

theological training of a student in the Free Church must, I suppose, be about £40 per annum, while among us it is *not* £5. But the enormous expense is not the only noticeable circumstance. Is it not obvious that if we, with our 500 congregations, need all our students to supply the home and foreign demand, the Free Church, with 700 congregations and 160 students only, must before long have an inadequate supply?*. And treating the probationers as our Free Church friends do, how can it be otherwise? I am glad to see that the probationers are shewing some courage, and are hinting significantly that they have been kicked and cuffed quite long enough; and especially glad am I that such a man as Dr. Cunningham is giving them his countenance and aid. In a letter to a deputation from the probationers Dr. C. says:—

“I have long been deeply impressed with the conviction, that the Free Church was guilty of a dereliction of duty in neglecting to attempt to provide employment, superintendence, assistance and protection to her probationers. After having incurred much expense in educating them and in preparing them for license, she threw them off just at the time when they most needed her interposition, and when she might have made use of them for doing some portion of the work incumbent upon her. The state of things in this respect, which alone can be regarded as perfectly satisfactory, is that in which the mass of those who have been found qualified for license are ordinarily employed in work, public and private, suited to their calling, and are able to make a livelihood by doing this work. They would in this way be giving probation of their fitness for the ministry, and at the same time be doing something for promoting the spiritual welfare of their countrymen. This idea is substantially realised in a sister Church, that of the United Presbyterians, where it is understood that the practical result is beneficial and harmonious, and affords satisfaction to all concerned—a fact which conclusively precludes an allegation of impracticability, though there may be peculiarities in the situation of the Free Church that would involve special difficulties, at least in the introduction and earlier period of a scheme for such an object.

“But the most clamant and offensive evils of the system which, for many years and until very lately, prevailed in the Free Church, were—first, that not a few young men of excellent character, and of superior talents and acquirements, had been for years probationers, without ever having had the opportunity of preaching in a vacant congregation; and, second, that there was thus a strong tendency to encourage the lower and more degrading features of character and habits of action among our probationers, to encourage at once impudence and sycophancy, forwardness and crouching meanness. The injustice of not securing to probationers an opportunity of preaching in vacancies, and the manifest tendency of the system to foster the qualities above mentioned, are, I am persuaded, far greater evils than could attach to any scheme that might be suggested as a remedy. If the system had continued unchanged, I have no doubt it would soon have operated powerfully in preventing men of honour and high spirit from coming forward as candidates for the ministry in the Free Church, and have left us dependent for our supply upon those who were little troubled with delicacy or scrupulosity as to the means to be employed for getting access to vacant pulpits, or for getting their names put upon lists.”

The Bill for the Reform of our Scotch Universities, introduced into Parliament by the Lord Advocate (Mr. Inglis) is encountering strong opposition from many quarters, and I think it is likely to be thrown out. A few of its provisions are, in my opinion, decidedly wise, and would, if carried out, lead to salutary results; some of them seem to me as decidedly injudicious, and a considerable number are so cumbrous, and withal so novel in Scotland, that I can form no opinion as to their probable practical effect.

Mr. McGill is likely to accept the office of Home Secretary, to which he was

* It must be recollected, however, that the Students of the U. P. Church attend five Sessions, those of the Free, we presume, only four. The latter license one fourth of their Students annually, the former only one fifth. Still our Correspondent's general conclusion is probably correct.