

we contend. We did our very best before the Disruption to secure that benefit. . . . The fact that now there is a disposition to give effect to this view is a homage to the soundness of our conclusion, and the further fact that there is a disposition to make clear, in the working of the Established Church, the principle of spiritual independence, by removing sundry obstacles, should be an encouragement to us in the maintenance of that principle. It did seem to him most unworthy of the Free Church to be interposing obstacles to such reforms in a sister Church; it seemed to him very inconsistent and ungenerous, and he would have no hand in the movement, except to encourage it, because it was in harmony with union principles." It removes what has for centuries been a stumbling-block in Scotland, and the immediate effect of the removal of that stumbling-block is to place the Presbyterians who are out, and the Presbyterians who are in, in a different relative position. When lay patronage is gone, it is difficult to see why the divided limbs of Scotch Presbyterianism should not reunite. Had it been abolished, we should never have had the Relief; and the other dissenting bodies previous to the Free Church were perpetually fed by cases of disputed settlement when outraged congregations, or congregations that felt themselves to have been outraged, left the old fold. The ground of the Free Church Disruption was not patronage, it was spiritual independence; but the question of spiritual independence was only raised because the patronage law compelled the State to order the Church to do certain spiritual acts. When patronage is abolished, a conflict between Church and State is improbable, and even sticklers for spiritual independence might consent to take the chance of a collision, the chief cause of similar collisions in the past having been definitively removed. The cases specified in the claim, declaration, and protest of the Free Church, arose mainly through the practice of patronage; and though the State is not confessing her past offences in the new Bill, she is turning away from them into "obedience." It is expressly enacted in it that the Church Courts have the right to decide finally and conclusively on all questions which

may arise in the course of the proceedings connected with the appointment, admission, and settlement of ministers. It is, indeed, conceivable that the State might, on some occasion, interfere, on the same ground that it took previously—that the matter on which it is asked to decide is a civil matter, and involves civil consequences. But if the Duke of Richmond's anti-Patronage Bill passes, the only bone of contention over which the battle of spiritual independence has raged in Scotland will have been removed out of the way.

The case being so, the question that rises is, whether the State is not bound to go farther, if it goes so far? It is opening a door to people whose principles are identical with those of many who are outside the Church. Should it not adopt these persons themselves as brothers? There are pre-Disruption Fathers, who were educated in the Established Church Hall's of Divinity. Should it not recognize them as eligible to Established Church livings? There are hundreds more who since then have had their clerical education in the Free Church Colleges, but on lines substantially parallel to those in Established Church Colleges. Might these ministers not become eligible to Parish Churches? It has long been evident that Voluntaryism is not a term of communion in the U. P. Church. Why should a U. P. minister, who may be willing, now that the patronage question is removed, to go in with the Church of the nation, be precluded from doing so? Does the abolition of patronage not compel the question, whether it is not possible, as well as seasonable, to heal the wounds of the daughter of Zion?

There is one obvious answer to this line of argument. An enlarged suffrage may logically involve redistribution, and yet it may be prudent or necessary to postpone the one till we have accomplished the other. Everything involves a hundred consequences, and one generally advances most rapidly to the consequences by doing the thing. Are we to refuse to abolish patronage, if the abolition of it be right, till we are prepared to submit a scheme for the reconstruction of Scotch Presbytery? Admitting that patronage first split the Church into fragments, is there no room