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THE

TIMES OF CLAVERHOUSE;

OR,

SKETCHES OF THE PERSECUTION.

BY THE

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SANQUHAR.

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"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

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PREFACE.

THIS small publication is due to the inhabitants of the moorlands, and may be regarded as a suitable accompaniment to the 'Traditions' that have been collected in their different localities. In the 'Gleanings among the Mountains,' many allusions are made to circumstances which, at the time, could not be explained without too great a divergency from the continuity of the story. It was, therefore, only an incidental glance here and there that could be taken of the persons, and scenes, and actings of the stirring period of the persecution. In the following Sketches, however, an attempt has been made to supply this deficiency, and to gratify that laudable curiosity which perchance may have been excited by the perusal of the volumes of the 'Traditions of the Covenanters.'

The people among whom the traditions of the persecuting times are mainly current, are not gene-

rally possessed of the histories of the period to which they refer, and hence a volume like the present may be helpful in furnishing them with more definite ideas of many things of which they have but an imperfect conception. It will throw light on some dark incidents, and afford a solution of certain difficulties which may present themselves to those whose acquaintance with the character of the times is neither accurate nor extensive.

The following volume is not precisely a history of the persecuting times, it is rather a remembrancer of that history. It is now nearly 160 years since the persecution terminated, and hence the long intervening period, during which so many successive generations have gone to the grave, has greatly effaced from the general mind the impression of the sufferings endured in those trying times; and, therefore, it is necessary to remind the present generation of the history of our forefathers, which is in danger of being forgotten, and is actually in a great measure unknown to many of their descendants, who enjoy the fruits of all their toils in the defence of the civil and religious liberties of the land. We never can be fully sensible of our privileges, nor of our obligations to our ancestors for these privileges, till we look into the history of their times, and make ourselves familiar both with their principles and their sufferings. The circumstances

of the present age may probably yet demand a more searching inquiry into the doctrines of the olden time—some of which, and the scenes which have been enacted in that age of oppression, are delineated in the ensuing volume. These Sketches, then, are given to the public, in the hope that they will be the means of stimulating those who are less informed on the subjects of the covenanting times, to a more careful inquiry in reference to the great points and privileges for which our fathers so strenuously contended.

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THE

TIMES OF CLAVERHOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

The Persecution.

Persecution is the result of the contrariety of the principles and practice of the world to the pure spirit of Christianity. On the first introduction of the gospel among the nations of the earth, persecution drew its sword, and to this day it has not been finally restored to its scabbard. The cessation of hostilities to the religion of Christ, and to those who profess it, we have every reason to believe, shall not take place till the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. In the present state of things no one Christian community can positively count on a continuous exemption from persecution; for whatever peace Churches may have for some time enjoyed, events may suddenly spring up which may throw the whole of Christendom into confusion, and from the midst of this turmoil there may march forth the sable war-steed of an exterminating persecution, dragging in its furious course the crimson chariot that receives its die from the blood of the saints, over whose prostrate bodies it rides in full and terrible career. The Churches of Christ, then, counting on the present

diffusion of the doctrines of civil and religious liberty, ought not to feel over secure, because a storm may yet arise which may shake the firmest foundations. Dark clouds are looming in the distant horizon, and some have even said that they have heard the mutterings of remote thunder; but however this may be, we ought to be prepared for the worst that may happen. Prior to the overthrow of the great antichristian city in the European dominions, and the sweeping away of the ancient and intolerant institutions of the nations, the enemies of religion will doubtless make one great effort, one final struggle, to retain that ascendency which they are destined to lose; and in the strife no one can ultimately predict what havoc may ensue, and to what distress the reformed Churches may yet be subjected. If it be true, as some have surmised, that the witnesses are not yet slain, then it is absolutely certain that days of darkness are awaiting the Church, and that these days are not far to come. This time of trial, if it be yet future, shall, it is true, be brief, but it shall be terrific,—a time of tribulation compared with which the Church has hitherto witnessed little like it. Times of violent shakings and of minute and painful siftings may yet be experienced by all the reformed Churches located within the bounds of the ancient papal territory.

But whatever may in this respect be the future fate of God's Church in the world, we know with certainty what she has endured in her past history. She has passed through the ordeal of grievous and protracted persecutions, and persecutions of a nature so trying, that had it not been for the Divine support and interference of her Gracious and Almighty Head,

she must have been utterly exterminated, and her memorial wiped away from the earth.

Few sections of God's Church in the world, perhaps, have undergone tribulations more severe than that which has had a place in our native land. Since the times of her first reformation, the Church of Scotland has been more or less agitated by an unscrupulous interference on the part of the civil rulers, who sought to mould her after their own fashion to subserve their political purposes. She was like a ship tossed on the bosom of the tumultuous main, ready to be swallowed up in the hideous chasms of its waters, yet she rode, a goodly vessel, on the billows, and proved that on the whole she was seaworthy, and that her timbers were tight and firmly laced around her. The severest of all the persecutions to which the Church in Scotland has been subjected, was that under the reign of the second Charles and his brother James. These impious men trampled under the feet of a crushing despotism a noble and high-spirited nation, and pressed the heart's blood through every pore of the body. Charles was an infamous character, perhaps one of the most infamous that ever sat on a throne. Treachery, cruelty, debauchery, and profligacy were appropriate to the man, and prompted the measures of his iniquitous reign. He was a recreant Covenanter, for he had signed the Covenant, and avowed that, renouncing Popery and Prelacy, he would regard the enemies of the Covenant as his enemies, and the friends of the Covenant as his friends. And yet, notwithstanding all these solemn professions before God and man, he resiled from every one of his engagements. He was called to the throne at

the Restoration, on the good faith that he would maintain an unswerving adherence to the Covenant, and support, on the ground of the social compact, the entire liberties of the subjects in all matters civil and religious. Great were the rejoicings throughout the country, when Charles returned from his exile, and was seated on the throne of his ancestors. Men of all ranks, from the lowest to the highest, seemed to vie with each other in their expressions of excessive loyalty and attachment to the sovereign; the ebullition, in fact, amounted almost to a frenzy, as if the advent of the king were the sudden commencement of the nation's millennium. This hilarious display on the part of the people, however, was shortlived; it was in fact ominous, like the bright cloud which to the practised eye of the weather-gazer seems to contain in its bosom the elements of a slumbering storm. It was something like what the Scottish people in their expressive dialect denominate a *feydom;* by which they mean, that when a person happens to exhibit more than his usual vivacity, some calamity is at hand. And truly it was so in the present case; for no sooner had the monarch adjusted himself in his royal chair, and when the acclamations of his subjects had scarcely ceased to sound in his ears, than he proceeded, with his characteristic bad faith, to rupture every tie by which he had been bound, and to fling to the fitful winds every obligation which lay upon him as the nation's ruler. The procedure of the king in his hasty invasion on the liberties and lives of his subjects, was as startling and astounding to the country at large, as a peal of thunder in the blue sky, which, it is said, has sometimes occurred, and when not a cloud of even

the size of a man's hand was seen to dim the azure firmament. The clouds of the former troubles were supposed to have passed away, and men were beginning to lift up their heads without fear to contemplate the clear expanse above them, and, breathing a freer air, were looking forward to times of security and repose, when lo, portentous sounds were heard, and sounds indicative of the onward rushing of a wide wasting tempest. Men could scarcely believe their own ears, or credit their own eyes, when things were told them, and scenes were witnessed by them, in reference to the doings and denunciations of him who had been so recently, and in such auspicious circumstances, as they thought, seated on the throne. But Charles, heedless of men's opinions, and reckless of all consequences, proceeded to stretch his royal prerogative to the point of a direct attack on the privileges of his subjects, and to declare war against the worthiest portion of his people, that in former times had shown themselves his readiest and his truest friends. A treacherous and a selfish man, the king was determined on a crusade against the populace of his own realm, for the purpose of his own personal aggrandisement, and to secure, by an intolerant despotism, as he foolishly imagined, a firmer seat on his throne. Charles plainly miscalculated the great principles which alone can strengthen and render permanent the kingly power. He forgot that if a prince would sit on his throne, that that same throne must be based on the affections of his people.

He preferred the Prelatic form of church government to the Presbyterian, and it is even affirmed that he embraced Popery when on the continent;

not, perhaps, that he regarded one form of religious profession more than another in the abstract, for he hated religion in his heart, as was plainly indicated by his practice; but he had an object in view, and that object was a political despotism, a supremacy in all matters civil and sacred, and hence it became a matter of serious consideration with him, what form of ecclesiastical polity would serve him best in the promotion of this object. He judged, and the event showed that he judged correctly, that Prelacy would best subserve his interests; and therefore he adopted it as a ladder, by which to climb with easier step to the top of that "bad eminence" on which he had so steadily fixed the eye of his ambition. The violent introduction of Episcopacy into Scotland, for the purpose specified, was the cause of that grievous and protracted persecution which has stained with a hue so deep the history of that bleeding land. The genius of Presbyterianism is alike opposed to tyranny in the State and to erastianism in the Church, and this Charles found to be a mighty obstacle in the way of his project; and hence its removal was resolved on, and that at any expense however costly. Had the king found the Presbyterianism of the north as compliant as the Episcopacy of the south, it is probable, even though the bishops were bent on their uniformity of church government, that the persecution which our forefathers endured would have been spared, or at least greatly mitigated. But the unbending spirit of Scotland's populace, and their strict adherence to the Covenants, which at that time embodied the great charter of the nation's privileges, presented a formidable barrier to the encroachments of the monarch on the popular rights.

Scotland, therefore, was to be subdued by a requisite infusion of prelatic influence; and failing the peaceable reception of this, it was doomed to the subjugation of the exterminating sword of persecution. And the inroad was speedily made. The king scarcely paused to deliberate, but hastened, with all his royal impatience, to put his favourite scheme in execution; and terrible and sanguine was the career of that fatal movement when once set on foot. The storm which was gathering in the south gradually thickened and came lowering on, emitting in the distance the voice of its deep and hoarse thunder, till it gathered directly over the devoted land, when it poured its disastrous contents in one full and vengeful tempest down on the territory over which it scowled.

The bloody work of this dreary and wasteful period commenced with the executions of Argyle and Guthrie, the one eminent in the State and the other in the Church, and they were the first of that great "cloud of witnesses" whose blood flowed profusely on the streets of the populous cities, and on the desert moors and lonely wastes of the upland districts. Men stood aghast at the first gush of blood shed by the ruthless hand of the recreant monarch; and little did they reck that it was the first rude opening of the sluice that was to give vent, in a long and dreary stream, to the best blood of the land, the current of which was not to be cut short till nearly thirty years had run their ample round. The Prelatists, bent on taming the spirit of a high-minded people, and on subduing the entire nation to their usurped domination, were determined to lay the hand of a firm and tenacious grasp on the Presbyterian ministers, whose high principled bearing stood like

an adamantine wall athwart their path; and the consequence was that nearly four hundred of these worthy men were ejected from their charges, and, with their helpless families, were driven in the depth of winter from their homes to "seek a shelter on the world's wide stage." Thus were hundreds of the best men, and men who were deeply seated in the affections of their people, scattered like the leaves of the forest by the sifting winds of persecution that had begun to blow with the violence of a tempest. The matter now assumed a serious aspect, and the people perceived that mischief of the most determined character was meditated against them, while none could certainly foresee the issue. Two great antagonist principles were now at work,—the principle of civil and religious liberty, and the principle of an overbearing despotism in Church and State,—and a collision might naturally be expected.

The rising at Pentland was unpremeditated, and originated in certain incidental circumstances in the village of Dalry in Galloway. The disastrous result of this conflict was followed by severe measures against the Covenanters, and the persecution advanced another step, and assumed an aspect of more decided cruelty. It would appear, that the rulers of the time were rather gratified than otherwise at this instance of resistance on the part of the oppressed peasantry, because it afforded them a fairer pretext for the adoption of the more stringent measures which they now assumed, and which they prosecuted with a rigour, increasing in its virulence, till the country was made one vast slaughter-field. It was not, however, till the "*seventy-nine*," the year of the archbishop's death, and of the skirmish

at Drumclog, which was quickly followed by the battle of Bothwell Bridge, that the furnace of the persecution glowed with its fiercest heat. The years which followed this were some of them emphatically denominated the "killing time," or the "slaughter years," when Claverhouse, and Lag, and Dalziel, and a host of others, were let slip like desperate beasts of prey, and rode furiously on their mission of murder over the breadth and length of a bleeding land. The worst times of the Cæsars, perhaps, did not surpass the times of ecclesiastical oppression in Scotland; for no person, unless he dip into the history of that period, can rightly conceive the barbarities that were then practised. All law and order seem to have been suspended, and a license granted to a ruffian soldiery to kill and plunder at their will the unoffending people, who would not bow the neck to a lawless usurpation, nor tamely submit to an invasion of the rights of conscience. There was not a cottage in the remotest glens and most solitary moorlands into which the military did not intrude. No place was safe from their ominous visitations, and the life of no person whom they might happen to encounter could be deemed a moment secure. Property was always at their disposal, and little did they scruple to appropriate to themselves what suited them. No company of banditti could be more dreaded by the peasantry than were the troopers who traversed hill and dale in quest of booty and adventures. No tongue can tell the distress that overspread the land during these mournful years, when every man's life hung in doubt before his eyes, and when Scotland's fairest provinces were trodden by the feet of blood-thirsty

men, the base hirelings of a baser faction, who spread terror and desolation wherever they came, reducing their native country to the sad condition of a land conquered by a foreign enemy.

No religious or patriotic man's house was any longer his home, for he was obliged, for self-preservation, to betake himself to the wilds, where he hid himself in the smeary trench of the deep moss-hag, or among the thickets in the ravine, or in the dark cavities of the rocks. Frequently, however, even these retreats did not screen them, and they were dragged forth from their hidings, and shot, without trial and without warning, on the heath. Many a time was the interdicted conventicle, which had assembled in the heart of the desert, surrounded by the merciless troopers, who fell upon the people like wolves on a fold of sheep, and either killed them on the spot, or drove them before them like a band of captives. The commands which the impious council which sat in the metropolis issued, were promptly obeyed by a horde of mercenaries who waited on their will; and the landed gentlemen, who had yielded to the pressure of the times, seconded their efforts, and wrought direful havoc among their tenantry and dependents, bringing the blood of many worthy men, and the ruin of many a virtuous family, on their heads. All things were thrown into confusion, and the attempt to erect Prelacy in Scotland, opened the floodgates of all wickedness and misrule, and deranged the whole framework of society.

The designs of the king, who had put such an active and malignant agency in motion, were in a great measure successful, for he assumed, with the

consent of the Parliament and Privy Council, the supremacy in Church and State. He was the lord of every man's conscience, and of every man's life, and the master of every man's property. His minions in the north wreathed the yoke of his despotism about the neck of the nation, and did more to subserve his interests in Scotland than could well be accomplished in the south. Middleton and Lauderdale, and M'Kenzie and Sharp, wrought strenuously, and succeeded marvellously in bringing matters to such a crisis. They were unprincipled and ambitious men themselves, and could, therefore, enter the more keenly into the designs of the master mind, whose influence swayed them all, and they found, that just in proportion as they served his interests, they promoted their own. They were characters called forth by the times, for the times suited them, just as the foul birds that are evoked by the scent of the carrion on which they love to prey. When the nation, thus prostrated under the feet of the usurper, happened at any time to move a limb, or to emit a groan indicative of the unnatural pressure under which it lay, instantly the weight was increased to stifle the voice that dared to complain, and to paralyze the limb that presumed to move.

But notwithstanding all this oppression, there was a vitality in the nation which could not be extinguished—a spark which could not be quenched. There existed a power within, hidden and deep, which no effort could annihilate; there was a principle of spiritual freedom cherished in the Church, and a fire of patriotism that lived and burned in many a bosom, both in the middle and

humbler ranks of society. This accounts for the long duration of the persecution in Scotland under the royal brothers. Had the fuel on which persecution is fed been wholly eaten up by its wasteful fires, it must naturally have expired, but so long as it found an element on which to operate, it existed. The fact that the persecution lasted for eight-and-twenty years, is a proof that there was, in considerable abundance, what afforded the persecutors work, and that it was not so easy a matter as they supposed to exterminate all opposition to their measures in Church and State. There was much worth in the nation, though there was much wickedness and many foul defections, and this worth was the power that occasionally shook the tyrant's throne, and made it totter under him, till it eventually required so concentrated a force, as to "break in pieces the arm of the oppressor," and to chase him, a terror-stricken and cowering fugitive, from the realm.

This persecution in Scotland, which lasted an entire generation, was designed to "wear out the saints of the Most High," and to degrade the populace to a mean and unresisting subserviency. The country was inured to hardship, for the great proportion of the nation was born and cradled in persecution. Year after year passed away, and no symptoms of any thing like a relaxing of this dire oppression appeared; nay, as the period advanced, the tribulation became more intolerable, and it seemed as if the extermination of every religious person, and of every thing in the shape of religion, was the design of the unhappy men who held the reins of so dreary and wasteful a tyranny. The

cry of the oppressed ascended from every corner of the land; but the wailings of distress, and the bleatings of the scattered sheep of Christ's fold, served only to remind the oppressors anew of the existence of victims on which to wreak, with redoubled fury, their insatiable vengeance. But He, whose bowels of compassion yearns over his sorrowing children and his Church in the furnace, heard their cry, sustained their souls in patience, and cheered them with the hope of an ultimate deliverance. "The rod of the wicked shall not always lie on the lot of the righteous."

How much distress does the reckless ambition of princes cause to their subjects, and, at the same time, how much wickedness does it work out! Satan sets his agents to work, from diverse motives on their part, to harass the Church of God; some from a pure hatred of Christianity, and others from the design of personal aggrandisement. His main end, however, in all cases, is to crush the Church, and, if possible, to sweep her away as a nuisance from the earth. The great spirit of evil never can cease to oppose the Church, and to fight despitefully against the people of God. Hence our Lord taught his disciples to expect persecution, —"In the world ye shall have tribulation." Such persecutions are doubtless permitted for the purpose of subserving certain wise and gracious ends in the hand of the great Head of the Church. The faith and patience of the saints are made by this means apparent, and the reality of the grace of God in the hearts of his people is demonstrated, while, on the other hand, the base ingratitude of a sinful world is made conspicuous. Christianity is designed

to save the world, and the Church in the world is the conservator of this Christianity; but yet, the world lying in wickedness spurns from it the boon, and turns its withering scowl on those who remind it of God's best gift to men.

The late persecution to which our honoured ancestors were subjected, though severe and long continued, was yet nothing new in the world; for persecution has been from the beginning, and shall still be experienced in one shape or other, till the day arrive, when Satan shall be bound, and cast into the bottomless pit, where he shall not be able to exert his power to persecute till the thousand years, the destined period of his doom, be expired. The past history of the Church has, for the most part, been a history of persecution arising from the conflicting elements of faith and unbelief, of piety and vice, of the interests of this world and the interests of the next, of the claims of Christ and the claims of Satan. *The* Persecution, as it was emphatically denominated by the Scottish peasantry, was an occurrence that is, to this day, as vividly before the eye of their mind, as if it had befallen in the experience of the present generation. The records of that dreadful time are, in the shape of biography at least, in the hands of almost every one, and are read with an interest so absorbing as effectually to prevent an oblivion of the deep tribulations into which the Church was then cast. Indeed, the traditionary anecdotes that abound in the localities to which the sufferers more especially resorted, would even, in absence of historic narrative, preserve, for a long time to come, the remembrance of these days. The descendants of the worthies, who still retain, as

heirlooms in their families, the traditions of their honoured fathers, who suffered for "Christ's Crown and Covenant," can never forget nor cease to rehearse the facts and the trials of their times.

It is the design of the writer of the following pages, to contribute, as a sequel to the 'Traditions of the Covenanters,' a few sketches of the origin and results of the Persecution.

CHAPTER II.

The Persecuted—their Principles and Character.

THE persecution in Scotland was directed against all classes who refused to subject themselves to the dominant faction. The object of that faction, at the head of which was the king, and for whom it wrought, was, as has been already stated, the erection of a lordly supremacy, in the person of the prince, over all things civil and sacred,—a supremacy which would permit no man to complain of its domination, nor any portion of the subjects to seek, even by the most constitutional means, a redress of that master grievance. The persecution, then, had for its object all and sundry who complied not with the wishes of the king, who pushed his power beyond the legitimate boundary which the social compact had assigned as the line of demarcation between the royal prerogative and the privileges of the subject. As Prelacy was the medium through which the king sought to acquire and to retain his lawless authority, the Presbyterianism of the country was rudely assailed as being the chief obstacle in the way of his ambition, in the room of which Episcopacy was to be established. The

Covenants had been sworn to by all ranks and conditions in the nation, and even by the king himself, and in these Covenants the maintenance of the Presbyterian form of Church government, as well as that of all civil and religious liberties, was asserted, and therefore to comply with the measures of the sovereign was to resile from the oath of the Covenants. This many of the upper ranks, to conciliate the royal favour, and to retain the possession of their estates, did, and many of the middle and lower classes followed their example to save themselves from trouble. A great proportion of the nation, however, consisting of the well informed and good principled subjects, refused to act a recreant part, and declined the proposals of those in power; and these were the individuals against whom the full pressure of the persecution was made to bear. No favour was shown to such persons, be they who they might; gentlemen, and ministers, and commons who adhered to their original principles, were alike regarded as enemies, and treated as the abettors of an audacious rebellion. The persecution had at first a wide field, though it was ultimately narrowed, not through the clemency of the rulers, but through the dreadful and exterminating severity with which it acted, gradually consuming the objects of its vengeance till it had comparatively little to do.

As, then, the persecuted embraced men of all ranks, and consisted of a prodigious number of the nation at large, it may not be out of place to glance briefly at the principles and character of these men. It has been fashionable to represent the persecuted as men distinguished for their insubordination,—a

company of fanatical persons; rude, factious, and unprincipled, who strove to trample all law and authority under their feet. Their preachers have been regarded as demagogues, the restless agitators of a political faction, who traversed the country for the purpose of inflaming the popular mind, and withal drivelling orators, who could scarcely utter a mouthful of common sense. The term "Covenanter" has been employed as the symbol of all that is illiterate, coarse, deluded, impious, and rebellious,—a grotesque figure, the fit object of universal ridicule and execration,—this, we say, has been fashionable, and the fantastic portraiture, drawn by the pencil of genius and the pen of elegant literature, has been presented in the pages of fascinating composition, and of imaginative interest, to the eyes of thousands, as a matter both of merriment and of scorn. What, then, were the principles of these men,—their principles as citizens and as Christians? Their principles, as denizens of the country, were the principles of loyalty; they were the supporters of constitutional authority and law, and strict adherents to the fundamental dogmas of civil liberty. Their Covenants bound them to maintain allegiance to their sovereign so long as he ruled according to the terms of these documents which previously received the nation's sanction, and the same Covenants bound them to the maintenance of the freedom of the subject, and of all the national immunities. Nor was their loyalty that of mere profession, it was the loyalty of principle; and there was no class of his subjects on which the king could have counted more firmly than on the Covenanters; and had he used them well, they would have been the orna-

ment of his crown, and the stability of his throne. But did the Presbyterians not rebel? Did they not rise against their rulers, and threaten their expulsion from the government? Did not Pentland, and Drumclog, and Bothwell prove the insubordination of their principles, and show how ready they were to throw the entire nation into confusion? Their lives and their liberties were unjustly assailed; and do the laws, either of nature or of religion, forbid a man to defend himself in case of the aggression of a murderer or a robber? If these men were ever found in a body, it was for mutual protection, and when the stronger party sought to make a prey of them. They were the last men in the land who would have lifted a rebellious arm against the righteously constituted powers; but when the rulers became their oppressors, their murderers, their slave-masters, and their plunderers, the matter assumed a very different aspect, and it became with them a matter of grave consideration how to act, and the manner in which they did act was ultimately and amply justified by the Revolution, when the whole nation did on a great scale, what they attempted to accomplish within a narrower field of operation. In fact, the quietness of the country, under all its oppression, seemed, in the eyes of the rulers, to amount to a stupid obstinacy, and they were irritated and disappointed at the want of insubordination on the part of the people, because by this means they were deprived of the pretext which they sought to justify them in proceeding to the full lengths which they wished to go. The general peaceableness of the peasantry under all their provocations was so vexing to them, that the notorious

and disgraceful scheme of introducing the Highland host was resorted to, and hence about eight thousand savages were let loose in the west. This horde spread themselves like locusts over what were deemed the disaffected districts, and plundered all indiscriminately, friend and foe alike. This great army marched into the western shires under the impression of meeting an insurgent host prepared to withstand their progress, and to dispute every inch of the ground with them, and when they had marched hither and thither, and traversed the country in all directions, not an enemy was to be seen, nor a single opponent, neither in the streets of the towns, nor in the open fields of the country. There was no insurrection to quell, nor were the plunderers successful, even by means of their aggression, in exciting an insurrection, so that the projectors of the scheme, becoming utterly ashamed of their base attempt, were, after a few weeks, obliged to recall their army. No person who reads the impartial histories of that distressful period will ever charge the Covenanters with disloyalty.

But what were their principles ecclesiastically speaking? In point of Church government they were Presbyterians, and altogether opposed, according to the express statements of their Covenants, to Prelacy. Their oaths bound them to maintain the ancient government of the Church of Scotland, in opposition to government by bishops. But the great and leading principle which they mainly asserted, was the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ as the King and Head of his own Church. This prerogative Charles had sacrilegiously invaded, and had declared himself supreme in all things, sacred

as well as civil. He had placed himself at the head of the Church, and sought to model her constitution and ritual according to the caprice of his own fancy, and was determined to brook no resistance to his sovereign will in these matters. To this the Covenanters would by no means submit; it was with them a matter of uncompromising principle, and a matter that seriously affected their conscience; and rather than yield, they were prepared to submit to whatever hardships they might be exposed. They could bear the deprivation of liberty, the spoliation of all their goods, and the loss of life itself; but they never could submit to the renunciation, either in theory or in practice, of the great fundamental tenet of the headship of the Lord Jesus. They maintained that Christ possessed the *sole* supremacy, and that he was the *alone* king of his own Church. Some might attempt to compromise the matter, and say, that while he was the head of the Church, the king was a head under him, and possessed of a subordinate rule in things sacred, but our persecuted ancestors entertained no such idea; they repudiated the slightest approximation, on the part of any man, to the kingly claims of Him who had purchased the Church with his own blood. The arrogant assumption of Charles, therefore, they regarded as an intolerable insult to Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and as they had sworn allegiance to this supreme Lord, they were by no means disposed to transfer it to any mortal, whatever might be his dignity among men. The Church they held to be an institution distinct from, and independent on, civil matters; and that while the king was ruler in his own appropriate dominions,

and therein bound to rule under the great Supreme, the Governor among the nations, the Lord Jesus was the *sole* King appointed over his holy hill of Zion. It was for the support of Christ's kingly honour, then, and in testimony of his righteous supremacy, that many a saintly man in Scotland willingly yielded up his life.

But while they maintained this great principle in opposition to the erastian encroachments of the king, and readily shed their blood as witnesses for this fundamental truth, we are not to suppose that as Christian men their principles were confined to a mere point. No; there are many important principles that flow from, and that cluster round this great central truth, and these for the most part were clearly seen, and firmly held by them. Few men were better skilled in sound scriptural doctrine than they. The tenets of the Christian faith, in all the regularity of enlightened system, were embraced and believed by them; and so far from being rude and uninstructed men, they were well informed on all essential points, and even in matters of merely circumstantial import. Theirs were times when men's principles were tested to the uttermost, and, therefore, since it was necessary for men to suffer on principle, they found it imperative to inquire into the soundness of their own, that they might be persuaded in their own minds, and might "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asked them a reason of the hope that was in them, with meekness and fear."

If such were the principles of these men, as patriots and Christians, it is not difficult to perceive their character, sceing a man's character is uniformly

moulded by his principles. Principles are the great stimulants of action, and are the centre spring of all human conduct. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he;" and consequently, whatever a man's doctrinal tenets are, of these his character must bear the impress. The apostle, when speaking of the ancient persecuted believers, says, they "were men of whom the world was not worthy," and the same thing may be affirmed of our suffering ancestors. Their contending for great principles, on public grounds, has bequeathed to us the rich inheritance which we now enjoy, and which it is our duty to transmit to posterity, while at the same time the simplicity and holiness of their lives are to be imitated by us, as the professed followers of that Saviour whom they honoured both by obedience and suffering. We do not say that the character of our ancestors was stainless, for this would be to affirm what is not true, and what can be predicated of no man, nor of any class of men, while in this world; for "there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not." They had their faults and imperfections like other men, but they were, on the whole, a class of Christians and of suffering witnesses of whom the world has rarely seen the like; and the fragrance of their piety, like incense breathed from afar, has been wafted to our times, and it smells as sweetly to-day as it did in its living freshness during their lives. Had their history been characterised merely for patriotism, their memorial would be dear to us, and would be warmly cherished in the heart of every lover of his country; but their history embodied more than patriotism. It was a history of genuine religion, of practical god-

liness. They were men the spirituality of whose lives emitted a brightness which dazzled the eyes of their enemies, and afforded them a light in which to read, with a painful distinctness, the worthlessness of their own character, and which forced on their unwilling gaze the revolting picture of their own deformity. This light operated as an incessant and irksome criticism on the conduct of their oppressors, and hence they laboured to extinguish it, that in the obscurity of its absence they might practise those deeds of darkness that have covered their names with so vile an infamy. Their craven-hearted persecutors might say, in their manifestoes which they issued against them, that "they had cast off all fear of God;" but in their conscience they knew better. They were aware that the very reverse of this was the fact, and that it was they themselves respecting whom the affirmation could justly be employed in all the latitude and energy of its meaning. The defamatory style of their opponents in speaking of them, is to be understood in a meaning exactly the reverse of what the language would literally indicate. Indeed, the slanders of their enemies are their credit. It is an honour to be reproached by some men, and a disgrace to receive their approbation. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

The piety of these men, whom their enemies gratuitously vilified, was beyond all question. The written histories of the period bear ample and undeniable testimony to this. They were men remarkable for the holiness of their lives, for they were visited with more than an ordinary measure

of the influences of that heavenly spirit imparted to all the people of God. They testified for Christ against the reigning defections of the times, and this was the result of their cordial attachment to the Redeemer, without which all their testimonies and contendings would have been of very little estimation in the sight of Him who searches the hearts and tries the reins. That these men truly loved the Saviour, to whose cause they professed an adherence, is obvious from the sufferings which they willingly endured for his name; for the highest proof that any man can give of the reality of his love to Christ, is the laying down of his life for his sake. This the martyrs did, and deemed it their highest glory to do so. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends."

They were men of strictly religious habits, devout men, who seemed to possess an uncommon relish for the ordinances of grace. And here there was one thing in which they much excelled,—namely, the exercise of prayer. The solitudes to which they resorted, the dark caves and lonely shielings in which they hid themselves, were all oratories from which the voice of fervent prayer ascended to the throne of grace, through the intercession of the great High Priest. The desert was vocal with supplications, for they had no refuge but in God, and they never felt themselves safe but when they drew near to the Rock of their salvation. No class of men in those times, perhaps, were admitted to a more intimate fellowship with Heaven, and none improved this intercourse more than they did. Whole days and nights were spent by them

in this blessed exercise. It was their chief employment when they reclined on the heath in the cheerful days of summer, or when, by the storms of winter, they were shut up in the solitary hut afar in the bosom of the waste. They were eminently men of prayer, and this accounts for the uncommon sanctity of their lives. And, O what prayers were theirs! what powerful intercessions! what deep and hallowed communings of spirit with God! They were men who lived with death daily before their eyes, and felt themselves on the close verge of the other world, into which they might be violently thrust in a moment; and this imparted an intensity of spirit and of earnestness to their devotions, of which we can form but little conception. If any ever fully followed out the Scripture exhortation, "Pray without ceasing," they did. The spirit of grace and supplication rested abundantly upon them, and the holy aspirations of their souls were continually ascending up before God, and they came with acceptance before him. This habit of prayer imparted a spirituality to their character, and a heavenliness to their deportment, that rendered their social intercourse exceedingly pleasant, and greatly edifying to each other.

Their chief companion in their lonely wanderings was the Bible. They were mighty in the Scriptures. Not only were they well instructed by the ministrations of their preachers, who at the crowded conventicles expounded to them the great doctrines of Christianity, but they searched the Scriptures daily, and occupied the leisure hours which they were obliged to spend in their retreats in the deep and searching study of the Divine Word.

Their lives were fashioned by its precepts, their minds enlightened by its doctrines, their faith was upheld by its promises, and their hearts were cheered by its consolations. They imbibed the spirit of the sacred oracles, and were actuated in all their movements by their heavenly guidance. Could the conduct of these men have been otherwise than becomes the gospel of Christ? Could such men be impious, as their enemies affirmed, whose course of acting and whose manner of life were thus instructed by the Word of God? None but those who hated them for their goodness durst venture the assertion.

The integrity of these men shone most conspicuously in that faltering and declining age, when so many, either through fear or through interest, resiled from their former engagements. They maintained their original position in the midst of the general defection, and rather than swerve from their avowed principles, they were prepared to suffer the loss of all things, and even of life itself. And bravely did they act on this determination, and thereby proved themselves to be a class of the most noble-minded and leal-hearted men the nation ever contained. Men were falling off on their right hand and on their left; the tall trees of the forest were shaken and moved to their lowest roots by the strength of that tempest which blew so fiercely over all, and many a stately oak was laid prostrate, and, in the crashing fall, brought others to the ground; but these abode in their strength, and the more they were agitated by the blast, the deeper did they strike their roots into the soil, and the more tenaciously did they cling to their position. Their

stedfastness in this respect, was a matter of severe mortification to the rulers, who could not but feel the burning shame of their cowardly and recreant conduct, as it appeared in the contrast.

There was one thing which lay very near the heart of these upright men, and that was the success of the gospel in the land. The great object they had in view was, the conversion of sinners to God. This, doubtless, was the great end for which they maintained so unflinching an adherence to their principles; it was to preserve the ordinances of Christianity pure and entire, and that the doctrines of the Cross might be published in their simplicity and fulness. They felt the power of the truth on their own hearts, and they eagerly sought to impart it to others, that they also might be saved. They did not neglect the support of the peculiarity of their principles on all suitable occasions; but then, as the good Cargill remarked, they were chiefly occupied in the *main things*, the exhibition of the doctrines of the glorious gospel. They were in all things practical men, and not mere speculatists on political and ecclesiastical theories; they wrought and toiled for the advancement of the interests of religion and of vital godliness in the community. Their sincerity in this great work becomes sufficiently apparent when we reflect, that all their labours in this behalf, were at the risk of their lives. They maintained the standard of the gospel in the open fields and in the desert moorlands at their peril, and often were their sacrifices mingled with their blood.

All this they prosecuted in the most peaceful and inoffensive way. A class of more quiet and

orderly men was not to be found, notwithstanding all that their enemies have said of their turbulence. The patient and meek spirit which they displayed in their sufferings, might well have disarmed the hardest opposition. If their enemies pursued them into their quiet retreats, or into the remote recesses of the wilderness where they met to worship God, and if there they tried to seize them as captives, or to spill their blood, were they to be deemed insubordinate, if, in the necessity of self-defence, they opposed force to force? Or, is it to be considered as an impeachment of their general character as peaceable men, when they attempted to shield those of their brethren on whom the foe had made an attack, with a view to take their lives? As well may the wolf complain of the shepherd who endeavours to rescue the lambs of the fold from his voracious jaws, and say, that he is acting a part quite inconsistent with the peaceable character of his vocation. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain, if thou sayest, Behold we knew it not, doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it, and he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know?" Such were the men of principle and of character, whom the rulers of the period in which they lived persecuted, and whom they chased, by violent deaths, out of the world. Men of a fairer reputation, it will not be easy to find in the page of history,—men of undaunted bearing, as we shall see, when called to suffer in their Master's cause,—men of an accommodating temper where conscience was not concerned,—and men whose honourable names reflected a credit on the nation to which they be-

longed. To say that they had faults, is just to affirm what is common to all men, even to the best on earth, and, therefore, to repudiate their character on this ground, as their detractors did, is just about as reasonable a thing, as to reproach the great luminary of day, because, here and there, astronomers have discerned spots on his disc. They were erring men like ourselves, and though they are to be revered, they are not to be idolised. There might be some things defective in their views and in their mode of management, but are these to vitiate their entire character, and to rob them of the credit of being God-fearing men, whose aims in the main were right, and whose solemn purpose it was to glorify God in life and in death. Let us imitate what was worthy in their principles and character, and follow them in as far as they were followers of Christ; "considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

CHAPTER III.

The Persecuted—their Sufferings.

We may well put the question, Why should men whose lives were so blameless and heavenly, be subjected to persecution? Why were they not rather honoured and lauded by the world, and their persons sedulously protected from harm? The reason has already been assigned,—the world hates the purity of the gospel character, and the integrity of lofty Christian principle, and hence the antagonism of true godliness to its own base maxims and conduct is not to be tolerated. The form which the sterling worth of our ancestors assumed in the eyes of the dominant party, and the reproving and unshrinking aspect which it presented in confronting the impious measures they had adopted in reference both to Church and State, gave them insufferable offence, and an offence which was not to be forgiven. They found that there was no hope of emasculating the vigour of their principles, nor any way of taming the firmness of their opposition, and hence they determined to proceed against them without mercy, and by every appliance of force and

of cruelty on their part to exterminate, if they could not subdue, the party.

There is no portion of our nation's history which we contemplate with more painful feelings, than that which comprises the space between the Restoration and the Revolution. The entire period is so revolting in its features, that the tongue is paralyzed in giving utterance to its character, and the pen trembles in attempting to depict the scene.

Among the first things which the persecution did, was to lay an arrest on the liberty of the subjects. Nothing is more sweet to man than freedom, and there is perhaps no nation under heaven to which freedom has charms so inviting as to the Scottish nation. Our ancestors, from even the most remote antiquity, have cherished the great principles of freedom, with a warmth amounting to enthusiasm, and there was no possession, to retain which, they would more readily have hazarded their lives, and the loss of all that was dear to them. What has man worth the name, if his liberty is taken from him?

> "A day, an hour of glorious liberty,
> Is worth a whole eternity of bondage."

But the king could not proceed a step with safety till he had imposed the manacles of bondage, and tightened them so rigorously, that men could not use their hands in opposing his designs. The honest Covenanters of Scotland, who erst rejoiced in possession of their liberties, civil and religious, and who did all they could, by oaths and engagements, to retain the precious boon, saw themselves robbed in one day of the whole, and plundered, in one hasty and

inauspicious hour, of all they deemed most valuable as Christians and as citizens. In civil matters they were not at liberty to think nor act otherwise than the king was pleased to permit. The civil constitution was at the mercy of the monarch, whose minions in the Parliament, and in the Privy Council, framed laws in accordance with his will, and passed enactments, however illegal, as it best suited them, so that in the progress of only a few years, there was scarcely a vestige of civil privilege remaining, and the national immunities, the glory of the land, were trampled under the feet of an insane faction. But that which chiefly afflicted our ancestors and pained them at the heart, was the deprivation of their religious freedom. The free exercise of their religion they regarded as the most costly of all their privileges. Their civil freedom was valuable, but then it had a relation only to the present world, while their freedom in reference to religious matters had a bearing on eternity. They claimed the privilege of worshipping God according to the dictates of their own conscience, but their masters said, No; you must conform yourselves in these matters as we deem it expedient, and it shall be at your peril if you dare to think otherwise than we are pleased to dictate. As in all religious concerns men are responsible only to the Most High, nothing could be more tyrannical than such an assumption of power over the conscience, for no one is privileged to rule here but God alone. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that in reference to this point, that portion of our ancestors who adhered to the right would concede nothing.

One consequence of their non-compliance with

these impositions in religious matters, was the making of exactions on their property by their oppressors. Fines, the most exorbitant, were resorted to, and many individuals, both of the gentlemen and of the commoners, were utterly ruined. If any person, be he who he might, refused to satisfy their demands, a company of dragoons were sent to his house, where they lived at free quarters, till every thing in the shape of provisions for man or beast was totally consumed. In this way, great numbers of recusant farmers and landed proprietors had their houses plundered of every thing they contained. Their money was extracted from their coffers; the clothes in the chests were appropriated to the use of the soldiers; the meal in the girnal, when they happened to leave a place before it was consumed, was trodden down in the dunghill; the meat in the barrels was cast on the floor, or before the door, and cut in pieces by their swords; the hay-ricks and stacks of corn in the barn-yard were set on fire; the horses and cows were seized as the booty of the plunderers; then the whole family, in the absence of the head of it, who had fled to his hidingplace in the desert, were driven naked and hungry to the wilds; and to conclude all, the flame was set to the thatch of the buildings, and the whole premises reduced to a heap of smoking ruins. When the master of the household ventured to creep from his retreat in the stealthiest manner to visit his home, nothing was to be witnessed but desolation; not a face was to be seen, nothing moving but a few domestic fowls picking the scorched particles of grain from the rubbish, and none, it may be, save a solitary dog sculking about the walls

of his wonted habitation, and which could not tell his master what had become of his wife and hapless children. Such scenes were common, and the veritable histories of the times assert, that hundreds of peaceable and virtuous families were treated in this way, without hope of redress. In this manner were fines exacted in all cases where conscientious scruples prevented their payment, or where pecuniary inability rendered it impossible; for, in a poor country, and in hard times, money was not to be had. Whole countries and districts were laid under the contribution of an illegal and insatiable extortion, and thousands on thousands were swept from an impoverished people by the licensed robbers, who not only taxed the populace at their will, but who were guilty of the meanest thefts; for even Claverhouse, and men of higher name than he, were chargeable with such offences.

A whole horde of mercenaries of all gradations in society, from men of the highest titles to the meanest subaltern in the army, overspread the land, for the purpose of plundering the peasantry. And these persons, all honourable men forsooth! enriched themselves by pilfering; no sum seemed too small for their rapacity, and none was too large to glut their avarice. Confiscation of property was quite common in those days, and nothing pleased the junto in the Privy Council better, than to find a recusant or covenanting landowner on whom to pounce, in order to enrich themselves with his estate; for these gentlemen readily contrived to bring the confiscated property into their own possession. No class of persons occupied a more unsafe position than these conscientious men, for their

estates operated as a lure to the gross cupidity of those reckless persons who made spoliation a trade by which to enrich themselves; hence the least suspicion, the slightest surmise, was enough to prejudge their case, and to bring them to certain ruin. It is known, that in certain instances, when any of these agents of oppression happened to cast a covetous eye on the fair domains of a quiet-minded gentleman, that schemes were instantly planned in secret, by which the honest man was inveigled, and his entire inheritance wrested from him, and bestowed on the greedy minion of the faction, who, in his turn, assisted in working out another plot to accomplish a similar end. Gentlemen and farmers were made responsible for their servants and dependents, and when any of them were found forsaking the curates and attending conventicles, a fine was the immediate consequence, and, in this way, vast sums were levied. In various instances, too, when the soldiers had seized the cattle belonging to a farmer, they obliged him to buy them back from them, and when the sum was paid down, the cattle were as much in their power as ever. But there is no end of enumerating; the history of these exactions and plunderings would require a volume. No man could call his property his own, and no redress was to be had for whatever injuries were sustained. As a specimen of these exactions, we may mention, that eleven gentlemen, in the small county of Renfrew, were fined in the enormous sum of upwards of thirty thousand pounds sterling.

But men were not plundered of their property and then dismissed to their freedom, like the sheep when shorn in the fold and then sent bounding to

the hills to roam at liberty till the fleece grow again; no, the incarceration of their persons was as common as the wasting of their substance. The personal liberty of every man who presumed to think for himself, was every moment in hazard, and the jails were crowded with people gathered from all parts of the country. The places of confinement were so filled, that there was no room for the reception of hundreds who had been captured by the emissaries of the council, whose occupation it was to sit in the metropolis and move the whole machinery of mischief that had been constructed for the subjugation of the country. Temporary places of confinement were resorted to, and when these were emptied of their occupants, who were removed either to death or to banishment, their places were speedily supplied. Some were detained in prison many a long year, and were never removed from their cells, unless to be brought before the council to be interrogated or put to the torture. In this way the health of multitudes was destroyed, their families ruined, and their property consumed. Many were laid in irons as if they had been the worst of felons, or desperate characters whom it was necessary to subdue and torment, even within the walls of the prison. Their relations were not allowed to see them, nor to communicate with them in any way, and no advantage was afforded them which their enemies could prevent; and the expression of sympathy on the part of others, was rarely allowed to reach them. In this situation, they were entirely ignorant of the condition of their friends, from whom they had been forcibly torn; the parent, immured in his dungeon for many tedi-

ous months, could not learn what had befallen his beloved family, whom he had left afar in the upland wilds, and left to the mercy of ravenous wolves who might waste and destroy them at their pleasure. Many a parent's heart was filled with painful solicitude on account of those he loved, and to whom he could render no assistance; but then the reflection came upon him, that it was in Christ's cause he was suffering, and he was content.

In those places of confinement they were frequently sorely pressed for want of food; for the fare was both scanty and mean, and in the inclemency of winter their clothing was often insufficient; and this induced diseases which preyed upon their constitution. It is not easy to conceive the inconveniences they were put to in their prison-houses, especially as these houses afforded the worst accommodation imaginable. No treatment inflicted on the brute creation could have been worse than theirs,—all feeling and decency and humanity were outraged in the manner they were used in those dreadful abodes to which they were confined. Of this a specimen may here be given, in the case of those who were conveyed to Dunnottar Castle: "They were thrust into a dark vault, which had but one small window on the side next the sea, which was full of mire, ankle deep, and was of such narrow dimensions as to allow scarcely more than room to stand upright. In this dreadful dungeon they remained almost the whole summer, crowded together, men and women, in one dense mass, without the slightest means of preserving what decency requires, compelled to purchase the worst provisions at the most extravagant prices so

long as they had any money,—even water being refuscd without a heavy price. Not even the horrors of the black hole of Calcutta surpassed those of Dunnottar Castle; for in the former the sufferings of the victims, if more intense, were of shorter duration, while the persecuted Scottish Presbyterians died many deaths, in the lingering agonies of these slow dreadful months. At length disease began to release them more quickly from their miseries; and the governor's wife having been induced to look into the hideous dungeon, was so shocked and appalled with the scene which met her brief gaze, that she prevailed upon her husband to remove the women to an apartment by themselves, and to put the men into other places, where they might at least breathe a less noisome and pestilential air. But many died of the diseases which they had already contracted, and about the end of the year the wasted survivors were banished to the plantations for slaves,—the men after having their ears cut off, and the women branded with hot irons on the face."

This may, by some, be considered as an extreme case, but if every case was not like this, it was not owing to the goodwill of their persecutors. The confinement of the prisoners who were taken at the battle of Bothwell Bridge in the Greyfriars' churchyard in Edinburgh, is characterised by a similar atrocity. "They were inclosed for a period of five months, half naked, half starved, and exposed to all the vicissitudes of the season, unsheltered, save by the tombstones and a few rude sheds erected towards the close of the autumnal months."

One of the many hardships to which our forefathers were reduced, was that of their being "in-

tercommuned," as it was termed by their persecutors. This was one of the most unmerciful and barbarous doings of those tyrannical times. By this deed the Covenanters were declared *rebels*, and were ejected from the pale of civilized society. A price was set on their heads, as if they had been a band of traitors of the most desperate and untameable description. No person was allowed to converse with them, or to write to them, or to hold any intercourse with them in whatever way. None were permitted to supply them with food or raiment. No door was to be opened for their reception, even though oppressed with sickness, or perishing through the inclemency of the weather, or sinking by exhaustion in traversing the weary deserts. Parents were forbidden to help their children, and children to help their parents. The wife was prohibited, on the pain of death, from aiding her intercommuned husband, and the husband was placed in the same circumstances with respect to his wife. These tyrannical men attempted to sever the ties of kindred, and to extinguish in the breast the feelings of natural affection. By this means the intercommuned were scattered abroad over the solitudes, and sought a retreat in the loneliest deserts. Their friends were under the necessity of ministering to their wants in the stealthiest manner, and it is remarkable that they were frequently supplied by children from the huts in the wilderness, who somehow had found out their haunts; and this they did without the knowledge of their parents, who otherwise would have been brought to trouble on their account. Thus were little children honoured to do service to God's

saints, who were suffering for his cause, and the blessing of the sufferers, no doubt, came upon them, and many a prayer would be breathed in their behalf, and many a word of sweet instruction whispered in their ear; and who can tell how many blessings might be showered on their households for their sake?—even a cup of cold water given to a disciple, in the name of Christ, shall not lose its reward. The Saviour is at no loss for instruments to do his work; he can evoke an agency from the most unlikely quarter, as he commanded the ravens to feed the prophet. Instead of the fathers, he can take the children, and by them he can perform the ministration which he intends in the behalf of his servants in affliction.

It is not easy to imagine the distress to which the country was reduced by means of these intercommuning edicts. "The Presbyterians," it has been remarked, "suffered extremities that tongue cannot describe, and which heart can hardly conceive, from the dismal circumstances of hunger and nakedness. Lying in damp caves, and in hollow clefts of the naked rocks, without shelter, covering, fire, or food, none durst harbour, entertain, relieve, or speak to them, upon the pain of death. Many for venturing to speak to them were forced to flee to them, and several put to death for no other offence. Fathers were persecuted for supplying their children, and children for nourishing their parents; husbands for harbouring their wives, and wives for cherishing their husbands. The ties and obligations of the laws of nature were no defence, but it was made death to perform natural

actions, and many suffered death for acts of piety and charity."

In this state of things society was thrown into great confusion and uncertainty. The intercommuned were converted into so many leprous persons, whom it was dangerous even to touch, so that no man could speak to his neighbour, or to a stranger, without the risk of attaching to himself the character of an infection which perilled his life. It was impossible, in those times, to move without coming in contact with the obnoxious individuals, for they were to be found everywhere,—in the streets, on the highways, and in the moorlands; so that if a man wished to avoid their presence, it was necessary that he should leave the country. The hardship in this case was not on one side only, it was felt by all, covenanter and anti-covenanter, although on the one part it was unspeakably greater than on the other. But what cared the iniquitous men who guided the movement? Their caprice and their cruelty must be gratified, at whatever trouble or inconvenience to others.

But not only were our forefathers subjected to the intercommuning process of ejection from the pale of society at home, they were banished also in great multitudes to foreign lands. In the land of their nativity they were too troublesome to the rulers; for the light of their principles, and the constancy of their conduct, were more than their enemies could well bear, and, therefore, the object that caused them uneasiness was to be removed from their sight. It was a sad state of things when the best men in the nation were regarded as a nui-

sance that could not be tolerated, and, therefore, must be swept away either by death or banishment. In the land of their exile they were sold as slaves, and reduced to a state of bondage the most degrading. It was because they refused to be bondsmen at home that their oppressors sent them into slavery abroad. But they were Christ's free men, and their oppressors might enslave the body, they could not enslave the spirit, nor exclude them from the glorious liberty of the children of God. Many of them died abroad, and a few returned home, but they left not the land of their captivity without a witness for Christ; for even there, in their vassalage, their light shone so brightly that not a few were, by their means, brought to the knowledge of the truth, and this was a result well worth all the sufferings and degradation to which they were subjected.

The usage which they rceeived in the ships in which they were transported to the place of their banishment, was of the most revolting description. In one instance they were thrust between decks like a herd of cattle, in a space hardly capable of containing the third part of them, and though on the point of suffocation, they were not allowed a breath of fresh air, nor a cup of cold water to allay the fever of their thirst. One of the sufferers, in a letter to his wife, remarks, that "all the trouble they met with before Bothwell was not to be compared to one day in their present circumstances; their uneasiness was beyond words, yet he owned in very pathetic terms, that the consolations of God overbalanced all."

The ship in which this party sailed was over-

taken with a fearful tempest among the northern islands. "The barbarous captain, who was a Papist, immediately ordered the hatches to be nailed down, lest any of the prisoners should escape; and in the course of the night the ship having struck upon a rock, he and the crew provided for their own safety, regardless of the heart-rending cries of the prisoners, who besought him in vain to order the hatches to be opened. One of the seamen, more humane than his fellows, at the risk of his life returned to the ship, and with an axe cut a hole in the deck, by means of which about fifty escaped; but the remainder, amounting to two hundred persons, sank to the bottom in the vessel from which they had been so cruelly deprived of the means of escape."

Thus, on their way to the land of bondage, these helpless witnesses for Christ were swallowed up in the great waters, and all their sufferings terminated in a moment. This, it is true, was regarded as a stumbling dispensation by the suffering remnant at home, yet doubtless they were taken away from the evil to come. Had they reached their destination, many weary days of tribulation were before them, and which, in mercy to them, were cut off by the hasty death to which they were subjected. They were delivered, by a most distressing occurrence, it is true, out of all their afflictions, while their brethren were left in the furnace, and to be kept in it for years to come.

But in speaking of the sufferings of the persecuted, we have yet to notice the cruel deaths to which they were exposed. On this subject, however, we shall not at present dwell, as in a subse-

quent chapter a more ample view of the blood-stained field which was trodden by the fect of the persecutors will be presented. The military were empowered to shoot them in the fields without trial, and even without warning. The south and west became a vast hunting-field, which was scoured in its breadth and length by those "human blood-hounds," that rioted in slaughter, and who, the longer they were employed in the work, acquired a keener appetite for bloodshed. The mountain streams and mossy rills were tinged with the blood of many a worthy man who was shot in the desert waste; and what a tale, if hills and glens could speak, what a tale of their sufferings and of their constancy would be unfolded! Many a witness, in his gory winding-sheet, sleeps in the moorlands, of whose history nothing has been retained; but then their memorial is with God, and their record is on high.

CHAPTER IV.

Actors in the Persecution—King—Council—Bishops—Curates.

It has already been observed, that in all the confusion and distress in which the country was involved, the king was the prime agent, the great mover of the whole mischief. It was for his own personal aggrandisement, and to raise himself to the elevation of an absolute supremacy in all things civil and ecclesiastical, that he entered on a crusade against the lives and liberties of his subjects. He was a man without principle and without character, and he was reckless alike of the public weal, and of the public opinion. The man who ought to have been the father of his people, and whose interests he ought to have identified with his own, became the troubler of the nation, and the scourge of the kingdom. He stepped out of his own proper sphere, in which the constitution had placed him, and made an invasion on his subjects, and plundered them of their rights, civil and sacred. A more wanton and insane aggression on a loyal and devoted people, can scarcely be imagined. The king seemed to be smitten with a fatuity to which monarchs are sometimes subject, and which is the

sure precursor of their ruin. In speaking of the agents in the persecution generally, it is obvious to remark that they were all bad men, for their very work stamps their character. No good men could act as they did,—no patriot could enslave his country,—no Christian could shed the blood of the saints,—no humane person could drive the ploughshare of ruin over a land,—no one but an ambitious man could seek to place himself in a lordly and oppressive domination over all,—and none but an unjust man could gratify his avarice by the indiscriminate spoliation of others. All this, however, the actors in the persecution did. The work was base, and it required base men to perform it,—and these were not wanting; they were found in great numbers, all ready to do what they were bidden, and to do it in the most offensive and unscrupulous manner. No deed of wickedness was too revolting for them,—no cruelties too atrocious, no action too despicably mean. The general irreligiousness of their character was noted throughout the country, and their profanity was proverbial. A class of persons more abandoned in morals, was not perhaps to be found in Europe, than the men who in that lawless age lent themselves so promptly as the ready tools of royal villany.

The privy *council*, which sat in Edinburgh, and transacted the king's business during this dismal period, was the source of innumerable evils to the nation at large, and especially to the Presbyterians. This court formed a "complication of perfidy, cruelty, perjury, and revenge," and the power assumed by it was equal to that of the king or the Parliament. They were bold, imperious, and un-

principled men who composed it, and the mere mention of their names is sufficient to stamp it with infamy. What could be expected from such men as Sharp, Rothes, Middleton, Paterson, Lauderdale, and Mackenzie? All of them were the minions of the tyrant who swayed the destinies of the nation. This court was most active in the persecution, and kept all in movement throughout the land. Every thing was done by its instigation and authority, and, indeed, it may be said to have been the heart, the living and beating heart, which sent its pulsations in full and effective throb throughout the entire body of the nation. Every department and corner of the kingdom felt its influence for evil, and not for good,—a blighting influence which withered men's hearts, and crushed their spirits. Never was a nation cursed by a court so tyrannical and indomitable in its procedure as the privy council of Scotland. Its whole work was to aggrandise itself and the king, and to plot mischief against the lives and the liberties of the people. The flagrant abuse of its power was seen in almost every act that it passed during the long period of its domination. The members of this court would allow nothing to rest; their minds were full of new inventions, for the purpose of stimulating to a still greater height the fury of the persecution. Bad as Charles was, this obsequious court was still worse,—it was, if possible, more wicked than even its prime mover, and it instigated him to many things to which, without the prompting of this evil genius, he might not otherwise have been inclined, or, at least, might not have thought of. The soul by which it was actuated seems to have

been the great spirit of evil himself, who excited them to all and every thing that could be imagined for the purpose of the utter extinction of the Church of God in the land.

The profligacy of this court, and its utter disregard of truth and justice, were notorious to all, friend and foe alike. No deed was too illegal for it, nor any act of iniquity too glaring. All law and reason were set at defiance, and the most of its members had perjured themselves again and again. Their decisions were often given in the face of their convictions, and the clearest evidence of the innocence of the accused. Their cruelty was extreme, and they seemed to be bereft of every thing like human compassion. This averment is fully borne out by the exhibition of those tortures which they ordered to be enacted in their presence, for the purpose of expiscating confessions from the wretched subjects of their monstrous treatment. It was considered a rare occurrence when any of those who had been cited before them happened to escape without some infliction or other. Avarice was a ruling passion with them, and they aggravated the persecution for the very purpose of seizing the property of their victims,—their unblushing oppressions in this way are notorious to all who are acquainted with the history of their times; and their insatiable covetousness amply accounts for many an act of gross injustice and outrage practised on those whose property had attracted their cupidity. They proceeded to prosecute, for the sake of their estates, multitudes, against whom not even the shadow of a crime could be charged. The younger Martin of Dallurg is an instance of this. This

worthy individual, "aware that his innocence, however fully established, was no security, expressed his willingness that the trial should proceed; but, at the same time, though guilty of no crime whatever, renounced all his property into the hands of the king. This being what the council desired, the diet was immediately deserted. The example of Martin was followed by many other gentlemen, who found it necessary to sacrifice their whole estates in order to save themselves from being criminally indicted."

The maintenance of their power was another object with this infamous junto. Men in general love power; it was the lust of power and prerogative that blinded the king, and it was the same desire to maintain their commanding position over the nation that made them grasp the reins of their rule with so firm a tension. They knew that men could not love them, nor in any sense respect their authority, and therefore they were determined that they should fear them. The entire destitution of religious principle, on the part of these men, and their profanity and debauchery and lewdness, lead us justly to believe that their assiduity and keenness in the persecution was greatly stimulated by a desire to extirpate the very profession of religion from the land. Their behaviour had not even the semblance of decency, and they seemed to be a class of finished characters prepared for the perpetration of the greatest crimes,—and of this the history of their doings furnishes the fullest proof. The treachery and bad faith of this court were notorious; their promises, and even their oaths were, when it served their purpose, utterly and unblushingly dis-

regarded by them. Their behaviour in the case of Mitchell, who attempted the life of the archbishop, is a flagrant proof of this. The vengeful and malignant spirit by which they were actuated becomes painfully apparent from the fact, that in some instances they concealed the king's pardon till the person in whose behalf it was transmitted was publicly executed. Conduct more execrable and diabolical can scarcely be conceived. In such cases they were twice murderers,—murderers in passing an illegal sentence, and murderers in refusing to refrain from the execution of that sentence, when the sovereign had granted the reprieve. But not only were they most arbitrary in the use of their power, browbeating and gainsaying every man who had the honesty and the daring to remonstrate with them, they occasionally passed the most iniquitous acts in a state of intoxication, and plotted over their carousals new schemes of cruelty and oppression. If, in any case, the jury seemed inclined to bring in a verdict of acquittal, the king's advocate rose in his fury, and threatened them with an assize of error, and in this way forced a decision in agreement with the mind of the council. This court of inquisitors submitted to the meanness of enlisting in their service persons who acted the infamous part of spies and informers, whom they dispersed over the country to search out the disaffected, even in the most private and obscure localities. Sharp had a host of such characters, who did his vile work for a base reward. And yet all those men had sworn the Covenants, and were lying under the strongest obligations to God and to their country to maintain that cove-

nanted cause, which they were now by might and main labouring to demolish. As a specimen of the men who thus tyrannised, we select Lauderdale, whose character has been drawn in the following words of Laing: "His temper was dark and vindictive, incapable of friendship, mean and abject to his superiors, haughty and tyrannical to his inferiors; and his judgment, seldom correct or just, was obstinate in error, and irreclaimable by advice. His passions were furious and ungovernable, unless when interest or ambition interposed. His violence was ever prepared to suggest or to execute the most desperate counsels. This ready compliance preserved his credit with the king till his faculties were visibly impaired with age." It will be readily granted by those who are acquainted with the history of this junto, that the preceding is by no means the darkest of their portraitures that might be given; a likeness of some of these men, of a deeper shading by far, might be presented, the ferocity and fiendishness of which, we shudder, even at this distance, to contemplate.

The privy council, then, composed of persons of so foul a cast, was the prime instrument of the persecution in Scotland; and all the wicked schemes that were put in execution abroad over the country, emanated from this conclave, and came invested with an authority that was not to be resisted. That nation must have come to a woful pass when such men were exalted over it, and were delegated with full powers to manage its affairs as it seemed best to them. Let the enemies of the Covenanters justify their persecutors as they may, their deeds condemn them, and will be regarded with merited execration

by all who retain the slightest respect for justice and mercy and honourable dealing. Even Hume remarks, that "such a complication of cruelty and treachery, shows the character of those ministers to whom the king had at this time entrusted the government of Scotland."

The next class of actors in this scene of outrage and blood were the *bishops*. They are here specified for distinction's sake, for several of them were already in the council, and, consequently, are to be identified with its character and proceedings; nevertheless, it appears necessary to give these men a special prominency as actors in the persecution, for this prominence is justly due to them. The establishment of Episcopacy, for the purpose of promoting the king's designs, was the grand object of the rulers of that period, and it was not to be expected that the prelates themselves would neglect any opportunity of strengthening their own interests. And how was this to be done but by the suppression of Presbyterianism? and how was it to be suppressed but by the strong arm of persecution? If, then, the Prelatic establishment was to supplant the Presbyterian, it was requisite that the bishops should forward the work as much as lay in their power. But this they could not do by fair reasoning, or by persuasive entreaties, and, therefore, the hand of authority must be put forth, to do by force what could not be done by argument. The bishops, with scarcely any exception but that of Leighton, were an order of haughty and intolerant men, who could brook no opposition to their measures, and hence they were the chief agents in prompting the council, and the other bodies in the kingdom,

to these acts of violence which filled the nation with the wailings of distress. In professing to support the king's interests, the bishops sought first to promote their own, and they persecuted as well in their own behalf as in the behalf of their sovereign. It may well seem strange that a body of men professing the religion of Christ, as they did, should be found persecuting that religion, simply because it was professed in a particular form; but then that form was inimical to them, hostile to their lordly arrogance, and incessantly impugning their unscriptural assumptions. The bishops were possessed of prodigious power and influence throughout the land. They had the ear of the nobility; and the great body of the country gentlemen were subservient to them, and the more so because they were the creatures of the king, and were the prime conductors along which the royal favour or the royal frown was communicated. To keep the good graces of the bishops, therefore, was a matter of solicitude with many, because in doing this they secured their own safety; and the more so if they lent a ready hand, at the bishop's will, to help to reduce the refractory spirit of the sturdy Covenanters, whom the firmness of unyielding principle forbade to submit to Prelatic usurpation. The most notorious of the Episcopal class was Sharp of St Andrews. This man had betrayed the Church of Scotland for a price, and from being an apparently warm and zealous advocate for her interests, leagued himself with the faction that sought her overthrow. He was one of the most deceitful, ambitious, cruel, and avaricious men of the age in which he lived. His life, as has justly been

remarked, was "one tissue of unbounded perfidy and remorseless eruelty, he having been the cause to his suffering country of a greater amount of war and ruin than ever was inflicted upon it by any other human being." This infamous man was never at rest; his evil genius was everlastingly plotting mischief, and framing wicked devices against the innocent; and he was never satisfied unless he had made some to fall. He was guilty of the grossest perjury, and serupled at no deed, however wicked and atrocious, to gain his object. He was the main persecutor of his brethren, and the chief hand that guided the lance in inflieting those eruel wounds whenee gushed the copious streams that flowed in torrents through the land.

The prelates exerted a fearful agency in the persecution, and but for them the flame might have languished and died away. Their activities never slumbered, their energies were never exhausted, their zeal never cooled. The violent way in whieh they acted reflects an indelible disgraee on the very name of Episcopacy. No name was more hated in the time in which they ruled than the name of *bishop*, and even to this day, in some of the landward districts, it is employed by the peasantry as an epithet of opprobrium. The Episcopal eonclave in Scotland was a fountain from which welled many waters of gall and wormwood, of which men could not drink, because they were made bitter. It need not be wondered at if the half of the nation had become infidel, when men in high office were seen, under the guise of religion, perpetrating deeds so repugnant to the spirit of true Christianity, and so alien to all the prineiples of goodness and huma-

nity. Their conduct produced a most deleterious effect on society at large, and especially on that portion of it that was more especially conversant with the men. They not only killed the bodies of the martyrs, but they killed the souls of others, who, being led by their example, precipitated themselves into perdition.

But the ecclesiastical underlings of the bishops, the *curates*, deserve no less special notice for their activity on the wide field of persecuting violence. The curates occupied the pulpits of the ejected ministers, and were located in hundreds throughout the country. A class of men more despicable than these prelatic incumbents, were scarcely ever invested with the sacred office.

"There was," says Burnet, "a sort of invitation sent over the kingdom, like hue and cry, to all persons to accept of benefices in the west. The livings were generally well endowed, and the parsonage houses were well built and in good repair. And this drew many very worthless persons hither, who had little learning, less piety, and no sort of discretion. The new incumbents, who were put in the place of the ejected preachers, were generally very mean and despicable in all respects. They were the worst preachers I ever heard, they were ignorant to a reproach, and many of them were openly vicious. They were a disgrace to their orders and sacred functions, and, indeed, were the dregs and the refuse of the northern parts. Those of them who rose above contempt or scandal were men of such violent tempers that they were as much hated as the others were despised."

Such were the men whom the bishops employed

in the parishes to promote the cause in which they had embarked. This testimony is borne by one of their own party, and is therefore the more valuable. They were, for the most part, grievously ignorant of their profession, half educated, or not educated at all. The doctrines of the gospel, which it is the peculiar office of a preacher to announce to his audience, they understood not; and in this respect they were immeasurably inferior to the peasantry, who had been soundly instructed by the holy and learned men who had been removed to make room for persons so unfit to occupy their place. Their sermons had no substance, no point, no doctrine. The glory was departed from the churches, and the sound of the gospel was not heard within their walls. The truths of the Bible had no influence on the minds of these men, and their conduct, as might be expected, was entirely unbecoming their office. If they were officially a disgrace to the ministerial profession, they were practically a disgrace to the gospel. They were greedy hirelings. They were Sabbath-breakers; they were profane; they were drunkards; they were harsh, rigorous, and overbearing. They had no sympathy with the people among whom they lived; they were for the most part strangers, needy adventurers, who sought the fleece, but cared not for the flock. Instead of improving their parishioners by their example, they demoralized them, and effaced from their minds the better impressions that had formerly been made.

The prelates and the council had not a better organised agency in the land,—one that was more widely spread, more efficient, or more supple and subservient to their will. They had, by this means,

a constituency in almost every parish, on which they could firmly count, and which was on all occasions devoted to their interests. These incumbents applied themselves, for the most part, strenuously to their special occupations, which chiefly consisted in that of informers; for they were in the diligent habit of communicating to their superiors all they knew respecting the nonconformists in their different localities. They were keen partisans, and determined opponents to the Presbyterians. The history of the curates of Scotland would, by itself, form a very curious document, and furnish a striking development of some special points of human nature.

No class of persons were more despised and even hated by the people of the parishes than the curates. Their churches were for the most part deserted, and they were obliged to harangue to empty pews. The people were scattered abroad like sheep without a shepherd, and the incumbents, acting the part of wolves, continued to disperse them wider and wider. The desertion of the places of worship was a matter of severe mortification to these prelatists. Their authority was set at nought, for the people would not acknowledge them; and when they contrasted them with their former ministers, who were to them like fathers and brothers, instructing them, and sympathizing with them, and preaching to them the gospel of the grace of God, their aversion rose to disgust, and they were prepared to sustain any hardship rather than submit to their clerical superintendence. Hence the vast numbers that flocked away to conventicles "like doves to their windows," and peopled the lonely recesses of the wilderness

with large assemblies convened from every quarter to hear the words of eternal life. When the curates found that their offensive presence in the different parishes had the effect of increasing the conventicles, they felt irritated in the extreme, and often broke out in the most intemperate language before the meagre handful who waited on their ministry. It is reported that one of them, on entering the pulpit on the Sabbath morning, and finding the church almost wholly deserted, exclaimed, in the bitterness of disappointment,—"Black be my fa' but they're a' aff to the hill folk thegither; sorra gin I dinna tell, and they'll be a' shot or hangit be Yule!"

It was impossible to escape the vigilance of these men, for they were thoroughly acquainted with every household, and knew the name of every individual in the parish. They kept a roll of their parishioners, and this was read, as often as they pleased, immediately before the dismissal of the congregation, when those who did not answer to their names were immediately transferred to the black book, and sought out during the week by the curate himself; or the list was given in to the military, who might search and capture them at their will. Indeed, the troopers were often in the churchyard ready to count the people as they retired, or abuse whomsoever they thought fit. No person could escape under such a supervision; and those who wished to avoid this impertinent interference were obliged to betake themselves to the deserts, and hide themselves in the solitudes. The curates spent much of their time with the military, for they regarded the troopers as their protectors; they

looked upon them as their body-guards, in whom they placed implicit confidence. The soldiers generally found the curates boon companions, and ready to engage in all their sports and unhallowed merriment without scruple; and thus the soldiers corrupted the curates, and the curates corrupted them, and both united in oppressing the pious and conscientious peasantry. A heavy incubus rested on the land, and liberty, by means of Prelacy, was on the eve of extinction. Charles said, that Presbytery was not a religion for a *gentleman;* and we may say with truth, that the Episcopacy which he established was not a religion for a *freeman.*

CHAPTER V.

Actors in the Persecution—Lairds—Informers—Dragoons.

The lairds or landed proprietors in Scotland, during the persecution, arranged themselves into three classes,—those who were decided Covenanters, those who were virulently opposed to the persecuted people, and those who occupied a middle place, favouring secretly the cause of patriotism and the Covenants, but, from matters of policy, appearing on the side of the persecutors. The first-mentioned class were the carcase, so to speak, on which the persecutors fed, enriching themselves and their agents by the spoliation of their property. The Covenanters among the lower orders, though they afforded fuel on which the fires of the persecutors acted, and acted with a flame so vehement as to scorch to death all that came within its range, yet there was little to be had from poor men to gratify the cupidity of their oppressors; but the nonconformist lairds were persons worth the persecuting, for their property as well as for their principles; and, therefore, it was a matter of high gratification to the rulers when a proper occasion was found to impeach those persons. The lairds who occupied the middle position

between the two extremes, were of great use on many occasions to the persecuted. They contrived to save appearances with the authorities, while at the same time they extended, so far as was practicable, the wings of their protection to the sufferers. Many a helpless family were sheltered by their means, and many a houseless wanderer hidden in the day of peril. There was a homeliness about these men of the olden time to which those of the same class are, in our days, comparatively strangers. They mingled with their tenantry, and with the humbler occupants on their estates, in a way so familiar, as to beget the greatest confidence and attachment. A struggle between interest and duty was sometimes strong in the breasts of these half-decided but much respected men, and it was not easy, on some occasions, to conjecture how the result would issue. As it was, however, the Saviour, whose Church was in affliction, made use of them to "help the woman" who had fled into the wilderness to seek a hiding-place from the face of the dragon. These patriotic men had a considerable influence over the more manageable of the curates in certain localities, and were the means of restraining their persecuting zeal. In this way, He who is wonderful in counsel made use of their want of decision on the right side as a means of protecting his helpless people. Some of these well-inclined gentlemen had confidential servants, who were equally well-disposed toward the suffering people, and whom they commissioned, in the most private manner, to carry information to the neighbouring Covenanters respecting the designs of the enemy. This information was often communicated in a particular

way. If any of the military officers who scoured the country happened to be at table, the master of the house contrived to expiscate the designs of the party in the audience of the servant, who lost no time in making known the matter to the wanderers in the vicinity, who, with all promptitude, conveyed information to those more immediately concerned. In this way the purposes of the persecutors were frequently frustrated, and their disappointments were often as astonishing to themselves as they were gratifying to the humane.

But then the lairds who coincided with the persecutors were terrible creatures, and often manifested a temper vengeful in the extreme. They were recreant Covenanters, having fallen in with the measures of the times to save their persons and their estates. They were the last men in the country who wished themselves to be suspected of nonconformist principles, and hence they exerted themselves with a proportionable activity in suppressing the spirit of independence throughout the nation. They knew that their estates lay at the mercy of the council that had, in order to serve their own ends, passed an act rendering landowners responsible for their tenants and cottars, that they should attend the curates, and abstain from conventicles. They found the tenure of their property dependent, not merely on their own behaviour, but also on the conduct of those who were under them, and this made them rigorous in enforcing the enactments of the council. These men acted the part of oppressive tyrants, either in self-defence or from a natural vindictiveness of temper. No person in the landward districts was more dreaded than a conformist

laird, whose frown was like the scowling of the tempest in the face of the poor peasantry, who, in that dismal time, had enough ado to bear up against the rude blasts that bore down so heavily upon them. These gentlemen watched their tenants so narrowly, that no sooner was any suspicion entertained of their covenanting leanings, or of their having sheltered any of the wanderers, than they were ejected from their farms, and forced to flee from the place; and what became of their property they could best tell who had been the cause of their flight. Whole hamlets were occasionally, in this way, depopulated, and the parents, with their weeping children, driven to the wilds. The distress caused by such incidents was very great, of which we have an instance in the case of the cottars of Carmacoup, in Douglasdale, whose little village was, in one day, almost wholly emptied of its inhabitants by the stern mandate of the proprietor. These lairds ruled with a rod of iron, and caused multitudes to cower under the terror of their arm; and much grievous oppression was practised by them which never was recorded, because the lesser acts of tyranny were overlooked, or absorbed in the greater deeds of villany which were perpetrated in higher quarters in a more conspicuous manner. On these the historians seized, and transmitted them to posterity, while hundreds of distressful occurrences, on a smaller scale, were left unnoticed. But the deeds of these cruel men live in the traditions of the peasantry, whose virtuous ancestry suffered so unrighteously at their hands; and characters and incidents are described and rehearsed with an accuracy which demonstrates the deep impression that

was originally made by the men and their deeds. How much have the landed proprietors in their power for the weal or woe of a country, and what a blessing might they be if they would only conduct themselves in a paternal and beneficent way toward those who are dependent on them! These persecuting lairds were roistering, graceless fellows, who acted according to their own caprice, and moved just as the times guided them, without principle and without motive.

But the *spies* were important persons in those times, and wrought great and deadly mischief throughout the land. These spies and informers, as has been already stated, were hired, some by the council, and others by individuals who employed them in this infamous calling. None but base men, it is true, and men lost to all character, and reckless of public opinion, could engage in an occupation so infamous; but then there was abundance of individuals found ready, at all hazards, for a vile reward, to do the work which an honourable mind would utterly scorn. No agency, next to that of the curates, was so successful in discovering the persons, and finding out the haunts, of the poor Covenanters. The guise which these insidious men assumed was of such a kind as effectually to lull all suspicions on the part of the sufferers. They went sometimes in the character of pedlars, vending their wares through the country. By this means they found their way to the hearths of the peasantry, who, suspecting no evil, afforded them a place at their board, and a night's lodging. Pedlars were universally welcome guests in the houses in the landward districts, because, in an age when

there were no newspapers, they were the only persons who communicated to the peasantry the intelligence of what was going on in the country generally. They told all they knew, and that with a frankness that begat confidence on the part of the simple-hearted people, who as readily communicated what they knew. As it was the chief design of these persons to gather all the news about the covenanting people, their ears were open to receive every thing with avidity that was stated respecting them. By this means they found out their names, and their haunts, with an accuracy that was well-pleasing to their employers.

At other times they appeared in the garb of shepherds traversing the lonely mountains, and seeking, in the character of wanderers, the hospitality of the lowly cottages among the hills. In this way they mingled with the inhabitants of the moorlands and remote deserts, where discoveries were likely to be made. The doors of no class of persons were more readily opened to the wanderers than those of the residents in the wilderness, and hence these disguised shepherds found an easy admittance into their humble abodes. This was to them of the greatest consequence, as it was in these solitary retreats that a vast number of the witnesses were to be found. They had fled to the solitudes for safety, and here they often congregated for prayer and social intercourse; and it was to find out their places of resort that these spies had penetrated so far into the wilds. They resided for a season among the moorland people, pretending they were under hiding, and rendering themselves as serviceable as possible to the shepherds, till they had ac-

quired all the information they wanted, and then they repaired to their employers to communicate the result of their researches, and to receive the wages of iniquity.

Sometimes these spies, in order to reach their object with a still greater precision, pretended to be avowed and zealous Covenanters, and subjecting themselves to the same hardships to which the worthies were exposed. By this means they insinuated themselves into the favour of the honest people, and gained their sympathy, as fellow-witnesses patiently enduring trials for the truth's sake. These artful persons assumed an uncommon appearance of sanctity, so that they were easily admitted to the prayer-meetings and religious conferences of the unsuspecting people. They speedily became acquainted with the leading Covenanters in the different districts they had thus insidiously invaded, and were careful to note down every circumstance concerning them. They knew all the houses in which the meetings were usually held, and the particular hour of the day or night in which the people were in the habit of convening. The secret places of concealment in their houses, which were often very ingeniously contrived—for necessity made men inventive—were all explored by them, that they might know where to flee in the hour of peril, as they pretended, but in reality that they might lead the enemy to the place. Often were the fugitives, when they thought themselves safe in these hiding-places, surprised and captured in the wariest manner. These traitorous spies succeeded in dragging multitudes to ruin, and hence they were found to be useful agents in the hands of the unprincipled

men who could stoop so low as to encourage such base hypocrisy.

Another class of these spies arrayed themselves in female apparel, and pretended to be distant relations, or persons in quest of relations in whom they seemed to feel a more than ordinary interest. In this habit they went from place to place, practising on the simplicity of the people, and beguiling them by fair pretences into the snare they had laid for them. Few suspected a female, and therefore were the more easily entrapped. One of the sufferers gives, in his own homely style, a specimen of the manner in which these pretended females conducted themselves. "The last half of the year (1682) came yet to be more trying to us, for the aforesaid Captain Inglis swore that, if we were out of hell, he would have some, if not all; and for that end, he disguised one of his own troop, a fair, well-favoured young man, in woman's clothes, like a gentlewoman, to go through the country and search for us, and see where we were lurking. This masculine she, personating a cousin of our own come from Ireland to inquire after our welfare, said, that hearing of our trouble, she was come to invite us over to our friends there, who would be very kind to us in our distress. Some of our friends that knew of us believed her, she being so like our family, and they, being caught in the snare, because of the probability of her discourse, gave her exact notice where we were, and so this masculine she went straight to his garrison with the tidings, who immediately all came out on horseback to the place where we were, which was about ten miles from their garrison." Thus was the country so troubled

with spies and informers, that men scarcely knew friend from foe.

Another most effective agency in the persecution was the military. It was into the hands of the soldiers that the curates and lairds and informers delivered the unoffending people, to be either killed or carried off as prisoners. The dragoons,—who were termed "booted apostles," because they were sent out on their great mission of evil, to convert the recusant Presbyterians to Prelacy at the point of the sword; and "ruling elders," because the decisions of the bishops were carried into execution by their bloody discipline,—converted the south and west into a hunting-field, on which the abettors of the Covenants were pursued and slain without mercy. No sight was more appalling to the country people than a company of troopers headed by a stern and savage leader. They were reckless and desperate men, and no deed of daring and villany was too much for them. They were regardless of their own lives, and consequently had no respect to the lives of others. Rude and unfeeling, and accustomed to scenes of cruelty, their hearts were hardened against the wailings of distress, and no tears or melting entreaties could ever move them. They were not men from whom compassion was to be expected, because their masters had hired them to shed the blood of the innocent,—and this they did without remorse, for they were men of an iron mould, and coarsely fashioned for the work on which they were commissioned. They were persons of a flagrant irreligiousness of character, neither fearing God nor regarding man, blasphemous in the extreme; the expressions of "hell," "devil," and "damnation" were

never out of their mouths. Addicted to all profanity and wickedness, they grew up into what was more like demons than men. A set of men more dissolute in their habits never spread themselves over a country, for they corrupted all with whom they came in contact, and their unhallowed example operated as a pest on the community. There was no act of vileness nor atrocity of which these men were not guilty, and the moral havoc they wrought in the households where they were quartered, or to which they happened to have access, was extreme. The peace of many a virtuous family was totally destroyed by their means, and the heart of many a child and many a parent broken. The rulers could not have adopted a more effectual means of demoralising the land, than the sending forth of such a swarm of miscreants to disseminate the infection of their corruption and their filthiness over the entire surface of society. The garrisons in which they were located,—and these garrisons were placed all over the land, giving it the appearance of a conquered country,—were dens of infamy and vice. So deep was the opprobrium attached to these receptacles of vice, as to procure for some of them the epithet of *Hell's byke*,—a title the appropriateness of which will not be questioned by those who are acquainted with the character of the men and the history of their times.

From these receptacles, the soldiers sallied out on deeds of plunder or of murder, by night or by day, in storm and in sunshine. Their exploits in this way are not only recorded by the pen of the historian, but they live also in the traditions of the peasantry. In their pursuit of the wanderers, these

terrible men not only scoured the wide desert, but occasionally, in the eagerness of the chase, rode into the sinking mosses, where none but the wary shepherd durst venture; and hence they frequently perished or sustained serious injury. Sometimes a little company of worshippers, in the heart of the impassable morasses, witnessed the signal discomfiture of a whole troop of magnanimous horsemen, who had the daring to attempt the invasion of their sanctuary, by their plunging one after another into the dark trenches which, being filled with blackish waters of the moors, concealed their perilous depth. One of the chief objects they had in view in traversing the high and open country, and every corner of the wilds, was the dispersion of conventicles. They had commission not only to seize or to shoot the preachers, but also to kill the people indiscriminately, if they offered to stand in their own defence. This was a piece of service in which they greatly delighted, for they had more pleasure in pursuing the poor people over the rugged face of the wilderness, capturing one here and killing another there, than the keenest huntsman can have in the hilarious chase. It was a sport to these fools to do mischief and to shed the blood of the innocent, and all this they did with impunity, for they did it under the sanction of the government, who declared it to be a meritorious act to murder the rebels, who had thus convened, in defiance of their iniquitous prohibition, to worship God. It is true, that the great body of these mercenaries were ignorant men, and they did just as they were bidden. They were mere hirelings, fighting against the liberties of their country for their daily bread. They cared not who was in the

right nor who was in the wrong, and they never inquired; they followed their leaders, and, as dutiful slaves, did just as they were commanded. To spare life or to destroy it was the same thing to them, for they were brutish and besotted men, and mere tools in the hand of a mastery that needed the services of a banditti exactly such as they were. Intelligent and inquiring men would not have suited them, and therefore the more ignorant and demoralised and foolhardy these fellows were, so much the better. Men destitute alike of head and heart were the men for these times. Their leaders, however, knew better; they in general were not ignorant of their position, but then they were military adventurers who had entered on the field for the purpose of promoting their own ambitious and covetous ends. They knew the condition of their country, and the fact that they were crushing its liberties, and with a remorseless hand shedding the best blood of its populace; but what was all this to them, since they made gain by it, and secured the favour of those in power?

It has been surmised, that the occasional acts of clemency on the part of the soldiers, in not discovering the wanderers where it was amply in their power, is an evidence that there were in the ranks of the troopers certain patriots who had placed themselves among the king's forces for the express purpose of defeating the designs of the military tyrants, who, with their dragoons at their back, swept like a tempest over the land, and of affording the sufferers assistance even at the risk of their own life. And it cannot be denied that, in some instances, no trivial aid was rendered by individual

soldiers here and there, both in the field and in private houses. Of this we have a few very striking examples, as in the case of David Steel of Lesmahagow, whom his wife, when she saw the dragoons approaching, concealed in a large clothes press. After the search was made, and nothing had been discovered, and when the troopers were marching away, one of the party, on pretence that he wanted something, rode back to the door, and calling out the mistress of the house, said, "Next time you hide your husband, try to conceal him better, for I observed part of his coat locked without the press." It sometimes happened, too, that a solitary soldier, who had diverged a little from the track of the main party in the moors, discovered the wanderers concealed in the mossy furrows that were partially covered with heather, and in a whisper admonished them to creep further in beneath the shaggy coverlet, lest the troopers in coming round should discover them. But whether these instances are to be regarded as proofs of a few men acting on principle, or are to be regarded as the mere expression of incidental sympathy, is not easy to say.

The annoyance which the troopers caused in their searches after persons in concealment was extreme. No place escaped their scrutiny—stables, cowhouses, and barns, were all visited. In the dwelling-houses, the chests, presses, and closets were indiscriminately thrown open, the bed-clothes were tossed in a heap on the floor, and the bedding pierced through and through with their sharp swords, if perchance they might discover any one concealed beneath. In these searchings, they used the utmost license, disregarding all remonstrances on the part of the in-

mates, whom they even threatened to kill on the spot, or to roast alive over the fire. They possessed the power of military execution, and consequently they scrupled at no deed of atrocity when it served their purpose. Their commanders were infamous men, men of blood and of rapine. Daring, imperious, and cruel, they never failed to pursue, with the recklessness of furies, their measures to an extreme point, and, in some cases, went so far beyond their commission, that the authorities, in a few instances, were obliged to recall them, in order to maintain something like a show of equity in their procedure. The dragoons, with such men as Claverhouse, and Lag, and Dalzell, could not be other than abandoned men, and scourges to their oppressed country. Claverhouse was artful, avaricious, and vengeful; Lag was infamous for his coarseness, profanity, and cruelty; Dalzell was a savage. These men had a goodly number of coordinates in rank, in character, and in persecuting violence. Their subordinates in military station amounted to a great host, who, having the command of small parties, overspread the country, producing a distress which no pen can describe. These petty officers naturally copied the example of those above them in command, and generally far outstripped them in recklessness and crime. Inglis and Strachan, Bannatine and Bruce, Cornet Graham and Bonshaw, with the whole horde of their compeers, were the regular scorpions that inflicted a pain so intolerable as to raise a cry of universal distress over the land, so that men's ears were made to tingle, and a cold shuddering crept over their frame. It is impossible to exaggerate in statement the

afflictions of Scotland under the libertine rule of these oppressors, high and low; and the scars which she received in this warfare were graven distinct and deep, so that they were traceable for many a long year after the fierceness of the battle was over, and the noise of the tumult had ceased.

CHAPTER VI.

Cruelties of the Persecutors.

One leading feature of the late persecution in Scotland was its *cruelty*. This indeed is essential to all persecutions, but it is more prominent in some than in others. There was an atrocity and a savageism which characterised the persecution of our forefathers worthy of the most barbarous times, and which it is proper that their posterity should know. We have for so many generations past been permitted to live in peace, that we are ready to imagine that the tragic scene that was enacted in the times of our ancestors, partakes more of romance than of fact. That age, too, is so far gone by, that by many it is almost forgotten, and has nearly vanished out of their sight in the extreme distance. It is, therefore, necessary that it should be recalled, and presented in all its dreadful realities to their sight, that they may receive the due impression thereof, and become fully sensible of the benefits which have resulted from the brave struggles of these Christian and patriotic men, who loved not their lives unto the death. But some feel the recital of the sufferings of those times too much for

their delicacy; it borders on the extremely painful, and even on the horrible, and they cannot bear to witness, even in contemplation, these shocking things. But if even the rehearsal be so intolerably painful, how do they think the reality was sustained by the sufferers?—if it be too much for us only to read their sufferings, what must it have been for them to have endured them? Truly it is the least thing that posterity can do to review the history of their tribulations, in their endurance of such outrages, and tortures, and cruel deaths, for the truth's sake, and for our sakes, who now enjoy the precious fruits of all their struggles. And be it remembered, that we should make ourselves familiar with the sufferings of those days, lest we ourselves be called to undergo something of the same kind; it is therefore necessary to have our minds fortified beforehand, and to be animated with the spirit of those who have passed through the furnace before us. It is indeed to be hoped that those days will never return, as the spirit of religious freedom has diffused itself so widely through the community, —still of this we have no absolute assurance; for as our prophetic expositions have, in many instances, proved fallacious, so may this, which affirms that the age of persecution is for ever gone by. We need not lay the flattering unction to our souls, that days only of uninterrupted ease and prosperity are before us, for it may perchance be far otherwise. The Churches may yet have to pass through a fiery ordeal, which will test their soundness, and the soundness of every individual belonging to them, and by this means the whole may yet be fused into one solid mass of pure and precious metal. We

say, then, that considering it as not an improbable circumstance that we ourselves may suffer, it is right that we should accustom ourselves to look broadly and firmly in the face the cruelties which were practised on our persecuted fathers. This field is wide, and it is only a very partial glance that can here be given, leaving a more expansive survey to be taken, probably, at another time. In viewing a subject so ample, and of such painful interest, there are three points of it on which we may fix our gaze, and notice the cruelties which were practised by the council,—the cruelties that were exhibited on the scaffolds,—and the cruelties of the military in the fields.

That the council were guilty of horrid cruelties in their persecution of the Covenanters, is to be seen at the very first glance of the history of their doings. In extorting confessions from the accused, they had recourse to the application of those engines of torture peculiar to the dark ages. "There was an instrument of exquisite torture called the 'thumbkin,' which, on certain occasions, was applied without mercy. For some time the patient bore the pain it occasioned with a firm and unchanging countenance; but as the instrument was screwed closer and closer to the thumb, the colour of the face rapidly came and went, and the person writhed himself with the agonizing pain when the thumb was heard crashing to pieces within the instrument, till nature could bear no more, and the poor sufferer fell down in a swoon." Such barbarity, one would think, could proceed only from savages, and persons whose feelings were more allied to fiends than to men. But this barbarous mode of inflicting tor-

ture was even surpassed by the use of another instrument, called the "boots." The torture occasioned by this was so exquisite, that the mere sight of its infliction was intolerable. Burnet says, "When any are to be struck in the boots, it is done in the presence of the council, and upon that occasion almost all offer to run away. The sight is so dreadful, that without an order restraining such a number to stay, the board would be forsaken. But the Duke of York, while he had been in Scotland, was so far from withdrawing, that he looked on all the while with an unmoved indifference, and with such an attention as if he had been to look upon some curious experiment. This gave a terrible idea of him to all who observed it, as of a man who had no bowels nor humanity in him." In order to give the reader something like a correct idea of this method of torture, we shall present an instance or two of its application.

The first that we shall select is the case of Hugh M'Kail, who was taken and executed after the rising at Pentland. "When he was brought before the council," says the narrative which we quote, "he was interrogated respecting the leaders of the insurrection, and what correspondence they had, either at home or abroad. He declared himself utterly unacquainted with any such correspondence, and frankly stated how far he had taken part in their proceedings. The instrument of torture called the 'boots' was then laid before him, and he was informed that if he did not confess, it should be applied next day. This instrument of cruelty had not been used in Scotland for upwards of 40 years before, and its very appearance had been forgotten

by the people; but the bishops and other rulers had got a new pair made for the occasion, and they were brought into frequent requisition during the subsequent years. This instrument was made of four pieces of narrow boards, strongly bound together, of a competent size for the leg. Into this case, after the criminal's limb was laid in, wedges were driven down with a hammer, which caused intolerable pain, and frequently mangled the limb in a shocking manner, compressing the flesh, and even forcing the marrow out of the bone. On the following day he was again brought before the council, and again ordered to confess, on the pain of immediate torture. He declared solemnly that he had no more to confess. The executioner then placed his leg in the horrid instrument, applied the wedge, and proceeded to his hideous task. When one heavy blow had driven in the wedge and crushed the limb severely, he was again urged to confess, but in vain. Blow after blow succeeded, at considerable intervals, protracting the terrible agony, but still, with true Christian fortitude, the heroic martyr possessed his soul in patience. Seven or eight successive blows had crushed the flesh and sinews to the very bone, when he protested solemnly, in the sight of God, that he could say no more though all the joints of his body were in as great torture as that poor leg. Yet thrice more the wedge was driven in, till the bone itself was shattered by its iron compression, and a heavy swoon relieved him from longer consciousness of the mortal agony. He was carried back to prison, and soon afterwards condemned to death."

The next example which we shall produce is that

of James Mitchell, who at one time had made an attempt on the life of the archbishop, and who had been for several years in prison, where he underwent much cruel treatment. When he was brought before the council, and asked if he adhered to his confession, the judge, in order to overcome his hesitancy, said, pointing to the "boots,"—"Sir, you see what is on the table, I will see if these will make you do it." His leg was then placed in the diabolical engine, and during the time that the executioner was performing his inhuman work, he was plied with a variety of teazing questions. Amidst his anguish he addressed his tormentors in the following affecting language:—"My lords, not knowing that I shall escape this torture with my life, I beseech you to remember what Solomon saith, 'He who showeth no mercy, shall have judgment without mercy,' and if there be any of you, as I hope there are few present, thirsting after my innocent blood, mind what is spoken in Rev. xvi. 5, 6; and now, my lords, I do freely and from my heart forgive you who are judges sitting on the bench, and the men who are appointed to be about this horrid work, and also those who are vitiating their eyes beholding the same, and I do entreat that God may never lay it to your charge." He at length fainted through the extremity of the pain, and the executioner cried, "My lords, he is gone!" Upon which his tormentors withdrew, and he was carried back to his prison-house. "He behaved with great courage and firmness under this inhuman treatment, refusing to gratify the malice of his tormentors, by uttering one word tending to criminate himself or others, till after nine successive blows

had crushed his leg almost to a jelly, he fainted under the excessive agony. It was proposed to crush the other leg in the same manner, but this was prevented, in consequence of a letter received by Sharp, intimating, that if he persisted in his cruel intentions he should receive a shot from a steadier hand."

The last instance which we shall produce as a specimen of the cruelties of the council, is that of Mr John Spreul, apothecary in Glasgow. He was a very excellent man, a firm and consistent Covenanter, and one who was prepared to endure hardships to the uttermost in the maintenance of the cause of truth. "When examined before the council, his answers were considered to be unsatisfactory, and he was ordered to be put to the torture, in the presence of the Duke of York, and a committee specially selected for the purpose. While the executioner was performing his horrid work, Mr Spreul was interrogated as to his knowledge concerning the pretended plot against the duke's life, his acquaintance with Mr Cargill's place of concealment, and other things of which he still declared his utter ignorance. Finding that nothing farther could be elicited from him, he was, with the greatest inhumanity, ordered to be tortured a second time, which he endured without departing, in any point, from his former declaration, and with a fortitude that astonished his tormentors." During this second outrage on humanity, Dalzell, who is noted for his barbarity, affirmed, with a savage accent, that the executioner did not strike the wedges with sufficient force. The man asserted that he struck with all his might, and offered him the hammer to perform the work himself.

These deeds of cruelty speak for themselves, and plainly show the temper and the character of the men to whom the affairs of the nation were mainly intrusted.

The cruelties exhibited on the scaffold were strictly akin to those already specified, and were actually decreed by the same persons; for they were not satisfied with simply inflicting torture in private, they were determined also that the most painful spectacles of this kind should occasionally be exhibited to the public. One of the most distressing of these exhibitions was witnessed in the case of Hackston of Rathillet, who had been present at the death of the archbishop, though he had no hand in it, and was also at the skirmish at Airsmoss. It was not to be expected, that to a man in his situation any thing like clemency would be shown, and therefore the council resolved that he should be subjected to a very hideous and barbarous treatment. He was condemned to die;—this was nothing strange, it is the circumstances that attended his execution that strike us as being peculiarly revolting and inhuman. His sentence was as follows:—"That his body be drawn backward on a hurdle to the cross of Edinburgh; that there be an high scaffold erected a little above the cross, where, in the first place, his right hand is to be struck off, and after some time, his left hand; then he is to be hung up and cut down alive, his bowels to be taken out, and his heart shown to the people by the hangman; then his heart and his bowels to be burned in a fire prepared for that purpose on the scaffold; that afterwards his head be cut off, and his body divided into four quarters; his head to be

fixed on the Netherbow,—one of his quarters, with both his hands, to be affixed at St Andrews, another quarter at Glasgow, a third at Leith, a fourth at Burntisland; that none presume to be in mourning for him, or any coffin brought; that no person be suffered to be on the scaffold with him, save the two bailies, the executioner, and his servant; that he be allowed to pray to Almighty God, but not to speak to the people."

This sentence was executed to the very letter, but through the grace of Him in whose cause he suffered, he endured it in every particular with the greatest fortitude and patience.

Similar to this was the treatment of Andrew Guillan, who was accused by the council as having been accessory to the death of the archbishop. Andrew Guillan was a weaver, a pious man, living in the neighbourhood of Magus Moor, and was called out on that occasion to hold the horses of those by whom the deed was perpetrated. He was apprehended simply for nonconformity, and afterwards artfully ensnared by the council into something like a confession that he was present at the primate's death. His confession was produced as sufficient evidence against him, and the following sentence was pronounced:—"That he should be taken to the cross of Edinburgh, have both of his hands cut off at the foot of the gallows, and then be hanged; his head to be cut off and fixed at Cupar, and his body to be hung in chains at Magus Moor." It has justly been observed, that "the inhuman treatment this martyr met with ought not to be forgotten, as an instance of the hellish rage and fury of these persecutors, and of the Lord's rich grace, who

wonderfully countenanced and strengthened him to endure the tortures inflicted on him with undaunted braveness of spirit. It was observed by onlookers, though he received nine strokes in cutting off his hands, the executioner being drunk, that he bore it with invincible patience. After the right hand was cut off, he held up the stump to the multitude saying, 'As my blessed Lord sealed my salvation with his blood, so I am honoured this day to seal his testimony with my blood.' Being afterwards partially strangled, his head was cut off, and, with his hands, placed upon the Netherbow port of Edinburgh. His entrails were also taken out, and his body conveyed to Magus Moor, and there hung up in chains."

Who that has a spirit within him does not feel it stirred at the bare recital of such deeds, and who is not ready to pronounce the rule of such men a system of unmitigated villany, of dark and horrid crime!

In speaking of the cruelties exercised by the military in the fields, the instances are so numerous that the difficulty lies in making the selection. As it is only a few cases that we can press within our narrow limits, we shall notice one here and there only in the spacious field. We shall begin with the martyrdom of John Brown of Priesthill, commonly called "the godly carrier," on which occasion so much greatness of soul was displayed by the sufferer, that even the rugged nature of the unfeeling soldiers, though inured to scenes of blood, was so mollified, that they refused for once to obey their master's orders, and the graceless cavalier was forced to execute his own sentence, while the vir-

tuous wife of the slaughtered man "stood like the rock which the thunder is rending." John Brown was no otherwise obnoxious to the rulers than that he did not attend the curate; for he had been neither at Drumclog nor at Bothwell, and nothing could be laid to his charge on the score of rebellion. Claverhouse, in his raids through the country, had heard of him, and on the first morning of summer he hasted from Lesmahagow, with his troopers at his back, and reached the cottage of John Brown at an early hour. He found him at his employment on the hill, and brought him down to his own door, where, on the brown bent, he was destined to die, an honoured witness for Christ's cause. The last meeting between Brown and his wife and weeping children was surpassingly affecting. "Go to your prayers," said Claverhouse, "for you shall instantly die." He then bent on his knees, and prayed in such a manner as filled the troops with amazement. His wife, who was great with child, with another in her arms, and Janet at her side, stood while he prayed "that every covenanted blessing might be poured upon her and her children, born or unborn, as one refreshed with the influences of the Holy Spirit, when he comes down like rain on the mown grass, or as showers upon the earth." When Claverhouse, with blasphemous language, ordered him to rise from his knees, he turned to his wife and said, "Isabel, this is the day I told you of before we were married; and," he added with his usual kindness, "you see me summoned to appear in a few minutes before the court of heaven as a witness in our Redeemer's cause, against the rulers of Scotland; are you willing that I should part from

you?" "Heartily willing," said she, in a voice that spoke her regard for her husband, and her submission to the Lord, even when he had called her to bow before his terrible things. "This is all I wait for: O death where is thy sting! O grave, where will be thy victory!" said John Brown, while he tenderly laid his arms around her, kissed her and his little boy, and lastly Janet, saying to her, "My sweet bairn, give your hand to God as your guide, and be your mother's comfort." He could add no more, a tide of tenderness overflowed his heart. At last he uttered these words, "Blessed be thou, O Holy Spirit, that speaketh more comfort to my heart than the voice of my oppressors can speak terror to my ears." Thus, when the Lord brought his witness to be tried, he discovered a magnanimity which, as he fell, conquered his enemies.

"Claverhouse ordered six of his dragoons to shoot him, ere the last words were out of his mouth, but his prayers and conduct had disarmed them from performing such a savage action. They stood motionless. Fearing for their mutiny, Claverhouse snatched a pistol from his belt, and shot him through the head. And while his troops slunk from the awful scene, he, like a beast of prey that tramples and howls over a fallen victim, insulted the tender-hearted wife, while she gathered up the shattered remains, by taunting jeers. 'What thinkest thou of thy husband now, woman?' 'I ever thought meikle good of him,' said she, 'and now more than ever.' He seeing her courage, said, 'It were but justice to lay thee beside him.' She replied, 'If ye were permitted, I doubt not but your

cruelty would go that length; but how will you answer for this morning's work?' With a countenance that belied his words, he answered, 'To *man* I can be answerable, and as for *God*, I will take him in my own hands.' Thus saying, he hastily put spurs to his horse, and left her with the corpse. She tied up his head with her napkin, composed the body, covered it with her plaid; and when she had nothing farther to do or contend with, she sat down on the ground, drew her children to her, and wept over her mangled husband."

The case of David Steel of Lesmahagow was nothing inferior, while in every respect it bore a striking resemblance to that of John Brown. Lieutenant Crichton, after promise of quarter given, ordered his dragoons to shoot him on the spot. The soldiers, however, touched with a feeling of humanity, and sensible of the gross injustice of the case, replied that they would neither shoot him nor see him shot, and mounting their horses, immediately rode off. He then gave a similar command to the foot soldiers, who were highlanders, and they instantly obeyed. A number of balls passed through his head, which was literally shattered in pieces, while Mary Weir, his youthful wife, who, it is said, cherished an uncommon attachment to her husband, gazing in the amazement of her grief on the manly and honest countenance, now pale in death, said, with a sweet and heavenly tone, as if whispering in the "dull cold ear of death,"—"The archers have shot at thee, my husband, but they could not reach thy soul, it has escaped like a dove far away, and is at rest." She then bent over the mangled corpse, and gently pressed down the eye-

lids, yet warm with life. Then folding her hands together, and looking up with an eye that pierced the heavens, she exclaimed, "Lord, give strength unto thine handmaid, that will prove she has waited for thee even in the way of thy judgments." When the neighbours came to the spot, they found her gathering together his fair hair, and the scattered fragments of his head. David Steel and John Brown were intimate companions, and many a sweet hour did they spend in hallowed intercourse, praying together, and talking of Zion's troubles; and they were both honoured to die as witnesses for Christ, and they have both obtained the martyr's crown.

But the cruelty of these men extended even to children, and some of the instances are too affecting to be passed over in silence. The following is from the pen of one of the Covenanters themselves, and has a relation to a younger brother of his, a mere child. "When the people of the house," he says, "saw the enemy coming, they fled out of the way, but the cruel enemy got my dear brother into their hands. They examined him concerning the persecuted people,—where they haunted, or if he knew where any of them were; but he would not open his mouth to speak one word to them. They flattered him, they offered him money to tell where the whigs were, but he would not speak. They held the point of a drawn sword to his breast, they fired a pistol over his head, they set him on horseback behind one of themselves to be taken away and hanged, they tied a cloth over his face, and set him on his knees to be shot to death, they beat him with their sword and with their fists, they

kicked him several times to the ground with their feet; yet after they had used all the cruelty they could, he would not open his mouth to speak one word to them,—and although he was a very comely child, going in ten years of age, yet they called him a vile, ugly, dumb devil, and beat him very sore, and then went their way, leaving him lying on the ground sore bleeding, in the open fields."

We shall give another example of a similar kind, and equally affecting:—"Captain Inglis, in searching for a man who was accused of the dreadful crime of nonconformity, and who fortunately happened to be from home, seized a boy in his employment, of fifteen years of age, and commanded him to swear whether or not he knew where his master was to be found. This oath being refused by the boy, the brutal military struck him with their swords, and wounded him in several parts of the body; they then dragged him by the hair to the fire, and held his face so near that his eyes almost started from their sockets. After having again cut him with their swords, they left him for dead, bleeding in every part of his body. Contrary to expectation, he afterwards recovered; but for several years he was bereft of reason, in consequence of the inhuman treatment he had received."

But it is needless to enlarge, as the instances of their cruelty are without end, and we shall conclude the subject of this chapter with the following notice of the wife of David M'Gill of Dalry, in Galloway. This poor woman was barbarously treated by these inhuman wretches. Her husband, whom the military had come to apprehend, having disguised himself in female apparel, eluded their

vigilance. "But dreadful were the reprisals which they took upon his wife, alleging that she had been accessory to her husband's escape. They seized her, bound her, and fixed lighted matches between her fingers, and in this state left her for several hours. As well might be expected, the pain of such torture made her almost go distracted. She lost one of her hands altogether, and in a few days after, the agony she endured having affected her vitals, she fell a prey to death, and was happily put beyond the reach of persecuting cruelty."

Such are a few of the specimens of the cruelties exercised by the men of those times, and which sufficiently justify what has been asserted of them, as base and savage men.

CHAPTER VII.

Constancy of the Persecuted.

THERE are few things about the persecuted that are apt to strike us more forcibly than their *constancy*, —their firm adherence to their cause in the face of all the opposition and all the cruel sufferings they met with; and this may to some appear the more extraordinary, when they could so easily have freed themselves of all their troubles, and freed themselves in one day, by a simple compliance with the will of their persecutors. Had they done as their rulers did,—resiled from all their engagements, and flung their oaths and obligations to the winds, and become recreant to the great cause which they had sworn so zealously to maintain, they might have dismissed all their distresses, and eased themselves of that intolerable weight of persecution which pressed so heavily upon them for so long a series of years. But this they could not do, for they were true-hearted men, and it was easier for them to part with their lives than with their principles. It is true that not a few left their ranks, and went over to the side of the enemy; but then these were false brethren, men who belonged to them by profession

merely, and on whose consciences the power of the truth had never been binding. In the day of prosperity, and when the profession of Christianity is popular, many will take their station on the side of religion, who will just as readily leave it when apostasy becomes fashionable, and an adherence to their former standing perilous. Hence, when the rulers abandoned their position, and renounced their principles to please the king, their example was followed by multitudes of all ranks, who, from interest or from fear, attached themselves to the prevailing party. The dependence which one class of society has upon another had in this case a mighty influence,—the prince acted on the nobles, the nobles on the gentry, and the gentry on their tenants and retainers. The bishops, the creatures of the crown, operated on their subordinates, and these again influenced the waverers in the parishes, and drew in their train multitudes who could not be troubled with the questions that stirred the public mind, and who, withal, found their safety in cowering behind the bush which screened them from the blast which raged so furiously over the land, and which threatened indiscriminate destruction to all who exposed themselves to its violence. In this case many were glad to lay hold on any pretext to retreat from the strict and honest party, in adhering to which nothing was to be expected but suffering and privations of every kind. Men whose minds were not solidly based on right principles, and whose convictions and faith had no firm resting on the truth, were not to be expected to stand in the day of trial, especially when they had the example of so many influential persons before them, whose

scruples hindered them not to yield nor to repudiate every point and tenet which they had formerly held sacred; and far less was it to be expected that they would keep their place, when the mere attempt to do so was sure to subject them to a course of suffering which they had not the fortitude to face.

The constancy of our ancestors in all the points in which they were tried, is sufficiently obvious to all who are acquainted with the painful details of their history. They were constant in the endurance of their sufferings, for they loved not their lives unto the death. These sufferings, of which a specimen has been given in the preceding chapter, were of such a nature as to overmaster the firmest resolution, and to wear down the strongest mind. Severe, however, as these trials were, they never made them swerve from their purpose. It is not difficult to assume the appearance of fortitude and determination when the hour of trial seems to be at a distance; but it becomes a very different thing when the trial is at hand, or when we are in the midst of it. Many fine and brave resolutions have vanished like the mist of the morning when the test came to be applied; and the vapouring and vaunting words of courage, uttered in the time of security, have, when the moment of suffering approached in earnest, been scattered like the withered leaves of the forest before the dizzy whirlwind. Sufferings that are severe at the time, but brief in duration, may, by a mind neither strong nor fortified in its resolutions, be borne with firmness till they pass away; but let these severe sufferings be protracted and heightened in their severity, and it will soon become apparent what manner of spirit the patient is of. A short

brush of persecution may be sustained by great numbers who, if the same persecution were prolonged and increased in its violence, would by and by become offended, and degenerate into dross in the crucible. But the Covenanters maintained their ground amidst the scorching fires which on every side had kindled on them. The furnace was hot, and it was not easy to endure the fierceness of its glow; but these men, who had counted the cost, were prepared for the worst, and they were found adequate to the trial when it came upon them in its vehemence. Nor was it a short work of persecution which was practised on these honoured men; it was lengthened out to nearly thirty years, and at the end of this period they showed themselves to be the same men as they were at its commencement. The duration and the severity of the trial had no effect on them, other than to render them even more stedfast and more willing to undergo the tribulations that were meted out to them. It was not suffering they feared; it was sinning, and a compliance with the defections of the time. They counted it all joy to suffer affliction for the truth's sake, and they deemed themselves specially honoured, when, as witnesses for Christ, they were called to endure hardships in his behalf. Such men as M'Kail, and Hackston, and Mitchell, and Renwick, who are only a specimen of that "cloud of witnesses" who were valiant for the truth in that time, were not the persons to be daunted and driven from their purpose by any force of assailants, however powerful or terrific their array,—their stand was taken, and bravely did they maintain it to the end.

But these men were not less constant in the en-

durance of their sufferings than in the maintenance of their principles. Their principles, indeed, were the cause of all their sufferings, for, had they foregone these, their enemies would have ceased from their opposition. But they suffered for trifles! Did they? Then what sort of rulers were they who killed their subjects for trifles? murdering them by scores and by hundreds, immuring them in prisons, spoiling them of all their property, robbing them of their liberty, their sacred liberty, the birthright of every man, and banishing them to foreign lands to end their days in slavery. Was all this done in the wantonness of heartless tyranny, to show how far unprincipled men could stretch their power against a virtuous peasantry for mere trifles? But their principles were not trifles; they were great controlling truths, to abolish which their adversaries laboured with a wicked assiduity, but laboured in vain, for truth is indestructible, and no human power can expel it from the mind when it has obtained a lodgment. The principles for which our ancestors contended were brightened up, and made to appear with a still greater precision and distinctness as the persecutors proceeded, so that they became more and more confirmed in their reality, and were less and less disposed to resile from them, even though the reward of doing so would have been the entire cessation of the persecution. Their principles were great facts, which even their oppressors saw, though they pretended not to see, and affirmed that that light was darkness. No bribe could induce them even to modify their principles, far less to renounce them. To modify them was to mutilate them, to pare them down; and this, like the illicit

filing of the sterling coin, was to impair their value, and to arrest their currency. But was not the stand they took merely in opposition to a modification of Church government? It is true that they opposed Prelacy, as in itself palpably opposed to the Word of God; and in this they are plainly to be justified. But they were the opponents of Prelacy for more than what it was even in itself; they opposed it because with it there was associated, at the time, generally speaking, unsound doctrine, in the shape of Arminianism; for though its creed might, on the whole, be orthodox, the men, for the most part, who expounded that creed, were not so. The curates and the bishops, with the exception of Leighton, knew little about doctrine, and cared as little. But they opposed Prelacy because it was inimical to the rights and privileges of the people, politically speaking; and they opposed it because of its Erastian assumptions, and because it was willing to delegate to an impious mortal what no man has a right to assume, namely, the supremacy over God's Church, which supremacy belongs inherently and inalienably to the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God has set as King upon his holy hill of Zion. "Christ's Crown and Covenant" was their motto; and it was emblazoned on their standard, which they bore aloft, and flounced conspicuously in the face of the bigoted usurper.

But these good men were also constant in the expectation that their cause would ultimately triumph. Of this they never entertained the fears of a moment, during the tedious period of their arduous struggles. They might, it is true, not easily see the end of their tribulations, for it was a long and

dreary vista through which they had to look, and there was no prophet who could tell them the time "how long." Still they were stimulated by the conviction that they would gain the victory at length. This seems to have been the firm belief of all the sufferers who bore testimony on fields and on scaffolds,—all of them asserted the final conquest which their principles would achieve over the entire force of that opposition which bore down so vehemently upon them. This idea was entertained by the whole body of the Covenanters, and it was the soul that animated them in the contest, and which inspirited them with a moral heroism, which all the might and the terror of their adversaries could not quell. They never allowed themselves to despond, even in the most perplexing and discouraging circumstances. In a situation in which other men would have fainted, and utterly abandoned their cause, they clung the closer to each other, and even became the more confident that they were destined to prevail. Often did the clouds gather over them, so dark and dismal, and cast upon their path a shadow so gloomy and bewildering, that they were nearly at their wit's end; but then there was a star that shone in the obscurity, and by this they were guided in the right way; and that star was to them a star of hope, and the harbinger of a better day, that was to burst forth in all its effulgence, when these portentous clouds should be removed;—and their expectations did not fail them. And who can tell how much the happy result depended on the confidence of their faith! for it might have happened to us as it did to other countries, where the severity of the persecution extinguished the light of the truth altogether,

and spread anew over the minds of the populace the sable shrouding of the dark ages. But the faith of our ancestors outlived the trial, and He who is with his Church in affliction rewarded that faith with victory. They toiled and bled, and prayed and believed, and we reap the fruits. Their trust was in the Lord, and the constancy of that trust carried them through every difficulty, till, by the favourable winds of heaven, the vessel was ultimately moored in a safe and quiet harbour. O how conspicuous did the faith of these worthies appear, not only as it respected the confidence of their own personal salvation, but also as it regarded the glorious triumph of their public cause; and how amply was their faith responded to, when He in whom their faith was placed appeared for their deliverance.

But if their cause was to triumph, it was necessary that they should be sustained in the conflict; and who was to sustain them when all had become their enemies, and sought their extermination? Their dependence, then, was not on man's aid, but on the Lord; and to him they looked for that Divine support which alone could bear them aloft, and bring them through the trial. Indeed they were shut up to a simple dependence alike on God's providence and his grace,—on his providence to supply their wants when men were forbidden to assist them, and on his grace to fortify and console their hearts in the midst of their manifold griefs, which were enough utterly to crush their spirits, and to waste away their energies.

Their constancy in promoting the interests of true religion, is equally noticeable. This, indeed, was

the main end for which they lived, and spent their strength, and endured their sufferings. They felt the power of the truth themselves; it had saved their souls, and by it their hearts were cheered in their dreary circumstances. The verity of the gospel was that to which they adhered with the pertinacity of the drowning man, who clings to the rope by which he is drawn to the shore. Now, this truth, which had proved so salutary to themselves, it was their wish to impart to others, that they also might be saved. Their assiduity in accomplishing this great end, is obvious from their history. Their enemies endeavoured to prevent them from sowing the seeds of Divine knowledge among the people, and many a time were they interdicted and forbidden, on the pain of death, to publish that gospel which was more precious to them than their lives. These prohibitions, however, were disregarded by a class of men who were prepared to risk every thing valuable in this world, rather than refrain from performing that service which they owed to their Master in heaven, in comparison with whose favour that of all earthly masters and authorities whatever was to be utterly despised. Their perseverance, in season and out of season, in the prosecution of this great work, was remarkable. No obstacles were too great for them to overcome. They traversed mountains and deserts, by night and by day, in all kinds of weather, and in hunger, and cold, and destitution. They were every hour in peril of their lives from their enemies, who were perpetually tracking them in their wanderings, and watching their opportunity to capture them in their religious meetings; but none of these things

moved them, neither counted they their lives dear unto them, that they might finish their course with joy. The privations and the dangers to which, in their efforts to promote the interests of true religion in the community, they were exposed, would have formed a sufficient ground of excuse to many cold-hearted religionists to abandon the work as a thankless task, and to retire from the field in time. No such considerations, however, deterred them, for they were animated in their noble purpose by the highest motives, and prompted by a sincere concern for the spiritual welfare of their fellow-men. Their persecutors strove to erect a religious despotism, for the purpose of promoting their political designs, and not at all for the good of the people; but the object of the Covenanters was the support of Christ's holy evangel, and the promotion of vital godliness in the community. In this work they were in earnest,—heartily desirous of advancing the glory of the Redeemer in the conversion and edification of souls. From this purpose they never swerved, but persisted, year after year, to maintain the standard of the gospel, in despite of the cruel treatment of their persecutors, who killed them one after another, that they might weed them all away, and leave the land a moral desolation. But the vigour of opposition served to stimulate, not to appal; and the more the enemy laboured to demolish, the more they laboured to build up and perfect what they had begun.

But they had not only to propagate the truth, they had to preserve it entire. Many false teachers had arisen, seeking to seduce the unwary and the ignorant, and, under specious pretences, put forth views of doctrine altogether repugnant to the holy

Scriptures. This was more especially to be expected in a time of divisions and distractions, when men's minds were bewildered with the jarrings and discordances with which society was troubled. It appears that the prelatic incumbents had no rallying point of doctrine to which they could refer, and every man preached what seemed good in his own eyes. A mixture of errors must necessarily have been preached from the pulpits of the curates, who, in fact, were so illiterate, and so uninstructed in the doctrines of the Bible, that they knew not what the form of sound words was. The preachers among the Covenanters were the only persons from whom sound views of the truth were to be expected; and, considering the abounding of iniquity and error, they had reason to be peculiarly cautious in guarding the great principles of the gospel. And it was never found that these men did let go the truth; they kept it as a precious treasure, infinitely more valuable than all the estimable things in the world. Their discourses, which have been transmitted to our times, plainly show what were the doctrines which they preached, and how purely they maintained them. They were lights shining in a dark place, holding forth the word of life. The great central doctrines of human sinfulness, and Christ's sacrifice for sin, were strictly maintained, and received a due prominence in all their sermons, and catechisings, and instructions. They were never known to resile from the doctrinal tenets of the Church to which they belonged, and whatever divisions there might be among themselves, these divisions were chiefly on matters of circumstantial importance. The truth went with them into the

furnace, and it came out with them,—it suffered no deterioration.

In speaking of the firmness of our ancestors in their attachment to great principles, the constancy of their attachment to peaceable measures is not to be overlooked. This, indeed, forms a peculiar feature of their character. It was the object of their enemies to represent them as factious and turbulent persons, keeping the nation in a state of perpetual agitation. Notwithstanding all these allegations, however, the Covenanters demeaned themselves in a peaceable manner, and strove to show their adversaries how groundless these charges were. The cultivation of peace was *principle* with them, because the Scriptures had said, "as much as in you lies, live peaceably with all men;" and Scripture precept was to them a matter of permanent authority. Many a time did their persecutors form plans for the purpose of stirring them up to a general rebellion, that they might find an occasion against them; but as often were their purposes defeated. The various risings on the part of the Covenanters were, as has already been shown, all unpremeditated, and entirely in self-defence, and were maintained on the same principles as a man would resist the attack of an assassin, or the aggression of thieves. But though they were obliged, on a few occasions, to assume a warlike attitude, for the mere preservation of their lives, they were, nevertheless, constant in their attachment to the political constitution of the nation. They were *constitutionally* loyal. But did they not resist Charles, and denounce him as a tyrant? A goodly number did, but not all; many acknowledged Charles as

the king, while they repudiated those who, under him, managed the affairs of the country in a manner so unrighteous and disgraceful. The stricter part of the Covenanters, it is true, and we must say the more honest and consistent part, would acknowledge neither Charles nor his brother as the lawful kings of the realm, because they had violated the social compact, and by their wicked aggressions on the lives and liberties of their subjects, denuded themselves of all right to reign over a people who could not admit them to the throne but on specified conditions; and the Revolution Settlement fully vindicated the justness of their views on this point. It is a mistake to suppose that the Covenanters were inimical to the *constitution;* they were the very reverse; and all their remonstrances with the king and the rulers arose out of their attachment to it. They had sworn to defend the national rights and institutions, and when they saw an infringement made on these by the very persons who were appointed their legal guardians, could they do otherwise than speak out? They have been denounced as rebels, just because they abode conscientiously by the laws, and would not yield to the domination of those who violated them, and trampled the constitution under their feet; and are they to be stigmatised for this? Had they outraged the laws as the rulers did, who would have apologised for them?

But did they not meditate an overthrow of the constitution? No. A statement, made in a paper found on the person of Henry Hall of Houghhead, when he was captured by the enemy, was, at the time, unjustly charged on the whole body of the

Covenanters; and never was a charge more injuriously preferred. In that paper a surmise was made respecting an alteration in the form of government; but then it is as plain that no one was privy to the sentiments contained in the document but the individual himself who had penned it, and none else were responsible. The council were peculiarly gratified at the discovery of this unauthenticated scroll, and immediately published it, charging the whole party with the intention of changing the government of the country, and of involving the nation in a civil war. The particular statement contained in this draught was in direct opposition to the sentiments of the most rigid Covenanters, and, therefore, to counteract the injurious impression which it might have on the public mind, they agreed to the publication of a declaration of their principles on political matters, in which they expressed their adherence to the present form of government, though they renounced their allegiance to the tyrannical monarch. This manifesto was published at the cross of Sanquhar in June 1680, and it embodies the very same political views which wrought out the Revolution. Does not the following deliverance, given by the English Legislature, which met in the form of a Convention, sufficiently prove the soundness of the political principles asserted by the Covenanters? "That James the Second, having endeavoured to subvert the *constitution* of the kingdom, by breaking the *original contract* between the king and the people, and, by the advice of Jesuits and other wicked people, having violated the *fundamental laws*, and withdrawn himself out of the kingdom, has abdicated the government, and the

throne is become vacant." The finding of the Scottish Convention is to the same amount, namely,—"That King James had, by his wicked deeds, *forfeited* his right to the crown."

We say again, that our persecuted ancestors were firm in their adherence to sound and loyal principles, and that the nation at large is, at this day, peculiarly indebted to the intrepid patriots who boldly set at defiance the doctrine of passive obedience to tyrants and despots. Let us, like them, cling to constitutional law, and let us remember, that the authorities under whom we are placed are not tyrants, and are therefore to be honoured and obeyed.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Solitudes.

The solitudes were the wide and lonely field that was trodden by the feet of the wanderers of the Covenant, who retired to the upland districts to avoid their persecutors. These solitudes were of vast extent and of the most dreary description. Immeasurable tracks of desert heath, stretching for many miles on all sides, may be seen from the tops of any of the heights in the vicinity of the localities frequented by those holy men in the dismal day of Zion's troubles. The upper parts of Nithsdale, Lanarkshire, Ayrshire, and the higher wilds of Galloway, concealed in their solitary retreats crowds of fugitives, who had gathered in from all parts of the lower countries, where they were more exposed to the notice of their enemies. The vast spaces of brown moorland, which in the mellow days of autumn are purpled o'er with the heather bells, and all vocal with the humming bee, buzzing among the blooming heath and the fragrant flowrets of the wilderness, extracting their honied sweets with which to store their little cells, were admirably adapted for concealment and safety. Their undu-

lating and shaggy surface, trodden only by the feet of the shepherds, and in some places but rarely even by them, admitted with difficulty the strolling troopers, who travelled everywhere in quest of their prey, and were often as sure a protection to the wanderers as the strong walls of a castle. These dangerous and inhospitable deserts were a terror to the military, who, when they entered them, were at a loss how to extricate themselves from the perilous footing, where even the most skilful and cautious had enough ado to pilot their way.

But these bleak and sterile tracks,—where now a dwelling is scarcely to be seen, not a dwelling, indeed, except here and there the lone huts of the shepherds, which, in the far distance, emit from their turf-clad chimneys the tiny columns of pale blue smoke ascending tardily into the air,—were once thickly peopled. The ancient Celtic clans claimed these solitudes as their own, and placed their habitations in the pleasant glades of the now decayed forests, and lived there an independent and hardy race, subsisting mainly by the chase. It is amazing to think how widely these tribes spread themselves in districts where now nothing but desolation reigns. Towns and villages, that have for many ages disappeared, once studded the bosom of the wilderness, and swarms of people were found in glens and wild recesses among the mountains, where no man dwells. These people of a forgotten age, who flourished at a period far remote from the commencement of our nation's history, have left indubitable monuments of their existence and of their populousness, in the names which they have imparted to hills and streams and places, so that scarcely a point in the bosom of

the vast solitudes is without its Celtic appellation. These names, many of which sound in the ear with surpassing sweetness, are all highly descriptive, and are proofs that the race who imposed them were possessed of no common shrewdness, and were by no means destitute of even a poetical taste. Within the boundaries of the solitudes are to be found ancient battle-fields, with numerous graves lying from north to south with great uniformity, and countless cairns, not on heights only but on the heathy plains, indicating the resting-places of illustrious persons, who, in these remote times, were deemed worthy of monumental remembrancers, but whose names and exploits have silently passed away into an oblivion out of which they never can be recalled.

These vast solitudes, which afforded our ancestors so wide an expanse through which to wander in seeking one place of retreat after another, embraced within their limits at that period large wooded spaces, and remnants of ancient forests densely set with underwood, especially in the glens and along the bases of the more abrupt mountains. These patches of natural wood, the representatives of the extensive forests which in former ages overspread the almost entire surface of the upland districts, admitted into their deep recesses companies of the suffering people, who there sheltered themselves for days and nights from the face of the persecuting foe. The military were not fond of venturing into these thickets, because they feared a shot from an unseen hand, on the supposition that the persecuted people would retaliate, and do to them as they themselves would have done in similar circum-

stances. In these hiding-places, they rested under the covert of the "green-wood tree," the leafy branches of which in the pleasant days of summer were filled with the charming warblers, whose sweet music blended in its softest melody with the thrilling song of praise, which ascended from the little company met in the heart of the mantling bushes to worship the God of their salvation. In the wintry storms, when they durst not venture under a friendly roof, they betook themselves to the coverts of the wood, where, under the awning of the wide-spreading branches, they found a shelter from the wind and rain, and screened themselves from the drifting snow. It would appear that these forests had been preserved from the wasteful hand of man and other incidents, which since have almost entirely swept them away, as places of refuge to the destitute people, who were bearing witness for God's truth in that trying time. *We* could not screen ourselves as they did, the face of the desert being now so bare and open; but happily we need no such hiding-places.

The solitudes in the times to which we refer were without any regular thoroughfares. No roads intersected their almost impassable surface, so that no facilities were in this way afforded to the troopers who were sent out in pursuit of the wanderers. This circumstance was of immense consequence to the Covenanters, who, when once they got into the heart of the moorland, could with pretty much ease keep themselves out of the way of their pursuers, for they could flee away with lightly foot where the military could make no progress. Hundreds were in this way preserved from capture and from death.

These wastes are, even to this day, for the most part unprovided with roads, so that the traveller must find his dubious way over broken moss and rugged heath, without any path to guide his uncertain steps.

But that which in these solitudes favoured the wanderers most of all, was the morasses. Into these no horseman could penetrate; the attempt was attended with certain injury, if not immediate destruction. Not a few of the more daring of the troopers, we have reason to believe, perished in this way. In the heart of the sinking fens, and behind the shelter of the deep moss-hags, a company of fugitives could have secured themselves, while the balls from the muskets of their pursuers whizzed innocuously over their heads, or sank without harm into the soft mossy bank at their side. In some cases, they even appeared conspicuously in the middle of the moss, at a secure distance from the shot of the foe, who durst not venture, even on foot, to assail them in their retreat, and they persisted, in spite of the boldest threatenings, to retain their position, refusing to be dislodged, and even inviting the magnanimous troopers to approach, if they dared, their resting-place. On every occasion, the wanderers sought, when surprised by the soldiers in the moors, the boggy ground, and ran at their utmost speed to reach it; while the horsemen as uniformly tried to get between them and the morass,—for they knew if once they reached its border, the game was up. In these places, however, they were sometimes greatly annoyed, being forced to stand for many hours in the cold and sluggy moss, while the soldiers kept watch to prevent their escape. In this way fevers and other diseases were caught, which

brought many to an untimely grave. For many days, and even weeks, these mosses were the home of the sufferers, who were thankful for such a refuge. But the troopers were not without other hazards in their pursuits through the moorlands; for besides the dangers to which they were exposed among the mosses, there were perils of another kind, which perhaps were not suspected by them. These were wells of apparently small dimensions at the surface, and nearly covered with aquatic weeds, which almost prevented them from being seen. These wells are in some instances of amazing depth, occasionally of ten or twelve feet, when to look at them no one would suppose them to be more than as many inches. Into these fearful and treacherous depths the horse and his rider were in danger of plunging, to the certain destruction of both. This may probably account for the traditions among the people of the deserts, respecting the sudden disappearance of some of the troopers in the moors, who were never again heard of. Some of these wells have become dry, the water having found its way beneath between the layers of the rocks, and they present the appearance almost of a funnel, while others are of a different shape.

But, in these solitudes, there are also deep ravines that afforded places of shelter to the intercommuned Covenanters. These ravines have originally been formed by the sudden rushing of the waters adown the face of the steep mountains in the time of great thunder storms. The gushing of the rain from the bosom of the dark cloud descends with such an impetuosity as at once to cut a deep trench on the slope of the hill, when moss and soil and rocks are

carried to the dale land beneath, and every succeeding deluge from the firmament ploughs it deeper and deeper, till it becomes a hideous chasm. These watercourses, some of which have been formed in ages long gone by, are filled with trees and shrubs overhanging the rocks, in which are many natural chambers and dark caverns, concealed by the mantling of the thick branches that droop pensively over the brook which murmurs o'er its rocky bed, as it pursues its way to the next tributary, which accompanies it to the main stream that leads them to the ocean. The shelving sides of these ravines are precipitous and dangerous, but they were well known to the wanderers, who made themselves acquainted with every hiding-place, and the means by which they could reach them. In seasons of pursuit, they could descend with safety and find a secure lodgement in the rocky cavity below, when those who followed could only stand on the brink and look with awe over the beetling descent, down which the fugitives had conveyed themselves and eluded their grasp. The discharge of their fire-arms might startle the sweet songster in the bushes, and the leaden bullets booming through the rustling leaves might rebound from the face of the opposite rock, but the persons beneath were secure from harm. Sometimes it has been known that a trooper, more forward than his fellows in the eager pursuit of the fleeing Covenanters, has rushed headlong with his charger over the brink of the yawning cleft, and tumbled crashing through the bushes and over the rugged rocks to the streamlet in the bottom. No places afforded a more frequent or a more safe retreat than the dusky sides of the bosky ravine.

But the solitudes afforded other places of concealment besides these already specified. The most conspicuous points of the desert were often the safest places of resort. The top of a hill or the summit of some particular eminence was frequently selected by the houseless wanderers as a retreat, from which they had on all sides an extensive prospect, and therefore could easily perceive if danger was near. And many an hour was spent on these heights in holy intercourse without fear, for no enemy could approach without being perceived. The slopes of the green hills, which were thickly covered with the feathery *brakens*, furnished a place of concealment and a soft bed on which the weary often reposed, and from which they could lift up their heads and look abroad over the wide waste beyond them, while the covering in which they were mantled prevented them from being observed. Some of these places are still pointed out as the frequent resort of the Covenanters on the steep hill side. The Fauns of Atry, near the source of the silvery Ken, is particularly mentioned, and a place more appropriate could scarcely be selected, for no enemy could come upon them without being descried in the distance. Oh, but these were weary times, when the best of Scotland's sons had thus to make the wilderness their home, and when they had to seek a refuge in the cold, dreary, and dripping caves of the earth! The desert was furnished with many such hiding-places, either natural openings among the rocks in the steep glens, or artificial cavities formed by the ancient inhabitants as places of security in their precarious times. These caverns, however, were welcome receptacles to men, whose

lives were every hour in jeopardy, and who were thankful to hide their heads under the ground till the enemy passed by. These abodes were sometimes occupied for months together, and were so concealed that none knew of them save those who had undertaken the kindly task of conveying food and other necessaries to those who had fled to them. Often did the soldiers pass the mouth of a cave when its occupants were within, and at the moment engaged in religious exercises, without being discovered,—the Lord covering them with his hand till their enemies were gone. Even to this day, some of these caves retain the names of the particular persons who were in the habit of resorting to them, and the shepherds can conduct the stranger to the very places, and can retail some of the affecting incidents that befell. The mouths of many of these caves are now closed up by the descent of the debris from the face of the hills above them, so that it is with difficulty that the precise spot can be ascertained, whence many prayers were wont to ascend to heaven, and where much holy fellowship was held by the men of whom the world was not worthy.

There were in the wilderness, here and there, what are termed shielings, used by the shepherds, chiefly in the summer, for the management of their sheep, but which were left entirely desolate in winter. These lonely and uninhabited huts were, on certain occasions, greatly prized by the wanderers. They afforded a sort of shelter in times of heavy rain, when the moorlands were flooded and soaked in water, but in an especial manner were these places beneficial in times of snow. Here

they could remain in perfect security, when the drift was streaming along the heath, and covering the entire face of the wilderness with one uniform sheet of whiteness. In such cases no enemy durst venture abroad, and the soldiers left the desert to the free occupancy of the worthies, who were happy to greet the scowling of the sky, which prevented the intrusion of their persecutors, and "compelled the men of blood to couch within their dens." When a company of friends met in the solitary shieling, the floor of which was strewed with the tufted heather, affording a soft and comfortable couch on which to recline, they felt unspeakably relieved; they knew that they were secure from interruption; they could speak aloud; they could raise their song of praise; and pray from the fulness of their hearts without the fear of detection; and when they happened to be furnished with provisions, they could spend days and nights together, enjoying a happiness of which their persecutors could form no conception. Many a time did the youthful Renwick occupy these shielings, where he made a fire of heath or sticks to warm his shivering frame and to dry his dripping clothes, while his precarious food was conveyed to him from great distances, and mostly by children, who durst not let their parents know of it. It is not on external circumstances that a man's happiness depends, it is on the state of his own mind; and when a man is at peace with God, no situation can render him unhappy; and hence the comfort which this poor tossed remnant experienced in the midst of all privations.

But, in enumerating the various means of shelter with which the wanderers in the desert were fur-

nished, we must not omit the friendly mists which sometimes shrouded them from the sight of their pursuers. These mists in the upland wilds are common, and at certain seasons of the year the tops of the higher eminences are for the most part scoured with low fleeting clouds. From the summits of the hills, the vapour descends into the glens, and, driven by the gusty winds from their narrow outlets, spread along the surface of the moors beneath. At other times, it creeps along the slopes of the mountains like a curtain drawn on its edge, or like a lofty wall of snowy whiteness, leaving the space within and beyond quite clear, and without any thing to intercept the vision. The sudden descent of the mist often came very opportunely to the Covenanters, who found behind its screen a sure protection from the troopers who might happen to be in pursuit of them. Many a time, when their destruction appeared to be inevitable, were they saved by the mist, which threw over them its ample folds, and hid them in its bosom till the danger was overpast. So frequent were the interpositions in this way, that the soldiers used to utter the most blasphemous imprecations when they saw the trailing cloud diffusing itself along the hills and stealing rapidly downward. Nothing is more bewildering than mist in the trackless waste, and scarcely any thing is attended with greater danger to those who are unacquainted with the locality. Hence the dragoons, when they were thus overtaken, left off the pursuit, and cared only for their own safety, while the fugitives, happy at the dispensation, gave thanks to Him who had thus covered them with his thick cloud, and saved them from the vengeance

of the foe. The venerable Peden had his life sometimes preserved in this way, and one remarkable instance occurred at Auchengrouth hill, in the vicinity of Sanquhar, when he and a few friends with him were hotly pursued by the military. He stood and cried, "Lord, if thou have any more work for us in this world, allow us the lap of thy cloak this day again; and if this be the day of our going off the stage, let us walk honestly off and comfortably thorow, and our souls will sing forth thy praises to eternity for what thou hast done to us and for us." In a short time they were enveloped in the mist, and the dragoons madly exclaimed, "There is the confounded mist again; we cannot get the execrable whigs pursued for it." The wilderness afforded great advantages to the persecuted people, and hence they flocked to it in great numbers, and never did the deserts harbour a more worthy class of men. These solitudes were hallowed by their inhabitation, and many a spot within their boundaries is to this day regarded with a deep veneration for their sake.

But if these wilds afforded them places of shelter, they at the same time afforded them places for religious exercises. The wilderness became an oratory in which the poor dispersed people, who delighted so much in prayer, could, without restraint, pour out the fulness of their hearts in fervent supplication before the God of all grace. Everywhere they prayed,—on the mountain side,—in the woody dell,—in the lonely shieling,—and in the heart of the deep moss-hags.

But the wilderness was dear to the sufferers, because it contained the graves of the martyrs.

The precious dust of many a saint of God was deposited in the bleak moors and on the lonely hills. The martyrs were usually buried where they fell, and a stone was placed over the grave, with a rude inscription to tell who slept beneath, and who were his murderers, and in what cause he died. These resting-places of the honoured dead were dear to the wanderers, and deemed very sacred by them, and they often convened to weep over the graves of their departed associates who had won the martyr's crown, and reached the happy rest before them. Deep and sad were their musings when sitting on the turf that covered the ashes of a martyred brother; they thought that perchance the next shot that might be fired on the heath, might stain it with their own blood, and leave their mangled bodies to be interred by kindred witnesses, or by the kindly hand of the passing stranger. The graves of the martyrs were solemn memorials to the living witnesses of their coming fate, and often impressed them with the idea of a speedy and a bloody death. Oh, how many fell in the wilds, when none were present to witness their martyrdom save their murderers, and those beneficent angels who were there invisibly to conduct the ransomed spirit to the realms of bliss!

There are, doubtless, many graves of slaughtered saints in the wilds which are not known to be so. No memorial is erected over them, and tradition seems to have forgotten them; but they are not forgotten by Him in whose cause they bled, He knows their resting-place, and will bring them from their obscure and lowly bed on that great and de-

cisive day, when all his saints shall be gathered together unto Him.

Some of these graves have been incidentally opened by the spade, and the soft moss which covered them has been cleared away, and the bodies have been found in a tolerably fresh condition. This was the case with the three martyrs of Crossgelloch, when, several years ago, their graves were looked into at the time when the present monument was reared over the spot. The bodies were in a state of good preservation; they were lying in their wearing apparel, just as they had been shot. Some leaves of the Bible were found among their clothes, which also were undecayed. The buttons on their coats were large and broad, according to the fashion of the times. Their hosen were drawn up on their knees. Their faces were of a deep sallow appearance. A few locks of hair were brought away as a memorial of the saintly men. The hair of one of them was of a brown colour, probably tinged by the moss in which it had been so long imbedded; it was obviously that of a young man, soft and fine, and had undergone little or no change.

The wilderness, then, is consecrated by the blood of Christ's witnesses. "The moors and mosses of Scotland are flowered with martyrs," and solemn is the interest which the thoughtful mind takes when passing over these localities, where holy men have lived, and suffered, and where

> "Graves of martyr warriors
> Are in the desert heath."

The topography of the wilderness brings to our

recollection many interesting details, both historical and traditionary. There is scarcely a hill, or glen, or moss, or streamlet, or shady ravine, but has its incident more or less important. In fact, the history of these dismal times may be said to be impressed on the face of the solitudes, and if they could speak, oh, how many tongues would utter tales that would thrill the heart—tales both of wailing and of gladness! We love these solitudes for the sake of those who traversed them, and suffered in their dreariest recesses. Their wildest moors are pleasant to us, more pleasant by far than the scenes of cultivated landscape, with which no such associations of our suffering ancestry are connected.

We speak of solitudes, but then the term is comparative, for what is solitude to one is the reverse to another. When the persecutors had driven our fathers into the desert, there to pine away in loneliness and want, they imagined that they had succeeded in banishing them from every thing like comfort in this world; but never were men more out of their reckoning. They expelled them, indeed, from human society, but then they drove them nearer God. When they intercommuned them and cut them off from all intercourse with their fellowmen, they thought they had severed them from all happiness, and from every thing which makes human life desirable; but these men knew not the secret of true happiness. They knew not that the happiness of the believer lay in God, who is everywhere present, and can make the wilderness a paradise. Whatever outward comforts these holy men might be deprived of—and they were deprived of almost every one,—the loss was richly compensated

by the intercourse they held with Heaven, and by the ravishing consolations of the Holy Spirit, with which the gracious Head of the Church so abundantly blessed his people in their day of suffering for his sake. Some of the worthies, who outlived the troublous times, used to remark, that if they had the choice of any given portion of their days to live it over again, they would, without hesitation, select that of the persecution,—for that had been their happiest time. A noble testimony this to the faithfulness of God to His promises, made to His people when enduring persecution in behalf of the truth.

CHAPTER IX.

Conventicles, or the Church in the Wilderness.

Conventicles were first held in private houses, and then in the fields. They originated in the following circumstances:—Fairfoul, archbishop of Glasgow, complained to the Earl of Middleton, who was the king's commissioner to the parliament, and who happened to be in the west, "that none of the younger ministers within his diocese, who entered since 1649, had attended his courts, or acknowledged his prelatic superiority; that he was exposed to the odium which attends that office in Scotland, but possessed nothing of its power; and that unless some more effectual steps were taken, the prelatic office itself would sink into general contempt. Middleton requested him to state his plan, and he would immediately put it in execution. Fairfoul proposed that an act of council might be passed and proclaimed, peremptorily banishing all the ministers who had entered since the year 1649, from their houses, parishes, and respective presbyteries, if they did not, before the 1st day of November ensuing, procure presentations from the patrons, and present themselves to the prelates

to receive collation and admission to their charges; assuring the commissioner that there would not be ten in his diocese that would not rather sacrifice their principles than lose their stipends. The result proved the folly of a prelate judging Presbyterian ministers by his own standard.

"The council met at Glasgow on the 1st of October, and passed an act known by the designation of the 'Act of Glasgow,' in exact conformity with the archbishop's suggestions. Burnet informs us that the Duke of Hamilton, who was one of the council, told him that they were all so drunk that day, that they were not capable of considering any thing that was laid before them, and would hear of nothing but the executing the law without any relenting or delay. The Presbyterian ministers obeyed the law. They submitted to the very letter of its penalty. On the last Sabbath of October they preached and bade farewell to their deeply attached congregations; and on that day, as Burnet states, above 200 churches were at once shut up, and abandoned equally by pastors and by people. 'I believe,' says Kirkton, 'there never was such a sad Sabbath in Scotland, as when the poor persecuted ministers took leave of their people.' In many instances, the congregations could not repress their feelings, but wept aloud, till their lamentations resembled the wild wailings of a city taking by storm. This desolating blast fell first on the western counties, but it soon extended over the southern and midland parts of the kingdom, till it caused the ejection of nearly 400 ministers in the course of a few months, involving a large portion of Scotland in sudden spiritual destitution."

The places of these worthy men were supplied by the curates, who, as Burnet remarks, "were the very dregs and the refuse of the north country, ignorant to a reproach, and many of them openly vicious." It was not to be expected that the people, who had been trained under the ministry of such godly and excellent preachers as the ejected ministers were, would tamely submit to the curates, and adhere as conscientiously to their ministrations. Accordingly, the parish churches were deserted, and the new incumbents were left to declaim to empty pews, while the people remained at home, or resorted to the churches of those ministers who were not included in the act of ejection. The consequence was, that their places of worship were crowded to excess, and this stirred up the wrath of the curates, who regarded it as an offence not to be forgiven. In their destitution, great multitudes attended the family exercises of the old ministers, who preached in their houses as they had occasion, to the no small edification of the hearers. These assemblies became at length so large, that no private house could contain them, and they were at length obliged to meet in the open air. It was not, however, for several years after this, that the standard of the gospel was, strictly speaking, reared in the fields. The great era of conventicles was from 1670 till 1680, and a bright era of the gospel this was to Scotland. During this decade of years, the assemblies that met in the fields were sometimes prodigious. The peasantry seemed to be animated by one spirit, and they flocked to the deserts, at the imminent peril of their lives, to hear the gospel, rather than remain with the curates, and be guilty

of foul compliance. During this period the preachers were numerous; they were to be found in every corner of the land, and were as ready to preach as the people were to hear. The wilderness became one vast church, and mountains, and glens, and moors were all occupied, as it best suited the convenience of the people in the different localities where the meetings were held. The council had ousted the ministers by hundreds, thinking thereby to silence them, and to prevent their influcnce among the people; but never were men more outwitted in their calculations, for, by their very deed of ejectment, they put into the hands of these honoured men a torch, a blazing torch, whose vivid flashing attracted the notice of all, and from this torch there flew many sparks, which lighted upon substances that were easily inflammable, and produced a conflagration in every direction, like the heath of the desert, which, in the dry days of spring, is kindled by the shepherds, and which, breathed upon by the western winds, spreads out into a long, and dusky, and crackling line of flame, gathering strength in its progress, till all the heights seem to be enveloped in sheets of fire. This fire, then, which, by means of the ejection, the rulers kindled in Scotland, they were not able by all their efforts to extinguish. They tried to quench it by casting water upon it—foul and muddy watcr, for they possessed none of a better quality; they tried to separate its parts, to see if, like burning coals scattered on the hearth, its flame would die away; they endeavoured to heap earth upon it to smother it; but all would not do, for neither privations, nor indulgences, nor bribery, could effect their purpose; the fire blazed

and flared higher and more conspicuously than ever, till all the wilderness was kindled by it, and thousands of hearts made to glow with a fervour which no tongue can express.

Conventicles in private houses having been denounced by the council, and severe laws enacted against those who frequented them, the Church, for her own safety, retired to the deserts; and the people, rising up like a flock of doves, fled to their mountains, where they expected to be further removed from the annoyances of their enemies. But even here she could not be hid; her persecutors followed her into the remotest recesses of the wilderness, and there sought to mingle her blood with the mountain-rills, or with the dark moss water on the waste. By this means the wilds became a vast hunting-field, scoured by the troopers, who went as joyously to work in hunting down the lonely worshippers as ever the sportsman followed his game; and there was not a nook nor a retreat, in all the wide solitudes, that was not searched as eagerly as if they had been seeking for the most precious treasures. This circumstance had a tendency to increase the size of the conventicles for greater safety, and led to the adoption of other precautionary measures. From the frequent and hasty attacks of the military on the helpless people who had met for the simple purpose of religious worship, it was found necessary that a certain number of the male part of the audience should provide themselves with weapons of defence, and come armed to the meetings. This plan turned out to be of great practical benefit to the conventicles; for when the troopers happened to invade their camp, their onslaught was resisted

till the people had separated and secured their safety by flight. In this way many an individual was preserved from capture and from death, and the soldiers also were rendered more cautious and less reckless in their aggressions; in fact nothing imposed a more salutary check on the military, than the knowledge of the circumstance that the conventicles were armed, and ready to shed the last drop of their blood in the behalf of the defenceless. The thought that brave and pious men were animated with such a determination, more than half-paralysed the troopers, who were stimulated by their leaders to the ungodly warfare. At first the council contented themselves with the command, that the ministers who presided at the conventicles should alone be captured or killed, while the people should be dispersed and chased to their several homes; but at length the orders were issued that all indiscriminately should be seized, and if they offered resistance they should be shot. By this means, the managers, as Wodrow calls them, intended to make the desert one vast slaughter-house, one wide field of wailing and bloodshed, till, by an utter extermination, the Covenanters, as a class, should be extinguished.

A conventicle in the solitudes was an interesting scene. The meeting was generally announced a while beforehand, to be held in a given place as remote from the haunts of men as possible. Sometimes the place selected was on the edge of a wide morass, into which, in case of a surprise from the troopers, the congregation could flee and save themselves. A tent was erected for the preacher, constructed of four upright poles driven into the ground,

and tied firmly together at the top with tough ropes twisted of the spratty grass that grew on the spot. Around the stakes were then wrapped the plaids of the shepherds, which imparted to the structure a pyramidal form, within which was a space sufficient to contain the minister and the precentor. A cross bar of wood was placed at the front opening, a little below breast height, on which was laid the Bible, from which the preacher read the words of eternal life. His feet rested on a slight elevation, that, when speaking, he might have a full view of his audience. Sometimes his standing-place was by the grave of a martyr, who reposed beneath in his gory shroud,—a martyr well known, it might be, to not a few in the assembly, the husband, the father, or the brother of some present, whose holy history and tragic end were deeply impressed on their minds. Standing over the ashes of the honoured dead, we can easily conceive the pathos, the energy, and the fervid eloquence with which the man of God, who did not know but ere an hour should pass he too might be added another to the number of the slaughtered saints, whose bodies were sleeping in the wilds around him, would address the eager multitudes, that hung on his lips as he uttered the message of grace, the glad tidings of mercy. They, as well as he, were in peril, and they had come to gather the manna in the wilderness at the risk of their lives; and cleanly did they gather it, and anxiously did they eat it, for they did not know but their blood might be mingled with their festival. O ye that have bread to the full, and none to scare you away from your repast, think on your ancestors who had to devour their precarious meal in haste, lest the raven-

ous wolves should snatch it in a moment from their mouths, and then tear them in pieces on the waste!

The situation of the conventicles, when they met in the wilds, was so uncertain, that they were obliged to resort to every precaution in case of a surprisal from the soldiers. Accordingly, warders were stationed on the eminences, and at proper distances from the meeting, whose vigilance was ever awake to descry the coming danger. Often were the assemblies saved by this means, and the mission of the troopers frustrated.

Nothing could exceed the solemnity that pervaded these meetings in the moors, or in the sweet secluded glens and fairy nooks in the bosoms of the hills, that were all in turn selected as preaching places, as it best suited. A hallowed influence came down from above, and every sentence spoken by the preacher fell like the oracles uttered by the lips of a prophet on the ears and hearts of the auditory. How sweet and heavenly was the song of praise chanted by a thousand voices in the deep and awful stillness of the lone wilderness! the hallowed sound was wafted afar, and fell on the ears of the warders by the distant cairns, mingling with the melody of the joyous lark high in the air, and with the pensive bleatings of the lambkins on the bent. Every soul was stirred, and every heart stimulated to the bold resolution of maintaining the good cause to the end, even though that cause should be sealed with their warm blood. It was animating to see, in the quietness of a summer's evening, so great a crowd dispersing to their different abodes after a day spent in the fellowship of the gospel; and yet there was something mournful in the scene, for who could tell how many of

this same company might fall by the murderous hand of the foe, ere another occasion of the kind came round! Some poured into the mouths of the narrow glens in seeking the way to their dwellings, others trode the rugged surface of the moors, and others again wended along the steep hill-side, every heart full of thankfulness for God's grace, and for his providential care during the day.

These conventicles were kept in all seasons. It was particularly pleasant, in the shiny days of summer, to see hundreds of people convened in the flowery glens, or on the scented heath, with all nature rejoicing around them, listening to the words of eternal life. Such a scene, notwithstanding the dangers that might be anticipated, was peculiarly animating, and must have been richly enjoyed by the people in general. The cheering sun smiling on high, the gorgeous scenery of the firmament, the lofty mountains—the pillars of heaven,—the far-spreading solitudes without a human habitation, the soft murmuring of the lonely rill, and the mingled melody of the wilderness, all conspired to soothe and solemnize the mind, and to impart an unwonted joyousness and elevation to the spirit. But summer did not always smile; in his turn came winter with his cold and desolating blasts sweeping o'er the desert, and filling the hearts of the inhabitants with fear. But were not conventicles suspended in the winter? No; the hungry flocks of Christ's fold persisted, even in storms and nipping frosts, to gather in groups "beside the shepherds' tents." The drenching rains did not deter them, for they sometimes stood whole hours together, while the clouds dissolved over them in gushing torrents; and

the preacher stood with them, refusing to avail himself of the covering which their kindness had provided for him. By his example they were encouraged, and by his doctrine their hearts were refreshed as with a dew from the Lord. The snows which laid an arrest on the troopers in their raids among the peasantry, did not hinder them from convening in their religious assemblies. They seated themselves on the soft snow *wreaths* that had been heaped together by the eddying winds, and glad were they to do so without interruption. Even delicate ladies have been known to visit the conventicles in the snowy days of winter, cowering in the shelter of a friendly bush when the heavy flakes were descending, or the smoking drift blown by the rising tempest. But these were times when people counted little on bodily inconveniences, and when they were glad to deny themselves every earthly comfort to enjoy the ordinances of the gospel in all their refreshing and heavenly unctiousness. Their bodies might be chilled in the cold, but then this was forgotten in the absorbing sense of that divine love which warmed their hearts, and sent an animating glow throughout their spiritual frame.

But the holding of these conventicles was not confined merely to the day-time; they were frequently kept in the dreary season of the night. This was, at certain periods, necessary to avoid the more than common vigilance of their persecutors in particular localities. The sable night, which hid them from the view of those who sought their hurt, was counted by them as a season suitable to their purpose, for on no account could they forego the observance of the great and binding duties of pub-

lic worship. It was indeed sad necessity that forced them to meet in the dead of night, and to sit in the dark in some concealed corner in the woodlands, to listen to these words of grace that were so sweet and acceptable to their taste. The song of praise raised by a company of worshippers on the skirts of the moors, must have produced a strange sensation, as the sound fell on the ears of a stranger unaccustomed to such things, and not aware of the true nature of the circumstance. The concealment of the night put their enemies at defiance, and even though they had been guided to the place, and invaded them on a sudden, they could easily, in the darkness, evade the pursuit; while the troopers, aware of the dangerous footing, would not dare to follow them. The worshippers knew the localities well, and could easily provide for their safety in places where the military, without a guide, durst not move a foot. Many a meeting was held in the wilds in this way, all which indicated the eagerness of the people and their determination to embrace every occasion, however inconvenient, to meet for religious exercises. While others were asleep upon their beds, and the persecutors engaged in their deep midnight carousals, they embraced the opportunity of assembling in the fields to call on the name of Him who alone could befriend them in the day of peril. Many such meetings were held by Mr Renwick in his wanderings through the country, for it was not till the latter years of the persecution, when it became so dreadfully severe, that the plan of night conventicles was especially resorted to, and when its adoption became absolutely necessary.

Before drawing this chapter to a close, we shall,

in order to illustrate the subject of conventicles a little more fully, present the reader with a detailed specimen of the manner in which one of these meetings was conducted by a party of the most eminent preachers of the time, who bravely upheld the standard of the gospel in the fields. It was a conventicle held at East Nisbet, in the Merse, as described by Mr Blackadder, one of the assistant ministers, and formerly of the parish of Troqueer, in the vicinity of Dumfries. The multitude at this conventicle must have been very great, when the number of the communicants alone was between 3000 and 4000. The place of meeting was a green and pleasant haugh by the margin of a stream, the communion-tables were placed on the grassy plain, at which the people seated themselves in a devout and orderly manner. "From Saturday morning, when the work began," says Mr Blackadder, "until Monday afternoon, we suffered not the least affront or molestation from enemies, which appeared wonderful. At first there was some apprehension; but the people sat undisturbed, and the whole was closed in as orderly a way as it had been in the time of Scotland's brightest noon. And, truly, the spectacle of so many grave, composed, and devout faces must have struck the adversaries with awe, and been more formidable than any outward ability of fierce looks and warlike array. We desired not the countenance of earthly kings; there was a spiritual and divine Majesty shining on the work, and sensible evidence that the great Master of assemblies was present in the midst. It was indeed the doing of the Lord, who covered us a table in the wilderness in presence of our foes, and reared a pillar of glory

between us and the enemy, like the fiery pillar of old that separated between the camp of Israel and the Egyptians, encouraging to the one, but dark and terrible to the other. Though our vows were not offered within the court of God's house, they wanted not sincerity of heart, which is better than the reverence of sanctuaries. Amidst the lonely mountains we remembered the words of our Lord, that true worship was not peculiar to Jerusalem or Samaria,—that the beauty of holiness consisted not in consecrated buildings or material temples. The tables were served by some gentlemen and persons of the gravest deportment. None were admitted without tokens, as usual, which were distributed on the Saturday, but only to such as were known to some of the ministers or persons of trust, to be free from public scandals. All the regular forms were gone through. The communicants entered at one end, and retired at the other—a way being kept clear to take their seats again on the hill-side. Mr Welsh preached the action sermon, and served the first two tables, as he was ordinarily put to do on such occasions. The other four ministers—Mr Blackadder, Mr Dickson, Mr Riddel, and Mr Rae—exhorted the rest in their turn. The table service was closed by Mr Welsh with solemn thanksgiving. And solemn it was, and sweet, and edifying, to see the gravity and composure of all present, as well as all parts of the service. The communion was peaceably concluded —all the people heartily offering up their gratitude, and singing with a joyful noise to the Rock of their salvation. It was pleasant, as the night fell, to hear the melody swelling in full unison along the hill, the whole congregation joining with one accord,

and praising God with the voice of psalms. There were two long tables, and one short across the head, with seats on each side. About a hundred sat at every table; there were sixteen tables in all, so that about 3200 communicated that day."

Great, indeed, were the multitudes which assembled on these occasions, for the fervour of men's spirits was very strong, and this banished the fear of man. In Fife, where three field meetings were held in one day, it was computed that no less than 16,000 were in attendance at the different places taken together. Such meetings were alarming to the prelates, and chafed them into ungovernable rage, for the work of the Lord went on in spite of them, and in their very face; and it is not to be wondered at that they should have opposed them with all their might, and sent forth their "booted apostles" to disperse them at the point of the sword. We may here give an instance of the attack of the military on a conventicle. It was on the occasion of a great meeting held by the saintly Wellwood on the Lomond hills. "A party of life guards, commanded by Adam Masterton, younger of Grange, came to the foot of the hill. They essayed to ride up to them between sermons, but the people drew up on the face of the brae. The soldiers shot bullets among them from pistols or carabines, a volley five or six times; but though the balls lighted among men, women, and children, and went through some of their hair, yet hurt none, which was wonderful. The soldiers, seeing the people stand their ground and not stir, were forced to retire. Some of their horses being hurt with the stones that were cast down the hill, they made signal to the people

to capitulate or dismiss,—and had a conference to that effect. They replied, they intended to stay no longer than worship was ended, but that they would not leave the hill till they had security to get no harm, which they did promise. Yet when the bulk of the people were gone, the soldiers fell upon the hindermost, plundering and stripping them, and apprehended about eighteen prisoners."

Such were the conventicles observed by our covenanting forefathers, and such were the circumstances in which they were maintained. It now remains that we notice, in the following chapter, the religious effect that followed these field preachings.

CHAPTER X.

The Success of the Gospel.

The era of conventicles was the era of the success of the gospel in the fields and deserts, to which the Church resorted to hide herself from the face of the dragon. The spirit of God seems to have been poured out in a remarkable degree on the assemblies that convened in the solitudes, and hosts of converts were gathered into the Church, while the great body of the faithful in the Lord were much countenanced of God, and uncommonly edified by the ministrations of his servants,—when men banished them, and cast out their name as evil, the Saviour took them in, and retired to the desert with them.

> "In cities the wells of salvation were sealed,
> More brightly to burst on the moor and the fields;
> And the spirit that fled from the dwellings of men,
> Like a manna cloud rained round the camp in the glen."

Patrick Walker remarks of this time, the period of conventicles, that "it was a day of the power of the gospel to the conviction and the conversion of many souls, which made some to call in question if there had been a greater since the apostles' days, in so short a time and in so small a bounds as the south and west of Scotland, for some years after the stand

ard of the gospel was publicly set up in the fields —a day of great confirmation, and support, and comfort to the souls of God's people, and of very remarkable steps of his providence toward their bodies, until they were in some way fitted and spirited for trials, and their hour came wherein the Lord answered them in their distress." The excellent Blackadder used to term some of these years *the blink*, on account of the bright and warm sunshine from the spiritual firmament, when the Lord lifted up on his people the light of his countenance and made them glad.

The men by whose instrumentality this distinguished revival took place in Scotland in what has been fitly termed "the good-ill time of persecution," were eminent for their personal worth and their entire devotedness to the cause of Christ. Their character stood high in public estimation, and even in the opinion of those who differed from them. Bishop Burnet speaks of them in the following manner, and he is not to be suspected of partiality toward them:—"The former incumbents (those who were ejected by the Act of Glasgow), who were for the most part protestors, were a grave solemn sort of people. Their spirits were eager and their tempers sour, but they had an appearance that created respect. They used to visit their parishes much, were full of the scripture, were ready at extempore prayer, and had brought the people to such a degree of knowledge, that cottagers and servants would have prayed extempore. Their ministers brought their people about them on the Sunday nights, where the sermons were talked over, and every one, women as well as men, were desired to speak their sense and

their experience, and by these means they had a comprehension of matters of religion greater than I have seen among people of that sort any where. The preachers went all in one tract of raising observations on points of doctrine out of their text, and proving these by reasons, and then of applying those, and showing the use that was to be made of such a point of doctrine both for instruction and terror, for exhortation and comfort, for trial of themselves upon it, and for furnishing them with proper directions and helps; and this was so methodical, that the people grew to follow a sermon quite through every branch of it. As they lived in great familiarity with their people, and used to pray and to talk often with them in private, so it can hardly be imagined to what a degree they were loved and reverenced by them. They kept scandalous persons under a severe discipline; for breach of Sabbath, for an oath, or the least disorder in drunkenness, persons were cited before the Church session, that consisted of ten or twelve of the chief of the parish, who, with the minister, had this care upon them, and were solemnly reproved for it."

The outed ministers, then, who supported the conventicles, were distinguished for their worth. They were men remarkable for the holiness of their lives; and if "eminent piety is essential to eminent usefulness," they truly possessed it. They were, perhaps, as blameless a race of men as the world ever saw, and the godly simplicity of their lives made a happy impression on the people of their charge, who never lost sight of the purity of their example. Their grave, sober, and heavenly deportment, imparted an immense weight to the doctrines

which they preached. Their lives were a living sermon, a practical commentary on all they said. They were indeed the light of the land in which they lived,—a city set on a hill that could not be hid. Their behaviour, as Christian men, presented a striking contrast to that of the curates who succeeded them in the parishes, and who were for the most part worthless men, conforming themselves to the frivolities and sinful customs of the world. It was not because they were in heart men devoted to God that they entered into the ministry, but simply for a livelihood. It was otherwise, however, with those on whom the heavy hand of persecution fell. They were men of rare piety, whose character was moulded by the gospel into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ, their great Master, whom they loved, and whom they served. Nothing but the worth of principle could have sustained them in the day of their trial, when they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, that they might preserve a good conscience.

But they were learned men as well as pious, well educated, and trained in schools and universities. The literary qualifications of not a few of them, excelled those of the majority of ministers even in our times, when literature is more extensively diffused, and can be acquired at a much easier rate. All this may be safely affirmed, without disparagement to the erudition of modern times, seeing that scientific investigations were less followed in their days than in ours. The learning of the schools was with them the chief thing, and in it they were admirable proficients. The assertion that they were illiterate men is a gratuitous calumny. Their

history plainly shows that they were able to cope with the men of their standing in all that deserves the name of learning, and were their peers and something more. Their main writings that have been transmitted to our times are fraught with erudition, and indeed we may say their pages are burdened with it. They are not, therefore, to be stigmatised as an ignorant horde, whose silliness and vulgarity deserve to be held up to ridicule. Gustavus Adolphus gave the following character to one of them, namely, Mr Robert Douglas, when leaving the service of that illustrious prince:—"There goes a man who, for wisdom and prudence, might be a counsellor to any king in Europe; who, for gravity, might be a moderator to any assembly in the world; and, for his skill in military affairs, might be the general of any army."

But these men were skilled in something more than merely human learning; they were soundly instructed in the great doctrines of the gospel. Their secular learning might polish their taste and strengthen their intellect, but this divine learning fitted them for their high office as ministers of Christ, and without which every other acquirement, however estimable, would have been of little avail. While the prelatic incumbents knew scarcely the merest elements of Christian doctrine, the ejected ministers were nurtured on the holy Scriptures, and were well informed on all the great and leading tenets of the gospel, and in all the diversities and extent of their ramifications. The great revivals which took place in the age of conventicles were doubtless owing to the preaching of sound doctrine, which alone is the doctrine countenanced by the

Holy Spirit as an instrument for the conversion of sinners. It was the doctrine of Christ crucified that made the "desert rejoice and blossom as the rose," and which fell like a dew from the Lord on many hearts, and entered as a balm into many a wounded spirit. In the true knowledge of the gospel they were eminently skilled, and in the preaching of it they were eminently successful.

Another element in the success of these men, was their unwearied official diligence. They considered the ministry of the gospel as their *work*, to which they devoted themselves with heart and good will. They were not satisfied merely with preaching, in collecting congregations in houses and in desert places, but they went from house to house in the way of more private and intimate intercourse, and they trained the people, by oral instruction, in the great lessons of Christianity, and were constantly communicating to them more and more of the knowledge of sacred truth. They seated themselves in the midst of the family circle, and there exhorted or catechised as the occasion required, and by this means they filled their minds with substantial information and clear conceptions of Divine truth. By this means they found their way to the hearts of their people, not as Popish confessors expiscating the secrets of families and individuals for purposes of their own, but as Christian pastors who watched for their souls as they that must give an account. Their diligence in this way soon became apparent, for their people grew up in knowledge, in faith, and in godliness.

It is scarcely necessary to add, that with all this many of them were eloquent men, deep thinkers,

and well versed in the controversial topics of the day; and not a few of them were connected with the best families in the land.

There appeared at that time a constellation of illustrious names, enough to grace the annals of any Church on earth, and that reflected a light over the breadth and length of the country. It would be endless to attempt a full enumeration of these names, while those of Blair, and Rutherford, and Dickson, —of Welsh, and Blackadder, and Semple,—of Douglas, and Gillespie, and Cargill,—of Cameron, and Renwick, and Shiels, may be given as a mere specimen. Such men as these maintained Christ's gospel and the Church's independence in a dark and troubled time. The great Head of the Church fitted his ministers in that period with every gift and grace for the work assigned them, and truly they were workmen that needed not to be ashamed, for they commended themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Few could "resist the wisdom and the spirit by which they spoke," and the most indifferent and hardened were brought to the feet of the Saviour. M'Crie, in his 'Sketches,' gives the following anecdote :—"An English merchant, who had occasion to visit Scotland, in the way of his business, about the year 1650, happened to hear three of the most eminent of the Scottish ministers of that age, Robert Blair, Samuel Rutherford, and David Dickson. Being asked on his return, what news he had brought from Scotland; the gentleman, who had never shown any sense of religion before, replied, Great and good news! I went to St Andrews, where I heard a sweet majestic looking man (Mr Blair), and he showed me *the*

majesty of God. After him, I heard a little fair man (Mr Rutherford), and he showed me *the loveliness of Christ.* I then went to Irvine, where I heard a well-favoured proper old man, with a long beard (Mr Dickson), and that man showed me *all my heart.* The whole General Assembly, says Wodrow, could not have given a better character of the three men."

Such, then, were the men whom the great Head of the Church raised up and qualified for the important work which he had to perform. They were polished shafts in his quiver, by whose means he subdued the hearts of multitudes to himself. The Spirit of God descended in his copious influences over all the spacious field that was so thickly studded with conventicles, like the showers that are frequently poured out on the lofty hills and sterile tracks of the wilderness, while scarcely a drop falls on the cultivated valleys. As the altitude of the mountains attracts the clouds, and fetches down on their heads the rich distillations of the firmament, so was it with the assemblies of God's people in the solitudes; they drew down influences from on high, and the cloud of the Divine presence hovered over them, and from the bosom of that cloud there came blessings manifold, which made the hearts of thousands glad. The Lord seems to have brought his Church into the deserts of Scotland for the very purpose of speaking words of comfort to her heart. "Behold I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the

day when she came up out of the land of Egypt." Verily this promise had an accomplishment in her case, for many a glad and profitable day did she spend on the solitary mountain's side, encompassed with the Divine favour as with a shield. The Church was there gladdened in herself by means of the communication of larger measures of grace, and more sensible manifestations of God's love, so that the Christian experience of great multitudes was vastly heightened, and the faith of not a few rose to the full assurance of salvation. So precious were those days of the gospel, and so acceptable was the fellowship in the institutions of grace, that it was with much reluctance that they departed at the close of their religious meetings; there was a something that charmed them to the spot, and they knew not how to part.

But besides this, the Church in the wilderness was made glad by her great accession of converts. Hundreds on hundreds who ventured to the interdicted conventicle, without any former saving knowledge of the truth, were powerfully arrested by the gospel, and gathered in companies to the Shiloh, for it was not merely one here and another there that was convinced of sin and converted, but many, many, even at a time, in those great "spring-tides of the gospel," were brought to the Saviour, as well as many collectively, taking all the different times of special conversions. O, then, "the wilderness and the solitary place was glad," for the God who was with his people in the wilderness of old was obviously with our fathers in the wilds of Scotland, and the report that God was with them drew multitudes to their side; and they did not come in vain,

for the Saviour drew them to himself, and made them his. The conversions that took place were so palpable, that men were struck with wonder; for these conversions were astonishing, not only as it respected the numbers, but also as it regarded the previous character of some of the converts. Persons of every description, and from every part of the country, were brought under the power of heavenly grace, and exhibited to all that knew them the reality of the change that had taken place. If the south and the west of Scotland was the scene of the greatest sufferings, it was also the scene of the largest displays of Divine graciousness; for there was not a quarter of the country that did not experience a visitation of the Spirit's influences in a greater or less degree. Whole households were savingly impressed, and even little children and old men were alike solicitous about salvation. The spiritual concern that was induced by the preachers at the conventicles was carried to the hearths of the peasantry, where it spread from heart to heart, till it issued in a cordial acceptance of the Saviour. The rude, the ignorant, the profligate, and the scorner, were equally subdued by the truth; and even some of those who had stolen to the meetings as spies and informers, were brought to repentance on the spot, and confessed their sin, and were joined to the assembly of the faithful, to which they afterwards adhered, through all perils, till the day of their death. This great success of the gospel was necessary to encourage the Church in her sufferings, and to recruit her ranks, that were daily thinned by the sword of persecution. Christ never fails to raise up a seed to serve him in the room of those that are

taken away, else the Church would soon die out, and the witnesses for the truth would cease. During the period of conventicles, the persecution had by no means reached its hottest; more terrible days were yet to come, and days when the blood of the saints was made to run like water on the ground, and, therefore, He who knows the end from the beginning, was preparing a host of martyrs and confessors for the day of trial. These were spiritually born and reared in desert places, and hence the great work of conversions, and of the upbuilding of believers in the faith, was concealed from the observation of the enemy, who knew not the mystery of the Saviour's working in the public meetings of his people, but accused the conventicles as rendezvouses of rebellion and seditious convocations, where inflammatory speeches were uttered, with a view to throw the nation into anarchy. Little knew they that these were Christ's nurseries, in which his children were fostered and reared up to manhood, and qualified for bearing testimony to his cause, and to seal that testimony with their blood. It is not possible, at this distance of time, to ascertain any thing like the exact amount of spiritual good that was done by means of the gospel in the fields, only we know it was very great; and who can tell how much of the piety and scriptural information that still linger in the moorlands is owing to the grace bestowed in those times? The inhabitants are, for the most part, the descendants of those holy men who prayed and suffered in the wild retreats, in the heart of which they dwell. They still retain much of the simplicity of those times, and much of the worth of their pious ancestry. By means

of the outpouring of his Spirit, and the numerous conversions which, at that time, took place, the Saviour bore testimony to the word of his own grace, and also set to his seal to the righteousness of that cause, in favour of which these holy men contended, and to which they clung even to the death. Though men disapproved of the honest stand which our forefathers made, God did not, for he smiled on their cause, and made it prosperous. It was greatly encouraging to his persecuted servants to witness the presence of Christ in their assemblies, by means of the powerful effect of his word on the souls of thousands,—an effect which was not transitory, but abiding even in the greatest trials, and trials which tested every man's sincerity to the uttermost.

The historians of the period bear testimony to the amazing success of the preaching of the gospel in the fields. "Then," says Alexander Shiels, "we had such humiliation days for personal and public defections, such communion days, even in the open fields, and such Sabbath solemnities, that the places where they were kept might have been called Bethel, or Jehovah Shammah, wherein many were truly converted, more convinced, and generally all reformed from their former immoralities, that even robbers, thieves, and profane men, were some of them brought to a saving subjection to Christ, and generally under such restraint, that all the severities of heading, hanging, &c., in a great many years, could not make such a civil reformation, as in a few days of the gospel in these formerly the devil's territories, now Christ's quarters, where his kingly standard was displayed."

"It must be owned, even by adversaries," says Wodrow, "that such success, and many remarkable, yea, extraordinary conversions and changes, did accompany the labours of Presbyterian ministers of this time up and down the country. Many were pricked in their heart, and cried out, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?' And their after practice evidenced their repentance was not repented of, and the Lord gave testimony to the word of his grace. Now and then conforming ministers came, and, after the forenoon's sermon, offered themselves, and, as circumstances allowed, actually did profess their sorrow for joining in the present course of defection. In several places they forsook their churches, changed their way, and, upon their candid acknowledgments, were received by the ministers preaching in the fields, and were as welcome to the people as any."

In speaking of the wonderful success that attended the gospel in the persecuting times, it must be kept in mind that we are speaking only of what took place among the conventicles, and not of what was the state of religion in the country generally. The state of matters in the outfield exhibited a very different aspect. Great confusion and immorality, and general irreligiousness, prevailed among those who had abandoned their former principles, while the careless lives of the curates, and their great ignorance of the gospel, helped on the evil. The light that shone in the Goshen of the wilderness was no proof of the existence of a similar light throughout the nation generally. It was like the rays of the sun in a gloomy day, darting through the opening of a thick cloud, gilding the space on

which they fell, while all around, and far beyond, is enveloped in obscurity. But then this light had a reflective power, not indeed like the lurid flames of a furnace flaring in the dark night on the vault of lowering sky, which transmits the fitful glare afar over the summits of the hills, but like the flashing that is emitted from the polished bosom of the mirror; and this gleamed painfully in the face of their persecutors, who, being startled and madded by the circumstance, vowed its utter extinction.

But the presence of the Saviour in the midst of the intercommuned conventicles amply compensated his people for all the trials to which they were subjected. What was the want of men's countenance to them when they had the countenance of God? And truly they were to be envied, while their foes were to be pitied. Their persecutors were wretched, but they were happy; the bleak and lonely mountain's side was a paradise when their hearts were full of the consolations of the gospel. Nay, the delight which, on some occasions, they experienced was so great, their sense of the Divine favour so strong, and their hopes of heaven so clear and animating, that, at the close of services, they could willingly, as some of themselves affirmed, have died on the spot, enduring even the most painful death, that they might have an immediate entrance into the heavenly state. It was not to be expected that men who were thus divinely sustained would easily yield to the base policy of their rulers, for death was less terrible to them than sinful compliance.

It must have greatly chagrined the Prelatists to

hear of the success of the gospel among the Covenanters, and to perceive that the more they laboured to crush the cause the stronger it grew, and the more widely spread and efficacious did the gospel become. The days of the Kirk of Shotts seemed to be revived, and sinners, by hundreds and by thousands, were born in Zion, at a time when the persecutors thought they had triumphed in laying the Church prostrate under their feet.

CHAPTER XI.

The Indulged.

THE first indulgence was granted in the year 1669, and was famous for the divisions it caused among the outed ministers. Prior to this date they were of one mind, and acted in unison. This indulgence was granted to a "limited number of the ejected ministers, permitting them to resume their ministerial functions under certain conditions. If their former charges were supplied, they were to be appointed, after receiving the consent of the patron and collation from the bishop, to such parishes as the Privy Council should deem proper. But then they were strictly enjoined to keep presbyteries and synods, —that is, diocesan meetings of the prelates, for there were no Presbyterian assemblies. They were forbidden to allow any of the people in the other parishes to attend their churches, and they were prohibited from speaking or preaching against ecclesiastical supremacy. The indulgence, in conclusion, enacted still heavier penalties against conventicles, the suppression of which was the object of the government in the whole transaction."

This, then, was that "bone of contention," to use the language of Sharp—that wily and worthless

prelate—which produced so much distress, and caused so many heartburnings among the Covenanters, and which so greatly weakened their hands as brethren in maintaining an honest testimony for the truth.

In this indulgence, then, the first thing obvious is the assumption of supremacy on the part of the king in all ecclesiastical matters. He could remove or reinstate ministers as he pleased, and encumber their office with what conditions he thought fit. The next thing was collation from the bishop, which was just to convert Presbyterians into Prelatists. Another article, namely, the injunction to attend the diocesan meetings of the bishops, was an attempt to bring them to the very practice on account of their refusal to comply with which they had been ejected by the Act of Glasgow,—for this formed the ground of Fairfoul's complaint against them,—and to agree to this was to stultify themselves, and to fall back on the evil which they had formerly avoided. A fourth thing was, the express prohibition of people from other parishes who wished to attend on their ministrations, and this amounted to a circumscribing of their ministry, contrary to the injunction, "Preach the gospel to every creature." In this case, the king plainly arrogated to himself the power of declaring, not only who should preach and who not, but also of deciding who should hear the gospel and who should be prohibited. The last thing was a restriction on ministerial freedom.

This indulgence, then, could not be accepted by any consistent Presbyterian who duly weighed the matter in his own mind. The indulgence is to be

condemned, not only on account of the object it had in view,—the dividing and weakening of the covenanting brethren,—but also on account of its assumptions. It sprang from the haughty arrogance of the monarch, who deemed himself the sole arbiter in all matters civil and sacred. It ought to have been rejected, because it was the offspring of illegal power put forth on the part of the king, and because it was a display of the grossest Erastianism, an encroachment on the rights of Christ's independent kingdom. "What is Erastianism?" asks Dr M'Crie; and let him who puts the question give the answer,—"Is it not the principle which ascribes the whole power of modelling and regulating the government of the Church to civil rulers? Now, in Scotland, this was declared to belong, not to the whole legislature, but the crown, as one of its inherent and peculiar rights. The whole weight of this extensive branch of authority, and of the influence arising from it, was thus thrown into the regal scale. By Erastianism Prelacy was introduced, and by means of it the absolute subserviency of the hierarchy to the crown was infallibly secured. The indulgence was merely an excrescence of Erastianism, proceeding from the ecclesiastical supremacy, and exerted in suspending the existing laws. If it was in some instances employed in suspending the execution of laws which were bad and oppressive, it was capable of being employed for setting aside all those which were good. And in the succeeding reign it *was* employed, in conjunction with the civil supremacy, as an engine for overthrowing the constitution in Church and State, and for introducing Popery and despotism."

The liberty which, springing from an Erastian source, was granted by the indulgence to the Presbyterian ministers to preach the gospel, was nothing more, indeed, than they were entitled to; but then it was a liberty which the king had no right either to bestow or to withhold. Their authority to preach was derived from the great Head of the Church himself, and no earthly power could denude them of it; and, therefore, many worthy ministers were determined to outbrave the fiercest persecution, rather than submit to exercise their office under the wing of an indulgence which recognised a usurped supremacy and an illicit exercise of royal prerogative. They were far-sighted men, as well as men of principle, and, therefore, they could easily penetrate the thin guise of liberality that was spread over the boon, and underneath which they could detect the insidiousness of the whole. For the truth is, that the indulgences that were issued at different times, were, one after another, stepping-stones to the introduction of Popery. This the tolerations granted by King James plainly manifested, and had that prince continued to reign, the result of his indulgent measures would have been the most disastrous. The great proportion of the ministers, then, continued to hold conventicles as usual, and as if no indulgence had been offered, exposing themselves to the fury of their persecutors in following out the plain line of their duty. In this they had the approbation of their own consciences, the good will of the people, and the countenance of their Master.

But many did accept the indulgence. This was expected. Those, however, who acted on the king's grant were still Presbyterians,—they did not adopt

Prelacy. They professed to consider the matter as a thing of expediency, and exactly what the necessities of the country required. The land was overspread with curates who knew not the gospel, and, consequently, could not preach it. The people, therefore, were in great destitution, and laid under strong prohibitions in reference to conventicles. The case in their estimation was urgent, and hence they deemed compliance a duty. They alleged that they had the consent of their people, who earnestly desired the stated services of their old ministers, being utterly disgusted with the Episcopal incumbents. It appears, then, that expediency swayed the accepters of the indulgence, many of whom, though excellent men, not having maturely considered the tendency of the step which they took.

"The whole number of ministers who were included in the first indulgence amounted to forty-two. All of them had made some form of protestation against the royal supremacy, or at least some declaration of the opposite principle, and very few accepted of either the direct presentation of a patron or collation from a bishop. Their wish appears to have been to obtain liberty to resume the discharge of their ministerial duties without molestation, though, at the same time, without receiving any stipend,—and so far their conduct was disinterested and unselfish, but it proved extremely detrimental to the cause of the Church of Scotland. It divided the ejected ministers into two parties, the indulged and the non-indulged, and thereby put an end to that unanimity which their common sufferings had reproduced, and which, since the Pentland insurrection, had been increasing so steadily as to pro-

mise, ere long, to be beyond the power of kings and councils to subdue."

But the indulged by no means felt themselves at ease. They were capriciously and even harshly used by the Prelatists, who had indulged them, not because they favoured them, but merely to promote their own designs. They knew that they were still Presbyterians, though, on the ground of expediency, they had accepted the government permission to preach under certain restrictions. The indulged, then, were nearly as much hated by them as were the more strict nonconformists, who rather chose to risk their lives in maintaining the standard of the gospel at the obnoxious conventicles, that they might exercise their ministry without the compromise of principle. The indulged could not expect to live without molestation, unless they complied in every point with the Episcopal party, and this as Presbyterians they could not do. They were, therefore, subjected to much harsh and ungenerous treatment; they were harassed by the curates, to whom they were an eye-sore, because, in every particular, they presented a striking contrast to them, both as men of character and as preachers. They were restricted in the exercise of their ministry, and forbidden to lecture on any portion of scripture, under the penalty of being ejected from their churches. The council ruled them with a rod of iron, threatening, fining, and persecuting them, as it suited their caprice, or the convenience of the prelates who lodged information against them. Those who refused to attend the diocesan meetings were confined to their respective parishes, and so rigorously was the act enforced, that Mr John Bell, minister

of Ardrossan, durst not visit his dying father, though within a mile of him, without an order from the council.

By the second indulgence, which was emitted in 1672, "about eighty ministers were appointed by pairs to parishes, with injunctions that they should neither marry nor baptize any except their own parishioners; that all of them should celebrate the communion on the same day; that they should remain within and not depart forth of the parish to which they were confined, without license from the bishop of the diocese." All this was obviously done with the design of preventing the influence of the Presbyterian ministers from spreading throughout the country, and done with a tyranny sufficiently indicative of the abject condition to which those who availed themselves of the indulgence were reduced. Owing to this state of things, not a few of the indulged ministers voluntarily relinquished their places and joined the brethren of the conventicles, and chose rather to expose their lives in the plain line of their duty, than remain with burdened minds under that galling yoke that was imposed upon them. They tried the expediency of the thing, and finding it would not do, they returned to the ground of principle, and there they had peace. When any of the ministers withdrew from the parishes, the people, for the most part, withdrew with them, and associated with their brethren who were worshipping in the solitudes. "Multitudes who had hitherto joined in the defection, disgusted at the tyranny of the persecutors, abandoned their churches, and repaired to the mountains to listen to the glad tidings of salvation. The indulged mi-

nisters who had yielded too much to the bishops were also greatly deserted, the people, as well as the ministers who had rejected the badge of supremacy, considering it unlawful to hold communion with those whom they reckoned unfaithful to their principles."

But though the indulgence is to be condemned on the part both of those who granted it and of those who received it, yet we cannot fail to remark how He who subordinates all things to his own wise purposes brought good out of it. It was not, indeed, with the indulged ministers as with those of the conventicles who were so much countenanced and honoured by the great Master of assemblies. Their influence as ministers was greatly lessened, and the success of the gospel among them was not what it once was. There was the want of that life and freedom which characterised them in their better days, and their spirits were depressed, as if a conscious weight of something wrong lay upon them. They were too closely associated with the adversaries of the cause which they wished to promote, and their foul contact with that Prelacy, of which, in heart and by word, they disapproved, had a benumbing effect on their energies, and greatly paralyzed their arm in the good work of the Lord. They were bondmen, tied down by their masters by certain restrictions which they durst not violate, and were confined within a certain boundary, beyond which they durst not step, and there were certain grievances against which they durst not testify; so that altogether they were much hampered in their ministry, and greatly annoyed and hindered by the officiousness of those who exercised a super-

vision over them. All this had a chilling effect on their ministrations, while there appeared a restraining of the Spirit's influences comparatively with what had been formerly experienced. If those who sat down under the shade of the indulgence, found it a temporary screen to shelter them from the rough blasts of persecution, they also found it a covert which prevented the bright and warm beams of the sun from shining on them.

At the same time we are not to suppose that *all* who accepted the king's permission to preach were inefficient in their ministry, for we never can forget that such a man as John Semple of Carsphairn accepted the indulgence, and, under its wing, preached the gospel with acceptance and great success till the day of his death. Few field preachers were more eminently countenanced of God than this worthy man was in his lonely parish, situated in the very heart of the wilderness. Even some of the ministers who maintained conventicles in opposition to the indulgence, declared, that no spot which they knew in all the country was so favoured as Carsphairn, and so richly watered and refreshed with influences from on high. Mr Semple was an eminently holy man, a man of prayer, a man of great primitive simplicity, and a minister devoted to his Master's work; and though in a suspicious connection, he became greatly instrumental in winning souls to Christ, and in rearing a numerous host of witnesses who bore an honoured testimony to the Redeemer's cause, some of whom sealed it with their blood. It would be a mistake, therefore, to suppose that all the indulged ministers were inefficient labourers. They were not, indeed, what they

might have been, nor what their brethren in the deserts were, nor what they even became when any of their number renounced the indulgence, and betook themselves to the more hazardous work in the fields, where, being as free as the partridge on the mountains, they could, without restraint, open all their heart, and declare the whole counsel of God; still their ministry, even in their hampered condition, was not without its fruits, for the pure gospel never can be preached, in whatever connection, without some good and appropriate results. At the same time, it is easy to see that the good done under the indulgence was not owing to the system, but in spite of it,—the Lord bringing good out of the evil.

The Divine Providence, then, overruled the acceptance of the indulgence, so that it was at least productive of two benefits. The one was the preservation of the gospel in many parishes that would otherwise have been in a great measure destitute. There were some parishes where it was next to impossible to keep conventicles, at least in the fields, except on very rare occasions. These were the parishes more immediately under the eye of the persecutors, and where the outed ministers could find no harbour. The indulged, then, who were located in situations of this description, were greatly beneficial to the parishioners, for they preached to them the gospel, though in much bondage, and were the means of much good, where the curates would have been entirely inefficient. It was not possible for infirm people and children to travel into the deserts, or even to any considerable distance, to wait on the conventicles, and, therefore,

it was of great consequence to them to enjoy the services of a Presbyterian minister, without molestation, at their own doors. There is no doubt that the life of religion was preserved in many places by means of the ministrations of these men, when, under the withering influences of the Prelatic incumbents, it would have died away. Had all these parishes been filled with curates, the evil, great as it was, would have vastly increased; for, bad as matters were, they would have been much worse without the counteraction of the compliant brethren, whose doctrines operated as a check on the abounding iniquity of the times, and the lustre of whose saintly conduct illuminated the darkness that had set in so thickly all around. Thus the indulged were like a salt which prevented the great mass over which they were sprinkled from further corruption, the Lord making use of them in this way contrary to the design of the rulers, who, by confining them as prisoners within the parishes, sought to annihilate their influence. This confinement, however, gave both their teaching and their example a greater degree of concentration than was anticipated, and those who indulged them became offended at this, and withdrew the permission from one here and another there, with a view to weed away the worth by degrees, or to extinguish the light under a bushel.

But besides the preservation of the gospel for a season, in a goodly number of the parishes, the indulgence operated beneficially in another way,—it mitigated the fury of the persecutors in sundry localities. This is plain, when we consider that the curates were an active class in oppressing the Co-

venanters, always searching them out, lodging information against them as nonconformists, and stimulating the military in their aggression on the helpless people. But in the parishes where the incumbents were Presbyterians, the state of matters was different. The people were not annoyed like those under the immediate inspection of the curates, who, refusing to attend their churches, were instantly denounced and put to trouble. The parishes of the indulged were comparatively tranquil, though never secure. The people who approved of the indulgence, and frequented the places of worship, were not harassed like their brethren in the entirely Prelatic districts, who could, on no account, comply with the Episcopacy. The military found no employment where no complaints were lodged, and unless they found the people guilty of resorting to conventicles, or of harbouring the intercommuned, they could not distress them, seeing they waited on the ministrations of the men whom the government appointed to be their pastors. This accounts for the quietude in which many worthy men were permitted to live, even though they were known to be of covenanting principles,—they were indulged along with their ministers, because a like toleration was extended to both. Neither is it likely that the indulged ministers would inform against those of their parishioners who they knew resorted to conventicles, though, in some cases, no very good feeling subsisted between them and the outed preachers.

In these respects, then, good was brought out of the evil of the compliance of not a few of the worthy men of that distracted period with the king's per-

mission. This, however, does not justify the men where their conduct was wrong. The good that followed could by no means acquit them of the sin of the unjustifiable step which they had taken. No doubt different minds take different views of the same subject, and what one thinks right another may think wrong; but it is clear to us, that these worthy but mistaken men should have clung to their brethren who were honestly bearing their testimony on the moors and mountains of their native land, and who disdained to accept, as a boon from the arrogant supremacy of a mortal, that permission to preach the gospel which they had already received from their Divine Master.

CHAPTER XII.

The Society People.

After the battle of Bothwell Bridge, the followers of Cameron and Cargill separated themselves from the rest of their brethren, indulged and non-indulged, and formed themselves into a distinct community. In the Presbyterian army assembled on the occasion alluded to, there were eighteen ministers, none of whom had taken the indulgence. Of this number, two, Donald Cargill and Thomas Douglas, espoused what were deemed the extreme opinions of Hamilton, the conqueror at Drumclog. This leader refused to acknowledge the king's authority, and regarded his right to the throne as forfeited by his violation of the covenant which he had sworn, his long-continued persecution, and his intolerant despotism. While Hamilton and his followers did this, they, at the same time, wished to embody in their manifesto an explicit condemnation of the indulgence, as partaking of the grossest Erastianism. This, with the rejection of the king's authority, was objected to by the other sixteen ministers, as tending to divide their ranks and to weaken the entire party at a moment when unanimity was of so much consequence. This alter-

cation was the commencement of that disruption which afterwards assumed a more decided shape, and carried off from the main body of the Presbyterians a goodly number of the more staunch Covenanters.

After the death of Cameron and Cargill, their followers, who were previously formed into a body, kept by themselves and refused to amalgamate with the rest of their brethren, who, they considered, had resiled in some degree from their original principles, or who were not sufficiently conscientious in bearing testimony against the prevailing defections of the times. After the decease of these two honoured witnesses, who had lost their lives, the one on the field, and the other on the scaffold, their followers formed themselves into various associations in all parts of the country, and on this account they received the denomination of "Society People." These associations were instituted for the purpose of keeping the party together, and for mutual intercourse and social prayer. They had no minister at first, and they endeavoured to supply the lack of public ordinances by meeting together in Christian fellowship, and engaging in devotional exercises. And in this they were not deserted; for He who said, "where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," came unto them and blessed them. These prayer meetings were like wells in the weary desert, at which many drank and were refreshed. They were green spots in the wilderness, on which the flocks of Christ's fold congregated as on rich pastures, and were fed and strengthened in their pilgrimage. By this means they became a blessing to many, and

not a few were gathered into Christ's fold by their instrumentality in the day when there was a scattering of the sheep, and many wandering away from the true centre of their rest. It was in this way that the wasted remnant exercised themselves, and maintained their testimony, waiting till He, in whose cause they were suffering privation, should send them pastors according to his own heart; nor did they wait in vain, for in due time the Lord, who is the stay of his people, appeared for their help, and sent them a youthful messenger—youthful as to years, but matured in grace and in the knowledge of the truth, and in the richest Christian experience; and he guided the flocks in the wilds, and fed the hungry sheep with words of grace,—and they grew and became a multitude, and were among the population of the upland districts as a dew from the Lord.

These societies had what was termed general meetings, or correspondences, formed of delegates from the various associations throughout the country. These delegates transacted the general business of the united body, and all difficult matters were referred to them for discussion and settlement. They generally met quarterly, and sometimes oftener; and for the most part in the remotest corners and lonely moors, where they were likely to meet with the least interruption. To those who know the localities, it may be interesting to mention the names of some of their meeting places. These, for the most part, were Sanquhar, Wanlockhead, Lowthers, Crawfordjohn, Blagannach, Cogshead, Douglas, Lesmahagow, Priesthill, Knypes, and Auchengillach,—almost all in retired places, and as distant

as possible from the intrusion of enemies. By means of these general meetings, the various associations belonging to the party acquired a kind of concentration and a compactness, which greatly strengthened the body and rendered their measures much more efficient. By means of the delegates, any important information was communicated with amazing celerity to every part of the country, and with the greatest secrecy. What concerned one concerned the whole, and what befell in any part was speedily made known in another. The plan, then, of general meetings operated most beneficially, and bound the great fraternity as one man. These meetings were of a strictly religious nature, and partook not of that secular cast for which meetings convened for general business are usually distinguished. Prayer, the reading of the Scriptures, and religious conference, occupied the greater part of their time; they met as brethren in the Lord, to consult about the affairs of his house, and they were blessed in their deed; and they separated with their souls refreshed with heavenly grace, more of one mind, and more strengthened and prepared for the endurance of the worst that might befall; and they carried back the sweet savour of a hallowed and brotherly fellowship to their constituents, who, in their turn, were refreshed by their consolations, and who submitted readily to the guidance of their deliberations. When they parted, they knew not if they would meet again, and hence their farewell was of the most affecting description, nay, they knew not but ere they reached their homes their blood might stain the heath, and their bodies hidden in a mossy grave on the waste.

The "society people" published various declarations, in which they vindicated the views they had adopted in their state of separation from the rest of the suffering Presbyterians in the country. The more famous of those declarations were the two published at Sanquhar, the one in 1680, and the other in 1685, in which they renounced their allegiance to the reigning sovereign, as having trenched on the great principles of the constitution, violated the social compact, and invaded the liberties, the property, and lives of the subjects, and bore their testimony against the misrule of the times both in Church and in State. Charles, when he was crowned at Scoon, on the 1st of January 1651, solemnly swore to maintain the Covenants, which were the great charter of the nation's privileges; and kneeling and holding up his right hand to heaven, he vowed to defend and support the Church of Scotland in the following awful words,—"By the eternal and Almighty God, who liveth and reigneth for ever, I shall observe and keep all that is contained in this oath." This oath, however, was flagrantly violated, and, for a long series of dismal and woeful years, this impious monarch trampled under his feet all constitutional law, and flung his oaths and engagements to the winds. On this account, this honest band of Covenanters denounced him as a perjured tyrant and a bloody persecutor. Whatever may be said about the premature declarations of these sentiments by so small and helpless a handful, yet it is obvious to all, that these were the principles that brought about the great national Revolution in 1688. This poor and wasted remnant were obliged to publish, in self-defence, and as a warning to

their persecutors, what is called the "Apologetic Declaration," which made so much noise at the time, and which, like the startling report of a musket fired unexpectedly at a man's ear, alarmed the curates, who, almost to a man, left their charges in Nithsdale and Galloway, and fled to Edinburgh. It had the good effect of restraining the spies and informers, who had been so busy in searching out the poor wanderers, and in delivering them up to their enemies. In this declaration, they warn their foes of the hazard they run in informing against them, and in putting forth their hands to the spilling of their blood,—stating, at the same time, that the sinless necessity of self-preservation, in connection with an honest zeal for Christ's supremacy, will not permit them to pass over their deeds with impunity. "Therefore," say they, "expect to be dealt with as ye deal with us, so far as our power can reach; not because we are actuated by a sinful spirit of revenge for private and personal injuries, but mainly because, by our fall, reformation suffers damage." It is impossible to read the "Apologetic Declaration" without strong emotions of a mingled kind. "The first feeling," says Dr M'Crie, "that must arise in every ingenuous breast, is indignation at the government, which, by its tyrannical and cruel conduct, had driven a sober and religious people to such extremities."

In these steps, however, they were not followed by the other Presbyterians, who still owned the king's authority, though they testified against the misrule and tyranny of the period. There was, doubtless, a danger in emitting such a declaration as the one now alluded to, because its object was

liable to misinterpretation, however guarded in its language, and some might be emboldened to act in a way directly contrary to what these honest men intended, regarding it as furnishing an apology for assassination. And though they declare that they utterly detest and abhor the hellish principle of killing all who differ from them in judgment, as having no foundation whatever, either in the Word of God or right reason, still there was a danger of an abuse being made of their sentiments, by persons who were not actuated by the same spirit as they were. "At the sametime," remarks Dr M'Crie, "it is impossible to condemn them with great severity, when we reflect that they were cast out of the protection of the law, driven out of the pale of society, and hunted like wild beasts in the woods and on the mountains, to which they had fled for shelter. It is impossible not to recognise the honesty of their intentions, to perceive the reluctance with which they took this delicate step, and to be convinced that they had no desire to defile their hands with the blood even of their persecutors, but aimed principally at impressing their minds with a wholesome terror. Their end was in some measure gained,—informers were terrified, and the persecution slackened for some time after the publication."

It is to be observed, that when they afterwards published their "Informatory Vindication," they softened some of the expressions which appeared to be too strong, and that might be ungenerously construed to their disadvantage.

The "society people," or, as they were also termed, "Cameronians,"—a designation of which they had no

reason to be ashamed,—formed but comparatively a small section of the Covenanters of Scotland. The great body of the Presbyterians lay without the pale of this little association, with whose opinions they did not coincide. The two parties into which the "persecuted sufferers were after Bothwell divided, were Presbyterians and Covenanters, and they equally deserved both appellations; but the minority, consisting chiefly of the followers of Hamilton, Cameron, and Cargill, may be termed the strict Covenanters, to distinguish them from the larger body, who continued to adhere to the Covenant, but not with such unbending firmness." The "society people," then, were by far the smaller party; but this circumstance did not detract from their worth. In the great outfield of Presbyterianism, the persecution raged, though not so fiercely as within the narrower circle of the more conscientious section. It was among the general Covenanters, from Bothwell till the time of Mr Renwick, that conventicles were maintained, and though little is said about the keeping of these conventicles during this interval, yet it is not to be imagined that they were then entirely discontinued. There were sixteen field preachers in the army of the Covenanters at Bothwell Bridge not belonging to Hamilton's party, and these must have prosecuted their labours, as opportunity offered, in the different parts of the country which they visited. The great conventicle held near Drumlanrig in Nithsdale in 1684, on the occasion of which the memorable rescue in Enterkin Pass took place, was not kept by Mr Renwick, but by another field preacher whose name is not given. And we apprehend, that not a few of the

conventicles mentioned by tradition were held at this time. It is true, that after the disaster at Bothwell, conventicles became much less frequent than during the ten preceding years; still there were preachers, and much good continued to be done by the non-indulged. There were thousands and thousands of Covenanters throughout the land who held no intercourse with the followers of Cargill, and who maintained the principles of the Reformation, though not with the same uniformity and strictness. It is a mistake, then, when speaking of our persecuted forefathers, to suppose that they must uniformly be considered as belonging to the "society people," and that there were no others; for the truth is, they were but a fraction compared with the whole. Nor are we to imagine, that all the worth of the period attached itself to these excellent people, who acted so noble and virtuous a part on Scotland's tragic theatre; for the Welshes and Jerviswoods, the Blackadders, and the Pedens, embodied a worth which rarely can be equalled, and maintained, though they owned the king's authority in civil matters,—a notable testimony, which has transmitted their names with honour to posterity.

It was by the "society people" that the great principles of civil and religious freedom were most uncompromisingly maintained, and small as their party was, their tenets exerted an influence throughout the land which ultimately issued in what is called the "glorious Revolution." They seemed to be the chief conservators of true liberty, and while other parties swerved in some degree from the integrity of their principles, they never yielded in a single point, but retained their position unflinch-

ingly to the end. That they were perfect it would be an absurdity to affirm, for what religious society is perfect? there were things, no doubt, both in their views and in their management, which we, now-a-days, can coolly criticise, and on which we can pass our verdict, sometimes with not overmuch feeling for men who were so severely tried as they were. And let us bring the case home to ourselves, and see if we would have acted a part more judicious, or think if we could now steer a course more evenly among the shoals, and quicksands, and sunken rocks, and whirlpools, among which they had to guide their little vessel, which was often seen riding on the crest of the foaming billows, tottering and precarious, and in danger of being engulfed in the devouring waters. No wonder if, in the raging of a tempest, the mariners are at their wits' end, when they feel themselves irresistibly impelled before the raving winds, when the ocean all around them, and far beyond, is one dreadful and incessant tumult.

The "society people" were, for a season, without ecclesiastical leaders, till the time of the celebrated James Renwick. This pious youth, from the time that he witnessed the martyrdom of the good Cargill, devoted himself to the cause for which the "society people" so zealously contended. He was a native of the parish of Glencairn in Nithsdale, and even in his infancy he gave indications of the working of divine grace in his heart. He received his education in the University of Edinburgh, where he made great proficiency in his learning; and having gone to Holland to perfect his studies in divinity, he was there ordained to the holy ministry;

and returning to Scotland near the end of the year 1683, he commenced his labours as minister of the United Societies. A man more holy and devoted, scarcely ever occupied the pastoral office in Scotland. The frequency of his preaching, in season and out of season, his night wanderings, his lodging in cold damp caves, his hungerings and watchings, his almost constant privations, his hairbreadth escapes, and his weary wanderings in the desert, are almost incredible. This zealous youth animated the desponding remnant, and his efforts encouraged, and stimulated, and bound them together as one man. His fame as a preacher spread abroad, and multitudes were added to the former numbers, and induced to maintain a stricter testimony; and what is more, many were savingly gathered to Christ, and the blessed days of the preceding conventicles seemed to return,—a light shone in the wilderness which guided the feet of many a wanderer to the place of rest. Mr Renwick continued for about four years and a half, in the midst of imminent perils, supporting the standard of the gospel on the wild mountains of Scotland, till he sealed his testimony with his blood, and obtained the martyr's crown.

More than two years after Mr Renwick began his ministry, Alexander Shiels joined the "societies." He was one of the finest spirits of his age. He possessed an accomplished mind, was a learned man, and well informed on all the agitated topics of the day. He did much with his pen, and threw a flood of light on many an interesting and difficult point. When Mr Renwick fell, he continued the testimony till the Revolution.

Mr Houston was a third preacher who attached

himself to this remnant, and lent his aid in maintaining their cause. He was a person highly esteemed by Mr Renwick, and was employed sometimes in Ireland as well as in Scotland. He was by no means equal to Mr Shiels, either as a preacher or as a person of influence among the "societies," but he was nevertheless useful in his vocation. After Mr Renwick's martyrdom he continued to preach the gospel, and endured no small hardships. Notwithstanding all that has been said about him, for evil tongues laboured to discredit him, he seems to have been an honest and worthy man. His name is connected with the famous skirmish at Bellopath near Cumnock, for he was the person principally concerned. He was brought from Ireland as a prisoner on his way to Edinburgh, under the conduct of the troopers. The report of his capture soon reached the ears of the "society people," whose general meeting happened at the time to be convened at the Lowther Hills. A detachment of delegates from the meeting assembled in the secluded glen of Cogshead, in the parish of Sanquhar, from which place they proceeded with all celerity to the rescue of their minister, who, they feared, would share the same fate as Mr Renwick. Having reached Cumnock, a number of the friends in that place joined them, and proceeding to the narrow pass of Bellopath, waylaid the party of dragoons and rescued Mr Houston. Some time after this, he fell into disrepute, without, it would appear, any proper ground. He never was himself after the rescue, indicating a certain weakness of mind which formerly was not apparent,—caused, no doubt, by the severe fall from his horse on that occasion, and

the harsh usage he otherwise experienced. "Some old accounts," says the author of the 'Faithful Contendings,' "some old accounts show, that bad usage in prison, and the hurt he received (at the pass), his feet being bound under the horse's belly, in the scuffle he fell, and his head trailed some time on the ground before he could be relieved, by reason of which he lost his teeth, and, consequently, distinctness of speech; but chiefly, as he showed publicly his dissatisfaction with the measures that shortly after were fallen upon, viz., supplicating the convention of estates, raising of Angus's regiment, conjunction with the ministers, &c.,—these caused his brethren to slight him, and many of the people followed their example, which much discouraged the good old man, and he went to Ireland and lived a few years and died there."

These were the men who supported the cause among the "society people," and who exposed themselves to more than ordinary hardships in their arduous vocation.

This section of the Covenanting Church in Scotland was reduced to very great straits. They were evil spoken of by many of their Presbyterian brethren, who did not approve of the lengths to which they proceeded, and the fury of the persecutors fell upon them with a peculiar severity. The troopers were let loose over the moorlands, with the power of a military execution to kill, maim, or capture those who were convicted, or even suspected of covenanting principles. Hence the vast numbers that were shot in the moors, especially in the years *eighty-four* and *eighty-five*, which were denominated the "slaughter years" or the "killing time." The

council issued severe and furious proclamations against Mr Renwick and his friends, denouncing them as flagitious and scandalous persons, forbidding the subjects to harbour, reset, or supply them with food or any of the necessaries of life, offering a reward of £100 sterling to any who should bring him in *dead or alive;* thus giving license, accompanied with a weighty bribe, to commit murder on the persons of the subjects,—the subjects to constitutional law, and not to the caprice of a profligate tyrant. This poor handful, then, were harassed incessantly, night and day, in all parts of the country, for however the persecution might slacken as to the others, it never relaxed as to them. They were to be hunted like the timid hare on the bent, and shot like the wild fowls on the mountains, and no mercy was to be shown them. No tongue can express the distress that was caused among the peasantry, through means of this infamous and cold-blooded persecution, that raged like devouring fire, scathing and conflagrating far and wide, and without discrimination, whatever combustible materials it seized upon. The military were put in possession of a few questions in order to test the Presbyterians, with a view to discover the more obnoxious party, to destroy whom they were especially commissioned; such as, Do you own the king's authority? Was Bothwell Bridge rebellion? Do you own the Sanquhar Declaration? The fate of the person accosted depended on the answers given to these queries. If the replies were unsatisfactory, the persons were either killed on the spot, or taken prisoners, to suffer a still more cruel death in another place. The insolence and cruelty of the soldiers against this poor

people were unbounded, and the cry of oppression rose shrill and piercing throughout the land. Volumes might be filled with statements the most painful and affecting that ever thrilled the bosom of humanity. But the little company still existed in the furnace, the glow of which was so terribly scorching,—they existed in it, and they came out as they went in. Their principles were not consumed by the fire ; *that* indeed might consume their bodies, but it could not annihilate the truths for which they contended. The justness of their sentiments, for the maintenance of which they suffered so severely, was appreciated at the Revolution, when the nation, as one man, assumed the tenets which the persecutors laboured so strenuously to crush and utterly to subvert.

CHAPTER XIII.

Providential Deliverances.

By providential deliverances, is not meant miraculous interpositions. The age of miracles has long since gone by, but the time of providential superintendence is always. The belief of an all-wise and controlling Providence holds a prominent place in the creed of the Christian, and he can no more forego this conviction, than he can forego his conviction of the existence of a great First Cause. For if the First Cause is necessary to the existence of the things that are, that same Cause is equally necessary to the actual sustentation of all these things in continued being. This latter idea involves the recognition of a providence in the common acceptation of the term, or that supervision which the great God exercises over all his creatures, guiding, and controlling, and moving all things according to the good pleasure of his will. No idea is more pleasing to a rightly constituted mind than that of the God who made him watching over his interests, and ordering and appointing every incident that befals him in infinite wisdom and goodness. The Christian believes, that nothing happens by chance

or unforeseen accident; for "known unto God are all his works from the beginning." It is from this conviction that a believer commits himself and all his concerns so implicitly to Him who presides over all, and whose prescience and ordination extends to every thing that has happened, or that shall happen. We do not for a moment entertain the notion of those unphilosophical and impious minds who imagine that the great Supreme merely called the universe into existence, and having imposed on it certain laws, left it forthwith to work its own way, for ever withdrawing from it his superintending care. We believe that God is everywhere in his creation, everywhere at work, and everywhere taking the oversight and management of the great effects of his creative energy. The delightful doctrine of a Divine providence is explicitly taught by our Lord in the following words:—"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father; but even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." If God did not think it below him to make the world and all things that are therein, he surely does not think it beneath him to care for the works of his own hands. But it is needless to insist; none who believe the Bible can deny a providence, and a providence that extends to the most minute and apparently trivial matter, and it only argues a little mind, and a mind that is not accustomed to take within the sweep of its consideration the small as well as the great, minuteness as well as magnitude.

That God has often interfered by his providence in behalf of his people, is attested both by experience and by the explicit statements of the Holy

Scriptures. What, in short, has been the history of the Church, but a history as well of providential as of gracious dispensations. No man can survey even his own short history, without observing that Providence has often interfered and wrought deliverances at a juncture when they were actually needed, and when calamity and ruin would otherwise have been the inevitable consequence. None but a cold-hearted infidel can repudiate the idea of a providence, and leave to blind unmeaning chance his dearest interests, and cast himself afloat on the ocean of fortuitous incident.

But why, in adverting to the doctrine of a providential interference, should we be charged with infringing on the miraculous? Can Providence not operate without a miracle? Are all the wonderful and surprising incidents which occasionally fall out in the history of human affairs to be regarded in any other light than that of merely providential arrangements, apart from miraculous occurrence? We have reason to expect that, in peculiar emergencies, God will appear for the help of his people, and, by striking providences, demonstrate his peculiar care over them, and his special presence with them. And there is no season in which this is more necessary than in the time of persecution, in the days when they are enduring hardships for his sake. Extraordinary occasions demand extraordinary interferences. This is the case among men, and are we to think that it is not the same with God, when his people are thrown into perilous circumstances on account of their bearing a faithful testimony to his truth in the face of abounding error and defections. "When thou passest through the waters I will be

with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee," is a promise which the people of Christ in the day of trial expect to be fulfilled, and fulfilled without a miracle. It is no presumption, then, to expect that the great Head of the Church will sometimes interfere on behalf of his people, when he sees fit that such an interference should be put forth. But such interpositions are not always to be looked for, they are merely occasional, otherwise his people would always be delivered from danger, and rescued from the power of their persecutors, which is contrary to fact, and contrary also to the Divine appointment.

These remarks are intended to show, that the remarkable providences which befel our honest forefathers in the days of their severe and protracted persecutions, are not to be regarded as incredible, or as at all improbable, while, at the same time, they tend to produce a delightful confidence in the paternal care of Him whose "eyes are upon the just, and whose ears are open to their cry."

By providential interferences, is meant those deliverances that were somewhat remarkable, and accomplished in circumstances in which, to all human appearance, it was next to impossible the persons could escape, and in which we are forced to acknowledge the hand of an overruling Providence. In a former chapter, we had occasion to detail a few instances of those cruelties that were practised on the worthies who fell into the enemies' hands; and we shall here engage, for a little, in the more agreeable task of noticing some of the extraordinary

deliverances with which the sufferers were, in those days, sometimes favoured. These instances are very numerous, and the recital of them is always attended with a thrill of satisfaction. We might furnish an abundance of instances from traditionary stores, and instances of a very striking and affecting description, and instances, too, the truth of which cannot reasonably be questioned; but we rather prefer to make a selection from those historical documents, in reference to which there can be no dispute. In making this selection, it may happen, perhaps, that we have not hit upon the most striking cases, because it is only a few, by way of illustration, for which we have room, and these taken chiefly at random, or from a more familiar recollection of the incidents.

Wodrow, in recording the sufferings of the Presbyterians in the "*eighty-four*," says,—"Wonderful were the preservations of the persecuted about this time. The soldiers frequently got their clothes and cloaks, and yet missed themselves. They would have gone by the mouths of the caves and dens in which they were lurking, and the dogs would snook and smell about the stones under which they were hid, and yet they remained undiscovered." This is a general statement, on the truth of which many a particular might be brought to bear. Mr Shiels, in his Life of Mr Renwick, makes a similar remark respecting him and his associates. "He and his companions," he says, "were made to lie many nights and days in caves and holes under ground, without room to sit or stand, without air, without refreshment, or hope of relief, save what was had from heaven; the murderous pursuers sometimes

coming over and by the mouth of the hole, while they were at their duty praying or praising undiscovered."

The following wonderful escape was experienced by Mr Renwick, as is recorded of him in his peregrinations through the country :—" One day, in the summer of 1684, he was going to a meeting in a certain place not specified. As he was toiling on his journey in a very weary and exhausted condition, an honest countryman lent him a horse to carry him a few miles on his way. Thus assisted, he proceeded with as much expedition as the convenience of the three men who were with him on foot would permit. As they were moving onward, they were surprised by the sudden appearance of a party of troopers, commanded by Lieutenant Dundas, from the garrison in Sorn Castle, who were out on their mission of searching for wanderers. They instantly pursued, and succeeded in capturing the men who were with Mr Renwick, whom they cut with their swords, and otherwise sadly abused,—one of them having received no fewer than eleven wounds. What became of them ultimately is not said, but the pursuit after Mr Renwick was very hot, who, being on horseback, fled with much greater speed than his companions on foot. He directed his flight to the top of Dungavel Hill, while a party of the dragoons, who were upwards of twenty in all, followed hard behind, and poured their shot as closely after him as possible, and another party on his right thrust themselves between him and the mosses, in the heart of which they were afraid he would take refuge. The horse on which he was mounted, not being able to cope with

the more powerful horses of the troopers, and beginning occasionally to sink in the boggy ground, he abandoned it, and fled on foot. He hastened along a piece of level ground, and sped to a cairn on the summit of the hill. For a few moments, the intervening rising ground hid him from the view of his pursuers, and by this time he reached the cairn, beneath which, among the rude stones, the shepherd boys had formed a sort of cavity in which to shelter themselves from the storms, as they tended their flocks on the height. Into this place he crept, and found it a chamber prepared for him, in which to conceal himself from the eyes of his persecutors. In this retreat, he instantly betook himself to prayer, and committed himself entirely to the Divine disposal; and he speedily attained a sweet peace and composure of mind as to the result. In the meantime, the soldiers were scouring the hill in all directions; like the dogs of the huntsman when losing the scent in the pursuit, they ran up and down in disappointment and perplexity. They never, for a moment, dreamed that the fugitive was beneath the cairn, but kept their eyes on the extent before them, expecting to see him running or lurking in the moor. At length, being utterly baffled, they withdrew from the place, leaving the poor praying wanderer alone with God. The state of Mr Renwick's mind, at this time, was of the most enviable kind. He encouraged himself in the Lord his God, and comforted himself in meditating on the promises that regard the people of Christ in the day of peril. He felt great comfort in realizing these promises by faith, and especially the following:—"He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee

in all thy ways;" which he says, "was such unto me that I lifted up my head to see these angels; but considering my folly in that particular, I was made to laugh at my own witlessness; so I lay till the sun set, sometimes praying and sometimes praising God, though I can do neither to purpose."

The subsequent remarkable deliverance, which is recorded of a party of Covenanters who had taken refuge in the house of Lochgoin, was the result of a strange dream which happened to old John Howie, who lived in this moorland solitude.

"After the disaster at Pentland, a number of those concerned in that rising sought refuge in the wilds in the vicinity of Lochgoin, and the residence of the Howies became, in a manner, their head quarters. It was the place in the lonely waste to which they resorted for prayer and social intercourse, and the humble roof often sheltered many a hungry and weary wanderer. One night, when a number of the refugees had met in his house, the aged man dreamed that he was at the Cross of Kilmarnock, and distinctly heard General Dalziel give orders to a party of his dragoons to repair to Lochgoin, to search for the reputed rebels who had been at Pentland. When the soldiers were about to depart, as he thought, they seized on him, and compelled him to act as their guide to Lochgoin; the which, as it was situated in the heart of the moors, was by no means easy of access, especially to horsemen. When the party had advanced about two miles on their way, he imagined that one of the soldiers used him rudely, on which he awoke, and found it was a dream. In a little, he fell asleep again, and dreamed that he met with the troopers

a second time, whom he accompanied on their march, till they came to a stream which they had to pass, when one of the sturdy dragoons seized him by the shoulders, and pushed him forcibly into the torrent till it reached his knees, and the sudden chill of the cold water broke his slumbers, and he began to be a little thoughtful. He fell asleep for the third time, and once more met with the soldiers, and went along with them till they came to the bottom of the rising ground on which his dwelling stood, when, being maltreated by them, as formerly, he started from his bed, and cried to the persons in concealment, to look out on the moor and see if danger was approaching. One of the company ran to the little turfen eminence that was reared a few yards from the house for the purpose of observation, and which stands till this day, and saw, to his astonishment, in the grey of the morning, the muskets and points of the bayonets of a party of military just at hand. He hastened back to make the announcement, and the company within instantly made their escape, and hid themselves in the hollow of a brook behind a moss. The worthy old man, whose dream was the means of saving the fugitives, hastily left his bed, and wrapping his cloak about him, went out and stood at the end of the house. When the party advanced, John was leaning against the wall, and panting for breath. The troopers, astonished at seeing a man in this position at so early an hour, cried out, taking the Divine name in a profane manner, 'What have we here?' 'It is e'en an aged man,' said John, 'infirm and breathless, who is under the necessity, at this unseasonable hour, of leaving his bed to seek relief in the open air. The smoke of

the fire which, on account of the cold, he is obliged to keep burning on the hearth, is like to stiffle him by reason of this cough.' This statement seemed to the dragoons to account naturally enough for the existence of the fire which they found blazing within, and lulled their suspicions of its having been kept burning for the accommodation of the party who had just fled from the apartment. The soldiers, when they had searched the dwelling and found nobody, entertained themselves with what provisions they could find, and in the early morning returned to Kilmarnock. Thus the dream of the good old man, however it may be accounted for, was the means employed by Providence of saving a handful of helpless men, who, in the time of their peril, sought refuge under his hospitable roof."

The following is narrated in the 'Memoirs of James Nisbet:'—"On the 26th of April (1685), it pleased God, in his good providence, to send that great man, Mr Alexander Peden, to the gentleman's house where I was. He preached from the 10th of John, from which he spoke long and well, with application to the present time. Next morning, the servants and I went to work in the fields, where, before nine o'clock, we saw a troop of dragoons coming at full gallop. Mr Peden and those that were with him in the house fled, which we at work knew nothing of; but we ran every one as Providence directed, and the watchful providence of God, which was ever kind to me, led me, as by the hand, to a moss two miles distant from where we were working, to which those with Mr Peden were fled for shelter. Two of the dragoons pursued me

very hard, but spying another man following me, him they pursued off at the right hand of my way. They fired at him, but it pleased the Lord he escaped at that time. Other two of them came in chase of me. I was sore put to it for my life. The day was very hot, the sun bright in my face, and the way mountainous; yet the Lord was very kind unto me, and enabled me to run. At the edge of the moss there was a bog or morass, and here the Lord was a present help in time of need to me; for just as I was got through the bog, and drawing myself out of it by the heather of the moss, the two dragoons came to the other side; but seeing they could not get through to me with their horses, they bade me, 'Stand, dog, and be shot.' They fired upon me, but God directed the ball by my left ear. I, finding that I had escaped the shot, ran further into the moss. Kind Providence led me just where my persecuted friends were lurking in a moss-hag,—about twenty in number. We stayed there for some time, till a second troop joined the first troop, and seeing them dismount their horses to take the moss on their foot to search us out, after some firing on both sides, without any execution done, we drew off and travelled the midst of the moss. They seeing this, horsed again, and pursued us by the edges of the moss; but we always kept ourselves on such ground where horses could not come. We ran that day hither and thither, forward and backward, about thirty miles. We got no manner of refreshment all that day but moss water to drink, till night, that each of us got a drink of milk. Mr Peden left those that were with him, and went one way, and I left them and went another. I lay all night far from

any house, among the heather. The next day when I awaked, after the sun rose, I saw about two hundred foot and horse searching all the country far and near; but seeing no way of escape, unobserved by the enemy, I clapped close among the heather, and so kind and condescending was the Lord to me, that not one of the enemy came near the place where I lay,—the Lord laying on me no more than I was able to bear."

We may here give the story of Mr Peden's providential rescue from the troopers that were pursuing him on the wilds of Auchengrouch, near Sanquhar, as related by Patrick Walker. "After this, in Auchengrouch Muirs, in Nithsdale, Captain John Mathison and others being with him, they were alarmed with a report that the enemy were coming fast upon him, so they designed to put him into some hole, and cover him with heather. But he not being able to run hard by reason of age, he desired them to forbear a little until he prayed; when he said, 'Lord, we are ever needing at thy hand, and if we had not thy command to call upon thee in the day of our trouble, and thy promise of answering us in the day of our distress, we wot not what would become of us. If thou have any more work for us in thy world, allow us the lap of thy cloak this day again; and if this be the day of our going off the stage, let us walk honestly off and comfortably thorow, and our souls will sing forth thy praises to eternity for what thou hast done to us and for us.' When ended, he ran alone a little, and came quickly back, saying, 'Lads, the bitterest of this blast is over, we will be no more troubled with them this day.' Foot and horse came the length of

Andrew Clark's in Auchengrouch, where they were covered with a dark mist. When they saw it, they roared like fleshly devils, and cried out, 'There is the confounded mist again! We cannot get these execrable Whigs pursued for it.'"

In searching the histories of the period, we may find instances without end of very wonderful escapes in those days of peril, when the sufferers enjoyed in a very noticeable manner the Divine protection, and deliverances so signal, as forced them to exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" Wodrow mentions the case of a worthy gentleman from Fife, who had occasion to visit Edinburgh on business. He came to the inn where he was accustomed to lodge when at any time he happened to be in town. After he had taken up his abode, the landlord told him that a search was that day to be made in his house for fugitives. "Where shall I conceal myself," exclaimed he? The landlord, who, on the present occasion, would rather have been rid of his guest, lest he should be brought into trouble on his account, replied, in a careless tone, that, if he chose, he might hide himself in that meal-girnel which stood in the apartment. The honest man took the hint, and there concealed himself accordingly. In a few minutes the house was entered, and a strict search was made in every corner, but without effect. The party at length came into the room where the gentleman was hid, and drawing their chairs near the girnel, the lid of which seems to have been used as a table, they sat down, and called for liquor. As they were regaling themselves, one of the company exclaimed, "I am sure the town is full of these Whigs, if we could only light upon them;

and so strange are their places of conccalment, that I would not wonder if, at this moment, one were hidden in this same chest." He then raised his hand, and brought down his fist on the lid with such violence, as to make glasses and decanters dance at the stroke. The party burst into a loud roar of laughter, and the remark passed off as a jokc, while the poor gentleman lay trembling, expecting every moment to be dragged forth from his retreat. They left the place, however, without further investigation, and the man in his precarious hiding-place escaped detection. Such instances were too observable to be omitted by the historians of the time; but we cannot enlarge,—a volume might be filled with the subject.

Had it not been our design to confine ourselves strictly to historical statements as being less liable to dispute, a great many interesting things might be fetched from tradition, illustrative of the peculiar care of Providence over the suffering Church of Christ in the day of persecution. The Covenanters were then cast out of the pale of society, but God took them in, and when men discarded them, he received them. But were they always preserved? doubtless they were not, else none of them would have suffered, and we would never have read of their martyrdom; yct they were often strangely delivered, and preserved for future work and future trials, for "every man is immortal till his work be done." Nay, so wonderful sometimes were the escapes, that the very men whom the soldiers came to apprehend, would have passed through the middle of the troop without being questioned, or even suspected. The frankness displayed by the goodwife

at the door of the farmer's cottage, when the house was suddenly besieged by a company of dragoons, gave her husband time to escape through a hole in the roof of the rudely thatched tenement. The starting of a hare cowering in the bent in the track of the military, has saved the life of a sleeping wanderer lying in the braken covert, only a few yards from their feet. The hasty resolution of a few Covenanters to retreat into the heart of a thicket by the wayside to pray, even when no danger was apprehended, has allowed a party of horsemen to pass by without discovering them; they knew not their hazard, but He who cared for them, hid them from the foe. The firing of a musket by a soldier, incidently on the heath, has been the means of saving an entire company of worshippers whom the enemy had come to apprehend, by giving them warning to retire from the spot into a place of concealment. If, in those days of distress, the poor sufferers had so often occasion to raise the loud voice of wailing, they had also occasion to raise the voice of praise and thankfulness for the hairbreadth escapes which they oftimes made. They cried in the day of their calamity, and the Lord delivered them.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Effects of the Persecution.

At the termination of the persecution, the country seems to have been in a very disorganised and unsettled condition. All ranks appear to have received a shock, and the whole frame-work of society was disordered. The country had the appearance of the ocean after a storm,—there was a great swelling of the waters, and a tumultuous tossing of the billows, that had not yet been calmed down after the chaffing of the tempest. There was an irritation on men's spirits, and a restlessness after a long season of agitation, and excitement, and terrible oppression. The people were thrown into confusion, and idleness, with its necessary attendant, want, prevailed to an alarming extent. Men seemed not to know what to do, or where to fix their abode. The populace moved to and fro like the trees of the forest shaken by the wind, and a class of persons had arisen that threatened to prey on the vitals of the community as fatally, though in a different manner, as the military, who were spread as an army of locusts over the land. Fletcher of Salton remarks, that the country was infested by no

fewer than two hundred thousand vagrants and beggars, who had no certain abode, and who subsisted solely by charity, riot, and pillage. This was, indeed, an alarming state of things for a poor wasted country like Scotland, that had already suffered under the hand of tyranny and spoliation for nearly thirty long years. This, however, was the natural result of the disorganisation of that period which had broken the arm of industry, and almost annihilated the security of property, as it did that of men's lives. What was the use of cultivating the soil, if the produce was to be seized upon by a rapacious gentry, or a lawless soldiery? and, indeed, in many cases, the tenantry could not cultivate their farms when their cattle and all were driven away from them, and when their lives were in risk in residing in their own houses. Great numbers of servants and tradesmen were thrown out of employment by the unsettled state of the times, and having acquired indolent and immoral habits, were not easily restrained nor induced to settle down in society, and hence they wandered about, and mingling with the discharged soldiery, endangered the peace of the community, and even inflicted no small injury on its morals. It was long before those of the industrious classes recovered from the effects of the spoliations to which they had been subjected, so as to resume their places of usefulness in society: for Scotland after the persecution exhibited the aspect of a nation sacked and plundered by a foreign foe. The devastations were immense, and thousands of worthy and prosperous families were reduced to the lowest point of subsistence, and when they got time to breathe and gaze around

them, after the tempest had passed away, they were amazed at the desolation, and they found their spirits crushed and their energies wasted, and in their helplessness they looked up to heaven, and sought aid from Him who alone could succour them in time of their calamity.

Mr Hetherington, whom we have had occasion to quote more than once in the progress of these Sketches, and whose History of the Church of Scotland ought to be in the hands of every Presbyterian in the land, remarks, that the "twenty-eight years of tyranny and persecution had wasted the land, reducing many of its most fertile districts to the condition of a wilderness, and throwing a vast proportion of the middle and industrious classes into deep poverty. The inevitable consequence was, that nearly all the lowest classes of the population were both thrown completely out of employment by the ruin of the class immediately above them, and habituated to idleness, vagrance, and pillage, by the encouragement and example of the devastating soldiery, and the use made of them to assist in destroying the property of the respectable Presbyterians. Thus the existence of two hundred thousand vagrants, by whom the country was so grievously infested, was one of the direct results of the attempt to establish Prelacy in Scotland; and it is no wonder that such people were ready, at the instigation of those around whose paths of carnage they had so long prowled and battened, to rush anew on their wonted task of perpetrating insult and violence against the persons of Presbyterian ministers, and of interrupting the most sacred ordinances of religion."

Scotland, a nation scattered and peeled by means of its cruel persecution, appeared something like a forest after the scourging severity of a tempest, when the leaves are stripped off, the branches torn from the trunks, and the stately trees uprooted from the soil and prostrated in every direction, having brought others, in the crashing of their fall, to the ground along with them. The destruction was great, and men looked with dismay on the wreck and ruin of their former prosperity, and they began, with tearful eyes and trembling hands, to repair the desolations of thirty years, not knowing how soon the blast might return and involve all again in the former distress. They had now time to reflect on the devastations which the persecution had made after the smoke and tumult of the battle-scene had passed away, and when the field was clear they could fully perceive the extent of the havoc in their worldly circumstances, and the unspeakably more painful havoc in the lives of their dearest friends, whose blood was made to run like water on fields and on scaffolds.

But it is impossible to calculate the mischief which the persecution wrought in a religious sense. In some respects, and at some periods, perhaps, persecution may have been the means of benefiting the Church of God, and of purifying her communion, but then, this is not uniformly the case; far from it. Persecution is a great evil, and if the Head of the Church be pleased to bring good out of it, no thanks to the existing evil for that. If persecution has in some cases been the means of purifying, it has in other instances been the means of corrupting the Church; and they certainly labour

under no slender mistake who profess to long for persecution, for the purpose of advancing the interests of true religion in the land. The design of persecution is to crush the Church of Christ, to subvert her doctrines, to deter men from professing the faith, and to kill those who persist in their testimony; it weeds out all the good, and leaves the bad; roots up the wheat, and sows tares. And, whereas, it has been supposed to unite the sufferers in one common bond, and to fuse them more perfectly into one mass, like different pieces of the precious gold smelted together in the crucible, it has sometimes had the very opposite effect,—the effect of separating chief friends, and of fomenting divisions and heart-burnings in the body of the faithful. Persecution has, when carried to the full extent of its severity, in various instances, actually exterminated the profession of true religion, as in some parts on the Continent. It is only when comparatively slight that persecution may be attended with something like beneficial results; but let its crushing hand once descend in all its dreadful weight, and consequences the most baneful will be the immediate result. No greater calamity can befal a land than that of persecution, and it is an evil by all means to be deprecated; for the benefits that flow from it will by no means compensate the evils. It does separate the precious from the vile, but then, unfortunately, it uniformly consumes the former and leaves the latter; it makes the separation, that it may with the greater precision and certainty send forth the stream of its devouring fire to burn up the wheat, while it leaves the chaff unsinged. That never can be a benefit to the Church which removes

all her worthiest and holiest members, and which eats up her people like bread. It is true, that the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church; but how? By an agency independent of persecution. It was not the sufferings of the witnesses that raised up new hosts of believers, these had rather a tendency to prevent such an increase, and to deter men from uniting themselves to a society that was enduring such tribulations; it was something extrinsic to all this, it was the Spirit of the Lord, who, by means of that truth for which these holy men were suffering, gathered converts to the cause, and raised up an army to supply the place of those who had fallen in the good fight, and who, in their turn, might also fall in sustaining the same conflict. It is not persecution that converts, but the grace of Him who shall never want a seed to serve him, and to witness for him, so long as the sun and the moon shall endure. One copious effusion of the Holy Spirit upon the Churches, would effect more real benefit throughout the Christian community than all the persecutions from the beginning, put together, have ever done.

The state of religion during the persecution was very deplorable; and this was the obvious result of the civil and ecclesiastical oppression of the times. The general irreligiousness of the country at this period, however, is to be viewed apart from the state of things in this respect among the conventicles, and even among the indulged. Among the strict Presbyterians religion flourished, and flourished greatly; for God was with them, and prospered them. But then, in the outfield, matters were in a very different position. In the districts of the curates a profli-

gacy of manners prevailed to a degree unknown in former periods. The persecution, by thrusting worthless, ignorant, and violent men, on the parishes, banished the good to the deserts, and with them even the formality of religion. A woful time to Scotland was the riotous and profligate reign of Charles the Second; that monarch, like a baleful planet, shed down a disastrous influence on the community by means of his servants and minions, who acted as conductors to the immoral contagion, which was amply communicated from the higher to the lower ranks. Men of worthy character, whose good example was greatly influential with the lower orders, were removed to make room for others of a very different description, who were the means of vitiating the morals of the populace, and of supplanting even the semblance of religion. This must be one uniform effect of persecution; for it substitutes the dark for the light, the profane for the holy, and licentiousness for restraint. When Scotland enjoyed her ministers, iniquity, as ashamed, was made to hide its head, and vile men were kept in check, and even assumed the formality of a profession; but when they were removed into corners, and the purity of their doctrine and of their practice concealed from the view, the sluices of vice were opened, and forth rushed a torrent of the foulest waters, like the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth after the woman, and it spread far and wide, and many men died of the waters of this turbid stream: for, though they were sweet to their depraved taste, they operated as bitter poison in the belly, and wrought with a deadly consumption on their vitals. When persecution banishes religion

from its presence what is to be expected but its substitute, irreligion, and all the dissoluteness that accompanies it?

The persecution called forth a host of bad characters, who practised on its stage during the time it lasted, and when it passed away it left them as a residuum in the community. In its troubled waters much mud was thrown up; for society was stirred to its lowest depths, and all that was filthy and which had lain still for many years, like the shoaling at the bottom of a lake, now boiled up to the surface, and there floated about like the bitumen on the sluggish waters of the Dead Sea. These evil men were not confined to one class of the community, they were to be found in all ranks, and they appeared boldly, and in the open face of day,—"the wicked walk on every side when the vilest of men are exalted." It is amazing to think what hosts of worthless men, in the shape of troopers, informers, ecclesiastics, gentlemen, counsellors, and judges, the persecution called forth. The evil genius of the nation seemed to be evoked by it, and wickedness was drawn forth, fostered and encouraged, as if it were the only good, the only glory of a country.

The persecution put into the hands of these men the means of doing much evil, and they were not more welcome than willing to perpetrate the deeds attributed to them in history. Had these men and their deeds died with the persecution, the matter would have been less; but their sin reigned after that period, and they themselves lived to practise their immoralities, so far as the restraint of the altered times permitted. The wicked example of the persecutors was not effaced in a day, and even

when things were restored to their proper order, it was long ere the moral wounds inflicted on the nation were healed; nay, it is questionable if they be entirely healed even at this day. The drunkenness, the profane swearing, the Sabbath-breaking, the debauchery, the plunderings, and the cruelties common in those times, and all practised under the screen of public authority, deeply affected the masses, and impressed on them an aspect of more than ordinary depravity. What, for instance, must have been the general character of the two hundred thousand vagrants that, in idleness, spread themselves over the entire extent of an impoverished land,—can it be conceived that they were orderly and pious persons?

The persecution was the cause of much perjury and apostasy. Multitudes, who had sworn the covenants, violated their oaths, and became violent assailants of the cause which they had professed so religiously to espouse. Apostasy is a fearful sin, but in those days it was so common that the greatness of its criminality was effaced from the convictions of men, and they scrupled as little to commit this crime as many do those offences which are conventionally deemed the most venial in society. The persons who acted in this way became extremely hardened and wicked characters; for, having "cast off all fear of God," they were prepared for the perpetration of any act, however nefarious. The vast number of flagrant instances of apostasy had a most deadening effect on the public mind, and taught men that there was nothing so sacred that might not be profaned, and so binding that might not be repudiated. In the case of the indi-

viduals themselves it produced fearful effects,—their consciences were seared as with a hot iron, and they were judicially hardened in their sin. The remorse and dreadful apprehensions that seized them on their death-bed, testified the Divine disapprobation of their wicked life. They were tormented with a terrific certainty of a judgment to come, of which they could not divest themselves; for they felt the terrors of the Lord within them, and no relief could be had from their associates in wickedness, and they could obtain no dispensation from those who had employed them in the criminal work of persecuting the saints of God. The case of Rothes was a fearful lesson to his compeers in crime. When on his death-bed, under the intolerable anguish of a guilty conscience, he sent for the very men whom he persecuted to pray for him, his heart being bowed down under the distracting fears of a coming damnation. And no less instructive was the death-scene of that noted persecutor and wicked man, Alison the chamberlain of Drumlanrig, mentioned by Wodrow. "At this time," says the historian (1684), "the death of John Alison, chamberlain in Nithsdale to Queensberry, made a great noise; he had been an apostate from the profession he had taken up before the Restoration, and lived a bitter persecutor. His torment in body made him roar, but he had heavier torture in his spirit for his by-gone ways. He died in the greatest agony and terror; yet the living laid it not to heart, but the persecution went on in its full vigour." Such were the effects of the persecution on the persecutors themselves, and such the effects of their conduct on the minds of the people.

But another effect of the persecution was the with-

drawal of the popular mind from sound principles. Indeed, as we have already shown, the great design of the persecution was the suppression of principles, in order to make way for the project which the king and his minions had set on foot. The Scottish mind was deeply imbued with just sentiments respecting civil and religious matters, and it was to uproot these sentiments that the severe measures of persecution were instituted. But though the persecution did make the spirit of multitudes to cower, and produced a base servility to the dominant authority, it could never repress the great dogmas for which the Covenanters contended. The establishment of Episcopacy could not overmaster the sturdy Presbyterianism of Scotland. The command was given to hew down the tree, and the command was obeyed; but still the stump of its roots was left in the earth,—this the persecution did not succeed in eradicating, though doubtless, had it lasted as long again, it would have effected its purpose, and thrown out the tree, root and branch, and utterly consumed it in the fire. This, however, was not permitted, and at the close of the period it was found that though the defection had been extensive, the great body of the people were of one mind respecting the ancient Presbyterianism of the Church of Scotland; and so their favourite form of Church government, associated as it was with the sound principles of liberty, like the revulsion of a mighty wave, covered the land anew, and restored that order which had been so long in abeyance. Indeed the Prelatic oppression under which the Church groaned endeared to the people still more and more that form of ecclesiastical polity under which they were formerly

placed, and which in their conscience they deemed to be most agreeable to the Divine Word; for "Episcopacy never appeared in Scotland but in the shape of a persecutor." The persecution, then, had this effect, that it tested the vitality and the strength of the great principles which had taken so firm a hold of the Scottish mind, and showed how vigorous these principles were, and in what a healthy condition they had been preserved, notwithstanding the withering blasts that had borne down so fiercely upon them. Still the persecution produced a slavish spirit in multitudes, and it would, no doubt, have ultimately enslaved the entire populace both in body and mind, had not He who rules over all, stretched out his hand, and suppressed it at the proper juncture.

Another effect of the measures adopted in the persecuting times was, the infusion of men of Prelatic sentiments into the ministry of the Scottish Church. The ecclesiastical innovations introduced at this period caused great confusions and distractions in the country, and were productive of much alienation among brethren. These divisions were uncomfortable enough at the time, and were attended by no small injury to the interests of religion, although good was eventually brought out of this evil, and order educed from the confusion. But one of the greatest injuries which the Church at this epoch sustained was *that* just alluded to, because it was a vital injury and permanent, the effects of which are felt to this day; a worse thing could scarcely befal the Church of our fathers than this,—it was probably a worse matter by far than even the persecution itself. The mere suffering occasioned by persecution

was soon over, but not so the moral effects which resulted from the reception of so many of the clerical persecutors within the Revolution Church. That evil reigns to this day, and has been the pregnant source of all the Moderatism that has found a place within her. The number of Prelatic incumbents admitted after the *eighty-eight* was much greater than we are ready to suspect. "It appears from an address by the Commission to Queen Anne, that the number of Episcopal clergy who, in the course of a few years, were admitted into the bosom of the Presbyterian Church was very considerable. In that address they say, 'We cannot but lay before your majesty this pregnant instance of our moderation, that since our late happy establishment there have been taken in and continued hundreds of dissenting (that is Episcopal) ministers upon the easiest terms.' This coalescing measure may justly be regarded as the chief source" of the many evils under which the Church of Scotland has groaned to the present day;—"a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." And but for the persecution this could not have happened; for it was the tyranny of the times, and the supremacy arrogated by the king, that thrust these worthless curates into the parishes, where they retained their position till the abolition of Prelacy, and after that they were retained under the form of Presbyterians, in such numbers as seriously to vitiate that body, with which they were now connected in Church fellowship. There were only from sixty to eighty of the old Presbyterian ministers alive at the Revolution,—and what were these among so many?

On the whole, then, it is plain that but for the

persecution this would not have happened. The effects of the persecution were, in every view, of a disastrous nature, in matters both of a political and a religious nature. Scotland was much endamaged at the time, and the shock was felt long after, like the far-distant throbbings of the terrible earthquake.

CHAPTER XV.

Conclusion.

We have, in the preceding chapters, glanced at the leading features of that disastrous period commonly denominated *the persecution*, and we have seen a picture by no means pleasant. A scene has been unfolded of a very revolting description, and we have been pained at witnessing the terrible ordeal through which our honest forefathers were made to pass, in the maintenance of all that was dear to them as Christians and as citizens. We have noticed the great struggle between despotism and liberty, between the claims of religious privilege and Erastian intolerance, in connection with the wide-spread desolations caused by the reckless measures of a bigoted and sanguinary usurper. The storm has passed away, and we rest in the calm,—the conflict is ended, and we enjoy the fruits of the victory,—we sit under our own vine, and under our own fig-tree, and there is none to make us afraid; and when we reflect that our ancestors, by God's working and blessing, planted both the vine and the fig-tree, and watered them with their blood, that they might grow and flourish, and spread their

branches over us, our first feeling is that of obligation to the worthy men who were instrumental, of working out for us so rich a benefit, and for transmitting it in the fullness of its blessing to their posterity. Our fathers struggled not for themselves only, but for us; and we prove ourselves their unworthy sons, when we dare to speak lightly of their noble and patriotic efforts in asserting their rights and ours. But a feeling of obligation to our ancestors is not all,—gratitude to the Supreme Disposer of events ought to fill our hearts. We have something to be grateful for—we have the full protection of life, liberty, and property; and in the enjoyment of these we ought to feel peculiarly thankful. We may think that we have many evils to complain of, and so perchance we have, but our burdens are light compared with those of our persecuted ancestors, who would have deemed themselves highly favoured had they possessed but the half of our securities and advantages. It is because we never knew worse, that we often feel discontented with our present condition, and that we are so easily stirred up to disaffection by evil and designing men, who, being themselves displeased with every thing, just because they have never known a hard lot, wish to inject a portion of their own fretful and insubordinate disposition into the minds of others. Those, however, who can estimate what is truly valuable in privilege, will be disposed to cherish a full measure of gratitude for the possession of those civil advantages which render life desirable, and which secure to us the benefit of our religious immunities. This, however, is not to

hinder us from improving our condition by all righteous and constitutional means, and to carry matters forward to a still higher degree of perfection, —nay, the victory which our fathers gained ought to encourage us to proceed in rectifying what is obviously wrong, in the hope that we also shall obtain our laudable object.

But this gratitude for privileges plainly involves the duty of exerting every effort to retain the possession of them. We must not be unfaithful to the trust committed to us, because we hold it not for ourselves only, but also for posterity; and hence there lies upon us a heavy responsibility. We should, therefore, be careful to watch against every attempt to abridge our just privileges; for the least infringement may open the door to an invasion on all that we regard sacred as Christians and as citizens. Had the nation, at the commencement of the persecution, manifested a sensitive dread of the slightest aggression on the rights of the subjects, and made a corresponding effort to withstand it, the widespread mischief which desolated the country for nearly thirty years, might have been prevented. The same spirit that wrought in the days of our fathers works still, and if a free scope were given to it, it would be productive of the same baleful results. We must not forego a single iota of our privileges; no, not one grain of sand must be purloined from the heap,—we must rather add to the amount, for much yet remains to be added, and the adversaries of the popular rights will hold back as long as they have the power of retention. Almost every one will say, We ought highly to value

our privileges, and to maintain them with a jealous care; while, at the same time, so recreant are they, that, like Esau, they would sell their birthright for a mess of pottage. Such is the selfishness of human nature, that many are quite prepared to shape both their religious profession and their political creed by their worldly interests. We ought not only to be cautious in guarding these privileges, but also in watching the conduct of those to whom the wardship of them is more especially intrusted.

Our fathers contended against the Erastian encroachments of their times, and we ought, with equal spirit, to repudiate the same. The Church of Christ is an institution independent of civil government, and totally distinct from it. "My kingdom," says our Lord, "is not of this world;" and, therefore, the Church should see that she become in no sense secularised by a power foreign to herself, and altogether of this world. The State must not be the Church's master, nor in any sense the Church's head, and no power should be yielded to it, even by the Church, which may be turned with dreadful effect against her own interests; and they are accountable for much of that earthliness with which the Church has been leavened, and for much of the persecution to which she has been subjected, who argue for the exercise of a power exerted by the State over the Church, which neither equity nor Scripture can sanction. Erastianism has been the bane of the Church, and it is an evil which must be annihilated, else the Churches never can have rest. This power lodges a poison in the very core of every ecclesiastical institution by which it

is recognised, and a poison which works with deadly effect. So long as Erastianism operates, we never can be safe from persecution; for it depends merely on the amount of the strength which it may happen to acquire, whether a uniformity in religious matters shall be enforced or not; and it was this enforcement which, in the times of the Covenant, deluged the land with blood. Erastianism is intolerant, and all intolerance in religious matters is decidedly to be opposed. No class of Christians has a right to arrogate to themselves what they will not tolerate in others; this is to invest themselves with a lordliness to which they have no right, and in which others ought to give them no countenance. To think and to judge for himself is the birthright of every man, and of which no earthly power can denude him; and, therefore, for one class of Christians to say to another, You have no right to think but as we think, or as we will permit you, is an insufferable insult which is to be repelled with indignant scorn, and to which no man who has not the spirit of a crouching slave will submit for a moment. A firm and uncompromising stand on this point would chase away the evil genius of persecution, and forbid it to hover over a land of a free-born and a high-minded populace, who, in matters of conscience, are determined to stoop to no authority but one,—and that is, the authority of the great Head of the Church, who alone has the right to assert the supremacy.

Every unrighteous assumption, then, whether exclesiastical or civil, ought to be promptly and energetically withstood, inasmuch as no one can tell

to what an extent such assumptions may proceed, if not firmly gainsaid. And truly we have need to be on our guard in these times, when Popery, under the insidious guise of Puseyism, is insinuating itself into the very core of the Anglican Church. In the days of our fathers persecution was employed to introduce Popery; but in our days the tactics are changed, and Popery walks quietly in, covered with a mask, and, without offering to injure any in forcing its way, it silently leavens the mass till it gain the majority to its side, and then, when it has acquired sufficient numerical strength, it will show itself unblushingly in its true colours. At present, it assumes a placid, harmless demeanour, till it get sufficient time to work its work, and then it will "speak like a dragon." It is high time for the Protestant Churches in Britain to rouse themselves, and to gird on their armour for the contest. While they are sleeping, the enemy is sowing tares, and the evil to be counteracted is rapidly diffusing itself; and much more rapidly and surely than many are aware of. The Protestant Churches will have a dreadful power to contend with, if the English hierarchy become essentially a member of the Papacy. The modified Popery which has already to so great an extent pervaded that Church, is gathering to its side, not only multitudes of the populace, but numbers even of the learned, and of the aristocracy, who are all lending their influence to promote the imposture, and to bring the nation back to the mummery of the dark ages. Let Popery once spread in the south, and occupy the framework of the Episcopal Establishment, and the

former days of ghostly despotism and dreadful persecution may yet return, and the witnesses for the truth may speedily be called to seal their testimony with their blood.

Every Scriptural effort, then, should be employed to stem the progress of this tide of error and defection that has set in with so powerful a current, and which may yet submerge all in a general deluge. The Protestant Churches, then, of all denominations, should draw as closely together as possible around their common centre, and, rallying under the standard of their great King and Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, should unite against the common foe, and go forth with him, conquering and to conquer. If days of trial are yet awaiting us, this union will be the more necessary; for if the armies of the aliens shall yet congregate in a hostile manner against the Church, no one can predict the mischief that may befal. There is obviously a spirit abroad that would fain blight every thing of a liberal growth in society, and which would bring under the power of an intolerant despotism the entire community. It is this power struggling for the ascendency, and retaining it where it has been acquired, that has been the main cause of the oppression under which the world has, in all ages, groaned. And it requires no little vigilance and effort on the part of the friends of freedom and religion to keep this power in abeyance. Those sections of the Reformed Churches in Britain and Ireland, by whom chiefly the dogmas of civil and religious liberty are held, ought instantly to begin to clear out of their way every obstacle that has hitherto prevented that

friendly co-operation which would make them formidable to their enemies, and, at the same time, render them more effectually the safeguard of the nation's privileges. Wait not till days of trial fuse us into one,—let us unite previously, and our union may, perchance, ward off the threatened evil.

And on what points better calculated to form the grounds of a general coalition can we meet, than the great principles embodied in the Covenants, for the maintenance of which our ancestors suffered so much? Was it not the very principles avowed in these documents that wrought out the boasted Revolution of the famous *eighty-eight*, although the constitution in Church and State came not up to the fulness of these Covenants, but in some things fell far short of their acquirements. The Covenants may yet form a rallying-point to the various denominations of the Church of Christ in our land; and why should they not? If there be any thing in the wording of these Covenants that requires a modification to suit the times, let that modification be made; and if there be nothing, let them remain as they are. That mawkish sensitiveness that seems to shrink from the very mention of the *Covenants*, is quite unmanly, quite unworthy of freemen, and more unworthy still of Christian freemen, to whom the Covenants have been the means of transmitting all the freedom they now enjoy. Why applaud the Covenanters and decry the Covenants? Who were the Covenanters? The men who upheld the Covenants, and who died in support of the principles they embodied. You honour the martyrs, don't you? and yet you trample their testi-

mony under your feet. You look grave when we speak of the noble band of witnesses who prayed and bled on these mountains, and yet you smile when we mention the Covenants. You have read of our martyrs, and, as you read, you felt the thrilling power of the romance of their story; but you never read the Covenants, consequently you cannot well tell for what it was they suffered. What are the leading principles contained in these antiquated Covenants of which you seem to be ashamed? Why, they are the following:—The defence of the reformed religion against Popish ascendency and Erastian encroachments; the defence of the king's person and the constitutional laws of the realm; the defence of the liberties of the subject against tyrannical aggression; together with an obligation to personal religion. These are the frightful tenets of those offensive documents, in defence of which, our fathers "loved not their lives unto the death."

It has been fashionable, and is so still, to speak lightly of the Covenants; but to be consistent, you ought also to speak lightly of the Covenanters. Speak lightly of the Covenanters!—that would be shocking! dreadful! Why, then, revile the Covenants? Were not they the great charter of Scotland's liberties; and but for these Covenants, and the noble maintenance of them by our ancestors, we would have, this day, been a nation of serfs; and if we have the imbecility to let go their principles, we may yet, at some future day, be indulged with a taste of the precious sweets of servitude. Perhaps not even a tithe of those who speak lightly of the Covenants have read a single word of them,

and are as ignorant of their principles and of the history of the Covenanting era, as they are of the history of the moon. "The Covenants," exclaimed the illustrious James Guthrie, when he was on the scaffold, "the Covenants, the Covenants, shall yet be Scotland's reviving;" and it remains to be seen, whether the words of this holy man shall fall to the ground.

THE END.

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