

receding brethren resolved to proceed to the full exercise of the powers with which they held themselves invested by the Head of the Church. In 1837 and 1838 they were joined by other four ministers,—Ralph Erskine of Dunfermline, Thomas Mair of Orwell, Thomas Nairn of Abbotshall, and James Thomson of Burntisland. These eight were soon afterwards libelled before the General Assembly, at whose bar they appeared as a Presbytery, and read a paper embodying the grounds of their secession, and declining the authority, power, and jurisdiction of the National Church,—in consequence of which, in the following year, a sentence was pronounced upon them, deposing them from the office of the holy ministry, and finally casting them out of the Church.

The blessing of God, however, rested in no small measure on the new denomination. Its number rapidly increased, and relief was widely extended to those who felt the oppression of the National Church. But in 1747, in consequence of a division of sentiment respecting the religious clause in some burgess-oaths, the Secession was divided into two branches, the one of which came to be known by the name of the General Associate or Antiburgher Synod. In this divided state, the Secession continued for more than seventy years; but the burgess-oath which gave rise to the division, having been abolished, identity of principle, mutual confidence, and growing affection on both sides, speedily led to re-union. A basis of union having been prepared and approved by the two Synods, these bodies met in the autumn of 1820, and formally adopted it, thus re-uniting the denominations under the designation of the United Secession Church.

THE RELIEF CHURCH

had its rise in 1752. After the Secession of the four brethren who originated the Secession, the Assembly of the Church of Scotland, as has been already stated, gave some indications of a desire to reform, but there is reason to believe that these were merely intended to mollify, and win back the Seceders. The sincerity of the Assembly at all events was distrusted, and its acts soon neutralized its professions of reformation. In a few years it became more arbitrary than ever in enforcing the settlement of presentees. Under the threat of suspension and deposition, Presbyteries were enjoined to carry into effect, by the aid of military if necessary, the most unpopular appointments; and it soon became more unfashionable than ever to preach the doctrines of natural depravity and salvation by grace. After its first alarm from the Secession had subsided, the Church of Scotland sunk rapidly into a corrupt and submissive civil establishment.

Such was the state of matters in the Church of Scotland, when the Presbytery of Dunfermline refused to carry into effect a settlement at Inverkeithing which was strongly opposed by the people at large. The case, by appeal, was ultimately, in 1752, brought before the Assembly. It was taken up on Monday. The Presbytery were appointed to meet at Inverkeithing on the Thursday of the same week, for the admission of the presentee, and to appear at the bar of the Assembly on Friday, to give an account of their conduct. It was known that three members of the Presbytery,—the usual *quorum*—were willing to act. In this instance, however, for an ensnaring purpose, the *quorum* was designedly made five. When the case was called on Friday it was found that the Presbytery had not met. Six members, among whom Mr. Thomas Gillespie, appeared, and gave in a representation, stating that they considered it contrary to the laws of the Church, the word of God, and their ordination-vows, to yield obedience to the injunction imposed upon them, and declaring that, as honest men, if censured, they were willing to undergo every secular advantage for the sake of a good conscience. To strike terror into the hearts of all who would not sacrifice their conscience at the mere dictate of human authority, it was resolved to depose Mr. Gillespie, who had striven to vindicate the conduct of the Presbytery on constitutional grounds. In the space of twenty-four hours, without a libel or any form of process, he was arraigned and condemned, and