

privilege which entitled the Councils to be considered as parts of the political engine, being taken away, there remains nothing for the Councils but to content themselves with the title and status of Administrators of the Municipal Affairs of the Burgh. In this character, and in this character alone, have all the Town Councils now existing in Scotland been elected, and it seems to be the chief intent and directing spirit of the Act under which they have been chosen, to make this fact apparent to all. By the Act, the status of the Councils is amply pointed out, and their duties well defined ; and it will puzzle any person to point out in the Act any clause or word which entitles the Councils to be considered as political bodies, or as possessing any political privilege whatever. The duties of the Councils are to manage the public affairs of the Burghs, and if they do this with honesty and sincerity, they will find they have enough to do, without constituting themselves into Political Unions, and consuming the time which ought to be employed in the exercise of their Municipal Trusts, in discussions of abstract political points, on which, I trust, it will not be considered treason to say, few of them are much qualified to enter.

In short, Gentlemen, you made an egregious mistake when you supposed that, as a body, you were entitled to give expression to any political opinion—for, as a body, you have just as much title to do so, as you have to interfere in the government of Peking. Individually you are all well entitled to hold your political opinions, and far be it from me to say, that you should not express them ; but I repeat, that it is only as individuals and not as Councillors, that you are entitled to do so, and you yourselves must acknowledge, that it is only individually that you can bring your political views to bear on the machine of the State.

I have thus, I trust, succeeded in convincing you, that the Councils of Scotland are now merely corporate, and not political bodies, and I am persuaded that, had you paused to reflect, you would never have committed the absurdity of endeavouring to punish persons whose sole crime is, presuming to exercise the right which is as free to them as to you—of holding their own opinions in politics. As it is, you have not reflected, and it unfortunately happens that it will not be difficult to show, in the third place, that the motion which you have passed, was brought forward with an intention to prejudice Mr. Cruickshank and myself, simply because, on a great public question in which the Town Council of Banff have, as such, no more interest, and on which no more right to express any opinion, than the Committee