

parish, but having during a period of mental excitement and restricted freedom of action pledged himself in the event of a Disruption—which event he had sincerely hoped to the very last might be averted—to leave the Church of Scotland, he left the Church in 1843 and became minister of Marytown in connection with the Free Church. The petitioner was not satisfied previous to the Disruption with the principles of the Church on the subject of patronage, but any exception he could take to it on that point had been removed by the Declaratory Act of 1844 (Lord Aberdeen's Act.) He had all along been conscious that by his withdrawal from the Established Church he had placed himself in a false position—a position in which it was easier to become more deeply involved than to get out. He had in fact undergone a ten years' conflict between a sense of duty and a desire for consistency, and he had long been reluctant to acknowledge his fault: which, however, he now did. Various documents were produced, testifying to the good character of the petitioner, and to his having remitted his charge at Marytown from ill health in 1849, and to his subsequently having ceased to have any connection with the Free Church.

Principal LEE said it had long been the practice to require some term of probation from ministers from dissenting bodies coming forward and asking admission to this Church. From the statements made in this case it appeared that the petitioner had been a minister of the Free Church from 1843 to 1849, but it did not appear at what period he had finally left the Free Church. He desired to know when it was that Mr. Dickson's bond with that Church was finally dissolved.

Dr. GRANT thought the Presbytery had not sent up sufficient information to enable them to satisfy themselves that this individual was actuated by sincerity. He certainly could have no reason to complain of being put on a year's probation. He moved that the case be remitted to the Presbytery for further information, and that they be called upon to report on it to next Assembly.

Dr. LIDDELL seconded the motion.

Dr. CRAIK thought, if there was a want of sufficient information, that was the fault of the Presbytery of Brechin and not that of the applicant. He moved that the Presbytery be called on to give in their Report to the first meeting of the Commission, which should be authorised to decide the case.

Dr. BISSET seconded the motion, and thought they should throw no unreasonable obstruction in the way of receiving Mr. Dickson. He believed he had made a statement which not a few in the Free Church might also make—that he had been entrapped.

After some further discussion Dr. Grant withdrew his motion, considering that the sense of the House was against it, and that it was desirable to avoid a vote at that late hour.

Dr. CRAIK's motion was agreed to, Principal Lee and others dissenting.

The Assembly then took up the application of the Rev. W. Strauchan, late minister at Gibraltar in connection with the Free Church, on which case the Committee reported that it was informally made, and that it must come through the Presbytery in whose bounds the Rev. gentleman resided. The Report was approved of, but Mr. W. Scott Moncrieff and others expressed regret that the application should be hung up for a year, and the Rev. gentleman's usefulness interrupted for that period.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH FOREIGN CHURCHES.

Mr. ROBERTSON, Greyfriars, presented the Report from this Committee, which gave some interesting information in reference particularly to the Protestant Central Society of France, one of the most zealous agencies on the Continent for the evangelisation of the people. It was also mentioned that a great Protestant Conference was expected to be held at Paris in August, at which evangelical ministers from all parts of the World would be present. Reference was made to Italy and to the dissensions that had arisen in Northern Italy between the Protestant part of the popula-

tion there. The Vaudois Church was exonerated from the blame of those dissensions, and a tribute paid to the evangelical principles which now as formerly characterised that Church.

M. Le Deune from Belgium addressed the Assembly in French. He was understood to give some particulars with reference to what was doing among the Roman Catholic population of Belgium, and to ask the assistance of the Assembly to the Christian enterprises in which the Christian Church in Belgium was now engaged.

Dr. Bisset, Mr. McLean (Glasgow), and Dr. Cook (Haddington), having spoken in favour of the objects contemplated by the Protestant Church in Belgium, the Assembly resolved to recommend them to the favourable consideration of the Church.

MARRIAGE AFFINITY BILL.

Principal LEE thought that at that late hour (11½ o'clock) it was not possible to do justice to a subject which was one of the most interesting at present before the country. With regard to the names of ministers which had been used by the supporters of the Bill as favouring their views on the question, he remarked that he had inquired into the cases of all clergymen that were known to him and he found that most of the statements were misrepresentations. Sir Harry Moncreiff had been mentioned as one of those, but he (the Principal) knew from the late Lord Moncrieff that the Rev. and Hon. Baronet held no such opinions. It had been said that the late Dr. Gordon had celebrated a marriage between a widower and his wife's sister knowingly, but it was not true. The Committee, endeavouring to procure the passing of the Bill, had published a statement that he (the Principal) had married such a couple without ever inquiring into the facts of the case. The persons had been publicly proclaimed; they were certified by one of Dr. Muir's elders as not being within the proscribed degrees of affinity; and he had no conception that any such relationship existed between them, and every thing connected with the ceremony was gone through, as far as he was concerned, in a regular manner. The Rev. Principal proposed that the Assembly petition Parliament against the measure.

Professor SWINTON seconded the motion, which was briefly supported by Drs. Hill and Grant, and unanimously agreed to.

PREPARING AIDS TO DEVOTION.

The Committee on this subject having verbally reported through Dr. Robertson that they had not been able to come to any definite conclusion, the Assembly re-appointed the Committee, Professor Campbell to be Convener.

ROYAL BOUNTY.

The Assembly proceeded to appoint the Committee for Managing the Royal Bounty for the ensuing year. An overture from the Presbytery of Abertarf, praying the Assembly to direct that more frequent meetings of that Committee should take place, was taken up. The Rev. Mr. McIntyre, of Kilmonivaig, explained the object of the overture, and supported it at some length. After Dr. Hill, Principal Lee, and other members of the House were heard, the prayer of the overture was granted, the Committee of the Royal Bounty being directed to meet on the rising of the Commission in August each year.

EXTENSION OF THE SCOTTISH UNIVERSITIES.

A memorial from the Association for this object, and signed by a considerable number of individuals, was then taken up.

Dr. ROBERTSON proposed that a Committee be appointed to watch over the matter, and put themselves in communication with the memorialists.

Dr. CRAIK mentioned that the subject had received the cordial concurrence of the Presbytery of Glasgow.

Dr. Cook, Haddington, suggested that, if a Committee were appointed, they should bring up a Report to next General Assembly.

The suggestion of Dr. Cook was agreed to, and a Committee was appointed, with instructions to report to next General Assembly.

COLLECTION FOR THE WIVES AND FAMILIES OF SOLDIERS AND SAILORS.

Dr. ROBERTSON reported that the Collection on behalf of this object had amounted to L.3313, 17s. 10d., contributed by 629 churches and chapels, which had been appropriated between the Central Association for the Relief of Soldiers' Wives and Families, and the Naval Association for the Wives and families of Sailors and Marines—L.3000 having been remitted to the former, and L.350 to the latter Association. In the event of the Committee being re-appointed he hoped they would receive powers to make another Collection through the Church, if it should be found necessary.

The Committee was re-appointed, with the powers wished for.

ST LUKE'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH.

Dr. ROBERTSON, on the part of the Endowment Committee, reported the circumstances under which this church is at present placed. The Assembly remitted the matter back to the Committee with powers.

After a variety of miscellaneous business the Commission of Assembly was appointed, with the addition of Principal Macfarlan.

THE MODERATOR'S ADDRESS.

The MODERATOR then addressed the Assembly as follows:—

Right Reverend and Right Honourable,—Our deliberations have been brought to a close. The time is just at hand when the present General Assembly is to cease to be, and it only remains for me, ere I descend from the Chair, which I feel I have so inadequately filled, to address to you, as is usual in such cases, a very few parting words.

We have had the privilege of devoting most of the time allotted to us to the consideration of those Schemes of Christian benevolence which to her honour the Church of our fathers has established—on the origin, the object, and the progress of which it is so delightful to him, who loves God and man for God's sake, to meditate and discourse and the interchange of sentiments upon which between soul and soul, through words proceeding from affectionate lips, is so eminently well calculated to perfect the life of God in the soul of the believer. Blessed be the name of the Lord who has given us the privilege of engaging in such employments, and of such employments may we feel the sanctifying influence many days hence.

Right Reverend and Right Honourable—Let us now look forward together. We cannot conceal it from ourselves that our sky—and that, whether we regard ourselves as a Church of Christ along with other Christian Churches in our land, or in our special character as the Church of Scotland—has a somewhat lowering aspect. We have to contend with Popery, with its twin brother Puseyism, and with the nascent or fully developed poison of Germanism—and with what in the present times we are very apt (our minds being occupied with other dangers of a more special, peculiar and apparently a more imminent character) to overlook, a growing spirit, if not of positive and direct infidelity, yet of carelessness or indifference about Religion. This casts a cloud over our prospects as we look forward, and can scarcely fail to excite apprehension in our minds, when we regard ourselves simply in our capacity of a Church of Christ, whose duty it must be to contend earnestly for the faith that was once delivered to the saints. But, apart from this, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that, as the Established Church of Scotland, we are placed in circumstances of a very ominous complexion. There is diffused over the land a thirst for change. The old maxims, "Stare super antiquas vias," and "Let well alone," are to a great extent repudiated, as coming into antagonism with what is called progress—(progress towards what, I would ask?)—or the spirit of the age. By this spirit our Legislature is in no small measure influenced, and against all our institutions is it to a greater or a less extent directed. The Church of Scotland has not escaped the assaults of it. It has already led to the severance of the connection between the Church and the Universities of the land, and it now aims at removing the control we have over