

Auchterarder or Cardross, to us, except theories or cases that may or may not be interesting to us, and about which we may discuss and hold different opinions as we please. How absurd it sounds at this time of day solemnly to disclaim that we are persecutors! We might as well disclaim that we are murderers.

But if we cannot accept the Confession as it is in good faith, if we must hedge and fence its statements on one point, why end there? Are there no other statements in it requiring limitation or explanation? And if there are,—as there are,—then how much more honest to lay down the principle explicitly that the Church has power to raise its subordinate Standards whenever it sees fit, whenever, in the Providence of its Head, it is called on to do so, and that in the meantime they are held as interpreted in the light of God's Word and Spirit, according to every subscriber's conscience!

THE SUPREME CHURCH COURTS OF SCOTLAND IN 1870 ARTICLE 2.—THE FREE ASSEMBLY.

Judged from an American point of view, the Free Assembly is the most popular and important of the three great Church Courts that meet in Edinburgh in the month of May. It has the biggest hall, and therefore the biggest crowd. Scottish religious fervour characterizes the debates to an extraordinary degree, and the rival debaters are cheered and hissed by enthusiastic partizans and opponents, without let or hindrance, till the noise amounts to positive uproar,—when the Moderator makes a mild effort to quell the storm. As a rule, the debating is excellent; and even when the subjects are abstract and dry to the average English capacity, the eager Scottish crowds show undiminished interest. I once heard Dr. Rainy speak for an hour on the different views on the Atonement held by Scotch divines from "the narrow men" down to the present day; and though the distinctions required the finest hair-splitting, not one of the audience seemed wearied or unable to follow him. To an Englishman it would have been all "metaphysics"; but Scotchmen are born metaphysicians.

During the last three or four years, a very distinct cleavage has manifested itself in the Free Assembly, and this year it looked more distinct and more formidable than ever. Dr. Begg heads a party opposed to union with the U. P.'s, because of their Voluntary views, and opposed also to the general policy of the Free Church. I don't think that any wise Free Kirkman should consider this an unmitigated evil, because in every large body—lay or clerical—that has charge of important interests, there must be diversity of views, and it is not good that these should be stifled. There must be a government and an opposition, or in the long run the work will not be so well done. Dr. Begg, then, may be considered leader of the opposition, with the venerable Dr. Julius Wood, bullet-headed Dr. Gibson, and the nimble elder, William Kidston, as his most trusted henchmen; while ranged behind them are pious and conscientious men such as the Bonars, Moody Stuart, and many from the Highlands well beloved by their people. The strength of the opposition is to be estimated not only by the numbers they show on a division, but by the nature of the tactics and the kind of resolutions they force the majority to adopt. Thus, on the union question, they were, it is true, but 144 to 379; but the year before they counted only 85; and besides, many waverers voted with the majority because so little was asked for that it looked like an insult to the U. P.'s to refuse it. All that Dr. Candlish ventured to move was that Presbyteries be asked to pronounce on whether "there is any objection in principle to an union among the negotiating Churches on the basis of the Confession of Faith as at present accepted by them;" it being further declared that "the entire question of the propriety or expediency of the union contemplated, as well as the time