

SECRET PRAYER.

Men never take so firm a hold of God as in secret. Remember Jacob. Thou shouldst pray alone, for thou hast sinned alone, and thou art to die alone, and to be judged alone. Alone thou wilt have to appear before the judgment seat. Why not get alone to the mercy seat? In the great transaction between thee and God, thou canst have no human helper. You are not going to tell him any secret. You may be sure he will not betray your confidence. Whatever reasons there may be for any species of devotion, there are more and stronger reasons for secret devotion. Nothing is more embarrassing and disturbing in secret prayer than unpropitious circumstances. Great attention ought always be paid to this point—"Enter into thy closet," says Christ. He says not *a* closet nor *the* closet, but *thy* closet. The habit of secret communion is supposed to be formed. The man is supposed to have a closet—some place in which he is accustomed to retire for prayer—some spot consecrated by many a meeting there with God—some place that has often been to him a Bethel. The Saviour uses the word to mean any place where, with no embarrassment either from the fear or pride of observation, we can freely pour out our hearts in prayer to God. No matter what are the dimensions of the place, what its flooring or canopy. Christ's closet was a mountain, Isaac's a field, Peter's the house-top.—*Nevins*.

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

[The following is a portion of the address delivered by the Rev. Dr. Henderson from the Moderator's Chair at the opening of the Free General Assembly on Thursday 21st May.]

When the Disruption took place, 473 ministers and professors abandoned their status and emoluments in the Establishment, and in faith and a good conscience separated themselves, prepared at all hazards to assert and maintain the crown rights of the adorable Redeemer, then rudely trampled under foot. Has this number suffered diminution or melted away? Far from it. It has now (1856-57) grown to 801 ordained ministers (787 returned by Presbytery clerks, and 14 not on Presbytery rolls) and 881 congregations.—a number which includes both sanctioned charges and stations,—with about one-third of the church-going population of Scotland owning the doctrine and discipline of our Free Church. In the first year of the Free Church the Sustentation Fund amounted to £68,704. for the last year, ending May 1856, it amounted to £108,972. being an increase of upwards of £40,000. In the first year of the Free Church 470 Disruption ministers and 113 others ordained during that year received fully or in part a stipend of £105. each from the Sustentation Fund. The stipend to each 712 ministers was last year £140. Then at the Disruption *all* the missionaries of the Church of Scotland declared themselves to be of the Free Church of Scotland,—not one was left behind. With regard to the Foreign Mission, the number of its agents in India in 1843 was 14, viz., 12 ordained Europeans and 2 natives. At present, 1856-57, the number of agents, European and native, is in India 59, of whom 24 are ordained European and 9 ordained native missionaries; besides 7 in South Africa, of whom 5 are ordained Europeans. In the first year of the Free Church, the revenue of the Foreign Missions was £4949. last year it amounted to £14,470. or nearly three times the revenue of the first year. At the Disruption the Free Church had not a single school though, closely following on that event, many of the parochial teachers were thrust out of their situations for adherence to Free Church principles. Now the Free Church has reported to her Education Committee 607 schools scattered over the land, attended by 57,000 scholars, with an annual revenue of £13,100 (on Schoolmasters' Sustentation Fund alone £8229), a sum all too little for the importance of the object. And, besides these, there are large numbers of schools in connection with the Free Church, supported by societies and individuals, but unconnected with our Education Committee, and not reported to it; so that the whole number of Free Church schools must be considerably above 712, the number given in the Government census in 1851, attended by not fewer than 76,000 children. At the Disruption our faithful country ministers with their families went forth for conscience sake from their comfortable manses, though many of them knew not where they were to find the sorriest and poorest shelter. The Free Church on that day