

And not only in the present, but at all former periods, the case seems to have been the same. I am sometimes half disposed to think, that either the Prophet Elijah, or the seven thousand honest men who had not bowed the knee to Baal, must have been dissenters. Had the Prophet been entirely at one in his views with the seven thousand, it is not easy to conceive how he could have been wholly ignorant of their existence.

With all these latitudinarian convictions, however, I was thoroughly an Establishment man. The revenues of the Scottish Church I regarded, as I have said, as the patrimony of the Scottish people ; and I looked forward to a time when that unwarrantable appropriation of them, through which the aristocracy had sought to extend its influence, but which had served only greatly to reduce its power in the country, would come to an end. What I specially wanted, in short, was, not the confiscation of the people's patrimony, but simply its restoration from the Moderates and the lairds. And in the enactment of the Veto law I saw the process of restoration fairly begun. I would have much preferred seeing a good broad anti-patronage agitation raised on the part of the Church. As shrewdly shown at the time by the late Dr. M'Crie, such a course would have been at once wiser and safer. But for such an agitation even the Church's better ministers were not in the least prepared. From 1712 to 1784,—a period of seventy-two years,—the General Assembly had yearly raised its voice against the enactment of the patronage law of Queen Anne, as an unconstitutional encroachment on those privileges of the Church and those rights of the Scottish people which the Treaty of Union had been framed to secure. But the half century which had passed, since, through the act of a Moderate majority, the protest had been dropped, had produced the natural effect. By much the greater part of even the better ministers of the Church had been admitted into their offices through the law of patronage ; and, naturally grateful to the patrons who had befriended them, they hesitated to make open war on the powers that had been exerted in their own behalf. Accord-