

towns of Scotland, took place a few weeks ago in Edinburgh, for the purpose of hearing ministers of various Dissenting Churches upon "the hearings of the late decision of the Court of Session on the Cardross Case." The propriety of such meetings is very questionable. Any intention of consussing the Courts is disclaimed, and well it may, for such an aim would be simply ridiculous. *Why then hold them! Are they the right tribunals before which to review legal decisions of the judges of the land.* Is a promiscuous and it may be prejudiced audience, "comprising a goodly proportion of ladies," and addressed by speakers all on one side, a promising jury-box when a calm examination and a dispassionate verdict are required? But there is need, it is said, of informing public opinion on the subject. Doubtless: and public opinion having become somewhat enlightened since 1843, does not run and cannot be made to run with the Free Church now as it did then. Still, we think that such meetings are unnecessary for such a purpose; and as their necessary tendency is to lower the dignity and authority of our law Courts, we think that truly patriotic and Christian men should hesitate before working such aids.

But our chief reason for noticing this public meeting is to point out that the Free Church has abandoned its old lines of defence and fallen back on new positions. They are now willing to concede to the Civil Courts the right of *reviewing all their ecclesiastical procedure, in order that they may judge whether any civil wrong has been done to Mr. McMillan, either by the mode of procedure or by the sentences adopted, and that they may award pecuniary damages for any wrong done him.* This however is all that has been ever demanded. What then prevents the speedy settlement of the question? Simply this;—that they are making this concession to the public, but not to the Court of Session. In the Court, they are still fighting for the old pleas that the whole case must be dismissed because the sentences were spiritual acts." And how will their present admission that "the Civil Court may take the whole ecclesiastical proceedings under consideration, and not only get them for consideration, but for judgment" (for such is Principal Cunningham's language) please those of their friends

in this Province who have been contending for them on their old grounds; and how will it agree with that clause in the late "basis of union" which forbids all such "review" to the Civil Courts? We leave these questions to be answered by each one for himself; but to prove that we are not exaggerating nor setting down aught in malice, we append the following article from the *North British Daily Mail*, the leading Liberal paper in the West of Scotland;—for the first time its tone on the question is bitterly severe, for it believes that the Free Church leaders do really now see the absurdity of their old views of "Spiritual Independence," but that they have not the honesty to confess their error. It is indeed most interesting to study how slowly but how necessarily the Free Church is being taught in the school of experience "the length of its tether" and at the same time, "the power of the law:"

A contemporary, whose imaginative is considerably in excess of his argumentative power, has been levelling the thunder; of his indignation against the leading journals in Scotland and England, on account of their consentaneous condemnation of the sentiments expressed at the recent meeting on the Cardross case. For the structure of his mind he is not responsible, and we have neither the right nor the fancy to complain of the poverty of his reasoning faculty. We do, however, complain of his disingenuous suppression of the arguments of his contemporaries upon those very points he rates them for disregarding, and of facts it is essential his readers should know, in order that they may be able to form for themselves an opinion on the bearing of the case. Our readers are aware that we have examined the subject from every point of view in which it has been presented by the defenders, and that we, very recently, in criticising the vagaries of Dr. Candlish, made it apparent, by extract from their printed pleading in Court, that they were maintaining one thing there through the medium of counsel, and quite another thing themselves in their addresses to the country. What are the pleas they have, at this moment, under appeal to the Inner House to sustain? On the one hand, that their "sentences being spiritual acts, it is not competent for the Civil Court to reduce them, and the action should therefore be dismissed;" on the other hand, that as these "sentences were pronounced in the exercise of the authority belonging to the Courts of the Free Church, no decree for damages can be pronounced." Language could not be more plain. They deny, at this moment, unconditionally, the right of the Court, in any circumstances, to interfere with their proceed-