

Disruption Memories

Being the Personal narrative of a Lay Voluntary
with
Remarks on the Present Condition of the Church

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Note

Now that the momentous event known as the Disruption is vanishing in the mists of the past, the leading spirits all gone, and the on-lookers, lay and clerical, only a remnant, it can readily be conceived how it is that so little seems to be known regarding it by the younger generation. The author of the following pages has frequently heard questions put, even by adherents of the Free Church, for the purpose of eliciting information. To such inquiries he now ventures to respond from his own experience, and in a form which, he trusts, cannot be felt as a heavy tax, either on the pocket or the time of those who desire to know something of the matter, yet fear to encounter the mazes of formal and elaborately detailed history.

J. Barr

Disruption Memories.

The Scotsman who can look around him upon the present ecclesiastical state of society, and at the same time carry his recollections back to the ten or fifteen years previous to the Disruption of the National Kirk, has a wide field for interesting and important reflection. In those earlier days there was war among the Scottish saints; that is, if the professors of the Presbyterian faith were deserving of that sacred appellation. The word "saint" has fallen into disrepute; when used it is generally in a derisive sense, and the reason is apparent enough. In these latter times imposture has been so frequently unmasked that when the outward signs of piety are conspicuous they are usually regarded with suspicion; and besides, the term "saint" has been openly appropriated by parties whose undisguised conduct is the very opposite of what the true meaning of the word implies.

Although the expression "war among the saints" seems to involve an incongruity, in reality it is not so, at least in so far as our meaning is concerned. We refer to what was called the Voluntary Controversy, which, in the earlier portion of the present century, drove the denominations into hostile camps. By the dissenters without, the walls of the national, or State Zion were furiously assailed, and by

the faithful within, as furiously defended. On both sides the wisest and best of the reverend fathers and brethren were in the van, and it may justly be said that these leaders were wise and good men. There were on the side of the Establishment a Chalmers, a Thomson, a Robertson, a Begg, a Cunningham, a Cook, a Buchanan, and many others not inferior in either gifts or graces. Then, on the other side there were a Wardlaw, a Heugh, a Struthers, a Ritchie, an Anderson, a Dick, a King, a Hervey, and a host of others regarding whose personal character, as sincere and consistent Christians, no word of reproach could justly be uttered. We only do justice to both parties when we say that the weapons of their warfare were not carnal, as neither their aim nor desire was to do any harm to the persons or material interests of each other. Contentions were bitter enough, no doubt, but we are bound to believe they were the natural outcome of zeal begotten of a conscientious regard for what was considered scriptural truth, and the spiritual welfare of the people.

But while we speak of the clergy, it is not to be supposed that this was only an ordinary clerical squabble. Being the parties more directly interested, they were naturally the instigators and leaders; but their respective adherents, who jointly comprised nearly the whole of the native population, engaged in the struggle with corresponding zeal and determination. Every exchange, club, warehouse, workshop, and “smiddy” was an arena in which discussion was carried on, sometimes in more than a Christian spirit, but on the whole the social amenities were seldom

outraged.

That this Voluntary question had more than a little to do with the re-enactment of the Veto law, and ultimately with the exodus known as the Disruption of the Established Church, there can be no doubt. The church party were twitted with such terms as slaves or creatures of the State; as subservient to the civil courts; that Caesar was their head, and without his permission they could do little. The churchmen indignantly repelled these allegations, holding that in spiritual matters they were as free and independent as any of the dissenting denominations.

From the days of Queen Anne, when lay patronage was introduced, there had always been two parties in the Established Church, in later times known as the Moderates and the Evangelicals, and the question chiefly at issue between them was the right of congregations to have a voice in the settlement or selection of their ministers. The two Erskines, who were the founders of the Secession Church, and Gillespie, the founder of the Relief Church, were of the Evangelical party while they remained in the Establishment; but the members of that party were few in comparison with the Moderates, who continued to dominate in the Church courts down to the year 1834. During their ascendancy the civil courts had no occasion to interfere in Church matters, farther than to supply an occasional military force sufficiently strong to protect the Presbytery when met for the purpose of “placing” some presentee who was obnoxious to the people.

In the biography of Dr. Heugh there is an anecdote related by himself, which, although somewhat whimsical, has still a dash of truth in it with regard to the religious condition of Scotland when the churches and church courts were under the domination of the Moderates. Dr. Heugh was one of a deputation sent to London on some matter connected with the Voluntary controversy. They waited on Lord Brougham at the House of Lords, and when his lordship was made aware of their mission his remark was, "Yes, gentlemen, had it not been for the dissenters there would have been no vital religion in Scotland." This he repeated more than once while passing from the House to his private room, the door of which he found locked. Not seeing the person who had been left in charge, he got into a passion, kicked at the door, and indulged in language which the reverend deputation considered very like profane swearing, yet occasionally interjecting the remark, "Yes, gentlemen, had it not been," etc. If Harry's conduct on this occasion was scarcely in keeping with vital religion, his remark, however, contained a great deal of truth. The General Assembly opposed missions, some of its members holding that the heathen could do very well without Christianity; and one, a Lord of Session, an elder of the Church, warned the Assembly against giving countenance to missionary societies, "as they have a common fund, which certainly would be turned against the Constitution." What this Constitution is no one has yet defined; but it must be something even more sacred than the Church itself, as a class of exceptionally great and good men, such as this

Lord of Session, have long been and still are kept in terror for its safety. How the missionary box was to be turned against it, with what kind of weapons was it to be assailed, and what the results if the assailants had prevailed, are questions of national importance, and not yet out of date.

It was not till the days of Andrew Thomson and Thomas Chalmers that the Evangelicals gained ascendancy in the General Assembly. They seem to have been under the impression that it was legally within the powers of the Church to refuse ordination to a presentee who had not the approval of the majority of a congregation. This had been the original law and practice of the Church, but the subservient Moderates disregarded it, and entirely ignored the right of the people to have any say in the matter. In 1834 the General Assembly restored this privilege to the congregations by an enactment called the Veto, in virtue of which a congregation could, by a majority, prevent the settlement of a presentee of whom they did not approve. Had this enactment of the Assembly been confirmed by the civil courts there would have been no disruption.

Meanwhile, the war between the churchmen and the dissenters was carried on with the utmost intrepidity and determination. All literature, sacred and profane, was ransacked for facts and arguments. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's" said the Voluntary; "Kings shall be nursing-fathers and Queens nursing-mothers" said the Churchman, and from such texts were evolved oratorical deluges such as

had never been known in the memory of living men. By and bye, however, when the church courts were beginning to get into collision with the civil courts, the Voluntaries slackened fire, and stood aside to await the issue. The time had come when the pretensions of the Churchmen were about to be put to the test. There was first the Auchterarder case, in which only three persons signed the call to the patron's presentee, and only two of these belonged to the parish, while 287 parishioners, out of a total of 330 entitled to vote, petitioned against it. Such being the case, the Presbytery, in accordance with the Veto law, refused to sustain the call. The patron and his presentee appealed to the Synod, then to the Assembly, and both these courts confirmed the conduct of the Presbytery. The case was then supposed to be at an end, but the Edinburgh lawyers had got on the scent. At first there was a difficulty as to the nature of the charge which should be brought against the Presbytery, but ultimately it was resolved to dispute the legality of the Veto law, and on that ground the Court of Session, by a majority, decided in favour of the patron and his presentee. The case was then carried to the House of Lords, when, after an interval of nearly two years, Lords Brougham and Cottenham confirmed the finding of the Court of Session. While this case was in suspense several other cases occurred.

There was the Lethendy case in the Presbytery of Dunkeld, in which the presentee, having been vetoed by the congregation, was also refused ordination. Another person was nominated and approved of by the congregation, and

was about to be ordained when the rejected presentee served an interdict from the Court of Session; but in the face of that the Presbytery completed the settlement. For this contumacious act the members of the Presbytery were summoned to appear at the bar of the Court of Session, which they did. The reverend culprits numbered eight, and on the bench there were twelve judges. The first intention of the court was to send these eight clergymen to prison, but ultimately, by a majority of one, it was agreed to dismiss them with a rebuke. These presbyters, however, required to pay, besides their own expenses, £340 as costs; and the rejected presentee got decree against them for damages to the amount of several thousand pounds; which sums were paid by the Church at large.

This might be considered quite sufficient to settle the question as to whether the Established Church was, or was not, the creature of the State; but the measure of her humiliation was not yet full.

There was the Marnock case, in Strathbogie, which Dr. Buchanan pronounced to be “a dense region of Moderatism.” In this case the call was signed by only one parishioner, and he the keeper of the public-house at which the Presbytery usually dined. In compliance with the Veto law and instructions of the Commission of Assembly, the Presbytery, although reluctantly, refused to proceed with the settlement. The rejected presentee then got a decree from the Court of Session, compelling the Presbytery to take him on trial with a view to ordination. Being for the

most part rank Moderates, the Presbytery, by discreditable tactics, endeavoured to steal a march upon the Commission of Assembly, and settle the presentee before the Commission could interfere; but in this they were outwitted, as the Commission suspended from the ministry the whole batch of these Strathbogie Moderates—seven in all. The seven now ran to the Court of Session, praying the court to annul the sentence of the Commission, and also to interdict other ministers from entering their churches or churchyards without their permission. Despite these interdicts, the ministers appointed by the Commission went to Strathbogie, in the middle of winter, and, amidst snow and rain, preached in the open fields and marketplaces to large crowds. The presentee having appealed to the Court of Session for redress, the suspended ministers appeared in court and expressed their willingness to proceed with the settlement. Authority was given them to do so, and this they did, in direct defiance of the action and mandate of the Church.

Then there occurred the Culsalmond case, also connected with the benighted region of Strathbogie. The people, by an immense majority, petitioned against the presentee; but the clerical members of the Presbytery of Garioch, being nearly all Moderates, by the aid of a sheriff and constables, and in the face of the people's veto, proceeded with the settlement. The people had taken possession of the church, and as the proceedings were being interrupted, the Presbytery succeeded in making their way to the manse, and there, with closed doors, concluded their not very

creditable work.

Then followed what was called the Stewarton case, by the finding in which the ministers of nearly two hundred *quoad sacra* parishes were deprived of their privilege to sit as members of the Church courts.

To sum up this catalogue of appeals to Cæsar, the rejected presentee of Auchterarder sought decree of the civil courts to compel the Presbytery to take him on trials, with a view to ordination, and, in event of refusal, to sanction his claim for damages. In this case also the House of Lords decided against the Church, and in favour of the presentee, whose claim for damages was set down at the modest sum of £10,000.

The Church now felt the contest to be hopeless, the higher civil courts, as at that time constituted, being evidently determined to maintain their supremacy. It is here proper to say that the majority in the Court of Session was composed of Tory moderates; but five, and certainly not the least eminent of these judges, at once recognised and advocated the claims of the Church. These were Lords Jeffrey, Moncreiff, Fullarton, Cockburn, and Glenlee.

It is no less necessary to say, that these contendings for the spiritual independence of the Church as opposed to the civil courts, were purely the action of the majority of the Assembly, composed solely of the non-intrusion or Evangelical party. The Moderates succumbed at once, and, instead of standing true to their colours, turned their weapons against their brethren of the majority. They not

only yielded obedience to the civil courts, but resorted to every conceivable device and intrigue which could tend to check-mate or render abortive the action of the Assembly. They were even detected in the carrying out, in an underhand way, of a scheme by which they expected legislative sanction to constitute themselves the Church of Scotland.

The Assembly, that is, the majority, now saw that their only hope was in an appeal to Parliament, praying for an act which should establish the true position of the Church in its relation to the civil courts, and thus put an end to these scandalous and unseemly proceedings which had rendered the Church a by-word and a reproach. In this, too, they failed.

Lord Aberdeen concocted a bill, but it was cramped with conditions which neutralised its usefulness, and was well described by one of the members of the House of Lords as “only giving the people the right to grumble.” They were to be permitted to object to a presentee, but were also to give their reasons for objecting, and the Presbytery were to judge of the validity of these reasons. The hollowness, of this bill was at once seen by the leaders of the Assembly, and unhesitatingly repudiated.

The Premier, Sir Robert Peel, was next approached, and petitioned to use his influence for the appointment of a committee to enquire into the grievances under which the Church laboured. But he declined to sanction such a proposal, one of his reasons being that many of the

churches were under the patronage of the crown, and to withdraw that patronage was to weaken the royal prerogative!

Redress being thus denied, the Evangelical portion of the Assembly began to make preparations for their departure from this ecclesiastical Egypt, where they were subjected to a bondage of the most humiliating description. They found that, after all, the Church was not in possession of “the keys,” but was the bedraggled menial of certain lay patrons, who might be infidels, atheists, or guilty of the grossest immoralities; and that the Church could not move a step in any direction without the sanction of a bench of lawyers. It was now clearly enough seen that the dissenters knew the position in which the Church stood to the State better than Churchmen themselves knew. And strange as it may appear, these leaders of the Evangelical party who were the champions of the Establishment during the Voluntary controversy, were the very persons destined to practically demonstrate the absurdity of their own fears and reasonings as to the inadequacy of the Voluntary principles to supply the spiritual wants of the community.

Towards the end of 1842 the non-intrusionists met in convocation, to take into consideration what should be done in the event of the legislature still refusing to give them relief. There was a large attendance of ministers, and the resolution was then taken to withdraw. The idea was to many alarming enough. The quiet manses, many of the clergy with families depending on them for support, and in

the face of these serious facts to cast themselves adrift without knowing what or whither, were reflections not easily reasoned away, especially upon the ordinary level of worldly discretion. At this meeting it was that Dr. Chalmers unfolded his great scheme of a general fund, a sustentation fund, in which all, under certain conditions, would share alike. Out of doors, and no doubt in some cases indoors this scheme was regarded as Utopian, but for conscience' sake, and having faith in the wisdom of their great leader, no fewer than 423 ministers concurred in the resolution to sever connection with the State.

The history of this fierce struggle, the fightings and hair-splitting contendings between churchmen and churchmen, between lawyers and lawyers, between civil courts and ecclesiastical courts; the meanings and shades of meaning of words and phrases, in Acts of Parliament, in Acts of Assembly, etc., etc., form quite a Sahara for the ordinary reader who has courage enough to overtake the task, even as recorded in a greatly condensed form. Dr. Buchanan, while writing his "Ten Years' Conflict," had before him no fewer than 782 pamphlets, all occupied in the discussion of matters relating to this controversy of the Church with the civil courts.

Which party was in the right and which in the wrong, it is not now my purpose to enquire. I intend only to record a few items of my own experience during the Disruption period; and it may be necessary to be somewhat egotistical in order to define with precision the peculiar standpoint

from which the surroundings were viewed. The foregoing brief summary of the events and proceedings that led to the Disruption is necessary for the information of the younger generation, comparatively few of whom were on the field at that period, to read history as it was being developed.

Although baptised by a Moderate of the most pronounced type, I had been brought up in the dissenting school, and, as a matter of course, swelled the chorus of applause at meetings where State Churches were denounced. I was also of the unnumbered host of “knowing ones” who regarded the struggle between the civil courts and the church courts as only a tumult that would soon subside—an internecine convulsion of a passing nature, in an institution that ought to have had no existence. We believed, or thought we believed, the principle of a State Church to be altogether wrong, and the only way to deal with the question in a satisfactory manner was to repeal the union. Tinker as they might, a State Church must and will always be a creature of the State, subservient to, and under its control. As the repeal of the union was not likely to occur very soon, *we*, the knowing fellows, were sagacious enough to perceive how all the prevailing fuss about spiritual independence would end. A parish manse was a remarkably snug and cozy billet, and a way would be found, a text would be discovered, which would satisfy the conscience and obviate any painful necessity. It may be thought that this was a very unjust and uncharitable spirit in which to judge of duly authorised spiritual instructors; and so it was; yet, it has something to say for itself, as we all

know how easily a passage can be found to suit when self or party interests are at stake. Besides, some of those who were now so strenuously contending for spiritual independence had not only pronounced Voluntaryism to be wrong, but absolutely sinful, and we thought more of their consistency than to suppose they would do aught that might place them outside the pale of an indispensable, if not of a sinless, Establishment.

In my individual case, the training both in Church and State politics, in common with anything else in the shape of intellectual athletics, was acquired in the provinces, but it so happened that for some months before and after the Disruption my location was Edinburgh. I here feel constrained to say a few words regarding the social conditions under which I found myself placed at this exciting juncture, as they exercised an influence which caused me to take a much warmer interest in the proceedings than I might otherwise have done.

On reaching the metropolis I went at a venture in search of lodgings, and, after not a little prospecting, found, in Cumberland Street, a small apartment suitable to my resources and wants. My landlady, a Mrs. W—, was a widow, with a grown-up son and daughter, the former of whom was at that time a teacher, a considerable distance out of town, but anxiously and industriously working his way towards the ministry. Mrs. W— required to resort to the letting of apartments, and as these were suitable only for gentlemen of limited means, that circumstance was

fortunately the cause of bringing me under her motherly care. A tall, spare, active, although not a very robust personage was Mrs. W—, with a strongly marked “Embry” accent, and all the while fancying she was perfectly free of anything of the nature of a “twaung,” as she characterised the speaking of “you west kintre bodies.” A shrewd, strictly upright and honest, well-meaning, well-living woman, who waited on the ministry of the Rev. Dr. Guthrie, and warmly allied herself with the party in the church of which her minister was a prominent member.

Previous to my acquaintance with Mrs. W— I was lukewarm, actually caring little about what was raging in, and about to rend, the Church of Scotland. I was there on quite other business than pertained to church matters, and was very indifferently posted up in the details of the great ecclesiastical conflict. That I could remain so under the roof of this modern Dorcas or Eunice, or whatever good name you might call her, was impossible. Zealously affected she was; knew the entire controversy; could define the line of demarcation between the Church and Cæsar, between the power of the sword and the power of the keys; could expound Erastianism, Moderatism, and all the isms and schisms which had been enlisted into the controversy. A Jenny Geddes she was not, for her temper was completely under the control of her judgment; a Mause Headrigg she was not, for she was a woman of few words: and yet in moral principle and courage she was equal to either of them. Nor is it for a moment to be supposed that these ecclesiastical leanings weaned her from the ordinary

duties of this life. The woman—the landlady who could, from her own free will, get up at five in the morning and go half-a-mile to the market, in order to get a bit of fresh fish at a reasonable price for your breakfast, or a bit of vegetable or beef for your dinner; who could arrange for the supply of your tea and coffee so as to make it cover the widest space of time, and press the lightest on your not over-bountiful purse, was not likely to forfeit your esteem, no matter how widely you might differ from her on subjects even more important than church polity. Her faith in Chalmers, and Candlish, and Guthrie, was implicit; and she had no doubt whatever that there would be a large secession from the church—from the house of bondage—at the coming General Assembly. When that day was at hand she put her house in order, so as to be ready to accommodate as many of the evangelical fathers and brethren as circumstances might occasion. I was even asked if I would, for the sake of the good cause, have any objections to submit to a little inconvenience for a few days,—that only, if necessity should be pressing. I did not anticipate any great necessity, nevertheless, if not for the “good cause,” at least to oblige her, I expressed my willingness to do all within my power, even to the surrender of my bed, which was nothing else than a very homely constructed sofa. Whether as sofa or bed I found it exceedingly comfortable, and still hold it, as I do her, in grateful remembrance. I was not called on to make much of a sacrifice, although two parsons came, for they only occasionally used my room an hour or two during the day

while I was absent.

The morning of the memorable 18th of May, 1843, had dawned. Edinburgh was thronged with visitors from all parts of the kingdom, some specially interested, others drawn hither by curiosity, but all anxious to know, and as far as practicable to witness, what was to be the issue of this long-continued contest between Church and State. The first scene in the drama which the unprivileged classes were free to witness, was the procession of the Queen's Commissioner from Holyrood to the church in George Street, where the Assembly were to meet. I had often heard of the grandeur of the pageantry on such occasions, but this was the first, as it was the last time, I had the opportunity of being an eye-witness.

Along the entire route the streets were lined with soldiers to guard the sacred cortege; then there were scarlet-coated, cock-hatted mortals on horseback, with trumpets at their mouths, blowing with might and main, till their cheeks were redder than their coats. Other human creatures there were bearing spears and other warlike instruments; there were big drums and small drums, and all the accompaniments of martial music in full rattle and blast, but whether the bag-pipes were honoured by a voice in the melodious, din I do not recollect. By and by there came a line of coaches—we might surely be allowed to call them the chariots of Israel—drawn by gorgeously caparisoned horses, and guided and guarded by more gorgeously caparisoned coachmen and flunkies. Things that had a

striking resemblance to golden cabbages stuck out from some of the carriage windows. What in the shape of humanity might be within these coaches I could not well see, but if it were humble Christians, surely they had got into the wrong box. We sometimes hear of the church militant, but here it was triumphantly military, and to give to it the crowning *éclat* either old Mons Meg or some of her younger associates on the castle walls belched fire and thunder sufficient to terrify all foes, either within or without, who would dare to lay unholy hands upon mother kirk. I had never before seen so gorgeous, so dazzling a spectacle, and when it had vanished and my bewildered intellects regained their normal working condition, the question spontaneously suggested itself as to what it was all about.

I never had any superstitious regard for the vestments, or church forms, or ritual of any kind, and this vain show, this ostentatious and trumpety display, did not tend to beget in me appreciations of a more reverential nature. To my mind it seemed to settle the question about spiritual independence. If the Church really acknowledged no head but Christ, as these churchmen affirmed, then why this regal display, making public announcement that Her Majesty, by representative, was about to preside at the Assembly, and see to it that nothing should be done contrary to the royal mind and will.

When the pageant passed I went my own ways, in the belief that there would be a great amount of speech-making and

verbal deliverances before any crisis could be reached, but in this instance the unexpected really happened. I had gone to the Statue Gallery in the Institution at the foot of the Mound, and had been there only a short time when the cry was raised, "They are coming." Scarcely comprehending what was meant, I followed the rush down stairs to the portico, and there, indeed, a long funereal streak of black-coated gentlemen, in double or triple file, came wending down the incline. On it came at a smart pace, passed the Institution, crossed Princes Street, and vanished in one of the streets leading northward. At its head was a gentleman in gown and bands. This sable host comprised the members of Assembly proceeding from St. Giles Church, where they had held a preliminary meeting for worship, toward St. Andrew's Church in George Street, where the Assembly was to sit. Their arrival at that church was almost simultaneous with that of the Commissioner, and of what then took place within the church I cannot speak from personal observation.

In his graphic account of the proceedings, Dr. Buchanan, after describing the densely crowded state of the church, and the reading of the protest by the Moderator, Dr. Welsh, goes on to say:—

"When the last of these solemn sentences had left the Moderator's lips, he laid the protest upon the table of the house, and turning round towards the Commissioner, who rose in evident and deep emotion, Dr. Welsh bowed respectfully to the representative of the Queen, and in so

doing, bade the Church of Scotland's farewell to the State. That brief, but solemn and significant action done, he lifted his hat from the table and went forth from the degraded Establishment. As he moved with calm dignity from the chair, Dr. Chalmers, Dr. Gordon, Dr. Patrick M'Farlan, Dr. Thomas Brown, Dr. M'Donald, the fathers of the Church, men who were its strength and glory, one after another, rose and followed him. It was a moment of intense and overpowering interest. . . .The veteran warriors of the Church's conflict were leading the way; how many were to follow? This evidently was the agitating inquiry which at that moment absorbed the minds of those who, with the incredulity of infatuation, had hitherto treated the event, which had now come, as a delusion and a dream. The chief law officer of the Crown, who stood beside the Commissioner, looked down from his elevated position with an anxiety which no effort could disguise, to mark how far his previous representations to men in power, and the facts now before him, might be found to agree. Dr. Candlish, Dr. Cunningham, Mr. Campbell of Monzie, Mr. Dunlop, and others, familiar names in the struggle which had now reached its close, were seen moving on after those who had gone before. These are men committed . . . they cannot draw back, and the Establishment will be quieter when they have retired. But the quiet country ministers occupying these crowded benches behind,—it is not possible that they can design to cast themselves and their families into the midst of poverty and want. Such, probably, were the thoughts that were rivetting the feverish

gaze of more than one high legal functionary upon the constantly expanding blank that yawned so ominously on the left side of the house, as bench after bench poured its occupants into the stream which kept constantly flowing towards the door of the church. There was no hurry, no rush, no confusion. . . . One entire side of the Assembly, and the whole of the cross benches, were left untenanted. The life had departed from the Establishment, and those who remained gazed upon the empty space as if they had been looking into an empty grave.”

These proceedings of the Assembly did not keep the eager crowds outside long in suspense for in a very short time the appearance of the Moderator coming out from the church in his gown and bands, followed by Drs. Chalmers, Gordon, and others of the Evangelical leaders, was the unerring signal that the anticipated had actually taken place, and a shout of joy and gratitude rent the air. These protesters kept streaming out till upwards of four hundred were formed into column, and accompanied by crowds, proceeded down the street towards their appointed place of assembling at Canonmills.

This was the infant Free Church. A goodly infant indeed; that could hold its head erect, walk with firm and steady step, speak with unfaltering tongue, and at once take its place among the most influential and commanding verities of the nineteenth century.

But where now was our shrewdness—our prescience—our knowledge of mankind, and especially of parson-kind?

The very supposition that snug manses and the inevitable stipends would outweigh any scriptural principle or conscientious scruple that may have existed, betrayed, not only a spirit of uncharitableness, but possibly the spirit in which we would ourselves have acted had we been placed in similar circumstances. The Disruption has been designated "a strike," and among the more fortunate classes strikes are considered very bad things. Good or bad, the Disruption was a strike, quite as much as the coming out of any body of workmen, and even in their case strikes may be perfectly justifiable. Workmen's strikes are usually brought about by some dispute about wages, but it was not so in this clerical strike, as the probabilities were that greatly less wages would be had, even in many cases no wages at all. It has also been alleged that the action of the Church, under the ascendancy of the Evangelicals, supplied only another instance of that lust for power and domination which has in all ages been a marked characteristic of the priestly order. Nor to that idea can anyone with candour subscribe. The Disruption may be more justly described as a noble stand for right, for conscience, and for justice to the people. Lay patronage, combined with "moderate" subserviency, had reduced the people to spiritual vassalage, almost as degrading as that which subsisted in the olden time, when life and liberty were at the mercy of the laird. A tame or sycophantic submission to manacles of so degrading a nature was altogether unworthy the nation that is sometimes led to boast of its triumphant contendings for civil and political independence. It would have been a

disgrace to the Church had there not been found in it discernment enough to see and feel its abject condition, and spirit enough to make this effort to set itself free.

I did not follow the four hundred. What came of them after they left the church I did not know till I went home in the evening. Mrs. W— had preceded them, as she had been present when the hive alighted in the old tannery at Canonmills. She had been eye and ear witness of all that had there taken place during the afternoon. So intense were her expressions of gratification at the noble stand that had been made for the truth, and at what had been done and said by Dr. Chalmers and others, that I became warmly interested. Next day, in compliance with her wish, I made my way to Canonmills, and was present in the hall that day, and a portion of almost every day during the sittings of the Assembly.

On hearing that the malcontents had settled down in an old tannery, some attempts were made to be sarcastic and witty, by saying that, if not a very dignified position, it was at least appropriate, as some of the reverend deserters would be all the better of a course of astringents to enable them to carry out the resolution hastily formed in a moment of unwonted excitement. Be that as it might, I found the place excellently well adapted for the purpose. It embraced a wide area, and was lighted by a series of glazed roofs or ridges, which were supported by iron pillars so slender as scarcely to interrupt the view of the speakers from any point in the apartment. A narrow platform had been

erected right along one side of the square; at the middle of it was placed the Moderator's chair, and on either side were chairs for the accommodation of the clergymen who had come out. The seats in the area gradually rose as they receded from the platform, on both sides as well as in front, forming a sort of basin, which, during the proceedings, was always as full of human beings as it could possibly contain. The long line of fathers and brethren on the platform, and the vast concave of human heads covering every inch of the expanse from the floor to the ceiling, was a sight not to be forgotten by those who witnessed it. According to the southern notions of Scotsmen and Calvinism, that sea of faces should have been what Thomas Carlyle said of the starry sky, "a sad sight." Dismal, morose, repulsive, the entire stock of such terms would have been called on to do duty in an imaginative description of such an assemblage. And yet nothing could have been farther from the facts. Every eye was focused on the speakers, every word rang through the silence, which was frequently, so far as the auditory was concerned, as profound as that of a vault in which there is no life. Although there was calm, there was also settled resolution, and on every face an expression of cheerfulness; and, so far as I could observe, not a trace of anything like regret or anger. Large as the accommodation was, it was far from being sufficient. On Sabbath there were more people outside than within, and as weather was favourable, outdoor services were simultaneously conducted by two or three clergymen at separate points.

When I for the first time entered the hall, on the day after

the Disruption, Dr. Chalmers was engaged in prayer. This was the first time I had heard him, and I was peculiarly impressed with his appearance and manner. His massive figure and venerable countenance suited admirably to the position in which he was placed, as it gave to the occasion a dignity and importance which would have been wanting in a leader physically insignificant. If struck with his personal appearance, I was still more so with his manner. Hitherto my experience had associated prayer with closed eyes, hands clasped and at rest, and head bowed; but in this instance the eyes were open, the head upturned, and the hands, or at least, one hand, in motion, moving as if by the pressure of the internal impulse which caused the words literally to gush from his lips. Chalmers speaking and Chalmers listening or silent was apparently two very different persons. In the latter case his countenance was that of a decent, somewhat stolid, but good-natured country gentleman. His eyes seemed small, rather dull and dreamy, and when anything was being said that pleased him, the quiet smile that passed over his countenance conveyed the idea of a rather obtuse and slow-working perception. The moment he got up to speak a magical transformation took place; the eyes seemed to emit rays, the nostrils distended, the hands were in motion, and the words gushed out like an impetuous stream of burning lava, and keeping the audience spell-bound to the close. All this, too, in spite of a husky, and by no means resonant, voice.

Many portraits of Dr. Chalmers have appeared, photographic and otherwise, but the only one that gives any

adequate idea of him while addressing an audience is the head painted about the time of the Disruption, by Thomas Duncan, R.S.A. I saw it when fresh from the artist's easel, and a more true and characteristic likeness never was produced either by brush or lens.

Dr. Chalmers was not a graceful or polished speaker; in many instances his pronunciation was broad Scotch, and there were no studied pauses or inflections, after the manner of the elocutionist. His special characteristics appeared to me to be a fertile imagination, a full and ready command of language, great power in giving expression to his ideas, and unrivalled physical energy in the communication of them to the hearer.

Great as a speaker, and great as a worker, no less great was he in those personal qualities that give weight and force to what is said and done, namely, goodness of heart, moral rectitude, and an unselfish and incorruptible nature. Without such a man it is not easy to perceive how, under the circumstances, a Disruption could have been possible. Still, among those associated with him were some who were his equal, perhaps his superior, in certain qualities absolutely necessary at such a crisis. I had heard it said, and it has often been repeated, that Dr. Chalmers could not speak to any purpose unless he had the matter previously written out, and either read or committed to memory. We learn from his own published letters that he failed in his attempts at extempore preaching, yet no one was conscious of the failure but himself. Much of the work in this first

Free Assembly consisted of receiving and hearing deputations from other denominations and parties who sympathised with the disrupting cause, and it became the duty of Dr. Chalmers, as Moderator, to reply for the Assembly. It was not at all probable that he knew beforehand what the members of these deputations were going to say, and as his replies were comments on what had just been said, it appeared to me that they were one and all improvised. At all events they were delivered as fluently, as energetically, and as unhesitatingly, as his ordinary pulpit discourses. The impression left upon my mind was, that he possessed to an eminent degree the gift of impromptu public speaking.

Not a few of those who took leading parts in the proceedings at Canonmills on this occasion I never heard nor saw before. Indeed, one of the few exceptions to this was the minister who, next to Chalmers, holds place as the leading and guiding spirit in the Non-intrusion movement, and in the formation of the Free Church. I refer to Dr. Candlish, whom I knew and often heard when he was assistant in the parish of Bonhill, Dumbartonshire, and a more fidgety, galvanised piece of humanity I never saw. Often had I paused to look upon the bolt-upright, square-shouldered little man, as he rushed along the road in the course of his visitations, professional or social. Never had I seen—never have I seen—other adult human legs in such nimble motion when under no other excitement than the sober act of walking. His nature, his entire career, so far as I had any knowledge of it, was that of unrest, happily not

arising from a perturbed spirit, but from a physical and mental organisation to which movement and action were either involuntary or absolute necessity. Old associations impelled me to be one of his occasional hearers in St. George's Church previous to the Disruption, and the peculiarities which characterised him in the country parish were there no less conspicuous. He could not for a moment be still. When the congregation were engaged in praise, he kept jerking from side to side of the pulpit, pulling on his gloves then pulling them off again, suddenly leaning forward, and as suddenly throwing himself backward, and himself evidently unconscious of what was so conspicuously manifest to every other person in the Church. Underneath all this unaffected oddity of manner there was the clear and subtle mind that could perceive acutely and judge calmly, combined with that other quality so essential to a leader in Church Courts and Ecclesiastical Assemblies, namely, great power and readiness in giving expression to his thoughts. And all the more effective were his utterances from what is called "a burr" in pronouncing words which contained the letter "R." The work he accomplished at this period, in the shape of speeches and sermons, was enormous, and all relating to the crisis was practically and directly to the purpose. While some of the lesser lights were inclined to talk and even boast of the noble stand they had made, nothing of that kind was then heard from Candlish. He was always looking forward with a clear perception of the fact that in reality nothing had yet been done—that all was yet to do; and no one was so

effectual in pointing out what should be done and how to do it.

In the evening of the first Sabbath after the Disruption, Dr. Candlish preached in the Canonmills Hall to an overwhelming audience. I can yet see that dark and peculiar-shaped head bobbing up and down, appearing and disappearing, as he was led through the crowd, by a taller gentleman on each side of him, to the platform and the desk. He had that day preached twice elsewhere, but notwithstanding, he gave a long and admirable discourse, delivered with even more than his wonted energy, and which was listened to with a hushed intensity seldom witnessed in a congregation.

Dr. Candlish was one of the ministers who went to Strathbogie and preached to the people in defiance of the interdict of the Court of Session, and that rebellious act was remembered against him in later times. He was by the Home Secretary appointed to a professorship in Edinburgh University, but Lord Aberdeen, on hearing of it, remonstrated with the Home Secretary on the impropriety of his act, and accordingly the appointment was cancelled.

And here it may not be out of place to revert to his old position as assistant to the eccentric minister of the parish of Bonhill. The Rev. William Gregor was a favourable example of the Moderate. He had for some considerable time been a teacher previous to becoming a parish minister, and was considered an excellent scholar, at least so far as a knowledge of the learned languages was

concerned. He had usually the function of examiner assigned him by the Presbytery, and was a terror to many of those young men who were on trial for license. As a preacher he was notable more by his personal appearance and peculiarities of expression, than for any of those qualities which distinguish preaching of a high class. It was said that he had only fifteen sermons, which may be an under-statement of the fact; but those he really had were so often repeated, that many in the congregation came to have considerable portions of them by heart, and which they made use of perhaps more in the way of entertainment than of precepts by which to control and colour their Christian walk and conversation. The reason assigned for this paucity of discourses was the pedantic difficulty of pleasing himself in regard to forms of expression and grammatical accuracy. For many years his custom had been to dispense the ordinance of baptism, not in the Church, but in an adjoining public-house during the interval between sermons. When dissent was beginning to assert itself in the Voluntary controversy, and by the building of a Relief Church in the parish, this anomalous and unseemly practice was freely and facetiously commented on, and the minister being remonstrated with, reluctantly gave his consent to discontinue it. This being agreed on, Gregor, in keeping with his eccentric ways, announced from the pulpit that “as the elders of the Church desired to have in future baptism administered in the Church, he considered it desirable that he should next Sabbath have a sermon specially for the purpose of explaining the nature and object of the

ordinance.” The sermon was accordingly preached, which consisted of an argumentative refutation of the views and practice of the Baptists, and concluded thus:—“Now you will perceive I have got them on the horns of a dilemma, and I think I will just leave them there.” And so he did.

Gregor gave no countenance to Sabbath Schools, urging as his reason that it was the duty of parents to give their children religious instruction in their respective homes; but notwithstanding, the work people, many of them belonging to his own congregation, organised such schools and themselves served as teachers. Such teaching in many cases laid itself open to sarcastic remarks such as Gregor was prone to make, but whether he did so or not I cannot say. When the long prevailing custom of serving whisky or other spirituous liquors at marriages and funerals came to be questioned by the temperance party, the minister of Bonhill stood boldly out for use and wont, and some of his choicest sallies were directed against the innovators. On the occasion of a marriage on abstinence principles I happened to be present, and after the ceremony the minister sat down, and waited patiently for some little time, expecting the appearance of the bottle. It was however not forthcoming, and when his reverence lost hope, he passionately seized his hat and rushed to the door. On his exit the children congregated outside raised a shout, at hearing which he, in stentorian tones exclaimed, “Shout away; its all that’s going;” and then hasted away in no very amiable mood.

In what was called the Row heresy he was an uncompromising opponent of the Rev. Mr. M'Leod Campbell, and in the Dumbarton Presbytery, when the latter made an appeal to the Bible, Gregor, in his irritable way, replied by saying, "We have nothing to do with the Bible; it is the Confession of Faith we have to do with." This remark was severely commented on at the time, and lately I have seen it referred to and deprecated both in Scotch and English periodicals. The remark was perfectly sound, and appropriate under the circumstances. The Confession contained the interpretation of the Scriptures in which the Church believed, and to the maintenance and propagation of its teachings every minister of the Established Church of Scotland was by his ordination vows bound.

While thus referring to what may be considered the doubtful or questionable side of his character, it is only fair to say that on the other side there were qualities which went far in the way of counterbalance. He was strictly honorable and open, entirely free from guile or meanness in his dealings with his fellowmen. The utmost familiarity subsisted between him and his parishioners, rich and poor, churchmen and dissenters, and yet the professional prestige was on his part always sustained, and on their part always respected. No one was more ready to deal in sarcasm, sometimes biting enough, towards dissent, or total abstinence, or radicalism, yet that never seemed to influence him in the least in his attitude towards individuals connected with any of these specialties. Indeed, there were

more radicals and chartists connected with his Church than with any other in the neighbourhood, but that neither caused him to disguise his sentiments nor them to take umbrage at his free and fearless expression of them. In officiating at marriages and funerals his language was sometimes quaint, but always appropriate, and in cases of the latter class extremely unctuous and impressive. Not a few still remember "Auld Gregor," as he was familiarly called, with more than kindly feelings, and retain memory of some sayings or actions of his which they are fond to recount on all favourable occasions. It must to his credit be said that he was always anxious to secure, as assistants, young men of superior learning and ability, and the result was that during his incumbency Bonhill was well supplied in that respect. Rumour said that he allowed his assistant half the stipend, but whether that was the case or not, it was at all events foreign to his nature to use him shabbily. Candlish was not his first assistant, as there were at least two before him, and as many after him. With considerable interest I recently turned up the biography of Dr. Candlish in order to ascertain what was there said about his sojourn at Bonhill, and I was glad to find, recorded by himself, that Gregor had been very kind to him, so much so as to make him reluctant to break the connection. It was no less gratifying to find, from the same source, that the assistant fully appreciated the peculiarities of his reverend father, and continued to entertain his family and friends by anecdotes relating to Gregor's eccentricities of word and deed.

At the same time I cannot very well account for a passage in one of Dr. Candlish's letters, written when he was about to be settled in St. George's. It runs thus:—"Had our old friend in Bonhill not been a fool, I should not have thought of leaving it." That is a very ungenerous, a very ungracious passage, especially coming after what he himself said about Gregor's kindness to him. No unprejudiced person that knew Gregor, however much he might have differed from him in matters of opinion, would for a moment tolerate the assumption that the term "fool" was applicable to him; and the biographers of Dr. Candlish should either have deleted this passage, or have given some explanation of what was meant by it.

Indeed, they were a pair of oddities, both physically and mentally. Gregor was in person fully over the ordinary stature, spare in body, but in face rather round and full, above which rose a capacious brow, under the shaggy eaves of which nestled a pair of small but active eyes that looked out at considerably divergent angles. He had a slight stoop, and a certain springiness in his walk made one suppose that he was always about to start into a run. When speaking to any one, his face was usually brought to within a span of that of the person addressed; and this peculiarity, together with the searching cross fire of his visual orbs, caused timid scholars to quail and get confused under his examinations. Besides, he was hasty in temper, and could not argue calmly, unless he had the argument all to himself. To this he readily owned, and expressed a great admiration of Principal M'Farlan of Glasgow, less for his logical abilities

than for his command of temper during discussions in the Presbytery and elsewhere.

Of what Gregor thought of his quondam assistant, may be known by a conversation I unexpectedly had with him some years after that disruption in the bringing about of which the assistant had so conspicuously figured. That the latter had been a leader in that movement which rent asunder the old Church, might, it may be thought, have been sufficient of itself to bias the old pastor's opinion of his capabilities, but it had not. I had occasion to be on a visit to friends who lived in the neighbourhood of the Mill of Balloch, at which quiet retreat the minister, who had never married, first took up his residence, and where he resided till his decease. While strolling in the fields I chanced to meet the parson, who paused in his walk, and although he knew not who I was, at once opened conversation on the usual topics of the weather and crop prospects, and from that we drifted into Church matters. He needlessly informed me that he was parish minister, and that Mr. Candlish, of the Free Church, had been sometime his assistant; which facts I well knew, but did not think fit to let him know this. In reply to a question from me regarding his opinion of Candlish, he at once launched out in admiration of "Candy's" abilities, adding, "You know, we always called him Candy." He had selected him in opposition to letters from Glasgow advising that he should have nothing whatever to do with Candlish, as he had preached a church in Glasgow vacant, and the probability was that he would soon do as much for Bonhill.

“Notwithstanding that,” said the parson, “As I was to pay the piper, I would choose the tune. I saw that the right stuff was in him, and by the help of God I’d try to bring it out of him. I never yet knew a young man that could match Candy in the speed with which he could compose a sermon; and always capital matter in it too. For instance, I would see him in the early part of the week, and would say to him, Well, Candy, have you selected your subjects for next Sabbath? No, Candy had not begun to think of them. Again I would see him on Friday or Saturday, and Candy was fully prepared. But he was ambitious though. He was not long with me till I saw that he would not be satisfied till he should become the Pope of the Church. I was in the habit of sometimes calling him Pope Candlish; and I believe that sticks to him to this day.”

Now, this quite neutralises a statement to the effect that Candlish had never been appreciated till some Edinburgh lawyer heard him preach, and who recommended him for St. George’s, Edinburgh. It was appreciation that brought him to Bonhill, and that too by one as capable of judging as any lawyer in or out of Edinburgh. And notwithstanding his fidgety manner, and, at that time, rather squeaking voice, Candlish soon came to be well liked, both as a man and a preacher, by the Bonhill congregation. Although Gregor was thus complimentary towards him in regard to ability, and evidently had kindly remembrance of him, there was one circumstance which he related and characterised in terms far from laudatory. He said that when his late assistant (the Rev. Mr. M’Goun, who went to

Laurence Kirk) left him, “what did Candy do but hurried down from Edinburgh and ran among my people, endeavouring to persuade them to build a Free Church; but he did not succeed. They knew him, and me too, and I have the people still.”

After we had discussed “Candy,” I asked his opinion of Dr. Chalmers. “The Doctor,” said he, “is no doubt an excellent man, but I just fear he has fallen among people not quite so good as himself; but, you know, he always had a bee in his bonnet.” He also referred to Lord Aberdeen’s bill, which gave a congregation power to object to the patron’s presentee, but bound them, at the same time, to state their reasons for objecting. This he considered an absurdity, as the people neither knew what they required nor could they express their reasons for objecting. To the latter clause of this sentence every sane person who knew anything of the working of this bill will unconditionally adhere. Most of us can remember reverend courts sitting for weeks on cases of this kind, to no better purpose than that of making sport of uneducated farmers and labourers, by putting to them frivolous questions which could only elicit ludicrous answers. A more useless and unholy waste of time it was scarcely possible to conceive. The Presbyteries never sustained, never intended to sustain, the objections, as their judgment was invariably in favour of the patron’s choice. Samuel Johnson said that “the wit of a clergyman was always offensive;” what would he have said of the buffoonery of a whole Presbytery? It was well said by Lord Campbell, and acquiesced in by the Duke of

Wellington, that this bill only gave the people the right to grumble.

I heard Dr. Candlish several times preach after the Disruption, and specially noticed what I have seen stated elsewhere, that his voice improved as he advanced in years. Among the last times I heard him, there was a richness and clang about his enunciation which was very pleasing, and he was distinctly heard at the remotest corners of the largest of our churches.

In anticipation of the Disruption a new church, a brick fabric of large dimensions but very unambitious architecture, was built for Dr. Candlish in Castle Terrace, and here, on the Sunday after the Disruption, he preached, forenoon and afternoon, to crowded audiences. Some years afterwards a more handsome and commodious church was built by the congregation in Lothian Road, and the site is now occupied as the terminus of the Caledonian Railway. They next built a larger and much more elegant church in Shand-wick place, Maitland Street, which may be considered the St. Peter's or St. Paul's—the great central fabric of the Free Church of Scotland. Dr. Candlish, in his youthful days, was brought up under the ministries of Drs. Chalmers and Welsh in Glasgow, and, strangely enough, both of these great men in their latter days were elders under Dr. Candlish in his church in Edinburgh. Truly, old Gregor's prophecy was fulfilled to the very letter.

A year or two previous to the decease of Dr. Candlish, when on a visit to Edinburgh, under the impulse of old

associations, I sought out his church in Shandwick Place, and was fortunate in finding the door open. In venturing inwards I found the beadle, or, more politely, the church officer, a very clerical-looking old gentleman, very civil and willing to communicate. Having gratified him by some laudatory remarks on the size and elegance of the church, which was really magnificent, I inquired regarding the health of the minister, of whom I had heard little for some years. In reply I was informed that he was “ a’ richt about the head, which was as soond and clear as ever, but he was na’ sae weel about the legs as they were getting stiff, and he was ill at the walking.” Remembering the past, I remarked to my informant that, although I was sorry for it, I did not wonder at the legs giving way, as they were in early days wrought at extremely high pressure, and engines of that sort generally wore themselves out much sooner than the low-pressure ones.

Robert Smith Candlish was assistant at Bonhill from 1831 till 1833, inclusive; was 37 years of age at the Disruption, and outlived that event 30 years, having died in 1873, at the age of 67.

Intellectually considered, my impression then was, and still is, that after Chalmers and Candlish we required to come down a step, and even then we had a group of remarkably able men, such as Welsh, Cunningham, Guthrie, Buchanan, Gordon, Begg, M’Farlan, and several others among the clergy, besides laymen such as Hugh Miller, A. M. Dunlop, and Maitland Makgill Crichton. Every one of these

possessed some special gift or gifts, suitable for the crisis, all of which were brought into action in laying the foundations of the Free Church. Dr. Welsh had been Moderator of the previous General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and, ex officio, he it was who lodged the protest and led the adherents from St. Andrew's Church.

As already said, that phase of the proceedings I did not personally witness, nor was I present at Canonmills when Dr. Welsh took the chair and, after prayer, proposed Dr. Chalmers as Moderator. All these duties Dr. Welsh by all accounts discharged with great propriety, unction, and dignity. I heard him speak several times afterwards. His manner was solemn and impressive, and he was always listened to with marked attention by his brethren, as well as by the general auditory. He was at the Disruption about 50 years of age, had sharp and well formed features, but was thin and sallow, and apparently not in robust health. He had been minister of Crossmichael, subsequently in St. David's, Glasgow, and in 1831 was appointed to the chair of Church History in Edinburgh University. He outlived the Disruption only two years, dying at the early age of 50 years.

While attending these Canonmills meetings there were two heads which specially attracted my attention, and puzzled me not a little to make out the true cranial shape and proportions. Those were the heads of Drs. Candlish and Cunningham. That of Candlish rose from the chin like a wedge, till the divergent sides lost their outlines in a vast

mass of dishevelled black hair. There was a great height and breadth of brow visible, and as it kept expanding till it entered the "dark continent," there was no means of ascertaining what occurred afterwards in the passage across, in completion of the cranial circuit. At first sight it might have been supposed that the facial features were small, while in reality they were large, but dwarfed by the abnormal development of the upper portion of the head. It was to some extent similiar in the head of Dr. Cunningham. There was less of the wedge, but more of an acorn shape, the outlines of the upper portion of the cranium being lost in an immense dome of dusky brown hair. To say that it was hair is to speak at random, as it more resembled wool, as close in texture as a Kilmarnock bonnet. Whatever may have been the outward aspect, that head was evidently well tenanted. He was one of the most effective speakers in the Assembly, and never failed in having an eager and attentive audience. He was less the declaimer than the reasoner, and while speaking he usually leant forward over the desk, and his long arms slowly flailed the air a long way out. When the Row heresy occurred, he held a charge in Greenock, and M'Leod Campbell had no more formidable opponent than Cunningham, who was so jealous in behalf of the Confession that he actually deposed one of his elders for sympathising with the so-called heretic. He was 38 years of age at the Disruption, and survived that event 18 years, thus dying at the comparatively early age of 56.

One of the most respected clergymen that took part in these proceedings was the Rev. Dr. Gordon. He was easily

distinguished by his massive head, the dimensions and form of which were subject to no such obstacle as that which came between the spectator and the heads of his two brethren to whom we have just been referring. It towered far above any capillary growth, and what really remained added veneration and dignity to the imposing structure. What seemed to be rather anomalous in the features of one so celebrated for delicate and humane sensibilities, was the prominent nose, of the Roman type, which, according to a certain school of philosophy is usually associated with the fighting propensity. He certainly was not deficient in courage when principle was involved, as when the eight ministers of the Presbytery of Dunkeld appeared before the Lords of Session in Edinburgh, to answer for the sin of obeying the mandate of the General Assembly in preference to that of the civil court, these said bench of Lords were scandalised by seeing the mild and gentle Gordon walk leisurely in and seat himself beside the accused. That was really a noble act—as much as to say, “Their case is my case; what they did I would have done under similar circumstances,—and what punishment you may inflict on them, I too am ready to bear my share.” The majority of these judges had all along been opposed to the Church Courts as independent judicatories, and in this case were at first disposed to send the erring presbyters to prison; but seeing, besides several others, the grand old divine, as it were, summoning himself to the bar of the court, they evidently felt ashamed of themselves, and dismissed the accused with an admonition.

I heard Dr. Gordon speak only once, and that very briefly. I cannot remember the subject on which his address was founded, but he had not proceeded far till his emotion seemed to overpower him, and he was obliged to resume his seat.

Dr. Gordon was a native of Glencairn; was sometime mathematical teacher in Perth Academy; was minister of Kinfauns from 1816 to 1820, was then translated to Edinburgh, where he died in 1853. He thus survived the Disruption ten years, being minister of the Free High Church during that time.

Here too it was that I for the first time heard or saw the Rev. Dr. Guthrie. The tall and gaunt figure, the prominent and strongly marked features, and the full brow, shaded by straggling streaks of lank black hair, at once attracted the eye; while the deep and grave voice, so well fitted as a medium for transmitting either pathetic or humorous sentiment, soon drew attraction from the eye to the ear. He was speaking when I entered, and the first words I heard him utter were sarcastically humorous. "The folks over the way," said he, "are saying that all the fire is still left in the Establishment. I'm no so sure about that. I rather think the fire's away. At any rate, if there is any left there is plenty o' cauld water to put it out." The effect of this on the audience, it may well be conceived, was not of a solemnizing nature, but it was a temporary relief from the serious and matter-of-fact mental tension which, from the nature of the proceedings, generally prevailed. Although a

sense of the ludicrous was a marked peculiarity of Guthrie's mind, it was usually kept in subordination to some useful end. He was a sagacious, practical worker, as well as a humorist, and did great and good work in the way of education among the poor and outcast in Edinburgh,—by what were called “ragged” schools, and also by his advocacy of the temperance cause throughout the country. On one occasion, however, he made a sad mistake in giving too much rein to the humorous side of his nature. That was long after the Disruption, when he occupied the chair as Moderator of the Free Assembly. Almost every sentence of his address was calculated to cause a laugh, and consequently the gravity and circumspection that ought to be associated with the proceedings of what are called “spiritual courts” were completely compromised. The address was a failure, not through want of ability, but because it was ability misdirected. His services in bringing about the Disruption and organising the Free Church were great, and the fatigue and exposure thereby occasioned, no doubt planted the seeds of the disease of which he died. Dr. Thomas Guthrie was born at Brechin in 1803, was minister, first at Arbirlot, near Arbroath, next of Old Greyfriars, Edinburgh, and afterwards of Free St. John's, Edinburgh; this latter incumbency he held till the Disruption, which he survived 30 years. He died at Hastings in 1873, aged 70.

A most useful member of the Assembly at this juncture was the Rev. Dr. Robert Buchanan of Glasgow. He spoke occasionally, and always with a practical aim. Like Dr.

Cunningham, he possessed more of the reasoning faculty than of the imaginative, was correct, methodical, and even elegant in his composition and style of speaking, and, in personal appearance and manner, had all the characteristics of a cultured gentleman. Although in the early days of the Voluntary controversy he was a most active and uncompromising advocate of Church Establishments, he afterwards was equally active in bringing about the separation and, as a shrewd business man, most useful in the organising and carrying on of the various schemes of the Free Church, especially as Convener of the Sustentation Fund. I had heard him in pre-Disruption days, while he was stumping the country with Dr. James Gibson for colleague, say very strong things against dissent and dissenters; and yet, in his latter days, he was a strenuous supporter of the proposed union of the Free Church with the United Presbyterians. Thus it is that circumstances not only alter cases, but personal or party interests sometimes alter opinions and actions. Possibly the success of the Voluntary principle, as seen in the experience of the Free Church, conscientiously enough enabled him to change sides. He outlived the Disruption 32 years, and died at Rome, aged 73 years.

With regard to Dr. Gibson, I do not recollect of him figuring much at Canonmills. Although he and Dr. Buchanan were coadjutors in the early days already alluded to, and both abandoned their ecclesiastical first love, they after-wards became opponents on the question of union with their old foes, the dissenters. Dr. Gibson retained to

the last his views of the necessity for State churches. He opposed, with characteristic asperity, the proposal for union with the U.P's., and was undoubtedly, to a large extent, the means of knocking that movement on the head. Although able in many respects, he was not a popular preacher, and had always, while in Glasgow at least, a very sparse congregation. He was notorious, however, for his combative spirit in church courts and elsewhere. While Clerk of Presbytery it was quite a treat to see him rule that reverend court, if not with a rod of iron, at all events with a will quite as inflexible. While his hands were busy writing minutes or letters, he all the while kept up a running fire at all and everything that was being said by other members, and always in the way of correction or opposition, and by no means in very courteous terms. On one occasion I was present when Dr. Buchanan proposed that the minute of certain proceedings should be worded in a particular way. The clerk, Dr. Gibson, at once put in his caveat, "No it shouldn't." Dr. Buchanan endeavoured to explain his reasons for his suggestion, but was cut short by the clerk's "Not at all," and at once, in spite of remonstrance, he proceeded to write it down in his own way. Dr. Buchanan just looked round him with a good-humoured smile on his face, while he quietly said, "Well, well; have it all your own way." With all this pugnacity, Dr. Gibson was said to be a man of kindly disposition, and never lost the friendship of those of his brethren whom he vehemently opposed. He was 44 years of age at the Disruption, and survived it about 30 years.

Another of these malcontents, who had abandoned old mother kirk, of whom I had some previous knowledge, was the Rev. Wm. Arnot, of Glasgow. A relative of mine, living in that city, was an office-bearer in St. Peter's, and with his family I occasionally went to that church, but was not greatly taken up with the manner of the preacher, which, in my estimation, was rather awkward and ungainly. An opinion—an erroneous opinion—then prevailed, that it was a studied awkwardness—a peculiarity meant to be an imitation of Mr. Candlish. I say Mr., as in those days there were comparatively few D.D.'s.; now I may say there are comparatively few clergymen who are not. Willie Arnot never had such tail to his name, and his memory now stands out all the more prominent without such an appendage. William Pitt, Charles James Fox, and W. E. Gladstone, are about the grandest names in political story, and to prefix Lord, Earl, or Duke, would be to lose these names in the great ocean of titled mediocrity. Like beauty, intellectual worth is "when unadorned, adorned the most." But, to return to Canonmills. When I first entered, the hall was crowded, and, like many others, I got pent up in a corner where there were no seats. In looking around to ascertain who were my companions in tribulation, I was surprised to find myself within a few inches of being cushioned on the portly form of the minister of St. Peter's, Glasgow. From the fact of seeing him there, instead of being seated with his brethren on the platform, I was under the impression that he still hesitated as to whether he should, or should not, make common cause with the

protesters. At all events he did adhere, but he took no active part, so far as speaking was concerned, in the proceedings at Canonmills. He was afterwards zealous enough in the cause of the new-fledged Church, and no less zealous as a philanthropist. While in Glasgow he was to be found on almost all platforms where a great religious or moral end was to be served, and from his ready command of mother-wit, and, homely and familiar style of illustration, was a general favourite. While he remained in Glasgow every seat in his church was let, and the demand for seats could not be supplied. When High and Low Churchism were much talked of, and the question being put to Mr. Arnot as to his leanings, he drew his hand across his capacious breast, at the same time exclaiming, "I'm a broad Churchman;" and certainly he was by no means narrow, either physically or mentally. He was a native of Perthshire, wrought as a common gardener before he became a preacher, and was 35 years of age at the Disruption. He survived that event 32 years, dying suddenly in Edinburgh in 1875, aged 67. Although in earlier years his style and manner of preaching was not much prized by me, still, shortly after the Disruption, I had ample opportunities of hearing him, and came to highly appreciate his abilities and moral worth.

A conspicuous figure personally was the Rev. Dr. Patrick M'Farlan, of Greenock. He was one of the comparatively few bald heads that took an active part in the proceedings at Canon-mills. He spoke occasionally, and always with considerable effect. The parting from the mother kirk was

to him, in a pecuniary sense, an important sacrifice, as the stipend at Greenock was one of the largest in Scotland. He was 62 years of age at the Disruption, and survived that event only 7 years. To his credit it is said, that he recommended as his successor in the Establishment the Rev. Mr. M'Culloch, afterwards well-known as the Rev. Dr. M'Culloch, one of the most chaste and eloquent preachers left in the Establishment, and who, for the following 40 years, pursued a most successful ministerial career in Greenock.

There was also among the most valiant in this great fight for spiritual independence the Rev. James, afterwards Dr. Begg, then a fair-haired, vigorous, and comely man of 35 years, and who, for the next forty years, was the hero of more moral and ecclesiastical conflicts than any clergyman of his time. He and the Rev. Dr. Gibson fought if not side by side, at least on the same side, on many fields; against Sabbath desecration, against Popery, against innovations in the forms of worship,—such as the use of hymns, the introduction of instrumental music, and sitting during prayer,—and, above all, against the union of the Free with the United Presbyterian Church. Although Dr. Begg was not a total abstainer, yet he was a staunch advocate for temperance, and took a deep interest in all movements calculated to improve the condition of the working classes. He was by many considered narrow and bigoted, and no doubt he was on some subjects, but, on the whole, a good man who did much useful work in his day, which was not a short one. He died in 1883, aged 75 years, being the last

survivor of the leaders in the movement that led to the Free Church.

Besides our own Scottish clergy, there were several from the north of Ireland, all of whom spoke well, in expressing approval of what had been done, and testifying their allegiance to the Free Church. Dr. Cooke from Belfast made a really eloquent and impressive address, in the course of which he expressed his thankfulness to heaven for what he had seen on the previous day. At one time he had some difficulty in coming to a conclusion with regard to the course which ought to be pursued at that crisis, but now all doubts and fears had vanished, and he cheerfully cast in his lot with his brethren there assembled. Notwithstanding such professions, Dr. Cooke soon turned aside and walked no longer with them.

These, so far as my experience went and memory serves, were the most notable of the clergy who took part in the proceedings at Canonmills. Among the laymen I can notice few, and none of these more deserving than Hugh Miller, editor of *The Witness* newspaper. He took no part as a speaker, but was daily in attendance under the platform, busy with his notebook and pencil. His true position was in the editorial chair, and through his paper as a medium, he spoke with great effect to a congregation even larger than that in the old tannery at Canonmills. He was easily distinguished by his massive head, rendered specially attractive by the superabundant crop of curling hair, which grew upwards from a high, although not very broad brow.

The story of his life is well known, and admirably told by himself in the work entitled "My Schools and Schoolmasters." *The Witness* was established to aid the cause of the evangelical party; and a letter in reply to Lord Brougham's decision in the Auchterarder case caused the leaders of the party to conclude that the author of that letter was worthy to be entrusted with the editorship. The author was Hugh Miller, who, from a stone-mason had become a bank agent, and latterly editor of that influential newspaper. He was also one of the most original and accomplished geologists of his times; certainly a most extraordinary example of self-teaching successfully asserting itself among the most accomplished products of our universities. At a later period, estrangement had taken place between him and certain leaders of the Free Church, who expressed dissatisfaction both with his ecclesiastical views and his literary capabilities. Possibly he was somewhat self-willed and stubborn, as self-taught geniuses often are, but of this I have no facts to rest upon. The long-continued mental strain which his literary and scientific studies entailed upon him induced disease of the brain, and he died by his own act, at the age of 54 years.

Another layman who figured conspicuously in the Church courts, both before and after the Disruption, was David Maitland Makgill Crichton, of Rankeilour. He was tall and thin, with sharp features, and the specialty of his personal appearance was a long neck which secured for him a very marked individuality. His origin was aristocratic, but he had passed as an advocate, and his knowledge of law

enabled him to speak with authority on many points where legal difficulties presented themselves. He was 42 years of age at the Disruption, which he did not long survive.

The official legal adviser of the Evangelical party, was Mr. Alexander Murray Dunlop, scion of the house of Keppoch, of whom I had formerly some slight knowledge, and distinguished him at once among the Canonmills' worthies by the permanent drooping of one of his eyelids, over which he seemed to have no muscular control. At an election of a member of Parliament for Dumbartonshire, some years before the Disruption, the two candidates were Mr. Alexander Smollett of Bonhill, and Sir James Colquhoun of Luss. The former was the Tory candidate; in his interest Mr. Dunlop appeared on the platform on the day of nomination, and it is highly probable that I may have done my best to swell the chorus of groans and hisses with which he was greeted by the multitude of independent non-electors around. Although that is now nearly a fifty-years-old story, I cannot refrain from adding that, *we* were successful at the poll. The interest, however, did not end there. Something had, during the struggle, been said by the defeated candidate or his friend, which was regarded as an insult by Sir James, and the consequence was that he sent a challenge to Mr. Smollett, who declined to accept. It was then sent to Mr. Dunlop, who did accept. The parties duly met, shots were exchanged in the usual way, and both the belligerents left the field unharmed. I heard afterwards that Mr. Dunlop had a narrow escape, as his opponent's ball had passed through part of his dress, and that he politely

refused Sir James' request to try again. The duel did take place, but how far these latter items were facts or fancies I cannot say. The reader may not require to be told that it was with surprise that I saw, in this rebellious ecclesiastical camp, the old opponent of popular rights against whom I had expended some breath and Sir James some gunpowder. There he was, thin and sallow, drooping eyelid and all, the trusted legal adviser of a great host struggling for spiritual independence. A Tory in such an Assembly was surely matter out of place, and yet there was a good deal of it. In reading biographical notices of some of those staunch defenders of the right of congregations to choose their own ministers, we are at the same time told they were staunch conservatives,—consequently indefatigable at elections to have the parties chosen who should do their utmost to prevent the people from having any say in the election of members of Parliament. Sticklers for the spiritual rights of the people, and yet enemies to their civil and political rights—anomalous enough, surely. It was said, however, that Mr. Dunlop's toryism waned as he advanced in years; but be that as it may, he proved himself to be a painstaking, clear-headed and sagacious lawyer and counsellor; one that could take a wide grasp of his subject, and with firm and unerring steps reason up to his conclusion. "The Claim of Rights," drawn up shortly before the Disruption, was his work, and will ever remain a monument to his worth, as a guide to the Free Israelites in their journeyings through the wilderness of statutory Sin. Dr. Buchanan, who was a competent judge of judicial work, had a great admiration of

Mr. Dunlop, and expresses it very strongly in various portions of his history. He states that the leaders of the old Assembly twice or thrice attempted to concoct a reply to the Claim of Right, but were ultimately compelled to abandon the task as hopeless. Indeed, so highly prized was that document by the Frees, that they resolved to append to it the name of the author, but to this Mr. Dunlop would not listen. He must undoubtedly be classed with the ablest of the many able men who brought about the Disruption, and planned and practically laid the foundations of the Free Church.

Mr. Dunlop was born at Greenock in 1798, and consequently was 45 years of age at the Disruption, which he outlived 27 years. He died in 1870, aged 72, and was buried in the churchyard of Corsock, Dumfriesshire.

When the protesting party left St. Andrew's Church, the remaining portion of the Assembly, namely the Moderates, at once proceeded to reconstitute the court, by appointing officials. Several of the deserted seats were taken possession of by men who had previously been solemnly deposed by the church courts from the office of the ministry, and recent acts and decisions of Assembly were declared null and void. Dr. Cook of St. Andrews had been and continued to be the Moderate champion and leader. He was now the acknowledged guardian of the flesh-pots, and the ecclesiastically halt and maimed swarmed around them. The account given by Dr. Buchanan of the doings of this remnant of the General Assembly is truly deplorable,

showing as it does that acts solemnly performed by previous Assemblies, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, were contemptuously disregarded, and thrown to the winds as worthless. These cannot be regarded as idle charges made, or opinions formed, by an opponent, but as a plain statement of facts which cannot be doubted or denied. These doings of the remnant Assembly actually amount to a mockery of those rites and forms of church courts which have always been considered sacred in Presbyterian Scotland, and were a sorry introduction to the new phase of moderate action which had now been developed. Dr. Cook was certainly a man of ability, but it is impossible to read his speeches without being impressed with the idea of a pervading Jesuitical spirit. He appears in no higher character than that of apologist for the indignities to which the Church had been subjected by the civil courts. Had he and his party joined cause with the non-intrusionists who struggled so nobly for the spiritual independence of the Church, there is every reason to suppose that the Disruption would have been averted. Viewed from the Voluntary standpoint, however, it was well that they did not, as the Disruption was a long step in the direction of dis-establishment, although even the Frees did not find that out for some years afterwards. There was nevertheless a presentiment of this betrayed by the dread which the leaders and fathers felt as to the danger of the Free Church sinking down to the low position of a sect of Voluntaries. They arrogated to themselves the right to be considered the Church of Scotland; but time and experience proved to

their satisfaction that they were, to all intents and purposes, only a sect of Voluntaries, and the existing alliance with the United Presbyterians is sufficient proof of the fact.

As to what occurred in the old Assembly after the Frees had left I have been speaking at second hand, as I was not there to see. Although I must confess to have been “a Moderate,” so far as the desire to know what was going on in that quarter, still I could not remain altogether lukewarm, subjected as I was to the influence of such a zealous and well-informed landlady. From her I learned that there was to be held, on a certain evening during the Assembly’s sittings, a meeting for prayer on behalf of the Queen’s Commissioner, the Earl of Bute, and, in compliance with advice, I bent my way to St. Andrew’s Church at the hour appointed. I expected a crowd and a buoyancy such as I witnessed at Canonmills; but in this I was disappointed. There was only a very thin sprinkling in the gallery, where I had taken a seat, and these seemed, like myself, to be there more through curiosity than from any higher motive.

When the noble Commissioner entered the Church, he was conducted to a chair—perhaps throne is the proper word—which stood on a dais or platform erected in front of the pulpit. When seated, he bowed his head till his brow rested on a pillow which had been placed on a desk or table before him, and in that position he remained during the entire proceedings. There was a certain degree of pageantry, such as macers with their golden baubles, which they placed under the table, where they were allowed to remain till the

conclusion of the services. On the platform were seated a number of ladies and the clergymen who were to officiate—the pulpit being unoccupied.

The first prayer was offered by the great Moderate leader, Dr. Cook, a man well advanced in years, of venerable, yet commanding appearance, who, as I then thought, should have been at the head of an army of soldiers, rather than doing verbal battle with his brethren and fathers in the Church Courts. His voice was clear and strong, he spoke distinctly and slowly, and certainly did not go about the bush in recommending his lordship to the divine care and protection. The family history was detailed with considerable minuteness, the many noble and virtuous acts of the various members carefully pointed out, and, above all, the special individual claims of the present representative of the family, now happily the chosen representative of her most gracious Majesty the Queen in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. After going on for a considerable time, he began to pause as if considering what next, or what else he could say; then went on, and then paused again, till he, and at all events I, thought that he was pumped out, and the subject entirely exhausted. That something more could and would be said was soon afterwards apparent enough. The next to continue the exercise was, I was told, a Rev. Dr., or Mr. Robertson, possibly him of Ellon, who, next to Dr. Cook, made the most conspicuous figure on the Moderate side in the Church Courts. At all events, he had more the aspect of a recluse and book-worm than his colleague who had just

concluded, and seemed to me to be more highly gifted in the matter of free utterance. The words streamed out liquid and unimpeded as water from a cistern pipe. A great flow of fresh matter relating to the Bute family reached the Commissioner's ears and all our ears, and the accompanying laudation was by no means of a secondary nature. Indeed, by comparison, I considered the first speaker eclipsed, both as to volubility and unctuous sentiment, but between the two nothing had been left out that a Queen's Commissioner could have with decency desired to hear.

At this stage I supposed the proceedings were at an end; yet no; another and a younger divine came forward, but he had no chance whatever, and he evidently felt it. His remarks were brief, and amounted only to the expression of his concurrence in what had already been so well and ably said, and soon after, to the great relief of the Commissioner I should think, the proceedings were brought to a close. I had gone thither in no captious spirit, and with no prejudice against either the Commissioner or the Assembly, but this meeting by no means tended to raise them in my estimation. Had it been a meeting for the purpose of presenting his lordship with his portrait, when the speaking would necessarily have taken the nature of flattery, it might have been excusable, but when viewed in the form of prayer to the Almighty it was surely out of place. The then Earl of Bute was a good and amiable man, and no doubt a staunch Protestant. I never saw him but on that single occasion when he represented Her Majesty at the highest

Scotch Presbyterian Court. Curiously enough, I never saw his son, the present Earl, but once, and that was when he was laying the foundation-stone of a Roman Catholic College in Glasgow. These two events were forty years apart, but come together in my recollection, and sometimes lead to reflections of a rather bewildering nature. Have the blessings thus sought at the said meeting of these Presbyterian high priests kept flowing on in the channel so directly indicated, or have they taken a very different and undesirable course? The reply to this question must be left to the reader himself, although it is not difficult to divine what the verdict of the vast majority of the people of Scotland would be.

What I have just related was all my direct experience of the diminished Assembly of the Established Church, but I still continued, as opportunity permitted, attendance at Canonmills. My landlady, Mrs. W—, was there part of every day, not less on her own account than on that of her son, who was a teacher in or about the neighbourhood of Polmont. On returning from the Assembly she indicted reports of the day's proceedings, sometimes extending to several sheets, and these were regularly transmitted to him by post. On learning from his replies that the people in his neighbourhood had very imperfect notions of the questions that had led to the separation, she at once set out in search of Dr. Guthrie, and, having found him, urged the propriety of immediate action towards the enlightenment of this benighted region; and Dr. Guthrie actually went out himself with that object in view. What success attended his

mission I do not know, but I mention the circumstance chiefly as an illustration of the interest and zeal that existed in the humbler walks of life, and of influences that may emanate from supposed uninfluential quarters. What I am writing is not worthy the name of history, but rather what may be termed gropings in the ash-pit of history. Myself, my landlady, and thousands more, equally, and even less obscure, were all elements in the conflagration, but all doomed to drop between the bars and vanish for ever from the sight and memory of mankind. Only the ashes of a few prominent figures are collected and inurned, and their memory thus preserved as the representatives of events and epochs of the past, and an ever-present influence for good or ill. To the movement at large, or even to her own party, she was unknown, but to me she was, and ever will be, remembered as one of the Disruption worthies.

The work of this first Free Church Assembly consisted of the appointment of committees to take charge of the various departments of the Assembly's business, such as the Sustentation Scheme, the Missionary Schemes, the Education Scheme, and indeed all the business of the Church, which had been taken over and proceeded with just as though no separation had taken place. A most interesting part of the proceedings was the signing of the Deed of Demission by every minister who meant to adhere to the Free Church. The signing occupied a whole day, and at the close no fewer than 474 names were appended.

The Assembly commenced its sitting on Thursday, 18th

May, 1843, and concluded them on June 3rd, by a farewell address from Dr. Chalmers—a name that will live for ever in the hearts and history of Scotsmen and Scotland. He was 63 years of age at the Disruption, and, although apparently in robust health, he did not long survive to see the fruits of the great change which he had been chiefly the means of accomplishing in the ecclesiastical condition of Scotland. Four years after that great event, on 27th May, 1847, he was found dead in bed, half raised, with head resting on his hand, and writing materials before him. Great as were his services in founding the Free Church, his true greatness was seen and felt long before that period. While minister in Glasgow he put life and soul into all the churches, not merely by preaching, but by personal visitation to the houses of the poor, by the planting of schools and churches in neglected localities, and in various ways promoting the moral and intellectual interests of all classes of the community. If not a profound thinker, he was at least a mighty worker himself, and the great instigator of others to work at what he called “the excavation of the heathen” at home. Through his exertions chiefly, no fewer than 200 churches, *quoad sacra*, were built throughout the country. By act of Assembly, the ministers of these churches had conferred on them the full status of ordinary parish ministers, without, of course, having any claim to State support. For a time these churches were allowed to remain unmolested, but ultimately the fiat of the civil courts went forth against them, and every one of these ministers was deprived of his privileges as a member of Church Courts.

This was a severe blow to Dr. Chalmers, who, after denouncing the tyrannous act, said, "If you drive these men out you will drive us out also." This act crowned the indignities inflicted by the civil courts, and set at rest the minds of the Evangelical party as to the course they ought to pursue.

To the transcendent abilities of Dr. Chalmers, as a preacher and public speaker, there is the testimony of men of the highest culture and greatest intellectual power. Lord Cockburn said that he was present in Parliament, and heard all the eloquence that preceded the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832, and great as it was he heard nothing to equal the speeches of Chalmers in the General Assembly. Thomas Carlyle considered Chalmers at the head of all modern preachers, not even excepting his own special friend Edward Irving. The Rev. Dr. William Anderson was, when a young man, so much under the Chalmers spell as to be on the borders of insanity—but enough for our purpose. For the long period of 37 years his remains have rested in that beautiful "Garden of the dead," known as the Southern Cemetery, at the Grange, on the south side of Edinburgh. He rests side by side with his wife and several members of his family, and other relatives; among these his son-in-law and biographer, Dr. Hanna. It was but the other day we had the opportunity to visit this sacred place, and we were not a little surprised to note so many of the Disruption notables gathered around their great leader. Within a few paces of him are Dr. Cunningham, Dr. Patrick Fairbairn, Dr. Hetherington, Dr. Tweedie, Dr. Clason, Dr.

Alexander Duff, Hugh Miller, Professor Miller, M.D.; and at the south side of the grounds, Dr. Guthrie and William Arnot. Those who remember and revere the great ecclesiastical event of 1843, will here find memorials which cannot fail to awaken emotions akin to those experienced by Dr. Johnson while visiting the ruins of Iona. A very general question had been—What about the money? Where were the funds to come from, to provide for the support of such a host of clergymen, to build churches and schools, and to promote missions and support missionaries in foreign lands. Why, it flowed in abundantly, and before the Assembly broke up the sum given or subscribed amounted to no less than £232,347. Knowing and sagacious people like ourselves said—“All very well under the initiatory excitement, but wait a few years.” We have now waited a considerable number of years, but proofs of our sagacity are still wanting. Not only has our sagacity been at fault, but also the foresight—the prescience—of the very men who so admirably planned and laid the foundations of the Free Church; as, only a few years before, they it were who went round the country endeavouring to show the absolute necessity for a State-endowed Church, and to demonstrate the inadequacy of the Voluntary principle to provide for the spiritual wants of the community. Even the Voluntaries themselves were as impotent to descry or divine the issues of this great secession from mother kirk. One of the leaders, who had in former years been a thorn in the side of the Establishers, both Moderates and Evangelicals, was the Rev. John

Ritchie, D.D., minister of the United Presbyterian Church in Potterrow, Edinburgh, a man of ability, and highly popular among the Voluntaries. On the first Sabbath after the Disruption, when my landlady returned from Church, she addressed me as follows:—‘He’s an awfu’ man that Dr. Ritchie; what think ye o’ his text the day? ‘Thy rowers have brought thee into deep waters.’”(Ezek. xxvii. 26.) How the reverend gentleman handled this text she could not inform me, but it was evident that he considered the protesters had got into a scrape from which they would not soon get out. They, however, got out of it wonderfully well, if they ever got in, but even that remains to be proved. In thus speaking of where the money was to come from, I am reminded of an amusing incident which, in these gossiping reminiscences, may not be out of place to mention. Shortly after the Disruption a considerable sum had been received from slavery supporting churches of South America. Against the taking of money from such a quarter there was a great outcry in this country, and “Send back the money” was a phrase to be heard in every direction: but the leaders of the Free Church were of a different opinion, and the money was retained. A gentleman afterwards informed me that while the cry was in the ascendant, he had occasion to call on Dr. Candlish at his dwelling-house. While in conversation, a little boy, one of the Dr’s. sons, was amusing himself in the apartment, and the noise he was making called forth a remonstrance from the father. As this had not the desired effect, threatening was resorted to, and as this also failed, the Dr.

took hold of the disturber by the shoulders and put him out of the apartment. The youth, who was evidently not a believer in the peace-at-any-price doctrine, by way of retaliation put his mouth to the key-hole and shouted at the top of his voice—"Send back the money! Send back the money!" As the visitor and the Doctor were not at one on this subject, the former felt rather awkward, and the latter, with a rather grim smile, and without a word of comment, allowed it to drop.

When the Assembly closed its sittings, and even when a sufficiency of money was at command, external difficulties were not at an end. If it required moral courage and resolution in the clergy to leave their churches and manses, these qualities had their counterpart in the efforts of the people to supply all wants. Many of the great landlords, such as the Duke of Buccleuch, Lord Panmure, Lord Glasgow, and the Earl of Lauderdale, stubbornly refused sites for churches on any portion of their lands, and some of them even threatened to evict cottars and tenants who should refuse to return to the Established Church. The use of quarries was denied, access to sandpits was prohibited, and every obstacle thrown in the way of planting Free Churches. In defiance of all obstacles and threats, the people found temporary means for the conducting of public worship, and with a heroism worthy the old Covenanters, persevered till these great men bowed to the inevitable. A marked exception was the Marquis of Breadalbane, who not only gave sites, but wood, stone, and slates, to the value of five or six thousand pounds.

The long period of 40 years now lies between us and the great event we have been describing. The black streak of the 400 divines marching along the streets is now sadly shortened. The fell destroyer has been nibbling at it ever since, and only about about a dozen are now found in the Assembly. All the leaders of both Assemblies to whom I have referred by name are dead; gone to their account; gone up, let us hope, to a higher altitude, where they have a wider and clearer range of vision; where there are no selfish or party interests to engender discord, or mar the universal harmony which the common faith tells us will remain unbroken for ever.

Now, after this experience of four decades, the question may be reasonably put, What have been the results accruing from this Exodus? To speak generally, they show to a certainty that in this country State aid is not necessary in order to provide for the spiritual wants of the community. Within a very short time after its birth, the Free Churches numbered 500, scattered all over the country, and every one of the ministers of these churches had an allowance of £140 per annum, which sum many of the wealthier congregations supplemented to a considerable amount. As years passed away the number of churches steadily increased, until at present they are upwards of 1000; and the Sustentation Fund has also increased till the minimum stipend on the equal dividend platform is about £160, and many of the stipends are supplemented by the respective congregations to three or four times that sum. The annual aggregate of the Sustentation Fund now stands at £174,000, the sum

collected for the year 1883, which is greatly in excess of what at the Disruption was considered possible ever could be raised. The total sum collected for church purposes for 1884 was £628,222. Then there are, besides, a host of funds, such as Church-building Fund, Manse-building Fund, Home Mission Fund, Foreign Mission Fund, Aged Ministers' Fund, Education of Ministers' Children Fund, etc., etc., each and all of them constantly crying "Give, give," and the cry is wonderfully well responded to.

Then there is another result which demands special notice—that is, the effect produced upon other denominations. The Established Church was stimulated to unwonted efforts in order to maintain her position as the Church of Scotland, and this rivalry—shall we call it *sanctified* rivalry?—has raised the number of her churches from about 1100 to about 1400. She too has her funds, and although the great central one, *viz.*, the general Sustentation Fund, is not required, the other schemes, to some extent, correspond to those of her rival.

A similar effect has been produced on the United Presbyterian Church. Until the advent of the Free Church, the United Presbyterian clergy were modest in their demands on the purses of their people, but the success of the Frees was so astounding that they too waxed bold, and by the judicious application of the ecclesiastical birch, succeeded to an extent quite unconceivable fifty years ago. Their minimum stipend is now about £200, and they have a great number of schemes, some of them with realised funds

attached sufficiently ample to preclude the necessity of trusting to Providence to provide the needful for tomorrow's wants. For aged ministers, their fund amounts to upwards of £40,000, some of their churches cost from £15,000 to £30,000, and several of their ministers have stipends of £1000 a year.

Now, surely, if elegant churches, convenient manses, and well-paid ministers in all parts of the country, represent a high degree of spiritual life, Scotland must be in a good way; and for this, so far as human means are concerned, she is chiefly indebted to the Free Church. Indeed it is scarcely going too far to say that any one of these three denominations might be struck out of existence without depriving the country of ecclesiastical machinery sufficient to supply all its spiritual wants. My meaning is, that there would be enough church accommodation left to supply the present demand, and sufficient parson power to overtake the subsidiary work which usually falls to their lot. In many parts of the country we find four or five churches where one would be sufficient to accommodate with sittings the whole of the adherents of these churches, and still be free from the charge of overcrowding.

But what are the moral and spiritual results of this vast accumulation of what in Church Courts is called "the external means of grace?" We should naturally expect that the results would be at an equal ratio with the means—that the "excavation" which Dr. Chalmers set agoing and carried on with so much success, would have been

continued with increasing energy, until gospel light and liberty had chased sin and wretchedness from the land. Instead of that being the case, Satan still holds his own, as there is in every class a fearful amount of grossness and immorality; sufficient in its depravity to make the words “civilized country” not more than a half truth. Indeed, in our cities, whole ship-loads of humanity could be found so low in the moral scale, as would make it a source of deterioration in the most benighted regions of Africa or India.

Apart from this; we hear from the various Church Courts a wail in regard to back-sliding —the lapsed masses, the falling away from church attendance by the working classes. That it is so, there is but little room for question, and various reasons may be found for this unfortunate state of matters.

It is usual for clergymen to say that one great cause is the immense amount of irreligious and atheistical literature now circulated in all parts of the country. And all the more is this to be regretted, when the doubting and unbelieving tendency is encouraged by men who are supposed to be the very high priests of science.

There is some truth in this, but it has a connection with other causes, for some of which it is to be feared the churches themselves are chiefly responsible. One of these is the increasing appeal for increased giving, and the often very injudicious manner in which the appeal is made. For instance, in urging the claims of the Sustentation Fund the

minister, and the fly-leaf left in the pews, dwells pathetically on the poor pittance upon which ministers in many parts of the country require to live. Now, the lowest paid minister in the Free Church has £160 a year, and a manse or dwelling-house; which remuneration is three times as much as the majority of tradesmen and labourers receive in the shape of wages. The sympathetic words of the city minister in behalf of his ill-paid professional brother in the country, imply the inferiority of the ordinary workman; and he feels it—feels his degradation, and that tends neither to sustain his respect for the church nor to loosen his purse-strings. He cannot see, and it would scarcely be complimentary to his sense of self-respect if he could see, how such sympathy should be shown for the penury of one so much better off than himself. He cannot see how a country minister should be discontented and in want on £160 a year; while he, the workman, is expected to be contented and happy, and in a condition to give on £60 or £70 a year.

Then there is the grumble of the higher paid clergymen. At a social meeting lately held, where, as usual, the great majority of the congregation were working people, the minister, a United Presbyterian, talked of his hard work, and his *paltry* £600 a year, in tones so bitter and upbraiding that my informant, who was present, but not belonging to the congregation, wondered why the people did not rise in mass and leave the hall. Any person of common sense will see the absurdity of using language like that in the presence of work people, who respectively require to labour eight or

ten years before they can earn such a sum. A minister in the enjoyment of such a stipend, from a congregation composed chiefly of the working classes, should be cautious of his utterances, as grumbling does not harmonise well with admonitions against wordly-mindedness, fashionable vanities, against discontentment with your lot, and a few other things which come within the scope of the preacher to denounce.

In speaking in this strain I do not by any means advocate low pay, but in the case of clergymen it should bear some proportion to that of the mass of the congregations with which they are connected.

A few years ago the discovery was made by the Free Church that there was great inequalities in the giving, as some families of two or three members attending the church contributed more to the various funds than other families of five or six members all worshipping in the same church. This seemed to be regarded as a system of fraud practised on the Church, as deacons were instructed to visit the families, and take down the names of all the members, so that the number of the family might be known and compared with the amount contributed. The defaulting families were to be remonstrated with, and no doubt dealt with as the Church Courts might in their wisdom see fit, but in what shape I never learned. Now, the members of a Voluntary Church—a Church professing to be supported by the free-will offerings of the people, submitting to such humiliating dictation, would show a mental softness

altogether foreign to what is considered the ordinary characteristic of Scotsmen. To their credit be it said, they spurned such dictation, and the scheme was then seemingly abandoned. The most remarkable circumstance in connection with this is, that any Churchman or Church Court in Scotland could for a moment have supposed that any considerable portion of their people would submit to such inquisitorial proceedings.

And yet, from the latest circular left in the pews, it appears that the scheme was only held in abeyance, as the inadequate maintenance of the ministers is dolefully harped upon, and the astounding statement made that “the income of the larger number of them does not come up to the level of first clerks in mercantile offices.” Then suggestions are submitted as to the duty of church members, adherents and sitters, towards the Sustentation Fund, and it is added that no one ought to feel justified in taking the benefit of gospel ordinances, without bearing his or her due share of the needful means of their support. Suggestions are also made as to the amount of income, a fifth or a tenth, which should be set apart for the support of church ordinances, and so forth. Besides the circular, the officiating minister usually enforces its teachings by his own cogitations on the subject, and the result is that many of the hearers go home dissatisfied.

In making these remarks I do not ask clergymen to be content with their condition, nor to cease from dictating to their hearers as to what they should give. All I have

attempted is to point out some of the causes that are alienating the working classes from church attendance. It must be perfectly evident to the clergy themselves that theology is now, among the Protestant denominations, greatly more unsettled than it ever has been at any period since the Reformation. The thunders of the Church are no longer feared as they once were, and the observance of rites and forms, new moons and holidays, greatly less believed in, even among the mass of steady church-goers. Although it may be in these days a difficult task to till churches, it is not so very difficult to drive people away from them, and if the clergy wish to retain, or strengthen their hold upon the people, they must take care that they be not over-exacting and burdensome. I once heard the late Rev. William Arnot say from the pulpit, with reference to the Free Church, that "there was a danger of too much worldly prosperity," but that is a danger as little dreaded by Churchmen as it is by the men of the world. While there is a continued call for money, and lamentation over the small amount given for "the cause of God," large sums are needlessly wasted in the erection of costly churches, which, after all, are seldom commodious or adapted to the dominating peculiarities of Presbyterian worship, and also in the planting of churches where they are not required.

Scarcely had the ink been dry with which these words were written, when I observed in a newspaper a report of the laying of the memorial stone of a Free Church in Perth. The presiding minister was the Rev. Dr. Horatius Bonar, and after a complimentary and an appropriate address, he

closed in the following words

“Still, in a time like the present, when admiration for ecclesiastical architecture was mistaken for devotion, when the beauties of sacred art were dazzling men into sacred unrealities, it was well to keep in mind that what they saw before them was the body, not the soul—the statue, not the living man. In erecting that new and handsome church they might be apt to fall into the error of building from the outward to the inward instead of from the inward to the outward. Let them take warning, and as they looked on these rising walls and that sky-pointing spire, let them remember that it was the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profited nothing. Music was not worship, architecture was not religion, the temple was not the Holy Spirit. It was often from the plain wooden structures of the memorable 1843 that burning words went forth, and carried warmth and life all over Scotland.”

There is well-grounded cause of the great need for such a warning. There seems to be a rivalry among congregations as to having the finest, that is, the most ostentatious churches, and in order to gratify this architectural vanity, they take to borrowing money, and then appeals are made to the people for special collections to assist in wiping off the debt “from the House of God.” Ordinary work-people, families compelled to live in houses of one or two apartments, are out of place in fabrics such as these, and have no right, in justice to themselves, to contribute towards their erection. “Let everything be done decently

and in order,” is an excellent maxim, but there is a danger in clerical human nature of giving it a one-sided interpretation.

With regard to the Free Church, it must be borne in mind that the contendings between Non-intrusionists and Moderates, which were so universally absorbing and exciting during the Disruption era, and had a stimulating effect on the liberality of the non-conforming party, have long ago subsided. Many of the present generation of adherents are so very ignorant of the origin of their Church, that they regard the Disruption as much a part of “ancient” history as the Reformation itself. Let them be asked the reason of their preference for the Free Church, and they have generally nothing higher nor better to say than the use-and-wont plea—following the footsteps of their parents, or personal convenience, or partiality to the preaching of a particular minister. On these parties the “giving” pressure, when it reaches beyond a certain stage, is felt to be irksome, and they either go elsewhere or nowhere.

Attempts have of late been made to show, that, in proportion to the increase of the general population of Scotland, the ratio of increase in the Free Church is considerably lower than in the Established Church. How far that may be true I know not, nor is it worth the trouble of anything like anxious inquiry. Assuming that it is true, the fact is not at all a matter for wonder, and perhaps, in one sense, not even for regret, on the part of the Free

Church. The Establishment opens its gates on much easier terms. In most of its churches the sittings are either free or very cheap, and with regard to the matter of doctrine, each minister is, to a great extent, left to the freedom of his own will. The rigidity of the old Covenanting and Puritan times is not merely relaxed, but somewhat contemptuously stigmatised, and belief, forms, and discipline adapted to a more free-and-easy state of society. How far this is matter for satisfaction or regret must be left for clergymen to determine, but there can be no doubt of its effect in drawing adherents, and also of its effect on their minds, so far as unwavering belief in the divine origin of the Bible is concerned. On these elastic terms the Christian character can be easily maintained, but the result is very likely to be that such a church will be found much in the condition of the church at Laodicea, “neither cold nor hot.”

The Established Church of Scotland is by its constitution bound to teach and maintain the Protestant religion as contained in the Westminster Confession, and to uphold the Presbyterian form of worship. On these conditions alone has she any claim for State support. Even under the old Moderate sway, however easy she may have been on the moral side of discipline, she was sensitive enough when anything like heresy was in the wind. With regard to the latter, she now concerns herself very little, if at all. There may have been no formal renunciation of the Confession, but, it cannot be denied that she tolerates preaching directly at variance with it, and to tolerate is virtually to sanction. In that respect she has earned—we cannot say honestly

earned—not only “honourable mention,” but first-class certificate from a body which has hitherto found in Scotland very little ground for the sole of its foot.

A report has just appeared in the newspapers of a meeting in Glasgow of the Scottish Unitarian Association, and one of the leading speakers stated that “he did not hesitate to say that religious thought in Scotland was already deeply and permanently influenced by the principles of Unitarian faith. He did not know any school of religious thought that better expressed his own personal faith, than the rising party of broad-churchmen in Scotland. He would say that there were clergymen who occupied pulpits in their Orthodox Churches who were as thoroughgoing Rationalists as any Unitarian minister in that meeting.”

If we except the word “permanently,” there is not another in the whole of the above quotation which can be objected to in regard to its truth. A perfectly true and honest statement, and the truth of it apparent to every one who has eyes and ears open, and can think a little on what is being said and done around him. Indeed, that class of clergymen in the Established Church are at no pains to conceal their unbelief, farther than to shape their phraseology so as to leave back-doors for retreat should their position be legally assailed. They say they preach what they believe to be the truth, but even assuming that it is truth, it is not what they have solemnly engaged, before God and man, to teach. Men that are paid for doing one thing and at the same time do quite another thing, must have very strange notions of

the nature of truth, and ought not to be relied on when they come forward as teachers of theology.

Evidently the State-paid Church has fallen from her high estate—is labouring under complicated organic disease for which she is herself responsible, and which justly portends a fatal termination.