

to the appointment of army chaplains, the Assembly resolve that the recommendation of persons to fill this office shall be vested jointly in the Moderator of the General Assembly and in the Conveners respectively of the Home mission Committee, the Colonial Committee, and the Committee on Indian Churches; Further, the General Assembly remit to the committee to suggest to a future diet the name of a suitable person to fill the office of Convener, vacant by the resignation of Dr. Fowler.

Sheriff Barclay seconded the motion of Dr. Pirie.

The Assembly divided, when Dr. Pirie's motion was carried by 131 to 44.

Mr. Phin and others dissented.

— EVENING SEDERUNT.

OCCUPATION OF PULPITS BY LAYMEN.—

The Assembly took up an appeal of the Rev. James Smith, minister of the Greyfriars, Aberdeen, against a finding of the Synod of Aberdeen, affirming a decision of the Presbytery of Aberdeen relative to the admission of laymen to the pulpit.

Mr. Smith's reason of appeal were as follows:—"1. Because the interpretation put upon the law is impolitic, suicidal, and unsuited to the age, and like many other laws it will not be possible to carry it into execution in a living church. 2. Because the supposed laws at present very generally broken, and if literally carried out, according to the interpretation now put upon it, would put a stop to all the variety of religious meetings and prayer meetings in which numbers of laymen of other denominations, or even our own elders, take part; and would put a stop to Sabbath school addresses in our churches and chapels by others than by our ministers and licentiates. 3. Because such an interpretation of the law would compel us to prevent our people from hearing, in our own churches or chapels, any deservedly celebrated clergyman of the Church of England, or of any other denomination who might come among us, although he were to address our people only on a Sabbath evening, or week-day evening, and not in the usual hours of divine service. 4. Because such an interpretation is injurious to the best interests of the Church of Scotland, the glory of God, and the great end of the gospel ministry in the conversion of souls."

Dr. Macpherson, on behalf of the Synod, said that the question for the Assembly was, whether it was consistent with the laws and constitution of this Church, as laid down in the New Testament, and as defined in its standards, that any minister should admit to his place in the pulpit a person coming from a distance who was not a member of the Church and was utterly unknown to the Church, and of the soundness of whose teaching they had no guarantee whatever?

Dr. Pirie followed. He said if the case had been introduced by overture, and with the

view to legislation, they might discuss it, as Mr. Smith had sought to discuss it, on principles, but it came before them judicially, as a court of review, called upon to determine the law of the church on the subject. As a question of law he apprehended the decision of the Presbytery and Synod was unassailable.

Dr. Robertson moved that the Assembly dismiss the dissent and complaint, but with this declaration, that in affirming the judgments of the Presbytery and Synod they hold this judgment as declaring only that the practice of preaching the Word of God from the pulpit, and conducting therein the other solemn services of the sanctuary by persons not duly appointed to the office of the ministry, ought not to be countenanced by the courts or ministers of the Church.

The Rev. Mr. Murray, Melrose, seconded the motion. He expressed his deep and hearty sympathy with the appellant, whom he had long known as faithful and most devoted servant of the Head of the Church.

Dr. Lee would have agreed to Dr. Robertson's motion if it went to the discharging or forbidding of lay preaching. It did not matter to him (Dr. Lee) whether the preaching was addressed from the pulpit, from the precentor's desk, or from the floor of the Church; if the person stood in any of those positions under the sanction of the kirk-session, he was for the nonce a minister of the Word.

Dr. Norman McLeod referred in animated language to the recent revival of religion in America; and asked if, when earnest-hearted men were using means to stir up the people of this country to explore a similar outpouring of the Spirit of God, this was a time to press severely upon a brother, who had allowed these men the use of his church for such services?

Professor Tulloch said it did not appear that Mr. Smith had admitted persons not licentiates of the Church of Scotland into his church, in any other way than, he believed, almost all the ministers of the Church permitted themselves to do on Sunday evenings. There was no attempt or wish to recognize these men as licentiates, or holding any similar or corresponding status in the Church. The real question was, were the Assembly about to enjoin ministers to prohibit and prevent all lay preaching? He hoped that would never be the case; and if any such a thing should ever be attempted in the Church of Scotland, he for one would raise his voice as loudly as he could against it.

Dr. Robertson's motion was then agreed to; and parties were called, and judgment intimated accordingly.

— TUESDAY, MAY 24.

DEPUTATION FROM THE IRISH CHURCH MISSION.—The Assembly then received a deputation from the Irish Church Mission, consisting of the Rev. Alexander Dallas and the Rev. Mr. Tait, of Rugby, who successively addressed the Assembly on the progress of