Mr. Gladstone, and this year takes from the little store another £7 or £8. Next are the assessed taxes, £2 or £3; poor-rates, say between £4 and £5; prison dues run away with something more. If the unhappy man who is undergoing this process of exhaustion live in a burgh, he must pay another pound or more for cleaning and lighting the streets. If he has a garden, and not able to dress it himself, it may cost him annually some £5 or £6 more. If he has insured his

furniture, which, like a wise man, he will have done, that is another pound or more away. Above all, if his congregation are scattered over a wide district of country, some of them four, six, eight, or even ten and twelve miles distant, he must keep a horse, and that horse, it is usually computed, cannot be kept for much less than £20. At this rate of exhaustion, what is to be left for the support of himself and family? When all these harpies have pillaged the store, out of the £150, £130, £115 what remains for the subsistence of the human animals? Nothing has a more direct and powerful tendency in the way of unspiritualizing a ministry, and of giving them the habits of mere worldly men, than to put them into a state where so much of their thoughts must necessarily be occupied from day to day about the means of their livelihood, where such anxious care, and rigid economy and perpetual calculation are necessary to keep free from debt. And besides this effect on their personal character consider how it cripples them as professional men. It prevents them from obtaining the implements of their profession, the tools with which they must work. How can the country brethren obtain even the cheapest books of their professional literature? In a day like this old theology and old apologetics will not do. All the forms of error and infidelity are, by means of cheap periodical publications, creeping into the quietest and remotest even of our country parishes. How is the poor country minister, having access to no public libraries like his brethren in town, ever to purchase the books in which these forms of error are met and exposed? And what is to be the effect on his ministry if they are not met, if his people see him always fighting with the enemies and objections of a former day, mere spectres now, and leaving the present ones unnoticed? or how fatal must be the consequences if numbers in his congregation outstrip him in his own professional field? We have heard a great deal in this Assembly about the blessing of God being only to be expected at Home in connection with great and extensive efforts Abroad in His service. One would fancy, from the habit of speech which has become common amongst us, that that blessing is in a manner tied to great and splendid things—that the foreign service especially had acquired a kind of monopoly of it,—that it, and it alone, had somehow acquired the power of shutting and opening the windows of Heaven. It is somewhat dangerous for a Church to be always promising herself the blessing of God because of the magnitude of her outward exertions, especially taken in connection with the fact that she is at the very time mourning over her internal deadness, and ministers never meet without confessing to each other and lamenting the barrenness which they feel within and see all around them. A Church, when she is dead at the heart, and least likely to obtain the Divine blessing, when she is sadly wanting in spiritual life, in strong living faith, in scriptural simplicity, in humility, meekness, charity, brotherly love,—when she is overrun with a proud, bitter, sectarian, vain-glorious spirit,—even when in this state, and all the more on this account, she may, under the influence of mere excitement or sectarian vanity or any other of the principles which are rife in our fallen nature, be making the greatest external efforts, be filling the world with the fame of her doings.

I think, with all the laudations bestowed on our mighty doings, it were well for us to keep this caution in view. At all events there is one thing about which there can be no difference of opinion, but which is very apt to be overlooked, that no blessing from on High is to be expected where the principles of morality are out carried out into practice, where, when mercy is exercised, common justice is trampled under foot. What confessedly exists to so great an extent in other Churches, as "The Autobiography of a Dissenting Minister" shows with such striking power and talent, may have some place even in our own Church, and may be the secret cause of some of our troubles. The goodly vessel, lately detached from her moorings beside the State, has long ago unfurled all her canvas. She is manned by a competent crew,—the winds of heaven expand her sails,—yet she makes no way across the waters,—no such way at least as might be hoped for. Might not the people now begin to inquire, whether the removal be not with them?—whether a miserably underpaid and poverty-stricken ministry be not after all the anchor at the bottom of the sea which keeps her fixed and motionless upon its surface. We are told, indeed, that there is no antagonism among duties, and that it is as much a commanded duty to send the Gospel to the heathen as it is to maintain the ministry at Home; and the passage is immediately quoted, as if it settled the whole matter, "Go, preach the Gospel to all nations." But I maintain that, while there is no antagonism, there is an order amongst duties. For example, to pay debt and to give charity are both duties, but they are not of the same order,—the one has a place before the other. A man is bound to pay his debts before he lavish charities. Is India "all nations" any more than Scotland is? It is but one of the nations; is not the latter just another? Are not the people in the one nation, till grace touch their hearts, as really heathen in the eye of God, under all their forms, as the people in the other amid all their pollutions? Nay, if there be any difference in the two cases as to the bearing of this text upon them, the advantage is all with the ministers at Home. They more fully and directly obey it than even our excellent missionaries themselves. These go forth not so much to preach the Gospel as to prepare for its preaching, to raise up those who may. May God multiply their success in this direction a thousandfold, and may the native converts who are fitted up for the high work no more be called to consume their time and strength in schools, but be sent exclusively, like the first apostles, to preach the Gospel among all the towns and villages of their native land. This is just what the ministers at Home are directly and constantly doing, doing from day to day and from Sabbath to Sabbath. It is a great mission, seven or eight hundred strong, sent to those who are practically heathen and who are in number thousands upon thousands,—sent simply to preach the Gospel. For this high end is the Sustentation Fund. If there be one Scheme in all the Church devoted purely and exclusively to the accomplishment of the Divine commission, "Go preach the Gospel," it is this. And, were it ever remembered that by means of it that Gospel is every Sabbath proclaimed by near eight hundred ministers to thousands upon thousands of immortal souls, it would never be depreciated or lightly spoken of when set