

wonderful deliverance. For by the death of the King of France, the faithful in France were delivered as it were from present death, and the professors in Scotland, who by their foolish ways had made themselves slaves to strangers, were restored again to the freedom and liberty of a free realm."

The first General Assembly of the Reformed Church of Scotland was held at Edinburgh on the twentieth day of December, just three centuries ago. In proof of the "rarity of pastors," as Calderwood expressed it, and of "the small beginnings of our Assemblies," seven ministers only, and thirty-six commissioners from the laity, formed the whole convocation; and their procedure was so orderly as to render a moderator or chairman unnecessary. Indeed it is a remarkable fact that of the seven Assemblies which were held betwixt 1560 and 1567, it does not appear from the records that one possessed what is now considered a requisite so necessary as even a presiding and guiding moderator. From the minutes of the first Assembly it appears that a large portion of the time was employed in the selection and nomination of such persons as were considered best qualified for "preaching the Word and ministering the sacraments." And such as were not thought suitably qualified, for those duties occupied the inferior office of "public readers." In the district of Kyle, nine are reported as fit to be "readers," and one only as "apt to teach." St. Andrews furnishes not fewer than *twenty-one*, who seem to belong to this honorable fraternity. Thirteen others from different localities are named as "thought apt and able to minister." These facts render most remarkable the rapid progress of the Church, for we find it stated by Professor Lorimer of London in his lately published work on the "Tricentenary" that in 1567 there were 257 ordained ministers, besides 151 exhorters and 455 readers. Many of the readers first became exhorters, and afterwards ordained ministers, till at length in 1581, the office of Reader being no longer necessary, and as being "no ordinary office within the kirk of God," it was thenceforth abolished.

Among the acts of this first General Assembly we find,—various regulations regarding the bounds of pastoral charges; the laws of affinity in regard to marriage; the public setting apart or admission of ministers, elders, and deacons; the nature and extent of church discipline for offenders; while this benevolent provision was made for the priests of the old religion; "that such as have been officers in the Popish church, should be supported with the alms of the Kirk as other poor, if their conversation were honest." Besides those matters which properly belong to ecclesiastical procedure, a good variety of petitions were drawn up and ordered to be presented to the powers that then were, on subjects of public interest to morals and religion, and on the settlement and organization of the church; and with this view the Assembly was continued till January 15th, 1561, the day that had been fixed by public authority for the meeting of the Parlia-