

for hoping that good sense and Christian feeling will reunite them after that rock of offence is once removed out of the way? In respect of spiritual independence alone, it is not unnatural that many who might never but for patronage have raised it or been troubled by it, may now see in it a very great obstacle to an immediate reunion. But their vision will naturally clear as the question ceases to be practical, and after they see that there is no outward distinction between Churchman and Free Churchman. If there be any party in the outside Churches at present eager to come back, and anxious to make terms, they may have reasons for objecting to the settlement of the patronage question till these terms are conceded, because this is the time for negotiation, and the promoters of the bill will be readier to make concessions to buy support now than ever they may be found again. But the argument has not much value when it comes from those who do not want to unite with the Establishment on any terms. If he thought it worth while, Dr. Begg might fairly ask that some stipulation might now be made that his friends' road back into the Church of their fathers might now be made smooth and easy. Mr. Hutton, of Paisley, is scarcely entitled to oppose the bill because it does not hold out the hand of welcome to anti-State Church Presbyterians.

There is, in fact, one question on which there can only be two sects, the question of the lawfulness of a State Church. The bill cannot be blamed for holding out no finger of reconciliation to those who utterly oppose and detest all national establishment of religion. On the other hand, those who do so may fairly argue that they are bound to oppose it as a formidable strategic movement, because it may take the national religion party in the Free Church back to the Establishment, and so strengthen her materially and numerically. Even they can only oppose it as a strategic movement, for they are at one with its framers about the proper persons to whom the election of the minister is to be trusted. The Free Church can scarcely say a word against a measure which establishes more than the veto for which they contended. They may claim for such of

their ministers and members as are ready to receive them the right of immediate admission to the privileges of the renewed Establishment. If they should, or if any number of them should, it would be difficult to bar such a claim. Coming hard on the utter and complete wreck of all the Union negotiations of the Dissenting Churches, the Patronage Bill may thus split some of them to pieces and reunite portions of them to the National Church. If it should do so—if it should or if it could again make the Church of Scotland the Church of the majority—it would give Establishments a new lease of life in this country. If it cannot do as much as that, even should the Bill succeed, it would reduce the Established Church to the level of a sect, and it would make its future disestablishment easier instead of harder.

Articles Contributed.

Meeting of the Kirk Synod in Ottawa.

All our correspondents speak in glowing terms of the meeting of Synod in Ottawa as one of the most blessed ever held. The Union question was the great one, and it was advanced to such a stage that the end can now be seen to be close at hand. The returns from the congregations astonished every one. Only ten out of one hundred and twenty-seven congregations voted nay. Greater unanimity can not be expected as long as men are free to say yea or nay. The majority will of course yield, or what was the use of submitting the question to a vote?

The speeches were worthy of the grand occasion. Rev. Mr. McDonnell pointed out that every gray-haired minister as well as elder were on the side of Union, and that the young men of the Church might be proud to kneel at the knees of such men, and with them rejoice in the proposed re-union. This is indeed a most noteworthy fact;—that the very men who bear the scars of the old conflicts yearn for peace. It says much for them. The venerable Dr. Cook thanked God that he had lived long enough to see such a prospect. Dr. Muir, Dr. Jenkins,