

School, able and willing to conduct industrial schools as soon as the state of the agricultural fund will justify the extension of the sphere of operations, and enable the Committee to take advantage of their services. In last year's report, reference was made to two Assembly schools into which agricultural instruction had been introduced, under qualified teachers,—viz., Camiscross, in the parish of Sleat, Skye; and Sabiston, in the parish of Birsay, Orkney. Colbost school, in the parish of Duirinish, Skye, has since been added to the number."

The report states the results at these schools to have demonstrated their great usefulness, and the interest which is taken in them by the pupils attending; and particular reference is made to the present flourishing condition of the school-garden at the parish school of Eyemouth, Berwickshire. In this parish, 1066 square yards were last year handed over by the proprietor (Mr. D. Milne Home) for the purposes of a school garden, of which 216 square yards have been devoted to walks and flower-borders, while the remaining 850 have been divided into ten allotments, and assigned to the best behaved and most regular scholars. The profit derived from the whole plot of ground, after deducting the price of seeds, &c., is £3 6s. 3½d., being at the rate of no less than £19 per acre. The land, if let for farming purposes, might yield a rent perhaps of £2 10s. per acre. The Sub-Committee earnestly hope that the future contributions to the scheme will be to such an amount as may enable them to develop and carry out its objects more extensively.

#### GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

The Assembly met at Canonmills, Edinburgh, on Thursday, the 24th of May, and continued its sittings till the 5th of June. The Assembly was opened by public worship as usual,—The Rev. Dr. Grierson of Errol, the retiring Moderator, preaching from Acts xx. 28, "The church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." The Assembly unanimously elected as Moderator the Rev. Dr. James Henderson, of Free St. Enoch's, Glasgow. The Assembly then proceeded to elect a successor to the late lamented Rev. Thomas Pitcairn, one of their principal clerks. Dr. Grierson, seconded by William Campbell, Esq., of Tillichewan, proposed the Rev. Sir Henry W. Moncreiff, Bart., of St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh; while the Rev. Dr. Brydone of Dunscroft, seconded by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, proposed the Rev. J. Julius Wood of Dumfries. Sir Henry Moncreiff was elected by a large majority. We propose to arrange our account of the principal proceedings as we did last year, under the following divisions:—I. Internal Condition and Arrangements; II. Missionary Schemes; III. College and School Education; IV. Relations with other Churches; V. Miscellaneous.

##### I.—INTERNAL CONDITION AND ARRANGEMENTS.

The Assembly was not called to deal this year with any case of discipline, whether for heresy or immorality, or with any local dispute of any magnitude. The appeals and references from Presbyteries were chiefly on points of routine, and of no great public interest.

1. *General Financial Report for the year.*—The following general abstract was given in, showing the whole sums raised for the various objects of the Free Church of Scotland, for the year from 31st March, 1854, to 31st March, 1855:—

I. Sustentation Fund, . . . . .	£100,407	17	4
II. Building Fund, . . . . .	31,176	12	2½

III. Congregational Fund, . . . . .	85,910	1	2½
IV. Missions and Education . . . . .	61,797	3	8
V. Miscellaneous, . . . . .	25,759	15	3

Total . . . . . £308,050 9 8

A report was given in of the number of collections made for the Missionary and other schemes of the Church. The number of collections actually made in the 758 sanctioned charges of the Church had been 4411, while the number that ought to have been made was 4548, leaving a deficiency of collections not made 137. Explanations were given of the reasons why these had not taken place.

2. *Sustentation Fund.*—Dr. Robert Buchanan gave in the Report of the Committee for managing this fund. The Committee and the Church had been actively promoting a movement for adding a fourth more to the ordinary revenue of the fund; so that instead of £120, which had been the usual dividend, £150 might be paid to each minister. The effects of the movement had been in operation for about half the year, and the result was, that the revenue of the fund had risen from £95,179 5s. 1d to £103,553 17s. 3d., being an increase of £8,374 12s. 2d. This revenue was sufficient, after defraying expenses of management, returning sums paid by preaching stations, and paying allowances to retired ministers and others not participating in the full dividend, to afford to each minister on the equal dividend a stipend of £132. It was further reported that the (capital) Fund for Aged and Infirm Ministers was advancing favourably, and also the Capital Supplementary Fund. Dr. Buchanan concluded his statement by announcing that the late William M'Fie, Esq., of Langhouse, had bequeathed £10 to each minister of the Church, whose income was not otherwise supplemented, so that no minister in the Church would this year receive a smaller allowance than £142. A long and interesting debate, which lasted two days, followed on the subject of the Sustentation Fund. A great difficulty in administering this fund lies in the endeavour to reconcile two almost conflicting interests. One great object of the fund is to secure the support and independence of ministers, especially in the poorer congregations, so that they shall not be reduced to absolute dependence on the resources of their individual congregations, which in many cases are not able, and in some cases may not be willing, to afford the proper means of subsistence. With a view to this, the equal dividend system was adopted, each minister receiving precisely the same sum,—the congregation contributing £3000 getting back the same as the congregation contributing £30. On the other hand, it is obvious that this arrangement is too favourable to indolent and selfish congregations, and presses too severely on the liberal and active. It is also plain that it tends to interfere with the due extension of the Church, because each new minister taken on the fund must so far diminish the income of the rest. Some years before his death, Dr. Chalmers became deeply impressed with the serious nature of these evils, and employed his utmost energy to induce the Church to depart from the plan of an equal dividend, and resort to that of a proportional dividend, each congregation to receive back in some proportion to what they contributed, till the stipend reached £150. His great argument was, that by this means the liberality of congregations would be largely stimulated, and the Church would be enabled to advance on a glorious career of extension, till the word of life was carried to the most destitute districts of the land. In 1853 the Assembly adopted a different plan, known as the rating schema. The sums were laid down which congregations were