

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

PUBLIC MEETING.

THE DEPUTATION TO NORTH AMERICA.

A public meeting of the friends of the Church of Scotland was held in the Music Hall, on Wednesday afternoon, for the purpose of hearing an account of the proceedings of the recent deputation to North America from the General Assembly, consisting of the Rev. Messrs. Fowler of Ratho, Stevenson of Dalry, and Mackintosh of Aberdeen, and generally to receive a statement on the state of religion in Canada, &c. Among those present were, the Rev. Dr. Paull, Moderator of General Assembly, Rev. Dr. Clark, Vice-Convener of the Colonial Committee, Rev. Drs. Grant, Robertson, Simpson, Hunter, Robert Lee, Steven, Arnot, and Bryce; Rev. Messrs. Nisbet, Caird, Horne (Corstorphine,) Macfarlane (Duddingstone), Mackenzie (Lasswade), R. H. Stevenson, Robertson, Veitch, Bonar, &c.; Professor Menzies, Mr. Swinton, Mr. Macfie, Mr. Tawae, W.S., Mr. W. Cook, W.S., &c. &c. The Rev. Dr. Clark was called to the Chair, and, at his request, the Rev. Dr. Paull opened the meeting by prayer.

The Chairman said that it was a source of great discomfort to all that they had not the presence and services that day of one to whom they had naturally looked for the discharge of the duties of the chair, and it was an additional cause of deep regret that his absence was owing to his want of health, for he was at present suffering from the prevailing epidemic—he referred to his friend the venerable Principal Macfarlan. But they knew that his spirit was with them—they knew well the interest which he had long taken, and which he had continued to feel, in that great measure, upon which they were now met to consider. They all knew what he had done for the promotion of that great work, and he (the chairman) might well say that it was to his untiring activity, his unremitting zeal, and his unwearied efforts, that they owed in a great measure, under a kind Providence, the prosperity and success of that scheme on the affairs of which they were then assembled. It originated in his masculine understanding and his benevolent heart. He saw and sympathized with his distressed countrymen in a foreign land, deprived of the means of grace, and he adopted those measures which in his wisdom seemed best for mitigating those evils. He personally felt greatly for the indisposition of their venerable father, as it had placed him in a position which no inducement could have led him to accept but for the accidental circumstance of his being Vice-Convener of the Colonial Committee. But he rejoiced that the duties of the chair were more honorary than arduous, and that nothing remained for him to do but simply to introduce to the meeting his reverend friends, who, having gone on a delicate and distant mission, were now here to tell the wants and wishes of our brethren with whom they had of late for months associated. The meeting would have to hear tales of woe and of sadness, for they had taken much care to collect authentic information upon this important subject, and had to tell of the hardships and privations of our expatriated countrymen in those distant lands. But it would not be all lamentation to which the meeting would have to listen, for, notwithstanding the hardships to which their countrymen had been exposed, especially as regarded the means of grace, they had still a strong feeling of affection towards their native land; and, above all, their affections still clung around the Church of Scotland, to which they felt as strongly attached as at any time they ever were. The last General Assembly, in its wisdom, had resolved to send another deputation to visit their expatriated countrymen. They found they had not the means of supplying with efficient labourers the demands of that extensive district, and they had thought the best thing which could be done in these circumstances, was to send some of the ministry out to strengthen and comfort them in the hard lot to which they were called. He had followed with much interest, from the place which he occupied in the Colonial Committee, and, he thought with considerable accuracy, the footsteps of the deputation, and he had no hesitation in saying that their duties

had been discharged in a manner beyond all praise. They had been everywhere received with the most kindly affection—they had acted with no common zeal and no common activity, and in the kindness of a merciful Providence, they had been restored once more in peace and safety to their families, to their friends, and to their flocks; and he had no hesitation in repeating, that they had earned the gratitude of their country, as well as of the Church, by the labours which they had performed. The reverend Doctor then introduced the Rev. Mr. Fowler to the meeting.

Mr. Fowler rose, and was received with much applause. He said—It is with no small degree of anxiety that I proceed to address this intelligent meeting—anxiety arising from a conviction that I am unable to convey to others the impressions that have been engraven on my own mind, that I am incompetent enough to plead the cause confided to me, the cause of thousands whose religious destitution, unbounded attachment to the Church of Scotland, and desire for ordinances at the hands of her ministers, I lately witnessed with bitter pain and unfeigned sympathy. If, therefore, I shall fail in the advocacy of the claims of our brethren abroad, if I produce not in the minds of this audience a profound interest in their religious wants—an earnest determination to do every thing in our power to relieve them, not to rest contented until the Gospel be regularly preached in every hamlet and village where they dwell, I beseech you to ascribe the failure to him who now addresses you, and not to the merits of the case itself; for their wants, believe me, are truly deplorable. They are looking with longing hearts towards you for help, and my sincere prayer is, and I trust, that of every individual in this meeting, that God may so smile upon our Zion, and so bless our endeavours as that the wishes of our expatriated countrymen shall be speedily gratified. With the objects contemplated by the General Assembly in sending us to America you are all acquainted. We were charged to preach the Gospel of the grace of God wherever an opportunity of doing so occurred, especially in those districts where only few and far between opportunities of hearing it were enjoyed by our people, to inquire particularly into their whole circumstances, to assure them of the real concern felt by the church of their fathers in their spiritual necessities, to comfort them in the meantime until permanent ministers can be provided for them, and to bring home such information as may enable the Assembly to frame a general scheme of policy, by which most efficiently to aid them and do them good. Those and other matters of a more business nature, to which at present it is not necessary to allude, because they fall more directly to be reported to the Colonial Committee, formed our instructions, and these instructions my respected colleagues, as well as myself, most rigidly adhered to. We resolved that, although bitterness unhappily exists among parties at home, although some too industriously fan the flame of controversy here, in that distant country we should, both by example and precept, inculcate the charity and peaceful brotherhood of the Gospel; that we should attempt at least to prove that it may be faithfully preached without vilifying others who differ from us, and that it is quite possible to speak about our own Church, and the favour which her Great Head is vouchsafing to her, without indulging in angry vituperation of others, or holding up to ridicule the efforts which they are conscientiously making to advance the kingdom of our common Lord. An opposite course may be, and, I regret to say, sometimes is adopted; but, every time that it is so, I humbly think that it is at the expense of the time and opportunities which might be much more advantageously employed. For, had we gone forth on our mission, and originated and fomented religious quarrels; had we circulated evil rumours, whether true or imaginary, against another body of Christians, or had indulged in ridicule of their meetings, and called in question their conscientiousness, we might, no doubt, have pleased some who are fonder of expatiating upon the errors of others than of examining their own and correcting them, and created a certain kind of agitation not very genial to the growth of calm and solid piety; but what then? By such a course would we have been discharging the office of Christian missionaries among a people perishing for lack of know-

ledge? Would it have been honourable in us to attack our neighbours thousands of miles away, and therefore not present to defend themselves? What would you have thought of our conduct if we had gone from place to place, from province to province, speaking about a love of the world as the ruling passion in many of our brethren in the ministry belonging to some other body, and raising a pathetic cry about persecutions to which we were doomed, when neither of the parties accused of being worshippers of mammon, or of exercising the excessive tyranny, had an opportunity of being heard for themselves, or of disproving the charges? Upon this topic, however, I shall not dwell, believing that I may take it for granted, that, in so far as we endeavoured to be missionaries of peace and not of strife, to preach the Gospel to our countrymen, without neutralizing it by after-oration condemnatory of others, you are satisfied that we adopted the course most in harmony with the spirit that pervades our Church at home, and which it must be the prayer of every well-wisher of Zion to see more extensively pervading all the Churches in our land. It will, I trust, be considered no infraction of this spirit if I refer to two particulars which I had an opportunity of testing in America, or rather if I notice two assertions which were not long ago publicly made in this city, and which it is of some importance to correct. Upon the collateral topics embodied in the speech, from which I am to quote, it would be unfair in me to enter; because, although in possession of accredited information regarding them all, their truth or erroneousness did not fall under my personal observation, and the gentleman, moreover, who tendered them, is not here to give his explanations. In a few sentences, therefore, let me contrast the two assertions, to which I have referred, with my own experience. We all remember, Sir, two years ago, when the former deputation addressed us in this hall, that among other objects of deep interest to us their dispensing of the communion at Pietou was one that evoked our gratitude to God, and produced an impression that we never can forget. When Dr. McLeod, with great pathos and eloquence, described the scene on that memorable day, the 5000 who were congregated to hear the Word of God, and the members who commemorated upon the green grass the dying love of a Saviour, it was impossible not to have been affected. Among my fathers and brethren around me there was scarcely an eye that was not moistened by the tear of gratitude for the good news brought to us from a far country. I should have thought that men of all churches, who love the prosperity of the gospel, would have rejoiced with us and bidden us God speed in our efforts to perpetuate the impressions of that singularly happy day. But it has not been so. I cannot express the surprise and pain which I felt when reading a speech, delivered in a General Assembly, which met in this city in the month of May last, by a clergyman from the province of America where the communion was dispensed, in which he very summarily accounts for the vast congress of people assembled on that occasion. His statement is in the following words:—"He heard from your shores here a glowing account of the success, the wonderful success, of a moderate deputation from the Establishment about two years ago, in the Presbytery of Pietou. Here allow me a note of explanation. At the time the deputation reached Pietou, our Synod met in Halifax, and the Secession Synod met in Truro, forty miles from Pietou, so that there was scarcely a minister within the bounds of the Presbytery, but the Moderate deputation." This is the explanation gravely given by the Rev. Mr. Stewart of the Free Church, Nova Scotia, why so great a multitude were assembled, evidently implying that, had he been at his post, and our brethren of the United Secession Church at theirs, a very different state of matters would have been exhibited to the Moderate deputation, that they would have felt the weakness of our Church, instead of being misled by false impressions of her strength. Well, Sir, when we had the privilege of being in the same quarter, what occurred? We were urged to dispense the communion in the village where the reverend gentleman officiates, and we agreed. There was no meeting of the United Secession Synod at Truro, forty miles away; the respected clergyman of that body in the neighbourhood had his communion on the Sabbath on