

Ladies of the Covenant

Mrs. James Guthrie, Mrs. James Durham, and Mrs. John Carstairs

We shall here cluster together some notices of three excellent women, ministers' wives, who lived during the persecution - Jane Ramsay, the widow of Mr. James Guthrie, who suffered martyrdom in 1661; Margaret Mure, the widow of Mr. James Durham, one of the ministers of the High Church, Glasgow; and Janet Mure, wife of Mr. John Carstairs, also minister of the High Church, Glasgow. Many facts or incidents of their lives have not indeed been spared by the mouldering hand of time; but even the few which remain are not without interest, particularly when we consider the relation in which these ladies stood to three of the most eminent men who adorned the Church of Scotland during the 17th century, by the lustre of their talent, the fervour of their piety, and their unswerving faithfulness to the cause of God. These women were in every respect suitable companions for the eminent men to whom they were united. Distinguished for enlightened and ardent piety, they proved mainsprings of encouragement and strength to them in the work of the Lord, by their conversation, their demeanour and counsel; and having taken up the cross, instead of tempting them to unfaithfulness to conscience, when, trials and difficulties in doing the will of God arose, they encouraged them to steadfastness and resolution, exhibiting that humility, patience, and self-sacrifice, which constitute the genuine spirit of the cross. All of them suffered more or less in the cause of Presbytery, and they thanked God that "unto them it was given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."

MRS. JAMES GUTHRIE was more severely tried than the other two. She was the second lady, whom the prelatie persecution made a widow, [*The Marchioness of Argyll was the first.*] Mr. Guthrie having been condemned by the Parliament, to be hanged at the cross of Edinburgh as a traitor, on the 1st of June 1661, and his head thereafter to be struck off and affixed on the Nether Row; which sentence was executed in all its parts. The grounds on which he was condemned, were his owning the "Western Remonstrance," "The Causes of God's Wrath," &c.; but Middleton, who had the chief hand in urging on the proceedings, was actuated by personal malice towards Guthrie, who, in 1650, had carried, in the Commission of the Church, a motion for his excommunication, and who, by appointment of the commission, had publicly pronounced the sentence in his own church at Stirling. On that occasion Mrs. Guthrie exhibited, what was the prevalent governing principle of her life, that strict conscientiousness, which, laying consequences out of view, looks only to the call of duty. When on the morning of the Sabbath, on which Mr. Guthrie was to pronounce the sentence against Middleton, a messenger from the king, or, according to some, from a nobleman, arrived at his house, just as he was about to go to church, desiring him to delay pronouncing it, she said to him, on observing him perplexed, "My heart, what the Lord gives you light and clearness to do, that do, without giving a positive answer to the messenger." The high christian character of this lady is attested in the farewell letter which Mr. Guthrie addressed to her from his prison, on the day on which he was executed. This letter is interesting, both as a relict of a dying martyr, and as a memorial of the lowly piety and supreme devotion to duty, which characterized the person to whom it is affectionately written. It also indicates the sources of comfort suggested to her mind, in her trying circumstances. It is as follows: -

"MY HEART, - Being within a few hours to lay down my life for the testimony of Jesus Christ, I do send these few lines as the last obedience of unfeigned and spotless affection which I bear unto you, not only as one flesh, but as a member with me of that blessed mystical body of the Lord; for I trust you are, and that God who hath begun his good work in you, will also perfect it and bring it to an end, and give you life and salvation. Whatever may be your infirmities and weakness, yet the grace of God shall be sufficient for you, and his strength shall be perfected in your weakness. To me you have been a very kind and faithful yoke-fellow, and not a hinderer but a helper in the work of the Lord. I do bear you this testimony as all the recompense I can now leave you with: -

In all the trials I have met with in the work of the ministry these twenty years past, which have not been few, and that from aggressors of many sorts, upon the right hand and upon the left, you were never a tempter of me to depart away from the living God, and from the way of my duty to comply with an evil course, or to hearken to the counsels of flesh and blood, for avoiding the cross, and for gaining the profit and preferment of a present world. You have wrought much with your hands for furnishing bread to me and to my children, and was always willing that I should show hospitality, especially to those that bore the image of God. These things I mention not to puff you up, but to encourage you under your present affliction and distress, being persuaded that God will have regard unto you and unto the children of my body, which I leave unto your care, that they may be bred up in the knowledge of the Lord. Let not your wants and weaknesses discourage you: there is power, riches, and abundance with God, both as to the things of the body and things of the soul; and he will supply all your wants and carry through. It is like to be a most trying time, but cleave you to God and keep his way, without casting away your confidence; fear not to be drowned in the depths of the troubles that may attend this land; God will hide you under his shadow, and keep you in the hollow of his hand. Be sober and of a meek spirit; strive not with Providence, but be subject to him who is the Father of spirits. Decline not the cross, but embrace it as your own. Love all that love the Lord, and delight in their fellowship. Give yourself unto prayer, and be diligent in reading the Holy Scriptures. Wait on the ordinances, and have them in great esteem as the appointed means of God for your salvation. Join the exercise of piety and repentance together, and manifest your faith in the fruits of sincere obedience and of a gospel conversation. Value your conscience above your skin. Be not solicitous, although you know not wherewith to clothe you and your children, or wherewith to dine; God's providences and promises are a true, rich, and never-failing portion. Jesus Christ be all your salvation and all your desire! You, I recommend unto Him, and Him unto you: My Heart! I recommend you to the eternal love of Jesus Christ. I am helped of God, and hope I shall be helped to the end. Pray for me while I am here, and praise with me hereafter. God be with you! - I am yours,

“ JAMES GUTHRIE.”

“Edinburgh Tolbooth, June 1st, 1661.”

This letter was calculated to arm Mrs. Guthrie's mind with fortitude and submission under the cruel and ignominious death of her husband. Other considerations would conspire in bringing into exercise the same christian graces. Though condemned as a traitor, he had committed nothing worthy of death, but fell a martyr for keeping the commandment of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. He encountered death with an unshrinking courage, which ranks with that of the most heroic of prophets and apostles. It was an alleviating circumstance, too, to reflect that his self-devotion in the cause of Christ procured for him, as it deserved, the affection, honour, and admiration of the wise and good, who regarded his death as a judicial murder. Nor were the religious ladies of that time wanting in paying to him the tribute of their respectful and admiring homage.* Though these considerations were fitted to mitigate her sorrow, yet the tragedy of his death, in all its appalling circumstances, would tend at first to overpower the mind, and to exclude from it reflection on such alleviating topics.

* In proof of this, the following instance may be given. After Guthrie had been executed, his headless corpse was put into a coffin and carried to the old kirk aisle, to be prepared for interment, by several devout ladies of quality who had tendered their friendly services. The dressing of the dead is always solemn, but the performance of this duty to the mortal remains of an honoured martyr who has sealed the truths of God with his blood, is associated with feelings of profound veneration, It was so on the present occasion. Some of the ladies who were so engaged, dipped their napkins in the blood that flowed from Guthrie's mangled body. Sir Archibald Primrose, Lord Register, observing what they did, asked them their reason for so doing, and charged them with imitating the superstition of the papists, who collect and worship the relicts of saints. “No,” said one of them, “we are not actuated by superstitious motives, we do not intend to worship the martyr's blood, but when we go to the throne of grace we will hold up that blood to God, that it may cry for vengeance on those who have most cruelly shed it.” During the performance of their solemn offices, a respectable young gentleman, unknown at the time to any of them, but afterwards discovered to be Mr. George Stirling, who became an eminent surgeon in Edinburgh, came in with a phial of fragrant ointment, and, without uttering a word, poured upon the corpse the ointment, which diffused through the whole building with a most delightful odour. “God bless you, Sir,” exclaimed one of the ladies, “for this labour of love which you have shown to the slain body of a servant of Jesus Christ.” Bowing respectfully to the ladies, he silently retired. “Janet Bruce,” says Wodrow, “who was Dr. Sir Thomas Burnet's lady, if I have not forgotten, was one of these gentlewomen that put their napkins in Mr. Guthrie's blood.” - Wodrow's *Analecta*, vol. iii, p. 103. M'Crie's *Sketches of Scottish Church History*, 2d edition, p. 396.

Mrs. Guthrie and her children were left in poor circumstances. But God, who in his providence exercises a special care over the fatherless children and widows of his martyred servants, raised up for them kind friends. Among others, Sir George Maxwell of Pollock took a particular interest in their temporal welfare. The following anecdote is highly honourable to the liberality of that benevolent, gentleman, and interesting as illustrating the unexpected and remarkable way in which God has sometimes supplied the wants of the widows and orphans of his departed saints in their distress. "I am assured," says Wodrow, "by a good hand that had it from Mr. George Lang, who was employed, that Sir George Maxwell of Pollock, a little after Mr. Guthrie's execution, hearing his relict was in want, called for Mr. George Lang, his chaplain, and told him that he was mighty uneasy since he had heard Mrs. Guthrie was in straits, and he had little money by him, but took out a purse of gold, most of it old Scots coins, of which he was very curious, and told him he would rather have sent, if he had had it by him, twice the value of it in ordinary money, but he could not and would not delay, and gave it him, and sent him in to Edinburgh express with it and a letter to Mrs. Guthrie. It was to the value of five hundred or six hundred merks. [*That is, between £28 and £33 sterling.*] Mr. Lang went in by Glasgow and borrowed five or six hundred merks, and left the gold in pledge, carried in and delivered the money to Mrs. Guthrie." [*Wodrow's Analecta, vol. i., p. 305. Mr. Lang had no authority to pledge the gold coins, but knowing the value which Sir George Maxwell set upon them, he did so that they might be recovered when Sir George got a supply of money.*]

In the beginning of the year 1666, Mrs. Guthrie was put to trouble on account of a book entitled "An Apologetical Relation of the Particular Sufferings of the Faithful Ministers and Professors of the Church of Scotland since August, 1660," which was written by Mr. John Brown, minister of Wamphray at the Restoration, and who, on being banished his majesty's dominions for faithfully adhering to his principles, took refuge in Holland. This able work was printed in Holland in 1665, and a number of copies were sent over to this country. The government being informed of the character of the book, and of its being circulated in several parts of the kingdom, and having, upon perusing it themselves, found it, to use their own language, "to be full of seditious, treasonable, and rebellious principles, contrived, of purpose, to traduce the king's authority and government, the proceedings of the late parliament, and the king's privy council," they resolved to put it down. As it vindicates at length the Marquis of Argyll and Mr. James Guthrie, the first victims who, after the Restoration, were immolated at the shrine of the Moloch of personal revenge and arbitrary power, and exposes the illegality, injustice, and cruelty of the proceedings of the government against them, it was natural that Mrs. Guthrie should procure a copy of the book. The copy she had got being found in her house, probably when it was searched for some of the Covenanters - such persons, from her relation to Mr. Guthrie, and from her known character, being suspected of resorting to or taking shelter under her roof - she and her daughter, Sophia Guthrie, were brought before the privy council on the 8th of February, 1666. On appearing before them, they were required to declare upon oath what they knew as to the author of the book, and to discover from whom they had received it. This they refused to do, upon which the council sentenced them both to be sent to Shetland, there to be confined during the council's pleasure, and to be kept close prisoners till they should be transported to the place of their banishment. These proceedings were not only harsh, but illegal. No law had as yet been published against the "Apologetical Relation." It was only on the day on which this sentence was passed upon Mrs. Guthrie and her daughter that the council emitted their proclamation against it, ordaining that, upon the 14th of February instant, it should be publicly burned on the High-street of Edinburgh, near to the market cross, by the hand of the hangman, and that all possessing it resident on the south of the Tay; should deliver the same to the sheriffs of the respective shires or their deputies, to be by them transmitted to the clerk of the privy council not later than the last day of February instant, and those on the north of Tay not later than the 21st of March next, under the penalty of two thousand pounds Scots money. It is obvious, then, that as at the time when the "Apologetical Relation" was discovered in Mrs. Guthrie's house, there was no law in existence forbidding any to have it, its being found in her possession was no crime against any existing statute, and that consequently the sentence pronounced against her and her daughter was arbitrary and illegal. "Where no law is, there is no transgression."

They lay in prison till the next meeting of the council, which was on the 2d of March. To that meeting they presented a petition praying that their confinement might be altered to some place upon the Continent, probably

intending, should they be allowed, to remove to Holland, which, from the number of their expatriated county men resident there, as well as from the character of the country itself, though it is not one of the best of climates, they would have felt a more eligible place of banishment than so remote, solitary, cold and unhealthy a part of the world as Shetland. The council referred their petition to his majesty's commissioner, with power to do in the matter as he should find cause. [Wodrow's History, vol. ii., p. 7.]

What punishment the commissioner inflicted upon them we are not directly informed. Mrs. Guthrie, however, was banished for some years from Edinburgh. This appears from a petition which she presented to the privy council about the beginning of January, 1669, 'showing that her only son was in Edinburgh under a sad distemper, to the hazard of his life, and therefore supplicating that, notwithstanding her confinement, she might be licensed for some time to come to Edinburgh and wait upon her son.' The council, at their meeting of the 15th of January, "upon consideration of this petition, and of a testimonial subscribed by Dr. Burnet, which was at the same time presented, allow the petitioner to come to Edinburgh, and to reside therein until the fifteenth day of February next, to the effect above mentioned." [*Register of Acts of Privy Council.*]

Here we lose sight of Mrs. Guthrie in the history of the persecution; nor have we discovered how long she lived subsequently to this period. We shall therefore close this sketch with a brief notice of her only son referred to above, whose name was William. At the time of his father's death he was a child not more than four or five years old. Yearning over him with all the affection of a parent's heart, Guthrie, in a last interview, took him upon his knee, and gave him such religious advices as were suited to his infant mind. "Willie," said he, among other things, "though your comrades should tell you, and cast it up to you, that your father was hanged, think not shame of it, for it is upon a good cause." But William was so young as not to be aware of the tragic fate of his father, and as scarcely to be restrained from playing in the streets on the very day of his father's execution. When, however, he grew up to boyhood, he became thoughtful and serious, While other boys were enjoying their youthful sports, William was to be seen at the Nether Bow Port, where the head of his dear father was fixed on a spike, a monument of the martyr's heroism, and of the government's injustice; and there looking up with rivetted gaze to the manly countenance, the tragedy of his father's execution was presented to his imagination, as if in all its living reality. Often would he return to the spot and gaze upon the spectacle, as if he could never become weary of gazing upon it; and, on returning home to his mother, when she inquired where he had been, his usual reply was, "I have been seeing my father's head." He remembered or was told his father's last advices to him; he read his father's last speech from the scaffold, a copy of which the martyr subscribed and sealed, and gave to his friends, to be kept for his son until he became older; and the mantle of his father seemed to have fallen upon him. As he grew up, his habits of seriousness increased; he was much employed in meditation, study, and prayer. [*Wodrow's Analecta, vol. iii., p. 103. Life of Guthrie in Free Church Publications, pp. 172-175.*] Having devoted himself to the work of the ministry, he prosecuted the preparatory studies with success, and gave indications of much future usefulness; but, being always of a delicate constitution, he was cut off when about to receive license as a preacher of the gospel. By his early death his mother's hopes of seeing him useful in the church below were disappointed. It was not, however, the will of God that he should be employed in His service on earth, and she doubtless bowed with submission to the sovereign and wise determination of the Supreme Ruler of all things, finding in this a new influence to attract her to heaven, and a new motive to quicken her diligence in making preparation for it.

MRS. JAMES DURHAM, whose maiden name was Margaret Mure, was the fourth daughter of William Mure, Esq. of Glanderston, by his first wife Jean Blair, daughter of a gentleman of that name in the West.* She was born August 26, 1618. Enjoying the inestimable blessing of religious parents, who both set before her a good example, and trained her up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, she became at an early period of life the subject of the saving work of the Holy Spirit. Educated too in the strictest principles of Presbytery, of which her father was a warm supporter, she continued through life to maintain them, in honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report. She was married first to the famous Mr. Zachary Boyd, minister of the Barony church of

* Besides Mrs. Durham and a daughter, Jean, who died in infancy, Mr. Mure of Glanderston had, by his first wife, other two daughters, Ursula, who was married to William Ralston of that ilk, and Jean, who was married to Mr. James Hamilton of Hallcraigs, a nephew of Lord Claneboy: and by his second wife, Jean Hamilton, sister to Lord Viscount Claneboy, he had Janet, to be next noticed, who was married to Mr. John Carstairs; Elizabeth, who was married to Alexander Dunlop, minister of Paisley; and Agnes, who was married to William Porterfield of Quarrelton. All these ladies were eminent for piety in their day. For some notices of Mrs. Ralston, see Woodrow's *Analecta*, vol. iii. pp. 18, 20; and Mr. John Carstairs' *Letters*, pp. 159-161. In *Rutherford's Letters*, White and Kennedy's edition, published 1848, there is a letter of Rutherford's to this lady, printed for the first time (p. 716). Elizabeth, the wife of Mr. Dunlop, for being present at a house conventicle in Edinburgh, in November, 1676, was imprisoned by order of the Privy Council, till she found caution, under a thousand merks, to remove from the town of Edinburgh, and six miles around it. - Wodrow's *History*, vol. ii., p. 335.

Glasgow, and next to the still more celebrated Mr. James Durham, as his second wife. But she became a widow a second time in 1658, Durham having died on the 25th of June that year, in the 36th year of his age. She survived him more than thirty years, living during that long period in a state of widowhood. Some time after his death, she appears to have changed the place of her residence to Edinburgh. At least she was residing there in 1666, [*Mr. William Veitch, in his Memoirs, (p. 38,) states that when sent on a perilous mission to Edinburgh by the Covenanters, previous to the battle of Pentland Hills, he intended to reside all night in the house of Mrs. Durham, which was in Bristo Street.*] and subsequently during the period of the persecution.

After Mr. Durham's death she carefully preserved his manuscript lectures and sermons, with a view to their being published for general usefulness, and many of them were actually published. Among these may be mentioned his *Exposition of the Song of Solomon*, to which she has prefixed an epistle dedicatory, signed and apparently written by herself, to the Viscountess of Kenmure; and his *Treatise on the Ten Commandments*. This latter work, from its very nature, would be regarded with jealousy by a persecuting government, whose whole policy was in direct opposition to the law of God, and some difficulty was experienced when it was first printed, in obtaining permission to its being circulated in Scotland, there being then no such thing as the freedom of the press in our land. Having got it printed in London, Mrs. Durham presented a petition to the lords of the privy council, praying them to allow it to be imported from England and sold in Scotland. The council's answer to her petition is embodied in the following act: - "Edinburgh, 4th November, 1675. The lords of his majesty's privy council having considered a petition presented by Margaret Mure, relict of Mr. James Durham, late minister at Glasgow, do recommend to the Bishop of Edinburgh to revise a book written by the petitioner's husband, entitled, *A Practical Exposition of the Ten Commandments*, which is already printed at London, and to report his opinion thereanent to the council, that thereafter they may give such order in favour of the petitioner concerning the said book as they shall think fit, and in the meantime discharge and prohibit all printers, stationers, and others to reprint or import any copies of the said book, under the pain of confiscation of the same, and such other pains as the council shall think fit to inflict, and appoint intimation to be made hereof to the stationers, printers, and others, to the effect foresaid." [*Register of Acts of Privy Council.*] As might have been expected, Mrs. Durham adhered to the faithful ministers, who, for nonconformity, had been ejected from their charges to make way for the establishment of prelacy. And maintaining the freedom of Christ's ambassadors to dispense the ordinances of the gospel, not only without licenses from the civil magistrate, but even when the civil magistrate has peremptorily discharged them to preach, baptize or perform any of the duties of the ministerial office, she had too much principle and spirit not to act upon these sentiments. She was accordingly not only a frequenter of conventicles, but an encourager of these interdicted meetings, so far as to allow them to be held in her own house. For a considerable time this was not known to the authorities of Edinburgh, or it was overlooked by the town major, who was in the habit of accepting money as a bribe, not to interfere with the private worshipping assemblies of the nonconformists in the city. When, however, the news of the tragical death of Archbishop Sharp, which took place May 3, 1679, had reached Edinburgh, the government becoming greatly alarmed and irritated, such as kept conventicles in their own houses, or frequented them, were exposed in an increased degree to danger and hardship. On the 4th of May, the day after the Archbishop's death, a meeting for sermon was held at night in Mrs. Durham's house. The number present was about thirty, and the most of them were her near relations, their children and servants. The

preacher was Mr. William Hamilton, a young gentleman of eminent piety, and the brother of Mr. James Hamilton of Hallcraig, who was married to Mrs. Durham's full sister Jean. When engaged in religious services this peaceful meeting was furiously broke in upon by the town major with a party of soldiers, who, seizing all present, committed them to prison. Mrs. Durham and her sister, Mrs. John Carstairs, who was one of the hearers, were, with the rest, imprisoned in the tolbooth for some nine or ten days, when on their petitioning the privy council, an order was granted for their being set at liberty. The act of the council is as follows: - "Edinburgh, 13 May, 1679. The lords of his majesty's privy council, having considered a petition of Margaret Mure, relict of Mr. James Durham, and Janet Mure, spouse to Mr. John Carstairs, for themselves and their children and servants, and divers other persons, prisoners in the tolbooth of Edinburgh, for being present at a conventicle kept in the house of the said Margaret Mure, upon the 4th instant, supplicating, that in regard of their miserable and poor condition, the council would give order for their liberty, the said lords do declare the petitioners free of any restraint or imprisonment by their warrant, and remit to the magistrates of Edinburgh to take such course with them as they shall think fit." [*Decrees of Privy Council.*] Wodrow observes that it was with difficulty that some of their friends got the council to pass this act in their favour. [*Wodrow's History, vol. iii., p. 10.*]

For this conventicle the magistrates of Edinburgh were fined by the privy council in the sum of £50 sterling, according to the fifth act of the second session, of the second parliament of Charles II., by which act it is expressly provided and declared, that "magistrates of burghs are liable, for every conventicle kept in their burghs, to such fines as the lords of privy council shall think fit to impose." [*Decrees of Privy Council, 15th May, 1679.*]

But the preacher, Mr. Hamilton, was most severely dealt with. His close imprisonment and harsh treatment so affected his health, that after some weeks he became dangerously ill of cholera, and though his friends presented a petition to the privy council, praying that he might be allowed to go to the country for the recovery of his health, and offered to give bond under whatever penalty they chose for his compearing, if his life should be spared, yet this petition, notwithstanding its being accompanied with the attestations of two physicians as to his extreme danger, was not only rejected, but the council assured his friends, that they intended to prosecute him for house conventicles at their next meeting. Before, however, the day of that meeting arrived, this excellent young man died in prison; and thus he may be said to have fallen a martyr to the free preaching of the gospel; for the only charge they could bring against him, was his delivering a sermon to a few friends in the house of a relative, without being licensed or authorized by a bishop, and his death being caused by the inhuman manner in which he was treated, the guilt of it may be as justly laid upon the government, as if they had sentenced him to be hanged at the Grassmarket. [*Wodrow's History, vol. iii., p. 54.*]

The following anecdotes concerning Mrs. Durham, may not be deemed unworthy of a place in this brief sketch, as they serve both to illustrate her character and principles. She was in the habit, it would appear, of visiting such of her friends and others as were imprisoned for their stedfast adherence to Presbytery. Nor were her visits always confined to those of whose sentiments on religious and ecclesiastical questions she could altogether approve. On one occasion she went to prison to see some females who belonged to the fanatical sect called "The Sweet Singers," not because she approved of their opinions and practices, but because she felt for them as deluded persons, who had been driven to frenzy by the violence of persecution. In this instance, however, she was far from meeting with a cordial reception. Law, when recording the imprisonment of five men and ten women of this sect, who were taken about Cather Moor of Borrowstounness, says, "These people were so deluded of Satan, as that they did not work, contrary to that, 1 Thes. iv. 11; nor would they eat any meat given them by the council, nor drink anything that paid excise; and when honest women, ministers' wives, came to see them, they began to rail upon them and upbraid them with the name of Jezebel, and called them reprobates. Mr. Durham's wife, and Mr. William Guthrie's wife, were so upbraided." [*Law's Memorials, pp. 185, 186.*] On visiting Mr. Robert Baillie of Jerviswood in prison, she met with a very different character, and was both refreshed and instructed by his heavenly spirit and christian conversation. "When Mrs. Durham came to him that morning before he got his sentence, he said he was never better, and within a very little time he would be well beyond conception. He said they are going to send me in pieces and quarters through all the country; but let them hagg and hew all my body

in as many pieces as they please, I am not much concerned about that; for I know assuredly there shall be nothing of me lost, but all these members shall be wonderfully gathered, and shall all be made like his glorious body, the body of his glory.” [Wodrow’s *Analecta*, vol. iii., p. 79.]

Mrs. Durham was accustomed to attend not only house conventicles, but also field meetings, which, as the persecution advanced, became necessary, from the vast multitudes who assembled to hear the gospel. The acts of Parliament, and manifold proclamations of the privy council, by which these meetings were prohibited did not frighten her from being present at them; nor did the opprobrious names of “unlawful conventicles,” “seminaries of Separation,” and “rendezvous of rebellion,” applied to them by the government, convince her that it was criminal to assemble in the open air to hear the glad tidings of salvation, when she remembered that her Saviour, in the fields and on the mountain’s brow, taught the multitudes who crowded around him to receive the lessons of wisdom from his lips. The following anecdote, relating to her opinion of some of the field preachers, has been preserved by Wodrow: - “Mr. Patrick Simson,” says he, “told me that Mrs. Durham, when reading some sermons of the high-fliers, and when hearing some of the more violent of the field preachers, said that she observed just such a difference between the field preachings and those she was used to, as she did between the apocrypha and the bible when she read them.” [Wodrow’s *Analecta*, vol. i., p. 324.] Mrs. Durham seemed to refer to such of the field preachers as, more zealous than wise, broke forth in their sermons into bitter invectives and uncharitable censures against the indulged ministers. She also, apparently, had an eye to the indigested and superficial theology of their discourses. The former was provoked, though it could not be vindicated, from the pretext which the acceptance of the indulgence, by their more compromising brethren, gave to the government to persecute the non-indulged with aggravated severity. The latter is best apologized for from the little leisure they had for reading and study, in consequence of their being constantly driven about from place to place. It is not, however, alleged that she pronounced an unfavourable judgment on all the field preachers, - a sweeping sentence, which could not have been supported by facts, - the most of them being far from inclining to extremes, while many of them, as Welsh, Blackadder, Riddell, and others, preached the gospel with much acceptance, as well as with remarkable success, including among their hearers and converts not a few of the best educated in the country.

Another anecdote, recorded by the same industrious collector, concerning this lady and two ministers, illustrates how galling and oppressive was the yoke of arbitrary and prelatic domination to the Presbyterians, and how ardently they longed for deliverance. Writing, in 1731, Wodrow says, “In the year 1685 or 1686, Mr. Samuel Arnot died at Edinburgh, after all the persecutions and sufferings he had gone through since Pentland, in much peace and joy. There was, generally, much company that came and saw him on his death bed. Among others, Mr. James Rowat, minister at Kilmarnock before the Restoration, came to see him, and, among other things, he asked Mr. Arnot if he had any hopes the Church of Scotland would get out from under this dark cloud she had been under for twenty-five years or thereby. The other answered he had, and he was assured she would. ‘Yea,’ added he, ‘I know more, and that is, that you shall live to see and partake of the church’s delivery.’ And so it came to pass. Mr. Rowat lived till 1690, or an year or two later, it may be, and saw that great work of God at the Revolution. Amongst others present when this was spoken, that good woman, Mrs. Durham, relict of Mr. Zachary Boyd and Mr. James Durham, was there, and she got up and said to Mr. Rowat, ‘Mr. James, I am younger than you, I hope I shall see the day of delivery as well as you,’ and she danced and skipped for joy; and so it came about. I was at her burial, at Glasgow, about the year 1692 or 1693.” [Wodrow’s *Analecta*, vol. iv., p. 285.]

MRS. JOHN CARSTAIRS, sister of the preceding, was the eldest daughter of William Mure, Esq. of Glanderston, by his second wife, Jean Hamilton, a daughter of Hans Hamilton, vicar of Dunlop, and sister to Lord Viscount Claneboy. She was born February 25, 1625. Enjoying, like Mrs. Durham, the blessing of pious parents, she early devoted herself to God; and, like her, she also inherited from them a zealous attachment to Presbyterian principles. She was married to Mr. John Carstairs in 1647 or 1648, when he had been just settled, or when he was about

to be settled minister of Cathcart, where, however, he did not long remain, having been translated to the High Church of Glasgow in 1650. To her eminent christian character Mr. Carstairs frequently bears testimony, many years after they were united in marriage. In a letter to her, dated November 25, 1662, he thus writes: - "I desire to bless Him that ever He was pleased to cast our lot to be together, and that he found you out a help meet for me: you were never a temptation to me, nor an obstruction to me either in my ministerial or christian course, though you have been little furthered and much obstructed by me; but He can make up out of the riches of his grace to you what you have been now these fifteen years at a loss in by me." [*Letters of Mr. John Carstairs, &c., pp. 91, 92.*] And in another letter to her, dated August 12, 1664, he pronounces upon her a still higher encomium: - "I desire to bless the Lord for you have been to me indeed a meet and faithful help, and if I had more improved your fellowship and counsel, your discreet and wise counsel, I am not ashamed to say it to you, I might have thriven better as a man, as a Christian, and as a minister. He might very justly, for my sins, deprive me of such a wife, such a mother, such a friend, such a counsellor, yea, of all relations, sweetly centred in such a one." [*Letters of Mr. John Carstairs, &c., p. 133.*]

In the correspondence between Mrs. Carstairs and her husband, after the persecution had commenced, we have a fine illustration of resolute adherence to duty amidst great temptations and dangers. Several of the letters which passed between them have come down to our day, and while from these it is manifest that Mr. Carstairs was a man of fortitude and magnanimity in the cause of Christ, it is equally apparent from them that Mrs. Carstairs was not inferior to her husband in these virtues.

When he began to be molested for his Presbyterian principles, Mr. Carstairs applied himself to the task of fortifying her mind for those hardships and sufferings which, without a direliction of duty, they could not escape. On receiving a summons, on the 15th of November, 1662, to appear before the privy council, writing to her from Hallcraig, on the very day on which he received it, he thus speaks: - "I hope, my dear, you can bear, through the grace that hath often strengthened you in difficulties that have occurred about me since we came together, to hear without vexation of mind, that I have this day got a charge to compear before the council this same day fourteen days, a double whereof I have sent you. It may be He will pity me and help me. The cause is good, and nothing at all disgraceful. O, to have a suitable frame every way! pray for it, and for sinless and inoffensive through-bearing. . . . Now, my heart, let me beseech you to take courage in the Lord, who hath given you a room in his heart, and will in due time give you a room amongst them that stand by the throne. Resolve to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. We may see this storm blow over, if kept faithful, and meet with higher and holier things." [*Letters of Mr. John Carstairs, &c., pp. 91, 92.*]

In like manner, when on his being summoned to appear in April, 1664, before the high commission court, for having been a witness to the dying testimony in favour of Presbytery, which his brother-in-law, Mr. James Wood, professor of divinity in the college of St. Andrews, left behind him, he fled, to escape the fury of Archbishop Sharp, which he had thus provoked, and hid himself for some time in Ireland and the west of Scotland, he thus encourages her, in a letter written from the place of his retreat, dated May 27, 1664: - "If at this next meeting [of the privy council] [*Mr. Carstairs, about the end of April, or the beginning of May, had also been summoned to appear before the privy council. - Wodrow's History, vol. i., p. 412.*] some men shall be cruel, and others shall disappoint us and prove vanity and a lie, think it not strange, neither let it trouble you. It's like we will have trouble in the world; but if we shall have peace in Him that hath overcome the world, we have reason to be of good cheer. Let us quietly and patiently wait for our sentence in these courts from God, which though as from men it should be unjust and cruel, yet as from God it will be just, holy, and, I hope, good." [*Letters of Mr. John Carstairs, &c., p. 120.*]

The high christian sentiments expressed in these extracts were not now for the first time presented to the attention of Mrs. Carstairs. They had long been familiar to her mind, and amidst the trials of the past she had practically exemplified them. "It does not a little satisfy and refresh me," says Mr. Carstairs in a letter to her, July 3, 1664, "that the Lord is graciously pleased to keep your own mind calm and quiet; and indeed it hath been his manner, to the commendation of his grace be it spoken, to bless you with somewhat of that mercy in most of the

difficulties you have been in Providence trusted with since our being together - a mercy indeed, and highly valuable, without which the least of difficulties will easily embitter a very well accommodated lot; nay, even the very apprehension of a difficulty.” [Letters of Mr. John Carstairs, &c., p. 126.] But having counted the cost of self-sacrifice, as well as estimated the rich reward of present peace and future glory, in becoming an humble follower of Christ, she was prepared for the endurance of severer trials than had hitherto been measured out to her; and when they befel her she encountered them with a high and holy heroism. On this subject let us hear her speak for herself. In a letter she addressed to Mr. Carstairs, without date, but evidently written when he was forced to flee for his connection with Mr. Wood’s dying testimony for Presbytery, we have a fine illustration of the strength and fearlessness of mind which true religion and a good cause are so well fitted to impart. She would not have him unnecessarily to expose himself to danger, but trusts that should he fall into the hands of his persecutors, grace would be given him to witness a good confession, She encourages him to bear with magnanimity the inconveniences of his wandering from place to place - to quit himself like a man and be strong; and she thanks God for having united her to a husband whom He counted worthy to suffer for His name’s sake. The following is the letter in which these noble sentiments are expressed:-

MY DEAREST AND MOST KIND FRIEND, - It was refreshing to me to have a line from you, but it troubled me to find you so heavy. He doeth well who hath found it meet to put us in heaviness for a season, finding that there was need of it. It did wound me when I read that in yours - your not being adverse to come here, which is thought by your friends very unmeet and unreasonable; for though you be very clear as to the cause, yet to cast yourself in such eminent hazard is a wrong, and I am persuaded you are not called to it, nay, you are called to the contrary; so hide as well as you can, and if it please the Lord so to order you be found out, which I wish may not be, I hope he shall glorify himself in you and carry you honourably through. Put not yourself to it while [until] the Lord bring you to it. I hope my request, which is so reasonable, shall prevail with you. My dear, weary not in wandering; it hath been the lot of many of his worthies to wander in caves and dens of the earth; and although your accommodation should be very bad, so that you cannot go about duties as you would, he counts your wandering better service to him than your preaching. My dear, a little while will put an end to all our troubles; as for myself, I had reason always to bless the Lord that ever I knew you, and this day I desire to bless him more than ever, that ever I was so nearly related to you, and that I have a husband wandering and suffering for the truth. Let us both bless him together for this. He might have given me one that was persecuting the truth. The Lord strengthen and confirm you! That commodity you desired cannot be gotten for the present, though they be most willing to give it. I hope the Lord shall provide another way; the bearer will show you all other things. The Lord’s blessing and protection be with you! and may He be near your soul with the consolations of his Spirit! - Farewell, my dear, I am your own,

J. C.”

[Letters of Mr. John Carstairs &c., p. 157.]

As a farther illustration of the heroic spirit which animated this lady; we may give another of her letters to Mr. Carstairs, which is without date, but which, as may be inferred from the allusion in the commencement, was written in the autumn of the year 1667, after he had been denounced a rebel and outlawed. It is as follows: -

“MY DEAREST FRIEND, - The bearer will show yon how all matters here go. The west country gentlemen and ministers, who were declared rebels, are now forfaulted.* I bless the Lord it nothing troubles me. A smile from God, and the lifting up the light of his countenance, can make up, and even doth make up, all the injuries men can do, so that ‘the lines are fallen to me in a most pleasant place, and I have a goodly heritage.’ I think my lot very far above the lot of my adversaries! Blessed be God, who made the difference; there being no cause, but even so because it pleased him. My dear, let us willingly cleave to him, and suffer for him. We owe him much. How much are we in his debt, who hath added this mercy to all the former mercies, that he has counted us worthy to suffer for his name’s sake? O for grace to be stedfast to the end, and that he would graciously pardon our unfaithfulness to him and to his cause and people! Alas! Zion’s condition lieth not near my heart as it should. J.C.” [Letters of Mr. John Carstairs, &c., p.160. See another of Mrs. Carstairs’ Letters in Appendix, no, iv.]

* The reference here is to a few country gentlemen in Renfrewshire, who had raised a small body of horse, to the number of about fifty, with the design of joining the Covenanters under Colonel Wallace, previous to their defeat at Pentland Hills; but who, on learning that Dalziel was between them and their friends, dispersed. Among these gentlemen were two of Mrs. Carstairs' sisters' husbands, the Laird of Ralston and Porterfield of Quarrelton. The ministers in this company, besides Mr. Carstairs, were Mr. Gabriel Maxwell, minister at Dundonald, and Mr. George Ramsay, minister at Kilmaurs. The greater number of these gentlemen, as well as many other individuals, and all these ministers, except Mr. Ramsay, together with several other ministers, were, by proclamation, declared rebels, on the 4th of December, 1666. On their being afterwards pursued by Sir John Nisbet, his Majesty's advocate, before the Justiciary Court, for treason, that court, on the 15th of August, 1667, upon their not appearing decerned them "to be denounced rebels, and their lands to fall to his majesty's use, as outlaws and fugitives from his majesty's laws;" and some of the gentlemen, though none of the ministers, were, on the 16th of that month, forfeited, in their absence, in life and fortune. - Wodrow's History, vol. ii., pp. 28, 36, 66, 67, 73-75.

Mrs. Carstairs had issue by her husband three sons and four daughters. Her son William, who became principal of the university of Edinburgh after the Revolution, was one of the most remarkable men of his day, and from his great influence with King William, whom he had attended in all his campaigns, was called at court Cardinal Carstairs. None of her children had offspring with the exception of her daughters Jean and Sarah, who have numerous descendants. Jean married Principal Drew of St. Leonard's College, St. Andrews, and from her Principals M'Cormick and Hill derive descent. Sarah, the fourth daughter, and the youngest of the family, married her cousin-german, William Dunlop, [*Her aunt, Elizabeth Mure, her mother's sister, was, as we have said before, married to Mr. Alexander Dunlop, minister of Paisley, who was the Principal's father.*] principal of Glasgow College; and from her, besides other eminent men, are descended the present Alexander Dunlop, Esq., advocate, and the Right Honourable David Boyle, Lord President of the Court of Session. "It is somewhat singular how completely the descendants of Carstairs are mixed, so far as the distinctions of church politics are concerned; and it cannot but draw forth a smile from any one versant in these matters in the present day, to observe, on the same genealogical table, and in very close juxtaposition, the names of Dr. George Cook, professor of moral philosophy, St. Andrews, and Mr. Alexander Dunlop, advocate, Edinburgh. Surely none would have thought, at least from their proceedings in church courts, that these two distinguished and opposite leaders of the church were pears of the same tree." [*Life of Mr. John Carstairs, prefixed to his Letters, by the Rev. William Ferrie, p. 9.*]