

with the Establishment. It is no less gratifying to observe that similar sentiments are both cherished and expressed within the Church of Scotland. During the last three years, a movement has been on foot to pave the way for a union between the Free Church and the other denominations of dissenting Presbyterians. It is no secret that this attempt has proved a failure, and that the principles of the Free Church and those of the other dissenting Presbyterians are found to be irreconcilable—at least, on certain fundamental points. The Free Church holds fast to the principle of an Establishment, which the older seceders, or a large portion of them, reject; and the only barrier which stands between the Free Church and the Church of Scotland, is the state of the law in reference to lay patronage. A strong opinion against this law, in its present form, has been gaining ground in the Church of Scotland, and a movement has been begun, to have it modified to suit the progressive spirit of the times. At a meeting of the Established Presbytery of Edinburgh, on the 25th April last, an overture was brought forward to the effect “that the General Assembly take into its serious consideration the present law of patronage, with a view to obtain some modification of the same.” Mr. Cumming, the minister who proposed the overture, used these significant words:—

“The history of their country in time past had been, he regretted to say, too much a record of ecclesiastical divisions. Was it not possible they had come to be wise enough to enter something like a period of union? (Hear, hear.) Must their separation from their Free Church brethren be indeed for ever? He knew not whether any of them looked towards the Church of Scotland; but if his poor word could have any weight, he could assure them that—bitter speeches and hard words notwithstanding—many in the Church of Scotland looked towards them with sympathy—(hear, hear, and applause)—and that, upon the ground of their common Presbyterianism, and upon the ground of their common principles, they still felt that they were brethren, and that they were nearer to each other than any other Church in Scotland. (Applause.) Time had done much to narrow the Free Church controversy of the past. That bitter and delicate question—spiritual independence—had been treated of—might he not say, disposed of—in the Civil Courts; and he believed many of their brethren did not hide from themselves that, to say the least of it, the Church of Scotland was altogether as free, and altogether as independent as they. (Hear, hear, and applause.) If that were so, there remained but the one question of non-intrusion. With regard to the question of non-intrusion, many of them, especially a large proportion of the younger men within the Church, deeply felt that a violent settlement in a parish was an incalculable evil—(hear, hear, and

loud applause)—and if, by removing this bar of patronage, which in itself was an evil and an incubus, they could do anything to remove obstacles in the way of a union with many of their brethren, should they not rejoice that such a thing was possible? Why, if patronage was a bad thing—as he held it to be a bad and an evil thing—he for one would willingly and gladly consent to its removal, if by its destruction there was a prospect of such a movement as that to which he had referred. It was no secret that to many of them, in private, communications had been made month after month, from some of their Free Church brethren, as to how gladly they would look towards the Church of Scotland were an open door provided for them. (Hear, hear, and applause.) And it was in the power of the Church at once to take away a certain system which crippled the action of the Church, to improve her constitution, and give her additional force and popularity in the country, and at least to provide a possibility of union with those whom they still regarded as brethren, a union with those whom he believed in principle they were still one, and with whom—bitter speeches notwithstanding—they were still one in sympathy and heart.” (Applause.) Mr. Cumming concluded by moving the transmission of the overture.

This overture was carried by the Presbytery, by a majority of 22 votes against 2. The decision was therefore all but unanimous. The following week an overture was brought before the Free Church Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, (comprehending the Presbytery of Edinburgh,) of a very significant nature, clearly indicating, in fact, that it owed its origin to the views and sentiments which had prompted the adoption of the overture in the Established Presbytery. In other words, a flag of truce has been raised between the two once hostile camps, the sounds of battle have died away, and both parties seem to be preparing the way for compromise and re-union. The Rev. Dr. Blaikie was the proposer of the overture in the Free Church Synod, which was expressed in the following words:—“Whereas, it is expected that the General Assembly's Committee on Union with other Churches will lay a Report before the Assembly, and, whereas, it is of great importance, before coming to a decision on any proposal of Union, that the Church should have full opportunity of considering, among other things, the bearing of such Union on her historical position and claims, and on the possible reconstruction of national Presbyterianism, in harmony with her principles: It is humbly overtured to the venerable General Assembly, that the Report of the Committee be simply laid on the table for the deliberate consideration of the Church, in order that the subject may be thus ripened for final discussion. Dr. Blaikie, in the course of his speech, said:—“It is the very sense I have of duty in this matter, that