

after authorizing that the government of the Church was in the general meeting of ministers and elders, goes on, "and do hereby allow the general meetings of the said ministers and elders, in whose hands the exercise of church government is established, either by themselves, or by such as shall be appointed as visitors (another name for Commissioners) by them, according to the practice of the Presbyterian government, to try and purge out all unfaithful ministers, &c." It was true, however, that the Commission was prohibited from carrying into effect sentences in cases of settlement; but this restriction in its powers arose from no doubt of their powers, or tenderness to Presbyteries. In disputed cases the Commission had been wont to settle ministers by means of what were called riding Committees, a plan by which Presbyteries whose consciences were forbade them to assist in forcing settlements were saved from the necessity of doing so. But it was never imagined that the hands of the commission were to be tied up from interfering to prevent Presbyteries of the Church from violating an *order of the Assembly*. The Act 1717 expressly enjoined every commission to "see and take care that every order of the previous assembly shall not be violated as they shall be answerable."—It were a strange thing if the Commission's hands were tied up from settling Mr. Hendry, and the Presbytery of Strathbogie be at the same time free to put in Mr. Edwards into Mar-noch in defiance of ecclesiastical interdict. The General Assembly of 1752 was ushered by an advice from the throne. It was given by a noble Commissioner, the ancestor of a noble earl who was a member of the present Assembly.—Coming from the supreme civil authority, an extract from it would be listened to on all sides with that deference which was due to that authority—perhaps with greater deference by the gentlemen opposite than by himself. "One thing, however, as a well-wisher to the government and good order of this Church, I cannot pass over in silence. Allow me therefore to hope, that as it is our happiness to have regular meetings of our national Assembly, countenanced by our gracious sovereign, you will be careful to support her dignity and authority, and not destroy with your own hands our most valuable constitution, secured by law, so dear to your forefathers, so excellent in itself, and which your enemies have so often attempted to wrest from you. The main intention of your meeting is frustrated, if your judgements and decisions are not held to be final; *if your inferior courts continue to assume that liberty which they have taken upon themselves, in too many instances, of disputing and disobeying the decisions of their superiors*. It is now more than high time to think of putting a stop to this growing evil; otherwise such anarchy and confusion will be introduced into the Church, as will inevitably not only break us in pieces amongst ourselves, but make us likewise the

scorn and derision of our enemies; for, believe me, subordination is the link of society; without which there can be no order in government.—In the celebrated manifest of the moderate party, in the composing of which the Reverend Principal Robertson had the chief part, we find the following statements: he (Mr. Dunlop) would confine himself to those passages which regarded the duty of subordination to superior judicatories: "In a numerous society it seldom happens that all the members think uniformly concerning the wisdom and expedience of any public regulation: but no sooner is that regulation enacted, than private judgment is so far superseded, that even they who disapprove it, are notwithstanding bound to obey it, and to put it in execution, if required; unless in a case of such gross iniquity and manifest violation of the original design of the society as justifies resistance to the supreme power, and makes it better to have the society dissolved, than to submit to established iniquity. Such extraordinary cases we can easily conceive there may be, as will give any man a just title to seek the dissolution of the society to which he belongs, or at least will fully justify his withdrawing from it. But as long as he continues in it, professes regard for it, and reaps the emoluments of it, if he refuses to obey its laws, he manifestly acts both a disorderly and dishonest part; he lays claim to the privileges of the society, whilst he contemns the authority of it, and by all principles of reason and equity, is justly subjected to its censures. They who maintain that such disobedience deserves no censure, maintain in effect, that there should be no such thing as government and order.—They deny those first principles by which men are united in society; and endeavor to establish such maxims, as will justify not only licentiousness in ecclesiastical, but disorder and rebellion in civil government. And therefore, as the reverend Commission have by this sentence declared, that disobedience to the supreme judicature of the church, neither infers guilt nor deserves censure; as they have surrendered a right essential to the nature and subsistence of every society; as they have (so far as lay in them) betrayed the privileges, and deserted the order of the constitution; we could not have acted a dutiful part to the church, nor a safe one to ourselves, unless we had dissented from this sentence; and craved liberty to represent to the venerable Assembly, that this deed appears to us to be manifestly beyond the powers of a commission." "But, on the other hand, if a judicature which is appointed to be the guardian and defender of the laws and orders of the society, shall absolve them who break these laws, from all censure, and by such a deed encourage and invite to future disobedience, we conceive it will be found, that they have exceeded their powers, and betrayed their trust in the most essential instance." "That the lesser and inferior ecclesiastical assemblies