

gation of Mid-Calder, under charge of the late Rev. Dr. Duncan. He had often spoken to his minister before he made actual movement about the desirableness of union between the two great bodies of seceders in Scotland. His minister did not encourage him, and was probably under the same fears, which many entertained, that it might be a fruitless effort. Mr. Mathewson, however, was not to be deterred from making some attempt. He belonged to a Reading Society, which included in its membership individuals of his own congregation, and of the Burgher congregation of East Calder, in the immediate vicinity. The members of this Society were accustomed to converse with each other on various topics of public interest, and among others that of union among evangelical Christians generally,* but especially between the Secession Bodies, was brought before them. Mr. Robert McGregor, a member of the East Calder (Burgher) Congregation, was the individual who took the lead with Mr. Mathewson. These individuals contemplated a more general union of Christians than of these two denominations, as appears from the notice of their meeting, which was drawn up at their request by Professor Duncan, and which is as follows:—

“MID-CALDER, 20th August, 1818.

“A meeting took place here this evening, of a considerable number of the two Congregations commonly denominated Burgher and Anti-burgher; for the purpose of considering the practicability and advantage of a general Union of the various denominations of Dissenters throughout Britain, primarily of all evangelical Presbyterians,—when it was unanimously agreed, that, as such an Union is highly desirable, so the present seems to be a favourable season for attempting it. The following persons—Samuel Neal, William Mathewson, Robert Dick, Robert Law, A. Sommerville, Robert McGregor, James Carlaw, G. Hastie—were therefore chosen as a Committee, and requested to draw out, and send to the editors of the *Christian Magazine and Repository*, for insertion, an intimation of their desire to correspond through those publications, and co-operate with all congregations who may have a similar inclination.

“Their present intention is, and they conceive it may be necessary for every congregation, to send to their ecclesiastical courts a petition, stating their desire that the subject be taken into their consideration. Of the propriety of this, and other steps for obtaining the object in view, this Committee look for suggestions from those congregations which are more numerous, and better able to direct to suitable means. From the liberal sentiments and friendly intercourse of Christians of the present day, and with America and Ireland full in view, there is much reason to hope for a favourable issue to endeavours so obviously conducive to the general interests of religion.”

Such was the invitation addressed chiefly to the Congregations of the two branches of the Secession, and it proved to be one which was responded to with alacrity and delight. For with almost lightning-speed it spread over the whole country, and meetings for consideration and movement were held in every direction. Suitable resolutions were passed at these meetings, and with almost simultaneous interest, and similar expression of earnest desire, petitions were prepared and forwarded by the greater number of Congregations, on both sides, to their supreme Courts, urging them to take this matter into serious consideration, and adopt such steps as they thought expedient to bring about the desired result.

The Associate Synod took the subject of these Petitions into their serious consideration on the 29th of April, 1819. They were delighted to find so

* It may be mentioned here that, about the same time, the Rev. Mr. Sommers, Minister of the Established Church, Mid-Calder, had an overture before the General Assembly which proposed a scheme for the return of all the Seceders to the National Church; which occasioned the sage remark by a minister of the Secession to a minister of the Establishment, who was our informer,—“That it would take a good many Summers to accomplish such a union.”