

tedious and at times unbusiness-like, but the result will be a healthier one.

In the only case of an unpleasant character before this Assembly, one in which excited feelings in and out of Court made delicate handling needful, while I had occasion to observe these defects in the conduct of the case, I had also to admire the practical wisdom of the decision arrived at. It was an appeal by one of the most respected fathers of the body against the metropolitan presbytery on the ground of irregularities of procedure in the formation of a new suburban charge and the induction of its first pastor. The Assembly, while it censured the irregularities, declined to disturb the settlement. The interest of the case lay in this, that it was an extreme example of a class of cases continually occurring: a mixed community, where the Church is called to overtake spiritual work under novel and adverse conditions. Forms devised to guide the usual order of Church transactions, such as the congregating of a people or the call of a pastor, must be sacrificed when, under circumstances neither contemplated nor provided for, it would frustrate the substantial ends in view to adhere to the letter of the form. The principle is acknowledged and must be acted on in the most settled of churches, if it would do its duty by new exigencies. In a colony like this, when the foundations are to be laid, and a new society presents new problems, still more latitude ought to be conceded. Indeed, our brethren here may almost claim the privileges attached by old divines to a Church in course of formation. At the same time, it will always be open to controversy, according to each man's habits of thought, at what point the limits of lawful liberty are exceeded and a dangerous license in dispensing with established order commences. The judgment of the brethren, under invocation of promised guidance, can alone decide each case, as this case has been here decided.

The statistics for the past year laid before the Assembly exhibit progress. Eleven new ministers have been admitted. The total income of congregations, or rather of those two-thirds of the congregations which make returns, reaches £44,200, against £40,800 last year; sums which do not include betwixt £6000 and £7000 of state aid, which is divided among a large number of the ministers, though not officially accepted by the Church at large. There is no central fund for ministerial support, but the guaranteed stipends seem to have been paid up in all but a small per centage of the cases reported. These stipends range from the minimum of £300 and manse up to £1000 per annum; and although from the higher cost of living such salaries do not represent a higher average of comfort and

more easy circumstances than our Free Church ministry has ever realized. There is unfortunately no information of the numbers adhering to Presbyterianism who have been already reached and congregated; but I find that under an admirable scheme for pastoral visitation analogous to our summer evangelistic deputations, seven of these remote and thinly-peopled tracts, which as yet lie outside the settled pastorates, were visited this spring; and four or five of them are said to be ripe for the settlement of a minister. Missionary contributions can hardly be said to bear as yet a due proportion to the general income. The whole amount raised for this object is under £1400. It is only fair, however, to recollect that the internal growth and consolidation of a young Church is its first duty, and that several schemes of this character are now on foot which call for special liberality. — Recently, they have begun to expand their heathen missions. Two classes of heathen within the colony itself, the vanishing remnant of aborigines and those natives of China whose hope of gain attracts to these golden shores, have for some years occupied the Victorian Church. Now she has also undertaken to assist the work in the South Seas by maintaining two European labourers. To meet this fresh obligation, a collecting organization of ladies has just been started, which, under the enthusiastic management of Mr. Campbell of Geelong, late of Melrose, will soon, I trust, put the mission in a good position.

Two very important funds laid their first reports before this Assembly. One is a fund for pensioning aged and infirm ministers, which aims at a minimum capital of £5000; and in this its first year has received in subscriptions £2783. It deserves to be noticed that, towards this sum half of the ministers have subscribed at the rate of £5 a year for five years. Young as the Church is, such a fund has not been started a day too soon. Special cases of superannuation are already occurring; the "hardness" which the older clergy had to endure in the rough early days of the colony must, ere long, begin to tell; and the sooner the capital sum is paid up the better. The other and, if possible, still more important scheme launched this year, is for the endowment of a Theological Hall. It has been felt for years, I believe, and with growing force, that the supply of ministers from home, while it may often be unsuitable, must always be scanty and precarious, and that it vitally concerns the progress of the Church to develop from among her own young men a succession of candidates for the ministry. A few students have always been under some sort of superintendence; but it was not till this year that the large project was set on foot of raising a fund