

RENWICK'S VISIT TO THE DEATH-BED OF PEDEN.

FEBRUARY, 1686.

THROUGH the small and dingy lattice gleamed the last red
beams of day,

One wintry burst from the setting sun, where the dying pro-
phet lay ;

Where, from his weary wanderings, with toil and suffering worn,
He had come to close his pilgrimage within his native Sorn.

Oh ! rest thee, aged, weary one ! be all thy conflicts past !
Lone dweller in the wilderness, rest calmly at the last !

The change hath touched his countenance, so wan, and fixed,
and cold,

And shrivelled up his frame that was so stalwart and so bold ;
His unshorn locks and matted beard in strange wild clusters
hang,

And the frequent start and shiver tell how near his dying pang.
But bright the sunshine on his brow ! the brow which God
hath given

To those who are His gifted ones, the messengers of heaven !

For his the lofty impulses, the clear, far-sweeping ken,
That have stamped him as a holy seer among the sons of men.

Oh ! rest thee, aged, weary one ! be all thy conflicts past !
Lone dweller in the wilderness, rest calmly at the last !

His eyes are closed, but not in sleep, he murmurs forth a
prayer :

“That poor and wasted remnant, Lord, do Thou in mercy spare !
The wolf hath burst into the fold, the shepherds they are gone,
In all our hills and valleys round we are not left with one :
O Israel's Shepherd ! guide the flock, the yearlings gently bear !
That poor and wasted remnant, Lord ! do Thou in mercy spare !
O Sun that shines in Scotland ! there shall be a dread
eclipse !”—

But the words of terror died away upon his feeble lips ;
And the latch is opened softly, and a pale sick youth appears,
Whose term of life hath numbered little more than twenty years.
Though something of the rosy bloom peeps from that faded
cheek,

And those dove-like eyes with tenderness and youthful yearn-
ings speak ;

Yet ye may see that toil and care, and sleepless thoughts have
crushed

The gentle blossomings that might in his young heart have
flushed ;

And youth and strength, and soul and life, as first-fruits, he
hath bound

Unto the altar's horn, and there may they in peace be found.

As he entered, Peden raised his eyes, and asked the stranger's
name,

And what the errand was for which to this lone place he came :
" Father ! my name is Renwick, I have come to speak with thee,
To see thee in these troublous times, and crave thy prayers for me !"

The old man's face with something flushed between the scowl
and sneer,

For false reports against the youth were scattered far and near.
" Are you the Renwick that has made such noise throughout
the land ?

Turn round about, and let me view your measure as you stand.
Narrow thy shoulders, frail thy limbs. Slim youth, thy heart
is bold,

If thou dost think that thou alone canst Scotland's Church
uphold !"

" O father ! do not mock me thus. To thee my spirit cleaves.
The railing Shimeis pain me not, but thy least whisper grieves.
The noise and strife are not by me ; my Lord's reproach I bear ;
And in the scandal of His Cross I also have my share :
They seek to drive me from the land, a hissing and a scorn.
O father ! hear and pity me ; my heart with grief is torn !"

The old man softened as the dew, and Renwick's hand he takes,
"Tis a bloody land, a treacherous time ; we walk on asps and
snakes.

Sit down by me, and tell me o'er the story of thy life,
For well I know that cruel words cut sharper than the knife."
He leant upon the truckle-bed ; whilst, keener than a lance,
The old man watched him with an eye, before whose searching
glance

The traitor and deceiver oft like drunken men had reeled,
And all their leper-spots laid bare, so long and well concealed.
But Renwick's pure and noble mind with meekness met the gaze,
With look as sweet as the lark doth greet the morning's first
bright rays ;

And, leaning on the truckle-bed, old memories stirred again,
And rushed upon his parched soul like a summer burst of rain.

He told how, from his mother's womb, he was vowed unto the Lord,
And from his childhood he was taught to lisp the Holy Word ;
What bright celestial glimpses in his youthful dreams he saw.
Then how his tender heart was wrung by the terrors of the law ;
What demon-shapes danced round his steps, and held his
thoughts in thrall,

And the candle of the Lord went out, and blackness covered all ;
And all this goodly frame of things was a dry and barren clod,
Till, gasping in his agony, he groaned, "There is no God !"

But as the watchman, spent and chill with watching out the
night,

Sees earth again put on her robes of pure and natural light ;
Even so on Renwick's darkened soul the Sun of Righteousness,
With healing on His wings, arose to brighten and to bless.

He told how Scotland's gaping wounds made his young heart
to bleed,

And he prayed that God would give him strength to help her
in her need :

How 'mid the sobbing crowd he stood who saw old Cargill die,
Then forth he rushed to solitude, and spread his hands on high,
And sealed his mother's vow in heaven, the aged, widowed one ;
The strong in heart, the great of faith, who loved her only son,
Oh ! tenderly, most tenderly ! yet ever longed to see
That where the " Crown and Covenant " led, his post or march
should be.

He sought the faithful remnant out, the brave contending band,
Who would not yield to Antichrist dominion in the land,
But homes forsook, and spoiling took, in rocks and caverns lay,
And worshipped there their fathers' God, and looked for coming
day,

And made a rampart of their hearts, their life-blood freely gave,
To save the Zion of their souls from being Babylon's slave.

He told how, after prayer and fast, and wrestling with the
Lord,

They with one voice had chosen him to labour in the Word ;

How godly men in Groningen had laid on him their hands,
And how the Spirit made him free, untying all his bands.
Through storm and danger and man's wrath, he reached his
native shore,

And still, amid reproach and grief, his Master's cross he bore ;
And he lifted up the standard where the Darmead waters flow,
When Muldron's wild and desolate heights lay thick with drifted
snow,

He lifted up the standard where old Cargill laid it down,
Where Cameron left it as he rose to wear the martyr's crown.
To the hungering souls in Scotland he had broke the bread of
life,

And shunned all innovations and all bitter roots of strife ;
But chief of all, his aim had been to guard with faithful hand
The Gospel's native purity, and the Covenants of the land.
Because he could not dance in step with the piping of the times,
And dreaded all compliances as heaven-defying crimes,
Those that his brethren should have been did all affection
quench,

Nay, cut him from all fellowship even as a rotten branch,
"Schismatic ! Jesuit ! whited Devil !" these were the names
that rung

From the Presbyterian Issachars who had lost the ancient
tongue ;

And afar in mountain solitudes, no succour, no relief,
He had kept the flock together, in danger, storm, and grief.

While thus he told how best-loved friends were severed from
his side,

Tears of deep agony gushed forth, and mournfully he cried :

“ Woe’s me that I in Mesech am a sojourner so long !

That I in tabernacles dwell to Kedar that belong !

My soul with him that hateth peace hath long a dweller
been ;

I am for peace, but when I speak, for battle they are keen !”

“ My son ! my son !” with broken voice the dying saint ex-
claimed,

“ How sore, how undeservedly hast thou, my son, been blamed !

And I, too, have defamed thee, I ; but I am punished now,

When thou standest at my dying bed with clear and open
brow,

A chosen vessel of the Lord, which I have sought to shiver :

Lord, from this weak and erring clay make haste and me
deliver !

I am an old man, soon to leave this troubled scene below ;

Then stay a while, and speak with me, and pray before you go.”

And he spake with him most cheeringly, with a reverent, tender
love,

And he prayed as they alone can pray whose hearts’ home is
above !

He prayed that, in His own good time, the Lord would grant
release,

And let His servant, worn with age and toil, depart in peace ;
That all his works and sufferings with acceptance might be
crowned,

And the fruit, in ages yet to come, might gloriously abound.
The old man wrapt him in his arms, and kissed him, brow and
cheek,

Whilst Renwick pressed the clay-cold lips, and strove his love
to speak ;

But the fountain of his soul was stirred, and he sobbed, in heart
oppressed,

And down he sank, and his burning head he laid on Peden's
breast.

“ Weep not for me, my son ! in peace and quietness I die,
As here beneath my brothers' roof in Auchincloich I lie,
Not far from Ayr's old murmurings, by bank, and rock, and
tree,

Mine eyes shall close safe from my foes, then do not weep for me !
But oh ! the young and tender Vine ! with its first and precious
birth,

The ruthless spoiler lays its boughs and promise in the earth.
Long, long and bitter could I weep to think of such a sight.
Ah, Scotland ! it is yet to come, thy darkest hour of
night !”

Whilst the words were trembling on his lips, a startled look he cast,
As if the rustling of a wing had o'er his body passed :

He raised him on the bed, with strength which time had little
 marred,

Like a rock whose sides the winter storms and mountain streams
 have scarred.

Like Elijah on the mount he sat, and turned an earnest ear,
As hearkening to the still small voice whose whisp'rings floated
 near :

With utterance chok'd, yet stern, he spake, and his eye with
 splendour glistened,

And Renwick trembled as he gazed, then bowed his head and
 listened:

“ A bloody sword ! a bloody sword !
 Forged and furbish'd by the Lord !
 For thee, O Scotland ! 'tis unsheathed,
 From the martyr'd saints bequeathed !

“ Many a weary mile and day
 Shall ye walk in Galloway,
 By the Nith and by the Clyde,
 Through Ayr's borders far and wide,
 And never see a chimney smoke,
 Never hear the crowing cock,
 But behold the desolation
 That must fall upon this nation !

“ Many a sweet conventicle,
In the glen and on the hill,
Hast thou had, O sinful land !
But another is at hand
That shall shake thee from thy day-dream !
Many a sermon, like the May-beam
Precious seasons, gracious dealings,
Holy, heavenly soul-revealings,
Have in by-past time been thine ;
God hath preached in love divine :
But because thou hast abhorred
The Law and Covenant of the Lord,
He shall preach by fire and sword !

“ Darker shades begin to thicken,
And the tyrant's rage shall quicken,
And the Church shall reel and stagger,
As hollow friends and cowards drag her.
From the west sea-bank to the east sea-bank,
Horseman prance and sabres clank ;
And not a gleam from sun or star
To tell the wanderers where they are !
The vain and false ones shall disown
Christ's sole kingly crown and throne ;
He shall be again denied,
And afresh be crucified,

And for a season He shall lie
 Buried ignominiously.
 But the stone shall be rolled back,
 And his winding-sheet shall crack,
 And he shall rise, the Mighty One !
 And His crown be as the sun,
 Shining o'er His gather'd host.
 Not a jewel shall be lost,
 Nor the golden ball be dim :
 Praise and glory be to Him !

“ Then the Remnant shall come forth
 From holes and caverns of the earth,
 And Scotland's widow'd Church look brave,
 And a ‘ bonny bairn-time ’ have !
 Her Maker shall her husband be,
 And her second progeny
 Outnumber and outstrip the first.
 But this house of Cain, accurst,
 Steeped in treachery and blood,
 Freedom, like a rolling flood,
 Shall sweep them hence for evermore
 From the throne and from the shore.
 Our Lord shall soon a feather twist
 From the wing of Antichrist ;

And this York, that treads down all,
Like a wither'd leaf shall fall ;
And never shall a Stuart reign
In this ransom'd land again.

“ Times of trouble, times of fear !
People of the Lord, keep near,
By patient waiting, fervent prayer,
To the Lord, whose seal ye bear ;
For only praying folk can pass
Through all this storm and wretchedness !”

He sank forwearied, like a steed which at length hath reached
the goal,

His flesh too weak to bear the throes of that rapt prophetic soul :
Some moments as in swoon he lies, with strange low mutterings,
As one on whom the shadows press of dread unearthly things ;
But again he lifts his eyes that beam with a beatific grace,
And with a father's yearning heart he looks on Renwick's face.
“ 'Tis time we part ! Not far from hence the Slayer hath a den,
And I know the night-shades gather thick around old Blaxeden.

“ Rough is the path before thee, planted thick with thorns and
briers,

And a spirit, meek and fearless, and a wary step requires ;
And thy feet are soft and tender yet : but keep a constant eye
Unto thy Master's will, and thou shalt quit the stage with joy ;

While they who walk with stately step, and bend their necks in
pride,

Shall soil their garments, and be fain their squalid looks to hide.

Who trust in self are forth at sea in a frail and broken ship ;

Who build their Church upon the breath of a prince or courtier's lip,

Are building on the shifting sand, or on the fleeting cloud,

And stand they may, so long as they are tools to serve the proud.

Trust thou for ever in the Lord ! for everlasting strength

Is in His arm, and He shall rise to plead thy cause at length !”

And he drew him nearer, and he placed his hand upon his head,

And, with a pause of inward prayer, these solemn words he said :

“ God be thy sun and shield ! Farewell ! And when we meet
again,

It will not be as now, my son, in peril and in pain !”

And slowly Renwick left the bed, his finger raised above,

The old man's eye still following him with looks and tears of
love !

