

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

ADDRESS BY REV. DR. MACLEOD, ON THE REPORT OF THE HOME MISSION COMMITTEE.

DR. MCLEOD, who was received with applause, said :—Moderator, I really have to cast myself on the kindness of the House in once more addressing you. (Applause.) Dr. Phin would not pardon me if I did not speak. (Laughter.) You must also be pleased to recollect that we have only the opportunity of addressing the House once in the five years ; therefore we are obliged to cram into one year what would otherwise be distributed over five ; and perhaps, if we were to go on at this pace, all the advantages and disadvantages of the five years' rotation will be fairly balanced, for it would never do year after year to speak at the pace some of us are obliged to speak in this Assembly. I am to deal with this subject in its most practical form, and condense into it all I know on the subject in as brief a form as possible, that it should prove interesting, and suggest questions to the ministers and elders of this General Assembly. There is certainly no contradiction between this report which I move to-day, and the Foreign Mission report which I will have the honour to move to-morrow. I think the relative importance of the two is expressed by the fact that you first bring in the home mission and then bring in the foreign mission. Whatever interest I have, and always have had, in the foreign missions of the Church, I must say that I consider the home mission as by far the most important. If the heart is not right the blood will not circulate to the extremities of the body. Unless you have the fountain full you will have no streams wherewith to irrigate the distant lands of India. (Applause.) Now, I am dealing with this question solely in reference to towns. The home mission in towns is as different from the country as if it were operating in two different parts of the world. The country parish as a sphere for the home mission is as different from the town as the country fields are from the hard town squares, or as domestic family life is from the great roaring public amongst which we dwell. I was delighted with the remarks of Dr. Bisset yesterday. There was a certain country innocence about them—(Laughter)—when he, picturing to himself his own splendid work in the nice ideal parish of Bourtie, expressed his great desire that the manse and the parish minister should be in the middle of the district, in order that the parishioners might know where the minister was to be found, and in order that the people might come to him and tell him of all they desire, and even to make temporal requests. I wish the Doctor had been in my house any one day. He would have discovered that they knew pretty well where I live—(Laughter)—and that the requests made in one day were more numerous than in the manse of Bourtie for weeks together. (Laughter.) The great temptation is for a man to get away, so that he may be able to do his work, and in order that he may be delivered from those interruptions that are ceaseless, and which compel me to leave the house and retire to some place where I may be able to write my letters. Then, again, you must also recollect that the introduction of the manse—which is a delightful picture—into the scene of our labours in the worst parts of the city, is a very different thing from the country manse, with its gardens and beautiful green grass and flowers ; and what the minister in a manse down in the Bridgegate or Canongate would do with his family, it would be extremely difficult to say. Then you must keep in mind the difference there is in dealing with the people of the country and the people of the towns. There was a time when even my parish might be called a country parish. It is a very curious coincidence that the Barony Parish has had only three ministers for 100 years—Dr. Burns having been ordained in 1770—and that these three ministers had the happiness of dining together, so that I had the happiness of receiving from Dr. Burns some account of the parish as it was when he was ordained. What the parish is now I can tell, with its 150,000 or 200,000 inhabitants ; but