



ABS. 1. 79. 195

Alfred Lewellyn

Decr 30<sup>th</sup> 1877

From your affecy. J. L. Harris

J. Lewellyn  
Feb 1915

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“ He invited Ralph to sit down by his side on the shelvy  
rock.”

RALPH GEMMELL:

A

COVENANTER'S STORY.

BY ROBERT POLLOK, A.M.,

AUTHOR OF "THE COURSE OF TIME," ETC.

NEW EDITION.

EDINBURGH: WILLIAM OLIPHANT AND CO

LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.

MURRAY AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,  
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.



# RALPH GEMMELL.

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## CHAPTER I.

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy steps.”—SOLOMON.

THERE is no truth in the Bible better confirmed, or more fully illustrated by the experience of the saints whose lives it records, or by the plain declarations of the Holy Spirit, than that God will never leave nor forsake those who put their trust in Him. Yet there is no truth in that sacred book which the young Christian is oftener tempted to doubt. The veteran soldier of Jesus Christ, who had fought long under the banners of the Most High, sees in his own history so many dangers escaped, so many temptations resisted, so many trials endured, and so many battles with the devil, the world, and the flesh, fought and won, that he feels little dismay in the most trying and threatening circumstances. Although, like the children of Jacob of old, the sea be before him, and pathless mountains on the right hand and on the left, and the shout of his enemy behind him, he can ex-

claim, in the language of faith, "Verily, the Lord sendeth none a warfare on his own charges. He hath delivered me out of six troubles, and in seven He will not forsake me." But when the young Christian is left to experience poverty, and contempt, and shame; when he is tried by temptations, which he feels too persuasive; and when he meets with enemies too formidable for his single arm; little acquainted with the experience of others, and little assisted by his own; he is ready to take up the unbelieving complaint, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?"

It is a pity, young reader, that a child of grace should ever thus complain, and charge God foolishly. And that you may be cautioned against thus dishonouring the veracity of the God of truth, I request your attention to the following story:—

RALPH GEMMELL, the subject of the following narrative, was born in the year of our Lord 1669, a period when persecution for religious opinions raged in our country. His father, George Gemmell, possessed from a long line of ancestors, the small, but fertile, estate of Craigfoot, situated on the banks of the Irvine, near to where that river pours itself into the Atlantic. From time immemorial, the younger sons of this family had generally devoted their lives to the service of their sovereign, while the eldest son farmed the estate, related the gallant actions of his kinsmen.



and boasted the steady loyalty of his house to the reigning prince. And to Craigfoot, in the evening of their lives, had their warlike relations often returned, bringing with them many a story of deeds done in the field of battle, of dangers braved, and honours received. From generation to generation, the castle of Craigfoot had thus been like a garrison of disabled soldiers, where the ever loyal toast, the fearless attack, the hair-breadth escape, the profane jest, the unchaste song, and the daring oath, make their constant rounds. Within its walls was heard neither the humble voice of prayer, nor the sweet melody of sacred praise.

But of all the masters of this house, none ever proved himself so careless of religion, or so blindly devoted to his prince, as the father of Ralph. In those troublous and cruel times, when the church of our land was driven to the wilderness, and when its scattered members hung their harps on the willows of Scotland's wildest streams, zealously did he embrace every measure of Lauderdale's wicked administration to overthrow and destroy the Presbyterians. Every Sabbath he attended the curate's church, not to worship God, but to evince his loyal attachment to the crown, and his hearty approbation of all the iniquitous and tyrannical measures its ministers were then carrying on in Scotland. Sharpe himself was not more eager to detect and suppress conventicles than George Gemmell. And in his rancour against the persecuted party, he had been often heard to say,

that he would rather see the waters of the ocean come up over his lands, than one of those fanatic rebels (for so the Covenanters were called) set a foot on it.

Such was the character of Ralph's father. But his mother, Isabella Mitchell, of a respectable family of that name in Ayrshire, was of a very different temper. She had read her Bible with attention and humility, before the commencement of the persecution under which the church was then suffering; she had listened to the pulpit ministrations of a faithful servant of God; and she had held communion with her heavenly Father, through the peace-speaking blood of his Son. She sighed for the desolation of Zion; and would willingly have gone to the mountains in search of that heavenly manna, which no longer dropt from the lips of those who ministered in the pulpits; but she feared her husband, with whom she had been unequally yoked, and chose rather to weep and pray in secret, than provoke his anger and resentment, by an open avowal of attachment to the interests of the Covenanters. Indeed, although she had often violated her own conscience to please him, and thus sinfully regarded him more than her Maker, her serious cast of mind had frequently been the subject of his ridicule; and her sympathy with the suffering church, which she could not conceal, had many a time provoked his anger, and drawn upon her his severe reproach. But although Mrs Gemmell had thus yielded too much for the sake of domestic peace, she had seen as we have intimated, the vanity of

time and its honours, the importance of eternity and its glories ; and she wished to impress on the minds of her children, Ralph and Edward, the importance of religious duty. Ralph, the elder of the two, listened to her instructions with attention, and seemed peculiarly interested, when she told him of the nature of sin and its punishment,—of the love and mercy of God in Christ Jesus, and of faith and its everlasting reward. But Edward was happier when mounted on his little pony, and riding by his father's side, along with the soldiers, in quest of our persecuted ancestors, whose torture and martyrdom he was taught to deride. Nothing could prevail on Ralph, however, even at the early age at which we are speaking of him, to mock at the sufferings of his fellow-creatures ; and often when he saw men and women tortured by the merciless servants of despotism, he incurred his father's displeasure by entreating him to interfere and relieve them.

“ He will be like his mother,” his father would say, “ ever weeping for those seditious wretches ; but Edward is a true scion of the old stock of Craigfoot ; I see loyalty and soldier-like bravery in his face.”

Their tutor, a young man, recommended to Mr Gemmell by the curate of the parish, was entirely devoted to the wicked government, as on his interest with men in power rested all his hopes of preferment. What Mr Gemmell approved, therefore, he approved ; what the former condemned, so did the latter ; what the one practised, the other imitated. From a man

whose creed was ever ready thus to be adjusted to the suggestions of worldly interest, and whose practice was ever formed to the humour of those on whom he depended, Ralph and Edward could imbibe little that was valuable, either of morality or of religion. Although Ralph was far superior to his brother both in the strength of his understanding, and in the kinder feelings of his heart, Edward, because he was the father's favourite, was represented by the tutor as possessing a vigorous understanding, a sound and clear judgment, and a ready and tenacious memory; while it was hinted, that, indeed, Ralph might have sometimes more perseverance at his tasks, and more gentleness in his manners, but that his mental endowments were rather inferior, and seemed capable of little reach of improvement. Neglected by his father, Ralph was despised by the tutor and his brother. When Edward was invited forth to the sports of the field, or to attend the savage military in search of conventicles, he was left at home to pass the day with his mother and the servants. Happy it was for him that he was thus despised and left at home; it was then that his mother had an opportunity of freely setting before him the importance of a religious life; and it was then that first dawned on his soul the hopes and the glories of immortality.

"Dear Ralph," said his mother to him, one day when they were left alone, "you are now arrived at your thirteenth year. I have already often endeavoured to explain to you the Christian religion. Do

you understand it? have you felt its influence on your heart? are you cheered by its hopes? do you thirst after its glorious rewards? At all times, my son, the Christian has need to be well acquainted with the revealed truths on which he founds his hopes for eternity. At all times he has need to have the proofs of the divine origin of his religion so felt on his heart, as to enable him to gainsay the adversary, and hold fast the profession of his faith without wavering. But in these troublous and trying days, when the followers of the Lamb are hunted like the wild beasts of the field, persecuted, and everywhere spoken against, you have tenfold more need to acquaint yourself with religion, with its doctrines, its comforts, its hopes, and its rewards. Dear Ralph, have you considered these things?"

"I have often thought of them, dear mother," answered Ralph, "but I like to hear you speak of them. I am never happier than when you speak to me about religion."

"And I am never happier," replied his mother "than when I see you attentive to my instructions, and storing your mind with those truths which the Bible reveals. Listen, then, my son; and may the Spirit of grace and of wisdom be present in our hearts while I speak.

"We learn, dear Ralph, from the works of nature, that there is a God of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; but we cannot discern by all that is around us, our relation to Him. Our own hearts

as well as the unjust actions we commit every day, inform us that we are sinners, and that we have need of a Saviour. But of this Saviour the works of nature give us no intimation. It is the Bible that reveals God to man, as a God of mercy, willing to be reconciled to us through his own Son. It is the Bible that teaches us our duty to our God and to our fellow-creatures—what we ought to do in time, and what we ought to expect in eternity. There we learn that God is not only all-powerful and all-wise, but also infinite, holy, and just; hating all manner of sin; and bound, by his own word, to punish every transgression of his holy law. There we learn, too, that we are great sinners, have broken his law and have exposed ourselves to everlasting punishment; that we are dead in trespasses and sins, totally unable either to keep his law or to ransom ourselves from its curse. But the Bible does not, you know, leave us in this hopeless state. It tells us, that our God is merciful; that He so loved the world as to send Jesus Christ, his well-beloved Son, into it, to fulfil the law for us, to suffer and die for us. Jesus, you know, had no sin of his own: He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. But He died for our sins, and rose again, and ascended up into heaven to plead for us in the presence of his Father—to plead, that through his merits our sins may be forgiven, and that we may be received, in due time, into those mansions of happiness which He is preparing for us.

“Do you, then, dear Ralph, know and feel your self to be a sinner, guilty in the sight of God’s law, and utterly undone for ever, unless Jesus Christ clothe you in his righteousness, and plead with his Father that your sins may be forgiven through his own blood? Do you believe on this Saviour? Do you think He is able and willing to save you? Have you placed all your hope for time and eternity on Him alone? Alas! kind as our Saviour is, able and willing as He is to save to the uttermost all who believe on Him, many will not listen to the invitations of his mercy, nor accept of his offered pardon! So much hath sin darkened the human mind to its own best interests, that none can believe on Him until the understanding is enlightened by the Spirit of God, and the heart made willing in the day of his power. Pray, then, my son, pray that this Holy Spirit may come into your heart, and abide in it for ever. This is the promise of God to all his children: ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and all the treasures of free grace shall be opened up to you.’ Place at all times your faith and your hope on the Saviour, this Rock of Ages, and you have no need to fear the troubles of life. These troubles you must not expect to escape. It is through many tribulations that the Christian is taken to heaven. It is through fire and water that he is brought into the wealthy place. But your Saviour will be present with you in every trial; and He will never suffer you to be overcome. In the darkest

night of trouble and affliction, your hopes shall have rest in heaven ; and in your bosom shall dwell that peace which passeth understanding. In death, too, He shall be your friend and deliverer ; and after death He shall receive you into that happy place, where you shall be for ever rewarded with the smiles of his countenance."

"I wish to be religious," said Ralph ; "but when Edward laughs at my seriousness, and my father encourages him to do it, I am ashamed, and sometimes determine to be like them."

"Your situation, my dear," continued his mother, "is certainly difficult. It is hard to resist the bad example, and bear the mockery of those who are ever about you. But, my son, remember this ; put your trust in God, and He will never leave nor forsake you. He will make you strong to resist all evil, and to set at nought all the revilings of the wicked. Persevere in religion, for it is happiness. Edward heeds none of my advice, and his father commends him for his foolishness, and teaches him to despise religious instruction. I fear he will go far astray ; but I hope that you, through the grace of God, will resist bad example, and, by persevering in the service of your God, secure not only your own peace and happiness, but perhaps yet be the means of saving your brother."

Young reader, I repeat to you what this excellent lady said to her son : Persevere in religion, for it is happiness. Is not religion just a trusting in God, who cannot lie ; a renouncing of the vain speculations,



and opinions and surmises of erring men ; and a placing of our faith on the words, promises, and appointments of an all-wise and all-ordering God ? Is it not just a withdrawing of our confidence from the frailty and weakness of human power, and a leaning on the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength ? Is it not just a coming forth from a land of darkness, ignorance, and slavery, and an entering into the fair regions of light, knowledge, and liberty ? What is it but a leaving of those pleasures which debase, and cannot satisfy, of those hopes which promise but to deceive, and of those schemings and reasonings which perplex, but give no certainty ; and a taking of ourselves up with those enjoyments which dignify and exalt us, while they never satiate—with those hopes which promise all that is really valuable, and give us all they promise—with those truths which are sanctioned by God, and which, therefore, are immutable—and with those plans which took their origin in eternal wisdom, and which, therefore, can never miscarry ? Religion is a coming forth from all that is impure, and abominable in the world, from the prison of guilt, and anxiety and hopelessness ; and forming an alliance with all that is pure, and holy, and happy. It is a putting away from us that which is empty, and fleeting, and perishing ; and a laying fast hold of that which is substantial, satisfying, and eternal. It is an escape from the terrors of death, and the wrath of the Great Judge of all, into the bosom of our God—into the dwellings of peace,

and love, and immortality. This is religion. These are the trust and the doings, the hopes and rewards, of the Christian.

Sometimes exposed to the taunts of his relations, and the unholy influence of the unrestrained dissipation and hardened wickedness of the times, but oftener employed in listening to his mother's instructions, in reading his Bible, or in storing his mind from other books of useful knowledge, Ralph reached his fifteenth year. About this time he lost his mother. A lingering illness, occasioned by her grief for the distressed state of the persecuted church, and by the hard-hearted severity and wickedness of her husband, deprived him of that loving parent and kind monitor. Her dying advice to Ralph was short and simple :—

“I have often violated my conscience, dear Ralph,” said she, as he stood by her bedside, only a few hours before her death ; “I have often violated my conscience for the sake of domestic peace. I should have been more resolute and more public in serving my God and Redeemer. But I know He will be merciful to my unrighteousness ; and my sins and iniquities He will remember no more. I shall see Him, because He loved me. I shall enter into his presence, because Christ died for me. But I wish not you to follow that part of my example which I now lament. You will have the same difficulties to encounter, the same reproach to bear ; and if you take a more decided part than I have done in the interests

of the suffering church, and a more open and avowed path in the service of God, which I earnestly wish you may, you will have more trials to endure, and more obloquy to withstand. But, dear Ralph, that which the word of God and your own conscience testify to be your duty, choose and do. Regard not the consequences—the reproach of relations, the malignity of enemies, the sneers of careless dissipation: these, under the guidance of a kind Providence, will work together for your good. Remember what the Bible says, and what I have often repeated to you: Put your trust in God, and He will never leave nor forsake you. Protected by his power, you shall be safe, for it is almighty; led by his wisdom, you shall not go astray, for it never errs; hoping in his Son, you shall not be deceived, for He shall appear at last in his Father's presence, bringing with Him all who have put their trust in Him. And while you walk thus in the strength of your God, ever seek to be useful to your fellow-creatures; and Oh, seek especially the spiritual welfare of your father and brother. I have often prayed for them. It hath not yet pleased God to answer my prayers; but you may live to see them answered, and your own piety rewarded, by the happy conversion of your father and brother. Now, my son, remember when I am gone, that this was the soundest advice, and the sweetest comfort that your dying mother could give you: 'Put your trust in God, and He will never leave nor forsake you.'

## CHAPTER II.

• My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not; walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path, that thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the path of the righteous."—SOLOMON.

RALPH, after the death of his mother, experienced little comfort in his father's house. Edward, as we have observed, was taught to ridicule his seriousness; his father was daily telling him that he would be a disgrace to his name; and the servants, following the example of their master, regarded him as a kind of outcast, and took every opportunity to insult and deride him.

From the curate, whom he still attended on Sabbath, he could gather little either to enlighten his mind or strengthen his piety. His sermons chiefly inculcated submission to the unjust measures of government, activity in suppressing those whose opinions differed from that of the then existing ecclesiastical establishment, and zeal in supporting the hierarchy to which he belonged. These were the chief doctrines which Ralph heard at church, and he was not satisfied. He wished to hear more of Christ, the great head of the Church; more of belief in Him who is the way, the truth, and the life; and more of holiness, without which none can see God

He had diligently contemplated the features of the times ; he had examined the creed, opinions, and life of the persecuted party ; he had likewise examined the principles, as well as the conduct of those who persecuted them ; and, young as he was, he could easily see that the former were suffering for holding opinions founded on the word of God, and sanctioned by their own consciences, for their highest privileges as men, and their dearest rights as Christians ; and the latter oppressing, torturing, and murdering, for non-submission to institutions which their own selfishness had suggested, and which they were ever ready to change for any other that might promise more gain to their avarice, or more indulgence to their vicious dispositions.

Impressed by these opinions, it was little wonder that Ralph, alive as he was to the dictates of conscience, and the calls of religion, had a strong inclination to join the Covenanters. But in doing this, he must submit to persecution and reproach, forsake his father's house, lay down all hopes of honour and preferment, abide the contempt and the hate of his nearest kinsmen, and experience the rigorous discipline of cold, and hunger, and cheerless wandering. Surely, young reader, this was no very agreeable reflection. It was enough to make a more experienced Christian than Ralph halt between two opinions.

More than three months after his mother's death he passed in this uneasy state of mind ; now resolving to leave all and follow Christ, now looking forward to the dreariness of a life of suffering, and

again, back on that old paternal castle, and those fertile fields, which might one day be all his own. And verily, were it in man that walketh to direct his steps—were it not God that chooseth his way, it is very probable that Ralph would have turned away from the sufferings he saw before him, and taken up with the ease, and the plenty, and the honour, which the world promised him. But God knoweth his own, and it is as certain that He will provide the means of enlightening them in the knowledge of himself, and of confirming them in his service, as that He will for ever protect and uphold them.

One Sabbath, after returning home as usual from the unprofitable discourse of the curate, Ralph went out at the evening-tide to meditate. It was in the end of autumn. And as he walked along the banks of the Irvine towards the sea, the wild flower, with scarcely its withered stalk remaining, which he had seen in the early year painted with all the colours of beauty—the shrub naked and blasted, which was lately vested in a thick foliage of healthy green—the aged leaf which fell rustling from its fellows—the stream, which was ever running on to be lost in the ocean—and the light, which faded dimly away on the indistinct summits of Arran; all had a tendency to draw him into serious musing, and especially to remind him of the short duration and sure decay of all earthly things.

“As for man,” said he to himself, “his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth;

for the wind passeth over it and it is gone ; and the place thereof shall know it no more. As the waters of this river run for a little, and then fall into the ocean, so shall time be with me ; so suddenly shall I pass into eternity. As the light dieth away on yonder mountains, so speedily shall the sun of my days set for ever. What, then, should I do ? Should I fear the reproach and persecution of man, which cannot long annoy me ? Should I take the honours and the pleasures which he can give me, which, short as life is, may wither and die long before me, and will, at any rate, slip from my grasp when I go down into the grave ? or should I serve my God, whose almighty power can protect me from every thing that would really hurt me in time, and whose loving-kindness and tender mercy will provide for me after death an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away ? Surely the wisdom of man is foolishness. Why should I listen to it ? O that God would direct my steps, and enable me to put my trust in Him alone !”

Thus did the merciful Creator make the contemplation of his works subservient to strengthen the piety of the young Christian. Musing on such thoughts as these, Ralph wandered on to the seashore. Agreeably to those sudden changes which happen so often in our climate towards the end of autumn, night, which at its coming on had been calm and serene, was now wrapt in the clouds of his thick darkness--the winds came in the swiftness of their

fury—the ocean lifted up his voice, and roared in the pride of his strength—and athwart the gloom at intervals gleamed the lightnings of God, awfully displaying the features of the storm. As it did not yet rain, however, Ralph walked on. The awful majesty of nature had something in it which pleased him, and sanctioned the reflections he had just made—something which reminded him of the littleness of man, and the greatness of the Creator. “How dreadful,” thought he, “to have that God our enemy, who walketh on the wings of the wind, and biddeth the storm do his pleasure! who setteth his foot on the sea, and holdeth the waters in the hollow of his hands, who sendeth the lightning, and they say unto Him, Here we are!”

Thus contemplating, he was walking along the coast, when his ear was attracted by the following words:

“How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not avenge the blood of thy servants! Thy holy city is a wilderness: Zion is a wilderness; Jerusalem a desolation. Be not wroth very sore, neither remember iniquity for ever. Behold, we beseech Thee; we are thy people. Oh visit Zion in thy mercy! Let not the weapon that is formed against her prosper; and the tongue that is raised against her in judgment do Thou condemn. We know that thy church is graven on the palms of thy hands, and Thou wilt bring her out of the deep waters. But, gracious Father! give us, poor helpless sinners, patience and resignation to wait till thy time come.



Give us that abiding faith in our Saviour, and that inextinguishable love, which, in all our trials, will make us more than conquerors. Yea, our eyes are unto Thee, O God, the Lord: in Thee is our trust: leave not our souls destitute: keep us from the snares which are laid for us, and the gins of the workers of iniquity."

After these breathings of holy fervour had ascended up unto the throne of God, Ralph heard proceeding from the same place the sweet melody of praise; and now it was lost in the loud voice of the storm, and again, in the intervals of partial calm, it came forth on the ear like the music of heaven. Ralph walked up to the place whence the sounds proceeded; and among the rugged cliffs, by the very side of the sea, did he find ten or twelve of those Christian heroes whom persecution had compelled to choose that secluded place, and that hour, to them of favourable darkness, to hear the word of life, and adore and praise the God and Redeemer of mankind.

At Ralph's approach, they seemed somewhat alarmed, for they knew well, though in so retired a place, and under the wing of night, they were not safe from the vigilant persecution of their enemies. They feared, therefore, that Ralph might be a guide to a party of dragoons. But as some of those present had been but lately tenants of his father, he was soon recognised. They had heard it reported that he favoured their party, and that he had for several years, suffered little less from his wicked relations at home, than they had endured in their flights and

wanderings. He was, therefore, gladly received amongst them. The reverend old minister, part of whose prayer he had just heard, and who had once been his mother's spiritual guide and dear friend, was especially interested at his appearance. Ever zealous in his Master's work, and remembering how desirous Mrs Gemmell had been that her sons might be true fearers of God, he invited Ralph to sit down by his side on the shelvy rock, and entered into conversation with him. With fatherly tenderness the venerable pastor encouraged the youth to describe the circumstances in which he was placed, and lay open the state of his mind. This was the first time that Ralph had had an opportunity of conversing with a faithful servant of the Most High. And truly his heart burned within him, as the good old man thus concluded a long and tender advice to him.

"Now, my son," for so tenderly did he address him, "now I know the difficulty of your circumstances. I know how hard it is to leave father, and brother, and houses, and lands, and goods, and plenty, and honour; and to be hated of those of whose love you are most desirous, and to be despised of those in whose eyes you most wish to appear honourable. We can promise you little but trial and suffering. We have been driven from our houses and possessions. Our families are left to wander and weep in poverty, exposed to contempt, and subjected to the insults of a brutal soldiery. Torture, imprisonment, and banishment are prepared for us. A price

is set on our heads, and our lives are every day sought for. We are cut off from all the comforts of life, and are exposed to almost all the ills which this world can muster up against the people of God. Now, my son, if you will take up your cross and follow Christ, you must be prepared to meet similar trials. But remember that you have his promise, that if you forsake father and mother, and houses and lands, for his sake, He will give you an hundred-fold of spiritual blessings in this world, and eternal life in that which is to come. Remember what Christ has suffered for you. All that the wickedness of men could invent, and all that the offended justice of his Father required, He endured for you ;—so ardent was his love for you ; so inexhaustible his mercy !

“ If you are resolved to put your trust in Christ, and follow Him through good and through bad report, although we can promise you none of this world’s comforts or honours, we can promise you, that although you be perplexed, you shall never be in despair ; although you are persecuted, you shall never be forsaken ; although you are cast down, you shall never be destroyed.

“ Are you afraid to put your whole trust in God ? Look around you and see. Is there any thing on earth or in hell that can snatch you out of the hand of his omnipotence ? Is there any power that can effectually hurt you, if ye abide under the shadow of the Almighty ? He walketh on the sea, and his path is in the great waters ; and He can say to the

raging of that vast ocean, Peace, be still! He walketh on the wings of the winds, and He can bid them, when He will, away to their place. He sitteth on the circuit of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers. These lightnings which you see gleaming through the darkness of the night, go abroad at his word, and would, if He commanded, in the twinkling of an eye, lay the boasting of human strength, and the pride of human greatness in a heap of burning desolation. Are you afraid to put your trust in this God? Are you afraid to meet the fury of man's battle, if He be on your side? Only put your trust in Him, and you are safe. His love and his mercy will never forsake you. Love your Saviour and serve Him, and you may say, in the darkest night of human calamity, I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for Thou, O Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.'

As the minister concluded these instructions, the gloom began to disperse, and the moon and stars looking through the clouds, cast their silvery light on the majestic scenery around. Then did Ralph observe the countenances of those about him. Twenty years had the old pastor wandered among the mountains of Scotland, subjected to every hardship, and separated from every earthly comfort. Often had he made the narrowest escapes from his persecutors; and often, exposed as he was this night to the fierceness of the storm, had he met, in the wildest glens and most forlorn caves of our country, with the few who had forsaken all to follow Christ, to instruct,

comfort, and animate them; and yet, when Ralph looked on his face, he could see nothing in it but the composure of peace and the sweetness of contentment. The few that were around him, although some of them bore the marks of suffering, their clothes being worn to tatters, and their bodies emaciated by fatigue, had all of them in their countenances the meekness of resignation, and the fortitude of Christian faith;—so powerful is the grace of God—so sure the comforts of religion.

After appointing where to meet with the minister next Sabbath, Ralph left him, and returned home. It was late when he arrived; but as it was customary for him to retire every Sabbath evening from the idle and profane conversation of his relations, his late return excited no surprise. During the week he reflected much on what he had heard. The instructions, arguments, and advice of the old minister had a powerful influence in determining him to keep his appointment next Sabbath. But especially when he considered how many trials the aged pastor and his friends had gone through, and yet how little they regarded them; how many privations they were enduring, and yet how constant they were; how many calamities were threatening them, and yet how calmly they looked forward, resting their confidence and their hope in the all-sufficiency of their Saviour—he determined to hesitate no longer, but to meet with them on the coming Sabbath, and to cast in his lot with theirs.

## CHAPTER III.

\* He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand ; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure."

EARLY on the Sabbath morning Ralph left home, and in the barn of a farm-house, about three miles distant, met, according to appointment, with the old minister, and twelve or fifteen people who had assembled to hear the gospel. Scarcely were the psalm and prayer concluded, however, when an alarm was given by one who watched at a little distance, that a party of dragoons were riding towards the house. One of those wicked men, who in those days were well paid by the abettors of tyranny and persecution for bringing information against the Covenanters, during the preceding week had found means of discovering the place and hour of the present meeting ; and now, like Judas of old, he came the leader of that savage soldiery who took delight in shedding the blood of the saints.

When the old minister heard that the dragoons were at hand, he recommended all present to God, the preserver of men, and earnestly begged that they would leave him, and take every possible measure for their own safety. But this they would by no means do. He had been the spiritual father, the comforter, and friend of most of those present, from their earliest

youth. He had grown grey in the service of his heavenly Master ; and his little flock seemed more anxious to save him than themselves.

“ Can you not hide him,” said a boy, a son of the farmer to whom the house belonged—“ can you not hide him in the hole below the kitchen floor, where Mr M‘Coll once hid himself when the dragoons were here before ?”

“ Thank you, my good boy,” said his father ; ‘ the alarm and danger had driven that place from my recollection. He may be safe there. It has sheltered many a worthy Christian from the blood-hounds of persecution.’”

Under the kitchen floor had been dug a cavity sufficiently large to hold two or three persons. The entrance to it was covered by a thin flag, so light that a single person could remove it, which, when closed, had such a complete likeness to the rest of the floor, that it could create no suspicion of any retreat below.

Into this place the old minister was persuaded to descend ; and both because he was afraid that Ralph had too little experience in the Christian warfare, and because he had been the immediate instrument of bringing him into the present danger, he invited the youth to conceal himself in the same place. This, however, Ralph refused. He was young, he said, and able to endure hardships ; but there were those present with hoary heads, who could ill bear the insolent and cruel treatment to which they should be

exposed, if they fell into the hands of their persecutors. There was no time for dispute. The owner of the house, and another old man, went into the cave along with the minister, and the flag was instantly returned to its place. Thus, young reader, had our Christian ancestors to hide themselves, for their attachment to religion and to their God.

Scarcely were these three old men concealed, when the dragoons, about twenty in number, arrived. They consisted mostly of Highlanders from the wildest districts of the North. Their countenances were fierce and cruel; and they seemed in general only to understand so much English as to be able, in that language, to curse their fellow-men, and blaspheme their Maker.

The Covenanters, aware that escape by flight was impossible, and knowing that, unarmed as they were, resistance would be vain, peaceably allowed themselves to be made prisoners. Their arms were pinioned to their bodies with cords, which the soldiers had brought with them for that purpose: and while they were thus bound as the vilest traitors, they were upbraided with the worst of names, and insulted with the most insolent and most contemptuous mockery. After some of them had been tortured in vain, to make them discover the owner of the house and the old minister, they were all conducted to Irvine. As persecution was then in the heat of its rage, I need not tell you what their fate was. Ralph was saved from that death to which



the rest were doomed, only by the influence of his father.

Mr Gemmell was just passing to the curate's church when the prisoners were guarded through the town to gaol. We have already mentioned his violent hatred to the persecuted party, and his displeasure at Ralph's serious and religious cast of mind; but paternal feelings, which cannot be easily overcome, compelled him to interfere for the safety of his son. To a man whose house had been long friendly to the governing party, and who had attested his own attachment to the present despotism, by the most diligent suppression, so far as it was in his power, of every movement against it, this was no difficult task. It was necessary, however, before Ralph's pardon and liberty could be granted, that his father should promise that his son's future conduct would be agreeable to government; and further, that Ralph himself should take what was called the test—a kind of oath by which the parties swearing engaged to renounce all communications with the Covenanters, to abjure all opinions not consonant with the institutions then established, and to defend every measure of government, however wicked or tyrannical.

And did Ralph swear this oath? Did he forget to soon the lessons of the old minister? Did he forget so soon his mother's last injunctions?—injunctions supported by the word of God, to abide by his duty, regardless of the consequences; to put his trust in God, and to despise the threatening of men?

He forgot none of these ; but he had leaned too much to the strength of his own arm. He had not yet rested his unhesitating confidence on the Rock of Ages. His impressions of religious duty had been strong ; and he had not yet fully recognised his own weakness, and his ever present need of Almighty grace. And now when he was threatened with imprisonment and death ; when he was reproached by a father with dishonouring his family, and assailed on every side by entreaties or ridicule ; although his tongue faltered, and every limb of his body trembled while he took the oath—he did take it. He engaged to assist in extirpating that form of religious worship which he thought most agreeable to the word of God, and which his own conscience therefore approved.

Let us pause here, young reader, and ask ourselves how we are prepared for meeting the threatenings of power, and the solicitations of sinful pleasure ? True, you are not menaced with the instruments of torture, with dungeons, and exile. You see not the sword of persecution laid to your neck, nor the heads and hands of the people of God nailed to the gates of the towns of our country. You have no occasion to fly from your dwelling at cold midnight, and seek refuge in the solitudes of nature. You can go forward in the track of Christian duty, certain that nothing in the shape of external force will meet you to force you out of it. You may put on the uniform of a soldier of Jesus, and march forth to the Christian warfare.

secure that no band of warriors, with sword and buckler, will set the battle in array against you, with the determined purpose of dragging you away from under the banners of the Most High. But are you safer on this account? Have you less need of leaning on an Almighty arm? Pause and consider! Are there not waiting you, at every footstep of your journey, unlawful pleasures inviting you, with tongues of sweetest persuasion, to turn aside from the upright path, and promising to entertain you in the gay and flowery fields of unwithering delight? And have you not in your own bosom a set of treacherous inclinations which have an ever-greedy ear to every delusive voice, and which are ever willing to wander from the steep ascent of virtue, and to take themselves up with the indulgent offers of present enjoyment? Are not the reasonings of a sophistical philosophy, and the misrepresentations of a false religion ever casting their doubts in your way, to turn you out of it, and draw you into a labyrinth of inextricable difficulties? Will you not meet avarice tempting you with his gold, and ambition directing you away to the gaudy heights of human glory? Will you not, at every step of your Christian progress, have to set your face against the mockery of wanton dissipation, and the studied and pointed ridicule of veteran wickedness? Will you not be solicited by the flattering words and decoying speeches of polished libertinism, which will introduce themselves to your ear with all the warmth of dis-

interested friendship, and all the gentleness of practised courtesy? Truly you will find these more dangerous foes, more frequent in their inroads, and more varied and persevering in their attacks, than the most violent of open and avowed enemies.

When the sword of persecution is unsheathed, and when it is plainly seen that something serious is determined against us, we put ourselves on our guard, advance with caution, examine every step we take, canvas every intelligence, and suspect every fair pretender of wishing to decoy us into the snares of the enemy. Besides, when we are beset by external violence, we are assisted in repelling it by that principle of our nature which rejects compulsion, and which will not comply with those who will have us their own way, whether we will or not, however agreeable to us their paths might otherwise be. But when vice comes in the guise of seeming zeal for our good, which infidel philosophy often assumes—or with the wanton jest and immoral illusion, which polished licentiousness is ever dropping from his tongue; or with the witty sarcasm and grave ridicule, which flow so profusely from the lips of irreligious genius; or when it tells us of riches, and honours, and preferments, and whispers in our ears, that if we stubbornly abide by the dictates of honesty, we shall probably die poor; then, young reader, it is that your enemy is the strongest, and that you have most need to call into service all the energies of your religion. Instead of any natural principle coming to

your assistance against foes like these, you have many of their friends in your own breast, wishing every moment to betray you, and labouring with all their might to hasten your defeat and complete your ruin.

Beware, then, young reader, of trusting to yourself; for if you do so but for a single step, at that step you will fall. Christ hath overcome the world; put your trust in Him, and you shall overcome it too.

## CHAPTER IV.

"The Lord is with you, while you be with Him: and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you: if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you."—CHRONICLES.

"In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer."—ISAIAH.

ON Ralph's return home, after thus renouncing his religion, his father at first assailed him with the most severe and indignant reproof. He reproached him not only for disgracing a family which had long boasted of its honour, but as he was answerable for the conduct of his family, for exposing him, if Government should exact it, to heavy penalties. And besides, he was told he had thrown an indelible stigma on his character, by associating with fanatics and traitors; for such was the light in which Mr Gemmell viewed the Covenanters. And further, he was assured, if ever he ventured again to attend their meetings, or at any future period should show them the least countenance, the paternal estate would be given to his brother, and he disinherited and disowned for ever.

But, as Mr Gemmell was really concerned for the honour, as he thought it, of his son, he did not leave him with reproach and censure. He assumed a

gentler mood, and represented to him how much his disobedience and folly had grieved his heart; promised, if his future conduct were agreeable to his wishes, to pay him the most fatherly attention; to make him his companion in all his visitings and amusements, and to introduce him to the notice of men of the first rank and highest honour in the country—assuring him, at the same time, that by pursuing the course which he himself had done, he would live in ease and happiness, would be respected and honoured by the nobles of the nation, and would add another worthy name to the dignity of his family.

These last arguments had a powerful effect on Ralph's mind. He had seldom heard his father speak kindly to him; and he was entirely overcome by the present tenderness. His conscience, no doubt, still told him he was wrong; but he had the sanction of a father, and he tried to silence its complaining. He rode out with his relations in quest of conventicles; he laughed at his own adventure with the Covenanters; he endeavoured to appear unconcerned about their sufferings; he took a share in whatever licentious conversation offered itself, and imitated the profane scoff and wicked ribaldry of his companions. His father rejoiced in the change, and every day showed him more kindness and respect; and all his relations caressed and complimented him as a worthy heir of so respectable a house. So much more were his circumstances easy and agreeable than formerly—and so much were his pride and

vanity flattered by the attentions and commendation he met with on all hands, that, to the eye of mortal penetration, he seemed to have made final shipwreck of his religion, and to have allied himself by a league that could never be broken with the world which lieth in wickedness. But God seeth not as man seeth. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his thoughts than man's thoughts.

Ralph, as we have hinted, although pleased and dazzled with his present condition, was not satisfied. His conscience often condemned him; and as it corresponded to the word of God, he knew its condemnations were just. Oft, in the merriment of light-hearted excursion, and the mirthfulness of wanton conversation, did its reproaches sting his soul and suddenly sadden his mind with the bitterness of remorse. But especially when he withdrew to repose, in the darkness and loneliness of midnight, did this censor within, directed by the Spirit of grace, set his sins in order before him, and point to the awful consequences.

One night, after having taken more than a usual share in the unholy mirth and licentious revelry which were so common in those times, and nowhere more so than in his father's house, he retired to bed, and had almost dropt asleep, when he was quickly alarmed by one of those sudden starts which are caused by a momentary cessation of the pulsation of the heart. Thousands have been thus alarmed at the beginning of their first slumbers, have felt a mo-



ment's uneasiness, laid their head again on the pillow, and slept soundly. But it was not so with Ralph. He thought he felt something like the visitation of death about him; a cold sweat suffused his body; and he durst scarcely lay his head down on the pillow. Quick as the lightning's flash did his mind traverse the field of his past doings. The many instructions, advices, and warnings he had received from an affectionate mother; the knowledge he had acquired of the will of God in the Bible; the conversation that had passed between him and the old minister; the resolutions which he had so often formed to be religious; the promises which he had made to God never to forsake his duty; all stood up as a strong witness against him. And his renouncing his religion when he knew he was doing wrong; his seeking the praise of men rather than the praise of God; his countenancing the endeavour to extirpate that faith which his own conscience approved of; his mingling in profane conversation when the voice within had bidden him withdraw; his love to the indulgences of wickedness when he was aware that he should have hated them; these, like so many spirits of darkness, gathered around his soul, and for a moment involved him in the gloom of despair. The anguish of his mind affected his body; he shivered, trembled, and still imagined he felt death laying his hand upon him. He thought God had forsaken him, and had left him to try what support or comfort the friendship of wicked men could

give him in the moment of dissolution. And truly then did he feel how helpless, how insignificant a thing he was! how unequal to tread the darkness of death alone! how weak, how deceitful, and how despicable the pride of human strength, and the flattering of human honours! He felt that all things below the sun are indeed vanity of vanities; that the soul cannot lean on any of them when shaken by the hand of death; and that man is really dependant on his Maker. For a moment did the terrors of despair convulse his spirit. He saw no smile from heaven; and in that moment he felt a bitterness of anguish, which he would have willingly exchanged for a whole life-time of poverty, and shame, and bodily suffering. So will you feel, young reader, if ever you be threatened with death, when as ill-prepared for meeting it as Ralph was.

But this was only the hiding of his heavenly Father's countenance—only one of those kind chastisements by which He convinces his children of their own helplessness—of the weakness of human strength—and of the meanness of this world's glory; and by which He teaches them repentance and humility, and the necessity of putting their trust in Him alone, for time and eternity. Ralph was not long left in this state of utter hopelessness: that holy, that watchful, that comforting Spirit, which never loses sight of any whom the Lord hath chosen for his own, came into his soul. Then was his mind turned to the contemplation of that blood which cleanseth from all sin.

He wept the tear of true repentance, and prayed in the language of faith, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner!" He now saw himself more guilty in the sight of God than ever; but he saw, also, God willing to be reconciled to him through Jesus Christ, and he felt a holy peace and confidence in his Redeemer, to which he had been formerly an utter stranger. So much weakness had he discovered in his own strength, that he durst no longer put the least trust in it, and so much deceit in his own heart, that he durst not promise future obedience. But humbly did he wish to be enabled by the Holy Spirit to make the will of God and his glory the aim of all his future actions. And humbly did he pray, that the same Divine Spirit would ever keep present on his mind the impressions which it had received of its own frailty and the world's deceitfulness; that He would ever give him to put an undivided trust in his Saviour, and that He would, by his counsel, ever guide his feet in the way of everlasting life. Such are the feelings of the true child of God, to whom He saith, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Solaced by these thoughts, and committing himself to the protection of his God, Ralph soon sunk into sweet repose.

## CHAPTER V.

“Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil falsely against you for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.”  
—ST MATTHEW.

NEXT morning Ralph arose, and resolved, since he could not stay at home without sharing in the wickedness of the house, or exposing himself anew to reproach and ridicule, to spend the day in a solitary walk, and to engage himself in serious thought how to conduct his future life.

He took his favourite walk down the banks of the Irvine. It was the last month of spring. The beams of the morning sun threw an air of sprightliness and gaiety over nature, that smiled around him in the loveliness and vigour of youth. The fields had clothed themselves in their mantle of green, and the singing of birds was heard in the woods. And although he knew how many of Scotland's best friends and most faithful servants of God were that morning wandering in poverty, immured in dungeons, or appointed to immediate death; and although he looked forward to all these evils as embattled against himself, yet, so entire was his resignation to the will of God—so confiding his trust in the all-sufficiency of divine grace, that his heart took in the joy of

nature ; and the breathings of its love and thankfulness ascended up to heaven with the universal anthem of nature's gratitude.

“ Why should I be sad ? ” thought the young Christian, “ or why should my soul be cast down ? The flocks that sport on yonder hills, and the herds that browse on yonder meadow, seem grateful for their day of short enjoyment that will soon end for ever. The songsters of the wood warble their song of praise, although they must soon perish utterly ; and why should not I be glad ? Why should not I, too, join the happy melody ? What are this world's sufferings to me ? What is all that the wickedness of man can do ? Is not my soul immortal ? When this body decays, have I not a tabernacle, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ? Are there not rivers of pleasure at the right hand of God, secured to me by my Saviour's death ? And when the loveliness of this world's scenery, and the mirthfulness of its irrational inhabitants, shall not be seen nor heard any more, shall not I, if I trust in my Redeemer and keep his commandments, stand in the presence of God and the Lamb, and sing the song of the Lamb in eternity ? ”

Employed with such thoughts as these, Ralph had nearly reached the sea-shore, when he was suddenly roused from his meditations by the sound of the military drum, and the tumult of a mixed multitude of soldiers, king's officers, magistrates, and others, leading, from the town of Irvine to the side of the

sea, a female, who, by her looks, appeared to be in her eighteenth or nineteenth year. This young woman, when an infant, had lost her mother, and she had seen her father, only a few weeks before the time of which we speak, torn from her arms and dragged to the gibbet. But the cruelty of persecution is as insatiable as the grave. The poor orphan girl had been apprehended on the preceding Sabbath at one of those field-meetings, whither she had resorted to worship God as her conscience directed her; and because neither entreaties nor threatenings could prevail on her to take the test which we formerly explained, she had been sentenced to be put to death by drowning—a kind of death to which several females were condemned in those days.

In the channel of the sea, from which the waves retired at low water, was fixed a stake, whither, between two ruffian soldiers, the helpless girl was led, and her arms bound to her body with ropes. In the meantime, she was again promised her life and freedom, if she would take the test. But with a holy indignation, she replied, "Seek ye the life of my soul by promising me a few years more of earthly existence? Begone, ye that would tempt me to violate my conscience, and deny my Saviour. I trust in my God. I know in whom I have believed. And I know that He will not forsake me."

The tide now began to flow, and she was soon surrounded with the waves, before which the crowd retired. As the water gradually deepened about her

she seemed engaged in prayer; and, when it reached her waist, as the day was calm, she was heard to say, "Farewell, my friends—farewell, my enemies—thou sun, and thou earth, farewell! Come, ye waters; why come ye so slowly? come and waft my soul to the bosom of my God!" Here her voice was lost in the sound of the drums that were beat to prevent her from being heard. Her eyes looked up to heaven, and a calm tranquillity settled on her face, while every succeeding wave advanced farther up her body, till at last the waters rolled over her head, and hid her from the eyes of the spectators.

You will perhaps ask me, young reader, why I introduce you to a scene like this? why I shock your feelings by the relation of such cruelties, and oppress your sympathies by the recital of such sufferings? Truly, I am not fond of the tale of distress; nor would I willingly sadden your countenance, did I not hope to make your heart better by it. And I think your best interests may be much promoted by thus reviewing the cruelties and sufferings of our ancestors. Thus we learn to what horrible transactions sin leads those who abandon themselves to its tyrannical guidance. How avarice, and ambition, and pride, if harboured and nourished in our bosoms, eradicate all that is amiable in man, and carry him forward into barbarity and wickedness, which place him far beneath the beasts that perish. And hence we gather the strongest proofs of the divine origin of our religion, and how well adapted it is to bear

the Christian out through the darkest night of the world's distresses. We hear evil spoken of him; we see him hunted from place to place, and tortured, and murdered; but still we see the grace of God sufficient for him. We see him placed on the Rock of Ages, putting away from him, as things of nought, the waves, and storms, and fierceness of this earth's most angry assault; and, calmly reclining his hope on the promise of his God, looking with a grateful heart and an eye of brightening gladness, to the land beyond the grave—the land of his Father, and his everlasting home. Hence, too, we learn how much we are indebted to the heaven-supported stand which our forefathers made against the inroads of civil despotism, and the domination of a secular priesthood; and thus we are led to revere their memory, which has, especially in late years, been loaded with contempt. And, above all, in reviewing such scenes as these, we cannot help being filled with gratitude to God, that He hath now brought his church back from the wilderness, and permitted us to worship within her walls in peace and safety.

Some of these reflections Ralph made while this work of wickedness was going on before him. For, although he had already resolved, through the help of divine grace, to give no countenance to the persecutors, and to ally himself to that scattered few, whom he thought sincere in serving their heavenly Master; and the murder of this helpless female—this outrage done both to humanity and religion.



excited within him a greater hatred to sin, and a firmer reliance on the grace of God, which he had seen so fully manifested, in supporting, consoling, and cheering this young woman in the last and severest trial to which the Christian can be exposed.

“If these be your doings,” thought he, as he wandered slowly along the coast, after witnessing this horrible spectacle, “if these be your doings, ye men of power and this world’s honour, let not my soul come into your secret; unto your assembly, mine honour, be not thou united. Surely the Lord will visit you for these things; and then He will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind. Oh, my Father in heaven! Thou knowest my heart. It is sinful, it is deceitful, ever deceiving me, taken up with lying vanities, ever leading me astray; but in thy great mercy, for the sake of Him who died that I might live, do Thou deliver me from its vain imaginations—from the snares of an alluring world—from the fear of its threatenings—and from the flattery of its promises. And, O give me, for Thou hast all power in heaven and in earth, give me strength and resolution to forsake all that is sinful, and follow all that is holy; to forsake those friends who would ruin my soul, and those possessions which, in a few years, at any rate, must be left for ever; and to follow my Saviour, that friend who sticketh closer than a brother—that friend who will never forsake me—who will

stand by me in death, and secure me from the fear of its terrors, who, by his own blood, hath won for me an inheritance valuable as the riches of divine grace—durable as the ages of eternity.”

After uttering these pious ejaculations, Ralph began to consider whither to betake himself. To return home was to put himself in the way of all that reproach, ridicule, and alluring temptation, which he had already found himself unable to resist; and to throw himself into the society of the Covenanters was to deprive himself of every comfort of life, and to expose himself to the severest sufferings. For the present, however, he thought the last his duty. Trusting, therefore, to God, the all-powerful and the all-wise, he took his way to the farm-house where he was formerly apprehended. When he arrived, the old farmer, whom we formerly mentioned, took him by the hand and said, “You were once our friend, will you tell us if the soldiers are coming hither; for we have heard that you are now taking part with our enemies?”

“I did take part with your enemies and mine,” replied Ralph, “but I have now left them; and I hope that my Saviour will never leave me to go so far astray again. I come to seek a night’s shelter under your roof, and to be instructed by your experience.”

“I cannot promise you an hour’s safety in my house,” said the old man, “but to what shelter it affords, you are welcome; and what of meat and

drink our oppressors have left, my children shall divide with you. Come in ; there is, at this moment, a minister in my house whom you formerly saw here. He will be glad to see you ; for often have I heard him speak of your mother ; and often has he lamented over you since you saw him last."

After a conversation with the old minister, in which Ralph related what had happened to him since their last interview, the venerable pastor asked him if he had ever joined in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. He replied in the negative ; and added, that it was his intention to take the first opportunity of publicly commemorating his Redeemer's death.

"You may soon have an opportunity," said the minister. "I am to dispense the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to-morrow, if it so please God, in a retired place, about five miles up the country, and you may go along with me."

"I would most willingly go," replied Ralph, "but I fear I am not prepared for an ordinance so solemn. It was but yesterday that I was giving myself up to profane conversation, and taking part with those who know not God."

"There are none of us well enough prepared," said the minister, "but that is no reason why we should neglect this ordinance. Indeed, if we thought ourselves fully prepared, it would be a sign that we saw ourselves not as God sees us ; that we flattered our own hearts, and were really ill-fitted for approaching the holy table of God. If you were lately

putting the fear of God away from you, and breaking his commandments, you have more need to approach the throne of grace in the sacrament of the Supper, that there you may manifest your return to his service, and receive a large supply of his grace, that you may not again fall into temptation and sin against Him. We do not eat and drink the Lord's Supper unworthily because we are sinners, but because we refuse to put on the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness. Arrayed in this righteousness, the guiltiest sinner shall then be welcomed and honoured by the God of holiness. If you see yourself to be naturally poor, and naked, and blind, and miserable, exposed to the curse of God's law, and unable of yourself to fulfil any of its demands; if you put all your hope of salvation in the mercy of God through his Son, sincerely desirous to love, honour, and obey your Saviour, to trust in Him—to be humbly taught by his word to hate sin—to avoid every appearance of it—to love holiness—and to be for ever holy; if you have a sincere desire thus to love and thus to hate what God loves and hates; if you can fall down on your knees before that God whose eye searcheth the heart, and pray to Him that you may so love and so hate, however guilty you may have been, however sinful you still are, you are called by your Redeemer to sit down at his table, and you are assured that He will meet you there in the kindness of his love. Examine yourself, my young friend, by these marks; and may the Great High Priest of the

upper sanctuary give you that preparation which we all need."

Thus instructed, Ralph spent the remainder of the evening in prayer and self-examination; and after a short repose, set out early on the Sabbath morning, with his reverend friend and the old farmer, to the place agreed on for worshipping God, and celebrating the death of his Son. When they reached the spot, which, that it might not be easily discovered, they had been induced to choose in the bosom of a thick wood, there were a considerable number assembled. The bread and wine to be used in his holy festival had been brought by some peasants from the nearest town. And as soon as the little flock was fully gathered around him the worthy old minister proceeded with the solemnities of the day. After sermon, and an address to those who were to be engaged in the celebration of the Supper, the communicants, among whom was Ralph, arranged themselves together on the grassy turf, and prepared themselves for receiving the bread and wine.

Let us pause here, young reader, and think for a moment on this scene. The celebration of the Lord's Supper is so common among us—we have so often seen it from our earliest years, that, whether we are engaged in it, or are merely spectators, it makes but too little impression on our minds. But let us reflect upon it for a little; and is it not the most solemn, the most interesting, and the most honourable work in which man engages in this world? It is not obe-

dience to the call of some noble friend, who hath raised us from poverty to some place of ease and distinction : it is a compliance with the invitations of our Saviour, who hath delivered us from the wrath to come, and secured to us an everlasting place in the presence of God. It is not the anniversary of a mortal's birthday or death, who will in time be forgotten : it is a calling to lively remembrance the death of our Redeemer, whose praise will constitute the anthem of eternity. It is not sitting down at the table of a prince : it is sitting down at a table spread by God, at the expense of Messiah's blood ; and it is our Saviour himself who welcomes the guests. It is not a token of some king's favour : it is a pledge of the love of God, of his wonderful love to man. It is not a banquet to regale our bodies : it is a feast that fills the hungry soul with eternal life. And should you then, young reader, be backward or ashamed to sit down at this table, because the men of this world will laugh at you ? Should you be afraid to tell, in the presence of the universe, that God is your friend, and that you are his friend ? Truly, none will be ashamed to have this to tell on that great and terrible day when this world shall be judged. But, alas ! those who are ashamed of Christ now, those who deny Him before men, will He deny before his Father and the holy angels.

After an address to the communicants, the old minister, who, as we formerly observed, amidst all his sufferings, had a look of peculiar peacefulness and

contentment, dispensed the elements ; and, resuming his discourse, thus concluded :—

“ Now, my friends, if you have eaten of this bread and drunk of this cup worthily, as I hope you have done, you are the honourable ones of the earth, the wisest, the best, the happiest. God is your friend, and He is the fountain of all honour. He delights to honour you. Your garments shall be ever white : your crowns are sure : He will himself place them on your heads ; and no being can ever wrest them from you. You are the wisest ; for God is your instructor, and He is the source of all wisdom. His word is a light to your feet, and a lamp to your path. He hath led your minds into all necessary truth. He hath made you wise unto salvation. You are the best ; for you are likest God, who is holy, and just, and good. You are vested in his righteousness. His spirit is in your souls, assimilating them to his own image, warming them with love to God and man, to all that is pure in heaven and on earth. You are the happiest ; for all your desires shall be satisfied. With God as your friend there is enough and to spare. You need but to ask, and ye shall receive—to seek, and ye shall find—to knock, and all his fulness shall be opened unto you. And, in the treasures of his grace, how much more is laid up than you can exhaust in time or eternity !

“ It is true, my friends, that we are now hunted from mountain to mountain, and from solitude to solitude ; now reviled and persecuted : now in want.



in danger, in affliction ; now menaced with bonds, with torture, with death. But is it not enough to make you patiently endure present calamity, and boldly face the future, that you this moment sit at the table of an Almighty Saviour, who, to replenish it for you, laid down his life ? Will He who loved you so much, suffer ought really to hurt you ? Verily, no. I believe, my friends, and I trust you believe also, that we shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved us. He will never leave us, nor forsake us. These are his own words, the words of Him who cannot lie. What, then, have we to fear ? Our Saviour is with us. The God of love, the God of all worlds, the God of time and eternity, hath taken us under his care ; let us then go through this world, unmindful of its honours, and careless of its revilings. Let us go, singing songs of praise to Him who goeth with us—to Him who will go with us through the darkness of death—to Him who will lead us to Mount Zion, to the city and temple of our God, where we shall sigh and weep no more ; where we shall be entirely holy, as we shall be completely happy.”

After the services of the day were over, the little congregation dispersed, with more true gladness in their hearts than the wicked have, when their corn and their wine are increased.



## CHAPTER VI.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of his countenance. In the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer to the God of my life."—PSALMS.

I SHOULD have mentioned in the last chapter, that, as soon as Ralph resolved to leave home, he wrote the following letter to his father:—

"DEAR FATHER.—I know what I am now to communicate to you will subject me to your displeasure. I wish I could both please you and obey my God. I tried that kind of life which you approve of. You then caressed and indulged me, and showed me all the kindness I could expect from a tender father. But still in every moment of reflection, I was miserable. I cannot be an enemy to God's people; I cannot live with those who persecute them; I dare not deny my Saviour before men, lest He deny me also before his Father at the day of judgment. Pardon, therefore, dear father, my disobedience. Since I have determined to associate with the persecuted party, and as I cannot at the same time make your house my home, without exposing you to the visitations of Government, I have resolved to leave you for some time. I may have to labour for my bread—I may have to beg it—I

may have to encounter many a hardship ; but I put myself under the protection of a kind and watchful Providence, and I fear not the frowning of the world. Perhaps the time may soon come, when the party with whom I am now to associate will no longer be counted traitors, and when I might live at home without exposing you to any penalties. If that time come, and if my present conduct do not so much offend you as to induce you to abandon me altogether, I will be glad to return and live with you. Do not be offended with me, dear father, for obeying the dictates of my own conscience. Forgive me for what I have done ; and be assured that I am still your affectionate son,—RALPH GEMMELL.”

You may imagine, young reader, how a man like Mr Gemmell would receive Ralph's letter. He stamped the ground with his foot, and gnashed his teeth with indignation. He regarded his son as a mad irreclaimable fanatic—a dishonour to his family—unworthy to be any longer remembered by him—and, without a moment's deliberation, sat down and wrote the following letter :—

“ RALPH,—Return home and live with me ! No, never ; my door shall be for ever shut against you ; I will even tear your remembrance from my heart. You have not only disregarded my injunctions ; you have not only rejected my kindness and disappointed my hopes ; you have allied yourself to the vilest and guiltiest traitors ; you have disgraced my name and

my house. I blush to think that you are my son. But you shall no longer be recognised as such by me. I shall leave all that I have to Edward. And I hereby charge you never to let me again see your face—never to presume to write to me, or to say that I am your father.—GEORGE GEMMELL.”

When Mr Gemmell had finished this letter, he gave it to Edward, and said, “Go early to-morrow morning,” for it was on the Sabbath evening he received Ralph’s letter, “go and deliver that letter to Ralph, who is no longer worthy to be called your brother. You will find him perhaps at the house where he was formerly apprehended. If not, you will probably learn there where you may find him. Go; put that letter into his hand, and stop not to hear a word from him.”

Ralph had just walked out from the old farmer’s (for he had returned thither on the Sabbath evening), to enjoy the freshness of the morning, when he observed his brother riding towards the house. Edward came up to him, put the letter into his hand, and turned his horse and rode off—happy that he had now got fairly quit of a brother he never loved, and had the clear prospect of inheriting all the possessions and honours of his father.

Ralph read the letter. He expected something of the kind, yet he was not prepared for so much. All the feelings which a lost home and a lost father could excite rushed bitterly upon his soul. It was hard

to be for ever forbidden a home where he had spent his childhood with the tenderest of mothers ;—it was hard to be disowned and hated by a father whom he had often endeavoured to please, even against his own conscience. He felt all this ; and to use the language of Scripture, he “ fell down on his face, and wept bitterly.” For a moment, he almost wished that, like Edward, he had been content to live as his father wished him. But this was only the passing thought of a moment. He remembered the stings of conscience, the anguish of remorse, and the fears of death, which he had so lately felt. He remembered the love of his heavenly Father, the love of his Saviour ; and although he continued still to weep, it was not for what he himself had done—it was not for what he had lost ; it was, that he had a father and a brother of whose eternal welfare he had every reason to doubt. But soon he betook himself to the never-failing comfort of the Christian. He addressed himself to a throne of grace, and besought his God that He would yet have mercy on his relations, and turn them from the evil of their ways, and yet magnify his grace by saving them from the wrath to come. After this fervent prayer to God for the salvation of those whom he still loved, however much they hated and despised him, peace returned to his mind. He knew, that although he was disowned of an earthly father, he had a Father in heaven who would never disown him ; although he was despised of his brother, he had an elder brother who loved

him and would love him to the end ; and although he had lost an earthly inheritance, he had treasures secured for him in heaven infinitely more valuable. These are the reflections, young reader, which fill the Christian's mind with that peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

We have seen, in this passage of Ralph's history, how well adapted the promises of the gospel are to the wants of the Christian—how securely he leans on the arm of his Saviour, and reposes his hope on those fair and untroubled regions beyond the grave, when the deceitful rod of this world's strength breaks under him, and the clouds of adversity darken his earthly prospects. But where, in the day of sore trouble—where, at the hour of death, shall the sinner look ? who shall comfort him at that awful crisis, when no earthly friend shall be of any avail ? Who shall guide his steps through the valley of thick darkness, and where shall his spirit find rest, when it shall be driven away for ever from the presence of its God ? The latter reflections have been suggested by a scene which Ralph witnessed soon after his banishment from his father's house.

Naturally of a thoughtful and contemplative turn of mind, and rendered still more so by the adverse circumstances of his life, Ralph loved to withdraw himself from the eye of human observation, and to sooth his feelings and nourish his virtues in solitary meditation.

One evening, following this propensity, he left a

shepherd's hut, in which he had spent a few days, and wandered forth amidst the peaceful scenery which surrounded it.

"These sheep," said Ralph, as he passed a flock that lay on the heath, "these sheep rest in peace; they have spent the day in gathering their food, and now their slumbers are sweet. And why is it that man eateth the bread and drinketh the water of affliction, and lieth down in sorrow? Why does rest depart from his eyes, and slumber from his eyelids? Why does he so often say, when it is night, 'When shall it be morning?' and when it is morning, 'When shall it be night?' Must he alone of all earthly beings, waste the day in sadness, and water his nightly couch with the tears of bitterness? Is God more merciful to the beasts of the field than to man, on whose soul He once impressed his own image? No, Holy Father!" the young man exclaimed, "Thou art not more merciful to the beasts of the field than Thou art to man. Thou hast made him only a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, and hast put all things under his feet. But he hath rebelled against Thee, and therefore he wandereth without a guide; he refuses to be reconciled to Thee, and therefore he hath no comforter; he hath himself planted his couch with thorns, and therefore rest fleeth far away. Gracious God! let it not be so with me; teach me to submit myself to thy government—to accept of

the offered Saviour as the great atonement for my sin. Then shall I spend the day in cheerfulness, for Thou shalt teach me to do my duty; and the night in peaceful repose, for I shall rest under the shadow of Thy wings.

“Just and Holy One! I know that Thou afflictest not willingly the children of men. It is sin, that abominable thing which Thou hatest, which infuses into the cup of life every drop of its gall. It is sin which embitters reflection, and darkens the prospects of hope. It is sin which makes this world a valley of tears, and the next, to him who hath not been redeemed from its consequences, a place of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. All the holy are happy. As that moon, which clothes the earth in silvery radiance, walks for ever peacefully and serenely amidst her attendant stars, untroubled by the noise of the tempest, while it carries desolation over the face of this lower world; so, O Father! if I trust in my Saviour, and keep his commandments, shalt Thou enable me to possess my soul in peace, amidst all the troubles of life, and all the terrors of death.”

Ralph was thus engaged in holy communion with his God, when his attention was attracted by a loud shriek, which seemed to be uttered by some person in great distress. He turned towards the direction whence he imagined the cry proceeded, and, by the light of the moon, observed two men carrying or dragging a third along with them. As they ap-

proached him, he discovered that they were soldiers, and that one of them, who was an officer, had received a wound that same day in an affray with a party of Covenanters. A few of those dauntless and intrepid sons of civil and religious liberty had assembled in the desert moorlands, to hear a sermon from one of those ministers who were then driven to the wilderness. Sermon had no sooner commenced, however, than the little congregation was surprised and attacked by a party of soldiers. As they were mostly unarmed, they at first made no resistance, and would certainly have suffered themselves to have been led quietly to the nearest gaol, had not the following occurrence roused their indignation, and impelled them to set the arms of the soldiers at defiance.

The officer whom we have noticed, having used some unbecoming liberties with a young woman who was among the prisoners, was reprehended by her father, who was also present. Instead of desisting from his improper conduct, however, he struck the father on the left shoulder with his sword, and became still more insolent towards his daughter.

"Thou shalt not be misused in my presence," said the indignant father to his daughter, while he drew from under a loose great-coat, the short and rusty, but tried and faithful, sword of his forefathers, and bringing a sudden and unexpected stroke, disabled the sword-arm of the officer, and wounded him mortally in the left side. In a moment the engagement became general. Some of the peasants with clubs,



others with swords, which they had concealed about their clothes, fell violently on the soldiers. And as they were inflamed with rage, and greatly superior in number, they soon put the soldiers to flight. Two of them, however, leaving the rest to fight as they could with the Covenanters, supported their wounded officer, and after the dispersion of their fellows, were suffered to carry him away without molestation.

This was the man whose shriek had attracted Ralph's attention, and who, as the exhausted soldiers laid him down on the heath, asking if there were any hut near in which they might be sheltered for the night, exclaimed, in the faltering accents of one near dissolution—

“You shall carry me no farther. I will die here. But, Oh! where am I going? What shall become of my soul?”

“You shall go to heaven,” said one of the soldiers, wishing to comfort the poor wretch.

“My life has made God my enemy,” replied the officer. “I have no hope! I have no hope!”

“If you must die, die like a man,” said the other soldier; “you have done your duty to your king, and you have nothing to fear.”

“The blood of innocence is on my hands,” replied the dying sinner; “I have no hope! no hope!”

Ralph, although struck with horror at the despairing and ghastly visage of the man, stood near, and tried to comfort him.

“You ought not,” said the young Christian, “to

despair, because you have been a great sinner. Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. His blood cleanseth from all sin—the greatest as well as the least. Persecutors have been saved, thieves and robbers have been saved, murderers have been saved. Repent, and seek the pardon of your sins through Jesus Christ. God will hear you for his sake, and save your soul from death.”

These words fell on the ear of the poor dying sinner, without yielding him any comfort. They were, indeed, like savoury meat placed in the sight of a hungry person, who is unable to stretch out his hand and partake of it. They made him feel with double anguish the wrath of God, which now lay heavy upon him; and he exclaimed, in the fearful tone of despair, “I cannot repent—God hath left me no hope! no hope!”

While he uttered these words of despair, his face grew pale as the moonbeams that fell upon it—the shadows of death closed over his eyes—the last agonies of nature shook his body—it lay still on the heath—and his soul was summoned away to the tribunal of its God.

Let us pause for a moment, and reflect on this scene. The man whose hopeless death we have just recorded was born of Christian parents, baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and thus, at his entrance into life, dedicated to the service of God. But early in youth he gave signs of aversion to religion, by swearing, breaking the

Sabbath, neglecting to read his Bible, and eagerly joining himself with the company of the profane. Conscience at first told him he was wrong, and for some time rendered him miserable by its upbraidings. But the farther we advance over the line that forms the limit of virtue, the voice of conscience becomes weaker and weaker, till it is at last almost lost amidst the noise and revelry of unhallowed pleasures.

So it was with the poor wretch whose lifeless body now lay on the heath. After treading for a while in the dark and ruinous paths of vice, his ear became deaf to the calls of religion, his heart hard as the nether millstone, and his conscience seared as with a hot iron. And when the voice of death, that speaks in the ear of conscience like the thunders of God, awoke him with the awful tidings that he must instantly appear before his God, he could not pray, he could not repent, because God, in his righteous displeasure, had left him to the hardness of his wicked heart. All his life he despised the Bible, and, at the hour of need, his own wicked heart rendered him incapable of drawing comfort from its promises. The Holy Spirit, long resisted, at last ceased to make intercession for him. The Saviour, long despised and rejected, withdrew from between him and offended justice. And God the Father, the entreaties of whose love and whose mercy he had long disregarded, took away from him the light of his countenance, and left him to the consequences of that sin from which he refused to be separated.

Thus it is the very nature of sin to harden the heart, and bring upon its miserable victims that punishment which is denounced against it. Every sin we commit stamps another stain on the soul, and renders it less capable than it was the moment before of relishing the beauties of holiness. Every step we take in the path of vice, carries us not only farther away from virtue, but weakens our desire of returning to it. Every draught we take of the cup of iniquity, not only increases our unhallowed thirst, but quenches some spark of heavenly fire in the soul. And when the soul is completely defiled, and every desire of returning to holiness entirely rooted out, and every spark of the Spirit's kindling utterly quenched in the heart, what is there to stand any longer between the sinner and the punishment of his sins? What is there that will turn aside from his soul the sword of vindictive justice? What is there that will snatch the wretched victim out of the grasp of eternal death? And who can tell what his sufferings shall be in that place where the worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched?

Think on the danger of sin. You do not know how soon your heart may become hard, and your conscience deaf, and God may leave you to the fearful consequences of your iniquity.

Although the two succeeding years of Ralph's life might afford many interesting and useful incidents, the bounds which we have prescribed for this narra-

tive oblige us to pass over them with a very short and general account. We shall only say, that his sufferings during this time were great. He often laboured in the fields with the peasants who sheltered him. Unaccustomed as he had been to poverty, want, or toil, they were now almost his constant companions. With clothes that could ill protect him from the severity of the cold, he had frequently, in the depth of winter, and the darkness of night, to seek a hiding-place in the dens and caves of the mountains; and sometimes he was compelled by hunger to beg a morsel of bread. His life, like that of all his associates, was every day sought, and he often made the narrowest escapes from those who sought it. Yet, instead of repining at his lot, instead of imagining that God had forsaken him, he had the Christian's peace in his mind, the Christian's hope ever brightening before him, and the truth of the promises of God every day ratified in his bosom. Through all his tribulations he pressed forward with joy for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And truly he felt that his Saviour's words are true, that "Whosoever put their trust in Him. He will never leave nor forsake."

He had often, as we have observed, escaped the search and pursuit of his persecutors. The time was now arrived, however, when they were to be permitted to take him.

On a Sabbath afternoon, about midsummer, as Ralph was hearing sermon in one of the moorish

glens in the upper part of Renfrewshire, he and the little congregation with whom he was worshipping, were suddenly surrounded by a troop of dragoons, and apprehended. Some of the soldiers, as they had then that power given them by Government, were for putting them instantly to death, others were for sending them to Edinburgh, there to be sentenced and executed. This last proposal was adopted; and the prisoners were accordingly conducted to Edinburgh. On their arrival there, they were loaded with irons, and thrown into the gloomiest cells of the old prison. After two days' confinement they were brought to trial, and all, excepting one or two who took the test, condemned to be executed next day, and their heads and hands affixed to the city gates. As soon as this sentence was read to them, they were remitted to prison, and shut up in separate cells.

You can often talk about death, young reader, with little alarm. You are not sure when it shall come, and your youth, your health, and your attachment to the world, when you begin to fear it, whisper in your ear that it is yet far distant. But to be assured that you were to die to-morrow would indeed bring the terrors of death near to your mind. Could you look on them without trembling? Are you sure that you would have a friend to stand by you, stronger than death? a friend who could effectually support you in the conflict with your last enemy? To be assured that we should die to-morrow would really be a serious thing, a try-

ing situation; and, in this situation, was Ralph placed.

Once before, you remember, he thought he was dying; now he was sentenced to be executed on the morrow. Let us reflect on his external circumstances and inward feelings in the former instance, and let us observe these also in the present. When formerly he imagined he was instantly to die, and appear at the tribunal of God, he was in his father's house, surrounded with this world's wealth and flattered with its honours; adjudged to no ignominious death, but in his own bed, called, as every one must sooner or later be, to pay the last debt of nature, and assured of a tender remembrance in the bosom of his friends, and of his name being ever mentioned with the highest respect. Thus was he then situated, and yet how did he feel? He had not then put his whole trust in God. He had been living in sin, and trying to banish every good impression from his heart. He thought, as he well might, that God was his enemy: and he saw no man that was able to protect him from the terrors of death, or from the wrath of the Judge before whom he was to appear. How did he then feel? The anguish of that moment was so insufferable, that he would have willingly exchanged it for a whole lifetime of the severest trials. Now the young man was cast out from his father's house, become the curse and the hissing of all his relations, forgotten by his acquaintances who once honoured him, or if remembered, only remembered

as a silly headstrong fanatic, whose sufferings deserved nothing but ridicule; oppressed with irons like a murderer; locked up in the darkness of a dungeon, without a friend to solace him; sentenced by the law to die as a traitor, and to have his head and hands nailed up before the public gaze, as an attestation to the vileness of his character. What were his thoughts now in this situation? Still death was awful to him: To be cut off in the midst of his days, in the vigour and healthfulness of youth—to break away from every earthly association—to leave the light of day for the darkness of the grave, and the voice of men for the silence of death; to have his body now so pleasant to him, made a meal for worms, and a prey to foul corruption. These were unwelcome thoughts. And he felt that death had still power to accomplish these things against him. But he now beheld the gloomy king shorn of his substantial terrors; a guilty conscience, the wrath of God, eternal punishment, these are the real terrors of death, the weapons with which he wounds the soul and destroys it. But Ralph knew that his Saviour had taken these weapons from his enemy; and he could look him in the face, and say, “O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God who giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ my Lord. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; and thy rod and thy staff, they shall comfort me.” Thus did God give the young



Christian a song in the night, in the darkest and stormiest night which the wickedness of this world could gather about him. So true it is that God is a present help in the time of need; that He will never leave nor forsake any who put their trust in Him.

Young reader, think on death. It will come; and you know not how soon. Are you prepared to meet it? Are you sure you have a friend secured who will not desert you at that hour? Pause and consider. There is no friend but one who can then effectually help you. This is your God—your Saviour. Be prepared, as Ralph was, by putting all your trust in Him. And come your last moment when it may, you are safe. Your Saviour will deliver you also from the terrors of death.

When morning came, Ralph awoke from a refreshing sleep, in which he had spent part of the night, and had just kneeled down in prayer to God, when he heard some person turning the lock of his cell door; and he now expected to be instantly led forth to execution. The door opened, and the gaoler ushered into the cell an uncle of Ralph.

“Young man,” said the old soldier, “I have come a long way this morning to save your life. I have already got your sentence turned into banishment; and I have even the promise of your liberty, if you will promise that your future conduct shall be agreeable to the wishes of Government.”

“A thousand thanks to you, my dear uncle,” said

Ralph, "for your kindness to me. But how did you know that I was here?"

"That will I soon explain, nephew. One of the soldiers who was at your apprehension had frequently seen you when you lived with your father. He recognised you; and, because he had served under me when I was a captain in the army, had a kindness for the family, and sent us word immediately that you were taken. Your father, although he seemed somewhat concerned, said he would by no means meddle in the affair; and I could not bear the thought that any one of my family should be beheaded, or hanged like a dog. So off I came, old as I am, pleaded the loyalty of our house, and my own services, in your favour; and you see how I have succeeded. Now, I am sure you have had enough of these madmen, the Covenanters; you will now take the test. What is it? I could swear a dozen such oaths in the hour, and be an honest man too. Come, I will introduce you to the minister. You shall be set at liberty; and I will do all that I can to make matters up between you and your father. Come, my boy, fling away that foolishness, and learn to be a man." Thus did the old soldier talk; and certainly Ralph found it no easy task to reject any of the kindness of a man who had taken so much interest in him: but he had not so learned Christ, as to be drawn from his service, by the promises and kindnesses of sinful men. After a moment's deliberation, he made the following reply to his uncle:—

“Dear uncle, be assured that I shall ever feel myself your debtor for the interest you have taken in me. You have already saved my life. This is enough of kindness; more than I can ever repay. Do not concern yourself further about me. Banishment and slavery are by no means pleasant; but I dare not try to escape them by violating my conscience, and breaking the commandments of my Saviour. I know you will think me foolish thus to choose exile and captivity, when I might, by your influence, be set at liberty, and perhaps restored to my father. But you will not be offended with me for persevering firmly in what I consider to be my duty to God. I have never found Him a hard master. He has supported, and will support me, in every time of need. I have always found his yoke easy, and his burden light. On the contrary, when I have forsaken his love, and given myself up to the guidance of this world’s wisdom, and the sinful desires of my own heart, I could see no one that could sufficiently befriend me in the hour of affliction and death. Advise me not then, dear uncle, to do anything against my own conscience; but accept my gratitude and love for the great instance of your kindness I have already received.”

“Well, well,” said his uncle, when he saw Ralph thus resolved, “you may do as you please for me. You will not find it very agreeable to labour under the heat of a burning sun. But I wish you a good voyage; and I hope you will have learned more

sense when you return." With this short reply, the old soldier quitted the cell, and Ralph was left to his own meditations.

Gratitude to God was now his master feeling; for He had stirred up this old man, who in fact cared nothing for religion, to be the instrument of saving his life. He had thus given him a new token of his loving kindness, and a new pledge that He would never leave nor forsake him. He had given him a new prospect of serving Him in the land of the living; of further storing his mind with new proofs of his Saviour's love, and faithfulness, and all sufficiency; and thus of being better prepared when the hour of death should certainly come.

## CHAPTER VII.

\* Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."—PSALMS.

HAVING remained two or three weeks in prison, Ralph, with a number more, was put on board a vessel at Leith, to be transported to the English plantations in Jamaica. It is almost needless to relate the severe treatment they met with during the passage. The captain, to whose charge the captives were committed, was a man who had never thought of religion, and who had little sympathy with human suffering. The prisoners, crowded together, were shut up in the hold of the vessel, under an iron grating. Their food was bread and water, and even that was but sparingly given them. Thus situated, with nothing to cheer them but the hopes of a better life, where their sins, being finally forsaken, would no more subject them to calamity, they sailed from their native land in the month of July. The weather was favourable, and their passage prosperous enough, till they came in sight of the island of Jamaica. It was near night, in the month of September, a very stormy time in these latitudes, when the ship drew towards the land. The wind, at this time, however, was fair, the sky serene, and every one expected to be ashore in the course of a few hours; when suddenly a dead

calm ensued—the heavens grew dark—the sea was troubled—and in less than half-an-hour, the fury of the tempest came. The winds blew so violently, and the tumult of the waves was so great, that to manage the ship became impossible. A rocky shore was before them, and the mighty strength of a stormy sea was driving them quickly towards it. In the midst of this danger, the prisoners entreated the captain to relieve them from their confinement, that they might have a chance of saving themselves if the vessel foundered. This request, however, he refused; declaring, that he would rather see them all drowned, than give them an opportunity of escaping from his hands. In the meantime, the vessel ran aground, a very little off the land, and was so damaged by the shock, that she made water rapidly, while the waves were every moment breaking over deck. Still, however, the captain refused to release the prisoners. But he did not forget to provide for his own safety. Expecting that the vessel would be instantly wrecked, he ordered the long boat to be manned, into which he threw himself, with all the hands on board, except the mate and two or three sailors, who refused to leave the vessel. Thus he thought to save himself, careless of the fate of Ralph and his companions. But God, who holdeth the waters in the hollow of his hand and bringeth to nought the counsel of men, had not so determined it. The boat had not proceeded many yards from the ship, when it was upset by the force of two mighty billows, and the cruel

captain, and all who were with him, instantly perished in the waters.

When the mate observed this, he immediately released the prisoners; and they, with the few seamen who remained on board, laboured incessantly at the pumps to keep the vessel from filling with water. But, notwithstanding all they could do, the water still increased on them; the storm was as violent as ever; and they thought every moment would be their last.

And how did Ralph behave himself then? Where did he turn for help? He trusted, as he had done before, in that Saviour who walks upon the sea, and who can say to the raging of its billows, "Peace, be still!" And he cried to Him that He would yet spare him. All his companions also lifted up their voices to God; and it pleased Him to hear and answer their cry. He made the storm a calm by His command; and every man that remained on board safely reached the shore in the small boats. The mate now took charge of the prisoners, and conducted them to the governor of the island, who afterwards disposed of them to the planters.

For a free-born and enlightened man to submit to slavery, as Ralph now did, is the hardest task which can be proposed to a human being. In some respects it is worse than death itself. To die is the lot of all. The rich man, as well as the poor, must go the way appointed for all living; and, therefore, no one can think himself peculiarly degraded by being subject

to what every other person is. But to be in vassalage to a fellow-creature—to be bought and sold like the beasts of the field or the produce of the ground—to be subjected to toil without even the hope of a recompense—and to be exposed to the lash of a capricious and tyrannical master, without daring to defend ourselves, and without any opportunity of having our injuries redressed—is a descent so far below the common rights of our nature, so far below the common condition of mankind, and therefore so peculiarly degrading, that to stoop to it for the sake of conscience, requires the greatest devotedness to religion, the strongest trust in the promises and grace of God, and the liveliest hope of a sure reward in the mansions of eternal freedom. In this state of servitude, however, severe as it was, Ralph was now doomed to live for a time. The master under whom he and two or three of his fellow-sufferers were placed, treated them with nearly the same severity as the negroes with whom they laboured. To Ralph, this treatment was peculiarly galling. His infancy had been tenderly nursed: he had been brought up, to the age of fifteen, as the expectant of a considerable estate. But now he was compelled to labour daily, from morning till night, under the scourge of a cruel taskmaster, breathing a sultry air, and exposed to the heat of a burning sun.

This, young reader, was a hard and painful condition, peculiarly degrading and revolting to human nature. But if you are doing what Ralph, to save



himself from this state, might have done ; if you are disobeying the commandments of God, and giving yourself up to the guidance of sinful passions, you are the willing victim of a slavery infinitely more debasing and severe. Ralph was compelled to his bondage by the wickedness of his fellow-men : you willingly subject yourself to the dominion of your passions, and the vassalage of the devil. He had the approbation of his own conscience, and the smile of his Saviour's countenance : you are providing for yourself remorse and the anger of your Maker. He submitted to slavery for love to God and holiness : you are selling yourself for what is unclean and abominable. He was degraded in the sight of sinful men only : you are rendering yourself vile in the pure eyes of God and every holy being. He was sustained by the hope of eternal life : your wages are eternal death. His servitude was that of the body only : yours is the bondage of the soul. His could endure for only a few years : yours, if you break not from it, will continue with increasing severity through eternity. In this dreadful slavery, you and all men are by nature. You cannot ransom yourself from it. No man can redeem his brother from this captivity. Christ only can make you free. Examine yourselves, then, and see that you are his freemen—that you have obtained the glorious liberty of the sons of God. If you have, you will not be surprised that Ralph submitted to slavery for love to his Saviour.

In this land of bondage, the young man had no

minister to counsel and comfort him. On the Sabbath, however, he was not required to labour, and he hailed its dawn with a rapture of holy delight. The former part of the day he spent alone reading his Bible—the only book he had taken with him from Scotland—enriching and solacing his mind with its precious truths, examining himself, lamenting his past transgressions, weeping over the sins that still remained in his heart, and lifting up his soul in prayer to God, for a heart to serve Him better and love Him more. In the afternoon he met regularly with his companions who were under the same master. Their place of meeting (for they generally met in the same place) was under a large plantain tree, whose foliage screened them from the scorching rays of the sun. Here they prayed together—read a portion of the Scriptures—sang a song of praise to their God and Saviour; here they conversed of the great love of God displayed through Christ Jesus; cheered and comforted one another with the promises of the gospel and the hopes of eternal life; and here, too, did they find the truth of the saying, that wherever two or three are met together in God's name, there will He be in the midst of them to bless them; and here did they often experience, in near communion with God, in the joy of the Holy Ghost, in ardent anticipation of heaven, the strongest proofs of that truth which we are so desirous to set before you, that whosoever putteth his trust in God, He will never leave nor forsake.

That this truth may be the better rooted in the mind of the young reader, I shall relate here a conversation which happened one Sabbath evening between Ralph and one of his companions.

“You seem,” said Ralph to him, “very melancholy to-day. May I be permitted to ask the cause of your sadness?”

“I have been troubled for some time,” replied his friend, “with the thought that we are deceiving ourselves. In our own country we were persecuted and condemned by the law to banishment; here we are in slavery, degraded from the rank of human beings, and without the hope of liberty: Surely the Lord hath forsaken us, else He would never permit so many evils to come upon us.”

“Beware of such thoughts,” said Ralph, “it is the adversary of God and man who suggests them. He tries to make you weary in the service of God, by persuading you that it is unprofitable. And if Satan or your own heart once persuade you of this, your obedience to God will be no longer sincere, and therefore you will have no right to expect the joy of his presence. But we have no reason to suppose that God hath forgotten to be gracious to us, because we are left to prove our sincerity by severe and long continued suffering, even slavery itself. Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. It is through much tribulation that we are to enter the kingdom of heaven. But the wicked, you know, the Bible says, prosper every day ;

they grow up and flourish like the green bay-tree, and are not troubled as other men. Prosperity in this world, therefore, is no proof of God's favour, nor is adversity any token of his displeasure. It is the feeling in our own bosom that makes us happy or miserable. The poor slave may have a peace of mind, and a hope in the life to come, which will be an ever-present reward for all his sufferings; while his rich master may have within him the gnawings of remorse, and those fearful forebodings, which shall hinder him from enjoying his wealth, and embitter his very existence. You know, my friend, that I tried the pleasures of sin myself. I had then all that I wanted. I was surrounded by friends who respected and loved me, and I was flattered by the hopes of future honours; but whenever I thought of death and a world to come, I was miserable. Then I was prosperous, and deemed happy by men; but then I had forsaken God, and was indeed forsaken by Him. Now I am as poor and as degraded in the eyes of the world as a human being can be; but I believe in my Saviour—I trust in God—and I am happy. It is only when I indulge sin in my heart that God leaves me a moment to mourn. Doubt not, my friend, the truth of God's promises. Our sufferings are indeed long and severe; but if we are rightly exercised under them, they will all work together for our good; and if we are faithful to the death, we shall receive a crown of life.

“ You speak truth, my friend,” replied his com-

panion. "I am convinced. I am comforted. Let us fall down on our knees, and pray to God that we may have grace given us to resist every suggestion of evil, to believe more and more in the promises of the gospel, knowing that He is faithful who hath promised, and will bring to pass the desire of our hearts."

Ralph had now endured this bondage nearly two years. His body, although naturally robust, subjected to severe toil, in a climate noxious to Europeans, was beginning to decay; and he hoped that death would soon deliver him from his thralldom. But God had yet in reserve for him many days of peace and happiness in the land of the living.

## CHAPTER VIII.

“Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife or children, or lands for my name’s sake shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”—ST MATTHEW.

ONE day as Ralph and his companions were labouring in the fields, their master approached them, and saluting them pleasantly said—“The year of jubilee is come. You are no longer my servants. A revolution has happened in Britain. A new king is placed on the throne; and he has sent orders hither, that all who were banished and enslaved for their religious opinions under the preceding government, are to be immediately set at liberty. Vessels await you on the coast to convey you to your native land.”

“Our native land!” they all cried with one voice. “Praised be God! hath He at last delivered it from oppression! O Scotland! Scotland! shall we yet see thee!” And they embraced one another, and shouted for gladness of heart.

In a few days after the announcement of these glad tidings, Ralph with many more exiles, embarked in a vessel for Greenock. The wind was favourable, the passage quick and prosperous. And how did his heart leap for joy, when the white rocks and blue mountains of his native country rose on his view!

With the flow of spirits which his releasement produced, and the change of air, his health was completely restored; and he forgot for a while that he was disinherited, and forbidden his father's house. And now the well-known cliffs of Arran, the rock of Ailsa, and the shores of Carrick, welcomed his eye; and now he could see Irvine, and the old castle of Craigfoot; and the joy of his childhood beat at his heart.

As Ralph and two or three other passengers wished to land at Irvine, the vessel drew near the harbour, and they were put ashore in the small boat. But who would attempt to tell the joy of Ralph's soul when he set foot on the land of his birth? It was a feeling of delight sufficient to repay years of toil. He fell down on his knees, and thanked God, who had preserved him through so many trials, and restored him in health and strength to his beloved country. "So may God bring me," said the young man, "when the trials of life have passed away, to the land beyond death and the grave."

It was in the beginning of summer, on a Sabbath, about mid-day, that he landed. The inhabitants of Irvine were just gathering to the afternoon's sermon. It was a pleasant sight to Ralph. He could observe many, of whose sufferings he had shared in the time of persecution, this day peacefully walking to the house of God, having none to make them afraid. He entered the church; and was both surprised and delighted when he saw the pulpit filled with the vener-

able old pastor, who, after his mother's death, had first instructed him in the ways of righteousness. This worthy minister having been ejected from his pastoral charge in Irvine at the commencement of the persecution, had, for twenty-eight years, wandered up and down his native country, doing what he could to instruct and comfort the suffering church; and now, after having undergone innumerable hardships, after having often made the narrowest escapes from his enemies, and after having seen them entirely overthrown, he was restored to the arms of his flock, to his home, and his family. Age had rendered him so infirm, that he was compelled to address his people sitting in the pulpit. When he began his sermon, Ralph listened to every word, as it had come from the tongue of an angel. And it is no wonder that he listened with delight; for the whole discourse was an offering of thanks to God for the deliverance of his church. No wonder that the tear of holy joy flowed down his cheek, while the good old man prayed that all those who had been banished from their native land for conscience sake, might be safely conducted home, to glorify and praise their God.

After sermon, Ralph, who had not been observed in church by the minister, called at his house. Although he was much altered, the old man instantly recognised him, and, to use the language of Scripture, "fell on his neck and kissed him."

As soon as this happy salutation was past, Ralph,



asked the minister if he had heard any thing of his father lately.

"You shall lodge with me to-night," said the minister, "and I will introduce you to your father to-morrow."

"And is he indeed reconciled to me?" said Ralph. "And is he well? Is Edward well?"

"Edward is well," said the minister, "but your father has been complaining for some time. Yesterday he sent for me. I had not been in his house for nearly thirty years, and I was surprised at the invitation."

"You might be well surprised," said Ralph; "surely he is greatly changed!"

"Yes, he is greatly changed," said the old man; "for he thinks he has wronged both you and me, and his own soul too. He says he is dying, but knows not what is to become of his immortal spirit."

"I will go to him this moment," said Ralph, "it may be that God will comfort him through me."

"Nay, but I will go too," said the affectionate old minister, "I like to see meetings of forgiveness and love. Your father wished me also to visit him to-day; but, being fatigued with the duties of the Sabbath, I meant to defer my visit till to-morrow. Since you will go, however, we will go together. By the time we have taken some refreshment, the cart will be ready, for I cannot walk now."

On their arrival at Craigfoot, Ralph, although he

had not been there for nearly six years, was recognised by some of the old servants.

“Here is Ralph!” they shouted; “here is Ralph! his father will now die in peace.” And they ran and told his father that Ralph was come home.

“Bring him hither!” exclaimed his father, “bring him hither quickly!”

The old minister, now approached Mr Gemmell’s bedside, leading Ralph in his hand. “I have wronged thee, my son! I have deeply wronged thee!” exclaimed Mr Gemmell, as he reached his hand over his bed, and drew his son forward to his embrace. “Canst thou forgive me? Will God forgive me for my iniquities to thee?”

“I have forgiven you already,” said Ralph, while he wept over his father’s breast, “and God is willing to forgive you too.”

Here the good old servant of God gave one hand to the son, and another to the father, and offered up his heart’s desire unto God. After this he exhorted Mr Gemmell to put his trust in God; entreated him to believe in the promises of the gospel, which, he assured him, were given to the chief of sinners; and then took his leave and returned home.

“You look very ill,” said Ralph to his father, when they were left alone. “I am fast dying,” replied his father; “I caught a cold last winter; it has never left me; and I am now so weak, I cannot stir from my bed. But where have you been wandering all this while, my son? I need not ask; I

know what you have suffered. I have been a cruel father to you. I wished you to live like myself, careless of religion; and because you could not do this, I drove you from my house. Your grievances, however, I can in some measure redress. I have destroyed the former will which I rashly made, and restored you to your proper rights; and thrice happy am I that you have returned to heir that estate you so well deserve."

Here Mr Gemmell was interrupted by Edward coming into the room. "Here is your brother," said his father to him. "You know how much I have wronged him—how much I have taught you to wrong him."

"But Ralph will forgive me," said Edward; for he knew the tenderness of his brother's heart, "Ralph will forgive me. You have often seen me weep, father, when we talked about him since you turned ill."

"My dear brother," said Ralph, "you are indeed forgiven." And the two brothers warmly embraced one another.

"Now," said Mr Gemmell, raising himself up on his bed, when he saw his sons weep for gladness in each other's arms; "now I am happy as far as this world is concerned. You are both well provided for; and you will be kind to one another. But, Oh, Ralph! I am not yet prepared for death. I have sinned grievously—I have been a curse to my own family—I have persecuted the people of God—I am

the vilest of sinners—and I fear that God in his anger may cast me off for ever. Yesterday I sent for the good old minister (so kindly did Mr Gemmell now speak of those men whom he had once scorned as the offscourings of the earth), and he gave me some comfort. He displayed the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, and encouraged me to believe in Him. I do wish to believe in Him. I see no other way of escaping the wrath to come. But I fear my heinous sins have provoked Him to leave me for ever.”

Can you imagine, young reader, with what feelings Ralph heard his father talk thus ; or with what eagerness and anxious love he began to comfort him ?

“Dear father,” he said, “Christ loves us the better, the more we hate ourselves ; and we do Him wrong, when we think that the greatness of our sins will hinder us from being accepted of God through Him. It is not because we are sinners that God will not accept of us ; for if this were true, no man could be saved. It is because we will not believe in Christ, nor repent, nor forsake our sins that He will not save us. This is the saying of God to every man, even to the chief of sinners—‘Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’ He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. His grace is sufficient for us : He perfects his strength in our weakness. Is not the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, sufficient to wash out the vilest sin from our souls ? The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. God is well pleased with us, that is, with all

who believe in Christ, for his righteousness' sake. If, then, we are willing to believe in Christ, if we are willing to forsake our sins, and to be made holy, we have the word of God witnessing to us that Christ is willing to plead his suffering and death in our behalf, to sanctify us by his Spirit, and to present us at last to his Father, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" exclaimed his father, when Ralph had done speaking. And again he cried, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" Ralph saw by his look and difficulty of breathing, that death was at hand. He fell down on his knees, with Edward, by the bedside, and prayed for his father. It was a fervent, effectual prayer, and it was heard.

Ralph now asked his father if he felt his trust any stronger in his Saviour. "He hath come to me at the eleventh hour," said his father; "I hope all is well. Oh the love of God in Christ Jesus!" He could utter no more, but casting a look of ineffable affection on his son, he fell back on his bed and expired.

To have been the means of saving a soul from death, will be to every one who has been so honoured, a thought of sweetest delight throughout eternity: but what infinite joy of heart must it be to have the conscious feeling that we have been instrumental in accomplishing the salvation of a father or a mother, a brother or a sister! This feeling was now Ralph's

reward. It was his zealous perseverance in obedience to God, against so much opposition, that first led his father to think seriously of his own conduct. He was, as we have seen, the means of enlightening and comforting him in his last moments; and he received from him a look of affection and gratitude, which recompensed him more than a hundred fold for all his past afflictions. By his example and instruction, Edward, too, forsook the error of his ways; and he had the satisfaction of seeing him, after having devoted himself several years to study, become a faithful and zealous minister of the gospel of Christ.

At his father's death, Ralph succeeded to the paternal inheritance; and we deem it unnecessary to say more of his future life, than that in prosperity, as he had done in adversity, he put his whole trust in his Saviour, walked in the way of his commandments, and to the end of his days experienced it to be a true saying—that God will never leave nor forsake those who put their trust in Him.

YOUNG reader, before I take my leave of you, let us reflect a little on the history of Ralph. You have seen him in childhood reading his Bible, and listening to the instructions of his mother. You have seen him, after her death, trusting too much to himself—breaking his pious resolutions—renouncing his religion—and walking in that way in which sinners go. Then, you remember, he had all that his heart could desire of this world's bounties. He was be-

loved and caressed by his friends, honoured by his acquaintances, and filled with the hope of a life of ease and prosperity. And what was then the sum of his happiness? His conscience condemned him; remorse embittered all his pleasure; and when he thought he was dying, he shook with the terrors of despair; for he had secured no Almighty Friend to stand by him at that last hour when the help of man is vain. So shall you be overcome by the threatenings and allurements of the world, if you seek not continually the guidance of the Holy Spirit—if you rely not wholly on the grace of your Saviour. And if you continue to live in sin, so shall the bitterness of remorse come upon you, and so shall you find yourself friendless and in despair at the approach of death. Again, you have seen him awakened to his duty by the grace of God, while at the same time he was forbidden his father's house—despised by his friends—wandering in poverty—labouring in the field or begging his bread—now with the immediate prospect of an ignominious and untimely death before him—and now in banishment and slavery; and what was then the sum of his happiness? In the severest moment of his sufferings, he had that peace of mind which passeth all understanding—he had the hope of eternal life—he had the smile of God's countenance, and the assurance that He would never forsake him. This was his happiness. It will be yours too, young reader, if you so serve God, so resist the world, and so take up your cross and follow Christ.

We cannot promise you the same wealth in the world as that which fell to the share of Ralph; but if you persevere, like him, in well-doing, you may be the means of saving some near relation or dear friend; and we can promise you, on the authority of God, that in poverty He will enrich you—in suffering He will solace you—in temptation He will strengthen you—in sickness He will be your health—in death your rod and your staff—and after death your everlasting reward. Persevere, then, my young friend, in well-doing; put thy trust in God; and thou shalt find Him, in life and death, in time and eternity, thy ever-present and all-sufficient friend.



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