

orderly gave in to that Presbytery his demission of his charge of Osnam, and took charge of the congregation of Jedburgh.

"Mr. Thomas Colier, late minister of the gospel at Ravenstonedale, in England, has accepted a call from the oppressed congregation of Kilconquhar, and others joined with them, to fulfil among them that ministry he has received of the Lord.

"These three ministers think themselves indispensably bound by the authority of the Lord Redeemer, King and Head of his Church, to fulfil every part of their ministry they have received from him, and for that end, in concurrence with ruling elders, to constitute a Presbytery as the Scripture directs, for committing that ministry Christ has entrusted them with to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others, and to act for the relief of oppressed christian congregations, when called in Providence. And therein they act precisely the same part they did when ministers—members of the Established Church of Scotland.

"In consequence whereof, Mr. Thomas Colier, late minister in Ravenstonedale, having got an unanimous call from the congregation at Colinsburgh, to be their minister, was this day admitted to the office, after sermon preached from 1 Cor. ii. 2, by Mr. Thomas Boston, minister at Jedburgh. And the same day, at four o'clock, in the afternoon, Messrs. Boston, Gillespie, and Colier, with an elder from their respective congregations, viz: from the congregation of Jedburgh, George Ruthersford; from the congregation of Dunfermline, Provost David Turnbull; from the congregation of Colinsburgh, Alexander Scott; convened in the meeting house of Colinsburgh, and by solemn prayer by Mr. Thomas Gillespie, formed themselves into a Presbytery for the relief of christians oppressed in their christian privileges.

"The Presbytery thus constituted, chose Mr. Thomas Boston for their Moderator, and the above Alexander Scott for their Clerk, *pro tempore*. The Presbytery adjourned to the house of Alexander Scott.

"The Presbytery appointed the seventeenth day of December, next, to be observed in the congregations under their inspection as a day of solemn thanksgiving unto God, for his goodness in the late harvest, and agreed their next meeting should be when Providence calls.

"The sederunt closed with prayer."

Such is the minute of the first organization of the Relief Presbytery.—It is most valuable as setting forth, in their own language, the position, views, and prospects of these distinguished fathers of this section of the christian church. "That portion of it," says Dr. Struthers, "which is properly the minute of Presbytery, and which begins with giving the reasons for their forming themselves into an ecclesiastical court, is evidently given at the dictation of Mr. Gillespie. It is cast in his strong, rugged, and somewhat involved style. The point studiously brought out in the narrative, is the fact, that they were all suffering persecution and oppression in their religious rights and privileges, and therefore necessitated, from a respect to the authority of Christ, the King and Head of his Church, to take the step of forming themselves into a separate Presbytery. Very particular prominence is given to the sentence of deposition passed upon Mr. Gillespie. It is placed in two lights. First, it is represented as a gross outrage, performed in the name of Christ, as the Head of his Church; and secondly, it is pointed out as being a sentence of deposition, limited merely to the Church of Scotland; so that Mr. Gillespie was still warranted to exercise, out of the Church of Scotland, the office of the ministry. It is very remarkable that, both in the ordination of Mr. Colier, and in constituting themselves as a Presbytery, the minute bears 'that the solemnity was performed according to Scripture,' and farther, 'they constitute a Presbytery as Scripture directs.' There is not a single phrase recognising the laws and canons of the Church of Scotland. The Confession of Faith is not even mentioned. The following are the principles embodied evidently in the minute as characterising this new denomination: 1. It was to be called the Presbytery of Relief. 2. It was to be a Presbyterian denomination, composed of ministers and ruling elders with churches under their inspection. 3. It recognized the 'Lord Redeemer, King and Head of His Church.' 4. Its rule was the Scriptures. 5. It claimed the power, as a Scripturally constituted Presbytery, to license and ordain others for the work of the ministry. 6. It particularly proffered assistance and relief to all oppressed christian congregations. 7. Under Christ, as the Head of his Church, it appointed its own seasons and forms of worship, and therefore, at its very first meeting,

appointed a day of thanksgiving, 'in all the congregations under their inspection.'"

From the fourth article in the foregoing enumeration, we are reminded of an anecdote in the formation of a Relief congregation, at a time when Seceders were very strenuous adherents to their Testimony. Many of the people wishing to form the Congregation, would have preferred the Secession, from a vague impression that a Testimony was essential to a Church. A Relief minister, however, had been invited to preach to them, and to converse with them in regard to their views. During the interview the objection to the Relief body was brought forward—that they had no Testimony. The minister, with much adroitness, met and removed their prejudices, by saying that this was a mistake, for they had a Testimony; and, pulling out a New Testament from his pocket, he said, "Here is our Testimony." This was a triumphant argument with the people, and they concluded to adhere to the Relief connexion.

But with all deference to the excellent historian, (for these are his remarks on the minute of constitution, and not the constitution or minute of the Church itself,) we cannot help observing, that it is saying nothing definite for a Church that its rule is the Scriptures; for what Church, professing to be christian, does not say the same? Nor is it, we think, doing justice to this newly formed Presbytery to say, that the Confession of Faith is not even mentioned, for although not mentioned in this minute, yet, doubtless, these ministers all recognized the Confession of Faith, with the exception of the article on the Magistrate's power, as explanatory of the sense in which they understood the Scriptures. We are convinced of the importance of subordinate standards; and every well-regulated Church has these, either expressed or understood, otherwise there could be no visible bond of union. Perhaps at one period the Secession churches carried their views of standards too far; and it may be that the Relief church, in some instances, did not carry them far enough; but the fact is undeniable, that both Churches regarded the Confession of Faith as substantially exhibiting the doctrines of scripture as they received them, and both at the same time, held the Scriptures to be the only fundamental rule of faith and practice. Let us hope that, as now united, the successors of these Churches have hit upon the true medium, and will "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel."

From this digression we return to remark, that the effects of the constitution of the Relief Presbytery were immediate and valuable. They were at once regarded as a nucleus for a new denomination,—in particular to give relief to the christian people, oppressed throughout the land, by the law of Patronage; and numerous applications were forthwith made to them for the exercise of their authority in supplying vacant congregations with the word of God.

In the course of a few years congregations were formed at Blair-Logie, Auchtermuchty, Bell's-hill, Edinburgh, Campbellton, Glasgow, Dunee, Anderson, Kilayth, Irvine, Dalkeith, Kilmarnock, Dysart, St. Ninians, Falkirk, Cupar Fife, and other places; and in several instances nearly the whole people in parishes, refusing the services of intruders, were received under the inspection of the Presbytery of Relief.

The chief difficulty, as was the case with the Secession Church at first, was to find supply to meet the demands. They had but few preachers. But the three fathers, with those who early joined them, were most laborious and diligent in planting their standard in various places of the land, and in fostering their cause till a regular ministry could be obtained.

As the liberal principles of the Relief Presbytery became better known, their numbers and influence increased; and from time to time they received accessions of ministers from various denominations. Among those who joined them from the Establishment were, the Rev. Messrs. Bain, Simpson, Cruden, Pinkerton, Bell, &c. But, besides, they had the accession of the Rev. Messrs. Scott, Warren, Neil, Monteith, M. Boston, &c. from the Presbyterian Dissenters in England; of the Rev. Messrs. Hutchison, Kerr, Laurence, Bonar, James Bonar, &c., from the Secession; and of the Rev. Messrs. Robertson and Auld, from the Reformed Presbytery.

It cannot be wondered at that the union of so many ministers from churches around, all contending with each other, would produce the impression that this Relief Church must be very lax in its communion; and, as thus reinforced, must have presented a very heterogeneous mass. But we are to beware of judging hastily and uncharitably.