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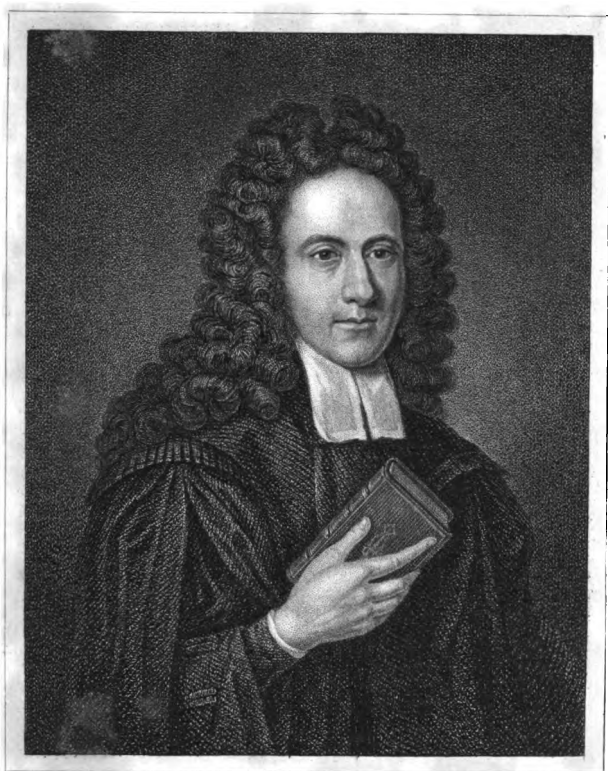
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Ralph Erskine

BORN MARCH 15. 1685. DIED NOV. 3. 1752.

FROM AN ORIGINAL PAINTING BY R. WATTS, EXECUTED IN 1711.

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THE LIFE AND DIARY

OF THE REVEREND

RALPH ERSKINE, A.M.

OF DUNFERMLINE,

ONE OF THE

FOUNDERS OF THE SECESSION CHURCH.

BY DONALD FRASER,

MINISTER OF THE UNITED ASSOCIATION,

KENNOWAY, FIFTH STREET.

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AND W. CURRY, JUN. & CO. DUBLIN.

MDCCCXXXIV.



Ralph Erskine

BORN 1811 IN THE CITY OF DUNDEE

EDUCATED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

Author of "The History of the City of Dundee" &c.

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J. THOMSON, Printer, Milne Square, Edinburgh.

PREFACE.

To detain the reader by a formal apology for adding to the numerous biographical works of the present age, a somewhat ample account of the Rev. Ralph Erskine, seems altogether unnecessary. The favourable reception given by the religious public, to the *Life and Diary* of his elder brother Ebenezer, serves to justify the sentiments expressed in the Preface to that work, regarding the claims of the Founders of the Secession Church to the attention of posterity; and having, in the same prefatory address, intimated his intention, with the permission of providence, to publish a memoir of Ralph, the author has endeavoured, as speedily as suited his convenience, to redeem his pledge.

Whatever deficiencies may attach to the present volume, it is impossible to plead the excuse, that it has been got up within too circumscribed a pe-

riod. More than ten years have elapsed, since the writer attentively perused and prepared a complete list of references to the whole of that portion of Ralph Erskine's Diary, which he has procured; and in three separate communications that appeared in the *Christian Monitor* for 1824 and 1825, he exhibited an outline, corresponding, in part, to the first four chapters of this work. The substance of those communications is still retained, while subsequent researches have led to several important enlargements; and of the eight succeeding chapters, no one has, in any shape, previously issued from the press.

This volume might perhaps have made its appearance a little sooner, had not the author felt anxious to improve his narrative, by the materials he expected to find, in those sheets of Mr. Erskine's Diary, which are unfortunately missing. The late Rev. THOMAS CLARK, M. D., who, in the year 1751, was ordained pastor of the Associate Congregation of *Ballibea*, Ireland, and in 1764 was missioned by the Presbytery of Down to "the province of New York," America, happened to carry part of the record with him to that country. In a letter still extant, addressed to the Rev. John Fraser, Auchtermuchty, bearing date, "Philadelphia, Oct. 27, 1785," the Doctor thus acknowledges the fact; "I have the pleasure of possessing the worthy Mr. Ralph Erskine's Diary, in his own short-hand, which I learned at college." Mr. Fraser, in his reply to that pious minister,

requested the favour, that by some proper conveyance, he would return this interesting relic to Mr. Erskine's descendants in Scotland; but whatever may have been the cause, it was never received. Upwards of twelve years ago, I myself despatched a letter to a friend, to be shown to a son of Dr. Clark's, who holds the honourable office of a judge in the county of Washington, earnestly soliciting his attention to this affair. Judge Clark, in consequence, had the kindness to examine his father's papers, and to send to this country a manuscript, which he supposed might be the one wanted; but, on its arrival in 1821, it was found, though a genuine short-hand production of Ralph Erskine's, to consist merely of a number of his sermons sewed together. Renewed efforts have been employed to recover the Diary, but hitherto without success.*

If this venerated father commenced the keeping of a Diary in youth, and persisted in the practice to the close of life, the parts wanted must be of great extent. The author, however, has the satisfaction to state, that the portion now in his

* For the direction of individuals to whom, by any possibility, an opportunity of recovering this valued MS. may present itself, it may be proper to mention distinctive marks of the portion in our possession, with which the rest is probably uniform. It is in small 4to; and one ignorant of the Stenography, could distinguish it by this circumstance, that each page exhibits, intermixed with the close short-hand-writing, the names of the successive months, and days of the week, *in common hand*.

hands, which was possessed by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Erskine of Falkirk, and with which he was favoured by his aunt, the late Miss Erskine, is considerably ample. It comprises all the entries from September 22, 1731, to December 23, 1739, and consists of sixty-seven pages in short-hand characters. So close and comprehensive is the writing that, on exact calculation, each page is found to include as many words as are contained in nearly eight pages of this volume, and consequently, the whole is equal to at least five hundred of such pages. Within the compass of these massy sixty-seven pages, the industrious journalist has comprehended so many notices of his own chequered lot and experience, and so many statements illustrative, however undesignedly, of the leading features of his character, that in this aspect, one is almost entitled to conclude, that no defect remains to be felt. The loss of those brief allusions to the occurrences of the times, which he no doubt recorded in that part of the journal that is wanting, may be justly lamented; yet our regret admits of some alleviation from the circumstance, that the private records of the two brothers, most happily, are not contemporaneous, but written entirely within the limits of two distinct periods. Ebenezer's Diary, commencing in 1707, extends to somewhat beyond 1722; and after the interval of a few years, the portion of Ralph's Journal in our possession, comes in to our assistance at the close of 1731, and aids our inquiries respecting

the ecclesiastical affairs of more than eight eventful years that succeeded.

The unhappy representation of Ralph Erskine's Diary, contained in an account of him, published about forty years since, is calculated to damp all hope of useful instruction from this source. "Our author," it is alleged, "left no written memoirs of the religious part of his life. True, indeed, he left a Diary behind him, from which something of this kind was expected; but, upon perusing it, it was found to contain only some domestic incidents and providential occurrences, the publication of which would serve no valuable end."* Nevertheless, it may be confidently affirmed, that this statement must have been hazarded by one, who had given the record in question nothing more than a cursory glance, and that it is fitted, though unintentionally, to produce a false impression. That the Diary does abound in details of "domestic incidents and providential occurrences," and that the publication of the whole, or of any large portion of it, *continuously*, would serve no valuable end," is readily conceded. Let it be observed, however, that the reverend writer himself gives it the title of *PASSAGES OF MY LIFE AND EXPERIENCE*; and let any person, possessed of integrity and common sense, first peruse the nu-

* Rev. Ralph Erskine's Works, in 10 vols. 8vo. Falkirk, 1794, vol. i. p. xviii.

merous extracts from it that enrich the pages of this volume, and then judge, whether there was sufficient ground to assert, that it contains no "memoirs of the religious part of his life." The truth is, that it at once illustrates the history of various public transactions in which he bore a part, and affords a most edifying view of his own religious experience and deportment. It lays open the secrets of his heart, and discloses the hidden springs of his external appearances as a Christian and a minister. The confessed intermixture of "domestic incidents and providential occurrences," while it proves that the record was intended exclusively, or almost exclusively, for his own use, invests the information communicated respecting his Christian experience with an evidence and a charm, which it could never have derived from the most ample and correct delineations, avowedly or apparently prepared for meeting the public eye. To the pious and discerning reader, the Diary of *Ralph*, in point of interest and utility, will, in all probability, appear equal to that of *Ebenezer*. Nor is it unimportant to state, that the selection now made exactly comports with the views long since expressed by Henry, his eldest son, who, in a letter to his mother, under date Jan. 15, 1753, thus communicates his mind; "As it now seems to be fully resolved, that my father's writings be printed in folio, I do think it will be very proper that there be some short history or sketch given of my father's life and character, at

the beginning of the book; *which might, in some measure, be collected out of his Diary*, though the Diary itself should not be published."

In taking advantage of this Diary, a mode of proceeding has been adopted similar to the plan observed in respect to Ebenezer's. The materials eligible for publication, are interspersed almost as fully as could be done with propriety throughout the whole narrative of his life; while the remaining pieces of this selected portion, *which otherwise must have been all but entirely suppressed*, are collected by a principle of arrangement, which, notwithstanding the deviation from the strict order of time, appears sufficiently natural. In this view, the ninth chapter of the present volume, with part of the tenth, forms a counterpart to the second and third, in the Life and Diary of Ebenezer. There is another point in which the attentive reader of both will probably recognise a resemblance. No attempt has been made to reconcile the giddy to a life of piety, by giving a partial and unfair exhibition of the exercises and experience of these distinguished brothers. In this state of imperfection and mortality, as appears from the details of sacred biography itself, painful conflicts and deep abasements are no less incident, even to the eminently pious, than reviving hopes and unutterable joys. The superior pleasantness of wisdom's ways must be steadfastly maintained, and in selecting extracts from the

unstudied memoranda of the private records of Christians, skilful discrimination is requisite ; but to represent the children of wisdom as almost entirely exempt from difficulty, temptation, and sorrow, or as generally possessing, with scarcely any intermission, the consolations arising from a vigorous faith, and from the consciousness of uninterrupted progress in the path of righteousness, is neither consistent with fact, nor really conducive to the advancement of vital religion. On this topic, the remarks contained in the "Advertisement," prefixed to the Rev. Thomas Adam's "Private Thoughts on Religion," deserve an attentive perusal.

While the author has drawn the most of his illustrations of Mr. Erskine's life and character from his Diary, he has availed himself not only of a numerous collection of his note-books, letters, and detached papers ; but also of whatever else he could any where find, recorded in print or manuscript, or transmitted by credible tradition, that seemed calculated to render this work more complete in itself, and more agreeable and useful to the reader.

Notwithstanding the close general similitude which the two reverend brothers bear to one another, each is distinguished by his own characteristic mode of thinking, feeling, and writing. The two Diaries, therefore, even so far as they relate to personal experience, exhibit a pleasing

diversity. The two narratives, also, it is presumed, will be found as distinct from each other as could reasonably have been anticipated. Though many of the same transactions, civil and ecclesiastical, referred to in the Life of Ebenezer, are necessarily introduced in the Life of Ralph,—repetitions, as far as possible, are avoided, and new circumstances and illustrations presented. Several interesting topics, briefly touched at in the preceding volume, are now more fully explained; in particular, the correspondence that took place betwixt the Associate Presbytery and the celebrated GEORGE WHITEFIELD, with regard to which much misconception has long prevailed. The present publication is so constructed as to be quite intelligible to readers that have not seen the Life of Ebenezer; while one who has previously perused that work, including the Memoir of the Rev. Henry Erskine of Chirnside, will no doubt possess additional advantages in the perusal of this.

In both volumes, the writer has endeavoured to blend inflexible adherence to truth and justice with the spirit of Christian charity and candour. It has been more his aim, he trusts, to promote the general interests of religion, than to advance the cause of any particular denomination or class. Whatever partiality he may naturally feel for the first ministers of the Secession, he has no allowed inclination to palliate their faults; yet a just esteem for their personal worth, and attachment to the sacred principles of truth and liberty they nobly

defended, imperatively require him to repel the unmerited thrusts they have suffered, however high or imposing the quarters whence those attacks have proceeded. If certain peculiarities in the case of Ralph Erskine have obliged him to enter somewhat particularly into a detail of circumstances bearing on one or two delicate and contested points, he has studied to make his statements impartial, and to give no just cause of offence. Let no reader, however, expect him to mingle in the clamour and turmoil of stormy disputes, in which, in the character of a *biographer*, he has no concern. Though fully alive to the importance of the contest betwixt the friends and opposers of ecclesiastical establishments, and though truly grieved for the hostile attitude which churchmen and Seceders have assumed towards each other, and for the bitterness which, with some honourable exceptions, has not a little characterized, on both sides, the agitation of the controversy,—he feels that he should only act an officious and a foolish part, were he, when “passing by, to meddle with strife belonging not to him,” as the humble writer of the following pages. He has, therefore, made it a fixed rule, to go straight forward in the way, faithfully narrating the particulars of his great-grandfather’s life, just as if he had never heard of such a controversy—unswayed by anticipations of the purposes to which any of those particulars may possibly be applied by disputants on either side, and consoling himself

with the reflexion, that he is not responsible for any illegitimate or overstrained conclusions they may think proper to deduce.

In quotations from the Diary and other manuscripts, as well as from printed works, uniform fidelity is shown. Even slight verbal alterations have been very sparingly made. The reasonable liberties taken with the Diary of Ebenezer, as particularly acknowledged,* are not exceeded in the present work. Condensation, too, has been kept in view; and to avoid tediousness, beside many pious extracts from the Diary parallel to those introduced, a variety of other useful materials has been withheld. It did not, however, seem right entirely to omit short notices of several Scotch ministers of the last century, whom the subject of this narrative numbered among his intimate friends, and regarding whose character and history, some particulars have been gleaned from his elegies and note-books. Another Wodrow, it may be hoped, will arise, to erect a monument sacred to the memory of excellent ministers and Christians of the eighteenth century, similar to that elaborate structure, which perpetuates the names of those worthy men who flourished amid the hardships and persecutions of the preceding age; and in the meanwhile, ought not every writer in biography to seize opportunities he may possess

* Life and Diary of Rev. Eben. Erskine, Pp. 81, *note*; 294, *note*.

of contributing fragments of authentic and rare information, which that future historian may find in some degree available, in compiling his extensive and enduring work ?

This volume, like the former, is concluded with a short Appendix, composed chiefly of documents illustrative of the text. Like that too, it is embellished with an engraved Portrait of its subject, in which the name is a *fac-simile* of his writing. Whoever compares the engraving prefixed to the folio edition of Ralph Erskine's Works with the frontispiece of this volume, will perceive a considerable difference. The first is obviously derived from a likeness of him taken when advanced years had impaired his youthful comeliness, and yet impressed more deeply on his countenance the traits of wisdom and bland authority. The last is taken from a painting by *Waitt*, an artist of eminence ; which was executed when Mr. Erskine was only twenty-seven years old, and has been in possession of Mr. Fisher's family for several generations. According to tradition, Ralph Erskine's stature was above the middle size, his make rather slender than stout, and his features pleasing and attractive.

The author feels it alike a duty and a pleasure to acknowledge his numerous obligations to friends, both the living and the dead. He owes much to his own honoured FATHER, from whom he learned a great proportion of those anecdotes, respecting

which no authority is expressly referred to. He owes scarcely less to that venerable man of God, the Rev. JOHN BROWN of Whitburn, who for a series of years preceding his death, favoured him with frequent communications relative both to Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine; and whose affectionate intreaties first produced the conviction, that duty required him to improve the facilities which providence had given for commemorating the worth of these good men, and extending the benefit of their example. His acknowledgments must also be renewed to Mr. JOHN BIRRELL, Kinnesswood, whose manuscript entitled "Pious Memorials of the parish of Portmoak," as well as another relating to the ministry of Ebenezer there, has furnished a few circumstances for the Life of Ralph. To several descendants of Ebenezer, residing in Glasgow and its vicinity, he is under great obligations; in particular, to Mr. WALTER WARDLAW, whose active friendship has repeatedly presented him with valuable materials. To the politeness of the Rev. PETER CHALMERS of Dunfermline, he stands indebted for access to the records of Dunfermline Presbytery; and Dr. JOHN GIBB of that town has kindly favoured him not merely with interesting information relative to his worthy grand-uncle, the Rev. *James Wardlaw*, but with the loan of an old manuscript written by Mr. *David Inglis*, many years an elder, and sometime precentor and session clerk in Ralph Erskine's congregation. This manuscript, containing an

accurate abridgment of whatever was important in the records of the kirk-session of Dunfermline during the period of Mr. Erskine's ministry, has supplied a number of facts, equally curious and useful. The cordial thanks of the author are also due to the Rev. Dr. KIDSTON of Glasgow, clerk to the United Associate Synod, who, with his accustomed alacrity in well-doing, granted him the use of the original records of the Associate Presbytery and Synod. He might justly specify, in fine, the services rendered by Dr. JOHN BROWN of Edinburgh, ROBERT PLENDERLEATH, Esquire, and several other individuals, including his own surviving relatives,—of which he desires ever to retain a grateful recollection.

May it please the God of our fathers, whose mercy endureth for ever, to pardon the imperfections attending this small memorial of departed excellence, and by the influence of his Holy Spirit, attending its perusal, to render it subservient to his own glory, and to the spiritual advantage of the reader !

D. F.

KENNOWAY,
November 11, 1833.

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THE
LIFE AND DIARY
OF THE
REV. RALPH ERSKINE, A.M.

CHAPTER I.

Mr. Erskine's Birth—Elementary Education—Attending the University of Edinburgh—Attention to Studies—Various appearances of early Piety—Notes and Opinion of Sermons he heard—Letter to the Rev. Mr. Shaw—Conduct as Tutor in the Family of Colonel Erskine—Extract from the Colonel's Letter—License—Calls to Tulliallan and Dunfermline—Ordination.

MR. RALPH ERSKINE was a son of the Rev. Henry Erskine of Chirnside, and Margaret Halcro, his second wife.* He was born at Monilaws, a village near Cornhill, in the county of Northumberland, on the fifteenth of March 1685, O. S.; and baptized on the fifth of April following, by the Rev. William Violand, sometime minister at Ferry-port-on-Craig, Fifeshire.†

In the eleventh year of his age, he sustained a very heavy loss, in the death of his pious and affectionate

* See Memoir of Mr. Erskine of Chirnside, prefixed to the Life and Diary of the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine.

† *Ibid.* Pp. 53, 54, the reader will find a slight notice of this Mr. Violand.

father, who departed this life the 10th August, 1696. It pleased God, however, to render this affecting bereavement conducive to his spiritual benefit. His valuable mother, too, was mercifully spared for many years; and he experienced in early youth, as well as in the succeeding periods of life, the advantage resulting from the company, counsels, and example of his brother Ebenezer, who was upwards of four years older than himself.

From the pleasing indications of piety and talent exhibited by Ralph, it was determined to give him an education adapted to the sacred office. Accordingly, after acquiring the elements of literature, partly at Chirnside, and partly, as appears from a passage of his Diary, to be quoted immediately, in one or more of the neighbouring towns, he entered the University of Edinburgh in November 1699, in the fifteenth year of his age; where, during four successive sessions, he studied languages and philosophy, and then proceeded to the study of theology.

The Professors, or Regents, as they were called, in that University, were generally the same at this time as during the period of Ebenezer's academical attendance.* Charles Erskine, however, afterwards Lord Tinwald, was chosen Regent in November 1700, after the death of John Row. Mr. John Goodale, an eminent linguist, succeeded Mr. Alexander Rule in the Professorship of Hebrew in 1702. Mr. John Cumming, the first *regius* Professor, was appointed to the Church History chair that same year. Dr. George Campbell, Professor of Divinity, who died 1701, was succeeded by the Rev. George Meldrum, minister of the Tron Church, a po-

* See the Life of Eben. Erskine, Pp. 64, 65.

pular preacher, and a man of distinguished integrity and humility; whilst, in May 1703, Dr. Gilbert Rule, Principal, was succeeded by the celebrated William Carstairs.*

The subject of this memoir seems to have duly appreciated his literary advantages in early years, and applied with great modesty and ardour to the acquisition of knowledge. A small memorandum-book, still extant, consisting of about a hundred pages, written mostly during his first and second sessions at College, bears ample testimony to the diligence and accuracy with which he studied Latin, Greek, and Logic. It contains a variety of elaborate exercises in both those languages, with a system of Logic in the Latin tongue, dictated by Professor William Scott, all executed with much neatness.† The same manuscript includes also some other small juvenile productions, worthy of a boy endowed with a lively fancy, and an affectionate heart; chiefly copies of letters, addressed to his favourite school-fellows, David Home, Alexander Littlejohn, James Edwards, William Hume, and others. Some of them are written in Latin,‡ others in English; some in prose, others in verse. In one of his poetical effusions, which extends to more than eighty lines, he twits his companion at great length, for

* Bower's Hist. of the Univ. of Edinburgh, vol. i. Pp. 318—385.

† At the close of this System, the young writer gives the following account of it:—" *A doctissimo necnon literatissimo D. Gulielmo Scot. Phil. Professore dictata, et a me Radolpho Araskino, summâ quâ potui, sed non quâ debui, diligentia conscripta. Anno salutis humanæ millesimo septingentesimo, mensis autem Decembris 23 die. Ἀρχὴν qui dederit—dabit et ille τέλος.*"

‡ A specimen of his Latin letters may be seen in the Appendix, No. I.

affirming that he could not write verses, when, after all, he produced better lines than himself; and he concludes it with what he calls a Litany, which is as follows :—

Unto more gifts, O may you still attain ;
May you enjoy a great poetic vein ;
In love of that that's good may you remain ;
May no ill thing thy reputation stain ;
But still continue honest, good, and plain ;
May bounties on you plentifully rain ;
May you, all heavenly, earthly blessings gain ;
May these my prayers ne'er be in vain !

The same turn of thought and qualities of style, it may be remarked, which distinguish an individual's youthful compositions, often continue to characterize his writings in maturer years. These early productions of Ralph Erskine, accordingly, in some degree foreshowed the vivacity and the quaintness which afterwards appeared in his discourses and sonnets.

It is particularly satisfactory to find that, in the morning of life, he was the subject of strong religious impressions. The following anecdote, which is credibly related, discovers the tenderness of his conscience, and his delight in prayer. “ When a little boy at school, to which he went from his father's house by the summit of a hill, he and his school-fellows amused themselves by rolling stones from the rising ground. One day, going to school, and diverting himself thus, he was seized with a violent pain in his arm. His conscience immediately smote him with the neglect of prayer that morning. He, without delay, returned home, shut himself up in his closet, and confessed his sin, resolving upon and promising reformation ; and prayed that God would be pleased to pardon him, and heal his arm, which, before he had well finished,

was perfectly recovered. This," it is added, "endeared the throne of grace to Ralph, and induced him ever after to pour out all his complaints, and cast all his cares on God, who is the hearer of prayer."* Without imagining that a miracle was wrought, or even that a very extraordinary interposition took place in his favour, it is not irrational to suppose that he felt his arm relieved far sooner than he had expected, and that its restored vigour, so speedily following his prayer, was not unworthy of his notice.

Prayer was, without question, an exercise which, in the days of youth, he found exceedingly pleasant, and highly valued as a means of obtaining the blessings of grace to the soul, as well as mercies adapted to the body. On one of the boards of an early note-book, he put on record the following petitions:—

"Lord put thy fear in my heart. Let my thoughts be holy, and let me do for thy glory, all that I do. Bless me in my lawful work. Give a good judgment and memory—a firm belief in Jesus Christ, and an assured token of thy love."

The first season of his attendance at the University was marked by a striking instance of the divine goodness in preserving his life amid the most imminent peril. At that time, in February 1700,† the Parliament Square was almost entirely destroyed by a fire, not unlike the memorable fire which took place in the same quarter in

* Portmoak Manuscript, by Mr. John Birrell. The author states, that this anecdote was told him by the Rev. Thomas Clarke, M. D.

† Some particulars of this disaster, with pious reflections on it, may be seen in the *Memoirs of Elizabeth West*, Pp. 127—133. New edition, 1825.

November 1824; and happening to lodge in a house belonging to that square, he narrowly escaped being burned to death, having forced his way through the flames with a number of his books. To this calamitous burning he alludes in a letter bearing date "1700," addressed to one of his young companions in the country;—"I suppose," says he, "it will be needless for me to give you an account of the furious conflagration that lately happened in this place, for you will have heard sufficient thereof already." The following extract from his Diary, written many years posterior to the merciful deliverance he then experienced, shows the spiritual improvement he made of it, and of several other occurrences, including the decease of his venerable father, alluded to above. It forms part of a record of his exercise, on a day of private humiliation and prayer, observed November 22, 1731, being exactly a year after the death of the first Mrs. R. Erskine.

Having read the 8th and 9th chapters of Ezra, he engaged in solemn prayer, in which "I remembered," says he, "the many instances of the Lord's favour to me, and my rebellions against him." "I began," he continues, "with his mercies to me in the womb and on the breast, in England, in my infancy; and in Scotland, in Rivelaw, and Chirnside, and Ayton, and Dunse, and Edinburgh, and Portmoak, and Culross, and Dunfermline. I took special notice of *the Lord's drawing out my heart towards him at my father's death*, and yet how early my rebellions against him began to work. I took special notice also of what took place upon my first going to Edinburgh to the College, in the burning of the Parliament Close; and how mercifully the Lord preserved me, when he might have taken me away in my sin, amidst the flames

of that burning, which I can say my own sins helped to kindle. I took notice of the kindness of God in providing for me since my father's death, preserving my mother, and what he did in ordering good company for me in Edinburgh, and how he manifested himself to be God unto me; and also his kindness manifested at Portmoak, of which I was made to say, he pitied me yonder at the hill-side, and yonder on the top of the mountain, and yonder in the valley, and yonder in the east room, and yonder in the west room, and yonder in the low room, when he made my heart to go after him. And yet I acknowledged my fearful sinning against that Holy Spirit that was leading me from time to time."

Some religious and moral reflections, recorded in the juvenile memorandum-book already noticed, seem still further to corroborate the fact, that in early years his mind was imbued with sentiments of piety. Of these the following specimen may suffice:—

"Where God putteth to his hand, there is no man so mighty, no beast so fierce, no sea so deep, that can resist his power." "Divinity cannot be defined. Simonides, the more he studied to know God, the harder still it seemed to him." "Without the understanding of the will of God by his word, our sight is blindness, our understanding ignorance, our wisdom foolishness, and our devotion devilishness." "God suffers not man to have the knowledge of future things; for, if he had prescience of his prosperity, he would be careless, or understanding of his adversity, he would be senseless. Things which it pleases God to keep secret, ought not to be searched; and things he has revealed ought not to be denied; lest, with regard to the former, we be found indulging a cri-

minal curiosity, and, with regard to the latter, a damnable ingratitude." *

"Take away discretion, and virtue will become vice." "The first step to virtue, is to love virtue in another man." "True peace is to make peace with virtue, and war with vice." "Virtue is a stranger on earth, but a citizen in heaven."

"Heaven is the habitation of the elect, the throne of the Judge, the resort of the saved, the seat of the Lamb, the fulness of light, the inheritance of the just, and the reward of the faithful." "The celestial glory comprises wonderful serenity, full security, eternal felicity." †

These detached sentences, however, are not the only memorial of his early piety. A more remarkable evidence of his assiduity in acquiring and preserving religious knowledge, is supplied by upwards of twenty volumes, most of which are still in the hands of his descendants, written chiefly betwixt 1703 and 1709. A few of them are in common hand, but the greater part in short-hand characters. They contain extracts from the religious books he read, and a few transcripts of old manuscript sermons, as one or two of Mr. James Guthrie's of Stirling, and of his own father's; but consist principally of notes of discourses preached in his own hearing. A few of these were committed to paper after the conclusion of public worship, and discover a memory uncommonly retentive. Most of them, however, conformably to a prevailing custom among devout people of that age, were

* *Quæ Deus occulta esse voluit, non sunt scrutanda; quæque manifesta fecit, non sunt neganda: ne et in illis illicitè curiosi, et in istis, damnabiliter inveniamur ingrati.*"

† "In gloria cœlesti mira serenitas, plena securitas, æterna felicitas."

written at church during the time of delivery.* The volumes may contain sermons by nearly a hundred clergymen of the Church of Scotland, who discharged their office in Edinburgh, Fife, Perthshire, and other parts of the country. It was his practice to state at the head of each discourse, the opinion he had formed of its merits. Some of them he characterizes thus:—"So and so."—"In some places, not sound."—"Somewhat legal, I think."—"Somewhat deficient."—"Good, but I think defective."—"Not very good, no word of Christ."

Yet, of by far the greater portion, he expresses highly favourable sentiments. It is truly refreshing to see, that the discourses of so many of the Scottish Clergy of that age, were calculated to meet the cordial approval of a young student of pious dispositions, and evangelical views. A discourse by Mr. James Webster of Edinburgh, on a thanksgiving day, June 1708, for the preventing of a dreaded invasion, he calls "excellent indeed." He gives a similar eulogy to a sermon by Mr. Mathieson, on the same occasion; and to a sermon by Mr. Hart, preached before the Synod of Edinburgh, from 1 Peter v. 2. High commendation is bestowed on a discourse delivered by Mr. Dickson, at the ordination of Mr. Macvicar of the West Kirk, May 1st, 1707; and on several discourses by Mr. Macvicar himself. He characterizes a sermon by Mr. Mitchell of Canongate, as "short, but substantial—had a sweet application." To a sermon by "an unknown Englishman," from Ezek. xvi. 8, he gives the epithet, "good indeed." He heard, with much pleasure, several sermons preached by his brother Ebenezer in Edinburgh, as well as Portmoak. He mentions his

* Compare Life of Rev. E. Erskine Pp. 69, 70.

cousin, Mr. William Erskine, of the Tron Church, and a Mr. More, whom he calls "my good-brother." Repeated and very favourable notice is taken of Mr. John Shaw of Leslie, afterwards of Leith; he heard this worthy man, when presiding at the ordination of Mr. Currie, at Kinglassie, September 28, 1705. At the administration of the Lord's Supper at Abernethy, 1705, Mr. William Moncrieff, of Largo, delivered from Ephes. ii. 17, "a noble sermon, *before* the action sermon." He heard "an extraordinary sermon" by Mr. Alexander Hamilton, on a *Tuesday* after the sacrament at Culross. He describes Mr. James Hogg of Carnock's discourses as "good and searching;" and those of Mr. Patrick Plenderleath, of Saline, as "sweet, and good indeed"—"excellent, great, and good." High encomiums are given also to Mr. James Cuthbert, of Culross. But the productions of none are spoken of in warmer terms than those of Mr. Cuthbert's colleague, Mr. George Mair, whose evangelical ministry he enjoyed during the whole period of his residence in that parish. One of his sermons, for instance, he styles "good gospel indeed;" another, "a gospel sermon, great and good;" and a third, "a most excellent, sweet, and eloquent sermon." Amongst this beloved pastor's discourses, he has one on 2 Cor. iii. 6, preached at Kirkcaldy, before the Synod of Fife; another, from Hos. xi. 5, 6, delivered on the first Sabbath of January, 1707, when a French invasion was dreaded; a third, on a day of thanksgiving, for a victory over the French in the year 1709; and a fourth, from Psalm v. 10, 11, "after the articles of the Union were passed."

A few of the sermons were preached by Messrs. Hogg and Cuthbert, and other ministers, on the evening of Sabbath, and of other days, in Colonel Erskine's dwell-

ing-house in Edinburgh. Instructions received even after diets of examination, are not quite omitted. In one of the volumes there is a long series of "Questions relative to the Covenant of Grace, and the seals thereof, answered,"—which appear to be the notes of an exercise of this kind, performed by Mr. Mair, and are eulogized as "clear, sweet, and excellent."*

A large proportion of the discourses, the substance of which Mr. Erskine thus preserved, were delivered on sacramental occasions; which seem to have deeply interested his susceptible mind, and occupied much of his devout attention. In those days, he repeatedly partook of the Lord's Supper, not only at Edinburgh, Culrose, and Portmoak, but also in various other places, as Leith, Liberton, Colinton, Temple, Linlithgow, Bo'-ness, Alloa, Saline, Kinross, Strathmiglo, and Abernethy. Nor was it his object, merely to increase his stock of doctrinal knowledge. He was solicitous to experience the consoling and sanctifying power of the cross, and to enjoy fellowship with God in the institutions of his grace. This will appear, in some degree, from the following anecdote :†—

When a student in divinity, he purposed to attend the Lord's Supper at Liberton, a few miles south from Edinburgh. Residing at that time in Fife, he had, from haste, neglected his usual personal devotions. On his way from Leith, after crossing the Forth, he met a poor man, to whom, though unsolicited, he gave an alms. This man seemed much affected with this act of generosity, and thanked him sincerely. These circumstances brought to his benefactor's recollection that expression in Isaiah lxiv.

* See Append. No. II.

† For this anecdote, the writer was indebted to the late Rev. John Brown of Whitburn.

1, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not;" and he said within himself, 'what a mercy will it be, if the Lord meet me at Liberton, notwithstanding my omission of duty this morning!' His soul was thus stirred up to earnest prayer for the gracious presence of God; nor did he pray in vain, for, on that occasion, he was favoured with delightful tokens of the divine presence.

The scriptural and pious discourses he heard in his youth, being sealed by the Holy Spirit, made deep and lasting impressions on his heart, and were often recollected with pleasure and gratitude in future life. One remarkable instance of those permanent impressions is supplied by a letter of sympathy, which, in the year 1731, he wrote to an esteemed minister, when suffering personal and domestic affliction. It is as follows:—

"To the REV. JOHN SHAW,
LEITH.

Dunfermline, March 1, 1731.

"Rev. and dear Sir,

Having heard several times by the bearer of your valetudinary circumstances, as also of your spouse her *tenderness*, [delicate state of health,] and having had some experience of trials myself several ways, and, I hope, of the Lord's pitying and supporting under them, I thought it not improper for me to signify my sympathy with you and your family, and to show my respect to you, particularly upon a ground which I suppose you know nothing of. It is now, I reckon, more than twenty-five years since I staid at Portmoak, and being under deep concern about eternal salvation, I had the occasion of hearing you preach at a sacrament

in Ballingry on John xviii. 37, ‘ Art thou a king then ? &c.,’ by the means whereof some beams of the glory of King Jesus shone on my heart, to the darkening of all mundane glory, and to the drawing out of my soul in insatiable breathings after him. And though I would fain hope he has since, from time to time, allowed further and clearer views of himself, and of his glorious mystery of salvation from sin and wrath, by free grace, running in the channel of the Mediator’s blood, and of grace reigning through his righteousness unto eternal life, Rom. v. 21 ; yet, that being among the very first views that he remarkably vouchsafed, it is what I can never altogether forget ; and I thought the mentioning thereof to you now, in your present afflicted circumstances, might not be unseasonable, but contribute somewhat to your encouragement, among other instances, wherein, I hope, the Lord has owned your ministerial work, when you was in case for it. O how sovereign is our gracious Lord, in dispensing his blessings and treasures by the like of us, while we know nothing of it, and are but as mere earthen vessels and passive instruments, reserving (as to point of power) the whole activity and efficacy in the hands of his own eternal Spirit. Sir, some of the sudden fruits and effects of that fore-mentioned sermon of yours upon the Monday, I think the mountains at the back of my brother’s house, will bear witness unto. But, ah ! many hills and mountains of another kind have I seen in my way since that time, and yet grace sometimes coming and skipping upon them. Of late also, the Lord has brought me into the deep waters of affliction ; and yet, I think, he has let me see some of his wonders in the deep.

May he graciously support and comfort you, and your

spouse, under your troubles and afflictions!—This, with my cordial respects to you and her, is from,

Very Rev. dear Sir,

Your very affectionate Servant and Brother
in common office,

RALPH ERSKINE.*

His brother Ebenezer having been ordained in May 1703, Ralph appears to have spent great part of two summer vacations with him at Portmoak. He afterwards obtained the situation of tutor and chaplain in the house of Lieutenant-Colonel John Erskine, a man justly celebrated for his piety and patriotism. The Colonel was third son of Henry, Lord Cardross, a nobleman distinguished for his attachment to Presbyterian principles, and his sufferings in the cause of civil and religious liberty. Both father and son took refuge in Holland, the great asylum of the persecuted, during the reigns of Charles II. and James II. The Colonel was himself a determined Whig and Presbyterian, and formed habits of intimacy with the refugees in that country, by whose efforts the Revolution of 1688 was effected. King William knew him well, fully appreciated his services in behalf of the Revolution, and honoured him with various marks of confidence and esteem. His cordial attachment to the true interests of the Church of Scotland "continued unabated till the close of his life." For nearly forty years he was regularly returned a member of the General Assembly by the Presbytery of Dunfermline; and during the whole period, he approved

* This letter has formerly appeared in several publications as in the *Missionary Magazine*, vol. iii. Pp. 354, 355.

himself a zealous advocate for the constitutional rights and privileges of the Christian people. In the year 1735, he was the only ruling elder associated with three eminent clergymen, whom the Assembly appointed commissioners to go to London for the purpose of applying to Parliament, and to the Crown, for a repeal of the act of the 10th Queen Anne, which restored to patrons in Scotland the power, of which the act 1690 had deprived them.* His memory, on the whole, is entitled to a large share of those sentiments of veneration and gratitude, with which the names of the old, devout, and patriotic Presbyterians should never cease to be regarded. Colonel Erskine, it may be noticed, was father of John Erskine of Cardross, Professor of Scots Law in the University of Edinburgh, and author of the "Institutes of the Law of Scotland," and grandfather of the late Rev. Dr. John Erskine of Edinburgh, the eldest son of that learned Professor.

From a comparison of several dates in his note-books, it seems probable that Ralph Erskine entered this worthy Colonel's family at, if not a little before, the commencement of the year 1705, and resided generally with it, till about the date of his license in 1709. The family being in the habit of spending a considerable proportion of the year at Edinburgh, he had the opportunity of improving the literary and religious advantages of the city, as well as of enjoying the sweet retirement of the country at the Colonel's seat near Culross, on the banks of the Forth. His own comfort or improvement, however, was not his sole object. The solicitude he felt to discharge with fidelity the whole duty that now devolved on him,

* See Sir Henry Moncreiff's Account of the Life and Writings of Dr. John Erskine, Pp. 6—8.

and to prove a blessing to his young and interesting charge, appears from the following memorandum, written by him on a blank page of a book for notes and extracts, dated 1705:—

“Betwixt sermons on Sabbath-day I was somewhat concerned with my case, and desired the Lord to pity me, and was helped in seeking this. I heard an excellent sermon in the afternoon. Monday morning I was enabled to pray with much sweetness; Thursday afternoon also, but especially Friday afternoon, when being thoughtful about my concerns with respect to the family, and my duty therein, and towards the children committed to my trust, I went to seek counsel of the Lord how to carry, and was made, with intentness of spirit, while praying, to seek that the Lord might give me a sight of my sins, and was made with affection to beg this, because I sought nothing but what was for his glory, and sought it for the sake of Christ, and because without it I could not glorify him either here or hereafter; with sweetness, pleading also, because he had promised it in his gracious covenant, where he has promised the Spirit. And a little afterwards, I was made to beg that the Lord would assist and direct me in my carriage with respect to the family, and the children committed to my custody in some measure, praying that the Lord might take the glory of all to himself, by helping me to my work, and profiting the children. And at both these times, I was made to bless and praise the Lord, because of his promise of his help and Spirit. Even with delight and affection, I was helped to bless the Lord for his promised help, and for giving me ground to hope that he would assist me.”

Happy the tutor who discovers so earnest a solicitude

to promote the glory of God, and the real welfare of the young people whom he has undertaken to govern and instruct; and who, conscious of his own insufficiency, implores counsel, strength, and success, from above! Happy the children who are placed under the tuition of such a teacher, if they obtain wisdom to prize, and a heart to improve their invaluable privilege!

Colonel Erskine, we find, expressed entire satisfaction with the manner in which this conscientious tutor discharged his trust. A lasting friendship resulted from the connexion; and it would be wrong to suppress the following fragment of a letter, which, though owing to the loss of part of the sheet, the concluding sentences and the date are wanting, was obviously addressed to him by the Colonel during the period of his residence in the family:—

“ Sir,

Though this base town doth, contrary to my inclination, make me omit my duty, [referring to his neglecting to reply to his letter] yet I do assure you, my dear Mr. Ralph, it shall never make me forget the many obligations I lie under to you, especially since I came from home. I beg earnestly the Lord may bless your good designs to my children; and am fully persuaded, the right impressions that children get of God, and the ways of God, when they are young, is a great help to them all their life.

The Queen is recovered; and I find, by the Jacobites rejoicing at it, that they do expect great things to be done for them this ensuing Parliament. But they may be disappointed, and the only way, I think, will be by prayer, to overcome our church and nation's enemies;

and if we will not defend ourselves by that, I know no other thing to do it with ; for there is neither gun, sword, nor cannon left in the Castle, but all carried to England.

I have confessed my fault in not giving you a return"——

Candidates for the Christian ministry, destined to signal usefulness in the Church, are often deeply impressed with a conviction of their utter insufficiency for that arduous office. The subject of this narrative, notwithstanding his piety, talents, and diligence, discovered an almost overwhelming sense of personal unfitness and unworthiness ; and was, with difficulty, persuaded to make application for license to preach the gospel. Under these depressing thoughts, however, he met with kind sympathy and encouraging counsel from his brother Ebenezer, to whom, during his stay with Colonel Erskine, he repeated his visits as frequently as possible. At one time, it is said, Ralph went to the top of *Bishop's Hill*, part of the Lomonds near Portmoak, to attempt preaching a sermon alone, and Ebenezer, having followed him and listened unobserved, was highly pleased with his appearance, and returning home in good spirits, expressed himself thus jocosely to Mrs. Erskine, "I hope our *calf* will preach yet."* Nor was his brother the only minister that took a fatherly interest in this modest youth, and urged him to overcome his diffidence. He seems to have been much indebted, as well to the private friendship, as public ministrations, of Mr. George Mair ; whose discourses we have found him so warmly commending.

* It was common, in this country, to call a bashful and diffident young person a *calf*.

But the condescending and affectionate attentions of Mr. Mair's colleague, appear to have been particularly encouraging and useful to Ralph. Hence, in the preface to his *Elegy on Mr. Cuthbert*, he states his obligations to that minister in the following terms :—

“ If it should be enquired, what concern I have beyond others to set forth his character, which none have hitherto attempted? Sure he deserved this service from none more than myself, if it be considered that I not only had the privilege of being some time under his most evangelical ministry, and of enjoying his edifying conversation, as well as his cheering and charming company, but also he was the person that first proposed seriously to me my entering upon trials for the ministry, the person that first urged and effectuated it in the Presbytery, the person that, being Moderator, pronounced my license to preach the gospel, and thereafter, first honoured me with his pulpit for that work, and the person that first laid his hand upon me, when I was ordained to the ministry by the imposition of the hands of the Presbytery, on which occasion he preached a very great and glorious sermon upon Ephes. iv. 11, 12, 13; besides many other things that I could mention, that lay me under great obligations to show a particular regard to his memory.”*

Cheered by the voice of friendship, and moved, we trust, by the gracious influence of the Divine Comforter, the Spirit of truth, the young man “took courage.” Towards the close of the year 1708, he was proposed to the Presbytery of Dunfermline, within whose bounds he resided, “to be entered on trials.” In the minute of that court, bearing date November 25th, it is recorded that,

* Works, vol. ii. p. 778, *folio*.

enquiry being made respecting his certificate, Messrs. Mair and Cuthbert stated that they had lately seen the Rev. Mr. Meldrum, Professor of Theology in Edinburgh; that, owing to his affliction, he could not give a written testimonial; but that there was "no objection against his getting the same, whenever Mr. Meldrum should be in health; he being well testified of by other brethren, in whose bounds and neighbourhood he had lived these several years by-gone." At this meeting, he delivered a lecture before the Presbytery, on the 6th chapter of Hosea. On January 5, 1709, he delivered a homily, from Heb. xi. 6, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God, &c.;" and the Presbytery appointed him, for a "common head," *In quo consistat beatitudo formalis aeterna sanctorum*?* February 9th he read his common head accordingly; March 16th, defended his thesis; March 17th, gave an *addition* on Ephes. iii. 1; and May 4th, an exercise on Ephes. iii. 2. June 8th, he delivered a popular sermon on Ephes. v. 15, "gave proof of his skill in the languages, and answered extempore questions." All his exercises met the approval of the court; and "having subscribed the Confession of Faith *coram*, the Presbytery did, and hereby do receive the said Mr. Ralph Erskine to preach the gospel within these bounds, and wherever, in providence, he should be orderly called."†

His first public sermon was delivered at Culross, on a week-day, from 2 Cor. iii. 5, "But our sufficiency is of God." The following memorandum, accordingly, is prefixed, in his note-book, to this sermon: "Preached at Culross, Tuesday, June 14th, 1709, being the first after

* "In what does the eternal happiness of the saints formally consist?"

† Records of Presbytery of Dunfermline.

my license." His character as a Christian, and his edifying gifts as a preacher, soon recommended him to general esteem. To adopt the terms of a certificate, dated April 4, 1711, which he received from the same Presbytery that gave him license, "he exercised the talents which the Lord had graciously given him within the bounds of the said Presbytery, both in vacancies and settled congregations, to the great satisfaction of his hearers, both ministers and people."*

The occasion of his receiving this certificate, was a request from the Presbytery of Dunblane, with which that of Dunfermline thought proper to comply, agreeably to the following extract from their minutes:—

"Dunfermline, April 4, 1711. There was a letter from the Presbytery of Dunblane, desiring that Mr. Ralph Erskine, in these bounds, might be allowed to preach, by their direction, for some Sabbaths, in the vacant congregation of Tulliallan, within the bounds of the said Presbytery of Dunblane; and that his license and testimonials might be given him for that end. The which being considered by the Presbytery, they grant the desire of the said Presbytery of Dunblane, and appoint that the said Mr. Erskine, his license and testimonials may be given him, signed by the Moderator and Clerk."

The parish of Tulliallan had lately become vacant by the translation of Mr. Buchanan to Dunfermline. The people, after hearing Mr. Erskine, unanimously called, and earnestly requested him to undertake the pastoral charge of their souls. About the same time, however, he received a call to the second charge in Dunfermline, which, notwithstanding the prospect of greater labour

* Works, vol. i. Pref. p. ix. fol.

and difficulty, with inferior emolument, he was ultimately persuaded to prefer. It appears then, that though Ralph Erskine was called to Tulliallan in 1711, and Ebenezer in the year 1713,* providence determined that neither of the two should be settled in that parish.

At a meeting of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, May 2, 1711, the Rev. Samuel Charters reported that, on the day preceding, according to appointment, he had moderated in a Call to Dunfermline, which had turned out in favour of Mr. Ralph Erskine; and *Parbock*, one of the heritors, in name of that parish, gave in the said call, "subscribed by a great plurality of heritors, magistrates, town council, and elders;" "the which being considered by the Presbytery, they did, and hereby do approve the said call, as legally and orderly proceeded in." The Call was consequently put into the preacher's hand, with an exhortation to consider it, and subjects for trial were prescribed. After passing through the various customary exercises, which we forbear again minutely to specify, to the entire satisfaction of the Presbytery, he was ordained second minister in that collegiate charge, on the 7th August, 1711. The particulars of this event, detailed in the two following extracts from the records, are not devoid of interest:—

"Dunfermline, July 12, 1711.—The Moderator [the Rev. Thomas Buchanan] acquainted the Presbytery, that the cause of his writing to the members of Presbytery to meet this day, was that Mr. Areskin, after much reluctance and dealing with him, had at length promised to comply with the Call of Dunfermline; but that in regard of a Call to Tulliallan, and frequent solicitations from that

* Life and Diary of Eben. E. Pp. 315—318.

parish, he [the Moderator] submitted his settlement in Dunfermline to the will of the Presbytery, as also the circumstances of Dunfermline, the weight of the charge, and his own difficulty, having the whole weight of the charge alone, and therefore desirous of a colleague, with the greatest expedition that might be conveniently reached. Which being considered, the Presbytery approve of the Moderator's deed, and declared their resolution to have Mr. Areskin settled with him, as soon as the nature of the thing will allow. Mr. Areskin having complied judicially with the said Call of Dunfermline, the Presbytery appointed his ordination to be on Tuesday the 24th instant; and that Mr. Buchanan preach that day, and preside in the action, and also serve his *edict* Sabbath next."

"Dunfermline, August 7, 1711.—After prayer, *sederunt*. Ministers; Mr Thomas Buchanan, Moderator, Mr. Samuel Charters [Inverkeithing,] Mr. Allan Logan [Torrieburn,] Mr. James Hogg [Carnock,] Mr. Alexander Steedman [Beith,] Mr. Robert M'Gill [Kinross,] Mr. George Mair [Culross,] Mr. Alexander Scott [Aberdour,] Mr. Patrick Plenderleath [Saline,] Mr. James Cuthbert [Culross,] Mr. John Gib [Cleish,] *Gask*, and James Beveridge, Elders. Mr. Andrew Thomson [Orwell,] and Mr. Alexander Campbell [Dalgettie,] absent.

"Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Charters, Mr. Hogg, Mr. Logan, and Mr. Mair, represented, that they had, in a meeting among themselves, at Mr. Areskin's earnest desire, altered the diet of ordination to this day, and had ordered timeous information thereof to this congregation, and to the members of this Presbytery; and also in regard to Mr. Buchanan's circumstances, had prevailed with Mr. Cuthbert to preach and preside in the action—to which the Presbytery acquiesced. Then Mr. Buchanan returned Mr.

Areskin's edict, which was called, and no objections offered against his life or doctrine. Upon which the Presbytery did proceed ; and after sermon by Mr. James Cuthbert, on Ephes. iv. 10—12, Mr. RALPH ARESKIN *was ordained Minister of Dunfermline, by imposition of hands*, according to the usual way in this church. Upon which [Adam Rolland of] Gask, in name of the heritors, and Mr. Buchanan, in name of the Session, asked and took instruments."

Mr. Ralph Erskine was thus inducted into the pastoral office at Dunfermline in the twenty-seventh year of his age, and nearly eleven years after the ordination of his brother Ebenezer at Portmoak.

CHAPTER II.

State of the parish of Dunfermline—Mr. Erskine's studious and devotional temper—Faithfulness and success in the discharge of his ministry—Preaching—Administering the Lord's Supper—Catechising and visiting his people—Attention to the young, to the sick, to criminals, to the disconsolate—Letters to Mrs. Sarah Fisher and Mrs. Mary Stuart—Exercise of discipline—Particulars regarding his Session—Care of the poor—Presbytery's approval of his labours—Solemn address to his hearers.

THE sphere of usefulness allotted to Mr. Erskine, as one of the ministers of Dunfermline, was extensive and important. This town is situated in the western district of Fifeshire, about three miles from the Frith of Forth; and is one of the most ancient and considerable in the county. In recent times, it has owed its external prosperity, in a great degree, to the excellence and extent of its linen manufacture. At an early period of the Scottish history, it was the residence of kings. Malcolm III. surnamed Canmore, with his Queen Margaret, usually resided at a tower or castle, built in an adjoining valley. The south wall of a magnificent palace, subsequently erected near the castle, still remains. This palace was the birth-place of Charles I.; and of his sister Princess Elizabeth, from whom the present royal family of Britain trace their descent. Dunfermline once boasted, too, of a very ancient, splendid, and extensive Abbey; but about the beginning of the fourteenth century, it fell a sacrifice to the predatory army of Edward I.; and what the English then spared of the fabric, was

destroyed at the Reformation 1560, with the exception of the parish church and steeple. In the year 1818, an elegant new church was erected, to which the building, formerly occupied as the place of worship, now forms a spacious vestibule. All the seats are removed; and not a shred of the old pulpit remains, except some bars of iron by which it was supported; but the monuments of the illustrious dead, whose ashes it contains, serve to clothe it with a sombre and interesting aspect, and to awaken solemn recollections.

The parish is about eight miles long and five broad. It contains, beside the royal borough of Dunfermline, the towns of Limekilns and Charleston, with Crossford, Halbeath, Crossgates, and several other villages. By the census of 1831, the population amounts to 17,068 souls. In the year 1755, according to the return to Dr. Webster, the number was 8,552. Even at the commencement of Mr. Erskine's ministry, it was very considerable. In the records of Presbytery 1713, the parishioners are stated to be 5000. From a letter, addressed by Mr. Ralph, in the year 1719, to his brother, the Rev. Philip Erskine, Rector of Knaresdale, it appears that there were then "upwards of 5000 *examinable* persons in the congregation."* In 1732, the parish is represented in the Session's Records, as consisting of "more than 6000 *examinable* persons."

This large parish had only one pastor till 1645, when Messrs. Robert Kay and William Oliphant were ordained on the same day.† For some time posterior to the Revolution 1688, its ecclesiastical state, in common

* See a short notice of this brother in the Life of Eben. E. Pp. 42-4.

† Fernie's Hist. of Dunf. ch. iii.

with many other parishes in Scotland, was somewhat anomalous. Mr. James Graham, the Episcopal incumbent, admitted 1687, was allowed to retain his benefice, and to officiate in the church; while the wishes of those who preferred a decidedly Presbyterian pastor were not disregarded. At a conjunct meeting of the Presbyteries of Kirkaldy and Dunfermline, held at Kirkaldy, July 10th, 1688, we find notice of a letter relative to "the constituting of an eldership in each congregation," addressed to those Presbyteries by Mr. John Gray, minister at Dunfermline.* In the same letter, too, he requests that, as he was unable to travel so far as Kirkaldy, their meetings might sometimes take place at Dunfermline and Inverkeithing. Most probably this infirm minister did not survive many years. On the 1st May, 1701, the Rev. Hugh Kemp, formerly of Forgan, was admitted one of the ministers of Dunfermline. During his incumbency, the parish church was occupied one half of the Sabbath by Mr. Graham, and the other half by Mr. Kemp; the latter preaching in a different place on that part of the day in which the former claimed the use of the church. Disheartened, however, by the conduct of some individuals who did not submit to his ministry, Mr Kemp accepted of a call to the parish of Carnbee, to which he was consequently translated in the year 1705. Though Mr. Graham was "deposed by the commission of the General Assembly for Arminianism, and neglect of his ministerial duties,"† no other minister seems to have been settled at Dunfermline before the death of that clergyman, which took place in 1710.‡

* Records of Presb. of Kirkaldy.

† Brown's Gospel Truth, p. 44, *Note*, 2d ed.

‡ MS. by Inglis.

Soon after that event, active measures were adopted to supply the spiritual wants of the parish. Mr. Thomas Buchanan was admitted to the first charge, November 30th, 1710; and Mr. Erskine, as has been stated, was ordained second minister about eight months after.

Fully alive to the importance of his charge, this devoted servant of Christ applied himself, with unwearied assiduity, at once to the sacred studies, and to the active services, belonging to his office. Whatever proficiency he had previously made, he now redoubled his exertions in the pursuit of knowledge; particularly in the study of theology in its various branches. Voluminous systems of divinity were perused with care, and many commentators consulted; among whom he appears to have given the preference to that very general favourite, Matthew Henry. Though his Diary gives no regular account of his course of reading, it occasionally mentions the books he read. Owen, Manton, Flavel, and Boston, were among the authors he peculiarly valued.* He repeatedly expresses his approbation of a work by Mr. Boston, which is now, probably, too much overlooked—his excellent treatise on the Covenant of Grace. In one passage he makes mention of the consolation he derived, in an hour of sadness, from an encouraging section in that performance, relative to all the promises having been originally given to Christ, as the head of his people. The entry is as follows:—

* The Diary mentions also the following writers:—Bates, Durham, Hutcheson, Jenks, Preston, Morning Exercises, Grotius on the Truth of Christianity, Gurnal on the Devices of Satan, Brown and Watts on Prayer, Vine on the Sacraments, Doddridge on the Care of Souls, Rollock's Sermons, Hogg on the Spirit, Clarendon's History, De Laune's Plea for Non-conformist, the Bishop of Cork on the Human Understanding, &c.

“*July 21, 1739.*—That which tended to my reviving at this time, was a word from Mr. Boston on the Covenant, particularly about the promise being made to Christ, and how faith might be strengthened by viewing the promise. Even when conscience-wasting sins appeared, so as to take away all ground of hope or expectation from the soul, looking to itself; yet, when the promise is pleaded, as made to Christ, who is worthy, for whose sake God should do this thing, it created hope, and strengthened the soul. By this means, I say, I was led, especially in secret, to look again to God’s holy temple.”

The BIBLE itself, however, was the book which he prized, read, and studied, above all others. To this pure fountain of sacred truth he daily resorted with fresh alacrity, aware that its salutary waters were equally calculated to refresh his own soul, and to furnish him richly for imparting instruction and comfort to others. Whilst he attentively perused the authorized English version, and committed many large portions of it to memory, he did not neglect the original Scriptures. One of his note-books contains an abridgement of part of a Hebrew grammar; to the study of which he began, it is stated, on February 29, 1716, to apply more closely than he had formerly done.

His delight in study was cordial and persevering. The Diary includes repeated expressions of regret at the interruptions he met with from company; and frequently did he persist in reading and writing till midnight, sometimes till three or four in the morning. Yet all this indefatigable labour was hallowed and softened by prayer. While he exercised an exemplary diligence in using the proper means of cultivating his talents and augmenting his intellectual stores, few ministers, pro-

bably, have been enabled to maintain a more humble and absolute dependence on the Spirit of God, for direction, strength, and success. His reliance on the Divine aid appears from the following extract :—

“ *Thursday, October 7, 1731.*—After reading Psalm xxxvii. with some consideration, I was helped in prayer to look to God in Christ, by way of trust and confidence in him. I was at a loss to look upon myself as among the number of the righteous spoken of in that Psalm. Yet I said, ‘ Though I have no righteousness nor strength in myself, I desire to lay claim to this,—that *surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength* ; and looking to Him as the propitiation for my sin, and to his blood as the atonement, my heart was sweetly melted and dissolved.’ On this ground I was made to look for the accomplishment of the promise of God ; and my heart was pleased that the promise of the Spirit was to be accomplished daily, yea, ‘ every moment.’—Also, my eyes were towards him for a word this day, being to preach, and not knowing yet what to think of for the subject. I preached on Psalm civ. 34, ‘ I will be glad in the Lord.’ After dinner, going to prayer alone, I was helped anew to seek the Spirit, to be as a well springing up and watering me every moment, and to look to the faithful Promiser. In seeking this, my soul was melted.”

His exercises on *October 8*, the day immediately following, are thus related :—“ Towards the *edge* of this evening, when I was at prayer, I got some pleasant gales of the Spirit about my heart—sweet liberty and freedom in pouring out my heart before God. After I had remembered the public abroad and at home, particularly in beseeching the Lord to bless my ministry in Dunfermline, and to remember his word, ‘ Lo, I am with

you,' and to bless what I was preaching on, even *all things being in the hand of Christ*, that he would give evidence of it by his working powerfully upon many; I was helped then to beg the Spirit constantly to water and watch me. Under a sense of absolute weakness and inability to stand of myself, I was helped, with a heart poured out before God, to declare to him that, though he was calling me to wait upon him, yet I could not wait on him a moment, unless he would water me 'every moment.' I was made to seek assistance and success, strength and courage, for my work in the congregation, while the Lord called me to the ministry therein; being conscious that my fainting spirit was unfit for any work, if the Lord would not be with me."

On the morning of the Lord's day, in particular, he often approached the throne of grace, with sentiments of deep contrition, and with earnest desires for the divine presence and aid in the ministrations of the sanctuary.

" *Sabbath, April 16, 1732.*—This morning, after reading, I went to prayer, under a sense of my nothingness and naughtiness, vileness and corruption, and acknowledged myself a 'beast before God,' and nothing but polluted and rebellious dust, yet looking to God as an infinite, eternal, and unchangeable Spirit, who from everlasting to everlasting is God, and always the same, and who manifests himself in Christ. And, therefore, with holy reverence, and with joyful tears, I professed my hope in the word; my hope of the Spirit, because he has said, 'The well of water shall spring up to everlasting life;' my hope of his presence, because he has said, 'Lo, I am with you.' I think he allowed me some communion with him in a way of believing, and I was

made to cry out with tears, ‘ Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.’ I was led, in some sensible manner, under a view of my nothingness, and of God’s all-sufficiency, to renounce all confidence in the flesh, and to betake myself solely to the name of the Lord, and there to rest and repose myself.” The result of this deep abasement and earnest supplication, on the morning of the Sabbath, was comfortable ; for he adds, “ This day I was helped in preaching.”

Even when keenly engaged in study and writing, his soul was apt to ascend to heaven, in spiritual contemplation and holy desires. At a time of assiduous preparation for the Lord’s Supper, accordingly, he says, “ This day I studied for the solemnity ; and while I thought and wrote, sometimes my heart was much lifted up, in viewing the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne.”

Whilst the gracious presence of God was the matter of his importunate and unceasing request, he did not neglect, when his prayers were mercifully answered, to recognize the divine goodness with feelings of lively gratitude. Thus, at the close of the first day of the week, he records his obligations, for the assistance afforded to him, in the following terms :—“ This morning, after reading, my heart was at more liberty in prayer, and I had much sweetness upon my spirit in looking towards God in the promise, and pleading his covenant and perfections ; and in looking to the promise as the promise of God in Christ, concerning the Spirit. I was helped to look to him for his presence in my ministerial work. And when I went to the church, I was helped to some believing view of Christ, as Mediator and Intercessor, and was helped inwardly in public prayer, and also

helped in preaching on Romans viii. 34, 'Who also maketh intercession for us.'

Animated by this devotional spirit, and sustained by heavenly succours abundantly imparted in answer to his fervent and believing prayers, he was "instant in season, and out of season," in publishing the glad tidings of the grace of God. His colleague and he preached regularly on the Sabbath, forenoon, afternoon, and generally in the evening, and also on the Thursday; each taking his turn in the work. When circumstances occurred to render Thursday inconvenient for the people, another day was chosen.

Mr. Erskine's sermons were truly evangelical, experimental, and useful. With few exceptions, they were fully written, and were the fruit of much study and reflection. The cross of Christ was the grand theme on which he delighted to insist; and whatever might be the immediate subject of discourse, he well knew how to keep in view its relation to the person, the righteousness, and the grace of the Saviour. His preaching, at the same time, embraced a great variety of topics; and with much facility he could bring forward scriptural instructions, happily adapted to every occasion. Amongst many satisfactory proofs of his having possessed this very useful talent, it appears from several long lists of texts, jotted down in some of his note-books, and classed according to the varied seasons for which they were selected. One class, for example, is entitled, "Texts for ordinary Sabbaths;" another, "Texts for week-days;" a third, "Texts for fast-days;" and a fourth bears the title "Texts for sacramental occasions."

In conformity with the prevailing practice of the Scottish Clergy, at least in that age, he considered the expo-

sition of a portion of sacred writ on the Lord's day, an essential part of the service. In the early years of his ministry, as his manuscripts indicate, he expounded the Gospels by Matthew and Mark, and the Acts of the Apostles; and afterwards proceeded to explain the Apostolical Epistles.

The Lord's Supper was administered at Dunfermline, for the first time subsequently to Mr. Buchanan's admission, and Mr. Erskine's ordination, on Sabbath, August 14, 1712; and in the second instance, June 7, 1713. Mr. Buchanan presided in the solemnity on the former occasion; Mr Erskine on the latter.* That sacred institution, except when particular circumstances occurred to prevent it, continued afterwards to be celebrated once a-year. Impressed with the importance of this Christian feast, and desirous that immortal souls might, through grace, be signally benefited by the united influence of the doctrine of the cross, and the precious memorials of redeeming love; the subject of this narrative prepared for public duty, not only by close application to his studies, but by supplications peculiarly solemn and importunate. Accordingly, when the sacramental solemnity of 1732 was immediately in prospect, he gives the following account of his exercise:—

“ *Wednesday, June 6.*—This morning, after wakening, I had some thoughts that this might be the last *Action* sermon that ever I might have, and I was affected. I read Psalm lxxvii. with some application and affection, and then prayed, and had my heart poured out in prayer. I was made to wrestle with him for his promised presence, for his Spirit and blessing. I sought his presence par-

* MS. by Inglis.

ticularly on this occasion, and that the Spirit might be sent to glorify Christ as the Lamb in the midst of the throne; expressing my hope."

His prayers, at those seasons, often met a gracious return. During a great proportion of the period of his ministry, multitudes of Christians from other parishes, and even from distant parts of the country, resorted to Dunfermline at the time of the communion, to share in its benefits and consolations. The number of the worshippers was frequently such, that to accommodate all of them with comfortable lodging, was quite impracticable; and not a few spent the whole night in the church-yard, or on the banks of the adjoining rivulet, employing themselves in pious conference and prayer. The spiritual refreshment they experienced is adverted to by Mrs. Balderston, in the following entries of her diary; where she also mentions the names of her brother's assistants, and the subjects of their sermons, on two occasions of this kind:—

"*The beginning of July, 1720, I went over to Dunfermline. The sacrament was to be given there. On the Thursday was the fast. Mr. John Hepburn's text was Isaiah liii. 7. The minister of ———'s text was John xi. 55. Mr. Bathgate had a great sermon; his text was 1 Cor. xi. 31. Mr. Brisbane's was ———. On the Saturday, at night, Mr. Bathgate was on the same text he had on the Thursday. My brother had the action sermon; his text was Zech. xiii. 7. At night, his colleague Mr. Wardlaw's text was Psalm xcv. 2. Mr. Currie's, on the Monday, was ———. Mr. Hamilton's was Mark xvi. 16. I was much in the dark myself; though I thought the Lord was in the place; and it re-*

freshed me to hear afterwards, that many had their bands loosed at that occasion."

"*August 19, 1721.*—The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was [administered] in Dunfermline. I went on the Wednesday, and got a very severe day of wind and rain; and when I came to the [Queen's] Ferry, there was a very great tempest on the sea, so that I stayed there all night. But the next morning looked so terrible, that I knew not what to do. I am sure I had a call to go to that place; it is dangerous to put my hand to the plough, and look back. It was fair in the afternoon;—all the sermons [on the fast-day] were done before I came there. On the Saturday, Mr. Wilson, minister in Perth, his text was Psalm xxvii. 4. Mr. Hamilton of Airth's text was 1 Tim. i. 13, 'Who was before, a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy.' I may say, to my blessed experience, and as it is Jer. xxxii. 27, 'Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there any thing too hard for me?' No indeed; for thou art a wonder-working God. Mr. Williamson's text, at night, was Psalm xxvii. 8, 'When thou saidst, seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' Lord, thou that knowest all things, knowest that my whole soul hath said it. I was in a great damp, under a sense of my own emptiness, but yet got a sight of the fulness that is in Christ, that would be forthcoming to me in his own time and way, which I was to wait, with that word John xiii. 7, 'Jesus answered, and said unto him, What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' So that I found this was to be a waiting, believing communion to me—little in hand, but much in hope. When I was going to the table, they were singing in Psalm xxii. 26, 'The meek

shall eat and shall be filled,' &c.; and I recollected Amos v. 4, 'Seek ye me, and ye shall live.' Still I was seeking but missing, that sensible presence I desired; but my Lord is wise, and knows what is best for me. At night, my brother's text was Song ii. 16, and ch. vi. 3, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his; I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine;'—so that the spouse spoke it both forwards and backwards. He had a sweet and great sermon—which many found to their sweet experience—and I also. Though I cannot remember sermons, I know, by the light of the Spirit in the word, what is freely given me of God; and I will never forget that 'my beloved is mine, and I am his.' On the Monday, Mr. Logan's text was Acts i. 5. And Mr. Hamilton was still upon 1 Tim. i. 13."

Mr. Erskine himself, in a sermon preached before the celebration of the Supper in July, 1743, gratefully alludes to those encouraging tokens of the divine presence, which had been vouchsafed to himself and his people, at similar solemnities, in the early days of his ministry. "Has not God declared his name," says he, "and saved his people, by giving sweet experience of his powerful presence among us, even in our day, particularly on solemn sacramental occasions? Hath not the Lord sometimes shown himself, and discovered his glory in the sanctuary, even here? I remember that at the first communion in Dunfermline, after the Lord had brought me in his holy providence to this place, he led me to speak in the evening on that word, 'The name of the city, from that day, shall be JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, the Lord is there,'—Ezek. xlviii. 35. Although many here were not then born; yet there are many people, witnesses to attest that, from time to time, from sacrament to sacrament, God hath

been pleased to show forth something of his glory. He saved, he showed himself, he declared his name ; therefore ye are his witnesses that he is God, that he is the God of Bethel, that he is the same God, the same immutable God.”*

His conscientious attention to the more private duties of his ministry must now be adverted to. In the letter to his brother PHILIP, formerly referred to, when detailing a number of circumstances respecting his connections, after having stated the extent of his charge, he adds :—“ Yet having a colleague, whose name is Mr. James Wardlaw, we usually get them visited and examined once a-year, besides our other ministerial work.” For even two ministers to accomplish annually, by their united efforts, the public examination and family visitation of so wide and populous a parish, was a very great labour ; and many, who are by no means destitute of principle, will deem it, in reality, greater than was consistent with prudence to undertake. But pious zeal delights in exertion, and a willing mind overcomes a thousand difficulties. Nor was Ralph Erskine less solicitous to enjoy the divine presence and blessing, while performing these humbler services, than when employed in the public ministrations of the Sabbath. On a Friday evening, he says, “ I visited at Pittencrieff, and before I went out, looked to the Lord for his blessing and conduct.” A minute list of the subjects comprised in his petitions, on a Tuesday morning, includes the following article :—“ Remembering that this day I was to begin examination, I was made to look to him that hath said, ‘ Lo, I am with

* Works, vol. ii. p. 214, fol. Sermon on Is. xliii. 12.

you;' and to plead for his promised presence, both in the beginning and progress of this work;—knowing and professing that the work would be but unpleasant to me, and unprofitable, unsuccessful among the people, unless He should be with me; and desiring to hope for his presence because of his own promise, and for his Spirit as a Spirit of light, life, liberty, and power." On the evening of Monday, a few weeks after, he gives this account of his exercise: "This day I went to *Masterton*, to examine. By the way, I was helped to pray on horseback, and my meditation on God was sweet. I sought of him, that he would help me in my work; I thought if he would pity any poor soul, he would get more glory than by sun, moon, and stars—the glory of his grace and mercy; and I was made to look to a promising God."

His public examinations appear, on the whole, to have been well attended. Instead, too, of regarding the indifference of careless individuals as a pretence for relaxing his own exertions, he studied, by the most awakening admonitions, to rouse them from their pernicious security. The following reproof, administered from the pulpit at the close of public worship, in the year 1717, may be produced, as not merely an instance of fidelity, instructive to pastors, but a solemn warning which deserves the serious attention of ignorant and negligent hearers, in the present age:—

"I observe that it is, for ordinary, the most ignorant people that are most averse from waiting on these diets of examination. Those means of knowledge, however, that you now enjoy, will rise up in the judgment against you, in the day of the Lord. Wilful ignorance, when people may have the means of knowledge, is a sin that

will bring on a double and dreadful damnation. ‘It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour.’ People may, sometimes, be more edified at one diet of examination, than at ten preachings; and if people neglect these means, let their blood be upon their own head. We can go to God and say, ‘Lord, we would have taught that people, as we were able, by thy grace, but they would have none of our teaching. They neglected the means of instruction, and cared not for our endeavours, so that it is not our fault, if they perish in their ignorance, and be damned for neglecting the great salvation.’ Mind what our Master said, ‘He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.’—I find the worst of you all, sirs, that care not a straw for ministers or means in time of health, yet crying for ministers and means of grace and salvation, when the cold hand of death is taking a grip of you. I’ll assure you it is an ill-chosen time, when possibly you have no strength to speak to us, and we have no time to speak to you; and God may leave your conscience to fill you with horror and to roar upon you, till you and it roar together among devils and damned spirits, in the bottomless pit. I love not, sirs, to preach of hell and wrath; but I see so many people running that way, through their slighting the road that leads to heaven, that I am resolved you shall not have it to say, when you are in hell, that you had a minister who never told you where you were going. Nay, you shall rather have it to say, ‘Our ministers told us of this place of torment; but we never believed it, nor took any care to

avoid it, or to flee from the wrath to come.'—I shall say no more at this time."

Amidst his active attentions to grown-up people, this minister of Christ did not overlook the lambs of the flock. Beside instructing and exhorting them, along with others, in his regular courses of visitation and public examination, he appears, at least at some periods of his ministry, to have held weekly diets of catechizing, exclusively for the young. His brief notices, for example, of the manner in which he occupied his time in spring 1733, include such statements as the following, written sometimes on a Monday, sometimes on a Wednesday:—"This day I examined the children of the town, according to the proposal on Sabbath." "I examined the children in the church." One of his note-books, too, contains a series of questions and an address, which afford a specimen of his plain, earnest, and affectionate manner of inculcating early piety on the rising generation. They are as follows:—

QUESTIONS TO YOUNG PEOPLE.

"*Quest. 1.*—Are you so young that you may not be sick and die? Are young folk exempted from death and the grave? What have you to hinder the grave from swallowing you up more than those that are older? Have you not seen infants laid in the cold dust?

"*2.*—Are you so young that you may not go to hell? It is among the first questions, you know, your parents teach you, that all ill children go to hell. Many young ones are in hell, who cursed away, and swore away their time, and who delayed away their time. (Job xxxvi.

14.) ‘They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean.’

“ 3.—Can you be good too soon? Can you love God, and mind your soul too soon? Can you be too soon sure of heaven; or too soon fall in with God’s call to remember your Creator, and to seek him early?

“ 4.—Whether is it better to give the first of your time to God or to the devil? Would it be beseeming any here to say [to an earthly parent,] ‘Father, I will rebel against you while I am young, and be obedient when old? and will you say so to God?’

“ 5.—Is not youth the usual time of conversion? An old sinner converted is a miracle that God works but now and then. ‘A young saint and an old devil,’ is a bad proverb; for a young devil may become an old Beelzebub.

“ 6.—Is it not more pleasant to God, that you come to him young? ‘I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me;’ ‘I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth.’ (Prov. viii. 17; Jer. ii. 2.) It is pleasing to God to hear young ones pray and praise, and to see them believe in Christ, and weep for sin. God resents that disobedience, which is brought from youth to manhood. ‘This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.’ (Jer. xxii. 21.)

“ O then, delay not. By beginning early, you will prevent a multitude of sins, and a multitude of sorrows. You will have a stock of prayers and a stock of graces laid up. Be afraid of that word, Job xiii. 26.—‘Thou writest bitter things against me; and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.’

“ Consider that you are poisoned in your nature;

defiled as soon as born, as soon as conceived. You have plague-spots on your heart. Can you delay, while these are eating away your souls? Can you be careful about many things, and forget the one thing necessary? Consider also what a great honour and happiness it is to be 'an old disciple.' O how comfortable will it be, to feel the weight of the crown of glory and the richness of your robes, according to the years of service.

"Does any say, 'You would have me religious, but I have no power, I can do nothing, I cannot even think a good thought?' *Answer.*—You can swear and lie, and you say you cannot read and pray. Do you think that God will be satisfied with such an excuse? or can you satisfy your own conscience, to think you have done all you can, or should do? Has not God enough to condemn you, in that you have not done what you could, and what you may? Never pretend, therefore, you were not able, while you have not done what you could.

Christ's complaint is, 'Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life,' (John v. 40.) Do you ask, How shall we come to him? It is said, verse 39,—'Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me.' So that one of the ways of coming to Christ, is by reading and searching the Scriptures. Prayer is another way. All that came to Christ for help and healing, came praying, with the blind man, 'Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me;' or with the leper, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;' or with Peter, when ready to sink in the waters, 'Lord, save me.' There is no coming to Christ, it is true, but by faith, or believing; nor can any

come to Christ, except the Father draw them. But yet, as the common road that faith takes in coming to Christ, is in the duty of reading and praying, so the common channel wherein the drawing power of the Spirit runs, is in the use of these very means. Let young and old, therefore, be diligent in reading and praying, and so in coming to Christ in that road wherein he has met with thousands; and in that road perhaps he will, some time or other, tell you,—‘When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.’ And if you hold on in that road, I may say to you as he said to Nathanael, ‘Thou shalt see greater things than these.’ (John i. 50.) ‘Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.’ (Jer. xxxiii. 3.) ‘Those things which he hides from the wise and prudent, he reveals unto babes.’” (Mat. xi. 25.)

Influenced at once by an affectionate natural temper, and by a truly Christian sympathy, he took peculiar pleasure in visiting the sick, the dying, the bereaved, the tempted and disconsolate. A considerable portion of his time was employed in administering instruction and comfort to these objects of compassion, and in offering up prayers to God with them and for them. “This evening, in secret,” says he in one passage of his Diary, “my heart was composed and enlarged. I was also disposed towards sympathy with *Gask’s* family, they having a pleasant child dead this day, occasioned by her being burned in hot water in a vessel, into which she fell about six weeks ago.” In another part of the same record, he thus expresses his concern at the calamitous death of one of the church-officers, who, on September

28, 1732, when seeking doves' nests, was instantaneously killed by a fall from the top of a steeple.*

"*Sep.* 29, 1732.—This evening, having come home [from a meeting of Synod at Kirkaldy,] I found my family in safety; but heard of the sad accident that befel *Charles Pringle*, one of our kirk-officers; how he had fallen from the top of an old steeple in the kirk, and was instantly killed." *Sep.* 30.—This morning, after reading, I was helped in prayer. I went to see *Charles Pringle's* wife; and after noon I went to his funeral. May the Lord bless the sad accident to all concerned."

"About this time," it is stated in an entry, bearing date June 16, 1733, "there was a great and universal sickness with the cold. This day, being called to see *John Black*, our precentor's son, about the middle of the day, I went, and was helped and quickened in prayer for the child. My heart was *kindly* engaged to look to the Lord in behalf of the child."

At another time, we find him praying most fervently for a pious female on the bed of death. "This morning," he says, "I was raised to see *Mrs. Meldrum* dying; and, as I was sweetly helped in prayer last night, so going out to Mrs. M., I was helped to speak and pray with her; and after I had been with her a while, went to see another dying saint, *Elizabeth Cleland*. After I came home, I went to my knees, and was helped, especially in behalf of Mrs. M., to plead his covenant and promise. She had told me, that He said, he would 'never leave nor forsake;' that he had said, 'Because I live, ye shall live also;' that he had said, 'The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed

* MS. by Inglis.

is come.' In the midst of her extremity she was saying, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;' and that his faithfulness was her shield. I was helped to pour out my heart in secret for her, that when she was tossed with tempests, and not comforted, he would act conformably to his promise, and my soul was poured out on her behalf; and I found that, at this very time, she had been dying; for she died before I got out to see her again. I had told her, when she was repeating some of these words, and when she could not take drink; 'Your soul is living on the word of life, that very word that proceeded out of the mouth of God.' I was made, in prayer at this time, to beg the Spirit might be poured out upon others in the place, that they might fill the room of those he was taking away."

Though he found it, no doubt, much more pleasant to visit the godly than the ungodly, when standing on the threshold of eternity, his sincere commiseration, like that of his Master, was shown to the most heaven-daring sinners. That he did not neglect those unhappy individuals whose crimes rendered them victims to public justice, appears from several entries in his diary:—

"February 8, 1732.—My eyes were towards God in the promise. In the forenoon, I examined in the church. Afternoon, I went to the prison, and heard a sentence of death passed upon one of the thieves, to be executed **March 22**. Afterwards, when the condemned man was alone in prison, I went in to him, and dealt with him to confess, and give glory to God; but gained little ground."

"**March 22**.—The Presbytery sat. James Ramsay, a man condemned to death for theft, was executed here this day. As I went along with him, I was helped to look to the Lord Jesus for grace to manage right in

this affair, as becomes a minister ; and as I was walking along, got some exercise of faith on that word, ‘ Lo, I am with you.’ And being the first that prayed on the stage before the multitude, I was helped. The man, however, was a mystery ; he still denied the facts for which he was condemned.”

The following anecdote illustrates his Christian humility, no less than his benevolence. During his ministry at Dunfermline, a man was executed for robbery, whom he repeatedly visited in prison, to converse and pray with him. Attending him, with the magistrates, on the scaffold, Mr. Erskine addressed both the spectators and the criminal ; and, after concluding his speech, he laid his hand on his breast, uttering these words—“ But for restraining grace, I had been brought, by this corrupt heart, to the same condition with this unhappy man.”*

The bowels of this tender-hearted pastor were moved, in particular, on behalf of those whose minds were oppressed with sorrow and perplexity, relating to spiritual concerns. He repeatedly adverts, in his daily memoranda, to the interesting conversations he had held with such persons ; and to the comfort which resulted to his own soul, from his endeavours to comfort others. How well qualified he was “ to speak a word in season to the weary,” is evident from the friendly letters he wrote to some thoughtful individuals who solicited his counsel, though not residing within the limits of his parish. Two of these communications may, without impropriety, be produced here. The first is addressed to a Lady, of

* This anecdote was communicated by the late Rev. J. Brown of Whitburn. It is related also in the Memoir prefixed to the Beauties of R. E., by the Rev. Sam. MacMillan.

whom we have learned nothing more than the particulars disclosed by the letter.

TO MRS. SARAH FISHER.

“ Madam,

Your line came to my hand a considerable time after the date of it, and also at a season when I was obliged to lay it aside unanswered. But lately, having again taken it into my hand, I thought it my duty to gratify your desire, by giving some answer. I am glad that the Lord hath made any poor writings of mine refreshing to you. Meantime, I see by your line, you are under fears, lest, notwithstanding the advantages you have enjoyed, you have no more than a head-knowledge ; and several other grounds of jealousies you express about yourself, wherein you desire I may deal plainly with you.

Dear Madam, though it is hard for me to write on this head to one that I know no more of than just what your letter relates ; yet there are some things dropped in it, which, if they be told me from an upright ingenuous heart, may give some handle to show, that the seed of grace may really be sown, and that the Lord is humbling you, in order to heal you in due time.

1st, You pretend you want the sealing testimonies of the Lord's grace, which you judge you would have, if you belonged to him. As to this, it may be in mercy that the Lord is withholding the seals of his love, and the comfortable feelings of it, until you be brought to find it in a more cleanly way of believing his love. It is said in Ephes. i. 13, ‘ After ye believed, ye were sealed.’ The only sure ground of faith, is the word of grace and truth

there spoken of, and not our feeling. The felt sealing of the Spirit of promise is not to be expected, before our believing the word of promise. If we should have any thing like a feeling of his love, before our believing of his love, we would be ready to build our faith upon transient feelings, and frames, and influences, and not upon the sure word of promise. Though the revealing work of the Spirit, opening the word, is prior to faith; yet the sealing work of the Spirit is posterior to it. Many are deluded that rest upon feelings, and build their faith of God's love, not on what God hath said, but merely on what they have felt; and, as these feelings are up and down, so is their faith. It will therefore be your mercy, if the Lord be withholding what you call the sealing testimonies of his love, till once you be made to give him the glory of his truth, by believing his love revealed to you in his word; and then you may expect the comfort of it sealed to you in your heart. The woman with the bloody issue had not sensible feeling of virtue coming from Christ, till once she touched the hem of his garment by faith, Luke viii. 43—48. If you expect and wait for feelings to found your faith, they are mercifully denied you, that you may build upon a surer foundation, namely, Christ speaking in the word for the *ground* of your faith, before you have any feeling of him in your heart for the *encouragement* of faith.

2dly, You tell me, you can hear others talk of sweet communion with the Lord, and of their longing to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, while yet the thoughts of death are terrible to you; and at the same time you complain of deadness, coldness, and carnality, fearing you want love to Christ, and that these things are not the spots of God's children.—Dear Madam, if you have

got a view of the plagues of your own heart, and are indeed kept poor, and needy, and empty, and humbled, under a sense of your want of all grace and goodness in yourself, that Christ and his fulness may be the more precious and acceptable to you; you have the advantage of those who are enriched with greater enjoyments, if they be lifted up with them, Matth. v. 3—6. Isaiah lxvi. 2. I hope this is the case with you; and that because of what also you say in your letter, that sometimes you can rejoice at the doctrine of God's everlasting love to his chosen ones, though you cannot see your own interest in it; and are sure, that if ever you are saved, the crown must be upon the head of Christ. This looks like the language of one whom God is humbling in order to exalt, and emptying in order to fill in due time. See Psal. ix. 18, and x. 17, and cxiii. 5—7.

3dly, You speak of your having been under many temptations, but that you do not remember any promise to have come with power for your deliverance. Dear friend, if deliverance has come to you from time to time, according to the promise, even powerful and merciful deliverance, whether sudden or gradual, though the promise itself has not come to you with such power, or in such a manner, as you think it has come to others, you should be thankful. The Lord's way of bringing home the promise to the heart is various towards some and others. However, I know little odds between a promise poured in sweetly upon the heart, and a heart poured out sweetly upon the promise. The latter may be as sure and safe as the former. If the promise has but, in holy providence, come to your mind, whether by hearing, reading, or musing, so that you have been helped to make it matter of prayer and pleading before the

throne of grace, be you content, Madam, and bless God for it. Many are ready to depend more upon the felt power and sweet influence by which the promise comes to them, than upon the promise itself; and hence, when the power and influence is withdrawn, then faith is to seek. They cannot rest upon the bare word of God, the bread on which the soul should live, unless, like little children, they get the butter and honey of some sweet influence spread upon it. This disposition, in any godly souls, is much owing to the sad remains of a legal temper, that makes them seek for a ground of faith and hope, more in themselves, and in what is done by them, and wrought or felt in them, than by going out of themselves to what the Lord is in himself, and has wrought for them, and spoken to them. Faith is most strong, when it can live on a bare promise, without the supports of sense. Endeavour you, Madam, through grace, to trust on a promising God, giving credit to his truth; and you shall find him, in his own time, a performing God, giving comfort to your heart. Seek rest, not in streams of blessings and comforts only, that come from him, and take various turns; but in himself, the fountain, who is still the same.

But I fear I have insisted too much. If you want I should further explain any thing here written, you may let me know by another line. I have not in the least studied to flatter you; I have no temptation to do so, being quite ignorant of you, further than you have told me. If you please to let me know your outward station or situation in life, whether it be high or low, it will be agreeable to me. I shall wish I may be able to do service to your soul; and if what I have here written be any way useful to you, and suitable to the case you

wrote of to me, I will be glad you let me know you have received this line: If it come in time to answer any difficulties you may yet be under, you will the more readily pardon and excuse my having been so long of coming with it. May the Lord bless all his own means of grace, and make your soul prosper!

I am, &c.

RALPH ERSKINE.

*Dunfermline, Jan. 19, 1742.**

The other letter, referred to above, is of a considerably earlier date than that to Mrs. Fisher. With the exception of a part of it published a few years since in a periodical publication,† it has never yet, so far as we know, appeared in print. It is addressed to several pious members of the family of Dunearn; and relates partly to certain conscientious scruples occasioned by the enforcement of the law of patronage, and partly to the spiritual exercises of the Christian.‡ It seems right to copy it entire, from the author's own manuscript in one of his note-books.

" Letter to MRS. MARY STUART, and her younger Sisters and Brother.

" Dunfermline, Nov. 17, 1724.

" My very much endeared Friends,

" Having understood once and again that you were expecting a line from me, I designed,

* This letter is copied from the Rev. Mr. Brown's Collection of Relig. Let. Pp. 209—213. See also Miss. Mag. vol. i. Pp. 302—304.

† Christ. Monitor, vol. iv. p. 712.

‡ See Appendix, No. III.

before this time, to have signified to you, how much I desire to sympathize with you, both in your crosses and comforts ; by bearing burden with you in your trials, and by rejoicing with you in the kindness which I hear the Lord is showing to your souls, amidst the pressures of manifold difficulties, whether inward or outward. But as my design has been hitherto crossed by several obstructions, needless to be mentioned here, so having at last broke through these hedges, I shall offer what occurs upon these two foresaid heads.

“ As to the main trial which I understand to have of late afflicted and affected you, since it has a reference to the glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus, and the evangelical way wherein you have desired the dispensation thereof, in opposition to the antichristian and anti-evangelical obtrusion of pastors upon a Christian people against their free election and consent, to the infringing of Christian liberty : Such an imposition as this is, I own, a yoke which neither we, nor our fathers, were able to bear ; and I think the Lord is saying to some in our generation, ‘ Why tempt ye God to put such a yoke upon the neck of the disciples ? ’ Acts xv. 10. Now, if you, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, be groaning under a heavy yoke of this nature, I shall not say either, on the one hand, that it is your duty violently to throw it off, like bullocks unaccustomed to any yoke ; or yet, on the other hand, tamely to submit your neck thereto, as if no difference were to be made betwixt the yoke of a Divine institution, and that of a human imposition. Every ordinance of God, whether it relate to his preceptive will in what we are called to do, or to his providential will in what we are called to suffer, ought to be submitted to, as an easy yoke and a light burden,

through his strengthening and supporting grace. But with respect to every ordinance of man that seems to be imposed under the colour of a divine warrant, it is a hard matter to understand how to carry so as to run to no extreme. And though it is also hard, while there is any thing like parties in the Lord's house, for one who is reckoned to be upon one side, to say any thing but what will be liable to misconstruction by the other side; yet, being confident that those to whom I write will make no bad use of my freedom, I shall adventure to give the following thoughts with respect to such a human yoke. It is to be considered either as it is managed by men for advancing their carnal designs, or as it is ordered of God for advancing his holy ends. In the former respect, it ought to be rejected, refused, and testified against, in all proper and becoming methods; otherwise we cannot be witnesses for God against the corruption of the day we live in. In the latter respect, it comes under the denomination of a trial, under which there ought to be a patient waiting on the Lord till he make light to arise out of obscurity. As to that particular difficulty, with respect to the attending on the ministry of the word under such circumstances, I dare not adventure to lay down any other direction save that of the Apostle, Rom. xiv. 5, 'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;' or, as the word may be rendered, 'fully assured;' and a good reason is given for this direction in the last verse, 'Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.' Particular straits, it is true, may occur in providence, which require particular light and conduct, for which there ought to be a close dependence upon the Lord, the fountain of light. The case of some congregations at present is to me like a forced marriage, when there is

not mutual consent of parties ; for example, on the side of the female. The match proves, in the issue, either good and advantageous to the forced party, or not so. If it prove good and agreeable, then she ought to dwell with the husband, and bless over-ruling providence, yet testify against the sinful management of the matter ; since the laws of nature were violated, by the force and violence that were used. If, on the contrary, it prove still bad and disagreeable, and yet a divorce impracticable, the misery is great, especially where there is no remedy but patience. The former part of the simile is easily understood, and it were desirable to be thus disappointed ; notwithstanding that I have sometimes thought, that a general attendance upon such a forced ministry, would make those that are guilty of that force and violence to glory in their action, and encourage themselves in such a conduct, though yet the good issue that providence brings out of an evil will never justify it. But as to the latter part of the simile, namely where the match is still disagreeable, and yet a divorce impracticable, and where there is no remedy but patience, I own the simile does not here agree so well with the matter represented by it ; for, in the pastoral marriage, where it is constrained, and every way disagreeable to spiritual welfare, there are particular measures that may be taken for relief, as Christian prudence may direct, and measures not inconsistent with a patient waiting on the Lord, and an inoffensive carriage towards men. In some cases, indeed, it is hard to carry so as not to displease some ; but it is one thing to displease their humour, and another thing to offend their conscience. We may sometimes displease people's humour and put them in a rage, while yet their conscience may justify our deportment ; or,

though their conscience be seared, and blind, and misinformed, yet if our way can bear the test of the divine word, we give them no real offence. It would be liable to misinterpretation by some, if I should say, as a great man once did, that it is no separation to seek after the purest ordinances, any more than a sick person going to the purest air. But I would fain hope that your case does not correspond with this. Meantime, I desire to pray that the Lord may sweeten and sanctify both present grievances, and the future alteration of circumstances, which, I understand, is likely to take place, with respect to you.

“ Now, amidst all the trials that you have been, or are conflicting with, I think I have ground to persuade myself, that the Lord is showing kindness to you, by his comforting and confirming manifestations; and by carrying on the great work, which, I hope, he has begun; and the furthering of which, is what I mainly proposed by this missive. Though I have prevented my enlarging, by insisting so much already, yet I shall presume to add a few things on this head. O bless the Lord that ever he brought you to see that your happiness lies not in the worldly vanities, earthly pleasures, and carnal jollities, that many are satiating themselves withal; but to look beyond these things, and to see Him that is invisible, even a God in Christ as your only sure and all-sufficient portion; and that even he taught you to put a difference betwixt the voice of Christ and the voice of a stranger; while others that see not so far, are perhaps looking upon you as if you were half-mad or infatuated. It is no new thing for Joshua and his fellows to be persons wondered at, Zech. iii. 8. But to be his fellows, who is the true Joshua, to have fellowship with the blessed

Jesus, through the sweet anointing of his Spirit, wherewith he is anointed above his fellows, is a privilege that can easily counterbalance all the slights and reproaches that can be suffered for his sake. I understand that this privilege is sometimes, in a remarkable manner, conferred upon some of you, if not on you all. O bless the Lord for it; but do not expect to be always dandled by sensible communion with our Lord. It is, indeed, sweet to be lying in the lap of sense; but you must be set down upon your feet, to walk by faith; and this life is as sure as the other is sweet. By a life of sense, we get the more comfort; by a life of faith, our Lord gets the more glory; for faith worketh by love, and love is the heart and soul of all gospel-obedience. Yea, though saving faith, and sensible spiritual feeling go frequently together—there being a joy and peace in believing—yet faith must be content sometimes to live upon a bond when there is no present payment to be given or expected. And we may be well satisfied that a faithful and true God gives us such good security as the bond of his promises, and we ought to give him his own day for the accomplishment. The more believingly and patiently we wait, till the fruit that hangs on the tree of the promises be ripe, it will be the bigger and the sweeter.

“Yet, by the bye, I think it is a sweet battle, and pleasant disagreement, that it is sometimes betwixt the two graces of faith and love,—while love says, I must have him presently, and faith says, I must wait for him patiently; love says, I cannot want him, and faith says, I cannot limit him; love says, let me rejoice in his sweet presence, and faith says, let me rest upon his sure promise. Love, I think, is more selfish, and speaks for itself; but faith is more noble, and speaks for God. What a noble life,

then, is it, to live by faith, even in a day of hiding and darkness, and against hope to believe in hope, and to be strong in the faith, giving glory to God! Though love may excel faith for *length*, as it is a triumphant grace, 1 Cor. xiii. 13, yet faith doth excel love for *strength*, as it is a militant grace; and hence, though love be strong as death, yet faith is stronger, for all things are possible to it. Why? It borrows the arm of omnipotency, and sets the power and the promise of God together on its side; it puts the God of truth to his word, and the God of power to his work, being fully persuaded that he who hath promised is able to perform, Rom. iv. 21. And as it most ordinarily is vented and exercised in prayer, so when it comes to the open field, the pitched battle, to be wrestling with God for the blessing, then Jehovah condescends to yield, and own that he is overcome; yet so as the conqueror shall not boast in himself, but glory in the Lord, in whom alone he is more than a conqueror, Rom. viii. 37.

“O if we could believe more, we should see more of the glory of God. It is our advantage, that he, who is the object of faith, is also ‘the author and finisher’ thereof; and that we are allowed to be still looking to him both as ‘the author’ of it, that he may work it and every act of it in us, as our momentary constant need requires; and as the ‘finisher’ of it, that he may carry on his work to perfection, till faith terminate in vision, and that he may fulfil in us the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power—that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, and we in him,” 2 Thes. i. 11, 12.

“True faith gives Christ his own room, and will not take a bit of his glory. It will own, that all its being

and operation hold of Christ as its author, so as it cannot stir without him, nor move but as he moves it; and that all its virtue and usefulness hold of Christ as its object, so as it cannot justify nor save, as it is our gracious act, but as it applies this glorious object. It makes Christ's perfect obedience and condign satisfaction the alone condition of eternal life; and as it cleaves to Christ's righteousness alone as the ground of its title to heaven, so it employs his Spirit as the only author of its meetness for heaven. In a word, it gives itself room nowhere, that Christ may have room everywhere; it makes itself nothing at all, that Christ may be 'all in all.' God has put honour upon it as the instrument of justification, because it puts all the honour of justification upon God in Christ by the Holy Ghost; or upon Christ's righteousness, imputed by the Father, brought in by the Son, and applied by the Spirit. Faith gives all the honour to God, and takes none to itself, so long as it acts like itself. God has eminently connected it with salvation, saying, 'He that believeth shall be saved,' because it disclaims even itself, as well as all things else, from having any title to the praise of any part of salvation, that Christ may have all the glory of it, and be the centre of our praises, and that salvation may not be by works evangelical any more than legal, but by grace. 'Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace,' Rom. iv. 16. Thus all boasting is excluded, while faith first excludes itself as a work, and then all legal and gospel works too, as the grounds of salvation and justification; while, at the same time, it produces natively all gospel works, as fruits and evidences of justification, and so we show our faith of free justification by our works of sanctification. As the same thread is winded

up upon one clew by being winded off from another, so the same work of holiness, which faith winds off and disclaims in the matter of justification, it winds up upon the clew of sanctification,—to evidence that justifying faith is a sanctifying thing, and that the more a man is dead to the law, the more is he alive unto God, Gal. ii. 19. The more he renounces the law as a covenant, the more does he honour it as a rule ; the faith of free justification through Christ's righteousness alone, without the works of the law, being the very root of all true gospel holiness.

“ Now that the glorious Gospel, and Christ the substance thereof, may be more and more known to you ; and that, under the constant influence of the eternal Spirit, you may grow up as willows by the water courses, till you be planted in the heavenly paradise, shall, I hope, be the prayer and desire of him who writes these lines, and desires a good share of your prayers, and who remains,

Dearly beloved and honourable,

Your endeared Friend and humble Servant,

RALPH ERSKINE.”

The most unpleasant part of a pastor's work is that which is occasioned by scandalous offences breaking out amongst his people. In the populous parish of Dunfermline, such disorders did not unfrequently occur ; and Mr. Erskine considered it his indispensable duty to vindicate the honour of Christ, resist the encroachments of vice, and attempt the recovery of open transgressors, by the vigorous exercise of the discipline authorized by Scripture, and by the rules of that Presbyterian church to which he belonged. In cases, therefore, where those rules required it, he not only conversed privately with

delinquents to bring them to repentance, but also rebuked them before the congregation. Admitting that the subjects of discipline were too frequently rebuked for the same offence, and even that, in some instances, private reprehension, would have served a good purpose better than any public appearance at all, his mode of procedure displayed no singular rigour or austerity. He merely acted in accordance as well with the established usage of the times, as with his own convictions of duty.

Some written reproofs, still extant in his manuscripts, afford sufficient evidence of the fidelity and gravity with which he was accustomed to address himself in public to persons convicted of dishonesty, Sabbath-breaking, lewdness, and other offences. To one, for example, he says: "Think upon the case you are in, and meditate on the misery you have exposed yourself unto; for God will deal with you either in mercy or in wrath. If he deal with you in mercy, then you will surely find more bitterness in sin than ever you found pleasure in it; and if he deal with you in wrath, you will find sin, like a mountain of lead, weighing you down to the bottom of hell for ever. The Lord make you wise to salvation, that you may flee from the wrath to come."—An address to another contains the following passage: "The devil promises the carnal hearts of men much pleasure and satisfaction in the way of sin; but, alas! in his promises he is found to be the father of lies. I have read of King CANUTE, that he promised to make him the highest man in England who should kill King EDMUND his rival; which, when one had performed, and expected his reward, he commanded him to be hung on the highest tower in London. So Satan pro-

mises great things to people in pursuit of their lusts, but he puts them off with great mischief. The promised crown turns to a halter; the promised comfort, to a torment; the promised honour, into shame; the promised consolation, into desolation; and the promised heaven turns into a hell. Oh! what profit have you of those things whereof ye ought to be ashamed? "for the end of those things is death."

In justice to this faithful reprover of iniquity, it must, however, be added, that his severity was softened by tenderness, his most awful rebukes, by affectionate counsels. At the meetings of his Session for administering discipline, if at any time elders assumed a tone of immoderate harshness, he was wont to check them gently, saying, "Brethren, we must restore those that are overtaken in a fault, in the spirit of meekness: Remember him who has compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way."

During Mr. Erskine's ministry, care was taken to provide an adequate number of ruling Elders and Deacons. In March, 1714, eight persons who had been ordained as deacons three years before, were promoted to the eldership, and other ten were invested with the same office. Mr. Buchanan preached and presided on that occasion. Five new elders were ordained by Mr. Erskine, in June 1720, thirteen in May 1733, and three more in November following. In September 1726, six deacons were ordained by Mr. Wardlaw.

The ministers, instead of choosing elders and deacons, merely by their own authority, availed themselves of the counsel of those who had previously sustained those offices, and manifested some regard to the voice of the

people. In 1719, "the Session, considering that there are several quarters in the congregation that want elders, the ministers recommend it to the elders to bring in, with their conveniency, a list of fit persons for that office." A few weeks after, they complied with that recommendation, by presenting "a list of those persons whom they judged fit to be elders in this parish." On the 2d of April, 1733, after a list prepared in the same manner was read, "the elders were appointed to make inquiry in the several quarters of the parish, if the foresaid persons be *the people's choice*, and can be constituted elders by their consent, and to report their diligence against Thursday come eight days." Accordingly, on the 12th April, "the several members present gave an account to the Session that they have mostly gone through their several quarters, and found that the foresaid leet nominated for being elders, were the choice of the generality of all the heads of families in the quarters to which they severally belong; and that, besides the foresaid leet, some others were nominated to them by the people—whom the Session were well pleased to add to the former leet." At a subsequent meeting, May 2d, the candidates, "being judicially examined as to their qualifications and abilities for that office, they were approved;" and then it was agreed that, on a certain Sabbath, notice should be given from the pulpit of their intended ordination, and intimation made, that if any person had any valid objection to the character of any of the candidates, he should state his objection in due time before the Session.*

To incite members of Session to diligence and faithfulness in the discharge of duty, the practice of *privy*

* MS. by Inglis.

censures was observed*, and each one was closely examined as to the particulars of his conduct. In the month of February 1736, the following list of Questions, we find, was proposed to the ruling elders:—

“1. Do you keep up the worship of God in your family, and endeavour it morning and evening?

2. Do you visit the sick in your own quarter, and pray with them?

3. Do you attend the monthly meetings of the Session, except in cases of necessary absence?

4. Do you endeavour to bring in no subject that may divert from duty, in these meetings?

5. Do you search out scandals and indecent conversation of persons, that you hear of in your several quarters; and when you find that they are flagrant, do you inform the Session of them?

6. Do you enquire for certificates from persons coming from other congregations, that live in your quarters?

7. Do you take care of the poor in your quarters, and only apply for them when you know that they are really needy?

8. Do you keep the Session's private affairs; and make it your business, before the dispensing of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to enquire into the conversation of every one in your quarter that use to apply for tokens, and faithfully make known to the Session, at the reading of their names, every thing for which they may be refused a token, [knowing] that the elder of the quarter shall bear the blame of every known fault not told?”

The two ministers were, in fact, zealously countenanced by the elders in their attempts to maintain virtuous

* Comp. Life of Eben. Erskine, Pp. 363, 524.

and regular conduct in the parish. We find the Session repeatedly making efforts to check the profanation of the Sabbath, the revellings at "penny weddings," and other evils; and appointing solemn warnings on such topics to be delivered from the pulpit. It seems to have been the practice for a few of the elders and constables, after the commencement of public worship on Sabbath, to perambulate the town and some of the adjoining villages, for the purpose of curbing disorderly persons that neglected divine ordinances, and desecrated that holy day by idle and mischievous sauntering. At one time the Session recorded their resolution to converse very seriously and particularly with the subjects of discipline, "judicially declaring to them, before their public appearance, that they have made themselves incapable of communion with the people of God; taking pains to instruct them, and to see that they have a real feeling of their sins, before absolution; and advising with the Presbytery respecting those that are still ignorant and insensible. "The Session being *weighted*," [deeply affected] it is added, "with the many scandals in this congregation, they resolve, after taking pains, as above directed, to proceed to the sentence of excommunication against such as continue ignorant, insensible, and uninformed; and they appoint this to be intimated to the congregation."

Elders themselves, when their conduct deserved it, were not exempted from the rod of discipline, or even from the penalty of deprivation. In the year 1726, for instance, a certain elder had repeatedly given offence by drinking to excess, and notwithstanding promises of amendment, had lately been "very guilty on the evening of a market-day." "The Session, after serious and

mature deliberation, thought fit that Mr. Erskine should pray for light and direction in this important matter, and that R—— C—— should be called to join therein; which being done accordingly, and he again removed, they came to this state of the vote, Suspend or Depose from the office of ruling elder, and it carried by a great majority, Depose.”

Considerable attention was shown to the interests of the poor, and various plans were tried for their relief. At one time, “it was agreed on by the heritors, town-council and session, that no stranger poor should be allowed to beg in the parish, nor any poor in the parish to beg from door to door; but their names put in a list, and weekly allowances given them, according to their necessities. And for this end, the whole town and landward were *stented* [assessed] according to their ability, for so much in the year. There were no collections gathered on the Sabbath-days at the church-doors.”* Serious difficulties having occurred, however, in the execution of this arrangement, the old mode of providing a fund by public collections on the Lord’s day was soon resumed. On Sept. 9, 1733, at a conjunct meeting of heritors, magistrates, members of the town-council and elders, it was determined, “that the way and manner the poor have been maintained these two years past, can take place no longer, but must drop; because several of the heritors, and inhabitants of the town and country, refuse to give up their *stent* laid on them as bound. Therefore the meeting agreed that the poor be supplied by the Session as formerly.” The Session, in consequence, embraced an early opportunity of

* MS. by Inglis.

causing "intimation to be made from the pulpit, that the congregation extend their charity to the poor, as much as their ability will allow, the poor being in very great need."* About this time, thirty-seven persons were relieved per week, receiving, in all, L.6, 8s. *Scots money*; and twenty-four per month, among whom L. 6, 18s. were distributed each month.

Partly owing to the increased population of the parish, but chiefly to the growing confluence of communicants and hearers from other quarters, the collections, on sacramental occasions, rose considerably. In the first years of Mr. Erskine's ministry, they averaged about L. 175 *Scots*; but after 1733, they sometimes amounted to more than L.280.

Notwithstanding the agreement relative to *stranger poor* mentioned above, the beneficence of the Session and people of Dunfermline was not entirely confined to their own parish. Part of the collections made on occasions of administering the Lord's Supper, was repeatedly given to strangers, "on particular recommendation." In compliance with a petition from the Session of Kinross, a liberal sum was collected for four orphans of that parish, whose father, with his dwelling-house and property, had perished by fire. The spiritual necessities of mankind were also kindly considered. Collections were made in aid of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland; and in the year 1724, a voluntary contribution, amounting to L.46, 14s. 4d. *Scots*, was gathered for the Scots Presbyterian Congregation in New York.†

Mr. Erskine was careful to promote both a spirit of

* MS. by Inglis.

† Ibid.

piety and of Christian benevolence amongst the members of his Session. Conformably to the custom of many worthy clergymen, he was accustomed, not only to call them together for the exercise of discipline and for managing the affairs of the poor, but also to meet regularly with them for prayer and spiritual conference. These social religious exercises were entirely suited to his taste, and truly refreshing to his heart. In one passage of his Diary he says :—

“ *Monday, Nov. 9.*—The Session met for prayer in my room, being the first Monday of the month. I prayed last ; was strengthened and helped therein.”—Shortly after the following expressions occur: “ This evening the meeting [of the elders] being in my room, we were helped to some very heavenly conversation about Christ and his glory, and the glory of his everlasting kingdom. I prayed last, and was strengthened in praise, and enlarged to bless the Lord for Christ, and the Gospel, and the covenant, and for the Spirit, the Comforter, the promise of the Spirit, and the performance of the promise in part ; and for Christ’s being at the right hand of God, and the expediency of his going away, that he might send the Spirit ; and also for this, that the government of the Church and its concerns is in the hands of Christ, and on his shoulders ; and that the tongues and hearts, and wrath of men, are in his hand.”

It appears too from his Journal, that, amongst the private members of his congregation, societies were formed for prayer and religious conversation, and that he was in the habit of encouraging them by at least an occasional attendance. “ This evening,” he writes on a Thursday, “ in the *fellowship meeting*, as I was helped

in conversation, so in prayer my heart and lips were somewhat opened, and my soul quickened in the duty."

An authentic testimony to the unwearied fidelity with which the subject of this memoir prosecuted the work of the ministry, is supplied by a minute of the Presbytery of Dunfermline respecting a presbyterial visitation of his parish, which took place July 4, 1716:—

"Mr. Erskine having preached on his ordinary, being 2 Cor. v. 14, was asked if he had made timeous intimation of this meeting, to which he answered in the affirmative. Then he was removed, and the presbytery, having considered his sermon, did approve thereof. Then elders and heads of families were called, and the usual questions anent his soundness in doctrine, diligence, piety, and orderly walk being asked, they all declared their great satisfaction with him on these heads. He was called in, and this was intimated to him, and he was encouraged to go on in his Master's work." The usual questions were then put with regard to elders and heads of families, and satisfactory answers returned.*

It may be proper to conclude this chapter with an Address, delivered by this approved pastor to his people in the year 1741, at the close of the first thirty years of his ministry. While he alludes to the new circumstances in which he then stood, as a member of the Associate Presbytery, he takes a retrospective view of the varied dispensations of providence, gratefully acknowledges the divine aid he had experienced, and the measure of success with which his labours had

* Records of Presbytery of Dunfermline.

been crowned, and earnestly calls upon his hearers to inquire into their own state and conduct respectively, and to improve their accepted time. This interesting Address, which we have found among his short-hand papers, is as follows :—

“ On the 7th day of this present month of August, *thirty years of my ministry* in this place have elapsed, that thirty years’ glass is run out. When God called me to this congregation, I scarce ever thought that my glass was to run so long in it. Far less did you or I ever think that such a scene would open at the end of thirty years as has now cast up. Many great sins and grievous short-comings I have to acknowledge during these years ; and yet also many great mercies, and favourable assistances in my work, have I to remark. Many dark clouds and gloomy shadows have passed over my head ; and yet many sweet returns and shining rays of the sun of righteousness have I experienced, during my ministry these bygone years. The Lord hath hitherto helped me. And whatever assistances he has granted from time to time, and sometimes success therewith, I have never enjoyed more of God’s presence and countenance in my public work, than since I was brought under ecclesiastical sentences and church persecutions. What has laid me open thereto I was never ashamed of to this day, but rather gloried in it as an honour I was never worthy to share of, namely, to be associated with those that are publicly witnessing, not only for the doctrines of the gospel I have been so long preaching, but also for the royalty of King Jesus, and for supporting that hedge of government which Christ has appointed in his house, for fencing his doctrines, that they be not corrupted and destroyed. This fence, this hedge, was

set up in the name of the Lord, and solemnly espoused in these lands, and the oath of God interposed therein. To the doctrine of grace, thus fenced and hedged, we are essaying to stand, in opposition to all that are breaking down the hedge, or silently suffering it to be broken down. For this we are sufferers, some one way and some another, and myself among the rest. This I value not.

“ But, oh ! may I inquire, what has God been doing among you these thirty years past ? Most of you, alas ! have got little good. Some, by this time, have become weary of my ministry, and uneasy that I should continue yet to preach in this house [the parish church.] But this house shall be a witness against them, that these thirty years I have been endeavouring to preach Christ to you ; and the other house of meeting for worship shall be a witness, when I am in the dust, that my ministerial work for thirty years ended in witnessing work. Witnessing, among other things, that however dear the credit of the ministry of others was to me, yet the credit of my Master, and of his interest and honour, when these came in competition, was yet dearer to me ; as it ought to be dearer to every one of us than all things else.

“ But what account shall I give of my ministry for so long a time ? Indeed, though many thousands of defects and blemishes have attended it, yet I think I can say that I have been made many thousand times, during these years, to plead that promise at the throne of grace, ‘ Lo, I am with you always,’ as importing not only assistance to me, but success for you, and your getting good by the word, by the power of the Spirit of Christ accompanying it. And, though I know, and bless the

Lord, that here one, and there one, has been **savingly** touched by the word and turned to the Lord Jesus, yet where is the fruit that might have been expected to follow thirty years' labour? Who hath believed our report? How few among you are drawn to Christ? Oh how many Sabbaths and week-days have I gone a-fishing with the gospel-net, and yet have caught nothing. Oh that now, at the end of these years, he would bid me cast the net on the right side of the ship, and order a great draught!

“Many of your parents and friends that witnessed my ordination in this place are lying in the dust, and their souls inhabiting a happy or miserable eternity. Another generation, almost quite new and distinct from that, has succeeded; and yet amidst these changes, my work in the ministry has been carried on. What shall I say to you that have heard all these years by-gone? May I say, in allusion to what Christ said to Philip, ‘Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?’ So, have I been so long time publishing Christ to you, and yet do you not know him? Have you never yet contracted saving acquaintance with him, nor attained access to God through him? What a dismal matter is this! Oh, will you now come to him! The gospel-net of grace and mercy is yet open to catch you. Come, come, come to Jesus, who is saying, ‘Come with me from Lebanon.’ Before death part you and me, come now, come now, that my thirty years’ preaching may not witness against you to your condemnation. Although you have slighted him these thirty years, yet he will welcome you. Notwithstanding all the affronts you have done him, his bowels yearn towards you.

“ You that are of younger years, what shall I say to you? You have been born, under a gospel dispensation ; but woe’s me if you have not been born again, by it. O that you were flocking in to Jesus, and outrunning those that are of greater age, that you may get in at the open door of access to Christ ;—that my ministry among you and your fathers these thirty years past, may not be lost both to you and them. O it shall not be lost, if but this day, after all, shall be the day of power, and your heart be made to cry for a word of power.

“ Nothing indeed but omnipotency will catch you. Thirty years’ preaching will not do it. Strangers from abroad, preaching, with ever so much fervour and fluency, will not do it. Though men and angels should cry to you, it will not do it. But there is a powerful cry, a powerful voice from the throne of God that can do it, even the voice of the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne. ‘ The hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.’ And his voice is, ‘ Come to ME.’ The minister can only say, ‘ Come to HIM.’ But the Master himself says, ‘ Come to ME ;’ and can you *sit* [disregard] the call, when the Master calls thee? Old man, arise, the Master calls you, saying, Come to me. Young man, young woman, arise, the Master calls you, saying, Come to me. Little children, rise, the Master calls you, saying, Come to me :—To me that fashioned you in the womb ; to me that fed you all your life long ; to me that has preserved you in life to this day, that a new offer might be made to you ; to me that am able to save and to condemn you ; to me that has no will to condemn, but a good will to save you. Will you not come to me? What! will you rather go to hell, and to the devil,

than come to me? There is more emphasis in the word ME than men or angels can express. Come to ME, for I am God, and there is none else. It is the work of God to draw you. To him I leave it, and to his grace I commend you. The Lord bless what has been said."

CHAPTER III.

Death of Rev. Thomas Buchanan, his first Colleague—Funeral Sermon—Mr. Erskine unanimously chosen to succeed him as first Minister—Differences regarding the settlement of the second charge—Presentation to Mr. Christie by the Heritors, offensive to the people and the Presbytery, and laid aside—Proceedings of the Presbytery and the Commission of Assembly—The Rev. James Wardlaw harmoniously chosen, and admitted—Notices of Mr. Wardlaw—Concord of the two Col- leagues—Esteemed Co-presbyters and Correspondents—Messrs. George Mair, Culbert, Hogg, Plenderleath, Bathgate, Thomas Mair, and others.

MR. BUCHANAN'S affectionate earnestness in urging Mr. Erskine to accept of the call to Dunfermline, could scarcely fail to excite his gratitude; and though the dispositions of these two colleagues were perhaps not altogether congenial, they seem to have co-operated harmoniously in the labours of the pastoral office. By the determination of a sovereign providence, however, the career of the first minister soon came to a close. Having gone to Edinburgh, in the year 1714, to discharge his duty as a member of the General Assembly, he was seized, during his stay in that city, with a palsy, from the effects of which most probably he never fully recovered. At a meeting of session on the 20th May, Mr. Erskine read a letter from him, earnestly requesting that the administration of the Lord's Supper might be deferred beyond the time previously fixed, since it not only belonged to him to preside in the solemnity, but "it would be very crushing to his spirit, if he were ab-

sent." In compliance with his request, the solemnity was postponed till the first Sabbath of July. His health, we believe, was not so far restored that he was capable of officiating at that time; and though he did return home, and resume in some degree the labours of the pulpit, a fresh attack of trouble brought his earthly course to an end on the 10th April 1715, little more than four years and four months after his admission at Dunfermline.*

On the Sabbath after the decease of his colleague, Mr. Erskine preached two discourses to his people from Zech. i. 5, "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" To the first discourse on these words, the following memorandum is prefixed in his note-book: "Funeral sermon on my colleague Mr. Buchanan, who died on Sabbath April 10, 1715; preached in Dunfermline the Sabbath following, viz. April 17, 1715." These discourses contain much valuable instruction respecting the nature of death, the universality of its reign, the difference between the death of the wicked and that of the godly, and the reasons of God's removing our near and dear relations, as fathers and prophets. No particular account is given of Mr. Buchanan's character or ministry; but the general expressions employed manifest a becoming respect for his memory, and an ardent desire to impress on the minds of the people the salutary lessons suggested by his death.

In his introduction he says: "It is not long since I preached on that text, 'The time is short;'" and we have since had several commentaries upon it, both among ministers and people, particularly in this same congregation. We are from time to time losing natural

* MS. by Inglis.

relations ; and last Sabbath this congregation lost a spiritual relation, I mean, a minister of the gospel, a relation which ought to be as dear and precious as any in the world. On such an occasion as this, when God has removed your teacher, not into a corner, as the Prophet speaks, but to the grave, to be careless and unconcerned were an evidence of very gross stupidity. Oh ! sirs, it is a loud speaking providence ; and if you do not hear the rod of God's providence and answer the end of it, you will come to bear the rod of God's anger for ever."

In the *application* of the sermon, the following inferences among others, are deduced.—“ You may see the vanity of idolizing your friends, your relations, your pastors. Give them no more room in your heart than a vanishing creature should have. Why ? ‘ Your fathers, where are they ? and the prophets, do they live for ever ? ’ You may have a just value, it is true, for the instruments of your being, as fathers and parents, and the instruments of your well-being or spiritual advantage, as prophets and ministers ; but let him that *liveth for ever* have the heart of your heart, and the cream of your affections.”—“ Is it so, that the prophets do not live for ever, that ministers die as well as others ? Then hence you may see what need you have to improve a preached gospel ; for you cannot be sure that the gospel will always be preached to you. He who taketh away one minister, can take away all ; and indeed, misimprovement of the gospel, and impenitency, provoke God to take it away. Rev. ii. 5, “ Repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.” God has of late extinguished many candles, many burning and shining lights. He has

taken away several candlesticks from this same neighbourhood. You need to pray, sirs, that the Lord may set new candlesticks in the room of those which he hath taken away, and particularly in this same congregation. As you regard the glory of God and the salvation of your own souls, as you would have pity on yourselves, and pity on the poor individual that is left to labour among you alone, pray for another pastor, even one according to God's own heart, to be settled among you."

Some time after the death of Mr. Buchanan, his surviving colleague was unanimously chosen to succeed him as first minister of the parish, and regularly admitted to that station. The right of filling up the vacancy having fallen into the hands of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, he received a formal call and invitation from that body, as well as from the parishioners. An occurrence of this kind being now exceedingly rare, we shall give the particulars, as detailed in the following extracts from the Records of Presbytery :—

" Saline, Feb. 8, 1716.

[No proposal having been made for appointing a minister to the first charge of the parish of Dunfermline, whilst] " the half-year is now more than elapsed, since the death of the Rev. Mr. Buchanan; therefore the Presbytery did and hereby do declare the right of the planting of said vacancy, to have now fallen into their hands."

Dunfermline, March 7, 1716.

" The Presbytery, considering that they have at their last meeting, declared that the settlement of the vacancy of Dunfermline is now fallen into their hand,

yet being resolved that the same shall be settled with a gospel minister, *with the consent of the parish*, they appoint Mr. Charters and Mr. Logan to speak with the town-council, heritors, and elders of the said parish anent the settlement thereof, and to report against the next meeting of Presbytery.

At a subsequent meeting, held on the 25th April, 1716, the Presbytery having received a favourable report of the harmony that prevailed in the parish of Dunfermline with regard to the manner of supplying the vacancy, the Rev. Messrs. Gibb and Bryce were appointed to meet with the heritors, town-council, and elders, to moderate in the election of one to be their minister.

“ *Dunfermline, May 1, 1716.*

[It was now reported that the appointed moderation had taken place, that Mr. Gibb had preached,] “ and after sermon, several of the heritors, the magistrates, the whole town-council, and elders met, and gave their harmonious consent that Mr. Areskin be settled minister of the vacancy of that parish.” A paper containing their consent and declaration, was laid on the Presbytery’s table by Mr. John Brand, clerk to the meeting. “ Bailie Wilson did likewise represent, that the magistrates and town-councillors were present, and also the kirk-session, who all unanimously signified their earnest desire that the Presbytery settle Mr. Areskin in the vacancy, and several declared that they knew none of the parish against it, and none appeared in the meeting, which consisted of a *considerable body of people*, against the same :—Which being considered by the Presbytery, they did approve thereof as a sufficient declaration of the harmonious choice of the heritors, magistrates, town-council, *and people* of Dunfermline, of Mr. Areskin to

be minister to the foressaid vacancy ; and further considering that the right of calling a minister to the said vacancy is now in their hand, *jure devoluto*, conform to their declaration at Saline mentioned in the minute of that day, did therefore give their Presbyterial call to Mr. Areskin, the tenor whereof follows :—

“ We the Presbytery of Dunfermline undersubscribing, being well satisfied of the fitness of you, Mr. Ralph Areskin, minister of the gospel in Dunfermline, for supplying the place of the first minister there, now vacant, and considering that you were unanimously chosen by the heritors, magistrates, town-council and elders of the parish of Dunfermline for that post, as appears by their consent and declaration given in this day, do hereby call and invite you to the said charge, and to enjoy all the benefits and emoluments belonging and appertaining thereto, and we promise you all due encouragement and brotherly-kindness in the Lord : In testimony whereof we have subscribed *this* presents (written by Mr. John Gibb, minister at Cleish, clerk to the Presbytery) at Dunfermline the 1st day of May, 1716 years.

Sic Subs. Robert M'Gill, Modr.

James Hogg.

Samuel Charters.

Allan Logan.

Alexander Scott.

Charles Muir, [Culross.]

John Bryce, [Saline.]

John Gibb.

——“ Which [Call] being delivered to the foressaid Mr. Areskin, he judicially accepted thereof ; and therefore the Presbytery appointed the charge formerly supplied by him to be declared vacant, upon Sabbath the 20th of this current month of May.”

The Presbyterial visitation, formerly noticed, took place about a month after this transaction. Hitherto, concord and harmony characterised the proceedings of

the parish. Mr. Erskine was installed in the first charge, at the unanimous request of heritors, elders, and people, and with the cordial approbation of the Presbytery. But how soon may a storm arise, to disturb the peace of the happiest community on earth. Difficulties occurred with regard to the settlement of a second minister; and so violent were the animosities which prevailed on this point, that it was judged proper, for the space of at least two years, to suspend the administration of the Lord's Supper in the parish.*

The great source of contention was a strenuous attempt on the part of the heritors to settle a young man by presentation, in opposition to the general inclinations of the people. Since this is a case, which not only attracted much attention at that period, but has recently been referred to in controversial discussions regarding the rights of the Christian people,† it seems proper to give an authentic account of the particulars, as narrated in the records of the Presbytery of Dunfermline.

At a meeting of Presbytery, held September 12, 1716, Sir Peter Halket and others laid on their table a presentation subscribed by the heritors, "some few excepted," and by some members of the town-council, in favour of Mr. James Christie, preacher of the gospel at Kelso; and, at the same time, "declared they would only make use of the presentation, as giving said Mr. Christie a title to the stipend, if the Presbytery go on to call him." "They being removed, the Presbytery, considering this affair, resolve to appoint two of their number to inquire into the harmony of the parish, and

* MS. by Inglis.

† Sir H. Moncreiff's *Life of Dr. Erskine*.

if they find difficulties, to take advice." The heritors, "being called in, this was intimated to them; whereupon they declared their adherence to the presentation: Upon which they were told, that the act, restoring patronage, and the pretensions of patrons, were contrary to our principles, and that that yoke was a heavy and grievous burden; whereof this church and nation were so far sensible, that both our Assemblies and Commissions had expressed their uneasiness about it in their addresses, and that the present Commission were to address the King and Parliament for relief; and that it becomes us, as men of probity, to declare so much."

It was agreed, that the Rev. Messrs. Hogg and Muir should "meet with the heritors, magistrates, town-council, elders, *and people* of Dunfermline, on Thursday the 20th instant, to understand what harmony is in that parish for electing a minister to supply their vacancy; and that Mr. Hogg preach there at that time, and that Mr. Areskin make public intimation hereof next Sabbath."

When the Presbytery met again on September 26, 1716, Messrs. Hogg and Muir reported that, according to appointment, they had met with the people of Dunfermline, after sermon by Mr. Hogg; and that they "found no harmony in that parish for calling a minister." At a subsequent meeting on the 24th October, Sir Peter Halket and some other heritors appeared, soliciting the settlement of Mr. Christie, according to the presentation. The Presbytery, in consequence, "appoint Mr. Charters to meet with all concerned in the parish of Dunfermline, in the choice and calling of a minister, on the 20th November next, and that he preach there, and if he find any suitable harmony, that he moderate

in their electing and calling one to be settled minister in their vacancy." The heritors, however, offended at this measure, and anxious that the Presbytery should proceed forthwith to expedite Mr. Christie's settlement, gave in a protestation and appeal to the Synod of Fife and the General Assembly.

The Presbytery having met at Dunfermline, April 17, 1717, by appointment of Synod; the heritors declared, that they would insist on their appeal to the Assembly, "unless the Presbytery would make their desire as to Mr. Christie effectual." Yet, on the 22d May ensuing, it was reported, "that the gentlemen had passed from their appeal, there being none from the parish of Dunfermline this day, making any motion towards the settlement thereof." At a subsequent meeting, on the 16th October 1717, a new presentation, nevertheless, was given in to the Presbytery in favour of the same Mr. Christie, now minister of the parish of Simprin. The Presbytery, however, delayed the affair, and appointed several of their number to wait on the heritors and others, to make fresh inquiry respecting the harmony subsisting in the parish; in consequence of which the heritors appealed to the Commission.

On the 11th November 1717, the ministers reported, "that they found the kirk-session, most of the town-council, and even some of them that had signed the presentation for Mr. Christie, and several heritors, most desirous that the design anent Mr. Christie should be laid aside, and that there should be a leet agreed on by all concerned, and one chosen out of that leet to be minister of the vacancy of that parish." Two representations were now laid on the Presbytery's table; one subscribed by six heritors and ten councillors, and

another from the kirk-session ; both requesting that the design respecting Mr. Christie should be relinquished ; and that if the appeal be insisted on, these representations should be laid before the Commission. In these papers it was stated, that the aversion to Mr. Christie, which was great before, had now considerably increased. The Presbytery were "unanimously of opinion" that the design for Mr. Christie should be laid aside, and accordingly appointed their brethren, members of the Commission, to concur with his opponents, and among other things, "to represent to the said Commission that the Synod of Fife had expressly prohibited the Presbyteries of their bounds to settle any parish with ministers, unless there be a *harmonious consent of the people*, as the foundation of a pastoral relation."

The Commission of Assembly, however, disregarding the unanimous judgment of the Presbytery on this point, gave sentence in favour of the presentation, and appointed them to concur in the translation of Mr. Christie, and ordered the Synod of Fife, also, if necessary, to see this matter accomplished. The Presbytery, at a meeting on the 11th December 1717, after considering this sentence of the Commission, agreed to delay the affair. When they met again, January 22, 1718, they resumed the Dunfermline cause. None of the brethren of Cupar and Kirkaldy Presbyteries, appointed by the Commission to correspond with them, made their appearance. Adam Rolland of Gask laid on the table a representation, subscribed by several heritors, most of the magistrates and counsellors, and several hundreds of heads of families, expressing a decided aversion to the proposed settlement of Mr. Christie. The Presbytery, therefore, referred the matter anew to the Commission, to meet in

March, and appointed some members to prepare reasons for this reference. The Commission, influenced probably in some degree by the force of the reasons laid before them, were pleased to alter their tone. Instead of imperiously enjoining the Presbytery to proceed to the admission of Mr. Christie, they now acquiesced in measures more conducive to edification and peace; as appears from the following extract of the minutes of Presbytery:—

“*Dunfermline, March 19, 1718.*—As to the affair of Dunfermline, the brethren report that the Commission, with the consent of all parties, had appointed the following probationers to be employed in preaching at Dunfermline, namely, *Mr. Sidserf, Mr. Wederspoons, Mr. Scott, and Mr. Dalgleish*; and that after the parish had heard them preach, there be a meeting of heritors, magistrates, town-counsellors, and elders; that he of the said leet, who shall be chosen by the majority of the said meeting, be called, and settled in that vacancy; and that the Presbytery of Dunfermline, at their next meeting, invite the said young men to their bounds.”

All these probationers, with the exception of *Mr. Wederspoons*, whose services it was found impracticable to obtain, having preached at Dunfermline, the Presbytery made every effort to forward the business. After two abortive attempts, a decisive Moderation at last took place on the 21st of August; yet, according to the following extract, the Call turned out, not in favour of any one of the four candidates proposed, with consent of parties, by the Commission, but for the Rev. James Wardlaw.

“*Dunfermline, August 27, 1718.*”—The Rev. Mr. Logan reported, that he and Mr. Bryce having met with

those concerned in calling a minister to Dunfermline, "the question being put, whether they might add to the Commission's leet or not, it carried that they might add thereto. Then liberty was granted to all concerned to put upon the leet *whom they pleased*; that a leet being made in which all acquiesced, and the votes of the meeting being called, all, except four or five, gave their votes to the Rev. Mr. JAMES WARDLAW, minister of the gospel at Cruden, to minister to their vacancy; and that they subscribed a Call to the said Mr. Wardlaw, which he [Mr. Logan,] with the said Mr. Bryce, had attested."

Captain Halket and others appeared at the same time producing the Call, and requesting the Presbytery to sustain it, and adopt measures for making it effectual. It was opposed only by a single individual, Mr. Blackwood, younger of Pitreavie, who alleged that it was contrary to what was done by the Commission. The Presbytery sustained the Call, and appointed Messrs. Gibb and Hepburn to prosecute it before the Presbytery of Ellon, and other judicatories, as might be necessary.

At a meeting on the 29th Oct. 1718, "the Moderator informed the Presbytery that Messrs. Gibb and Hepburn informed him, that they had obtained the transportation of Mr. Wardlaw, and wished it to be speedily accomplished." All proper expedition was consequently used, and, on the 20th of November, 1718, after a sermon by the Rev. James Hogg, on Heb. xiii. 17, Mr. Wardlaw was admitted second minister of Dunfermline, according to the rules of the church.

A happy termination was thus put to a scene of discord and confusion which had continued for upwards of two years, and must have proved very distressing to the pastor, as well as injurious to the interests of religion in

the parish. His sister, Mrs. Balderston, alludes to this affair in the following brief memorandum :—

“ *Edinburgh, March 13, 1718.*—I had a great weight upon my spirits on account of Dunfermline and my brother, who had the reproach of tongues to bear. But I thought of Jer. ix. Isaiah xiv. ult. 2 Cor. i. and Psalm ci. ; and before I slept, there was a song of praise put into my mouth on his account.”

By concurring with the Presbytery in firmly resisting those measures by which the heritors pertinaciously attempted to effectuate the settlement of a minister, who was unacceptable to the parish, he could hardly fail to give umbrage to those gentlemen, and to incur their ill-founded invectives. Let it be carefully observed, however, that all the circumstances of this interesting case combine to show, that both he and his co-presbyters, far from contemning or overlooking the rights and wishes of the people, did every thing practicable at the time, to vindicate their privileges, and to supply them with a pastor whose character and ministrations commanded their esteem. Impelled by these liberal views, they even ventured, as we have seen, towards the conclusion of the affair, to transgress the letter, though possibly not the spirit, of the Commission's appointment, by sustaining a Call to a candidate, whose name was not included in the list which that court had authorized.*

The Rev. JAMES WARDLAW is entitled to high commendation, as a sincere Christian, a faithful pastor, and an agreeable colleague. He was born about the year 1673, at a small village in the parish of Saline. His

* See Appendix, No. IV.

father, Henry Wardlaw, Esq. removed some time after to *West Luscar*, an estate in the parish of Carnock which belonged to him, and was inherited by James. His parents, being attached to Episcopacy, trained him up in that persuasion; but, at an early period of his life, he began to feel and to avow a decided predilection for the Presbyterian system. Along with a brother, who survived but a few years, he studied philosophy and divinity at the University of St. Andrews. He was licensed to preach the gospel by the Presbytery of Dunfermline, at the same time with Mr. Ralph Erskine. For several years previous to his receiving license, he sustained the office of a Ruling Elder. He was invested with this office, it appears, on the 13th February, 1704, in the parish of Carnock, where he maintained "the strictest union of sentiment" with the venerable and worthy Mr. Hogg.* In a minute of the Session of Dunfermline, dated January 26, 1715, it is recorded that Mr. James Wardlaw, probationer, formerly an elder in the parish of Carnock, was admitted an elder of this congregation, and took his seat. In the parish of Cruden, where he was first settled as a minister, his comfort and usefulness were considerably obstructed by the zealous attachment of the people to Episcopalian principles and forms. For this and other reasons, he cheerfully accepted of the Call to Dunfermline. "It appears from the Presbytery Records, that when called to renew his subscription to the Confession of Faith, he did it with an explanation regarding the extent of the death of Christ. He steadily maintained the adequate sufficiency of the atonement for the salvation of all men, while he, no doubt, restricted its efficiency to

* Brown's Gospel Truth, p. 159, 2d edit.

the elect.”* No inconsiderable evidence of his Christian temper and prudent demeanour is furnished by the fact, that he was very harmoniously invited to take the pastoral oversight of a people, by many of whom he was well known from his youth. A hearty welcome too was given him by Mr. Erskine, who was truly grieved at the circumstances which had kept the second charge so long vacant, and happy to receive the assistance of a fellow-labourer so worthy of his esteem, and so much beloved and respected by the people.

United by the endearing bonds of Christian friendship, and deeply impressed with the importance of entire harmony and cordial co-operation, as equally essential to their own happiness and the success of their pastoral labours, in the delicate connexion subsisting betwixt them,—these two colleagues, within less than a month after Mr. Wardlaw’s admission, drew up and formally subscribed a paper of mutual agreement, which, from its minuteness and general good sense, seems not unworthy the attention of other ministers that are placed in similar circumstances. We shall here copy it, as formerly published, “from the original manuscript,” in a periodical work.†

“Some Rules and Principles agreed upon betwixt Mr. James Wardlaw and Mr. Ralph Erskine, in order to the maintaining a good understanding betwixt them in their collegiate ministry in the parish of Dunfermline.

“At Dunfermline, the 10th December, 1718.

“Imo, That we shall not receive or entertain any ill

* Brown’s Gospel Truth, p. 159.

† Christ. Reposit. Vol. iii. Pp. 391—3.

report of one another, no not from the wife of our bosom, or dearest or nearest friend or acquaintance; and whatever we may hear that may occasion any jealousy, we shall not give it any entertainment, till first we have made inquiry thereinto, by a friendly communication for removing any mistakes.

“*2do*, That in all our public administrations, and mutual helpfulness to one another in our work, we shall not be under the management of our wives, nor any other’s counsel or advice, when it comes to interfere with, and run in opposition to, those duties of love and neighbourhood, agreement, and fellowship, that we owe to one another, especially in matters wherein we need one another’s help.

“*3tio*, That upon any call in Providence that may require our absence from any congregational work, we shall endeavour to be mutually helpful to one another, whether in preaching or in any other ministerial work on week day or Sabbath day; such as visiting the sick, catechising in our colleague’s quarter, as well as in our own, when there is a call in Providence thereto.

“*4to*, That whatever respect or disrespect is shown by the people to one of us more than another, it shall not, through grace, have any influence upon our grudging or entertaining ill sentiments about one another, or diminish that regard and love that we should bear towards one another, whatever difference may be in people’s carriage in preferring one of us before another.

“*5to*, That in matters of moment, wherein we are both equally and mutually concerned, we shall act by previous concert, particularly in all our public intimations about visiting, catechising, or the like, when it is possible for us to concert together, and that in all mat-

ters of less moment or indifferent, (wherein Satan may seek to get advantage of us, as well as in greater matters,) we shall mutually yield to one another.

“6^{to}, That we not only keep up a good correspondence between ourselves, but endeavour to conciliate all that love and respect from the people to each other that is possible, seeing that it is for the furtherance of the gospel that people entertain love and respect to us both; and, therefore, that none of us shall hear or give entertainment to any thing that may be spoken (either by good or bad) to the disadvantage of his colleague, without resentment, or endeavouring his just vindication in all proper ways; and, therefore, whatever we shall hear as ungrateful to people, either in method or manner of speech, or whatever is reckoned amiss, whether in our public administrations, or private communications, we shall, in a friendly manner, communicate it to each other, without taking offence at one another’s freedom; and that we shall entertain no insinuations of people’s commending or applauding one of us beyond another, which may any way tend to the detriment or discouragement of any one of us, without endeavouring, at the same time, (if occasion can allow,) to drop what may have a tendency to make our fellows have the same respect, that may be pretended toward ourselves, by those who make such insinuations.

“7^{mo}, That whatever we reckon amiss in any part of our ministerial management, whether with respect to doctrine, discipline, or any such thing, we shall, in a friendly way, caution and confer with each other thereanent; also, that we bear with one another’s weaknesses, and, in a friendly manner, make each other (if possible) sensible thereof, in order to our and other people’s ad-

vantage, thus employing our endeavours to draw in the same yoke.

“*8vo*, That we keep not up, nor attend, any separate societies in the congregation, without mutual consent or endeavours to have each other the same way stated and concurred thereabout as we ourselves may be ; and that we take no separate lead in any part of our ministerial work without previous consent ; and that we indulge not any keeping up a more close correspondence with one of us than with another, such as may tend to cause any thing of alienation in them to any of us, or to cause in us toward one another.

“*9no*, That we allow no difference or distinction of one before another as to matters of our public ministry, or even as to matters of common civility ; not taking any honorary place of another (except when necessity, order, and decency obliges us,) but being kindly affectionate one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another.

“*10mo*, That we shall endeavour to strengthen one another's hands, not only in public, in our praying and preaching, confirming what truth and safe doctrine our colleague hath advanced, but also in private, when occasion offers ; that we shall endeavour to show ourselves concerned, as for the success of our own, so of one another's labours ; studying to inculcate upon people the doctrine of the gospel preached by our colleague, as well as that by ourselves.

(Signed) RALPH ERSKINE.
JAS. WARDLAW.”

The brotherly concord, thus solemnly pledged, was happily maintained for a long series of years. Mr.

Erskine's manuscripts furnish numerous proofs of the high esteem he entertained for his colleague, and of the great comfort they enjoyed in each other. He alludes, occasionally, to the pleasure and advantage he reaped from his instructive conversation. At one time, when attending a prayer meeting in his house, he requested him, and others present, to implore the divine aid to be afforded to himself in the performance of important services he had in prospect. In the year 1723, he baptized one of Mr. Wardlaw's children, and preached from these words in Gen. xxxiii. 5, "The children which God hath graciously given thy servant." Mr. Wardlaw, as we shall afterwards find, performed a number of similar services for him, and that in a very friendly and impressive manner.* In various note-books, Mr. Erskine has recorded valuable memoranda of his colleague's discourses. In his Diary, he repeatedly states not merely his approbation of them, but the spiritual enlargement they were the blessed means of imparting; some, in particular, that were delivered on sacramental occasions. Let two instances suffice:—

Sabbath, July 16, 1732. In the time of my colleague's *action* sermon upon the sufferings of Christ, the Lord gave me much of a sweet melting frame in looking towards a crucified Christ, and many heart-melting actings of faith, which dissolved me in tears in hearing. Then I went down to the table with my colleague, and had, I may say, communion with God through Christ in a way of believing, both while the psalm was singing, and while the words of institution were reading, and in the distribution of the elements. And when I received

* Ch. x.

the elements, I had many distinct actings of faith upon Christ, such as made me melt before God, viewing him as a promising God, and laying hold upon his faithfulness. After communicating, I served two tables and was helped therein. Then I went into the house, and shutting up myself in a closet, poured out my heart in thankful acknowledgment of the Lord's goodness and mercy, and expressed my confidence in him through Christ as a promising God, who had allowed me a seal of the covenant of promise, and allowed me to apply. I preached in the evening on Ezek. xliii. 12. 'This is the law of the house. Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold this is the law of the house.' My doctrine was, that universal holiness is so much the law of God's house, that the whole family being privileged with access to a most holy place, are under the strongest obligations to be a most holy people. I was helped in delivering; and it being late, I referred part of the application, which I delivered in the tent on the Monday.* Lord, glorify thy name."

"*Sabbath, July 11, 1736.*—I got leave to roll myself, and my work and furniture for it, upon the Lord; and, I may say, that as my heart trusted in him, so I was helped;—helped in hearing my colleague, to hear with some application of the testament confirmed by the death of the Testator; helped in prayer, when he prayed for the blessing on the elements, while I sat at the Lord's Table; helped to look towards Jesus with a mourning weeping eye; helped to look to him in the promise of

* The sermon here referred to is one of his published discourses. See his Works, Vol. i. Pp. 627—639.

the Spirit, and in the promise of his presence. My heart was humbled and poured out before the Lord at the table; and I was assisted, immediately afterwards, in serving two tables. The matter I was directed to in the first of them, was given in hearing my colleague, particularly on the necessity of the death of the Testator: which led me to a view of a *manifold gracious necessity*; namely, of his death, of his ascending to glory, of the Spirit's coming, and of the soul's coming to Christ, according to the word, 'Them also I must bring;' and then, afterwards, the necessity of the believer's suffering here, and then entering into glory. These thoughts, I found, were useful to some. Sermon at night was delayed, because the tables were so numerous. I preached on Monday at the tent, after my brother, and was helped."

Whilst these pious colleagues attended one another's public ministrations with delight and advantage, they were enabled also to go hand in hand, in conducting matters of discipline and order in the parish. They cheerfully concurred with each other, for instance, as well as with the whole session, in urging, though without effect, the erection of one or more new churches, to supply the spiritual necessities of the increasing population. On the 25th February, 1730, "it was proposed that the elders should prepare a list of all the examinable persons within their several quarters, in order to lay before the Presbytery the state of this vast congregation, and the necessity of a new erection of more churches in this parish; which proposal was gone into by the session." So early, indeed, as the year 1713, a similar representation had been made by Messrs. Buchanan and Erskine, with their elders, to Lord Bowhill, whom the

Lords of Session had appointed to visit and divide the church of Dunfermline. They stated that the charge was by far too great for the two ministers, and that "the church could not contain above the half of the people."*

Messrs. Erskine and Wardlaw maintained their accustomed harmony also, on occasion of a difference which arose in spring 1725, regarding an appointment to the office of reader or precentor, and which was carried to so great a height as to prevent the administration of the Lord's Supper, both that year and the following. Captain Peter Halket of Pitferren, having, on April 22d, offered to the session a Presentation by the Marquis of Tweeddale in favour of *Mr. John Hart*, "Doctor of the Grammar School," to hold that office, Mr. Wardlaw protested that no regard shall be shown to this presentation, any further than to give a legal right to the Presentee, to the Queen's donation in favour of the music master and precentor in this place. To this protest Mr. Erskine, with the majority of the session, adhered. They all agreed in assigning as a principal reason for the protestation, that such procedure went to deprive the ministers and elders of their undoubted right to choose their own precentor, asserted by the Directory.

In January 1730, shortly after the death of *Mr. John Brand*, precentor, when a new presentation was laid before the session in favour of the same Mr. Hart, they unanimously refused to sustain it. The Marquis, however, now prosecuted them before the Court of Session, and obtained a sentence favourable to his claim. But while the ministers and elders were obliged to acquiesce in that decision, they expressed their submission

* MS. by Inglis.

in guarded language, which proved offensive to his lordship, and provoked him to threaten them with a new law-suit. In this juncture, the Session recorded their opinion, partly, in the following spirited terms:—

“ Although the Lords of Session have found reader and precentor to be *one*, which yet were always distinct in this place, (as our records demonstrate,) and that the presentation to the reader gives a right to the kirk emoluments, which was never in use before in this place; yet by their *decreet* they have not found the ministers of Dunfermline cannot be precentors themselves, if they please, to their own congregation, or take the assistance of any therein whom they or the Session think fit to employ.” “ If the Marquis designed to take advantage of the decreet of the Lords of Session, so narrowly passed by the casting vote of the Lord President, and to take advantage of the mean circumstances of the Session of Dunfermline, we cannot hinder him; but withal, as it will be the first instance they know of any minister or Session being prosecuted on such a narrow point as this is now come to—for reserving to themselves the privilege of precenting either by themselves, or taking what help they think fit, (which they maintain not for contention but for principle,) so, as long as the law of the land establishing Presbytery is in force, we hope it will allow no prosecution against any ecclesiastical court for their adhering to Presbyterian principles.”—“ The Session of Dunfermline humbly think his Lordship would be better employed, if he were considering what measures to take for supplying this numerous congregation with more kirks and ministers; our kirk not being capable of containing the parish, which, consisting of more

than 6000 examinable persons, would require, at least, that two congregations more should be taken from it."

During this contest betwixt the Marquis and the Session, the ministers themselves sometimes occupied the precentor's desk, as appears from the following entries in Mr. Erskine's Diary:—

" *Sabbath, Dec. 24, 1732.*—This day my colleague and I were precentors to ourselves, and raised the psalm, because of the Marquis's decret, which he was insisting upon." " *Thursday, Dec. 28.*—This day I precented for my colleague in the church." " *Sabbath, Dec. 31.*—I precented for my colleague, and he for me."

This unhappy misunderstanding was at length adjusted; and, in May 1734, when the Marquis handsomely entertained the magistrates and council, Messrs. Erskine and Wardlaw received an invitation to dine with him, which they readily accepted.

The public concerns of the church, as well as the affairs of their own parish, generally appeared to these like-minded colleagues in the same light. In bearing testimony to the precious doctrines injured by the Acts of Assembly condemning the Marrow of Modern Divinity, and in vindicating the sacred rights of the people in opposition to the stern decisions of the church courts in favour of patronage, they cordially united. Their mutual harmony was sustained and sanctified by prayer. On the least appearance of discord relating to any point, great or small, Mr. Erskine betook himself to the throne of grace, imploring the divine aid and guidance for the speedy restoration of peace. Thus at a time when he felt hurt at his colleague's deviation from their concerted plan of proceeding with regard to the visitation and exa-

mination of the parish, he has the following memoranda:—

“*Feb.* 22, 1733.—Some words a little hard passed betwixt my colleague and me, respecting the breach made upon the uniformity of our public work.”—*Feb.* 24. After reading with some attention, my heart was poured out, looking to the Lord that I might not be ashamed of my hope—my hope of the Spirit, because my hope was in the word, and in the Lord, the speaker in the promises;—that I might not be ashamed of my hope of the divine presence in my ministerial work; and that he might mercifully order what difference was betwixt my colleague and me, and bring it to such an issue, that the enemy might get no advantage, but that ‘the God of peace might bruise Satan under our feet.’”

The open breach which happened between them a few years after, when Mr. Erskine completely seceded from the national church, will fall to be noticed in a subsequent part of this work.*

Mr. Erskine enjoyed much happiness not only in his colleague Mr. Wardlaw, but also in many other clerical friends, with whom he was accustomed to associate from time to time, particularly on sacramental occasions, mingling sweet confidential intercourse in private with conjunct appearances in public duty. From the native fervours of an affectionate temper, sanctified and refined by divine grace, he identified himself, to a singular degree, with his dear brethren, whom he “loved in the truth.” Though somewhat ample accounts of these brethren, therefore, had been introduced in this narra-

*See Ch. V.

tive, they could not have been justly regarded as an unwarrantable diverging from its proper subject. We must content ourselves, however, with a few brief notices, relating partly to some of his co-presbyters, and partly to others.

Amongst the members of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, the first place seems due to the Rev. GEORGE MAIR, who, as has been stated, was his pastor and friend some years prior to his entrance on public life. Mr. Mair, we believe, was first settled at Airth. He was afterwards translated to Culross, where the Rev. James Fraser, of Brae, was his colleague till September 1698, when "that holy and learned man" died at Edinburgh, in the 60th year of his age.* Circumstances occurred which induced him, in summer 1714, to accept of a Call to Tulliallan, where he laboured till his death, which took place a few years after. Mr. Boston repeatedly mentions Mr. Mair in terms of cordial esteem.† His deep piety, and the spirituality of his conversation, no less than his ardent attachment to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, made a strong impression on that good man's heart, at the commencement of his own career as a preacher of the gospel. It was in Mr. Mair's house that he saw the first example of a family fast; and it led him afterwards to introduce this branch of domestic piety into his own habitation. His opinion of his public usefulness, too, is thus expressed, "I reckon that worthy man one of the happy instruments of the breaking forth of a more clear discovery of the doctrine of the gospel in this church, in these latter days thereof."

* Boston's Memoirs, p. 40, *first ed.*

† *Ibid.* Pp. 45, 57, 104, 105.

We have formerly noticed the profound veneration in which Ebenezer Erskine held Mr. Mair, and the fatherly attention he experienced from him, when his eyes were beginning to open on evangelical truth.* That his brother Ralph regarded him with similar sentiments, is evident from his marked encomiums on his discourses, which we have already seen;† and still further, from a long elegy on him, found in one of his note-books, of which the following lines are a part :—

“ He was a burning and a shining light,
In doctrine ardent, and in practice bright.
Sweet in his converse, sober in his talk,
Meek in his worship, modest in his walk ;
In pulpit did a holy hero prove,
In private intercourse a harmless dove.
In him lamb-meekness, lion-boldness shone,
Bold in his Master’s cause, meek in his own.

“ How can we choose but mournfully lament
The loss of one so great, so eminent,
Who from pure zeal immortal souls to save,
Did preach his mortal body to the grave.
But, lo ! the sermons of his dying breath
Proclaim his glorious victory over death.
His text, ‘ I know that my Redeemer lives,’
Did usher in th’ event which us bereaves.
Knowing his season, like the heaven-taught stork,
With this sweet theme, he closed his pulpit work ;
Thus crown’d his Lord with glory of the whole,
Then to his loving hands resign’d his soul,
Which now its heavenly Tabor-top has reach’d
To praise the glorious grace which here he preach’d.
With that to preach, thought time too short always,
Thinks now eternity too short to praise.”

* Life of Eben. Erskine, Pp. 160—162. † Chap. I. P. 30.

The Rev. JAMES CUTHBERT, Mr. Mair's colleague at Culross, possessed an equal share in Ralph's affectionate regard. His obligations to him at the time of receiving licence and ordination, as has been stated,* he frankly acknowledges. Mr. Cuthbert was settled at Culross in September 1708; and after exercising his ministry with great fidelity and approbation, died there in October 1715. Mr. Erskine, more than twenty years after his death, wrote "An Elegiac Poem" to his memory, which is published in his Works,† with a Preface, stating the reasons for writing it, and the causes of the delay. The poem, or rather poems, (for it includes one elegy in English, and another in Latin) extends to nearly four folio pages. Mr. Cuthbert is eulogized at great length, as excelling at once in the gifts of nature, art, and grace; eminent for wit, fortitude, and humility; innocently cheerful and sprightly in conversation; noted for evangelical sentiments and spirituality of mind; and, as a preacher, faithful, profound, and eloquent, equally acceptable to the learned and the illiterate. It is mentioned in the Preface, that being skilled in poetry, as well as almost every other branch of learning, he had encouraged Mr. Erskine in attempts at poetic composition, and that he had enjoyed "very familiar intercourse with him by word and writ, even in that strain." From the poem itself it appears, that he frequently received from him the designation of "my son Timothy;" and, moreover, that he had the satisfaction to see him on his death-bed, where he celebrated the praises of the master he had served, and expressed

* Chap. I. P. 39.

† Vol. ii. Pp. 778—782.

his joyful hope of a glorious resurrection. Mr. Mair, who survived him, though then minister of another parish, honoured his memory by preaching a sermon suited to the occasion of his decease,

“Declaring, by his death there fell,
A great man, yea, a prince in Israel.”

Amongst all his co-presbyters there was perhaps none whom the subject of this memoir more deeply venerated than the Rev. JAMES HOGG of Carnock, a man of uncommon worth, learning, and zeal. In early youth he lost a pious father, whom it pleased God to remove by a triumphant death; but his surviving parent with her children, experienced the care of him who “relieveth the fatherless and widow.” Excluded by the intolerant policy of that age from the seminaries of learning in Scotland, he repaired to a Dutch University; where, together with a brother, he prosecuted the study of languages, philosophy, and theology. For some time he was intrusted with the tuition of two young noblemen at the Hague, where he had frequent opportunities of conversing “with persons of quality and others, who were travelling heaven-wards.” “Many of these,” he adds in his *Memoirs of himself*, “met in religious societies for prayer and spiritual conference, in which I enjoyed no small pleasure.”* He was not only pious from his youth, but deeply thoughtful. At an

* See *Memoirs of Mr. Hogg's religious experience*, published from his own MSS. by the Rev. John Brown of Haddington, in his *Christian Student and Pastor Exemplified*, Pp. 77—150. Also the *Memoir of Mr. Hogg* contained in *Gospel Truth*, Pp. 39—53.

early period of his life, he was penetrated with most humbling convictions of his own guilt and vileness as a sinner, and blessed with a reviving discovery of the way of salvation. Spiritual light and comfort were imparted to his soul, chiefly by means of communication with the Rev. Thomas Hogg of Kiltarn, whom he met with in the Tolbooth of Edinburgh, and with whom he afterwards corresponded by letters. During his stay in Holland he experienced many distressing mental conflicts, and many gracious deliverances. The horrid temptations he felt and was enabled to conquer, were not only overruled for the establishment of his own faith, but prepared him to act the part of a sympathizing counsellor to others similarly tried. Amidst impressions of the vast importance of the sacred office, almost overpowering, he still persisted in a course of theological studies. Conscientious scruples, relating to some ecclesiastical rules observed by the Reformed Church in Holland, prevented him from complying with the advice of several friends who wished him to become a minister of that church. Soon after the Revolution, he returned to his native country, where he was licensed; and two competing Calls having appeared for him, the preference was given to Dalserf, in the Presbytery of Hamilton. A species of persecution he met with from several of his co-presbyters led him, after a few years, to demit his charge. He was subsequently settled at Carnock, where he continued to minister faithfully till his death, which took place at Edinburgh, amidst the supplications of his friends, in the year 1736. His ministrations at Carnock seem to have been eminently blessed. To a vigorous judgment and solid learning, he added a share of fortitude, which singularly qualified him for the defence of the

truth. He testified, with peculiar warmth, against what he considered defective and wrong in the arrangements relative to the Church of Scotland adopted at the Revolution.* Though his loyalty was unquestionable, yet because he had conscientiously declined the qualifying oaths, he was excluded from his seat in the General Assembly 1695; and when admitted in 1701, he renewed his exertions in support of the intrinsic power of the church.† His appearances in the Marrow controversy are well known. He published not only a recommendatory Preface to the Marrow of Modern Divinity, but a variety of pamphlets, explaining the passages objected to in that work, and vindicating its leading tenets. The candour and integrity he discovered, when examined in the year 1720 by the Assembly's Committee for purity of doctrine, procured the marked approbation of that Committee. Yet, owing chiefly to the tenor of the First Dialogue on the Marrow Controversy, and of several other anonymous publications that were generally imputed to him, he was, of all the twelve Representing Brethren, the most obnoxious to the ecclesiastical leaders of the day. Beside these controversial pieces, he published a number of other little works, including Notes about the Spirit's Operations, and a Treatise on the Covenant of Grace and Redemption. He wrote also a Preface to Halyburton's learned Treatise on Deism. His distinguished knowledge, piety, and zeal, in short, greatly endeared him to the strictly evangelical portion of the clergy. Mr. Plenderleath, in his Diary, speaks

* See *Memoirs of the Public Life of the Rev. James Hogg*, published from his MS. by the late Rev. Arch. Bruce, Whitburn.

† *Christ. Instructor*, vol. xxx. p. 540.

with much respect of his attainments and ministrations; and warmly expresses his obligations to the friendship and spiritual conference, both of Mr. and Mrs. Hogg. Mr. Boston, in the year 1727, wrote an interesting letter to him, tenderly administering consolation under some internal conflicts with which he was then exercised.* Ralph Erskine, too, highly valued him as a kind neighbour, an attentive correspondent, and a judicious friend. In the following lines, which appear at the close of his Elegiac Poem on Mr. Cuthbert, referred to above, he strongly expresses his veneration for the memory of Mr. Hogg, as well as Mr. Boston:—

We see him fall, and, to augment the moan,
 The great, the grave, judicious BOSTON gone; }
 Who once, like Athanasius bold, stood firm alone,
 Whose golden pen to future times will bear
 His fame, till in the clouds his Lord appear.
 With him, blest HOGG, the venerable sage,
 The humble witness 'gainst the haughty age,
 Was swept, with other *Worthies*, off th' *unworthy* stage.

The Rev. PATRICK PLENDERLEATH falls next to be mentioned among the valued friends of Mr. Erskine. He was the second son of David Plenderleath, Esq. of Blyth, and afterwards of Kailzie, writer in Edinburgh. He was born June 14, 1679, licensed by the Presbytery of Edinburgh in 1700, and ordained at Saline in December 1701. He married Jean Rymer, daughter of Rev. James Rymer, first a Regent in the University of St. Andrews, and afterwards one of the ministers of that city. Eminent piety characterized Mr. Plenderleath

* See this Letter in the Appendix to Boston's Memoirs, No. 17.

from his early years. Two fragments of his Diary, still extant, which we have had the pleasure to peruse, give evidence of extraordinary seriousness, and of the humble, affectionate, and devoted spirit, with which he applied himself to the duties of a preacher and a pastor. Some of his expressions are as follows :—

“ Oh that I could first give my heart to the Lord, and then be an instrument in his hand, employed to win others to him.” “ I would desire with my soul to love that people, [the people of Saline,] and to have their souls dear and precious to me night and day ; and not to have *theirs*, but *them*, upon my heart. Oh ! to be helped to seriousness and constancy, in opposition to natural lightness ; to public spirit and self-denial, in opposition to selfishness ; to faith, in opposition to unbelief and discouragement ; and to due concern, in opposition to security and indifference.” “ Oh ! to be helped to walk humbly, tenderly, and thankfully with my God. Oh ! that I could reap the fruits of living near himself, as manifested in his precious word.” “ Oh ! for a distinct, pure, plain, powerful, self-abasing, and heart-exercising sermon, out of heaven, for this people.”

The circumstances of Mr. Plenderleath's death were particularly affecting. In January 1715, when accompanying his wife's sister, after her marriage, to *Echt*, he was seized in an inn at Fordun, in Mearns, with a violent fever, which proved fatal on the 6th of that month. Whilst his departure was most happy and triumphant, he left a widow, with a number of children, to lament his loss. Mrs. Plenderleath survived him till August 13, 1730. David, his eldest son, having chosen his father's profession, was minister first at Ormiston, afterwards at Dalkeith, and thence, in 1764, translated to

Edinburgh, where he died in 1779, deeply regretted by the pious.

A private Christian, residing in Edinburgh, who was intimately acquainted with Mr. Plenderleath of Saline, says of him, in a letter to a friend, written after his decease, "I never knew a man, in whom more of his Lord's image shined."* The great esteem which Mr. Ebenezer Erskine had for him, and his deep emotion at his death, have been adverted to in a former work.† But none felt a warmer interest in this worthy minister, than Mr. Ralph Erskine. In one of his manuscripts, we have found a sermon, preached at Dunfermline on a day of public thanksgiving, soon after the arrival of George I. in Britain; at the close of which, when noticing the premature dismissal of the godly, as one of the remaining tokens and signatures of the divine wrath, he expresses his affection for this deceased brother, and details the edifying circumstances of his death in the following terms:—

"The Lord has lately made some great gaps in this Presbytery, as well as in others, by taking away some holy souls out of it. It is true, the number of the glorified is increased; but, alas! it is our loss. The loss has had the more impression upon me, that God has so suddenly removed that holy, humble, laborious brother, of late, from our adjacent congregation, in the flower of his age. I believe none that knew him doubted but he was a holy man while he was living; and that you may perceive that he died as he lived, I shall tell you

* See a Collection of Religious Letters, by John Monro of Edinburgh, first published about 1720, and republished in 1807. Two of the Letters are addressed to Mr. Plenderleath.

† Life of Eben. Erskine, Pp. 281—3.

two or three of his dying words, which I had from his mourning relict, who got them from ear and eye witnesses. I hope I shall do but a piece of justice to his memory, who loved so much, in his sermons, to tell the dying words of other holy men. When he offered to sing psalms in his sickness, they stopped him, lest he should do himself harm. ‘Well,’ says he, ‘I am going away to that place, where there will be no interruption to my singing.’ When a minister had prayed with him, and asked if he heard; ‘Yes,’ said he, ‘I heard, and I am assured that your prayer is accepted in my behalf.’ And when another minister was praying, and at last speaking of victory; ‘Stop there,’ said he; and when the minister had stopped, then he cried out, ‘Victory! victory! victory for evermore! I see a guard of angels ready to carry my soul to glory.’ Mr. Erskine having remarked a little after, that ‘prayer and praise go well together, and if there were more prayer, there would be more ground of praise;’ he adds, ‘which again puts me in mind of that now glorified brother, whom I spoke of. He had a custom of frequently going alone to pray in his church, which many of you know is very near to his dwelling-house; and the last time he was there before he went north, he was overheard, as he was coming away from prayer, saying that word three times over, ‘Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!’ There had been some sweet work there, Sirs, to prepare him for death; and I’ll assure you, that frequent and fervent prayers will fill your mouths with hallelujahs, and make you glad indeed.”

The same affectionate esteem which is expressed in this extract is discovered also in a “Funeral Poem,” written in honour of Mr. Plenderleath, “at the desire

of some of his friends.”* From this elegy, which consists of a hundred and eighty-six lines, we select the few following :—

“ His walk, his worship, was of Divine stamp ;
His doctrine, practice, all a burning lamp ;
His life all light and heat, fed from above ;
His lips all fervour, and his heart all love ;
His time all holy days ; for of the seven,
Each day was Sabbath, and each Sabbath heaven.

So vast the treasure in this earthen cup,
Zeal for his Master’s house did eat him up.

This ministerial grace to him was given,
To leave in many hearts, a seal of heaven.”

It is in a still more cursory manner that we must mention some other excellent co-presbyters of Mr. Erskine. Let it suffice barely to name Mr. GIBB of Cleish, whose primitive piety has already been adverted to ;† with Mr. CHARTERS of Inverkeithing, and Mr. ALLAN LOGAN, first of Torrieburn and afterwards of Culross, both of whom were esteemed “able, holy, and zealous ministers.”‡ The same character seems due to Mr. ALEXANDER STEEDMAN of Beath, who baptized the first Mrs. Ralph Erskine, and also celebrated her marriage. Mr. Plenderleath, in his Diary, alluding to this pious minister having spent a night along with Mr. Mair of Culross at Mr. Hogg’s of Carnock, observes that “their conversation was useful and edifying,” and that Mr. Steedman

* Works of R. Erskine, vol. ii. Pp. 782—3.

† Life of Ebenezer Erskine, Pp. 208—9.

‡ Brown’s Gospel Truth, p. 139.

“spoke to good purpose at the family exercise, from Psalm xxii.” We have found Mr. Steedman’s name in a list of ministers present at a conjunct meeting of the Dunfermline and Kirkaldy Presbyteries, April 6, 1692; and have been told that he was succeeded by a son, who lived beyond the middle of last century, and whose immediate successor was the late Mr. James Reid, who died on March 14, 1798.

Mr. Erskine had also for his co-presbyter, for a short time, Mr. CHARLES MUIR, who was translated to Stirling, and died there a few years before the Secession was completely stated.* This good man was licensed by Mr. Erskine, as moderator of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, June 24, 1713, and ordained at Culross, May 10, 1715. His translation was acquiesced in by that Presbytery, February 19, 1718.† Mr Muir was decidedly attached to the doctrine of grace, and strongly disapproved of the act of Assembly, 1720, respecting the Marrow of Modern Divinity. He thought proper, however, not to subscribe the Representation against that Act, and to content himself with expressing his opinion as a member of court. When the Commission met on the 8th May, 1722, he was the only individual who voted against the overture on that subject, which the Assembly soon after adopted, and turned into an act.‡

The Rev. JAMES BATHGATE, another member of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, was a brother, who stood high in Mr. Erskine’s esteem. He received licence from

* Life of Rev. Eben. Erskine, p. 337.

† Rec. of Presby. of Dunfermline.

‡ Account of Controversy respecting the Marrow, in Ch. Instructor, vol. xxx. Pp. 695, 819.

that Presbytery October 19, 1715, was ordained at Orwell, March 6, 1717, and died there so early as the 30th May, 1724. His ministry seems to have been remarkably blessed to his hearers. *John Birrell*, who departed this life at an advanced age in October 1771, left an account of his own religious experience, in which he states that, at a sacramental solemnity at Arngask, he had received much benefit from the last sermon at the tent on Sabbath, preached by Mr. Bathgate, "on that blessed word, Ps. cxvi. 1, 'I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplication.'" One *William Dickson* also, another worthy old man of the parish of Portmoak, repeated on his death-bed "many passages of the word of life, that he lived on in his young days under the ministry of Mr. Bathgate, and called them my *Michtams*."*

Mr. Bathgate's fervent piety, and zealous attachment to the doctrines of grace, very much endeared him to both the Erskines.† In one of Ralph's note-books we have found a pleasing account, in prose, of his "dying words," with an elegy on his death, containing references to those expressions, which were exceedingly triumphant.‡ The following lines form a small part of the Elegy:—

" Marching unhurt through death's devouring jaws,
With joyful notes he sung, O glorious cause !

* Pious Memorials of the Parish of Portmoak in MS., written by Mr. John Birrell, Kinnesswood, grandson of the above John Birrell.

† Life of Eben. Erskine, Pp. 210, 211.

‡ The reader may see these dying words, and most of the Elegy, in Gospel Truth, Pp. 168–170.

I bless, I bless, and shall for evermore,
 The worthy name of Jesus Christ adore,
 For precious truths I have contended for.
 Dark clouds are gathering fast in Zion's skies,
 But her triumphant Head shall yet arise ;
 Pure truth shall flow amain, in spite of man ;
 Let envy stop the fountain, if it can.
 Smiling he spoke, ' I stay no more below,
 But to my Father's house I joyful go.
 I leave my family, though void of pelf,
 On fulness and sufficiency itself.' ”

The Rev. THOMAS MAIR was Mr. Bathgate's successor in the parish of Orwell, and, of course, a co-presbyter of the subject of this narrative. In an account of this estimable minister, formerly given,* it was stated, that a particular intimacy had been maintained betwixt him and Mr. Ralph Erskine. A small addition must now be made to that sketch. At the moment of writing, we have had the satisfaction to learn, from an able and interesting work just published,† that on the 21st August, 1736, Mr. Thomas Mair was chosen by the Consistory of the Scottish Church in Rotterdam to be one of their pastors ; and that, owing to the sinister influence of the dominant party in the Church of Scotland, successfully exerted against him, as it had previously been against the Rev. Henry Lindsay of Bothkennar, through the medium of the British envoy at the Hague, the burgo-masters set aside the election on the 24th November following. The Church of Rotterdam, in reply to their

* Life of Eben. Erskine, Pp. 537-540.

† The History of the Scottish Church, Rotterdam, with Notices of the British Churches in the Netherlands, by the Rev. William Steven of Rotterdam, Pp. 164-170.

inquiries regarding Mr. Mair, received letters of recommendation much to his credit. Ebenezer Erskine lauds him as "a man of singular piety, of solidity of learning, judgment, and experience; a pleasant edifying gift both of prayer and preaching, of a grave, tender, and circumspect walk, zealous for his Master's glory and the edification of souls." Two of his Majesty's chaplains also, the Rev. Neil Macvicar of St. Cuthbert's and William Gusthard of Edinburgh furnished explicit vindications of his character. Omitting the honourable testimony borne by the latter, let us hear Mr. Macvicar. "As to his ministerial qualifications," says he, "I judge, in my opinion, that he is an able New Testament minister;—if a competent measure of learning, beautified and blessed with an eminent degree of shining piety can make him so.—As to the charge of Antinomianism, he is as far removed from it as darkness from light."

From manuscripts belonging to the Scottish Church, Rotterdam, it further appears that Mr. Mair "was born of pious parents within the bounds of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, about the year 1700;—that his co-presbyters esteemed him so highly, that they would, if possible, keep him in Scotland; and that his wife was such a valetudinarian as to render his voyage to Rotterdam a hazardous undertaking."

Mr. Ralph Erskine, himself, it seems, was put on the list for filling up a former vacancy at Rotterdam in January, 1714. "This list," says the author of the new publication referred to,* "contained the names of the

* The History of the Scottish Church, Rotterdam, &c. p. 146.

following eminent clergymen,—Messrs. Robert Baillie at Inverness, John Brown at Abercorn, and Ralph Erskine at Dunfermline. Mr. Baillie was unanimously elected.” We find, too, from a fragment of a short-hand draught, in our own possession, of a letter addressed by Mr. Erskine to a member of the church at Rotterdam in the year 1736, that he was one of the ministers whose advice was solicited in reference to the supply of their vacancy at that period. He writes in the following terms :—

“ Sir,—Having seen your line to Mr. James Hogg, with reference to your concern about the right settlement of the Scottish congregation with you, and finding that among others whom you wished to interest themselves in that affair, I was mentioned, and classed with them for whom you express such a high regard ; though yet, for my own part, I know too good reason to account myself unworthy of any such esteem. However, finding as I have said, and also that Mr. Hogg inclined much that I should write a private missive to you on that affair, though altogether a stranger to you, and to the state and circumstances of that congregation, except in so far as Mr. Hogg informs me,—I cannot but observe, that to me it appears promising-like that you and others should show such a zealous and hearty concern towards the glory of God and the good of souls, in the comfortable supplying of that vacancy with an able minister of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit. This bodes good towards you that are thus concerned, and says that either the Lord will grant you your desire with a blessing, or sanctify to you the trial of a disappointment, which, no doubt, will be very heavy.

“ The brethren whom you mention in your line, together with some others, having, at Mr. Hogg’s desire, conversed seriously upon that affair, judged it a matter of very great importance that you should be well provided ; but to find out a person in whom all the qualifications necessary for that charge do concentrate, and especially those great and leading ones mentioned by you, was somewhat straitening to them. Most of those they were intimate with, being either superannuated, or, however otherwise worthy persons, yet destitute of some or other of the endowments we judged necessary for that post ; and others that had a good character, yet being not of our particular acquaintance, we could not recommend them from our personal knowledge. Though therefore Mr. Campbell of Barr, Mr. Smith of Newburgh, and *Mr. Mair of Orwell*, were mentioned among us, yet we came to no fixed resolution of proposing them, or any others, to be added to the leet ; only allowed Mr. Hogg to mention these to you, in case you should be straitened for persons to put into the room of those in your former leet ——.”

After these statements, relative to some of Mr. Erskine’s co-presbyters, the reader must expect greater brevity in any notices to be given of his esteemed associates who belonged to other districts of the church. To advert at all in this place to the character and history of such of them as espoused the cause of the Secession, would be quite superfluous. Nor is it very necessary in this manner to honour the memory of those eminent men of God, who concurred with him in the famed representation regarding the Marrow ; since more or less

ample accounts of each of the twelve representing brethren have been furnished by a late author.* Three of them, members of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, are included in the above details, namely, Messrs. Hogg, Wardlaw, and Bathgate. There are, however, other three of that bold and worthy fraternity, namely, Messrs. Bonar, Williamson, and Kid, respecting whom we must here communicate a few particulars, mostly such as are not recorded by the venerable writer referred to.

The Rev. JOHN BONAR, many years an endeared correspondent of Mr. Erskine's, was ordained at Torphichen, in the Presbytery of Linlithgow, in the year 1693, where he exercised his pastoral functions for more than half a century, being spared till 1747. His ministrations were eminently useful, and some of his sayings long remembered. Mrs. Balderston strongly expresses the comfort she reaped from his discourses. When he assisted in administering the Lord's Supper in the Tolbooth Church, Edinburgh, in March 1716; "On Monday," she states in her Diary, "Mr. Darling's text was Psalm lxxxiv. 4. It was a very sweet sermon. Mr. Bonar's text was John x. 27, 28. But, Oh! what I found in that sermon. Indeed the Spirit of God breathed upon it. This was the *little further*, and I found him whom my soul loveth. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. "He was characterized," says an author who has minutely inquired into his history, "by earnestness and energy, combined with much Christian simplicity in his public appearances as a preacher; by unremitting fidelity and zeal in his private labours; by steady attachment

* Gospel Truth, by the Rev. John Brown, Pp. 39—170.

to the doctrine and discipline of the church of Scotland ; and by singular piety and child-like humility in his private walk as a man and a Christian.”* A favourable specimen of his talent for tendering pious and seasonable counsel, may be seen in a small publication, which has lately issued from the press.†

The Rev. JOHN WILLIAMSON, Inveresk, son of Mr. David Williamson, St. Cuthberts, was a man of excellent character, and singular endowments. His ministry commenced at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and was finished about the year 1743. Beside several volumes of sermons on evangelical topics, he published able pamphlets on the Marrow Controversy. Mr. Boston describes him as a person “ of a clear head and ready wit ;” and specifies his marked success in silencing “ Mr. Allan Logan of Culross, in a point in debate.”‡ Mrs. Balderston speaks repeatedly of his edifying sermons. At one time she heard him preach in Edinburgh, from Song i. 5. “ I am black but comely ;” and she adds, “ It was a very great sermon, which I felt.”

The Rev. JAMES KID was settled at Queensferry early in the same century, and prosecuted his ministry there about forty years. Mr. Erskine seems to have maintained a peculiar intimacy with this excellent man.

* See a Memoir of the Rev. Archibald Bonar, Minister of Cramond, by Dr. Robert Burns of Paisley, prefixed to “ Genuine Religion the best Friend of the people,” 5th edit. Pp. 3, 4.

† The Duty and Advantage of Fellowship Meetings, in Two Letters from the late Rev. John Willison of Dundee, and the late Rev. John Bonar of Torphichen. With a Preface by the Rev. W. H. Burns, Kilsyth. Glasgow, 1832.

‡ Boston’s Memoirs, p. 373.

He alludes, in his Diary, to his preaching for him a Sabbath in December 1733, when disabled by affliction. Mr. Kid was fervent in prayer, clear and zealous in preaching the doctrine of grace, and highly esteemed by the pious. His manly appearances in support of the right of the Christian people to choose their own pastors, as well as in defence of evangelical tenets, rendered him exceedingly obnoxious to the ruling clergy of his age. He was the individual, we find, selected by the twelve brethren, to lay their representation before the Committee of Assembly in the year 1721,—“being a man,” says Mr. Boston, “of singular boldness.”* And when the Assembly 1722 passed their explanatory act regarding the Marrow, and at the same time rebuked the representing brethren, Mr. Kid threw down “a guinea, as instrument money, on the table,” and gave in their protestation, which had been prepared by Mr. Boston, and was immediately published.† His unflinching intrepidity is particularly illustrated in a “Letter to a minister of the Gospel concerning the parish of Bathgate,” printed in 1720. This letter details the unhappy circumstances attending a violent intrusion in that parish, effected conformably to a decision of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale; which, it is affirmed, was imposed on by falsehoods. “No minister of the Presbytery of Linlithgow had the courage to protest, and give any remarkable testimony against the settlement, save the worthy Mr. Kid; for which and the baptizing of some of their children, [children of persons who refused to submit to the ministry of the intruded incum-

* Boston's Memoirs, p. 371.

† *Ibid.* p. 379. R. Erskine's Faith no Fancy, Appendix, p. 28.

bent,] he was not only maltreated in the Presbytery and behind backs, but actually libelled in the most base and malicious manner."

We could mention several pious clergymen beyond the limits of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, who neither subscribed the representation respecting the Marrow nor joined the Secession, whom, however, Mr. Erskine ranked amongst his dear correspondents. To this number pertained the Rev. Messrs. SETHRUM of Gladmuir, STEVENSON of Glendovan, ALEXANDER WARDROPE of Muckart, and afterwards Whitburn, FERRIER of Largo; and in particular, CURRIE of Kinglassie, with whom he very frequently interchanged services, till the wide difference betwixt their sentiments and conduct with respect to the Secession, put a stop to this correspondence.

Candour and justice demand the admission, that there was a considerable remnant of ministers of the Church of Scotland not less sincerely attached to the doctrine of grace than the twelve representing brethren, who did not co-operate with them in their decided measures. In this class, Messrs. Hamilton and Brisbane of Stirling, both of whom Mr. Erskine numbered among his intimate friends, held a distinguished place.

The Rev. ALEXANDER HAMILTON's learning, piety, and warm attachment to evangelical doctrine, were universally acknowledged. The Christian simplicity and meekness, united with fidelity, which he manifested in the year 1720, when he underwent an inquisitorial examination by the Assembly's Committee for purity of doctrine, conduced greatly to his credit, and served to disarm his accusers. After they had sat for the space of eight days, and made him appear ten or eleven times

before them, they expressed their satisfaction with his answers to their queries, "and agreed to make a favourable report thereof, and of his conduct in that affair, to the Commission; and resolved, on all occasions, that they will improve it with the greatest affection and brotherly tenderness towards him." In an account of their proceedings, drawn up by himself, he says: "I confess, when they were putting some queries to me, which insinuated great suspicion of gross error, and others that I thought grated much upon special gospel truths, my heart grew so great that I could scarce utter a word without a flood of tears, for which I craved their pardon, and told them it was my infirmity, which I could not help; and some of themselves were so affected that they teared also."*

Mr. Erskine had great pleasure in corresponding with this worthy minister on sacramental occasions. On the first Sabbath after his decease, being February 5, 1738, at the close of a sermon from Col. i. 18, "And he is the head of his body, the church," preached to his own people at Dunfermline, he paid a tribute to his memory in the following passage, which we copy exactly from his notes:—

"May we not lament, and tremble at the thought of it, that there are so few living and lively members of Christ's body in the visible church, and that many that were living members and lively upon earth are taken away to heaven! A great many that were eminent in the church are, within these few years, removed. The last star that has fallen out of the church's firmament

* Account of Controversy respecting the Marrow of Modern Divinity in Ch. Instructor, vol. xxx. Pp. 693-4.

that I know of, is one that departed to glory the last Sabbath day,* who was wont sometimes to assist at solemn occasions here, and of whom, if I should give a short character, I judge it may be of use. I may say, he was indeed a burning and a shining light; one who bore the lively image of his meek and lowly Master Jesus Christ, and whose daily practice corresponded with his divine doctrine, and whose doctrine was more pure and evangelical than this impure age could well bear or tolerate. Yet was he so well furnished with learning and ability to defend it from the holy divine oracles, that some who attacked him as erroneous, and were thought fit to be his judges, were obliged to become disciples at his feet and his happy proselytes, who never shined so much in the church till once they shared his light; which, when once they did, they shone more brightly, clearly, and successfully than their neighbours and cotemporaries. In a word, he was one of the most eminent of his age, both for Gospel doctrine and a Gospel conversation, insomuch that his daily walk and talk were a continual confutation of the errors, wickedness, and corruption of the present age. And I may add, that his sentiments concerning the public [affairs of the church] were so much the same with those that are now associate together by themselves, that they had a remarkable share of his daily prayers under the name of the Reforming Society, as he was pleased to design them even in his solemn addresses to heaven. Let those who are lovers of his memory remember this among the rest, and how many documents can be produced under his

* Here it is added in a parenthesis, "Mr. Alexander Hamilton in Stirling died Sabbath, 29th January, 1738."

hand of his zeal this way. Some of us have had occasion to join with him, and adhere to him, in some of his judicial appearances against the defection and corruption of the times. Now when the Lord is removing such bright luminaries, what darkness does this presage! When God is taking his Noahs into the ark, what a deluge is threatened! Meantime nothing can make up the loss of any such eminent member of Christ, but that which was promised to make up the want of Christ's own bodily presence, namely, the coming of the Spirit in his room, John xvi. 7. We should therefore pray that the Spirit of those Elijahs that are gone may remain with the Elishas that are behind, and that Christ may yet have some living and lively members of his body in this land."

His profound veneration for Mr. Hamilton appears also from a long Elegiac Poem to his memory.* From this poem, which, including seven verses in Latin, fills nearly three folio pages, we extract these few lines:—

" His eyes diffused a venerable grace,
And piety itself was in his face.
Sweetness of temper softened all he spoke;
He bore his great commission in his look.
He taught the Gospel rather than the law,
He forced himself to drive, but loved to draw.
With eloquence innate his soul was armed;
Learning and grace combining, jointly charmed.

Warm from his work, he to his rest did move,
And from his pulpit to his throne above.

And now, since he is gone, be this our strife,
Just so to live, and so to end our life."

* Works of R. Erskine, vol. ii. Pp. 784-6.

The Rev. JAMES BRISBANE, who finished his earthly career at Stirling about two years before Mr. Hamilton's translation from Airth to that town, distinguished himself as well by zeal for evangelical truth, as by his able ministrations and exemplary practice. An excellent sermon he preached at Denny on the Monday after the Lord's Supper, August 11, 1718, was given to the world soon after its delivery. In an *advertisement* prefixed, it is stated, that it was "published without the worthy author's knowledge or consent, whose modesty might have stopped the publication." "This sermon," adds the editor, "was not only accompanied with much sweetness and satisfaction to many of the hearers, but also has been very savoury and refreshing to many who have read it." The discourse, which is founded on Rom. vi. 14, appears to us to manifest very considerable talent, and an accurate acquaintance with the Gospel. The author clearly illustrates the connexion between justification and sanctification, and makes close application of his doctrine both to the sinner and the saint. His views, in a word, are materially the same with those defended by the Rev. James Fraser of Alness in his celebrated Treatise on Sanctification; in which several chapters of the Romans are critically explained. Yet in the year 1720, he was summoned to appear before the Assembly's Committee for purity of doctrine, to be catechised with regard to this very sermon. From motives of policy, however, they exempted him from that ordeal of minute and vexatious scrutiny, to which Mr. Hamilton was subjected; and this lenity, it is thought, induced him to decline subscribing the representation against the act 1720 condemning the Marrow. Yet at the meeting of Assembly 1722, he

gave his cordial support to the twelve brethren. "I remember," says Mr. Erskine, "of a worthy and great divine, Mr. James Brisbane, minister at Stirling, after the representation given in against the act of Assembly 1720, condemning the Marrow of Modern Divinity, by twelve ministers, of whom I was honoured of God to be one, and when the act 1722 on that point was passing, he openly asserted that he could evince there were not so many errors in that book as in their acts condemning it."* Mr. Brisbane too, it appears, when that act 1722 was put to the vote, ranked as one of five who voted in the negative, while five were silent, and a hundred and thirty-four voted, approve.† Mr. Erskine delighted to associate with this valuable minister during his life, and embalmed his memory after his decease. He made various affecting allusions to him in the pulpit, and in the second part of his Elegy on Mr. Hamilton, he mentions his obligations to that sound theologian, for clear views of the Gospel, in the following terms:—

"Great BRISBANE owned himself his happy proselyte ;
His arguings drew him, like a mighty chain,
Quite from the legal to the Gospel strain ;
So bright that henceforth he appeared to all
Most accurately evangelical."‡

We shall conclude these notices of Mr. Erskine's correspondents, by naming other two venerable fathers, who commenced their career many years prior to him—

* Faith no Fancy, ch. viii. p. 351.

† Ch. Instructor, vol. xxx. p. 825.

‡ The above particulars respecting Messrs. Hamilton and Brisbane are supplementary to what the reader may find in the Life of Eben. Erskine, Pp. 336-339.

self, and the remembrance of whose excellencies and services he felt anxious to cherish.* Conformably to his usual mode of commemorating departed worth, he composed elegies on them, which we have found written by himself in short-hand characters, in one of his note-books. Probably they were once published, but we have not seen them in print.

The subject of the one is the celebrated Mr. JAMES WEBSTER of Edinburgh, whose discourses he often heard during the period of his own preparation for the ministry. It extends to a hundred and twenty lines, of which we quote the few following:—

“ Has cruel ATROPOS, with fatal knife,
Cut off the thread of such a blissful life ?
Has death thus snatch'd (Oh ! most afflictive doom)
The blessed WEBSTER from his Gospel-loom ?

Where such a golden thread of grace he wrought,
As captivated every hearer's thought ;
Each thread was wrought so close, so superfine ;
His style was pure, his eloquence divine.

This heavenly zealot for the Gospel-scheme
Taught without fear, and argued without shame.
His active zeal 'gainst error all did flash,
And burnt up anti-evangelic trash.

His prayers, short, substantial, unconfined,
Touched every heart, and ravished every mind.”

The Rev. WILLIAM MONCRIEFF of Largo, is the other excellent father alluded to. A small part of the elegy,

* Compare Life of Eben. Erskine, Pp. 208-210.

which consists of nearly a hundred and eighty lines, is as follows :—

“ Behold ! he was an Israelite indeed,
Who, without guile, the flock of Christ did feed ;
Tender of weaklings, faithful unto all,
He spared the faults of neither great nor small.
Of sin and vice he was a bold reprover,
Of Zion’s welfare still a zealous lover ;
Her peace was matter of his fervent prayer,
His public labour, and his private care.

This preacher showed himself what few can do,
A Barnabas and Boanerges too,
A son of thunder, with alarming noise,
A son of comfort, with a charming voice.

Hence many came from distant parts, and saw
Sinai and Zion both, at Largo Law.

He testified even to his latest years
For Christian liberty in choosing overseers.
He could not see the flock of Christ oppressed,
And in their room nobility caressed.

Gone, but it is to Christ his resting-place,
To glorious friends and to the saint’s embrace.
Faith’s prospect fetch, and view him happy there,
With WEBSTER, CULBERT, PLENDERLEATH, and
MAIR.”

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Erskine's conduct with regard to the public transactions of his time—His reasons for declining the Oath of Abjuration in all its forms—His Loyalty, as expressed at the Death of Queen Anne, and Accession of George I.—Opposition to the Pretender's interest, and appropriate instructions to his hearers during the Rebellion 1715—Early and persevering zeal for the Doctrines of Grace—Attention to Mr. Boston's Letter to Mr. Hogg, respecting the Act of Assembly condemning the Marrow of Modern Divinity—Various trials, efforts, and publications relative to the Marrow Controversy—Vindication of our Lord's Divinity against Arian Errors.

ALTHOUGH the character of any individual may, in most instances, be known with the greatest certainty from the general tenor of his private deportment, and from his manner of conducting himself, while no extraordinary excitement occurs, his behaviour in reference to public transactions, and singular events, should not be overlooked. Transactions and events of this nature, it is obvious, often prove a satisfactory test both of talent and of prevailing disposition; and serve to develop qualities, which might otherwise have been scarcely perceived, or altogether hid.

We have seen the piety and conscientious fidelity, with which Mr. Erskine performed the various duties statedly incumbent on him as a Christian pastor. We have also seen the brotherly temper he discovered as a colleague, and the lively interest he felt in all those faithful clergymen with whom he cultivated habits of Chris-

tian friendship and ministerial intercourse. We are now to contemplate his conduct relative to the more public affairs, and the more remarkable occurrences of his day.

The first point, in the order of time, which in this view demands our attention, is that well-known cause of dispute and animosity in the Church of Scotland, the OATH OF ABJURATION. Even the *Oath of Allegiance* and the *Assurance* imposed on the Scottish clergy in the year 1693, were somewhat offensive to the scrupulous constitution and tender conscience of several pious individuals, whose loyalty was above suspicion.* But the Oath of Abjuration, which was rigidly imposed in 1712, within less than twelve months after Mr. Erskine's ordination, was considered far more obnoxious. Mr. Ralph's sentiments on this head exactly coincided with those of his brother Ebenezer,† and, it may be added, of his friend Colonel Erskine.‡ Accordingly, in the following verses, extracted from a poem that he wrote on the coronation of King George I., he strongly expresses his disapprobation of the oath, grief for its unhappy effects, and ardent wishes for its abolition.

“ Redeem us, Sire, from things our country loathes,
Subverting patronages, ranting oaths.
Such was the woeful dubious *abjuration*,
Which gave the clergy ground of speculation.

* Memoirs of Mr. Hogg's Public Life, sect. iv.

† Life of Eben. Erskine, Pp. 220–224.

‡ Moncreiff's Life of Dr. Erskine, p. 4. “He was dissatisfied,” says that biographer, speaking of Col. Erskine, “with the terms of the oath of abjuration; and was so conscientious in adhering to his scruples on this subject, that, Whig as he certainly was, he steadily refused to take the oath as long as he lived.”

Though all could freely, without laws to urge,
 Abjure the popish James, and swear to George ;
 Yet while it swell'd with circumstantial clauses,
 Old English acts' reduplicating *ases*,
 Some feared to leave their conscience in the lurch,
 And make the *kirk* to swear unto the *church*.
 The clergy that had more of second sight,
 Swore it, and said it never cross'd their light.
 The rest engaged they could, on solid ground,
 Both love their King, and keep their conscience sound ;
 Witness Dunfermline's Presbyterial bound.
 Great nursing-father of our church and nation,
 Give an abortive birth to this temptation ;
 'Tis such a fertile womb of altercation.
 Our church, upon the whole, do all agree ;
 But oaths add little to its harmony."

In these lines the author, it will be observed, alludes to the particle *as*, which was introduced in the oath in a manner highly offensive to zealous Presbyterians. The clause was originally expressed in the following terms. " I do faithfully promise to support the limitation and succession to the crown, *as the same* is, and stands limited by an act entitled," &c. viz. an act of the English Parliament, which provided, that the King must always be of the communion of the Church of England. In the year 1715, after the accession of George I., that clause was made to run thus ; " I do faithfully promise to support the succession to the crown ; *which succession*, by an act entitled, &c. is and stands limited," &c. The following explanation, too, was then added ;—" That by no words in the said oath, or oaths formerly imposed or contained, it is or was meant to oblige his Majesty's said subjects to any act or acts, in any way inconsistent with the establishment of the Church of Scotland, according

to law. At last, however, several clergymen who had previously declined the oath, having in 1718 sent the Rev. William Guthart of Edinburgh to London, to represent to his Majesty the loyalty and good affection of the non-jurors, and humbly to request some farther alteration in the terms of the oath; a statute was passed in the year 1719, by which no direct reference was made, in the form of the oath, to the act requiring the sovereign to be of the Episcopal communion; but it was merely required to "defend the succession of the crown in the heirs of the body of the late Princess Sophia—being Protestants." At the same time, all ministers and preachers of Scotland who had hitherto scrupled, were expressly commanded to take the oath in its new shape against the 1st of June 1719; and no young man was henceforth to receive licence or ordination, without having sworn it. The objections of the great body of non-jurors were now removed; but the Messrs. Erskine, in common with Mr. Boston and a few others, were still dissatisfied, and from conscientious motives continued, at all hazards, to decline submitting to the injunction of government.

About this time, a paper, composed by Mr. Boston, entitled, "Reasons for refusing the Abjuration Oath, in its latest form, 1719," made its appearance in print. In one of Mr. Ralph Erskine's note-books, written in the same year, we find a pretty long essay, in manuscript, bearing this title,—“An Apology for some Brethren, who could not find freedom in their consciences to take the Abjuration Oath, as last imposed by the states of Parliament.” The spirit of Christian meekness and forbearance, with which Mr. Erskine's tenderness of conscience, in respect to this point, was accompanied, is

worthy of notice. Such is the temper expressed in a passage of one of his printed sermons, preached in the year 1719, which contains an allusion to the differences then prevailing. "The miseries of the Church," says he, "and the sins that bring them on, are heart-rending things to the people of God; and particularly, their hearts are rent for the rents of the Church; *For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart.* For my own part, I am but a person of little experience in the world, and therefore I desire to be modest at this juncture, about *the present rent* among us. It is plain enough that the anger of the Lord hath divided us, and rent us in twain, like the veil of the Temple, from the top to the bottom. God is angry, because we have sinned."*

A communication on this subject, "written in much haste," and sent to some friends for their "own private use," which we find recorded among his 'short-hand papers, breathes the same moderate and healing spirit. "I shall not trouble you much," says he in this confidential letter, "with my sentiments; only in general, though I desire to condemn none, that, since the amendment of the oath, have gone into it; but reckon it my duty to justify them from many groundless prejudices, that a great deal of ignorant persons entertained against them, and have done it already, as far as occasion served: Yet the reason why I have not had freedom myself to join with them in taking this oath, is, because the utmost light I have win to, is that I know not whether it would be my sin to take it, or my sin to refuse it. I was afraid of sinning on either hand, and more light you

* Works, vol. i. p. 16. fol.

know is necessary ; for thus, to me, it is a doubtful oath ; and if the least doubt remain, it is sin, and the least sin is enough to state suffering upon. But because, as you say, people should not suffer as fools, it were necessary to speak of the grounds of my doubt ; and besides the particular objections or scruples inclosed, there are these doubts in the general that have presented themselves to me, concerning the oath.—1. I doubt, if thereby I can truly serve the great ends that should be proposed in all such public management, especially by the ministers of the Gospel, namely, the glory of God, the good of his church, the edification of his people, and the advancement of a work of reformation, so far decayed at this day. 2. I doubt, if it can be said here, I take an oath which is matter of my rejoicing before the Lord ; and that this is my rejoicing in this matter, the testimony of my conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, have I done it,—with as little scruple as ever I went to my knees, or any other piece of worship. 3. I doubt if it can be said, that all Israel rejoiced because of the oath, since it is a matter of vexation to the godly, instead of being the matter of consolation ; matter of trouble to them, and not of triumph. 4. I doubt if it can be said, I mean by me, I have no bye end in taking this oath, more than my ill heart leads me to in other duties. That is to say, if I could gladly and heartily embrace it as my duty, although there were no penalty, no danger of suffering by refusing it, but that it were at my option to take or not ; and so, whether penalty or conscience drive me most to it ; for, if conscience cannot lead me to it without the other, it cannot be my duty. 5. I doubt, if it be the call of God at this day, wherein the land groans under the sins, not only

of perjury, but of multiplying oaths of this sort, and of unnecessarily imposing and taking of oaths; and if this oath be necessary, as the end of all strife, or the determination of a controversy, namely, concerning my loyalty to King George, and opposition to the Pretender, and the like; which are matters that neither the court nor country have any doubt of. 6. I doubt if I be not hereby serving the politics of some, rather than serving God and the king in a due manner; of some, I say, who might easily have prevailed with the government to free us of it altogether; and who were the first movers, with respect to the late application for this draught; and of whom one of the leaders, as I am informed, said to a friend of mine, that methods would be fallen upon to make us all go in to it; which makes me doubt there is more in it of the humour of a party, than the voice of God. 7. I doubt if my taking it can serve the interest of the Gospel in this place, fearing it would rather help to mar the great design of my being called to this great congregation; it being dangerous to have the affection, of even ignorant people, alienated from their minister, beside that of the godly. 8. I doubt, because I cannot find a satisfactory answer to all the inclosed scruples ———.”*

Mr. Erskine, in this communication, alludes to his well-known “loyalty to King George and opposition to the Pretender.” Nor was this a vain boast, or an empty pretence. His whole conduct discovered a fervent and resolute attachment to the Protestant succession in the House of Hanover. Shortly after the accession of

* See these scruples in the Appendix, No. V.

George I., he composed and published the poem* noticed above, consisting of about a hundred and sixty lines, and entitled, "A Congratulatory Poem on King George's Coronation; with Dunfermline's Address to his Majesty, to redress the grievances of Scotland." A small part of this production has already been quoted; its conclusion is as follows:—

"Great prince, in favour to your loving nation,
Accept of this uncultivate oration.

Parnassus' towering train will criticize
What royal clemency may patronize.

Now may the heavens adorn your majesty
With glorious blessings of the first degree.
May that celestial Power that never dies,
Make you the darling of the destinies;
That *Clotho's* sisters may spin out your thread,
Till age shall crown your life, as gold your head!

And may your royal progeny outshine
All earthly monarchs to the utmost line;
Fame sound their praise, and echo's nimble soul
Reverberate the sound from pole to pole.
May they succeed to your imperial robe,
Till nature fail, unhinge the ponderous globe;
And then may they, with you, be crown'd on high,
When time's ingulf'd into eternity!"

The death of Queen Anne, the accession of King George I., and the Rebellion of 1715, were events to which the clergy of that age could hardly fail to advert

* We have only seen the original short-hand draught of this poem in one of the author's note-books. But in the account of him prefixed to the 8vo. edition of his works, printed in 1794, it is said to have been printed, vol. i. p. 15, *note*.

in their discourses ; and from this minister's manuscripts we find that, on all these occasions, he gave pious and appropriate counsels to his people ; and expressed himself in a manner worthy of a man decidedly attached to the principles of the glorious Revolution of 1688, and determined, in defiance of danger, to lend his active support to the cause of liberty and of the Protestant religion. In August 1714, immediately after the Queen's demise, he delivered a series of instructive sermons on Providence, from Ps. xcvi. 1, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." Part of the introduction to the first of them is as follows :—

"As my text stands connected with the subject I pursued before, so it is not unsuitable to the present juncture and state of affairs. While we find, on the one hand, a late sovereign, of excellent memory, removed by death from the crown of our kingdom, here is the very thing that may mitigate the severity of that dispensation, that however earthly potentates must die, and resign their sceptre at the call of death, yet our Supreme Monarch keeps his throne for ever : 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.' And while we find, on the other hand, that another sovereign, of illustrious fame and renown, is proclaimed king over these domains, which may afford matter of joy to all the true friends of the Protestant interest ; yet to qualify our joy, so as we may not exult in an arm of flesh, my text doth very natively temper the extravagance of such a frame, in regard that we see therein, that the ground of our rejoicing is not so much, that any earthly potentate whatever doth sit at the helm of government, as that the Lord Jehovah himself doth sway the sceptre of absolute

universal dominion and government ; and hence we say with the Psalmist, ‘ The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.’ ”

The second sermon on this text is concluded by a brief enumeration of the various steps of the divine procedure towards the Church of Scotland, and ends thus :—

“ To name no more, another step of Providence is, that after the decease of our late sovereign, the Lord has stirred up the spirit of the great ones of the nation, and present administrators, to proclaim that Protestant prince, on whom the succession was established by law, to be our king and sovereign, and allowed the proclamation to be peaceably performed throughout the kingdom, notwithstanding the opposite endeavours that Jacobites and Jesuits were employing themselves about, for the subversion of this establishment. This providence is the more remarkable, that the Lord hath brought it about at such a juncture, wherein enemies were at the height of their hopes, and upon the top of their designs ; all things seeming to go fair before the wind with them, insomuch that some malignant adversaries have been heard to say, ‘ What will become of the Whigs now ? They have nothing but God to depend upon ! ’ Indeed, if that be truly our motto, *to depend on God*, we see how soon he can turn the wind, and make the most frightful aspect of Providence wheel about with a favourable countenance. But notwithstanding of any merciful turn of affairs, let us not live securely ; neither trusting in man’s defence, nor making princes our confidence. God can soon turn about the wheel of Providence another way, and give us a prey to our enemies ; and our sins cry for vengeance. So that we have no cause to rejoice in any thing but God himself, who reigns, and is

at present giving a check to our adversaries ; putting his hook in their nose, and his bridle in their jaws, and that in a very surprising and unexpected manner, to the dashing of their darling hopes upon the rocks of disappointment, that they may see and know that the world is not governed by human projects, but by Divine Providence. ‘ The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.’ ”

On a day of public thanksgiving, observed some time after the arrival of George I. in Britain, taking for his text Ps. cxxvi. 3, “ The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad,” he expatiated still more largely on the same topics. Let the following specimen suffice :—

“ The Lord hath done great things for us, in that hitherto he has frustrated the hopes of our enemies, who have been laying all oars in the water to waft over to our island a Popish Pretender, bred up in all the principles and maxims of Popish cruelty and idolatry. It is known how enemies have been employing their utmost endeavours of late, even in a parliamentary way, to subvert the security of the Protestant succession ; and the Lord hath laughed at their politics, and confounded their measures. Further, the Lord hath done great things for us, in that he has peaceably settled a Protestant successor, his royal Majesty King George, upon the throne of these realms ; that he has safely conducted him and his son the Prince of Wales, and others of his royal family, into these dominions, and installed his Majesty in the possession of the Britannic throne. This is a great thing the Lord hath done for us ; and it appears the greater, while we consider, 1. What designs were on foot for opposing such a happy settlement, and en-

slaving us to a Popish yoke. Yet the Lord in this matter, brought enemies from the height of their hopes to the depth of confounding disappointment. 2. It is the more remarkable, that Providence carried on the matter in such a calm and easy manner, as no enemy had the courage or spirit to rise up in opposition to it, notwithstanding of their inward malice and dissatisfaction. 3. It is the more considerable, in that the royal person in whom God hath placed the sovereignty of these domains is blessed with a numerous family and promising offspring, in whom the succession to the crown is entailed. 4. The mercy is yet more observable, if we consider the solemn, free, and voluntary engagement, that our sovereign has taken upon himself, to study the good and welfare of all his subjects; and particularly, to maintain and support the present establishment of the Church of Scotland. These things are grating to our enemies, and destructive of their hopes; but to us, they are mercies of a considerable magnitude. They are the Lord's doing, and wondrous in our eyes; and upon review of them, we may rejoice in God, and bless him, saying, 'The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.'

During the formidable rebellion, which broke out soon after the crown had been placed on the head of George I., this conscientious minister did not omit to exhort his people to make a religious improvement of its various occurrences; whilst he was at pains to animate the zeal of those who stood forward in defence of their civil and religious liberties. His unpublished discourses supply many instances of his fidelity and loyalty on this occasion; a few of which it seems proper

to produce. At the beginning of a sermon, preached 1715, from Psalm lxxvi. 10, his sentiments are thus expressed:—

“ We live in a day, wherein the rage of the wicked and ungodly is boiling and running over in a furious manner. The fire of their wrath is kindled ; the flame of their fury is raised, and come to such a height, that it is ready to burn up and destroy the whole kingdom. But may you say, What will come of all this work, when men, in their wicked rage, are rebelling against a Protestant Government, striving to introduce a Popish Pretender ; breaking down the walls of our Established Church, and committing many horrible abuses in our land? Would you know, what will come of all this madness and rage? My text gives an excellent account of it ; ‘ Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee ; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.’ ”

In another discourse, he enumerates fully, and with much energy, a variety of considerations calculated to dispel those sinful and depressing fears, which are apt to prevail in times of danger. The words of Isaiah, chap. lix. 19, “ When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him,” were the foundation of several addresses, full of appropriate instructions and counsels. In the month of January 1716, “ when a garrison was placed,” as he states, “ in the town of Dunfermline,” he delivered several sermons on that pertinent caution, Deut. xxiii. 9, “ When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thou from every wicked thing.” From these words he shows, that times of war should be times of reformation ; and takes occasion also to point out the circumstances, in which it is lawful and warrantable to bear arms in

civil warfare. On this part of his subject, he replies to the conscientious scruples that some entertained, and produces scriptural arguments to incite volunteers to come forward with alacrity and zeal in defence of a Protestant government.

“I never knew a time,” he declares, “wherein people had a more clear call to offer their help voluntarily, against Antichrist, according to their ability, than at this day, when Antichrist is shooting out his horns in Britain. It is not my single judgment only, nor is it the judgment of the Presbyterians in Scotland only, that the Pretender’s government would open the doors of hell, to let in black and bloody Popery; but it is the judgment of all the Protestant churches, abroad and at home, and of all who have any thing of the light of Reformation shining among them, who do not blind their own eyes. Witness the bishops of England, in and about London, who have made an open declaration before the world, that this perjured combination of rebels are agents for Antichrist, betraying our Protestant religion, and involving our country into the palpable darkness of Romish blasphemy, blood, and tyranny; and thereupon solemnly declare their abhorrence and detestation of this horrid, Popish, unnatural, and unchristian rebellion. So that it is not only we, but all that have any sense of the reformed religion, any knowledge of the blasphemies of Popery, that abhor and detest the present insurrection.”

On January 31, 1716, “about the time of Argyle’s marching to Perth, to dispossess the rebels of it,” according to a memorandum in the manuscript, a solemn fast was held; on which Mr. Erskine preached from Lament. iii. 37—40, and earnestly exhorted his people

to humble themselves before God, on account of their sins and provocations; and to implore his pardoning mercy, and the renewed manifestations of his favour to the land. A short address, delivered at the commencement of the public services of that day, contains the following expressions. Adverting to the probable consequences of the success of the Rebellion, he says:—"As some of this Popish and Jacobite party have threatened, so we have no reason to doubt, but, if they prevail, *their little fingers will be heavier than their father's loins*. Therefore we have all reason to pray and cry to God this day, for success to the Protestant forces against that Popish, and desperately inclined party. It is reasonable and seasonable, that, when the forces are fighting for us, we should be praying for them, and fasting too."

On this topic, let only one thing more be stated. After the suppression of the Rebellion, and the happy restoration of internal tranquillity, this active watchman warned his hearers against a dangerous security, and directed their attention to the Prophet's awful declaration, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Whilst he thus acted the part of a stanch abettor of civil liberty, and a loyal subject to the House of Hanover, he acquitted himself with equal fidelity as a decided friend to the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, and to the ecclesiastical order established in the Church of Scotland. Actuated by genuine public spirit, he not only sustained his full proportion of labour in conducting the affairs of his own session and parish, but paid great attention to the general interests of religion, and displayed an indefatigable activity with reference to the

transactions of the superior courts. He seems, in particular, to have punctually attended the meetings of the Presbytery to which he belonged, and to have taken his proper share in its necessary business and customary exercises. We find, accordingly, from one of his notebooks, as well as from the records of Presbytery, that, on Monday, September 23, 1717, he presided at the ordination of the Rev. William Henderson of Dalgety. On that occasion he delivered a discourse from 2 Cor. iv. 5, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake;" and addressed impressive exhortations to the minister and people. In his Diary, too, he briefly notices his attending the ordination of the Rev. Mr. Hunter at Saline, on the 26th January, 1732. It being usual in those times, moreover, for each minister, by rotation, to submit to the judgment of his brethren a critical exercise on some portion of Scripture, Mr. Erskine, at a meeting of Presbytery, held in January 1719, delivered an elaborate discourse of this kind, from these words, Ephes. iv. 11, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

Whatever services devolved on him as a member of church courts, his zeal to advance the cause of truth and holiness was accompanied with humble dependence on the God of Zion. When his co-presbyters, for instance, placed him in the moderator's chair, he embraced the first opportunity of retiring to implore the Divine assistance. "This day," he states on one occasion, "I was chosen Moderator of the Presbytery; and after dinner, I left the Presbytery a little, and came to my room; and there got liberty, with tears, to beg the Spirit of

God to be with me, to assist and to strengthen me, that I might do nothing dishonouring to his name, and might be helped to my duty. This, with an eye to the promise of the Spirit, and to that word, 'Lo, I am with you,' I was helped sweetly to seek."

Previously to the meetings of the Synod of Fife and of the General Assembly, he discovers the same impressions of his own insufficiency, the same humble reliance on superior aid. Thus, referring to Sabbath, Sept. 24, 1732, he says:—"In the evening and at night, my prayer was to the Lord for promised mercy—for his pity and conduct at the Synod I was to go to at Kirkaldy this week; that he would help me to witness for him and his cause."—To the same effect he wrote subsequently as follows:—

"*Tuesday, Feb. 13, 1733.* Read Ezekiel, 1st, 2d, 3d chapters; James, 4th and 5th chapters; and Psalm 141st. What I read in Ezekiel was partly improved in prayer before God; and that word in the Psalm, 'But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord; in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute;' or leave not my soul *bare* or *naked*. And though I had not much sensible influence, yet I was made to trust upon the mercy and truth of God in his word; and complaining of my fears of men's looks and words, which the prophet Ezekiel is warned against, especially when in judicatories, I sought the Lord would be the strength of my heart, and remember the 'Lo, I am with you;' for I could promise nothing but what the Lord himself promises to me and for me."

His ardent attachment to the pure gospel conspicuously appeared during the discussions on doctrinal questions, which, at that period, were keenly disputed

in the church. At the very commencement of his ministry, he took his place amongst those who opposed the *Neo-nomian* or *Semi-arminian* principles, to which not a few of the clergy were attached. He cordially concurred with Messrs. Hogg and Hamilton in resisting the specious doctrine borrowed from England, that the Gospel is a New Law, promising salvation on certain conditions. With regard to the Covenant of Grace, he held that the Divine Surety having completely fulfilled its proper condition by his obedience unto death, it is in its dispensation to mankind, entirely absolute. In the Preface to his Gospel Sonnets, accordingly, he expresses his sentiments on this point in the following terms :—

“ I am convinced that many dark apprehensions concerning the gospel, flow from mistaking the nature of the Covenant of Grace and the proper parts therein ; and consequently the proper condition thereof. And though many excellent Divines, for whose character I have a very great reverence and regard, have represented it as a mutual bargain between God and man, with stipulation and re-stipulation : yet without disparagement to them, I owe more regard to our excellent standards, agreeable to the word of God, to which I own myself solemnly bound ; wherein it is held forth as a covenant that was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him, with all the elect as his seed. And if God and Christ be the parties, we may thence consider what are the proper terms, or what is the condition thereof, and by whom performed. I am persuaded that the general receding from this good old way and manner of speaking, and the confounding of the parties contracting in the covenant of grace, namely, God and

Christ, and the parties consenting in a day of power and brought into the covenant, namely, elect believers; together with the confounding of the proper condition of the covenant with the proper qualities of the covenanted; and even the covenant itself with the manner of its manifestation, and the method of its application; and the not duly attending and adhering to our standards in this and the like matters,—is at the root of a great deal of mistaken views, even among those that would seem to be the most zealous espousers of our excellent Confession and Catechisms.”*

The controversy, however, respecting the book entitled the Marrow of Modern Divinity, roused the subject of this Memoir, in common with several other evangelical ministers of the Scottish Church, to still more strenuous exertions in favour of the truth. To introduce here any historical sketch of this famous contest is altogether unnecessary.† But it would be an act

* Works, Vol. ii. Pp. 578, 579. *fol.* Similar passages occur in his sermons, an instance of which may be seen in a discourse on Gal. iv. 28, quoted in GOSPEL TRUTH, Pp. 140, 141, 2d edition.

† Some notices of this controversy have been given in the Life of Ebenezer Erskine, Pp. 233—251, where reference is made for more ample information to the late Rev. John Brown's GOSPEL TRUTH; of which a second and improved edition has been published. The curious reader will also consult, with much advantage, an “Account of the Controversy respecting the Marrow of Modern Divinity,” in four parts, which appeared in the Christian Instructor for August, October, and December 1831, and February 1832. This account is exceedingly calm and dispassionate, and contains a variety of interesting particulars not generally known.

of injustice to the memory of Ralph Erskine, to pass over in silence the lively interest which, during the agitation of that controversy, he expressed in the doctrines of grace, and the zeal and courage he exemplified in their defence.

His prompt acquiescence in the proposal to vindicate the precious truths injured by the condemnatory act of Assembly 1720, is attested by Mr. Boston, who seems to have received from him the first encouraging letter sent in reply to a communication on the subject addressed to Mr. Hogg of Carnock. "Now after some time," says that truly eminent and holy man, "at the close of the year 1720, I received from Mr. Ralph Erskine, minister of Dunfermline, and son to the worthy Mr. Henry Erskine, above mentioned, an answer of the letter aforesaid, sent to Mr. Hogg; and then a return from Mr. Hogg himself, bearing their readiness to concur in seeking redress of the injury done to truth by the act of Assembly foresaid."*

We have found, in one of Mr. Erskine's note-books, an entire copy, save one or two sentences at the beginning and the close, of Mr. Boston's letter to Mr. Hogg, in which he informs him of a modest reference made by the Presbytery of Selkirk to the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale; of the unfavourable issue of the reference, and of the earnest wish entertained by his friends, Messrs. Wilson of Maxton and Davidson of Galashiels, with himself, that the lovers of truth would make a necessary and seasonable appearance in its behalf. This letter, which can scarcely fail to gratify the intelligent reader, is as follows :

* Boston's Memoirs, p. 368.

“ Letter, Mr. Boston to Mr. Hogg anent the Marrow of Modern Divinity, and the Assembly’s Act concerning it.

———“ The act about the Marrow occasioned great thoughts of heart among us. I have been acquainted with that book about eighteen or nineteen years, and many times have admired the gracious conduct of holy Providence which brought it to my hand, having occasionally lighted upon it in a house of the parish where I was first settled. As to any distinct uptakings of the gospel I have, such as they are, I owe them to that book ; and therefore, as the hearing of the late act anent it was wounding to me, so the seeing of it did sting me to the heart. Last week our Synod sat ; and these two brethren, namely, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Davidson, and I, agreed to write you on that head ; and they left it on me to do it, that you may be apprized of the state of matters here in that point.

“ At the last meeting of our Presbytery before the Synod, the printed letter anent the Marrow falling of course to be read and considered, some difficulties anent it were started. This was so managed, that it was none of us three that brought this matter into the field. After some reasoning on divers heads of the act, which was also produced, the whole brethren present finding themselves straitened, at least upon one point, namely, the condemning of that position, ‘ as the law is a covenant of works, you are wholly and altogether set free from it,’ unanimously resolved to make a modest reference to the Synod, on some difficulties they had about the act, but making no condescendence in writ.

“ At the Synod, after some struggle, we were allowed to produce our difficulties, in face of the meeting. This

was done at some length, as to each of the five heads of doctrine, namely, in so far as some passages of the book put under these heads, stand condemned; and answers were made by the brethren in favour of the act. Somewhat, though little, was also said, on the paradoxes and expressions of the Marrow. And having the opportunity, it was also represented, that two passages in the ‘act for preaching catechetical doctrine’ were stumbling, namely, the necessity of holiness in order to the obtaining of eternal happiness, and justification through our blessed Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ;—the *former* being considered and compared with the condemning of that passage under the third head of doctrine, ‘If the law say, good works must be done if thou wilt obtain salvation;’—and the *latter* is too wide; and *neither* of them the language of our Confession of Faith or Catechisms, so far as we remember.”

“You need not question but we received hard words and names, in the management of this matter; though it must be owned, it was but from very few. It was begged of the Synod, they would contribute their endeavours to get this matter redressed at the next General Assembly; but we were put off with an advice to lay our difficulties before the Committee for purity of doctrine, which we looked upon as little better than to lock them up in our own breast; and could not obtain a delay of the affair till the next Synod, that it might then come in again.

“Dear Sir, this matter is much at heart with us; and though we charitably think ourselves obliged to judge, that the General Assembly are not of those principles which the act seems to us to import, yet we are persuaded that truth is wronged, and the purity of the

doctrine of the gospel cast under a cloud ; from which, nevertheless, we hope it will shine forth more bright than formerly. And we are convinced that, unless there be a redress, the interest of truth will sink very low in this generation, and lower in the rising one, unless the Lord himself interpose with an almighty hand. We are afraid of the guilt of being accessory any way to the betraying of it ; and it would much refresh our heart, to hear that you and others capable, through grace, to serve the interest of the truths of the gospel at such a time, were bestirring yourselves to fall on some method for getting these matters rectified at the next Assembly ; or if that cannot be obtained, for discharging of the consciences of those who are pressed in that matter.

“ As for us, we would desire to be helped, through grace, to concur with you according to the measure bestowed on us. We are informed the committee have given ground to hope, that the next Assembly will rectify something amiss in that act. We shall be glad of the retrieval of any part of truth in hazard, but are indeed afraid it be much like to the explications and alterations made in the Oath, [the Oath of Abjuration.]

“ Meantime, while in this keen assault against a book, for which many bless the Lord, to reach a bloody blow, they have fallen into something that is so gross, that it is shocking even to some, not very apt to quarrel the courses taken in our dark and cloudy day, one cannot but observe the fulfilling of Scripture, Isaiah xxix. 13, 14, ‘ Therefore, the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.’ ”

We regret that Mr. Erskine’s reply to this interesting letter has not been found. Mr. Boston, however, men-

tions, as we have seen above, that it was favourable; and his continued attention to the cause is manifest, from that worthy minister's subsequent statements, relative to the meetings of the twelve brethren, and to the presenting of their representation to the Assembly.*

Without derogating from the honour due to his esteemed coadjutors, it may perhaps be affirmed, that no one either embarked in this cause with greater alacrity, or supported it with greater decision and activity than the subject of this memoir. He bore his full proportion both of the work done, and of the odium incurred. Along with Mr. Bathgate of Orwell, and his brother Ebenezer, he was formally arraigned before the Synod of Fife, for having violated the act of Assembly 1720, and strictly enjoined, on pain of heavy censure, to observe it in future.† The Synod's severity to the representatives was further shown, by an act enjoining all their members to subscribe the Confession anew, in a sense agreeable to the Assembly's deed 1720, condemning the Marrow. Mr. Erskine, while he professed his willingness to renew his subscription to the Confession, as received by the Church of Scotland 1647, positively refused to submit to this oppressive injunction. After the lapse of some years, he subscribed in the following terms:—

“ I, Mr. Ralph Erskine, minister at Dunfermline, do subscribe the above written Confession of Faith, as the confession of my faith, according to the above-written formula, conform to the acts of the General Assembly, *allennarly*,
RALPH ERSKINE.”

Dunfermline, March 20, 1729.

* Memoirs, Pp. 369, 370.

† See Appendix, No. VI.

“ In the same form,” says Mr. Erskine, “ did Mr. James Hogg in Carnock, and Mr. Wardlaw, my colleague, sign the foresaid formula. The word *allenarly* imported our subscribing, not in conformity to an act of the Synod of Fife at that time, requiring a new subscription.”*

The vexatious treatment he, and others, experienced from the violent adversaries of the Marrow is feelingly related by him, in the following extract from a controversial work :†—

“ The Synod of Fife, among whom were five of us that were the representing brethren, for several years after that act [the explanatory act of Assembly 1722] was passed, formed questions at their privy censures, for imposing a compliance with and obedience to that act 1722, upon the said brethren, and made an act for a new subscription of the Confession of Faith, in consequence of, and in an agreeableness to that act 1722, in order to bring all their members to an unanimous submission thereto : which we, who were representers, unanimously refused ; declaring at the same time our readiness to adhere to, and renew our subscription of, the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, as they were received by the Church of Scotland, *anno* 1647 ; but by no means, as they were by the Synod’s act interpreted in an agreeableness to these acts of Assembly 1720 and 1722, in which, we still maintained, so many precious truths were condemned and injured. Thus, we also stood condemned by their acts, and had no communion with them in a way of submission thereto ; but remained,

* GOSPEL TRUTH, P. 146.

† Append. to Faith no Fancy, Pp. 31, 32.

while the affair was in hand, not so much members of the court, as pannels at the bar, obnoxious to whatever censure they might have inflicted for our disobedience to their *acts*, and disregard to their *inquests*, both in presbyteries and synods. Of which acts and inquests with respect to us, and all that were suspected to be *Marrow-men*, as they were reproachfully called, there are abundance of standing evidences yet in their records. And as our escaping the lash of their highest censure was more owing to prudential considerations among members, than to the tendency of their acts; so the disposition of the judicatures appeared too evidently, whenever any student or candidate was supposed to be tinctured with the Marrow, that is, with a gospel-spirit. There was no quarter for such: queries upon queries were formed to discourage them, and stop their way, either of being entered upon trials, or ordained into churches; while those that were of the most loose and corrupt principles were universally most favoured and furthered. These things are too notour to be denied. And these were some of the sad, and yet lasting effects of the foresaid acts of Assembly, and the sad occasion of planting many churches with men that were little acquainted with the gospel, yea, enemies to the doctrine of grace. Many pious youths of sound gospel principles, to whom now a door is opened in holy providence among us, [the Seceders,] had the door of entrance into the ministry quite barred against them; and we formerly fought many times, as in an agony, and fought in vain, to have it set open to them."

On various occasions, it appears, Mr. Erskine discovered his cordial veneration for the pure gospel by active sympathy for his fellow-sufferers in its behalf.

He tenderly sympathized, for example, with GABRIEL WILSON of Maxton, when suffering under a tedious and harassing process commenced against him for several expressions in his "faithful and excellent sermon," entitled THE TRUST, preached at the opening of the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale, October 17, 1721. Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, during that prosecution, travelled together, once at least, to Kelso, to give their countenance to that esteemed brother, when he appeared as a pannel at the bar of his Synod. The following repartee has been preserved by tradition. The younger of the two brothers, it is said, was jocosely, perhaps rudely, accosted by the Rev. Mr. Ramsay of Kelso, one of Mr. Wilson's keenest adversaries, in these words: "Ralph, they say you are a poet; will you favour us with a specimen of your poetry?" "Yes, Sir," he instantly replied; and, alluding to the Christian name of their obnoxious friend, presented the clergyman with this appropriate couplet:

"We be two angels, who did ride and run,
To see the angel GABRIEL fight and win."

His persuasion of the truths injured by the act of Assembly 1720, was too firm to be unsettled, either by the assaults of enemies, or by the well-intended efforts of friends. A cordial friendship had previously subsisted betwixt him and the Rev. JOHN WARDEN of Gar-gunnock, who was a nonjuror, and an evangelical preacher. This respectable minister, however, did not ultimately manifest all that consistency in upholding the interests of truth, that might have been expected. Mr. Boston, accordingly, expresses regret at the manner in which he treated himself and his associates, when they

held a private meeting in Edinburgh, on "the first night of the Assembly," 1721, for the purpose of conference and prayer with regard to their intended representation. "There came in to us," he says, "a goodly company of brethren, with whose appearance I was much encouraged. But, behold! they turned our meeting, designed for prayer, into a meeting for dispute and jangling, and breaking our measures; in which the main agent was Mr. John Warden."* In a subsequent page, he characterizes this agent as "a man well seen in the doctrine of free grace, but of some vanity of temper."†

So solicitous was Mr. Warden to exercise the office of a mediator betwixt the contending parties, that, at the very time he was co-operating with the commissioners in their proceedings against the representers, he thought proper to solicit a correspondence with Mr. Ralph Erskine with a view to a reconciliation. Their letters to each other, which were printed, and a copy of which we have seen in short-hand characters, whatever light they throw upon the question at issue, had not the effect, as might have been anticipated under the circumstances, of either producing greater unity of sentiment, or strengthening the bonds of mutual affection. After three letters had passed between them, the correspondence was dropt at the request of the party by whom it was opened. "In his last letter, Mr. Warden talks of 'the quirks and empty distinctions' of his correspondent, and he concludes thus: 'I believe you will not, in haste, give yourself nor me the trouble of so long letters. I have wrote my thoughts, and I beg there may be no dis-

* Boston's Memoirs, p. 370.

† *Ibid.* p. 372.

putings; it breaks my heart.' To this Mr. Erskine answers: 'As the former was far from the design of the last I sent you, and as I cannot accuse myself of having employed my pen about trifles, (and I wish you had let me understand wherein it appears to be as you allege,) so the latter seems to be as far from the design of the first you sent to me, wherein you expressed such an inclination towards communicating by word or writ to one another. And as I was not the first that wrote and made the proposal of conferring in this way, so I am content I am not the first that hath insinuated an inclination to drop it, which, indeed, I would have done the more readily, if this way of speaking had not suggested, as if there were no more could be said, after this strong effort of yours.' Accordingly, he subjoins a long reply, which, however, concludes in the following friendly strain: 'Meanwhile, as a brotherly line from you, proposing whatever you think proper, will always be acceptable to me, so I hope nothing that has passed in our communication hitherto shall make me disown that debt which I am always obliged to pay (according to the apostolical precept, *owe no man any thing but to love one another*), nor yet weaken just esteem and brotherly love, which I own to be a debt always owing to you in particular.' ”*

In this important cause, Mr. Erskine considered it his duty to employ his pen in a variety of forms. He judged it necessary to compose a number of small controversial tracts in defence of the views maintained by

* Account of Controv. respecting the Marrow in Ch. Instructor, vol. i. p. 73, *et seq.* New series.

the representing brethren. We have before us a manuscript written by him, and probably published at the time, entitled, "Some Remarks upon an Essay concerning the tendency of the Marrow Scheme." It consists of thirteen closely written pages in short-hand characters, and contains able and acute disquisitions respecting the believer's entire deliverance from the law in the form of a covenant; the design of fatherly chastisement, and the nature of the connexion between a holy life and everlasting happiness. Another tract is referred to in the following entry in his Diary, dated *January* 13, 1735: "After reading and praying, this day was much spent in writing upon Mr. M'Laurin's Essay against the Marrow." The Rev. John M'Laurin of Glasgow, a justly celebrated divine, wrote a pamphlet, it appears, on "The Scripture Doctrine of Continued Forgiveness:"* and possibly that was the publication which, at least in some of its tenets, he disapproved and attempted to refute. In the appendix to *Faith no Fancy*, too, published in the year 1745, he replies to several passages in the writings of Messrs. Willison and Currie, and "clears some points of gospel doctrine injured by their defence of the act of Assembly 1722." He here exposes the mistake which good Mr. Willison had committed, in his "Fair and Impartial Testimony," in affirming that the seceding ministers had not openly complained of that act till more than twenty years after it was passed. It is shown, on the contrary, that it was no sooner passed than they solemn-

* See Dr. Gillies' Account of the Life and Character of Mr. M'Laurin, prefixed to his Sermons and Essays, p. vi.

ly protested against it, and that their subsequent proceedings corresponded with their protest.*

To illustrate and vindicate the true Scripture doctrine of grace, and to furnish plain Christians with an antidote against legal errors, was one principal and avowed design even of his Gospel Sonnets. This was the object, in particular, of the Sixth Book, entitled *the Believer's Principles*, which contains a variety of "spiritual songs," relating to the difference betwixt the assurance of faith and the assurance of sense; the difference and harmony between the law and the gospel, and the proper place and station of each; the ground of a sinner's justification before God; and the points on which justification and sanctification agree and differ.

Above all, his Sermons, especially those of them that were studied and preached betwixt the years 1719 and 1728, contain elaborate defences of evangelical doctrine. Of this number are his discourses on "Christ the people's Covenant," "The Death of legal hope, the Life of gospel-holiness," "Receiving Christ and Walking in Him," "The Pregnant Promise," and "the Law, the Strength of Sin."† His talent for discrimination and research appears to advantage, at least in some of his discussions on these topics. We find him often referring expressly to the obnoxious Acts of Assembly 1720 and 1722, confirming the truths opposed by forcible appeals to Scripture, as well as to the subordinate standards of the Church of Scotland, and to the most approved Divines of the Protestant Churches, as

* App. to Faith no Fancy, Pp. 27—32.

† These discourses are founded on the following texts:—
Isaiah xlii. 6. Gal. ii. 19. Col. ii. 6. Gal. iv. 23. 1 Cor. xv. 56.

Dr. Owen, Witsius, and others ; and vindicating the salutary tendency of those principles from injurious aspersions. His compassionate zeal for the salvation of souls is at the same time manifest from the assiduity and earnestness with which, in skilful addresses to his hearers, both converted and unconverted, he makes a practical application of his animating doctrines. He dilates on them, indeed, with an energy and pathos which could scarcely have been attained by one who had not felt their power, and tasted their sweetness. His own experience of their life-giving efficacy is occasionally alluded to, both in his Sonnets and Sermons. To this effect, for example, are the following lines :—

“ Sweet was the hour I freedom felt
To call my Jesus mine,
To see his smiling face, and melt
In pleasures all divine.”*

In one of his sermons also he says, “ I know not what experience you have, Sirs ; but some of us know that when our souls are most comforted and enlarged with the faith of God’s favour through Christ, and with the hope of his goodness, then we have most heart to duties ; and when, through unbelief, we have harsh thoughts of God as an angry judge, then we have no heart to duties and religious exercises. And I persuade myself this is the experience of the saints in all ages.”†

Every one that coolly reflects on the stern countenance with which the dominant clergy of that age beheld the friends of Marrow doctrine, the ecclesiastical

* Gospel Sonnets, Part. vi. ch. v. sect. 2.

† Works, Vol. i. p. 147, *fol.*

censures they were visited and threatened with, and the civil penalties to which, as non-jurors, they were at the same time obnoxious, will readily admit that Mr. Erskine discovered no small share of courage in preaching that doctrine so boldly and explicitly, and in publishing so many tracts and sermons in its behalf. His sensibility, it is manifest, was much alive to the grievous reproaches cast on the evangelical system, and its strenuous defenders. These calumnies, however, served only to stimulate his diligence in investigating, and to animate his resolution in maintaining the truth; whilst they afforded him an opportunity for the exercise of Christian meekness and candour. In one of his sermons on Gen. xlix. 10, preached in the year 1725, he expresses himself in these words: "It is our mercy that we have pure standards; and if any latter acts of this church seem to clash therewith, we hope they have not the deliberate approbation even of those that framed them."* And in the Preface to an early edition of his Sonnets, he writes in the same candid strain, as follows: "Though some late writers, whether in print or manuscript, have stumbled into certain unguarded expressions, that seem to be quite cross to our received standards, yet I charitably judge that their stated sentiments in calm blood, are not such as their new and harsh expressions, vented in the warmth of their paper war, seem to import. And, much more, I do entertain a charitable opinion concerning the rest of our communion, that have not been engaged in the heat of these disputes, occasioned by some occurrences."

Many instructive and interesting passages relative to

* Works, Vol. i. P. 311.

the points contested in the Marrow controversy, might be quoted from his works. On the sinner's immediate access to the Saviour; on the personal application involved in saving faith; on the believer's entire exemption from the law in its covenant form, with regard at once to its precept, promise, and penalty; on the true nature and influence of evangelical repentance; on the importance, the genuine principles and the distinguishing qualities of acceptable obedience;—on these and other kindred topics, his remarks have been esteemed by competent judges equally striking and judicious. But a selection of those passages, accompanied by a discussion of the subject, however useful or seasonable,* would require a volume. Suffice it, therefore, to refer the reader to the original Works, and to selections which other writers have made.†

The charitable hopes regarding the clergy, expressed, as above, by the subject of this memoir, were, with respect to some of them, grievously disappointed, when

* See Appendix, No. VII.

† Brown's Gospel Truth, Pp. 146—155, 382—418. Mac-Millan's selection, entitled, "The Beauties of the Rev. Ralph Erskine."—If the reader imagine, that either in the present Memoir, or in the Life of Ebenezer Erskine, the author should have more amply stated his own views respecting the doctrine of grace, he takes the liberty to say, that he considered any such statement as superseded by the notes subjoined to his Translation of Witsius on the Creed. On the gospel, as distinguished from the law, see Vol. i. Note 49; on the unconditional exhibition of Christ, and his blessings to sinners, Notes 16, 27, 42, 44, 45; on the appropriation included in faith, Notes 11, 19; on free, complete, and final justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, Notes 30, 52, 62; Vol. ii. Notes 7, 17, 75, 76; on the salutary tendency of the doctrine of grace, Vol. i. Note 62. Vol. ii. Note 61, 89.

errors still more pernicious than the Neonomian, or even grossly Arminian tenets, began to infest the church. The Rev. John Simson, Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow, who in the year 1717 had been declared guilty by the General Assembly of teaching doctrines tending to attribute too much to the power of human nature, was accused in 1726, first before the Presbytery of Glasgow, and then before the General Assembly, of denying the Supreme Deity and necessary existence of the Son of God. After long delays, the process was at last concluded by the Assembly 1729, when the charge was found clearly proved; but the only censure inflicted was suspension from teaching and preaching.* The appearance of this heresy is characterized by Mr. Willison as a very "terrible rebuke" to the Church of Scotland. He states that Mr. Simson having asserted that the doctrine that "Christ is the Supreme God" must be taken *cum grano salis*, (literally, *with a grain of salt*, i. e. with some limitation;) he professed sorrow for having given offence by that and some other expressions —. "But, notwithstanding of all these renunciations and declarations, which came so very late," adds the same writer, "many in the Assembly declared that he deserved *deposition*; because, at the beginning of the process, he refused to answer questions for clearing himself, and had neglected many opportunities for two years' time, of giving satisfaction to the judicatories as to the soundness of his faith concerning these important articles, when called upon to do it."†

* See some notices respecting this process, and the revival of the Arian heresy in Britain, *Life of Rev. Eben. Erskine*, Pp. 251—263.

† Fair and Impartial Testimony, p. 60.

Mr. Erskine, in common with other faithful ministers, felt exceedingly grieved at the detection of a departure from the first principles of the Christian system in a Professor, intrusted with the instruction of candidates for the sacred office ; at the countenance he met with during the prosecution ; and at the inadequacy of the censure finally administered. As a member of the church courts, he embraced proper opportunities of displaying a laudable zeal in reference to that dangerous heresy. His published works, too, abundantly evince that he was careful to give seasonable instruction and warning on this head, from the pulpit. The vast importance of our Lord's divinity, and the guilt and danger of denying or relinquishing this doctrine, are often alluded to ; particularly in sermons preached betwixt 1725 and 1729 ; as the following specimen will serve to show :—

“ Whatever doctrine tends to the disparagement of Christ, or to the robbing him of any part of the glory of salvation-work, is to be rejected as erroneous ; for to *him alone must the gathering of the people be* ; and to him only shall the glory of our whole salvation from first to last belong. Christ is much robbed of his glory in Britain at this day ; damnable Arian doctrine is spreading, whereby Christ is robbed of the glory of his Supreme Deity,—denying his being the eternal Son of God, co-equal and co-essential with the Father. The devil himself was more orthodox than our Arian doctors, when he owned, Matt. viii. 29, that Christ was the Son of God ; ‘ What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God ? ’ The devil spake more honourably of him than they do, when he said, Mark i. 4, ‘ I know thee who thou art, the holy one of God.’ My text leads me to what I am saying ; for if Christ were not the Supreme

God, equal with the Father, the gathering of the people to him, to believe in him, to worship and adore him, would be unlawful—it would be idolatry. For as the Lord our God is one Lord, so we must worship the Lord our God, and him only must we serve; and it is idolatry to worship any other.”*

“ The spreading of Arianism now in Britain and Ireland, is like a pulling up reformation by the roots, and a saying, ‘ *We will not only pull off the jewels of the Mediator’s crown, but we will take the crown itself, and cast it into the mire.*’ If this error be subtilly maintained among us, pray that God may discover and destroy it, otherwise it will destroy the very foundation of our holy religion. That pernicious error strikes directly against the doctrine of our Lord Jesus here; for if there be not an essential oneness between him and his Father, then it is not true that *he that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father*. If he be inferior to the Father in point of essence, self-existence, independency, or any other essential perfection, then we cannot see all the Father’s glory in him. But let Christ, who is truth itself, be true, and every man a liar.”†

“ Here is his human nature; but, Oh! she [the woman of Samaria] saw his divinity through the vail of his humanity. ‘ *He told me all things that ever I did,* and gave me thus an infallible proof of his being the supreme God.’ She was neither an Arian nor a Socinian, neither will any be so that gets such a discovery of Christ as she got. And surely the blasphemous Arians of our day bewray their ignorance and want of true

* Works, Vol. i. p. 322, Dis. on Gen. xlix. 10.

† Ibid. p. 454. Dis. on John xiv. 6,

learning and spiritual knowledge, such as this poor woman had. O but a little glance of Christ's glory can make a poor illiterate woman wiser than the learned rabbies that were never taught of God, and yet think themselves the only wits in the world. Those to whom Christ discovers himself, as they will see, so they will commend him to others, as God in our nature, *God manifested in the flesh*. Who ever questioned but the Searcher of hearts, who knows all things, is the true and supreme God, that can give laws to bind the hearts and consciences of men, and then disclose their hearts to them, and tell them all those things wherein they have violated and broken that law in heart or way? Yet Christ is here declared to be such a one; *He told me all things that ever I did.*"*

Frequent allusions to this precious doctrine, we may notice in conclusion, occur in the Gospel Sonnets, as in the following stanzas :

My Lord appears ; awake my soul,
Admire his name *the Wonderful*,
An infinite and finite mind,
Eternity and time conjoined.† *

All heaven's astonish'd at his form,
The mighty God become a worm.
Down Arian pride to him shall bow ;
He's Jesus and JEHOVAH too.‡

* Works, P. 578-9. Dis. on John iv. 29.

† Part III. sect. 11.

‡ Part VI. ch. i. sect. 2.

CHAPTER V.

Brief notice of Mr. Erskine's domestic condition—Particulars of his conduct regarding the SECESSION—Disapprobation of a violent settlement at Kinross—Letter to a Glasgow merchant on that topic—Various expressions of sympathy with the Four Brethren—Adopts their testimony before the Commission in August 1736—Formally accedes to the Associate Presbytery, February 1737—His candour and moderation—Subsequent treatment by the General Assembly—Countenance and encouragement from his Session and People—Difference betwixt him and Mr. Wardlaw with respect to the Secession—His frequent prayers, disinterestedness, and confidence in God.

MR. ERSKINE'S situation in domestic life has been sometimes referred to in the foregoing pages; and as still more numerous allusions to it will be found in the extracts from his Diary to be shortly produced, it seems necessary now to introduce a few particulars relating to his circumstances as the head of a family.

On the 15th of July 1714, nearly three years after his ordination, he married MARGARET, daughter of John Dewar, Esquire of Lassoddie, an estate situated in the adjacent parish of Beath. Her mother's name was Elizabeth Ayton. From the Christian graces she displayed, as well as the sweetness of her natural temper, she proved an eminent blessing to her husband. After she had lived with him sixteen years, it pleased God to remove her by a sudden illness, in the thirty-third year of her age, on Sabbath, the 22d November, O. S. 1730. She had ten children, of whom five survived her, namely, Margaret, the eldest, and four sons, Henry, John,

Ebenezer, and James. For some time after this afflicting bereavement, Anne Erskine, second daughter of his brother Ebenezer, appears to have resided with Ralph, and taken care of his children. A second partner, however, was provided for him in MARGARET SIMSON, a pious and respectable female, daughter of Daniel Simson, Esquire, Writer to the Signet, Edinburgh. This union, which took place on the 24th of February 1732, was also felicitous, and supplied new cause of unfeigned gratitude to his heavenly Father. The second Mrs. Erskine treated the children of the former marriage with true maternal affection; became herself the mother of four sons, only one of whom, however, reached maturity; and survived her husband a few years.*

Deferring further accounts of the occurrences that befel him, and of the excellent spirit he discovered, in a domestic capacity, we return, in the mean time, to trace the subsequent steps of his progress in the more prominent career assigned to him, as an ambassador, and a witness, for the Saviour.

Among the public transactions in which he took a part, the SECESSION holds, without doubt, a very conspicuous and interesting place. We shall here suppose the reader to be somewhat acquainted with the general history of that event;† and it may suffice to do little more than detail the proceedings of the subject of this memoir respecting it, chiefly as authenticated by his own

* These particulars are taken partly from the Records of the parish of Dunfermline, and partly from Mr. Erskine's Diary.

† See "Sketch of particulars regarding the rise of the Secession," in the Life and Diary of Eben. Erskine, Ch. viii. or the works referred to in that publication, Pp. 360, 361. *note*.

manuscripts. From these it will appear that zeal and moderation were happily blended in his character, and that his conduct in this weighty affair, as on all other occasions, was sanctified by devout acknowledgments of God.

Although he remained in communion with the Established Church for several years after the measures adopted by the ruling clergy had compelled "the four brethren" to secede, his views were materially in unison with theirs, and he did not fail to afford active support to the cause in which they had embarked. How cordially he co-operated with them in maintaining those evangelical doctrines which were then impugned, is clear, from the tenor of the preceding chapter. That he no less heartily concurred with them in vindicating the right of Christians to choose their own pastors, in opposition to the oppressive courses pursued in that age, is equally evident. He decidedly disapproved, for example, of the obnoxious *overture with respect to the planting of churches* which the Assembly passed into an act, May 16, 1732. We have seen the bold and manly speech delivered by his brother Ebenezer on that occasion.* Ralph, as appears from a concise hint in his Diary, spoke at the same time to the same effect. No enlightened and impartial judge, indeed, can examine the spirit and tendency of that overture, without admitting that it richly deserved unqualified reprobation. The learned and worthy Mr. Boston accordingly condemns it in the strongest terms. In a letter addressed to the Presbytery of Selkirk, dated Etterick Manse, February 22, 1732, after stating that his "growing in-

* Life of Rev. Eben. Erskine, Pp. 357—360.

disposition and frailty" would prevent him from attending their meeting on the last Tuesday of that month, he makes several remarks on the overture as calculated to destroy *the few remains* of religious liberty in this point, and then adds :—

" I cannot help thinking, that the method proposed in the foresaid overture for planting congregations has a native tendency to sap our constitution, break this church in pieces, fill her pulpits with a naughty ministry, to mar the success of the glorious Gospel, and ruin the interests of true religion among us. For which cause I declare myself altogether against passing of the said act or overture into a standing act, and durst not, in the Presbytery or Assembly, vote in favour of it *for a thousand worlds*. I desire and hope the reverend Presbytery will do me, their afflicted brother, not having access to meet with them, the justice to *record* their receiving of this my letter, and its bearing my not consenting to, but being altogether against the passing of the said transmitted act or overture into a standing act."*

The Presbytery of Selkirk agreed unanimously to oppose the passing of this overture. The Rev. Mr. Willison of Dundee, too, who was decidedly hostile to separation from the national church, does not hesitate utterly to condemn that act; and its supporters having alleged that it was materially the same with the act 1690, he shows, at great length, that it differed essen-

* Quoted from a pamphlet, published 1734, and now rarely to be met with, entitled, " The Mind of the Modest, Holy, and Learned Mr. Thomas Boston, late Minister of Etterick, concerning the Act of Assembly, 1732," &c.

tially from that act, and was extremely injurious to the spiritual liberties, and the best interests of the people.*

Mr. Ralph Erskine gave another proof of his zeal for religious freedom, by firmly refusing to acquiesce in the violent settlement of a minister in the parish of Kinross. According to a late writer, that settlement was "one of the most scandalous intrusions that ever was made on a Christian congregation."† Even Dr. Erskine's biographer allows, that the Assembly "appointed the settlement of Kinross to be carried into execution, with circumstances of peculiar severity."‡ In the year 1729, Mr. Francis Craig, a young man of eminent piety, had received a very harmonious call to that parish, with the concurrence of the patron, Sir Thomas Bruce Hope. But owing to the odious interference and inquisitorial proceedings of some members of the Synod of Fife, who entertained a prejudice against this worthy candidate for his alleged partiality to the Marrow doctrines, the call was laid aside.§ Sir John Bruce, who succeeded his brother, subsequently gave the presentation to Mr. Robert Stark, a very unpopular nominee, to whose ministry the body of the people could not be induced to submit. The Synod of Fife, however, with the aid of the Assembly, resolved to settle him at all hazards, in

* Fair and Impartial Testimony, Pp. 65-68.

† Struthers' Hist. of Scotland, vol. i. book vii. p. 599.

‡ Life of Dr. Erskine, by Sir Henry Moncreiff Wellwood, Bart. p. 445.

§ The cruel harshness with which Mr. Craig was treated, appears from the circumstances detailed in the account of Marrow Controversy, Ch. Instructor, *new series*, vol. i. Pp. 88-92.

defiance alike of the parishioners of Kinross and the Presbytery of Dunfermline.

The Presbytery having positively declined taking any steps towards Mr. Stark's ordination, the General Assembly, in accordance with a strange practice frequently resorted to at that period, devolved this business on their commission. When the commission were about to commence their operations at Dunfermline, Mr. Erskine deemed it prudent to keep at a distance, and was designedly two days from home. His Diary, however, contains the following curious notice of the reception they met with :—

“ *Dec. 1, 1731.* A committee of the commission was sent to take Mr. Stark on trials, and on Wednesday they sought access to our kirk ; and though they got the key, yet it was barricaded within, and they could not have access. I was not ill pleased at this, though yet I knew nothing of the affair.”

A few more extracts, relative to this notorious case, will serve still further to discover his abhorrence of ecclesiastical tyranny.

“ *May 1732.* *The beginning of this month,* being a member of the Assembly, I went to Edinburgh ; where, upon the affair of *Kinross settlement*, and upon the affair of the *act anent planting vacant churches*, I was helped, after some premeditation, to deliver myself before the General Assembly. The first speech was against the commission upon the affair of Kinross ; and the second was on Monday, May 15th, against the act empowering heritors to be electors of the minister, and excluding the people.”

“ *Nov. 7th, Tuesday.* After I arose, having read some Scriptures, I was helped in prayer, and my soul

was melted and poured out in the view of God as a promising God. After I had acknowledged my corruption and confusion, I was made to grip to God's word of promise of the Spirit, and his promise, 'Lo I am with you, in all my ministerial work. And I had in view attending the commission, and acknowledging my utter unfitness for doing any thing, prayed that he would pity and be present with me.—This day I went to Edinburgh, and next day, being *Wednesday*, I attended the commission, and *Thursday*, the affair of our Presbytery's refusing to obey the appointment of Assembly in receiving and enrolling Mr. Stark as minister of Kinross. I was *alone*, no minister of the Presbytery being there but myself; and though Mr. Bain's appeal was from the Synod, yet they meddled not so much with that, nor indeed at all, but with the Presbytery's conduct, and ordered a letter to be written in very strong terms, importing high displeasure, and also menaces, in case we would not take their advice in obeying the Assembly."

"*Feb.* 14, 1733. I was mostly employed in writing an answer to the letter of the commission, in behalf of the Presbytery's refusing to receive and enrol Mr. Stark."

"*Monday, March* 12. I came to Edinburgh to attend the commission. *Tuesday*, I met with some friends beforehand. *Wednesday forenoon*, the commission sat down. *Afternoon*, they entered on our affair; we having given in a representation from the Presbytery, wherein we declined them as judges, and adhered to the Synod's sentence, appointing a committee to deal with the parish of Kinross. The commission having interrogated the Presbytery why they did nothing of that sort

themselves, I answered that the Presbytery were all along suspected as having a hand in the opposition made in that parish, and if we should essay that mean, and prove unsuccessful, it might have riveted that thought, but we were very willing to have joined with the committee of the Synod. After this we were put out, who were commissioners from the Presbytery, namely, Messrs. Gibb, Hunter, and I. And after reasoning in the commission, a large committee were appointed to converse with us, and bring in an overture to the commission next day. The subject of their communing with us, was our reasons for not regarding the authority of the General Assembly, appointing us to receive and enrol Mr. Stark as a member of our Presbytery, (where we gave such reasons as the meeting could not answer;) and then they proposed if we would be *passive* and let them enrol him, since we could not be *active*. We showed that it behoved us to protest against such a deed; and they were willing we should do so, only desired we might submit. The paper we jointly gave in to them, and the sentence of the commission, appointing our clerk to enrol Mr. Stark, are in the minutes of the Presbytery. I remember I was helped to speak on this occasion in the committee, and we were helped to stand our ground; and I again and again told them, I could do nothing that would import an owning him to be *de jure* minister of Kinross."

" *Wednesday, March 28.* The Presbytery sat, and after the sentence of the commission was read, appointing our clerk to enrol Mr. Stark, Mr. Hogg protested against the enrolment, and the rest of the Presbytery adhered to that protest, except Messrs. Stark and Steedman."

“ *Thursday, May 3.* After reading several scriptures, I again got some pleasant liberty to pray to a promising God, and to look to him for the Spirit; my heart was much sweetened and enlarged, and my hope in God through Christ strengthened. After this I went to Edinburgh to the General Assembly, where I and my brethren had a great battle, with reference to our having refused to receive and enrol Mr. Stark. The history of what happened at this Assembly, see, in short, in a letter to a Glasgow merchant, written in that book, where the sermon on Rev. vii. 17, is written.”

The letter thus referred to, was intended to repel a charge of inconsistency and unsteadfastness preferred against himself and his co-presbyters on account of their procedure on that occasion. He shows, that though a majority of members of Presbytery present at their meeting in Edinburgh having voted for the enrolment of Mr. Stark, he was obliged to acknowledge him as a co-presbyter, yet he and several other members had protested against the enrolment, and were determined never to recognize him as minister of Kinross, so long as the people of that parish refused to receive him as their pastor. This exculpatory communication, however, gives an instructive picture of the painful and embarrassing circumstances in which the faithful friends of truth and liberty are placed, when closely linked in ecclesiastical connexion with men of an opposite character. The letter itself, copied from the above note-book, runs as follows:—

*Letter directed to James M'Coll, merchant in Glasgow,
at his house, by-west the Laigh Kirk.*

“ Sir,—I am sorry you have been so much imposed

upon by misrepresentations anent the affair of Kinross, and our conduct thereanent at the General Assembly. For preventing, therefore, people's mistakes, I lay before you this plain true state and history of that affair. The ground of our refusing all along to receive and enrol Mr. Stark as a member of our Presbytery, was because we could not in our consciences own him to be minister of Kinross. Hence, it is plain, that the enrolling in the abstract was not the thing that straitened the conscience, but the owning him minister of Kinross. Now, if we have maintained this, viz., the disowning his being lawful minister of Kinross, notwithstanding of his being enrolled over our belly, then I think we have stood our ground, and may defy the malice that reproaches us. But that this question stands still entire with us, we have as solemnly asserted as either word or writ can do, before the General Assembly; where, after we had given in our reasons against the enrolment, and were communed with, we were instructed to meet as a presbytery, and to receive and enrol Mr. Stark, and bring a report of every man's vote and behaviour; which being done, the report came in as before; *not enrol* carried. Whereupon we the recusants were all summoned next day before the Assembly to answer for our disobedience. After this it was proposed, that we should be summoned particularly, man by man. Which, while the Moderator was doing, and coming to the last man of us that had voted *not enrol*, it was alleged his vote was ambiguous in the grounds of it, and he being called to the bar to explain his vote, said he was for enrolling, and that the exception he made in his vote was only a proposal. Upon which it was found by the Assembly, that the plurality of the Presbytery were for enrolling; and,

therefore, we were commanded to meet again, and receive his vote, and enrol. Accordingly, being met again, and the plurality voting *enrol* and giving him the right hand of fellowship, we that were against it caused mark in the records of Presbytery, (which was read in open assembly,) our declaration against the enrolment for all the reasons given in to the General Assembly, and that our owning him as a co-presbyter, (since now the enrolment was over-ruled and carried against us,) should not import an homologating or approving of his settlement as minister of Kinross. Whereupon we, the recusants, (being now the minority of the Presbytery,) were again sisted before the Assembly, and though we owned the necessary consequences of the enrolment, which we were obliged to do unless we were to turn independents, viz. that we were not to leave the Presbytery, but to sit and vote there, and own his brotherhood, or fraternal relation to the Presbytery, founded now upon their consent, which you see we protested against as before ; yet we have never owned the pastoral relation of Mr. Stark to the parish of Kinross, their consent being never yet obtained ; which, together with the judgment of the Presbytery, is necessary, according to our covenanted reformation and constitution, to constitute that relation. This we asserted before the Assembly, and also our hands declared that the question anent the people and their enjoying church privileges was still entire. Yet we declared our willingness, since the matter was thus over-ruled, to contribute our endeavours so far to reconcile that people to Mr. Stark, as to see if they could yet be brought, if possible, to that consent, which should have taken place before the ordination, and which hitherto was wanting, and which, while it is wanting,

we have no freedom to deny them church privileges. Upon this adherence to our main point, the sentence of the Assembly passed against us. Which sentence not being complete, but left to the Commission in August to execute more fully according to our behaviour, we did not see fit to protest against it, but only upon the back of its being intimated to us, signified our adherence to what we had said before, by telling the Moderator that we had already told our mind to the Assembly, and had no more to add.

“ This is a short account of the affair, as it stood before the Assembly ; and I think none that were present will adventure to contradict me in these facts.

“ Two things remain to be cleared, for giving you full satisfaction. The one is anent the lawfulness of the Presbytery while the elders were not present, nor advertised as to this [meeting.] It is fit you should know, what many are not aware of, that not only were we commanded by the General Assembly to constitute, and judge anew in this affair ; but also at our last Presbytery at Dunfermline, we were authorized by the Presbytery to meet at Edinburgh on the same affair, so that all the elders might have been present, (as some of them readily would, if they had known what was to happen.) So it was a lawful meeting according to the rules of the church, although there had been but a quorum of the Presbytery present. Since the former Presbytery authorized all their members that should be at Edinburgh, to meet and constitute there, this made it a legal meeting, abstract from the command of the General Assembly.

“ The other thing to be cleared is anent the alleged inconsistency between owning Mr. Stark now a member

of presbytery, and yet disowning his being minister of Kinross. To this it is answered, that if this be inconsistent, several judicatories of this church are very inconsistent with themselves, for all the Professors of Divinity in Scotland, though they have no pastoral charge, and some Professors of history and languages, yet are received as members of the Presbytery they reside among; and in several places, where a minister happens but to dwell within the bounds of a Presbytery, although he have no pastoral relation to any flock, yet he is chosen to be a member of Presbytery: No doubt but the plurality of a Society or Presbytery consenting may constitute a man's relation to it as a member thereof; but it can never constitute his pastoral relation to a flock not consenting thereunto. Therefore, though we were obliged to own the former, we denied the latter, yea, some of the brethren that were for enrolling, never yet owned Mr. Stark to be minister of that congregation; and though we that were against enrolling, because we could not own him as minister of Kinross, do now own that he is a member of the Presbytery contrary to our wish, yet we can never own him to be a member of the Presbytery, as he is minister of Kinross, but merely as he is chosen by the plurality of the Presbytery to be a member thereof, as our foresaid recorded declaration makes evident. If we had either acquiesced in the enrolment without entering our protest or declaration against it, or upon the enrolment had owned that now he is minister of Kinross, men might have alleged that we had pretended conscience in this matter, but since, as I have told you, the case is quite otherwise, you may see how fearfully we are reproached and abused. We were all along of the mind, that if the plurality of the

Presbytery should sway the enrolment against us, we could do no more than protest against it ; but while we were the plurality, to do the thing or see it done, and yet not protest against it, would be indeed to have acted like men of no conscience. Yielding active obedience to either superior or inferior courts in this matter, might have straitened our conscience ; but it is plain, from what I have told you, we have been active only in opposition to it ; and I hardly know how we could give farther testimony against it than we have done. We have yielded nothing but to own what is now matter of fact, that he is a brother as a member of the Presbytery, and that we ought not to carry unbrotherly towards him, but the contrary ; since the Presbytery, whereof we are members, have received him, though against our will.

“ I see, indeed, we stand just now in a dangerous post, and yet in a middle place between the kirk and the people, so to speak ; the kirk, that would drive us to popery, making the judgment of ministers simply to constitute the relation between a pastor and people, and so lording it over their consciences, by obtruding ministers upon them without their consent ; and the people, many of whom would, at the roots, drive us to independency, as if we should do somewhat more than enter a protest or dissent when overcome and outvoted ; that is, they would have us leave the judicatory, or separate. Perhaps I mistake them. However, I doubt not but, upon due information, they will see it is our duty to shun all extremes and fight lawfully, as long as we can with a safe conscience. I do not see we are so entangled as the representations you have got of this affair, make you suppose we are. The account I have

given here, will obviate every thing you have told me is alleged against us. We cannot help if we are reproached; better than we have been so. Meantime, when you are attacked, so as you cannot answer for us, you may reserve or refer answering till farther information."———*

Whilst the subject of this memoir was strenuously contending for scriptural purity as well in government as doctrine, what less could be expected from him, than unequivocal expressions of regard and sympathy for his dear brother Ebenezer and his three adherents of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, when suffering ecclesiastical severities incurred by their fidelity? His cordial fellow-feeling was manifested at once by earnest prayers on their behalf, by friendly confidential communications, and by public tokens of esteem, that even-

* Notwithstanding the specious apologies he pleads in this letter, Mr. Erskine appears to have afterwards candidly confessed himself guilty of sinful pusillanimity in at all acquiescing in Mr. Stark's enrolment. Hence, "A Confession of the sins of the Ministry," made by the Associate Presbytery at Dunfermline, November 3, 1743, contains the following acknowledgment. "And we desire to be humbled, that some of us were left to faint sinfully in the year 1733, when suffering ourselves to be so far blinded, by the seeming decision of a meeting of the Presbytery of Dunfermline at Edinburgh, for the enrolment of an intruder among them, as to drop our testimony against his being enrolled; through our not adverting either to the unlawfulness of the constitution of that meeting of Presbytery, which all the members were not warned to attend, or the sinfulness of the decision, though the Presbytery had been lawfully constituted." Act of the Associate Presbytery for renewing the Covenants, p. 43.

tually terminated in a complete accession to the Associate Presbytery. Those who consider the Secession as on the whole a real blessing to Scotland, will not read without pleasure, the ensuing extracts from the private records of this conscientious minister, illustrative of the piety, integrity, humility, and zeal, which guided his steps, in befriending this cause in its infancy.

“*Saturday, October 14, 1732.*—This night I got notice of my brother Ebenezer being arraigned and accused before the Synod of Perth for his synodical sermon before them, and by three votes voted censurable, and he ordered to be rebuked and admonished—upon which seventeen ministers dissented, and he, with Mr. Fisher, appealed to the Assembly.”

“*Monday, Oct. 16, 1732.*—After reading Is. lvii. and Ps. lvii. I got liberty to pray over some parts of the Scriptures I read, and then to express confidence in the mercy and truth of God with reference to his accomplishing the promise of the Spirit; his presence in my work;—— his countenance to my brother in his present circumstances, that integrity and uprightness may preserve him —— with sweetness of frame, and high expressions of humble confidence in the Lord.”

“*Wednesday, May 2, 1733.*—This morning about six o'clock, after reading, my heart went after God in prayer, and I was helped to pray with some faith and hope and pleasure; and to glorify God as a God in Christ, that had glorified many of his perfections before my eyes, in his way of dealing with me. I was helped to look to him with faith and desire, through the glass of the promise of the Spirit —— also that the Lord

would stand by my brother Ebenezer at the General Assembly."

"*August 7, 1733.*—This evening I went to Edinburgh."—" *Wednesday, Aug. 8.* The commission sat, and took the affair of my brother Ebenezer, Messrs. Wilson, Moncrieff, and Fisher, under their consideration, and with great violence hastened to a sentence."—" *Thursday, Aug. 9.* These four brethren were suspended by that violent court, after long and warm reasonings. The stream carried down all before it."

Ralph Erskine was not a mere passive spectator of the conduct of the Assembly in May 1733, and of their commission in August following, relative to the suspended brethren. A paper presented by him and Mr. Thomas Mair to the commission, at their subsequent meeting in November, contains the following allusion to the testimonies they had previously borne against the violent proceedings in this cause:—" Though we had no occasion regularly to sign the same papers with these brethren, [Mr. Ebenezer Erskine and his three adherents,] yet not only did some of us, as well as others present at the last General Assembly, openly and judicially adhere to the protestation and declaration given in by them, as containing a testimony against the act of Assembly 1732, anent planting vacant churches, and as asserting our privilege and duty to testify publicly against the same, or like defections, on all proper occasions ; but also at the last commission, met in August, offered our verbal adherence, as several others did, unto the protestation these brethren entered against the sentence of the commission, suspending them from the exercise of their ministry : whereby we intended to testify

our concurrence with, and adherence unto the several representations given in by them to the commission under form of instrument.”*

His brotherly behaviour towards these ill-treated ministers, accorded with his verbal adherence to their protests ; as appears from the successive entries of his Diary :—

“ *Thursday, Sep. 6, 1733.*—I went to the ordination of Mr. Webster at Culross. I found he had refused to let my brother Ebenezer join in that work. I returned that night, my brother being at my house.”—*Sabbath, Sep. 9.* This day my brother Ebenezer preached in Dunfermline for me and my colleague. We freely employed him, though suspended by the commission.”—*Tuesday Sep. 11.* I went with my brother towards Stirling, and was with him all night in Kennet Bruce’s house.”—“ *Wednesday, Sep. 12.* This evening we came to Stirling ; I was there all this week.”—“ *Sabbath, Sep. 16.* I preached for Mr. Muir, and exercised in the kirk of Stirling on 2 Tim. i. 7. ‘ God hath not given us the Spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.’ ”

“ *Monday, Sep. 17.*—My brother and I went towards Kinclaven to meet with his other suspended brethren. We were all met at Auchterarder.”—*Tuesday, Sep. 18.* We came to Kinclaven ; and afterwards came Mr. Moncrieff of Culfargy. Mr. Fisher and Mr. Wilson were detained at Dunkeld, where they were attending the Presbytery.”—“ *Wednesday, Sep. 19.* The four brethren, and I with them, spent the day in praying, and seeking counsel of the Lord, as to what they were

* Re-exhibition of the Testimony, Pp. 27, 28.

next to do. This afternoon Mr. Gow* came, and he also joined in worship with us.”—*Thursday, Sep. 20.* Part of this day was also spent in prayer and conference. The brethren came to find that in their circumstances, it was fit they should think, in case of their deposition next commission, to be ready before it to constitute themselves into a Presbytery, and declare themselves not of the communion of this church, with certain reserves.”—“*Friday, Sep. 21.* I came with the rest of

* This was, no doubt, the Rev. John Gow of Cargill, who held the same views with the four brethren, though he failed to support them with equal resolution. He was one of the forty-two ministers that subscribed the representation and petition to the Assembly 1732, remonstrating against a variety of grievances; and one of those members of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, who adhered to Mr. Moncrieff's dissent and protest against the deed by which Ebenezer Erskine was found censurable. Nor was Mr. Gow the only clergyman whose caution ultimately prevailed against his courage. We may here specify the Rev. Mr. PALMER of Forgandenny, as supplying another instance. An intimate friendship subsisted betwixt him and Mr. Wilson of Perth. Soon after the Secession, Mr. Palmer was seized with an illness that terminated in death. During the time of his affliction, he was anxious to enjoy much of Mr. Wilson's company, who gratified him in this point, as far as he could. “Conversing one day very closely, Mr. Wilson hinted to him, brother, I think you should have stood forth with me and some others, and borne an open testimony against those indignities which you have often lamented, and which are so injurious to your Master's cause and interest at this day. The good dying man replied, yes, brother, I have always been deficient in courage and zeal for my Lord and Master, but I hope, by the riches of his mercy, that sin and all my other sins shall be as the iniquities of Israel, which shall be sought for and there shall be none, and as the sins of Judah, that shall not be found.”—*Pious Memorials of the Parish of Portmoak, by Mr. John Birrell, MS.*

the brethren to Perth; and my brother and I came that night to Mr. Mair's in Orwell."—The day following he reached Dunfermline in safety, and found his family well. The week after, he attended a meeting of the Synod of Fife, at which, "there was carried," says he, "an address to the commission in favour of the four suspended brethren."

Such was the active friendship discovered by Mr. Erskine at the first; nor did his zeal abate.

"*November 4, 1733.*" [After mentioning several topics in reference to which he presented his earnest supplications to God, he adds;] "And also I had a concern about the four brethren suspended, that they might have the Lord's conduct."

"*Monday, Nov. 12.* This day I went to Edinburgh to the commission, where my brother, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Moncrieff, and Mr. Fisher were *loosed from their pastoral charges, and declared no ministers of the Church of Scotland.* When the sentence carried, I was one that *protested* against it. And before this, when the vote was carried, 'Proceed to a higher censure,' Mr. Mair and I gave in a *protest* against that, when others that were members were *dissenting* from it.*

The protest taken by six ministers immediately after the sentence was passed, is as follows:—

Edinburgh, November 16th, 1733.

"I, Mr. Gabriel Wilson, minister at Maxton, do

* This protest against proceeding to a higher censure, is included in the First Testimony, where it is designated, "Declaration and protestation of some ministers upon the affair of Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, &c. given in to the commission of the General Assembly met at Edinburgh the 14th day of Nov. 1733." Re-exhibition, Pp. 27—29.

hereby, in mine own name, and in name of all those that shall adhere to me, protest against this sentence of the commission in the case of the four brethren ; and that it may be lawful for me to complain of the said sentence, and of the several acts of Assembly that have occasioned the same, to any subsequent Assembly of the Church of Scotland ; as also, that it may be lawful for me, in a becoming manner, on all proper occasions, to bear testimony against the same, with all other defections and severities of this church in her sentences. And finally, that I may in the mean time, as in providence I shall find opportunity, hold ministerial communion with my said dear brethren, as if no such sentence had been past against them. Upon all which, I take instruments in the clerk's hands.

GABRIEL WILSON.

The above protest is adhered to by us,
 RALPH ERSKINE, minister at Dunfermline.
 THOMAS MAIR, minister at Orwell.
 JOHN MACLAREN, minister in Edinburgh.
 JOHN CURRIE, minister at Kinglassie.
 JAMES WARDLAW, minister at Dunfermline.
 THOMAS NAIRN, minister at Abbotshall.*

Mr. Erskine continues the memoranda in his Diary thus :—

“ *Monday, Dec. 3. 1733.*—This night my brother came ; and the next day, Tuesday Dec. 4, I went with him to the Bridge of *Gairney*,† where he and his other

* Re-exhibition, P. 31.

† A village near Kinross. Compare *Life of Eben. Erskine*, Pp. 270—1.

three brethren spent all the Wednesday in prayer and conference, and also the Thursday: and thereafter, about two o'clock, came to the resolution of constituting themselves into a Presbytery, which accordingly they did, and Mr. Mair and I were witnesses. *There was, I thought, much of the Lord with them; and I found my heart frequently warmed and drawn out in prayer with them.* They appointed their next meeting of Presbytery to be in Dunfermline, February, the first Wednesday thereof. We returned to Dunfermline on Friday, and I went with him to Stirling on Saturday, and came there that night."

"*Sabbath, Dec. 9.* I preached at Stirling for my brother in the forenoon, (he lecturing,) and for Mr. Hamilton afternoon, upon Ps. lxvi. 10, 'Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.'"

"*Sabbath, Feb. 3, 1734.* This day, afternoon, I concluded my sermon on *the burning bush*. This evening in family worship, singing Ps. xxii., my heart was helped to some exercise of faith on God, as my God and guide from my mother's womb. And afterwards in secret, I was helped to some strong and sweet acting of faith in the promise of everlasting life, John iv. 14, and of my being carried thither in the stream of the spring-well there promised in Christ Jesus. I prayed for the four brethren of the new Presbytery."

"*Wednesday, Feb. 6.* This day the new Presbytery sat in *my colleague's house*; as next day, namely, Thursday, they sat in my house. Many causes, from several corners of the land, were brought before them; but they delayed them till the grounds of their secession and constitution were published. *Thursday, Feb. 7.* Mr. Wilson of Perth preached here on Christ our Hope,

and was well helped. Much of the Lord seemed to be with him."

" *Tuesday, July 16.* The brethren kept their Presbytery in my house."

The brethren of the new Presbytery, it thus appears, met with a cordial welcome at Dunfermline. According to his own account, too, Mr. Erskine persisted in his attention to the proceedings of the judicatories, particularly of the General Assembly, relative to them, and the public interests of religion.

" *May 2, 1734.* I went to Edinburgh and attended the General Assembly."

" *May 1735.* I went to the General Assembly, and observed what was doing; and coming home, I went afterwards to the sacrament at Kinclaven, the first Sabbath of June."

" *May 1736.* I was a member of General Assembly, and endeavoured to do there what I thought was right and *honest.*"

The Diary contains nothing more regarding any of these three successive meetings of Assembly. This brief memorandum, however, shews sufficiently that in 1736, he availed himself of his privilege as a member of court, to defend the cause of truth and righteousness. Very probably he alludes, in particular, to his humble efforts, at the time when the obnoxious writings of the Rev. ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL, Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of St. Andrew's, were under the consideration of the Assembly. In a short account of Mr. Erskine that appeared in a well-known periodical soon after his death, it is stated, among several instances of his active zeal, that he "made a warm appearance in the several processes against Professors Sim-

son and Campbell.”* Subsequently too, he adopted the judicial testimony of the Associate Presbytery† in which Mr. Campbell’s errors are pointed out and confuted, and the unfaithfulness of the Assembly 1736, in suffering him to escape without censure exposed. Some allusions also, to those errors occur in his sermons. Thus in a discourse on stability in the Faith, he says, “It is now a debateable point, whether there be any necessity for divine supernatural revelation ; whether the light of nature be not sufficient, without scripture, to salvation.”‡

Nor were the ministers of the Secession the only clergymen that condemned and lamented the extreme leniency with which the Assembly treated Mr. Campbell. The Rev. Mr. Willison, and his brethren of the establishment who concurred with him in his “Testimony,” viewed the matter in nearly the same light. Accordingly, after mentioning “several good things,” done by the Assembly 1736, they thus qualify their eulogy : “But it is to be regretted that they were not steady and uniform in their proceedings. For while they discouraged and stopped some intrusions, they encouraged others ; and they gave no small offence by their management in the affair of Professor Campbell at St. Andrews, who had vented several dangerous errors in his writings, such as his *Oratio Academica*, his Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue, his discourse concerning enthusiasm, &c.” After specifying some of his erroneous tenets, and adverting to the unjustifiable enity which characterized the settling of the cause, they thus conclude their remarks : “This issue of the pro-

* Scots Magazine for 1752, p. 510.

† Re-exhibition, Pp. 118-133.

‡ Works, vol. I. p. 671.

cess, many in the Assembly, and out of it, were highly dissatisfied with ; judging that Mr. Campbell did justly deserve a sharp rebuke for the many incautious and unsound expressions he has in his writings, however orthodox his explications might be. And with these we do heartily join.”*

Influenced to a great degree by the unhappy course of defection, which, notwithstanding the favourable appearances in 1734, the Assembly in the two following years, according to his judgment, seemed determined to pursue, Mr. Erskine gradually proceeded to take more decided steps.

“ *August 8, 1736.*—[After stating some circumstances relative to the administration of the Lord’s Supper at Torphichen, where his brother Ebenezer, Mr. Moncrieff, and Mr. Fisher, as well as Mr. Mair and himself assisted, he thus continues:] *Tuesday*, went to Edinburgh. *Wednesday*, the three brethren before mentioned, and Mr. Mair and I were together drawing up a paper, which I designed to lay before the Commission, containing the causes of a fast, and *wherein I adopted the four brethren’s testimony*.† Accordingly, I gave it in *Thursday forenoon, August 12*; not without much sinful fear and perplexity, yet with some desire to glorify God, and bear witness to truth, and to the cause of God’s controversy. Many hard speeches followed upon my reading it. Then I desired it to be marked; which being refused, I took instruments that I adhered to it as my testimony, and Mr Mair having signed the paper,

* Fair and Impartial Testimony, Pp. 85, 86.

† This paper is referred to in Mr. Mair’s Declaration of Secession, and Mr. Erskine’s adherence to it. Re-exhibition, Pp. 154, 164.

took instruments also after me. I had much thoughtfulness about my own weakness and indisposition for such an attempt, and about my unworthiness. I came home on Saturday, and Sabbath, August 15, preached upon Matthew xvii. 20, 'The Lord pardon and pity.'"

Determined as he was, in one form or another, to maintain a testimony against prevailing defections, he felt considerable difficulty, for a time, in reconciling his mind to an entire secession from the established judicatories; and it was only after much anxious reflection, and repeated communications with the brethren, that he considered it his duty fully to acquiesce in their measures. That this was in reality the case, is evident from the following extracts:—

"*October* 1736.—Towards the end of this month I went up to Culfargie, and met with the four brethren, together with Mr. Mair. *26th*, Was three nights with the brethren, and heard them reasoning with Mr. Mair and me about our present situation. Next week there was to be a fast held at Culfargie; but Mr. Mair and I were obliged to be home at the Presbytery [of Dunfermline,] when we had our paper of a testimony to be considered."—" *Monday, Nov. 1*, Mr. Mair met with me anent our presbyterial affair. We prayed together; and also set apart some time on Tuesday for that work, together with my colleague."—" *Wednesday, Nov. 3*, The Presbytery sat, and appointed the consideration of our paper betwixt and the next [meeting of] Presbytery; and the consideration of a fast."

" *Tuesday, Jan. 4, 1737*, I was at Kinross, where a fast was kept by the four brethren, and where Mr. Mair and I joined in the public work, by prayer and speaking a few words of preface before it. Next day I was

with the brethren there.”—*Thursday, Jan. 6*, I heard Mr. Mair give in reasons for his secession from this church, and accession to the brethren: Whereupon, afterwards, my mind was asked, and I owned myself to be yet unclear—that I was taking it under consideration.”

“*Saturday, Jan. 8*. I set aside a part of this day for prayer. I was thoughtful about that great business of Secession, and sought the Lord would give me light.”

“*Jan. 18*. About this time, I wrote to Mr. Mair my thoughts concerning Secession, and laid down some arguments and reasons, that weighed with me against a present secession.”

“*Saturday, Jan. 29*. I had many struggles in my mind about secession from the judicatories and joining with the four brethren. I wrote a letter to Mr. Mair concerning my scruples; who having sent my line to Messrs. Wilson and Moncreiff, they wrote letters, which to me were weighty,* and induced me to a farther consideration of that affair, till I was brought to think of joining them in the matter of the judicial testimony.”

These weighty letters, it appears, were the means, under Providence, of bringing him to a final resolution. He gives the following account of the result:

“*Dunfermline, Feb. 14, 1737*. Mr. Mair came, and was fully resolved to make a direct absolute sort of secession. I was not his length.”—“*Tuesday, Feb. 15*. Mr. Mair and I prayed together. I was helped, and had my heart poured out in acting of faith, looking to the Lord for conduct, and fleeing to Jesus for pardon. Also this morning, Isaiah 43d and 44th chapters, last part of the

* See Appendix, No. viii.

former and first part of the latter, were refreshing to me, and matter of pleasant meditation, somewhat encouraging in the present work. Yet I was at this time much in darkness and confusion, yet desiring to follow all the light and freedom I had, namely, to adhere to the Testimony, and to join the brethren in their adherence to it, and disjoin the judicatories of the church, so far as my joining with the former made joining with the latter inconsistent. Accordingly, on *Wednesday, Feb. 16*, I gave in an adherence to Mr. Mair's secession, explaining what I meant by it.* May the Lord pity and lead."

"*Thursday, Feb. 17*. I went with Mr. Mair to Orwell. *Friday, Feb. 18*. Having met with all the four brethren, together with Mr. Mair; Mr. Moncrieff preached upon that word, 'When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.' After sermon, the Presbytery met, at which time Mr. Mair and I joined with them, and were received into their number, after the papers given in to the Presbytery of Dunfermline were read. Then we adhered judicially to the Testimony, which, with our adherence to them and it, was about to be published. This step was indeed extraordinary; and all my light in it was drawn from the testimony for truth, and against the errors and defections of the church: which testimony I had faintly essayed to lift up in a way of communion with the church judicatories, until I myself was left alone, Mr. Mair being enlightened to

* He here refers to his paper of Adherence, which, along with Mr. Mair's Declaration of Secession, was laid before the Presbytery of Dunfermline on the 16th February, and before the Associate Presbytery on the day following.

leave the judicatories entirely. I thought it were my *sin*, if I did not take the opportunity of emitting to this, and transmitting to the rising generation the same testimony more fully, and that in a formal judicial way; since I had this occasion of doing so. Lord help!"

It was obviously a pure sense of duty that induced this pious minister to take part in the Secession. He was far from indulging a schismatical spirit. His candour and moderation are manifest, we may remark, not only from these entries in his Diary, but from the whole strain of his paper of adherence to Mr. Mair's Declaration. Let the following expressions suffice for a specimen:

"The four brethren being particularly stirred up to this work by a remarkable chain of providences, I think myself obliged to join with them in this matter; not as they are a Presbytery or judicatory separate from the church of Scotland, but as they are a *part* of that same church, constituting themselves in the Lord's name as a judicatory of ministers associate together, distinct from the present judicatories of this church, and witnessing against their corruptions and defections." "If the judicatories, who at present either unjustly refuse or unduly delay to receive that testimony, were acting a contrary part, and putting hand to reformation, the same reasons that induce to this withdrawing, would necessarily induce to a returning; which I cordially wish I may quickly see good reason for." *

Having now formally connected himself with the seceding brethren, he shared with them alike in their

* Re-exhibition, Pp. 164, 165.

labours and sufferings. His Diary contains the following notices of the treatment they subsequently met with :—

“ *Friday, Jan. 27, 1738.* About this time the Associate Presbytery sat at Orwell, when I was made Moderator. Thence I went to Stirling and preached for my brother, that he might go with his other three brethren of the Synod of Perth to Perth, where a synod *pro re nata** was to meet about a libel that was given them. I went from Stirling to Perth on the Monday, and was with my brother some days. The Synod dropt the libel, and appointed another meeting to draw up a representation to be given in to the General Assembly. The Lord reigneth, even he who is Lord of all.”

The representation here alluded to, by the Synod of Perth and Stirling, was supported by similar complaints from a variety of quarters, where the enemies of the Secession were now bestirring themselves; for “ they doubted whereunto this would grow.” These efforts are glanced at in the following entry :—

“ *Wednesday, May 10th.* Preached at a meeting very numerous, in the parish of St. Ninians, upon Exod. iii. 2, *The burning bush not consumed.* At this time there were representations from many to be given in to the General Assembly against us.”

At last, in the month of April 1739, Mr. Erskine, in common with the other seceding brethren, had a libel put into his hand, drawn up and executed by the Commission, conformably to an act of Assembly passed in

* This is a technical expression, employed to denote a meeting of an ecclesiastical court, called by the authority of the moderator, to consider some unexpected affair that has occurred.

the year preceding. The memorable appearance made by the Associate Presbytery at the bar of the Assembly, in consequence of this libel, is described by him in the following terms :

“ *Tuesday, May 15, 1739.* I, with the rest of the Associate Presbytery, went to Edinburgh, to attend the General Assembly, that had given us a summons and a libel, to give in a DECLINATURE. There was hot work in the Assembly, till it came to a vote, *proceed upon the libel*; and it carried, *proceed*. Whereupon *Thursday, May 17*, we were called, and after prayer, went as a constituted Presbytery, and by Mr. Mair, our moderator, read our declinature solemnly. The Lord countenanced, and Providence directed that we were heard, and no mouth opened against us. The General Assembly sat, and heard themselves condemned judicially, and declined; and yet their anger was restrained from proceeding against us to any present sentence of deposition, but they referred that to another Assembly. We saw matter of praise to God, and accordingly returned, and appointed one to pray and praise.”

Agreeably to this statement, the Assembly deferred the passing of any sentence. They agreed, however, to record an earnest recommendation to the next Assembly, without further delay, to inflict the censure of deposition on the ministers of the Secession, in the event of their refusing to retract their declinature, “and return to their duty and submission to this church.” Accordingly, on the 12th of May, 1740, the Assembly proceeded actually to depose all the eight brethren who had then joined the Secession, including Mr. Ralph Erskine.*

* Compare Life of Eben. Erskine, Pp. 374-376.

The terms, in which the sentence of deposition was expressed, were by no means so clear and unequivocal as might have been wished ; and the following remarks, by Mr. Willison of Dundee, on this ambiguity, are worthy of attention:—

“ Look to the words themselves,” says that writer, “ which are—‘ they depose them from the office of the holy ministry, prohibiting them to exercise the same within this church ;’ and we must say, we are sorry to see a sentence of this court so ambiguous. If these words, ‘ within this church,’ be connected with the word ‘ depose,’ as well as with the word ‘ prohibit,’ they mean no more but that they depose them from being ministers of this church, and many who voted it say they meant no more ; so that, in this sense, the sentence is only a loosing of their relation from the national church, which the brethren themselves had done in effect by their secession from her, by their renouncing her authority and jurisdiction, and refusing all communion with any of her ministers. But, on the other hand, if the words ‘ within this church’ be not connected with the word ‘ depose,’ then the Assembly meant to depose them *simpliciter* [absolutely] from the office of the ministry itself; and in this sense many members understood the sentence, and therefore a good many voted against it, and dissented from it. For though they did not approve of their *wild divisive* practice, yet they had not freedom to *unminister* them ; seeing they looked upon them as pious orthodox Presbyterian ministers, who had been useful in the church, and might still be useful in preaching Christ to lost perishing sinners. And if the sentence be taken in this sense, we join with those who testified against it ; in regard we

think the world cannot easily spare any of those ministers who are upright and zealous in preaching a crucified Jesus to fallen mankind, and especially at a time when deism and dry moral discourses are like to thrust out true Christianity. Neither do we think it was time for the church to proceed to censure the brethren, till once they had done all they could to remove the evils, and redress the grievances, which were the grounds of their separation; which, alas! is far from being done.”*

Mr. Erskine himself, in common with all the deposed brethren, deemed the Assembly’s sentence utterly unscriptural and unwarrantable, possessing no validity in the sight of God. His feelings on this trying occasion, with his firm determination to persist in the exercise of his office so long as it pleased God to grant ability and opportunity, may be learned from his own statements. We have before us his notes of a sermon he preached to his people immediately after the sentence was pronounced. It is dated in his own hand-writing, “May 19, 1740, after the Assembly’s sentence of deposition.” The text is Job i. 21. “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” He begins thus:—

“My friends, among the other great gifts that come from God, a gospel ministry is one. Christ, when he ascended up on high, received gifts for men, and gave gifts unto men. The ministerial gift that any has, is what the Lord gives. The ministerial office is what the Lord gives; and I may say, even to me, who am less than the least of all saints, and the chief of all sinners, is this grace given, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And as he gave me this

* Fair and Impartial Testimony, &c. p. 92.

grace, this office, so he has, from time to time, given me some seals of my ministry, both here and elsewhere. And as it is God the Lord that gives, it is also the Lord only that can take away. Though man in his wickedness attempt to take away what God hath given, till God himself also do so in his providence, I dare not, at the will and pleasure of man, cast away what God gave; and since he yet gives me opportunity, in his providence, of opening my mouth in his name, I embrace it as his continued gift; and that according to the example of the blessed apostles of our Lord, Acts iv. and v. When they were deposed from the ministry, and discharged by the Jewish Sanhedrim to speak any more in the name of Jesus, yet we find them disregarding the unjust sentence of men, declaring they would obey God rather than men, and accordingly teaching and preaching in the temple as long as God, in his providence, restrained the outward violence of men from hindering them. But though the Lord should take away even in his respect, we are to say, ‘Blessed be the name of the Lord.’”

In the prosecution of the subject, he insists chiefly on this proposition, “That it is a becoming frame of spirit, in a time of outward adversity and affliction, so to overlook the wicked and malicious hand that the devil and his instruments may have in our trouble, as to notice and adore the holy hand of God therein, and to justify him.” After briefly illustrating from Scripture examples the nature of this happy frame, he proceeds to recommend it, by describing the sovereign power of God in directing and controlling the operations of men and devils, and by adverting to his justice, wisdom, and goodness. “We ought to justify God,” he observes, “because we cannot charge him with any iniquity.

Ought we not to acquit the innocent? and what iniquity have we found in God? If we will condemn the guilty, we must, in the first place, condemn ourselves. His awful providence towards this land, this place and congregation, ought to lead us to condemn ourselves. We have provoked the Lord to anger against us; and therefore we ought to be angry against ourselves for our sins, that have provoked God to leave the generation, to leave ministers and judicatories, and to leave his servants and people to the fury of oppressors. This should calm our spirits, Isaiah xlii. 24.

“ *Query*, ‘ But though we may not complain of God, may we not complain of men? At this rate you will not let us say an ill word of those that are condemning you, and have deposed you and your brethren.’ No indeed; you ought not to say a word by way of railing accusation, no, not against the devil, Jude v. 7. It is true we are not to justify the devil or his instruments, for their hand is a wicked hand, though the hand of God be holy. Who would justify Judas in betraying, or Peter in denying, or the Jews in crucifying, the Lord of glory?

“ *Query*, ‘ What shall we say, if you be put away from the ministry in this congregation?’ I will tell you, that as I had a unanimous call to this place twenty-nine years ago, so though I had another call at the same time to another place, which was both to what they call a better stipend and an easier charge, and though flesh and blood were for accepting of that, yet I was helped to resist the argument drawn from carnal considerations, and accept of the call to this place, because I took it to be the call of God, and I never yet repented that I was thus guided, because God has given me some seals of my ministry, and perhaps some evidence commendatory

in the conscience of several, that the word has had impression on their heart. However, though I will never wish to be a burden to you, yet, if you continue to make choice of me for your minister, I also continue my choice of you, and judge it is only God's immediate hand that can loose the relation. Therefore, if my heart deceive me not, I would rather choose to suffer with you—to live on bread and water—for the little time that I may yet have in this world, than to have an active hand in separating what God has joined. But if any in this congregation, on account of any unwarrantable act of any assembly of men, shall prove deserters of my ministry, I must tell them, in the name of the Lord, they will bring upon themselves the guilt of that act, and the sin of the judicatory that presumed to loose what God hath joined, and to take away what God hath given. I design, as the Lord shall give health, and ability, and liberty, to prosecute my ministry among you, in the name and strength of the Lord. But if any sinful sentence of men shall tempt you to despise and disparage my ministerial office and work, you must answer for it before his awful tribunal, where you must have some other thing than the authority of any assembly to bear you out."

His unpublished discourses from other texts supply further evidence of the fortitude he displayed, and contain seasonable instructions on the duty of suffering for Christ's sake. But not to multiply quotations, we shall only cite a passage from his printed works, where he explicitly refers to the source from which he derived sweet consolation, under the bitterest feelings and anticipations occasioned by the Assembly's attempt to deprive him of his office. It occurs in an exhortation

addressed to his people at a sacramental solemnity observed at Dunfermline, August 10, 1740, about three months after the sentence was pronounced :—

“ Let it not trouble you that all things seem to be against you, as Jacob once said, when he thought Joseph was lost, and feared that Benjamin also was like to be lost, *All these things are against me*. If he had waited a while, he would have heard that all these things were for him ; and you know when he heard again of Joseph, *It is enough*, says he, *Joseph is yet alive*. So you are perhaps saying, All things are against me ; many dark providences are against me ; many ministers are against me ; good men and bad join together against me ; presbyteries, synods, and assemblies are against me ; all the kirk judicatories of the established Church of Scotland are against me, and against the way that I am taking, and the cause that I am espousing ; the last Assembly hath shewed this with a witness, by deposing all the ministers here, and condemning the whole Reformation cause that you are appearing for ; and inferior judicatories, since that time have homologate and approven of their deed ; all these things are against me. Why Joseph, I think, is gone ; Jesus, by his Spirit, is withdrawn and gone away ; and I fear the little Benjamins will be taken away also ; that the little remnant, that is reserved, will be taken away with a flood of opposition and persecution by church and state. What may fall out, the Lord knows ; the aspect of affairs is awful indeed. But be not vexed and troubled, believer ; let it ease your heart and mind that *all things are of God*, who as the God of providence over-rules all events ; let it suffice you, that *Joseph is yet alive and is governor over all the land of Egypt*—that Jesus is alive, and is

the governor among the nations, and the government of Zion is laid upon his shoulders. It is enough to faith, that Jesus is alive, and that the *Father hath given all things into his hand, even all power in heaven and in earth.*"*

In the important affair of seceding from the judicatories of the established church, Mr. Erskine was ultimately supported by a great proportion of his elders and hearers. In the first instance, indeed, the Session appear to have been somewhat averse to so bold a measure. An entry, dated February 14, 1737, a few days before he gave in his accession to the Associate Presbytery, contains the following expressions:—"The elders met with me in my house to pray, and confer about my withdrawing from the judicatories, and joining with the brethren. They were generally against the deed, being, I suppose, surprised, fearing the issue. I was brought to some determination to leave events to the Lord, and to fall in with the opportunity of joining the Secession." On maturer consideration, however, most of them saw reason to justify and imitate this part of their minister's conduct. He has accordingly the following memoranda:—

"Dec. 15, 1737 was a fast in Dunfermline. The Session had appointed it upon their own act and grounds, and particularly *adopted the testimony*, as to the matter of it. I preached in the afternoon upon these words, 'Ye have robbed me.'"

"Feb. 11, 1739.—This day five elders met in *Mas-terton* for prayer and conference about the present state

* Works, Vol. ii. p. 127.

of affairs in the kirk and congregation ; Harry Fisher, James Wardlaw, James Bogie, John Letham, and John Brand. They were, as I was told, most unanimous, and much helped of the Lord, and strengthened in prayer, and strengthened one another ; all clear against joining the judicatories, and for befriending the Associate Presbytery. Lord, guide and direct."

" *Thursday, May 24.*—I preached, and then kept session ; wherein I read to them the declinature of the Associate Presbytery, and proposed they should thereupon take it under their consideration, in order to deliberate on their duty at this day ; which, accordingly, they took under their consideration."

" *May 27.*—This evening I kept session, and caused read the motions gone into on Thursday, because they were now more fully convened. No objection was made save by one, who inquired if it intended a secession from my colleague Mr. Wardlaw. But this not being the question on the field, there was no more said."

" *Wednesday, Nov. 14, 1739.*—I preached, and afterwards the session met, and judicially resolved to withdraw their connexion from the judicatories of the established church, so far as not to send any member to them ; and as to cases that would require a reference to any superior judicatory, they resolved that before any such case was referred, a full session should be called, and then it should be considered whether the case should be referred to the established church, or to the Associate Presbytery."

The records of the session of Dunfermline serve to corroborate the statements of the Diary. They contain a copy of a petition which the session, on the 2d March 1734, agreed to present to the Presbytery of

Dunfermline. The petition in question, which occupies a number of pages, enumerates various defections of the church, and requests the Presbytery to give suitable instructions to their commissioners to next Assembly for obtaining the removal of the causes of complaint. Amongst other grievances, the petitioners complain of the act of Assembly 1732, respecting the planting of vacant churches, as contrary to Scripture and to the books of discipline; "thrusting in ministers upon parishes, whereby the parishioners are not only called to own the person intended for their own lawful pastor, but also deprived of the benefit of sealing ordinances from any other they have freedom to join, which *practical excommunication* we humbly judge very rigid and pernicious." "Considering," add the petitioners, "that four faithful ministers of the church are, by the sentence of Assembly and commission, suspended from the exercise of their office, and declared to be no more ministers of this church, and all the ministers thereof prohibited to join with or employ them, merely because of their testifying against the said act of Assembly 1732, and not submitting to the censures and sentence of the Assembly and commission that followed thereupon, we are persuaded that the said sentence cannot make it unlawful for us to join with the said ministers, as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

The session, moreover, having appointed a congregational fast to be held in December 1737, their recorded reasons for that solemnity throw light on the state of feeling among its members, in reference to those public evils which occasioned the secession. From these reasons, which the two ministers and several elders had been appointed to draw up, we make the following extracts.

Amongst the various causes for humiliation, they specify, "The woeful and sad animosities and divisions among ministers and people in the land; many of the Lord's own servants and children not seeing with the same eye in public matters; manifold jealousies and evil surmisings, much envy, strife, railing and evil speaking, bitterness and buffeting, and many dangerous deviations from the duties of brotherly love, Christian forbearance, and conscientious attendance on gospel-ordinances, lamentable defections from the once glorious covenanted reformation, and the various steps of departure from it both in former and present times; with all the causes of divine wrath specified in a late *Act and Testimony* emitted by the associate brethren; all which, materially considered, we hold as here repeated, and own as good grounds of fasting and humiliation: Considering further the late sinful compliance made by the plurality of the ministers of Scotland, their reading an act of Parliament, plainly Erastian, and thereby practically disclaiming the sole headship and supremacy of our Lord Jesus Christ over his church:*

* This sentence obviously refers to the act of Parliament for the discovery of those concerned in executing Captain John Porteous at Edinburgh, Sep. 7, 1736. All the clergymen of Scotland were enjoined, under certain ecclesiastical penalties, to read this extraordinary act, in the time of divine service in their churches, every first Sabbath of the month, for a whole year. Mr. Erskine alludes to it in his Diary, as follows:—"August 7, 1737. Being the day an act of Parliament was appointed to be read by ministers anent the murder of C. Porteous, a most Erastian act, I lectured on 2 Cor. iii. 6.—; and in my lecture noticed ministers' office its being spiritual, and their being spiritual heralds; where I took occasion to show my mind a little against the reading of that act. Also afternoon, preaching on

“ And finally, taking into our consideration the great need that this session, as well as all the Lord’s people and servants have, ‘ to seek of him a right way for us and our little ones, and particularly a right way of testifying against all the God-dishonouring evils and corruptions of the times, and of the judicatories of this church,———Therefore the session did, and hereby do appoint Thursday the 15th of this month, December 1737, to be observed for that solemn and important work, earnestly calling and intreating all persons within this congregation —— that they be fervent in prayer for the pouring down of the Spirit of grace and supplications upon ministers and people, that God would return to us mercifully ;——— that he would preserve a gospel ministry and pure gospel ordinances ; relieve his oppressed heritage that have been robbed of their rights and privileges by the violent obtruding of hirelings upon them ; —— that he would graciously assist,

Math. iii. ult., I had a use of caution against every thing displeasing to God; especially in a day wherein he shows his wrath and displeasure.” The same matter is alluded to in one of his published sermons, vol. ii. p. 28; where a note is subjoined by the editor, shortly stating the circumstances of that memorable transaction. We find too, from a memorandum in one of his note books, that the Presbytery to which he belonged, sent a communication to the Synod of Fife, expressing their disapprobation of the reading of the act, which they asked to be inserted in the records of Synod. Mr. Willison, in his “ Fair and Impartial Testimony,” p. 88, while he states that “ several pious and conscientious ministers read this act,” adduces various arguments, which determined him and the other subscribers of that Testimony, “ to join with those who bore testimony against the reading of the foresaid act, and to run the hazard of all its penalties.” Compare Life of Eben. Eschine, p. 473.

direct, and prosper his sent servants that are making, or desirous to make, an honest attempt towards reformation ; ——— that he would graciously influence and stir up many to a faithful appearing for him, by putting hand to such work in this day of deep defection and degeneracy ; that he would bring all his sent servants and people to be of one heart and way in his cause, turn away the tokens of his anger, and in wrath remember mercy.”

The subsequent proceedings of the session are thus detailed in the record :—

Dunfermline May 24, 1739.—After prayer by Mr. Erskine, moderator.—The moderator informed the session that he, together with the rest of his brethren of the Associate Presbytery, had, by an act of their Presbytery, read judicially by them in the General Assembly at Edinburgh on Thursday last week, being the 17th of this month, declined the judicatories of this church that were carrying on a course of defection, as no lawful and right constitute courts of Christ. And having read in the session the said act or declinature mentioned, desired that the session should take it under their consideration, in order to deliberate upon what might be their duty with reference to the said judicatories, in consequence of the said act ; that after serious prayer, both in secret and otherwise, they might come to determine themselves in due time to what the Lord should clear up to be incumbent upon them, on this head. Which motion the session unanimously agreed to. Whereupon Mr. Erskine desired it to be marked, that as the session, their having for some time by-past suspended and withdrawn their connexion with the superior judicatories on account of their corruptions and

defections, such as are specified in the foresaid declinature, had given him freedom to continue hitherto in this session, notwithstanding of his being a member of the Associate Presbytery in secession from the said judicatories ;—so the session's going into this motion contributes also, in conjunction with the foresaid consideration, to continue yet his former freedom to sit and to preside in this session, notwithstanding the foresaid declinature, until the session have due time to deliberate upon this weighty matter now tabled before them, and to look up to heaven for the Lord's determining them to that which they shall judge from his word to be their duty with reference to this matter in their sphere, and in a suitableness to the circumstances of the church of Scotland at this juncture."

" *Dunfermline, Oct. 28, 1739.*—The session resumed the consideration of their former resolution of suspending their connexion with the present judicatories of the established church. The plurality of the members present declared that they were for continuing in an *interdependent* situation, without holding a connexion with the established church ; and agreed that this overture should be read before the session upon Sabbath the 11th Nov. to be approven or disapproven of by them."

" *Dunfermline, Nov. 14, 1739.* [After prayer by the Rev. Mr. Wardlaw, moderator.] This day, the session having heard the overture of the 28th October last read, they, in order to keep harmony among them, approved of the same, with this amendment, that the first difficult matter, which in the nature of the thing, requires a reference to a superior court before it be determined—that a full meeting of the session shall be

called, and they then determine, whether the same shall be judged by the Established Church or the Associate Presbytery.*

In spring 1740, when matters were approaching to a crisis, the elders differed in opinion with regard to the propriety of referring a particular case of discipline to the Presbytery of Dunfermline; and each prepared to take his side. About the same time a tent was erected in a green, "Clerk Wilson's yard, where Mr. Gillespie's meeting-house stands," in which Mr. Erskine conducted divine service one part of the day, while the other part, so long as permission was given him, he continued to preach in the church. It appears that eventually, of about twenty-six elders and deacons, seven stood neutral, five remained in connexion with the national church, and fourteen seceded.†

A great majority of the people, as well as most of the members of session, concurred with him in espousing the cause of the Secession. The alacrity they discovered in contributing for the erection of a new place of worship, as soon as the near prospect of his deposition by the Assembly rendered this measure indispensable, seems to have excited equally his gratitude and surprise. His own account of their proceedings is as follows:—

"*April* 1739. About this time a libel and summons were put into our hand from the commission, to appear before the next Assembly; and what happened in this parish was very remarkable. Some three weeks ago, upon the hearing of the libel, our session, all except four or five, met in order to contribute for a meeting-house

* MS. by D. Inglis. † Ibid.

in case of the Assembly's sentence of deposition; and then they went through the parish for subscriptions, and the people generally and heartily subscribed, some less and some more, according to their ability, and very quickly made a considerable sum, which at present is going on, this being the 17th of April. It is expected that at least *four hundred pounds sterling* will be gathered in the parish, even among the poorer sort for the most part; and many that have given, declaring that, in case of need, they will give as much again. This collection by subscription is so universal that it is surprising and astonishing both to friends and enemies. Great and wondrous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; and what am I that such favour should be expressed towards me in this place! Lord, help rightly to improve this providence."

This liberal subscription was speedily followed by the erection, in Queen Anne's Street at the head of the town, of a large church, capable of accommodating about two thousand people; where he preached the gospel with fidelity and high acceptance, to a numerous and attached congregation, till death removed him to the upper sanctuary. In notes of a sermon which he delivered about this time from 2 Cor. vi. 18, we have found the following paragraph; in which he seems to refer to the unexpected generosity of his hearers as well in making provision for his maintenance, as in building a house for worship:

"I find at present in this congregation the generality of the people therein giving such an evidence of their favour towards me as I never expected, never desired, never proposed; nor did it ever enter my head or thought. And I own I should be very ungrateful, if I

did not entertain a kindly favour and affection for you. There is another token of your favour to me," he adds in the true spirit of a minister of Christ, "that I would desire at your hand; and that is, that you will accept of my message that I have to you from my glorious Lord and Master Jesus Christ, by coming to him for salvation to your soul; that you match with him as your head and husband, your friend and father, and come to him for grace and glory, that you may be happy in him, in life and death, judgment and eternity. And to evidence your grant of this favour, I desire, for the Lord's sake, that you will set apart an hour or two in some secret place for meditation, prayer, self-examination, and imploring the mercy of God in Christ, and crying for the Spirit of Christ to be sent into your heart, both to convince you of sin and to reveal to you the Saviour, and powerfully to bless the reading and preaching of the word." After replying to the objections that some might urge against compliance with this affectionate counsel, he concludes with solemn admonitions respecting the danger of refusing to build on that precious corner-stone which is laid in Zion, and the necessity of an immediate improvement of the day of grace.

Among other cheering expressions of public favour, he was not a little encouraged by the increased confluence of Christians from various parts of the country to the sacramental solemnities of Dunfermline, whilst he rejoiced above all, to find that these hallowed seasons proved in the experience of many souls, "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." Of this we shall give one example, in his own words. It relates to the first opportunity of administering the Lord's Supper at home, after his accession to the Associate Presbytery:—

“ Sabbath, July 10, 1737. The sacrament was in Dunfermline ; and I preached half an hour before the action began, about half before eight in the morning, upon Matth. iii. 17. The tables began to be served a little after nine, and continued till about twelve at night, there being betwixt four and five thousand communicants. I hear from several hands, that the Lord owned the occasion. Ministers were well helped, and many people heartened. After I had served the first table, I communicated at the second, which my colleague served. I was helped, for my heart trusted in the Lord ; and afterwards, I preached on the same text in the church-yard tent, and was assisted there.”

To have obtained the cordial concurrence and support of his worthy colleague, in withdrawing from the established judicatories, would have afforded heart-felt pleasure to Mr. Erskine ; but an all-wise though inscrutable Providence did not indulge him with this satisfaction. We have seen, indeed, that Mr. Wardlaw, to a certain extent, befriended the cause of the four brethren ; that at one time he even invited them to hold their meetings as a constituted Presbytery in his own house, and that acquiescing in the reasons of the congregational fast held in December 1737, he gave a general approval to their Act and Testimony. He was not disposed, nevertheless, to become a decided Seceder. Mr. Erskine, accordingly, in an entry dated February 20, 1737, a few days after his accession to the Associate Presbytery, remarks, that he knew his “ colleague was displeased at this step.” They continued, however, in a great degree, to conduct themselves towards each other

in a manner befitting the Christian temper, as appears from the following short memoranda:—

“ *February 22, 1737.* This evening my colleague came to my house with another gentleman ; and having taken my colleague alone, I talked with him, in a friendly way, about the peace and concord we should study ; declaring I had made no secession from him, and that we ought to abstain from every word, that should seem to import as if there were any difference in public betwixt him and me ; to which he assented. And I found him, and the people generally, more easy than I had feared.”

“ *Sabbath, Feb. 27.* I lectured forenoon, and had a note concerning people joining with the builders, whether in the inside or outside of the wall, in order to caution people against leaving my colleague. The Lord made my colleague and me to harmonize and agree about this time, both in private and public, much more than I feared, after my secession.”

“ *Monday, July 18.* I essayed to keep my room for praying, my colleague having consented that that day, he and we should keep it for prayer about light and direction.”

Yet, considering the weakness of humanity, none will be surprised to find, that when the public matters at issue drew near to an extremity, the mutual harmony of these excellent men was somewhat impaired.

“ *Sabbath, May 7, 1738.*—Afternoon, my colleague fell upon the secession before his close, alleging in his sermon, that though the defection in Israel was universal, yet Caleb and Joshua went not out from them ; and that we were to wait upon God, who had other ways of de-

livering his church than some thought of. This was very uneasy to me, and obliged me in the [evening] exercise to say something on that subject. This was a trial I did not just now expect, after some former exercise and assistance the Lord afforded. No doubt matters are coming to an extremity in the church. May the Lord pity, help and guide, and mercifully over-rule.

“*December 1738.*—My circumstances with my colleague about this time were trying; he differing from our way of testifying, and some people leaving him, and his crying out against them.”

The good offices of friends, it appears, were sometimes employed for the purpose of allaying the heat of Mr. Wardlaw’s zeal against the Secession. “*Friday, Aug. 17, 1739.* Mr. Fisher had a communing in my room with my colleague Mr. Wardlaw, and put him to silence, yet in a very calm way of reasoning.”

The unhappy difference betwixt the two colleagues, and the allusions to the Secession in their public ministrations are adverted to in a manuscript repeatedly quoted in these pages, in the following terms:—

“There was also a pulpit war betwixt Mr. Erskine and Mr. Wardlaw, which continued till Mr. Erskine was put out of the kirk. What Mr. Erskine spoke in the forenoon with respect to the defection and backslidings of the Established Church, and the lawfulness and necessity of the brethren’s separating from them, Mr. Wardlaw contradicted in the afternoon, saying, that the Associate Presbytery were unnatural children, and ought to have pleaded with their mother, and that it was at best a setting up of altar against altar. Much was said on both sides, and many Scriptures cited.”*

* MS. by D. Inglis.

Various passages, already quoted from Mr. Erskine's Diary, give evidence, that it was not without humble prayer to God, he formed his views, and adopted his measures regarding the Secession. The same document enables us, however, to show still more particularly, with what earnestness, and with what solemnity, he implored the Divine direction on this subject. That in this critical conjuncture, he was very frequently employed in extraordinary prayer and fasting, both in his closet and family, appears from the following extracts:—

“ *Saturday, Aug. 17, 1734.*—Having proposed this to be a day of personal fasting and humiliation, being stirred up by *Boston* on that subject,* I attempted to follow the directions he gives. After my ordinary of reading Psalm xxxi. with some attention and prayer, I read the Scriptures marked by *Boston*, and also the things required and forbidden in the several commands, noticing especially what I stood particularly chargeable with, and then went to prayer and confession. Endeavoured a confession of my heart and nature sin, my sins of practice in childhood, youth, riper age, and older age; laying my finger especially on the greatest sore, and owning unbelief and atheism the root of my other sins. I was a little humbled, and, among other things, for my want of humiliation, and my sin against every part of God's law; and I was led to put my right hand and right eye sin into the hand of Christ, that he might break the same. Then I arose and considered the covenant of promise, and went again to God as a pro-

* He alludes to a “Memorial concerning personal and family fasting and humiliation,” subjoined to the View of the Covenant of Grace.

mising God, and put my soul under the sacrifice, the atonement, the propitiation, the ransom, acknowledging I had no righteousness in all the world to shelter in, but that. I had, in the whole of the work, some secret persuasion of acceptance through Christ, and looked to the promise as standing fast in Christ, the fulfiller of the condition. I was led to lay hold upon the promise as in Christ, made to him principally; and particularly the promise of eternal life, and this as one branch of it, the Spirit as a well of water for sanctification. I was led to seek this as a promise made on the condition of Christ's doing and dying, and for the regard that God has to that righteousness of Christ; which regard he has testified by raising him from the dead, and giving him glory. I sought, therefore, on this ground of Christ's obedience and satisfaction, which God so much regards, that I might be sanctified and made to honour him, and have my sin killed, and my soul quickened."

"*Nov. 20, 1734.* It was put in my mind to appoint a family fast; and I had in view deliverance from my own sinfulness, and the subduing of my strong corruption. Accordingly, Saturday, November 23d, forenoon, I called all my family together that were capable, and spent the whole forenoon in prayer, singing, and reading, particularly Neh. ix. Ps. xxv. xxxii. xxxv. li. xxxix. xc. Rom. iii., and Larger Catechism, reading the duties required and the sins forbidden on every command; intermixing prayer and praise, confession and supplication. O may the Lord follow it with his special blessing."

"*Saturday, Dec. 25, 1736.* I proposed, this forenoon, to set apart some time for fasting, prayer, and humiliation. I was led to acknowledge the sin of my

nature, and my former iniquities ; my ingratitude towards God to this day, notwithstanding his kindness towards me. Here I had such a view of my sinfulness as led me to acknowledge I deserved a hotter hell than that of heathens, than Sodom and Gomorrah, yea than devils. And I thought, ‘ yea what revenge’ I ought to meditate against myself, and cried down the vengeance of God upon my sins and lusts, and put them in the hands of Jesus to be destroyed, acknowledging it was impossible for me to forgive myself, and desiring to look towards Jesus with shame and confusion of face. Yet, as I was led to hope in his name and word, so to look to the blood and righteousness of Christ, and to his mediation, who is God-man, and whose obedience and satisfaction were of infinite value ; and thereupon to hope and to cry for the promised Spirit. I was made also to reflect with wonder on the white lines of love and mercy from time to time, that were mixed with the black lines of sin and guiltiness that ran through the several periods of my life ; remembering how many times the Lord had made crooked things straight. I was led also to look to his ‘ Lo I am with you,’ with respect to my public work ; and to seek his best blessing to my wife according to his word, Isaiah xlii. 16, and to flee again to his covenant with my children, the lass and the five lads ; remembering one of the words I had read this day, Prov. xiii. 22, ‘ A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children’s children.’ I thought the only and the best inheritance I would leave my children and their posterity, if given them, was God himself ; that he would be their God for ever and ever, according to the covenant of promise—‘ thy God and the God of thy seed.’ ”

“ *Monday, Jan. 15, 1739.* I set apart this day, fore-

noon, with my family ; because the praying societies were to meet, by the advice of the Associate Presbytery, for humiliation and prayer, for the Lord's ordering public concerns, now when a Libel is forming against us. This week, knowing the need, the great need, of fasting and prayer, I put on a resolution, every Saturday, to make part of it a time of fasting ; by myself alone, the first Saturday, and with my family the next, and so on by turns carried on."

" *Saturday, Feb. 17.* After family worship, set a little time apart. After looking to some Scriptures, and meditation on my innumerable sins, and yet acknowledging that the Lord had borne me from the belly, and carried me from the womb, according to Isaiah xli. 8, 4, ' And even to old age I am He, and to hoar hairs will I carry you, and I will deliver,' I was made with weeping and mourning to look again to his holy temple, and to his gracious promise. My heart was poured out before the Lord like water, and I was made anew to cleave to him. I wondered also at the office I am called to, acknowledging they should be angels and holy persons that are witnesses for him, yet declaring before God that I thought it was some regard to his great name that swayed me in going out to this business. This evening also I earnestly solicited to have the Lord with me the following day, the Sabbath, acknowledging my sin and the sin of the congregation, saying, behold, I am vile ; behold, the congregation is vile ; behold, the land is vile. This was a loud *behold*, heard in heaven : yet I was made to set against it another *behold*, or rather *lo*, that was as loud, even ' Lo, I am with you,' the promise and the prayer of Christ ; and on this ground drew encouragement from God as a God in Christ, a God hear-

ing the cry of the blood of Christ. In this view, my heart was drawn out in prayer, on the faith of the promise, acknowledging I had no other arguments to plead upon for the poor congregation."

"*Saturday, Aug. 25, 1739.* This day I kept part of the forenoon with my family. My heart was much melted and poured out, both in speaking on the last four verses of the Book of Lamentations, and also in prayer. It was a very pleasant time."

Amidst unfeigned contrition and deep abasement, Mr. Erskine, as the reader will observe, discovers, in these passages, a distinct consciousness of his own integrity in making common cause with the brethren, that were lifting up a public testimony in behalf of injured truth. The piety of his motives, his holy contempt of the unjust reproach he might incur, and his cheerful confidence in God both for direction in the path of duty, and for temporal provision for himself and family in the prospect of losing the advantages of the civil establishment, will further appear from the following extracts:—

"*Tuesday, March 8, 1737.* After reading Is. liv. I was much helped, quickened, and strengthened in prayer, humbled under a sense of sinfulness, yet led to some lively hope in his word for myself, my work, my wife and children; desiring also to wait upon him for clearing me further in the great step I have now taken, being content though I should be the scorn of fools, and the song of the drunkard, if he would enable me to bear his cross and despise the shame, [wishing] only that he would form me for himself to show forth his praise, and take my name in his hand, and let the spirit of glory and of God rest upon me, and bring glory to himself out of this testimony, which I thought, was like that in

Is. lxii. 10, ‘Gather out the stones, lift up a standard for the people.’ May the Lord guide, and keep from darkness and delusion. This evening I was made in some measure, to look to the Lord Jesus in that promise Is. xlii. 16, now when I was not only ‘blind,’ but in a way that I neither knew nor have known, that he would grant the promised leading (he being anointed to be the leader;) and that he would in due time make darkness more and more light, and crooked things straight. Also that he would help me to wait upon him as Lord of all, having all things in his hand, for providing for my family, and that in the mount of the Lord it might be seen.”

“*Sabbath, March 13, 1737.* This morning I desired to look towards the Lord for help, and I was helped in the day’s work. Betwixt sermons, and being to preach afternoon upon 1 Cor. xv. 55, ‘O death, where is thy sting?’ &c., before I went out, I sat down on my knees, and was helped to offer up a short ejaculation with fervour, and to say, I will go in the strength of a promising God, of a promising Christ, and of a promising and promised Spirit; and this afternoon I was quickened in preaching and praying. Also this evening, after I had seen some sick people, I was strengthened with strength in my soul in prayer, and had some joy and peace in believing the promises of God; humbled under a sense of sinfulness and emptiness, and yet made to glory in Christ as wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, and every thing I needed. I was made also, in the consideration of my present circumstances to say, ‘I am a wonder unto many, but be thou my strong refuge. I will fear no evil, if thou be with me, now when I am in a way that I do not know, in a

path I have not known.' I was made to plead with God on account of what Christ did and suffered, and for the love he has to Christ, and for the glory he has by Christ. Thus to plead with God was sweet and melting to my soul. I was made also, with outpouring of soul, to commit anew my wife and children to the Lord, looking towards him in the promise, 'These things I will do, and not forsake,' 'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed.' I was made to lay hold on this covenant, and the name of God declared therein, and to cast my children particularly on the care of the Lord Jesus, the Father's TRUSTEE, and to look again to him as Lord of all, resolving with myself to be easy in the faith, and hope of their being intrusted to him."

These extracts afford a satisfactory specimen of the pious and disinterested principles, by which the founders of the Secession were actuated in leaving the establishment; and of the cautious, deliberate, and prayerful manner in which they were enabled to proceed. Some zealous church-men, we are sorry to find, still continue, with a wonderful pertinacity, to ascribe their conscientious withdrawal from the national church, to pride and resentment. This unjust and uncandid charge, however, having been formerly adverted to, as well as several other ill-founded aspersions, cast on the first ministers of the Associate Presbytery,* let it now suffice to lay before the reader a few sentences from "Thoughts on the Case of the Four Brethren," included in a Speech, addressed to the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale, by a Clergyman who lived and died in the communion of the Church of Scotland, and who, in

* Life of Eben. Erskine, Pp. 391—407.

piety, humility, good sense, and extensive usefulness, has had but few equals in any church :—

“ ‘Judge not,’ says our Lord, ‘that ye be not judged ; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged ; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.’ Let us not, Moderator, judge our brethren, (professing that with them it is principle and conscience,) to be biassed by pride, humour, blind zeal, popularity, &c. For ‘who art thou that,’ in such a case, ‘judgest another man’s servant?’ All church judicatories ought, and, unless they be animated by an anti-christian spirit, will in the case of their pannels, distinguish betwixt conscience and contempt ; and will endeavour to suit and adjust their conduct and measures to them accordingly. If our brethren, Moderator, have, in some instances, failed in paying the ordinary regard due to our forms in ordinary cases, if, I say, in this they have at all erred, I firmly believe it was for fear of erring ; which, with all who exercise themselves to keep a conscience void of offence, first towards God, and in the next place towards men, should make theirs a very favourable case.”

Having made the remark, that, it may be easily understood how men faithfully delivering God’s message, cannot be persuaded to retract it, unless convicted from the Bible, of some error or mistake, he thus continues :—

“ The wonder with us should rather be, how men endued with self-love, come to venture on such an extraordinary piece of conduct. For, how much soever such a way of doing may be nicknamed and loaded among men, it is not, (when one’s reputation, usefulness, outward peace and comfort, and in a word, all in this

world, is at stake,) I persuade myself, soon or easily attained unto. And, therefore, to be true to one's own conscience at so much cost, is, and, (let others account it, and call it as they list,) will ever be honourable in my eyes, even though it were under a mistake."—"What think you of our Lord's defending and justifying his disciples for their refusing conformity to the traditions of the elders, and these, one would think, very innocent and harmless ones too? Mark vii. 1—13. Ah! Moderator, would we, who are the ruling, commanding Church, learn subjection to Christ, as punctually as we would have our brethren to learn subjection to us, our differences of this sort would soon be at an end."*

* See a scarce pamphlet, entitled, "The Mind of the Modest, Holy, and Learned Mr. Thomas Boston, concerning the Act of Assembly 1732, while it was yet an Overture; also a Speech relative to the same subject, with some Thoughts on the Case of the Four Brethren." Pp. 25—37.

CHAPTER VI.

Death of Mr. Wardlaw—Notices of his Family—Appointment of Successors to Messrs. Erskine and Wardlaw in the Parish Church of Dunfermline—Warnings by Mr. Erskine to his People—His activity at home and abroad—Services at the Ordinations of Messrs. John Hunter and John Swanston, and at Mr. Fisher's admission—Sermons before the Associate Presbytery and Synod—Solemn covenanting at Dunfermline—Mr. Erskine itinerates with other brethren in a variety of districts—Striking incidents relative to a meeting at Braidcraigs, near Edinburgh.

THE Reverend James Wardlaw departed this life, on the 2d of May 1742, in the twenty-fourth year of his ministry at Dunfermline, and in probably the sixty-ninth year of his age. His remains appear to have been interred within the walls of the church; for his tombstone, the inscription of which seems almost illegible, may be seen lying near the spot, where the old pulpit stood. Although he and Mr. Erskine differed in opinion with regard to the Secession, and expressed their opposite sentiments on this point with sufficient freedom in the pulpit; and although the intimate co-pastoral relation which had long subsisted betwixt them was dissolved by the final sentence of Assembly in the year 1740,—they continued, we doubt not, to regard each other with feelings of mutual esteem. On occasion of his colleague's death and interment, Mr. Erskine, we are assured, did not fail to honour his memory, by bearing ample testimony to his numerous excellencies, as a Christian, and a Minister of the Gospel.

Some time before his admission at Dunfermline, Mr. Wardlaw was happily united with JEAN MORRIS, by whom he had four daughters, Christian, Jean, Isabella, and Mary. CHRISTIAN gave her hand to the Rev. Samuel Charters of Inverkeithing, and was mother of the late Dr. Samuel Charters of Wilton, a well-known writer of Sermons. Her daughter Margaret married the late celebrated Dr. Henry Hunter of Leith, and afterwards of London, author of Sacred Biography, and other works. She had also another daughter, who married Mr. Hardy, a respectable citizen of Leith, and father of the late Dr. Thomas Hardy, minister of Ashkirk.—JEAN WARDLAW gave her hand to Mr. Strachan, a writer in Edinburgh; and ISABELLA was united to the Rev. Mr. Muir, minister first at Cumnock, afterwards at Paisley, author of Discourses on the Synod of Jerusalem and other topics. MARY, the youngest of Mr. Wardlaw's daughters, died at an early age. He had a half-sister named Christian Wardlaw, who reached a great age, and died at Dunfermline a few years since.

The Presbytery proceeded, shortly after the decease of Mr. Wardlaw, to adopt active measures with reference to the parish of Dunfermline. Mr. Erskine, though deposed by the Assembly in May 1740, had continued, it appears, to officiate in his turn, with his colleague, in the Parish Church, for the two subsequent years. In this respect he met with greater indulgence than his brother Ebenezer, whom the magistrates of Stirling deprived of his church the Sabbath immediately after the sentence of deposition was pronounced.* The General Assembly, however, were not a little chafed to find that,

* Life and Diary of Eben. Erskine, p. 414.

in several instances, their orders were neglected by the civil authorities. At their meeting in May 1742, having learned that Mr. James Thomson and Mr. Ralph Erskine were still permitted to occupy the pulpits of the parish churches of Burntisland and Dunfermline, they “resolved to apply to the civil government for a redress of this grievance and contempt, and ordered that letters be wrote to the Secretary of State and his Majesty’s Advocate, to the end the said sentence of deposition may be supported and rendered effectual, and that the vacant churches may be planted without delay; and further appoint the Moderator to write letters to the magistrates of these burghs, exhorting them to give no longer countenance to such disorders, but to perform their duty by debarring the deposed persons from access to officiate in the parish churches.”*

This renewed injunction of the Supreme Court, concurred with the event of Mr. Wardlaw’s death, to rouse the Presbytery of Dunfermline to vigorous exertion. The record of their meeting on the 2d June 1742, contains the following passage:—“The Presbytery, taking into their consideration the melancholy state of the parish of Dunfermline, did, after some reasoning, agree to supply the vacancy occasioned by the deposition of Mr. Ralph Erskine, as well as the vacancy occasioned by the death of the Rev. James Wardlaw, and did and hereby do appoint the Moderator, [the Rev. Mr. Hardy,] to preach at Dunfermline next Lord’s day, *both forenoon and afternoon.*” The Rev. Mr. Steedman of Beath dissented from this deed of Presbytery, so far as it regarded Mr. Erskine, and protested for

* Struthers’ Hist. of Scotland. Vol. ii. Pp. 57, 58.

liberty to give in his reasons of dissent ; while two elders begged it to be marked that they could not concur in the sentence.

The following extracts, from memoranda written by one of Mr. Erskine's hearers, seems to refer, notwithstanding the apparent inaccuracy of the *date*, to occurrences that happened in *June* 1742, when Mr. Hardy attempted to fulfil the presbyterial appointment which has just been noticed. It is, at any rate, too curious and interesting to be suppressed :—

“ *Dunfermline, May 11, 1740.* This day Mr. Erskine's turn was to preach in the tent forenoon, and knowing he was to meet with opposition in essaying to preach in the old-kirk in the afternoon, he gave suitable exhortations to the congregation how to behave, whatever should fall out, it being the Lord's day ; and also intimated that he was to be with his brother Ebenezer at the sacrament in Stirling next Lord's day, Mr. White, probationer, to preach for him here that day :—That the congregation should wait in the church-yard till they saw if he got entrance ; if not, to return to the other place of worship. Accordingly this afternoon, Mr. Hardy, minister in Culross, being appointed to take possession of Mr. Erskine's pulpit, whose diet it was this Sabbath, the established party came a little after the second bell, and caused lock the porch door, as the ministers always entered the east door. Mr. Erskine's congregation were mostly without, in the church-yard. The east door was guarded by David Black of Hill, Bailie Chalmers, Bailie John Walker, and others, to keep out Mr. Erskine. But when he came through the church-yard with Mr. Brisson, many following, as they came near the east kirk door, Mr. Brisson cried out, *make way for your*

minister. Upon this, some rushed in ; others, that were within, soon turned back the gentlemen door-keepers ; neither could they get the door shut, so that when Mr. Erskine came forward, none of his opposers had power or courage to make the least resistance against him ; his presence struck a terror in them. The way to the pulpit was lined on every side, so that Mr. Erskine had a full and free entry to it. During all this time, Mr. Hardy was in the session-house trembling, for he would not mount the pulpit till he saw that Mr. Erskine was kept out of the kirk, and when the small scuffle was at the kirk door, he called to lock the session door, and when the kirk was composed and the psalms singing, he went forth with his gentlemen door-keepers to Bailie John Walker's house.——

“ *Dunfermline, May, 18, 1740.* This day, Mr. Erskine assisting at a sacrament in Stirling, and Mr. White being to preach the forenoon in the kirk.—But Mr. Geddis, the other minister in Culross, and Mr. George Adie, took early possession of the pulpit, and when Mr. White came to the kirk, the pulpit was filled, and he refused entrance. So he and our congregation returned to our own place of worship.”

“ This week,” adds the writer, “ Mr. Hugh Forbes came to Dunfermline, and visited Mr. Erskine ; and speaking of our affairs, desired Mr. Erskine to make no more attempts to force himself into the established kirk of Dunfermline ; for he wished him well, and if he did, the consequences might not be comfortable, as it bordered upon rebellion. So we never afterwards attempted it.”*

* MS. by Inglis.

Without question, it was only after May 1742, that Mr. Erskine entirely ceased to occupy the parish church.

To obtain able and popular clergymen to fill the pulpit of that church after his ejection, was deemed peculiarly necessary. One of the first to whom, in this juncture, the friends of the establishment turned their eyes, was Dr. Hugh Kennedy, minister sometime of Cavers, in the Presbytery of Jedburgh, and afterwards of the Scottish Church Rotterdam, a man deservedly held in high estimation "for piety, popularity, prudence, and learning." About the beginning of Autumn 1742, a most harmonious call to Dunfermline was given to that eminent clergyman; and both the magistrates and the Presbytery wrote him letters, earnestly urging him to comply with the call. After mature deliberation, however, he determined to remain at Rotterdam, where he continued to labour with distinguished fidelity and success till the day of his death, Nov. 3, 1764.* After several other abortive attempts, the Presbytery at last succeeded in supplying both vacancies at Dunfermline. On the 5th May 1743, the Rev. James Thomson was admitted successor to Mr. Erskine in the first charge; and on the 19th April 1744, the Rev. Thomas Fernie was ordained minister in the second charge. Mr. Thomson is said to have been a native of the parish of Carnbee, Fifeshire, and previously to his settlement at Dunfermline, he had been employed fourteen years in the army as minister to the Cameronian, or twenty-sixth regiment of foot. He died Oct. 19, 1790, in the 92d year

* Steven's Hist. of the Scottish Church of Rotterdam, Pp. 186, 187, 196.

of his age, and the 47th of his ministry at Dunfermline. Such was the vigour he possessed in extreme old age, that in his ninetieth year he administered the Lord's Supper, and preached on that occasion a sermon of two hours length. Mr. Fernie lived till April 5, 1788, and was succeeded by his son Mr. John Fernie in February 1789. Mr. Thomson and Mr. Fernie, senior, were colleagues for nearly forty-four years.*

It was not without emotions of deep concern that Mr. Erskine witnessed those proceedings, by which it was attempted to supersede his own ministry; and he considered it his duty to give repeated admonitions to the inhabitants of the parish both from the pulpit and the press, against deserting their pastor without sufficient cause. Regardless of the unfavourable interpretations that some might put on them, he emitted in particular three solemn warnings, which were read to his congregation at three different times, and subsequently published. The *first* is entitled a "Ministerial Testimony, Warning and Declaration, by the Rev. Ralph Erskine, with relation to the *invasion* attempted upon his pulpit and ministry by Mr. Henry Hardy, minister in Culross, by appointment of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, Sabbath, June 6, 1742." The *second* was issued on the 22d August 1742, a few days after he had learned that the Presbytery, in concurrence with some of the parishioners, had taken steps towards the calling of a minister to occupy his charge in the congregation of Dunfermline, "as if that place were lawfully voided, or

* Account of Parish of Dunfermline, by the Rev. Allan Maclean and John Fernie, Statistical Acc. of Scotland, vol. xiii. No. 29.

by divine allowance vacant." The *third* Warning was read by him on Sabbath, May 1, 1743, when intimation was made, in the parish church, of the intended admission of one to be minister in his place, on the following Thursday.*

It may not be improper to produce a few specimens of these Pastoral Admonitions, which, in common with some other compositions bearing this designation, sent forth by ecclesiastical courts as well as individuals, were no doubt prepared under the influence of considerable excitement.—In the first of them, the author expresses himself as follows:—

" I do give my testimony, in the name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, against this deed of the Presbytery of Dunfermline ; and this I do for the following grounds and reasons. 1st, Because this deed of the said Presbytery of Dunfermline, carries in it an approbation of the unjust and sinful sentence of the foresaid Assembly against these eight ministers, and me among the rest. 2dly, Because this deed is an evident robbing of this congregation of their present lawful pastor, and an intruding of ministers upon them without their consent, and without their being lawfully called or convened, to inquire if they wanted two ministers in the place." " I know not of seven or eight persons among all the seven or eight thousand examinable people, of this congregation, but seem to be still satisfied to subject themselves to my ministry in peace." " 3dly, Because this deed carries in it a strong attempt to involve this congregation in the sinful breach of a solemn engagement betwixt them and me before the great God." Here, after

* See Mr. R. Erskine's Works, vol. ii. p. 220, *note*.

pointing out the nature of the mutual covenant entered into by a minister and his people on the day of his settlement, he adds, "Heritors, elders, magistrates, town-counsellors, and heads of families, did all concur in the above solemn engagement, in their Call given to me about one and thirty years ago. And though I am very conscious to myself of much sinful weakness, and many failures in the discharge of my pastoral duty, yet I can appeal to the consciences of the people of this congregation, that I have, according to the measure of ability and grace given me, endeavoured to discharge the duties of my office among them, particularly by preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ unto them; and I have some satisfying hope and persuasion that I want not some seals of my ministerial work, and of my call to the same, among the people of this congregation." In conclusion, he solemnly admonishes the people to take heed that they give no manner of countenance to those that were obtruding themselves on his charge, and at the same time manifests the christian spirit of forgiveness in these words; "Though this warning should through ignorance be disregarded by some, or through wickedness be despised by others, yet I incline to follow the example of our glorious Master, who said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Even so I desire to pray, 'Lord, forgive them, and lay not their iniquity to their charge, nor to the charge of this congregation.'"

In his second "Warning," while he expresses his regret at the proceedings of the Presbytery of Dunfermline against him, he feelingly alludes to his brethren of that Presbytery at the time of his ordination, who "looked indeed like a reforming Presbytery, and were

all now in the dust." He again refers to the sacred ties by which a Christian pastor and his people are united. "The longer the relation has subsisted, the more aggravated will their sin be that endeavour the dissolving of it; since the longer it has stood, the more firm and numerous are the bonds by which it has been established." "And as to my not preaching now," he adds, "in the other ordinary place, you know that it is owing to my being excluded by violence such as I could not resist, unless I had designed by carnal weapons to fight my way to it; which, you will own, were neither suitable to my character and profession, nor adapted to your edification." Among other expressions in which he boldly states his views of the guilt contracted by those who causelessly turned their back on his ministry, he says: "Those that have a hand in calling another minister to this congregation in my room, are exposing themselves to that wrath of God that is threatened in his word against such as are guilty of misusing the messengers of God, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. "Though they could get one that shall preach to them as an angel of light, this iniquity is, and will be marked before the Lord." "I reckon my being persecuted in my office and ministerial work more gross and heinous than any outward or corporeal persecution, and what tends to bring on the greatest wrath." "They not only reject their own lawful pastor without any ground, but reject him at the last and most noted period of his life, when, in holy providence, he is become more than a minister to them as formerly, a public witness for the persecuted truth and cause of Christ." "Indeed, if the people of this place had contrived a way to get rid of my ministry twenty years ago, their guilt had not been so aggravated

as now, when a testimony is put in my hand, wherein the glory of God, and the credit of his name and truth, is so much concerned." "Upon all these accounts," says he at the close, "I see it my present duty, to warn the people of this place to consider what they are doing in this matter, as they have any regard to the glory of God, the credit of the gospel, the salvation of their own souls, their peace in a dying hour, and the great account they are to give before God's tribunal of what improvement they make of the gospel ministry he has sent to them."

Let these extracts suffice. Though to a calm and dispassionate judge, some of the expressions employed in these solemn warnings may appear unreasonably strong, no candid person will ascribe them to a sinister motive, and unquestionably they demanded the serious attention of those to whom they were addressed.

Mr. Erskine's withdrawal from the national Church was succeeded by increased exertions in his Master's work. Though not now possessing the advantage of a colleague in the ministry, he performed the accustomed services of the Sabbath, kept up the week day sermon, and continued with exemplary vigour to prosecute the private duties of the ministry amongst his numerous flock. His ready disposition to exert himself to the uttermost in their behalf is declared in the following sentences, quoted from an address to his people we have found among his papers, intended to obviate the excuses that some might make for relinquishing his ministry.

"As to the greatness of my charge, I own that ever since I came to Dunfermline, it has still been greater than my ability; and though I had the foresight of that

before I engaged in it, yet the old Presbytery of Dunfermline, that are now all in the dust, encouraged me to adventure on it with this argument, that the Lord's call being clear, he would never call me to more work among the people here than he gave me furniture and ability for." " Though my strength should be decaying even when my charge is increasing, yet I could have no freedom before God, to cast out any from being under my charge, that are not guilty of casting themselves out from it, nor freedom to reject those that are coming in to it upon the same public reformation cause we espouse, while others are going out from it, and so betraying that cause." " However weighty my charge be, and unproportionable to my strength and ability, yet I desire to bear it as the Lord enables, and to go on in my work, according to the assistance he gives, and even to spend and be spent therein."

How interesting and extensive soever the field of labour at home requiring his attention, he did not decline at proper times to go abroad. In rendering assistance to his brethren of the Secession in the customary services accompanying the administration of the Lord's Supper, he appears to have displayed uncommon activity, and found peculiar enjoyment. The following extracts from his Diary, though unavoidably not extending beyond the year 1739, will serve to justify this conclusion.

" *Saturday, June 4, 1737.* I set apart the forenoon with the family for prayer; and in reading Is. lxiv. I was affected. O may the Lord pity, recover, restore, return with mercy. I had at this time a view of the sacrament at Kinclaven, on the second Sabbath of June,

Orwell on the fourth, Dunfermline on the second Sabbath of July. Lord, prepare for thy work."

" *Sabbath, June 25, 1737.* I preached at Perth for Mr. Wilson, in a tent without, forenoon; and in the church within, afternoon. *July 2*, being Sabbath, I assisted, through grace, at the sacrament in Kinclaven. On the *Thursday*, I preached on Is. xxvi. 20. *Sabbath* I preached twice, and *Monday* closed on John xiv. 1. Many bands were upon me; yet the Lord pitied in hearing Mr. Wilson on Saturday, while he preached on that word, 'I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.' One special mark he gave of the believer, was, that he loved the plan of salvation the better, that God in all his glorious attributes is glorified thereby. This, I thought I could seal in my heart. I heard Mr. Fisher in his action sermon on that word, 'It is finished!' His proofs that the work was finished, and inferences therefrom were refreshing to me; and I got some lively faith and hope, whereby I was quickened to look to the Finisher, now exalted to finish by power the work that he had finished by price. Both in secret and public, I got my heart poured out, and a mighty heart-burning desire and concern that the Lord would appear at this occasion. I found sensible influence this way in the Psalm then singing before I preached in the tent, also in prayer, and partly in preaching. I served five tables.

" *July 16, 1738*, being Sabbath, I was at Abernethy sacrament, when I preached Saturday, Sabbath, and Tuesday, and served eight tables, being greatly assisted, especially at the last. My text at this occasion was Heb. iv. 3. 'We that have believed do enter into rest.'"

“ *Sabbath Aug. 6, 1738.* I was present at the sacrament in Orwell, where a vast multitude were gathered, and upwards of five thousand persons did communicate. I preached Saturday and Sabbath on Rom. iv. 18, ‘ Who against hope believed in hope.’ Ministers were helped, and many were refreshed.”

“ *Sabbath Oct. 15, 1738.* I was present at the sacrament in Perth, where I preached on Saturday, and twice on Sabbath, upon John iv. 10. Tuesday being a fast, I was desired to conclude, and did so by prayer ; and before it I spoke a little on Micah vi. 8,—‘ to walk humbly with thy God?’ I was helped and strengthened, and many were refreshed.”

“ *Saturday, May 12, 1739.* I went to Abernethy sacrament, and there preached that day on that word, ‘ But Christ liveth in me,’ as also twice on the Sabbath day, and was helped, particularly Sabbath forenoon at the tent in the church yard. I found much of the Lord’s presence strengthening me in preaching there after I had served three tables, and in the evening preached again at another tent.”

“ *Saturday, July 14, 1739.* Being at Stirling sacrament, I was called to preach Saturday, Sabbath, and Monday ; preached all the time on these words, ‘ Who loved me, and gave himself for me.’ The solemn action in one of the churches there fell to me, and the other to my brother Ebenezer. I was helped on the Saturday, and much more on the Sabbath, and most of all on the Monday. Having expected to preach neither on Saturday nor Monday, yet I was strengthened inwardly, and also in serving tables, whereof I served at least twelve, partly in the one church, and partly in the other. On the Monday, both in preaching and praying I found

more than ordinary assistance and hearty concern for winning souls to Christ. The work was great, and few hands. There were two places of worship on the Saturday, four places on the Sabbath, and three places on the Monday; and there were but seven ministers and three probationers, my brother and Messrs. Wilson, Moncrieff, Thomson, Fisher and myself, with Messrs. James Mair, Hunter, and Young, probationers. The work was very decently gone about, and the Lord was present with the ministers."

"*Saturday, July 28, 1739.* This evening I had a public exercise before the sacrament in Kinclaven, and preached on Gal. ii. 20. On Sabbath I communicated at a table served by my brother, and was quickened there by hearing that Christ was alive, and that all the words of promise on which he has caused us to hope were more upon his heart than ours. This was a mean of quickening, and when I went alone, my heart was poured out by the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ upon me. I was strengthened in preaching at the tent upon the love of Christ being a giving love, and strengthened in serving seven tables, especially the two last except one; at which two the communicants and hearers seemed to be greatly moved, for there was some remarkable breathing. I expected not to preach next day, but it was, in providence, put upon me."

"*Monday, July 30.* This morning being obliged, I studied, and preached; though unprepared, I was helped in studying and preaching. I found my heart indeed to trust in Jesus, and cast the work upon him; and accordingly found him taking the burden of the work from off my heart, and then sustaining and strengthening in public praying and preaching, *as remarkably as*

ever, if not more than ever before. I preached from the foresaid text on Christ as a lover and a giver. I preached from a heart, as it were, full of Christ, and of desire to win souls unto him. The Lord was with me in the closet, and with me in the tent. O wonder of mercy to such a wretch as I am ! I was made to rest on his word, his name, his righteousness, his strength. I preached before my brother Ebenezer, and many went away with the conviction that God was in the place."

In the various efforts employed by the Associate Presbytery to promote the cause of religion in Scotland, and to afford relief to thousands groaning under the yoke of patronage, the subject of this narrative was fully prepared to bear a part. Even before his accession, as has been stated, he often attended their meetings for conference, prayer and fasting ; and after having taken that step, he cheerfully concurred with them in those acts of jurisdiction, to which, after considerable delays, and solemn consultation, they at last proceeded. It gave him peculiar pleasure, as appears from several notices in his Diary, to take part in licensing and ordaining young men, possessed of good principles, and of respectable talents and acquirements.

" *Tuesday, June 28, 1737.* After the sacrament in Orwell, we kept a public fast, and each of us (except Mr. Wilson, who was unwell,) prefaced, [that is, made remarks on the Psalm that was given out to sing,] and prayed, and was helped. It was with reference to the view we had of keeping fast days elsewhere, and sending forth labourers at this juncture, when the cry of oppression by reason of obtrusion was coming from all parts of the land."

“*Dec. 15.* After this the Presbytery met at Kinross, when two students were entered on trials, and some fast-days were appointed.”

“*May 16, 1738.* This day I went to Abbotshall, where the Associate Presbytery met on Wednesday the 17th. I heard Mr. HUNTER preach his popular sermon, and was refreshed therewith.” Mr. Hunter, as appears from the records of Presbytery, received license to preach the gospel at Orwell, June 7, 1738.*

After noticing the administration of the Lord’s Supper at Stirling, July 15, 1739, Mr. Erskine continues thus :

“ We kept Presbytery on the Tuesday and Wednesday. Mr. James Mair and Mr. Beugo made accession to the Presbytery, and some young men were nominated, and marked in the minutes for being entered on trial, namely, Messrs. Gibb, Hutton, Smyton, and Abercrombie.”

“ *Tuesday, August 28, 1739.* I preached at Orwell in the afternoon, it being a fast-day appointed by the Presbytery. The Lord helped and strengthened in this work. And on *Wednesday, Aug. 29,* we held a Presbytery—appointed the time of ordaining Mr. Hunter at Morebattle, and entered three young men on trials for the ministry.”

“ *Oct. 14, 1739.* Having on the Thursday before gone to Edinburgh, and thence on the Friday with Mr. Fisher to Dryburgh, Shielfield house ; and on the Saturday having visited Mr. Gabriel Wilson, we came to Stitchell, and on the Sabbath preached to a numerous

* The statement in the Life of Eben. Erskine, p. 422, that Mr. Hunter was licensed at Abernethy on May 12th, is incorrect.

auditory on that word, 'To you is the word of this salvation sent.' *Tuesday, Oct. 16*, we went to Gateshall and Morebattle, where, on *Wednesday, Oct. 17*, I preached a sermon, at the ordination of Mr. Hunter, on Luke xiv. 23, 'Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.' I was helped, the people were affected, and the Lord followed his word with power. Thereafter we ordained Mr. Hunter. *Thursday, Oct. 18*, I came to *Causton*, which was about thirty miles riding. *Friday*, I preached there in the morning and in the evening."

Mr. JOHN HUNTER, whose ordination is here referred to, was a young minister of great promise. Owing chiefly to the defection of the times, and the opposition given by the dominant clergy to candidates for the ministry professing evangelical sentiments, he lived in retirement for several years after he had finished his theological studies. Soon after the commencement of the Secession, however, he embraced the opportunity then presented of appearing in a public character. Having obtained the cordial recommendation of the Rev. Gabriel Wilson, he was very favourably received by the Associate Presbytery.* He was their first licentiate, and his settlement at Morebattle was "the first of the kind that had taken place among them." Mr. Erskine presided both in licensing and in ordaining him. During his itinerant labours as a probationer, which continued about a year and a-half, he everywhere experienced the most cordial reception, and when he became pastor of the united societies of Morebattle and Stinchell, he had fair prospects of usefulness amongst an affectionate people. But how un-

* Life of Eben. Erskine, p. 422.

searchable are the ways of Providence ! It pleased God to remove him to eternity on the 7th of January 1740, somewhat less than three months after his ordination, leaving a widow and fatherless children to lament his loss. His death was sincerely regretted, not only by the people of his charge, but by his brethren in the ministry, and all that knew him. In compliance with the earnest request of the hearers, Mr. Erskine published the sermon he preached on the occasion of his settlement ; and the publication not having taken place till after his death, he subjoined an appendix, consisting of counsels and consolatory suggestions, addressed to the bereaved congregation, and well adapted to direct them in improving that mournful event.* He adverts to the adorable sovereignty and unerring wisdom of the Most High, who gives and takes away according to his will. He pathetically exhorts them to consider and to profit by the salutary lessons, which the departure of their beloved minister was calculated to impress on their minds ; to keep in memory the precious truths they had heard from his lips ; to place their trust in the great and immortal Shepherd ; to cultivate preparation for their own death ; and to copy the many excellencies that were united in the character of the deceased. His meekness and humility, his signally blameless deportment, concern for the welfare of immortal souls, readiness to suffer reproach and contempt for Christ's sake, and the ardent zeal he had discovered for the cause of the Redeemer, both in a private and a public station, are particularly mentioned. His eminently holy life terminated, it appears, in a triumphant death.

* See R. Erskine's Works, vol. ii. Pp. 101—118.

Many striking expressions of joyful hope proceeded from his mouth. "I have had many adversaries," said he, "both within and without to wrestle against; but now my head is lifted up above all mine enemies; and I would not change my lot for the heaviest crown of gold."

The following epitaph, composed by Mr. Erskine, was inscribed on his tomb:—

*Ipse Petrus, quamvis hominum Piscator, obivit ;
Horum hic Venator, quin properanter ? obit.*

This mighty HUNTER, well employed,
Betwixt the distant poles,
His mortal body soon destroyed,
To save immortal souls.*

The premature death of this valuable minister seems to have been, in reality, occasioned, under Providence, by his own immoderate exertions. Animated by love to the Saviour and by compassion for the multitudes in various districts of the land that were thirsting for the word of life, he laboured far more incessantly than was compatible with a prudent regard to his health. It is even stated, that he sometimes preached above thirty sermons within the space of fourteen days.

His friends admired him for his learning, judgment, and eloquence, but above all for his fervent piety and unquenchable zeal. In warm commendations of Christ, and in the use of "similes and metaphors, tending to convey the truth with pleasure and evidence into the hearts of the hearers," he was thought by many to bear a closer resemblance than any preacher they had heard

* Works, vol. ii. p. 788.

of to the celebrated *Samuel Rutherford*. His powerful discourses were calculated to impress the minds of every class of his audience. Many years since, the late Dr. Robertson, Principal of the University of Edinburgh, related the following anecdote to a clergyman still alive. When he was about sixteen years of age he made a visit to his uncle, minister of the parish of Gifford, where, learning that Mr. Hunter was to preach in the neighbourhood, and that a vast crowd were assembling to hear him, curiosity prompted him to join the multitude. "The preacher," added the reverend Principal, "addressed his audience in a strain of natural and powerful eloquence, and a strong impression was produced. I myself was deeply affected as well as those around me, and such was the effect, that I recollected more of that sermon than of any I have ever heard." A specimen of the evangelical and lively discourses of this popular preacher was given to the world shortly after his decease, but it is now rarely to be seen.

Mr. Hunter was not the only minister of the Secession, at whose settlement Mr. Erskine's services were required. At Mr. Fisher's admission to the Associate congregation of Shuttle Street, Glasgow, October 8, 1741, he succeeded his brother Ebenezer, who presided on that occasion, by preaching a sermon on Acts vii. 34, which may be seen among his published works. When the Rev. James Johnston was ordained at Dundee, April 16, 1746, Mr. Moncrieff of Abernethy took the lead in the solemn act of ordination, and Mr. Ralph Erskine concluded the services with a sermon on 2d Cor. v. 18. 19. We find too, that at the ordination of the Rev. John Swanston at Kinross, on Thursday,

June 23, 1748, he presided and preached from John xx. 21. Mr. Swanston proved a bright ornament to the Secession church. To eminent piety, he added profound theological knowledge, popular talents, and singular prudence. The Rev. James Fisher having been obliged, by bodily infirmity, to resign the office of Professor of Divinity, the Associate Synod, at their meeting in May 1764, appointed Mr. Swanston to succeed him in that important charge;* but after sustaining it for a short period, with much credit and utility, he died, suddenly, at Perth, universally regretted, on Friday June 12, 1767. His decease was occasioned by an illness with which he was seized on the evening of the Sabbath preceding, immediately after delivering a sermon, subsequently to the celebration of the Lord's Supper in that town. A volume of his discourses, rich in the "grace and truth" of the gospel, has been long in the hands of the Christian public; and the fragrance of his memory has also been heightened by the exemplary piety and spirituality, and uncommonly amiable temper of his son, Mr. Andrew Swanston, whose Sermons and Lectures, introduced by a short Memoir, written by the late Rev. David Greig of Lochgelly, discover great ability, and breathe a most evangelical and heavenly spirit.

The subject of this narrative preached frequently in the presence of his brethren, at their meetings in a judicative capacity. On the 15th February, 1738, he was chosen moderator of the Associate Presbytery.

* Records of Associate Synod.

His fervent prayers for the members of that court, as well as his discourses before them, are noticed by himself in his Diary :—

“ *Saturday, May 13, 1738.*—I got grace to flee to the fountain of blood shed at Jerusalem, and sought to know the value and virtue of that blood, and to be washen therein, and to have the promised Spirit ; and particularly to seek the Lord would be with me the next day, when to preach alone. Having a view of the subject, namely, 2 Cor. v. 21, about Christ being made sin for us, and we the righteousness of God in him, I got grace to seek that the revelation of this righteousness might be the power of God to the salvation of poor souls in this place ; also to look for the outpouring of the Spirit to continue, because a crucified Jesus is now made both Lord and Christ. Afterwards, this same afternoon, going again to God by prayer, I was enabled to wrestle mightily for his coming in power by the gospel, and for the outpouring of the Spirit to bear witness to Christ, and glorify him. Here I was led to cry, with many tears, that the Spirit might be poured out upon *his servants with whom I am associated*, and put hand to his own work ; particularly to cry that the Spirit might be sent as a glorifier of Christ, that he being glorified, the Father might be glorified in him. Amen, Amen.”

“ *December, 1738.*—The Associate Presbytery met at Stirling, where I preached before a great multitude, on 1 Pet. v. 6, ‘Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.’”

“ *Aug. 27, 1739.*—I studied a sermon upon Ezek. xvi. ult.* which on Tuesday the 28th I preached at Orwell,

* This sermon was published in his Works, Vol. II. p. 81, *et seq.*

in the afternoon, being a fast-day appointed by the Presbytery. The Lord helped and strengthened in this work."

" *Sabbath, Nov. 4, 1739.*—The sacrament being at Abbotshall, I preached on the Sabbath, and on Monday, and before the Presbytery on Wednesday. At the sacrament, preached on Micah v. 5, ' This man shall be the peace'——; and after the tables, very late, or rather early in the morning; and then *without* on the Monday. I communicated at a table served by Mr. Wilson. That Wednesday, being a fast-day appointed by the Synod of Fife, I went not home, but stayed with the Presbytery, and because of the multitude of people present, preached before two of the young men upon trials. Though I had studied little, I preached on that word, Zech. viii. 19, ' Love the truth and peace.'"

" *Tuesday, Nov. 27, 1739.*—I preached before my brother on Jerem. xiv. 7, ' O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake.' It was very early this day before I went to bed, having studied till after four in the morning. This day I was helped and strengthened in speaking."

After the Associate Presbytery was formed into a Synod, consisting of three Presbyteries,* Mr. Erskine

* The three Presbyteries of which the Associate Synod originally consisted, were designated the Associate Presbytery of Edinburgh, the Associate Presbytery of Glasgow, and the Associate Presbytery of Dunfermline. The last of these included the following congregations and ministers :—

Congregations.

Dunfermline,
Dunnichen,
Burntisland,

Ministers.

Mr. Ralph Erskine.
— Andrew Arrot.
— James Thomson,

officiated as moderator at its first meeting at Stirling in March 1745, and consequently, in accordance with custom, he preached before them at the opening of the second meeting of Synod at the same place, the September following. One of his note-books contains a long discourse on Ephes. iv. 8, with this memorandum prefixed, "Designed for the Synod at Stirling, Sep. 24, 1745."

At no period of public ministration, however, were his feelings, in all probability, more deeply solemnized, than when he preached before his brethren on the occasion of their uniting in the work of public covenanting, which appeared to them a proper and seasonable means of promoting reformation.* Waiving all inquiry into the nature and expediency of this exercise, let it only be remarked in passing, that if the ministers of the Secession of that age, did in any degree too highly admire the covenants of their Presbyterian ancestors, or attach undue importance to explicit public vowing as a scriptural means of reviving the power of godliness, they only shared those prepossessions, and that zeal with the generality of the pious clergymen who chose to

Congregations.

Abernethy,
Orwell,
Ceres,
Perth,
Leslie,

Ministers.

Mr. Alexander Moncrieff.
— Thomas Mair.
— William Campbell.
— George Brown.
— John Erskine.

The following congregations, then vacant, also belonged to the Presbytery of Dunfermline, viz. Kirkaldy, Kinkell, Muckhart, Kinclaven, Dundee, Montrose, with some in the counties of Ross, Murray and Buchan. See Gibb's Display of the Secession Testimony, Vol. ii. p. 14.

* Compare the Life of Ebenezer Erskine, Pp. 432—437.

retain their connexion with the national church. The Rev. Mr. Willison of Dundee and his associates, in their "Fair and Impartial Testimony," refer repeatedly to the "defection by covenant-breaking, and dealing deceitfully with God," as constituting a large proportion of the national guilt, and express ardent wishes to see a universal disposition amongst the people of Scotland to renew the solemn covenants. After particularising a variety of measures, conducive to the advancement of religion, they recommend "looking earnestly to the Lord for his Spirit's influence and special blessing upon all those means and endeavours, until at length the whole land arrive at the happy frame and disposition of our forefathers, when they, with one consent, renewed covenant with God, and dedicated themselves and their posterity unto the Lord."*

An entry in the Diary, dated *August 29, 1739*, contains the following sentence:—"We held a Presbytery, at which we agreed, that the national covenant should be renewed with accommodation to our time." Nothing further on the subject occurs in that portion of the manuscript which is in our hands. We find, however, that on the evening of the 28th Dec. 1743, being the day on which the covenants were renewed at Stirling, he preached from Deut. xxvi. 17, 18, a very serious and interesting sermon, entitled "Covenanting Grace for Covenanting Work." On that occasion, which was the first of the kind in the Secession Church, none but the ministers were invited to swear and subscribe the bond.† The generality of private Christians of that

* Pp. 122, 123.

† Records of the Associate Presbytery.

persuasion, however, were expected, in course of time, to come under similar engagements.

The following account of a renovation of the covenants by the Associate congregation of Dunfermline, which took place a few years after, under the eye and superintendence of their minister, is quoted from the old records of session there :—

“ *Dunfermline, May 28, 1746.*—After prayer by the moderator Mr. Erskine, *sederunt* all the members of session. This day being set apart for humiliation and solemn covenanting, the session adjourned till the said solemn work was over, and went into the church constituted. Mr. Ralph Erskine preached from Zech. xiii. 9, last part, [They shall say the Lord is my God.] Mr. Henry Erskine succeeded in prayer, and in assisting his father; read the Solemn League and Covenant, and solemn acknowledgment of sins prefixed to the bond. Mr. Ralph Erskine read the bond, and after reading thereof, Mr. Ebenezer Erskine made an acknowledgment in prayer of the sins prefixed to the said bond. And thereafter the list of the people, whose names and designations are here inserted, who were judicially admitted by the session to swear and subscribe the bond, was publicly read.*—Mr. Thomson of Burntisland concluded the forenoon work with prayer and praise. Mr. Henry Erskine preached in the afternoon from Psalm xlviii. 8,—‘ he will be our guide even unto death.’ ”

“ *May 29, 1746.*—This day being set apart for those

* About six pages *folio* are occupied by the names and designations of subscribers, each page containing nearly fifty names. The names of thirty members of session appear at the head of the list.

who had entered into the bond yesterday, their subscribing the same this day, Mr. Thomson preached from Col. i. 11, ‘ Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness.’ All that could write subscribed their names ; and at their desire the clerk subscribed for those who could not write. Mr. Ralph Erskine concluded the forenoon’s work with prayer and praise. Mr. Ebenezer Erskine succeeded in the afternoon, and preached from Heb. iv. 14. Sermon being ended, the whole work was concluded with prayer and praise.”

A note-book of Mr. James Erskine, one of Ralph’s sons, then a student in divinity, contains all the sermons preached by the different ministers employed during this solemn transaction ; which he seems to have written in the public assembly at the time of their delivery.

To advance no less the general interests of piety than their own cause as a distinct religious community, the Associate Presbytery adopted the measure of sending forth individuals of their number, generally “ two and two,” to preach the gospel in various districts of the land. It was mostly in consequence of express application from people groaning under the intolerable yoke of patronage and its accompanying evils, that those deputations were sent ; and when they were solicited to hold public fasts with them, or to form congregations and ordain elders, they usually complied with such requests. In these home missionary exertions, the subject of this memoir sustained his own share of labour ; and notwithstanding the toil attending them,

and the difficulties and obloquy encountered in some quarters, he seems to have gone through them with considerable pleasure and success. In tours of this description, he accompanied his brother Ebenezer to Cambusnethan, Denny, and Balfron; Mr. Wilson of Perth to Braid's Craigs, near Edinburgh; Mr. Mair of Orwell to a village near West Linton; Mr. Fisher to Annandale, and Mr. Thomson to Evandale. His works, accordingly, contain sermons preached on "present duty before approaching danger," at Cambusnethan, Aug. 3, 1737; on "the great ruin and the great relief," at Braid's Craigs, May 22, 1738; on "glad tidings in sad times," in Annandale, Aug. 27, 1738; and on "chambers of safety in times of danger," in Evandale, Sept. 19, 1739.*

The following brief notices, by his own pen, of some of these preaching excursions, will not, at least to members of the Secession church, seem void of interest.

"*Dunfermline, July 12, 1737.* We had a presbytery in the church, where a multitude were present. We were appointed, by two, to go and keep a day of fasting among oppressed people. My brother and I were appointed for Cambusnethan the first Wednesday of August coming, and the rest to other places."

"*Monday, Aug. 1, 1737.* This morning, in secret and in family worship, I was helped to pour out my heart to a promising God, looking that, for his name's sake, he would be with me. This day I was to go off for Linlithgow, in order to meet with Ebenezer, on our way to Cambusnethan. *Wednesday, Aug. 3,* I preached in the tent with my brother at Cambusnethan, where

* See R. Erskine's Works, vol. ii. Pp. 11, 21, 51, 87.

was a very great auditory. I had the forenoon, and after reading the causes of the fast, prefacing and praying, I preached on Jer. xiii. 16, 'Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness;' afterwards baptized about twenty-six children. We were very kindly entertained by the people in that place, and they seemed to be refreshed with the fast day's work, the Lord helping in some measure therein. We kept a session next day with the elders. *Friday, Aug. 5, At Linlithgow*, on my way home, I preached that evening in the church to a great many people, the minister of the place being present."

"*Monday, Sept. 26, 1737.* I went to Stirling; next day with my brother to Balfroon; where, *Wednesday 28*, we kept a fast. I preached upon Ps. lxxix. 8, 'O remember not against us former iniquities.' The night before, and this morning, my heart was poured out in prayer, looking to a promising God, and wrestling with him."

"*Wednesday, March 22, 1738.* Being appointed with Mr. Wilson and Mr. Mair, by the Associate Presbytery, to observe a fast at Edinburgh, we accordingly went, and after them, I preached on Hos. xiii. 9, 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.' The day was very windy, and many of the ungodly rabble surrounded the meeting. Yet the Lord helped, and many were refreshed. And *Thursday, March 23*, I went with Mr. Mair to Linton. *Friday, March 24*, I preached there; and then we proceeded to the electing of elders, who were chosen by the lifting up of the hand, and then examined; and their edict served on Sabbath. *Sabbath, March 26*, I preached with Mr. Mair. We had a great and grave auditory.

I continued here to preach on Hos. xiii. 9. Many, I heard, were much refreshed. *Monday, March 27*, In returning to Edinburgh I preached and baptized at *Carlips*; was also helped there. *Wednesday morning* the 29th, I preached and baptized at a house in the *Park* of Edinburgh; the house belonged to Mr. Wilson the smith. Also the same day, exercised with my sister Balderston in the evening."

"*Monday, May 8, 1738.* This morning, in family worship, I was helped, and my heart strengthened in prayer. I designed this day [to set off] for Stirling: Lord, guide. It was recommended to me by the Associate brethren to go and assist at a fast in St. Ninians. Accordingly I went Monday night to Stirling, and preached there on Tuesday, and then upon Wednesday, May 10, preached at a meeting very numerous, in the parish of St. Ninians.*——Mr. Nairn began this day, and my brother closed the work."

"*Monday, Aug. 21, 1738.* I went to the Ferry, to meet with Mr. Fisher, in order to our going to the south, to observe a fast-day on Friday, and to preach on the Sabbath among Mr. Hepburn's people, and other societies there, that had made accession to us.† And this we did by virtue of the appointment of the Associate Presbytery. *Tuesday, Aug. 22*, we rode nearly thirty miles, and on *Wednesday* nearly as much, to the place where we were to have the fast. *Friday, Aug. 25*, Mr. Fisher preached, and I succeeded on that word, 'when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin.' Six or seven ministers heard us, with whom we con-

* Compare p. 215.

† See Appendix, No. IX.

versed afterwards ; and Mr. Fisher sustained a debate with them to great advantage. *Saturday*, we went eight miles further, to a place called Horwood, on the Water of *Milk*."

" *Sabbath, Aug. 27*. This morning I got some lively acting of faith upon the word, ' Lo I am with you ;' and I was helped in the day's work, especially at the close. I lectured forenoon, on 1 Cor. ii. 6, &c. preached afternoon on Ps. xlv. 4, ' There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God.' Influences were given ; many of the people heard with greedy looks and weeping eyes, as if it were the first and the last offer of Christ and salvation they were then getting, and as if the word were going through heart and flesh. Some evidence there was then of the Lord's presence ; and at the evening prayer, in a barn full of people, the place was a Bochim. Many, I heard, went away, saying they never saw such a day. May the Lord follow the work with remarkable fruit. In our return, we preached at Linton on Wednesday and baptized ; and on Thursday night I came home to Dunfermline."

" *Sabbath, April 15, 1739*. Last month, when the Associate Presbytery sat, I was appointed to assist at a fast near Glasgow next week, and then to preach at *Kilmaurs* the Sabbath following, and then at a fast in another place. May the Lord go with me, and assist, and bless."

" *Tuesday, April 24, 1739*. I went away with Mr. Thomson for our journey, by appointment of the Presbytery, and was present at Logie, where some of the brethren kept a fast. *Wednesday, April 25*, we went, (namely, he, and Ebenezer, and I,) towards Glasgow ;

and, *Thursday* the 26th being a fast-day, within two miles of Glasgow, there were two tents erected for us, when I preached forenoon and afternoon, and was helped especially afternoon, upon that word, ‘ If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.’ That night we went into Glasgow. *Friday, April 27*, Mr. Thomson and I went to Etherly, a gentleman’s place, where we preached also and baptized. I spoke on Christ being a treasure, and was helped. Some, I heard, were touched. *Saturday, April 28*, we came to Kilmaurs, and *Sabbath, April 29*, two tents were erected, at which we separately preached the whole day. I lectured on Paul’s reproving Peter, Gal. ii. and preached upon that word, ‘ Ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty, 2 Cor. vi. 18. I lectured that evening also. *Monday*, we went to Kilmarnock, where I preached in the evening to people that stood without doors. *Tuesday, May 1*, we went for Dalry, through Irvine and Kilwinning, and came to the place, where next day we were to keep a fast. I preached that night to the people that came. *Wednesday, May 2*, was a very rainy day. We preached to a very numerous auditory. *Thursday*, we came from Dalry, through Paisley, and by Glasgow to Hamilton along Bothwell Bridge. *Friday, May 4*, we came to the Kirk of Shots, and preached and baptized there; and that night came to a place called the *Knock*, having come through Bathgate. The day before, I preached at the Shots on, ‘ A man shall be a hiding place from the wind;’ and this day on Gal. i. 3, 4. I was helped and strengthened, and this evening we came home.”

“ *Tuesday, Sept. 4, 1739*. I preached with my bro-

ther at Denny on a fast occasion, upon Ephes. v. 14, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!'"

"*Monday, Sept. 10, 1739.* I went to Burntisland. September 11, being a very stormy day, Mr. Thomson and I went over to Leith, and thence to Carlips in Linton. *Wednesday* the 12th, Mr. Thomson preached at Linton and baptized. This afternoon we went to Symington, where next day we were appointed to have a fast. *Thursday* the 13th, we kept the fast in Symington. I preached after Mr. Thomson. *Friday* the 14th, we went to the parish of Cambusnethan, and next day to a place therein called Davie's Dykes, where we stayed all Saturday night and Sabbath night. *Sabbath, Sept. 16,* we preached in Cambusnethan parish; my text was, 'Unto you is the word of this salvation sent.' The auditory was considerably numerous, from a great many places. I was helped and strengthened. *Monday* the 16th, we went to Evandale. *Tuesday* the 17th we held session there. *Wednesday* the 18th we held a fast appointed by the Presbytery, and I preached on that word, 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers,' &c. In all these places I was helped, and the people seemed to be greedy hearers. May the Lord follow with his powerful blessing! *Wednesday* evening, we came to Strathaven, which is a town and chief place in the said parish, and stayed all night. *Thursday*, we came through Hamilton, Shots, and Avon, to the parish of Whitburn, and stayed all night with Mr. Beugo in *Cowhill*. *Friday*, I took occasion to see Mr. Wardrope, and Mr. Bonar, and then came to Linlithgow, thence that evening to the Queensferry. *Saturday*, we came home,

through the mercy of God, the preserver of man and beast."

In the libel executed against the ministers of the Associate Presbytery by order of the General Assembly 1738, one of the articles related to the crime of preaching beyond the limits of their own parishes, and several of the above instances are specified. The meeting at Braid's Craigs, for example, is thus referred to:—
 ' Moreover, you the above-mentioned defenders, one or other of you, did upon the 22d day of March last, or upon one or other of the days of the said month, convene with great numbers of your followers at Braid's Craigs, within the said parish of the West Kirk of Edinburgh, and then and there you did preach and baptize several children, without proper certificates from the ministers of the said parish, or the authority of the presbytery of the bounds." *

Mr. Erskine alludes, in his Diary, as we have seen, to "the ungodly rabble that surrounded the meeting" at Braid's Craigs. A few of that "rabble," we are informed, more daring than the rest, made several audacious but fruitless attempts to molest the worshippers. Some of these "rude fellows of the baser sort," amused themselves by rushing amongst the people and setting up a *Merry Andrew*; but a well-disposed youth promptly stepped forward, and threw it down. A man, named D—— R——, steward to H——n of C——n, had also the hardihood to set fire to some whins in the immediate neighbourhood of the spot where the numerous audience were assembled, concluding, from the direction and force of the wind, that the smoke proceed-

* Re-exhibition of the Testimony, p. 191.

ing from the burning whins would exceedingly annoy the seceders. It so happened, however, in the good providence of God, that the wind immediately veered about to another quarter, and the assembly suffered no inconvenience. The impious project, in the meantime, attracted the notice of the ministers as well as the people; and Mr. Erskine publicly remarked, that the person who had been guilty of that deed would perhaps live to repent of it. That same individual, it is credibly related, was afterwards three times driven from his own dwelling by means of fire. First one house he occupied on Clerkington estate was burned down and then another; on which his master dismissed him, saying, *that man* would burn all the houses on his property. He removed, in consequence, to Prestonpans, where a similar calamity befel him, the truth of which is attested by a woman ninety years old, who was very lately, if she be not even still, alive in Edinburgh, and who affirms that, when a child, she made a very narrow escape from the flames of that house, being let down from a window in a blanket. The events of Providence ought not to be interpreted with presumptuous boldness and temerity. But instances of daring impiety are sometimes succeeded by visible strokes, bearing such distinct signatures of just retribution, as compel even the thoughtless and the sceptical to exclaim, "Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

CHAPTER VII.

The Ministers of the Secession attract the notice of good men in other countries—Letter from the Rev. Mr. Muirhead of America—Correspondence of Mr. John Wesley, Mr. Seward, and chiefly Mr. Whitefield with Mr. Ralph Erskine—Mr. Whitefield's singular interview with Mr. Erskine and the Associate Presbytery at Dunfermline—Facts of the conference collected from various documents by the different parties—Remarks.

THE ministers of the Associate Presbytery, owing to the bold and decided part they had taken in the work of religious reformation, and the sacrifices they had made in its behalf, soon became the objects of general attention. Their fame was not confined to Scotland. It was speedily diffused, at least, through other portions of the British empire, at home and abroad; and while their conduct met the keen reprobation of some, it obtained the warm approval of others. Many excellent persons in England and America sympathised with them in their generous struggles in the cause of truth, liberty, and piety; and in particular, several fellow labourers in the gospel, residing at a distance, beheld them with cordial esteem, and were desirous to cultivate their acquaintance by an epistolary correspondence.

One instance of this marked regard is noted by Mr. Erskine in his Diary.

“*Saturday, August 12, 1738.*—At this time we of

the Associate Presbytery had a letter from Mr. GILBERT TENNANT, minister in New Brunswick, in the province of Pennsylvania, in the Synod of Philadelphia in America, dated June 20, 1738, in the name of his brethren of the same Presbytery, signifying their hearty approbation of our reasons for not joining the judicatories; representing their difficulties, and desiring our sympathy and counsel, and correspondence with us. The letter was engrossed in our minutes, and an answer ordered to be written to them, together with all our publications, which they desire.”*

Another friendly communication from America was addressed to Mr. Erskine by the Rev. JOHN MUIRHEAD, imparting “good news from a far country.” This letter contains a cheering detail of the prosperity of religion in his own congregation, and of the extraordinary success which crowned the labours of Mr. Whitefield and other zealous preachers in the new world; and, at the same time, expresses the delight with which he heard of the activity and courage discovered by the Associate brethren in the cause of Christ,

* A minute of the Associate Presbytery, dated “Orwell Manse, Aug. 6, 1738,” contains the following passage:—“Mr. Eben. Erskine produced a letter, directed to him, to be communicated to the brethren of this Presbytery, dated New Brunswick, June 23, and signed by Gilbert Tennant, minister in that place, and one of the members of New Brunswick Presbytery, within the bounds of the Synod of Philadelphia, the tenor whereof follows.”—But, alas! the promised “tenor” is not to be seen. It is only added, “After reading of the above letter, they appoint Mr. Eben. Erskine to write a return to the said letter in the name of the Presbytery.”

and the value that was put on the writings of the Erskines by himself and others. Part of this epistle runs as follows :*—

“ Go on, blessed champions in the cause of God. Your trials are not greater than those of Zinzendorf, Whitefield, Tennant, and the poor unworthy instrument that is now writing to you. We must have thorns, lest we be exalted above measure. All that would live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. The more of this, if submitted to with a gospel meekness, our crown, though sullied here by rebels to God and their own good, will shine the brighter through eternity.

“ I shall now give you a genuine account of our religious concerns, that, I am well persuaded, will cause your soul, and the souls of my dear fathers and brethren with you of the same frame, to sing for joy, and heartily join with me in repeated songs of praise and thanksgiving to the blessed Lamb of God, who seems to have begun his millennium at this time in America. Rejoice, O my soul, I say, rejoice greatly, at the relating of the blessed history of my dear Lord's kingdom in America. Mr. Whitefield, that man of God, came into this great town last September, where he preached incessantly with surprising flame and success for two months. Consolation and thunder, with the utmost plainness and freedom, were intermixed in all his discourses, both to ministers and people, so that numbers were made to cry

* This extract is taken, not from the original, which we have not seen, but from a copy in short-hand characters, transcribed probably by Henry Erskine, eldest son to Ralph. The date, with several sentences at the beginning, is wanting.

out, 'What shall we do to be saved?' Thus, while the iron might be said to be hot, that Boanerges, Mr. Gilbert Tennant, came, and in a severe season, namely, last winter, laboured with still greater success among us, in and nigh this town, for near the space of four months. Many hundreds of souls came under great distress, insomuch that all God's faithful ministers here found blessed work, and abundance of it. Lectures are set up and continued almost every day in the week, with a great increase of souls savingly brought home to God. God's blessed Spirit is poured out on some of all ages, sexes and complexions. God has perfected praise from the mouths of many hundreds of children. Here also many poor Ethiopians are made to stretch forth their hands to God, and say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord to save us. In my little congregation, a hundred and seventy-eight souls have applied to me, either to relate what God had done for them, or to ask direction how to manage under soul trouble. One thing I would notice, the work of Christ has been greater since these men of God have gone hence. But they brought the sacred fire along with them, and now it is kindled into a divine flame. God has made many townships and ministers light with tapers at our torches, namely, Roxbury, Brookline, Cambridge, Charlestown, Ipswich, Newbury, Rhodes Island, with many more towns through almost all the provinces of English America. I do not know that I ever have read or seen any thing like this blessed time since the Apostle's days. Indeed, the fulfilling of the Scriptures mentions some things like it. The devil is sowing some tares among the wheat.

"Be earnest, dear shepherds of Christ's flock, that

God may accompany your labours with power, and that the glorious work of conversion may revive among you. Let your dear people know what God is doing here. I can never enough magnify God, that he brought me hither to receive and do good. Lord, let me never forget the happy day that I came to America. I want words to express what God has done for me and my people. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Good Lord, carry a live-coal with these lines, and fire thy dear servants, until they see the mountains covered with horsemen and chariots of fire, and souls flocking to Christ. My honoured fathers and brethren, pardon this zeal and freedom. My soul is engaged for you, and all the real lovers of my Lord, who are carrying on reformation in his kingdom. O let me say, the absolute necessity of Christ's doctrines preached to the reformation of the hearts and lives of men is apparent, while the government and discipline of the church is to be considered as subordinate to these.

“ Pray for me, a poor frail creature. My soul has been often refreshed with the savoury performances of you and your dear brother's. They are much admired here. The Gospel Sonnets have been lately reprinted with great acceptance here. Pray fail not in writing, and be more particular. I should be glad to have one copy of your's and brother's sermons that have been published. Be so good as to remember my sincere duty and love to my fathers and brethren with you, with whom I shall rejoice to correspond. I can easily transmit your letter to the Presbytery at New Brunswick. May the eternal God encompass you and yours

as with a shield, and bring you as refined gold out of all your fiery trials. This from

“ Your dutiful son, and humble servant,

“ JOHN MUIRHEAD.”

The brotherly correspondence that subsisted for a time betwixt the celebrated GEORGE WHITEFIELD and the members of the Associate Presbytery, has attracted so much notice in the religious world, and been referred to by so many writers, influenced by various views and prepossessions, that a careful attempt to place it in a just light requires no apology. If the following detail shall be found correct and impartial, and calculated to throw an unmerited share of odium on neither of the reputable parties concerned, there will be no cause to regret the labour it has cost.

An epistolary intercourse had taken place between Mr. Whitefield and some of the Associate brethren upwards of two years before an opportunity of personal conference occurred. The merit of opening this correspondence seems to be due to Mr. Whitefield, and his coadjutors Messrs. JOHN WESLEY and WILLIAM SEWARD. That the motives in which it originated, were, on both sides, pure and honourable, reason and charity alike oblige us to conclude. A deep interest in the cause of vital religion was the animating principle which appeared equally to sway the hearts of our English and Scotch Reformers of that age; and the general similarity of their circumstances and objects, notwithstanding varieties on some subordinate points, naturally inclined them to encourage each other by mutual communications, and even to contemplate some kind of

union and co-operation. The letters they exchanged with one another, breathe only the spirit of piety and love, and are still fitted to refresh and edify the reader.

That Ralph Erskine was actuated in this matter by unfeigned Christian affection, and aimed at something nobler than the advancement of a party, cannot justly be disputed. It will gratify the pious inquirer, to see the following extracts from his private memoranda; being the whole of the notices on this subject to be found in that portion of his Diary, which terminates in December 1739 :—

“ *April 17, 1739.*—I received a letter this month from *Mr. Whitefield*, dated *Bristol, March 10, 1738-9*, showing the great outpouring of the Spirit in England and Wales, and his utility in bringing home many souls to Christ; as also his hearing of our success in Scotland, and desiring to have a line from me. I did not suddenly answer this line, till I heard more about him, which I did both in public prints, and by letters from London—having written for an account of him.”

“ *Saturday, August 4, 1739.*—This afternoon the Spirit of grace and supplications was in a great measure granted, and I was helped to wrestle in prayer for the Lord’s blessing to my family, and for his blessing upon *Whitefield* and his brethren, from whom I have got another letter, namely, from him and *Mr. Seward*. I was made to pray for them, and for the work of God among their hands, and to bless the Lord for what he had done to them and by them. Also I was helped to cry mightily for the Lord’s presence next day, and that he would give a word for the Sabbath, and powerfully concur to the good of souls. I was also made to pray for the coming of the kingdom of Christ, both abroad

and at home, and for Christ's exerting his commanding power in commanding the blessing to many souls in this place. Lord hear."

" *Sabbath, Sep. 30, 1739.*—This morning, after reading part of Ps. xviii., about the Lord's girding with strength, and his word being a tried word, I got my heart poured out in prayer for his presence, his countenance, his assistance; and got a new hold of his name and covenant of promise in Christ. Also prayer for *Whitefield, Seward, and Wesley.*"

" *Oct. 6, 1739.*—Kept the forenoon with my family; read Ezek. xvi. and in the last prayer, after confession of sin, was moved by some new motion of the Spirit. After I was alone, my heart was humbled in the dust before the Lord, and thereafter had my faith and hope revived, and was made to look again to God's holy temple; to acknowledge, that while the Spirit was poured out in England, the Lord was just in suffering our fleece to remain dry, and yet to look for his coming, according to his word. My heart was humbled and melted down like water. Glory to him who can make the flint to melt. I remembered *Whitefield* and his brethren. Lord be with them, and let thy kingdom come abroad and at home."

The same excellent spirit he breathes in his Diary, is expressed in his letters. It seems proper to produce here a series of communications that passed betwixt him and his English correspondents, few of which have hitherto met the eye of the public.

He alludes, we have seen above, to a letter received from Mr. Seward at the close of summer 1739. This worthy gentleman, Mr. Charles Seward of Evesham, ascribed his conversion to the instrumentality of White-

field. Evangelical truth made a powerful impression on his mind; and he discovered the sincerity of his faith, as well by vigorous exertions to promote the immortal interests of mankind, as by uncommon liberality in supplying their temporal wants. It pleased an unsearchable providence, however, in the month of October 1740, to give this amiable and useful convert a speedy release from the labours and sorrows of time. His journal was published after his death.* Mr. Erskine had the happiness to receive from him the following pious and affectionate letter.

“ London, July 24, 1739.

“ Reverend and Dear Sir,

“ I humbly beg leave to open a correspondence with you, though I am very unworthy of that honour. I have been a very weak fellow-labourer with dear Mr. Whitefield, since his arrival from Georgia. I had lived near twenty years in the midst of a polluted world, and I need not explain to you how different my pursuits are now. But I must ever adore the free unmerited, Almighty grace of God, who has snatched me and my brother Benjamin out of the fire. What distinguishing love must the Almighty have to us, when thousands of polite learned gentlemen have been passed by, and God has displayed his Divine Power in us, in doing that which with man, it was impossible to be done. I am persuaded, dear Sir, when we come to compare experiences in eternity, we shall find most of them tally and answer as face answers to face in the water.

God seems to have visited his people, and is working

* Southey's Life of Wesley, vol. i. Pp. 239, 243, 384.

wonders in this nation. O may the light of his glorious gospel shine to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south. Pray for me, dear Sir, that I may be able to finish the building I have begun, that though I am nothing but poverty, yet I may daily draw such supplies from the fulness of Christ as may bear me up unto the end. I have already run the gauntlet through my old acquaintances, which I could not have done of myself; but I have more and greater trials yet to go through. You have, doubtless, given up your life to your master. Our brother Whitefield lately bore his testimony on a public stage against revellings, cudgelling, and other such evils, on which occasion we have certain information that twelve men lay in wait for his life, but were, by the special providence of God, disappointed. If God will thus honour his servants, as he did St. Paul seventeen hundred years ago, what shall we say? 'Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight?' Indeed I am but a babe, a child in grace. O pray for me, that I may daily grow up unto the perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Your's in Christ,

WILLIAM SEWARD.

From the manner in which Mr. Erskine, in the above extracts from his Diary, introduces the name of the Rev. JOHN WESLEY, it is manifest that, at the first, he entertained favourable sentiments no less of his orthodoxy than of his zeal. That eminent man, it is well known, subsequently opposed with great vehemence, the entire freeness and adorable sovereignty of Divine Grace; by which procedure, while it created an open rupture betwixt him and Mr. Whitefield, he

forfeited much of that high esteem in which he had been previously held by other decided friends to the Calvinistic system. The following letter, however, addressed to him, ere the writer was aware of his leaning to Arminian principles, contains such statements respecting the way in which many hearers, both in England and Scotland, were affected under the preaching of the word, and also regarding his views on some points of Christian experience, that it would be wrong to deny it a place in this memoir.

Letter.—Mr. Ralph Erskine to the Rev. John Wesley.

“ Reverend and Dear Sir,

“ I desire to bless the Lord for the good and great news your letter bears, about the Lord's turning many souls from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, and that such a great and effectual door is opened among you as the many adversaries cannot shut. May he that hath the keys of the house of David, that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth, set the door of faith more and more open among you, till his house be filled, and till he gather together the outcasts of Israel; and may that prayer for adversaries be heard, ‘ fill their faces with shame, that they may seek thy name, O Lord.’ As to the outward manner you speak of, wherein most of these were affected, who were cut to the heart by the sword of the Spirit, no wonder than they were at first surprising to you, since they are indeed so very rare that have been thus wounded; yet some of the instances you give, seem to be exemplified in the outward manner, wherein Paul and the jailor

were at first affected, as also Peter's hearers, Acts ii. The last instance you give of some struggling as in the agonies of death, this is to me somewhat more inexplicable, if it do not resemble the child spoken of, Mark ix. 26, and Luke ix. 42, of whom it is said, that when he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down and tore him. I make no question Satan, so far as he gets power, may exert himself on such occasions, partly to mar and hinder the beginning of the good work, in the persons that are touched with the sharp arrows of conviction, the enemy being unwilling to quit his old possessions, and partly also to prevent the success of the Gospel on others ; while he seeks thus to disparage the work of God, and bring it under contempt and reproach, as if it tended to lead people only to madness and distraction ; and a holy sovereign God may permit it, for trying the faith and constancy of his own children, whom he has called effectually. However, the merciful issue of these conflicts, in the conversion of these persons thus affected, is the main thing, when they are brought, by the saving arm of God, to receive Jesus Christ, to have joy and peace in believing, and then to walk in him, and give evidence that the work is a saving work at length, whether more quickly or gradually accomplished.

“ There is great matter of praise, as to the work of God among us, an account whereof you seem to desire. Though we cannot deny but we sensibly feel now and then, some remarkable breathings of the Spirit of God, in praying and preaching, and frequently hearing of savoury impressions made by the word upon the hearts of people, and of some good fruits following ; and though, any instances of his powerful presence this way, at this juncture, seem to relate more to the carrying on

of the good work when begun, than to the remarkable conversion of others, yet we want not instances of his power and pity this way though not appearing entirely in such sudden and visible effects as these you mention. All the outward appearances of people's being affected among us, in time of preaching, and especially at sacramental occasions, may be reduced to these two sorts. One is, hearing with a close silent attention, with gravity and greediness, discovered by fixed looks, weeping eyes, joyful or sorrowful-like countenances, evidencing tenderness in hearing. Another sort is, when the word is so affecting to the congregation, as to make them lift up their voice and weep aloud, some more depressedly, others more highly, and at times, the whole multitude in a flood of tears, all as it were crying out at once, till their voice be ready to drown out the minister's, so as he can scarcely be heard for the weeping noise that surrounds him. And though we judge that the most solid and judicious of the auditory are seldom so noisy as others, though perhaps more affected inwardly; yet of these that are thus outwardly affected, we conceive some to be under a more common, and others under a special gracious influence of the Spirit of God, which we can only know by the fruits and effects that follow. The common influence, like a land-flood, dries up; we hear of no change wrought; the other appears afterward in the fruits of righteousness, and the tract of a holy conversation. As to the impression the word makes upon those whom we take afterwards to be true converts, the degrees and duration of a law work, or conviction, are various, and the saving issue comes to be known also at sundry times and in divers manners. Some have been more quickly touched and turned to the Lord and his

ways, others have been many weeks, yea months, if not years, under much heaviness, bondage, grievous terrors, and horrible temptations ; some relieved very gradually, with a word now, and a word then, impressed upon them, and some outpouring of the Spirit now and then, and further degrees of illumination and divine teaching, till, by little and little, they have come to more establishment in the faith, and till they be brought off from all confidence, not only in their works and duties, in point of justification before God, but also from all confidence in and dependence upon their best frames, tears, enlargements, influences, and attainments, to a solid life of faith, upon the grounds that are unchangeable.

“ My dear Sir, I will enlarge on this point, in some hints ; under a blessing, they may be useful to you, and us both. A delusive spirit may sometimes lead poor souls to rest upon impressions, motions, and what they feel within them, as if these were to be the ground and reason of their hope, whereas the true feelings and sealing of the Spirit is the fruit and effect of faith, (‘ after ye believed ye were sealed,’ Eph. i. 13;) and the true Spirit of God within a believer, leads him to a dependence upon Christ without him, in the word of grace and promise, and not upon a Christ within him, nor upon any created or communicated graces, gifts, experiences, tears, sorrows, joys, frowns, feeling, or whatever else, is not God himself in Christ, exhibited in the covenant of grace. This is a mark and sign of a work that is divine and saving ; as saving knowledge empties a man of his own knowledge, making him in his own eyes more brutish than any man, and not having the understanding of a man ; so saving faith empties him of his own faith. Many hope to be saved ; why ? be-

cause they trust in God ; and so it is not God, but their own faith and trust in him, they hope upon ; but true evangelical faith, of divine operation, leaves the man that has it nothing to lean unto but Christ, in a bare word, and a ‘ thus saith the Lord : ’ ‘ It leaves him nothing in all the world to hang by but the girdle of God’s loins,’ Is. xi. 5 ; the faithfulness of a promising God, a divine testimony. It leaves him neither righteousness nor strength in himself, that he may come to the proper language of faith, saying, Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength. It leaves him wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, that he may prove only the tried gold and white raiment, and the eye-salve that Christ has to give him ; it leaves him quite destitute of and denied to all good in himself, that he may have nothing but what he has in Christ. Of such Christ says, ‘ Blessed are the poor : to this man will I look, even to him that is poor.’ The man that feels peace, joy, and comfort, in a false way, is in the most dangerous condition ; because here the affections are so sensibly touched, and the thing looks so like unto true grace, that it is easier to convince one of the weakness and unsoundness of all other signs than of this. But God’s saving work is not only a *filling* work, giving people grace and holiness, humility, the spirit of prayer, faith, love, joy, repentance, zeal, making all things new ; but also an *emptying* work, which is the great mysterious part of religion, whereby God shakes a man out of all his religion and righteousness, natural or gracious, in point of dependence, and makes all things nothing, that God and Christ may be all in all. That saving faith, that will abide the trial of death and judgment, can only stand upon such everlasting and

immutable grounds as these, the word and promise of God, which is everlasting, 1 Pet. i. 22—25, the righteousness of Christ, which is everlasting, Dan. ix. 24, being the righteousness of God, and of him who is Jehovah our righteousness, and the grace and fulness that is in Christ, which is also the grace and fulness of God, and everlasting ; not as in the stream, and communicated to us, and so may soon dry up ; but as it is in the spring and fountain, God himself in Christ, in whom God and all his grace and fulness ever dwells. To rest upon these grounds, is to rest upon the eternal God himself, the rock of ages, and to be like Mount Zion, that can never be moved. Such are the remains of corruption, even in those that are true converts ; and so powerful is the legal bias of their hearts, leading them to rest on their duties, graces, frames, feelings, and enjoyments, that oftentimes it may require many years' trial and probation, ere they come to know themselves, and whether God is their only resting place. So that it is not such a *proper question to inquire*, what they feel ? as, where they stand ? if it is upon a ground on which they shall be able to stand in judgment, and stand to eternity ? As, when Christ suffered, the just for the unjust, it was to bring us to God ; so when the Spirit is sent, there is nothing wherein his gracious operation and saving power is more exerted, from time to time, than in bringing sinners to God, by sweeping away all their refuges of lies, and destroying all their false confidences, in any thing whatsoever that is not of God. It is no easy matter, but a work of omnipotence, to be thus brought unto God ; the power of Satan is not put forth more in any way than by leading men to trust in any thing, duties, frames, feelings, or whatever else,

providing he can keep them back from such a faith in Christ as terminates upon God, and all the glorious attributes of God in him, according to the Gospel plan of divine grace, reigning through his righteousness unto eternal life. If Satan has power, he will never suffer a man to come thus to God, and to God only ; hence the saving efficacy of the Gospel when accompanied with the power of the Spirit of God, is expressed by a turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Christ the Mediator is only the great ordinance of God, for restoring a number of lost sinners, and redeeming them to God by his blood ; or the way by which unholy sinners are brought back to a holy God, as the only centre of their rest, to which the more they come, the more holy they are, and to which, if they never come, they never have any true holiness, true religion, or true conversion. May the Lord strengthen you to go on in his work, and in praying for the coming of his kingdom with you and us ! I hope you shall not be forgotten in our joint applications to the throne of grace. Pray let me hear, at your leisure hours, more and more of what the Lord is doing among you.

“ I am, Reverend and very Dear Sir,

Your affectionate brother and servant in Christ,

RALPH ERSKINE.”

The epistolary correspondence that took place betwixt Mr. WHITEFIELD and the members of the Associate Presbytery, in particular Mr. Ralph Erskine, is peculiarly interesting, and comes now to be detailed. Mr. Erskine was favoured with Mr. Whitefield's first letter, it appears, in April 1739 ; and though he prudently deferred replying till he had made some inquiry

respecting his character and doings, the favourable accounts he soon received of that distinguished preacher induced him to return a kind answer ere many months had elapsed. Whether these first-fruits of their mutual esteem are still to be any where seen, we do not certainly know. The following communications, however, may suffice for a specimen of the strong affection these two correspondents then cherished for each other.

*Letter.—Rev. G. Whitefield to Mr. R. Erskine.**

“ Reverend and Dear Sir, “ *London, July 23, 1739.*

“ Yesterday, with great pleasure, I received your kind letter, which gave me much satisfaction. I was afraid lest I should have offended you. If this should be the case at any time, reprove me sharply, and I shall thank you with my whole heart. I bless God that my sermons are approved of by you. I am but a novice in the school of Christ. My Master enlightens me more and more every day, to know the exceeding great riches and freedom of his grace to all that shall believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. The book you mentioned has been sent me by Mr. Davidson, a merchant in Edinburgh. I have not yet time to read it. I doubt not its usefulness, because you recommend it. By this time I hope you have seen my last Journal, and have given thanks for what great things God has done for my soul. An Appendix will

* This letter to Mr. Erskine from Mr. Whitefield, the one above from Mr. Seward, and the long reply to Mr. Whitefield, are all transcribed from short-hand copies written by Mr. Henry Erskine of Falkirk. These are the only copies of them we have seen.

be printed shortly. The success of the Gospel increases yet daily. God make his people more and more willing in this day of his power. Opposition increases daily, but as opposition abounds, so my inward consolation abounds also. A sermon of mine is now printing, which will disturb the pleasure of preferment-loving clergy more than ever. How can I send you some? Do you know Mr. Davidson? Yesterday I sent you near a dozen of my last Journals by one Mr. Smith, as I take it, a minister of the Scots church. O that the blessed Jesus may breathe on them. Mr. Wesley has not yet received your letter. He will readily correspond with you. He fights the Lord's battles, as doth his brother, most courageously. A noble reformation is begun among the Kingston colliers near Bristol. I am now collecting money for building them a school-house; God is pleased to bless it much. Our adversaries gnash with their teeth; 'Turn them, O Lord, we beseech thee, for thy mercies sake.' The news of my death has done great service. Though I long to be dissolved and be with Christ, yet I believe I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord. Father, thy will be done. My tenderest affections await all the Associate Presbytery. I am opposed for owning you, but to deny our Lord's disciples, in my opinion, is denying Christ himself. *Though I die with you, yet, by God's help, I will not deny you in any wise.* Providence detains me here. Pray write, by next post, to Rev. and Dear Sir,

Your's most affectionately in the bowels of Christ,
GEORGE WHITEFIELD."

This very friendly letter reached its destination at the

same moment with Mr. Seward's, as copied above. We are unable to produce the reply to this excellent young convert, but the following answer to his spiritual father will command esteem for the candid and affectionate, as well as faithful spirit it displays.

Letter.—Mr. R. Erskine, to Mr. G. Whitefield.

“DUNFERMLINE, Aug. 21, 1739.

“Reverend and very Dear Sir,

“Your's, dated July 23d, was most acceptable ; and I would have answered it by the first post, as you propose, but that, as it lay about eight days in my house before I was at home to receive it, so I delayed a few days thereafter, as I was to meet with my brethren of the Associate Presbytery, to whom I communicated your line and Mr. William Seward's, and at the same time gave to each of them a copy of your last Journal as a present from you. I received nine of them at Burntisland, where we then were. I received also much about the same time, six of your last sermon on John vii. 37 ; some of which, with some of the former, I also gave to the brethren. And as I return you hearty thanks for these presents, so my brethren received them as tokens of that love and kindness which you express in such affectionate terms, in the close of your letter to me, as gave them very much pleasure and satisfaction, and tended to increase and inflame their love more and more to you. Your being opposed for owning us, and your maintaining such a regard for us, give ground to hope and expect that you will receive no information about us to our disadvantage, unless or until you have account thereof from ourselves, since you

have laid such a foundation of kindly correspondence with us.

“ I have some acquaintance with Mr. Davidson in Edinburgh, whom you mention, and was glad to hear he had sent you Mr. Boston’s books. However, he has not had so much communication with us as I hear he has with you, since he began to sway towards the Independent or Congregational way, which he has for some time been active to promote, though otherwise, I hope, a good and well-disposed man. Mean time, by whatever hand you please to send any print, (expecting, by the first occasion, to see the Appendix, if published) it can scarce fail to come safe, if but directed as your letters are. I have given orders to send you the prints relating to our public affairs in the Associate Presbytery ; and in case of your absence, they are to come to Mr. Seward or Mr. John Wesley.

“ I have now read your Journals and Sermons ; and I can assure you, with reference to the whole work in general and the main scope of it, my soul has been made to magnify the Lord for the very great things he has done for you and by you ; and I rejoice to see you ascribe all to the free grace of God in Christ, and that he has so remarkably raised you up to testify against the errors and corruptions of the times, to rouse and awaken a secure generation, and to bring such a number of sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. If I shall speak of any particulars wherein we differ, it shall only be to show the greatness of my love to you, by the greatness of the freedom I use with you ; also to prevent after mistakes, and to promote unfeigned love, which can both cover a multitude of infirmities, and overlook a number of differences—not by quite

concealing them, which might bring love under a suspicion, but by a friendly mentioning of them, which may prove it to be without dissimulation.

“ Though we desire to cover with the mantle of love all the differences betwixt you and us that flow from your education in the Church of England, and adore the merciful providence of God, who has so far enlightened and qualified you and your brethren to be witnesses for him and instruments of reformation, yet we hope the more this work is of God, the more will it tend to bring about a happy union in the Lord betwixt you and us, not only in a private and personal, but even in a more public and general way. My brethren and I, that have had occasion here to confer about you, see a beauty in the providence of your being in communion with the English Church. Otherwise such great confluences from among them had not attended your ministry, nor consequently received the benefit or reaped the advantage which so many of them have done. And though infinite wisdom has made, and may yet make this an alluring bait to draw them forth, yet as England’s reformation at first, (from Popery and its superstitious and ceremonial services,) however great and glorious, was far from being so full as that of some other Protestant churches, particularly that of Scotland; so we would fain hope that when a new and general reformation shall be set on foot, some more at least of the rags of that Romish church shall be dropt, such as (abstracting at present from the subject of church government) many useless rites and customs relating to worship, which have no Scriptural foundation. This is what some of the most pious and learned divines of your communion have wished to see reformed, knowing that many of these

were retained at first, only under the view of reforming gradually and from some prudential considerations ; and knowing also that the continued retaining of these things, which the reforming fathers designed gradually to cast off, has been more stumbling to the friends, than ever it was gaining to the enemies, of the reformation. Therefore, though providence at present be making a good use of your being, according to your light, of that way, yet when you are beginning, as it were, to lay a new foundation, may the Lord in due time enable you to guard against such things as may afterwards prove a hinderance to a multitude of tender Christians their holding communion with you, as has been the case formerly. *Principiis obsta*, is a caution most necessary in many cases. What the great and famous Reformer Luther, retained from his original Romish education proved a sad dividing snare among the Protestant churches ; and since, by the good hand of God upon you, you are so well occupied in dashing down bigotry and party zeal, I hope the hint I here give you on this head will be the more agreeable. The first and main business, no doubt, is to lay the foundation of saving faith by preaching the pure truths and precious doctrines of the everlasting gospel, which (glory to God) you are so busy about, and we, I hope, are joining heart and hand with you."

" Very dear Sir, if you and your brethren, whom I honour and esteem in the Lord as his eminent witnesses, shall judge the freedom I have here used already to be rash or unseasonable, the least challenge of this sort from you shall be to me as excellent oil which shall not break my head ; for I think I would choose to suffer many miseries rather than choose to offend you. But, hoping my freedom shall rather be taken as a mark of that kind-

ness of which my heart is full, I proceed to tell you what may be reckoned exceptionable in the last journal, though, at the same time, the wonders of divine grace therein recorded were most savoury to me, and to all I have spoken with upon it, and will, I hope, stir up many to prayer and praise. Your opinion about the business of the attorney has, I hear, been written of to you already; and therefore I shall say nothing of it. The correction you gave to your own opinion of its unlawfulness, by adding, 'at least exceedingly dangerous,' satisfied me. Some have thought your love and charity extended a little too far beyond the Scripture rule in some instances, such as Journal last, page 59th, where you say the Quakers' notions about walking and being led by the Spirit, you think, are right and good: Unless they be Quakers of another stamp than the rest, whose dangerous tenets are inconsistent with the right notion of being led by the Spirit, while, beside other things, they deny justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, or his active and passive obedience received by faith to be the only ground of justification before God; and while thus they cannot receive Jesus Christ, they consequently cannot walk in him, nor be led by his Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, testifying of Christ according to the revelation made of him in the word, which they contradict. Whatever duties of love you perform towards these men, I will never believe you mean or intend to justify their principles and delusive notions.

"There is a passage in the same book, page 83d, that has been improven against us and our secession from the judicatories; which yet, when I read it over again, seems to show to me how much you are of our mind, and that you would take the same course, if you had

been in the same situation. You very justly, I think, express your dissatisfaction with three of your brethren that were driven to deny Christ's visible church upon earth, and show that needless separation from the established church would no doubt be attended with ill consequences ; and you judge of the state of a church, not from the practice of its members, but from its primitive and public constitution. Hence to me it would seem that if even the plurality of its members meeting judicially should contradict its primitive and public constitution, you would see fit to leave them and cleave to the said constitution ; which is the case with us in our secession from the present judicatories of the Established Church of Scotland. Such seem to be the defects, it is true, of your ecclesiastical government in England, that unless in the case of a convocation, you can never boast of an ecclesiastical and judicial cleaving unto, nor complain of a judicial seceding from the primitive public constitution. But as I make no question but, in that case, you would find (as matters are at present stated in England) there would be defections of the same sort with you as there are with us, and consequently that you would see need to take the same course that we of the Associate Presbytery do ; so while you want the same advantages for seeing clearly when it is that defections are become national and judicial, and when there is an universal practical departure from the scriptural principles of the church you profess yourself to be of, it is a question how far it is consonant with the word of God to maintain close communion with those of that church who are either subverting its primitive public constitution, or openly and avowedly denying the foresaid principles. Since

right communion is founded on union in the truth, at least by some open profession of it, which most of your clergy seem to have little of, while they excommunicate you and your brethren from the use of their churches; however well ordered, this also is in providence for good, yet it discovers them to be what they are. You likewise add, that so long as the Articles of the Church of England are agreeable to Scripture, you resolve to preach them up, without either bigotry or party zeal. This I heartily approve of, and this is the case with us also. We preach up and defend, doctrinally and judicially, those Articles of the Church of Scotland, agreeable to the scriptures, which the judicatories are letting go. Hence, I conclude, you seem to be just of our mind, as to separation from an established church. We never declared a secession from the Church of Scotland, but on the contrary, only a secession from the judicatories, in their course of defection from the primitive and covenanted constitution, to which we stood also bound by our ordination engagements. And hence, to this day, we never did quit our charges or congregations, to which we were ordained by the imposition of the hands of our several respective presbyteries, nor did we ever design, unless we were obliged by violence or compulsion, so to do.

“ As to your Sermons, dear Sir, I am ashamed you should mention my approbation of them, as if it were of any significancy. The general strain of your doctrine I love, admire, and relish with all my soul, and hope, through the blessing of God, it will do much service. And as to some particular expressions which I myself could not have used, my love to you, and my view of the countenance of heaven with you, made me

to put such a favourable gloss upon them as to discern no odds betwixt you and us. But since I am using all the kind freedom I can, I shall give you some instances :

“ *Almost Christian, penult page.*—‘ We shall then look back on our past sincere and hearty services, which have procured us so valuable a reward.’ This I could by no means interpret, as if you meant it to the detriment of the doctrine of heaven’s being a reward of grace in Christ Jesus, and not of debt to our services, or of eternal life its being the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

“ *Sermon on Justification by Christ, at the close.*—‘ Do but labour to attain that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; and then, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow’——. I could by no means think that this was intended any way to thwart the doctrine of free remission of sins, by the blood and righteousness of Christ only, which is the subject of the preceding sermon; or to make sanctification or labouring after holiness, which is the fruit and evidence, to be the root, ground, cause, or condition of forgiveness, No; I take your view to be, that in this way of labouring to attain holiness, people would evidence to themselves and others, that they were pardoned persons in Christ, or that they could not maintain the knowledge or assurance of it but in this way of holiness.

“ *Sermon on Philip. iii. 10, page 14.*—‘ He has passed from death to life, and shall never, if he stir up the gift of God that is in him, fall into condemnation.’ This *if* here I did not interpret as favouring the Arminian error against the certainty of the perseverance of

saints that are once savingly united to Christ by faith of the operation of God, and passed from death to life ; but rather viewed it as favouring the gospel doctrine concerning the connection betwixt the means and the end, and the necessity of the one in order to the other, though both are secured by promise to a believer in Christ.

“ I was told by one that, in some part of your works, you speak of justification by the act of believing ; but as I noticed nothing of this in the prints, so I affirmed that you had not so learned Christ, as to put the Arminian *eo credere*, or anything done by us, or wrought in us, in the room of Christ and his righteousness, or of his obedience and satisfaction, which alone, received by faith, I was sure, from your writings, you would own to be the only matter and ground of justification.

“ Again, though I could not use the English of your *Bone Deus*, because profane persons here sometimes swear in these terms, yet, as I know it is common among your writers, so I judge nothing is intended by it but a note of astonishment.

“ Though some of these remarks are perhaps but trifling, and not so material as others of them, I have noted all down, that I may keep nothing back from you that in the least occurred to my mind of any seeming dissonancy betwixt us in words. Yet I judged, that, under various ways of speaking, we meant the same thing, and point at the same end ; and I can say before the Lord, I not only approve of your sermons and journals, but see much matter of praise to God for them. I see much of the glory and majesty of God, and many of the stately steps and goings of our mighty king Jesus in them, and have at times, with tears of joy, adored his

name for what he is doing for you and by you, and I pray for the continuance and advancement of that work of God. I rejoice that the Lord's work is going on with you, and that days of power continue. May it do so till all the powers of darkness give way to it, and till every Dagon fall before the ark of God!

"Your way of arguing against the apostatizing clergy of your church in your last sermon, even from the instances drawn out of your service-book, may be to them, I think, arguments *ad hominem*. May the Lord bless for their conviction, and for awakening them out of their spiritual lethargy.

"When I consider how you and your brethren are stirred up of God to such a remarkable way of witnessing for him in England against the corruptions and defections of that church, and when we of the Associate Presbytery have been called forth in a judicial way to witness against the corruptions and defections of the Church of Scotland, and both at a juncture, when Popish powers are combining together against us, and desolating judgments are justly threatened from heaven,—there is perhaps more in the womb of providence relating to our several situations, and successes therein, than we are aware of. What he doth we know not now, but we may know hereafter. If he be gathering his birds together before a storm according to the call, Zeph. i. 1, 2, 3, and Isaiah xxvi. 20, 21, glory to him who doth all things well.

"We have lately been attending several sacramental solemnities in our brethren's congregations, where vast multitudes of people were assembled at the tents without doors, as well as in the church; and I never found more of the presence of God than at some of these oc-

casions. The Spirit of God was sometimes remarkably poured out, and I hope the power of the Lord was present to heal many souls. Enemies gnash with their teeth, as they do with you, but the Lord carries on his work. My brethren salute you most affectionately; they love and respect you in the Lord. Now, very dear Sir, I have in this long letter opened my very heart unto you, and told you the very worst thought that ever entered into it concerning you; which I could not have done, if it were not filled with love to you. And it loves you because you love Christ, and he loves you and honours you, and I hope he will spare and honour you more and more, to be a happy instrument in his hand for advancing his kingdom, and pulling down the throne of iniquity. May the weapons of your warfare be more and more mighty through God for that end. I am, Rev. and dear Sir,

“Yours, most affectionately, in our Blessed Immanuel,
RALPH ERSKINE.”

“I salute the worthy
Sewards and Wesleys in the Lord.”

This long and open-hearted epistle afforded great satisfaction to Mr. Whitefield; as appears from the following extract of his reply:—

*Letter.—Rev. G. Whitefield to Mr. Ralph Erskine.**

“Rev. and Dear Sir, “*Savannah, Jan. 16, 1740.*

“With much pleasure, though not till last week, I received your kind affectionate

* Copied from *Letters* by the Rev. G. Whitefield, vol. i. Let. 150.

**Your weak unworthy brother, and fellow labourer
in Christ, GEORGE WHITEFIELD."**

GEORGE WHITEFIELD."

In a letter of nearly the same date, addressed to Mr. Gilbert Tennant, Mr. Whitefield, alluding to the above communication, says, "Since my arrival here, I have received a sweet endearing instructive letter from Mr. Ralph Erskine."*

About two months, however, prior to the receipt of this "endearing" letter, Mr. Whitefield had despatched three letters from Philadelphia; one to the Associate Presbytery, a second to Ebenezer Erskine, and a third to Ralph. They are as follows:—†

Letter.—Mr. Whitefield to the Ministers of the Associate Presbytery.

"*Wrote at Sea, dated at Philadelphia, Nov. 8, 1739.*

"My dear brethren and worthy fellow-labourers in Christ,

"Though I know none of you in person, yet from the time I heard of your faith and love towards our dear Lord Jesus, I have been acquainted with you in spirit, and have constantly mentioned you in my prayers. The good pleasure of the Lord, I find, has prospered in your hands, and I pray God to increase you more and more, both you and your children. Scotland, like England, seems to have been settled on its lees for some time. Our late day may properly be called the midnight of the church. Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath sent

* Letters by the Rev. G. Whitefield, vol. i. Lett. 151.

† For copies of the letters to the Presbytery and Mr. Ebenezer, which we could not find in the printed collection, we are indebted to a friend. The one addressed to Mr. Ralph may be seen entire in Whitefield's Letters, vol. i. Lett. 138.

forth many of his servants with this cry, behold the Bridegroom cometh. Thousands obey the call, and are trimming their spiritual lamps in order to go forth to meet him. I cannot but think a winnowing time will come after this ingathering of souls. You, my dear brethren, may be called out first to suffer for your Master's sake. God is my judge, I expect to follow after. Oh that we may suffer only as Christians, and then the Spirit of Christ and of glory will rest upon your souls. There is nothing I fear more than that many, out of a false zeal, will endeavour to defend themselves by carnal weapons. This, I think, was the blemish of the Cameronians in the year 84 [1684.] When I read of Hackston's, of Cargill's, cruel execution, I could not but think that as they had taken the sword, so they deservedly perished by the sword. And though God might accept their souls, yet I thought he justly let them receive that temporal condemnation which the Apostle threatens to those who resist the higher powers. God forbid any such spirit should be found amongst us. That moment it creeps in, I should think, God would depart from us. Whatever acts may be made against our preaching, I shall think it my duty, notwithstanding, to open my mouth with all boldness. If I suffer imprisonment or death for so doing, in patience I desire to possess my soul, and leave my cause to God. You, my brethren, I trust, are no otherwise minded. Go on then, go on in the power of the Lord of hosts. The eternal, everlasting God will be your perpetual refuge. He that employs will protect you. As your duty is, so shall your strength be. Let not our dear Lord's lambs perish for lack of pasture. Give ye, O give ye them to eat. Suffer not the wolves to

devour them, but rescue them out of their devouring jaws. And, oh that the same zeal may be found also in me, your unworthy brother. But alas! I blush almost, when I style myself your brother; for I am a child, and all you are fathers. Oh strive together with me in your prayers, that the Divine strength may be still magnified in my weakness. Entreat the Lord to bless the orphan-house. I have reason to think God will bring mighty things to pass out of it. Oh, that I may be prepared for his future mercies! Oh, that pride and self-love may be rooted out of my soul. Brethren, I beseech you by the love of God in Christ Jesus, pray for us. Even whilst winds and storms are blowing over me, you are not forgotten by him, who, though the most unprofitable of his Lord's servants, desires to subscribe himself,

“Your affectionate brother, fellow pilgrim, and labourer in Christ Jesus,

G. WHITEFIELD.”

Letter.—Mr. Whitefield to the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine.

Wrote at Sea, dated at Philadelphia, Nov. 8, 1739.

“Rev. and Dear Sir,

“Surely we have, in some measure, drank of one spirit; otherwise, why is my heart fired, as it hath been, by reading your sermons? Providentially many of them were given me, though I know not by whom. Indeed I can say, they have been food unto my soul. That especially upon raising the tabernacle of David has been greatly blessed to me. Methinks affairs of Scotland and England answer to one another, as face answers to face in the water. Only

England, I believe, is by far the worst. Our governor's dealings with me and my brethren agrees with the treatment you have received. But I find as yet I have not been so faithful as I ought to have been, in exposing the vices and corruptions of our church and age. If God gives me leave to return to England, as I propose in about a twelvemonth, I hope I shall then open my mouth boldly and speak as I ought to speak. For it grieves me to the heart to meditate on the desolation of God's sanctuary. Oh, dear Sir, pray that I may go forth in the Divine strength, and bear my testimony, though it costs me my life. What have I to do to consult that, when the Lord's ark is fallen into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines? Oh that I had the wings of a dove that I might fly to Scotland and catch some of your sacred fire and zeal. For your's is a zeal according to knowledge. God, for ever adored be his free grace, has given you that wisdom which dwells with true Christian prudence. Your advice to your brethren seems quite agreeable to the spirit of Christ, and convinces me that you are willing patiently to suffer for the truth's sake without taking up carnal weapons. I am persuaded your honoured brother and the rest of your associates are like-minded. The searcher of hearts alone knows how earnestly I pray for your success. May the Lord open your mouths more and more, and if it be his will, usher in, at least begin, a thorough work of reformation by your hands. With much fear and trembling I have wrote to the Associate Presbytery. Oh let them not be angry that a babe in Christ takes so much upon him. I love and honour you all for our dear Master's sake, and out of the abundance of my heart my pen wrote. Will you be

pleased to deliver it? Mr. Seward, whom perhaps you have heard of, and my other fellow travellers, say hearty amens to the petitions, which, as the Lord enables me, I put up for you. If it be the Divine will, I pray God I may see you face to face, and have some spiritual gift imparted to me. I have ordered some books to be sent over to you by Mr. Oswald, and if you would be pleased to let me know how I may have all your sermons, you would highly oblige, Rev. and dear Sir,

“ Your obliged friend, fellow labourer, and humble servant,

G. WHITEFIELD.”

“ *P. S.*—Pray see my letter to your brother. He can tell you how to write.”

Letter.—Mr. Whitefield to the Rev. Ralph Erskine.

“ *Philadelphia, Nov. 28, 1739.*

“ Rev. and Dear Sir,

“ The cordial and tender love which I bear you, will not permit me to neglect **any** opportunity of sending to you. I bless the Lord **from** my soul for raising you and several other burning and shining lights to appear for him in this midnight of the church. My heart has been much warmed during **my** voyage by reading some of your sermons, especially that preached before the Associate Presbytery.* I long more and more to hear the rise and progress of your proceedings, and how far you would willingly

* Here he probably alludes to the sermon on Ezek. xvi. 63, in Mr. Erskine's Works, vol. ii. Pp. 81—87.

carry the reformation of the church of Scotland. There are some expressions which I suppose will be interpreted to your disadvantage, both by your domestic and foreign enemies. I should be glad to know who are those martyrs to which you refer, and of what nature those covenants were which you mention in your sermon. My ignorance of the constitution of the Scotch Church, is the cause of my writing after this manner. I should be obliged to you, if you would be pleased to recommend to me some useful books, especially such as open the holy sacrament; for in God's law is my delight. *Boston's Four-fold State of Man* I like exceedingly. Under God, it has been of much service to my soul. I believe I agree with you and him, in the essential truths of Christianity. I bless God, his Spirit has convinced me of our eternal election by the Father through the Son, of our free justification through faith in his blood, of our sanctification as the consequence of that, and of our final perseverance and glorification as the result of all. These, I am persuaded, God has joined together; these neither men nor devils shall ever be able to put asunder. My only scruple at present is, 'whether you approve of taking the sword in defence of your religious rights?' One of our English Bishops, I remember, when I was with him, called you *Cameroonians*. They, I think, took up arms, which I think to be contrary to the Spirit of Jesus Christ and his Apostles.——Pray send an immediate answer, directed as usual, and care will be taken to have it remitted to, Rev. and dear Sir,

“Your most affectionate brother, friend, and fellow-labourer, and obliged servant,

G. WHITEFIELD.”

Although the correspondence betwixt Mr. Whitefield and Mr. Erskine was most probably maintained with considerable regularity, we have discovered few traces of letters written during the year 1740. The year after, however, supplies a number of epistles still extant. The two following letters seem fully as affectionate as any they had ever exchanged.

*Letter.—Mr. Whitefield to Mr. Ralph Erskine.**

“ On board the Minerva, Feb. 16, 1741.

“ Reverend and very Dear Sir,

“ I wrote you a letter from Bohemia in Maryland, and inclosed it in a packet. I should be glad to know whether you have received it or not. You and your brethren are dearer to me than ever. I love and honour you in the bowels of our Lord Jesus Christ. Your Sonnets and Sermons have been blessed to me and many. The former are reprinted in America. I want all your own and brother's works. Since I have been on board, I have been much helped by reading the MARROW OF MODERN DIVINITY. Boston on the Covenant I have just now perused; and this morning have been solacing myself with your Paraphrase upon Solomon's Song. Blessed be our Lord for helping you in that composition. Thanks be to rich and sovereign grace, I have experienced much of the Spirit's influences in making nine Sermons, which I intend to print by subscription towards carrying on a Negro school, I am going to settle in Pennsylvania.

* Copied from a transcript in short-hand characters, found among the papers of Henry Erskine of Falkirk.

The price of them bound will be four shillings. If you or your friends would take a few, it might be for the glory of God. My Journal, which I bring over, will acquaint you how the work of God goes on abroad. Indeed, it is wonderful. The orphan-house has succeeded far beyond expectation. I will send you the particulars as soon as I print my account. I am now going to England, expecting to suffer (see) great things. I hear there are sad divisions and errors sprung up among the brethren. In the spirit of meekness I have answered dear Mr. Wesley's sermon entitled *Free Grace*, and trust God will enable me to bear a full and explicit testimony to all his eternal truths. Blessed be his holy name, I am enlightened daily in the covenant of redemption, and think I experience more and more of the divine life in my soul. I long to be holy even as God is holy; and though I expect not perfection on this side eternity, yet I would press after it day by day.

I believe it is my duty to marry. You will help me with your prayers in this, as in all other respects. You see, dear Sir, how freely I open my heart to you, though I never saw you face to face. If it be the will of God, I shall be glad to come into your parts before I leave England. But I fear my speedy return into America will not permit me. I purpose to embark again, God willing, in the latter end of July or the beginning of August. I write to you so soon, lest I should not have time on shore. I hope my love will find acceptance with your dear brother, and all the Associate Presbytery. My prayers always attend them. I should be glad to sit at their feet, and be taught the way of God more perfectly. I am a child, and feel more and more

every day that I am nothing, less than nothing. Excuse this long letter. When I begin, I know not how to leave off. Indeed you are very dear to,

“Your unworthy friend, brother, and servant in the blessed Jesus,

G. WHITEFIELD.”

“*London, March 16, 1741.*

“I arrived here yesterday morning. The Lord gave me a sweet passage. O praise the Lord of all lords; his mercy endureth for ever.”

*Letter.—Mr. Ralph Erskine to Mr. Whitefield.**

“*Dunfermline, April 10, 1741.*

“Rev. and very Dear Brother,

“I received joyfully your letter dated on board the *Minerva* Feb. 16th, and desire to praise the Lord with you for his wonderful care of, and works done by you. I did not immediately answer, because ere I did so, I intended that my brethren should share with me in the pleasure I had by your’s, and that my answer might impart their friendly salutations as well as my own, which I hereby send you.—Mr. Wilson in Perth, who teacheth as our Professor of Divinity, has more candidates for the ministry under his charge, than most of the public colleges, except Edinburgh. I have two sons with him. They

* This letter has been repeatedly printed. It is here copied from Mr. M’Millan’s *Memoir*, prefixed to his *Beauties of the Rev. R. Erskine*.

seem as yet to be promising youths ; but O pray for them, that they may be fitted with others, for usefulness in the Lord's vineyard. I am glad that the Marrow of Modern Divinity has been helpful to you, as it has been to many. I hope that, and Boston's works, which you have perused, will contribute to give you the same views of the Gospel with all other evangelical divines, and be more and more a fence to you against the erroneous stuff that lards the most part of preachings and prints. Blessed be God, you are set for the defence of the Gospel, and that I hear you sing of distinguishing grace, and of our Lord's powerful presence with you. Go on, dear brother, in asserting and publishing the doctrine of grace reigning through his righteousness to eternal life ; for this, and only this Gospel, will be the organ of omnipotency, and the power of God to the salvation of sinners.

“ Within these two days, I have seen the bitter queries sent you, and your mild answers. Blessed be the Lord that makes you like the industrious bee, that gathers sweet honey out of bitter flowers. Some of their observes will, I hope, work more and more for your good, advance your growth, and further your caution and circumspection. As I did greatly disrelish the bitter spirit in which they wrote, so I noticed their legal strain in vindicating *Tillotson* and the *Whole Duty of Man*. I see them confound the covenant of grace or redemption, that stands fast in Christ, with the divine method in the application and dispensation thereof in the Gospel ; and confounding the condition of the covenant of grace, (which is properly the doing and dying or perfect righteousness of Christ) with the duties and works of the covenanted.——You are still dearer and

dearer to me. By your last journal I observed your growing zeal for the doctrine of grace.

“ Rev. and dear brother,

Your's in him who is (the best centre of our love and union) *the Lord our righteousness.*

RALPH ERSKINE.”

To this very friendly letter the writer appears, a few weeks after, to have added another, explicitly disclosing his sentiments and wishes and those of his brethren, relative to the manner in which his beloved correspondent should exercise his office, during his intended visit to Scotland. In the two following, Mr. Whitefield replies to this proposal with his accustomed candour :—

*Letter.—Mr. Whitefield to Mr. Ebenezer Erskine.**

“ *Bristol, May 16, 1741.*

“ Rev. and Dear Sir,

“ I owe you much love. Only want of time prevents my writing to you oftener. This morning I received a kind letter from your brother Ralph, who thinks it best for me wholly to join the Associate Presbytery, if it shall please God to send me into Scotland. This I cannot altogether come into. I come only as an occasional preacher, to preach the simple Gospel to all that are willing to hear me, of whatever denomination. It will be wrong in me to join in a reformation as to church government, any further than I have light given me from above. If I am quite *neuter* as to that in my preaching, I cannot see

* Letters by the Rev. G. Whitefield, vol. i. Let. 280.

how it can hinder or retard any design you may have on foot. My business seems to be to evangelize, to be a presbyter at large. When I shall be sent into your parts, I know not. I write this, that there may not be the least misunderstanding betwixt us. I love and honour the Associate Presbytery in the bowels of Jesus Christ. With this I send them my due respects, and most humbly beg their prayers. But let them not be offended, if in all things I cannot immediately fall in with them. Let them leave me to God. Whatever light he is pleased to give me, I hope I shall be faithful to it. Our dear and precious Master still carries me on. God enables me to fight my way through. The Gospel doctrines, I believe, will yet prevail. I feel a divine power attending my ministrations. I preach twice daily, and am invited to many places. I believe the Lord intends to keep me on this side the water [the Atlantic] for some time. Blessed be God, all places are alike to me. O dear Sir, pray for me. I am a poor unworthy worm. I love you tenderly, but am almost ashamed to subscribe myself,

“ Your brother in the best of bonds,
G. WHITEFIELD.”

*Letter.—Mr. Whitefield to Mr. Ralph Erskine.**

“ *London, June 4, 1741.*

“ Reverend and Dear Sir,

“ I have now a little time to myself. I must improve it, and answer your kind letter. Blessed be God for enabling me to write

* Letters by the Reverend G. Whitefield, vol. i. Lett. 280.

any thing that may be of service to his church and the comfort of your soul. Glory be to our dear and common Lord, his cause here succeeds. Truth gains ground. The Lord strengthens me mightily. His power is manifested in our congregations. Conversion work is going on apace among us. I am not yet determined about the exact time of coming to Scotland; but I believe I shall be with you in about three months. I can't but think the Associate Presbytery a little too hard upon me. If I am neuter as to the particular reformation of church-government till I have further light, it will be enough. I come simply to preach the gospel, and to be received only as an occasional itinerant preacher by all, and not to enter into any particular connexion whatever. The Lord, I hope, will order my goings in his ways. I desire to hear frequently from you; I have need of your prayers. My trials are great, my comforts far greater. I am a poor worm, and yet Jesus delights to honour me. We are likely to have settled societies in several places. Jesus rides on from conquering to conquer. I am,

“Reverend and Dear Sir,

“Your unworthy fellow-labour, and affectionate brother, and servant in Christ,

G. WHITEFIELD.”

Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, shortly after receiving the above letter of May 16th, wrote a kind answer to Mr. Whitefield, bearing date, “Hilldown, near Dunbar, June 1741,” in which he expresses his eager desire to see him preaching in Scotland with the same power and success that had attended his ministrations in England and America. The proposal made to him by

his brother Ralph and himself in the name of the Associate Presbytery, he assures him, arose from "no party views;" and at the same time, he adds:—"But, if, besides, you could find freedom to company with us, to preach with us and for us, and to accept of our advice in your work while in this country, it might contribute much to weaken the enemy's hand, and to strengthen our's in the work of the Lord, when the strength of the battle is against us."*

The mutual correspondence now detailed was at last succeeded by the memorable personal interview which took place at Dunfermline, betwixt Mr. Whitefield and the members of the Associate Presbytery, in the month of August 1741; and which unhappily proved far less pleasant and satisfactory than they had allowed themselves to anticipate. On this somewhat delicate topic, we shall begin by stating the facts of the conference, so far as they can yet be learned from authentic documents.

The two following letters, written in haste by Mr. Erskine, immediately after a first sight and hearing of Mr. Whitefield, serve to show the favourable impression made upon his mind by his conversation and discourses, as well as the lively solicitude he felt to secure the continuance of friendship, and to see a harmonious co-operation established betwixt that celebrated preacher and the Associate Presbytery.†

* See this Letter in the Life of Eben. Erskine, pp. 424.—427.

† We have been favoured with correct copies of these letters by a friend.

“ To the Rev. Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, Minister of the Gospel at Stirling.

“ Dear Brother,

“ Yesterday, about 3 afternoon, Mr. Whitefield landed at Leith ; and after tarrying about an hour in Edinburgh, he thence, over the belly of vast opposition, came to me yesternight about ten. I had conversation with him alone this forenoon. I only mention this one thing about his ordination ; he owned he then knew no other way, but said he would not have it that way again for a thousand worlds. As to his preaching, he declares he can refuse no call to preach Christ, whoever gives it ; were it a Jesuit priest or a Mahometan, he would embrace it, for testifying against them. He preached in my meeting-house this afternoon ; the Lord is evidently with him. He could not be detained from returning to Edinburgh this night. But this comes to inform you that he is to return here to Dunfermline, on Tuesday night, and expects to see and converse with my brethren on the Wednesday. I am,

“ Dear Brother, yours affectionately,

RALPH ERSKINE.”

“ Dunfermline, July 31, 1741.

“ To the Rev. Mr. Adam Gibb, Minister of the Gospel at Edinburgh.

“ Reverend and Dear Brother,

“ Mr. Whitefield was, it seems, under some engagements to return to Edinburgh. I

have many pleasant things to say of him, and his communication with me, which I have not time to write of. But I find his light leads him to preach even at the call of those against whom he can freely testify. This comes to shew you that he designs and desires to meet with the Brethren, and has promised to be at Dunfermline on Tuesday evening, that he may have the Wednesday with them. This I inform you of, that you may attend; and I hope you will endeavour to inform Mr. James Mair and Mr. Hutton. This in haste from,

R. D. B. Yours affectionately,

RALPH ERSKINE."

"*Queen's Ferry, July 31, 1741.*"

"I am in this place by coming along with Mr. Whitefield to the Ferry. He preached in my meeting-house this day. I see the Lord is with him. I expect he will call for you. I got your letter."

During the short interval betwixt his first appearance at Dunfermline and his conversation with the Associate Presbytery there, Mr. Whitefield wrote a letter to a friend at a distance, of which we give the following extract:—*

"*To Mr. J——. C——.*

Edinburgh, Aug. 1, 1741.

"My very dear Brother,

"The Lord was very gracious to me on board. He gave us a pleasant passage. As you know that the Messrs. Erskines gave me the first invi-

* Letters by the Reverend G. Whitefield, vol. i. Lett. 337.

tation to Scotland, and have been praying for me in the most public, explicit, I could almost say, extravagant manner, for nearly two years last past, I was determined to give them the first offer of my poor ministrations. Accordingly I went yesterday to Dunfermline, where dear Mr. Ralph Erskine hath got a large and separate, or as it is commonly termed, *Seceding Meeting-house*. He received me very lovingly. I preached to his and the town's people, a very thronged assembly. After I had done prayer and named my text, the rustling made by opening the bibles all at once quite surprised me ; a scene I never was witness to before. Our conversation, after sermon in the house, was such as became the gospel of Christ.—They urged a longer stay, in order to converse more closely, and to set me right about church government and the Solemn League and Covenant. I informed them that I had given notice of preaching in Edinburgh this evening ; but as they desired it, I would in a few days return and meet the Associate Presbytery in Mr. Ralph's house. This was agreed on. Dear Mr. Erskine accompanied me, and this evening I preached to many thousands in a place called *the Orphan-house Park*. The Lord was there. Immediately after sermon, a large company, among whom were some of the nobility, came to salute me. Amid our conversation came in a portly well-looking Quaker, nephew to Messrs. Erskine, formerly a Baptist minister in the north of England, who taking me by the hand said, ' Friend *George* I am as thou art ; I am for bringing all to the life and power of the ever-living God ; and therefore if thou wilt not quarrel with me about my hat, I will not quarrel with thee about thy gown.' In

this respect I wish all of every denomination were thus minded.—

G. WHITEFIELD.”

The intended conference, followed by public worship in the evening, took place on Wednesday the 5th of August. It is confessedly difficult to obtain a correct account of any conversation that is held by a number of persons on points to which importance is attached, and more especially when the result is unsatisfactory and dissensions arise. In such cases reason requires us at least coolly to hear and compare the reports of both parties. Even where the integrity of all concerned is above suspicion, it is invariably found that slight diversities occur in the statements of individuals, and the omissions of one are supplied by another.

Mr. Whitefield's account of this conference, which appears in his published letters, is well known. It exhibits indications of that good man's constitutional vein for humour, and it has been eagerly appealed to by subsequent writers, who wished to expose the Associate Presbytery to ridicule and contempt. Let it suffice to quote the following passage from a letter to a friend in America.*

Letter.— Mr. Whitefield to Mr. Thomas N——, at New York.

“ Edinburgh, Aug. 8, 1741.

“ My dear Brother,

“ ——— The Associate Presbytery here are so confined that they will not so much as hear

* Letters by the Rev. G. Whitefield, vol. i. Lett. 339.

me, unless I only will join with them. Mr. Ralph Erskine, indeed, did hear me, and went up with me into the pulpit of the Canongate Church. The people were ready to shout for joy ; but I believe it gave offence to his associates. I met most of them according to appointment on Wednesday last. A set of grave venerable men ! They soon proposed to form themselves into a Presbytery, and were proceeding to choose a moderator. I asked them for what purpose ? They answered, to discourse and set me right about the matter of church government and the Solemn League and Covenant. I replied, they might save themselves that trouble, for I had no scruples about it, and that settling church government, and preaching about the Solemn League and Covenant, was not my plan. I then told them something of my experience, and how I was led out into my present way of acting. One, in particular, said he was deeply affected ; and the dear Mr. Erskine desired they would have patience with me, for that having been born and bred in England, and never studied the point, I could not be supposed to be so perfectly acquainted with the nature of their covenants. One much warmer than the rest immediately replied, ‘ that no indulgence was to be shown me ; that England had revolted most with respect to church government, and that I, born and educated there, could not but be acquainted with the matter now in debate.’ I told him I had never yet made the Solemn League and Covenant the object of my study, being too busy about matters, as I judged, of greater importance. Several replied, that every pin of the tabernacle was precious. I said that in every building there were outside and inside workmen ; that the latter at present was my pro-

vince; that if they thought themselves called to the former, they might proceed in their own way, and I should proceed in mine. I then asked them seriously what they would have me to do. The answer was, that I was not desired to subscribe immediately to the Solemn League and Covenant, but to preach only for them till I had further light. I asked, why only for them? Mr. Ralph Erskine said, 'they were the Lord's people.' I then asked, whether there were no other Lord's people but themselves; and supposing all others were the devil's people, they certainly had more need to be preached to, and therefore I was more and more determined to go out into the highways and hedges; and that if the pope himself would lend me his pulpit, I would gladly proclaim the righteousness of Jesus Christ therein. Soon after this, the company broke up, and one of these otherwise venerable men immediately went into the meeting-house and preached upon these words, 'Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, the morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye; return, come.' I attended, but the good man so spent himself on the former part of his sermon in talking against Prelacy, the Common Prayer Book, the Surplice, the Rose in the Hat, and such like externals, that when he came to the latter part of his text, to invite poor sinners to Jesus Christ, his breath was so gone that he could scarce be heard. What a pity that the last was not first and the first last. The consequence of all this was an open breach. I retired, I wept, I prayed; and after preaching in the fields, sat down and dined with them, and then took a final leave.

Ever your's in our common Lord,

G. WHITEFIELD."

Such then is Mr. Whitefield's history of this singular interview. Let us now hear those notices of it on the other side, which it has been in our power to collect.

The following statement, by a highly esteemed minister of the Secession, though not of that age, or an eye-witness of the scene, may be here introduced :—

“ Sometime after Mr. Whitefield's coming to Scotland, the Presbytery, or members of it, had a conversation with him. It is likely enough that the solemn league might be mentioned in this conversation. But it has still been understood, that the direct and principal reason of difference was about church government. On this head, an anecdote is commonly told, the truth of which there seems to be no reason to doubt. After a good deal of reasoning as to a particular form of church government being prescribed in Scripture, Mr. Whitefield, laying his hand on his heart, said, ‘ I do not find it here.’ Mr. Alexander Moncrieff, who was of a warm temper, giving a rap on the Bible, which was lying on the table, replied, ‘ But I find it here.’ On this, if I mistake not, the conversation terminated; and it has still been asserted, that the proper ground of their giving up any connexion with Mr. Whitefield was his positive denial that any particular form of church government was of Divine authority, and declaring his resolution to maintain this in his public ministrations.”*

The representation which this learned author gives of the principal subject of the conversation, and the cause of that “ open breach” which ensued, is confirmed

* Remarks on the Rev. Rowland Hill's Journal, by John Jamieson, D. D., Edinburgh, p. 39.

by an original memorandum, written by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine soon after the conversation took place.*

“ Here follows an Account of a Conversation held with Mr. Whitefield at Dunfermline, Wednesday, August 5th, 1741. The ministers of the Presbytery present, were Messrs. Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, Mr. Moncrieff, Mr. Gibb, Messrs. Thomas and James Mair, Mr. Clarkson, with two elders, namely, Mr. [James Wardlaw and Mr. John Moubray.]

“ We being advertised to be here this day, by a letter from Mr. Ralph Erskine, who had formed the *tryst* with Mr. Whitefield, Mr. Ralph’s letter bearing, that Mr. Whitefield desired the conference, &c., and that he had yielded so far to him as to his episcopal ordination, that he would not take it again for a thousand worlds, but at the time he knew no better. Upon *Tuesday* night, when we arrived at the place, we waited upon Mr. Whitefield in Mr. Erskine’s house, where and when we had some conversation about several things relating to the state of affairs in the church. *Wednesday* forenoon, the ministers and elders above-mentioned met with Mr. Whitefield, in consequence of a letter from Mr. Ralph Erskine, desiring they might have a conference with him ; and they having met as above, a motion was made, that Mr. Ebenezer Erskine pray before they entered upon conversation. As Mr. White-

* This memorandum is copied *verbatim* from Mr. Ebenezer Erskine’s short-hand characters, lately observed in one of his note-books.

field showed an inclination to proceed to a conference about toleration for a time, it was proposed, that, seeing toleration of all sects by a church is an opinion of his, as supported by some Scriptures, and as that principle concerns church government, it was thought fit to consider what is the form of government Christ has laid down in his word. And agreeably to this, Mr. Whitefield put the question, Whether Presbyterian government be that which is agreeable to the pattern shown in the mount? and supposing that it is, if it excluded a toleration of such as Independents, Anabaptists, and Episcopalians, among whom there are good men?

“ Mr. Ebenezer Erskine said to him, ‘ Sir, God has made you an instrument of gathering a great multitude of souls to the faith and profession of the gospel of Christ throughout England, and also in foreign parts; and now it is fit that you should be considering how that body is to be organized and preserved: which cannot be done without following the example of Paul and Barnabas, who, when they had gathered churches by the preaching of the gospel, visited them again, and ordained over them elders in every city; which you cannot do alone, without some two or three met together in a judicative capacity in the name of the Lord.’ Unto all which Mr. Whitefield replied, that he reckoned it his present duty to go on in preaching the gospel, without proceeding to any such work. It was urged, that it might please the Lord to call upon him; and, in that case, there being none other, the flock might be scattered, and fall into the hands of grievous wolves without any to care for them. He said, that he being of the communion of the Church of England, had

none to join him in that work, and that he had no freedom to separate from the Church of England, until they did cast him out or excommunicate him."

It is to be regretted, that an authorized account of the conversation in question, probably more full and circumstantial than this memorandum written by Mr. Ebenezer, cannot now be found. That an account of this description once existed, appears from the following document :—

Letter—"To the Rev. Mr. Adam Gibb, Minister of the Gospel in Edinburgh, at Mr. Cleland's house, above the Weigh-house, north side of the street, Edinburgh.

" R. D. B.

" I expected before this time a copy of the conversation we had with Mr. Whitefield in this place. I have some occasions that require my having it. Therefore please send me, if you can, a copy with this post. I'll be glad to have your news. I hear Mr. Whitefield is to be in this bound toward the end of this week. I sent him this day a letter, wherein I used much plainness with him, on account of his declining conversation with us upon Church Government, and upon the influence I dreaded he was now under,—— though all my plainness was in the most kindly way. I am,

R. D. B. yours, very affectionately,

" *Dunfermline, Aug. 17, 1741. RALPH ERSKINE.*"

The letter to Mr. Whitefield, referred to in these lines to Mr. Gibb, we are unable to produce. We have

discovered, however, in one of Mr. Erskine's manuscripts, a few previous jottings, which seem sufficient to show us the general scope of that letter. They are as follows :—

“ I write more freely than I can speak.——Sorrowful for being disappointed about your lying open to light, as appears from your declining conversation on that head,——sorrowful for your coming harnessed with a resolution to stand out against every thing that should be advanced against——. The freedom I used at first, and whereof I am not ashamed, in accompanying you first to my own pulpit here, and then to another in Edinburgh, was founded upon a full expectation I had, that you were, as I have many times said, in the road of reformation, not only as to the doctrine, but also every thing relating to the security of it, and all things relating to the house of God, and which, you knew, we were contending for.——A conversation to be wished, free of that confusion that took place on Wednesday, occasioned by the hurry of ringing of bells, and expectation of sermon, at a time when the brethren wished for a sedate conversation.——

“ As since your conversion, you learned the doctrine by reading your Bible on your knees, so may you learn what relates to the discipline and government the same way: but to refer the disquisition of this cause till you read books *pro* and *con*, and peruse the volumes of different parties; in this way you must propose to come to an end of life before you come to the end of books.——”

The reader is now in possession of all the original documents of any value regarding this noted conference,

which we have hitherto seen; and his attention is requested to the following remarks.

The undoubted excellencies of Mr. Whitefield's character, and the astonishing effects of his ministry, are calculated, in some degree, to bias the judgment in his favour, and to disqualify his admirers for equitably deciding a disputed point in which he is concerned. With all his misapprehensions and eccentricities, he was a great man of God. Sincerely pious, fervent in spirit, active and indefatigable in his habits, and endowed with unrivalled powers of eloquence, he became the honoured instrument of converting a vast number of souls to the Saviour. Our admiration for his worth, talents, and success, should not, however, induce us to justify his infirmities and mistakes, or to load with unmeasured opprobrium, any class of faithful men, whose sentiments and methods of proceeding were not entirely in accordance with his.

Some members of the Associate Presbytery, it is granted, had been "weak" enough to flatter themselves with too sanguine expectations of persuading Mr. Whitefield almost entirely to adopt their views. Yet, who can deny that these hopes are in part to be attributed to the spirit of docility he breathed in his letters, and to the ardent, if not "extravagant" expressions of personal respect and attachment they contained? Shortly before his first visit to Scotland, he had indeed expressly stated his resolution to confine his services to no particular denomination. It was not easy, however, to obliterate the impressions made, or to extinguish the hopes enkindled, by such previous declarations as these: "I should be glad to sit at their feet, and be taught the

way of God more perfectly :” “ There is no face on earth I would desire more earnestly to see ;” “ Though I die with you, by God’s help I will not deny you in any wise.” Besides, he had freely confessed, and openly testified against the corruptions of the English church ; and more than once he declared, that he “ would not receive ordination again by the hands of a bishop for a thousand worlds.”

Another circumstance must not be overlooked. At the very moment of his first landing in Scotland, an opportunity was eagerly seized, of attempting to infuse prejudices into his mind against the ministers of the Secession, and the cause in which they had embarked. Mr. Erskine, we have seen above, refers to his “ coming harnessed” to the conference at Dunfermline ; and, in a letter to Mr. Gibb, he speaks of having written to Mr. Whitefield concerning “ the influence” he dreaded he was now under. To understand what is meant by this “ influence,” it is necessary only to read the following extract from a “ Biographical Sketch of the late Dr. Alexander Webster, one of the ministers of the city of Edinburgh,” a clergyman of acknowledged dexterity and eloquence :—

“ In the year 1741, they [the ministers who had seceded from the national church] invited down to Scotland Mr. George Whitefield, a young English preacher, of great piety, and extraordinary pulpit abilities. Mr. Whitefield, on his journey to Dunfermline, the principal abode of the Secession, was met and entertained at Edinburgh by Mr. Webster, and some of his brethren. From them he learned the state of church prejudices and parties in Scotland ; and though he kept

his promise of preaching first in Fife, he openly refused to connect himself with any particular sect.*

The difference betwixt Mr. Whitefield and the seceding ministers did not at all turn on the subject of coercive measures in religion. Though he once suspected them of favouring the propagation of the truth "by "carnal weapons," he had seen good reason to lay aside that suspicion. The toleration referred to by Ebenezer Erskine, in his account of the conference, it is evident, was merely an ecclesiastical forbearance. The point in question was not, whether persons holding unscriptural tenets should be tolerated by the state, but whether such persons should be admitted members of the church—whether those who entertained opposite views relative to the government Christ has appointed in his house, should hold fellowship with each other in all divine ordinances.

The Associate Presbytery, it may be readily conceded, were somewhat "hard upon" Mr. Whitefield. It would certainly have become them, at least some of them, to have treated him in a more gentle and conciliatory way. His sentiments and theirs, however, were too discordant to admit of cordial co-operation. It was not to be imagined, that, if he fully retained his connexion with the Church of England, it could comport with their principles or inclinations, any more than with their policy, to employ him as their fellow-labourer in the work of reformation. In some instances he was keenly objected to on the same ground, by ministers who adhered to the national church. The Rev. Mr. Bisset of Aberdeen publicly entreated God to forgive

* Scot's Magazine for 1802, p. 279.

the dishonour that had been put upon him by Mr. Whitefield's being employed to preach in that pulpit; and in the course of his sermon, he took occasion to assign, as one reason for the petition, that he was "a curate of the Church of England."* In a reply also to the Rev. Mr. Willison of Dundee, Mr. Whitefield says, "Your letter gave me some little concern. I thought it breathed much of a Sectarian spirit, to which, I hoped, dear Mr. W—— was quite averse. Methinks you seem, dear Sir, not satisfied unless I declare myself a Presbyterian, and openly renounce the Church of England."†

Impartial inquirers cannot fail to observe, that the ministers of the Associate Presbytery were now placed in very peculiar circumstances. The General Assembly having, in the year 1740, formally deposed them, and rendered it unconstitutional for any clergyman of the national church to recognize them in any form as brethren in office, they, on their part, adopted more rigid counsels than formerly with reference to communion. The breach on both sides became extremely wide. It may be plausibly, if not justly alleged, that the seceding brethren, notwithstanding the treatment they had met with, ought not to have abandoned their original proposal, but continued to declare their willingness to hold fellowship with those ministers and members of the Church of Scotland who concurred with them in lamenting her defections, while they considered it their duty to remain within her pale. As matters now stood, however, it is not wonderful that they de-

* Letters by Rev. G. Whitefield, Let. 361.

† *Ibid.* Let. 429, dated July 7, 1742.

terminated to follow a stricter rule of proceeding; and that in consequence, consistency required them to decline any public connexion with Mr. Whitefield, unless he could be prevailed on, during his residence in Scotland, to relinquish his design to treat all the different parties alike. This refusal, whatever illiberality it may seem to display, is by no means strange. It has found its parallel in the transactions of various other churches in more recent times, not excepting those that are established by the Legislature. The Church of England, it is well known, still professedly regards the ministrations of all other Protestant churches as possessing no real validity; and within less than forty years since, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland expressly prohibited her clergy to open their pulpits even to any minister of the Church of England. Doth it not sometimes happen, that the same measures which in one church are lauded as most necessary and salutary precautions, are in another denounced as unequivocal proofs of sourness and bigotry?

Mr. Whitefield, in his account of the conference with the Associate Presbytery at Dunfermline,* takes no notice of the weighty considerations, urged by Ebenezer Erskine, to show the necessity of the regular organization of churches; but he ascribes an expression to Ralph, which has been often cited as an instance of great illiberality of sentiment. On this point, we shall avail ourselves of the following explanation, furnished by a writer, who seems well acquainted with the history of the Secession:—

“ The conclusion of the conference, in which Mr.

* See above.

Ralph Erskine is represented as saying of the Seceders, 'We are the Lord's people,' and the rest that follows, does not deserve much consideration. Nobody who knew any thing of Ralph Erskine will for a moment believe, that these are the *ipsissima verba* that passed at the conference. Many things were said in it, we have no doubt, that appeared to Mr. Whitefield quite unaccountable; and when he gave, what he apprehended was something like the sense of what was said on both sides—the exact words he could not give—there is reason to think that he, as on many other occasions, indulged a little his natural turn for pleasantry. Mr. Erskine, we believe, did say, that they, viz. the Seceders, were, in a particular sense, witnesses for the truth, from which the church of Scotland had in part apostatized, and were engaged in a cause, which, they were convinced, was the cause of God. These and similar expressions, we believe, were unconsciously caricatured by Mr. Whitefield; but yet so far changed were they from their original consistent form and meaning, as to fit them in the hands of Sir H—— M——, and others before him, for making the Seceders appear very ridiculous. As a farther proof that Mr. Ralph Erskine did not use any such preposterous arguments as those imputed to him, we have the best authority for saying, that nothing at all resembling them appeared in a full and accurate minute of the conference made out at the time, and long preserved, but which has at length unfortunately disappeared.*

That Mr. Erskine was in reality a man of a far more

* Review of Sir H. Moncreiff's Life of Dr. Erskine, Ch. Repos. vol. iv. p. 551.

liberal and catholic spirit than these "caricatured" expressions would lead one to imagine, is evident from the tenor of his life and writings. We might refer to some passages in his letters to Mr. Whitefield himself,* and to several of his printed sermons.† But let it suffice to quote a few sentences from an unpublished address to his congregation, immediately preceding the administration of the Lord's Supper, August 10, 1740. Having shown the propriety of their adhering to the cause maintained by the ministers of the Secession, in contradistinction to the course pursued by those who had deposed them, he anticipates and answers a question on this point as follows:—

"But does our joining with you import an obligation never to hear or join again with any in the present establishment, be they otherwise ever such good men and well-disposed, or never to hear or join with any but such as are associate with you? I answer, this would, indeed, be a very untender, unmerciful, and unreasonable term of communion, and would be justly condemned by all the Christian world. This would be to exclude ourselves and others from all occasional and providential communion with all the churches of Christ upon earth that are not just of our society. This would be, as I heard one lately say, to cast off all that have Christ's image, unless they have just our image too. *We are far from thinking that all are Christ's friends that join with us, and that all are his enemies that do not. No indeed.*"

Considerate and unbiassed judges will, perhaps, see

* See above, p. 300, the letter, dated Aug. 21, 1739.

† See vol. i. p. 694.

cause, on the whole, to conclude, as a late writer has expressed it, that Mr. Whitefield and the Associate Presbytery "parted in a manner which has left no credit to either party."* This awkward parting, without question, supplies an example of human infirmity calculated to operate as a salutary warning to Christians in succeeding times, whilst the brotherly correspondence by the pen which preceded, may still, under the Divine blessing, prove a means of strengthening the best affections of the heart.

* Chalmers' *Lives of Distinguished and Illustrious Scotsmen*.
Art. Rev. Ralph Erskine.

CHAPTER VIII.

Observations on the controversy respecting the Cambuslang work—Mr. Erskine's share in that dispute—Loyalty during the Rebellion, 1745-6—His remarks on the flight of the Highland army—Imaginary interview with the Duke of Cumberland—His deportment, trials, and writings on occasion of the Breach in the Associate Synod, 1747—Continued activity and usefulness—Disappointment in not obtaining his son James for his colleague—Exercise under bodily afflictions—Circumstances of his death and burial—His successors in the ministry at Dunfermline.

“THE beginning of contention is as when one letteth out water.” With great rapidity it rises to a mournful height, and its operation proves equally mischievous and extensive. Strife among “brethren” is usually marked by peculiar virulence. The higher the esteem and the stronger the affection they once entertained for each other, and the more sanguine the expectations they cherished of increasing each other's happiness and usefulness by mutual fellowship and assistance, they become, in the event of a difference, the more deeply and irreconcilably offended. Irritated by the pangs of disappointment, they seldom rest satisfied with relinquishing all fraternal intercourse; they generally, less or more, indulge in positive rancour and fierce hostilities.

The ungracious meeting and abrupt parting that took place betwixt Mr. Whitefield and the Associate Presbytery, after the affectionate correspondence which for a

few years had been maintained by that distinguished individual and some members of the Presbytery, could hardly fail to wound the feelings of both parties, and to pave the way for sharp contention. Mr. Whitefield did not hesitate to express his disgust at the "narrow" views to which they were attached, and to represent their scheme as a proper subject for ridicule. Their plan of reformation, it is well known, was characterized by him as "a Babel building that behoved to be pulled down;" in reference to which Ralph Erskine thus expressed himself: "We hope the glory of God, and the God of glory is so much concerned in it, that it will defy all the gates of hell to prevail against it."* Mr. Whitefield too, having differed with the Seceders, was received with the utmost cordiality by the evangelical clergymen of the establishment; and while prompted, there is reason to hope, by a sincere desire for the conversion of sinners and the revival of religion, they encouraged him in his powerful preaching and extraordinary labours, they also availed themselves confessedly of his friendship and his ministrations, as means of upholding the interests of the national establishment in opposition to those of an alarming secession.†

* This sentence is quoted from one of Mr. Erskine's manuscripts. Some remarks on that famous saying of Mr. Whitefield may be seen in the *Life of Eben. E.* Pp. 429, 430.

† This statement is justified by a pamphlet written by the Rev. JOHN BISSET of Aberdeen, entitled, "A Letter to a Gentleman in Edinburgh, containing remarks upon a late Apology for the Presbyterians in Scotland who keep communion in the ordinances of the gospel with Mr. George Whitefield, a priest of the Church of England." The letter bears date Oct. 26, 1742. "I am heartily sorry," says the writer, Pp. 4, 5, "for the narrow way of thinking and unaccountable way of doing

The ministers of the Secession, on their part, suffered their prepossessions and feelings on this occasion, to carry them beyond all reasonable bounds. Had they been content with addressing calm and dignified admonitions to their people regarding the laxity of Mr. Whitefield's principles in reference to the government of the church and the necessity of acting a consistent part as sound presbyterians, and as witnesses for sacred truth and religious liberty, no one could have justly blamed them. Most unhappily, however, they poured out against that excellent man, and against their former friends and brethren in the church of Scotland, a torrent of bitter invectives, for which the strenuous efforts employed to disparage their own proceedings and to obstruct the success of their cause, furnish no adequate apology.

To detail the subsequent labours of Mr. Whitefield in Scotland, or to discuss the questions relative to what is styled the *Cambuslang work*, does not belong to the present narrative. The circumstances of that extraordinary scene have been related in various publications; the opposite views that were taken of it, have been zealously supported by the respective parties;* nor can we

that is with some of the worthy ministers of the Secession, who forbid communion with such ministers as are not one whit behind themselves in witnessing against prevailing evils, and the defections of the Church of Scotland. But I never expected that some ministers and elders, because of their extremes, would have given up with all their former contendings, and have invited, employed, and caressed a subverter of our government, as it would seem, for this end, to break the Seceders."

* See Rev. Mr. M'Culloch's Account of the work at Cambuslang, Narrative of the Extraordinary Work of the Spirit of God

boast of having discovered any documents that serve to throw much additional light on the subject. Yet since the subject of this memoir took a considerable share in the controversy, we must not pass it over without a few observations.

Mr. Whitefield was induced to prolong his first visit to Scotland for about the space of three months; during which his energetic and extensive ministrations attracted public notice beyond all precedent, and produced striking effects on many of his hearers. Having also returned next summer 1742, he concurred with several pious ministers of the national church in promoting the singular work which had commenced at Cambuslang in the spring of that year. His previous preaching indeed, with the perusal of his Journals and similar publications of the English Methodists, was understood to have exercised a primary influence on its commencement. Both the abettors and the revilers of this work unquestionably proceeded to extremes. The established clergy extolled it beyond measure as “a glorious work of the Spirit of God,” while the seceding ministers most unjustifiably reproached it, without due discrimination, as a “delusion of the devil.” Credible testimony com-

at Kilsyth, &c. by the Rev. James Robe of Kilsyth, Mr. Robe's Three Letters to Mr. Fisher, Dr. Webster's Letter concerning Divine Influence, &c. Willison's Fair and Impartial Testimony, Pp. 102—109. On the other side, see Fisher's Review of the Preface to Mr. Robe's narrative, Mr. Ralph Erskine's Fraud and Falsehood detected, &c. Among more recent accounts of this work, see Dr. Meek on Cambuslang Parish in Statist. Acc. of Scotland, vol. v. Pp. 266—274. Struthers' Hist. of Scotland, Vol ii. Pp. 59—72, and Hist. Acc. of Secession in Christ. Reposit. vol. v. Pp. 158—169.

pels us to believe that, though multitudes who had then experienced temporary impressions of the truth, subsequently gave practical evidence that they had been deceived and deluded by Satan or their own hearts, there were several hundreds of persons, whose exemplary conduct in future life afforded sufficient proof that at that memorable period they had in reality been visited with the regenerating power of the Divine Spirit. Amidst the keen discussions which took place, however, too little attention was given, on either side, to the force of sympathy and the constitutional tendencies of individuals, which were certainly the natural causes of much that was ascribed to these contrary sources, the gracious influence of heaven, and the malignant agency of hell. The worthy ministers who promoted the work appear, at least in the first instance, to have attached undue importance, and lent too much encouragement to those bodily agitations and violent outcries, with which convictions of sin and discoveries of the Saviour were frequently attended. Mr. Erskine affirms that he "seldom ever heard any such clamorous noise in time of public worship without giving a public check to it;"* and the defenders of the work ultimately satisfied themselves with maintaining, "that such effects on the body are not incompatible with saving operations on the mind."†

The visionary representations with which many of the converts considered themselves favoured, gave rise to much disputation. On the one side, it was held, that

* Faith no Fancy, Appendix to Preface, p. xvi.

† Letter from Mr. Alex. Webster to Mr. R. Erskine, &c. 1743, p. 16.

images of spiritual things must necessarily be represented more or less strongly to the fancy, and that "imaginary ideas of Christ as man belonged to saving faith," or at least were "helpful to the faith of his being God-man." Those who refused to acquiesce in this doctrine, were even accused of heresy and blasphemy. On the other side, it was argued, that such imaginary ideas are unwarranted by Scripture, and injurious to the exercise of genuine faith. On this question, "Mr. Ralph Erskine wrote a book of considerable length and undoubted ability, entitled 'Faith no Fancy, or a Treatise of Mental Images.'" This publication "has been celebrated as not only comparatively moderate, but as displaying an extraordinary degree of metaphysical acuteness. Some quick-sighted readers have found in it the principles on which Dr. Reid afterwards built his system of the philosophy of the human mind; but whether they are really there or not, may be matter of some doubt. To find them out, it is necessary that the book be well understood; and it is not every where level to mere ordinary capacities."*

Though the work at Cambuslang, and several other villages in the west of Scotland, was tarnished by some glaring improprieties, and though its zealous promoters injudiciously employed it as a conclusive argument against the whole cause of the Secession, we deeply regret the sweeping condemnatory sentence passed on that work by the act of the Associate Presbytery, July 15, 1742, and the vehement expressions regarding it and its friends, that occur in various pamphlets and sermons, published by individual members of the Pres-

* Ch. Reposit. vol. v. p. 169.

bytery.* We have reason to believe that the violence then discovered, has not only been sincerely deplored by their successors in office, but that they themselves lived to repent of the rancour into which the heat of controversy had at first betrayed them. The Reverend Mr. Fisher, we know, was accustomed to say to his brethren, that had he been aware of the distinguished worth of Mr. Edwards of Northampton, he would have treated him in his "Review" with much greater respect. A surviving nephew of the Rev. Adam Gibb, too, has told us the following anecdote: When his uncle, in advanced life, made him a present of his "Sacred Contemplations," he alluded to the pamphlet against Mr. Whitefield, he had given him many years before, adding that he had never read it. Mr. Gibb replied, that he wished no copies of that pamphlet were on the face of the earth, and that if he knew by what means he could recal them, he would collect every copy and burn them; for "my blood," said he, "at that time, was too hot, and I was unable to write with becoming temper."

It is fair at the same time, to state, that, despite of the sad indiscretions into which the members of the Associate Presbytery themselves were hurried by the force of intemperate zeal, as well as the powerful obstacles to their success arising from the efforts of Mr. Whitefield with his coadjutors and admirers, the interest of the Secession continued to prosper. Its members were, in

* Among these objectionable passages are included a number in Mr. Erskine's writings, as in the pamphlet styled *Fraud and Falsehood Detected*, and in Sermons he preached at different places in the year 1742, particularly those on Luke xxii. 31, 32, Heb. xiii. 8, Rev. v. 9.

general, an intelligent and steady people, cordially attached to the Westminster Confession, and the Presbyterian form of government, and not apt to be carried away by every wind of doctrine, or imposed on by specious arguments and flaming appearances. They clung to their profession and their ministers in the hour of trial, and their numbers increased. Mr. Erskine vindicates their character in these terms :—" How it may stand with some that choose to be our hearers, and attend our meetings for worship, but are not formally under our inspection, we cannot be supposed to know. But as to the generality of those that are judicially received by us, they are well known to be a number of the most judicious, knowing, sober, serious, and praying people in Scotland."* Their steadfast adherence to the cause in which they had embarked, and the general prosperity of that cause amid the formidable opposition it met with, are certified by the same author in the following passage, introduced by him to repel a prevailing allegation to their disadvantage.

" The unbiassed regard of the Associate Presbytery to the cause of reformation among their hands, appears even in a special circumstance, wherein yet they are reproached, as if they were now appearing against Mr. Whitefield and his extraordinary work, because the success and spreading influence of it tends (say they) to make our interest among the people to sink, and to draw them away from us ; whereas Mr. Whitefield was cast off by the unanimous consent of the brethren of the Presbytery, whenever they found his direct opposition to that cause. And this was done at his first

* Faith no Fancy, p. 351.

coming to Scotland ; and so before ever they knew what sort of success his ministrations could have here, and when at the same time they knew what splendid reports there were of his wonderful success abroad ; yet they durst lay none of these things in balance with the public cause among their hands, which they were sure was the cause of God, or with the ancient work of reformation they were appearing for, which they were sure was the work of God ; and that therefore no new work that men were attempting to raise upon the ruins of it, could be the work of God. Meantime none of the promoters of the present applauded work have much ground to boast of any victory gained or advantage obtained against us. It has pleased the Lord to “keep” these hitherto “in the hour of temptation,” who were desirous and concerned to “keep the word of his patience,” and to increase our congregations from time to time, notwithstanding these extraordinary efforts of the enemy against us.”*

Amid the religious controversies that prevailed in Scotland during the early years of the Secession church, the British empire was involved in the calamities of a foreign war ; and to these, in 1745, were added the horrors of an internal Rebellion. In this critical conjuncture, the ministers and members of that church fully disapproved the rash charges of disloyalty which some of their opponents had brought against them, by manifesting a universal and decided attachment to the House of Hanover, in opposition to the daring attempt then a second time made by the family of Stuart to regain the

* Faith no Fancy, p. 351.

British throne. We have seen the distinguished patriotism and courage displayed by the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine at a time of great peril and annoyance at Stirling, in consequence of that ancient town being taken possession of by the Highland army.* His brother Ralph, though perhaps not placed in circumstances of equal danger, discovered the same loyal principles; and did not fail, during the progress and after the suppression of this rebellion, conformably to his conduct in 1715, to address instructions and counsels to his hearers, happily adapted to the interesting occasion.

In a sacramental exhortation to his people, August 11, 1745, about three weeks after Charles had landed in one of the north-west isles, after having preached on Col. iii. 3, "Your life is hid with Christ in God," he alludes to the bloodshed that might possibly arise from that occurrence, saying, "We know not how soon the lives of thousands may be a prey to the devouring sword," and then encourages the godly, amidst all possible dangers, to repose their confidence in their heavenly Father.† A sermon delivered at Glasgow, from Is. xlv. 2, July 21, 1746, being the Monday after the celebration of the Lord's Supper, contains the following sentence: "God hath delivered us from the dreadful disturbance that was in this country by a wicked insurrection."‡ On August 10th that year, in a discourse preached to his own people immediately before the administration of the same ordinance, on "the pure and precious blood of Christ for the cleansing of polluted sin-

* Life of Eben. Erskine, ch. ix. Pp. 437—446.

† Works, vol. ii. p. 251.

‡ *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 268.

ners," he alludes, near the close, to the pretended purifications of the church of Rome, purgatory, human merit, and holy water, and then exclaims, in the language of gratitude, "Glory to God that this late Popish insurrection, as well as the former one in our day, is quelled, that sought the introduction of such anti-christian abominations."* We find that on December 24, 1745, he kept a fast with his people on account of the rebellion, appointed by the Presbytery to be held that day, and that in a thanksgiving sermon, preached at Falkirk, May 12, 1746, from 1 Sam. vii. 12, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us," he insisted particularly on the suppression of that unnatural rebellion, and the various circumstances which united to enhance the deliverance vouchsafed.

It will gratify the pious reader to see the following memorandum, describing the happy consequences of the Duke of Cumberland's arrival, and illustrating the Divine agency in this merciful deliverance. Though contained in one of his note-books, it is not introduced as part of a sermon :

"*Feb.* 1, 1746.—Being Saturday, Prince William, our king's son, having come to Edinburgh on Wednesday, went out with a great army on Friday towards the enemy, that were lying about Stirling and St. Ninian's. But this morning, the rebels, being filled with fear, hasted over the Forth, and fled; but before they went all off, they blew up their magazine, that was placed in a church (they say) at St. Ninian's, which made all the country round to shake, even the length of this place.

"Some things are remarkable in this present deliver-

* *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 277.

ance that God has wrought for us from the robber and spoiler of the country. 1st, The present deliverance is in such a way as teaches us not to trust in an arm of flesh, nor in our sword and battle-axes. For there have been two battles in the country, and in both of them the enemy has still boasted of victory; which, indeed, has been obtained by them in a great measure, partly through the fraudulent unfair method of the enemy, never venturing a fair battle, but in a guileful way, and partly through the treachery and villainy of the officers and commander in the armies we were ready to depend upon. But herein God has been giving us, and our king and government, a lesson not to trust in their armies, and officers, and generals, that can swear fealty and fidelity to them, and yet betray them. It will be good, if our king and court could see the hand of God herein, and come to understand who are their best friends, and who not; and that they are not all to be trusted as friends to the government, that can swallow down oaths to the government. 2dly, The present deliverance is in such a way as teaches us to trust only in the arm of the Lord; for it is he that has dispersed the enemy, as he did in the days of Gideon (Judg. vii. 20,) when Israel were delivered from the Midianites, not with the edge of Gideon's sword slaying them, but with the cry of Gideon's sword, that frightened them. For the cry was, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.' Why? What did Gideon? He had only the name of the general, the name of the victory. He did not draw a sword, but only blew a trumpet, and broke some empty pitchers with flaming lamps, or burning torches in them, and caused [his soldiers] cry, 'the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.' The sword of the Lord was

a victorious sword ; it was just God himself making a sword of fear and terror run through the heart of the Midianitish host, and making them flee for their lives, that so the victory might not be ascribed to Gideon's sword, but to the sword of the Lord. Even so in the present providence relating to the dispersion of the Highland host, and Jacobite antichristian faction, God has made a cry reach the ears of that rebellious multitude ; saying in effect, ' The sword of the Lord, and of Prince William.' The Prince has the name as an instrument, but God has the praise as the agent. For what did the Prince ? He needed not to draw his sword, nor in this dispersion did he do it. He was only in the way of duty, and in motion towards the enemy ; but God went before him, and did all the work himself, by drawing his sword of fear and terror, and running it through the heart of the enemy, and thus put them to flight in confusion. Now, when such a cry has been heard in effect by the enemy, as that of the sword of the Lord, and of the Prince, it contributes more to the honour of God and of the Prince too, than if there had been a bloody battle, and the enemy had been cut off and destroyed. It is even more for the honour of the Prince ; for it says, that God has made the fear and dread of him to seize the enemies, so that they dare not face him. God has made him terrible to his enemies, more than an army with banners. Besides, what an honour is it that God, as the Breaker, should go up before him victoriously, and give him no more ado than pursue the victory. Instruments are not the less honoured, but the more, that God uses them in a way whereby all the praise and glory evidently redounds to himself. O that hence we could learn to trust in the

Lord, and not in our arms or armies. Psalm xliv. 1—8, Hos. i. 7.

“ Meantime let us be humbled for the sins that brought us in this land so much under the feet of the antichristian adversary, and particularly those sins that have been evidently written upon the judgment; as not only in general the contempt of the Gospel, which God has been threatening to remove, but also, more particularly, for our forgetfulness and ingratitude in the following respects: 1st, One sin written upon this late judgment, is that of forgetting and neglecting to be humbled for the dishonour done to God in this land by the abominations committed by that race of kings, by whose posterity (whether spurious or not) God has been smiting us, and putting us in remembrance thereof.” [After an ample review of these abominations, he thus continues:] “ 2dly, Another sin written upon our judgment, is our ingratitude for our deliverance by a merciful Revolution from that wicked and cursed race, and from the miseries they brought upon us, as also for our deliverance from the many attempts made by them since that time to bring us again under the dominion of Popery and tyranny; particularly these four. 1. In the year 1708, when an invasion was threatened, and the Lord mercifully delivered. 2. In the year 1715, when an unnatural rebellion was raised by the same antichristian party with their Highland host, which the Lord also defeated. 3. In the year 1744, but about two years ago, when an invasion was again threatened and carried some length, till the Lord ‘ broke the ships of Tarshish with an east wind’ upon the day when the Associate brethren were setting that same time apart for fasting and humiliation with reference thereto. 4.

Now again in this year 1746, after the Lord has been for some months punishing the land with an insurrection of that same antichristian crew, robbing and plundering the land, the Lord has been pleased yesterday to begin a new deliverance and dispersion of the enemy by the instrumentality of the king's son, Prince William, come down to head the army. If by these judgments, and these mercies and deliverances, we will not be reformed, if we will not return to the Lord but remain unthankful, may he not punish us yet seven times more?" Ezra ix. 13, 14.

The striking deliverance to which these remarks chiefly refer, made so deep an impression on the writer, that it influenced his imagination during the slumbers of the night. Without meaning to countenance that species of superstition, by which unwarrantable importance is attached to the dreams and visions of modern times, we may here copy a curious paragraph, which immediately follows, in the same manuscript.

"In a dream after this, I spoke thus to the Prince: 'May it please your royal highness, I have, during the years of my ministry in Dunfermline, seen and been witness to two wicked, horrid, and unnatural rebellions, at the distance and interval of thirty years from each other, the one raised against your royal grandfather in the year 1715, the other now against your royal father. When the former took place, I had occasion to evidence my loyalty, at the peril of my life, by praying in express terms for King George, within pistol-shot of the enemy entering the church in arms, even after I was interdicted and discharged by them to pray in these terms.*

* This instance of sacred heroism, though here referred to in a dream, is in all probability, founded in fact.

Yet now the hazard I did then run, and was ready at this time again to run, I think abundantly rewarded and compensated by my having the honour to see your royal highness, and congratulate you as the darling of the nation, and the terror and dread of the rebellious Jacobite crew that have so long been oppressing this land, till your highness came, through favour of the Most High, to be our deliverer.

“ Though it is my present lot to be one of the ministers of Scotland that are known by the name of *Seceders*, yet I reckon it my advantage that I and all my brethren of the Secession have their congregations made up of such members as are all and every one of them loyal subjects to King George your royal father, and that they are such as cannot be enemies to a Protestant government, because our Secession stands mainly upon the footing of our close adherence to the covenanted Reformation, wherein Popery, in a special manner, is abjured ; so that it is impossible, in the nature of the thing, and from our professed principles, that a Seceder can be either a Papist or a Jacobite.

“ May it please your highness, it were unsuitable to my character as a minister of Christ, who is our king eternal and immortal, to be a flatterer of any mortal man. Therefore I only add, that as it is the great God that has put such honour upon you as to make your very name amiable to your friends and terrible to your enemies, so, if you put honour upon God, and give him all the glory, he will honour you more and more ; for he has said in his holy oracles, ‘ Him that honoureth me I will honour.’ ”

To this visionary but sensible address, he subjoins in his note-book the following lines on the Duke of Cum-

berland's enterprize, taken "out of the Edinburgh Courant, Feb. 18, 1746."

" Scarce had the hapless news of Falkirk's day
To Britain's sacred monarch winged their way,
When his young Harry mounts the rapid car,
To save his country, or her fate to share.
Intent on this, he very late defies
The rigid journey, and more rigid skies ;
And, what with wonder latest times shall hear,
Raised Stirling's siege, before we thought him there."

The entire unanimity that prevailed among the ministers and members of the Secession Church, with reference to the cause of the House of Hanover, could not ensure their perfect concord on every other point. An esteemed historian, when treating of the diversity of sentiment, which, in the seventh century, took place betwixt *Paulinus* and *Aidan*, who were equally zealous for the propagation of the gospel, has justly observed, that "the craft of Satan too commonly succeeds in fomenting divisions even among those who, with equal sincerity, are engaged in the best of causes."* The truth of this remark was sadly verified in the mournful rupture which, in April 1747, divided and dishonoured the Associate Synod.

It is not our design to detail at large the particulars of that event ; nor would it be proper, by a minute rehearsal of the hostile measures or unpleasant altercations of the two contending parties, to revive the recollection of many painful circumstances, which the re-union

* Milner's Hist. of the Church, vol. iii. p. 110. 4th edit.

happily accomplished in the year 1820, is calculated for ever to obliterate. Yet, to state a few facts relative to the conduct and sufferings of the subject of this memoir on that afflicting occasion, appears neither unnecessary nor inexpedient. The impartiality essential to a biographical narrative, may oblige the pen to record what the unfettered inclination of the writer might have induced him to suppress. When past occurrences are of such a description, that their consignment to absolute oblivion is utterly impracticable, it seems better to give a correct account of them, than by a total silence, to countenance erroneous and mischievous traditions.

Among all the ministers concerned in this contest, no one exerted himself with greater activity than Mr. Erskine, in supporting what he deemed the right side of the question, and no one certainly drank more deeply than he of the cup of bitterness, at that time mingled by an inscrutable providence. Firmly persuaded that it was not unlawful, nor inconsistent with his profession, on the part of any seceder, to take the burgess-oath, even where it included that religious clause which was the subject of dispute, he boldly defended this opinion "in the course of the debate relative thereto, at the several meetings of Synod before the breach;" and, in consequence, he was singled out to be the foremost of the first three to whom ecclesiastical censure was administered by those brethren who held contrary sentiments on the question at issue.* When the Presbytery of Dunfermline, at their meeting at Perth, May 5th,

* Proceedings of the Associate Synod at Edinburgh in April and August 1749, and in Feb. 1750, upon the case of the separating brethren, &c." Minutes for Aug. 3, 9, 10, 1749.

1747, thought proper judicially to exclude him, with some other members, and to cancel their names from the roll, because they refused submission to the authority of "the Synod, which met in Mr. Gibb's house the 10th of April," he addressed the Moderator in a speech to this effect:—

"I got my ministry from our Lord Jesus Christ himself according to his own appointment, and in an agreeableness to his word; and however unworthy I have been of it, and unfit and unfaithful in the due discharge of the duties of it; yet I dare not deny that he has *many, many* times owned me in it, and appended many seals unto it from time to time. And, therefore, I dare not lay it down at the feet of any body of men on earth, that may presume to rob me of it."*

It particularly grieved him that the Rev. John Erskine of Leslie, his second son, though at the first moment of the breach in April 1747 he espoused the same side with his father, was induced soon after to change his purpose, and decidedly to attach himself to the opposite party. This difference of sentiment betwixt relatives so near, was unquestionably the source of much unhappiness to each. John, it appears, took part in the judicial act of the Presbytery at Perth, just referred to, which his father witnessed, he himself states, "with a sorrowful heart."† Speaking of John, in a letter to his elder brother Henry, bearing date May 9, 1747, the venerable parent says, "He there sat with the Presbytery,

* "Narrative of the separation of the majority of members from the Associate Presbytery of Dunfermline at Perth, May 5, 1747." Pp. 8, 9.

† *Ibid.* p. 49.

which exauctorated me and you, and all the true lawful Synod." "You may be sure," he adds, "it was as a sword piercing my heart, to see that Johnny was sitting in the midst of them." On learning that this son had subsequently concurred with his associates in voting for the infliction of a higher censure, he wrote him a serious letter, expressing his extreme sorrow on that account, and observing that no court ought to have asked a vote of that nature from so near a relative; that, though asked, it should not have been given; that he had dishonoured his father; and, as he might see from the fifth commandment, had taken the way to shorten his own life.

It would be wrong, however, to question the correctness of a statement made by a very respectable writer, that "it has been asserted that his father, however much irritated, acknowledged his persuasion that 'what John did, was from conscience.'"^{*} We have found, among Mr. Erskine's papers, a summary penned by himself of a reply John had written to him on that occasion, in which he attempts to vindicate the course he had chosen, and represents it as proceeding not from hatred or disrespect but from love. "I desire through grace," says he, "to offer up earnest prayers and supplications for you, and that he may do for you for his name's sake; and I am persuaded that this is the case with my brethren also." This expression reminds us of the following anecdote transmitted by domestic tradition. Some time after the breach, John having made a visit to Dunfermline, was employed to conduct the devotions of the family, and, alluding to the head of the house, prayed

^{*} Remarks on the Rev. Rowland Hill's Journal by Dr. John Jamieson, p. 26.

“that the Lord would restore him to his former usefulness.” At the close of the service, his father took the liberty to ask him this question, “In what respect am I less useful now than I have formerly been?” But John had not the courage to make any reply.

The unhappy transaction now referred to, supplies one of the many instances in which false or exaggerated rumours relating to mournful occurrences, have gained a wide and protracted circulation. In some quarters it appears to be still reported and believed, that John Erskine was employed by the Synod to which he belonged to pronounce an awful sentence against his own father. A very worthy clergyman from London having heard this report during a tour in Scotland about the year 1798, thought proper to record it in a published Journal of that Tour. But the whole affair is placed in its true light by the learned author mentioned above, in his letter to that celebrated clergyman. It will suffice to quote the few following sentences, in which the writer’s accuracy and candour are equally apparent:—

“You next proceed to the consideration of the excommunication of those who adhered to the burghess-oath. Here it may be necessary to observe, that an approbation of this deed has never been made a term either of Christian or of ministerial communion. Those who inflicted this censure acted, I am persuaded, according to their light. But there is ground to believe that the generality of those who succeeded them would not have gone so far. There is no reason, however, for heightening the picture by the addition of circumstances that never had any real existence. The amputation knife was *not* committed into the hand of Mr. John Erskine.—Instead of employing Mr. John Er-

skine to pronounce or intimate the sentence either as to his *father* or *uncle*, he was not employed in any case whatever. The sentence against three of the separating brethren, of whom Mr. Ralph Erskine was one, was pronounced at Edinburgh, Aug. 10, 1749, by Mr. George Brown, moderator, and afterwards intimated at Dunfermline, where Mr. Erskine was minister, by Mr. Adam Gibb, according to appointment. (Proceedings of Synod," Pp. 48-50.)*

Mr. Erskine's views respecting this melancholy breach are amply expressed in an elaborate sermon preached at the opening of the Associate Synod at Stirling, April 12, 1748, and published at their request. At the conclusion of this discourse, which is founded on John ii. 19, and entitled " Temple desolation making way for temple restoration,"† after noticing the methods by which men had been suffered so far to demolish the temple of the Associate body, he inquires into the sinful causes that had provoked God to order such a rent and destruction of the temple. The native candour of his mind appears in his illustrations of those causes of the divine anger, as in the following passage regarding the culpable harshness shown to worthy brethren who retained their connexion with the national church :

" 2. Untenderness towards these we left in the judicatories, when we made secession from them, without dealing more kindly with them, praying more for them, and bearing more with them ; especially such as were friends to the same reformation cause, though not enlightened in the same manner of witnessing for it.

* Remarks on the Rev. R. Hill's Journal, Pp. 24—28.

† Works, vol. ii. Pp. 317—329.

Some began too soon to *severities* ; even in excluding such from their communion, which tended to restrain and keep them back from us. Though we began with some *moderation* towards them, yet through unsteadfastness in standing to our first resolution, many proceeded soon to such heights as could not in the issue but terminate in a downfall. If in this respect the bond of brotherly love was too soon broken, the Lord is righteous in ordering such a breach among us as threatens the destruction of this temple, and to make them read their sin in their punishment. It is true, though all of us were not equally chargeable this way, yet we have been too indulgent to such as were so, and therefore cannot purge ourselves." *

In the unhappy controversy relating to the burgess-oath, Ralph Erskine wrote a greater number of pamphlets than any other member of the Synod to which he adhered.† That they are entirely exempt from that unhallowed bitterness, which stained almost all the publications put forth on each side, amid the keen agitation of the question, we will not pretend. An impartial reader, however, will allow, that they display conscientious views and feelings, as well as great acuteness and ability, and that his mind was deeply grieved for the

* *Ibid.* p. 324.

† The Narrative of the Separation, &c. ; The Lawfulness of the Religious Clause of some burgess-oaths asserted, &c. ; Fancy no Faith, or a Seasonable Admonition and Information to Seceders ; Observations upon the conduct of the separating brethren, with Fancy still no Faith ; Third Proof of Fancy no Faith, in three parts, with a Fourth Proof of Fancy no Faith ; A Review of Mr. Gibb's Remarks against the Synodical Fast, June 2d, 1748 ; with one or two other small tracts.

mournful occasion of writing. "Our author's pen," says a valuable biographer, "was much engaged in this affair, and it evidently affected his spirits. He speaks of it with concern and emotion."*

Yet the rich consolations of the gospel, and the recollection of past experiences of the divine loving-kindness, served to moderate the anguish of his spirit, and to inspire him with confidence and hope. Information of the severest part of the procedure adopted against him, happened to reach his ear on the morning of August 14, 1749, being the Monday after the celebration of the Lord's Supper at Kinross, where he was assisting. In the course of his sermon that day, "the thoughts" of that dismal intelligence at one time "oppressed his mind, and his speech began to falter; but lifting up his eyes," the service being performed in the open air, "the mountains of Portmoak were full in his view, and these words of David came with refreshing energy into his mind, Ps. xlii. 6, 'O my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizar.' The words of the sacred ode, and the prospect of a place endeared by the peculiar manifestations of heaven, calmed his troubled soul, and he went through his work with his usual animation."†

The following extract of a letter to his son Henry, referred to above, serves also to show in what way he sought and obtained consolation under the pressure of grief:—

* Middleton's Evangelical Biography, vol. iv. p. 282.

† Portmoak MS. on the Life and Ministry of Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, p. 24.

“ You sympathise with me, as I desire to sympathise with you in our present perplexities. It is good our Lord and Master is always the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. Let us bear his indignation, because we have sinned against him, till he arise and plead our cause, and let us be confident in him, and trust in him, though he should slay us.——God is trying us, but when he has tried, we shall come forth as gold. Let us say, Lord is it I that have raised this storm of wrath? but let us hope, that in due time he will lay the storm with a word, and make darkness light, and crooked things straight. ‘ Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.’ May the Lord be with you and us, and we shall fear no evil, when going through this dark valley.”

From his note-books, written about this time, it appears that he exerted himself with great diligence in administering instruction, counsel, and encouragement to his people, under the perplexities and temptations occasioned by the breach. He strenuously exhorted them to prove all things; to love the truth and peace; to pray fervently for themselves and for all concerned, whatever views they had embraced; to pray for the restoration of unity; to beware of stumbling at the word in a cloudy and dark day; to seek communion with God and his people in public and private ordinances; and to hope in his mercy. “ Let not your heart sink in the deep,” said he, “ but swim ashore; or rather stand still and see the salvation of God, making the deeps of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over. He makes the clouds, even the darkest clouds, his chariot, wherein he rides for the help of his people. When you walk in

darkness, you are to trust ; and when you walk in the deep, you are to believe what God is to do for you, and for his people that follow after righteousness, and in due time you shall see the salvation of God. Expect a cup of comfort, after you have drunk of the cup of trembling."

None of his sermons, perhaps, are more pleasant and animating than several of those he preached posterior to that deplorable rent, and within five years of his death. Such are the five sermons delivered at Dunfermline at five successive sacramental solemnities, the subjects of which are John xvi. 15, chap. xvi. 32, Song. ii. 3, ch. ii. 8, ch. ii. 13.* The same cheering and lively strain is discernible in the discourses which during that period he preached in other places, as at Glasgow Oct. 4, 1747 from Rom. viii. 28. ; at Kinross, at the time above specified, from Rom. viii. 37 ; and at Falkirk, May 20, 1720, from Luke xix. 5.†

His vigour and activity seem to have undergone little or no abatement. Not only at home but abroad, and even in places considerably distant, he went through a variety of interesting services. We find him, as mentioned in a preceding chapter, presiding at Mr. Swanston's ordination in summer 1748 ; preaching under trying circumstances in the vicinity of Perth in March that year ; assisting in the services of the Lord's Supper at Dundee in Oct 1749 ; and on his way home from that town preaching from 1 Cor. i. 30, on a week-day at Auchtermuchty. He gave his valued assistance also to the Rev. William Hutton of Dalkeith in administer-

* Works, vol. ii.

† These sermons are also published, *ibid.*

ing the same ordinance in the year 1751, when a great multitude of Christians were assembled, to whom he preached an impressive discourse from these words, "Who against hope believed in hope." In the year 1748 he had performed a similar act of friendship for the Rev. John Smith, then of Jedburgh, as appears from the following extract of a letter to that excellent minister, shown us by a friend :

" *Dunfermline Sep. 1, 1748.*

R. D. B.

" Your's dated Aug. 22d, I received only this evening ; in answer to which, I have a design, if the Lord will, to essay the journey you propose in order to attend the sacramental solemnity you have in view ——— I shall not say, to fulfil each of the diets you mention, which, after such a journey, may perhaps prove too much work for me. I had no line from Sir Robert Pringle ; however, I design not to decline preaching at Stitchell for once, if providence permit.

" Dear brother, as to the trial some people design to make, whether the Lord has left us or not, their judgment needs perhaps be little regarded. But, however this be, our God is sovereign in his coming and going ; we cannot limit him to our times ; he will do all his pleasure and take his own time and way. ' Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.' He was pleased to smile remarkably here, and to show himself the God of Bethel as much as ever, if not more, as many found to their experience. And no doubt there is as much need of his gracious presence among you, which I hope it shall be the desire of my soul he may vouchsafe.

“ Dear brother, I have good reason to sympathise with you in these sufferings ——— wherein I myself am a partaker to a very great degree. I am glad you have got such a good number of elders ordained. May it be a token for good that the wall shall be built even in troublous times, and that the Lord will own and countenance you in the solemn work you have in view. My wife and family salute you kindly, and I remain, R. D. B. Yours very affectionately,

RALPH ERSKINE.”

The above notices of Mr. Erskine's active and useful exertions during the years of his life posterior to the breach appeared the more necessary and seasonable, because, strange to tell! from prejudice or some other cause, attempts are still being made to uphold and propagate the groundless notion, that after that deplorable occurrence, the Erskines lost the divine countenance, and became almost utterly useless.*

* We allude especially to some passages in the account (highly favourable to a great extent) of the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, lately published in Chalmers' *Lives of Illustrious and Distinguished Scotchmen*, Pp. 219—236. A considerable portion of that account is evidently copied from Struthers' *History of Scotland*. The writer, while he censures the conduct of the ministers on both sides in reference to the breach 1747, avows his predilection for that class which “ met in Mr. Gibb's house,” and represents the opposite party as the least enlightened of the two, the most irregular in their procedure, and the least penitent for their faults. Ebenezer Erskine in particular, is loaded with a most disproportionate and unmerited share of odium. It is affirmed of him too, that after this “ he abated considerably of his zeal for the principles of the Reformation,” and “ was engaged in nothing of public importance.” This author, it may be al-

It may be deemed somewhat remarkable, that though three of Ralph's sons followed their father's profession, and proved acceptable preachers, no one of them was appointed his colleague or assistant. The very numerous and widely scattered congregation of which, after ceasing to belong to the national church, he had the exclusive charge, would, from the first, have required the ministrations of two pastors; and the approaching infirmities of age soon gave him a powerful claim to all that aid and comfort which an effective and attached fellow-labourer might have been able to administer. His generosity, however, led him to consider the necessities of many other congregations, which the Associate Synod had scarcely the means of supplying to their full extent; and his principles would not have allowed him to obtrude upon his people the services of any young man, however closely related and dear to himself, who was not the object of their own free and unbiassed choice. Yet the fact is, that James, his third son, who was licensed in the year 1750, received an unanimous call to be his father's colleague and successor, and that the Synod's appointing him to Stirling instead of Dunfermline was a painful disappointment both to father and son; as appears from three letters, part of which is still extant; one from Mr. Erskine to his son Henry, a second from James to his father, and a third from James to Mr. Fisher.

In the first of these, which is of date, "Dunfermline, April 20, 1751," a few weeks after the Synod's deci-

lowed, writes in accordance with his own views and prepossessions. It is but a small proportion, however, we trust, of the religious public, that will acquiesce without inquiry in statements, to say the least, so obviously questionable.

sion in this cause, Mr. Erskine expresses himself as follows:—

“ My dear Harry.——James, I expect, will be with you on Monday, and here with us on Tuesday. I am glad you are more and more confirmed in the opinion that he ought not to accept of the call to Stirling, but that Dunfermline is the place that ought to have him. I acknowledge that this is also more and more my mind. Seeing God has put it in the heart of this people so unanimously to call him, without being influenced any way by leaders, the thing seems to be of God; whereas, I know the call of Stirling, as it is not harmonious, so it has been brought about by human contrivance. Besides, none can have more right to him in these circumstances, than I have; and I doubt not but you will signify your mind to Jamie as you have done to me. It seems hard, on account of my brother's present need (wherein he may be helped in another way,) to stake down the poor young lad to what, I fear, would be a lifetime of heavy work and warfare, among a divided people. Your uncle Lassodie, I am told, is very much displeased at the Synod, and thinks I should keep Jamie whether they will or not. However, I am for regular steps without haste, and if Jamie continue to be for us, we will still be for him, so far as I understand of our people, who continue more and more of that mind.”——

The letter addressed by James to his father, a first draught of which only we have seen, as recorded by himself in short-hand characters, in one of his notebooks, was also written soon after the Synod had passed their act, preferring the claims of Stirling to those of Dunfermline and Dundee, from each of which he had

received a call.* “My mind,” says he, “is exceedingly perplexed anent the present circumstances in which matters stand with reference to me. My settlement in Stirling is dismal to me, when I consider the beautiful call from the congregation of Dunfermline, attended with your earnest desire to have me assisting you in the work of the Lord, and that that design seems to be frustrated in a way so dissatisfying to you, and, consequently, perplexing to me ; and that a door seems now to be shut against my being helpful to my dearest father. It grieves me to the heart, when I reflect on the petition not being delivered in to the Synod, as was designed, and that on that account, as I have heard, several ministers and others have said it is owing to myself, that the sentence was not reviewed. This tends much to disquiet me. If I could, in a cleanly way, make amends for the same, and yet get the matter before the Synod, I think at present I would much incline it. Your need of an assistant, I think is equal, if not greater in some respects than my uncle’s ; but how to behave myself I know not.”

The third is a long epistle to Mr. Fisher of Glasgow, bearing date, “Dunfermline, 20th December 1751,” the substance of which it will suffice to produce. He refers to his having delivered all his discourses for trial, and to the Presbytery of Glasgow having appointed his ordination to take place at Stirling the month following ; and after alluding to the great scruples he had entertained and expressed, he adds : “My silence and succumbing, after Wednesday night’s conversation, did

* Records of Associate Synod, in MS. p. 1094, *et seq.*

not flow from their removal, but from the great fear I was put into by some strong expressions used by you and the rest in that conversation, and the preceding day." He intimates his wishes, that, if possible, the ordination should yet be deferred till another meeting of Synod, and thus continues: "Dear Sir, as the matter is now come so great a length, and the day of ordination approaching, I have been endeavouring to bring up my heart to a cordial compliance, and to say, 'Good is the will of the Lord.'" Having stated several considerations, however, by which he was still tempted to question the propriety of accepting the charge of Stirling congregation, he urges that, as a means of reconciling his mind to that step, the Presbytery should, at least, acquiesce in a proposal which his father, at his request, had made in a letter to Mr. Fisher, ——— to pass an act of transportability in the event of certain circumstances taking place. "My father assures me," he states in conclusion, "that he is so far mortified and denied to what was *his wish and inclination*, that for edification's sake, and for preventing public speculation unfavourable towards the judicial decisions of our court, which he has no will should come under universal contempt, he therefore would choose the going on of my settlement in Stirling in the above manner rather than the proposed delay; and to this I also gave my consent.—— The soreness of my father's eyes, which hinders him from studying, is the reason of my being here the two last Sabbaths. Expecting your answer, I kindly salute you and all my cousins, and remain,

Rev. Dear Sir, your affectionate Cousin and humble
servant,

JAMES ERSKINE."

The ordination of James at Stirling accordingly took place, as was elsewhere stated, on the 22d January 1752.*

The time was now approaching when Mr. Erskine was to obtain a happy discharge from all the toils, and crosses, and sorrows of life. Blessed with a vigorous constitution and an active mind, he had prosecuted the labours of the ministry without any considerable interruption from bodily infirmity. From his own memoranda, however, it appears that he suffered some occasional ailments, and that these were devoutly improved as divine appointments, mercifully intended to remind him of his sins, and to forewarn him of his departure. In the following entry, he gives an account of his exercise under an affliction he was suddenly seized with, when attending a meeting of the Commission in Edinburgh :

“ *Sabbath, March 18, 1733.*—This morning, before I arose out of bed, I took a great pain in my right shoulder, which hindered me for a considerable time to move myself by turning to one side or the other. I sent for my nephew George Balderston, who advised to rub with hot cloth and with brandy, and to take a little blood, if it did not abate ; and I took blood about the middle of the day. Meantime, I found my heart fixed, trusting in the Lord, and I was made joyfully to bless the Lord that these outward changes did not in the least affect my state and hope. I could say in some measure, my heart is fixed, my hope is fixed, my peace is fixed. When I got time and had read and prayed, I was en-

* Life of Ebenezer Erskine, p. 455.

abled, notwithstanding a sense of sinfulness and naughtiness, to bless the Lord with hopeful tears, that he was to me a promising God in Christ, and had my hope exercised and strengthened, particularly upon the promise of everlasting life and of the spirit to be given to lead thereto, and of his watering every moment ; also upon the promise of his blessing to my wife and children. I was made to commit them to the Lord, and to leave them upon him according to that word, Ps. x. 14. I was made to roll upon him whatever had been put upon his name, that he would do therein whatever was most for the honour and glory of his name. Then I was made to glory in his being God, and in his being mercy and truth in Christ, and to express my hope and confidence in him."

The same year, in the month of August, at Queensferry, whither he had gone to assist in administering the Lord's supper, he was, on the evening of Saturday the 11th, seized with a fit of trembling, and then with what he calls " a stitch that centred near my heart, ready to cut me at every breath." After copious bleeding, he felt somewhat relieved. He returned home on the Monday, and though unable to preach the next Sabbath, speedily recovered. " I mended apace," says he ; " the Lord be blessed for his mercy." When my wife and I were alone, and the rest in the church, I prayed with her, and was helped to look to a promising and covenanted God. I was strengthened to cast her and myself and the children over upon a God in Christ ; and with somewhat of a believing frame to take Him as our happiness in time and eternity, and to claim interest in Him on the ground of the Mediator's righteousness."

Having mentioned an inflammation in the throat which attacked him in June 1735, he says, "I observed good ground the Lord had to lay his hand upon me." Subsequently, adverting to another complaint, he says :

" *Sabbath, Nov. 16, 1735.* I was sore pained with a toothache, and went not out in the forenoon. I preached in the afternoon, and when alone, I had some sweet freedom in putting my name under the shadow of that name of the Lord that is my strong tower, and in seeking he might be with me till death, and in death, making his word my comfort and support."

When "the inevitable hour" at last arrived, it did not find him secure and unprepared. More than sixteen months before, he had been careful to "set his house in order;" for in a letter to his eldest son, of date April 20, 1751, he gave particular instructions with reference to the making of his testament, and the manner in which the moderate property he had to leave should be apportioned amongst the members of his family. For some time prior to the moment in which he was called to bear a part in the songs of the heavenly temple, his leisure had been chiefly occupied in the appropriate exercise of composing his Scripture Songs ; and when that undertaking was accomplished, he seems to have had a presentiment of the near approach of his end. Mrs. Erskine having repeatedly expressed her regret that his close application to study deprived her so much of his society, he told her one day that the work he intended for the press was finished, and "she might soon expect a little more of his company for some time, but it would not be long till she should be deprived of it altogether."*

* Account of R. Erskine, prefixed to the 8vo. edition of his Works, p. xvi. note.

He persisted, however, in the active discharge of duty, till he was suddenly seized with that violent distemper by which he was removed to eternity, on Monday the 6th of November 1752.

We have seen a letter he wrote to the Rev. Robert Shirra of Kirkaldy on the 23d October preceding, relative chiefly to a Memorial to be presented to the king's ministry respecting a business not particularly explained, but designated an affair of "general concern to all our brethren in Ireland, and the peace and quiet of some of his Majesty's most loyal subjects." He preached, it appears, with more than usual vigour on the second Sabbath before his departure, and his last discourses related to the comfort connected with a holy life, and to the hope of a blessed immortality. The texts were, Prov. iii. 17, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" and Job xix. 25, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."* The circumstances of his death are briefly stated in the following communication :—

Letter—Mr. Erskine of Falkirk "to Mrs. Scott, spouse to the Rev. Mr. James Scott, minister of the Gospel at Gateshall."

"My dear Cousin,

"The Lord liveth, blessed be our rock. He has been pleased to visit us, in his holy Providence, with the very awful and smarting stroke of my dear father's death. He died yesterday, a quarter after

* Account of R. Erskine, prefixed to the 8vo. ed. of his Works, p. xvi.

three in the afternoon, of a nervous fever, being the eighth day of the fever. He preached here last Sabbath save one with very remarkable life and fervency. He spoke but little all the time, that the disease did not evidently appear to be present death approaching; the physicians having ordered care to be taken to keep him quiet. But after he had taken the remarkable and sudden change to the worse, which was not till Sabbath, he then spoke a great deal, but could not be understood. Only among his last words he was heard say, ‘I will be for ever a debtor to free grace.’

“ My brother Robert and a servant-maid in the house were both of them at death’s door with the same trouble, but are now recovering. My mother desires your’s and Mr. Scott’s sympathy, and so do we all here. Being in haste, I only add that all here join in our compliments to Mr. Scott and you, and that a line from you, acquainting me of your welfare and family, will much oblige,

“ Dear Cousin, your most affectionate Cousin and
humble servant,

HENRY ERSKINE.”

“ *Dunfermline, 7th Nov. 1752.*”

Little more than two months after, the same dutiful son wrote a kind letter to Mrs. Erskine, bearing date Falkirk, 15th Feb. 1753. The chief subject is the publication of his father’s works; but he begins by expressing his regret and sympathy in the following terms:—

“ Dear Mother,

“ I desire to be enabled to have a continued sympathy and hearty condolence with you under

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the very great loss we all lately suffered by my father's death ; which was a stroke with which you, in a peculiar manner, could not fail to be very deeply affected, and which will no doubt be many times as sensibly smarting to you as if it were a wound newly given. May the Lord himself be better than all things else to you, and teach you and us all to glorify him by turning to him and trusting in him, when he is smiting and slaying ; and may he deliver us from the sorrow of the world, which only worketh death. Mrs. Kay and my wife have likewise a most hearty and cordial sympathy with you."

That so few of his dying expressions were audible or intelligible, was matter of general regret among those who knew him. Though amidst the violence of his trouble " he enjoyed the exercise of his judgment and senses," his physicians, we have seen, judged it necessary to impose restrictions on inquiring friends ; and " he himself complained that so few attended him at that time."* Owing to increased debility, when these restrictions were removed, he could scarcely be understood. Yet one short and pleasant sentence, uttered by him on the bed of death, in full accordance with the whole tenor of his preaching, in which the glories of free grace held a prominent place, has just been recorded. A single word more, highly expressive of a triumphant faith, is mentioned by the Rev. Mr. Whitefield in a sermon from Isaiah lx. 19, where, when repeating the last expressions of several dying Christians, he says, " Thus died Mr. Ralph Erskine. His last words were,

* Account prefixed to his Works, in 8vo. p. xvii.

‘ Victory, victory, victory!’” With regard to the extent to which pious ministers or other Christians are enabled on a death-bed to impart verbal instructions and advices to survivors, the wisdom and sovereignty of Providence must be adored; and if by their previous conversation and deportment in the course of their lives, they have borne ample testimony to the truth and importance of religion, we have powerful motives to submission, when it so happens that the words they utter, amidst the infirmities and agonies of dissolving nature, cannot easily be heard or understood. The comparative silence of this distinguished man was neither total nor final. Still his “works praise him in the gates,” or rather praise the glorious Master whom he served; and by them, “he, being dead, yet speaketh.”

His mortal remains were interred in the church-yard of Dunfermline, on Thursday, November 9, by his surviving relatives and friends, in the presence of a vast concourse of spectators, “deeply and justly lamenting the loss of so valuable a minister.”* A table-stone was placed over his grave, on which, it appears, the following Latin epitaph was inscribed. It is here copied from a book of memoranda written by his son Robert.

M. S.

RADOLPHI ERSKIN,

Qui obiit VI. die Novembris MDCCLII,

in LXVIII. anno ætatis.

Hic jacet in tumulo non tactâ vir pietate,
Semper fidè gregem namque suum docuit.

Obstitit ætatis Clericorum vitia, culpas.

Non flexit devias; jus vero Dei timuit.†

* Account prefixed to his Works in 8vo. p. xvi. note.

† This inscription, literally translated, is as follows:

This sepulchral stone was renewed about the time of the erection of the new parish church of Dunfermline in the year 1818. It now lies, supported by short pillars, at the north-east corner of the church, a few yards from the wall of that edifice. The present epitaph consists of these words :—

“ In memory of the Rev. RALPH ERSKINE, minister of the Gospel in Dunfermline, who died the 6th Nov. 1752, in the 42d year of his ministry, and 68th year of his age.”

To this are added similar memorials of his successors, the Rev. John Smith and Dr. Husband, who were interred in the same grave, while the following verse of Scripture is placed at the bottom :—

Heb. xiii. 7. “ Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God ; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”

Soon after his decease, the following concise account of him appeared in a list of deaths in a periodical work.*

“ At Dunfermline, of a high fever, in the sixty-seventh year of his age, Mr. Ralph Erskine, minister of the Associate congregation in that town. His father, Mr.

“ Sacred to the memory of RALPH ERSKINE, who died on the 6th day of November 1752, in the 68th year of his age.
Here lies the dust of a man of untainted piety,
His flock he instructed with uniform fidelity,
He firmly opposed the corruptions and faults of the clergy of his age.

Toby-paths he turned not aside, but revered the law of God.”

* Scots Magazine for 1752, p. 510.

Henry Erskine, descended of the family of Marr, and one of the younger of thirty-three children, was, before the Restoration, minister at Cornhill in Northumberland, from whence he was ejected by the Bartholomew act 1662; and after the Revolution, at Chirnside, five miles from Berwick; and died August 10th, 1696, aged 72. Mr. Ralph was ordained in 1711, was generally reckoned one of the most popular preachers in the church, and was therefore much followed. He joined in the famous representation and protestation given in to the Assembly 1720 and 1722, with respect to a book entitled *the Marrow of Modern Divinity*; made a warm appearance in the several processes against Professors Simson and Campbell, and against the act of Assembly 1732, concerning the method of planting vacant parishes, which chiefly gave rise to the secession from the church; seceded in 1736 from the church judicatories; was one of those who gave in a declinature to the Assembly 1739; and was, with the rest of his brethren, deposed in 1740. When a breach took place in the Associate Synod, on occasion of the burgess-oath, he was of those who maintained the lawfulness of that oath. He was author of many poems, sermons, &c. which are well known. He has left three sons, two of whom are succeeding ministers, Mr. Henry at Falkirk, and Mr. James at Stirling."

Ebenezer Erskine of Stirling could not fail to be deeply affected on receiving information of the sudden death of a younger brother, peculiarly endeared to him by his excellent qualities and attainments, and by long-continued habits of the most confidential and delightful friendship. When the interesting intelligence reached

him, he expressed himself, as was formerly stated,* to this effect: "And is Ralph gone? He has twice got the start of me; he was first in Christ; and now he is first in glory."†

The heavy loss sustained by the Associate congregation of Dunfermline, in the death of this much esteemed pastor, was not speedily repaired. After a long vacancy, however, of nearly eight years, the Rev. JOHN SMITH, a richly gifted minister, who had previously laboured with great credit at Jedburgh about fifteen years, was admitted to the charge of that numerous and bereaved flock, July 16th, 1760. On that occasion, according to the records of the Associate Session of Dunfermline, Mr. William Arnot of Kennoway delivered the first discourse, Mr. Swanston of Kinross preached the admission sermon, and, after an interval, Mr. Shirra gave the concluding discourse. Mr. Smith exercised his office with eminent faithfulness and acceptance till the 7th December 1780, when he died suddenly, "in the fifty-eighth year of his age, and thirty-fifth of his ministry." In 1776, the Rev. JAMES HUSBAND, D.D. having received a unanimous call, was ordained colleague and successor to Mr. Smith; after whose decease he remained sole pastor of that congregation till the year 1785, when the Rev. JAMES M'FARLANE was regularly called, and ordained to be his colleague. For a long period these two excellent men laboured together in the ministry, in a manner that commanded universal

* Life of Eben. Erskine, p. 454.

† See Appendix, No. X.

esteem and admiration. "Dr. Husband and Mr. M'Farlane," says a writer who knew them well, "for upwards of thirty-six years exercised their joint labours among that people, with a harmony and agreement perhaps rarely experienced in collegiate charges. They loved each other with a pure heart fervently."* Lovely in their lives, in their death they were not far divided. Dr. Husband, according to the epitaph formerly noticed, died "the 17th May 1821, in the seventieth year of his age, and the forty-sixth of his ministry." Mr. M'Farlane, as is stated on another monumental stone, erected in a different part of the same burying-ground, by "a number of his friends, in testimony of their respect for his character, and affectionate gratitude for his long and faithful services,"—"died on the 10th April 1823, in the sixty-fourth year of his age, and the thirty-eighth of his ministry."†

About the year 1800, during the collegiate ministry of Dr. Husband and Mr. M'Farlane, the old meeting-house, built at the commencement of the secession, was demolished, and a new and elegant church erected near the same site. A short time after Mr. M'Farlane's decease, several hundred members of the congregation, in compliance with their own request, were disjoined

* See a "Short Memoir of the Rev. James Husband, D.D. senior minister of the Ass. Cong., Queen Anne Street, Dunfermline," in the *Christ. Monitor*, Vol. i. Pp. 401—405. See also a description of his character, comprised in a Review of Dr. Henry Belfrage's Funeral Sermon, after his death, in the same Vol. Pp. 514—518.

† See a "Short Sketch of the Life and Character of the Rev. James M'Farlane," by H. B., in the *Christ. Monitor*, Vol. iii. Pp. 389—400.

from Queen Anne Street community, and formed into a new congregation, which soon built for themselves in another street, a handsome place of worship, distinguished by the appellation of St. Margaret's Church. The Rev. ROBERT BROWN was ordained minister of this last congregation on the 17th May, 1826; but finished his course so early as April 19th, 1828. The Rev. ALEXANDER FISHER was settled pastor of Queen Anne Street congregation, March 20th, 1827; but to him also a short career of usefulness was assigned, for he died the 26th September 1829. The memory of each of these highly promising young ministers is embalmed by two separate volumes, containing respectively an account of their life and character, and a few of their valuable discourses and addresses. The surviving friends of their predecessors, Dr. Husband and Mr. M'Farlane, who so long and so ably exercised their ministry in Dunfermline, must surely regret, that hitherto they have not been favoured with similar memorials of these amiable and talented fathers, to remind them of those evangelical, correct, and eloquent discourses, which were often heard with exquisite delight; and to animate their hearts, and quicken their pace, on the way to that heavenly Zion, where pious preachers and their believing hearers shall meet again, to part no more.

With reference to these two congregations, it remains only to notice, that the Rev. JOHN LAW, formerly minister of Newcastleton, was admitted to the charge of St. Margaret's, October 1st, 1828; and that the Rev. JAMES YOUNG was ordained minister of Queen Anne Street congregation, June 1st, 1831. May both these respected brethren be preserved alive and vigorous for many years, and have the joy to see their ministrations

crowned with abundant success. May great and happy effects, resulting from the labours of Ralph Erskine, and his successors, be continued for a long series of ages to come !

Several other seceding congregations, erected at different periods, within the original bounds of Mr. Erskine's charge, might also have been mentioned ; as those of Cairnyhill, Limekilns, Crossgates, Chalmers' Street, Dunfermline, and a few more. Without meaning, however, at all to derogate from the importance of those congregations, or from the respectability and worth of their former and present pastors, we must satisfy ourselves with this brief allusion, and forbear stating any particulars of their history.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Erskine's religious character illustrated by extracts from his Diary—His vital piety—Dependence on the Saviour and the Spirit—Habitual trust in God—Devout perusal of the Scriptures—Frequent and fervent prayer—Self-inquiry—Domestic and public exercises—Improvement of providential occurrences—Humility.

THE reader of the foregoing pages has now perused a somewhat circumstantial account of this minister's eventful life, and surveyed his conduct in the varying scenes through which he passed from early youth to the close of his mortal career. Some further details, however, illustrative of his spirit and behaviour, both in a private and public capacity, may not merely be proper from the regard due to his memory, but seem justified by considerations of utility ; for his example, when still more minutely contemplated, is calculated, by the blessing of God, to afford encouragement and direction to the Christian pastor, and to animate every good man in the path of duty.

In a memoir of him written many years since, his character is summed up in the following terms :—

“ He was a man who possessed not only a very extraordinary degree of the most valuable natural gifts and endowments, such as cheerfulness, good nature, modesty and gratitude, uniting in him, but remarkable for genuine piety, a heavenly disposition of mind, and well acquainted with vital religion and practical godli-

ness. Yea, in him centred all the ornaments of the minister, and amiable qualities of the Christian, without the least affectation or smallest appearance of vanity. He was a shining instance of the truth and amiableness of Christianity, and an exemplary pattern of spiritual-mindedness and sincere devotion.”*

This high encomium may seem to discover the fond partiality of an admiring friend. But that it is not entirely without ground, is evident from numerous documents, and, in particular, from the tenor of his own DIARY, on which we shall chiefly draw for those illustrations of his excellence that remain to be produced.

That sincere PIETY, which is the beginning of wisdom, formed the most prominent trait of his character, and shed its benign influence on every other feature. With him religion was by no means a lifeless form, or a mere professional garb, to be assumed or laid aside as expediency, or a regard to reputation, might direct. It was, on the contrary, a vital operative principle, reigning in his heart, and habitually governing his conduct. He repeatedly expresses an earnest desire to possess an experimental knowledge of the truths he published to others, and to “practice his own sermons.” His determination to seek his chief happiness in God, and the delight he actually found in Him and his service, are also every where apparent in his record. He says accordingly :—

“ *Monday, March 6, 1732.*—At this time my soul was made to profess to God that I would hope in him amid all changes, because he is God and changeth not,

* Account prefixed to the 8vo. edition of his works, 1794, Pp. xviii. xix.

that I would hang upon him as a promising God ; and that here I would lie, here I would die, here I would rest in life and death, in time and eternity, even in himself, as my only prop and salvation, consolation, righteousness and strength, happiness and heaven."

" *Sabbath, Nov. 19, 1732.*—I was made to look to Him as my only refuge and portion. Having this day given it as a mark of God's being a refuge, that to whom he is a refuge, to them he is a portion ; I was made myself to exercise faith upon God as my portion as well as my refuge, and to declare to him I would have himself and none but himself to be my portion. Under a sweet tide of influence, I was made to acknowledge him as my only portion, my heaven, my hope, and my all ; and to cast myself upon him as the great God that made heaven and earth, and the God that is in Christ, and whom, in and through Christ, I desired to have as my everlasting inheritance."

In his intercourse with the Father of spirits, his whole dependence was placed on that Saviour, whom he powerfully recommended to others, as the only medium of access to God, the only foundation of hope for eternity. To this the following entries bear sufficient testimony :—

" *Sabbath, Oct. 24, 1731.*—Having prayed in the evening with my children, I was helped to pray in secret with an outpouring of the soul before the Lord, owning my claim to the promise, my claim to pardon, my claim to grace, my claim to daily bread, my claim to a comfortable life, my claim to a stingless death, my claim to a glorious resurrection, and my claim to everlasting life and happiness, to be, only *only* in Christ, and in God through him as a promising God."

“*Nov.* 13, 1731.—O where shall I see God but in the promise? There I see him. And where shall I see the promise, but in Christ, in his blood, and as there ratified and confirmed? Under a sense of my iniquity and naughtiness, I was enabled to put all things in Christ’s hand, my justification and sanctification, consolation and salvation; and to bless God, who had put all in his hand, and to glorify him with my heart, that he had chosen such a trustee. I proclaimed him worthy, worthy to have the government, worthy in himself, and judged worthy by his Father. I therefore thought him infinitely worthy, and thus I put myself, my soul, my name, my worldly affairs, my children, my life, and all, in his hand.”

To the province of the HOLY SPIRIT in the economy of redemption he frequently alludes; and the necessity of the Spirit’s influence to the purification and comfort of his own soul he deeply felt.—“I was enabled,” says he at one time, “with tears to appeal to the Three that bear record in heaven, concerning my need of the Spirit.”—“My heart,” he states at another time, “was sweetly poured out in pleading the words of grace on which the Lord has caused me to hope; and particularly in looking to him in that word of promise to me, the ‘watering every moment,’ and the ‘well of water springing up to everlasting life.’ My heart melted before God, and dissolved like water, in the view of my being favoured with such a promise. A short blink of heaven and sweet assurance was allowed me. Glory to God. O to be helped to wait on a God of judgment.”

In the following entry he records a lesson learned from experience, regarding the importance of not resist-

ing, as well the cheering as humbling influences of the Divine Spirit :—

“ *Jan. 23, 1733.* This morning after reading and meditating a little on the word, particularly Heb. iii. and Ps. cxxx., I was quickened in prayer, and strengthened to hope in the Lord. At the beginning of my prayer, I discerned a lively frame in asserting a God in Christ to be the fountain of my life, the strength of my life, the joy of my life; and that I had no life that deserved that name, unless he himself were my life. But here checking myself with reflections upon my own sinfulness, vileness and corruption, I began to acknowledge my wickedness; but for the time the sweetness of frame failed me and wore off. Whence, I think, I may gather this lesson, that no sweet influence of the Spirit ought to be checked upon pretence of getting a frame better founded on humiliation; otherwise the Lord may be provoked to withdraw. The Lord, however, was pleased to breathe upon my soul in some after part of the duty, and to make me say with the Psalmist, ‘ I wait for God, my soul doth wait, in his word do I hope.’ ”

Very frequently does he express his reliance on the promises as the ground of his hope, and his purpose to trust not in his own varying frames and feelings, but in Christ himself, that firm and immutable rock, and his unchanging word :—

“ *Aug. 23, 1732.* This morning, after reading and considering Is. xxv. and the beginning of Ch. xxvi., it was the matter of my prayer; wherein I was helped to some steadiness, composure, and serious attendance upon a sovereign God, but without any sensible sweetness of a lively frame. Yet I had a persuasion that this made nothing to the ground of my hope and confidence,

which, I was persuaded, was still the same, without any variation from my frames. These I was brought to be so far 'denied' to, that my heart rested just upon a bare naked promise of the living God, whose life and being is ever the same, notwithstanding my deadness. The Scripture I had read I went over in prayer upon my knees, both with a view to the interest of Christ abroad and at home, and with a view to myself, my work, my children ———. And before I was done, got some little lively acting of faith in desiring that, with reference to all I had been praying for by virtue of the divine promise, I might have it to say, 'This is the Lord, I have waited for him, I will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.' "

" *Thursday, Dec. 7, 1732.* This evening when I went alone, I was helped in secret prayer to a special degree of trust and confidence. I was made with tears of joy to say, can God forget me? No: because he cannot forget himself and his Christ, his name, his glory, his mercy, and his truth. If he remember himself, he cannot but remember me; for all my hope, with all my encouragement, is only drawn from himself. Glory to God."

"He was favoured by his Blessed Master," says one, "with uncommon degrees of the manifestation of the love of God, and enjoyed the highest measures of assurance."* This statement seems to be justified by many paragraphs in his Diary, where he expresses a joyful confidence in God, and a *firm trust in him, suited to various exigencies and occasions.*

* Account prefixed to Mr. Erskine's Works, 8vo. edition, Vol. i. p. x.

Such was his exercise, *under a consciousness of personal guilt and depravity*.—"Sep. 2, 1734. This morning, after reading some Psalms, and particularly the 51st, I was helped and strengthened in prayer, with some penitential melting before the Lord as my God and Father, and some believing application to him in the promise. I went to prayer in faith of acceptance through Christ, blessing God that Christ was so acceptable to him, that through him he could accept of such a leper as I. I was filled with a sense of my own weakness, and therefore sought he might keep his everlasting arm about me."

He trusted in God in the prospect of *important and arduous duties*.—"Friday, June 27, 1735. I was humbled before the Lord, and led to fervency in pleading for the promised Spirit, the promised presence. In view of the sacramental occasion, I was made to rely on his 'Lo, I am with you.'"

When *difficulties relating to external comfort* were in any degree felt or apprehended, he confided in the promises of his faithful Creator. "I was exercised before him," he says in one passage, "about my family provision. I was made to say, 'I am poor and needy,' and to own that God has been my hope; and looked to that word, 'Bread shall be given thee, thy water shall be sure.'" "Viewing my present circumstances," he adds in a subsequent entry, "as one that might be cast out of the present Church of Scotland, I desired to look to the Lord, that he would help me to faithfulness and faith without fear, and to cast myself and my family upon his providence, to whom the earth belongs. I viewed that the earth is his and the fulness thereof, the

heaven his and the glory thereof, and that he himself is heaven, and the glory of heaven."

The *obloquy* which he occasionally suffered, as well for his faithful admonitions to individuals, as his public appearances in the cause of religion, gave occasion for the exercise of trust in God. At one time, when subjected to the scourge of the tongue, he availed himself of David's expostulation, and made it the subject of a sermon. "*Monday, Oct. 2, 1732.* This night at Culross, I was detained in Col. Erskine's, and obliged to preach in the evening; Lady Catharine Anne Erskine having greatly urged it. Accordingly I preached on Ps. xlii. 11, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul' ———." "*Tuesday, March 19, 1734.* After reading particularly the book of Ruth, it was up-stirring to me, and I was enlarged, quickened, and melted in prayer ——— entreating the Lord Jesus would not leave me nor bid me leave him, but that his Father might be my Father, his God my God, his people my people, and that I might glean in his field, he being my near kinsman. This evening having heard of some reproaches cast upon me, I was led to the Lord, and got my name, and all things put in his hand."

His habitual confidence in God was mightily sustained by means of a *regular and attentive perusal of the Scriptures*. The Bible he made use of in his studies, in small octavo, bearing his name, and the date 1716, written with his own hand, is still in a state of good preservation. It exhibits various marks of the care with which he read it, and the value he put on its precious contents. A great proportion of the verses throughout

the whole volume have a dot or asterisk prefixed to them, denoting the attention he paid to those texts, or the impression they made on him, and probably in many instances their having been the subject of his public discourses. On one of the blank leaves, too, he has recorded a list of verses entitled texts "that have been sweet and useful to my soul."*

It was his custom to read a portion of Scripture immediately before engaging in solemn secret prayer. With a view to promote holy reverence for the word, and confidence in pleading its gracious declarations and promises, he not unfrequently, like the pious and Honourable Mr. Boyle, read the book of God literally on his knees.

"*Saturday, Dec. 4, 1731.* After reading I prayed, and was humbled under a sense of my unbelief and wickedness. Yet I was made to look to God's name as being still the same, which I thought of this morning when I awoke; and especially I looked to God in those names given him, Ps. cxlvi. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, which I read again *upon my knees*, and dwelt particularly upon that, his "keeping truth for ever," and compared in my mind his being the Keeper of truth with his being the Keeper of mercy, Exod. xxxiv. 7.

"*July 2, 1735.* After reading Ps. lxxi. I took the Bible in my hand *to my knee*, and read, and prayed as I read, from verse 16th and downwards; and was helped so to do with some outpouring of the soul, and with application to myself in the view of the sacrament and the work upon my hand. I sought the Lord might teach me how to make mention of his righteousness,

* See Appendix, No. XI.

knowing I have no righteousness but guilt instead of righteousness, and how to go on in his strength, knowing I am not only weak but wicked ;—owning he had taught me from my youth, and seeking that now when I am old and grey-headed, he would not forsake me till I have showed his strength to this generation, and showed the glory of Christ and his righteousness ;—owning also that none is like unto him, and seeking that he would quicken me as the God that quickens the dead, and do great things for me like a great God, and comfort me on every side by refreshing me with his presence, blessing and making me a blessing ; that so I might praise him on the psaltery, even his truth.”

Though in perusing the sacred oracles alone, it seems to have been his usual practice to proceed regularly from chapter to chapter, he often read passages of different books at the same time, comparing them together. “ *Monday, Jan. 29, 1733.* I read Jerem. last chapter, and Heb. vii. viii. and ix. with some meditation, and observed how Christ’s priesthood is established as an everlasting, valid, and fully sufficient priesthood, and how the covenant is confirmed by his death ; and this was matter of prayer to me.”

He appears to have read no part of holy writ with greater frequency or delight than the book of Psalms.—“ *Monday, April 10, 1732.* After reading Ps. cv. and part of cvi., I got grace to pray with many sweet actings of faith, mixed with kindly penitential mourning for sin ; acknowledging myself to be more brutish than any man, and pleading that the Lord would have respect to his covenant.”—“ *April 14, 1733.* In some of these mornings past, some scriptures that I read in my

ordinary were precious to me, particularly Rev. vii. 17, and Psalms xxiii. xxiv. xxvii. xxviii. xxix."

Instead of confining himself, however, to favourite books or select passages, he made conscience of perusing the whole Bible, and often reaped much instruction and refreshment from portions which at first he was apt to consider comparatively uninteresting. "*Aug.* 11, 1732. This morning I read some chapters in Isaiah, viz. xv. xvi. xvii.; which, though I thought there was little in them, I determined to read with an eye to the sovereign Lord, because it is his word; and I observed many useful lessons therein, as I had done some days before in Isa. xiii. After reading I was mightily helped and strengthened in prayer, particularly with reference to my public work, and my going to Kinglassie. I was made to lay hold on his word and his faithfulness pledged therein, and to plead upon his former mercies."

From the preceding extracts it is manifest, that what he read in the Scriptures was often improved as materials for *meditation* and prayer. The few following afford a further specimen of the pious assiduity with which he availed himself of the sacred lessons that, in his daily course of reading, fell successively under his eye.

"*Sabbath, Dec. 5, 1731.* After I had noticed, in reading, some of God's names in Psa. cxlvi. and the beginning of Psa. cxlvii., I went to prayer, and had my heart poured out before God therein. I viewed him as great in power, and of infinite understanding; pleading that this day he would act in a manner suitable to these names of his—that he looses the prisoners; that he opens the eyes of the blind; raises those that are bowed down; gives food to the hungry; heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds; breaks the hard

heart, and heals the broken heart.—I was this day helped to preach on that subject, ‘ God in Christ.’ ”

“ *June 29, 1734.* This morning after reading, I had a strong inclination to lay siege to heaven for the living water that was promised to come out from Jerusalem. I prayed with strong cries for the Lord’s being victorious in my behalf, in preserving me from such a way as might be to the dishonour of his name and discredit of his gospel, and to the wounding of my own soul. I looked for the living water I had read of this morning in *Zech. xiv.*, and pleaded the promise with strong cries and tears, acknowledging my own weakness and wickedness, and putting myself into the hands of the Lord Jesus.”

Monday, April 21, 1735. This morning my son John coming in to me to seek money to buy paper, his calling me *father* was in providence blessed to me, to quicken me to go to God as my Father. Accordingly, after reading, my heart was melted in looking to God through Christ as my Father; who had exercised a fatherly care about me hitherto. Here I was made to look to him and to beg of him as a father, that he would give me his Spirit; and remembering with outpouring of heart before him that word, *Luke xi. 13*, ‘ If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that ask him?’ I was led to seek this blessing; and the rather that he had caused me to hope for *twenty four years* past on that word *John iv. 14*, ‘ The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life.’ Then I was made to seek his presence in my ministerial work

It is not without reason that he has been styled "a laborious and successful wrestler" at the throne of grace.* He felt the importance of *prayer*, we have seen, in very early life;† and the whole tenor of his Diary manifests the conscientious diligence and zeal with which he persisted in this interesting duty. At the very beginning of that portion of it we possess, he expresses himself in the following terms:—

"*Monday, Sept. 27, 1731.* I came to Perth [from Kinclaven,] and Tuesday the 28th I preached in Perth, for Mr. Wilson, from Rom. viii. 28. Late this night, in my room, I got my soul sweetly poured out before God in secret prayer; praying for the Spirit to be with me according to the promise; to be helpful to me in the whole of my conduct, public, private, and secret."

He was far from adopting the notion of those who imagine that the coldness of their hearts at the moment, or the want of a desirable frame of spirit, affords a sufficient pretext for omitting the exercise. His own experience served to confirm his attachment to those more scriptural views on this point which have since been thus expressed by a justly celebrated writer: "If the time and other circumstances call for the duty, our own disposition of heart is, of all others, the most foolish and criminal excuse. How much better would it be to wrestle as Jacob in the text, and insist upon the blessing; which cannot be more sensibly illustrated, with respect to this particular branch, than by mentioning to you a resolution which an eminent Christian entered into for his own practice: That he would not be baffled

* Account prefixed to his Works, in 8vo. vol. i. p. 17.

† Chap. i. Pp. 24—27.

by a treacherous spirit; for he would never give over the work of praise till his affections were stirred and he were brought to a sense of gratitude for Divine goodness; and he would never give over enumerating and confessing his sins till his heart were melted in contrition and penitential sorrow.”*

“*May 6, 1735.* I had a little reviving in prayer to a promising God, and some outpouring of heart in looking with humility towards the promise, and the faithfulness and mercy of God in the promise. One lesson I learned about this time, and many times formerly, that when I have been utterly indisposed for any duty, I have resolved to present my *body* at prayer and to cast my empty self before the Lord, though I could do nothing more; and then I have found my *soul* also engaged to the Lord and his service, and faith strengthened and quickened, before the duty was over. Whence it is plain to me duty is our’s, but the ability is from the Lord; and though we have no ability for duty, yet we are to venture looking for foreign strength. Hence also it is plain, in opposition to Quakers and enthusiasts, that the rule of the word is to be followed, even when we find no motion of the Spirit; and that his motion and influence is to be expected in following the rule; but we cast ourselves out of his way, when we neglect the rule, and are in danger of following an erroneous spirit, instead of the Spirit of truth.”

The *subject and tenor* of his petitions for himself and others may be understood from the following extracts, as well as from others already produced:—

* Dr. Witherspoon’s Works, vol. ii. Ser. 11th, Fervency and Importunity in Prayer.

“ *Sabbath, July 30, 1732.*—After I had lectured on Rom. iii. ult., and preached on Ezek. xliii. 12, and prayed with the children at home, I had some access to God, in praying to him as a promising God, in behalf of my ministerial work; in behalf of my everlasting concerns; in behalf of my wife; and in behalf of my children; I was also made to cry to God, that he would bless what was delivered this day, partly by my colleague, and partly by myself; and that, though the preaching was over, yet the Lord would bless it with powerful effect.” “ *Saturday, Jan. 14, 1738.*—After awaking, I thought upon that word I had read the night before, 2 Cor. v. 5, ‘He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.’ I thought on the sovereignty of his grace as the worker of grace, and the giver of the Spirit. After reading, I had some freedom in prayer, and in family worship. After worship, when alone, I had my heart sweetly melted in the view of the promise of the Spirit, and in pleading that the Lord would pour out his Spirit upon the people of Dunfermline. I had that word especially in view, Is. xliii. 20, 21, ‘The beasts of the field shall honour me, even the dragons and the owls; for I will give water in the wilderness, and streams in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise.’”

The *frequency* of his devout supplications gives evidence of the pleasure he found in approaching to God. Agreeably to David’s example, he appears to have made it his usual practice to pray at least “evening, morning, and at noon.”* “ *Saturday, March 3, 1733.*

* Psalm lv. 17.

This morning, after reading, I was helped in prayer. Afterwards I was helped in the forenoon ; but especially after dinner, when I went again to God upon my knees, my heart melted before the Lord, and was poured out into his bosom as a promising God, while I professed him to be my only hope and happiness ; my only refuge and portion."

Not satisfied, however, with observing stated seasons of solemn prayer on his knees, his soul very often, and particularly during the course of his journies, took flight to the throne of grace in those *ejaculatory addresses*, which are eminently conducive to the habitual enjoyment of intimate fellowship with God. The correctness of this statement is evinced by the following examples.

" *Sep.* 29, 1731. I was detained in Perth this forenoon by ill weather. I came off about the middle of the day, and betwixt Perth and the Bridge of Earne, I was helped in prayer while on horseback."—" *July* 25, 1732. "When I rode home alone from Orwell [where he and his brother had assisted in administering the Lord's Supper] I was helped, when riding on horseback, to serious application to the Lord by prayer. Betwixt *Kirkness* and *Blair*, and also on the rest of the way, I was much humbled under a sense of sin and unworthiness, and yet my eyes were towards his holy temple."

A firm conviction, founded on Scripture and supported by happy experience, of the *efficacy* attached to the prayer of faith, powerfully incited him to "pray always with all prayer and supplication," and sincerely to value an interest in the kind intercessions of his fellow-Christians.

“ *Feb. 12, 1732.* This night *Helen Waterston* came to the house and gave me several encouraging accounts of her exercise in behalf of my children. This evening my daughter was not well ; and when I was alone very late, I prayed for her with much sweetness, putting her in the heart of the strong tower, the name of the Lord, and casting her on that covenant, ‘ I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed.’ Deriving my hope from the promise, and the fidelity of the promiser, my heart was poured out with hopeful tears.”

On one occasion he was requested by an afflicted friend to remember him in prayer. From the urgency of other affairs, the pious request for a time escaped his memory ; but happening to recollect it during the night, he rose out of bed, and prayed with great fervour in behalf of that individual. Not long after, he had the happiness to receive information of his recovery, and found that at the very hour in which he had wrestled for him with the God of Jacob, the sufferer had obtained effectual relief. “ How true the promise,” adds a worthy minister,* in a letter containing this anecdote, “ While they are yet speaking, I will hear.”

That he was minutely attentive to the workings of his own heart, and often *examined his state and character* before God, is clear from the tenor of the foregoing extracts. The two following instances will serve still further to show the accuracy with which he investigated his own spiritual condition, and his readiness to avail himself of instructions calculated to aid him in this necessary and profitable exercise :—

* The late Rev. Mr. Brown of Whitburn.

“ *Saturday, Aug. 5, 1732.* This evening, after I came from Carnock, I went to prayer, and found liberty in pouring out my heart before God. I remembered in prayer the Scriptural marks [of vital Christianity] that Mr. Hunter offered in his discourse this day, and examining myself before the Lord about them, I found I had either every one of them, or a hearty desire after them. The marks were founded on John vi. 40, 44, 45. Ps. cx. 3, whence he deduced that they who had not found their inability to believe, and the need of drawing, their unwillingness and their need of being made willing, and had not been determined effectually to close with Christ, were not believers. Also upon 2 Cor. v. 17, ‘ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.’ I said before the Lord that I thought there was something within me that would be pleased with nothing without him, and that he alone was my hope and my strength; and that my heart which naturally was towards the creature, was, I thought, in some measure towards God. Also upon Rom. viii. 9, ‘ If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;’ I thought that was what I had been many years looking for. Also on Philip. iii. 3, 7, 8, showing that a change was wrought, from what sometime was the temper of the heart, and Christ above all things precious for righteousness. I had a *Bochim*, and an ardency of zeal in desiring fellowship and communion with God, and in looking for his Spirit; also a solemn protestation before God, that I could do nothing without him, and that he alone is my hope and my strength.”

“ *Sabbath, Dec. 3, 1732.*—This evening I was strengthened to the exercise of faith in secret prayer, to trusting in a promising God, and to a secret pleasant

glorying in the Lord. In prayer, I went through the marks in my colleague's sermon, and made application of them to myself with some pleasure, such as; they whom the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus had freed from the law of sin and death, they have seen the glory of the light; this view has begotten them to a lively hope; this hope has led to a purifying of heart and life; this purity makes the remains of sin grievous; they are lovers of the ordinances of the gospel, and of the word of God; they are lovers of the people of God, who bear his image; they are lovers of the providence of God, even of cross-providences. Whatever fretfulness flesh and blood may have, they see God in his dispensations; and the more of God, the more beauty in his dealings."

Whilst the various exercises of the closet were thus sedulously maintained, and proved the means of so much spiritual enjoyment, it might well be presumed that the *family altar* was not neglected. Many brief allusions occur in the Diary to the religious worship performed daily in his house, at least morning and evening; to the psalms sung, the chapters read, and the prayers offered up. "This evening," he says, "in family worship, I was quickened with the word read, Acts v., and helped after it in secret." "This day," he adds in a subsequent passage, *Dec. 28, 1736*, I examined at Crossford, and visited some sick people, both before and after it. At family worship, having read John vi. I was somewhat touched with the great and weighty matter contained in it; and, after family worship, having gone to secret prayer, I was helped in some measure to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God,—

by faith apprehending Christ's incarnation, or God in our nature, and Christ's satisfaction, his being the sacrifice, the propitiation, the ransom, the atonement; and all with some liveliness and application."

On various occasions his family were assembled for the purpose of *extraordinary* abasement and prayer. If iniquity abounded, if important services were in prospect, or if afflictive and bereaving dispensations were experienced, he said to his household, "Sanctify a fast." Let one example in addition to those formerly produced suffice:—*

"*Saturday, Nov. 15, 1735.*—I set apart all the forenoon from nine to two or three afternoon, for humiliation and prayer with my family, confessing sin and seeking the mercy of God in Christ. I kept Henry and Johnny at home from school for that end. Instead of speaking with the family betwixt prayer and praise, I read some of Mr. Boston's notes on fasting, and what is forbidden in every command in the Larger Catechism. While I caused Henry and John pray in the family, my heart was in their behalf, it being their first [attempt of this kind,] wherein I allowed and excused their brevity. May the Lord succeed this exercise with a blessing in due time."

The man who, from principle, worships God with his own family, is not indifferent to the observance of this excellent practice in the houses of his friends and acquaintance. Whatever kind hospitality they show him, he feels a real defect where that service is omitted, and is proportionably happy when he enjoys the opportunity of uniting in the delightful exercises of domestic

* Chap. v. p. 236—240.

piety with those from whom he receives other valued expressions of civility or friendship. Mr. Erskine accordingly describes the happiness he once experienced in the dwelling of a pious friend in Edinburgh in the following terms:—

“ *Saturday, Jan. 15, 1732.*—This morning, after reading Ps. xxix. 10, 11, I found my heart strengthened in prayer: and, afterwards, in family worship, in my landlord’s *Mr. Braidwood*, my heart was enlarged both in singing, in reading, and in prayer. The psalm sung was Ps. xxv. 6—8, and the psalm read was Ps. cxv.; in both which I found matter of comfort and confidence in the Lord; and after worship was over, sitting alone, my heart was poured out before God for his blessing, according to that word, ‘I will bless thee, and make thee a blessing.’ Lord, glorify thy name.”

His delight in the *services of the sanctuary* was great and lasting. In some preceding chapters we have adverted to his care to profit by the public institutions of religion, and the pleasure he found in associating with his brethren, especially at sacramental solemnities. A few more quotations bearing on this trait of his character, may seem useful.

“ *Monday, March 6, 1732.*—I heard my brother preach in the Tolbooth Kirk, [Edinburgh] and was refreshed, being able, through grace, to apply to myself the marks that he gave about going up from the wilderness, leaning on the Beloved.”

Even when hearing young men, as a member of Presbytery, in order to judge of their qualifications, he was more apt to listen to the truth as a Christian, desiring his own spiritual advancement, than to sit as a critic,

intending to pronounce an opinion on the merits of their discourses. When the late Rev. Robert Shirra of Kirkaldy had delivered some trial discourses for ordination, being asked to give his judgment respecting them, he answered with a tone of surprise, "What is that? Moderator, I forgot that it was upon trials; I was hearing for the edification of my soul."

To him the songs of Zion appear to have been particularly pleasing and beneficial.

"*June 23, 1732.*—This day I went to Glendovan, where I preached Saturday and Sabbath on Matt. iii. 11. My special times of refreshment were in singing the psalms in public, both Sabbath morning and Sabbath evening. The last psalm sung was Ps. lxxxv. 6, 7."

"*Burntisland, July 22, 1733.*—I found much sweetness and heart-fellowship with God several times this day, partly in hearing Mr. Thomson preach, and especially in singing the psalms, and was helped in serving the two first tables after him, and thereafter in preaching at the tent, on 'Do as thou hast said.' This evening in my room I got my heart revived and melted in the duty of prayer alone, apprehending God as my own gracious promising God, and trusting in his word. My heart was made thankful also to God for owning Mr. Thomson, and making him evangelical and zealous."

"*Saturday, Oct. 20, 1733.*—I went to Abbotshall. I heard Mr. Currie and Mr. Gibb [of Cleish] and tarried with my wife in the house of *Raith*. On Sabbath I communicated at one of the tables Mr. Currie served. I had much sweetness in the exercise of faith, in singing several psalms that were sung, particularly part of Ps. xxiv. and xxii."

Seldom, however, was he more in his element than

when employed in solemn prayer and humiliation, whether in the closet, in the social circle, or in the public assembly :—

“ *Tuesday, April 25, 1732.*—There was a fast kept by the elders and others in George Crawford’s house. I was helped to wait on it without weariness, and closed the meeting with prayer about 5 o’clock, p. m.”—“ *Tuesday, Nov. 14, 1732.*—This day I preached, and was assisted on Philip. iv. 6. This evening the meeting for prayer was in my house, and we had sweet fellowship in conversation. In singing afterwards, when alone, I was made to consider what there was in God that could give me relief; and my heart was made to rejoice in him as all my happiness, all my heaven. I thought there was enough in him to satisfy my mind, to satisfy my will, to satisfy my heart and affections; and that it was happiness enough to the redeemed that they for ever behold his glory, and got liberty to praise him for his glorious perfections in Christ: and I desired to be of that happy number.”—“ *Tuesday, Oct. 22, 1734.*—This day being the congregational fast because of the great sickness and death, especially among the children, I was strengthened in preaching this afternoon, upon Isa. ix. 13, ‘The people turneth not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts.’”

The spirituality of his mind, and his entire devotedness to the service of God, seem to have been greatly promoted by a habit of *carefully observing the events of Providence*. We find him, accordingly, at one time devoutly fixing his eye on an eclipse of the moon, and at another, recording a hurricane.

“ *Tuesday, Nov. 20, 1732.*—This morning, after reading, I prayed with some composure of mind and holy confidence in God as a promising God. This evening I spent some hours in noticing a remarkable eclipse of the moon, which lasted, from beginning to end, three hours and forty minutes.”

“ *Sabbath, Jan. 14, 1739.*—This day, from twelve to near four in the morning, a wind, or rather a hurricane blew terribly, shaking all the houses of the town, and putting all the inhabitants to a great confusion and consternation. Little more harm, however, was done here; but much more elsewhere through the land.”

Striking instances of the Lord’s preserving goodness made permanent impressions on his heart. Once on the evening of a communion Sabbath, he recollected with lively feelings of gratitude a narrow escape from drowning, when crossing the firth from Leith to Kirkaldy.

“ *Kirkaldy, Monday, Oct. 22, 1733.* Last night, before the work was over, I went away in the evening to my quarters, and by the way was helped to meditate upon God, and his works of mercy towards me. I walked towards the place where I was almost drowned, when the impression I had in Leith, and my prayer for preservation [recurred to my thoughts.] I meditated on that work of God, then went home, and in secret that night was helped anew to pour out my heart before God, and to take a new grip of his covenant and promise, as I had done in the church.”

Some years after, he rendered his tribute of thankfulness for a renewed preservation amid “perils by water,” which proved fatal to others on the same day:—

“ *Tuesday, June 26, 1739.*—I preached at *Knock*,

and *Thursday* at *Linton*, by appointment of Presbytery. Wednesday being a rainy day, I rode the Water of Leith as I went to Linton; and that day a minister and four other people were drowned in that water some miles below! Glory to God for preserving mercy."

He was not inattentive to the lessons which the commencement of a new year and the anniversary of his own birth-day were fitted to impress on his mind. These seasons gave a new impulse to his devotional ardour.—"*Jan. 1, 1733.* After reading Jer. xxxiii. and some other Scriptures, I went to prayer, and therein had my heart poured out with secret joy before the Lord. I found my soul somewhat strengthened to look to God through the glass of the promise. This day I first went to the Session that met for prayer, and then to another meeting for that end, and was engaged in this work till six p. m. We had designedly proposed the setting this day apart in this manner, because so many, on the contrary, sequester it for drinking and wickedness."—" *Jan. 1, 1735.*—When praying in the evening, I was led to look to God in the promise; begging he might help me to watch and keep my garments clean, not knowing how soon the Lord may come."—" *March 15, 1735.*—*Saturday* being my birth-day, when I entered my fiftieth year. This morning I was helped in prayer and quickened in duty. I had some conviction of my ingratitude, and was made to look again towards God's holy temple."

His Journal contains several notices of the deaths and funerals of ministers and others whose character he esteemed, and was desirous to emulate; of which the following are a specimen:—

" *May 23, 1732.*—*Andrew Conyng*, an elder of our

parish died. We heard about this time also of Mr. BOSTON's death. Lord, sanctify.—*Thursday, May 25.*—

This day I preached upon that word, ‘ Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him? ’—“ *June 29, 1733.*

—This day I went to the burial of Mr. *Charters*, minister of Inverkeithing, and Mrs. *Lindsay* of Cavil.”

“ *Friday, Oct. 4, 1734.*—This morning Mrs. *Spence* died after child-birth. I was raised out of bed to go to her husband, who was greatly afflicted. I was much affected, when, at his desire, I went to prayer with him and my colleague, and afterwards when alone. I was led to bless the Lord, because he had ripened her for the change, as I evidently discerned, from the strong affection she had, especially of late, to the word, and the sweet communion she had with God therein, which, from time to time she imparted to me. I lost a great friend by her death.”

The decease of MARGARET DEWAR, his first wife, he felt particularly trying; and his concern to profit by that affecting bereavement, was discovered not merely at the time of the event, but also in succeeding years, more especially when the annual return of the day brought it fresh to his remembrance.

“ *Wednesday, Nov. 22, 1732.*—This day, remembering it to be the day on which my wife died, and which, last year, I had set apart for secret worship to some advantage, I resolved to essay observing it in like manner, and shut myself up in my room. After a short prayer that the Lord would be with me, I read my ordinary, Jer. ix. and then prayed. Afterwards I read my ordinary Ps. lxxxviii. and then meditated upon Jer. ix. 23, 24, compared with 1 Cor. i. at the close. Having read that, and the whole of ch. iii., I adored the

perfections of God that shone in his conduct towards me, and observed that he exercised lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, and towards me. Then I went to my knees, and having reflected on the sinfulness of my nature and way, I begged of God to be pitied and purged, and to have my heart fixed this day, acknowledging I could no more pray than I could save myself, and could no more fix my heart than I could make the sun to stand still. Then I began to think on what has passed since my setting this day apart last year; and though I noticed ground of humiliation, I observed also ground of thankfulness." [He proceeds to mention some other chapters he read and compared; also several petitions he presented for himself and family, for a minister in affliction, for the church of Scotland, for Dunfermline, and the success of his labours there, for Jews and Gentiles, and for "the persecuted and praying people of God throughout the world," and concludes thus:] "In this manner the day was spent till about two o'clock afternoon. I cried to the Lord it might not be a lost day, but that for the Mediator's sake I might reap the blessing of the day in his time. Then I went and prayed in the family betwixt 2 and 3 o'clock, and afterwards prayed alone, expressing my hope, saying, 'my hope is in his word.'"

His *keeping a Diary* for many years, amid the numerous labours that daily devolved on him as the pastor of a large congregation, affords a satisfactory proof both of his attention to his own heart and conduct, and of his care to receive the salutary counsels brought home to him by outward occurrences in providence. He occasionally reviewed what he had recorded in his Jour-

nal; and we find him acknowledging the benefit reaped from it :*—

“ *Saturday, Nov. 1, 1735.* This evening in secret prayer, the Lord humbled me, and I was partly led to it by reading over some part of this diary in this book, reflecting on old aberrations, and also late iniquities. The Lord, however, quickened me both now and on *Sabbath, Nov. 2*, in the morning; for on both these occasions, I was brought under a powerful gale of the Spirit, laying me low, and yet enabling me anew to lay hold on Christ by some lively acting of faith in his promises. Conviction of sin was great, and yet confidence in the mercy of God through Christ, as manifested in the word, was also great: and my heart was melted to spirituality and to a hatred of vain conversation.”

The candid statements of his own private record, added to the authentic testimonies of his contemporaries regarding the general tenor of his conduct, leave no room to doubt, that whatever his defects and aberrations may have been, he was entitled to the character given him of “a shining example of *piety, holiness, and integrity*.”† Ingenuous acknowledgments of sin were accompanied with firm resolutions and habitual endeavours to mortify and avoid it; as appears from the following, amongst many similar expressions.—“I was taught that the utmost liberty and outpouring of heart before the Lord will not preserve from a sudden return to folly, if watchfulness be not added to prayer. Lord hear, and pity.” “I was made to swear and resolve through

* See some remarks on writing a Diary, in *Life of Ebenezer Erskine*, Pp. 172-177.

† Account in 8vo. edition of his *Works*, vol. i. p. 17.

grace, that I would keep myself from mine iniquity. Lord help to perform ; help to walk circumspectly, and to watch unto prayer."

The influence of his exemplary conduct has been described in the following lines :—

" An holy humble course of life he steer'd,
That all might see the doctrine which they heard.
His presence grave did reverence great command,
And crave profound respect from every hand.
His very look could vanity reclaim,
His countenance put levity to shame."*

That his " course of life" was truly " humble"—that he was adorned with that *humility* which is an inseparable concomitant of piety and the brightest ornament of the Christian, appears from the foregoing detail. Yet it may be useful, in concluding this chapter, to produce a few extracts and anecdotes calculated to exhibit this amiable characteristic a little more fully. The passages of his journal in which, with deep abasement and godly sorrow, he confesses his sinfulness by nature and practice, are almost numberless. What follows may be received as a sample :—

" *July 7, 1732.* I was at this time brought to have a little *Bochim*, looking on myself as a child, yet the most rebellious child that ever a gracious God had in this world."—*Nov. 12, 1733.* I was made hopefully and humbly to cast all upon him with some dependence on

* Quoted from a Poem to his memory, composed about thirteen years after his death, Works in 8vo. vol. i. p. 22. These lines indeed are confessedly borrowed from Mr. Erskine's own Elegy on Mr. Hamilton of Stirling, and applied to himself.

his word; having first viewed myself as a mass of unbelief, enmity, atheism, darkness, death and hell, and yet apprehended a God in Christ as my light, and life, and righteousness, and all.”—“*Sep. 29, 1735.* I was made to own that infinite justice could not be magnified upon any one in hell so much as in my damnation; and yet was made to see how every perfection of God, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, mercy, and truth, would be all glorified to the highest in my salvation, and therefore to hope in his name and perfections through Christ.”

These expressions in his Diary, serve to illustrate the cordial sincerity with which he uttered the following words in a sermon he preached at Carnock:—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. O let every one here say it with application, *and I will say it with you through grace* — ‘of whom I am chief,’ even the chief of sinners whom he came to save.”*

Far from contenting himself with such general and vague confessions of sin as serve only to beguile the conscience and harden the heart, he particularly scrutinized the diseases of his soul and the errors of his life. He often charges himself expressly, as in the following entries gathered from various parts of his record, with much remaining ignorance, unbelief, indolence, unwatchfulness, wanderings in prayer, and other iniquities; and describes the painful conflicts betwixt grace and corruption, these two opposite principles he found operating within:—

“I had a sense of my utter ignorance of God, but yet

* Quoted from Brown's Gospel Truth, p. 132, note.

I was pitied and strengthened in viewing the names he had taken to himself in his word and promises." "I was under heaviness through apprehension of atheism, and unbelief, and the Lord's absence." "Much idleness having been my fault, on Saturday, even after the sweet morning I enjoyed, I had some challenge this day (Sabbath,) yet was carried through the work with some desire to commit it to the Lord." "I found in prayer, at this time, as frequently before, both a dark side and a bright; a dark side, filled with roving, and a bright side, filled with the Spirit poured out so as to make the heart to trust, believe, and rejoice." "This evening my unwatchfulness robbed me of the sweet communion promised, John xiv. 21." "After I had been some time alone, I got a bitter, mourning review of my sinfulness, both old and late transgressions, the sins of my childhood, sins at Edinburgh, Portmoak, Culross, Dunfermline; mourning bitterly, as it is expressed, Zech. xii. 10. Yet with tears, I got prayed for forgiveness, saying, Father, Father, forgive."

How excellent soever the gifts he was endowed with, he retained through life a deep sense of his own insufficiency for the faithful and successful discharge of ministerial duty, and daily implored the necessary aids, and the blessing from above.

"*Nov. 27, 1791.* I went to my knees, seeking of the Lord he would show me whether he had any more to give me to say on that text, 'He hath given all things into his hand.' And here I was helped humbly to acknowledge my insufficiency. I had such a sense of this that I could hardly utter it. I thought words could not express how insufficient I was. I owned the ministerial work to be what the Lord only could bless and make

effectual, and that the whole belonged to him. And here my heart was poured out to seek that that which is the glory of the gospel might be granted; even that it might be 'the ministration of the Spirit' in a powerful way, and that he would reach and touch the hearts of whom he pleased."

His humility was discovered further, in his readiness to do justice to the merits and popularity of other ministers, and also to conduct himself meekly when, at any time, he somewhat failed in his public appearances:—

"*Sabbath, Aug. 6, 1732.* This morning I was helped, with an outpouring of heart, to pray, and to trust, and to look to the Lord for his pity, and had faith strengthened upon Ps. xviii. 1, 2. My heart exulted and rejoiced in him as my strength, while I was made sensible of my own weakness and confusion. I thought of my incapacity to preach after such an eloquent preacher as Mr. *Lindsay*, * [whom he was to succeed in the pulpit at Carnock the day following,] and of my want of preparation. Yet I thought, on the other hand, if God were my strength, I should do well enough; and in the confidence of this, I set about the means."

At one time when Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine both preached on the Monday after the celebration of the Lord's Supper at Glasgow, the former delivered an excellent discourse with his accustomed animation and dig-

* He here refers to the Rev. Henry Lindsay, then minister of Bothkennar, but translated about eight years after to Perth. He was born in the parish of Dunfermline, sustained an irreproachable character, and was esteemed a very evangelical and useful preacher. See a short account of him in *Gospel Truth*, pp. 443, 444, and also in *Steven's History of the Scottish Church in Rotterdam*, pp. 161—164. Compare p. 133 of this work.

nity, while the latter considerably fell short of his usual fluency and fervour. Shortly after the close of the worship, when the two brothers had an opportunity of conversing privately together, Ebenezer gently intimated to Ralph that it appeared to him the sermon he had preached that day was not so substantial and interesting as usual; on which Ralph made a reply to this effect; "True, brother; but if my poor sermon humble me, perhaps I shall reap greater advantage from it, than you from your great sermon." *

The language he employs, in fine, with regard to his various publications and their apparent utility, indicates a genuine lowliness of heart, combined with an ardent desire of doing good. Some of his expressions on this topic will occur hereafter. The following brief quotation from one of his letters to Mr. Whitefield may suffice at present.—"It refreshes me to hear that any of my poor writings in verse or prose have been and are blessed, in this or any other part of the earth. If I travel by pen as far as you do in person, and contribute my mite for spreading the gospel light, I rejoice in it, and bless his name for it, who has ordered this beyond my view and expectation." †

* This anecdote was related by the late Dr. Lawson, who probably received it from the Rev. Mr. Fisher of Glasgow.

† Brown's Gospel Truth, p. 157.

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Erskine's pious and exemplary conduct in the various relations of life—As a Son—Husband—Father—Master—Grandfather—Brother—Friend and Companion—His candid and forgiving spirit—Extensive benevolence.

TRUE piety is the only solid basis of all that is virtuous in temper and conduct. The experience of ages confirms the doctrine of Scripture regarding its absolute necessity to genuine moral excellence, and the powerful influence it exerts on the behaviour of mankind in the various relations and circumstances of life. By its vital and blissful energy, it, in some degree, supplies what is defective, and corrects what is amiss in the natural temperament, whilst it never fails to throw a fresh lustre on every estimable endowment and amiable quality received from the God of nature.

The subject of this narrative was constitutionally possessed of a warm, affectionate, and active spirit; and its tendencies being refined and ennobled by Divine grace, he became, on the whole, singularly pleasant and useful in every relation and capacity he held, whether public or private.

As a SON, he cherished a profound veneration and tender love for his worthy parents. It is no slight proof of his early attachment to his father on earth, that when deprived of him by death in his eleventh year, the pangs of filial sorrow he then felt proved the occasion of drawing out his heart to God as his Father in heaven;* and

* Compare Ch. i. p. 26.

the care with which he subsequently copied his father's example as a Christian and a minister, afforded the most substantial evidence of deep regard for his memory. His mother, MARGARET HALCRO, having survived her husband for about thirty years, he had many opportunities of expressing his affection for her ; nor did he fail to improve them. Part of her time in old age, as was formerly stated, she spent happily under his roof ; and he concurred with his brother Ebenezer in showing her all becoming attention and respect at her death.* The Latin inscription on her tomb-stone, most probably, was composed by Ralph.†

In the interesting relation of a HUSBAND, he discovered great tenderness, happily blended with that Christian fidelity which produces an unwearied attention to the spiritual welfare of a beloved partner. Though we have seen no part of his Diary written prior to the death of MARGARET DEWAR, his first wife,‡ the subsequent entries, we find, contain repeated allusions to her, from which it is clear she was endeared to him by a lovely combination of the principal excellencies that can adorn the female character. He commends her as truly pious, prudent, and affectionate, his " best friend on earth." Among other passages, referring to her worth, the following occurs :—

" *Saturday, Dec. 25, 1736.*—Last night, I saw *Elizabeth Campbell*, she not being well ; and having spoken a little to her alone, she told me some of my first wife's dying words, [uttered] before I came home

* Life of Eben. Erskine, Pp. 39, 42.

† *Ibid*, Pp. 516, 517.

‡ Compare chap. v. p. 186.

that Sabbath night [in which she expired ;] namely, ‘ This mortal shall put on immortality, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and death shall be swallowed up in victory.’ She told me also how afflicted she now was for her ingratitude in her carriage many times towards her [having been a servant in the family,] and desired I might pray for her.”

In one of his note-books, we find a sermon on Job xiii. 15, ‘ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,’ with this memorandum written on the margin at the beginning : “ My dear wife died November 22, 1730, being Sabbath. I preached this first sermon thereafter on Sabbath, December 6th.”

We must not here omit the verses in memory of this excellent female, which are introduced at the close of his Miscellaneous Poems, in the following terms :*—

“ A SACRED ODE ON MARGARET DEWAR, my first most affectionate spouse, who died November 22, 1730, after having born ten children, aged 32.

“ The law brought forth her precepts ten,
And then dissolv’d in grace ;
This vine as many boughs, and then
In glory took her place.

Her dying breath triumphantly
Did that sweet anthem sing,
Thanks be to God for victory ;
O Death ! where is thy sting ?”

A letter addressed to an esteemed brother, only nine days after he became a widower, supplies, however, the

* Works, vol. ii. p. 788.

amplest account of his feelings on that mournful occasion, the consolations that sustained him, and the spiritual improvement he was desirous to reap from the sadly bereaving stroke.*

Letter—Rev. Ralph Erskine to the Rev. Neil Macvicar of St. Cuthberts, Edinburgh.

Dunfermline, Dec. 7, 1730.

“ Very Rev. and Dear Brother,

Your kind sympathising letter came to my hand on Saturday at noon, when I was alone in my closet, and my soul eating bitter herbs in great plenty, insomuch that I could not read your compassionate line, without bedewing it with tears of sorrow at the occasion of it, and joy upon occasion of the Lord’s goodness, in stirring you up to take a lift of my burden, which I take to be one of the fruits and effects of his sympathy, who is the great burden-bearer, and who has said, ‘ Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.’

“ Dear Brother, I may say, with Ezekiel, (chap. xxiv. 18,) ‘ I spake unto the people in the morning, and at even my wife died.’ I lectured in the forenoon, preached in the afternoon, heard the exercise in the evening, and after that saw some sick persons, and all this time the Lord saw fit to hide it from my eyes, that my dear wife was dying. Though I knew she was in distress that day, and two or three days before, yet it was not

* This letter is copied from the Christian Repository, vol. i. pp. 527—529, collated with a MS. copy, kindly shown by a lady. The varieties are but few, and merely verbal.

reckoned mortal by any but herself; for she many a time expressed her apprehensions of death, not only then, but a long time before; and it is part of my grief that these advertisements were so overlooked by me, and that I had so little will to believe what I now find to be true. Her last words expressed the deepest humiliation and greatest submission to the sovereign will of God, that words could manifest; and thereafter, she shut up all with that, ‘O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord,’—which she repeated two or three times over. And yet, even at this time, I knew not they were her dying words, till instantly I perceived the evident symptoms of death; in the view whereof I was plunged, as it were, into a sea of confusion, when she, in less than an hour after, in a most soft and easy manner, departed this life.

“She was one that had piety and seriousness without the least noise or show; virtue and industry, without vanity or levity; and the greatest kindness and care, especially towards me, all the lifetime we had together, which was sixteen years. And now my groaning is sometimes heavy, and yet my stroke is heavier than my groaning; but it is the Lord, and therefore it becomes me to be dumb, and not to open my mouth, because he did it. O pray to him, that he may sanctify this providence, and that Christ himself may be more than ever the desire of my heart, since he has taken away the desire of my eyes with a stroke. And to encourage you to seek this in my behalf, you may plead his own promise, on which, I think, he has caused me to hope, viz. that he will be with me in trouble, and that he will

never altogether leave me, but that his Spirit shall be in me as a well of water springing up to everlasting life; that he will lead the blind by a way that they know not; that he will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight; and some other such words of grace as these.

“ Meantime I see need, great need, for such a stroke and affliction, as a rod to correct me for my faults, as a furnace to purge me from my dross, as a bridle to restrain me from my rebellion, as a spur to excite and stir me up to my duty and work, and as a glass wherein I may see both more of my own sinfulness, and more of the glory of God. And as I do indeed see his holiness and righteousness, and truth, on several accounts, in this dispensation; so I would fain hope to see his grace, mercy, and lovingkindness therein more clearly than as yet the dark side of the cloud allows me. May the Lord help my unbelief and increase my faith. Pray that my five motherless young ones may be the objects of our everlasting Father’s love and care. They and I need the continued sympathy of godly friends, in many respects, and especially that of our never-dying, ever-living friend, Jesus Christ.

“ Rev. dear brother, as iron sharpens iron, so your sympathy with me tended, in a great measure, to excite mine towards you in the several heavy burdens you lie under. It has been the desire of my heart to the Lord, that as to the affair of your great congregation, he would order it, in his infinite wisdom, to his own glory, their good, and your comfort. Your distressed friends have also been upon my heart, and particularly poor Mrs. ———, that she may be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, to the glory of his free grace.

This, with my kind respects to your spouse, and to Mr. Gusthart and his, (whose sympathy I hope I have,) and whom, together with other Christian friends, I wish you to stir up to Christian sympathy and prayer in behalf of me and my family, is from, very Rev. and dear Brother,

Your very affectionate, though afflicted Brother,
RALPH ERSKINE."

Two years after the death of his first partner, he married, as was formerly stated,* a lady named MARGARET SIMSON. The contract of marriage entered into at that time, is mentioned in the following terms:—

"*January 12, 1732.* I looked to the Lord this morning, and eyed him that he would do for me for his name's sake; and my heart trusted in him, and I was helped. For this evening I got a meeting of friends, taking with me my Lord Grange and Mr. Mackie; and for the bride there was Mr. Guilan, Advocate, and her brother, who met in Mr. Simson's house. The meeting was managed without any altercation, and the frame of the contract was agreed upon with much harmony. I had told again and again that I had nothing to contract but myself and providence. She contracts ———. Here I observed the goodness of God, who still carried on this affair without any opposition, and with much peace."

The celebration of the marriage is recorded thus:—

"*Thursday, Feb. 24, 1732.* I was married by my brother Ebenezer at Edinburgh with Mrs. Margaret Simson, daughter to Mr. Daniel Simson, writer to the

* Page 187.

signet in Edinburgh. Some time after the marriage, I called my wife alone, and prayed with her. On this occasion much time was spent in giving and receiving visits."

Several letters he had written to this lady during the period of courtship are still extant, and are truly worthy of him as a parent, and as a man of integrity and piety. The following extracts from these communications need not now be reprobated as an unwarrantable divulging of private concerns, and may serve not merely to increase the reader's esteem for their author, but to exhibit, at least with regard to their spirit and tenor, a useful example to others placed by providence in similar circumstances.

In his first letter, of date Dec. 8, 1731, he says;—
"As it is in itself no light affair for one to be called in providence to be a wife and a mother at once, so my heart bears me witness, that it has been no light matter unto me, to have the conduct and direction of heaven in my choice; which if I am favoured with, it is not great things in a world I desire to aim at, knowing from experience that bountiful providence has made my cup to run over many times, when I have been far from laying down measures for that end." He concludes by requesting her "to spread his proposal before the Lord," imploring his direction.

In a letter of December 27th, written subsequently to her having somewhat encouraged his advances, he expresses his hope that she will "prove a help, comfort, and blessing to himself and his family:"—"which I also hope," he continues, "will be comfortable to you, and easily managed to your satisfaction, whose temper and disposition, so far as I have heard or can discern,

is such as I expect will be agreeable to me and them. Such is my natural endearment to the five children the Lord has spared to me that, if I were *trysted* with one in a conjugal relation with me that was of a rugged and unkindly disposition towards them, I doubt not but it would contribute to hasten me with sorrow to my grave. But as I have quite other apprehensions of your temper and disposition, so my value for peace and satisfaction at home being greater than for many thousands of gold and silver, which I have been prompted to aim at, has made me especially wish for one in whom piety, prudence, virtue, and good natural temper might meet together."

A third letter, bearing date January 31st, 1732, gratefully acknowledges a kind reply she had sent him, and contains the following passage:—"It has been part of my prayer that you may be filled with much of the spirit of love to Christ, and in him to me and my children, and I desire it may be part of your prayer also: For that love is the purest and sweetest that is of his creating by his Holy Spirit, and that is founded upon love to himself. Such love among friends and relations makes the life sweet, and every service easy and pleasant. It nobilitates the soul, and elevates it far beyond all natural pleasures."

The Christian sincerity and humility with which Mr. Erskine acknowledged God, when proposing to enter a second time into the bonds of matrimony, and the deep solicitude he felt for the happiness of his first family, appear, if possible, still more strikingly from several entries in his record; of which we quote the three following:—

"Dec. 6, 1731.—I was made to look to God for

provision, in a meet help, that in the mount of the Lord it might be seen, the Lord would provide. Also I prayed that if *Peggy Simson*, of whom I heard one speak to me this morning, were the person I should seek after, the Lord, the Angel of the Covenant, the Angel of angels, might guide and direct me. I was made to look to God in the promise, that he would lead me in a right way, in a way I knew not, in a way I have not known, that he might do these things, and not forsake me."

" *Sabbath, Jan. 23, 1732.* After sermon, my soul was sweetly melted before God in secret, in looking to him through the glass of the promise.—I was made to look to him, that when father, and mother, and wife had forsaken me, he would take me up, and take care of me now when old age and grey hairs were coming on me; and that he would provide well for me, as he had hitherto done. And here I was helped to pray for my bride, that the Lord would bless her and make her a blessing to me and to the children; that he would see to the glorious accomplishment of the word on which he had caused me to hope; that he would betrothe her to himself. My heart was enlarged and poured out."

" *Monday, Jan. 31, 1732.* This morning, after reading some Scriptures, I went to prayer. Though under indisposition at first, yet before I was done, I again met with the gales of heaven about my heart. I was again made to acknowledge my sin, and flee to the mercy of God in Christ, as the ransom and propitiation. I acknowledged the Lord might righteously write bitter things against me; but I looked to Jesus who had drunk the bitter cup, and was made sin for me, and through him I sought to be pitied, particularly in this matter of my intended marriage. I was made again to

commit my bride to the Lord. Having read that word, 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths,' (Prov. iii. 6.) I now acknowledged that a prudent wife was from him, and that the qualifying of a wife for me was from him. I acknowledged him as a promising God, to whom I looked for the blessing, and sought her as a blessing to me and to my children. And here again the poor lass and the four lads were rolled over upon that covenant,—'thy God and the God of thy seed.' I looked upon them as not my children, but the children of God, his concern. I was made to seek that the Lord, who had taken away their mother, and left them orphans, would provide a mother for them, and make my bride a loving kindly mother to them. Here, with all my heart melting, and my eyes dissolved in tears, I was made to seek that the Lord would create love in her heart, first to God, and then, in him, to me and to the children. My heart was a little damped, when I considered that it was not natural for women to have much love for the children not their own by birth, and that common experience, for the most part, showed that it is a rare thing. But then, again, though I owned it was not like nature, or like the common way of the world, for a mother-in-law to have much love for the children of the first marriage, yet I thought it was like grace, that it was like unto God, the God of love, and that it would be like the promise. And then, with a flood of tears, and under a shower of influences, I sought of God, that he would remember his word, and do for me and my children, and fill my bride with love to himself, and in him to me and to my children; and I sought to her the spirit of love as well as the spirit of wisdom to this end, and was made to look with confi-

dence to a promising God. Thus my heart was enlarged. Lord, hear.——Though it is man's way not to love or delight in children not our own, even when marriage takes place, yet God's way being the way of love, contrary to man's way, which is the way of hatred, strife, and variance, I sought the promise might be accomplished in a way like himself, that his name, and truth, and faithfulness, might appear. Glory to God for what impression of himself he has been pleased to allow me, both last night and this morning."

To these fervent prayers a gracious answer was returned. According to his own repeated and satisfactory statements, Margaret Simson proved all that could be wished, both as a dutiful wife, and an affectionate mother :—

"*June 14, 1732.*—I was made to bless the Lord for his goodness in providing me a wife, whose temper was so pleasant and peaceable."

"*Jan. 1, 1734.*—When sitting at breakfast, Johnny not being well, I observed the care that my wife and her aunt took of him, and the rest; and my heart blessed the Lord, that he from day to day provided, and I was helped to dependance on him as a heavenly Father."

While feelings of undissembled gratitude were thus excited in his breast, he was careful on his part to manifest cordial affection for Mrs. Erskine, not only by unremitting attention to her temporal comfort; but also by frequent prayers with and for her, and by embracing every opportunity of promoting her knowledge, holiness, and spiritual enjoyment, as appears from the following extracts :—

"*Wednesday, July 19, 1732.*—Last night I talked

with my wife about the sacrament, [administered at Dunfermline the Sabbath preceding.] I found she had been at a table that Mr. Fisher served. She told me of the struggle she had before she went, and yet that she did not repent going, because she got Christ applied in communicating, but durst not speak with confidence of it. She looked on herself as the greatest sinner, and none she thought needed Christ so much as she. To this purpose she spoke, when I asked her about the frame and disposition of her mind in communicating; and this was pleasing to me."

"*Nov. 18, 1732.* This morning I had some edifying conversation with my wife, and in speaking to me I found her affected, and her eyes dropping tears. She was not without some views of death, and spoke of her own stupidity and want of due concern, though she knew not but she might die at this season of child-bearing. I spoke to her of our making Christ our refuge; how little we needed to fear death, if the sting were removed; and how our stupidity, deadness, darkness, and other heart plagues, were so many reasons for our looking to the Lord Jesus for healing."

From a number of the foregoing extracts, it is clear, that as a FATHER, he was distinguished for ardent and sanctified affection. His record, however, supplies many additional passages, expressive of parental tenderness, and, in particular, of the lively and unceasing solicitude with which he watched for the souls of his beloved offspring.

The surviving children of the first Mrs. Erskine having been early deprived of their excellent mother,

he felt deeply for them, and often renewed his fervent prayers on their behalf:

“ *October 8, 1731.*—My heart was poured out before God on behalf of my children, fleeing with them to that covenant, which says, ‘ I will be thy God and the God of thy seed,’ and to that Jesus, who said, ‘ Suffer little children to come unto me.’ Are they left, said I, in my hand? Aye, they are ruined and lost there, if thou take not the charge of them; therefore, I put them into the hand of God, into the hand of Christ.”—

“ *Nov. 7, 1731.*—I plainly said to God that he knew I had no other ground to hope upon than his covenant and promise, or a ‘ thus saith the Lord;’ and so I was made with fervour and freedom, on the score of free sovereign grace, manifested through Christ in the promise, to pray that he would be a God to Peggy, a God to Harry, a God to Johnny, a God to Ebie, and a God to Jamie.”

No truly Christian parent can fail to be peculiarly affected at the birth and baptism of his little ones. The feelings of holy gratitude, earnest desire, and humble expectation, with which Mr. Erskine saw his infants brought safe from the womb, and dedicated them to the Lord in the initiatory rite of Christianity, may be learned from his own memoranda, relating to the first child of his second spouse, which are as follows:—

“ *Tuesday, Dec. 5, 1732.*—After some rest, I was wakened by Mrs. Spence telling me that my wife was delivered of a man child this morning about 6 o’clock. I arose and praised the Lord for his goodness, and dedicated the child to God, pleading this deliverance might be a double deliverance to my wife, both inward

and outward; inward and spiritual, so that she might be delivered from all spiritual bands, and that her heart might be enlarged to magnify the Lord. Afterwards I gave the child to God, looking to the covenant (Gen. xvii. 7.) as sealed with the blood of Christ, and as all my hope."

"*Tuesday, Dec. 12, 1731.*—This morning having read in my ordinary, namely, Jer. xxiii., Psalm cvi., and Col. ii., there was something, particularly in that last chapter, which I thought suited my present circumstances, designing the baptism of my child this day; and upon this I prayed that my child might be buried with Christ in baptism and raised with him, that he might be baptized with the Holy Ghost, that God might be to him, according to the promise, his God; and I was made, with sweet freedom, viewing the covenant of promise in Christ, to cast over the child upon a God in Christ for the blessing of baptism, and for washing in the blood of Christ.

"This evening my child RALPH was baptized by my colleague Mr. Wardlaw. Providence led him to speak upon Gen. xvii. 7, 'I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee.' When he read that text, it was like marrow to my bones, and made my flesh, in a manner, creep with surprise. I desired to bless the Lord for it, and heard with satisfaction many things said on it; and when I was standing up taking on the engagements, in which my colleague dealt very modestly, binding me to what I was accustomed to bind others to, and when he said, 'these things you promise through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,' my heart

cordially went in to it, and to the dedicating of the child to the Lord. Then after baptism and prayer, because night was coming on, he caused to be sung the last verse of Psalm 144:

‘ Those people happy are who be
In such a case as this;
Yea, blessed all those people are,
Whose God Jehovah is.’

And herein my heart joined, and I cordially committed myself and my children to the Lord. Glory to God for the blessing of this day.”

The Journal contains similar though shorter notices of the birth and baptism of the other three children of the second marriage: from which it appears that they were all, too, baptized by Mr. Wardlaw, while their father humbly devoted them to God, saying, “ Lord, accept of the offering, and remember thy covenant in Christ Jesus.”

His subsequent attention to the best interests of his children was correspondent to the pious feelings and purposes which accompanied their baptismal dedication to God. He not merely prayed for them at the stated times of domestic worship, but made it his practice occasionally to take them by themselves, individually as well as collectively, to pray with them and to administer appropriate counsels.

“ *Sabbath, Nov. 5, 1732.*—This evening, calling for the children, I looked to the Lord for grace to speak to them, and accordingly was helped to give them some needful exhortation, and then, having prayed with them,

I prayed alone.”—“ *Sabbath, March 24, 1734.*—This evening, after I had spoken with the children and prayed with them, I was helped solemnly to give them to him, to be saved by grace reigning through the righteousness of Christ to eternal life, and that grace might not want the glory of the salvation of any of them. I saw warrant to bring them to him.”—“ *August 22.*—After reading, I had sweet liberty in prayer and solemn approaching to God. I prayed for my wife and for my children, looking to God in the testament, and formally signing, as it were, the testament by faith, for myself and for my wife, and for my children, and laying claim to it, pleading it with liberty and a flowing of influence. This was sweet to me, when led in a manner to subscribe Christ’s legacy for myself and for my poor children particularly, the lass and the six lads.”

“ *Sept. 22, 1734.*—In the evening I found my throat uneasy, as it had been for twenty days past. Not being in good condition for going out, I went this evening, in time of public exercise, to secret prayer. I was helped to cast the burden, care, and concern of my soul, my work, my wife and children, and my family provision over upon Christ. I prayed particularly the Lord would be a God to my children, and remember his righteousness is to children’s children. I had some view of the Lord’s taking care of them when I was gone ; having prayed the Lord would be a guide to me through every dark valley in my way, and that the valley of the shadow of death being an untrodden path, he might help to go rightly and safely through it, and that my death might be no loss but a gain and advantage to my wife and children through the Lord’s blessing it, and taking care of them and of theirs, even their

children and children's children, if he spared them, and that the Mediator might have a seed of them. I committed my children to him to be their God for ever and ever, and their guide even unto death; and that he might guide them when I was gone, and remember his covenant. Under this exercise, I was led to view Christ a good hand to leave them upon, being 'the wisdom of God and the power of God;' and I got a heart-filling view of his being so, such as made me dissolve, as it were, into water before him, and run over in a sweet flood of tears."—"Dec. 25, 1736.—I was led to flee again to his covenant with my children, the lass and the five lads, remembering one of the words I had read this day, Prov. xiii. 22, 'A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children.' I thought the only and the best inheritance I could leave my children and their posterity, if given them, was God himself, that he would be their God for ever and ever, according to the covenant of promise."—"Sab. Jan. 17, 1737.—I was this evening led not only to pray for the children, particularly Harry and Johnny, and for Peggy, Ebie, Jamie, and Robie, but to wrestle with God for the blessing to them, and under some powerful strengthening influence to take hold of him for them, that he may provide for them. Here I looked upon him as the God who had provided for me, being cast upon his care from my mother's womb; and I was made to seek that he would do all things to them imported in his being a God to them. My soul was made to melt down before him, and dissolving in tears, to take hold of his word and promise, begging he would take them off my hand, and take all the care of them."

His affection for his children, though exceedingly

tender, was enlightened and judicious, and prompted him, when circumstances required it, to mingle reproof with instruction and advice.

“ *Sabbath, Nov. 19, 1732.*—The Lord pitied me this evening after the exercise, when I came home and my wife had sent the children, Peggy, Harry, Johnny, and Ebie to me, having heard of Harry and Johnny sometimes casting out in the school. I was helped very gravely to exhort and admonish them, and solemnly also at this time to call them to remembrance of their baptismal vows and engagements, which, being come to the years of capacity, they ought to consider and take upon themselves. Then I was helped in prayer with them, to pray that the Lord might put them among his children, who knows how to do for and how to take care of them, when some of their friends they have had are rotting in the dust. I observed my admonition and prayer were affecting to them, particularly Johnny and Harry, and, I think, Peggy. After they were gone, I got them in secret rolled over upon the Lord as a covenanted God, and put them in his hand, and also the child unborn. I was made, with an outpouring of heart, to commend that child and them to the Lord.”

He takes notice repeatedly of his spiritual conversation with his sons alone, and also of his attention to their literary progress.

“ *Sabbath, June 2, 1732.*—This evening, after I had prayed with Harry and Johnny, I got my heart poured out in secret. Psalm cii. at the close, was made useful to me, being the subject of my colleague’s lecture this day. I got my children prayed for with a hopeful eye, looking to the promise of God, and the unchangeable perfections of God in Christ.”

*" Sabbath, Oct. 12, 1735.—*The sacrament was at the Queen's Ferry eight days before this. My sons Henry and John proposed that they might have liberty to go there, which I granted. Some days afterwards I inquired if they had a mind to participate. I found Johnny more clear on that head. He gave me some account of the Lord's way towards him. He had been made to suspect he was guilty of the unpardonable sin, till he read Mrs. [Elizabeth] West's book. He mentioned some words, on which the Lord had caused him to hope, particularly the following:—'I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me: Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.' Harry, sometime before this, had come to me, complaining he was tempted to give over duty, because of what he heard respecting the fall of a person that was eminently pious, and at this time he spoke of his convictions of his sinful state he had been under, and his having been made to seek after an interest in Christ, but durst not assert any thing positively. At the Ferry I gave them tokens to make use of, as the Lord should clear their way. They both communicated. When I inquired of Johnny afterwards, what had encouraged him, he told me that that word ran through his heart, 'He loved me and gave himself for me:' and that though he was confused in going, yet not in partaking. Having asked Harry what encouraged him, he told me he had been in great fears lest he should communicate unworthily, but that in hearing Mr. Thomson on the Saturday evening, his doubts were resolved, and he was encouraged to adventure to go to the table. I found matter of thanksgiving to the Lord that there was any such appearance of concern in them about the great salvation."

"*Thursday, Nov. 4, 1736.*—I went to Edinburgh, with my sons Henry and John to the college."——
"Nov. 2, 1737.—I went to Edinburgh with my two sons again to college. When I was led to exercise in prayer from time to time, they were always upon my heart."——"*Saturday, May 27, 1738.* My sons came home from the college in Edinburgh."

This affectionate father makes still more frequent mention of MARGARET, his only surviving daughter, her early indications of piety as well as filial tenderness, the instructions he imparted to her, and the happiness she gave him.

"*Friday, April 14, 1732.* This day my daughter Peggy was sent to Stirling to my brother, to be further taught——. I was somewhat sorry to part with her, finding her so careful still about me, which appeared partly that day I went to the Synod last week. When I was going off amid the rain, she dealt with me to stay, and the tear gushed in her eye. I noticed much of her mother's temper and careful disposition about her."——
"*Monday, Feb. 5, 1733.* In the evening I was helped to pray particularly in behalf of Peggy, whom I was designing to send to Edinburgh for some time. My heart was poured out before God in view of his promise and covenant, that he would be with her, and keep her."

"*June 27, 1734.* This evening my daughter Peggy spoke with me, desiring my prayers, weeping, and saying she could pray none. Some time ago I had bid her think of the sacrament. I was glad to get the commission from her, directed her to Zech. xii. 10, that she might plead that promise of the Spirit. When I was alone, I got grace to pray particularly for her with my soul melting before God, looking to his word."——"*June*

28. I looked to him in behalf of Peggy, that she might be fitted for the sacrament, and get the Spirit poured out upon her.”—“*Saturday, July 19, 1735.* I went to Kinglassie sacrament. I preached this day, as also on the Sabbath and Monday, upon Luke ix. 42. I served eight tables. While I served, I think, the fifth or sixth, I saw my daughter Peggy at the table before me; and then the word ‘thy God and the God of thy seed’ coming in mind, my heart was led to look to God in her behalf; and being much helped and strengthened in serving that table, I was thereafter somewhat quickened.”

The bowels of a parent can hardly fail to be particularly moved, when his dear children are visited with painful and threatening distempers, and especially when they become the victims of death. The following extracts may furnish a specimen of Mr. Erskine’s feelings and exercises, under the influence of sanctified affection, on those trying occasions.

“*Nov. 1, 1733.*—My child RALPH grew worse, and took convulsive distress, through the trouble and pain of teething. This evening we thought he was just a-dying; in family prayer, I closed with commending him to the Lord. I had been singing Psalm viii. and in secret prayer afterwards, applying it as the Apostle to the Hebrews does, to Christ, as having all things put under his feet, and being clothed with power, and crowned with glory and honour, I was, in some measure, helped to put him over upon this Jesus whom the Father loveth, and hath given all things into his hand——desiring to give him also into his hand, that he might be saved by him.”—“*Nov. 4.* This day the child was better.”

“*Monday, June 24, 1734.*—This morning, after

looking to the Lord in prayer, and going with the family to ordinances [at Carnock] I heard for a while Mr. Wardrope's sermon on that text, 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it.' In the midst of the sermon, an express, sent by my wife, came from Dunfermline to me, telling me of *Ralphie's* being threatened with death. I called my servant to get the horse, and sat hearing till that was done, and till the sermon was done, which I thought was very suitable to me, and which I heard with some application; and then he gave out, Ps. xxiii. at the close, which I was helped to sing with some pleasure and melting of soul. Then I came off, without hearing the other sermon preached by my brother Ebenezer. When I came home, the child was no worse. Meantime I thought the Lord was justly chastising me, and that I had good reason to lay my hand on my mouth, whatever should be the cup he put into my hand."

"*Tuesday, Sep. 10, 1734.* My sons RALPH and DANIEL took the small-pox."—" *Sep. 13.* My concern this morning about the children was, that I did not wish them to be spared, unless it were for his glory, and that I would take his sparing, if he did so, a token he would provide for them, bless them, and be their God."—" *Sabbath, Sept. 15.* In the evening, Ralph being worse, I prayed with my wife in prospect of his death. She told me of the liberty she had got this forenoon in his behalf."—" *Sept. 16.* This forenoon my wife coming into my room, concerned in the view of Ralph's illness, who seemed to be dying, I went with her to my knees, and then devoted him to the Lord, craving it might be recorded in heaven, that we the parents of the child, at Christ's call, came to bring the

child to him, that whatever he did with the body, his soul might be blessed and saved to the praise of his glorious grace, and that he might be a part of *heaven's plenishing*, and as a vessel of mercy filled for ever with the grace and fulness of God. Afterwards I essayed prayer for him alone, with some humble confidence in God, looking on the child as having no father that could do him any service, and therefore rolling him on the everlasting Father, in whom the fatherless findeth mercy."—" *Sep.* 17. I was made to say, let it be death or life, no matter providing thou be his God. I was helped to some ardency in this, and in seeking that the providence might have a purging and purifying effect on me."—" *Sep.* 18. My child Ralph was still weaker. I joined with my colleague, this day, in prayer for him, and for fruit by this rod to me and my wife, whom I found somewhat exercised, and brought to some submission to the Lord's will. About the middle of the day I got him again cast over on the covenant. In the evening I was led to seek the Lord Jesus would bless the child, because God the Father had blessed him for ever, that he might be a blessing. Afterwards I was led to acknowledge his natural guilt and pollution and all his sins, and to plead the Lord would purge them away, and to look to the fountain of his blood. Afterwards, that God would save him to the honour of his Son, that thus the Son might honour the Father; and that the Holy Ghost might get the honour of applying the blood of Christ; and then with some strength of concern to plead that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost might get glory in the salvation of the child. I was led to acknowledge the Lord was righteously angry with me, and to seek he might pity me, that I might never

grieve his Spirit again. After this I prayed beside the child and the company, and was therein helped to some exercise of the same kind as in secret, and a little while after, about eight o'clock *my child Ralph died*. I endeavoured, mean time, to comfort my wife; and after his death, going to my closet, I got some grace to acknowledge the holiness, righteousness, mercy and faithfulness of God in the dispensation, and had some confidence exercised in him as a promising God, notwithstanding his slaying dispensation. My heart was especially poured out, and mightily melted in praying for the blessing of this rod to my wife and me, that it might be truly sanctified, and made a mean of the Lord's accomplishing his word of grace, on which he had caused me to hope; that it might be a mean of purging away my dross; and that it might be blessed to the family, particularly to the servant *Jean*, who had waited carefully on the child."

"*Friday, Sep. 20.* This day, about nine o'clock, I interred the body of my son Ralph in the place where my sister and five of my children were buried. Glory to God for the ground of hope through Jesus Christ. This evening I was helped in secret to look for fruit by this dispensation. For this I prayed alone, and prayed with my wife."—" *Sep. 21.* I was enabled to look to God as the husbandman that was pruning me and my family by this providence, and thereupon to plead I might be purged to bring forth more fruit according to John xv. 2, and to seek that this also might be the blessing of the family—— wife, children, friend and servant. I had before this the faith of that word Ps. lxxviii. 35, that the God of Israel only is he that giveth

strength and power to his people, and sought I might find it to my experience, that so I might bless him."

" *Sabbath, Sep. 29, 1734.*—The afternoon sermon by my colleague was somewhat quickening to me, to excite to confidence in the Lord as my only Lord and God. Afterwards in prayer this evening, I was made, with some sweetness and seriousness, to look to God as a God that rests in his love, that rests in his mercy, that rests in his truth, that rests in his name, and then to say, I have no rest for the sole of my foot; and viewing how he rests in Christ, I thought that here also was my resting-place, since in him the covenant of promise stands fast, sealed with his blood; and therefore I expressed my hope in him for his Spirit and presence, for his blessing to my wife and children, and particularly to the young afflicted child DANIEL, whom I was made this night to lay over upon the Lord."—" *Friday, Jan. 24, 1735.* The child Daniel grew still weaker. I was called to see him, and prayed for him with the family."—" *Jan. 25.* Daniel was so ill we looked on him several times this day as expiring. I prayed for him, I think believingly, with an eye to the covenant of promise, and to the name of God, and the grace of God reigning through the righteousness of Christ."—" *Jan. 27.* I prayed, 'Father, glorify thy name,' and so devolved the child on him, that in life or death he would glorify himself in his salvation."—" *Wednesday, Jan. 29.* Early this morning *my son Daniel died.* I was helped this day to look to the Lord, that he would bless this providence to my afflicted wife, when all the stock sprung of her body was cut off. I observed her many times greatly affected; yet I had ground to think that

Ralph's death was still as heavy to her as Daniel's."—
“*Jan. 30.* I buried the corpse of my young son Daniel beside the rest of my deceased children.”

“*Thursday, April 6, 1738.*—I preached again on Ps. lxxiii. 26. I was helped and strengthened inwardly, and was directed to something suitable, namely, all things failing except God, and the relation to God in Christ, that never fails. Having somewhat of influence more than ordinary, it seemed preparatory to the trial of the threatened death to the young child RALPH, [the second of this name] who took the convulsions very severely that night, and also next day.”—“*April 7.*—The child was very ill. Last night and this morning, I got grace to own the sovereignty of God, that he might condemn; and yet to plead, that since he would get more glory in saving through Christ, he might take the child and make him a jewel of the Mediator's crown.”—“*Saturday, Apr. 8.*—This morning, when I was pleading for the sick and afflicted child, I was helped to leave his temporal life at his pleasure who gave it; but for spiritual and eternal life, and for God's being his God, I was made to plead it on account of the tenor of the covenant, and the condition of it fulfilled and finished by him who said on the cross, ‘It is finished.’”—“*Sabbath, Apr. 9.*—This morning I was raised to see the child, on whom the disease was continuing and increasing. I prayed in company with the rest, and then retired to my room. I looked to the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and the blood of the Lamb sprinkling the mercy-seat, and sealing the covenant of promise; and, on this ground, my heart was made somewhat easy with respect to the child. Afterwards I got the dying child put anew into the

hands of the living Jesus, exalted to the Father's throne, praying he would glorify his name, and his Father's name, in the salvation of the infant, since he was exalted to the Father's throne a Prince and a Saviour."—" *Monday, Apr. 10.*—This morning I was wakened again to see the child die. Then I went to the room where he and the people were; and in prayer I was led to run to the name of the Lord, as a strong tower, and under a gale of influence to leave the child in the midst of the tower, expecting he should be saved for the sake of God's great name. I then prayed alone, and was helped; my heart was made quiet and composed. A very little after, the child departed this life about six o'clock in the morning. O may the Lord sanctify this dispensation to me, and to my wife and family."

" *Tuesday, Apr. 11.*—This day I buried my child *Ralph* beside the rest that are dead. After the occasion of the funeral was over, about the middle of the day, I went to family worship, and was somewhat quickened; afterwards, in secret especially, my soul was poured out before the Lord in the review of my sinfulness, for which the Lord was breaking me, though yet, I hope, in mercy."

His whole family, servants as well as children, experienced the benefit of his vigilant and prayerful attention. The following expressions occur in his Diary :

" *March 3, 1734.*—This evening in prayer, my heart was quickened and drawn forth towards the Lord and away from the world, with a desire that *all present* might be drawn to Christ."

" *March 9, 1734.*—After reading I prayed, looking

to the promise, and through that glass to the mercy and truth of God, thanking God that the living Spirit was promised, and looking to him for his blessing to my wife and children, and for provision to my family, twelve in number, including servants. I owned I could not provide for them, but looked to my heavenly Father, who has all things in his hand, to do it."

We have also seen above the concern he expressed that the death of one of his children might be sanctified to the female servant who attended him. There is good reason, then, to conclude, that as a MASTER, he treated his domestics with equity and kindness, and was careful, by sound instruction and a judicious use of his authority, to lead "his household to keep the way of the Lord, and to do judgment and justice."

Grandchildren are frequently the objects of a still more tender affection than a parent's immediate offspring. The subject of this memoir had the happiness to see the children of his eldest son, the Rev. Henry Erskine. He baptized two sons and three daughters of Henry, being his whole family, with the exception of one daughter. With how great pleasure he performed these interesting services, and with what fervour he besought God to pour down the richest blessings of the covenant upon them, may be learned from the following letter:—

"To the Rev. Mr. Henry Erskine, Minister of the Gospel at Falkirk.

"Dunfermline, July 21, 1749.

"Dear Henry,

"I got not your letter, dated the 19th instant, till this day. And now I desire to bless the

Lord with you for the merciful deliverance he has given to your wife, and the new addition he has made to your family, by giving you a man-child; and I pray he may be the Lord's, and that, as young Samuel, he may be lent to the Lord as long as he liveth. May he whose righteousness is to children's children, who said, 'I will be thy God and the God of thy seed,' and whose promised blessing is to Christ and his seed, and his seed's seed for ever, even 'the God who hath fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel who redeemed me from all evil,—bless the lad.'

"My wife and family congratulate your wife's deliverance, and join with you in thankfulness to God for his mercies shown to you and your family. I perceive by your letter that you incline most to my coming to preach and baptize the child, as I return from Glasgow on Thursday eight days, if the Lord will; therefore I agree to it, and give way to your making your intimation accordingly as you propose. Your letter to Las-sodie will be sent with the first occasion. I am, your affectionate Father."

With the warm heart, and the pious feelings of a patriarch, he even anticipated the possible preservation of his offspring till the end of the world, and poured forth his best wishes in favour of his descendants from age to age. A long entry, of date, November 22, 1731, part of which was formerly quoted,* contains, accordingly, the following words:—"I had grace to look to God, that if he preserved my children after me to live and have an offspring, he would make his grace

* Chap. i. Pp. 26, 27.

and righteousness to extend not only to them, but also to their children, yea, and to their children's children, until Christ should come again in the clouds of heaven. This view I had, with some hopeful and pleasant outpouring of heart before the Lord, remembering only his great name, and holy promise or covenant, as the ground of my suit."

Similar petitions were preferred also at a subsequent date:—" *Sabbath, Dec. 2, 1733.* This evening in secret prayer, my soul was cheered and inflamed in a believing apprehension of God in his glorious perfections through Christ. I was made to declare my hope, my life, heaven and happiness, to be God himself, his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, mercy and truth, and his very being; and to seek he would be with me in death when I went through that dark trance, and that because he hath said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' And having some renewed remembrance of that word, 'his righteousness to children's children'; I was made to look to him for my wife and children, seeking the Lord would be with my children, while I am with them, and after I am by death removed from them; that he might bless them, and bless their offspring, if he would give them any, even to the second coming of Christ. It was with tears of joy, and with humble reverence, I was helped to look to a gracious God in Christ."

Mr. Erskine showed by his conduct, that he felt the force of those endearing ties which the name of BROTHER imports. The evidence he gave of his fraternal dispositions towards PHILIP, one of his father's first family, who became a Rector in the Church of England, was

noticed in a former publication.* His brotherly spirit was still more fully displayed in his attentions to another member of that family, whose eminent piety united with her relationship to secure his most cordial esteem.† Mrs. Balderston, as we have seen, repeatedly availed herself of the privilege of making him a visit at the sacramental solemnities of Dunfermline.‡ Nor did he, on his part, when he took a journey to Edinburgh, neglect to reciprocate her kindness. Both she, and her husband, who died in 1720, stood high in his regard. Her son George, the only survivor of a numerous family, having gone to reside for some time in a foreign country, he wrote him a long letter, dated Sep. 16, 1719, full of salutary counsel. She experienced, in short, his tender sympathy under her various bereavements and trials; and, in a memorandum relative to her death and funeral, he bears the following testimony to her solid worth:—

“*Thursday, Oct. 19, 1738.*—This day my brother and I were called to the funeral of my sister Mrs. Balderston. We came from Perth, Wednesday, and she was buried after sermon, on the fast-day. She was an eminent Christian, of signal experience, and was eighty-five years, being born in Galashiels, June 28th, 1653.”

A great share of his brotherly affection was also due to MARGARET, his full sister, who resided with him, it appears, for some time after his settlement at Dunfermline. It pleased Divine Providence, however, to remove

* Life of Ebenezer Erskine, Pp. 42-44.

† See Notices of Mrs. Balderston, *Ibid.* Pp. 44-46, 517, 518.

‡ Compare Pp. 55, 56, 57.

her to the world of spirits in October 1713, about nine months before his marriage with Margaret Dewar. The tenderness and piety he discovered in his instructive conversations with her, and earnest prayers on her behalf, during the time of her mortal illness, are very apparent in a record of the circumstances taken by her not less affectionate brother Ebenezer.*

No one of his father's descendants, however, could command his esteem, gratitude, and love, in a higher degree than EBENEZER himself. United alike by the bonds of nature and grace, associated in the ministry of the gospel, and residing at the distance only of about twelve miles from each other, they maintained the strictest friendship through life, and never ceased to keep up a frequent brotherly correspondence at once in a private and public capacity. Whatever shades of difference may have distinguished their natural tempers, or whatever diversity may have occasionally characterized their views, they cordially agreed on all the great points of Christian doctrine and practice, and on matters relating to the order and the liberties of the church of God. Whilst each of them thought for himself, they concurred almost universally on every question they saw discussed in the church ; and when, at any time, they viewed the same topic in a different light, they knew how to forbear one another in love. Deeply impressed with a sense of their mutual obligations, they rejoiced exceedingly in each other's prosperity and usefulness, and heartily sympathised with one another amid the changes and sorrows of life. Ebenezer testified his respect for Ralph, by employing him in

* Life of Eben. Erskine, Pp. 270-273.

1724, to celebrate his marriage with a daughter of the then deceased Mr. Webster; and Ralph returned the compliment by requesting his services on a similar occasion, in February, 1732. We have seen Ralph's pious attention to Alison Turpie, in the season of great affliction, and the fraternal kindness with which he comforted her bereaved husband on occasion of her death,* together with the corresponding care and condolence of Ebenezer towards Ralph, when tried with a like bereavement.†

The numerous breaches which occurred in Ebenezer's family, gave occasion to many kind and useful visits on the part of Ralph. At one of those interesting seasons, he joined a company of his brother's parishioners, who, conformably to the custom of the age, watched the remains of the deceased child during the night. "One of the company told me," says an esteemed friend, "that the conversation was exceedingly instructive and refreshing. On that night," he adds, "Mr. Ralph composed the verses entitled Smoking Spiritualized."‡

In the happiness, temporal and spiritual, of his brother's surviving children, Ralph took a lively interest. His professional services were asked and cheerfully given on occasion of the marriages of at least three of his nieces;—JEAN, with the the Rev. James Fisher, July 4, 1727;—ANNE, with Mr. James Jaffray, Stirling, Nov. 27, 1735;—MARGARET, with Mr. James Wardlaw, Dunfermline, Nov. 8, 1736.

* Life of Eben. Erskine, Pp. 295, 296.

† *Ibid.* p. 314.

‡ Portmoak MS. by Mr. John Birrell.

His affection for JEAN, the eldest of his brother's daughters, was often expressed. A kind and encouraging letter addressed to her Nov. 3d, 1726, on the delicate subject of her proposed connexion with Mr. Fisher, is still extant. The following letter which he sent to her a few months after her marriage, is too valuable to be here omitted.

“ Letter—The Rev. Ralph Erskine to Mrs. Fisher.

“ January 4, 1728.

“ My Dear Niece Jeanie,

“ I am sorry we have so seldom any communication with you, now that you are situate in your married lot at a little farther distance from us than formerly. At the same time, though I hear seldom from you, I am satisfied to think that, in providence, you are privileged with good company and in comfortable circumstances outwardly in many respects, even your external prosperity being what I would ardently wish and desire, so far as is consistent with God's glory and your good: For an absolute exemption from all crosses and trials in this world, could not be contributive to either of these ends, according to the ordinary stated method of heaven, especially towards the children of grace, and consequently were not to be wished for. And, therefore, though the Lord hath mercifully provided and ordered matters, I hope, very commodiously for you in a suitableness to your station, and blessed you with a kind husband as well as a Gospel minister in one and the same person, a competent living, a convenient dwelling-place, and many comfortable accommodations, which ought to excite gratitude and thankful-

ness ; yet as I hope you will never look upon any outward temporal enjoyments as your best and chief treasure, nor consequently give them the room which glorious Christ alone should have, so I shall wish you may be helped of grace to such a joyful yet spiritual and regular use of all outward mercies and comforts as may be consistent with a readiness to be divorced from them, whenever the Lord shall show that the time he gave them in loan to you is expired : For when providence says, in effect of any worldly comforts we may enjoy, as was said of the ass and her colt, Matth. xxi. 2, 3. ‘ The Lord hath need of them,’ then he expects that straightway we will send them. While they are tied, and he sees them needful for us, we are allowed thankfully and comfortably to use them ; but when he seeks them to be loosed, and sees them needful for the ends of his glory and our good to be surrendered to him, then we ought with humble submission and contentment to part with them at his call.

“ I desire to hope that the Divine blessing upon the good example and excellent education that you was privileged with in your father’s family all along, to which I charitably presume that saving and effectual Divine teaching and instruction hath been mercifully superadded, will make that deportment, which I have hinted at, to be natural, easy, and pleasant to you, or at least excite you to such an endeavour after it as will be agreeable to those that are about you, and adorning to the Christian profession and Gospel character ; to which the more conformed you are, the more will you show yourself a kind and loving wife to your husband, a wise and virtuous housewife to your family, and a pattern of discretion and civility to all your neighbours,

as well as a serious seeker of and faithful servant to the Lord your God, not only as he is your father's God and your mother's God; which you have ground to say, but especially as he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious object of our faith and love.

“ If any good advices are deducible from what is above stated, I hope my former familiarity and intimacy with you as a friend and relative shall not make my present liberty and freedom with you as a Christian adviser the less acceptable, but rather the more so, since the former hath given me the better opportunity for the latter. But as I do not in the least suspect your kindly accepting of the freedom I use in this way, even though there were no such inducement thereto, so it will be always desirable and refreshful to me, to hear and understand that, under the influence of heavenly instruction and conduct, you are helped to outdo the advice of your best friends upon earth. I shall also be glad to hear that you enjoy the fruits of God's common providence with his special blessing, which alone maketh truly rich, and addeth no sorrow in the issue. After what I have here seriously delivered, I shall allow the inclosed diversion from my daughter. My wife gives her kind service to you and Mr. Fisher. I am,

Your very affectionate Uncle, and humble Servant,

RALPH ERSKINE.”

The “ diversion,” referred to at the close of this letter, seems to be an epistle in verse, full of humour and vivacity, and consisting of about one hundred and fifty lines, composed perhaps by Ralph himself, but written in the name of his daughter Margaret to her cousin Mrs. Fisher, kindly reproving her for an appa-

rent forgetfulness of her former friends and correspondents in Fife, and jocosely contrasting her advantages in Kinclaven with those she had once enjoyed at the foot of the Lomonds.

Mr. Erskine's affection could not fail to descend to the numerous family of this favourite niece. The birth of one of them was announced to him by Mr. Fisher in the following terms:—

“ To the Rev. Ralph Erskine.

Glasgow, March 24, 1743.

“ Rev. and very dear Uncle,

“ It pleased the Lord that my wife was safely delivered of a son upon the 12th instant. So soon as he was born I named him RALPH, and intimated that name when I presented him to baptism. My child, though outwardly beautiful and healthful, yet bears the image of the first Adam. But the same grace that has defaced that image in the name-father is sufficient for the nameson.”——

The kindness he owed to individuals, with whom he stood connected in consequence of marriage, was not neglected by this amiable man. In his Diary he repeatedly alludes to the visits he received from the sisters and other relatives, both of the first and the second Mrs. Erskine, and to the endeavours he used to make his conversation with them spiritual and edifying. The following extract from a letter, addressed to Mrs. Scott of Gateshall about the commencement of the year 1751, shows the sincere regard he felt for a pious aunt of his second wife, who resided in his house for a series

of years. It relates to an interesting circumstance attending her death.

“ Mrs. AICHISON, my wife’s aunt, who lived with us, though she had her unbelieving doubts and fears, which she sometimes got above——about three or four minutes before her death, she desired some beside her to read in the SONG, ch. ii. ; and when they had read from the beginning to verse 10th, where the words are, ‘ Rise up my love, my fair one and come away,’ she there stopped the reading, and said, *That’s it, That’s it ; I have no more time, I must sleep ;* and so instantly expired. I thought it worth telling you by what a kind call the Lord Jesus made her to breathe out her soul, and invited her into his bosom.”

As a FRIEND, ACQUAINTANCE, and COMPANION, the subject of this narrative was equalled by few. Communicative, generous, candid, and faithful, he recommended himself to all whom he favoured with a share in his friendly regards. To whatever class or sex they belonged—whether they moved in a public or a private sphere—he entered into their circumstances and feelings with sincerity and warmth, and was ever ready to promote their true happiness by his prayers, his counsels, and his efforts. His affectionate spirit is marked in the numerous elegies and epitaphs that he wrote in commemoration of departed excellence ; of most of which, deceased ministers are the subjects, while some, at least of the latter, relate to pious laymen. Among the monumental inscriptions published at the close of his works, we find, for example, one prepared for the sepulchral stone of Mr. “ COLIN BROWN, late provost of Perth, who died in 1741, at the age of seventy-one ;” and whom he commends as a man of prayer, a friend to

truth, and a blessing to his fellow-citizens, both in their civil and religious interests.*

Integrity and piety never failed to secure his esteem ; and if ready to oblige a valued friend when alive, he was still more disposed to vindicate his character and embalm his memory, after his eyes had been closed in death. An additional instance of this laudable promptitude is supplied by a letter, which he wrote to his niece Mrs. Scott, in favour of the Rev. James Johnston, first minister of the Secession at Dundee, a short time after his decease ; from which we quote the following extract :—

“ Very Dear Niece,

“ My wife put a letter of yours into my hand, desiring I might answer it, with reference to Mr. Johnston’s death, which you want to have an account of. I was at Dundee the day after the death of that worthy servant of Christ, and was employed in the last duty to him, of carrying his head to the grave on Saturday, Nov. 17th, 1750. I was part of four days in that place, and had occasion to converse with his wife and all that were present with him during the time of his illness, and got account both of his disease and his deportment under it. His disease was what they call a nervous fever, or a fever of the spirits, a very ordinary thing, by which many are called off the stage. In this case, seldom doth, or can any escape roving, and there was no other kind of roving he had, as to the manner of them, than any other man in the world is liable to in a raging fever. As to his

* Works, vol. ii. p. 788.

deportment in the intervals of the fever, none could express themselves more spiritually and judiciously than he did.——He spoke of the short way wherein God took Enoch and Elijah to heaven, and said, that though miracles were not to be expected, yet God was about to take him a short way also. At other times he said to those about him, ‘O saw ye him whom my soul loveth? Go and pray; pray, and tell him that I am sick of love.’ Such words as these, uttered with great distinctness and fervency, passed from him, till at last, his spirits being spent and wasted, he lay calm for many hours, and went off the stage without the least struggle, and, as it were, in the most easy sleep.

“ In his lifetime he gave many evidences of his being a wrestler with God, and he remained faithful unto death in the truths of the glorious Gospel, in the preaching whereof he was a burning and a shining light. He was decently and most respectfully attended in his funeral by all ranks of persons in Dundee, and interred in the midst of his own kirk, where no man lay before him. I preached all the following Sabbath there, (the subject of lecture being Rev. xi. 17, 18, the subject of sermon Ps. xxxvii. 37.) to a very great and crowded auditory, multitudes being obliged to go away, because they could not get in nor hear. His memory is most savoury in all that bounds, and even in these bounds. The last sermons he had at the sacrament here and at Kinross were such as, I am told, God made a savour of life unto many. I remain your most humble Servant, and affectionate Uncle,

RALPH ERSKINE.

Amid the differences and separations that took place

among brethren, his feelings, in common with others, were sometimes unduly excited, and his expressions immoderately severe. Yet his native candour and charity often broke forth, and he had no wish to foment or perpetuate contentions among the friends of Christ. We might appeal to the tenor of his last letter to Mr. Warden on the Marrow Controversy.* His deportment also towards several others of his former associates in the ministry, discovers the same excellent spirit. Mr. Alexander Wardrope of Whitburn having declined joining the Associate Presbytery, after holding a conference with them, some of their number proceeded, when he had retired from their presence, to speak somewhat strongly to his disadvantage, for his want of decision and public spirit; but Mr. Erskine checked them with the remark, "he can pray as well as any of us, let us remember that." When he was itinerating in the year 1739, he embraced an opportunity, according to his own statement, of calling for Mr. Wardrope, and for Mr. Bonar of Torphichen.† On their part too, they expressed gratitude for his friendly visit. To Mr. Wardlaw, his former colleague, he paid great attention. His calls were often repeated, and always well received. The expressions of mutual Christian affection that passed betwixt Mr. Ralph and Mr. Willison, when the latter found himself at the gates of death, are particularly refreshing. The two following letters exhibit the character of both to advantage:—

* Page 76.

† Page 278.

*Letter—The Rev. Ralph Erskine to the Rev. John Willison.**

“ Dunfermline, Feb. 7, 1750.

“ Very Rev. and Dear Brother,

“ Having heard from my brother Mr. Johnston, that your distress and weakness of body continues to increase, and that since the time I last saw you, you have come to no greater measure of health, but rather seem to be hastening nearer and nearer to your change;—I thought it proper to show my sympathy with one for whom I have always had a great regard. Whatever differences have taken place anent some things, by reason of different degrees of light in the dark valley of the world, yet it never lessened my esteem of you, as one that, I was persuaded, desired to be faithful to the truth and interest of our Lord Jesus Christ, and whom I hope the Lord will now ripen to make ready for the full enjoyment of himself.

“ Rev. Dear Brother, I hope that, as you have taken up your rest by faith in Christ as the Lord your righteousness and strength, so when flesh and heart shall fail you, you will, through grace, lay your head in his bosom, and remain confident in this, that whatever winds blow or waves beat, even amid the swellings of Jordan, your rock remains firm and immovable; and that you shall endure as seeing him that is invisible, when all visible and sensible things give way and dis-

* This letter is copied from the *Christian Repository*, vol. iii. p. 85.

appear, until faith issue in fruition. This being all the bearer's time allows me to add,

"I remain, very Rev. and Dear Brother,

Your's very affectionately

RALPH ERSKINE."

"P. S.—While you live, mind in your prayers Zion, and those you may leave behind you."

*Letter.—Rev. John Willison to Rev. Ralph Erskine.**

Dundee, 13 Feb. 1750.

"Very Rev. and Dear Brother,

"I thank you sincerely for your most Christian sympathising letter by Mr. Johnston to me, a poor dying man, who am still drawing nearer to my change; and I thank you for the particular regard you express to me, notwithstanding of the different degrees of light in the dark valley of this world. May the back-view of these make us long to be ripened for that world of light where divisions have no place. Though I sometimes aimed to be concerned for the truth and interest of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to appear as I could for the same, yet I renounce all these appearances, and all my other doings, as filthy rags, and desire only to take up my rest in Christ as the Lord my righteousness and strength, and to lay down my head in his bosom, when my heart, flesh, and

* This letter is copied from the original of the venerable writer, which is still extant. It was also published in the *Christ. Repository*, vol. iii. Pp. 202, 203, and in Mr. Brown's Collection, Pp. 182, 183.

strength fail me, as they are daily doing. O let me just die, like Simeon, with Jesus in my arms, saying, ‘Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; mine eyes have seen thy salvation.’ I acknowledge my attainments are small, and manifestations few, yet sometimes I would be for saying, ‘I will remember the Lord from the land of Jordan, the Hermonites, and the Hill Mizar;’—Though in the meantime I would flee from all past experiences to a present offered Christ, and a present offered perfect righteousness, and depend entirely thereon. I rest, I hope, I live on this righteousness; I die, leaning and resting wholly on this bottom; all other bottoms are false and deceiving.

“I desire also to die, like Moses and Aaron, at the foot and commandment of the Lord. Though they wished to be over Jordan to see the glory of the promised land, yet God denied it to them, but made it up abundantly, by giving them presently the glory of heaven. So, though I may not see the glory of Christ’s kingdom coming here on earth, yet I will submit and die at his command; praying that you and many thousand others may see it, and my loss be made up with Jesus himself for ever.—Farewell, dear brother in Christ. May the Lord grant us a happy meeting with Jesus in the promised land, where we shall mutually rejoice in him, and embrace one another without a grudge. Surely there is nothing here tempting, to make us draw back, or desirous to stay. Alas! I see nothing but a daily continued backsliding into the pit of corruption. May the Lord himself pity.—My weakness causes me to break off, and only add, that I remain, Rev. Dear Brother,

“Your affectionate dying Brother in the Lord,

JOHN WILLISON.”

The following anecdote regarding a personal interview that took place betwixt Mr. Willison and Mr. Erskine at Dundee during the same mortal illness, is credibly related. While these two men of God were speaking pleasantly to each other concerning that happy country where the saints are perfect in knowledge and in love, a pious lady present who was warmly attached to the national church, addressed Mr. Erskine in these words ; “ Ay, Sir, there will be no Secession in heaven.” “ O Madam,” he instantly replied, “ you are under a mistake ; for in heaven there will be a complete Secession from all sin and sorrow.” “ With pleasure,” said Mr. Willison, “ do I adopt that view of Secession.”

On various occasions Mr. Erskine discovered much of a pacific and forgiving spirit. At one time an elder thought proper to protest against a very harmless deed of Session in which he himself had formerly acquiesced, and in the course of his arguing accused him, in no measured terms, of pride and ambition. At the close of the answers returned to the reasons of his protest, he freely forgave the unprovoked reproaches of this inconsiderate elder in the following terms :—“ Mean time, as to G——’s railing words formerly mentioned, Mr. Erskine, to show himself of another spirit than they import, and charitably constructing them to be the eruptions of sudden passion, not the image of his deliberate judgment, cordially forgives him the same ; and from a regard to the example and command of our meek Lord Jesus, who has said, ‘ Pray for them that despitefully use you,’ he desires to pray that G——’s strange expressions may be forgiven of that God, to whom we must be accountable ere long for all our thoughts, words, and actions.”

In his intercourse with friends, whether at home or abroad, the spirituality of his mind was apparent. We had occasion formerly to notice the interesting conference that took place betwixt him and Mrs. Erskine of Portmoak, with its important results, as overheard by his brother Ebenezer.* In his Diary he often alludes to the pious and profitable conversations he held with ministers and others. "My colleague," says he in one passage, "came and talked with me a good time. We had edifying discourse, which I loved, and liked to continue in, particularly about exercise of heart, the promises, and faith acting on the Lord's word——." "This evening," he states elsewhere, "Mr. Mair and my colleague were with me; and we had some useful conversation." In a number of entries he expresses his regret at the prevalence of mere worldly talk, and his earnest desire to do good to his acquaintance by edifying discourse. "I was uneasy," says he at one time, "at carnal conversation, and glad of opportunities to converse about spirituals." At another time he thus refers to the subject of one of his petitions:—"My desire was that the Lord would make me to glorify him, that he would make me a blessing, and enable me to adorn religion by a cheerful and yet an edifying conversation."

Conformably with this request, he was enabled to mingle cheerfulness with gravity. To recreate himself and friends, it is said, he sometimes performed on the violin. His constitutional propensities, it is certain, were on the side of frankness, good humour, and innocent hilarity. When he took a journey to the south of Scotland shortly after the commencement of the Secession,

* Life of Rev. Eben. Erskine, p. 82.

he paid a visit, we are told, to the Erskines of Dryburgh. From his ministerial strictness, and his faithful contendings against the prevailing party in the church, they expected to find him gloomy and austere; but were agreeably surprised, when they saw the urbanity of his manners, and the native kindness and cheerfulness that graced his demeanor.

From conscientious motives, he was careful to repress profane swearing wherever he found it indulged in; and according to tradition, he discovered considerable ingenuity in the measures he employed to curb and prevent it. On one occasion, when crossing the Forth, he begged the boatmen, some of whom he knew were addicted to this odious sin, to guess what his own first name was. They spent the whole time of the passage in forming fruitless conjectures on this point; and thus he escaped the great annoyance of profane language.— On the streets of Dunfermline, when passing a group of boys diverting themselves with some amusement, he had the unhappiness to hear one of them swear. Without knowing which individual had been guilty of the offence, he took a sixpence out of his pocket, and said he would *instrument* (solemnly protest) against that boy. Owing to the caution of the other boys, who were unwilling to expose their comrade, he could not immediately detect him, but at last succeeded. The little culprit, convicted by his own conscience, confessed his fault, and received the money, but expressed his earnest wish that the minister would take it back. Mr. Erskine, however, refused to comply with this request, and persisted in his refusal, till, after many serious conversations with the boy in his own house, he gave evidence of being considerably impressed with the great evil of taking God's name in vain.

The truly *Christian benevolence* of this good man appeared in a variety of forms. While it inspired him with zeal for civil and religious liberty, it created a sincere attachment to social order and tranquillity. The whole tenor of his life was calculated to refute the charge of disloyalty, rashly preferred against him, in common with his brethren, by some violent enemies of the Secession. The schemes of those who, on religious pretexts, held it culpable to pray for kings, or to obey human laws, not inconsistent with the laws of God, met his decided opposition. His views on this point are clearly expressed in a short poem, entitled, "Scripture Authority for subjecting unto, and praying for, Civil Magistrates," which begins thus :

" To civil powers let great regard be given,
And human laws that cross not those of heaven."*

In his unwearied efforts to promote the interests of that kingdom, which consists in righteousness and peace, his benevolence was conspicuously displayed. He gave his countenance and support, as we have seen, amid the difficulties they had to contend with, to enlightened and pious young men, whom he expected to become hopeful instruments in promoting the cause of Christ, and the welfare of souls.† The worthy Mr. Brown of Haddington, among other candidates for the ministry, experienced the benefit of his friendship in early life ; as appears from the following extract of a letter from his eldest son, dated " Whitburn, October, 3d, 1830 :"—

* Works of R. Erskine, vol. ii. Pp. 786, 787.

† See page 173.

“ My late father acknowledged in his last days, he apprehended he was greatly benefited by Mr. Ralph Erskine’s ministry, when he attended it while residing at Gairney Bridge ; and that Mr. Erskine recommended him with much affection to the Synod as a student, when they met at Falkirk in 1748. Perhaps he could never have had access to the ministry, but by means of Mr. Ralph Erskine.” In another communication to the writer, the same Mr. Brown adds, that, when Mr. Erskine was introducing his father to the brethren at Falkirk, one of them proposed an objection, founded on the absurd calumny, that he had got his learning from the devil ; but Ralph replied, “ I think the lad has a sweet savour of Christ about him.”

Mr. Erskine gladly embraced opportunities of giving his counsel to students and preachers with regard to the books they should peruse, and other points of importance. Boston on the Covenant of Grace, we are assured, is one of the books he strongly recommended as calculated to assist them in forming clear views of the plan of salvation.

Possessing a truly apostolical spirit, “ the care of all the churches ” devolved upon him. He was prepared tenderly to sympathize with Christian congregations, amid the afflicting bereavements and perplexing difficulties they experienced. One example of this commiseration is supplied by a memorandum we have found, of some petitions which he publicly offered up at Kinglassie, at the sacramental solemnity in June 1731, shortly after his brother’s translation from Portmoak to Stirling had been appointed by the church courts :—

“ Let the poor congregation lately deprived of their minister by a cast of the hand of Providence, in calling

him elsewhere, be pitied and provided for. O give them grace to believe that all things are in Christ's hand. Help them to see and to say, it is the Lord that gives, and the Lord that takes away. In the mount of the Lord let it be seen, the Lord will provide for them. And provide for other desolate congregations in these bounds. There is the more need of thy doing, that comfortable settlements at this day are rendered so hard and difficult, through the pride and corruption of man. Lord, deliver this poor church from the heavy yoke of patronage, and from all the grievances under which it groans. Lord, mercifully bless that congregation, which is in view of being settled with a more full ministry, at the expense and loss of another. May all things be ordered to a comfortable account, and to the edification of poor souls."

Actuated by the same excellent spirit, he afterwards befriended the erection and support of new congregations, and cheerfully exercised his talents in obviating prejudices, and healing differences, injurious to their peace and prosperity. The Associate Congregation of Haddington, among others, profited in their state of infancy, by his valuable services as a peace-maker. Having given a call to the Rev. George Brown to be their pastor, prior to the call he received from the congregation in Perth, thrown vacant by the lamented death of Mr. Wilson, they were pleased to take offence at the decision of the Associate Presbytery, by which the preference was given to that far more numerous community. But Mr. Erskine, who had reasoned and voted in their favour, being sent by the Presbytery to conciliate their minds, his soft and prudent counsels suc-

ceeded, in some degree, in allaying their displeasure, and regaining their confidence.

The first Associate Congregation in London was also indebted to the kind interest he took in their welfare. In the year 1748, when a few young men from Scotland, who had previously held meetings for prayer, applied to the Associate Synod for a supply of preaching, several members of court opposed the granting of their request, on the ground that there was no probability of success, and that the proposed congregation would become a heavy burden to their funds. Mr. Erskine, however, who was the medium of this application,* maintained that duty required them to embrace the opportunity now presented of promoting the cause of religion, and showed how much their having a church in London would conduce to the benefit of young people educated in the Secession who went to reside in that city, and what a source of satisfaction this would prove to their parents; on which no further opposition was made, and a preacher was appointed to repair to London.

The details, in short, of his labours and journies, and of his correspondence with Christian ministers in distant places, contained in several preceding chapters, appear sufficient to show that he was surpassed by few of his contemporaries in zeal for the interests of truth and peace, and for the wide propagation of the Gospel. Whatever spots and deficiencies may be discerned in his character, ("for there is no man that sinneth not") he exemplified, above many, that love which is "the end of the commandment," and "the fulfilling of the law."

* Records of Associate Synod, in MS. Pp. 981, 982, 1006.

CHAPTER XI.

Mr. Erskine's characteristics as a Preacher—Sincere—Profound—Evangelical—Practical—Experimental—Choice of Texts—Gift of Prayer—Instances of Success—Publications—Editions and Translations of his Sermons—Testimonies to their excellence and utility—Gospel Sonnets, and other poetical works.

THE sketch attempted in the two chapters immediately preceding, relates chiefly to the excellencies of this eminent individual as a man and a Christian, who walked with God, and manifested the salutary influence of piety in the various relations of life. The course he pursued as the pastor of a Christian congregation was described in a former part of these memoirs*. Yet it will be proper to advert somewhat more particularly to his attainments and usefulness as a PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL.

Nature and grace united to furnish him for this interesting and arduous employment. "If Mr. Erskine is considered as to his *natural endowments*," says one of his surviving friends, "he possessed many fine qualities; he had a sweet temper, a clear head, a rich invention, a lively imagination, and a great memory. If he is viewed as to his *acquired abilities*, he was well acquainted with all the useful branches of literature, being an able scholar, an accurate logician, and a penetrating philosopher. If he is considered as to his *office*, he was

* Chap. ii.

a great and judicious divine, a pious and evangelical preacher, an accurate critic, and an able casuist.”*

His principal qualifications for preaching the gospel, no doubt consisted in the grace and spiritual gifts with which he was endowed. Out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth spoke. Love to his Master, and an ardent desire to promote the salvation of precious souls, made him faithful and zealous in his work. At the close of a series of unpublished sermons on Christ “the image of the invisible God,” (Col. i. 15,) preached probably in the year 1717, that superiority to sinister motives and disinterested concern for the spiritual good of his hearers of which he was conscious, is expressed in the following terms :

“ And now, dear friends, I have been endeavouring to preach Christ to you from this text ; and I hope to preach him still, as long as God allows me to preach among you. And woe will be to you, if you live and die without a due improvement of this glorious gospel, which is the doctrine of a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. God worshipped out of Christ is an idol, and all hope of acceptance out of Christ is a dream. O then let Christ, above all things, have the pre-eminence among you. What doth God care for your coming to church, if you will not hearken to what he says, and come to his Son. Or do you think that I study one preaching after another to tell over to you, merely to put off the time. Nay, the Lord is my witness, that it is the desire of my soul that you may be convinced and converted, and brought to Christ. It is

* Account prefixed to his Works in 8vo, vol. i. p. xvii.

not your applause that I want, for that can do me little good. If my heart deceive me not, it is not your approbation of my discourses, but your answering the call of God in his word of grace that is my aim. Little matter what you think of me or my preaching. Let me decrease in your esteem as much as you will, but let Christ increase among you, and then in the close of the day, I shall have joy, and you will have advantage. Let my person be ever so contemptible, yet I magnify mine office; for I am called to preach among you the unsearchable riches of Christ. And by virtue of this office, it is not me but Christ you have to do with; and therefore it is at your peril, if you neglect this glorious gospel of Christ. O go to God this night, and never give him rest, till you be brought, in some measure, to behold his glory in the face of Jesus, who is 'the image of the invisible God.'"

As a preacher he was considered *judicious and profound*. "He was an able, close, and clear reasoner, and could, when he set himself to it, exhaust a subject."* "Luther remarks," said a deceased friend, in a letter to the writer, "that a divine who can distinguish well, is an able divine. I think Mr. Ralph Erskine had a good deal of this gift. See his sermons on Christ the people's covenant, law-death gospel-life, the pregnant promise, and an inference in the sermon from 'who loved me and gave himself for me.'"[†] His talent for research and discrimination, however, did not preclude a certain *vivacity* of sentiment and style, fitted to allure the hearer. "He was blessed with a rich and fertile

* Account prefixed to his Works in 8vo, p. ix.

† Rev. John Brown, Whitburn.

invention, as appears in the agreeable and entertaining diversity wherewith his heads of doctrine are every where adorned. The poetical genius with which he was happily endowed, contributed not a little to the embellishment of his discourses with a variety of pertinent epithets, and striking metaphors.”*

The *evangelical* tenor of his preaching, conformably to the statements formerly made in reference to his efforts in the Marrow controversy,† formed one of its most prominent characteristics. He peculiarly delighted to proclaim the grace of God in its admirable glory, freeness, and extent, to make ample exhibitions of “Jesus Christ and him crucified” to guilty and perishing men, to remove stumbling-blocks out of their way, to obviate their difficulties and objections, and by the most powerful arguments and affectionate entreaties to “compel them to come in.”‡ His sermons were signally calculated to humble the sinner, to exalt the Redeemer, and, at the same time, to promote the interests of holiness.

He was truly a *practical* preacher. With him, the inseparable union of an unfeigned faith of the truth with the cultivation of a holy temper and conduct, was never lost sight of. We find from his printed works, and still more from his *unpublished manuscripts*, that the duties of Christianity occupied a large share of his ministrations, and that he did not neglect to reprove prevailing sins and omissions with unshrinking fidelity.

* Account by Rev. James Fisher, in the *folio* edition of his Works, vol. i. p. ix.

+ Pages 178, 179.

‡ See Brown's Gospel Truth, Pp. 133—136.

For specimens of his faithful remonstrances, we might refer to his searching addresses immediately before the administration of our Lord's Supper, to his discourses on self-conceit and nonconformity to the world, and other topics, and to the *uses of reproof* that occur in the application of many of his sermons.

An increased interest was often given to his illustrations and admonitions from the pulpit, by seasonable and striking allusions to the *events of providence*. On some occasions he referred expressly and at large to facts of foregoing times, detailed in the page of history ;* and frequently did he call the attention of his hearers to recent occurrences, and administer appropriate counsels, as to the part it became them to act, and the practical lessons inculcated by the affecting operations of the Lord's hand. In this manner we find him improving the invasion and rebellion 1715,† an extraordinary drought in summer 1723,‡ the rumours of a Spanish war in 1729, and again in 1733,|| a great mortality by small-pox 1734,§ the calamities of war with France and Spain in the year 1739,¶ the deaths of ministers, and other interesting events.

While he approved himself a devout and skilful discerner of the signs of the times, the utility of his discourses was still more effectually promoted by his great attention to the human heart, and his singular talent in accommodating his instructions to the varied conditions,

* See the Sermons on the Pregnant Promise and the Strength of Sin, vol. i. Pp. 427, 529, *folio*.

† Vol. i. p. 647.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 108.

|| *Ibid.* p. 578, 683.

§ *Ibid.* p. 720.

¶ *Ibid.* vol. ii. Pp. 86, 251.

difficulties, and exercises of the godly and thoughtful. For this reason, many were pleased to distinguish him by the designation of *the experimental preacher*. "He had a dexterous faculty," says Mr. Fisher, "in ransacking the plagues of the heart, and describing the diversified circumstances of serious and exercised souls, as if they had fully communicated to him their several doubts and cases; while, in the meantime, he was only unfolding the inward experience of his own soul, what he himself felt of the workings of unbelief, and of the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit in opposition thereunto."*

"He could the saints' perplexities well trace,
And in all straits afford them great solace.
Souls exercised concerning sin or grace,
May in his works find what will suit their case.
There he propounds and solves each case he heard;
To saints a mighty casuist appeared."†

In choosing subjects and texts, he seems, with Dr. Owen, to have often given the preference to those which had been powerfully impressed upon his own heart; and he had repeated occasion to observe, that when he essayed to comfort others with the comfort wherewith he himself was comforted of God, his own consolation was renewed and confirmed. The truth of this statement appears from numerous memoranda in his Diary, and even from several passages in his Works, as in his discourse on Rev. vii. 17, where he says: "I

* Preface to Works in folio, vol. i. p. ix.

† Poem to the Memory of Rev. R. Erskine, in Works, 8vo. vol. i. p. xxiv.

have been led, without any design in me, but only as the text was pleasant to *my own soul*, to speak of the very sum and centre of ecclesiastical government, ‘the Lamb in the midst of the throne.’”

The simplicity of his diction, and the pathos of his elocution, were in excellent keeping with the importance of his theme, and the warmth of his heart. “His style was natural, unaffected, manly, and scriptural. Indeed, he studied much to adapt himself to the capacity of the auditory, never choosing, in his public appearances, to come to his hearers with the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but to preach the truths of the everlasting gospel in their genuine purity and naked simplicity.”* He had a pleasant voice, an agreeable manner, a warm and pathetic address. An aged and pious female who had often heard him in her youth, long since eulogised his appearance to us in these words, “I really thought that his face shone.” His hearers were accustomed to speak of the frequent raising of his hand in the pulpit as expressive of the elevation of his soul. It is alluded to in the following lines:—

“His silver tongue did living truth impart,
With raised hand, fit emblem of his heart.
He saw, he felt, he sung redeeming love,
Death called him hence; he tunes his harp above.”

Mr. Erskine was thought to excel no less in conducting the devotional exercises of the sanctuary, than in illustrating the truths, and inculcating the duties of religion. From the fervour of his pious feelings, and his

* Account prefixed to Works in 8vo. vol. i. p. ix.

frequent approaches to the throne of grace in his closet and family, as well as from his familiar acquaintance with the Scriptures and with his own heart, one may readily conclude, that his public prayers must have been eminently adapted to arrest the attention and impress the minds of Christian assemblies, and to raise their thoughts and affections, with his own, to God and the things above. Ebenezer Erskine, according to his own account, "had some meltings of soul," during the time of his brother's prayer, previous to the distribution of the sacramental elements.*

The following expressions, which he seems to have recorded as a memorandum of part of a public prayer on a day of humiliation preparatory to the administration of the Lord's Supper, are quoted from one of his note-books:

"Alas! we live amid many dark and dismal days of wrath, wherein God is frowning upon our mother-church, and frowning on all her children. O may we have one glorious day of the Son of Man amongst all our gloomy days. May the Sun of Righteousness range the clouds, and dart a beam of light upon this assembly. O for a thick shower of heavenly influences to make a glorious communion in this place. Does not the dry ground of our hearts need such a shower, especially on a humiliation-day? We come to set our parched and withered souls under the drop of thy ordinances. Lord, if we have a *Bochim* on the fast-day, may we not expect a *Bethel* on the feast-day. A shower of influences would make a shower of tears among us. Lord, come and thunder out of Sinai upon the dead and obstinate

* Life of Ebenezer Erskine, p. 159.

hearts that are here, to prepare them for coming to mount Zion, the city of the living God. Lord take thy bow in thine hand, and shoot off the arrows of conviction to pierce the heart of the enemies of the king. Our time will soon be at an end ; our praying time, our preaching time, our hearing time, our communion time, will soon be at an end. Death will in a little cut our breath and send us to eternity, and part us and ordinances for ever. If we be not joined to the Lord in ordinances now, then in a little God and we must part for ever and ever ; but if God and we meet together graciously in time, then we shall meet together gloriously in eternity. O send forth thy light and thy truth, let them lead us to thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.”—

The ministrations of this devoted servant of Christ were highly valued by his own people, and by Christians of every class in the various places where he occasionally preached. A striking evidence of his great popularity at home is supplied by the circumstance that, as was formerly stated, when he seceded from the judicatories of the establishment, he was followed by nearly the whole parish. Some individuals travelled every Sabbath from a considerable distance to hear him. One *Andrew Small* of Kinnesswood, who died in 1798 aged 84, prior to the settlement of Mr. Swanston at Kinross, went from that village every Lord's day for a series of years, to wait on his ministry. He considered his “ Sabbath-day's journies very pleasant walks, and never wearied.”* Mr. *John Kinninmonth*, a most spiritually-minded man, and many years a venerable elder in the

* Pious Memorials of the Parish of Portmoak.

first congregation of the United Secession church Auchtermuchty, who departed this life near Kinghorn in the month of Feb. 1812, at a very advanced age, always spoke of Mr. Erskine with much warmth, and esteemed it a high privilege that eight years of his youth had been spent under his ministry.

Both before and after his secession from the national church, the sacramental solemnities of Dunfermline were attended by vast numbers from different parts of the country.

The following notes, accordingly, occur in his Diary :—

“ *July 18, 1734.*—There being such a multitude of people, and thirty-three tables, the service was not over at twelve o'clock [midnight,] and I began to preach betwixt twelve and one on that text, ‘ Behold, thy time was the time of love,’ and the congregation was dismissed betwixt one and two in the morning.”—“ *Sabbath, July 6, 1735.* The sacrament of the Lord’s supper was administered. My action sermon was upon Rev. xxii. 1. I was helped, especially in the application, and carried through the work with some hope that the Spirit of life was present. There were thirty-eight tables, and a most numerous congregation.”

The real utility of his labours was no less evident than their high acceptability. Though he deplored the ungodliness and indifference of many of his people, he rejoiced, as we have seen, in some of them, as seals of his ministry.* The few following entries, selected from his journal, afford additional proof of this pleasing result :—

“ *Friday, June 1, 1733.*—This day I examined at

* See Pp. 91, 92, 253.

Whitefield. Mrs. Spence walked out with me, and in coming home, we had some pleasant conversation. She told me that my preaching was the first means of cheering her with the gospel."

"*July 9, 1735.*—This afternoon I was made to understand that a young woman in Mr. *Wellwood's* family was brought under deep exercise at this occasion, [the Lord's Supper having been administered a few days before.] I conversed and prayed with her, and found indeed the Lord had awakened, and given her a clear view of her natural state, and of her utterly destitute condition. She owned she never heard the gospel preached in the manner as here, nor such large offers of Christ, and yet she remained dead. She had formerly communicated at Edinburgh, but was crying out, 'O dreadful! I was guilty of the body and blood of Christ, I never saw his glory, I was but a moral formalist.' I spoke to her case as I could. May the Lord carry on his work."

"*March 15, 1737.* At this time *Sarah Murray* was lying ill of the trouble whereof she died this week. She had been in the church on Sabbath, and told me this evening how remarkable and refreshing the sermon on death was to her. I was helped in praying with her both this night and next morning. She was one of the most exercised, tender, solid Christians in all this congregation."—" *Saturday, March 19.* This morning when I awakened, my heart was melted with the thought of *Sarah Murray's* death. I sought the same Spirit to rest upon me, that was so much with her. I went this day to her burial. I conversed with her daughters, both promising young lasses, who, weeping, told me some of her dying words. Being asked what

she thought of death, she answered that death was to her an unstinged death, a conquered death. She said she would not part with her interest in Christ and the covenant of promise, for ten thousand worlds ; also that he had been her God and guide from her youth. Being asked by her daughters what would become of them when she was leaving them, she answered, ‘ Seek the Lord and his strength ; seek his face evermore.’ I was affected both in hearing the account, and in seeking a blessing and giving thanks. As I came home on horseback, I conversed with a young lad, who called *Sarah* a mother to him, and told what good the Lord had done him by her influence, example, and direction, and, weeping as he went, was blessing the Lord that ever he was cast into the company of such a one.”

“ *Feb. 24, 1739.*—[After alluding to his keeping a fast every Saturday, alone and with his family alternately, he adds,] “ The Lord owned me therein, and the Sabbaths following these fast-days have been somewhat remarkable ; for I found myself helped and strengthened, and many have signified to me how much it appears that the Lord was in the public ordinances. I understand that evidences of the Lord’s presence and countenance were much spoken of, both during this last winter season, and also this spring.”

To these authentic notices by his own hand, we may add a few instances of the good effects of his ministry, gleaned from other sources.

His sister Mrs. Balderston, in her Diary, mentions the comfort which not only she, but other Christians in Edinburgh, reaped from his sermons.—“ *March 13, 1718.* On the Friday, my brother Mr. Ralph preached in the New kirk. His text was in *Exod. xxxiii.* ‘ And

he said, I beseech thee show me thy glory.' Many came from it, rejoicing in the Lord."

His usefulness to Mr. BROWN of Haddington in early life has been noticed above.* That eminent man, "in his last days, being engaged in conversation with a brother, Dunfermline was mentioned; upon which he said, that with pleasure he recollected the time when he went over the hills of Cleish from Gairney Bridge, to hear that great man of God, Mr. Ralph Erskine, "whose sermons," said he, "I thought were brought home by the Spirit of God to my heart; at these times I thought I met with the God of Israel, and saw him face to face."†

Alexander Pearson, a godly man of the parish of Portmoak, spoke feelingly on his death-bed of the benefit he had derived from the services of Ralph, as well as Ebenezer Erskine, and other ministers. Referring to a sacramental occasion at Orwell, he said, "O how cheerfully did I go to the table. I enjoyed a heaven upon earth that day. Mr. Ralph Erskine served a table on the fulness of the gospel, and sacramental feasts. O that was a good time to my soul."‡

"An eminent Christian told me," says a minister lately deceased, in a private letter, "he was once at Linton, where Mr. Ralph Erskine preached on these words, 'The power of the Lord was present to heal them.' To him it was a wonderful sermon, and he thought it was the same to others."—"An old man," says the same esteemed correspondent in another com-

* Pages, 471, 472.

† Gospel Truth, p. 138.

‡ Pious Memorials of the parish of Portmoak.

munication, "a respectable elder at Bathgate, told Mr. C——s he was an attender at Seceding communions from the beginning, and was once at Burntisland. Under the precious truths uttered by Mr. Ralph, he said he had a heaven upon earth, particularly in serving a table. When he spoke of this sixty or seventy years after, the tears ran down his cheeks."*

Another example of the lasting impressions received, under the divine blessing, from his personal ministrations, may be taken from a short account, published in a periodical, of the late Rev. *William Wilson*, of the United Associate congregation, Nicolson's Street, Greenock, who died March 9, 1831:

"Mr. Wilson was a native of Dunfermline, his mother, who died at an advanced age not many years since, having been brought up under the ministry of the Rev. Ralph Erskine. Of the days of her youth, and of the powerful ministry of that distinguished man, she was accustomed to speak with peculiar warmth, quoting passages of his sermons and of his sacramental addresses, and noticing an impressive gesture which he had used when animated, and which she denominated '*the ca' of his hand.*'†

One instance more of the happy success with which it pleased his Divine Master to crown his labours, is too interesting to be omitted. This example occurred in the family of his much beloved friend and brother, the Rev. WILLIAM WILSON of Perth. "MARJORY, his eldest daughter, died at the age of sixteen. A sermon she had heard at Kinclaven sacrament by the Rev.

* The late Rev. John Brown, Whitburn.

† Theological Magazine, vol. vi. p. 288.

Ralph Erskine of Dunfermline, on that text, 'They shall mount up with wings as eagles,' had brought her mind under very serious impressions. During the remainder of her life she often spoke of this sermon, and, on her death-bed, the remembrance of it yielded her much comfort."*

Influenced by the numerous and urgent solicitations of pious hearers, this zealous minister not only preached the gospel from the pulpit, but availed himself of the facilities afforded by the press, for diffusing the savour of the knowledge of Christ. In some instances individuals took the liberty, without previously asking his consent, to publish his discourses from notes taken by short-hand writers at the time they were delivered. Hence, in the advertisement prefixed to an edition of the sermon on Christ the People's Covenant, printed 1725, the publisher states, that "the author neither revised the manuscript, nor corrected the printed sheets;" and adds, "it is hoped the author will not be too much offended, that it is thus exposed to public view." In other cases, however, he seems to have furnished the publisher with his manuscript. At all events, betwixt the year 1722 and the time of his death, his discourses on about forty texts were given to the world, and extensively circulated in small *duodecimo* pamphlets, most of which, in that form, reached three or four, and some of them five or six editions.

The productions of Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, having attracted the attention of several pious ministers

* Ferrier's *Memoirs of the Rev. W. Wilson*, p. 377.

in England, a selection from the numerous detached sermons of both brothers was published in London in *octavo*. A first volume issued from the press under the superintendence of the Rev. Thomas Bradbury, who introduced them with a recommendatory preface, dated March 3, 1737-8. The second volume of this collection appears to have been brought forward under the auspices of the same celebrated divine ; and, in the year 1757, a few years after the decease of both the Erskines, a new edition of these two volumes, the first of which had previously undergone two impressions, was published at London, with the addition of a third volume, recommended in a preface written by a different clergyman, whose name is withheld.

The publication of Mr. Ralph Erskine's Practical Works in two volumes *folio* was contemplated soon after his death ; but, owing to various hinderances, it was not accomplished till after the lapse of twelve years ; the first volume having appeared in 1764, and the second the year following. Mr. JOHN NEWLANDS the Editor, bookseller in Glasgow, and son-in-law to Mr. Erskine, was determined to execute the design faithfully and honourably. His address "to the public," inserted at the beginning of the first volume, conveys a favourable impression of his attention and disinterestedness, in his manner of conducting it : "He resolved with himself, when he first proposed this undertaking, either to have the work done in such a manner as would reflect honour upon the worthy author, yield pleasure as well as profit to the reader, be a credit to himself and an honour to his country, (being the first of its kind for largeness and elegance that ever was published as the

composition of a Scotch author,)—or not to have emitted it at all into the world. How he has accomplished his resolution, the public are left to judge.”

Beside the *poetical pieces* subjoined, these volumes contain, including a great proportion never published before, about one hundred and forty sermons, founded on about seventy-six different texts of Scripture. Twenty of the sermons were preached immediately before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, five on the evenings of communion Sabbaths, and five on fast-days held in different places. The whole series is arranged mostly in the order of time in which the discourses were delivered. The type is excellent; and, by a generous deviation from his original proposals, the editor “printed the whole upon a superfine demy paper.” Great pains were taken to correct numerous inaccuracies that had disfigured the preceding editions of the sermons formerly published. To elucidate passages in which the author alludes to “the occurrences and transactions of the time,” explanatory notes were added at the foot of the page. To large tables of contents at the beginning, a copious alphabetical index is subjoined at the close. Mr. Fisher of Glasgow not only wrote the “Short Account of the Author prefixed,” but was in all probability the writer of most of the notes and illustrations. The execution proved highly satisfactory to the subscribers; of whom lists are given, from which it appears that more than seven hundred copies were subscribed for.

No other *folio* edition has since appeared. The whole practical works of Mr. Erskine, however, have been repeatedly printed in *octavo*. The first edition in this form, consisting of ten volumes, was published at Falkirk, by *Patrick Muir* for Hugh Mitchell, in the year

1794. By whom the Account of the Author prefixed was composed, we are not informed; but it seems to be the same as that contained in the folio edition abridged and improved. It is succeeded by a "Poem to the Memory" of Mr. Erskine, consisting of eight lines in Latin, and nearly two hundred in English, written about thirteen years after his death; to which is added "an Acrostic" on his name. A numerous list of subscribers is appended.

Several similar editions of his practical works have been subsequently printed in different places for the booksellers in London and elsewhere. The circulation of his discourses has also of late years been promoted by the pious attention of individuals and societies, who have published selections from them in a variety of shapes. In the year 1821, the Rev. SAMUEL M'MILLAN, Aberdeen, gave to the world, in two volumes 8vo, "The Beauties of the Rev. Ralph Erskine, being a selection from the Sermons of that eminent Theologian, of the most striking illustrations of Gospel-doctrine," with a short Memoir prefixed. This selection, which is recommended by a number of respectable ministers as "highly creditable to the judgment of the editor, and much fitted for general usefulness," has passed through several editions. A number of his sermons, as the Rent Vail of the Temple, and Faith's Plea on God's Word, have also been published separately by the Tract Societies of London and Dublin, in the form of small tracts; by means of which they readily find their way to the cottages of the poor.

The utility of these evangelical discourses has been still further extended by means of translation. If we are not misinformed, the London Collection of Sermons,

by Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, in three volumes, has been turned into Welsh, and circulated among that interesting people to a considerable extent. It is, however, a more remarkable fact, that *all* the published discourses of both these reverend brothers have been translated into the Dutch language, and most favourably received in Holland. In a note near the beginning of the Account of Ralph Erskine, that appears in the Falkirk edition of his works, 1794, it is said, "We have even seen a few of them printed in Dutch." But more ample information on this subject has lately been received. In an excellent publication that has recently issued from the press, distinct notice is taken of the translation by Mr. *John Ross*, Rotterdam, "of all the prosaic writings of Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine."* We have had the satisfaction to see the entire translation, consisting of twelve thick but handsome volumes in small octavo, including recommendatory addresses, some of them of considerable length, by two native clergymen of high respectability. These discourses in Dutch, which began to be translated about 1744, have undergone many impressions, and they still continue to be extensively read in that country.† "Ebenezer and Ralph," says an esteemed correspondent, "are as great favourites among the Dutch as they still are among our Scottish peasantry. On a market-day at Rotterdam, I have often been amused and pleased in overhearing the *boors* or farmers around a stall of books, eagerly inquiring for the works of *Erskeyna*; for thus did they pronounce the name."

* Steven's History of the Scottish Church, Rotterdam, p. 198.

† See Appendix, No. xii.

Waiving all critical discussion regarding the merits of Ralph Erskine's discourses, let it suffice to notice some attestations that have been given to their substantial excellence and spiritual utility. It seems unnecessary to repeat the extracts formerly produced in joint commendation of the works of his brother and himself, from the pens of the Rev. THOMAS BRADBURY, WILLIAM CUDWORTH, JAMES HERVEY, and AUGUSTUS TOP-LADY.* To these the following may now be added :—

The author of the preface to the last of the three volumes of Ebenezer and Ralph's sermons, published together in London in the year 1757, thus expresses himself respecting "these reverend and worthy brothers :—" "I think it may be said, with the strictest regard to truth, that their praise in the gospel is now spread abroad throughout the churches of Christ in *Britain, Ireland, and America* ; and they have obtained the best epistle of commendation, even a testimony in the consciences of not a few of the children of God, who have reason to bless his name for the great spiritual benefit and advantage they have reaped by the perusal of the valuable labours of these his servants, on whom he has bestowed such eminent ministerial gifts and abilities."

The Rev. ADAM GIBB, while in terms abundantly strong he expresses his disapprobation of Mr. Ralph Erskine's writings relative to the burgess oath, has the candour to observe respecting him ; that "his name and just reputation were of great importance to his cause, he having been long a very eminent light in the church, and one whose memory as a minister of the gospel

* Life of Rev. Eben. Erskine, Pp. 489—491.

must be precious, from the various works which he had then given to the public, so long as the gospel continues to be dispensed in the English tongue.”*

The late Dr. JOHN MASON of New York did not hesitate to acknowledge his esteem for Mr. Erskine, and the benefit which, at a very early period of his life, he had derived from the perusal of his works. The following circumstance is related in a sermon preached on occasion of the death of that able and eloquent man. “When ten years of age, he was the subject of deep religious impressions. He has often remarked, incidentally, that at that period, he took Ralph Erskine’s ‘Faith’s Plea upon God’s Word’ to the garret of his residence, and read, and wept, and prayed.”†

The worthy Dr. JOHN COLQUHOUN of Leith, who was himself a great admirer of Ralph’s sermons, a few years before his death gave an esteemed friend the following account of what passed regarding him, in a conversation he had held in his own house with an eminent London bookseller. “Who do you think,” said the bookseller, “is the most popular religious writer at present?” “I cannot tell,” answered the doctor. “It is Ralph Erskine,” was the reply; “we sell more of his writings than of any other divine, Scotch or English.” He added that his discourses are much valued by pious clergymen of the church of England.

“Of Mr. Ralph Erskine’s writings,” says a writer in a biographical work at present being published, “it is scarcely necessary to speak, any more than of his cha-

* Gibb’s Display of the Secession Testimony, vol. ii. Pref. p. i.

† Sermon by Dr. Joseph M. Elroy on occasion of the death of John M. Mason, preached at New York, Jan. 23, 1830.

racter. They have already, several of them, stood a century of criticism, and are just as much valued by pious and discerning readers as they were on that day when they were first published. Models of composition they are not, nor do we believe that they ever were; but they are rich with the ore of divine truth, and contain many passages that are uncommonly vigorous and happy.”*

Whilst both brothers were held in high estimation by the religious public at large, and have been styled “the idols of the body” (the Secession church) of which they were eminent members, it might appear invidious to institute any comparison betwixt them as preachers and authors. Suffice it to observe, that Ebenezer was peculiarly distinguished for manly sense, a dignified appearance, and commanding elocution; but Ralph was thought to excel in critical acumen, and, at the same time, in the superior unction and affectionate earnestness with which he entered into the varied circumstances and feelings of serious hearers.† Their comparative merits are briefly alluded to by the Reverend author of an account of Chirnside parish, in the following terms:—“The tombstones of the church-yard cannot be passed over, as they exhibit that of the Rev. Mr. Henry Erskine, first minister of the parish after the Revolution 1688, whose sons Ebenezer and Ralph were the principal and famous leaders of an open and well-known secession from the established church. The first was reckoned the pillar of the party; while Ralph was allowed to be

* Chalmers’s *Lives of Distinguished and Illustrious Scotsmen*, Art. R. Erskine, Pp. 267—271.

† Brown’s *Gospel Truth*, p. 137.

the best scholar, with a vein for Latin and English poetry.”*

The *controversial* writings of Ralph having been severally referred to before, in connexion with the disputes by which they were occasioned, it is scarcely necessary to allude to them again. The ablest, as well as the most unobjectionable among them, was no doubt the work entitled “Faith no Fancy.” It has been eulogized as a “work singularly valuable, in which the author has given the greatest display of his abilities, both as a Divine and a Philosopher—a book that effectually silenced all his opponents, and stands to this day unanswered.”† A celebrated Professor of Philosophy in a Scotch University, lately deceased, is reported to have expressed great admiration of the ability and acuteness discovered in this work.

The share Mr. Erskine took in composing that useful publication, “the Synod’s Catechism,” has been adverted to in the memoirs of his brother.‡ It was there stated that the original materials prepared by him in shorthand characters, extending from the 76th to the 95th Question of the Shorter Catechism, are still extant.

His POETICAL Works come now to be noticed. Of these the GOSPEL SONNETS are unquestionably the most useful and important. The composition of these Sonnets, or Spiritual Songs, in six parts, namely, the Be-

* Statist. Acc. of Scotland, vol. xiv. No. I. Parish of Chirnside, by Rev. Walter Anderson, D. D.

† Account prefixed to his Works in 8vo. 1794, p. xiii.

‡ Pages 493, 494.

liever's Espousals, Jointure, Riddle, Lodging, Soliloquy, and Principles, appears to have been his chief recreation in the earlier years of his ministry. The first edition seems to have preceded all his other publications, and was published anonymously. He afterwards enlarged it, and gave his name. "This book underwent several impressions at Edinburgh, some of them without his name and very incorrect; but at length, upon leave asked and given, it was re-printed at London with large additions and great improvements made by himself, upwards of ten years before his death."* His Diary contains repeated allusions to the revising of the Sonnets, and discovers the humility, and the pious intentions, with which he applied himself to the work:

"*Dec. 31, 1733.* I had another letter from [Mr. John Oswald at the Rose and Crown] London, earnestly desiring the Gospel Sonnets, which I was preparing for a new edition."—" *Jan. 23, 1734.* I was helped to look for his blessing to attend my work in framing the Sonnets, that they might be for his glory, and the good of many souls."—" *Sabbath, March 3, 1734.* This evening, after family worship, I was strengthened mightily in secret prayer.——I was made to look to the Lord, that the Sonnets might be made useful even when I was in the dust, and was led to seek I might be made to glorify the Lord Jesus. Here I thought with deep humiliation of my unworthiness, and what a wonder it would be, if by the like of me his truth might be spread, and his name celebrated; and I thought none in the world had so good reason to glorify him and magnify his name, as I. My heart was poured out and humbled."

* Works in *folio*, vol. i. p. xvi.

—"June 1, 1734. I wrote a Preface for the Gospel Sonnets."

The modest preface here referred to might serve to disarm the severity of criticism. He states that he did not pretend to write for the entertainment of men of learning and refinement, but for the instruction and edification of those of meaner capacity and inferior education. "I can offer no other apology," says he, "for my rudeness of expression, besides the want of a cultivated poetical genius, than this, that most of the lines are set down in the very first unrefined dress wherein they were presented to my mind, when I thought and wrote upon these subjects; nor could the vacant minutes borrowed from my other weighty work allow me leisure to study that politeness and elegance of phrase, which more time, leisure, and pains, might have hammered out."* Adverting to the treatment the Riddle, in particular, had met with from some who had ignorantly censured, and from others who had profanely derided it, he defends its paradoxes with considerable success, and shows that they are justified by the texts of Scripture annexed. He commends the whole book to the care and protection of God, expecting it still to pass through "good report and bad report." "It never promised much," he says, "to them that seek nothing but pleasure and satisfaction to their fancy; but I have heard that it has done some service, and I hope, through the blessing of heaven, it may yet do more, to them that seek profit and edification to their souls."†

This small book of Spiritual Songs, notwithstanding its unpretending diction and "homely rhyme," has un-

* Works, vol. ii. p. 578.

† *Ibid.* Pp. 530—532.

dergone a vast number of impressions, and, by “the blessing of heaven,” on its evangelical contents, has enlightened and refreshed the souls of thousands. Its value has been experienced by Christians in England, Wales, and America. It has been translated, we are told, into Welsh, and much esteemed among that people.* A lady in New England long since acknowledged her obligations to it, in a Poem dedicated to the author, usually prefixed to the work. The late ANDREW FULLER of Kettering, in an account of his first religious impressions, introduces the following statement: “One day, in particular, I took up Ralph Erskine’s Gospel Sonnets, and opening upon what he entitles, ‘a Gospel Catechism for Young Christians, or Christ all in all, and our complete redemption,’ I read, and as I read, I wept. Indeed I was almost overcome with weeping; so interesting did the doctrine of eternal salvation appear to me.”†

A considerable number of the pious have found their spiritual comfort much advanced by committing many of these songs to memory, and frequently repeating them. This was the practice of several devout individuals in the parish of Portmoak;‡ and it is recorded of the late Rev. David Wilson of the United Associate Congregation, Cumnock, that having treasured them up in his mind in early life, he often quoted interesting verses from them in his addresses at the Lord’s Table with great effect.||

* Brown’s Gospel Truth, p. 156.

† Dr. Ryland’s Life and Death of Rev. A. Fuller, p. 13.

‡ Pious Memorials of parish of Portmoak, Art. *Eben. Birrell* and *Janet Loudon*.

|| Christian Monitor for 1823, p. 130.

From the numerous encomiums that have been passed on them, we may select the few following :—

“ I take this opportunity,” says the Rev. THOMAS BRADBURY, “ of recommending those hymns and spiritual songs for the sweetness of the verse, the disposition of the subject, the elegance of the composition ; and, above all, for that which animates the whole, the savour of divine and experimental knowledge.”*

The celebrated Mr. HERVEY, Rector of Weston-Favell, entertained a high esteem for the Gospel Sonnets, as well as for the sermons of Mr. Erskine. “ During his last illness, a pious gentleman from Glasgow, concerned in the publication of Ralph Erskine’s works, in folio, waited upon Mr. Hervey for a recommendation of them. He was not able to write, but dictated one to the gentleman. Having asked what the intended edition would cost, it was answered, ‘ two guineas.’ Mr. Hervey, pointing to the Gospel Sonnets, which lay on his table, and had been much blessed to him during his weakness, replied, ‘ *There* is a production of Mr. Erskine, I value more than two guineas.’”†

The last eulogy on the Sonnets to be here produced, is one that appeared some years since in a provincial newspaper, and is understood to have come from the pen of a learned professor in connexion with the Church of Scotland. Influenced, perhaps, in some degree by an amiable fondness for youthful recollections, this talented man bestows far higher praise than has been usually awarded to Mr. Erskine as a poet :—

* Pref. to 1st Vol. of Coll. of Sermons by Eben. and Ralph Erskine.

† Brown’s Life of Hervey, p. 397, 3d edition.

——“ We refer without hesitation,” says he, “ to the ‘ Gospel Sonnets and Spiritual Songs of the Rev. Ralph Erskine,’—an author, who, independently of all that quaintness of thought and expression to which, from the nature of his views, and perhaps of his age, he was exposed, is, notwithstanding, a Poet, and ‘ a Sacred Poet,’ of no mean character. Party spirit, originating in his church politics, no doubt contributed long to procure for him an undue reverence from the mob, whilst it prevented men of literary character and attainments from reading his productions. But the lapse of upwards of a century has contributed greatly to the removal of that false medium through which recent events and characters are apt to be viewed, and has presented us with ‘ a new edition of Ralph Erskine’s Gospel Sonnets;’ and a new and a more just, and consequently more consistent apprehension of his real merits. Without ranking him with Milton or Klopstock, who are in fact the Homer and Virgil of sacred epic, we may fairly and unhesitatingly class him with Ramsay and Burns, (we only refer to a poetical, not a moral resemblance)—the Horace and Catullus of Lyric poetry. Ralph Erskine, independently of his great learning and classical acquirements, which he has evinced in several most beautiful Latin odes, possesses that power of imagination, and truth of feeling, which are the alpha and omega of a poetical temperament. He writes with apparent ease, and with so truthful an appeal to the heart, and in particular to that heart in which he is particularly interested, the heart of a Christian, that he requires only to be read under an atmosphere of right Christian sentiments to be fully appreciated, and greatly and justly admired.

———We are quite sure that no one ever repented having read, even occasionally, and partially, the works of this author; and we are quite sure that a careful and systematic perusal has always opened up new views, and increased respect for this learned, conscientious, and highly respectable poet. In early life we were ourselves brought acquainted with this author, and many of his more catching couplets have so identified themselves with the general current and character of our thoughts, that they have become, as it were, a part of our moral constitution, and are associated with all that is fresh, and lovely, and endearing, in recollections of youth. What we have ourselves, through the blessing of a pious parentage enjoyed, we would not willingly withhold from others, even from those little embryos of manhood which are at present hanging around the knee and upon the lips of teachers, and are laying up treasures of delight, or storing up sources of reliance against the manhood of their being. But we must now conclude with a few quotations in illustration of the statements, which, viewing the present age as one of a very mixed and a very contradictory character, we may truly be said to have risked."

"Take the following song of 'Heaven desired by Saints on Earth,' as an example:

'Happy the company that's gone
From cross to crown, from thrall to throne;
How loud they sing upon the shore,
To which they sail'd in heart before!

Bless'd are the dead, yea, saith the word,
That die in Christ the living Lord,

And on the other side of death
Thus joyful spend their praising breath :

Death from all death has set us free,
And will our gain for ever be ;
Death loos'd the massy chain of wo,
To let the mournful captives go.

*Death is to us a sweet repose,
The bud was op'd to show the rose ;
The cage was broke to let us fly,
And build our happy nest on high.**

“ Nothing, we will boldly venture to assert, ever exceeded in true pathos, and beautiful moral energy, those lines which we have printed in italics. ‘ The opening of the bud to show the rose,’ is fresh and immediately from nature herself, in one of her sweetest and most alluring attitudes ; and ‘ the breaking of the cage,’ and ‘ the building of the nest,’ though they may be objected to by the over fastidious, will be felt in all their true character by those who permit themselves to judge from their own consciences, rather than from the opinion of others.”

This ingenious writer then remarks, that “ **THE WORK AND CONTENTION OF HEAVEN** is likewise most powerfully given ;” and, after quoting some verses from it, he concludes with these words :—“ We ask our readers, whether or not the author, who could write in the manner which we have exhibited, should continue to be regarded by a reading and an intellectual public, as a mere dull, droning, *canting* enthusiast, without one spark of the true poetic fire to recommend him.”*

The next exercise in verse to which he turned his

* The FIVE HERALD for Thursday, December 16, 1824.

attention after finishing the Gospel Sonnets, was the one entitled, "A PARAPHRASE, or Large Explicatory Poem, upon the SONG OF SOLOMON." It extends to nearly thirty pages in the folio edition of his works. His principal object in this poem seems to have been, to furnish plain Christians with an evangelical and pleasant exposition of that mystical Song. In the preface addressed "to the *curious*, and the *serious* readers," he states, accordingly, that he did not venture to make the paraphrase on any one verse, "till he had consulted a number of sound interpreters, and satisfied himself that he should not deviate from the current of orthodox writers." His diary contains several allusions to this production, of which a single specimen may suffice:—"Nov. 24, 1734. Many of these days I was occupied much in writing the paraphrase upon the Song. Lord, bless the work for the benefit of souls."

Before sending his Paraphrase to the press, he submitted it to the inspection of Dr. ISAAC WATTS, who favoured him with some "remarks;" and he expresses his regret that circumstances occurred to prevent the Doctor from undertaking "a more close and full review thereof."* Adverting to the poetical writings of that distinguished man, he thus owns his obligations to them:—"I have frequently, *both here and elsewhere*, essayed to imitate them by adopting some of their delicious metaphors."†—This Explicatory Poem on the Song appears to have been first published about the year 1738. He speaks modestly of it as "a homely essay." Though of inferior merit to the Sonnets, it

* Works, Vol. ii. p. 664.

† *Ibid.*

obtained considerable favour among Christians, and has passed through a number of editions. In a letter formerly inserted, Mr. Whitefield expresses gratitude to God for the assistance afforded him "in that composition."*

After an interval of several years, he proceeded to compose his **SCRIPTURE SONGS**, which were not fully published till after his death. According to the arrangement adopted in his practical works, they consist of two books; the one including "Old Testament Songs," in six parts, and the other "New Testament Songs," in three parts.† Of all these, the short Paraphrase on the Lamentations, which forms the fifth part under the first division, was the first given to the world, being published in the year 1750.‡ It is introduced by a Preface, in which he disclaims all pretensions "to a genius fitted to act the sublime Poet," and invites persons of piety and judgment to send him their observations on his verses. In the preface to his Songs on Select Portions of the Book of Job, he speaks respectfully of *Sir Richard Blackmore's* Paraphrase on that book, and adds; "Though I have not followed him in every gloss of his upon some texts, yet I have taken

* Page 318.

† Works, Vol. ii. Pp. 697—776.

‡ One of his note-books, containing the Paraphrase on the Lamentations, and a considerable proportion of the other Scripture Songs, fairly written in short-hand characters, is in the writer's possession; also another book, containing a great part of the Gospel Sonnets, similarly written. Another of his descendants is in possession of an original copy of the Sonnets, neatly transcribed for the press by Mr. Erskine.

all the help and assistance I could in framing many of the songs into common metre.”* To the “New Version of the Song of Solomon,” an advertisement is prefixed, in which he states, that after his Paraphrase on that book, he had no design of publishing any thing else upon it, but “was urged likewise to make a short version of this Song, as near as possible to the text.” Alluding to Mr. *Mason’s* Version of it in favourable terms, he acknowledges that, on several verses, he had “taken what help it, together with Mr. Mason’s Paraphrase and his own, could afford.”† It fell to the share of the Rev. Henry Erskine of Falkirk, to transcribe a number of the Scripture Songs for the press, from his father’s short-hand characters, after his decease. Had his life been spared a little longer, he was expected, it appears, to add several more poems on a variety of interesting passages.‡

It is unnecessary to notice particularly his Defence of Rhyme and musical metre,|| or to advert more minutely to the contents of the prefatory addresses prefixed to his various poems.

No one can justly refuse to Ralph Erskine the praise of laudable motives, or of pious industry, in writing this ample collection of Scripture songs; nor should we overlook the liberality of his views in reference to the propriety of providing an enlarged psalmody for the use of the church.¶ If the merits of the execution proved unequal to the excellence of the design, the

* Works, Vol. ii. p. 709.

† *Ibid.* p. 737.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 700.

|| *Ibid.* Pp. 575, 576.

¶ See the sentences prefixed to the New Testament Songs, *Ibid.* p. 761.

failure does admit of an apology. The urgency of his brethren of the Associate Synod, who earnestly and repeatedly recommended it to him to attempt this work, determined him to proceed, while his other numerous and important labours scarcely admitted the necessary leisure.* At the very commencement of the undertaking, also, to adopt his own expression, "Satan hindered him;" for the unhappy controversy which then arose in the Synod, required much of his attention, and made large demands on his pen.† How rare and difficult is it, in fine, even for a poet endowed with the highest talent, and enjoying every advantage of leisure, to compose Scripture songs, "worthy of the gloriously divine originals!" A late writer, after frankly admitting the obvious deficiencies of Mr. Erskine's Scripture Songs, concludes with the remark: "Nor

* We give the following extract from the Records of the Associate Synod in manuscript, p. 1007. "*Stirling, April 14, 1748.* The Synod recommended it to the Rev. Mr. Ralph Erskine to have under his consideration a translation of the Songs in Scripture into metre, except the Psalms of David, which are already translated, agreeable to the recommendation of the General Assembly, met at Edinburgh, Aug. 28th, 1647, Sess. 25." Subsequent notices relative to the progress of this design occur in the same folio manuscript, Pp. 1044, 1058, 1071, 1125, 1141. From the following minute, however, p. 1147, being the last we have observed on the subject, it appears that, after Mr. Erskine's decease, the affair was dropped. "*Shuttle Street Church of Glasgow, May 2nd, 1753.* In regard the Committee, appointed to revise the Scripture Songs translated into metre by the Rev. Mr. Ralph Erskine, had not met before his death, the Synod did not judge it proper to continue the said Committee."

† Works, Vol. ii. p. 699.

are these attempts, after all, beneath several of the same kind by the greatest names in English poetry.”*

It is perhaps hardly worth while to allude expressly to a certain charge, which, in no measured terms, has been preferred against him by the writer of a late paper in a periodical publication.† In a previous communication, relative to the Paraphrases sanctioned by the General Assembly,‡ another correspondent had probably ascribed too much to Mr. Erskine. Not satisfied with saying, “I was astonished and highly pleased with the poetical richness and sweetness which pervade the sonnets and paraphrases of this good man,” he adds, “I soon perceived that some of the most vivid and ardent lines in several of our Paraphrases were borrowed from his pious effusions;” and then exhibits a few specimens. This lofty assumption appears to have awakened the filial indignation of the church-man who made the reply; and who keenly repels the idea, that the Psalmody of the Church of Scotland should be “under deep obligations to one of the fathers of the Secession.” Now, we readily concede, that, *if the dates this writer assigns to the first publication of the Assembly’s paraphrases be correct; and if, further, it be quite certain that Mr. Erskine had, at no time, made any contributions towards the materials which, for a very long series of years, had been under the consideration of the Assembly’s Committee on Psalmody, he*

* Chalmers’ Lives of Distinguished Scotsmen, Art. Ralph Erskine, p. 271.

† Edinburgh Christian Instructor for March 1832. “*The Claims of R. Erskine on the Paraphrases examined.*”

‡ *Ibid.* No. for March 1830, Pp. 538—541.

has thoroughly wiped away the foul aspersion cast on his church by one of his more candid brethren, who, in an unguarded moment, had represented her as deeply indebted to a Seceder. But why did this gentleman allow himself, on that account, to pour forth a torrent of abuse on the memory of a confessedly "pious man," who is not himself responsible for the unfounded compliments that others may choose to pay him? In spite of the hard words which this anonymous accuser employs, and the boasted array of proofs he eagerly presents, the integrity of that good man remains unquestionable. Very possibly, he may not, in every instance, have minutely recollected, or expressly acknowledged, his literary obligations. But can any impartial judge reflect on the singular modesty of his pretensions with respect to poetical genius and attainments, or on his various acknowledgments to Watts, Blackmore, and Mason, referred to above, and yet imagine that he was ambitious to shine in borrowed plumes, or inclined to withhold the avowal of any obligation, of which he was conscious? He spontaneously proclaims, we have seen, his willingness in preparing his Scripture songs, to receive assistance from every quarter; and though, "in his Preface to Job's Hymns, he never hints that he is under any obligation to Watts," yet in the Preface to his Paraphrase on the Song of Solomon, he does expressly state, as was mentioned above, that he had frequently, both in that production *and elsewhere*, essayed to imitate that valuable writer. Whatever, then, may be his deficiencies or faults, in other respects, as a sacred poet, he cannot justly be accused of deliberate theft or dishonesty. It were not difficult, very probably, to show, that the principles of "literary honesty"

have been, at least, as ill understood in more recent times as in the days of Ralph Erskine; but it would afford us no pleasure to indulge in violent recrimination or severe invectives.

With regard to his MISCELLANEOUS POEMS, published in his Works, which include elegies on the death of the Rev. Messrs. Cuthbert, Plenderleath, and Hamilton; Scripture authorities for submission to Civil Magistrates; and Smoking Spiritualized; with epitaphs on the Rev. Messrs. Wilson of Perth, Boston of Ettrick, Ballantyne of Sanquhar, and others, most of them have already been referred to in the course of these memoirs. Suffice it only to notice, that another proof of his literary uprightness, and of his unwillingness to obtain greater credit for originality than he was conscious of deserving, is furnished by the account he gives of one of those poems, which are described by a very competent judge, as "most beautiful Latin odes."* In a notice accompanying the Latin part of his elegy on Mr. Cuthbert, he avows explicitly that he had availed himself of the "appropriate expressions of several authors, which are here and there interspersed."†

His elegies on the Rev. Messrs. Mair, Bathgate, Webster, and Moncrieff, which do not appear in his published works, were formerly noticed.‡ One of his note-books, *penes me*, contains a number of similar pro-

* See above, page 502.

† *Ne tanti viri nomen, fama, celebritas, et quibus pollebat dotes, oblivione deleantur, sequentis quoque Elogii centuriam linearum (aptis quorundam authorum phrasibus hio illic interspersis) adjicere visum*, Works, Vol. ii. p. 781.

‡ Chap. iii. Pp. 121, 132, 133, 146, 147.

ductions, as, an elegy on *the Earl of Bute*, extending to forty-four lines ; one of thirty-two on a *Mr. John Aedie*, Convener in Dunfermline, who is described as a most faithful, benevolent, and useful man ; and one of fourteen stanzas on a promising youth, named *Eben-ezer*, who seems to have died about 1720. It comprises also a number of short epitaphs in addition to the published ones ; as the following on *MARY STUART*, to whom he wrote an instructive letter in 1724.*

“ This Mary chose the better part,
Which death could not remove ;
For glorious Christ did win her heart,
And gospel truth her love.

This faithful Steward's time, and tongue,
And talents, all engaged
To give instruction to the young,
Example to the aged.”

“ A congratulatory poem on King George's coronation” was mentioned in a preceding part of this work.† He wrote also a poem, never published, entitled, “ The Forced Marriage of Queen Scots,” on occasion of the Union between Scotland and England.‡ His manuscripts, indeed, comprehend a variety of poems, moral and entertaining, as well as religious. But the only one that now remains to be noticed here, bears the title of *REFORMATION LIGHT*. It consists of brief encomiums, each of four lines, on sixteen celebrated reformers, namely Wickliffe, Huss, Jerome of Prague,

* Page 72.

† Chap. iv. Pp. 149, 150, 155.

‡ Acc. prefixed to *Works* in 8vo. Vol. i. p. xv. note.

Zuinglius, Luther, Oecolampadius, Bucer, Calvin, Melancthon, Peter Martyr, Knox, Flaccius, Bullenger, Zanchius, Beza, and Perkins. The two following may suffice for a specimen of the whole :

“ JOHN WICKLIFFE, died 1387 ; was dug up and burnt 1428.

Wickliffe on England gospel light conferred ;
Rage burnt his bones, when forty years interred :
Edward the Third, the approaching light befriends,
And lops the Popish bishops' purse and tiends.”

“ JOHN KNOX, born at Gifford, of Scotland, 1505 ; died in the sixty-seventh year of his age.

Scotland's apostle, Knox, from Frankfort tossed
Back to Geneva, thence doth homewards post ;
Makes Reformation light to grace the stage,
In spite of Popish rancour and Prelatic rage.”

CHAPTER XII.

Notices of Mr. Erskine's descendants—Children of the first family—Henry, minister of Falkirk—John of Leslie—Ebenezer, a student in divinity—James of Stirling—Daughters—Margaret—Second family—Robert, a merchant and engineer, who died in America—Concluding remarks.

IT would be wrong to trespass on the patience of the reader, by giving him as ample intelligence respecting Mr. Erskine's posterity as it is possible to furnish ; but the following summary of whatever is most interesting in their history, it is presumed, will not be unacceptable.

His family, by the first partner of his cares and joys, consisted of four sons and six daughters. The sons were named Henry, John, Ebenezer, James.

The birth and baptism of HENRY, the eldest of these, is thus recorded in the parish register of Dunfermline, according to a mode of registration then customary, and observed in reference to the other children of this family : —“ Mr. Ralph Erskine, minister of the gospel at Dunfermline, had a man-child, born to him of his wife Margaret Dewar, upon the 29th day of November 1720, and baptized the 9th day of December, called *Henry*. Witnesses, James Dewar of Lassodie, and Adam Rolland of Gask.” The evidence this Henry gave of early piety has been noticed in a former chapter.* His clas-

* Page 442.

sical and philosophical studies were prosecuted at the University of Edinburgh, to which he went, apparently for the first time, in November 1736.* He was a member, we find, of a literary society of students, to whom he read an essay on the existence of God, in February 1738. After studying theology during the period then prescribed, under the Rev. William Wilson of Perth, the first professor of divinity in the Secession church, the Associate Presbytery met at Stirling, Dec. 14, 1742,† licensed him “to preach the everlasting gospel of Christ as a probationer for the holy ministry.” Having received a unanimous call from the Associate congregation of Falkirk, he was ordained there, March 13, 1744.‡ Mr. Fisher preached the ordination sermon from 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2. The Sabbath following, Henry delivered his first discourse to his people from 2 Cor. ii. 16, “Who is sufficient for these things?” and his uncle Ebenezer preached an encouraging sermon in the afternoon from 2 Tim. ii. 1, “Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” On the 10th April 1745, he was united with AGNES KAY, daughter to Mr. Andrew Kay, ship-master, Kirkcaldy, and Magdalene Fleming, daughter of Sir James Fleming of *Rathobyres*. As a preacher, his elocution was somewhat injured by a natural diffidence; but his discourses were esteemed judicious and interesting, and he ingratiated himself with his people, by his uniform attention to the public and private duties of his office. Benevolence, prudence,

* Page 443.

† Records of Assoc. Presbytery.

‡ *Ibid.*

modesty, gentleness, frankness in confessing a fault, and genuine politeness, adorned his demeanor. His services as a member of church-courts, were held in great repute. The good sense, impartiality, and candour, which characterised his remarks on the various causes, lent much weight to his opinion. He officiated for some time as clerk; and also held for several years the situation of treasurer to the Associate Synod. It devolved on him, as Moderator, to preach at the opening of the Synod at Stirling, May 2, 1749. During the rebellion 1745—6, when the Highland army occupied the town of Falkirk, he never flinched from any part of his public duty, but prayed explicitly for King George II., and the preservation of the Protestant succession, in the presence of officers to whom such prayers must have been highly offensive. Yet his character commanded the respect of those men, and he incurred no serious hardship by his fidelity. In the year 1751, the magistrates and council of Glasgow honoured him with the freedom of their city.* Owing to exposure while freely perspiring from the labours of the pulpit, he was seized with a dangerous cold. The complaint baffled every means of cure, and for two years his health and vigour gradually declined, till he departed this life July 29, 1754, in the 34th year of his age. During his decay, he often preached from texts relating to death and immortality, as Rom. v. 21.—2 Cor. iv. 18; v. 1.—Exod. xv. 13. He discovered deep abasement, mingled with a lively hope. “The prayer of the publican,” said he, “must be my

* His burgess ticket still exists, being in the hands of his grand-daughter, Mrs. Robert Simpson, Edinburgh.

prayer ; ‘ God be merciful to me a sinner.’ ” When his brother James at one time made this pious remark, “ We all need to settle our accounts with God be- times,” Henry replied ; “ I know no way, dear brother, of settling my accounts, but by receiving a free pardon from my Redeemer.” Mr. *Robert Smith*, one of his elders, being employed to pray with him immediately before his exit, asked him what blessing he should request ; and his answer was, “ Pray that an abundant entrance may be administered to me into the everlasting kingdom.”—We have seen the strong affection he showed for his parents, and his sorrow at his father’s death.* Both before and after that event, he transcribed some of his father’s short-hand manuscripts for the press ; but he published nothing of his own composing ; and, prior to his decease, gave express orders, which have been strictly obeyed, that none of his discourses should be printed.

His relict, after the loss of her beloved husband, spent four years in Falkirk, and then removed to Edinburgh, where she died at her house, Alison’s Square, Nov. 13, 1798, aged seventy-eight. She had a family of two sons, and four daughters. Her son *Ralph* was born July 19, 1749. After learning the first principles of literature at Falkirk, and at the High School of Edinburgh, he chose the mercantile line, which he followed for a series of years in Glasgow, where he died in July, 1782. *Ebenezer*, her second son, born Nov. 5, 1750, made choice of the same occupation with his brother ; but in 1777 he emigrated from Glasgow to America, where, for several years, he resided with

* Pages 380—382.

his uncle Robert Erskine, at *Ringwood*, and subsequently with Colonel *Hooper*, near *Trenton*, New Jersey. In the year 1784, he made a visit to his relatives in Scotland; but, returning to America, he died at the close of the voyage, towards the end of 1785. Neither of these two sons entered the married state.

MAGDALENE, the eldest of Henry's family, was born, July 23, 1746, and baptized, as were all the rest, with the exception of the youngest, by her grandfather of Dunfermline. On the 27th of February 1770, she gave her hand to the Rev. *John Fraser*, A.M., Auchtermuchty, to whom she proved, in all respects, an excellent partner. After having become the mother of six sons and six daughters, she died April 9, 1792, deeply regretted by her relatives and acquaintance. Her husband remained a widower till his death, which occurred on Friday, Dec. 18, 1818, in the 74th year of his age, and 51st of his ministry. A small volume of Sermons and Essays by Mr. Fraser, with a Memoir of him prefixed, was published in the year 1820. Having learned the elements of literature at the Grammar School of Inverness, he obtained a regular education for the ministry at King's College, Aberdeen. Sincerely pious from his youth, and cordially attached to those evangelical tenets, which he had been taught by the Divine Spirit under the ministry of valued pastors of the Church of Scotland in the north, as Messrs. Alexander Fraser and Murdoch M'Kenzie, Inverness; Donald Fraser, Kirkhill, grandfather of the present minister of that parish, and Hector Macphail of Kirkmichael and Cullicudden, where for a twelvemonth he held the office of parish teacher,—he was equally surprised and vexed, when he

found a contrary scheme of doctrine generally prevalent among the clergy and students of Aberdeen. After mature deliberation, he determined, in consequence, though at the expense of disappointing relatives, hazarding early friendships, and sacrificing the fairest prospects of worldly comfort, to abandon the establishment and join the Secession. Having completed his theological curriculum under the Rev. John Swanston of Kinross, he received license from the Associate Presbytery of Perth and Dunfermline, and on the 7th July 1768, was ordained, by the same Presbytery, to the charge of the first Associate Congregation of Auchtermuchty, who had unanimously called him.

In spite of the impulse of filial piety, we must forbear introducing here any full delineation or defence of this conscientious minister's character. Reason and justice, however, demand, that we should not wholly pass over the fact, that, though he had seldom taken a prominent share in ecclesiastical business, he gave a memorable display at once of decision, integrity, and candour, when, on the 12th of May 1795, he spontaneously laid before the Associate Synod, a representation and petition relating to their Formula, which led to important and well-known results. Notwithstanding some unpleasant occurrences, of which his petition proved the innocent occasion, he retained to the last moment of his life a firm persuasion that, in presenting it, he had discharged an important duty to God and the church. Let it only be noticed further, that while he urged the propriety and necessity of avowed mutual forbearance with respect to some subordinate matters, regarding which, he was aware, a difference of sentiment really existed, he was himself personally attached to

the original views of Seceders on the points in question. In particular, so far as we know, he never cherished or declared hostility to the *principle* of a civil establishment of Christianity. He left the church of Scotland in youth, not because it was a national church, but because, in his apprehension, many of its ministers had apostatized from its acknowledged doctrines and discipline. Nor, in advanced years, was it any change of his judgment on this head that induced him to request the Synod to which he belonged, to accomplish what he deemed a necessary reform. The following sentence of the speech he addressed to the moderator at the time of laying his representation and petition on the table, though introduced by him, indeed, to illustrate a different topic, is sufficient of itself to establish this assertion. "It is the profession of this Synod," says he, "not to have separated from the revolution church, and to be willing to return to the communion of the established church, whenever she shall become as pure as she was about a hundred years ago."* To examine the correctness of the ideas on this contested point entertained by the author of that representation, does not fall within the compass of our present design, nor do we at all wish to attach undue weight to his authority; but the precipitant strictures of unguarded criticism have created the necessity of explicitly stating the fact, as to what views he did entertain.†

* Sermons and Essays by John Fraser, A.M., late minister of the Gospel in Auchtermuchty, to which is prefixed a *Memoir* of the Author, p. xxix. See also p. xii.

† Theological Magazine for 1832, p. 25, Review of *Life and Diary of Ebenezer Erskine*.

Of the twelve children of Mr. and Mrs. Fraser, three died in infancy, *Ralph*, *Ebenezer*, and *John*. Other two have been removed since in mature age, *Lydia*, their fourth daughter, March 10, 1808; and *Henry Dewar*, M. D. of Lassoddie, their eldest son, who expired on the 19th Jan. 1823, leaving a family of three sons and two daughters, of whom the youngest, *Donald William*, died, and was buried at Paris, in summer, 1831. It may be proper to add, that, while Mr. Fraser's two surviving sons, are ministers of the United Secession Church, two of his grand-children have also been invested with the same office, the Rev. *John Skinner* of Partick, near Glasgow; and the Rev. *John Henry Gardner*, son to the late Rev. *James Gardner*, Newtonards, Ireland, and Magdalene Fraser, who was ordained at Whithorn, July 13, 1831, and after affording proof of decided piety and hopeful talent, died there, much regretted, April 10, 1833, in the 26th year of his age, and 2nd of his ministry.

AGNES, Henry Erskine's second daughter, was born, Jan. 8, 1748, and died at Edinburgh, Sep. 16, 1818. She distinguished herself through life, as well by the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, and the cheerful discharge of every relative duty, as by a conscientious regard to the ordinances of religion.

Her sisters, MARGARET and ISABELLA, were both taken away in childhood, as appears from the following Epitaph, engraven on a sepulchral stone, kindly renewed in the church-yard of Falkirk, by some members of the United Associate Congregation there, at the time when that people were called in providence to perform the last offices of respect to the Rev. JOHN BELFRAGE, the worthy successor of Mr. Erskine:—

“ Beneath this Stone are interred the Remains of the Rev. HENRY ERSKINE, who was minister of the gospel in the Associate Congregation of Falkirk, for the space of ten years. He died, July 29, 1754, aged 33 years ; a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate. In this place also, the bodies of two of his children were buried, *Margaret* and *Isabel* Erskines.

This stone was erected by his relict, and was renewed in the year 1801, by some members of the Congregation, in testimony of their veneration for Mr. Erskine's memory.”

JOHN, Mr. Ralph Erskine's second son, was born Aug. 2, 1722, and named from his maternal grandfather. The religious impressions he discovered in youth were highly pleasing to his father.* His elder brother and he, notwithstanding the difference in age, seem to have attended the University together, during the same sessions, and then to have jointly pursued their studies in theology. They were licensed by the Associate Presbytery at the same moment, and both were addressed by Mr. Moncrieff of Abernethy, in the name of the court.† John's ordination, also, took place only two months and a half posterior to Henry's ; for he was set apart to the ministry at Leslie, Fife-shire, May 30, 1744, the Rev. George Brown of Perth, presiding on the occasion. He was reckoned a devout and evangelical preacher. It is unnecessary to advert

* Page 442.

† Records of the Assoc. Presb. at their meeting at Stirling, Dec. 22, 23, 24, 1742.

again to the line of conduct he adopted, at the time of the mournful breach, 1747.* The mortal career assigned him, in adorable providence, was short. The particular day, and other circumstances of his dissolution, we have not ascertained. We find, however, that the last minute of his session, written during his incumbency, is dated Jan. 27, 1751; and that, in a letter to Mr. Newlands, of date June 5, 1751, his father alludes to his death as one of several trying bereavements he had suffered. John was never married.

EBENEZER, Ralph's third son, entered life, Sept. 6, 1726. He first chose the occupation of a Printer; but conscientious motives impelled him to relinquish it. One of his manuscripts contains the following memorandum; "On Wednesday the 24th of Oct., 1744, I left Mr. Ruddiman's printing-house; on the 2d Nov. 1745, my apprenticeship should have been done." Elsewhere too, he plainly states his ground for changing his employment:—"The reason of my leaving my business was, that I could not make it my trade and business, without infallibly being exposed to such snares, and being obliged to be employed in such work, as, in its own nature, could have no other tendency than to spread error and be the occasion of sin. These scriptures, "Abstain from all appearance of evil," (which includes all the occasions of sin,) "Be not a partaker of other men's sins,"—induced me to think of leaving it, and taking up with whatever providence should cast in my way." Having probably attended the college before becoming apprentice to Mr. Ruddiman, he commenced the study of philosophy or theology, with a

* See pages 363-366.

view to the sacred ministry, as we learn from his memoranda, almost immediately after his leaving the printing-office. Judging from the remains of his manuscripts, he displayed industry, caution, and tenderness of conscience. It pleased God, however, to remove him to the world of spirits, before he had completed the term of study. According to a memorandum of his brother James, he died Jan. 3d, 1747.

JAMES, the fourth son, and tenth child of Margaret Dewar, first saw the light, Sep. 19, 1730, two months and three days before his mother's death. In common with his brothers, he received the rudiments of learning at the grammar school of his native town. His academical education was begun at Edinburgh, but finished at the University of Glasgow. In early youth he was exceedingly merry and volatile; but in the second year of his attendance at college, became remarkably grave. The violin, however, for which, as a harmless means of recreation, he formed an attachment when a boy, he never entirely threw aside. Along with other young men, he appears to have spent a great portion of the year 1745 at Abernethy, receiving instruction from Mr. *David Wilson*, a teacher of philosophy, appointed by the Associate Presbytery. His theological studies, begun possibly with Mr. Moncrieff, were prosecuted at Stirling under the tuition of his uncle Ebenezer, and completed at Glasgow under Mr. Fisher. Nor should it be forgotten that both he and his elder brothers, were favoured with great advantages in the advice and superintendence of their own father. Having been licensed by the Associate Presbytery of Dunfermline towards the close of 1750, his ministrations as a probationer were universally po-

pular. It was formerly mentioned, that he received calls to Dundee, Stirling and Dunfermline; and that, by the appointment of Synod, he was ordained at Stirling in January, 1752.* On a board of one of his note-books, we have found the following memorandum:—"A Scripture that was sweet to me, in the view of my settlement in Stirling. Acts xviii. 9, 10. 'The Lord said unto Paul, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city.'" He approved himself a dutiful colleague to his venerable uncle, and a faithful pastor to that large congregation. Mrs. Henry Erskine of Falkirk, in a letter to a cousin written shortly after she had attended the Lord's Supper at Stirling, in May, 1756, expressed herself thus:—"The action sermon was from John x. 9. 'I am the door.'—I think the Lord is making the spirit of Elijah to rest on the young Elisha." His ministry was thought to be eminently successful in gathering souls to Christ, and confirming the faith of believers. In consequence of a synodical appointment, he preached eight Sabbaths at the beginning of summer, 1752, to the newly formed Associate Congregation in London; and, in the course of his journey to or from that city, he did himself the pleasure, it appears, to call for the celebrated Mr. Hervey.†

On the 18th of December, 1753, he married *Jean*, daughter to Mr. Fisher of Glasgow, who became the

* Pages 373—377.

† Brown's Memoirs of the Rev. James Hervey, p. 156.

mother of four children. He had the unhappiness, however, to lose three of them by death, namely, *Jean*, *Ebenezer*, and *James*; on whose afflictions and decease he makes interesting observations, in a short account of them recorded in a note-book. His last entry in this domestic register is as follows :—

“ The Lord’s rod at this time has been very heavy on my poor family. Yesterday, betwixt twelve and one P. M., being Saturday, Nov. 15, 1760, my dear, dear, sweet child, *Jamie*, was cut off by the small-pox, the ninth day of the trouble. If he had lived till the 1st of March, he would have been three years of age. My heart and affection were much glued to this child. There could not be a more pleasant one. The Lord has dried up this sweet stream. O that he may now lead my dear wife and me up to himself, the inexhaustible fountain. O for right views of God in Christ. Alas! I have not yet win to part with *Jamie* in my heart and affection. The Lord keep me from sinning.—This day, when my son was lying a corpse, I preached, afternoon, on Prov. iii. 12.”

The sudden death of this dear child, in fact, had a fatal effect on his own constitution. His health immediately declined; he never recovered from the shock; and, to the inexpressible grief of his relatives and congregation, he expired on the 9th March, 1761, in the 31st year of his age, and 10th of his ministry. Several letters which, during his illness, he wrote to his father-in-law, Mr. Fisher, discover great solicitude respecting the spiritual interests of his flock, and a sincere desire to reap the fruits of righteousness from the

chastening rod. Soon after his decease, the following description of his character appeared in the public newspapers :—

“On Thursday the 9th March, died of a short illness, the Rev. James Erskine, minister of the gospel at Stirling. The happy talent God had given him to display the mystery of grace, he employed with unwearied diligence in promoting the interests of pure and undefiled religion among his numerous congregation. The humility, openness, and affability of his temper, the prudence, zeal, and integrity, with which he filled up every relation and capacity of life, had acquired him the unfeigned affection and esteem, not only of those under his inspection, but of all who had the happiness of his acquaintance, and make his death universally lamented, as a severe and afflicting loss to his family, congregation, and the church of God.”

His discourses were prepared with much judgment and accuracy ; but, like his brother Henry, he expressed an extreme aversion to authorship, and none of his writings were ever given to the world. His disconsolate widow did not long survive him. She died at Glasgow, May 2, 1762. *Ralph*, their only surviving child, chose the sea-faring life ; and, having sailed from Greenock in December, 1767, was understood to have, soon after, perished at sea.

The first Mrs. Erskine of Dunfermline, bare four daughters before she had any son ; namely, *Elizabeth*, *Jean*, *Margaret*, *Helen* ; and subsequently two more—*Rachel* and *Christian*. Elizabeth, the eldest, was born on the 17th May, 1715 ; and her baptism on

the 24th of that month, is attested in the parish register by the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, Sir Peter Halket of Pitfirran, and John Dewar of Lassodie.—Only one of these six daughters, however, reached the years of discretion. *Christian* died at her birth, and other four in infancy, as appears from a Latin inscription on a stone which yet remains among the sepulchral monuments of Dunfermline, erected by Mr. Erskine in memory of his sister Margaret, and his deceased children.*

MARGARET, his only surviving daughter, was born April 7, 1718. She much endeared herself, as we have seen, to her father, by her tenderness and care; and was also enabled to exhibit hopeful indications of an early attention to the concerns of the soul.† She was united, probably in the year 1745, with Mr. *John Newlands* of Glasgow, the Editor of her father's works. It pleased divine providence, however, to remove her from this transitory life in summer 1751, about six years after her marriage. A short time before her departure, she received from her father the following letter of paternal sympathy and counsel:—

Letter.—Rev. Ralph Erskine, “To Mrs. Newlands, Spouse to Mr. John Newlands, Merchant, Glasgor.”

“Dunfermline, June 5, 1751.

“Dear Peggy,

When I last saw you, I saw so much of death and distress in your countenance, that as it afflicted me, so it made me suspect whether I

* See Appendix, No. xiii.

† Page 443, 444.

should ever see you again in time: and therefore I desired you might lay your account with the worst that could happen, and recommended to your close meditation, Psalm cxxx. and some other Scriptures, both for a direction in prayer, and a foundation of hope. Your own utter inability to believe, or act, or think, which you spake of, should be a motive for you to despair quite of help in yourself, and to place your hope only upon God in Christ, expecting to be justified only by his merit, blood, and righteousness, in order to your being entitled to heaven, and to be sanctified only by his Spirit, in order to your being made meet for it. This is the way to have a well-grounded hope of being for ever with the Lord. And in this hope of the remission of all your sins in the blood of Jesus Christ and of eternal life by him, Dear Peggy, endeavour to bid a hearty farewell to this vain, vanishing world, to welcome death itself, which is the end of all men, and to be reconciled to it as the irreversible decree of God. Seek of him a kindly submission to his sovereign will herein. However sorry I am to part with you so soon, I desire to be still, and know that he is God. I know not how soon my own departure may be at hand. Meantime, it has pleased him to bereave me; *Ebie* is not; *Johnny* is not; and if now he be calling for you also, even He whose right it is to give and to take as he pleases, O may he loose your heart wholly from this world, and all that is in it, and enable you to take a *dead grip* of Christ, into whose hands I commend your spirit, desiring to plead on your behalf his covenant toward me and my seed, not for your sake or mine, but for his own name's sake. O let this name

of the Lord be your strong tower, to which the righteous run and are safe, in life and in death. I remain,
Dear Peggy,

Your affectionate and sympathizing Father,

RALPH ERSKINE."

Soon after the death of Mrs. Newlands, Mr. Erskine addressed a letter of condolence to the bereaved husband. In this communication, bearing date July 6, 1751, he expresses the pleasure he derived from the account Mr. Newlands had given him of the passages of Scripture which had proved consolatory to the deceased in the prospect of her departure, alludes to the good hopes he entertained regarding her, and administers salutary counsel :

———" God has ordered," says he, " in infinite wisdom, that I should lose my daughter, and you your wife. But we must be still, and know that he is God. I could not but see that you are a grieved and disconsolate widower, and so I find still your line bears.—— Meantime I reckon myself very much concerned in the motherless children which you have, especially by my daughter. The good counsel, you tell me, she gave your children when she was dying, will, I doubt not, be a melting argument to you, to take all the parental care you can of those that are properly her's as well as your's, and that are remotely so much mine, that I hope, while I live, to be mindful of them, and to do them what service providence may call me to. May you and all your children be blessed of God ; and may he be an up-making God to you, to fill to advantage the

room he has emptied, and to bless and sanctify the loss to you and your family. I rest,

Your affectionate Father and humble Servant,

RALPH ERSKINE."

Mr. Newlands, it appears from these lines, had children of a former marriage. Of his family by Mr. Erskine's daughter, we know of one only that attained mature years, namely, *Margaret*, who gave her hand to Mr. *James Lockart*, Merchant, Glasgow; and whose only child, also named *Margaret*, is the partner of *James Jaffray*, M.D. Professor of Anatomy in the University of Glasgow.

The family of *Margaret Simson*, the second Mrs. Erskine, consisted of four sons—Mr. Erskine's children thus amounting, in all, to fourteen. Three of these four sons, however, as has been stated in a foregoing passage of this narrative, died in infancy.* **RALPH**, the eldest, born Dec. 5, 1732, was cut off by small-pox, at the age of a year and nine months; **DANIEL**, the second, shared the same fate when only nine months old; and another **RALPH**, the youngest of the family, died April 10, 1738, a babe of two months and fourteen days. The bereaved father, having thus, including the five deceased babes of his first wife, lost eight children in infancy, knew well from experience how to appreciate the consolations arising from God's covenant, as extending to the little ones committed to his hands; and no doubt often recollected these pleasant lines of his own composing:

* Pages 444-450.

“ In heavenly choirs a question rose
 That stirr'd up strife will never close,
 What rank of all the ransom'd race
 Owes highest praise to sov'reign grace ?

Babes thither caught from womb and breast,
 Claim'd right to sing above the rest ;
 Because they found the happy shore,
 They never saw nor sought before.”*

ROBERT, the only member of the second family that reached maturity, was born Aug. 27, (*i.e.* Sep. 7, N.S.†) 1735, and lived to the age of forty-five. He seems, as well as his brothers, to have received a liberal education ; and though he did not copy their example in devoting themselves to the sacred office, he proved an ornament to the family. For some years he followed the mercantile line in London, where he was connected in business with a gentleman in Virginia ; but certain advantageous proposals induced him to emigrate to America in spring 1771. Some time before his departure, he published an Essay, which did him credit, and which is the only publication we have heard of, attempted by any of Ralph Erskine's immediate sons. The Rev. *Archibald Hall*, in a letter to Mr. Fisher of Glasgow, dated London, July 1770, refers to Robert and his production, in the following terms :—

* Gospel Sonnets, part vi. Ch. v. Sect. 1. The Work and Contention of Heaven.

† In noticing the dates of events recorded in Mr. Erskine's Diary, we have uniformly adhered to his own numbers, which are, of course, in accordance with the old stile.

“ Mr. Robert Erskine and Mrs. Erskine are very well. He has lately published an Essay upon the effect of bridges and abutments in rivers to cause shoals, dedicated to the late Lord Mayor, William Beckford, Esquire, which is thought by good judges to be a very ingenious performance. The city of London has the improvement of the river Thames in contemplation just now. It is hoped this seasonable discovery of the author's fine genius will recommend him to some useful place in forming and executing their schemes to that effect.”*

He seems to have possessed a natural turn for the business of an engineer. Prior to his emigration to America, he spent some time, we are assured by a friend, at *Carron*, near Falkirk, where he “ learned the art of casting cannon.” As appears from a Journal kept by his nephew Ebenezer Erskine, who resided several years with him at Ringwood, State of New Jersey,—his prosperity in the new world fully equalled his expectations. When the war broke out betwixt Britain and her American colonies, he thought proper to take part with the latter; and his services in the cause of liberty were highly valued. From the journal just alluded to, we find that he received visits from General Clinton, Colonels Morris and Stewart, and other persons of consideration; that during his last illness, physicians were despatched from the camp to administer medical aid to him; and that his funeral was most respectably attended.

On the 18th of Sept. 1780, he caught a severe cold and sore throat, which produced fever, and within the

* Christian Monitor, Vol. v. p. 89.

space of a fortnight terminated in his dissolution. "On the breast of the coffin," says his nephew, "is a very neat plate of Mr. de Witt's making, on which is the following inscription in gilt letters :

' In memory of ROBERT ERSKINE, F.R.S. Geographer and Surveyor General to the Army of the United States of America. Born Sept. 7th 1735. Died October 2d 1780. Aged 45 years and 25 days.'

This gentleman had no child that survived him. His relict, *Elizabeth Erskine*, whom he had left his sole heir, was united some time after his death, probably in the year 1783, with *Col. Robert Leltis Hooper* of Belvill, Trenton, New Jersey.

To these particulars of his history, it affords us great pleasure to add, that Robert Erskine, the youngest save one, and the last survivor of his father's fourteen children, to all appearance feared God from his youth, and continued to the end of life to cherish the faith, and manifest the influence of divine truth. In a very friendly letter to Mr. Fisher, under date, "London, June 10, 1768," he gives an affecting account of his bereavement in the loss of an exceedingly sweet child, almost two years old, who died of hooping-cough the 23d of April preceding, and subjoins most delightful expressions of Christian resignation and hope. At the close of another letter, addressed to his widowed sister-in-law, Mrs. Henry Erskine, Jan. 23, 1771, he concludes a short account of his prospects in America, for which he intended to sail a few weeks after, with the following words : "I hope we shall always recollect that here we are only passengers—that we may remember the better country, where many of our dear friends have gone before us."

His nephew, who attended him on his death-bed, after detailing the particulars of the closing scene, sketches his character as follows:—"Thus died my uncle Robert Erskine. Through the whole of his life he strictly adhered to the principles of religion, honour, and justice; had a clear judgment, a most sympathizing heart for the distressed, whom he was ever ready to relieve to the utmost of his power. Upon his death-bed he began to reap the benefit of such a life, for when free of bodily pain, his mind was all calm and serene; and he is now in the full enjoyment of bliss in the realms above. Poor Mrs. Erskine is in the greatest distress. Never, I believe, was a couple more firmly united by the most sincere esteem and tender affection for each other——."

The preamble to his Testament, in fine, while it exactly defines his occupation in America, contains a most evangelical and striking confession of his faith, well worthy of his descent and education. It runs in the following terms :

"I ROBERT ERSKINE, son of the Rev. Ralph Erskine, author of the Gospel Sonnets, &c., by the providence of God at present in America, for the purpose of directing, conducting, and taking charge of several iron-works, and other lands and property belonging to gentlemen in England, who style themselves the proprietors of the New York and New Jersey iron-works; being now in good health of body, and sound in mind, make this my last will and testament, as follows :

"When it shall please my gracious and merciful Father, God Almighty, to call me hence, after my days are completed, the number of which he knows, my body I commit to wherever his providence pleases to

deposit it, till the resurrection of the just : and my soul flees now, and at the hour of death, I trust, will be enabled to flee, to the merits of my gracious and merciful Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ, for protection against the wrath of a justly offended God. He came to call sinners to repentance. Blessed be the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, that I ever heard the call, and that ever I felt myself inclined to obey it, through the influence of the Blessed Spirit. Oh ! may me and mine, and all that belong to me, hear and know the joyful sound ! Let the whole earth be filled with his glory ! Let my Mediator's kingdom extend from sea to sea ! May he go forth, conquering and to conquer, poor, miserable sinners unto himself !"

The reflexions interspersed, however sparingly, in the course of this biographical narrative, must be considered as almost entirely superseding the necessity of a formal conclusion. Suffice it briefly to suggest, that it seems calculated to prove, by the blessing of God, in some degree, beneficial to various classes.

Ought not memoirs of RALPH ERSKINE to interest all his *descendants*, whether lineal or collateral ? To indulge the spirit of those vain-glorious Jews, who made this their boast, " We have Abraham for our father," would be exceedingly unbecoming and delusive. Yet unquestionably they are bound by endearing obligations to cherish his memory, to copy his example, and to profit by his Diary and his various writings. A departure from the doctrines of the Christian system, or from the path of Christian holiness, would, in their case, be found peculiarly criminal. Let them de-

liberately weigh the fervent prayers he poured forth in behalf of his posterity in all succeeding times,* and then determine whether they will reciprocate his pious affection, and say from the heart, " May these prayers of my venerable ancestor, be answered to my happy experience ! May I follow him to those bright regions of purity and bliss, where I trust he occupies a place ! ' The Lord is my God, I will prepare him an habitation ; my father's God, I will exalt him.' "

May not the members of the numerous *Associate Congregation*, of which, under providence, he was the founder, as well as the pastor, be expected to fix their eyes on that distinguished pattern of piety and goodness he was enabled to exhibit ? Though he has now been more than eighty years dead, he still speaks to them, not only by his published discourses and songs, but by his pious and holy life, of which authentic memorials remain., Even now he seems to beckon to them from his celestial throne,

" With raised hand, fit emblem of his heart,"

saying, " Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ." —Communities often continue to subsist for a succession of ages, after the individuals of whom they were originally composed, have universally gone to their long home. Let the new generations that arise, whilst they prize and improve the ministry of the new pastors provided for them by the great Shepherd of the church, take good heed that they do not deprive themselves of the benefit they may yet reap from devout recollections of

* Pages 452, 453.

an *Erskine*, a *Smith*, a *Husband*, a *M^cFarlane*, a *Fisher*, and other ministers of Christ, that have finished their course with joy. "Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." "Behold," says the unchanging and immortal Redeemer, "I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

For the space of at least thirty years, Mr. Erskine was one of the acknowledged ministers of *the whole parish of Dunfermline*; and it could in no respect injure the best interests of professed Christians of every persuasion, and of every congregation in that populous parish, were they all to concur in so remembering this man of God, whom their fathers united in esteeming, as to improve that Saviour whom he warmly recommended, and to cultivate those Christian graces which it was his habitual care to exemplify.

Is it too much to hope that *all the churches of the Secession* should be willing to receive instruction from the subject of this memoir, and from the other founders of the associate body? The general and undisputed excellence of their character, as men and as ministers, added to the intrepid appearances they made in support of the injured truths of God, and the infringed liberties of his church, in a day of trouble and rebuke, entitle their names to everlasting remembrance, and their example to perpetual regard. All that claim ecclesiastical relation to them as Fathers of the church to which they belong, ought to justify their pretensions, by resembling them in whatever was estimable in their temper and conduct. The members of the Secession Church of every rank and class, may learn much from these godly fathers, regarding the nature and importance of vital

Christianity, and the duties which they owe to God and man. Its ministers, in particular, may receive valuable lessons from them relative to the spirit and manner in which they should discharge their ministry, and further the interests of the kingdom of Christ. Their zeal and activity were obviously pre-eminent; and if, on some points, their sentiments cannot be recognized as perfectly correct, their views of the grand mysteries of the gospel were uncommonly scriptural and luminous. Infallibility, indeed, is an attribute they neither claimed nor possessed; and if their successors, after mature inquiry, shall discern in the system they bequeathed, either defects to be supplied, or excrescences to be lopped off, let no blind veneration for human names preclude the resolute performance of necessary duty. "To the law and to the testimony—One is your Master, even Christ—One is your Father, which is in heaven." Yet, if we proceed to discard some old tenets and usages, and to embrace new opinions and modes in religion, let us copy the caution, the deliberate and solemn investigation, the brotherly conference, the deep humiliation, and earnest supplications, which marked the procedure of the first ministers of the Secession, when contemplating untried and bold measures, that circumstances appeared to require.* Nay, let us be admonished by all that was least happy and commendable in their temper and carriage. Who has not heard of the sharp contentions that arose among those worthy fathers themselves, as well as of the violent controversies agitated betwixt them and other excellent clergymen, who chose a different man-

* Comp. pp. 236—242.

ner of testifying against abounding evils, and of advancing the interests of true religion? * Allowing that our views are wholly in accordance with scripture, and that the objects we aim at are great and good, it should never be forgotten, that "wisdom is profitable to direct," and that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." "Speaking the truth in love, let us grow up in all things into him, who is the Head."

Ralph Erskine, in a word, is a man who belongs to the *church universal*. His name has been widely spread, and his writings extensively perused. His disposition was, on the whole, eminently catholic and generous. In his prayers and his efforts, he sought the prosperity of all the churches, and the welfare of the whole human race. May it not then be presumed, that Christians of every name, who have respected his character, and been edified by his writings, will profit by that more intimate acquaintance with him, to which his own Diary cannot fail to introduce them? Is there not reason to hope that, at least in all the more essential points of doctrine and practice, they will be thereby stimulated more and more, to be "followers together with" him, and with the whole company of those, "who through faith and patience, inherit the promises?" GRACE BE WITH ALL THEM THAT LOVE OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN SINCERITY. AMEN.

* Pages 347, 366, 367.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

No. I.—PAGE 23.

OF two juvenile letters in Latin now before us, addressed by Ralph Erskine to a school-fellow, let it suffice to produce the shortest. It relates merely to the time of taking his journey from Chirnside to Edinburgh to attend the University, respecting which he had promised to give him information.

“Cum proximè abs te recederem, statui te certiore facere, quando mihi in animo esset Edinburgum proficisci, ne et fiam fœdifragus, et a te fidem non servasse dicar. Designavi (Deo dante) octavo idibus Novembris ad iter instructum esse, Gymnasiumque adire. Nihil igitur opus est reliqua scribam, modo Patrem, Matrem, Sororesque tuas verbis nostris salutes; ut ne addam, dicas, quæso, quo vestra tendunt negotia.

“Propter materiæ defectum, temporisque angustiam, plura non subjiciam. Errores reparcito. Hæcque omnia,

Tui amantissimi, spectatissimi,

et amicissimi commilitonis,

RODOLPHUS ARESKINE.”

Vale.

Rod. Areskine Andræ Gul. S.”

Datum Chirnsidi,

Prid. Cal. Decem. 1701.

No. II.—PAGE 31.

The notices we have given of Scottish clergymen who flourished at the beginning of the 18th century, and of their discourses, may be regarded by some readers as unnecessarily minute. To others they will probably prove acceptable; and to gratify the curiosity of such individuals, a list of the names of most of the ministers whom Mr. Erskine heard in his youth, not mentioned in the text, is here subjoined.

The Rev. Messrs. Carstairs, Maclaren, Drysdale, Wilkie, and John Law, Edinburgh; Walker of the Canongate; Foster "of the Hospital;" Smith, minister of the Castle; Wishart of Leith; Brown, Abercorn; Hamilton, Cramond; Campbell, Newbattle; Semple, Liberton; Bell, Gladsmuir; Wilson, Maxton; Currie, Haddington; Brown, Abergowan; Logan, Alloa; Gray, Dollar; Dalgleish, Dundee; Foster, "Principal of the College St. Andrews;" Dunning, Abernethy; Gillespie, Strathmiglo; Anderson, Falkland; Brown, Aberdour; Steedman, Beath; Wardrope, Ballingray; Halyburton, Ceres.

Also, Bain, Balantyne, Blair, Brand, Brodie, Buchanan, Chalmers, Davidson, Elphinston, Finlay, Fleming, Flint, Friskin, Grieve, Henderson, Innes, Kerr, Knox, Lyon, M'Murdoch, Monro, Oliver, Orr, Paterson, Randal, Sandilands, Scott, Stark, Trail, Williamson, Wilson.

No. III.—PAGE 72.

Mr. Erskine, in his letter to "Mrs. Mary Stuart," repeatedly alludes to the spiritual consolation with which she had been blessed. It may, therefore, be right to insert here, at least some extracts from an epistle previously addressed by that lady to a female friend, in which she gives an account of the delightful fellowship with God she had enjoyed at home, when detained in Providence from associating with her and others, in the public services of a communion Sabbath. This pleasant letter hav-

ing been shown to Mr. Erskine, he transcribed it in one of his note-books, from which it is now copied.

Letter—Mrs. Mary Stuart to Mrs. Anne Christie, Dunfermline.

“ My Dear Friend,

“ I thought it meet to write this to you, that so you and others of the Lord’s children may be invited to praise and glorify Jesus for his wonderful goodness to me, a poor lost miserable sinner. You may know that it would not be very easy to me to think of what I was deprived of this day, even of joining with you in your solemn feast. But the Lord has made up my wants in giving me my communion at home this day. After I found that others were all gone to the church, you and the work in that place were carried in upon me with a great impression of your privilege beyond what I enjoyed ; and the Lord wonderfully pitied me in your behalf, and gave me a promise that the great Master of assemblies would come down and feed among the lilies, and that all of you should be made to say, ‘ It is good for us to be here.’

[She proceeds, in a similar strain, to detail her requests at the throne of grace, for some serious individuals in the place of her residence, for the Church of Scotland, for the poor Jews, and for the suffering Protestants abroad, with the promises respecting them severally, that were impressed on her heart, and afterwards she continues thus :]—“ Then I was led to be exercised about my own particular circumstances ; whereupon the Lord carried in with marvellous power upon my soul, that sweet word, ‘ He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?’ Here I was led to inquire, what were these things that he freely gives us with Christ ; and the answer was, He will give grace and glory, no good thing will he withhold from you. Then I was made to inquire, what was that grace and glory that he freely gives with Christ ? I got a view of the grace that is freely given with Christ as *distinguishing* grace, which distinguished from the rest of the world ; as *strengthening* grace, which strengthened the soul for its work ; and, as *conquering* grace, by which we should conquer and overcome all our

spiritual enemies. And here I was made to triumph and say, 'Thanks be to God who will give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Again, I got a view of the glory that was to be freely given us with Christ, as a glory *in time*, whereby we should glory in the Lord, and glory in the name of Christ, and in the cross of Christ; and also as that glory that was incorruptible and that fadeth not away, the glory that dwells in Immanuel's land, never to have an end. O the sweetness I felt in this meditation! It was as life from the dead to my soul. I was made to cry with the holy Apostle, O the height, the depth, the length, and the breadth of the love of God! O how unsearchable his wisdom, and his ways past finding out!

"In the midst of all this, cursed unbelief led me to say with Thomas, 'Except I shall see in his hand the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.' I knew not well what to make of the Lord's work, nor how to improve it, till he dispelled all my clouds, and then I was made to cry with Thomas, 'My Lord, and my God.' I was rejoiced with a view of God as a sun and shield; and O what can disturb those who are thus privileged with having God for their God. Here I was made to invite sun, moon, and stars, and all things in heaven, on the earth, and in the sea, to unite in helping me to praise this great and glorious Jesus. And I write this to you, and all with you, who are friends of our common Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and who hope to be partakers of the common salvation, to join in praise to our God; for he is a great king, and is to be praised in the assemblies of his saints, and admired by all ~~them that~~ believe.

"I take this as an answer to your prayers, who, I hope, have not been unmindful of me.——Dear Anne, this has been a day of no small advantage to my soul. I am full of the consolations of the Spirit, though at first I could not receive them when given. I was just like a weary traveller in the dark night, wandering in the dark, and knew not where I was going: and, on a sudden, there shined a clear spiritual light about me, and I knew not whether to trust or follow that light or not. I was at a loss what to make of it, till our glorious High Priest came with that challenge, 'Are the consolations of God small things with thee?' and I was made to receive, feed upon,

and rejoice in them, and praise Christ who purchased them. They are the first fruits of the ascension of Christ, even the outpouring of the Spirit, John xvi. 7. O the sweetness, the joy, the peace that Christ gives. When he comes in a word or in an ordinance, he makes all things new, and gives something of the experience of the spouse, when she says, 'Ere ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.' I hope to hear that you have found the truth of this. I should be glad to hear how all of you have been feasted with Christ in his own ordinances, where he displays his glory many times to his friends and followers. I desire a share in all your prayers, as one that stands much in need.

Dunearn, July 21, 1714.

MARY STUART."

NO. IV. PAGE 107.

A certain causeless aspersion, connected with the affair of supplying the second charge of Dunfermline, has been thrown on the character of Mr. Ralph Erskine, which it would be wrong to pass over in silence. The late Sir Henry Moncreiff, in his Appendix to the Life of Dr. Erskine, represents the first ministers of the Secession as adopting views of the rights of the Christian people, widely different from those on which they originally acted; and he refers to Mr. Erskine's presumed acquiescence in a particular measure resorted to on that occasion, as a satisfactory evidence of the inconsistency alleged.

"There is a remarkable fact," says the Rev. Baronet, "which belongs to this period, and deserves to be mentioned. There had been a long dispute about the settlement of the second minister of Dunfermline, already alluded to. It terminated at last in an application to the General Assembly of 1718, by the magistrates and council of the burgh, supported by the heritors and kirk-session of the parish, with the unanimous concurrence of the Presbytery, asking the Commission (after laying aside the presentee, Mr. Christie) to appoint, in the technical terms of the church courts, a Call to be moderated in favour of four candidates, whom they named, one of whom should be elected

by the majority of the magistrates and town-council, the heritors, and elders of the parish. No mention whatever is made of heads of families, or of any other individuals in the parish, or even of their right to object to the candidate to be elected. And yet it is remarkable that this application was made, when Mr. Ralph Erskine, who was afterwards one of the heads of the Secession, was the first minister of Dunfermline; and as the *Presbytery*, and so far as appears, the Kirk-Session were *unanimous*, must have had his special approbation and concurrence; a fact which is by no means unimportant, when it is connected with the proceedings which took place after the year 1732.”*

To discuss the general question relative to the sentiments respecting the rights of the Christian people, held by many pious ministers of the Church of Scotland, during the first twenty years of the eighteenth century, as compared with the principles maintained by the seceding brethren at the commencement of the Secession, would not suit the limits of this note. We take the liberty to refer to the brief notice of this topic in the *Life and Diary of Ebenezer Erskine*, and, in particular, to Ebenezer's own remarks on it, Pp. 392—394. It gives us sincere pleasure, we will add, to find that, during the years that have passed since the publication of Moncreiff's *Life of Dr. Erskine*, the subject of patronage has undergone ample discussion; and that among clergy and laity connected with the establishment, the disposition to recognise the rights of the people in the choice of pastors has been rapidly increasing.

It may be sufficient here to advert briefly to the case of Dunfermline. In so far as appears from the extract produced, page 105, from the records of Dunfermline Presbytery of date March 19, 1718, the application or petition in question to the General Assembly, contained no express mention of any but the magistrates and town council, the heritors, and elders of the parish; nor did it even explicitly refer to the people's right to object to the candidate to be elected. But, admitting all this, what is the legitimate conclusion? Doth it follow that Mr. Erskine, with *all* the members of his session, and *all* the members of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, showed no regard whatever, on that oc-

* *Life of Dr. Erskine*, p. 496, Note.

casion, to the voice of the people, or that, *bona fide*, they considered them as possessing no title to take any part in calling a minister, or even to object to any candidate whom magistrates, heritors, and elders, might think proper to elect? This is utterly incredible. They had not surely so completely lost sight of the doctrines avowed in the first and second Books of Discipline. How concise or defective soever the terms in which the petition was expressed, the very ground on which the petitioners proceeded in recommending the measure referred to, was the prospect of a result satisfactory to the people at large. Mr. Hogg of Carnock, and at least a majority of the other members of that Presbytery, it is well known, ranked among the most zealous advocates for popular rights, and would never have sanctioned by their approval any representation or petition, which was understood to annihilate every title on the part of the people to be heard. The views by which they were actuated in the whole business regarding the settlement of Dunfermline, are abundantly clear from the extracts we have produced from their records. When the presentation to Mr. Christie was laid on their table, the Presbytery, as we have seen, candidly stated to the heritors, that the law of patronage, which had lately been revived, was a grievous yoke, and that the Church of Scotland was using means to obtain its removal. When two members of Presbytery were appointed to visit the parish, they were to meet with the heritors, magistrates, town-council, elders, *and people*, of Dunfermline. When the cause was carried by appeal to the Commission of Assembly, they instructed those members of Presbytery that belonged to the Commission, to state to that court, that "the Synod of Fife had expressly prohibited the presbyteries of their bounds to settle any parish with ministers, unless there be a *harmonious consent of the people*, as the foundation of a pastoral relation." Even after the Commission had appointed the translation of Mr. Christie to take place, the Presbytery demurred. They received and read a representation subscribed not only by heritors, magistrates, and members of the town-council, but also by *several hundreds of heads of families*, expressing their aversion to the settlement of Mr. Christie; and, in consequence, remitted the cause to the Commission.

With respect to the views of the Presbytery generally, it is quite unnecessary to add a single syllable. As to Mr. Ralph

Erskine in particular, possessing a number of his manuscripts, though indeed no portion of his Diary written previously to the year 1731, we are able to state the few following facts.

In the year 1716, he transcribed in one of his own note-books, a sermon preached by his neighbour and intimate friend, Mr. Hogg of Carnock, bearing this title, "The right of *Church-members* to choose their own overseers, fairly stated from the Scriptures of truth, now drawn out at the desire of the hearers ; being a discourse on Acts i. 22, 23." This discourse, fully written out for the use of the hearers, and at their request, though perhaps never printed, clearly shows that the author strenuously maintained the *jus divinum* of the people. His reasonings and exhortations are concluded with this ardent aspiration ; "The Lord bring us back to the primitive institution ! and let all the sons of Zion say, Amen !" Mr. Erskine's being at the trouble to write a copy of this discourse for himself, in a volume containing his own compositions, affords a presumptive yet satisfactory evidence, that its sentiments, even then, namely in 1716, received his cordial approbation.—Besides, in a copy which he preserved of a letter addressed to Colonel Erskine, relative to the procuring of a colleague, he expresses an earnest desire that the charge should not continue vacant, and begs the Colonel, whom he commends "as a man who loves to do service to the interest of Christ," to use his influence with some of the heritors to persuade them to drop the appeal made to the Synod and Assembly, with their presentation in favour of Mr. Christie, and to give their countenance to a certain preacher whom it was "*the great and universal desire of the people*" to have for their minister. These are his very words.—It is evident, in fine, that Mr. Erskine incurred the keen resentment of the heritors by resisting their design, on this precise ground, that Mr. Christie was not the object of the people's choice. In a corner of a page containing notes of the sermon he preached on "a week-day, Nov. 1717," he has accordingly this memorandum ; "That day I was libelled by the heritors at the Commission, not knowing any thing of it."

These facts may serve to throw some light on the sentiments which Mr. Erskine, in common with a numerous class of the Scottish Clergy of that age, had always held respecting the importance of obtaining the call and consent of the Christian peo-

ple, and the culpability, as well as inexpediency of committing the pastoral care of any congregation to a man, whom the majority of the members of that congregation do not approve, and to whose inspection they are unwilling to submit. No impartial person will for a moment entertain the idea that Mr. Erskine, after having acted the faithful part now stated with regard to Mr. Christie, discovered so violent and sudden an inconsistency with himself, as to be straightway prepared to countenance, and even to *solicit* the settlement of another candidate, without the least regard to the call and inclination of the people. Any petition which he considered as involving an entire abandonment of their rights, could by no means obtain his "special approbation and concurrence." Whatever respect, therefore, we cherish for the memory of the Reverend Baronet, for whose talents and integrity we have always entertained a sincere esteem, we must conclude, that the allegation in question is utterly groundless, and serves only to show that the understanding of the wise and the good may be warped by the power of prejudice.

NO. V.—PAGE 154.

A private communication, sent by Mr. Erskine to a number of his friends, contained the following Scruples :—

"SCRUPLES ABOUT THE ABJURATION OATH, JULY, 1719."

"1st. It is unprecedented; and as no scriptural instance of any such oath occurs, it seems unsafe to walk in untrodden paths, where we see not the footsteps of the flock.

2dly. By the claim of right, which is engrossed in the Union Act, we are freed from any other oath except a simple allegiance, and so may claim exemption from it as our privilege. And if it be said, this oath is no more, or little more, than a simple allegiance, then it would seem, that the act which enjoins the taking of the simple allegiance with the same breath and at the same time, obliges to take God's name in vain.

3dly. By the Union Act we are exempted from all impositions

contrary to our principles, and therefore may lawfully refuse it. And that it is contrary to our Presbyterian principles, appears these ways. 1. In that we homologate the Union, whereby we are bound up from the Reformation of England. 2. In that we are engaged by it to maintain the present government, or the king, in the execution of the present laws, several of which are against our principles, as the patronage. 3. In that the penalty by which it is imposed, is a plain exercise of Erastian supremacy, whereto the swearer seems to consent. See *Mr. Ebenezer Erskine's print on the head.** 4. We consent that a yoke of bondage be put upon the neck of our successors in office, and that all of them be kept back, or afflicted in their entrance, who want freedom for this oath, though the Lord has otherwise qualified them; and so make way for the free entrance of knaves, who, designing only to get their bread, will not stick at any oath which the government can impose; and by this means the ministry in a short time being sadly corrupted, neither doctrine, worship, discipline, nor government, will be long kept pure.

4thly. By the oath we prelimit Providence, in swearing to a particular branch of the Royal Family, whereas we know not but a sovereign Lord, who puts down one and sets up another, may be pleased to make use of another branch of the family, and honour it to be his instrument in reformation.

5thly. The reference to the Act which stumbled so many, materially still continues, seeing that it is not to an Utopian successor we swear, but such as is expressed and limited by the Act.

6thly. I never knew one single person exercised to godliness, who loves the oath.—I mean private persons; and therefore, I fear, it is not approved by the Lord himself, seeing it is a matter of joy to none of his people, as we find good oaths have been.

7thly. As it was designed by the Tory part of the Parliament in Queen Anne's reign to divide the Presbyterians, so it has exactly answered the design, and by separating from one another, has also alienated them from the Lord. And not only the first, but even this very draught has, and is likely to have, the

* We have seen no copy of the Pamphlet by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, here referred to.

same effects. So if we may judge of the cause by the effect, a heavy judgment must be passed on this oath.

8thly. It seems to oblige to what is most uncertain, even in the judgment of lawyers, namely, to discover treasons; and so it cannot be the matter of an oath, which should be plain and obvious.

No. VI.—PAGE 171.

The Act of the Synod of Fife relating to the brethren accused of disobeying the injunction of Assembly, 1720, with regard to the Marrow of Modern Divinity, has been slightly alluded to in the Life and Diary of Ebenezer Erskine, Pp. 170, 171. The substance of it also may be seen in Brown's Gospel Truth, p. 31. But the *Act itself*, being a document somewhat curious and interesting, seems entitled to a place in this Appendix. We copy it from the Records of Kirkcaldy Presbytery, making no alteration except in the spelling of a few words:—

“ Kirkcaldy, October 19, 1721.

“ There was given in to the Presbytery an extract of the Synod with regard to the form of sound words, which was read and ordered to be recorded, the tenor whereof follows :

“ At Cupar, the 28th September, 1721 years.

“ The Synod being met, the brethren appointed to present an Overture anent the irregularities of some ministers, reported the same was done, and should be read when the Synod ordered Whereupon the same was read, the tenor whereof follows :

“ Whereas the Synod of Fife had by their Act at Cupar, Sept. 28th, 1710, enjoined all the members in their bounds, in their preaching, to observe the form of sound words—and the General Assembly, in the year 1720, in their fifth Act anent *the Marrow of Modern Divinity*, did strictly prohibit and discharge all the ministers of this Church, either by preaching, writing, or printing, to recommend the said book, or in discourse to say anything in favours of it, but, on the contrary, did thereby enjoin and require them to warn and exhort their people, in whose bounds the said book is, or may come, not to read or use the same: Yet it being represented to the Committee of Overtures of this Synod, that some brethren within the bounds of this Sy-

nod had contravened the said Act; to wit, MR. JAMES BATHGATE, minister of the Gospel at Orwell, by the vindicating publicly before the congregation the foresaid book, and some positions therein censured by the Assembly, and by recommending the said book, and saying that the Assembly had condemned precious truths; and further, by his venting positions not warranted by Scripture, nor agreeable to the form of sound words contained in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms: And that MR. EBENEZER ERSKINE, Minister of the Gospel at Portmoak, by his advancing in a public sermon, at a sacramental occasion, that the General Assembly had injured or wounded truth by their foresaid act; and also, MR. RALPH ERSKINE, Minister of the Gospel at Dunfermline, at the like solemn occasions, by his advancing tenets and using expressions in favours of some of the doctrines in the Marrow censured by the said Act.

“The Committee, where most of the members of Synod were present, having heard the said brethren upon the particulars which gave occasion to these reports—MR. EBENEZER ERSKINE answered before the Synod, that what he said was: ‘A few brethren had presented a petition to the General Assembly in behalf of some truths, which they conceived to be wounded by a certain act of Assembly.’ And MR. RALPH ERSKINE answered, that he had always paid a dutiful respect to the authority of the judicatories of this church, and particularly to that of the General Assembly; and, in testimony thereof, had never publicly recommended the Marrow since the act of Assembly 1720 against it; notwithstanding that his mind concerning that act is known; nor was he ever resolved to vent himself publicly concerning those truths which he reckons condemned by that act, so long as that affair is in dependence, had he not been obliged thereto, by hearing that he and his brother subscribers were reproached and misrepresented on these accounts, as if they had been *Antinomians*, *new schemers*, and the like; and that he had indeed at public occasions preached some doctrines which are *in terminis* in the marrow; such as, that the believer is not under the law as a covenant of works, that he is neither under the commanding nor condemning power of the law as a covenant of works. Besides, that, to his knowledge, he had not meddled with any other doctrines in the Marrow, except such as are contained in the Representation given in to the Assembly with

his subscription ; which he had never yet seen ground to retract.

“ The Synod, upon report of said Committee, did and hereby do declare their high dissatisfaction with such practices ; and do strictly enjoin the said brethren, and all the ministers within this Synod, punctually to observe the foresaid acts of Synod and Assembly, with certification that the contraveners shall be censurable by their respective Presbyteries and this Synod, according to the demerit of their offence. And considering that it is peculiarly the duty of all the ministers of the gospel to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, they do therefore recommend to all the brethren within this province, to advert to any innovation in doctrine, or expressions contrary to the form of sound words contained in the Scriptures and our Confessions of Faith and Catechisms, if any such should happen to be vented at sacraments or other occasions, and to any thing that may be contrary to the order and unity of this church ; and that they give faithful testimony, as they shall be called, against these evils.—And the Synod further considering that by the fourth act of the Assembly 1720, it is appointed that the *Formula* of commissions to the General Assembly shall bear this clause, to wit, ‘ that the said Presbytery do hereby testify and declare, that all the ministers above named have signed the *formula* enjoined by the tenth act of Assembly 1711 ; and seeing many ministers of the Synod who have formerly subscribed the Confession of Faith before the said *Formula* was enacted, yet have not signed that formula ; and that the subscribing of the said formula by all the ministers of this province will be a fresh evidence and document of their zeal for, and adherence unto the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this church, and of their engagement to maintain and defend the same, and to follow no divisive courses contrary thereto : Therefore the Synod do hereby appoint all ministers in their bounds to sign the Confession of Faith with the said formula, in and before their respective Presbyteries, as soon as may be ; and to report their obedience hereunto at the meeting of this Synod in April next ; and they appoint their clerk without delay to send an extract hereof to each Presbytery, that the same may be read, and recorded in their books ; and that the said Presby-

teries be careful, at their privy censures, to inquire how this present Act of Synod shall be observed.

“ Extracted by (Sic Subscribitur) AND. ELLIOT,
Clk Syn.”

NO. VII.—PAGE 181.

A calm and scriptural discussion of the points at issue in the Marrow Controversy would unquestionably be “seasonable” at the present moment. Whilst several important truths, which the twelve brethren maintained are impugned by some, and kept back by others, gross misconceptions regarding their nature and tendency prevail to a considerable extent. To justify this statement, it is necessary only to notice the attempts that have been made to identify the sentiments held by these venerable men, with the tenets of a certain class of teachers that have recently appeared; and to allude to the fact, that, in the proceedings in the case of the Rev. John M. Campbell, late Minister of Row, the General Assembly has unhappily impressed anew the seal of its approbation and authority on the highly objectionable Act of Assembly, 1720, relative to the Marrow of Modern Divinity.

“ We are gratified, indeed,” says a writer in the *Edinburgh Theological Magazine*,* “ That the Assembly have censured certain dangerous errors; but we regret that they have also wounded some precious truths. Mr. Campbell states, ‘ I do honestly believe that it is not the doctrine I have taught, that was that of the Marrow,’ (Report of the Proceedings of the General Assembly in the case of the Rev. John M. Campbell, p. 62.) and what we regret is, that the Assembly, in condemning Mr. Campbell’s doctrine, have identified it with the doctrine that was taught in the Marrow, and *materially* renewed the Act

* Vol. VII. for 1832, Pp. 246—257. “ Remarks on the proceedings of the General Assembly in Mr. Campbell’s case, particularly in respect to their charges against the Marrow of Modern Divinity.” No signature is attached to this communication; but we are informed that it was prepared chiefly by the late Rev. John Brown of Whitburn.

of 1720, by which, we apprehend several gospel truths were injured."

It is not our purpose to enlarge ; but we refer with pleasure to the "Remarks" in the periodical just named, where the subject appears to be correctly, as well as somewhat fully explained. We must add, however, that the General Assembly would do honour to itself, and more successfully advance the cause of truth, were that venerable court to display a noble *impartiality* in the exercise of discipline. On this topic, let us hear the expositulations of a strenuous defender of the National Church. After extolling the firmness discovered with reference to the new doctrines of the Irvine school, he justly deploras the lenity shown towards certain clergymen that hold livings in the Church of Scotland, who have published works in which they "openly deny the most important doctrines of her standards." "We ask again," he continues, "why are such things tolerated? Why does the Assembly say to one man, you teach doctrines subversive of the faith of the church, and we therefore tell you that you shall no longer minister at her altars; while it says to others, you teach doctrines just as subversive of the faith of the Church, but we leave you to follow your career undisturbed. We are perfectly aware of the difference in the circumstances of the case, which accounts for, but, we think, by no means justifies this difference in their treatment. The Assembly owes a duty to itself,—to the church and to its glorious Head; and while it purges out one class of most destructive and soul destroying heresies, it does well; but while it tolerates another class of heresies differing from those which it condemns, in form and expression rather than in reality and substance, it is doing what we, who rank among the warmest of its admirers, not only shrink from defending, but will lose no opportunity of denouncing as an error,—an evil of enormous magnitude."—Christian Instructor for 1832. Vol. i. New Series, P. 543.

No. VIII.—PAGE 212.

We have nowhere met with the letter which Mr. Wilson of

Perth wrote to Mr. Mair of Orwell, relative to Mr. Ralph Erskine's scruples with respect to Secession. We have had the satisfaction, however, to find among Mr. Erskine's manuscripts a copy, written by himself, of the letter Mr. Moncrieff addressed to Mr. Mair on the same topic. It is a long, friendly, and faithful epistle, exhibiting a remarkable specimen of the writer's characteristic ardour and decision. In its statements and reasonings, it bears a close resemblance to those which may be seen still more at large in the First and Second Testimonies, emitted by the Associate Presbytery. The whole letter will be readily forwarded to any friend, who has resolved, or may yet resolve, to publish a Memoir of Mr. Moncrieff. In the mean while, let it suffice to lay before the reader a few sentences at the beginning, from which he can easily judge of its spirit and tenor, and of the zeal and energy with which that good man attempted, and not without effect, to solve the doubts, and overcome the scruples, of a more cautious and hesitating brother :

Mr. Moncrieff to Mr. Mair, January 29, 1737.

“ Rev. and Dear Brother,

I was refreshed with a letter of yours to my brother Mr. Wilson, communicated to me last Tuesday in the evening. And particularly, it is matter of praise, that as the Lord has taught you, and led you on from step to step, so he holds you up, and keeps you from losing your feet, by giving you views of the indignity done our highest Lord, Immanuel, in his person, truths, cause, crown, and members, and gives you some sweet breathing for the day of the flourishing of the crown upon his head.—He likewise did communicate to me a letter to you from our Reverend and worthy brother Mr. Erskine. I would fain hope that the Lord will break up his way. He is clear in the point of testifying, and of adhering to the testimony. The judicatories are clear for rejecting the testimony, and for burying the testimony; witness the conduct of the Commission in August. The consequence is plain and obvious, that if he will contribute his endeavours to support the testimony, he must join those who are clear for the testimony, and are endeavouring, by all proper means, to advance the ends and design of the testimony. May I be allowed, with all deference to my worthy brother, to say it,—his letter, in the who

of it from first to last, goes off the state of the question to consequences. But let us, in the Lord's strength, essay present duty, and depend on the wisdom, power, and faithfulness of a promising God, to provide for all consequences. We may justly look upon all the worthy men in Scotland as our colleagues, seeing the flock of Christ is one. Yet the word of God, the circumstances of the flock and heritage of God, the providences of our times, and the call and command of *the Chief Shepherd* are to direct our steps, and not the mistakes of good men. If the witnesses are few, we may lament the blindness and neutrality we have all of us been so deeply intrenched into for these years past, which has had no small hand in it; and if we miss an opportunity of joining our endeavours to have a banner displayed for truth, and a standard fitted up for the people, I am afraid we be accessary to it, that none witness for his cause any more, and that there be an universal consent that the Lord depart out of our coasts. Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. To give one faithful conscientious testimony to "Him that loved us, and washed us in his own blood," in a day when all men forsake him, is more valuable in itself, when the Lord calls to it; and even if consequences are considered, they may be far more considerable,—than if we should preach to seven thousand people, seventy thousand times."——

NO. IX.—PAGE 275.

The Mr. Hepburn in the South of Scotland, whose people, with other societies there, had placed themselves under the inspection of the Associate Presbytery, was no doubt the Rev. JOHN HEPBURN of Urr in Galloway, whom some have styled "the morning star of the Secession." A zealous and uncompromising Presbyterian, he became noted alike for the public testimony he bore against the defects of the Revolution-settlement, and for the severities, as well civil as ecclesiastical, which he, in consequence, sustained. Having received private ordination in London, he exercised his ministry among the people of Urr from 1680 till a short time after the Revolution, when he was called to that parish, and installed with all the legal forma-

lities. He was suspended by the Assembly in January 1696, and because he continued to preach in defiance of its authority, he was summoned by the Privy Council in summer that year to answer a libel, and imprisoned in the tolbooth of Edinburgh. Though liberated after the expiry of several months, he was not allowed to return to his parish, or receive his stipend till three years had elapsed. In April 1705, the Assembly deposed him ; and though he was reponed in August 1707, yet, from conscientious scruples, he finally ceased to attend the ecclesiastical courts. Owing to the countenance he gave to the Rev. *James Gilchrist* and *John Taylor*, who were deposed soon after the accession of George I., he suffered new hardships. For some interesting particulars, respecting this resolute and worthy minister, see Struthers' History of Scotland, vol. i. Books 1st and 3d ; and a pamphlet published 1723, consisting chiefly of a letter addressed to his son, the Rev. John Hepburn of Torrieburn, entitled, "The last testimony of the reverend, pious, and faithful servant of Christ, Mr. John Hepburn, late Minister of the Gospel, at Urr in Galloway, who died March 20th, 1723."

NO. X.—PAGE 386.

The anecdote relative to Mr. Ebenezer Erskine's exclamation, when he received the affecting intelligence of his brother's death, has been caricatured by one of those adventurous writers, who do not hesitate to entertain the giddy, at the expense of any one whom they choose to hold up to ridicule as "excessively pious." The distortion referred to occurs in a passage of a late publication, where the author, professing to give some account of Dunfermline, endeavours to amuse his readers with a number of embellished stories relating to Mr. Ralph Erskine. The whole group may be fairly judged of, from the specimen which the course of our narrative has led us to notice.—"It is remembered," says the writer, "of Ralph Erskine, that on a servant coming to the door to inform him of the death of his brother, the minister of Stirling, he exclaimed, *Ah Yeben, Ye-ben !* (Ebenezer was his brother's name,) *ye've won to heaven before me ; but I'll no be lang ahint ye, lad.* (A Picture of Scot-

land by Robert Chambers, author of 'Traditions of Edinburgh, Vol. ii. pp. 176, 177, note.)

At that period, it is true, the conversational language of well-educated Scotsmen was characterized by great simplicity, and by a strong predilection for the peculiarities of their vernacular tongue. Yet what credit can be due to this ludicrous account of the exclamation in question, when the most essential circumstance is so erroneously stated? Ralph Erskine never had occasion for uttering any such words as those imputed to him; for *his brother Ebenezer survived him more than a year and seven months.*

No. XI.—PAGE 398.

The texts of Scripture, which Mr. Erskine has noted in his Study Bible as "sweet and useful to my soul," are in part only referred to, and in part cited at length. The following is a complete list of them, which may probably prove interesting to our readers:—

"GEN. iii. 15. JOB xiii. 15. PSALMS ii. 8; xxiv. 8; xl. 17; lvii. 2, 3; lxxxv. 10; xci. 4; cix. 21; cxviii. 15; cxix. 114; cxlii. 5; cxliii. 10. ISAIAH xxx. 18; xlii. 4; xliii. 25; xlv. 24. HOS. xii. 4—6. ROM. xv. 12. 1 COR. i. 30. HEB. vii. 25. 1 JOHN i. 7; ii. 1; REV. v. 6."

The blank leaves of this Bible exhibit also a variety of remarks, partly in prose, and partly in verse,—some of them in English and others in Latin; inserted, without doubt, for the purpose of familiarizing them to his mind. Of these, the reader will accept what follows as a specimen:—

"There are two hundred and sixty places quoted out of the Old Testament into the New."

"In all thy actions and intentions see,
That God thy Alpha and Omega be."

"Forgive me all the errors of my life,
And save from all the terrors of my death."

"Nemo patet cœlum, nisi per te, Christe Redemptor; A te vera salus, non aliunde, venit."

[No one is admitted to heaven but through thee, O Christ,

the Redeemer ; from thee, and from none else, salvation and true happiness come.]

“ Ut tua pertingat penetretque præcatio cœlum,
Corde sit ex puro, sit brevis, atque frequens.”

[If you wish your prayers to pierce the sky and reach heaven, see that they proceed from a pure heart, that they be short, and be frequent.]

“ Nihil infelicius felicitate peccantum.

“ Nothing more unhappy than the happiness of sinners. No blindness like a blind understanding ; no chain like an obstinate will.”

“ Ardeat orator, qui vult accendere plebem.”

[The orator who desires to inflame the people, must himself be flaming.]

In the last blank page his name, “ Ralph Erskine,” appears on the one side, and the following quotation from the Greek Testament on the other :

Πάντα καὶ ἐν παντί Χριστός.

[Christ is all, and in all.]

The late Dr. Husband, to whom this Bible for some time belonged, has testified his regard for its original owner, by copying on one of its pages that beautiful encomium in verse, which has been exhibited in this volume, page 481.

We have learned from Dr. Gibb, that soon after Mr. Erskine's death, this copy of the Scriptures was presented by Mrs. Erskine to Miss Wardlaw, half-sister to the Rev. James Wardlaw ; that she gave it to himself, (Dr. Gibb,) and that he made a present of it to Dr. Husband. Agreeably to the following notice prefixed on a blank page at the beginning, it is now, from the kindness of the Doctor's son, the property of a Session in Dunfermline, connected with the United Secession Church.

“ This Bible, which first belonged to the Rev. Ralph Erskine, and afterwards to the Rev. James Husband, D.D., is presented to the Rev. Robert Brown and the Session of St. Margaret's Church, by

JAMES HUSBAND.”

DUNFERMLINE, Feb. 1828.

To this account, possibly too minute, of Mr. Erskine's small octavo Bible, it may be added, that a large folio Bible, which he made use of in the pulpit, still exists in a state of excellent pre-

servation, and is considered as belonging to the Minister and Session of Queen Anne Street Church.

No. XII.—PAGE 493.

The author of the "History of the Scottish Church, Rotterdam," has favoured the writer of these memoirs with some further particulars relative to the Dutch translation of the Works of Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine. In a letter of date, "Rotterdam, September 3, 1832," this inestimable clergyman expresses himself as follows :—

"Almost every discourse written by the Erskines has not only been converted into the language of Holland, but has gone through many editions, in some cases six. Knowing, as I did, that great piety and earnestness pervade the whole of their compositions, and that not a few of the sermons were distinguished by uncommon ingenuity and knowledge of human nature, it did not at all astonish me to meet with a Dutch translation of some of Ebenezer and Ralph's treatises. But I must say I was both surprised and pleased to discover, that our Batavian friends had encouraged the Rotterdam publishers to print again and again all the prosaic Works of the Erskines. With the exception of the last two volumes, the work was mostly translated by Mr. JOHN ROSS, a member of the Scottish Church in Rotterdam; and I have reason to think that he was encouraged in this and similar undertakings, by one of my able and worthy predecessors, Dr. HUGH KENNEDY.

"With regard to the fidelity of the Dutch version, I can speak favourably, having myself carefully compared several of the discourses with the original. Mr. Ross, conformably to the practice, once not uncommon in Holland and Britain, procured some friend to write complimentary verses to more than one of the sermons; but the most important addition to the labours of the translator, is the aid which he obtained from two of the native clergy, who kindly wrote preliminary dissertations, largely analyzing and commending the particular volume.

"The two Dutch ministers, just alluded to, were Messrs THEODORE VAN DER GROE and GEORGE HOGENDORP.

The former born Sept. 3, 1705, became pastor of *Rhynsaterwoude* in 1730, and ten years afterwards, of *Kralingen*, where he died June 24, 1784. Mr. Hogendorp, after holding for a time the parochial charge of *Cortgeen*, was translated to and established at *Zierikzee*, Nov. 1759. He was declared *Emeritus* by the States of *Zealand* in 1790, and died within three years after his retirement from public life. Messrs. Van der Groe and Hogendorp were faithful and useful ministers of the gospel, and I have heard several old Christians often speak with pleasure of the popularity and excellent talents of the two Divines, of whom I have given you this brief notice."

We have now only to state, that owing to the liberality of a certain individual, the twelve volumes, comprising the whole of the two Erskines' discourses in Dutch, now occupy a place as an object of curiosity if not utility, in the Library for Students in Theology, under the inspection of the United Associate Synod.

No. XIII.—PAGE 528.

The Latin inscription on the stone commemorative of Mr. Erskine's sister Margaret, and the five deceased children of his first family is as follows; a few words being omitted, which it was difficult to decipher.

"Sub spe beatæ resurrectionis in Domino Jesu Christo Redemptore, hic exuviæ MARGARITÆ ERSKINE, nonis Octobris 1713 denatae, item ELIZABETHÆ, JANÆ, HELENÆ, RACHELIS, et uatu mortuæ CHRISTIANÆ . . . Quæ sex, illa in juventute, hæ in infantia, hæc in partu diem obiere; erga . . . fraterni, has et hanc, paterni amoris tesseram, Magr. RADOLPHUS ERSKINE, Pastor Fermilo-dunensis, cippum hunc cædendum curavit, an. 1728.

Dulce mihi Christo vivere, dulce mori!"

THE END.

J. THOMSON, Printer, Milne Square.

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