

ought to be subordinate and subject unto the greater and superior assemblies. To this declaration, which we humbly conceive is a decision in point, and to the whole spirit and system of the presbyterian government, this sentence of the commission is manifestly repugnant; and therefore we doubt not but the venerable assembly will justify our dissent; and will find that the commissions have exceeded their powers." Principal Robertson's comment upon the statement is—"As the same errors seem to be again revived, as the dangerous tenets of independency spread fast, and have in all appearance infected some of our own members, we do humbly conceive, that it would have become the reverend commission, rather to have imitated the vigor of their forefathers, in supporting the presbyterian discipline and government, than by this unprecedented sentence to have given admittance, and promised impunity to the most unconstitutional tenets and practices." It concludes—"We cannot help being surprised, that our brethren, whose consciences are so tender in other points, should feel no remorse of conscience, for giving such a blow to the authority of their mother church." (Laughter.) With these counsels the assembly proceeded to its duty. The General Assembly, by an ingenious system of cruelty, resolved to bar—(hear, hear) this door for the relief of presbyteries. The callers of Mr. Richardson, brought the case under instructions of the commission, before the assembly, complaining of the presbytery for not executing the sentence of the commission. He forgot to mention, in its proper place, that the commission in March, while they refused to censure the presbytery of Dumfermline, again appointed them to admit Mr. Richardson. The petition and complaint was taken up by the assembly on the 16th May. What did this assembly under such guidance, and so zealous for form and due citation, do? The complaint was not served on the presbytery at all. The seven days allowed at present were not given them. In the records of all such cases, we find no such things as ten days' previous notice. We often find the complaint presented on one day, and judgment three or four days afterwards.—He had many instances before him, but he need not go over many. He would only refer to a late case of the synod of Dumfries, where the complaint was served on the Tuesday, and the parties ordered to appear on the Friday. The Assembly, without hearing the presbytery, took up the petition and complaint on the 16th May, agreed that the commission had exceeded its powers in not doing what it ought to have done—censured the presbytery. Judgment was delayed till Monday the 13th; on which day, parties being called, the Assembly, without having cited or heard the presbytery, agreed and issued an order, appointing the presbytery of Dumfermline to meet at Inverkeithing on Thursday the 21st, to admit Mr. Richardson,

making five (instead of the usual number three) a quorum, so as to involve the necessity of some one whose conscience was violated by the proceeding being pressed at the ordination. They also granted a warrant on Tuesday to cite each member of presbytery who did not attend and *take part* in the services, to appear at the bar of the Assembly on Friday. On Friday, the Assembly resolved to depose one, and on Saturday, they deposed that holy man, Mr. Gillespie—(Hear, hear, hear.)—Now these were the tender mercies of the Commissions of other days. God forbid he should ask this house to follow such an atrocious example. He was not there to recommend any such course. They (the Evangelical party) maintained the same power; but he trusted they never would exercise it in a way so fearful, and would never refuse to listen to the appeal of all parties. He felt that he could not and would not in any case for a mere act of insubordination; taken by itself, unless prolonged and perpetuated in a way which rendered it necessary to proceed to the extremity of depriving a minister of the gospel of Christ of the sacred character conferred on him at his ordination.—Therefore he said at once that it was not his purpose to ask this Assembly to pronounce any such sentence now. There were other actings of those parties which involved far higher crimes and inferred far more heinous punishment. Nay, though one of those actings was to apply to a civil court to exempt them from the jurisdiction of an ecclesiastical court, and to suspend church censures, though by the act 1592 it was declared, that any man who did such an act should be liable not merely to deposition, but summarily to excommunication without any form of process, he would not take advantage of an act which he thought disregarded justice. Nay, more, he would not propose now to proceed at once to libel the parties for their offence. He desired the Church to do nothing rashly at all; but that the proceedings of the Assembly should be of such a form as should bring out the true character of what had been done, and it could not be forgotten that they were not proceeding to punish a contempt of their own authority, but a contempt of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.—But before pronouncing any sentence at all, he desired to deal once more with these unhappy men. The Commission had appointed a Committee to deal with them—a Committee of most admirable and venerated men, who had abstained from any one act that could create prejudice or hesitation on the part of those seven gentlemen to engage in the conference—Dr. Gordon, the present Moderator, and Mr. Bruce. These three in the dead of winter proceeded to Aberdeen, to hold a conference with their misguided brethren. They had communicated with them beforehand, they were not made aware that they would not be met. They were allowed to go north; and did these ministers see those