

HISTORY  
OF THE LIFE & SUFFERINGS  
OF THE  
**REV. JOHN WELCH,**  
SOMETIME MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT AYR,



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## THE

# LIFE OF JOHN WELCH.

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MR. JOHN WELCH was born a gentleman, his father being laird of Colieston, (an estate rather competent, than large, in the shire of Nithsdale) about the year 1570, the dawning of our reformation being then but dark. He was a rich example of grace and mercy, but the night went before the day, being a most hopeless extravagant boy: it was not enough to him, frequently when he was a young stripling to run away from the school and play the truant; but after he had passed his grammar, and was come to be a youth, he left the school, and his father's house, and went and joined himself to the thieves on the English border, who lived by robbing the two nations, and amongst them he stayed till he spent a suit of clothes. Then he was clothed only with rags, the prodigal's misery brought him to the prodigal's resolution, so he resolved to return to his father's house, but durst not adventure, till he should interpose a reconciler. So in his return homeward, he took Dumfries in his way, where he had an aunt, one Agnes Forsyth, and with her he diverted some days, earnestly entreating her to reconcilo him to his father. While he lurked in her house, his father came providentially to the house to salute his cousin, Mrs. Forsyth; and after

they had talked a while, she asked him, whether he had ever heard any news of his son John ; to her he replied with great grief, O cruel woman, how can you name his name to me? The first news I expect to hear of him, is, that he is hanged for a thief. She answered, many a profligate boy had become a virtuous man, and comforted him. He insisted upon his sad complaint, but asked whether she knew his lost son was yet alive. She answered, Yes, he was, and she hoped he should prove a better man than he was a boy, and with that she called upon him to come to his father. He came weeping and kneeled, besecching his father, for Christ's sake, to pardon his misbehaviour, and deeply engaged to be a new man. His father reproached him and threatened him. Yet, at length, by the boy's tears, and Mrs. Forsyth's importunities, he was persuaded to a reconciliation. The boy entreated his father to send him to the college, and there to try his behaviour, and if ever thereafter he should break, he said he should be content his father should disclaim him for ever: so his father carried him home, and put him to the college, and there he became a diligent student, of great expectation, and shewed himself a sincere convert, and so he proceeded to the ministry.

His first post in the ministry was at Selkirk, while he was yet very young, and the country rude ; while he was there, his ministry was rather admired by some, than received by many ; for he was always attended by the prophet's shadow, the hatred of the wicked ; yea, even the ministers of the country, were more ready to pick a quarrel with his person, than to follow his doctrine, as may appear to this day in their synodical records, where we find he had many to censure him, and only some

to defend him ; yet it was thought his ministry in that place was not without fruit, though he stayed but a short time there. Being a young man unmarried, he lodged himself in the house of one Mitchelhill, and took a young boy of his to be his bed-fellow, who to his dying day retained both a respect to Mr. Welch and his ministry, from the impressions Mr. Welch's behaviour made upon his mind though but a child.

The special cause of his leaving Selkirk, was a profane gentleman in the country (one Scot of Headschaw, whose family is now extinct) but because Mr. Welch had either reprov'd him, or merely from hatred, Mr. Welch was most unworthily abused by the unhappy man, amongst the rest of the injuries he did him, this was one, Mr. Welch kept always two good horses for his use, and the wicked gentleman when he could do no more, either with his own hand, or his servants, cut off the rumps of the two innocent beasts, upon which followed such effusion of blood, that they both died, which Mr. Welch did much resent, and such base usage as this persuaded him to listen to a call to the ministry at Kirkcudbright, which was his next post.

But when he was about to leave Selkirk, he could not find a man in all the town to transport his furniture, except one Ewart, who was at that time a poor young man, but master of two horses, with which he transported Mr. Welch's goods, and so left him, but as he took his leave, Mr. Welch gave him his blessing, and a piece of gold for a token, exhorting him to fear God, and promised he should never want, which promise, providence made good through the whole course of his life, as was observed by all his neighbours.

At Kirkeudbright he stayed not long; but there he reaped a harvest of converts, which subsisted long after his departure, and were a part of Mr. Samuel Rutherford's flock, though not his parish, while he was minister at Anwith: yet when his call to Ayr came to him, the people of the parish of Kirkeudbright never offered to detain him, so his transportation to Ayr was the more easy.

Mr. Welch was transported to Ayr in the year 1590, and there he continued till he was banished, there he had a very hard beginning, but a good ending; for when he came first to the town, the country was so wicked, and the hatred of godliness so great, that there could not be found one in all the town, that would let him a house to dwell in, so he was constrained to accommodate himself in the best he might, in a part of a gentleman's house for a time, the gentleman's name was John Stewart, he was an eminent christian, and a great assistant of Mr. Welch.

And when he had first taken up his residence in that town, the place was so divided into factions, and filled with bloody conflicts, a man could hardly walk the streets with safety; wherefore Mr. Welch made it his first undertaking to remove the bloody quarrelings, but he found it a very difficult work; yet such was his earnestness to pursue his design, that many times he would rush betwixt two parties of men fighting, even in the midst of blood and wounds.

His manner was, after he had ended a skirmish amongst his neighbours, and reconciled these bitter enemies, to cause them to cover a table upon the street, and there brought the enemies together, and beginning with prayer he persuaded them to protest themselves friends, and then to eat and drink together, then last of all, he ended the work with

singing a psalm: after the rude people began to observe his example, and listen to his heavenly doctrine, he came quickly to that respect amongst them that he became not only a necessary counsellor, without whose counsel they would do nothing, but an example to imitate, and so he buried the bloody quarrels.

He gave himself wholly to ministerial exercises, he preached once every day, he prayed the third part of his time, was unwearied in his studies, and for a proof of this, it was found among his papers, that he had abridged Suarez's metaphysics, when they came first to his hand, even when he was well stricken in years. By all which, it appears, that he has not only been a man of great diligence but also of a strong and robust natural constitution, otherwise he had never endured the fatigue.

But if his diligence was great, so it is doubted whether his sowing in painfulness, or his harvest in his success was greatest; for if either his spiritual experiences in seeking the Lord, or his fruitfulness in converting souls be considered, they will be found unparalleled in Scotland: and many years after Mr. Welch's death, Mr. David Dickson, at that time a flourishing minister at Irvine, was frequently heard to say, when people talked to him of the success of his ministry, that the grape gleanings in Ayr, in Mr. Welch's time, were far above the vintage of Irvine, in his own. Mr. Welch, in his preaching, was spiritual and searching, his utterance tender and moving: he did not much insist upon scholastic purposes, he made no show of his learning. I once heard one of his hearers say, That no man could hear him and forbear weeping, his conveyance was so affecting. There is a large volume of his sermons, now in Scot-

land, wherein he makes it appear, his learning was not behind his other virtues: this also appears in another piece, called Dr. Welch's Armagaddon, printed, I suppose, in France, wherein he gives his meditation upon the enemies of the church, and their destruction: but the piece itself is rarely to be found.

Sometimes before he went to sermon, he would send for his elders, and tell them, he was afraid to go to pulpit because he found himself sore deserted; and thereafter desire one or more to pray, and then he would venture to pulpit. But, it was observed, this humbling exercise used ordinarily to be followed, with a flame of extraordinary assistance: so near neighbours are many times contrary dispositions and frames. He would many times retire to the church of Ayr, which was at some distance from the town, and there spend the whole night in prayer: for he used to allow his affections full expression, and prayed not only with audible, but sometimes, loud voice, nor did he irk, in that solitude, all the night over, which hath, it may be, occasioned the contemptible slander of some malicious enemies, who were so bold as to call him no less than a witch.

There was in Ayr, before he came to it, an aged man a minister of the town, called Porterfield, the man was judged no bad man, for his personal inclinations, but so easy a disposition, that he used many times to go too great a length with his neighbours in many dangerous practices; and amongst the rest, he used to go to the bow-butts and archery, on Sabbath afternoon, to Mr. Welch's great dissatisfaction. But the way he used to reclaim him, was not bitter severity, but this gentle policy; Mr. Welch together with John Stewart, and Hugh Kennedy, his two intimate friends, used

to spend the Sabbath afternoon in religious conference and prayer, and to this exercise they invited Mr. Porterfield, which he could not refuse, by which means he was not only diverted from his former sinful practice, but likewise brought to a more watchful, and edifying behaviour in his course of life.

Ho married Elizabeth Knox, daughter to the famous Mr. John Knox, minister at Edinburgh, the apostle of Scotland, and she lived with him from his youth till his death. By her I have heard he had three sons: the first was called Dr. Welch, a doctor of medicine, who was killed in the low countries, and of him I never heard more. Another son he had most lamentably lost at sea, for when the ship in which he was embarked was sunk, he swam to a rock in the sea, but starved there for want of necessary food and refreshment, and when sometime afterward his body was found upon the rock, they found him dead in a praying posturo upon his bended knees, with his hands stretched out, and this was all the satisfaction his friends and the world had upon his lamentable death, so bitter to his friends. Another he had who was heir to his father's grace and blessings, and this was Mr. Josias Welch, minister at Temple-Patrick in the north of Ireland, commonly called the Cock of the Conscience by the people of that country, because of his extraordinary wakening and rousing gift: he was one of that blest society of ministers, which wrought that unparalleled work in the north of Ireland, about the year 1636, but was himself a man most sadly exercised with doubts about his own salvation all his time, and would ordinarily say, That ministers was much to be pitied, who was called to comfort weak saints and had no

comfort himself. He died in his youth, and left for his successor, Mr. John Welch minister at Iron-Gray in Galloway, the place of his grandfather's nativity. What business this made in Scotland, in the time of the late Episcopal persecution, for the space of twenty years, is known to all Scotland. He maintained his dangerous post of preaching the gospel upon the mountains of Scotland, notwithstanding of the threatnings of the state, the hatred of the bishops, the price set upon his head, and all the fierco industry of his cruel enemies. It is well known that bloody Claverhouse upon secret information from his spies, that Mr. John Welch was to be found at some lurking place at forty miles distance, would make all that long journey in one winter's night, that he might catch him, but when he came he always missed his prey. I never heard of a man that endured more toil, adventured upon more hazards, escaped so much hazard, not in the world. He used to tell his friends who counselled him to be more cautious, and not to hazard himself so much, That he firmly believed dangerous undertakings would be his security, and when ever he should give over that course and retire himself, his ministry should come to an end; which accordingly came to pass, for when after Bothwell bridge, he retired to London, the Lord called him by death, and there he was honourably buried, not far from the king's palace.

But to return to our old Mr. Welch; as the duty wherein he abounded and excelled most was prayer, so his greatest attainments fell that way. He used to say, He wondered how a Christian could lie in bed all night, and not rise to pray, and many times he watched. One night he rose from his wife, and went into the next room, where he stayed so long

at secret prayer, that his wife fearing he might catch cold, was constrained to rise and follow him, and as she hearkened, she heard him speak as by interrupted sentences, Lord wilt thou not grant me Scotland, and after a pause, Enough, Lord, enough, and so she returned to her bed, and he following her, not knowing she had heard him, but when he was by her, she asked him what he meant by saying, Enough, Lord, enough. He shewed himself dissatisfied with her curiosity, but told her, he had been wrestling with the Lord for Scotland, and found there was a sad time at hand, but that the Lord would be gracious to a remnant. This was about the time when bishops first overspread the land, and corrupted the church. This was more wonderful I am to relate, I heard once an honest minister, who was a parishioner of Mr. Welch many a day, say, 'That one night as he watched in his garden very late, and some friends waiting upon him in his house and wearying because of his long stay, one of them chanced to open a window toward the place where he walked, and saw clearly a strange light surrounding him, and heard him speak strange words about his spiritual joy,' I do neither add nor alter, I am the more induced to believe this that I have heard from as good a hand as any in Scotland, that a very godly man, though not a minister, after he had spent a whole night in a country house, in the inuir, declared confidently, he saw such an extraordinary light as this himself, which was to him both matter of wonder and astonishment. But though Mr. Welch had upon the account of his holiness, abilities, and success, acquired among his subdued people, a very great respect, yet was he never in such admiration, as after the great plague which raged in Scotland in his time.

And one cause was this : The magistrates of Ayr, forasmuch as this town alone was free, and the country about infected, thought fit to guard the ports with sentinels, and watchmen ; and one day two travelling merchants, each with a pack of cloth upon a horse, came to the town desiring entrance that they might sell their goods producing a pass from the magistrates of the town whence they came, which was at that time sound and free ; yet notwithstanding all this the sentinels stopt them till the magistrates were called ; and when they came, they would do nothing without their minister's advice : so Mr. Welch was called, and his opinion asked ; he demurred, and putting off his hat with his eyes toward heaven for a pretty space, though he uttered no audible words, yet continued in a praying gesture : and after a little space told the magistrates they would do well to discharge these travellers their town, affirming with great asseveration, the plague was in their packs, so the magistrates commanded them to be gone, and they went to Cumnock, a town some twenty miles distant, and there sold their goods, which kindled such an infection in that place, that the living were hardly able to bury their dead. This made the people begin to think Mr. Welch as an oracle. Yet as he walked with God, and kept close with him, so he forgot not man, for he used frequently to dine abroad with such of his friends, as he thought were persons with whom he might maintain the communion of the saints ; and once in the year he used always to invite all his familiars in the town to a treat in his house, where there was a banquet of holiness and sobriety.

And now the scene of his life begins for to alter ;

but before his blessed sufferings, he had this strange warning.

One night he rose from his wife, and went into garden, as his custom was, but stayed longer than ordinary, which troubled his wife, who, when he returned, expostulated with him very hard, for his staying so long to wrong his health; he bid her be quiet, for it should be well with them. But he knew well, he should never preach more at Ayr; and accordingly before the next Sabbath, he was carried prisoner to Blackness castle. After that, he, with many others were brought before the council of Scotland, at Edinburgh, to answer for their rebellion and contempt, in holding a general assembly, not authorised by the king. And because they declined the secret council, as judges competent in causes purely spiritual, such as the nature and constitution of a general assembly is, they were first remitted to the prison at Blackness, and other places. And thereafter, six of the most considerable of them, were brought under night from Blackness to Linlithgow before the criminal judges, to answer an accusation of high treason, at the instance of Sir Thomas Hamilton, king's advocate, for declining, as he alledged, the king's lawful authority, in refusing to admit the council judges competent in the cause of the nature of church judicatories; and after their accusation, and answer was read, by the verdict of a jury of very considerable gentlemen, condemned as guilty of high treason, the punishment continued till the king's pleasure should be known, and thereafter their punishment was made banishment, that the cruel sentence might someway seem to soften their severe punishment as tho king had contrived it.

But before he left Scotland, some remarkable

passages in his behaviour are to be remembered. And first when the dispute about church-government began to warm; as he was walking upon the street of Edinburgh, betwixt two honest citizens, he told them, they had in their town two great ministers, who were no great friends to Christ's cause, presently in controversy, but it should be seen, the world should never hear of their repentance. The two men were Mr. Patrick Galloway, and Mr. John Hall; and accordingly it came to pass, for Mr. Patrick Galloway died easing himself upon his stool; and Mr. John Hall, being at that time in Leith, and his servant woman having left him alone in his house while she went to the market, he was found dead all alone at her return.

He was sometime prisoner in Edinburgh castle before he went into exile, where one night sitting at supper with the lord Ochiltry, who was an uncle to Mr. Welch's wife, as his manner was, he entertained the company with godly and edifying discourse, which was well received by all the company save only one debauched popish young gentleman, who sometimes laughed, and sometimes mocked and made faces; whereupon Mr. Welch brake out into a sad abrupt charge upon all the company to be silent, and observe the work of the Lord upon that prophane mocker, which they should presently behold; upon which immediately the prophane wretch sunk down and died beneath the table, but never returned to life again, to the great astonishment of all the company.

Another wonderful story they tell of him at the same time; the lord Ochiltry the captain, being both sons to the good lord Ochiltry, and Mr. Welch's uncle in law, was indeed very civil to Mr. Welch, but being for a long time, through the multitude

of affairs, kept from visiting Mr. Welch in his chamber, as he was one day walking in the court, and espying Mr. Welch at his chamber window asked him kindly how he did, and if in any thing he could serve him. Mr. Welch answered him, He would earnestly entreat his lordship, being at that time to go to court, to petition king James in his name, that he might have liberty to preach the gospel; which my lord promised to do. Mr. Welch answered, my lord, both because you are my kinsman, and other reasons, I would earnestly entreat, and obtest you not to promise except you faithfully perform. My lord answered, He would faithfully perform his promise; and so went for London. But though at his first arrival he was really purposed to present the petition to the king, but when he found the king in such a rage against the godly ministers, that he durst not at that time present it, so he thought fit to delay it, and there after fully forgot it.

The first time that Mr. Welch saw his face after his return from court, he asked him what he had done with his petition. My lord answered he, had presented it to the king, but that the king was in so great a rage against the ministers at that time, he believed it had been forgotten, for he had gotten no answer. Nay said Mr. Welch to him, My lord you should not lye to God, and to me, for I know you never delivered it, though I warned you to take heed not to undertake it, except you would perform it; but because you have dealt so unfaithfully, remember God shall take from you both estate and honours, and give them to your neighbour in your own time: which accordingly came to pass, both his estate and honours were in his own time transmitted to James Stewart son to captain

James, who was indeed a cadet, but not the lineal heir of the family.

While he was detained prisoner in Edinburgh castle, his wife used for the most part to stay in his company, but upon a time fell into a longing to see her family in Ayr, to which with some difficulty he yielded; but when she was to take her journey, he strictly charged her not to take the ordinary way to her own house, when she came to Ayr, nor to pass by the bridge through the town, but to pass the river above the bridge, and so get the way to her own house, and not to come into the town, for, said he, before you come thither, you shall find the plague broken out in Ayr, which accordingly came to pass.

The plague was at that time very terrible, and he being necessarily separate from his people, it was to him the more grievous; but when the people of Ayr came to him to bemoan themselves, his answer was, that Hugh Kennedy, a godly gentleman in their town, should pray for them, and God should hear him. This counsel they accepted, and the gentleman convening a number of the honest citizens, prayed fervently for the town, as he was a mighty wrestler with God, and accordingly after that the plague decreased.

Now the time is come he must leave Scotland, and never to see it again, so upon the seventh of November 1606 in the morning, he with his neighbours took ship at Leith, and though it was but two o'clock in the morning, many were waiting on with their afflicted families, to bid them farewell. After prayer, they sung the xxiii psalm, and so set sail for the south of France, and landed in the river of Bourdeaux. Within fourteen weeks after his arrival. such was the Lord's blessing

upon his diligence, he was able to preach in French, and accordingly was speedily called to the ministry, first in one village, then in another; one of them was Nerac, and thereafter settled in saint Jean d' Angely, a considerable walled town, and there he continued the rest of the time he sojourned in France, which was about sixteen years. When he began to preach, it was observed by some of his hearers, that while he continued in the doctrinal part of his sermon, he spoke very correct French, but when he came to his application and when his affections kindled, his fervour made him sometimes neglect the accuracy of the French construction: but there were godly young men who admonished him of this, which he took in very good part, so for preventing mistakes of that kind, he desired the young gentlemen, when they perceived him beginning to decline, to give him a sign, and the sign was, that they were both to stand up upon their feet, and thereafter he was more exact in his expression through his whole sermon; so desirous was he, not only to deliver good matter, but to recommend it in the neat expression.

There were many times persons of great quality in his auditory, before whom he was just as bold as ever he had been in a Scots village; which moved Mr. Boyd of Trochrig once to ask him, (after he had preached before the university of Samure with such boldness and authority, as if he had been before the meanest congregation) how he could be so confident among strangers, and persons of such quality! to which he answered, That he was so filled with the dread of God, he had no apprehension from man at all; and this answer, said Mr. Boyd, did not remove my admiration, but rather increased it.

There was in his house amongst many others, who tabled with him for good education, a young gentleman of great quality, and suitable expectations, and this was the heir of the lord Ochiltry, who was captain of the castle of Edinburgh. This young nobleman, after he had gained very much upon Mr. Welch's affections, fell sick of a grievous sickness, and after he had been long wasted with it, closed his eyes, and expired as dying men used to do, so to the apprehension and sense of all spectators, he was no more but a carcase, and was therefore taken out of his bed, and laid upon a pallet on the floor, that his body might be the more conveniently dressed, as dead bodies used to be. This was to Mr. Welch a very great grief, and therefore he stayed with the young man's dead body full three hours, lamenting over him with great tenderness. After twelve hours, the friends brought in a coffin, whereunto they desired the corps to be put, as the custom is: but Mr. Welch desired, that for the satisfaction of his affections, they would forbear the youth for a time, which they granted, and returned not till twenty four hours, after his death, were expired; then they returned, with great importunity the corps might be confined, that it might be speedily buried, the weather being extremely hot; yet he persisted in his request, earnestly begging them to excuse him for once more; so they left the youth upon his pallet for full thirty six hours: but even after all that, though he was urged, not only with great earnestness, but displeasure, they were constrained to forbear for twelve hours yet more; and after forty eight hours were past, Mr. Welch was still where he was, and then his friends perceived that he believed the young man was not really dead, but under some

apoplectic fit, and therefore propounded to him for his satisfaction, that trial should be made upon his body by doctors and chirurgeons, if possibly any spark of life might be found in him, and with this he was content: so the physicians are set on work, who pinched him with pincers in the fleshy parts of his body, and twisted a bow string about his head with great force, but no sign of life appearing in him, so the physicians pronounced him stark dead, and then there was no more delay to be desired; yet Mr. Welch begged of them once more, that they would but step into the next room for an hour or two, and leave him with the dead youth, and this they granted: Then Mr. Welch fell down before the pallat, and cried to the Lord with all his might, for the last time and sometimes looked upon the dead body, continuing in wrestling with the Lord till at length the dead youth opened his eyes, and cried out to Mr. Welch whom he distinctly knew, O Sir, I am all whole, but my head and legs: and these were the places they had sore hurt, with their pinching.

When Mr. Welch perceived this, he called upon his friends, and shewed them the dead young man restored to life again, to their great astonishment. And this young nobleman, though he lost the estate of Ochiltry, lived to acquire a great estate in Ireland, and was lord Castlestewart, and a man of such excellent parts, that he was courted by the earl of Stafford to be a counsellor in Ireland, which he refused to be, and then he engaged, and continued for all his life, not only in honour and power, but in the profession and practice of godliness, to the great comfort of the country where he lived. This story the nobleman communicated to his friends in Ireland, and from them I had it.

While Mr. Welch was minister in one of these French villages, upon an evening a certain popish friar travelling through the country, because he could not find lodging in the whole village, addressed himself to Mr. Welch's house for one night. The servants acquainted their master and he was content to receive this guest. The family had supped before he came, and so the servants convoyed the friar to his chamber, and after they had made his supper, they left him to his rest. There was but a timber partition betwixt him and Mr. Welch, and after the friar had slept his first sleep, he was surprized with the hearing of a silent, but constant whispering noise, at which he wondered very much, and was not a little troubled with it.

The next morning he walked in the fields, where he chanced to meet with a country man, who saluting him because of his habit, asked him where he lodged that night? The friar answered he had lodged with the hugenot minister. Then the country man asked him what entertainment he had? The friar answered, Very bad; for, said he I always held there were devils haunting these ministers houses, and I am persuaded there was one with me this night, for I heard a continual whisper all the night over, which I believe was no other thing, than the minister and the devil conversing together. The country man told him, he was much mistaken, and that it was nothing else, but the minister at his night prayer. O, said the friar, does the minister pray any? Yes, more than any man in France, answered the country man, and you please to stay another night with him you may be satisfied. The friar got home to Mr. Welch's house, and pretending indisposition, entreated another night's lodging, which was granted him.

Before dinner, Mr. Welch came from his chamber, and made his family exercise, according to his custom. And first he sung a psalm, then read a portion of scripture, and discoursed upon it, thereafter he prayed with great fervour, as his custom was, to all which the friar was an astonished witness. After the exercise they went to dinner, where the friar was very civilly entertained, Mr. Welch forbearing all questions and dispute with him for the time; when the evening came, Mr. Welch made his exercise as he had done in the morning, which occasioned yet more wondering in the friar, and after supper to bed they all went; but the friar longed much to know what the night whisper was, and in that he was soon satisfied, for after Mr. Welch's first sleep, the noise began, and then the friar resolved to be sure what it was, so he crept silently to Mr. Welch's chamber-door, and there he heard not only the sound, but the words distinctly, and communications betwixt man and God, and such as he knew not had been in the world. Upon the next morning, as soon as Mr. Welch was ready, the friar went to him, and told him, that he had been bred in ignorance, and lived in darkness all his time, but now he was resolved to adventure his soul with Mr. Welch, and thereupon declared himself Protestant: Mr. Welch welcomed him and encouraged him, and he continued a constant protestant to his dying day. This story I had from a godly minister, who was bred in Mr. Welch's house, when in France.

When Lewis XIII. king of France, made war upon the Protestants there, because of their religion, the city of St. Jean d'Angely, was by him and his royal army besieged, and brought into extreme danger, Mr Welch was minister in the

town, and mightily encouraged the citizens to hold out, assuring them, God should deliver them. In the time of the siege a cannon ball pierced the bed where he was lying, upon which he got up, but would not leave the room, till he had by solemn prayer acknowledged his deliverance. During the siege, the townsmen made stout defence, until one of the king's gunners planted a great gun so conveniently upon a rising ground, that therewith he could command the whole wall, upon which the townsmen made their greatest defence. Upon this they were constrained to forsake the whole wall in great terror, and though they had several guns planted upon the wall, no man durst undertake to manage them. This being told Mr. Welch with great affrightment, he notwithstanding encouraged them still to hold out, and running to the wall himself, found the cannonier, who was a Burgundian, near the wall, him he entreated to mount the wall, promising to assist him in person, so to the wall they got. The cannonier told Mr. Welch, that either they behoved to dismount the gun upon the rising ground, or else they were surely lost; Mr. Welch desired him to aim well, and he should serve him, and God would help him; so the gunner falls a scouring his piece, and Mr. Welch runs to the powder to fetch him a charge; but as soon as he was returning, the king's gunner fired his piece, which carried both the powder and ladle out of Mr. Welch's hands, which yet did not discourage him, for having left the ladle, he filled his hat with powder, wherewith the gunner loaded his piece, and dismounted the king's gun at the first shot, so the citizens returned to their post of defence. This discouraged the king so, that he sent to the citizens to offer them fair conditions, which were,

That they should enjoy the liberty of their religion, their civil privileges, and their walls should not be demolished: only the king desired for his honours that he might enter the city with his servants in a friendly manner. This the city thought fit to grant, and the king with a few more entered the city for a short time.

But within a short time thereafter the war was renewed, and then Mr. Welch told the inhabitants of the city, that now their cup was full, and they should no more escape; which accordingly came to pass, for the king took the town, and as soon as ever it fell into his hand, he commanded Vitry, the captain of his guard, to enter the town, and preserve his minister from all danger; and then were horses and waggons provided for Mr. Welch, to remove him and his family for Rochel, where he remained till he obtained liberty to come to England, and his friends made hard suit, that he might be permitted to return to Scotland; because the physicians declared there was no other way to preserve his life, but by the freedom he might have in his native air. But to this king James would never yield, protesting he should never be able to establish his beloved bishops in Scotland, if Mr. Welch were permitted to return thither; so he languished at London a considerable time, his disease was judged by some to have a tendency to a sort of leprosy; physicians say he had been poisoned; a langour he had, together with a great weaknoss in his knees, caused by his continual kneeling at prayer: by which it came to pass, that though he was able to move his knees, and to walk, yet he was wholly insensible in them, and the flesh became hard like a sort of horn. But when in the time of his weak-

ness, he was desired to remit somewhat of his excessive painfulness, his answer was, He had his life of God, and therefore it should be spent for him.

His friends importuned king James very much, that if ho might not return to Scotland, at least he might have liberty to preach at London, which king James would never grant, till he heard all hopes of life were past, and then he allowed him liberty to preach, not fearing his activity.

Then as soon as ever he heard he might preach, he greedily embraced this liberty, and having access to a lecturer's pulpit, he went and preached both long and fervently : which was the last performance of his life ; for after ho had ended his sermon, he returned to his chamber, and within two hours quietly and without pain, ho resigned his spirit into his Maker's hands, and was buried near Mr. Deering, the famous English divine, after he had lived little more than fifty-two years.

FINIS