

MEMOIR OF

THE REVEREND

DAVID WILSON,

The late Pious and Learned Minister of the
UNITED ASSOCIATE CONGREGATION OF
OLD CUMNOCK.

ALSO,

AN ACCOUNT OF HIS FUNERAL,

AND

An Elegy to his Memory.

WITH

A SELECTION OF HIS FAVOURITE SONNETS,
From the Rev. Ralph Erskine's Works.

KILMARNOCK:

Printed by H. Crawford Bookseller.

1825.

MEMOIR OF
THE REV. DAVID WILSON.

THE Rev. DAVID WILSON, Minister of the United Associate Congregation of Old Cumnock, died at Cumnock, on the 17th of December, 1822, in the 35th year of his ministry, and 69th of his age. His death is generally and deeply lamented, and he will long be remembered for the diligence, activity, and zeal with which he discharged the public and private duties of the ministerial office. He was very generally known as a most laborious and faithful minister of the gospel; and it was evident, that the uncommon exertions which he continually made for the spiritual and temporal welfare of his congregation, sprung from love to the work itself, — from compassion to perishing sinners, — and from a desire to promote the edification and comfort of those who believed. He early felt and displayed the power of religion. When very young, he took great delight in reading and committing to memory Ralph Erskine's Gospel Son-

nets, (a book which he generally carried about with him till he had worn it to pieces in his pocket.) and many of the verses illustrative of Christian experience, and of the blessed fruits of communion with God, he was afterwards accustomed to repeat, in his exhortations at the communion-table, with great effect. A fact which lately came to our knowledge we may mention, as a striking illustration of his early piety. He and another young man, an intimate companion of his own, built a turf house in the fields, in which they often met for religious conversation and prayer, and often spent whole nights in these pious and improving exercises. Under the disorder which terminated in his dissolution, he looked back on these exercises with great pleasure; and sometimes said, that if he had been then called to put off his earthly tabernacle, he thought that he would have died in the full assurance of faith and hope. Thus feeling the power of divine love, and experiencing the joy, the peace, and the hope which spring from faith in Christ, he felt a strong and growing desire to engage in the work of the ministry; and after much meditation and prayer, entered on that course of learning and study, which

is preparatory to preaching and defending the gospel of Christ; and persevered, till, under the smiles of Divine Providence, he reached the object of his devout wishes. That his desire to engage in the ministry was a matter of deep and serious concern to him, is manifest from a letter which lately came into our hands; and which, it appears, he had written to the friend above mentioned, during the first year of his residence at College. We make the following extract, as also illustrative of his Christian attainments at that period.

“Indeed, my brother, the more that I enjoy of my God, the less do I think of my books, for the latter, compared with the former, are tasteless and insipid; but yet my soul feels pleasure and delight in these words, “Go feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood;” and when my thoughts recur to them, I feel animated to proceed in the prosecution of my studies. O my soul! mayest thou never forget the day when thy God spoke these words unto thee, when in his own divine manner he delivered unto thee the solemn charge, commanding thee to go forth in his name, and proclaim this wonder in the ears of all the

people, saying,—Behold at what a price thy God hath bought thee, O ye saved of the Lord! even at a price of which neither man nor angel can estimate the value! O my soul! a goodly price it was indeed that was paid down for thy recovery, even the blood of the eternal Son of God in my nature. Mayest thou ever be engaged in speaking to his honour and praise; mayest thou ever adore him; mayest thou ever magnify and extol him!—And may God, even my God, assign to me whatever he pleases for the exercise of my short life, and may the glory be to him for ever.”

Having finished his course of literary and theological study at the College of Edinburgh; and at the Divinity Hall, under the Rev. Mr. Brown and Dr. Lawson, he was licensed to preach the gospel by the Associate Presbytery of Edinburgh. After exercising his gifts for a short time in the vacancies, under the inspection of the Associate Synod, he received an unanimous Call from the Associate Congregation of Old Cumnock, [vacant in consequence of the translation of the Rev. Mr. (now Dr.) Hall to Edinburgh,] to the pastoral inspection of which, after going through the usual course of trials, he was solemnly or-

clained by the Associate Presbytery of Glasgow, in the year 1788. The interests of this congregation he continued till his death to promote, with a degree of activity, success, and approbation seldom equalled, and still more rarely surpassed.

As a man, Mr. Wilson, though naturally a little quick and warm in his temper, was exceedingly kind, generous and friendly; and proved an attentive and affectionate husband, a kind friend, and a useful member of society. As a Christian, his sentiments were purely evangelical and practical. He was a true Presbyterian and thorough-paced Seceder, warmly attached to the principles upon which the Secession was originally founded, and which the United Church still maintains. In every thing which respected the Christian profession and eternity, he loved and strongly recommended decision and steadiness. Being thus minded, he pointedly condemned men "halting between two opinions—suffering themselves like children to be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine," and unduly yielding to mere human attachments and local circumstances in the profession of the gospel, and in seeking glory, and honour, and immortality.

But while he was a steady and decided Seceder, he breathed in private and in public a benevolent and catholic spirit,—took great delight in Bible and Missionary Societies,—rejoiced in the success of the gospel, by whomsoever it was preached, and fervently prayed with the Apostle, “Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity.” In short, he was a steady and warm member of a party, but detested every thing like a narrow and party-spirit.

As a minister of the gospel, the divine and mediatorial glory of Christ, the wonders of his love, and the riches of his grace in saving sinners, and in bringing them to glory, according to the gracious purpose of the Father, and by the agency of the Holy Spirit, formed the great and leading subjects of his preaching, and gave peculiar richness and suitableness to his ministrations. His sermons were plain and scriptural; his style and manner of delivery, though by no means polished, were warm, animated, and full of natural eloquence, and never failed to interest the heart, and to increase the flame of Christian and devotional feeling. In dispensing the word of life, he took great pleasure in illustrat-

ing the excellence and blessed effects of the ordinances of religion, in urging the faithful cultivation of the various graces of the Spirit, and in enforcing the numerous duties of the Christian life.

In thus setting before his own people, and other congregations of the Association where he occasionally laboured, the whole counsel of God, he commanded general attention, and under the agency of the Holy Spirit, we have reason to believe, was the honoured instrument of saving and comforting many. He evidently wished to spend and be spent for the advancement of the glory of Christ, the salvation of sinners, and the spiritual and temporal prosperity of his own congregation.

He was particularly attentive and diligent in visiting and examining the people of his charge. His congregation was a very large one, and though it lay scattered over an extensive country-side, he regularly visited and examined the whole of it every year. As this part of his duty was particularly suited to his active disposition and habits, so in the discharge of it he took great delight, and fixed upon a very high standard for the execution of it. In proof of this, in July 1822, after the dis-

ease which carried him off had taken firm hold of his constitution, he visited no less than twenty-nine families in one day, some of which were situated at the distance of ten miles from his own house. In visiting the sick he was equally attentive and diligent. In the discharge of this duty, it may with truth be said of him, that he was "instant in season and out of season." No species of disease he reckoned as a barrier, no distance disagreeable, no hour unseasonable, when he was called on by affliction to administer the consolations of the gospel. As in this important duty he greatly excelled, so he was very frequently called on to discharge it, not only among his own people, but also among all classes of the community. To the spiritual instruction of the young he also paid particular attention. For those of them between fourteen years of age he had a class which went through a course of instruction preparatory for admission into his Sabbath evening school, which met regularly during the summer months, and which consisted chiefly of young persons between the ages of fourteen and twenty-four.— As he was unremitting in his attention to their spiritual welfare, so to him and his

instructions they paid a corresponding affectionate regard. This was so much the case, that they gradually increased in number; and during the last summer, though he was under the necessity, from the low state of his health, of having recourse to assistance, he was more numerously attended than ever he had previously been. His parting interview with them was very tender and affecting. Before they were dismissed, he addressed them in a short exhortation with uncommon fervour and feeling. He seemed to have impressed upon his mind a lively presentiment of his approaching dissolution. He spoke of it as a matter of certainty, and urged them, as one who evidently regarded himself in the immediate neighbourhood of the eternal world, and who had their dearest interests at heart, to "remember their Creator in the days of their youth." He hoped that, though the present was in all probability the last interview he was to enjoy with them, they would still be as active and diligent in their spiritual improvement, as if he still presided over them, and guided them in the acquisition of useful knowledge. His youthful audience was deeply moved, and it was truly affecting

to witness the sorrow they manifested in taking their last farewell of their aged instructor: while he, as he shook them by the hand, gave to each his parting blessing.

From this interesting period his health rapidly declined, and his bodily and mental vigour so quickly forsook him, that he afterwards attempted only once or twice to address his people from the pulpit; and for about a month before his death, he was almost entirely confined to his own house, exhibiting day after day, evident marks of approaching dissolution. Such was the activity to which he was habituated, and such his delight in the public and private duties of his office, that when the hopes of resuming them became fainter, he felt rather uneasy. An impression also, which certainly he had less reason than many others to indulge, that he had done little for Christ, and for promoting the best interests of his beloved people, accompanied with severe bodily pain, in no small degree agitated his mind, and unfitted him for conversation. But as the interesting crises approached, his mind became more tranquil, and seemed to lose its strong attachment to the activities of life; and on the morning of the last day

of his valuable life, a brother in the ministry having visited him, and engaged in those conversations and exercises suitable to a dying hour, he manifested great serenity of mind, and at last expired in the most gentle and agreeable manner.

From this short memoir, it is abundantly manifest, that the Church has lost a most diligent, zealous, and successful minister; which loss, while it must interest all the lovers of Zion, must press in a particular manner on the affections and feelings of the bereaved widow and congregation. Let all in the ministry be admonished by his death, diligently to discharge the duties of their office, and labour to promote the prosperity of the Church, that they may put off their earthly tabernacle with joy, and be greeted with these exhilarating words, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter ye into the joy of your Lord." Let those who are looking forward to the ministry, and who are in some measure prepared to fill up the vacancies that death is now and then making in the Church, emulate the virtues of their departed fathers, and even prepare to excel them in activity and usefulness. And let the congregation cordially acqui-

esce in their bereavement, and love one another with a brotherly love, in honour preferring one another, and look to Christ, the Head of the Church, that he would give them a pastor according to his own heart, who may feed them with understanding and knowledge.

THE Rev. Mr. WILSON's funeral was attended by a very large concourse of people, from the village, and the neighbouring country. Never was witnessed a more solemn spectacle. Every one seemed so affected with their mournful task, that it looked as if they were conveying to the grave one upon whom all their hopes in life depended. In testimony of their esteem, a public subscription was entered into, and a small Monument, executed with considerable taste, and having an appropriate Epitaph, and an inscription cut upon it, was erected to his memory.—
 “Blessed are they who die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.”

ELEGY

*On the Death of the Rev. DAVID WILSON,
Old Cumnock.*

WHAT shriek is this among the village
crowd,
Solemn the sound! 'tis sorrow's deepest
tone!

From street to street the cry is rais'd aloud,
Alas! alas! our well-lov'd Wilson's gone!

Now thro' Old Cumnock spreads a death-
like gloom,
Quick to the spot the mourning groups
repair,
Where Christian-like he met his final doom,
And soar'd to glory in a higher sphere.

In this broad world no mortal e'er requir'd
Less preparation for a world unknown;
For hope of Heaven had long his bosom
fir'd,
And long he claim'd this region as his
own.

Farewell! thou sweetest Herald of the cross!
Soft were Salvation's accents on thy
tongue,

Religion's votaries shall bewail thy loss
 While prayers arise, or Zion's songs are
 sung.

For thou wert ever still the poor man's
 friend,
 And at his pillow, when with sickness
 worn,
 With Christ's most holy precepts would'st
 attend,
 From midnight hour until the dawning
 morn.

O! Cumnock's daughters, while ye mourn
 your Seer,
 Let not your hearts with hopeless grief
 be torn;
 Lift up your eyes, and wipe away the tear,
 Soon breaks the dawn of everlasting
 morn.

Then shall you hear your Pastor's voice
 again,
 Jesus receive me! and the flock thou gave!
 O let us grace the glories of thy reign,
 Thy love is all-omnipotent to save.

Fancy be hush'd—the theme is too sublime
 For erring mortals in this vale of tears,

The splendid scenes beyond the verge of
time

Remain unknown till Christ himself ap-
pears.

But as yon sun in splendour far outvies
The darkest orb in Heaven's exalted
sphere,

So high in glory shall the Pastor rise,
Who has been *faithful to the death* while
here.

Then sainted Priest of eloquence and worth,
Enjoy on high thy sceptre and thy
crown;

Well hast thou earn'd them whilst thou
wast on earth,

Immortal is thy name and thy renown.

O! Calvin's sons, well may you weep his
loss,

'Twas he your doctrine nobly could de-
fend;

All human merit he decried as dross,
To sovereign grace he taught the heart
to bend.

His Saviour's death and blood were all his
plea,

For love and mercy at the heavenly
throne;

To these, and these alone, let sinners flee,
Oft would he call with sweet persuasive
tone.

To what exalted fervour would he rise,
When pour'd his raptures of redeeming
love;

Who could his warning solemn voice des-
pise,
When sinners' marble hearts he tried to
move.

Alike his doctrines, and his virtues pure,
He liv'd rever'd in this licentious age;
His merits shall for evermore endure,
Recorded in the biographic page.

His merits tell some warm ingenuous friend,
To whom his worth and talents still are
dear;

And genius oft-times o'er his tomb shall
bend,
And give the tribute of a bitter tear.

Mr. WILSON's fondness for the GOSPEL SONNETS of RALPH ERSKINE, is well known; and we cannot better conclude our brief notice of this excellent man, than by selecting a few of which he shewed a peculiar predeliction.

The Believer's perfect beauty, free acceptance, and full security, through the imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness, though imparted grace be imperfect.

O HAPPY soul, JEHOVAH's bride,
The Lamb's beloved spouse;
Strong consolation's flowing tide,
Thy Husband thee allows.

In thee, though like thy father's race,
By nature black as hell,
Yet now, so beautify'd by grace,
Thy Husband loves to dwell.

Fair as the moon thy robes appear,
While graces are in dress,
Clear as the sun, while found to wear
Thy Husband's righteousness.

Thy moon-like graces, changing much,
 Have here and there a spot;
 Thy sun-like glory is not such,
 Thy Husband changes not.

Thy white and ruddy vesture fair
 Outvies the rosy leaf:
 For 'mong ten thousand beauties rare
 Thy Husband is the chief.

Cloth'd with the Sun, thy robes of light,
 The morning rays outshine;
 The lamps of heav'n are not so bright,
 Thy Husband decks thee fine.

Though hellish smoke thy duties stain,
 And sin deform thee quite;
 Thy Surety's merit makes thee clean,
 Thy Husband's beauty white.

Thy pray'rs and tears, nor pure nor good,
 But vile and loathsome seem:
 Yet gain, by dipping in his blood,
 Thy Husband's high esteem.

No fear thou starve, though wants be great,
In him thou art complete:
 Thy hungry soul may hopeful wait,
 Thy Husband gives thee meat.

Thy money, merit, pow'r and pelf,
 Were squander'd by thy fall;
 Yet, having nothing in thyself,
 Thy Husband is thy all.

Law-precepts, threats, may both beset
 To crave of thee their due:
 But justice for thy double debt
 Thy Husband did pursue.

Though justice stern as much belong
 As mercy to a God;
 Yet justice suffer'd here no wrong,
 Thy Husband's back was broad.

He bore the load of wrath alone,
 That mercy might take vent;
 Heaven's pointed arrows all upon
 Thy Husband's heart were spent.

No partial pay could justice still,
 No farthing was retrench'd;
 Vengeance exacted all, until
 Thy Husband all advanc'd.

He paid, in liquid golden red,
 Each mite the law requir'd,
 Till with a loud '*Tis finished*,
 Thy Husband's breath expir'd.

No process more the law can tent;
 Thou stand'st within its verge,
 And may'st with pleasure now present
 Thy Husband's full discharge.

Though new contracted guilt beget
 New fears of divine ire;
 Yet fear thou not, though drown'd in debt,
 Thy Husband is the payer.

God might in rigour thee indite
 Of highest crimes and flaws;
 But on thy head no curse can light,—
 Thy Husband is the cause.

*The mystery of the Saints' adversaries and
 adversities.*

A LUMP of woe affliction is,
 Yet thence I borrow lumps of bliss:
 Though few can see a blessing in't,
 It is my furnace and my mint.

Its sharpness does my lusts dispatch;
 Its suddenness alarms my watch,
 Its bitterness refines my taste,
 And weans me from the creature's breast.

Its weightiness does try my back,
 That faith and patience be not slack
 It is a fanning wind whereby
 I am unchaff'd of vanity.

A furnace to refine my grace,
 A wing to lift my soul apace;
 Hence still the more I sob distress,
 The more I sing my endless rest.

Mine enemies that seek my hurt,
 Of all their bad designs come short;
 They serve me fully to my mind,
 With favours which they ne'er design'd.

The fury of my foes makes me
 Fast to my peaceful refuge flee:
 And ev'ry persecuting elf
 Does make me understand myself.

Their slanders cannot work my shame,
 Their vile reproaches raise my name;
 In peace with Heav'n my soul can dwell,
 Ev'n when they damn me down to hell.

Their fury can't the treaty harm,
 Their passion does my pity warm;
 Their madness only calms my blood;
 By doing hurt they do my good.

They are my sordid slaves I wot ;
 My drudges, though they know it not :
 They act to me a kindly part,
 With little kindness in their heart.

They sweep my outer-house when foul,
 Yea, wash my inner filth of soul :
 They help to purge away my blot,
 For Moab is my washing pot.

SECESSION

Hitherto the character of the Secession, both as to the intelligence and faithfulness of its ministers, and as to the piety of its members, has been very fair : and we would fondly hope, that the sons, who are rising up to occupy the places which their sires are leaving vacant, instead of tarnishing her reputation, will rather raise it to a higher pitch. Let not the present generation disgrace the memory of their pious ancestors — The world and the church look to them with an expecting eye. Each individual amongst them, both ministers and people, should

feel and should act, both in public and in private life, as if the character of the whole depended on his conduct. Let ministers exert themselves more and more, to promote true godliness in their respective flocks. Let heads of families attend to the cultivation of religion in their domestic circles. Let the young vie with one another, who shall be most distinguished for amiableness of disposition, and for their zeal and activity in promoting the cause of the Redeemer. Let all classes cultivate a spirit of earnest and importunate prayer; and thus shall the blessing come down from the God of glory, "like the dew of Hermon, that descended upon the mountains of Zion."

"For my brethren and companions' sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee; because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.

F E N I S.