

Erving, M.P., Mr. Maxwell, M.P., Professor McLagan, Baillie Watson, &c.

The Lord Provost, after returning thanks for being called to the chair, said:—Surrounded as I am to-day by gentlemen of great attainments, and of far greater knowledge of the subject than I possess, it would be unpardonable in me to say a single word upon the general question. But if you would allow me, I would refer to the little I have been able to do or assist in doing to forward the very cause in which you are engaged. At the last General Assembly, when the letter was read from the Duke of Argyll, which reflected such honour upon him, as it gave heart and hope to the Church—(Applause)—I used the opportunity to state that at that moment the Corporation of Edinburgh was engaged in passing a bill through Parliament for abolishing the patronages of the city of Edinburgh. (Applause). Since that time, you are aware we have accomplished that object. (Applause.) And now the whole patronages of the city of Edinburgh have been handed over into the hands of the people. That is an earnest that anything I have had to do in the matter has been in the direction indicated by this meeting. (Applause.) The Dean of Faculty at that meeting stated that there were forty-four patronages in the hands of the burghs of Scotland, and I believe that I am right in saying that the whole burghs of Scotland will be perfectly ready at the proper time to follow our example. (Hear.) The Duke of Argyll in his letter expressed his willingness to hand over his patronages, and the Duke of Buccleuch, we have equal hope, will do the same thing; and when the Crown patronages are also given up, we will have little difficulty, and the only outstanding matters that require to be treated with will be found to “become smaller and beautifully less.” I see in some of the prospectuses that there is an idea of compensating with a money price. I am rather against that view, because the patronages of Scotland from time immemorial have been held, not for the pecuniary advantage of the patrons, but for the good of the people of Scotland—(Hear)—and I don't see what money value could be given. If I were not trespassing on your time, I would like to refer again to the settlement of the Edinburgh case, because the surrender of the patronages was only one part of the bargain. A very important part of the bargain was the price to be paid for the bond of annuity, which has been the production of so much mischief in this city. We found it at first impossible to meet the clergy, because we could not agree as to the sum to be paid.

The Corporation of Edinburgh was very unyielding about the matter, and would not give the sum asked; but I got them to meet, and I thought we had got an immense length when we got to the notion of having it. It was entertained by both parties, but it was on the understanding that if we got the clergy to yield a little, we would undertake to make up the sum. I undertook to guarantee £1000, and I am glad to say that £1000 is paid. There is still an outstanding sum, and I would like the congregations of Edinburgh to help us to meet it. I think it would be ungenerous and unthankful if they did not come forward to help us to raise that sum. There are thirteen congregations that have got the patronage, which was valued some years ago at £600 a piece: and if they think it a great sacrifice to give £100 or £150 each, I say they are very unthankful, and ought to think shame of themselves. (Laughter.) He concluded by asking Dr. Nicholson to move the first resolution.

Rev. Dr. Nicholson begged to move the first resolution:—

“That, in the opinion of this meeting, the present law of patronage in the Church of Scotland has been productive of serious evils to the Church and to the country, having more or less directly occasioned secessions from the Church, and weakened many of its congregations.”

This first motion was seconded, put to the meeting, and unanimously carried.

Mr. Dalrymple, M. P., moved the second resolution:—

“That a strong desire exists throughout the country that the communicants of a parish should have a prevailing voice in the selection of their minister, and that it is of great importance to bring the law into harmony with this desire by the abolition of the present law of patronage.” (Applause.)

The Rev. J. Elder Cumming seconded, and the resolution was carried unanimously.

Mr. Gordon, Dean of Faculty, moved the next resolution; and before doing so, read a letter from the Marquis of Tweeddale. The Dean of Faculty moved:—

“That, in the opinion of this meeting, such a change would produce the best effects on the Ecclesiastical relations and on the moral and religious condition of the people of Scotland.”