

CHAPTER XXV.

“ All for the Church, and a little less for the State ”

BELHAVEN

I HAD taken no very deep interest in the Voluntary controversy. There was, I thought, a good deal of overstatement and exaggeration on both sides. On the one hand the Voluntaries failed to convince me that a State endowment for ecclesiastical purposes is in itself in any degree a bad thing. I had direct experience to the contrary. I had evidence the most unequivocal that in various parts of the country it was a very excellent thing indeed. It had been a very excellent thing, for instance, in the parish of Cromarty, ever since the Revolution, down to the death of Mr. Smith,—in reality, a valuable patrimony of the people there ; for it had supplied the parish, free of cost, with a series of popular and excellent ministers, whom otherwise the parishioners would have had to pay for themselves. And it had now given us my friend Mr. Stewart, one of the ablest and honestest ministers in Scotland or elsewhere, whether Established or Dissenting. And these facts, which were but specimens of a numerous class, had a tangibility and solidity about them which influenced me more than all the theoretic reasonings pressed on my attention about the mischief done to the Church by the over-kindness of Constantine, or the corrupting effects of State favor. But then I could as little agree with some of my friends on the endowment