

charges with all the worst features of the Voluntary and State Churches, without the excellencies of either. They had as much right, by their own mere motion, to give seats in the Church Courts to the chapel ministers, who were simply town missionaries, acting under instructions from the Kirk Session of the parish in which the work of each lay, as congregations here would have to make their ministers members of Municipal Councils, in defiance of the law of the land. Just as the ratepayers, in the latter case, would plead the illegal constitution of the Council if they objected to a municipal rate, however necessary that rate might be, and however just, had it been legally imposed, so did those whose rights were invaded by illegally constituted Church Courts appeal to the laws of the land. The effect of the illegal constitution of the Church Courts was still more prejudicial. It rendered them helpless to remedy the grossest abuses. Hence arose scandals which did not affect the Church of Scotland alone, but injured the cause of religion itself. Were a minister, notorious as leading an immoral life, to be summoned before one of these illegally-constituted Courts, he would do what every criminal does. He would at once raise the legal objection to its constitution, and apply for protection to the nearest Civil Court having jurisdiction. On proof being presented that men who had no legal right to be there were sitting as members of the Church Court which issued the citation for the party accused to appear before it, the Judge had no alternative but to obey the law laid down for his guidance. He was compelled to issue, as a matter of course, an interdict against further proceedings being taken, and, to the great scandal of religion the accused escaped trial. This was used as part of the stock-in-trade of the non-intrusion agitators. They represented the decision of the Judge as an invasion by the civil power on the spiritual functions of the Church ; as a tearing off of Christ's crown and trampling it in the dust. Godly, honest, simple-minded men, who knew nothing beyond the facts, and these facts only as shown to them through a distorted medium, firmly believed that the Judges of the land were in the habit of sallying out of the Courts over which they presided, and in the most violent manner interfering personally with the actions of the Church Courts.