

Scottish secessions have never in the least degree affected the grand distinctive features, either of our doctrinal creed or of our ecclesiastical constitution. In so far as regards these, no difference is discernible among us. The several parties into which we have been divided are in doctrine the same, in worship the same, in organisation and discipline the same. And thus may we venture to say that Presbyterian Scotland, notwithstanding those divisions with which it is so often reproached, is yet substantially, with reference to religion, the most united Protestant country on the face of the earth, and that it would be well for some of those Churches that are inclined to boast of their superior unity as compared with us, if they really possessed as much of it in those things in which it is most of all desirable as ourselves. (Applause.)

This substantial agreement in faith, worship, and government, to which I have just alluded as subsisting between our National Church and those that have seceded from her, is doubtless in a high degree matter of congratulation. And yet in one respect it cannot otherwise be regarded than as furnishing additional ground for sorrow and humiliation, that with so much that is in the judgment of all parties of primary importance on which we are entirely agreed, we should yet as to far inferior matters be disunited. I can truly say it for myself, and I am confident that I have the hearty concurrence of many, if not all of you, in saying it, that we should hail with unmingled satisfaction the prospect, if God in His good providence should afford it to us, of reunion with those other Scotch Presbyterians, whose great services in the cause of our common Lord we highly appreciate, and whose present estrangement from our fellowship we unfeignedly lament. (Loud applause.) That there are serious difficulties and obstacles standing for the present in the way of this reunion, it would be altogether fruitless to deny. At the same time, I should be most unwilling to forego the hope, that, under the overruling providence of our divine Head, these difficulties and obstacles may eventually be removed, and that ere long the way may be opened for the attainment of a consummation so devoutly to be wished. (Applause.) We have seen even greater revolutions of sentiment, and more unlikely legislative and social changes occurring of late years—nay, within this present year—both in our own and in other lands, than would be necessary to the fulfilment of such a hope. But even were it tenfold more distant than it seems to be, it still is so precious that we well may be content to wait patiently and to pray earnestly for its accomplishment. (Applause.)

In the meanwhile, may I be pardoned for suggesting that much might be done to mitigate the evils of our present divided state, were all parties as intent as they ought to be on doing it, even though the healing of our divisions should be as yet impracticable. Al-

lowing that there seems to be no immediate prospect of our being actually incorporated, Presbyterian kinsmen into one United Church, there surely might be a mutual recognition, a charitable forbearance, an amicable alliance, an interchange of sympathy, conference, and prayer to a far greater extent than has ever been evinced, without any unwarranted compromise of our several principles. (Applause.) Nay, there might even be a brotherly co-operation in the furtherance of many schemes in which we have a common interest, and with which our points of difference have no concern. (Hear, hear.) Why, for example, should our Scottish Presbyterian Churches have each of them its own separate mission to the benighted heathens and to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, so as at once to weaken their energies, to dissipate their resources, and, above all, to present a divided front to those whom they are seeking to convert, instead of joining together in one strong combined effort to diffuse, alike among Jews and among Gentiles, the "unsearchable riches of Christ." (Applause.) Why should we not, in like manner, make common cause in furnishing the means of grace to our countrymen in the British colonies, who are wisely beginning to see that there is no reason for carrying with them to the lands of their adoption those unhappy divisions which arose from circumstances altogether peculiar to the mother-country, and that they can now find a sufficient ground of union in their common faith and their common Presbyterianism. (Applause.) In these, and in other schemes of pious and beneficent exertion, I see no reason why our several Presbyterian Churches should not, and might not, without any serious difficulty, and certainly without any unprincipled compromise of their points of conscientious difference, be united—appointing a common missionary board, at which each Church is fairly represented, and allotting a set time during the session of their Supreme Courts for receiving in one great convocation its reports—conveying it to their instructions, and joining together in friendly conference and fervent prayer for the furtherance of the great work with which it is intrusted. (Applause.)

But even if any federal union, or any such joint action of our several Churches in their corporate capacity, should for the present be regarded as unattainable, I am very sure of this, that there is nothing to prevent us, as individual ministers and elders of the National Church, from cherishing kindly feelings, cultivating friendly relations, and extending at all times a brotherly recognition, a cordial sympathy, and a generous support towards those in other Churches who are invested with the like offices, and charged with the same highly onerous and important work. (Applause.) We cannot ignore the liberality of their contributions, or the earnestness and faithfulness of their exertions for the advancement of that good cause which is alike dear to