

The ceremonial of opening being thus ended, the Assembly proceeds to do the work before it. There is always a great deal to do, and not much time to do it in, the period for which the Court is allowed to sit is fixed by law. The Assembly always begins on a Thursday, and must end always upon the Monday week after. The sittings usually commence every day at eleven, A.M. and continue to five or six P. M.; they are then resumed in the evening at eight, and last till one, three, five and six in the morning. The evening sittings are generally the judicial ones, as counsel can attend more conveniently then, the Courts of law not being open. The evidence in all cases of charges against clerical delinquents has been taken by the presbytery, and is printed, a copy being given to each member of the Assembly. Of late years, the tendency of the Assembly has been to extreme severity. One or two instances of drunkenness will insure deposition from the ministry, which implies deprivation of the benefice and total ruin.

Another matter besides clerical offences which comes before the Assembly as a court of justice, is the case of disputed settlements. When a man is presented to a living in Scotland, should objections be made which the Church Courts think sufficient, the presentee is excluded from the living; and the Assembly have at various times decided that objections of a very fanciful kind will suffice. In fact, the people have only to say that they dislike the man so much that it is impossible his preaching can benefit them; and this objection will be held quite sufficient. The people of Scotland have, in all conscience, amply sufficient to say in the choice of the clergymen. Patronage may now be said virtually to be banished from the Church.

The legislative business of the General Assembly usually occupies the forenoon sittings throughout the period of its meetings. In a company of near four hundred there must always be a few bull-headed individuals, who, like the stormy petrel, only appear when a squabble arises. Such a court furnishes every meddlesome, turbulent clergyman with an opportunity of pushing forward his own peculiar crochets. Indeed there can be no doubt that it is mainly owing to such facilities being afforded, that so many schismatic movements have taken place in Scotland. The result of Presbyterian Church Government in Scotland has been, that at five or six different times, little bands of unmanageable and mulish individuals have seceded from the kirk, declaring that they constitute the true Church of Scotland; and at this moment the Scotch Church, with, perhaps, as little to complain of as any established Church in the world, numbers among her adherents not less than two thirds of the population of Scotland.

An interesting feature in the Assembly's proceedings, is hearing the annual reports made by the Committees to which is intrusted the management of the various missionary "schemes of the Church,"—which are

the "Home Mission" for building and maintaining Churches in Scotland; the Indian Mission; the Colonial Mission; the Jewish Mission; the Education Scheme, for supporting schools in poor districts, and the Endowment Scheme, for providing endowments for chapels, and thus raising them to the position of parish Churches.

A collection is made in each church in Scotland for each scheme, once a year, and these collections, with some donations from individuals, form the income of the Mission.—The income of the Indian Mission last year was £7,153; that of the Home Mission, including the balance from the previous year, £8,892; that of the Education Scheme, £9,859; that of the Colonial Scheme, £3,332; that of the Jewish Mission, 3,309. We think it only fair to place these figures before our readers, for we have met with intelligent Englishmen who, misled by the trumpet-sounding of the 'Free Church,' have supposed that all the zeal and liberality of Scotland are confined within its limits. We know that the clergy of the Scotch Church think that, considering the numbers and wealth of its adherents, the income of the church should be much greater; but we confess that, to ourselves, such sums, collected by the little kirk from her twelve hundred congregations, appear extremely creditable.

"It was to us," says a writer in Fraser's Magazine for July, 1856, "we confess it, an affecting sight to look at so many of those men whose faithful labours in their simple spheres of duty have mainly tended, under the blessing of God, to keep Scotland in its present position as a moral and religious country. Looking at them, we felt that there was little ground for fear as to the non-sufficiency of Presbyterian orders. The orders of the men who have done and are doing so much good are recognized by the Almighty. And as we beheld that great array, almost without exception of most decent appearance, and very many among it with the bearing of high-bred gentlemen, we could not but think how many cares and anxieties must have at one time or another found their home in the hearts of men who are expected to maintain the appearance of gentlemen, and to be foremost in all works of Christian charity, on incomes varying from a hundred and fifty to four or five hundred pounds a year. The best livings of the Scotch Church do not exceed a thousand a year, and the number of these may be counted upon the fingers. The average value of the Scotch benefices is about £240 a year. Our readers may imagine the life of struggle and self-denial which must be led by men who have to maintain and educate a family on such a pittance. Yet, from the discipline of their pious homes, the sons of the clergy of the Scotch kirk have gone forth to hold with honour the first places in the country. The manse has given the Scottish bar and bench their most distinguished members, the army its most gallant generals, the East India Company its chairman, Britain her most eloquent historian, the woollen its most brilliant occupant, England her Lord Chief Justice, and Turkey (we lament to write it) her grand vizier."

"Among the most conspicuous members of the Assembly are Dr. Hill, mild, kind, judicious, always speaking briefly, and making speeches which really tend to expedite the business; Dr. Bryce, tedious, good-natured, quite content to talk away, though no one is

listening; Dr. Robert Lee, neat, pointed, fluent, gentlemanlike, desperately wrong-headed; Principal Lee, impracticable and testy, yet dignified and esteemed; Dr. Muir of St. Stephen's, perhaps, the finest-looking man in Scotland, amiable, decided, intensely honourable, not a little prejudiced—the idol of the High Tory and High Churchman; Dr. Pirie, pert, flippant, tedious and intolerable; Dr. Grant of St. Mary's, a master of that liberative eloquence in which every word tells; Dr. Macfarlane of Duddingstone, keen, though fat, the sharpest man at a reply in the Assembly; Mr. Norman M Leod of Glasgow, one of the most remarkable of Scotchmen,—a great preacher, barely second, to Mr. Caird, a teaching platform orator, a brilliant conversationalist, a tremendously energetic manager of business, a popular author, a great traveller, an extremely stout man. Among the younger clerical members of the last Assembly, Mr. Muir of Dalmeny and Mr. Wilson of Paisley made several admirable speeches. And of the lay members, perhaps the most conspicuous was Mr. Campbell Swinton, a law professor in the University, a fluent and energetic speaker, and apparently a man of high talent and great liberality of sentiment. Sir George Clerk made a very judicious speech on the question of receiving from the East India Company grants in aid of the Mission schools; and Sheriff Barclay of Perth made one or two brilliant appearances. Mr Cook, an eminent advocate already alluded to, spoke several times with good effect.

Two Sundays occur during the sittings of the Assembly, and upon these the Commissioner goes in state to attend divine service in the High Church of Edinburgh. There the arrangements are very much as on the opening day of the Assembly; and an immense crowd of sight-seers testifies to the interest excited by any State accessories to the service of the kirk. The High Church is the choir of the ancient Cathedral of St. Giles, and although disfigured by heavy galleries, which cut the shafts supporting the centre vault, and a stately and noble church, and can contain, we believe, about two thousand people. The Commissioner occupies the throne, facing the pulpit, supported by his chaplain and posse-bearer. The Moderator accompanied by six Doctors of Divinity in canonicals, occupies a front gallery pew to the Commissioner's right. Further on towards the pulpit sit the judges, and opposite them the magistrates, all in the glory of their official array. A great number of the clergy are present, and a very crowded general congregation. Two select preachers are appointed for each day, one of whom officiates in the morning, the other in the afternoon. In accordance with the old custom, introduced when the Scotch people had an absolutely unlimited capacity of listening to preaching, the forenoon preacher's appointment bears that he is to 'lecture and preach before his Grace the High Commissioner;' this has degenerated into a formal exposition of some ten minutes' duration, and the service is little superior than on ordinary occasions. The select preachers are appointed by the old Moderator, and, as a general rule, the most popular preachers, members of Assembly, who have not already preached before the Commissioner, are appointed; unless, indeed, when any other Moderator has in the church a son, nephew, son-in-law, cousin, brother-in-law, or other relative, who is ambitious of the distinction. The preacher goes to the pulpit when the bell has ceased, and there awaits the arrival of the Commissioner. His Grace comes with toler-