

## A GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

In the expectation that this interesting and important subject will occupy a portion of the valuable time of the ensuing meeting of Synod, we propose briefly to indicate the practicability of the measure, and state some of the advantages that will result from it to the Church at large.

General Assemblies are among the Institutions of Presbyterianism which the ministers of our Church at ordination pledge themselves to support and maintain. As they are of great utility and advantage, our organization is obviously not complete without them. A Synod is not, properly speaking, a legislative body, but a court of review. Its functions should, by right, be confined to a jurisdiction over the inferior courts of Session and Presbytery, and to the transmission of causes and measures, which have their origin in these courts, to the Supreme Court of a General Assembly for final decision. Coming through these various stages, they receive fuller consideration, and are thoroughly matured for final disposal. The mind of the Church is more correctly ascertained, and the legislative court can proceed with much greater confidence and advantage in giving its imprimatur. At present much valuable time is lost on their discussion in the Synod, from the circumstance that members are not fully acquainted with their merits. A matter, for example, originating in the Presbytery of Quebec, is not familiar to any member of Synod beyond the bounds of that Presbytery, which would not be the case if that Presbytery were joined synodically with two or three neighbouring Presbyteries. And then it is obvious that, from the extent of territory within the bounds of the Synod and under its ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and from the relative location of Presbyteries, the general superintendence of the Church cannot be felt or profited by, to the same extent, by Sessions and Presbyteries, as would be the case if it were exercised more directly and distributively through a number of Synods judiciously organized and arranged. With all the subjects that come up for the consideration of the Synod, as at present constituted, there cannot be, owing to the vast amount and pressure of business to be transacted, and oftentimes on that account imperfectly and inefficiently disposed of, that minute inspection of the inferior courts which should be coveted and prized.

As to the practicability of a re-arrangement of the existing organization, that is easily stated. The General Assembly we have in view is a court which would embrace under its supreme ecclesiastical jurisdiction all the Synods of the Church in British North America. Three Presbyteries are sufficient to compose a Synod according to the constitution of our Church, while any number of Synods thus formed compose a General Assembly. The Syn-

od of Nova Scotia consists at present of three Presbyteries. That of New Brunswick is defective to the extent of one Presbytery, but we observe it is under the consideration of this court to organize a third. In Canada we might easily have fifteen Presbyteries even with our present numbers, consisting at an average of six or seven clerical and as many lay members. A dozen members will form a respectable and efficient court of Presbytery for all local purposes, for one of the advantages of this system is that the lay members would be more likely to attend the meetings of a court, held at short distances from their places of residence, than when they have long and expensive journeys to accomplish, while their interest would be proportionably excited and maintained. The same applies to clerical members. These fifteen Presbyteries would afford materials for the organization of five Synods in the Province of Canada. In all then we would have twenty-one Presbyteries, and the number would speedily increase by this more effective occupation of the land. Supposing two representatives, one clerical and one laical, to be furnished by each, we have a result of forty-two members for the annual meeting of a General Assembly. Say thirty, as an average attendance. We conceive there would be that in the very fact of the representative element which would invest their position with a degree of influence, responsibility, and seriousness not at present felt, that would be most advantageous for the deliberations in which they would engage and the measures which they would pass. The number would not be too small to divest the court of solemnity and importance, nor too large to occasion protracted discussion and inefficiency of despatch.

The advantage of all this would neither begin nor stop at this point. The Presbyteries would be smaller and more local. A fuller attendance would be insured. The expense would be trifling. The work would be better done; the destitution more thoroughly overtaken. Presbyterial visitation and superintendence of sessions and congregations would not be a hopeless undertaking, for the work could be admirably and easily executed by a meeting in each Church in succession every two months or so. In the local Synod, which might meet twice a year, although once would probably be sufficient, ministers of adjoining Presbyteries would come together more frequently and to better advantage for consultation and deliberation. While the meetings of the different Synods could be so arranged as to time that a most wholesome and beneficial system of mutual representation would be maintained throughout the whole organization. The general result would be apparent in a more satisfactory performance of work, in the better dispensation of justice, in the maturer fruits of frequent deliberation, in the

origination of wise and necessary measures, in the mutual interchange of communication, and in the operation of a joint but universal dependence, so essential to the maintenance of an effective Scriptural Presbyterianism.

We are in earnest in this matter. We hope the Church will be in earnest. We have given the subject a long and anxious study, and we throw out this brief indication of our views for consideration and, we would fain hope, adoption by our friends.

## HENRY'S COMMENTARIES.

## AN APPEAL TO THE LAITY.

Our readers will have observed the advertisement in our last number offering to our ministers, missionaries and students a copy of a forth coming excellent edition of Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures on very advantageous terms. Nearly as many subscribers can be accommodated have remitted their applications and subscriptions. The published price of the Commentary is 45s. per copy. Applicants in terms of the advertisement will get copies at 25s. currency. The difference between this and the published price, on the number of copies (about 40) reserved for Canada by Jas. A. Campbell, Esq., Glasgow, one of the Treasurers, will have to be made up by the liberality of laymen either at Home or in this country. The friends of our Church in Montreal who have taken an interest in the matter are of opinion that an appeal to lay friends throughout the Province will not only be liberally responded to but be accounted an excellent opportunity of testifying their respect to the ministers and others more immediately benefited. At least £50 will be required to meet the difference between the published and reduced prices. It would hardly be fair to leave this sum to the liberality of friends at Home. Every subscriber of about five dollars will have the satisfaction of placing a copy of the above standard work in the hands of one of our ministers, missionaries or students. We leave the matter with our numerous friends, and we will be happy to acknowledge subscriptions to this object of any amount. Remittances are requested to be made *without delay* to John Greenshields, Esq., Treasurer, Montreal.

## THE JUVENILE PRESBYTERIAN.

The second volume of this useful little periodical commenced with the April number. It has now a circulation of over 2000, and forms at the end of the year a volume of 200 pages. Its cost is 1s. each, when 25 copies are taken, and 1s. 3d. by the single copy per annum. It is postage free. An extra number of copies of the April number have been printed, and a few complete sets of the first volume can yet be supplied.