

JULY, 1879.

## The Mother Churches in General Assembly.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLIES of the Church of Scotland and of the Free Church of Scotland convened at Edinburgh on the 22nd of May. The United Presbyterian Synod also met in Edinburgh and within the Assembly Hall of the Free Church there on the 5th May. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland met at Belfast on the 5th June. The moderators who presided over the deliberations of these courts respectively were:—the Rev. Dr. Chrystal, of Auchinleck: the Rev. J. C. Burns, of Kirkliston: the Rev. Dr. Jeffrey, of Glasgow, and the Rev. Dr. Watts, of Belfast College.

In the Church of Scotland Assembly no burning questions came up for discussion. It was an unusually quiet Session. There were no cases of discipline. The opening sermon preached by Principal Tulloch, the retiring Moderator, in the grand old Cathedral of St. Giles, was perhaps one of the most noticeable features. It was worthy of the man and the occasion—elaborate and profound. The Earl of Rosslyn, Her Majesty's Lord High Commissioner, was also very happy in his opening address. This is now the fourth time in succession that he has occupied the throne. Though not a Presbyter, His Grace has always manifested a deep interest in the proceedings of the General Assembly. In the House, as well as at Holyrood, Lord Rosslyn is very popular, so much so that were the question put to him we might expect to hear the reply, "Almost thou persuadest me to become a Presbyterian." The report of the committee on Union with other churches created a little "breeze," and brought a number of leading members to their feet; as also an overture on the formula of subscription for Elders; but by

far the most important matters discussed were the reports of the various missionary agencies of the church, and not the least interesting of these was the report of the Colonial Committee, in which the committee foreshadowed their future policy towards Canada, namely, their intention of restricting grants to the new settlements and Provinces of the Dominion.

In the Free Church, the vexed question of disestablishment received a share of attention. The chief debate of the session, however, had reference to the case of Professor Robertson Smith of Aberdeen, during the hearing of which the House was densely crowded. When the vote was taken it was found that 321 were in favour of serving a libel on the professor, and 320 favoured the appointment of a committee to confer with him. The libel as amended by the Assembly charges the learned professor with having published views respecting the books of Scripture at variance with the teachings of the Church, specially for the expression of doubts as to the authorship of Deuteronomy.

The United Presbyterian Synod had its hands full with heretical sentiments respecting future punishment, and the Confession of Faith, and other indiscretions iterated and re-iterated by the Rev. David McCrae of Gourrock, the painful result being that he was judicially suspended from exercising the functions of the ministry. The Irish General Assembly was chiefly exercised on the question of "INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC." In the end, the vote stood 313 against, and 278 in favour of the organ. A large majority of the ministers voted in favour of instrumental music, but the elders, whether wisely or not, turned the scale decisively against it. We hope in future numbers to be able to refer more particularly to some of these topics. We regret to hear that our worthy delegate to the Irish Assembly was "crowded out." Such a thing could not under any circumstances have happened in Canada.