

righteousness. Therefore, until we find that those who made Patronage their darling theme of raillery, attempt to disprove it from Scripture, we shall leave it for their "further consideration," and simply express our conviction that we have the highest authority and example, in the infallible rule of faith and practice, in approbation of Patronage, and that any countenance or support given to the cause of Christ, from a Cæsar or a Felix, down to the humblest in life, for the furtherance or protection of His kingdom, was gladly accepted. The subject of Patronage has so long engaged the consideration of the noblest sons of the Reformation, and still requiring the exercise of the brightest intellects, that it might be considered presumptuous in us to say that Patronage, as now exercised in the Church of Scotland, is entirely in accordance with the principles of the Word of God. As the exact and only form in which Patronage is to be adhered to is not defined in the Scriptures, we should require to believe that those who framed Patronage were infallible men, before we could undertake to defend Patronage in our Church, as that alone form of which the Supreme Head of the Church can approve. It must rather become manifest in practice, that, whatever form of Patronage be adopted, should it, in the very letter and spirit, accord with Holy Writ, it is liable to abuse while fallible men have to do with it. At the same time, we confidently maintain that Patronage, as existing in the Church of Scotland, is about the mildest form, least likely to be exercised tyrannically, and next to impossible to be exercised for evil, of any that can be conceived. Accordingly, we find that, when the subject was before the British Parliament, immediately before the secession of '43, and the Bill on Patronage adopted, which more fully defined it, and, as some think, modified Patronage, it was stated by some who afterwards, from the pressure of association, left the Church, that this measure was the very thing they desired, that it was a "great boon;" and this measure was objected to in the House of Lords, on the ground that it "reduced Patronage to a mere name."

Just glance at Patronage as it is in operation in accordance with this measure. The Church, and the Church alone, has the right to decide on every young man's qualifications for the ministerial office, as regards talents, attainments, morals, piety, everything; the Church is absolute in this, so that the shadow of a supposed unfitness may reject him after eight years' special preparation for the ministry. If, then, among the many or the few who seek an appointment to a charge, one should be found really incompetent, the Church Court is at fault, and not the patron. The patron, however, may nominate one out of all the Church Courts have licensed, and still countenance. But now, again, the Presbytery and particular congregation may scrutinize his character, his personal appear-

ance, his voice, and raise any objection their imagination can conceive, and the Church has the most absolute power to settle or reject him on the most trivial objection—may reject him solely because of his unfitness, in their judgment, for that particular charge. But when a licentiate is declared in every respect suitable for the charge, and settled, he is most entirely free from the control or dictation of the people, as he had been of the patron. And thus the most the patron can do, is to relieve the Presbytery or individual minister from the responsibility of making what might be regarded invidious selections from the licentiates, and also save the people, at the outset, from disagreeing as to the particular licentiate they should nominate from among the many declared by the Church to be qualified to labor in the Lord's vineyard. And being ordained to the work, we conceive that there are no other ministers in any Church more independent to preach the gospel, to speak the truth and the whole truth, fearless of the face of high or low, patron or peasant, than the ministers of the Church of Scotland. The Patronage, as in our Church, really serves to render the Church free from any undue exercise of power from any quarter which can in any way retard her usefulness. No minister of Christ can be conceived more absolute in power for good, than ministers in the Church of Scotland; and therefore we believe that no minister on the face of the earth has a more solemn, responsible, and terrible account to render at the tribunal of the Lord Jesus Christ, than the minister of the Church of Scotland, unless he exercises his independent position for the dissemination of pure and undefiled religion.

It would be wrong to say that patrons have in every instance made the most suitable selection. But entrust the nomination to the Presbytery, the people, or whoever you may, and would this be done? As it is, the Patronage of nomination—for to this, and to nothing more, does the Patronage in our Church amount—is distributed among all who may and should take an interest in the extension of the Gospel throughout the kingdom, and it may thus lead to all taking an interest in those who are to be engaged in the great work of ameliorating all classes of the community. But patrons have too often been spoken of as if all those who have the legal right to nominate to charges in our Church, were heathens, and only heathens—as if Christian laymen had no right to take an interest in the settlement of ministers of the Gospel: whereas we have it from those most competent to give an opinion, that probably there is not one in a hundred of the patrons but really felt their responsibility, and exercised their best judgment for the welfare of the Church, in nominating to vacant parishes. And during the time in which Patronage was exercised before 1843, it was