

er which could pass or remove such a sentence would for one moment have dreamed of exercising those functions. But it was contemplated that though those parties might not carry their disobedience to so flagrant and atrocious an extent, they might yet disregard a mere prohibition to abstain from proceeding to the induction of Mr. Edwards, and might put themselves in a position which required the Church to pronounce a severer sentence. It was not only due to the Church, but right in justice and in mercy to those ministers, that their hands should be tied up, to prevent them from doing what might involve a more serious punishment. Those parties, however, suspended by the commission from the exercise of their functions, resolved, nevertheless, to proceed in the exercise of their judicial functions, to sit as a Presbytery, and go on with the trials of Mr. Edwards.—They stated now that they never intended to admit Mr. Edwards as minister of Marnoch, but only meant to take him on trials. They did not tell the commission so. Their own resolution was, that they would proceed to the settlement of Mr. Edwards. Nor could one see how they could divide the sentence of the Civil Court—how, if they considered themselves bound by their duty and allegiance to the Civil Court, which they held to be so imperative on their consciences, to take Mr. Edwards on trials, they could consider themselves entitled to refrain on finding him duly qualified from receiving and admitting him; for if there was any difference between the two parts of the sentence, it was that there was greater sanction and authority for the latter, inasmuch as the statutes did not say a word about taking on trials, but used the very words of the deliverance of the Civil Court, that they were bound and astricted to *receive* and *admit*. But the meeting of Commission on the 4th of March had not only this matter under their consideration, but were informed that it was generally reported and understood that the suspended ministers, notwithstanding their suspension from all their ministerial functions, continued to act in a spiritual capacity, and as a subsisting Church judicatory, that they were baptising and administering ordinances, and preaching in their Churches, as if they had never been suspended,—on the faith, and by virtue of authority proceeding from a secular court of this land as their only warrant. (Hear, hear, hear.) But they took a far greater step than this.—They, ministers of the Church, disowning all authority in spiritual matters of any secular power whatever—professing to maintain that independence in purely spiritual matters, recognised most unequivocally in the Confession of Faith and the statutes of the realm—having been suspended by the Commission's sentence, which, if improperly passed, might be remedied by an appeal to the General Assembly—went to the Civil Court and acknowledged its jurisdiction of inflicting ecclesiastical

censures in a most purely spiritual matter. No person who had entered the arena of argument in this controversy, denied that in regard to spiritual censures the Church was altogether and absolutely independent—that its authority flowed from the great Head of the Church, and that the Civil Courts were not entitled to interfere. The terms of the Confession of Faith were clear beyond the possibility of quibbling or dispute; and not one of the opponents of the Church had ever ventured to assert that the Court of Session or any civil court on earth had a vestige of jurisdiction in the matter. Yet these seven ministers of the Church, sworn to obey her judicatories, had applied to a Civil Court, not to protect them in their civil rights—not to protect them in the possession of their parish churches, which, coming under civil cognizance, were legitimate subjects of civil interference, and which it was not attempted to take from them. That was a matter competent to the Civil Courts; a matter in which the Church was bound to give, as she did, implicit obedience to the decision. But what did those ministers call on the Court to do? In the prayer (which the learned gentleman read) of the Note, they prayed the Court of Session to prohibit the parties authorised by the Commission's sentence, absolutely from preaching the gospel of Christ; not only calling in the arm of the civil power to repon themselves in the exercise of their ministerial functions, but calling on the Court of Session to interrupt the Church in her right to have the gospel of Christ freely and purely preached to her own people, and to put the inhabitants of those parishes in a situation in which no individual could consistently with the principles of liberty and toleration be placed, so that they could not obtain, without a breach of interdiction, the preaching of the gospel and the administration of ordinances by any minister of the communion to which they belonged, and which, above all, was the communion of the Established Church—(hear, hear, hear.) Such were the several actings of the ministers at the bar which were now brought under consideration; and the house was now to determine what course should be followed in regard to them. A rev. doctor, on the other side of the house, congratulated him, in the former discussion on this subject, on having taken a leaf out of the book of the opposite party. He was now going to take another leaf out of the book of that party in former days, the reading of which would now-a-days, give them no great pleasure. He would not take that leaf as it stood, for he found written there, within and without, oppression and woe. But he took that leaf to expunge the bloody characters of oppression and woe, and to inscribe on it the golden characters of protection to the people of this Church. (Hear, hear.) He proposed to take the power which that party had used to oppress the Christian people; but he would