



OF THE

Church of Scotland in Nova Scotia and the adjoining Provinces.

"IF I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM! LET MY RIGHT HAND FORGET HER CUNNING."—PSALM 137, 10.

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THE CHURCH AT HOME.

Commission of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND.—On Monday the 16th of April a special meeting was held of the Commission of the General Assembly of the Established Church of Scotland—The Rev. Dr. Grant, moderator of the General Assembly, presiding.

The Moderator stated that he had called this meeting in compliance with a requisition from the Education Committee of the General Assembly, and from having reason to believe that, throughout the Church, a very general desire existed that a meeting of the Commission should be held for the purpose of giving expression to their mind on the subject of the two bills before the House of Commons regarding education in Scotland.

Principal LEE moved that the Commission approve of the Moderator's conduct.

SIR JOHN HERON MAXWELL seconded the motion which was unanimously agreed to.

The Commission first entered into consideration of the Lord Advocate's bill.

Dr. Cook, Haddington, Convener of the Education Committee, might be allowed to express his astonishment that the Lord Advocate should have introduced a measure precisely similar to that thrown out last year. He (Dr. C.) trusted they might look to the House of Commons with confidence not to go back on its former decision, and not to undo the work of last session for the mere sake of flattering the self-love, soothing the wounded feelings, of any individual. He knew of no change which should have led to the re-introduction of this measure. While it was unanimously opposed by the Church of Scotland, what was the nature of the support which it received from other bodies? The support of the United Presbyterians to it was languid and cold, and was given because they considered it as a step towards the casting forth of the religious element from the public schools, and because they considered it a decided step in advance towards a system of secular instruction.

There was another religious body, the great majority, perhaps all, of whom at one time looked with favour on this bill, because they considered it a "heavy blow and great discouragement" to the Church which they had left. The Free Synod of Glasgow and Ayr deserved all credit and honor for this that, strong as might be their feelings against the Church, they had still the manliness of principle to prefer the continuance of the security for the sound religious and Christian education of the young, to the humiliation and detriment of the Church of Scotland. Then were they to forget the lay opposition which was made to the bill of last year; that strong and almost unanimous opposition of the nobility and gentry of Scotland, that body by whom the parish schools were supported, and under whose control, conjointly with the Church, they were placed. He thought that on all these grounds they were entitled to marvel that a bill, so identical in character with that thrown out last year, should be again introduced; but he trusted that their firm and renewed opposition would be attended with the same result. The Lord Advocate proposed to embrace religious instruction as an essential element of his system of education. He would call on the Commission, however, to compare the present system, and that by which his Lordship proposed to supersede it, in respect to the provision made and security afforded for religious instruction. Under the present system instruction was given in religion from the Holy Scriptures, and from the Shorter Catechism, which was but an epitome of the Confession of Faith, which had been solemnly ratified and approved by the State, as a sound exposition of the truth of God. Security was likewise taken for the Christian knowledge, and the Christian character of those by whom that instruction was to be communicated, the teacher being called upon to signify, by his signature to the Confession of Faith and the standards of the Church, his adhesion to the great principles of religion professed and

established in the land, and being called upon to place himself under the superintendence and control of the body to whom the State had entrusted the religious oversight of the country. Now, under the proposed system there was no distinct definition of what the nature of the religious teaching was to be. It was said it was simply instruction in the principles of religious knowledge, "as heretofore in use in the parochial and other schools in Scotland." But let time pass, and let the influence of the existing system pass away, as it assuredly would do, and then see what — when doubt and dispute arose — "religious instruction" actually meant. Then by whom was this religious instruction to be administered? What was enacted with regard to him to whom they intrusted this solemn and important function? By this bill there was an absolute withdrawal of all security for the man's belief and Christian knowledge altogether; and so long as the teacher, after he was placed in the situation, continued, no matter how, during the appointed hour to go over the books prescribed, he might go home and scoff at religion, and might abstain from attendance on the ordinances of God's house, under the pretence that there was no one within fifty miles by whom he could be edified, and thus give a pernicious example to the youth of the parish in which he was so important a functionary, while even for the grossest religious error there was no power that could remove him from the situation which he held. Then, if they had no security for his religious belief, what security had they for his religious knowledge? It was provided by the bill that every candidate should be examined in religious and secular knowledge, by one of the inspectors. These were men over whose appointment they could have no control at all. They were to be appointed by the Privy Council, a board resident in England, and imbued with English principles of education. But even were these inspectors highly qualified and accomplished men, their work must needs be inadequately and per-