

to settlement not having been enforced. The law was clear, and could have been restored without disturbing the existing order of things. Dr. Chalmers advised, that as the Call had been rendered a nullity, by the decisions given by the General Assembly on individual cases, so by a series of opposite decisions, it could be restored to significance and effect. He proposed that the question should be sent down to Presbyteries, that it might be decided by them what amount of signatures to the Call should be required, and that, acting on their determination, the Supreme Court might establish sound precedents. That would have been a legal course; but he was overruled by others, far less able than he, but more determined to establish the authority of the Church Courts at the expense of the people. The first false step was taken; the Veto Law was passed, by which the power of the parishioners was restricted, and the decision as to the choice of a minister practically put into the hands of the clergy. Under the laws of the land, *all* the parishioners had the right to call or object; under the Veto Law, only the male heads of families being communicants were entitled to be heard. The object of the more violent of the party was to transfer the patronage from the lay patrons to the clergy, a policy which has since been carried out by the Free Church, both in Scotland and in this country. With the same end in view, they tried to secure what was called, in ecclesiastical jargon, the *liberum arbitrium*, which has been justly defined as "a discretionary and irresponsible power to determine, not judicially, nor according to any ascertained rule, but arbitrarily in every case." To the Veto Law Dr. Chalmers was greatly opposed, and writing some years after its enactment, when the evils had arisen which he had believed to be inevitable, he said: "The Church came into her present difficulties, not by my advice, but in opposition to it."

The evil effects of such assumptions were soon felt. In whatever light the law of patronage may be regarded, no man can deny that so long as the law existed its provisions must be obeyed. The patron having presented, the presentee had a right to be put on his trials, and had this been done the whole battle would have been fought out in the Church Courts; no Civil Court would