

One of the most exciting subjects before the Assembly was the "*Australian Union Question*." Mr. Miller of Victoria attempted to obtain a seat in the Assembly as Commissioner or delegate from a Body calling itself the Free Synod of Victoria. The Committee on Bills refused to transmit his Commission. The Assembly was overtured by many Presbyteries, and several Synods on the subject of the "*Australian Union*." Some prayed the Assembly to favour the United Body, and some the disunionists, while others prayed that they might be both treated alike. The Rev. Mr. Gibson, a Professor in Glasgow, seems to have been the champion of Mr. Miller's party, while the leaders such as Drs. Candlish, R. Buchanan, Begg, and Principal Cunningham took the most decided stand in favour of the united body, and the terms of Union. The Rev. Robert Rainy, the successor Dr. Gordon in the High Church, Edinburgh, moved the following deliverance on this subject:—

The General Assembly learn with high satisfaction that, in deference to the opinion expressed by last Assembly, and at the instance of the members of the late Free Church Synod of Victoria, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria have unanimously and unreservedly rescinded the Act passed by the said Synod at Geelong in 1857, cutting off the dissentient brethren from their body, and have in cordial terms declared their readiness to welcome the said brethren into their community: so that what last Assembly was led to believe to be the chief, if not the only serious obstacle to the reunion of the said brethren with those from whom they are now separated, is happily removed. The General Assembly regret, however, to find that the dissentient brethren still entertain grave objections on other grounds, which seem to them sufficient to prevent them from abandoning their position of separation. The General Assembly adhering to the resolutions of former Assemblies in 1858, 1859, 1860, continue to acknowledge the United Church, now called the "*Presbyterian Church of Victoria*," as standing in the place of the Synod of the Free Church, which has been incorporated with it, and entitled, in that character, to such countenance and support as this Church was in the habit of affording to the said Synod in its former condition. The General Assembly fully admit the right of the dissentient brethren to judge for themselves whether or not they can conscientiously enter into the union now consummated, or are to continue to dissent from said union. The General Assembly further admit the liberty of ministers and probationers, at their own discretion, to join in ecclesiastical fellowship with the dissentient brethren; and, in the event of the dissentient brethren remaining a separate body, the Assembly declare that, if they abstain from claiming the position formerly occupied by the "*Free Presbyterian Church of Victoria*," and now acknowledged by this Church to belong to the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, this Church will be ready to enter in such friendly intercourse with them, as a Church, as is consistent with this Church's past and present condition." Mr Rainy contended that it was impossible for the Free Assembly to recognize the two Churches side by side in accordance with the actual standard of the Free Church. The Assembly had already recognised and entered into ecclesiastical fellowship with the majority as the "*Presbyterian Church of Victoria*;" and he held that they could not, without renouncing ecclesiastical fellowship with that body, enter into a similar connection with the minority.

Professor GIBSON's motion, in amendment, was as follows:—

"That this Assembly, having regard to the conscientious convictions of the brethren who feel themselves precluded from entering into the union recently consummated in Australia, recognise them as a Church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland."

A considerable number of members addressed the house, but the great speech on the question was made by Principal CUNNINGHAM who disposed of the difficulties raised by Mr. Gibson. On the vote being taken there appeared 341 for Mr. Rainy's motion and only 64 for Mr. Gibson's amendment. It is