

ination upon Divinity, Church History, Hebrew, &c., and of his personal piety and motives in seeking to enter into the ministry, resulting in much satisfaction to the Presbytery, he was licensed to preach the everlasting Gospel. Another highly promising addition has thus been made to our staff of Probationers. May the Lord of the Vineyard watch over them and abundantly bless them and their labours. Mr. F. Tisdell read an excellent essay upon the Evidences of Christianity, and sustained most creditably examinations upon the Classics, Mathematics, and Theology. Mr. McNeillie also read an Essay assigned by the Committee of Presbytery, appointed to examine him for admission as a Student. The Report of the Committee, and the Essay, were highly creditable to Mr. McNeillie.

R. H. T.

### Original Articles.

[FOR THE CANADIAN PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.]

#### UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HISTORY.

BY THE REV. DR. FERRIER, CALEDONIA.

In his ecclesiastical characteristics, Dr. Witherspoon gives some fearful satirical representations, which, we have been told, are no way overcharged, of the deplorable state of religion in the Church of Scotland about the middle of last century. In reference to these he says in his serious apology—"Within these few years, writings were published in Scotland directly levelled against religion itself—taking away the very foundations of morality—treating our Redeemer's name with contempt and derision—and bringing in doubt the very being of a God. Writings of this kind have been publicly avowed, and the names of the authors prefixed. Now, where has been the zeal of the enemies of the characteristics against such writings? Have they moved for the exercise of discipline against the writers? Have they supported the motion when made by others?" Again, "The persons chiefly aimed at in the characteristics had, by a course of decisions, planted the country with useless ministers; and though the whole office of ordination proceeds upon the supposition of a call from the people, gravely admitted them without a call at all. Conscientious ministers absented themselves from these pretended ordinations, till at last it came into the heads of their enemies to force them to be present under pain of the highest censures of the Church."

In such circumstances it was not wonderful that elements were in operation which were likely to lead to a new disruption in the Church of Scotland. Of these we shall endeavour now to trace the progress and early results.

The immediate cause of that movement in which the Relief Church originated, was a presentation given to Mr. Richardson to the Church and Parish of Inverkeithing. The people resisted the settlement. The Commission of the Assembly, in November, 1751, enjoined the Presbytery to proceed with the induction. The Presbytery refused to obey the Commission. At the next meeting of the Commission, it was moved that the Presbytery should be censured for refractory conduct. This motion, however, did not carry; but the Commission appointed the Synod of Fife to proceed with Mr. Richardson's induction before the month of May, 1752, and to report to the General Assembly then to meet. But the Synod also refused obedience to the Commission, and in consequence a complaint was made to the Assembly against both Presbytery and Synod for refusing to execute the sentence of the Commission.

This case was taken up by the Assembly with great keenness. They found "That the Commission in March had exceeded their powers, and had not done what they were bound to do, conform to the powers given them by the last Assembly." Accordingly they appointed the Dunfermline Presbytery to repair to Inverkeithing, and on Thursday forenoon, that week, to induct Mr. Richardson. The whole Presbytery were ordered to attend; and whereas, three were usually considered a quorum, the Assembly agreed that not less than five should be a quorum on this occasion. This was intended to bring the matter to a point, as they knew that three would be found ready to obey, but they doubted whether five of the ministers of the Presbytery would obey; and the Presbytery were appointed to report to the Assembly next day. Only three minis-

ters of the Presbytery, willing to obey the Supreme Court, went to Inverkeithing; but by the Assembly's arrangement they could not proceed, not having the authorised quorum. The members who declined compliance were, of course, called to state their reasons to the Assembly.—The reasons of several were sustained. Messrs. Robert Stark, Torryburn, David Hunter, Saline, Alexander Daling, Gleish, John Spence, Orwell, Thomas Gillespie, Carnock, and Thomas Fernie, Dunfermline, pled conscientious scruples, and gave in the following representation to the Assembly:—

"To the very Reverend the Moderator, and the Reverend and Honourable Members of the venerable Assembly of the Church of Scotland, met at Edinburgh, May, 1752, the humble representation of the ministers of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, whose names are hereunto subjoined: We cannot but be deeply affected with our present situation, in being obliged to stand at the bar of this venerable Assembly, to answer for non-compliance with any of their appointments; but as this venerable Court is so good as to allow us to speak in our own behalf, we shall, therefore, beg leave humbly to represent some of those things which have all along straitened us in the execution of the orders we received, and which still lay such difficulties in our way as we are not able to surmount. And this we hope to do with that plainness and honesty, and at the same time with that dutiful respect to the supreme judicatory of this Church, which it is so justly entitled to expect from us. We need scarcely observe how unjustly we have been represented as having no other difficulty but the unreasonable fear of opposing the ill-grounded prejudices of our people; nor need we inform this house that, ever since the Act restoring patronages in the end of Queen Anne's reign, there has been a vehement opposition to all settlements by presentations, where there was but a small concurrence, which settlements have already produced a train of the most unhappy consequences, greatly affecting the interests of religion, and if turned into the stated and fixed rule of procedure will, in all probability, be attended with every fatal effect. Now, under such a view and apprehension as this, was it any wonder, or was it inconsistent with that obedience which we owe to our earthly superiors in the Lord, that we should demur and stop short in carrying a settlement into execution where, in our apprehension, there was by no means such a concurrence of persons residing in the parish, as might give sufficient weight and influence for promoting the great ends of the ministry? The Assembly know well that it appears from their own acts and resolutions, entered into their records, that the law of patronage has been considered as no small grievance to this Church, not to say as inconsistent with our Union Settlement; and we find it declared, act 25th of May, 1736, that it is, and has been since the Reformation, the principle of this Church, that no minister shall be intruded into any parish contrary to the will of the congregation; and, therefore, it is seriously recommended, by the said Act, to all judicatories of this Church, to have a due regard to the said principle in planting vacant congregations, so as none be intruded into such parishes, as they regard the glory of God and the edification of the body of Christ; which recommendation we humbly apprehend to be strongly supported by the principles of reason, and the laws of our Lord Jesus Christ. Permit us to inform the Assembly that, after repeated endeavours used by Committees of the Presbytery to lessen the opposition to Mr. Richardson, in the parish of Inverkeithing, matters still remain in such a situation, that we are brought to this unhappy dilemma either of coming under the imputation of disobedience to a particular order of our ecclesiastical superiors, or contributing our part to the establishment of measures which we can neither reconcile with the declared principles, nor with the true interests of this Church. On the whole, we cannot help thinking that, by having an active hand in carrying Mr. Richardson's settlement into execution, we should be the unhappy instruments, as matters now stand, to speak in the language of holy writ, of scattering the flock of Christ, not to mention what may be the fatal consequences of such settlements to our happy civil constitution. If the venerable Assembly shall, on this account, judge us guilty of such criminal disobedience as to deserve their censure, we trust they will, at least, allow that we have acted as honest men, willing to forego every secular advantage for conscience sake. In such an event, this, through grace, shall be our support, that, not being charged with any neglect of the duties of our ministry among those committed to our care, we are to suffer for adhering to what we apprehend to be the