

ciple must merge them with one of the existing parties. They are not strong enough, and when the first burst of excitement is over, they will not be important enough to form a separate party of themselves. The very sensation which they have been enabled to create has been owing to the accident of their position. The importance of a man's acts is oftener the result of the opportunities he enjoys than of any particular qualities of mind or body that he possesses. They are strong enough to be powerful auxiliaries to any party, but not strong enough to remain a separate party of themselves. To remain together as a party at all, they must have a clear, defined, practical object in view; and this they will only attain by embracing without reserve the principles of the Dissenters—the most important one they have adopted—but they must eventually go farther, or they have already gone too far. On what ground have they quitted the Establishment? because, according to the interpretation of the law, it was unchristian. But if that be their opinion, can they stop there? Must they not go on to say, that what is so obnoxious must be got rid of? Such is the view which plain, practical men must feel that the framers of the Free Church are shut up to. This indeed is their only justification for the course they have already adopted—the only practical result they can hope from it—otherwise it must appear that, as regards the Establishment, they have inflicted very gross and wanton mischief, without holding out any public advantage to be gained by their emphatic condemnation of that which they are not unwilling to perpetuate.

We are looking beyond the present moment. We believe the changes we anticipate will be brought on by the slow but sure progress of events, and not at the bidding or design of any set of men. It is difficult for the parties we are speaking of to see their position all at once. The smoke and dust of the engagement have not yet cleared away, and it will take some time before they can discriminate between enemies and allies. But we feel no doubt whatever as to the truth eventually of what we are predicting—that those who have lately left the Establishment must ere long avow themselves wishers for its downfall, and that they will be driven to this, not by a regard to their principles alone—not to preserve their consistency or their character only—but to preserve their very name and existence as the Free Presbyterian Church. They have otherwise no principle either of union or durability, and unsupported either by sympathy or opinion, they will dwindle into nothingness long before the present generation has passed away.

Notwithstanding, however, the union which we have predicted, the accession of strength thereby given to the dissenting bodies, and the blow which has lately been dealt at the Church, we are far from saying that any immediate or natural change could be expected or apprehended from these events, important as they may be. Viewed by themselves, there is nothing in them to disturb the happy dreams of those who repose contentedly and with good reason on the love which our countrymen have for the institutions which are established by law, and the unwillingness with which they consent to any great or revolutionary change. Our candid opinion is, that the Church Establishment of Scotland is yet far too strong for all the assailants that can be brought against her.

But we take these events in conjunction with what is passing elsewhere, and in that view there is ample food for very serious contemplation. The event which has taken place among us is only an indication of a far more general move that is going on busily in the religious world. The first blow at Establishments has been struck in Scotland, and the wound has been inflicted from within. The Puseyites in England have been less