

"national" than others, it is that very class amongst whom the lay patrons were chiefly found. And as for the ubiquitous ratepayer, what makes him as such so national? For the most part he pays his rates because he cannot help doing so; and if besides paying his rates he chooses for some deliberately chosen good of his own to refuse communion with the National Church, why should his rates entitle him to interfere with the interests of a Church from which, of his own free will, he has separated himself? Why should he or his friends wish him to interfere? He has preferred something that he thinks better. Every ratepayer who seeks the benefits of the National Church has rights and privileges regarding it. No one can both reject a good and have it. And every institution—even a National Church—must be worked on the intelligible principle of belonging to those who in point of fact do belong to it.

We have been led too far into these remarks; but the truth is, that the abolition of Patronage seems to us, on the part of certain people who claim to be Liberals, to have been made the occasion of more bad and ill-natured logic than one could have supposed possible. It has denationalised the Church, and has converted it into a sect! It has given an impulse to disestablishment! The simple historical fact being, that the British Legislature has repealed an Act, known as the Act of Queen Anne, which the same British Legislature enforced in the face of the unanimous remonstrance of the Church, and of which the Church may be said never to have ceased to complain. What may be the issue of the new order of things no one can foretell. We venture on no prophecy; but one would require to be ignorant both of logic and of history, to write and speak of the recent legislation which has abolished Patronage in the manner which is persistently done in certain quarters. Let us hope that the congregations of the National Church throughout the country, under the regulations now laid down by the General Assembly, and the course of events, may conspicuously demonstrate the extravagant inferences which have been drawn from a long-delayed act of justice.

Immediately connected with the elec-

tive rights of congregations under the new system arose the question of the rights of ministers and congregations who might, in the altered state of things, desire to return to the Church which they had forsaken, or from which they were separated by causes which might appear to them no longer the same as before. Here, too, there has been great scope for misrepresentation, and some have fully availed themselves of it. The wish of the Church to open her doors to any who might desire to return to her—now that patronage is gone—has been set forth as a mere wish on her part to weaken other Churches—to repair her breaches at their expense. It has been said that the proposal to admit ministers of the Free Church to join the National Church on easier terms than heretofore is to insult the Free Church. The fact that Free Church ministers as a body have not manifested any eagerness to rejoin the Church, has been considered a public testimony to the strength of their principles, and the independence of their character and position. It is not necessary to make any reply to statements of this kind. Those who believe that the only object of the prevailing party in the Church who obtained the abolition of Patronage was to weaken the Free Church, or to insult it thereafter by overtures of union, must be allowed to hold their opinion. It may be permitted, however, to one who had no connection—political or otherwise—with those who were instrumental in obtaining the abolition of Patronage, to hold that other motives had also some influence in urging the legislation of last year. The divided state of Scottish Presbyterianism was admitted to be a scandal by all. The feelings of alienation and hostility out of which the Disruption had sprung had considerably died down. An important section of the Free Church were notoriously as much devoted to the principle of the national establishment of religion as any member of the Established Church itself. Why should not something be done to give an opportunity, if nothing more, of reconsideration, and possibly of reunion, to those who were thus separated. Adherence to principle is a good thing—manly adherence to a position even unhappily taken up may be highly creditable; but Chris-