

LIFE
OF
THE REV. JAMES RENWICK,

THE LAST OF THE SCOTTISH MARTYRS.

BY
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"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

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PREFACE.

THE last persecution in Scotland, which existed for the space of eight-and-twenty years, commenced with the restoration of Charles the Second, 1660. This prince, infamous alike for his profligacy and perfidy, resiled from all his vows and engagements, and turned his hand against his best friends. No sooner did he ascend the throne, than he laid the hand of demolition on the ancient Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the constitution of which he had sworn, on his coronation at Scone in 1651, to maintain in all its integrity. He had formed the project of rearing the fabric of a religious and civil despotism, and he scrupled not to employ any means, however nefarious, to accomplish this end. The ladder by which he hoped to climb to the elevation of absolute monarchy, was Episcopacy, the subserviency of which in promoting his designs, he firmly counted on. Immediately after his restoration, therefore, he entered, contrary to his most solemn oaths, and to every honest man's expectation, on an impious crusade against the liberties and the lives of his sub-

jects. He violated the social compact, and overstepped the limit which forms the legal barrier to the encroachment of the ruler on the popular rights. This reckless monarch found, on entering on his daring enterprise, many ready instruments for the accomplishment of his purpose, among his unprincipled minions both in Church and State,—to an extent, indeed, which brands with an indelible infamy the character of sundry classes of the community in that age, from whom better things were expected.

Charles was determined that all should be subject to his control, and that no man in his dominions should gainsay his absolute authority. He usurped the supremacy in Church and State, and required every class of his subjects to bow before the great idol which he had set up. The entire lordship which he assumed over the consciences of men, and his tyrannical aggression on their civil rights, were what a great proportion of the Scottish populace, at least, was determined not to brook. In swearing the Covenants he had vowed to maintain the Presbyterian Church, and to assert the rights and liberties of the citizens; and they had vowed allegiance to him on these conditions; and therefore, though *he* might act in violation of his engagements, *they* were resolved to adhere to the covenanted cause, and to abide the consequences. It was to subdue this determination on their part, then, that Charles waged

the war of persecution against his honest and unoffending subjects,—a war which he pursued till the end of his days, and which his successor prosecuted with the same rigour, till he was forced to abdicate the throne.

The period between the Restoration and the Revolution, is the darkest and most melancholy, without exception, in the entire history of the Scottish nation. Thousands and thousands of the best subjects in the land, because they refused to yield subjection to an unconstitutional and lawless domination, were either despoiled of their property, or banished from their country, or deprived of their lives.

The subject of the following Memoir was one of the most renowned of the sufferers in that dismal period, when every religious and patriotic man's life hung in doubt before his eyes. He was born and cradled in persecution. His home was the wilderness, and his hiding-chambers were the dens and caves of the earth. He maintained his testimony on the recognised footing of the Reformation principles, in the face of all the opposition he met with, and at last sealed it with his blood.

His character was maligned by his enemies, and bitterly assailed by false brethren. Even to this day the aspersions that were cast on his name have not been fully wiped off, nor have the minds of many been disabused of certain injurious notions

entertained of him. How far the following attempt to place his character in its proper light has been successful, the reader is left to judge.

In this biographical sketch, the people of the moorlands, in the south and west of Scotland, may probably feel some interest. It was among their ancestors that Mr Renwick mainly sojourned. His memory is warmly cherished by them to this day; and they still retain many of the anecdotes respecting him, with as much vividness of impression, and correctness of detail, as if the incidents had occurred but yesterday. A considerable number of these traditionary notices, for the first time published, are interspersed throughout the work, and inserted as nearly in the order of the events as can be conjectured.

This little volume is given to the world, with the sincere desire that it may profit the reader, and in the expectation that those who peruse it will be led to examine more particularly the history of that eventful period to which it refers, and to investigate more fully the great principles on which our illustrious ancestors took their stand, and in the defence of which they suffered unto the death.

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LIFE
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CHAPTER I.

Mr Renwick's Birth-place and Parentage.—His Early Piety.—
His Attendance at the University.—His Connection with the
Societies.—Lanark Declaration.—Ordained in Holland.

MINIHIVE is a pleasant village in the parish of Glencairn, in the county of Dumfries. It lies in the bosom of one of the most delightful valleys in the south of Scotland, and is surrounded with scenery sweetly picturesque. The locality, in the midst of which the sequestered village stands, has been hallowed by the blood of the "martyrs of Jesus," which, in the heavy times of persecuting violence, was made to flow so profusely on the mountains and mosses of Scotland. The month of May, 1685, witnessed a tragic scene enacted at the bridge end of Minihive, when William Smith, a youth of only eighteen years of age, was cruelly shot by the command of Lowrie of Maxwelton and Douglas of Stenhouse, for his attachment to the covenanting cause. He died

with much heavenly composure, and in the full assurance of faith, and striving to console his afflicted parents, who were called to witness the death of their dear boy, and to bow submissively before God's terrible things. In the churchyard of this parish there rest the ashes of four honoured witnesses for the cause of Christ, who, being found in a cave at Ingliston in the neighbourhood, were instantly shot by the barbarous persecutors. One of them, when weltering in his blood, exclaimed, "Though every hair of my head were a man, I am willing to die all these deaths for Christ and his cause." Rest ye blessed bodies of the martyrs—rest in your blood-stained winding-sheet, till that blast, which shall issue with such startling energy from the mouth of the last trumpet as to be heard by all the dead, shall break your slumbers in the tomb, and call you to inherit the martyr's crown!

The notice of these incidents has been suggested by the mention of the name of Minihive, in whose immediate vicinity was born the illustrious JAMES RENWICK, the last of the Scottish martyrs. The name of this rural village cannot be dissociated from the memory of this pious and devoted youth, the narrative of whose short and eventful life it is our intention, in the sequel, to present to the reader.

There stood, on the ancient farm of Knees, in the parish of Glencairn, and near to Minihive, a lowly cottage, occupied by two rare Christian persons, Andrew Renwick and his wife Elizabeth Corsan. Andrew followed the occupation of a weaver, and in his humble line he walked with God, a thankful dependant both on his providence and grace. Elizabeth was, in the full sense of the

expression, a "mother in Israel,"—a woman full of faith and of good works, and one who had great pleasure in religious ordinances, to enjoy which she frequently travelled considerable distances from her home, and was a constant attendant on the sacramental occasions, under the ministry of the godly John Semple of Carsfairn. This pious pair were warmly attached to the principles of the Reformation, and the door of their dwelling was readily opened to the wanderers who, for conscience' sake, were banished from their homes to traverse the mountains and the wildernesses around them. This devout and affectionate couple were blessed with several children, whom the great Disposer of events was pleased to remove in infancy; and Andrew Renwick, whose mind was always disposed to bend in the lowliest resignation to the Divine will, used to comfort his wife, whose motherly heart, on the occasion of the death of her sweet babes, was crushed with grief, by saying, that he was well pleased to have children to be heirs of glory, whether they died young or old.

As this good woman had hitherto been deprived of her children in the early morning of their existence, she besought of the Lord a child who might not only be an heir of glory, but who might also live to serve him in his generation. This request, like the prayer of Hannah, was granted, and James Renwick was born on the 15th February 1662, a little after the commencement of that long and grievous persecution for righteousness' sake, in which he was destined to be so conspicuous a sufferer. We may easily conceive how this worthy matron would, with grateful heart, devote this

“son of her vows” solemnly and in faith to Him from whom she had received him. Nor was this devotement in vain; He accepted the offering, and testified his acceptance by the communication of his grace to the child even in his infancy. The spiritual disposition of the boy was observable when he was no more than two years of age, for at this early period he was seen to aim at prayer even in his cradle. The remarkable appearances of a gracious dealing with their sweet infant, excited no ordinary emotions in the hearts of the parents. And what parent, who is at all interested in divine things himself, does not rejoice to witness the symptomatic workings of heavenly grace in his children? The dawning of spiritual light in the heart, though faint and feeble at first, is nevertheless the precursor of a brighter day, when the true light shall shine in full radiance on the soul. From the early work of grace in her son, Elizabeth Corsan concluded that it was the design of Providence to sanctify him for some great work in the Church, or to prepare him, it might be, for great sufferings in bearing witness to the truth. It is said that his mother never lost her confidence in God respecting him, even in the midst of the greatest trials of persecution to which he was exposed in after life, firmly believing that he would be carried honourably through, to the glory of God and the edification of many souls.

When he was six years of age, and could read the Bible, he was much exercised in his mind respecting the Maker of all things, and how the world was created, and for what end. The idea of a multiplicity of worlds, which, in that age, was

very rarely entertained by the common people, seems to have arrested his attention in a manner unusual among children. His mind was absorbed in musing on this amazing subject for the space of nearly two years together, till at length he came to the solid conviction that Almighty power was competent to all things, and that the worlds were framed by the word of God. These thoughts in a mere child show the workings of a mind above the ordinary capacity. By these cogitations he attained, at an early period, to a rational belief in the existence of a God, his creative power, and superintending providence. After this, however, and when he had reached more maturity both in years and in understanding, we find him attacked by temptations, which assailed the fundamental principles of all religion ; and so powerful and bitter were these assaults, that one day, when walking in the fields, and gazing on the mountains by which he was surrounded, he exclaimed in the earnestness of his spirit, " Though all these lofty mountains were devouring furnaces of fire and brimstone, I would be content to go through them all, if by this means I could arrive at the unwavering conviction that there is a God." Out of this difficulty, however, he eventually emerged, and came not only to the entire belief of the Divine existence, but also to a comfortable view of his personal interest in that God, as his God and Father in Christ. During his childhood his manner of life furnished the most unequivocal evidence of genuine religion. There were three things for which he was remarkable : secret prayer, the reading of the Bible, and obedience to his parents. What a contrast does the

conduct of this pious youth present to that of the most of children, who live without prayer, forget the Word of God, and disobey their parents. Such children do not seem to remember, that though young in years, they are accountable to God, and that their habitual disregard of religion will, in the end, destroy the soul.

So complete was his submission to the will of his parents, that though he desired, above all things, to prosecute an education for the ministry, he never objected, nor showed the slightest symptoms of murmuring, when they proposed that he should follow some secular trade, by which to earn an honest livelihood. When he had nearly reached the fourteenth year of his age, he sustained a heavy loss in the decease of his honoured father, who died in the full hope of the heavenly blessedness. On his death-bed he expressed his full persuasion that his beloved son would have but a short time to live in the world, but that the Lord would make an eminent use of him as an instrument for the promotion of His cause. He was thus left with his mother in poor circumstances, but yet depending on the Providence that cares for all. He had now made considerable progress in that learning which was necessary to fit him for the object he had in view, so far as the means of education in a secluded part of the country could furnish. But if he was making progress in the school of literature, he was also making progress in the school of Christ, and was daily growing in grace and in the knowledge of divine doctrine. He was a help to his worthy mother, and much esteemed by the people in the neighbourhood.

At length the Lord, who is the breaker up of the way of those who trust in him, provided for him the means of prosecuting his studies in the city of Edinburgh, where he attended the schools, and, finally, the university. A number of good people, to whom he was introduced, took a warm interest in him, and exerted themselves in his behalf. When ready for the university, he superintended the education of a number of young gentlemen, which both procured him the means of subsistence, and promoted his own learning. It was when thus employed that he engaged somewhat freely with these young men in sundry games and recreations, which were deemed unsuitable to his religious character and prospects, and the circumstance was made use of by his enemies to injure his reputation; but those who knew him best were ready to prove how unfounded these aspersions were, and they bore their unqualified testimony to the blamelessness of his deportment. His elevation from a state of poverty to comparatively easy circumstances, and his being introduced into genteel society, might at first produce an unfavourable effect on the ardent mind of young Renwick; and hence the necessity of circumspection on the part of young men of religious habits, when they happen to be transferred to a different sphere from that in which they were formerly placed.

When the period of his studies in the university drew to a close, he refused the oath of allegiance, which was then tendered to every student of divinity, on which account he was denied his laureation, but afterwards he obtained it privately, with other two students in Edinburgh. Mr Renwick now

began to entertain serious scruples respecting his hearing the indulged ministers, who seemed to have been guilty of many unjustifiable compliances, and he was thrown into a state of great perplexity with regard to the course he ought to pursue, not seeing it his duty to withdraw from them entirely. After much prayer and many inquiries, however, he was led to perceive his way more clearly, and like an honest man, he determined to follow it. Having witnessed the death of several of the worthies, and perceiving the heavenly composure and triumph with which they yielded up their lives, he felt a strong inclination to identify himself with the cause for which they suffered. This inclination ripened into a full determination, after witnessing the martyrdom of the good Cargill at the Cross of Edinburgh. The heavenliness of this martyr's deportment on the scaffold,—the calm statement of the ground of his sufferings,—the unruffled peace which he enjoyed,—the dignified and composed manner in which he surveyed the frightful apparatus of death, and the joyful anticipation of his immediate entrance on the celestial blessedness, all wrought together in the mind of the youthful spectator, and guided him to a decision from which he never afterwards resiled. Little did the persecutors dream that the public execution of these holy men was to become, in the hands of Providence, the means of raising up multitudes to supply their place, and to rear to a still greater and more conspicuous elevation the standard of Zion, all sullied and torn as it was, on the hills and moorlands of bleeding Scotland.

After the death of the saintly Cargill, when field

preachings ceased for a season, the suffering remnant that had been wasted and scattered by devouring wolves, gathered here and there in little groups, and formed themselves into praying associations for the purpose of preserving among them the life of godliness. These societies were productive of great good to the country generally. They became fountains, by the side of which many a weary pilgrim, in passing through the wilderness, reclined, and was refreshed by the living waters which they contained, and preserved in purity and sweetness. Many a hallowed hour did the worthies of the covenant spend in these religious fellowships in some lonely dwelling in the dreary desert, when the sable curtain of the night screened the face of the sky, or when the snow lay deep and impassable on the moorlands; and who can tell, at this distance of time, how many souls were edified in these meetings, or how many wanderers were by their means gathered into the fold of Christ? These societies at length formed a powerful bond of union among the dispersed people of Christ, who looked to one another for encouragement and defence in the dark day of defection and suffering. Delegates were chosen by the different associations, who convened in some suitable place to manage the matters which concerned the entire associated body; and any information that related to the general interests was circulated with amazing rapidity to every corner of the land. By this means, whatever matter of importance was transacted in one place became speedily known in every other. These meetings were not rendezvouses of rebellion, where mischief was plotted in sullenness and secrecy, but hidden

sanctuaries for God's worship and mutual edification.

It was not long till Mr Renwick became a member of these societies; and none was more active and zealous than he in promoting the good work of God among them. His fervent prayers and heart-stirring exhortations greatly refreshed and stimulated the friends who met in social intercourse. By this means the highest opinion was formed of his piety and talents; and he was already looked on as the instrument which the great Head of the Church was to employ to feed the scattered flock, in the day when all the shepherds had withdrawn into corners, to screen themselves from the howling and desolating blast which now swept with such terrific fury over the land. Nor did these anticipations prove deceptive; for the time came round when he alone, of all her sons, as the venerable Mr Peden expressed it, was found ready to sustain his fainting mother's head in the day when her remorseless foes drove over her prostrate body the bloody car of a ruthless persecution.

About the time that Mr Renwick joined the societies, he testified the high respect he entertained for the character of the persecuted, by raising, at the risk of his own life, the bodies of several of the martyrs which had been buried at the foot of the Gallowlee gibbet, and interring them, by the assistance of a few friends, in the churchyard of St Cuthberts.

On the 12th of January 1682, the Lanark Declaration was published. In this document a testimony was emitted against the last parliament, at which the Duke of York presided as commissioner, and

particularly against the laws enacted by it: there was also contained in it an adherence to the declaration formerly published at the Cross of Sanguhar. Mr Renwick was employed in publishing this declaration, but he had no hand in the penning of it, else it is likely that some expressions would have been greatly modified. This manifesto brought no little odium on the society people. They were reproached not only at home, but also abroad, as an association that had abandoned the approved principles of the Reformed Church of Scotland, and had adopted wild and extravagant nostrums. In order, therefore, to clear themselves of these aspersions, they deputed Gordon of Earlston to visit the Churches of Holland, and to lay before them a true and unvarnished statement of their circumstances and proceedings. In this mission he was successful, and gained the sympathy of these sister Churches in behalf of that afflicted people whose name was cast out as evil. This prudent measure on the part of the Covenanters was the means of securing for them afterwards an ordained ministry, which otherwise, in all likelihood, they never would have obtained.

Mr Renwick and several other young men were chosen by the societies to proceed to Holland to perfect their studies, and to receive ordination to the holy ministry. A short time prior to his departure to Holland, we find the mind of Mr Renwick most religiously and devoutly exercised. The following is an extract from one of his letters to Mr Robert Hamilton at Lewarden:—"O let us follow Him, O let us serve Him, O noble Master, O noble service! In serving Him, therein we shall

get all our ambition satisfied. O let us follow him and serve him in his own way; he cannot be found out of his own way. In his light we shall see light; in the light of his paths, and there only, we shall see the comfortable light of his countenance. O light, O comfortable light. There be many that say, who will show us any good? but let us say, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us; he can, yea, doth gladden our hearts more than the enemies' hearts, in the time when their corn and wine are increased. O let us leave the world, and follow him. Is he not saying, 'Come with me from Lebanon, my sister, with me from Lebanon.' O, if his company will not allure us, surely nothing will; and both to ravish us therewith, and to make us sure thereof, he says, 'with me from Lebanon, with me from Lebanon.'" And in a letter to Mr Brakel, an eminent minister in Holland, a few days after this, we find him employing the following language:—"But O, what shall I say? Is not the Lord God of hosts worthy, and only worthy of all service, if we could serve him? May not that infinite and transcendent love, in the profound depth and admiration whereof angels are drowned, which he bore unto men before the foundations of the world were laid, so ravish and fill our souls, as that we might say, Him only will we serve who loved us? Nothing present, or to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. O, is not his yoke easy, and his burden light? His cross is no cross, for he bears it himself; and also those who take it up. His will is holy, just, and good, and spiritual in all that he does. O, what is more desirable than to live and

die unto him and for him?" In such a heavenly frame, and with such sincere desires to please God and to serve him, did this interesting youth sail for the United Provinces, towards the end of the year 1682.

It was in the University of Groningen that Mr Renwick prosecuted his studies. His residence in Holland was but short, being only about six months, but during that time he made very great proficiency. His young and ardent mind pursued with incessant application the particular branches of study to which it was necessary he should attend, and his profiting soon became apparent to all. He was regarded by the learned with whom he associated as a youth of rare talents and of uncommon piety. His gentle and amiable manners and devout habits gained the unfeigned love and respect of all who knew him. Though he loved his studies, and followed them with eager assiduity, he never forgot the main thing, the state of religion in his own soul. It could not be said of him while he laboured to accomplish himself for the benefit of others, that he forgot the keeping of his own vineyard. Amidst his other learning, his great object was to learn Christ, and to learn himself. In a letter to Mr Hamilton, he says, "O that I could praise Him for his free, free love: he lets me see much sin, and yet lets me see also that he does not contend for the same,—which cannot but be great matter of wonder. O, no sight, I think, is so sweet as that sight, for it is backed with admiration of his free love, and also with self-loathing."

During his stay in this place, though he was happy in the society of learned and religious per-

sons, yet his heart was with the bleeding remnant in his native land. He saw them as sheep bleating on the mountains, without a shepherd, and he longed to be with them to share their hazards in the desert wastes, and to impart to them the bread of life, to strengthen and encourage their hearts in their forlorn condition. In one of his letters to his friend Hamilton, he employs the following language:—"I am not a little sorrowful at the very heart that I am not in Scotland to obey all your commands anent your dear brother. The Lord himself knows that nothing that ever I was trysted with was such an exercise to me as my being detained now out of it is. My longings and earnest desires to be in that land and with that pleasant remnant are very great."

His feelings in prospect of his being invested with the office of the holy ministry were precisely such as became a man who was alive to the weight and responsibility attached to it. "Oh," he exclaims, "oh, it is a weighty work indeed; oh, I say, a weighty work indeed: who is fit for showing up the mysteries of salvation? who is fit for declaring our sweet Lord Jesus Christ, Prophet, Priest, and King in Zion, without any competitor, and for opening up the same? who is fit for dispensing these glorious benefits of the covenant of redemption? Oh, who is sufficient for these things?" What a lesson is this to those youthful aspirants after the ministry who are stimulated by merely selfish and earthly motives. They run unsent, for the glory of the Redeemer and the good of souls never enter into their calculations. Put me into the priest's office, that I may eat a piece of bread, is, it

is to be feared, the tacit language of too many in these times of Zion's peace and external prosperity ; and equally condemnable are the motives of the individual who thrusts himself into the pulpit, that by means of his talents and his oratory he may gain a name. "This," to quote the words of an eloquent writer, "this is the direst, the deepest tragedy that ever was performed by men,—since it ends in the eternal death of the performer, who forgets, as he snuffs the gales of popular applause, that the vapours of damnation float upon the breeze."

The wants of the suffering people who had withdrawn themselves from the ministry of the indulged, called for the return of Mr Renwick. It was therefore necessary that his ordination should be hastened. For this purpose Mr Hamilton, who was warmly attached to Mr Renwick and the cause of the Scottish sufferers, applied to Mr Brakel, who cordially acceded to the proposal, and wished much that the ordination should take place in Embden. This, however, was found to be impracticable, on account of Mr Renwick's scruples to employ persons in this work whom he did not consider sound in the faith. Application was next made to the Classis of Groningen, an ecclesiastical consistory similar to a presbytery in Scotland ; and the application being favourably received, Mr Renwick's testimonials were produced and sustained. When the Classis met, Mr Renwick, and Mr Flint, a fellow-student, were called in, and, at the request of the Assembly, delivered their preliminary discourses with great gravity. In these discourses they pointed out what they considered to be the corruptions of the Dutch Church ; and this, in men

so young, and being withal strangers, and dependent on the good-will of the Classis for ordination, might be deemed rather a bold proceeding ; instead, however, of giving offence, it was well taken, and their discourses were approved of and sustained. On such occasions, it was customary to pay 20 guilders for the use of the church, but the Classis generously declared that they would defray the entire charges themselves. But though the trial discourses were sustained, a difficulty of rather a formidable nature presented itself, and this was, the ordinary subscription of the catechisms of the Dutch Church. With this Mr Renwick would by no means comply, alleging that the catechism justified what was wrong in their Church. This difficulty, however, was at length got rid of, by the proposal that the candidates should subscribe the Standards of the Church of Scotland. This both relieved Mr Renwick, and reflected no small credit on the Classis. He was then, in the presence of his friends, solemnly set apart to the office of the ministry by the imposition of hands and fervent prayer. So deep and hallowed were the impressions produced by the services, that the whole audience was melted into tears. After his ordination, he delivered a discourse before the Classis, which seems to have been attended with uncommon power from on high. "With this solemnity," says Alexander Shields, "the Classis was so much affected, that at dinner, to which he and his friends attending were invited, the preses declared the great satisfaction the whole brethren had in Mr Renwick, that they thought the whole time he was before them, he was so filled with the Spirit, that they had never seen such evident tokens

of the Lord's being with them as in that affair all alongst. Another declared he had been twenty years a minister in that place, but had never seen nor found so much of the Lord's Spirit accompanying a work as that. Then desiring a relation might be given to the brethren of their cause, sufferings, and wrestlings, they were so filled, both with joy and grief, that they promised to mind their case, both in private and in public, and offered themselves for the same service again whatever might be the hazard."

These godly, learned, and judicious men, gave their most unqualified testimony in Mr Renwick's behalf. He was ordained on the 10th May (o.s.) 1683. Thus was prepared an eminent witness for the truth, who, single-handed, was to maintain the cause of Christ's crown and covenant in the glens and solitudes of Scotland.

Shortly after his ordination, he wrote to Mr Hamilton in the following strain:—"You know what a great work the Lord hath laid upon me, and how he hath laid so many obligations upon me to be for him and him only. I hope that ye will be mindful thereof, praying that he will endow me with zeal, courage, resolution, constancy, tenderness, and humility, and give a door of utterance, that with all boldness I may speak all his words, and that he may follow the same with his rich blessing. I do not think but trials and difficulties are abiding me; but if he be with me, I shall not care; we must not this day seek great things for ourselves when the Lord is bringing evil upon all flesh, and is breaking down what he hath built, and plucking up what he hath planted. O, I must say this in-

deed to the praise of his free grace, that he is continuing and increasing his kindly dealing with my soul. O that I could praise him and commend him to all flesh." This shows how devoutly he was exercised, how pure were his motives, in entering on the ministry, and what a deep sense of his own insufficiency he entertained.

On the day after his ordination, a communication was received by Mr Brakel, stating that a formal libel was to be forwarded from the Scottish ministers in Rotterdam, containing very serious charges against the society people in Scotland, which must be answered, or else the ordination delayed. This, however, came one day too late, and could not now affect Mr Renwick ; and the friendly disposition of the Classis towards him was not on this account in the least degree lessened.

CHAPTER II.

Mr Renwick's Return to Scotland.—State of the Country at this time.—His first Public Appearance in Darnead Moss.

So strong was Mr Renwick's desire of visiting Scotland, that immediately after his ordination he hastened to Rotterdam to embrace the first opportunity of sailing to his native land. In Rotterdam he was assaulted by several of the ministers with regard to his principles, and the conduct of the societies in Scotland; but he was nothing moved, he answered all with meekness, he continued firm to his purpose, and was determined to follow, in the strength of his Master, what appeared to be the plain line of his duty.

In a short time, finding a ship ready to sail, he embarked at the Brill, but being detained a few days waiting for a fair wind, he was so disgusted with the profanity of those on board, who were continually pressing him to drink the king's health, and threatening to inform on him in case of a refusal, that he left the ship and took his passage in another bound for Ireland. When at sea, a violent storm arose, which compelled them to put into the Rye harbour in England at the very time when

there was so great an uproar throughout the kingdom respecting the Ryehouse plot. This incident threatened to involve him in no small distress, and he narrowly escaped being apprehended. Both the tide-waiters and the master of the vessel were inclined to betray him into the hands of his enemies ; but, by the kindness of Providence, he eluded the snares that were laid for him, and in the beginning of August, after a perilous voyage, he arrived at Dublin. Here he had frequent interviews with the ministers who were resident in the place, with whom he warmly and affectionately remonstrated on account of their defections and their lukewarmness in the cause of Christ. His reproofs, though not accompanied with any reforming effect, were at least well taken, and the persons with whom he conversed conceived a good opinion of him as a godly and zealous youth, and they exerted themselves in procuring for him a speedy passage to Scotland. His voyage to what Mr Peden used to call, when in Ireland, the "bluidy land," was accomplished with much greater difficulty than Mr Renwick anticipated. The master of the vessel, who was no friend to the covenanting cause, was induced, notwithstanding, to set him ashore during the night, otherwise he would have been seized on the first moment of his landing. Thus was this devoted servant of Christ restored to his native land through many difficulties and perils ; he was preserved and sanctified for the great and good work, in which, for about the space of four years and a-half, he laboured in the light of his Master's countenance, with all fidelity and painfulness, till he sealed his testimony with his blood.

At the time when Mr Renwick set his foot, as an

ordained minister, on the Scottish shores, the country was in a melancholy condition. The persecution had now risen to a dreadful height ; and so frequent were the murders on fields and scaffolds, that the period was emphatically denominated the *killing time*. The whole land was overrun with oppression, and violence had risen up like a mighty flood, pouring its desolating waters over every district where any symptoms of civil and religious liberty showed themselves. The bigoted and ruthless rulers in Church and State vented, without restraint or compunction, their fury on the unoffending people of God, who were subjected to unheard-of suffering. And for what was it they suffered ? Why, the great and leading offence was, their holding the doctrine of the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ as the King and Head of his own Church. It was for maintaining this, in the face of the usurpation of it by a profligate prince, that their enemies saw fit to yoke the car of oppression, and to drive it remorselessly over the breadth and length of a prostrate land. Nor were the principles of civil liberty lost sight of by our persecuted ancestors ; and because they dared, as men and as citizens, to assert these, the sword of despotism was lifted up to hew them to pieces ; so that, in the united character of Christians and of patriots, our forefathers maintained a noble struggle.

Their non-compliance with the iniquitous laws of the time subjected the Covenanters to incredible hardships. A lawless soldiery were let loose on the country, to plunder and kill at their will, those who would not subject their consciences to the dominant party. Their recreant persecutors yielded their con-

victions to the will of a despot, and, to serve a purpose, forswore the vows under which they lay; but the sufferers for conscience' sake maintained their original position, and rather than swerve from which they were prepared to endure the loss of all things, and even of life itself. Their craven-hearted rulers might openly and avowedly perjure themselves, but the virtuous peasantry were not to be seduced by their example; it was their determination to cleave to the Lord in what they conceived to be the obvious paths of duty; and bravely did they maintain this determination, and thereby proved themselves to be a race of as noble, principled, and upright hearted men as the world ever saw. They were men who reflected an honour on the nation in which they lived; and had their princes used them well, and according to the terms of their covenanted engagements, they would have been a rock of defence to them, and the stability of their throne.

It is a grievous slander to represent the Covenanters of Scotland as a race of turbulent and seditious men, whose principles forbade them to live in subjection to lawful authority. They were the last men in the nation who would have risen up against the righteously constituted authorities of the land; and if they had not been *forced* to defend themselves against an illegal aggression, we would never have heard of their opposition. They were men of a peaceable disposition, good and loyal subjects, but slaves. "The Reformers of Scotland," says Dr M'Crie, "were always *Covenanters*, and always *loyal*, but never *slavish*." Who, we ask, were the rebels of these times,—the subjects who adhered to the constitutional laws, or the rulers who violated the social

compact, and broke faith with the people? Their civil and religious rights were invaded; and viewing themselves not only in the light of Christian men, but also as members of the commonwealth, the Covenanters considered it their bounden duty to defend these privileges, and that not for the sake of themselves merely, but also for the benefit of posterity. He deserves neither the name nor the place of a citizen, who will not stand honestly forward in defence of the rights and lives of the community, when these are unrighteously assailed. The contentings on the part of the Covenanters would never have existed, had not their rulers attempted, with sacrilegious hands, to wreath about their necks the chains of a political and ecclesiastical despotism. Let him renounce the civil constitution of the Revolution Settlement, and be branded as a rebel, who is mean enough to traduce the manly and loyal struggles of the honest Covenanters of Scotland.

In this crusade against the religion and liberties of the land, many ready and effective instruments were found to carry into full execution the dark designs of the worthless men who guided the helm of affairs during the reign of the royal brothers. The chief of these "human blood-hounds," as they have been named by one of the master minds of our age, were Claverhouse,—familiarily denominated Clavers, that reckless and unprincipled cavalier, that gallant and accomplished slaughterman, who, in his appearance, seemed fit only to grace a court, but who in action proved himself a monster of cruelty, and a ferocious butcher of his kind; the infamous Lagg, noted for his coarseness, inhumanity, and blasphemy; the notorious Dalziel of Binns, whose bar-

baric and savage appearance, when he happened to visit his master Charles the Second, with whom he was a great favourite, uniformly attracted a crowd of wondering boys on the streets of London ; and Queensberry, of persecuting memory, distinguished for his injustice, rapacity, and avarice ; and a host of others no less noted in their different localities,—all of whom were active emissaries of Satan, and busily employed in oppressing and murdering God's saints.

This state of things drove the Church into the wilderness, where she sought a place of refuge from the face of the dragon. But even here she could not be hid ; her enemies, instigated by Satan, pursued her into the very heart of the dreariest solitudes, and there mingled her blood with the mountain rills, or with the dark moss water on the heath. The assemblies which met on the moors and on the hills were frequently attacked and hewn to pieces by the savage troopers, who delighted in those acts of cruelty in which their still more savage masters employed them. The heathy mountain side, the dark and secluded glens, the cold damp caves in the rock, and the murky dens of the earth, were places to which they resorted, in seeking an asylum from the pitiless storms of persecution ; and it was in such places that they frequently fell martyrs in the cause of the holy evangel.

The preachers, who, like Moses, led their flocks to the back parts of the deserts, that there, on the green spots of the wilderness, they might find that pasture which was denied them elsewhere, were especially the objects of their enemies' dislike. They were considered as the ringleaders of the rebellion,

and consequently they were the more eagerly sought for. After the standard of the gospel was reared in the fields, the ministers who presided at the conventicles were deemed peculiarly hostile to the Government, and a great price was set on their heads. These holy and devoted men traversed the country, preaching the gospel wherever they had access, and this they did at the daily risk of their lives; but then, "they loved not their lives unto the death." On these occasions, when the assemblies of God's people convened on the desert heath, or in the bosom of the bosky glen, warders were stationed at different distances, to give notice of the approach of the enemy, who, by means of the spies who were constantly prowling about, were sure to receive information of the meeting. It was at the peril of their lives that they gathered the manna in the wilderness; but then, the bread was so sweet to their taste, that rather than forego the precious repast, they would brave every hazard. These were times when the sincerity of a man's religious profession was tested to the uttermost, and when the Saviour's presence was more especially requisite to strengthen the faith and the hearts of his followers; and verily they were strengthened, for He in whose cause they suffered did not desert them in the day of trial. The adherents of the covenant displayed a moral bravery which their warlike enemies might well envy, but which they could not equal. Even timid females and tender-hearted children manifested a courage in meeting death for the Truth's sake, which astonished their adversaries, and made them quail before it. The scenes of murder on the scaffold, and the shootings in the mosses and on the mountains, demon-

strate that the oppressors of the gospel in Scotland had not cowards to deal with ; and well may we affirm, that the tales of Grecian and Roman heroism, which have been arrayed in classic beauty, and so much lauded by posterity, are not to be named, in point of interest, with those relating to our suffering ancestors, who were, for the most part, plain country men, not bred in camps, nor trained to a high sense of honour ; but they were trained under Christ the Captain of our salvation, for whose cause they were at all times ready to die.

And who were the men that instigated all this mischief ? They were chiefly the prelates, at the head of whom was placed the notorious Archbishop Sharp of St Andrews, whose tragic end, though it is to be stigmatized as foul and flagrant murder, was yet, in the providence of God, a visitation awfully appropriate as a conclusion to his impious and cruel life. The prelates, and their underlings the curates, wrought much havoc in the Church, by the informations which they lodged, and the means which they employed in stimulating to more energetic measures the gentlemen of the country and the members of the council against the non-conformists. The curates kept a roll of their parishioners, which was frequently called on the Lord's day, at the dismissal of the congregation ; while the soldiers, who, during public worship, had been carousing in the neighbouring ale-house, assembled at the church doors, and counted the people as they retired ; and those who were found absent were prosecuted accordingly. Gentlemen and farmers, and indeed all masters, were made responsible for their servants ; so that in this way many were ruined, being despoiled of

all their goods. No religious man could with safety lodge a single night in his own house ; and many are the stories of the hair-breadth escapes effected by the peasantry from their own houses, when, at the dead of night, their cottages were invested by the troopers. Almost miraculous were these escapes, and in them the hand of God was clearly seen, and no less gratefully acknowledged. The sight of a book, and especially of a Bible, was enough to ensure a man's death. Persons in every situation, and in every place, were exposed to the insolent intrusion of the military,—not only those who lived near the great thoroughfares, and the towns in which the soldiers lay, but the people resident even in the wildest glens and in the remotest solitudes. The mischief which the troopers wrought when they came to the houses of any of the Covenanters was incalculable. When they were unsuccessful in finding the person of whom they were in quest, their rage knew no bounds ; and, in the most uproarious manner, they proceeded to despoil the house of every thing valuable ; clothes and money and other moveables became their ready prey. The corn which they found on the barn floor, they scattered on the flowing stream or in the moss hags ; the meal which they found in the ginals, they trode down in the dunghill ; and the ricks of corn and hay which they found in the stackyard, they set on fire ; the meat which they found in the barrels, they boiled or roasted for their own use, and the remainder they destroyed by hacking it in pieces with their swords, and trampling it under their feet ; and finally, the horses and the cows were driven before them, as the ancient borderers used to do in their raids against some hostile feudal

chieftain. Indeed, the insolence, brutality, and avarice of the troopers knew no bounds ; and the country, especially in the south and west, was as if it had been overrun by a foreign enemy. Garrisons were appointed in every convenient place, and furnished with a sufficient number of soldiers, who were always ready, at the bidding of their commanders, to sally out to any point in the neighbourhood, to waylay the wanderers, to plunder houses, and to shoot suspected persons wherever they might chance to find them. These men were drunken, swaggering, swearing, savage and lawless persons, the appropriate tools of a lawless Government. No object struck more terror into the hearts of the helpless peasantry, than the sight of a gruff trooper, a licensed vagabond, ready to kill or steal, or to gratify his brutal passions, on any befitting occasion. When at any time a laird or farmer was suspected of non-conformist leanings, or of having harboured any of the wanderers, if he himself could not be found, a company of dragoons were quartered at his house for days, or weeks, or months, as it suited their caprice, till every thing was devoured in the shape of food for man or beast, and then they left the place, as locusts leave the trees which they have stripped of their entire foliage.

The garrisons in which the soldiers lay were dens of infamy and vice ; and to such a degree was this the case, that some of these quarters received the descriptive appellation of *hell's byke*, and which appellation is attached to one of these military residences to this day. These were the agents whom the misguided rulers of the time deputed to suppress the gospel in the upland districts, to which

the persecuted people had fled, that among the bleak mountains and dreary wastes, where no man dwelt, they might hold those sacred meetings, called conventicles, in which the worship of God was maintained at the manifest hazard of their lives. The finings, imprisonments, and banishments during this period, were unparalleled in the annals of our nation, even in its darkest and rudest times. Never were a people more barbarously treated by their rulers, than were the peasantry of Scotland, and never did a people bear oppression so patiently. If at any time they exhibited symptoms of impatience, and drew the sword, it was in self-defence, and in the defence of the lives of others when unjustly assailed; and this they did because the Scriptures had said, "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?" It is not possible to describe, nor scarcely to conceive, the distress in which the land became gradually involved, especially after the battle of Bothwell Bridge. No person can form any thing like a just conception of it, unless he carefully pore over the veritable history of that dreary age. Every means were resorted to for the purpose of wearing out the saints of the Most High, and even the patience of every patriotic mind. It is in vain for any class of men to justify the conduct of the rulers of Scotland during the reign of civil and religious despotism. The facts on record are calculated sufficiently to disable any such effort; and indeed, any attempt

of the kind must be viewed as an insult offered to posterity, in addition to the wrongs inflicted on their forefathers. No description, sufficiently vivid or true to life, can at this distance of time be given, of the unparalleled distress of the worthy part of the Scottish nation, during the ascendancy of prelatic usurpation.

The condition of that section of the Covenanters who refused to comply with the indulgence, was, with respect to the ordinances of religion, at the time of Mr Renwick's return, one of great destitution. They adhered honestly and conscientiously to their principles, when many of their brethren, from whom better things might have been expected, were guilty of foul compliances : they, in reproach and peril, remained true to their engagements. " I have no hesitation," says M'Gavin, " in calling them the *faithful few*, though it has been fashionable from that day to this to treat them and their memory with all manner of contempt. They were faithful to the Word of God, so far as they understood its meaning and application, faithful to their consciences and to their solemn engagements. I am not called to vindicate the engagements themselves in *every* particular. The Covenanters were fallible men, and liable to error, exemption from which they never pretended ; but they adhered honestly and faithfully to what they conscientiously believed to be the truth, which many of them sealed with their blood, while the great body of their brethren gladly submitted to accept the boon which the king intended not for them but for the Papists, by means of which he hoped soon to crush them all." The great principles of the sole headship of

Jesus Christ over his Church, and the civil liberties of the subjects of the realm, they attempted to follow out in many of their practical bearings, although there were others which they did not see, and consequently could not follow ; nor are we to blame them for not seeing in every point as we now see. They walked according to their light, and acted conscientiously on the convictions which they entertained. There is a species of moral cruelty in the harsh language employed by some in speaking of these worthy men, merely because they were not in every respect so enlightened as the moderns, who enjoy the advantage of the improvements and experience of more than 150 additional years. Let those who boast so vauntingly of their light, and of the justness of their principles, see if, in the day of equal trial, they would manifest an equal moral heroism.

We have said that the more conscientious section of the Covenanters was, with respect to the ordinances of religion, in a very destitute condition at the time of Mr Renwick's arrival in Scotland. There was not a man to maintain the field meetings which were at one time so common in the solitudes, and attended with so much of the Divine presence. When these interdicted conventicles were frequent in the desert, "the wilderness and the solitary place was glad for them, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose : it blossomed abundantly, and rejoiced even with joy and singing." Great was the success of the gospel in those times of peril and suffering ; and the Saviour testified, by a large effusion of his Spirit, his approbation of the labours of his devoted servants.

“ In cities the wells of salvation were sealed,
More brightly to burst on the moor and the field;
And the Spirit that fled from the dwellings of men,
Like a manna-cloud rained round the camp in the glen.”

We can scarcely conceive of seasons more hallowed than those occasions when great companies met on the brown bent, and in the far retreat of the moorlands, or in the bosom of the flowery glens, to worship the God of their fathers apart from the vigilant eye of their persecutors. These sacred spots are to this day pointed out by the shepherds, as they traverse the lonely wastes. The writers of the period bear testimony to the great success of the gospel in the retreats of the mountains and in the recesses of the wilderness. Patrick Walker calls it the “good-ill time of persecution,” which, he says, “was a day of great sinning and suffering, and a defiling furnace to the most part, but a purifying day to those who kept clean hands and garments,—a day of the power of the gospel to the conviction and conversion of many souls, which made some to call in question if ever there had been a greater since the Apostles’ days, in so short a time, and within so narrow bounds, as the south and west of Scotland, for some years after the standard of the gospel was publicly set up in the fields.”

One would think that the field preachers in those days might have understood somewhat better than they seemed to do, the signs of the times, and might have learned, from the amazing success of their ministry, to persevere in the cause they had adopted, and to spurn any restrictions of human imposition in the exercise of their heavenly calling. It is

greatly to be questioned if the preaching of the gospel under the wing of the indulgence was attended with even the fourth part of the success it had in the open fields, when the people congregated at the risk of their life, not only in the sweet sunshine of the pleasant summer, but also in the dreary winter, when they sat contentedly in the drifting snows to listen to the words of eternal life. It appears that the Spirit's influence was in a great measure restrained after the preachers deserted their perilous post at the conventicles, and accepted the permission to exercise their office in much bondage in private houses.

Mr Peden, a man whose home was the wilderness, and who kept conventicles wherever he had opportunity, either in the fields or in private houses, was, at the time when Mr Renwick returned, in Ireland, to which country he had fled during the heat of the persecution. The society people were therefore in great want, and their prospects appeared very gloomy. They wandered from sea to sea, seeking the Word of the Lord, and could not find it. Through the defections and perplexities of the times, many were at a loss what to do,—their children by hundreds were unbaptized,—the public ordinances were denied them,—they languished under many grievances and difficulties, and were at their wits' end. Many were deeply exercised with legal terrors, and in great distress about their salvation; and others were bordering on religious extravagances and enthusiastical delusions. The prayer meetings were the only bond which kept them together, and the chief means of edification and spiritual refreshment.

When things were proceeding to an extremity, Mr Renwick made his appearance among his former friends, a messenger of peace and mercy, and one whose ministrations were to prove eminently beneficial to this poor wasted remnant. He found them with their spirits broken, and their hands enfeebled; but he rallied them, he roused them, he united them, and encouraged them; so that in a short time after his arrival among them, a remarkable change was visible, and the cause that was sinking emerged with new life, and spread itself abroad over the surface of the troubled waters, on which it rode once more triumphant.

His first public appearance was in the famous Darmead Muir, which lies on the east of the parish of Cumbusnethan, and on the boundary of Clydesdale and Lothian, where many a conventicle was held by the worthies in those suffering times, on which account it got the name of the "Kirk of Darmead." It is a secluded spot, and surrounded by high moorlands, so that a company of worshippers could remain long in its secrecy without discovery, and the marshes and mosses contiguous to it presented an effectual barrier in the case of a pursuit by horsemen. In solitudes like this did the persecuted remnant conceal themselves when they convened for religious exercises; and many a happy hour did they spend, when, sitting on the blooming heath, and inhaling its healthful fragrance, they listened to the preaching of the everlasting gospel. It was in the heart of this wilderness that Mr Renwick, at the call of the societies, commenced his ministerial work, "taking up," as Alexander Shields expresses it, "the standard of the testimony of Christ,

and for Christ, upon the same ground where it was fixed, and had fallen at the removal of the former renowned witnesses, Mr Richard Cameron and Mr Donald Cargill, which, in the strength of his Master, he undertook to prosecute against, such opposition from all hands as seemed insuperable to sense and reason, and could not have but deterred the most daring, that had no other principle or end for their support or encouragement but humour or interest. An undertaking it was to him as difficult and desperate as that of Athanasius against the whole world, or that of a child thrashing down a mountain, which yet, against all the arrows of archers which shot at him, and hated him, he was helped to achieve and attempt effectually, and overcome with no despicable success, while his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob."

The meeting in Darnead moss, which took place on the 23d November 1683, was doubtless of a very solemn nature. The text from which he preached was, "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." This discourse, fraught with sound views of the gospel, displays an uncommon degree of heavenly earnestness, and a deep insight into the spiritual exercises of God's people. It is a sermon, as has been justly observed, "which does equal honour to his piety and talents, and will bear a comparison, in regard both to its composition and its sound evangelical doctrine, with many of a much later date." In the preface to this discourse he gave a full statement of his principles,

and of his views of some of the disputed points among the Presbyterians of the time. He showed the reason why he stood aloof from the other ministers in Scotland, who had resiled in no small degree from their formerly avowed principles.

So encouraging were the appearances among the people of the upland districts, that Mr Renwick exclaimed, "If the Lord could be tied to any place, it is to the moors and mosses of Scotland." The heavenly state of his mind, a few days prior to his public appearance in the moss of Darnead, is sufficiently indicated by the following words of a letter which he wrote to the society of strangers at Lewarden :—"O, praised be His free grace, he hath provided and laid open a way whereby we may have both access and right unto him by the mediation of his own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore let us answer his call, and come unto him, where all and our only happiness lies, with hearts so enlarged, and conceptions so framed and shapen out, that nothing less than himself may satisfy, for more cannot be more desired. Let us come to him, follow him fully, and take up his cross." Thus was he furnished with grace, and strengthened for that work, and those sufferings, on which he was to enter, and in which he was to continue for about four years and a-half, and then to seal his testimony with his blood.

CHAPTER III.

Hardships—Proceedings of the Council against Mr Renwick—
Incidents—Tradition—Cottage in the Moor.

THE year 1683, in which Mr Renwick commenced his ministry among the suffering people in Scotland, was not only remarkable for the grievous persecution of the Non-conformists, but also for calamities in other respects. This year was famous for the long storm which began in November, and continued till the middle of March, when, on account of the frost, which rendered agricultural operations impracticable, and the deep snow, which deprived the flocks of food on the hills, the distress of the country was very great. Patrick Walker, who notices this storm, mentions circumstances apparently incredible. "Many graves," says he, "were seen in the west of Scotland, when the earth was as iron, in ones, twos, threes, fours and fives, together, which was no imaginary thing. Many are yet alive who measured them with their staves, exactly the deepness, length and breadth of other graves, and the lump of earth lying whole together at their sides, which they set their feet upon, and handled them with their hands,—which many concluded after-

wards did presage the two bloody slaughter years that followed, namely, 1684 and 1685, wherein 82 of the Lord's suffering people were cruelly murdered in desert places, wherever that heaven-daring enemy found them, and few to make graves or bury them, for fear of that enemy, who left their dead bodies where they killed them."

Now, we see no reason to discredit the facts mentioned by this venerable worthy, who himself suffered much in those trying times ; but while we see no cause to doubt the truth of the statements, we demur to the inferences drawn from them,—namely, that these open graves were something like miraculous presages of more calamitous times to come. The truth seems to be, that the people in the moorlands who professed covenanting principles, durst not, especially at certain seasons, convey their dead to the common burying-ground in the churchyard, for fear of discovery, and therefore they were obliged to inter them in desert places, and with as much secrecy as possible. These open graves, then, which were seen by travellers passing through the solitudes, were doubtless prepared by the inhabitants of the wilds, which at that period were much more thickly peopled than now, as the last resting-places of their deceased friends ; and these graves might be more numerous this year on account of the prevalence of epidemic diseases, which the severity of the protracted storm might generate. Persons hastily passing through the moors would doubtless be struck at meeting here and there with open graves ; but not having opportunity to inquire into the circumstances, they incautiously concluded the thing to be miraculous.

The mention of the storm which set in so severely towards the end of this year, is introduced for the purpose of showing what Mr Renwick had to endure in his wanderings through the desert, not only from persecutors, but also from the inclemency of the seasons, when in his sojournings he was obliged so often to lodge in caves and holes under ground. As it respected this winter in particular, he had a hard beginning ; and the privations which he endured in woods and caverns, and unoccupied huts in the mountains, fairly tested the strength of his constitution, which ultimately suffered greatly from his exposure to all sorts of weather. He was a " man of a little stature, and of a fine fair countenance ;" and he is reported to have said to his friends when he returned from the continent, that as to his health and the firmness of his bodily frame, he entertained few fears ; but that his main solicitude was about the strength of his faith, and his constancy to his principles in the day of trial. The latter, however, abode firm to the end, while the former often failed him. A specimen of the privations he endured in the desert is given by Mr Shields, who states that he found " no place of rest but in the remotest recesses in the wilderness, exposed to the cold blasts of winter storms in the open fields, or in some shepherd's summer shieling in the mountains, used in the summer, but lying waste in the winter, which yet were the best chambers he could find, where he made some fire of sticks or heath, and got meat with great difficulty out of places at a distance, and mostly from children, who durst not let their parents know of it. Here he and they that were with him did sometimes remain several days and nights, not

daring to look out, both from the hazard of being seen, and from the boisterousness of the storm." In another place he remarks, that Mr Renwick and his friends were made "to lie many days and nights, in crowding numbers, 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 coming over and by the mouth of the hole, while they were at their duty, praying or praising, undiscovered; and, when forced from thence, he hath often been compelled, wet and cold, hungry and weary, in great hazard, to run barefooted many miles together for another subterraneous shelter."

With all these hardships in the prosecution of his work, Mr Renwick laid his account. He knew what his brethren had endured for many tedious years prior to his public entrance on the stage of Scotland's tragedy, and he had deliberately counted the cost, so that nothing unexpected befell him in all the tribulations he was called to endure. His appearance at Darnead moss, as the minister of the united societies, brought upon him the unsparing reproach of the ministers who had partially fallen in with the defections of the times. The validity of his ordination was called in question,—he was represented as a bigot and a schismatic,—as an unlearned and ignorant person,—as an individual who had assumed the office of a preacher, but who was under the necessity of entertaining his audience with other men's sermons,—as one who vended the wildest doctrines, and attempted to seduce the multitude into the most extravagant and dangerous errors. Some of his opponents went even so far as to assert that they

“had sought and got the mind of God in it, that his labours should never profit the Church of Scotland, nor any soul in it.” Thus a spirit of rancorous opposition was stirred up against him at the very first. Nor was less to be expected; for his singular faithfulness to the true principles of the Scottish reformation formed a striking contrast to their supple and time-serving compliances. His unflinching fidelity to the covenanting cause, in which all his brethren had at one time embarked, operated as a severe criticism on their conduct. They compared him to “Jannes and Jambres, who withstood Moses, and a man whom the Lord would break and bring to nothing, and all who joined with him.” The subsequent success of his ministry, however, and the remarkable degree in which he was countenanced by his Master, amply refuted in the end these uncharitable allegations, and proved that these Scottish seers were not overmuch to be depended on, as it respected their prophetic averments.

But Mr Renwick was speedily assailed by enemies of a different description. The great council of the nation had their attention directed toward him, and he was accordingly indicted and “put to the horn.” There is something ludicrous in the idea of the whole power, civil and ecclesiastical, of a great nation exerting itself in one general and prodigious movement, for the purpose of securing the person of a poor fugitive preacher, who, single-handed and alone, was labouring to uphold the banner of the gospel, as it waved in the breezes of his native hills. But the tocsin was sounded; and forth rushed a hoard of savage dragoons, to scour every hill and dale, and moss and glen, in the south and west of

Scotland, if perchance they might catch a partridge or a fly on the wilds,—a goodly prize and a worthy reward to invest with renown, in a nation's eyes, the gallant trooper, whose martial dexterity and heroism might be gloriously signalized by the chivalrous and successful adventure. One of the most conspicuous of these daring and quixotic knights was the redoubted Clavers; and who can dispute *his* bravery, when he made even *women* quail in his presence. But woman conquered him, and made him sneak away, abashed at the greatness of soul which she displayed, even at the moment when his murderous arm had laid the victim bleeding at his feet. Did Claverhouse conquer the wife of Priesthill, when the mean-spirited ruffian attempted to insult the helpless widow and the weeping children, as they gazed, in the amazement of their grief, on the mangled body of the martyr? Did not her high Christian bearing fairly defeat the “magnanimous” trooper, and make him and his myrmidons flee from the scene of slaughter, like the fragments of a scattered army when signally routed on the battle-field? But Clavers was a “gallant warrior;” yes, gallant was he, and he girded on his armour like king Saul of old, when, with the thousands of Israel at his foot, he sought the stripling David in the recesses of the wilderness and among the wild goats of the rocks. Claverhouse, illustrious Viscount of Dundee, how great wast thou in marching through the desolate moors of Scotland, with thy troopers at thy back! How honourable, when thou didst rob the cottages of the peasantry, in thy raids through a conquered country! How courageous, when, in the wantonness of thy cruelty, thou didst bathe thy sword in the

blood of the innocent and unresisting ! And O how valiant in thy efforts to secure the person of a helpless man,—helpless as it regarded man's aid, but not helpless when supported by the arm of God's omnipotence ! But thou didst not succeed. Another arm than thine, O doughty chieftain, was destined to seize the youth, and to deliver him into the hands of those who longed to offer him up as a sacrifice to the Moloch of prelatie usurpations.

No place was now a safe retreat for Mr Renwick. Every part of the west swarmed with soldiers, and spies and informers, ready to do the work of treachery and murder. A great section of the country was in motion, and men running to and fro, as if some prodigious matter occupied the attention of all, and as if a nation's destiny was about to be sealed. The military were empowered to murder in cold blood every suspected follower of Mr Renwick, and numerous proclamations were issued against him and his associates. The people in the farm-houses, and in the huts and cottages of the shepherds, were expressly forbidden, on the crime of rebellion, to harbour him, or to supply him with food. In these circumstances he was frequently reduced to great destitution, and was kept in life by precarious supplies from strangers, and even from children, as has already been observed, who furnished him with food without the knowledge of their friends.

The hazards to which he was exposed, and the escapes he made, were, as might be expected, both numerous and remarkable ; and it is a pity that his first biographer did not relate some of them ; more especially as he informs us that they were so many as could scarcely be recorded. It is the re-

cord of such incidents that, at this distance of time, would have imparted so deep an interest to the history of such a man as Mr Renwick, whose home was the solitudes, and whose life was the special care of Providence.

The following incident, however, is related both by Mr Renwick and Mr Shields. 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 country man 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 receiving 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 toward 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 shield 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 run up and down in disappointment and perplexity, utterly at a loss how to proceed. They never for a moment dreamed that the fugitive was beneath the cairn, but kept their eye 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 until the sun set, sometimes praying, and sometimes praising God, though I can do neither to purpose. But all the joy that the Lord's works of wonder for me did afford, was swallowed up in sorrow because of what befell my dear brethren, who fell into the enemies' hands." Thus was he preserved in the meantime; but it was only to meet with a similar treatment whenever the enemy should find him in his wanderings. Mr Shields remarks that some of these pursuits "continued whole days and nights, without intermission, through the wildest places of the country, for miles together, without so much as a possibility of escaping the sight of their pursuers."

We have in one of his letters written to Mr Hamilton this same year, an interesting narrative of some remarkable deliverances, which may be presented to the reader in Mr Renwick's own words:—"We met for public worship near the Whin bog, in the Monkland, but the country being generally apostatized into an open hostility against the Lord, some went quickly away into Glasgow, and gave notice unto the enemies' forces; howbeit we heard thereof ere the forenoon sermon was ended, yet continued until that part of the work was gone about, and thereafter thought it fit to depart from that bounds, and that the armed men should keep together for their better defence and safety, which, through God's goodness, was a mean to keep the

enemy from noticing and pursuing strangers, that being stricken into some confusion and terror, and keeping both their horse and foot in one body, yet they lodged all night, we not knowing of it, within a mile of some, and two miles of others of us, intending to set forward toward these houses where we were. But the Lord, whose ways are wonderful, made use of a malignant gentleman to detain them, he asserting that none of us went toward that airth. Notwithstanding, this wakened up the adversaries the more, so that they kept up a pursuit and search which proved very destructive to our general meeting, which was upon that Thursday thereafter; for, upon that very day, they came with horse and foot to search those moors where we were, and came near upon us ere we got any thing concluded; which thing moved us (we suspecting that they, some way or other, had gotten notice of some of us being together) to remove from that place, some way off, into a little glen, where we resolved to keep ourselves obscure; but after we had rested and refreshed ourselves a little, we spied four of their foot marching toward us, whereupon it was thought fit to send out so many to meet them, who, when they came together, fired upon one another; but the Lord's gracious providence so ordered it, that there was not the least skaith upon our side, there being one of the enemies' wounded, so that he died since. Howbeit the shots alarmed the rest of the enemies which were upon the hill; and when we drew out to the open fields, we saw their foot not very far from us, and got present advertisement that the enemy was still upon the pursuit, and near unto us. We in all haste set forward through the moss, hav-

ing no outward strength to flee unto but by crossing the way of the adversary ; whereupon we expected to encounter with them ; yet, committing ourselves into the Lord's hand, we went on until we came into another certain moss, where we staid until night, and got much of our business done. But in all this the wonderful power of God was seen, both in spiriting his people for that exigence, and preserving us from falling among the hands of the adversaries. Yea, though He showed us wonders therein, yet he delighted to show us more ; for, upon the Saturday night thereafter, there was a competent number of us met in a barn for worship, and had not been well begun until we heard both the drums and the trumpets of the enemies ; but we thought it most expedient to set watches without, and continue at our work until we saw further.

“ Nevertheless, in all these tumults and dangers the Lord's goodness was so manifested to his people, that he not only hid them under his wing and preserved them, but also he kept their spirits from the least fear, confusion or commotion. Yea, the very sight of some of them would have made resolute soldiers among us. So after this hazard was over, some of us thought it convenient to stay where we were, it being a woody place, until the Sabbath was past ; but ere the middle of the day, we got an alarm that the enemy was within two miles, or thereabout, coming towards that airth, whereupon we went over Clyde ; but so soon as that was, we, being in number about six or seven, had almost encountered with a party of the enemies' horse, who, at the crossing of our way, had eventually met with us, if that the Lord had not so ordered it

that a friend of ours had seen them ere they could see us, who thereupon came running toward us with a white napkin, because conspicuous to us, flourishing in his hand. On this we halted, and when he came to us we lurked among some bushes until the enemy passed by; and thereafter, we, setting forward by two and two upon our journey, which was intended to be but short, some two of us met with one of the adversaries' number on horseback, who presently fled with all his might towards Lanark, we being within three miles thereof, which forced us to take a desperate course in running through that plenished country, unto Dar-mead moss, still expecting to forgather with that hostile town of Lanark, both horse and foot; but the Lord's power and goodness was such toward us that we escaped all their hands, which thing was matter of great admiration to us all, and made me to wonder no little."

The scene of Mr Renwick's labours, during the few eventful and chequered years of his public ministry, was chiefly the wilder localities of the country. The higher parts of Nithsdale, Galloway, Ayrshire, and Clydesdale, were the principal resort of the wanderers, who, in the day of peril, sought to hide themselves among the dark and misty heights of the upland districts. The sufferers crowded to the mountainous tracts to worship in the wooded glens or on the bleak moor, behind the shelter of the deep moss-hag; and thus far removed from human observation, they raised aloft the voice of prayer, or the loud acclamation of praise, to Him who was with his Church in her affliction. And many are the tales of traditional interest that are in

circulation in the moorlands respecting the worthies of those times, and which touch the deepest sympathies of our nature, especially when we reflect that these were men who "jeoparded their lives in the high places of the field" for us who enjoy the fruits of their contendings,—our liberties, civil and religious. Of all the preachers who occupied the fields in the heavy times of Zion's tribulation, there are none of whom more numerous and stirring anecdotes are told than of Mr Renwick. That these anecdotes are veritable we have every reason to believe, for they have been transmitted with pious and scrupulous exactness in the families of the Covenanters, that are resident by scores and by hundreds in the landward parts of the country, and in the very heart of the field of Mr Renwick's labours. They are in general pious and intelligent people, who, to this day, seem to reap the benefit of the ministrations of this youthful and zealous servant of Christ.

We intend to introduce here and there, in this sketch of Mr Renwick's history, a few of these anecdotes and traditions, as illustrative of God's providential care.

The following traditionary incident is said to have befallen him when he was preaching in the wilder parts of Galloway. It was known that a conventicle was to be held by him among the desert mountains, in a place the name of which is not given, and to this place the leader of a party of dragoons repaired with his men. Mr Renwick and his friends, by certain precautionary measures, were made aware of their danger, and fled. In the eager pursuit, the commander of the troopers shot far a-head of his

party, in the hope of capturing, by his single arm, the helpless minister, on whose head a goodly price had been set. Mr Renwick succeeded in eluding the pursuit, in wending his way through the broken mosses and bosky glens, and came, in the dusk of the evening, to Newton-Stewart, and found lodgings in an inn, in which, on former occasions, he had found a resting-place. After a tedious and fruitless chase through moor and wild, the leader of the troopers arrived at the same place, and sought a retreat for the night in the same inn. It appears to have been in the winter season when this occurrence took place, for the commander of the party feeling the dark and lonely hours of the evening hanging heavy on his hand, called the landlord, and asked if he could introduce to him any intelligent acquaintance of his, with whom he might spend an hour agreeably in his apartment. The landlord retired, and communicated the request to Mr Renwick, and whatever may have been his reasons for the part which on this occasion he acted, Mr Renwick, it is asserted, agreed to spend the evening in the company of the trooper. His habiliments would no doubt be of a description that would induce no suspicion of his office as a non-conformist minister, for in these days of peril and necessity there would be little distinction between the plain peasant and the preacher in regard to clothing. It is highly probable that the soldier was a man of no great discernment, and hence Mr Renwick would succeed the more easily in managing the interview. The evening passed agreeably, and without incident, and they parted with many expressions of high satisfaction and good-will on the part of the officer, who

retired to sleep, with the intention of resuming his search on the morrow. When all was quiet at the inn, however, and when sleep had closed the eyes of its inmates, Mr Renwick took leave of the landlord, and withdrew, in the darkness and stillness of the night, to the upland solitudes, in which to seek a cave in whose cold and damp retreat he might hide himself from the vigilance of his pursuers.

When the morning came, and the soldiers were preparing to depart, the commander asked for the intelligent stranger who had afforded him so much gratification on the preceding evening. The landlord said that he had left the house long before the dawn, and was now far off among the hills, to seek a hiding-place. "A hiding-place!" exclaimed the leader. "Yes, a hiding-place," replied the innkeeper. "This gentle youth, and inoffensive as you have witnessed him to be, is no other than the identical James Renwick, after whom you have been pursuing." "James Renwick! Impossible. A man so harmless, so discreet, and so well informed. If he be James Renwick, I for one, at least, will pursue him no further."

The officer, accordingly, marched away with his dragoons, and searched the wilderness no further for one of whom he had now formed so favourable an opinion. It was probably with the full concurrence of Mr Renwick that the master of the inn divulged the secret, when danger was no longer to be apprehended; and done, in all likelihood, with a view to show the trooper that the Covenanters were not the men that their enemies affirmed they were—wild, and fanatical, and ferocious—and by this means to

leave a good impression on the minds of those who, without cause, were seeking their destruction.

This, however, is but a specimen of the incidents of a similar nature which we may yet meet with in the progress of this narrative. These things, nevertheless, did not in the least retard him in the prosecution of his work; for no man, perhaps, ever laboured more ardently in circumstances so equally painful and hazardous. He had a wide field to cultivate, having the superintendence of all the society people in the south and west, and therefore his preaching and his travellings were incessant; and he may be said to have had no rest except when he was shut up in caves or huts, for fear of the enemy, or when he durst not venture out in perilous storms. As a proof both of his labours and of the number of his followers, he baptized, in the space of three months, about 600 children.

His anxieties, and the excessive fatigue to which he was subjected, began seriously to affect his health. "For my own part," he says, "though the enemy should not get me reached, seemingly this tabernacle of clay will soon fall; for I am oft-times variously and greatly distempered in my body; but while the Lord hath any thing to do with me, I shall continue, and I desire to continue no longer, though many live longer than the Lord hath work for them. Howbeit I many times admire the Lord's kindness toward me; for I never find any distemper of my body but when I am so circumstantiate as in many respects I may dispense with it; and through his grace this is all my desire,—to spend and be spent for Him in his work until my course be ended."

Many of the worthy men in these harassing times

were brought to a premature grave, by means of diseases brought on by the buffetings of the storm, and by excessive hunger, and the cold damps of the caves in which they were obliged to lie whole days and nights together. These men, though they were neither shot in the fields nor murdered on the scaffold, are not therefore to be left out of the catalogue of the martyrs. They lost their lives in the cause as really as those who suffered violent deaths.

The reader, perhaps, will be gratified by the following pleasing anecdote in connection with Mr Renwick, in his wanderings in the desert. One evening, after a day of toilsome journeying in the solitudes, he was traversing a lonely moor. The darkness had closed in around him, and in considerable perplexity he was wending his way over the trackless wilderness. At last he observed a light, faint and flickering, in the distance before him. He was uncertain whether it issued from the window of some solitary hut afar in the waste, or whether it might merely proceed from some of those luminous substances which at certain seasons of the year are seen in considerable abundance in dreary morasses. He committed himself to the guidance of that Providence that watches over all, and especially over those whose trust the Lord is ; and he went forward in hopes of finding shelter for the night. As he advanced in the direction of the light its glare became stronger and stronger, till he plainly perceived that it streamed from the window of a lowly dwelling on the heath. When he reached the door he distinctly heard the voice of prayer. He stood still to listen ; and he heard with unspeakable delight the utterance of fervent

supplications on behalf of the suffering remnant, and God's Church in affliction. The heart of the patriarchal suppliant seemed to be full, and Zion's troubles were the burden of his intercessions. Mr Renwick stood and prayed without; for his heart responded to every petition which the good man preferred to the throne of grace, through the great Redeemer, whose bowels of compassion yearned over his Church in the furnace. At length, when the family devotions were ended, he knocked at the door, and was admitted. On his entrance the worthy man and his wife were not sure in what light to regard their visitor,—whether to consider him as a foe or as a friend; for in those precarious times people scarcely knew whom to trust. The country was swarming with insidious characters, with spies and informers, who, under the guise of great friendship, insinuated themselves into the confidence of the simple-hearted people, whom they made their prey on every hand.

Mr Renwick's appearance in the cottage, therefore, was the occasion of various thoughts and surmises on the part of the aged couple. Was this young man a friend? or was he one of a party who had come to spy out their lonely dwelling, for the purpose of discovering wanderers, against whom he might lodge information? And yet there was something about the stranger's countenance and entire demeanour which banished suspicion and invited confidence. His manners were so gentle, the tones of his voice so sincere, and his deportment so simple and artless, that they forgot, when they looked on him, that there were such persons as spies in existence. "I ventured to ask admittance into this

house," said the stranger, "because I heard the voice of prayer when I stood at the door, and I said, Surely God is here, and the inmates will not refuse to entertain a wanderer for the Saviour's sake. I am one of that suffering remnant for whom supplication has this evening been made; and I solicit the shelter of this friendly roof for a night. I am fatigued and faint with travel, and I need repose to refit my exhausted frame. I trust that in exercising hospitality to one who so much needs it, the blessing of him who is ready to perish will come upon you."

On this he received a cordial welcome; for no class of people is more hospitable than the inhabitants of the moorlands, and more especially when genuine Christianity is the accompaniment of their natural kindness. He was placed in the warmest corner by the blazing hearth, and every thing was done to make him comfortable. This faithful servant of Christ, who, in the prosecution of his Master's work, willingly subjected himself to every hardship, found in this hut a safe and agreeable resting-place, after his dubious wanderings in the moor. He was directed to a household that feared the Lord; and not a few of such were in those days scattered over the desert parts of the country.

The little party in the hut discoursed on various topics. The stranger's conversation was frank and engaging; and the worthy couple having dismissed all suspicions, felt deeply interested in him. Their hearts grew warm as they talked of Zion's troubles, and of the afflictions of the saints in that dark and cloudy time. "Know you," inquired the venerable tenant of the cottage, "know you any thing of our

friends who are wandering among the heights of Lanarkshire and Nithsdale? My heart bleeds for them when I think of their situation in these cold and dark nights. Poor fellows! they are thankful for the bare shelter of the wet and dreary caves, while we are comfortably seated here before the warm fire; but how long we may be permitted to enjoy this benefit God only knows; for even this night, when you knocked at the door, we had our own fears. The poor lad Renwick, too, we hear, is hardly pressed, being driven from place to place by the fury of the persecutors. Have you heard any thing of him? We never yet have had the pleasure of seeing him, nor of hearing him preach; but perhaps Providence may direct his steps this way ere long."

Mr Renwick, on witnessing the deep and heartfelt interest which this pious pair took in the suffering remnant, and in himself as their minister, could no longer restrain himself, and he informed them that he was the Mr Renwick concerning whom they had made so kind inquiries. Their astonishment and satisfaction knew no bounds; and they received and welcomed him as an angel of God. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers," says the Apostle, "for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." On this occasion they had opened the door of a Christian hospitality to one of the most honoured of Christ's servants in the times in which he lived; and the blessing of Him whose servant he was came upon them. They were probably infirm persons, who could not travel far to hear the Word of God, after which they thirsted; and therefore the Lord sent it to them, and ministered to their spiritual

wants by means of one who watered the churches in the deserts, and whose sole work it was to traverse the lonely moorlands on this very errand.

When Mr Renwick had rested, and was recruited and cheered with warmth and food, the little company engaged in prayer, in which exercise a spiritual influence came from heaven, and refreshed their hearts with more substantial nourishment than any earthly food could impart; for "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The aged couple deemed themselves unspeakably honoured in being privileged to entertain so distinguished a servant of Christ; and their hearts were full to overflowing with gratitude and happiness, of which the following circumstance is a proof:—As they were sitting before the blazing fire, with feelings that can be more easily conceived than described, the worthy old man, as if awakened from a revery, exclaimed, "Janet, bring out hoshen." The hoshen was a sort of purse in which the country people kept the little money they possessed, and which was carefully deposited in a corner of the chest, which was generally well filled with blankets, and various sorts of wearing apparel. Janet produced the hoshen, and delivered it to her husband. The worthy man, holding it in his hand, addressed Mr Renwick in the following strain:—"We had a dearly beloved daughter, in whose heart we verily believe the grace of God had a place. She was a great comfort to us, and we fondly hoped that she would be our stay in our declining years. But it pleased the great Disposer of events to remove her from us. Her death was a sore dispensation; but the affliction it caused was

greatly alleviated by the cheering evidence she gave of her eternal wellbeing. She died in full dependence on the Saviour, and in great peace ; and we do not sorrow as those that have no hope. The money contained in this little pouch belonged to her ; and as the Lord has taken her to himself, and as He enabled us to give her freely up to Him, so we are resolved to give Him this also, as the only thing disposable of hers that remains ; and I present it to you, to be distributed by your means among the suffering remnant who are enduring privations in the cause of that Saviour whom she loved, and with whom she now is."

We may easily conceive with what feelings Mr Renwick would receive this token of a pious gratitude, and how readily he would undertake the office of almoner in distributing this sum among the destitute wanderers. We cannot estimate the worth that was resident in this lowly cottage. It was a household in the wilderness which Christ was training for himself. The scene which was witnessed on this evening was such as even angels would delight to contemplate.

CHAPTER IV.

Happiness in the Solitudes—Mr Renwick at Priesthill—Interesting Anecdote—Apologetic Declaration.

THAT our suffering forefathers were men of prayerful habits, and persons who lived much in communion with God, their whole history shows in the clearest manner. Besides reading the Holy Scriptures, and conversing together on religious subjects, their principal occupation when they met was *prayer*. The lonely moorlands were witness to their many supplications and earnest pleadings with God on behalf of his Church in the furnace. It was the prayers of these holy men that brought down on the wilderness so copious a flood of divine influences, for the supplications of God's people are like the lofty hills which attract the clouds of the sky, and bring down their contents in a full gush of refreshing waters on their summits. Whole days and nights were spent by them in this sweet exercise, for it was when they were driven furthest from men that they drew nearest God, and sought communion with Him when they were denied intercourse with their fellow-men. Indeed, they never felt themselves safe but when they drew near the Father of Mercies

with the voice of prayer. And they could pray without restraint on the bleak mountain-side or in the deserted shieling on the moors ; and who can describe the divine ravishment of soul which they experienced in approaching the mercy-seat, through the great Intercessor, whose bowels of compassion yearned over his suffering Church ? Some of the worthy men who outlived these times of tribulation declared, that if they had the choice of any period of their life to spend it the second time, they would, without hesitation, select the period of persecution, because it was then, in an especial manner, that they enjoyed the light of God's countenance, and fellowship with him.

Never were men more out of their reckoning, than were the enemies of these worthies, when they imagined that they robbed them of all conceivable comfort in compelling them to flee to the solitudes, and in keeping them there in the depth of winter, in cold, and hunger, and loneliness ; for the places to which they resorted, whether huts, or caves, or woods, were places where God's presence was peculiarly felt, and where they experienced the plain foretastes of heaven itself, so that it was with difficulty they were prevailed on to withdraw from these retreats. The deserts, as places of prayer, appeared to them more sweet and lovely than the most delectable paradise on earth. They loved the solitudes, for there rested the bodies of the martyrs ; they loved the solitudes, for there they prayed together ; they loved the solitudes, for there they walked with God, and enjoyed high communion with the Saviour, who seemed to have retired to the deserts

with them. Could these be otherwise than excellent men who led a life so heavenly?

That these are no imaginary statements, will appear from the following words of Mr Renwick:—
“Enemies think themselves satisfied, that we are put to wander, in dark stormy nights, through mosses and mountains; but if they knew how we are feasted while others are sleeping, they would gnash their teeth for anger. O, I cannot express how sweet times I have had when the curtains of heaven have been drawn, when the quietness of all things, in the silent watches of the night, has brought to my mind the duty of admiring the deep, silent, and inexpressible ocean of joy and wonder, wherein the whole family of the higher house are everlastingly drowned, each star leading me out to wonder what He must be who is the Star of Jacob, the bright and morning Star, who maketh all his own to shine as stars in the firmament. Indeed, if I may term it so, I am much obliged to enemies; for though they purpose my misery, yet they are instrumental in covering a sumptuous table to me, and while they are pining away in dark envy and pale fear, I am feeding in peace and joy. O, poor souls, what can they do? The greatest wrong they can do is to be instrumental in bringing a chariot to carry us to that higher house, and should we not think this the greatest favour? Let enemies never think that they can make the people of God’s care miserable, while He lives and reigns. I wot well he hath that to give, and will give that which will sweeten all the sour of his followers.” In another place, he remarks:—
“O fear not difficulties, for many trials, that when looked upon at a distance, seem big and mounting,

yet when they and you meet, ye shall find them nothing. If I commend any thing besides Christ, it would be the *cross* of Christ. These things which make carnal onlookers think my condition hard and miserable, makes me think it sweet and pleasant. I have found hazards, reproaches, contempt, weariness, cold night wanderings, stormy tempests, and deserts so desirable, that it is a greater difficulty to me not to be ambitious of these things, than to submit to them."

We can easily conceive particular cases in which the wanderers in the solitudes would experience indescribable happiness, notwithstanding their perpetual exposures to the harassings of the enemy. We can imagine a few of these wanderers on the evening of a gloomy winter's day, and just as the first heavy flakes of snow, presaging a storm, were beginning to fall, arriving at a shepherd's cottage in the wilderness, the inmates of which belonged to their own party. We can conceive the cordial welcome with which they would be greeted, and the hospitable entertainment which would be presented, while they stretched their shivering limbs before the fire of blazing peats piled on the cheerful hearth. After a refreshing night's repose, the morning dawns, and their host, approaching their couch, informs them that the wide desert is one field of snow, gathered to the depth of several feet, while the smoking drift streaming along the heath renders even the nearest objects imperceptible. No dragoons could move abroad on such a morning as this, and the helpless wanderers, who could scarcely at any time lay their heads on their pillow in security, and who scarcely ever rose without apprehension, would, in such a

case as this, feel themselves in a state of perfect quietude and safety. They would listen to the roaring of the tempest with unspeakably more delight than ever they listened to the sweetest music that fell on their ears. They are safe for once; their little hut is now as unassailable as the strongest fortification on the summit of the beetling rock, and they can bid defiance to all their foes. Those religious exercises in which they so much delighted could, in such circumstances, be performed without the slightest fear of interruption, and they could converse all the day, and far on in the night, on those subjects which were more deeply interesting to them, knowing that interference was impossible. Several days and even weeks might be spent in such a way as this, for the hospitable inhabitants of the wilderness never grudged to entertain those who, suffering for Christ's sake, had been providentially guided to their dwelling.

The perpetual harassings to which Mr Renwick was at this time exposed, induced him to withdraw from Clydesdale to the wilder parts of Ayrshire. He repaired to the house of the saintly John Brown of Priesthill, when the following scene was witnessed, and which is so graphically described in the sketch of Brown's life given in the Scots Worthies:—

“Almost sinking with fatigue, he arrived at Priesthill. Brown was from home, and the family were busily engaged in preparing the wool of their flocks for a neighbouring fair. The eldest daughter, Janet, by a former marriage, and the herd-boy, were teasing the wool, and the shepherd was carding it; while Mrs Brown sat nursing her first-born son at one side of the fire, with the faithful watch-dog lying at

her feet. At the sound of Mr Renwick's footsteps the dog started up and ran to the door, barking at the approach of a stranger. Janet and the herd were almost as soon at the door as the dog, commanding him to be silent. The herd caught the dog in his arms, and returned with him into the house, while Janet followed leading the stranger, first looking to her mother for encouragement, and then to her guest. She led him to her father's chair, with a courtesy that seemed to give rise to strong emotions in his heart. Mr Renwick, who was unknown to any in the house, was pale with fatigue and sickness. His shoes were worn out, and a shepherd's plaid hung around him seemingly for disguise; for by his dress and speech they were convinced that he was of superior rank. While the servants gazed on him, Mrs Brown was at a loss to know whether she should welcome him as a sufferer or consider him as a spy; and she accordingly left Janet to perform the kind offices the stranger required, while she lulled her boy to sleep by singing a verse of an old song. During Mrs Brown's song Mr Renwick's countenance brightened up, and he more cheerfully accepted of the child's endearing attentions, who placed him in the warmest corner, helped him off with his dripping plaid, and, in short, imitated all the kind offices she had seen her mother perform to her father, to the no small amusement of the rest of the family. On Mr Renwick it had a different effect. He burst into tears, and cried, "May the blessing of him that is ready to perish rest on you, my dear bairn. Surely God has heard my cry, and provided me a place to rest my head for a night. O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of

wayfaring men, that I might leave my people and go from them; for they be an assembly of treacherous men." At this moment John Brown entered. He gazed at Mr Renwick for an instant, and then with great deference informed him that he was welcome to his house. "Do you know me," said Mr Renwick? "I think I do," replied Brown: "it was in this house that the societies met that contributed to send you to Holland; and now I fear they have not received you as they ought." "Their reproach has not broken my heart," rejoined Mr Renwick; "but the excessive travelling, night wanderings, unseasonable sleep, frequent preaching in all weathers, especially in the night, have so debilitated me, that I am often unfit for my work." In this happy home he sojourned some time, till his health was recruited; and then he set out afresh on his Master's service.

Mr Renwick, in his wanderings, holding conventicles wherever he had opportunity, frequently preached in Galloway, in the mountainous parts of which he met occasionally with no ordinary success. The following interesting anecdote has a reference to one of these visits to this district. He came to Balmaclellan, and agreed with some of the serious people there to hold a conventicle in a solitary place among the mountains; and, on the day appointed, a great assembly convened from all parts of the surrounding district. The morning was lowering, and heavy showers were falling on the distant heights, swelling the mountain streamlets as they descended with impetuosity into the valleys. Notwithstanding the caution, however, with which the intelligence had been communicated, the enemy received information, and came upon the congrega-

tion just as they were going to commence worship. On the approach of the troopers, the people fled in all directions; and Mr Renwick, accompanied by John M'Millan and David Ferguson, escaped towards the Winding-ken. It was the design of Mr Renwick to seek refuge in the house of a friend in the parish of Penningham, and there to conceal himself for a season. The place where they attempted to ford the stream was at a considerable distance above the village of Dalry. The river was greatly swollen by the heavy rains that had fallen among the hills during the morning; and before they entered into its turbid waters, they agreed to engage in prayer among the thick bushes that grew on its margin. When they rose from their knees, and were about to step into its dark rolling tide, they observed, to their amazement, a party of dragoons landing on the opposite bank. They had reached the place in pursuit during the time the three men were at prayer, and without noticing them, or hearing their voice, they rushed into the ford, in haste to cross before the waters became deeper. This occurrence plainly appeared to the party to be a providential interference in their favour; for it was at the moment they were employed in devotion that their enemies arrived and missed them; and there is every likelihood, had they not lingered for a space to implore the Divine protection, that they would have been taken in the midst of the stream at the very time the horsemen reached the place. John M'Millan, from whose lips this tradition has been transmitted to posterity, used to say that he was never so impressed, either before or after, with any thing he ever heard, as by the remarks made by

Mr Renwick on this occasion ; and that, moreover, they were the means of directing his attention more particularly to providential occurrences during the after-part of his life.

As his two friends were to accompany Mr Renwick no further than the ford, they resolved not to leave him till they should see him in safety on the other side. As the current was powerful, they resorted to the following means to assist him in crossing. They provided themselves with a long, tough branch of the mountain ash, which was grasped by the three at equal distances, so that if one should be carried off his feet by the strength of the stream, the others standing firm would sustain them. They entered the water, and the three advanced in a breast as steadily as they could, till they reached the bank in safety ; and having landed Mr Renwick, the two companions returned to the place they left. No sooner, however, had they stepped from the channel of the river, than the flood descended with great violence, covering the banks on both sides, and sweeping every obstacle before it. Such an occurrence is not unfrequent in the upland districts, where the thunder-clouds discharge themselves with great impetuosity among the hills.

Mr Renwick, now alone on the south side of the stream, began to seek a place of shelter in which to pass the night, which was now fast approaching. He entered the mouth of a narrow glen, along which he proceeded in quest of a resting place ; and having found a hollow under a projecting rock, he crept into it, and fell fast asleep. After a brief repose he awoke, and ruminating on his uncomfortable couch, he heard distinctly the sound of singing at

no great distance. The idea naturally occurred to him that there might be other fugitives in the ravine besides himself, who, seeking refuge from their foes, were engaged, in the midnight hour, like Paul and Silas, in singing praises to God in their hiding-place. He rose to search them out, and following the sound through the thickets of the underwood, he discovered a light proceeding from a hut at a short distance before him. He advanced with cautious step, and in the full expectation of finding a company of friends with whom he should spend the remaining hours of the night in security and comfort. The night was very dark, and his footing along the narrow pass precarious, at the bottom of which the foaming streamlet, which leapt from linn to linn as it dashed over its rugged bed, was the only object which was visible, and by which he attempted to guide his way. At length he reached the house, and stood still to listen; but, to his disappointment, the sounds which he heard were those of mirth and revelry. It was a shepherd's cot, and a party had convened within for the purpose of jollity and drinking.

Mr Renwick hesitated for a moment, whether to seek admission, or to retreat to his hiding-place; but being drenched in rain, and shivering with cold, he resolved to attempt an entrance. He knocked at the door, which was immediately opened, and he was forthwith conducted into the midst of the apartment. The master of the cottage, whose name was James M'Culloch, a rude, blustering person, and no friend to the Covenanters, received the stranger graciously on this hilarious evening. He led him to a seat near a rousing fire of peats, and

ordered a repast to be immediately set before him. The demeanour of Mr Renwick formed a complete contrast to that of the party among whom he was now placed, and seemed to excite some suspicion on the part of M'Culloch, who now and then muttered something about rebels and conventicles, and so forth. M'Culloch's wife, however, was a person of a different description. She was humane, seriously disposed, and a friend to the sufferers. She had some guess of the party to whom the stranger belonged, and dreading a disclosure in the progress of the evening, she hurried Mr Renwick to bed in an adjoining apartment.

As she conducted him to his dormitory, she requested him to be on his guard before her husband, who had no warm side to the persecuted people; informing him, at the same time, that he was in perfect safety under her roof during the night. She made a comfortable fire in the little chamber, before which she suspended his dripping clothes, that they might be ready for him in the morning. Mr Renwick having committed himself to the guardianship of Him who watches over all, crept under the soft and warm bed-clothes, and slept soundly till the morning. Awaking about the break of day, and groping about the obscure apartment for his clothes, he could not find them. Uneasy suspicions began to arise in his mind; he dreaded some mishap, when the mistress of the cottage entered, and informed him that his garments having been so very wet, she had not succeeded in getting them sufficiently dried, but had brought part of her husband's apparel, which she requested him to put on for a few hours. Mr Renwick complied, and the circum-

stance was the means of saving his life. M'Culloch had gone out before Mr Renwick rose, to drive his sheep from the low grounds, which were flooded with the rain that had descended so copiously during the night. After the devotions of the morning, in which M'Culloch's wife cordially joined, he walked out to the fields to breathe the refreshing air. Previously to his leaving the house, he had thrown over his shoulders a shepherd's plaid, which action being observed by one of the dogs that lay near the fire, the sagacious animal rose and followed him. Mr Renwick ascended a gentle eminence near the dwelling, and as he stood on its summit, his attention was directed, by the barking of the dog, to a company of dragoons that were newly come in sight, and were very near. Mr Renwick, forgetting that he was now attired in a shepherd's dress, expected to be instantly seized. The troopers rode up to him, and asked if he was the master of the cottage? He replied, he was not; and informed them where he was to be found. When the soldiers were gone, Mr Renwick returned with all speed to the house, and having put on his own clothes, he set out without delay for Penningham. Thus Providence delivered, within a few hours, this helpless man, twice from imminent danger, by the simplest means, and preserved him for further service in the cause of Christ. Nor were such preservations, however wonderful, unfrequent. Alexander Shields remarks, that "his preservation in keeping meetings so frequently and resolutely, in the very midst of his enemies, when keeping garrisons all over the country, was so remarkable; his protection in his wanderings, both night and day,

so observable ; and his escapes from many dangerous and hot pursuits so many and marvellous, that his reproachers took occasion to forge another impudent lie,—that he was in collusion with the soldiers, only seeking the ruin of the country, and that they would not take him.”

Mr Peden, when in Ireland, had his eye incessantly on the “bluidy land,” and all his sympathies were with the suffering remnant, who were scattered by the red sword of persecution ; and in the following words he alludes to the privations they endured :—“Pack and let us go to Scotland ; let us flee from one devouring sword to another. The poor honest lads in Scotland are running upon the hills, and have little either of meat or drink ; but cold and hunger and the bloody enemies are pursuing them, and murdering them wherever they find them. Their blood is running like water upon scaffolds and fields : let us go and take part with them, for we fear they bar us out of heaven.” On another occasion, when Mr Peden with a few friends were seated at a plentiful meal, and when asking a blessing, he put his hands beneath the bread, and holding it up, with much affection and tears, said, “Lord, here is a well covered table, and plenty of bread ; but what comes of the poor, young, kindly, honest lad, Renwick, that shames us all, in staying and holding up his fainting mother’s head, now when, of all the children she hath brought forth, there is none who will avowedly take her by the hand ; and the poor, cold, hungry lads upon the hills ; for the honour of thine own cause let them not starve.”

This year, 1684, the Apologetic Declaration was published by Mr Renwick and his friends, which

caused a great noise, and which heated the furnace of persecution seven times. In September the council indicted him in his absence, and issued against him what they called their letters of intercommuning, of which the following is a copy:—
“Forasmuch as Mr James Renwick, a seditious vagabond, and pretended preacher, being lawfully summoned to have appeared to have answered and underlien the law for his being in the late rebellion at Bothwell Bridge, 1679; keeping and preaching at field-conventicles in arms several times since, and particularly at Black-loch, Wolf-hole-craig, and Greenock, and several other places; for maintaining and asserting several treasonable and rebellious principles against us and our authority and government, whereby some of our unwary subjects have been infected with and debauched into the same wicked and unnatural and seditious principles with himself,—we command and charge all and sundry, our lieges and subjects, that they nor none of them presume nor take upon hand to reset, supply or intercommune with the said Mr James Renwick, rebel foresaid, nor furnish him with meat, drink, house, harbour, victual, nor no other thing useful or comfortable to him, or have intelligence with him by word, writ, or message, or any other manner of way whatsoever, under the pain of being esteemed art and part with him in the crimes foresaid, and pursued therefore with all vigour, to the terror of others. And we hereby require all our sheriffs to apprehend and commit to prison the person of the said Mr James Renwick, wherever they can find and apprehend him.”

It has been justly observed that “the low and

contemptible scurrility of these tyrants appears as conspicuous in this paper as their abominable cruelties."

By this furious declaration Mr Renwick and his followers were publicly ejected from the pale of civilized society, branded as traitors and rebels, as the offscouring of all things, and as persons who were not fit to live. A host of informers arose on all sides, and the military were poured into every suspected district, "not only commissioned," remarks Mr Shields, "to hunt, hound, chase and pursue, and seek them out of all their dens and caves, in the most retired deserts and remotest recesses in the wilderness; but empowered to murder and make havoc of them wherever they could meet with them." In this extremity what was to be done? They could neither cope with this armed force nor elude them. Their hiding-places were discovered by the numerous spies who swarmed everywhere, and that for the most part under the guise of friends. They possessed no means of sustaining themselves in their lurking-places, for food was denied them; and hence nothing but either starvation or murder stared them in the face. Was it not natural, then, that, so situated, they should employ what honest expedients were in their power, either to deter their ferocious enemies, or to defend themselves against their unrighteous assaults? In this perplexity the Apologetic Declaration was suggested, as an expedient to prevent, if possible, their utter extermination; and which, in their ordinary circumstances, they never would have thought of. When this Declaration was proposed to Mr Renwick he was at first opposed to it, dreading the sad effects it might produce; but, reflecting on the urgency of

the case, he consented, and assisted in its publication. Accordingly, on the 8th of November it was affixed to the crosses of several market-towns, and to the doors of several churches.

In this manifesto the sufferers declare "their firm resolution of constant adherence to their covenants and engagements, and to the declarations disowning the authority of Charles Stuart, and to testify to the world that they purposed not to injure or offend any whomsoever; but to pursue the ends of their covenants, in standing to the defence of the work of Reformation, and to the defence of their own lives. Yet if any," say they, "shall stretch forth their hand against us, by shedding our blood actually, either by authoritative commanding, or obeying such commands, to search for us, and to deliver us up to the spilling of our blood,—to inform against us, to raise hue and cry after us, and delate us before the courts,—as these shall be reputed by us enemies of God and to the covenanted Reformation, and punished as such, according to our power and degree of their offence, if they shall continue so maliciously to proceed against us. And we declare that we abhor and condemn any personal attempt, upon any pretext whatsoever, without previous deliberation, common or competent consent,—without certain probation by different witnesses, the guilty person's confession, or the notourness of the deeds themselves. And we warn bloody Doegs and flattering Ziphites, informing against us, to expect to be dealt with as they deal with us."

Such is the tenor of the famous Apologetic Declaration, which so greatly exasperated the rulers of the period, but which, at the same time, deterred not a little the base informers and insidious spies

from hunting after them, and accomplishing the mischief they so eagerly contemplated. It may be questioned, after all, whether the sufferers ever intended to act on this Declaration. It was exhibited more for the purpose of deterring their enemies, than with any fixed determination to put it into execution. The killing of Peter Pearson, the curate of Carsphairn, which happened the following year, is not to be instanced as a proof to the contrary; for that act was condemned by the societies, and the perpetrators were ejected from their communion.

The result of this Declaration, however, was as Mr Renwick had anticipated. It stimulated the persecutors, and caused an unutterable degree of suffering in the moorlands of Scotland. The gentle heart of Mr Renwick was made perpetually to bleed at the constant reports of the murders which were committed by the persecutors in the fields, and which led him to declare that, "though he had peace in his end and aim by it, and, for the time, durst not but concur in the emitting of it, and could and would defend all that was in it; yet he wished from his heart that that Declaration had not been published."

This Declaration drew forth from the council the imposition of the Oath of Abjuration, which caused much vexation in the western shires. The Declaration, besides striking a salutary terror into the ranks of the intelligencers, was the means of adding not a few converts to the cause of the friendless people, and also of drawing forth sympathy from several quarters whence it was not expected. The Oath of Abjuration, therefore, was enforced with great rigour. It ordained that "every person who owns, or who will not disown, the late treasonable

Declaration, upon oath, whether he have arms or not, is to be instantly put to death." The inhabitants of all the suspected parishes, above the age of fourteen, both male and female, were to be convened, and every one who refused to repudiate the offensive document, was to be put to death on the spot. We may easily conceive the intolerable grievance of this harassing measure. The infuriated council went so far as to decree that no person should be permitted to travel through the country without a certificate of his principles and loyalty; and this certificate could not be obtained by any one unless he had first taken the Abjuration Oath, denouncing the Apologetic Declaration as treasonable and rebellious.

Amidst all the distress of his lot, however, we find the mind of Mr Renwick filled with a uniform composure and resignation to the Divine will. "Though the world," said he, "think my case miserable; yet I think it so happy, that I know not a man this day upon the face of the earth with whom I would exchange my lot. O it is more sweet and pleasant to be swimming in the swellings of Jordan for Christ and with Christ, than to be wallowing in the pleasures of sin and the delights of the flesh. Yea, though Christians had not a heaven hereafter, I cannot but judge their case even here happy beyond all others; as the Psalmist saith, 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time when their corn and their wine were increased.' And when the world frowns most, I know it is the time wherein the Lord smiles most upon his own."

CHAPTER V.

Sanquhar Declaration—Argyle.

IN the midst of the turmoils and distresses of Scotland, and when the tide of oppression in that land had risen to a fearful height,—when the Covenanters, “expelled from their homes, were driven to hide in dens and in caves of the earth, to wander naked and starving in the sterile or remote parts of the country, skulking in woods, or among mosses, or on the hills, without any certain dwelling-place, exposed to every extremity of climate, in the depth of winter as well as in the heat of summer ; when they made the heather their bed, and the rock their pillow, and their only covering the canopy of heaven ; when, debarred from the charities of life, their presence was deemed pestilential, and their nearest relatives dared not exchange an expression of kindness with them but at the peril of their lives,”—when things were come to this pass, the prime mover of all the mischief was suddenly removed from the world. He who “cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth,” cut off Charles the Second in the midst of his days,

in the 54th year of his age. This tyrant was torn from the throne of Britain, and that not without the dark suspicions of foul play. "Worthless as a man," says Aikman, "Charles was detestable as a sovereign. His private character was unadorned by any active virtue, and his public conduct possessed not even the wretched relief of splendid crime. Beneath a plausible exterior, he was selfish, unfeeling, faithless, cruel, and revengeful. The good nature for which he was praised, evaporated among parasites and prostitutes, and his good-breeding was admirably adapted for the associates of his pleasures. When irritated, he could be rude, insulting, and vulgar. When facetious, he was not unfrequently blasphemous or obscene. He neither patronised learning nor encouraged the arts, nor is his name associated in the annals of Britain with any useful or ornamental institution. For his government of Scotland it would be difficult to find a parallel, except in the worst reigns of the worst of the Cæsars. It was one continued act of revolting, flagitious tyranny; unprincipled and unsparing in its rapacity, insulting and more than usually barbarous in its bloodshed; whose delight was to torture and to punish after it had reviled and pillaged its victims."

This infamous tyrant himself swore to observe the covenants, and came voluntarily under the same obligations with that portion of his subjects, whom, on account of their honest and loyal adherence to these very obligations, he, for the space of nearly five-and-twenty years, persecuted with relentless vigour.

The death of Charles made room for his brother James, Duke of York, to step into the throne.

James was a man of even a worse character than Charles. He was an avowed and bigoted Papist, whose intention it was to saddle the nation once more with Popery, and all its attendant evils, and to follow the steps of his deceased brother, in prosecuting the same profligate invasion on the religion, the liberties, and the lives of his subjects. It was not to be expected that the men who had emitted the Apologetic Declaration would sit down tamely under the assumption of the government, by one so obnoxious as the Duke of York, and so keen a persecutor. The same reasons which existed for their disowning Charles, existed for disowning James. On the accession of the latter to the throne, Mr Renwick, at the request of the united societies, drew up a Declaration, embodying their rejection of a second tyrant. "Mr Renwick," says Mr Shields, "could not let go this opportunity of witnessing against the usurpation, by a Papist, of the government of the nation, and his design of overthrowing the covenanted work of reformation, and introducing Popery. Accordingly, he, and about 200 men, went to Sanquhar on the 28th of May 1685, and published the Declaration, afterwards called the Sanquhar Declaration."

It may not, perhaps, be uninteresting, to give here the tradition respecting the circumstances which immediately preceded this Declaration.

Shortly after the accession of James, a conventicle was kept by Mr Renwick in a remote part of the wilderness. After the day's work was concluded, a meeting was held on the spot, for the purpose of deliberating on what, in the present posture of affairs, was best to be done. After much

consultation, it was agreed that a declaration of their principles should be published on an early day. They were convinced that no redress of their grievances was to be obtained,—they saw that they could not rectify matters for themselves, and that the only thing left for them to do, was to testify publicly and strongly against the evils complained of. The drawing up of the manifesto was committed to Mr Renwick. Having arranged all the preliminary matters, and appointed another meeting on a given day, in a secret place among the hills to the north of Sanquhar, the assembly dispersed, every one being enjoined to observe the strictest secrecy. It was not an easy matter, however, to secure the secrecy necessary in such cases; for it was not possible to hold any meeting, even in the remotest solitudes, without the intrusion of spies and informers, who appeared among them as wolves in sheep's clothing, and who, by goodly words and fair speeches, insinuated themselves into the good graces of the simple-minded people, who, practising no deceit themselves, were not so ready to suspect others. The appointed day of meeting at length arrived. Mr Renwick was accompanied with a few faithful friends, one of whom, named Laing, a steady adherent to the cause, lived in Blagannach, not far from the appointed place of meeting. Blagannach is situated in the midst of the mountains, about half way between Sanquhar and Muirkirk, and near Hyndbottom, the lonely scene of a great conventicle held on one occasion by Cameron. The locality affords a specimen of one of the most perfect solitudes in the south Highlands, and in former times, when the country was more thickly

wooded, must have been a very eligible retreat in days of peril.

When a goodly number of the people had congregated, and were silently waiting till the services should commence, a man on horseback was descried in the distance, advancing with all the speed that the ruggedness of the ground would permit. The deep murmuring of voices was heard throughout the congregation, like the low muttering of remote thunder. It was obvious to every one that the horseman was the bearer of important tidings. This was indicated by his hurried and impatient movements. Every heart throbbed with solicitude, and the anxiety of the moment was intense. At length the approach of the messenger put an end to suspense. "Ye are betrayed, my friends," vociferated he; "ye are betrayed, and the enemy is approaching." This was indeed the case. A traitor had found his way into the camp at the former meeting, and he had informed the soldiers. This informer is said to have been a man of the name of Sandilands from Crawfordjohn, and he had been seen in company with the commander of the dragoons on the preceding evening. This infamous character was in the pay of the enemy, and he exerted himself in every way to gain the good opinion of his employers, and to retain his lucrative situation.

This information spread consternation throughout the meeting, and it was resolved instantly to abandon the spot, and to retire to a still more secluded place among the mountains; and the moss of Blagannach was fixed on as the place of retreat. The tent, under the awning of which Mr Renwick

was to address the people, was speedily erected on the edge of the morass, and was constructed of strong stakes driven deep into the moss, and covered with the plaids of the shepherds. Before the work of the day commenced, it was agreed that Mr Renwick should exchange clothes with some individual present. The design of this was, that in the case of a sudden approach of the troopers, he might the more readily effect his escape. There was no small danger attending this experiment to the man who should assume Mr Renwick's dress, as a person in clerical habiliments would, in these times, be easily distinguishable from the rest of the people. Laing, however, was ready to incur all the risk attending the project, and he generously offered to substitute himself in Mr Renwick's place. He was a stout and intrepid man, and fully prepared for a tough pursuit by the enemy. Mr Renwick was forced to comply with the wishes of the company, and to attire himself for the present in a garb different from his own, but not an inappropriate one, for it was the garb of a shepherd. This was done with a most generous design ; for Mr Renwick, possessing a constitution by no means robust, was much exhausted by the toil of the previous night's journey, and therefore incapacitated for much exertion in flight before the pursuers.

When all things were arranged, and the watches stationed at proper distances, to give due warning in case of danger, this little church in the wilderness engaged in the solemn worship of God. As the company were listening to the discourse, with minds deeply absorbed in the subject, the work was suddenly interrupted by the report that the soldiers

were seen advancing through the moors, apparently in the direction of the meeting. All was again confusion, and the congregation rose to depart. The troopers came near, and the greater part of the people fled to the moss, where the dragoons could not so easily follow them. Laing, arrayed in Mr Renwick's clothes, took a different route, and rendered himself as conspicuous as possible, for the purpose of attracting the notice of the troopers to himself, singly and alone, as the supposed individual of whom they were chiefly in quest. The stratagem succeeded, and the main body of the dragoons turned in the direction in which he was fleeing, and this afforded the people and Mr Renwick the opportunity of escaping. Laing, acting as a decoy, led the soldiers into the deepest and most inextricable parts of the morass. He knew every foot of it, and could wend his way with ease through its entire breadth and length. In these mosses there are generally narrow paths, known only to the shepherds, who can pass and repass with perfect safety, where strangers might probably lose their lives. Laing, and the few that were with him, endeavoured to preserve a certain distance from the pursuers, not to advance too fast lest they should give up the chase as hopeless, and turn on the others, and not to proceed too tardily, lest their enemies should get within shot of them. The troopers seemed to have no doubt but that the person whom they were following was Mr Renwick, both from his appearance, and from the assistance which they saw was occasionally lent him in stepping the deep moss hags. The individual about whom so much solicitude was manifested, could be

no other than the minister, and therefore they were determined to capture him, come of the rest what might. When the horsemen had advanced a certain way into the moss, the impossibility of proceeding further became instantly apparent, and therefore it was agreed, that two or three of the more robust of the party should dismount and pursue on foot. In a short time, however, it was found that this method was equally impracticable, for the tall, heavy men, leaping and plunging in the moss, sunk to the waist, and could with difficulty extricate themselves. In this attempt one of their number broke his leg, and this incident put an end to their pursuit. They dragged their disabled companion to the firm ground, and conveyed him to Blagannach. The good-wife of Blagannach was the only person who was within when the party arrived, the rest of the family, who were at the conventicle, not having yet returned. The soldiers behaved very rudely, and questioned her respecting her sons and her husband. The honest woman, however, seemed to pay very little regard to their inquiries, professing to be greatly distressed at the loss of a good milk cow that had that morning disappeared in the morass. After they had refreshed themselves with what provisions they found in the house, and perceiving that they could elicit nothing satisfactory from the old matron, they departed, being themselves the only party that had that day sustained damage. They marched to Crawfordjohn, where they left their comrade with the fractured limb till he should recover. Tradition says, that the soldier who met with the accident became an altered man,—that he was ultimately brought

to repentance and the knowledge of the truth ; and that after his recovery he connected himself with the cause he had persecuted, and lived a devoted Christian. It is exceedingly gratifying to meet with such an instance of a gracious change in an individual whose occupation was to shed the blood of the saints. Such conversions, though not numerous, were nevertheless of occasional occurrence,—the Lord manifesting his graciousness here and there, as something noticeable, and as an encouragement to others of the same profession to turn to Him, in the certain hope of obtaining mercy.

The congregation having fled on the approach of the dragoons, pursued their way down the rivulet of the Spank, towards the river Crawick. The Crawick is a pastoral stream which rises on the borders of Lanarkshire, in the high lands, and wends its way in a south-westerly direction, till it falls into the Nith, in the immediate vicinity of Sanquhar. The course of this stream exhibits a scene of surpassing beauty ; its mountains clothed in deep verdure, present the appearance of a newly mown meadow, while some of the hills are so abrupt from the summit to the base, that a person can scarcely walk with steadiness along the velvet slope. The hollow valley of the Crawick was at this time densely covered with wood, whose thickets afforded a secure retreat to the fugitives from Blagannach moss. Into this place of concealment it was in vain for the dragoons to attempt to penetrate, and therefore they retired, satisfied that they had at least scattered the conventicle, though they had captured none of the worshippers.

The leaders of the dispersed multitude met, it is

said, on the evening of the same day, in a sequestered glade in the dark forest of Crawick, to concert measures anew respecting the Declaration. It was agreed, that though for the present they were disappointed in their object, they would by no means abandon their design, but that on a future day they would meet again to fulfil their purpose. The publication of their projected Declaration they considered as an important duty, which they owed alike to God and to their country, and a work which, in the present emergency, they were imperiously called on to perform. They accordingly appointed a day for a second convention, and having commended one another to the grace of God, and to the care of his providence, they dispersed to their several homes, thanking the Lord for the special protection which had that day been vouchsafed to them.

After the noise which the affair of Blagannach made had ceased, those friendly to the covenanting interest convened from all quarters, for the purpose of proceeding to the inland burgh of Sanquhar, to publish the Declaration agreed on. About 200 men met accordingly, determined to brave every opposition in the performance of a duty so imperative. On the 28th of May 1685, the inhabitants of Sanquhar were surprised at the appearance of so great a company, who, without any signal of their approach, stationed themselves in the very heart of their town. The men had a warlike aspect, each prepared with weapons of defence in case of an onslaught. In those unsettled times, when rumours of battles and of bloodshed were constantly ringing in people's ears, it is not to be wondered at that the populace of this quiet and secluded town should

have felt some degree of alarm at the unceremonious intrusion of so great a band of men. Their purpose, however, was soon divulged. They were come not to pillage the inhabitants, nor to spill one drop of blood, but to testify publicly their adherence to the covenanted cause of reformation, in the only way which was left open for them to do. Having therefore read their Declaration aloud, in the audience of the people, and then attached it to the cross, as their avowed testimony against the evils of which they virtuously complained, they, in a peaceable and orderly manner, left the place with all convenient speed, lest the enemy, to whom information of their proceedings would instantly be transmitted, should pursue them. This second Declaration, which was published with much more pomp and circumstance than the first by Cameron's party, was equally offensive, although not so much was said about it at the time; for, as the one disowned Charles, so the other abjured James as an obnoxious Papist and tyrant, to whom no allegiance was lawfully due.

The following is a copy of this Declaration:—
“ A few wicked and unprincipled men having proclaimed James Duke of York, though a professed Papist and excommunicated person, to be king of Scotland, &c., we, the contending and suffering remnant of the pure Presbyterians of the Church of Scotland, do here deliberately, jointly, and unanimously protest against the foresaid proclamation, in regard that it is choosing a murderer to be a governor, who hath shed the blood of the saints; the height of confederacy with an idolater, which is forbidden in the law of God; contrary to the De-

claration of the Assembly of 1649, and to many wholesome and laudable acts of Parliament ; and inconsistent with the safety, faith, conscience, and Christian liberty of a Christian people, to choose a subject of antichrist to be their supreme magistrate. And further, seeing bloody Papists, the subjects of antichrist, are become so hopeful, bold, and confident, under the perfidy of the said James Duke of York, and Popery itself like to be intruded again upon these covenanted lands, and an open door being made thereunto by its accursed and abjured harbinger, Prelacy, which these three kingdoms are equally sworn against, we do in like manner protest against all kind of Popery in general, and particular heads, &c.

“ Finally, we being misrepresented to many as persons of murdering and assassinating principles, and which principles and practices we do hereby declare before God, angels and men, that we abhor, renounce and detest ; as also all manner of robbing of any, whether open enemies or others, which we are most falsely aspersed with, either in their gold, their silver, or their gear, or any household stuff,—their money perish with themselves, the Lord knows that our eyes are not after these things.

“ And, in like manner, we do hereby disclaim all unwarrantable practices committed by any few persons reputed to be of us, whereby the Lord hath been offended, his cause wronged, and we all made to endure the scourge of tongues, for which things we have desired to make conscience of mourning before the Lord, both in public and private.”

With regard to the propriety of the various declarations which were published in those times of

oppression, different persons will doubtless entertain different opinions; but, it may be asked, was not the Revolution Settlement founded on the very principles contained in these declarations? And, in 1688, did not the whole nation do, on a larger scale, what the Covenanters did on a small scale,—namely, repudiate the reigning prince on account of his tyranny and misrule? Dr Burns, in his excellent Preliminary Dissertation to Wodrow's History, makes the following remark:—"The conduct of the actors in the scenes at Rutherglen, at Sanquhar, and at Torwood, in disowning the king, and excommunicating him and his adherents, is indeed justly censurable as rash and unwarranted (?); but we would beg to know, wherein did the primary principles, avowed and acted on these occasions, differ from those principles which, in the course of a very few years thereafter, roused the dormant spirit of the country, and chased the oppressor from the throne?"

Did not the "Claim of Right" which, at the Revolution, rescinded all the forfeitures passed against those who had been in arms at Pentland and Bothwell Bridge, and pronounced them null and void from the beginning, plainly homologate these principles, and give them the nation's sanction? And does not the House of Brunswick, on these self-same principles, hold at the present moment the tenure of the throne of Britain? It is injudicious, then, to give it no worse a name, for any class among us to traduce the conduct of these individuals, on the broad basis of whose political principles our present constitution is founded.

The first Sanquhar Declaration, which in prin-

ciple was the same as the second, was the focus into which were gathered those scattered rays of political doctrines, which were formerly avowed in the Covenants, but which had been obscured by a long reign of despotism, and from which again they radiated in every direction, enlightening men's minds and producing a fuller conviction of their justness and expediency, till at length, the nation, as a whole, proceeded to act upon them, and annihilated the wretched usurpation of a tyrant and unprincipled bigot. This Declaration was an arrow shot by the hand of a dexterous bowman, and which, though it was long in reaching its destination, yet at length hit its object with a precision as admirable as it was effective.

It is remarkable, that within the walls of this little burgh was heard the first blast of that trumpet which eventually roused the attention of the realm, and summoned its energies to the overthrow of a despotism under which it had groaned for nearly thirty years. The first trampling of the feet of the great host, which ultimately effected the Revolution, was heard in the streets of Sanquhar. Mr Cameron, in a sermon, said that the Sanquhar Declaration would shake the throne of Britain, and we know how fully this prediction was verified. The Rutherglen Manifesto did not occupy the same high ground as the two declarations alluded to.

An elegant writer remarks that the "standard of the Covenanters on the mountains of Scotland indicated to the vigilant eye of William, that the nation was ripening for a change. They expressed what others thought, uttering the indignation and the groans of a spirited and oppressed people.

They investigated and taught, under the guidance of feeling, the reciprocal obligations of kings and subjects, the duty of self-defence and of resisting tyrants, the generous principle of assisting the oppressed, in their language *helping the Lord against the mighty*. These subjects, which have been investigated by philosophers in the closet, and adorned with eloquence in the senate, were then illustrated by men of feeling in the field. While Lord Russell and Sydney, and other enlightened patriots in England were plotting against Charles, from a conviction that *his right was forfeited*, the Covenanters in Scotland, under the same conviction, had the courage to declare war against him. Both the plotters and the warriors fell, but their blood watered the plant of renown, and succeeding ages have eaten the pleasant fruit."

On the attempt made by Argyle and the Duke of Monmouth to overthrow the tyrannical government of James, a good deal of influence was used with the society people to induce them to co-operate with that party. Mr Renwick and his friends, however, though they expressed great respect for Argyle as an upright and honest man, hesitated to join in this expedition, "because it was not, as they affirmed, concerted according to the ancient plea of the Scottish Covenanters, in defence of our Reformation expressly, according to our Covenants, National and Solemn League, because no mention was made of these Covenants, nor of Presbyterian government, and because some persons were too promiscuously admitted to trust in that party, who were then, and since have discovered themselves to be, enemies by taking the test. Yea, some that had

accession to the blood shed at Ayr-moss, namely, Sir John Cochran, who had a hand in bringing the forces together, and since hath treacherously redeemed his life by turning a traitorous informer against his fellow-associates."

Mr Renwick sustained much reproach for his not falling in with the measures of Argyle, but his scruples were conscientious. In reference to this matter, he says in one of his letters, "Before Argyle brake, many of our friends were greatly puzzled whether the Lord was calling them to follow their former methods, or to draw altogether by themselves and to emit a declaration of their own. Whereupon there was a meeting appointed to consider the matter, and also a day for prayer ; but the Lord disappointed one after another, until Argyle was apprehended and his party scattered."

After the defeat of Argyle, the persecution raged against Mr Renwick with even greater fury than formerly, for though he had never acceded to Argyle's attempt, yet he and his friends were implicated. The mere suspicion was enough to authorise his enemies to whet their swords to a keener edge against that obnoxious people. "All the forces," says Mr Shields, "foot, horse, and dragoons, and military troopers, and companies of Lowlanders, being poured in upon all the western and southern shires, to range through all the rocks, woods, muirs, and mountains, pursuing close after them with indefatigable travel, and saying that now they had gotten away with Monmouth and Argyle, they must now fall in with Renwick and the old regiment." This, however, neither discouraged his heart nor hindered his work. He went on progressively, with no or-

dinary spiritual enlargement and even increase of bodily strength, preaching, and catechising, and baptizing in every part of the country. The success of his ministry was at this time uncommonly great; a wide and effectual door was opened. Many were converted to Christ, and many of those who had sullied their garments by foul compliances, returned to their former standing as witnesses for the Redeemer. Multitudes resorted to the moorlands to follow the persecuted gospel, and so numerous were the demands from all quarters, that it was not in his power to comply with them. A hallowed influence came down upon the wilderness, as a dew from the Lord, and as rain upon the tender grass. The lonely companies that hid themselves behind the drapery of the snow-white mist on the hill, were made glad with the light of God's countenance, and strengthened with the joy of his salvation. He who foresaw what sufferings they were to bear for His name's sake, fortified their hearts beforehand to the firm endurance of all that they were to undergo; for they were killed all the day long, they were counted as sheep for the slaughter.

CHAPTER VI.

Remarks—Conventicle—Mr Renwick's preaching—Interview with Mr Peden—Success of the Gospel.

THE Word of God assures us, that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Now it may justly be a matter of wonder, why the godly should in any case suffer persecution, for may it not be fairly asked, What evil have they done? are they not the excellent ones of the earth? do they not fear God and keep his commandments? do they not love their neighbour as themselves? do they not labour to promote the good of the world around them? and do they not, in their general deportment, exhibit a pretty fair specimen of the excellency of the religion of Christ? Why, then, should such a class of persons be subjected to persecution? ought they not rather to be esteemed, and honoured, and lauded by the world, and should not their persons be sedulously protected from harm? Now the very thing on account of which such persons ought not to be persecuted, is the reason why they are persecuted. The world hates the godly, because their godliness operates as an incessant and irksome

criticism on its unhallowed principles and conduct ; it hates them, because its works are evil, and theirs righteous ; and hence the fruitful source of all the persecutions that have been endured, from the beginning till the present moment. The ground, then, on which Christ's people suffer persecution, is honourable to them, and reflects an unspeakable credit on their principles and practice ; and hence the abusive treatment which they receive from the world may be regarded as the best testimony which it can, in its own rude and unmannerly way, bear to the excellency of their character.

That the Covenanters were precisely such men as the world loves to persecute, is obvious from their history. They were men in heart, devoted to the Redeemer. This is as much as to say, that they were true Christians. It would be asserting too much, to affirm that all who adhered to the cause of the Covenant were truly godly persons, for there were some among them who were merely patriots, and influenced more, it may be, by the love of civil liberty than by religious principle. But what we affirm is, that the great body of the men of the Covenant were truly Christian persons, and deeply influenced by the love of that Saviour, whose cause it was their highest ambition to maintain. Their attachment to the Saviour lay at the very foundation of their character as Christians, and without this, all their professions, and contendings, and sufferings, would have been of little avail as to themselves, although as to us they might have been the medium of transmitting many valuable privileges. With regard, then, to the sterling godliness of their character, there can be no doubt, for

the highest proof which a man can furnish of his attachment to the Saviour, is the laying down of his life in His cause. The veritable histories of the period in which they lived bear ample testimony to the holiness of their lives, as men "of whom the world was not worthy." They might be maligned as wicked men by their persecutors, but in the convictions of all who knew them, they were God-fearing men, the purity of whose lives emitted a splendour too bright for their enemies to gaze on, and therefore they hated them, and sought to remove them out of their sight.

They were men who had the interests of true religion at heart, and the great object of all their contendings was to preserve the truth of God alive in the land. As they had felt the power of the doctrines of Christ on their own hearts, so their earnest wish was, that others should experience the same. Their oppressors had in view, the establishment of a religious despotism, merely for the purposes of promoting their political designs, and not at all for the spiritual good of the people; but the object of the Covenanters was the support of Christ's holy evangel, and the advancement of vital godliness in the community. In all religious matters they were in earnest, heartily desirous of promoting the glory of Christ, in the conversion and edification of souls. The conventicles which, at the risk of their lives, they maintained in fields and private houses, proved that the success of the gospel was a matter which lay very near their hearts, and that their profession of religion was more than a name.

Mr Renwick was the minister of the moorlands, which were the spacious fields he traversed at all

times, by night and by day, and in all kinds of weather, in storm and in sunshine, and in the most hazardous circumstances, when chased by troopers, and traced by insidious spies. The incidents which befell him were manifold, though only a few have been transmitted to us by tradition, and almost none by history, although we are informed by Mr Shields that such incidents were almost without end. Tradition says, that Mr Renwick, in his wanderings through the wilder parts of the country, came to the neighbourhood of Kirkmahoe, in Nithsdale, and kept a conventicle on a hill, called Wardlaw, not far from the residence of William Swan, of Braehead, mentioned in the "Traditions of the Covenanters,"—a worthy man, who made it his business to hide and entertain the sufferers, in their moving from place to place for shelter. On the day of the meeting, a large company assembled from the surrounding district, in expectation of spending one Sabbath in the worship of God without disturbance. There was a person of the name of Smith, who resided within the farm of Braehead, which was occupied by William Swan. This man was a low, selfish character, who expected to reap some worldly advantage, at the expense of the meeting at Wardlaw. After the worship was begun, and when the minister in the tent which was reared in the field was preaching to the people, Smith, who was watching his opportunity, came running in great haste to the outskirts of the crowd, crying that a company of dragoons was approaching. The report, which was entirely false, threw the multitude into confusion, and occasioned the dispersion of the congregation, the very thing which Smith wanted. In

the disorder of the moment, when the people were running to and fro, the temporary tent was overturned upon the minister, but without any injury to his person ; although, as might have been expected, several serious bruises were received by the people, from coming in contact with the horses, many of which had been brought by the company, and were tied in different parts of the field to wait the termination of the services. When the congregation had vacated the spot, and not an individual remained in the field, Smith, at his leisure, gathered the bonnets, and plaids, and Bibles, and other articles which the people, in the scene of confusion that ensued, had left behind them. Having collected the spoil, he returned to his house like a person laden with the plunder of the slain from the battle-field. This man, actuated by a principle of sordid avarice, was guilty of a base falsehood and of a disgraceful theft, and deprived a great company of hearing the gospel, on one of those occasions which was but rarely enjoyed in those perilous days. To such interruptions as this, in the prosecution of his ministry, Mr Renwick was frequently exposed, and to interruptions much more serious than this, and attended with unspeakably greater peril ; but so much was his heart set on his Master's work, that none of these things moved him, he was prepared for the worst, and the trial, however fiery, was not a strange thing to him.

There was perhaps no preacher in his day so popular as Mr Renwick. He seems to have had a soft and mellifluous voice, which fell with ineffable sweetness on the ear. His eloquence flowed in "gentle stream," and came with a great and sub-

duing power on his audience. There was nothing vehement in his action, nor boisterous in his delivery, but every thing calm and dignified, and suited to the solemnity of the subject. The continuous and majestic flow of his oratory, which proceeded from the urgency and earnestness of his spirit like the still but irresistible current of a mighty river, swept all before it, and carried his hearers onward to the precise point he wished to conduct them. The crowds that listened to him in the desert, were often melted to tears by the heavenliness of his manner and his doctrine. So persuasive and animating was he in his preaching, that the holy fervour and resolution of his auditors were often roused to so high a pitch, that they could have endured martyrdom on the spot. One who heard him preach declared that the effect of his discourse on him and his fellow-worshippers was such, that "they could have been glad to have endured any kind of death, to have been home at the uninterrupted enjoyment of that glorious Redeemer, who was so livelily and clearly offered to them that day."

In another place, the same person remarks, "I went sixteen miles to hear Mr Renwick, a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, who was a young man, endowed with great piety, prudence, and moderation. The meeting was held in a desolate moor. He appeared to be accompanied with much of his Master's presence. He preached on Mark xii. 34, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.' In the forenoon he gave us several marks of a saved believer, and made a large and full offer of Christ to all sorts of perishing sinners. His method was clear, plain and well digested, suiting the substance and sim-

licity of the gospel. This was a great day of the Son of Man to many poor exercised souls, who this day got a Pisgah view of the Prince of Life." Again he remarks, respecting Mr Renwick's preaching, "O this was a great and sweet day of the gospel, for he handled and pressed the privileges of the covenant of grace with seraphic-like enlargement, to the great edification of the hearers. Sweet and charming were the offers which he made of Christ to all sorts of sinners.

I never knew a man more richly endowed with grace, more equal in his temper, more equal in his spiritual frame, more equal in walk and conversation. Many times, when I have been thinking of the great Mr Knox, Mr Welsh, Mr Davidson, Mr Bruce, Mr Rutherford, Mr Durham, and other of the worthy reformers, I have thought that the great Mr James Renwick was as true and genuine a son and successor to these great men, as any that ever the Lord raised up in these lands to contend for truth, and preach the gospel to lost sinners. He seemed to come upsides with them in soundness of principles, in uprightness of practice, in meekness, in prudence, in zeal for the glory of God, in giving testimony for the truth, and against sin and defec-tion; so that, though he was the Joseph that was sorely shot at and grieved, yet he was the Caleb that followed the Lord fully. When I speak of him as a man,—none more comely in features, none more prudent, none more brave and heroic in spirit, and yet none more meek, none more humane and condescending. He was every way so rational as well as religious, that there was reason to think, that the powers of his reason were as much strength-

ened and sanctified as any mere man I ever heard of. When I speak of him as a Christian,—none more meek, yet none more prudently bold against those who were bold to sin, and yet none more prudently condescending, none more frequent and fervent in religious duties, such as prayer, converse, meditation, self-examination, preaching, prefacing, lecturing, baptizing, and catechising. None more methodical in teaching and instructing, accompanied with a sweet charming eloquence in holding forth Christ as the only remedy for lost sinners. None more hated by the world, and none more strengthened and upheld by the everlasting arms of the great Jehovah, to be steadfast and abounding in the way of the Lord to the death; wherefore he might justly be called Antipas, Christ's faithful martyr. And as I lived then to know him to be so of a truth, so by the good hand of God I yet live thirty-six years after him, to testify that no man, upon just grounds, had any thing to lay to his charge, upon all the critical and straitening circumstances, when that suffering period is well considered, save that he was liable to natural and sinful infirmities, as all mere men are when in this life, and yet he was as little guilty in this way as any I ever yet knew or heard of. He was the liveliest and most engaging preacher to close with Christ I ever heard. His converse was pious, prudent, and meek, his reasoning and debating was the same, carrying along with it a full evidence of the truth of what he asserted. And for steadiness in the way of the Lord, few came his length. He learned the truth, and counted the cost, and so sealed it with his blood. Of all the men I ever knew, I would be in the least danger of

committing a hyperbole, when speaking to his commendation. And yet I speak not thus to praise man, but for the glory and honour of God in Christ, and who makes men to differ so much from others, in some periods of the Church more than others."

The subjects on which Mr Renwick preached, with such enlargement of spirit and heavenly oratory, are embodied in his sermons. It may not be unedifying, however, to present here a specimen of his doctrine, and his manner of handling it, as contained in one of his letters to the society of strangers at Lewarden in Friesland:—"Let us yet come a little nearer, and take a look of Him, as he is our Saviour, in his condescendency, love, power, faithfulness, and other properties. O how condescending is he; though he be that high and lofty One, the Father's equal, yet he stooped so low, as to take upon him the nature of man, and all the sinless infirmities that attend it; he became flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, and that in the lowly condition of a servant. He suits the creatures' affection, as if it were of some worth, and seeks men and women to match with him. O how loving is he; it is a strong love that he beareth to the seed of Abraham. Doth not this shine in all that he hath done: he emptied himself, that they might become full; he made himself poor, though maker and possessor of heaven and earth, that they might become rich; he fulfilled the law for them, that he might purchase to them life and happiness; he made himself a sacrifice to the death, that he might satisfy offended justice, and make reconciliation for them. O such a death! so cursed, so shameful, so painful, and so lingering; but above all, he had the full weight of

the wrath of God to bear, which all the strength of angels and men could not have endured ; but he being God, could not fall under it. O what manner of love is this ! In effect he did not care what he suffered ; let justice charge home upon him, with all its rigour and severity, seeing he was to gain his point, and purchase a part of mankind from Satan to himself, from sin to holiness, from misery to happiness ; so that man, however unworthy, base, sinful, and miserable, yet is the centre of his love. O how powerful is he ; he is mighty to save to the uttermost. All the strongholds of the soul cannot hold out against him ; his power is irresistible ; by this he can do what he will, and by his love he will do what we need. And again, he is so faithful, that what he sayeth he doeth ; he will not retract one promise that has gone out of his mouth, neither will he fail in fulfilling all his threatenings.

“ Much might be said of these things, but not the thousandth part of the truth can be told. When we win to the house above, and see him as he is, we will be ashamed of all our babblings about him. They that have been most ravished with his love, and most eloquent to speak forth the praises of his comeliness and properties, will see that they have been but at best babes learning to speak. O what shall I say ; he is the wonderful, matchless, glorious and inestimable jewel, and incomparable pearl of great price. O who would not choice him ! Let a man look through heaven and earth, and seek a portion where he will, he shall not find the like of Christ. O, then, let us be altogether his ; our will let it be his,—our affections, let them be his,—the travail of our souls, let it be his ; and let us

be fully surrendered, and entirely consecrated to him."

It is obvious from what we know of Mr Renwick as a preacher, that his discourses were eminently practical and experimental, as well as doctrinal, and that it was not his custom to dwell exclusively, and with an embittered sort of eloquence, on the wrongs of a bleeding remnant, depicting their sufferings, and denouncing the cruelties of their oppressors. No; his preaching was occupied chiefly with the substance of the gospel, with a view to the conversion of sinners and the edification of believers. He was not a demagogue, nor the ringleader of a seditious mob, traversing the country in its breadth and length, for the purpose of exciting and fostering a popular disaffection to the laws of the land. He was not a person employed in political intrigues, as the hireling agent of a party, who wished to embroil the nation in civil war. Nor was he a mere patriot, pleading the people's cause against a dominant and unprincipled faction, that had infringed the social compact, and invaded the liberties, the lives, and the property of the subjects. He was indeed a patriot, but much more than a patriot,—he was a Christian, and a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, whose chief ambition it was to make men spiritually free, and denizens of the kingdom of God above. Not that Mr Renwick reckoned the advocacy of the civil and religious rights of the people a matter of inferior moment. No; the declarations which, at the risk of his life, he had a hand in publishing, are a full proof of this; for these declarations embody the great principles of patriotism and of civil immunities as well as religion. But then he went

far beyond, and high above this,—he stretched his views forward to eternity, and his leading design was to bring sinners to the Saviour. For this end he laboured night and day, in peril, in want, and in weariness, preaching in season and out of season, testifying the gospel of the grace of God. His whole heart was in this great work, and he counted not his own life dear unto him, that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry he had received of the Lord Jesus.

The movement made by Argyle was the cause of much uneasiness to Mr Renwick, owing to the divisions that arose among the society people. Sundry preachers that belonged to the party that favoured Argyle found means to insinuate themselves into the good graces of not a few of Mr Renwick's people, and succeeded in unsettling their principles to a certain extent. These individuals were, Messrs Barclay, Langlands, and Alcorn, who traversed the west, making reproachful speeches against Mr Renwick, and urging his followers to join in the movement. By the misrepresentations of these men much confusion was introduced into the ranks of the strict and honest Covenanters. Many fell away from Mr Renwick; and not a few of even his warm friends became disaffected. But among the bitterest of his opponents was one Cathcart, who prevented him from preaching in sundry places where the people were desirous of hearing him. He wrote a scandalous libel against him, accusing him of heresy, and error and pride. All these low and contemptible accusations, however, Mr Renwick amply refuted. But the chief thing which grieved his upright mind in all this turmoil was, that his hitherto stedfast and

beloved friend, Mr Peden, turned his back on him, and became as loud as others in reproaching him. This caused much distress to Mr Renwick, whose gentle nature could ill brook harsh treatment, especially from those whom he respected. And Mr Peden was a venerable character, a holy and zealous minister, who suffered much in the cause of truth, having endured no less than six-and-twenty years of persecution; and who, except when he was in prison, or under hiding in Ireland, was never off the field, preaching the gospel in the solitudes or in private houses. He was eminently a man of prayer, and lived near God in heavenly fellowship. No man was a more frequent inmate of the cottages in the deserts, to which he betook himself for safety when the storm of persecution raged so wastefully over the land. His homely and affectionate manners made him a universal favourite with the peasantry; and his blameless life commanded respect even from his enemies. His lonely wanderings, and solitary lodging in caves and woods, and his perseverance in preaching the gospel in constant peril and destitution, drew toward him the sympathy and the affectionate regards of all who knew or heard of him. He was a man much honoured by his Master, and of uncommon attainments in the divine life. The memory of his ministrations is still retained in many a lingering anecdote by the inhabitants of the wilderness. The false statements of the forementioned ministers respecting Mr Renwick had produced so pernicious an effect on the mind of the venerable Peden, as to lead him to affirm, with warmth, that he would make Renwick's "name stink above the ground."

In a short time, however, Mr Peden saw good reason to change his sentiments respecting Mr Renwick. He entertained the suspicion that he had been imposed upon, and being now an old man, and on his death-bed, he wished to see the man who was everywhere spoken against, and to ascertain from his own mouth the true state of the case. Having sent for Mr Renwick, the following interview, as given in the words of Patrick Walker, took place:—"When Mr James came in, he raised himself upon his bed, leaning upon his elbow, with his head upon his hand, and said, 'Sir, are ye the Mr James Renwick that there is so much noise about?' He answered, 'Father, my name is James Renwick; but I have given the world no ground for making any noise about me; for I have espoused no new principle or practice, but what our Reformers and Covenanters maintained.' 'Well, Sir,' said Mr Peden, 'turn about your back,' which he did in his condescending temper. Mr Peden said, 'I think your legs too small, and your shoulders too narrow, to take on the whole Church of Scotland on your back. Sit down, Sir, and give me an account of your conversion, and of your call to the ministry,—of your principles, and the grounds of your taking such singular courses in withdrawing from all other ministers;' which Mr Renwick did, in so distinct a manner,—of the Lord's way of dealing with him from his infancy,—and of three mornings successively, in some retired place in the King's Park, where he used to frequent before he went abroad, where he got many signal manifestations and confirmations of his call to the ministry, and got the same renewed in Holland a little before he came off, with a distinct short

account of the grounds upon which he contended against tyranny and defections, and kept up an active testimony against all the evils of that day. When ended, Mr Peden said, ' You have answered me to my soul's satisfaction ; and I am very sorry that I should have believed any such ill reports of you, which have not only quenched my love to you, and marred my sympathy with you, but made me express myself so bitterly against you, for which I have sadly smarted. But, Sir, ere you go, you must pray for me ; for I am old, and going to leave the world,—which he did with more than ordinary enlargement. When ended, he took him by the hand, and drew him to him, and kissed him, and said, ' Sir, I find you a faithful servant to your Master ; go on in a single dependence on the Lord, and you will win honestly through, and clearly off the stage ; when many others that hold their heads high will fall, and lie in the mire, and make foul hands and garments.' He then prayed that the Lord might spirit, strengthen, support and comfort him in all duties and difficulties." Thus was a misunderstanding on the part of Mr Peden removed, before that good man left the world. The alienation, however, manifested by this venerable worthy, whose character stood so deservedly high, operated very injuriously on Mr Renwick ; for people were more ready to believe the things that were spoken against him, when so godly a man as Mr Peden took up the reproach. But the Lord, who brings forth the " righteousness of his people as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day," was pleased to vindicate his servant, and to commend him more fully to the affection and the esteem of all good men.

Notwithstanding the defections which took place among Mr Renwick's party, owing to the false accusations that had been spread abroad respecting him, the Gospel was greatly successful under his ministry, and perhaps more successful than ever it had been since the commencement of his labours in the wilderness. If some fell away, others were gathered in, so that a goodly accession of converts amply supplied the place, both of those who had been removed by martyrdom and banishment, and of those who had voluntarily retired from the party. In one of his letters he remarks, "As to our present case, I wot not well what to say aenent it, there are so many mercies and judgments in it to be spoken of. God hath taken, this last year, many from us by banishment and by death on scaffolds; and especially on the fields, where none, for the most part, were to see them but the executioners; and yet God fills up their rooms again: neither are these things permitted to damp such as are left. Some have, which is more sad, fallen off from us; and yet God is filling up their places also, and making others more stedfast. And notwithstanding both of persecutions and reproaches, the Lord hath opened doors for me in several places in Scotland, where there used to be no such access before, and hath multiplied my work so upon my hands,—I speak it to His praise—that I have observed my work, I say in some shires, to be threefold, and in some fourfold, more than it was. O that God would send forth labourers; there seems to be much ado in Scotland with them. Also it is almost incredible to tell what zeal, what tenderness, what painfulness in duty, what circumspectness of walk in many young ones, of ten, eleven, twelve,

and fourteen years of age, in many places of Scotland, which I look upon as one of the visible and greatest tokens of good-will we have."

From the preceding letter we see how much the heart of Mr Renwick was in his Master's work. Unlike those hireling shepherds, who do too little work, he rejoiced in the increase of his, and was glad that the field of labour was in some cases four times larger than formerly. It is interesting to contemplate this youthful servant of Christ, opposed on the right hand and on the left, traversing the country, in the midst of peril and distress, for the purpose of preaching the Gospel, and even feeling grateful in no common degree, that he was called to the endurance of toil and affliction, and to unheard of exertions in propagating the knowledge of the truth. It was no unpromising circumstance for the future prosperity of the cause, that the Spirit of God had descended on the rising generation, and that so many youthful hearts were brought under the power of the Gospel. These symptoms of a gracious revival were needed to inspirit him, amidst all his discouragements, and to refresh his heart in his dreary wanderings in the desert.

With regard to the extent of his labours, Mr Renwick writes to Mr Hamilton in the following strain:—"My work keepeth me busy, so much of it lies in the remote corners of the land, as Galloway, Nithsdale, Annandale, &c. I have not been near Edinburgh since the 16th October 1685, and I have travelled since through Clydesdale, Eskdale, some of the Forest, Annandale, some of Galloway, Kyle and Cunningham; and all these ways I examined the societies as I passed through, several

other persons coming to hear ; and I found my work greater this last journey than ever before. Also in lower Cunningham, where there never had been any field-preaching, I got kindly acceptance, and great multitudes came to hear ; and I have had several calls since from that country-side ; such like have I found through Renfrewshire." Such was the scene of his toils,—wide, mountainous, and desolate. It caused him many a weary step ; but still his heart was lifted up in the good ways of the Lord, and he took courage.

" Moreover," says he, in the same letter, " moreover, the Lord hath wrought a great change on the barony of Sanquhar, the parish of Kirkconnel, and these dark corners." A spiritual influence seems, through the ministrations of Mr Renwick, to have descended on the inhabitants of these two contiguous parishes, in the dark and cloudy day when men could scarcely grope their way, on account of the surrounding obscurity. Sanquhar is situated in the very centre of the spacious field of covenanting interest, which was trodden by the feet of the worthies who were compelled to flee to the solitudes for safety. Among the hills and deserts of this locality, Mr Renwick held many a conventicle, and precious were the seasons of refreshment with which the people of the neighbourhood were blessed. His labours here were not in vain in the Lord. " Generally," he says, " they come to hear the Gospel, and are quitting many of the defections of the times." Who can tell how many of the ancestry of the present inhabitants of this district were brought to the knowledge of the truth by Mr Renwick's means ? or who can say how much they themselves owe to

this circumstance, for the knowledge of that Christian doctrine, which, through the descent of several generations, has been transmitted to them by a religious parentage.

When we take our station on any of the eminencies near the town of Sanquhar, and carry the eye around the extremity of the beautiful basin in the midst of which it stands, we find that there is scarcely a hill or a glen within the ample circle, which does not record some incident, more or less interesting, which befell in the gloomy times of persecution. We tread more than classic ground when we traverse these moorlands; we tread ground that has been consecrated by the wanderings, and the prayers, and the sufferings of holy men, men of "whom the world was not worthy." The spirits of our forefathers seem to rise up before us when thinking on the days of other times; we find ourselves alone on the bleak waste, or on the tops of the lofty mountains, where they hid and prayed, and met in the interdicted conventicle.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr Renwick at Auchencairn in Closeburn—His Journey to England—Joined by Messrs Alexander Shields and David Houston.

MR RENWICK, in his wanderings in the upper parts of Nithsdale, as tradition tells, visited Closeburn, in which parish he kept a conventicle on a bleak moor, in the time of snow. Closeburn was, in those days, a place much frequented by the worthies. Its woods, and glens, and mountains, furnished many a favourable hiding-place to the refugees of the Covenant. The romantic Crihope linn, which has been honoured by ducal visitors, and by the most celebrated geologists of the day, and which is altogether a scene which baffles description, afforded,—among its shelving rocks and dark ravines, to whose dangerous entrance no unaccustomed foot durst venture,—the harassed non-conformists a retreat as secure and unassailable as the vaults of a fortified castle. The lonely worshippers, cowering in these caverns, beside the roaring of the torrent, and the tumultuous gush of waters, that shoot over the hideous precipice, and fall, boiling and foaming, into the dreadful caldron beneath, could raise aloft,

without the fear of detection, the loud sound of praise, and the hallowed voice of prayer, to Him into whose ears no deafening sound can prevent the entrance of the supplications of his people. It was in the rugged sides of Crihope linn that the good James Nevison of Closeburn Mill, as has already been detailed in the "Traditions of the Covenanters," took refuge with his wife and infant, when obliged to leave his home on account of the strict search that was made for him. Their bed was the cold hard rock; while the baby, wrapt in a warm blanket, was placed in a basket formed of the pliant twigs of the palmy willow, and rocked asleep; and the soft lullaby chanted by the affectionate mother filled with a sweet plaintive music the murky recesses of the cave, the sound of which, wafted stealthily on the fitful breeze, was carried down the gloomy ravine, and died away among the distant woods.

In this upland parish there lived sundry families devoted to the covenanting cause, and who suffered much in those times. Rosehill, the residence of John Mathison, is within its bounds; as also the cairn of Closeburn, which, in the times of which we are writing, was tenanted by the good William Smith. Interesting anecdotes respecting these two individuals, in connection with the incidents which befell James Nevison, have been given in the forementioned volume. Among the friends who inhabited this district, the sufferers in the cause of religious liberty found always a ready reception and a welcome meal. Besides the security which Closeburn afforded among its mantling woods and deep dells, to those who sought concealment

from the persecutors, another circumstance which invited the wanderers to this locality, was the peculiar leniency of the lord of the manor. Sir Thomas Kirkpatrick showed, so far as he durst with safety, a friendly disposition toward the Covenanters, who, on that account, might flock in greater numbers to his lands, seeking a retreat in the cottages of the kindly affected peasantry. Many are the instances preserved by tradition, of the manner in which this well-disposed gentleman, whose sympathies were uniformly found on the side of the oppressed, screened the non-conformists who happened to be lurking in his neighbourhood. The curate of the parish, who, like his brethren, acted the part of informer against those who refused to comply with the measures of the times, did not choose to offend Sir Thomas ; and knowing his leanings in favour of the persecuted, he strove to save appearances as far as possible, and hence less mischief was done than otherwise must have befallen, had circumstances been more favourable. The curates did immense harm to the Presbyterians, and brought many a family to utter ruin ; and wherever the gentlemen of their neighbourhood inclined to severe measures, they exerted themselves to the utmost in procuring information respecting the Covenanters, and in searching out their haunts.

It was in the winter season that Mr Renwick visited Auchencairn in Closeburn, where he sojourned in the house of a pious man of the name of James Elspie. When residing in this lowly, but hospitable mansion, the religious people in the neighbourhood were desirous of availing themselves of the opportunity of his services ; and therefore

it was agreed that a conventicle should be held in a retired corner in the solitudes, and information of the circumstance was conveyed, as quietly as possible, to the friends throughout the district. The snow lay deep on the ground, covering the dark and shaggy surface of the moorland with one uniform sheet of whiteness. On the day appointed, straggling companies were seen gathering in from different quarters to the meeting-place, to sit on the soft and sinking snow to hear the words of eternal life. The different articles necessary for the accommodation of the preacher were brought by the people,—a little table, on which he was to stand at a moderate elevation above the audience, and a quantity of the branches of the bending willow, which were to be attached to the corners of the platform, and gathered together at the top. Around this were twisted ropes of straw to keep the fabric firm, and then the whole was covered with plaids. Thus provided, Mr Renwick took his station under the awning, which afforded a tolerable shelter from the cold and piercing easterly winds. It was not on every occasion, however, that this zealous preacher would accept of such an accommodation as this, for he sometimes exposed himself to the weather when preaching, and stood under the pelt-ing rain, while the congregation sat drenched on the ground beside him. In the present case, the audience sat on the snow, and forgot the inclemency of the weather, in the interesting service in which they were engaged. Their bodies might be chilled by the cold breath of winter, but their hearts were warmed by the enlivening truths of the gospel, and the quickening influences of heavenly grace. We

who live at ease, and in the enjoyment of our many privileges, have little notion of the spiritual ardour by which the hearts of these followers of the Saviour were fired, when they gathered by stealth the manna which was occasionally rained on them in the wilderness, and on which they fed at the peril of their lives.

As the little assembly were engaged in these religious exercises, and in a great measure oblivious of their external situation, a party of dragoons, who had been informed of the meeting, were plodding their way through the deep snow, for the purpose of surprising the conventicle. As the horsemen were moving cautiously onward, they happened to start either the whirring moorfowl, or the timid hare, at the sight of which they eagerly fired, and, happily, the loud report of the muskets reached the ears of the worshippers on the waste. The circumstance roused their attention, and they saw in the distance the troopers advancing. The little company fled like a flock of sheep when scared by the ravenous wolf. Elspie's little daughter, who was holding the horse that carried Mr Renwick, was in great distress about the minister, and cried and wept bitterly. "If," said her father, "you desire Mr Renwick's safety, do not mention his name, nor appear in any way to acknowledge him, lest you should happen to point him out to the enemy." The child saw the propriety of the caution, and held her peace.

When the people were running and wading through the snow, Elspie gave Mr Renwick in charge to his little daughter, whose name was Agnes, to conduct him safely to the house by a

circuitous rout, while he himself mounted the horse and rode off in a different direction, as if he were the preacher. The troopers followed him as being the most conspicuous person, and the rest of the congregation escaped the pursuit. When the soldiers came to the tent they found the place deserted, and the snow trodden by many feet, plainly indicating the direction in which the company had fled. They now accused themselves as being the cause of the breaking up of the conventicle, by means of their too great eagerness for their sport on the moor.

But though the troopers captured none of the conventiclars, the day did not pass without its calamitous incident. An old woman, in her flight from the meeting-place, fell through the sinking snow into a deep moss hag, from which she could not extricate herself. In the hurry and confusion, the poor woman had not been missed by her companions on the way, and it was not till the friends reached Closeburn that they found she was not in their company. They knew that she had not been captured by the soldiers, and they suspected, what was the truth, that she had sunk in the snow. Accordingly, in the dusk, when they could venture out without being observed, a party went in search of her, and following the beaten track, they hastened forward on their errand of mercy. As they proceeded along, looking on every side, they heard a deep sound, as if it issued from the earth, and standing still to listen, they distinctly heard the voice of prayer. Guided by the sound, they came to the place, and found the aged mother almost covered with the snow, and sinking in the miry

moss beneath. The poor woman was chilled to the heart, and greatly exhausted by the struggles which she made to free herself from her perilous situation. In a brief space the dark mossy trench must have been her grave, and the pure white snow her winding-sheet, had not friendly aid been near. The men drew her from her lair, and finding that she was unable to walk, they carried her gently along as expeditiously as possible. Their kindly efforts, however, were vain, for she expired before she reached the nearest dwelling-house. She met her death in following the persecuted gospel, and in countenancing the testimony which the worthies had lifted up in behalf of the truth. Among the last words she uttered were the following :—" May God give me good of the sermon in the end, for in the first place I have received evil ; but if I should die among the snow, may He take me safely home to the rest in Christ."

The soldiers tracked the footsteps of the conventiclers towards Closeburn, where they remained some days, endeavouring to discover those who had been at the meeting. Their chief object was to find out the preacher, but they could not discover the place of his residence.

Next morning the soldiers were early in motion, and came upon a tailor with the implements of his occupation in his hand, and him they accosted. This man, whose name was William Goudie, a shrewd and pious man, had been at the conventicle, a circumstance of which the men were not aware. Having incidentally met with him, however, they began to question him, with a view to elucidate something respecting the Covenanters in the neigh-

bourhood. After having conversed with him on various matters, they began to test him, thinking that perhaps he might be one of the party of whom they were in quest. "Do you renounce the covenant?" asked one of the party. "Which covenant?" replied the honest tailor; "is it the covenant of works you mean? if so, then I solemnly and deliberately renounce all connection with it, and all connection with those who adhere to it." The dragoons, it would appear, were very ignorant men, and knew nothing of the nature of those covenants for their adherence to which our ancestors suffered so much; and the tailor's reply seemed to them perfectly satisfactory, and they lauded him for a good and loyal subject, and allowed him to go peaceably on his way. This anecdote has often been rehearsed as an instance of the dexterous manner in which the wanderers evaded the ensnaring questions that were frequently put to them by the soldiers who happened to encounter them on the highway. And, indeed, from the sagacity which they displayed, and the self-possession which, in perplexing circumstances, they manifested, it is obvious that they enjoyed assistance from above in a very remarkable way; and this, too, in fulfilment of the promise with which the Saviour encouraged his disciples:—"But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." Mr Renwick, on this occasion, escaped, and none of the people were apprehended.

But Mr Renwick did not confine his ministrations to Scotland merely; he entered England also, and there preached with no small degree of accep-

tance and success. It was his desire to propagate, in both countries, the pure doctrines of the gospel, and to disseminate correct notions of the nature of Christ's kingdom, and the order of his house. The persecution was in this year, 1686, in some small degree slackened, and a short breathing-time was afforded to the weary remnant who were harassed and tossed incessantly in every part of the land. One particular object which Mr Renwick had in view in visiting the south at this time, was to confer with some of the ministers in that part of the kingdom respecting a union and co-operation with him on the principles on which he and the societies stood. His efforts in this way, however, were unsuccessful, and he came home with no other prospect than to labour singly and alone as formerly. But his journey was not fruitless in other respects. He preached the gospel to the edification of not a few. "I have been," says he, "for a season in England, where, by the good hand of the Lord, we kept our Sabbath meetings, all except one, in the fields, without any disturbance; but upon our days in the week they were kept in the night-time;" so unwearied was he in publishing the message of salvation, in season and out of season, never forgetting the great end he had in view, the conversion of sinners.

Mr Renwick was not a man who, in his zeal to make converts, was ready to gather together any sort of materials that came to his hand, for the purpose of enlarging a party; he knew that augmentation was not strength, unless it was the augmentation of sound believers. Purity of communion is the glory and stability of a Church, and Mr Ren-

wick exerted himself to the utmost to maintain this purity among the society churches to which he ministered; and few men, perhaps, have in this respect been more successful. He was particularly scrupulous in the case of those who had been guilty of defection, and would not, without the closest scrutiny, admit them to fellowship. In a letter to Mr Hamilton he remarks,—“As for those persons who have complied with any thing or other, I do not admit them to present their children (for baptism), unless they have evidenced a right sense and practical reformation, by standing out (against) the temptation unto these things they have been chargeable with, and their engagement to give due satisfaction when lawfully called for, or else the attestation of some acquainted with their case, that in the judgment of charity they appear to be convinced of, and humbled for their sin, and their engagement to forbear their sin, and give satisfaction in manner foresaid.”

Mr Renwick had always been desirous of obtaining the assistance of men like-minded with himself in the work of the ministry, and now his solicitude was greater than ever. The field of labour was every day widening on his hand, and the necessities of the people were becoming more clamant. “My business,” he says, “multiplies still on my hand, and people are more earnest now than ever I knew them after the gospel. O that the Lord would send forth labourers.” This desire was soon to be gratified; for the Lord, who saw the toil of his servant, faithful alone amidst all the reproaches, and persecutions, and privations to which he was subjected, in maintaining the standard of the gospel,

in opposition to the foul compliances of the times, provided two worthy coadjutors, Messrs Alexander Shields and David Houston, to take part of the ministry with him, and to proceed unitedly in the prosecution of the great work. After full deliberation, and when all concerned were entirely satisfied with regard to the propriety of the measure, these two ministers were admitted by the societies as fellow-labourers with Mr Renwick in the work of the Lord.

Mr Alexander Shields, the faithful friend and biographer of Mr Renwick, a man much about the same age, was a native of the Merse. His father's name was James Shields of Haugh-head. He studied philosophy in Edinburgh under Sir William Paterson, who was afterwards clerk to the council, whose mismanagement and tyranny wrought so much havoc in Scotland. After this he went over to Holland for the purpose of prosecuting his studies, where he continued for a short time, and then returned to his native country. Not long after this he went to London, and became an amanuensis to the famous Dr Owen, who was at the time writing for the press. It was while he resided here that he was licensed to preach by the Scottish dissenting ministers in London. Shortly after this he was apprehended at a private meeting for religious purposes, by the authorities, as an obnoxious person. After the death of Charles he was sent prisoner to Scotland, and examined before the council. He took the oath of abjuration, of which he afterwards bitterly repented, and made an ample confession of it before the society people when he was admitted by them. Mr Renwick, alluding to the circum-

stance, says, that Mr Shields, when conducting worship in a private house, used the following words:—"I cannot longer contain, but must confess unto thee, Lord, before this people, that I am ashamed to offer my body as a living sacrifice unto thee; yet I must do it, for I, a prisoner and a preacher, might have been a martyr, and in glory with thee and thy glorious martyrs above. But I sinfully and shamefully saved my life with disowning thy friends, and owning thy enemies, and it will be a wonder if ever thou put such an honourable opportunity in my hand again."

He was sent prisoner to the Bass, but he succeeded in making his escape in female attire. He went straight to Mr Renwick, who was then in Galloway, and attended a conventicle which was held in the woods of Earlston, and shortly afterwards he was received by the societies as a fellow-labourer with Mr Renwick. When the informatory vindication was framed, he went to Holland to superintend the printing, but was obliged to return before the work was finished. After Mr Renwick's death, he continued preaching in the fields with unwearied diligence till the persecution closed.

After the Revolution he was settled minister in St Andrews, where he remained till 1699, when he, with three others, was appointed to visit the settlement of Darien in America. He died in Jamaica after a short illness. The last sermon he preached was from the words, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein."

Mr Shields was a person of no ordinary accomplishments. He possessed a fine and vigorous mind, was a man of extensive reading and various learning, zealous for the truth, a true patriot, a devoted Christian, an active minister, and, in short, one of the most estimable men of his time. He was by no means a perfect character, any more than others. He lived in a trying period, and his yieldings before the council, which indicated the weakness of human nature in him, were sincerely lamented by him, and his after conduct tested the uprightness of his principles and the honesty of his profession. He was the author of several works. He wrote Mr Renwick's life, and the vindication of his dying testimony. He published the "Hind Let Loose," a book which may enlighten even this enlightened age. There were several sermons of his printed, a vindication of the covenants, and a few religious letters.

Mr Houston was a preacher in Ireland prior to his connection with Mr Renwick's party. He was by no means equal to Mr Shields, either as a preacher or as a person of influence among the societies; but he was, nevertheless, highly esteemed by them, and useful in his vocation. Mr Renwick makes the following mention of him:—"As for Mr David Houston, he carried very straight. I think him both learned and zealous. He seems to have much of the spirit of our worthy professors, for he much opposes the passing from any part of our testimony, yea, and sticks close to every form and order whereunto we have attained, asserting pertinently, that if we follow not even the method wherein God hath countenanced us, and keep not

by every orderly form, we cannot but be jostled out of the matter. He hath authority with him, which someway dashes those who oppose themselves; he discovers the mystery of the working of the spirit of antichrist more fully and clearly than ever I have heard it." It appears that he went occasionally to Ireland to preach to the societies there, who kept a correspondence with those in Scotland. After Mr Renwick's death, he was seized in Ireland, and conveyed to Scotland, to be tried before the council. The society people having obtained information of the circumstance, and fearing lest he should undergo the same fate as Mr Renwick, determined to accomplish his rescue by the way. Accordingly, having formed a party, they waylaid the company of troopers who had him under their care, and attacked them at the narrow pass of Bellapath, on the road between Cumnock and Muirkirk. In the scuffle, several of the soldiers were killed, and one of the Covenanters, named John M'Gechan of Auchengibbert, in the parish of Cumnock, lost his life, whom Wodrow terms "a singularly pious man." The council were greatly enraged at this incident, and the West was harassed in no small degree by the vexatious meetings which were held for the purpose of discovering the persons engaged in the rescue.

Wodrow asserts that Mr Houston ultimately fell into disrepute with the society people, and that he was eventually rejected by the party. These statements of the historian seem to be at variance with the following statements of Michael Shields, in a letter to the friends in Ireland, dated Sanquhar, June 24, 1689, the year after the Revolution:—

“ The Rev. David Houston is coming over to you, whose labours in the gospel among you we heartily pray may be crowned with success, to the glory of free grace. We hear it reported with you (that) he and we should be separated one from another, which we here declare to be false. As formerly, so now, we much esteem him, though many who had their tongues bended like their bows for lies, but they were not valiant for the truth upon the earth, have been at no small pains to load his name with reproaches and base calumnies, which, as they are grievous to us to hear, so we have endeavoured to search out the truth of them. But after trial, excepting some sharp and too vehement expressions concerning the indulged party, which we wish and hope he will forbear, do find that the same hath chiefly flowed from prejudice in some, and ignorance in others ; and all we shall say of them who have so done, shall be cordial wishes that they may see the evil of it, and do so no more.”

It would appear, however, that the statements of the historian respecting Mr Houston refer to a date considerably posterior to the time of Michael Shields' letter. There is in the possession of Mr Dalziel, of the Holm of Drumlanrig, a copy of the minutes of the general societies, containing an account of their transactions from 1693 to 1719. In these registers Mr Houston is several times mentioned, and it is recorded that his case was brought before the general meeting by the correspondencies of Galloway. The meeting enjoined all the correspondencies to take it into consideration, and to report. Meanwhile he was requested to appear before them, and answer for himself, which it does not appear he

ever did. At a meeting held at Leadhills, on the 9th of October 1695, it was agreed that none who countenanced him in any part of his ministerial functions should be owned as any of their number. He was accused of "associating with the Lord's enemies, and of marrying without sufficient testimonials;" and "further, of marrying persons, and baptizing children, to persons known to be guilty of public sins, without requiring satisfaction." Mr Houston's name does not again occur in the minutes, and it is not likely that he had any further connection with the societies.

These two associates were very acceptable to Mr Renwick, whose hands, by means of their co-operation, were much strengthened in the work of the Lord. By this threefold cord the societies were more closely and firmly bound together, and the success of the gospel among them soon became more apparent.

CHAPTER VIII.

State of matters in the Country.—Mr Renwick and his Party.—
Fast at Cairntable.

It may not be improper here, perhaps, to look beyond the boundary within which we have been confining ourselves, and glance at the outfield of the persecution, as it presents itself to our notice at this period. During the seven years prior to this date, 1688, the persecution raged at its greatest height. Its furnace was heated to a degree of intensity past endurance, and every man's life hung in doubt before his eyes. The enemies of the Church seemed to be impelled by a satanic fury, like persons intoxicated by strong drink. The madness of their procedure knew no bounds, and men were astonished at the deeds of daring wickedness and cruelty which, with impunity, they perpetrated before high heaven. The foundations of law, reason, and religion appeared to be erased, and the entire fabric of social order seemed to have toppled down, and to have buried in its ruins everything valuable in a nation's privileges. From the commencement of these troublesome times, onward to the *seventy-nine*, the work

of persecution was making gradual progress ; but at this date it received a fearful impetus. The archbishop's death, the scuffle at Drumclog, and the battle of Bothwell Bridge, stimulated to a mischievous energy the evil genius of a despotic government, which, for many years, had hovered like an ominous cloud over the nation, and ready to discharge its destructive contents, with a fearfully augmented vehemence, on the wide territory over which it lowered. The first Sanquhar Declaration, and the skirmish at Ayrsmoss, afforded an additional pretext to the unprincipled faction that ruled the land to proceed to the utmost excesses, in the violation of the lives and liberties of the populace. No language can depict the sufferings and the outrages of these nine years. The annals of no nation, perhaps, can furnish a period of tyranny and oppression equal to this ; even the worst times of the Roman Cæsars are not to be compared to it. A nation of loyal, industrious, and religious people, lay like a bleeding victim at the feet of royal villany.

These general statements may be confirmed by an induction of particulars, and these particulars are so profusely strewn over the spacious field of persecution, that there can be no difficulty whatever in making a selection. We may fix on an individual, a hireling in this work of bloodshed, the atrocities of whose procedure against the covenanting party may be taken as a specimen, and is enough to stamp the character of an indelible infamy on the rule of that terrible faction that then swayed the destinies of the nation. Take Claverhouse for instance, follow him in his godless crusade against his country's liberties, and we will be able

to form a notion of the general features of the time. In this man we see a picture of the whole horde of ruffian troopers, who were let loose like so many beasts of prey, to riot on the calamities of the peasantry. Who has not heard of CLAVERHOUSE? His name is a household-word in every cottage in the south and west of Scotland; for in what cottage did his cruelties not raise the wailings of distress? Claverhouse appeared in 1678, to act his infamous part in the scenes of his country's tragedy, during the hottest times of persecuting outrage. Few men have attained so infamous a renown as John Graham, Viscount of Dundee. This man was commissioned to "hunt the peasant from his hearth;" and a fit agent was he for the work assigned him. The shameful defeat he sustained at Drumclog, shortly after the commencement of his bloody career, greatly exasperated him against the Covenanters, and seems to have imparted an impulse to his fury that accompanied him to the end. After Bothwell Bridge, he traversed the country with the power of a military execution like a roaring lion. The instances of his cruelty and spoliation are without number. In his march through Ayrshire he came to the house of Merkland, in the parish of Bar, which he entirely plundered. He took away all the clothes, and two horses, worth six pounds sterling. In Galloway, his works of plunder were indiscriminate, for he scarcely made any distinction between friends and foes. He seized all the horses he could find, and either drove them away, or made their owners pay the full price. In the parish of Carsphairn he captured all the horses that were of any use to him, and from a man in Cragengillen he

took three, each worth nearly four pounds sterling. In the same parish he pilfered fifty pounds from a poor widow woman, because, as he alleged, there was in her house a servant who had been at Bothwell. Behold this "honourable cavalier" acting the part of a petty thief, at the head of a gang of licensed banditti. "In Glencairn," says Wodrow, "they apprehended a poor harmless youth at his work, and pressed him to declare who of his neighbours were said to be at Bothwell. The young man either could not or would not inform them. And when he had stood out their threatenings, they come to put him to the torture. Boots and thumbkins were not at hand, and the way they fell on was this: a small cord was tied about his head, and both ends of it were wreathed about the butt of one of their pistols, then they twisted it about the upper part of his head with the pistol so hard, that the flesh was cut round into the skull. The pain was inexpressible, and his cries were heard at a great distance. They caught a young herd-boy in the same parish, and would have him to discover where his master was, whom they alleged to have been at Bothwell. The boy very probably could tell them nothing about his master. However, they took him and fastened two small cords to his thumbs, and by these hung him up to the balk (roof) of the house. The torment he endured was very great, yet they got nothing out of him. But the other youth last spoken of died within a little after he came out of their hands."

On the water of Dee, in Galloway, he came upon a number of people in concealment, and in the wantonness of his cruelty, and without trial or cere-

mony, shot four of them on the spot. After their friends had buried them, a party of soldiers, by the command of Clavers, opened their graves, and left their coffins uncovered for several days, and the body of one of them was disinterred, and suspended on a tree, with a view to imitate the ignominy of a gibbet.

In his progress through the country, he came with his troopers to the house of Mr Bell of Whiteside, a worthy and excellent person, and here he and his men quartered themselves for several weeks, till, says Wodrow, "they had eaten up all the provision that was there, and when that was done, they forced the people about to bring them provisions, till they, with their horses, ate up all his meadows. And when these began to fail them, they went off, spoiling every thing in the house, and what they could not carry with them they sold to the people about for meat and drink. Yea, they broke down the very timber of the house, and burnt it, and so spiteful were they, that they destroyed the planting. Likewise they took with them the whole stock of sheep, which were many, and all his horses." "Dreadful were the acts of wickedness perpetrated by the soldiers at this time," says the historian. "They used to take to themselves, in their cabals, the names of devils, and persons they supposed to be in hell, and with whips to lash one another, as a jest upon hell."

The cruelty of Claverhouse extended even to children, whom he sometimes used in a very barbarous manner. On one occasion he collected all "the children below ten years of age, and above six, and a party of soldiers were drawn out before them.

Then," says the historian of the period, "they were bid pray, for they were going to be shot. Some of them answered, 'Sir, we cannot pray.' Then they were ordered to tell when they saw men and guns in their house, and if any men with guns and swords got meat in the house, or who took it to the door to them, and such other questions, and they should not be shot. Several children of seven or eight years of age were carried about with the soldiers, who sometimes would offer them all fair things, if they would tell of their parents, and what people used to come to them late at night, and go away early in the morning; or if they knew where their fathers were, and who in the house carried anything to them. At other times they treated them most inhumanly, threatening them with death, and at some little distance would fire pistols without a ball in their face. Some of the poor children were frightened almost out of their wits, and others of them stood all out with a courage perfectly above their age."

Acting in the same manner, and practising on the fears of children, Claverhouse came to Closeburn with a party of his dragoons. He had heard of a certain non-conformist in that place, where there were occasionally not a few, and his intention was to seize the man in his house. Information, however, was conveyed to the family that the troopers were at hand, and in the surprise and trepidation of the moment, the inmates fled, leaving a child of about eight years of age in the house. Claverhouse finding that he was the son of the man whom he was seeking, employed coaxing and fair words to induce the boy to inform on his father. His

efforts in this way, however, were in vain ; the child remained firm, and refused to answer the questions that were put to him. He then proceeded to extort the information he wanted by threatenings. Standing at a short distance from the child, he shot a pistol in his direction, but he continued inflexible. He then shot another near his head, which so terribly frightened him, that he told him all he knew concerning his family and his neighbours. The meanness, nay, we may say, the cowardice of thus practising on the fears of a mere child to expiscate information, is utterly detestible, and shows the low and base artifices to which such men as the *illustrious* Claverhouse could stoop.

In his ravaging expeditions through the country, he at one time, when entering Nithsdale, from Ayrshire, drove the inhabitants of the upland parish of Kirkconnel, on both sides of the river, before him like a flock of sheep, and then treated them as his caprice or cruelty dictated. He marched like a general at the head of an invading army, killing and plundering as it best pleased him ; sometimes gratifying his revenge, and at other times his cupidity, by the perpetrating of mean and scandalous acts of theft, ill befitting the lofty demeanor he assumed as a high-minded and gallant warrior. Many were the cold-blooded murders which this "magnanimous" trooper committed in the fields. He shot without accusation and without trial, with his own hand, John Brown of Priesthill, while his virtuous wife "stood like the rock, which the thunder is rending ;" and when, in the fortitude of a high Christian bearing, she put to him the question, "How will you be answerable for this morning's work ?"

he replied in the true style of a ruffian and a blasphemer, "To *men* I can be answerable; and as for *God*, I will take him in my own hand." Such was the man whose persecuting fame has made Scotland to ring from end to end, and the picture of whose cruelties seems to be as vividly before the mind of the peasantry of the present day, as if they had witnessed but yesterday the entire series of his barbarities.

"There, worthy of his masters, came
The despots' champion, *bloody Graham*,
To stain for aye a warrior's sword,
And lead a fierce, though fawning horde,
The human blood-hounds of the earth,
To hunt the peasant from his hearth."

These few particulars, gleaned in the track of Claverhouse's progress through the country, during the ten eventful years in which he was employed in the ungracious work of persecution, are but a specimen of *himself*; and when we consider the host of similar characters, who were all actively engaged on the bloody field, and doing exactly as he did, and some of them even surpassing him in certain particulars, we may well wonder that Mr Renwick and his little flock were not utterly swallowed up, without a solitary individual remaining to represent the cause for which they suffered. This, doubtless, would have been the result, had the persecution continued much longer. It would have worn out the saints of the Most High, at least that section of them who maintained the stricter and more consistent ground which the preceding worthies had occupied. But the "bush burned, and was not

consumed," because God was in it; and it was his pleasure to rescue a remnant, who wrestled with him, and walked with him, and suffered for him. Now and then the furnace was cooled down, and anon it was heated again, and then its scorching flame abated, till the fires were extinguished altogether. It is to be remarked, however, that the great force of the persecution was, in the latter years, chiefly directed against the society people; while those who sat down under the screen of the indulgence were comparatively secure, at least at times. The outstanding sections of the Presbyterians, who maintained the gospel in the fields, and would not coalesce with their less scrupulous brethren, were the prey on which the mighty endeavoured to seize, and to tear to pieces like devouring wolves.

For certain reasons, however, the violence of the persecution was at this time greatly restrained, and a breathing-time was offered to the Presbyterians generally. "The reasons" says Wodrow, "of the slackening of the persecution this year, as to some branches of it, are many. After the endeavours of the prelates and their adherents, so vigorously supported, as we have heard, for twenty-six years, one needs not to be surprised to find they had little work to do. Most part of the Presbyterian ministers were banished, or had withdrawn, and few were left. The gentlemen and heritors who favoured Presbytery were either worn out by death, forfeited, banished, or put under such burdens as were equal to a forfeiture, and little more could be done this way. The common people, who had suffered so much during the former years, were many of them cut off, transported to the plantations, or mewed up

in prisons, and the rest so borne down by the soldiers, and time-serving persons, and wanted ministers to preach to them, that they lived as privately as might be, and essayed to pass this melancholy time as much unobserved as they could. A good many complied in some things, and now and then heard some of the better sort of the established clergy, especially such who showed themselves hearty Protestants, by opposing Popery, now coming in so fast." It appears, then, that the fire of persecution merely wanted fuel; its spirit was the same, but it wanted the occasion. The grand object which James had in view, was the establishment of Popery on its ancient basis; and therefore, in order to make room for this, he mitigated the rigour of the former measures against the Presbyterians. "All the respite, then, at this time, was either from mere necessity, and want of objects to work upon through the preceding barbarity, or designed to cozen and cheat all who had any warm side to the Protestant religion, to go into, or at least not to oppose, the jesuitical measures the king was entering upon for the total ruin of the Reformation."

But though others were leniently dealt with, the strict non-conformists received no favour. "The society people," says Wodrow, "in this and the succeeding years, were hunted and harassed in the south and west, as far as they could be discovered. Their hardships were indeed inexpressible, and their privations and deliverances remarkable. Mr James Renwick was preaching here and there, as he best could, in retired places." Whatever rest, then, there was for others, there was none for Mr Renwick and his party. They were too honest in their

principles, and too unflinching in their opposition to that tide of misrule, and oppression, and Popery, that now threatened to deluge the nation like a desolating flood, sweeping onward with disastrous energy, and overturning every thing valuable in matters both civil and sacred. This little company had no resource left them but the power of prayer, and they were ready to say, with the pious king of Judah, "O our God, wilt thou not judge them, for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee." Their groanings were not disregarded, and their wailings, like the bleatings of solitary sheep on the lonely hills, were not unheeded by Him who never trifles with the feelings of a wounded heart; and richly were they comforted with the hidden stream of the consolations of God, who prepared a table for them in the presence of their enemies, and anointed their heads with fresh oil. No ordinary means could support men in their circumstances, and had it not been a conviction of the sacredness of their cause, and the powerful support of divine grace, they must have sunk; but God was with them, he was their "strength and their deliverer, the horn of their salvation, and their high tower."

These good men were, to use the language of their rulers, "intercommuned," and every person was forbidden to hold intercourse with them. But what then,—they held companionship with mountains, and they looked on every height, and glen, and streamlet, as a friend. And truly there is scarcely a hill which does not tell a tale of their wanderings, nor a moorland rill which does not

murmur a story of their sufferings, nor a flowery glen-let which is unacquainted with their communings with God, nor a bosky ravine that is not vocal with the minstrelsy of their times, and scarcely a desert moss whose blooming heather, once dyed with their crimson blood, does not wave pensively over their lowly resting-place. "I think," said Mr Renwick, "I think within a little there shall not be a moss nor a mountain in the west of Scotland which shall not be flowered with martyrs." Hallowed scenes, trodden by the feet of holy men, ye are dear to us, very dear to us, for their sake!

When they were intercommuned, did they hold communion with mountains, and contract a friendliness with inanimate nature? Yes; but they did more than this,—they held companionship with Heaven, and cultivated an intimacy with the Saviour, the like of which few men since their time have reached. They were admitted to a wonderful degree of close communion with God, and by means of their incessant converse with Him, their faith and experience in innumerable instances rose to the full assurance of salvation. This fact was more especially apparent at the hour of their death,—an hour of solicitude to all, and an hour when men are more especially disposed to speak the truth. We might here produce many examples in confirmation of this averment. The good Cargill, when brought to the scaffold as an honoured witness for the truth, said, "This is the most joyful day that ever I saw in my pilgrimage on earth. My joy is now begun, which, I see, shall never be interrupted. I see both my interest and His truth,—the sureness of the one, and the preciousness of the other. It is nearly thirty

years since He made it sure; and since that time, though there has fallen out much sin, yet I never was out of an assurance of mine interest, nor long out of sight of His presence." This is the testimony of one, the truth of which will not readily be disputed by those who know his character. Walter Smith, a student in divinity, who suffered at the same time with Mr Cargill, said, "And now I am to die a martyr, and am as fully persuaded of my interest in Christ, and that he has countenanced me in that for which I am to lay down my life, as I am of my being." James Boig, another student, who suffered at the same time, remarked, "If I had time to enlarge, I could give you a more particular account of God's goodness to me; but let this suffice, that I am fairly on the way, and within a view of Immanuel's land, and hope to be received as an inhabitant there within the space of twenty-six hours." John Malcolm, a weaver in the parish of Dalry, in Galloway, who suffered martyrdom in 1680, said, in his last speech, "And now I am clear of my interest" (in Christ), "and clear as to the grounds on which I am to lay down my life this day." John Potter, a farmer in the parish of Uphall, in West Lothian, who suffered at Edinburgh on the 1st of December 1680, expressed himself as follows:—"I am well pleased with my lot this day. O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name for all that He has done for my soul, and for bringing me here this day, to lay down my life for Him! I am not afraid of grim death; I know that God hath taken away the sting of death, through the sufferings of his Son." Isobel Alison, who was executed for her adherence to Christ's cause, in

Edinburgh, 1681, expressed herself to this effect :—
“O, the everlasting covenant is sweet to me! I bless the Lord, and praise his holy name, who hath made my prison a palace to me. O how great is his love to me! I bless the Lord that ever he gave me a life to lay down for him.” James Skeen, who suffered 1680, concludes one of his letters with the following words :—“From my delectable prison, in which my Lord has allowed me his peace and presence, and comforted me with the assurance that I shall reign with Him eternally, for I am his, and bought with his precious blood.”

The same assured confidence of salvation was expressed by many of the Covenanters who were taken by surprise, and shot in the fields. Daniel M'Michael, who was shot by Captain Dalziel, at the mouth of the pass of Dalveen, in the parish of Durisdeer, said, when the bandage was tied over his eyes, “Lord, thou broughtest Daniel through many straits, and hast brought me, thy servant, hither to witness for thee and thy cause: into thy hands I commit my spirit, and hope to praise thee through all eternity.” The godly John Brown of Priesthill, the flower of the martyrs of the west, who was shot by Claverhouse before his own door, on the first morning of summer 1685, thus expressed himself immediately before his death :—“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where will be thy victory? Blessed be thou, O Holy Spirit, who speakest more comfort to my heart than the voice of my oppressors can speak terror to my ears.” But it is needless to enlarge; we could produce instances of a similar nature to an indefinite extent. Let any person read the testimonies of the worthies in the “Cloud of

Witnesses," and say if the attainments of these men, in knowledge, in spirituality of mind, and in intimacy with God, were not of the rarest kind. Can the thought, then, for a moment be admitted, that these were the men whom their enemies represented them to be,—ferocious, seditious, and persons who had cast off all fear of God. They were holy, humble, quiet, and unobtrusive men, who lived mainly for the world to come. To what a high standard did these maligned but honoured individuals reach, when they attained the full assurance of their salvation! How far were they above the standard of the ordinary rate of Christians in our day!

Our persecuted ancestors adopted no unlawful means to save themselves from trouble. They were content to endure affliction to the uttermost, rather than, by foul compliances, to bring discredit on their profession and guilt on their consciences. They could easily have extricated themselves from all their distresses, had they fallen in with the plans of their rulers; in one day they could have freed themselves from persecution, had they done as their superiors did, and taken part with them; but, instead of this, they resolved to wait with patience God's time, and to look up to him for deliverance with a good conscience.

Mr Renwick and his party stood as sufferers between the persecutors on the one hand, and the moderate and complying Presbyterians on the other. Through the misrepresentations of the latter, transmitted against him to the continent, the good Mr Brakel, who was so much his friend when he was in Holland, was much grieved, and sent home a warm and friendly remonstrance; which was taken

in good part by Mr Renwick. Mr Brakel showed more tenderness and sympathy in his remonstrance than all the other ministers in Scotland taken together had ever expressed. If the attempt to prejudice the mind of Mr Brakel against him caused him much sorrow, he was still more deeply wounded by the harsh expressions which Mr Koelman had uttered. Mr Koelman was an eminent Dutch divine, who entertained a great esteem for Mr Renwick, and who sympathized deeply with the sufferers in Scotland; but the same means had been employed with him that had been employed with Mr Brakel to alienate his mind from the remnant in this country. The bitter and unguarded reflections which this otherwise worthy man had made, could not fail to wound the mind of a man of so much sensibility and gentleness as Mr Renwick, and he could not conceal the pain which it inflicted on him.

In December this year, 1686, the council issued a severe proclamation against Mr Renwick, who had hitherto eluded their vigilance, notwithstanding the mighty force which was employed against him, and the numerous searches for him which were instituted in all parts of the country. An appeal was now made to the cupidity of those who might be acquainted with his hiding-places, and a goodly price was set on his head,—a reward of no less than £100 sterling was offered for his apprehension. This, however, did not dishearten this zealous servant of Christ; he encouraged himself in the Lord his God, and persisted in the faithful discharge of his ministerial duties, preaching the gospel in all the remotest recesses of the wilderness, and wherever an opportunity offered; nay, he seemed rather

to increase in diligence, and to abound in service, in proportion to the likelihood of his being soon cut off by the hand of violence. While the consideration of a martyr's death appeared to enervate other men, it stimulated him, and imparted fresh energy to his efforts, and communicated a greater hardihood in meeting danger for the Truth's sake.

A few days after the proclamation was emitted by the council, and the tempting bribe was offered for his capture, we find him holding a large conventicle at Cairntable, in the neighbourhood of Muirkirk. This place was, in all likelihood, selected in the heart of the solitudes both for secrecy and as a centre-point for the convenience of the worshippers from the different parts of the upland wastes. The vicinity of Cairntable contained clusters of cottages, amongst the inhabitants of which were many of the Covenanters, who fearlessly maintained their principles in the day of general defection. But not a few of these poor people suffered severely for their honesty, and were banished, by the injustice of the times, from their habitations. Tradition affirms, that "no fewer than thirty chimneys ceased to smoke on Whitsunday at noon, on the fair lands of Carmacoup."

The text from which Mr Renwick preached, on the occasion of the fast held at the base of Cairntable, was the following:—"Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly." The discourse was designed to enumerate the causes of fasting; which he did in forty-one particulars, showing that these were some of the reasons why the Lord was contending with Scotland. The discourse is characterised throughout by deep sincerity and

earnestness. In conclusion, he remarks, "O that we could mourn all of us this day over these things! O that it might please Him to send down a shower of the influences of His Spirit among us, and that we might be helped to cry for His help to this work! And O, what need have we to look to ourselves; for there is something to be won this day, if we be serious with God,—and there is something to be lost this day, if we be come to mock God with our formality; for Satan will be here, and will be careful and busy to get the fruit of this day gathered up."

CHAPTER IX.

Toleration—Excessive Labours—Anecdotes.

THIS year, 1687, was famous for King James's three indulgences. The first was proclaimed in February, the second in June, and the third in October. The first of these tolerations permitted the moderate Presbyterians to meet in private houses, to hear the indulged ministers, expressly mentioning that no meeting was to be held in the open fields, nor even in barns, in which a greater number might perchance congregate, than in the privacy of a family apartment. The second was somewhat larger in its permissions, and allowed meetings to be held in any house, but still interdicting the field conventicles. This, it was thought, would leave the field preachers without excuse, and would furnish the Government with a strong pretext to proceed against them, should they still persist in assembling their congregations on hills and moors. The third proclamation announced that all preachers and people who frequented conventicles in the open air should be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of law, and that those who restricted themselves to houses,

should teach nothing which might tend in any way to alienate the minds of the people from the Government, and that they should specify to the privy counsellors and sheriffs the particular houses in which they were accustomed to meet for divine worship. Against all this, Mr Renwick lifted up his testimony, and warned the people against the snares which he conceived were laid for them; he plainly perceived the design of all this show of liberality. Its object was not to take off any restrictions in preaching the gospel, but to open a door in the most insidious manner for the introduction of Popery. The king's predilections were well known; he hated not only the Presbyterian principles particularly, but the Reformation principles generally, and he wished to establish the Popish faith throughout the wide extent of his dominions. From the temper of the country, he plainly observed, that to introduce his favourite system openly and avowedly might create an opposition of rather a formidable nature, and might embroil the kingdom in a civil war. He resolved, therefore, to proceed more cautiously, and to endeavour to accomplish his purpose without greatly exciting the suspicions of the people, who cherished an indomitable dislike to the Papal superstitions. With this view, then, he opened the door of what he conceived to be a pretty liberal indulgence, allowing all to serve God in their own way, which was intended to operate as a blind, in reference to the Presbyterians, under the pretence of granting them religious liberty, but chiefly to allow the Papists the full exercise of their religion. This was the main drift of all the indulgences granted by this intolerant bigot and heartless

tyrant, and though great numbers did not seem to perceive this, but, on the contrary, deemed the toleration a precious boon, Mr Renwick and his followers saw clearly through the thin guise of deception under which the main purpose was concealed ; and, therefore, they failed not, as honest witnesses and true patriots, to sound the alarm, and to tear aside the illusive covering. They nobly refused to accept an indulgence which proceeded from a man who had usurped the supremacy over the Church of Christ, and who assumed a power of dispensation which did not belong to him. They scorned to receive that as a boon from any mortal hand, which was every man's birthright, and they declared, that "nothing can be more vile than when the true religion is tolerated under the notion of a *crime*, and when the exercise of it is allowed only under heavy restrictions."

But were not these indulgences embraced by many worthy men who were as inimical to Prelacy and Popery as Mr Renwick and his adherents were ? It is true, a great number did embrace these permissions, and preached the gospel under the wing of the various indulgences that were granted at different times, during the period of the persecution ; nor can it be denied, that in many instances they did much good, as in the case of John Semple of Carsphairn, who, as an indulged minister, preached the gospel for seventeen years, and was the honoured instrument of gathering many souls to Christ ; and, bad as matters in the country were, they would have been ten times worse had it not been for these indulged ministers, because the curates were, for the most part, ignorant of the gospel, and immoral to

a proverb. Hence the gospel was, in many destitute localities, preserved by the Presbyterian ministers, who, under the Government arrangements, accepted of charges. Nor was this the only advantage that resulted to the community; they were the means of assuaging the persecution in the parishes where they were settled, for the people going readily to hear them, were not prosecuted as non-conformists, as *they* were who lived in the parishes of the purely Episcopal incumbents. But, though these were advantages that resulted from their compliance, the justification of their conduct in accepting the indulgences is another matter. If good was done by them, it was not owing to the system under which they had placed themselves, but in spite of it; as we find that the Lord often brings good out of evil, while the evil is not therefore to be approved of. True it is, that the times in which they lived were of the most perplexing nature, and even wise men were driven to their wits' end. They were often so bewildered that they did not know to which hand to turn; and, therefore, if they frequently stumbled and fell, they still claim our sympathy. It is an easy thing for those who, in peaceful days, ruminates, in the quietude of their homes, on the times and scenes of which we are speaking, coolly to scrutinize the conduct of the actors in such scenes; but the question is, had we lived then, would we have acted a better part? Few in that perilous period were gifted with the penetration of Renwick and Shields, and fewer still were possessed of the grace to act so disinterested a part. Those who accepted the indulgence cannot be justified, while "those who declined its acceptance," says

Dr Burns, "acted, we apprehend, on the most consistent and independent principles. The very acceptance of such a boon implied, in some measure, a recognition of the reigning order of things in the Church. The indulgence came in the shape of a commission, to hold a spiritual charge granted by a civil power, and the reception of such a thing as this was, in so far, a practical renunciation of the grand principles of Presbyterianism."

Mr Renwick's opposition to the indulgences called forth the invectives of those who had complied with their requisitions. He was loaded with reproaches, for they thought the more they reviled him the more they exculpated themselves. He was, at the time of the first toleration, alone in Scotland; Mr Shields being on the continent, and Mr Houston in Ireland. Mr Renwick and his friends did not hesitate to testify explicitly against the toleration, at whatever risk to themselves. "What they rejected," says M'Gavin, "was not toleration generally, but *the* toleration offered by the king, which was clogged with conditions with which they could not conscientiously comply, such as owning the king's prerogative and supremacy or headship over the Church. It would have been acknowledging that the king, who was a Papist, had a right to grant liberty to worship God as his Word requires, which implies a right to withhold that liberty, and they would have yielded to his impious claim, to be sovereign lord of their consciences."

The sufferings of the society people were augmented rather than diminished on account of these indulgences; and the great object of Prelatists and Presbyterians was to extinguish the party as an

obnoxious and untameable sect. Mr Renwick remarks, "Our troubles are growing, and enemies are stretching out their hands violently to persecute, and they want not instigations from our false brethren; so we are made the contempt of the proud, and the scorn of them that are at ease. Our sufferings were always rightly stated, but never so clearly as now, and why should we not endure these trials, for they shall work for truth's victory and Christ's glory." Notwithstanding all these incessant harassings, Mr Renwick prosecuted his work with a spirit as dauntless as ever. "I have not," says he, in a letter to the laird of Earlston, "I have not been forgetful of you, though I have long delayed to write, and the real occasion of my so long delay, was the throng of business, together with a designed forbearance, until I had this course finished in Galloway, that I might give you an account of the present case of this country. I had great access to preach the gospel, the Lord wonderfully restraining enemies, and drawing out very many to hear, and moving them to give great outward encouragement. We kept thirteen field meetings, whereof four were in the daylight, and I studied publicly to declare and assert, in its own place, every part of our present testimony. We had also nine meetings for the examination of the societies, casting the most adjacent together into one meeting for that effect, and I hope, through the Lord's blessing, that that small piece of labour shall not want its fruit."

This excessive labour began at length to produce an injurious effect on a constitution not naturally robust, and there is every reason to believe, though

he had not been cut off by the hand of persecution, that he would soon have sunk and died a martyr to excessive toil in the prosecution of that good work on which his heart was set. In another letter he remarks, " My business was never so weighty, so multiplied, and so ill to be guided as it hath been this year, and my body was never so frail. Excessive travel, night wanderings, unseasonable sleep and diet, and frequent preaching in all seasons of weather, especially in the night, have so debilitate me, that I am often incapable for my work. I find myself greatly weakened inwardly, so that I sometimes fall into fits of swooning and fainting. I seldom take any meat or drink but it fights with my stomach, and for strong drink, I can take almost none of it. When I use means for my recovery, I find it sometimes effectual; but my desire for the work, and the necessity and importunity of the people, prompt me to do so more than my actual strength will well allow, and to undertake some toilsome business, as casts my body presently down again. I mention not this through any anxiety, quarrelling, or discontent, but to show you my condition in this respect. I may say, that under all my frailties and distempers, I find great peace and sweetness in reflecting upon the occasion thereof; it is a part of my glory and joy to bear such infirmities, contracted through my poor and small labour in my Master's vineyard."

Such is the simple account he gives of himself in being spent in his Master's service; and it is truly affecting to know, that when he became so weak as not to be able to sit, even on horseback, his friends actually carried him to the place where

he was to preach, and when the service was over, brought him back in the same manner to his lodgings, whether to a lonely cottage on the wilds, or to a dreary cavern in the ravine. Tradition has preserved a number of interesting stories respecting the providential deliverances experienced by Mr Renwick, in his wanderings in the hilly parts of the country, and especially in Galloway. The following anecdotes are told of him by the people resident in that district, and who still cherish his memory with uncommon regard:—

A conventicle was to be held among the hills, not far from Newton-Stewart, and in order to be in readiness for the projected meeting, Mr Renwick repaired to the neighbourhood on the preceding evening. In a state of considerable destitution, as tradition affirms—and we can easily believe it—he arrived, after the light of day had departed, at a public house on the way side. The master of the inn was not a Covenanter, at least he did not belong to the stricter part of the non-conformists, but he was a worthy man, and not only hospitable, as his vocation demanded, but really kind, and more especially to Mr Renwick and his friends, who were subjected to so many hardships. This man, like the landlord mentioned in a former chapter, who entertained Mr Renwick in the village of Newton-Stewart, was well acquainted with him, and never failed to minister to his wants when he happened to visit that quarter, for God had put it into the hearts of many to show him kindness for the gospel's sake; and they were blessed in their deed, for “he that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward.”

There lived in this neighbourhood a person who generally went under the name of "Silly Willy Smith." He was a mendicant, and an individual who was weak in his mind. Willy constantly traversed the country, and he knew every body, and every body knew him. He was a harmless creature, possessed of a kind heart, and even inclined to what was serious. Willy, in his rambling, became acquainted with Mr Renwick, with whom it appears he frequently met, and for whom he had conceived a strong attachment, and would sooner have died himself than seen any mischance befall the wandering minister. This poor man, at whom every person was inclined to laugh, and whom not even the most jealous malignants ever once suspected of favouring or helping in any way the intercommuned Covenanters, was often of signal service to Mr Renwick. He sometimes brought intelligence of the movements of the troopers; and we can easily conceive him running without stockings and shoes at great speed, and availing himself of every advantage in passing through fields and woods by a nearer route, to give the friendly warning. No person heeded Willy, nor cared where he ran, nor what he was about, for he was "Silly Willy," and his movements were capricious. At other times he watched Mr Renwick like a guardian angel, when he was lurking in a thicket or hidden in a cave, and oftentimes supplied him with the bread of his begging which he received in abundance from the hand of charity; for few people, we may suppose, would refuse a morsel to poor harmless Willy when he happened to present himself at their hearth, for in those days the wanderers of Willy's description did not use the cere-

mony of knocking at the door. It is wonderful to think on the particular sort of means which the Lord sometimes employs for the service of his people, and how available he can make the most apparently insignificant instrument for the accomplishment of very important ends. Silly Willy Smith, and not the powerful and influential of the land, was made use of by Providence for shielding Mr Renwick in the hour of peril, and Willy's name is to this day remembered and mentioned with respect.

On the evening prior to the meeting, Willy had learned the place of Mr Renwick's residence, and, as usual, was on the outlook, for he conceived he had something worth the while to guard when his minister was in the house. And his guardianship was not unneeded, for a company of troopers were near, information having been conveyed to them respecting the conventicle. Mr Renwick had just partaken of an entertainment, and was warming himself before a blazing fire in the kitchen, when Willy entered with the report that soldiers were just at hand. The landlord was fully aware that his inn would be occupied as their quarters during the night, and he became very solicitous about his guest. Mr Renwick, seeing the honest man's concern about his safety, said, that as he was at present feeble and exhausted by means of his having been so many days exposed in the fields to the inclement weather, he was resolved to stay where he was and to abide the consequences, as he was not able to flee. It was then proposed that he should array himself with all speed in a suit of the landlord's clothes, but he being rather a corpulent person, and Mr Renwick a short and slender man, it was considered that the

scheme, if adopted, would rather excite suspicion as otherwise; and so the proposal was abandoned. The soldiers now thronged into the house, the best apartment of which was occupied by the commander. Mr Renwick kept his seat by the fire in the kitchen, not without solicitude, but trusting in his God, and ready to resign himself to whatever might be his fate. During the bustling made by the uproarious troopers, little attention was paid to the unassuming stranger, who kept near the corner beyond the *hallen*; and any inquiries that were made concerning him led to nothing, and nothing was suspected, for they never deemed it possible that the man in quest of whom all the soldiers in the country were in motion, would place himself carelessly and unmoved, by the fire of a public inn, exposed to the gaze of every visitor who might happen to call on his way. Many a time did the worthy men in those trying days escape detection in this way. Their coolness, and apparent courting an interview with the military, screened them from hazard; whereas, had their timidity led them to assume a different bearing, and incited them to attempt an escape, their capture was inevitable. But then it was not every man who had the nerve to act in this way, not to speak of the grace which was necessary to enable them to conduct themselves with prudence and Christian firmness in a moment of sudden danger.

The evening passed on, and the soldiers retired to rest. Their dormitory was the stable loft, where beds were made for them among the soft hay, immediately above the horses' stalls; and there is perhaps no chamber so warm and comfortable in a cold

winter night, as the apartment which the dragoons now occupied. As for Mr Renwick there was no bed in the house for him, and therefore he was obliged to stretch himself on what by the peasantry is called the *lang settle*, or wooden seat, in the form of a modern sofa, which stood behind the fire-place, in an open space which was formed for its reception. Here he slept, and enjoyed the genial warmth of the place, a treat with which he was seldom favoured, as he was often obliged to cower down during the night in some outhouse, or thicket, or cave,—thankful for any retreat, however inhospitable, under the care of the Great Shepherd of Israel, who never slumbers nor sleeps. It appears that the conventicle was to be held in the night season, a circumstance of no unfrequent occurrence, as is stated in his letters. The night was deemed the fittest season, both because their enemies were not so likely to be abroad, and also because, if discovered, their footsteps could not be so easily traced in the dark. There is something very solemn in the idea of a great company of worshippers meeting at the dead of night in the heart of a lonely moor, with nothing to guide them to the appointed spot but the occasional gleaming of the lightning from the murky bosom of the thick clouds with which they were o'er-canopied, while the hoarse muttering of the thunder was heard mingling with their song of praise. These were truly sad times, when God's people, in a professedly Christian country, were obliged to shroud themselves in impervious darkness, when they assembled for religious exercises, for fear of the enemy and the avenger.

Mr Renwick was astir a little after midnight,

and before he retired from the house he entered the stable, as being the most secluded place he could find for the purpose of secret prayer. He does not seem to have been aware that the soldiers were sleeping in the loft above him, and as he did not conceive himself to be within the hearing of any individual, he felt no restraint. By degrees his voice rose, as the fervency of his spirit wrought within him, till it became so audible as to awaken the soldiers. They heard an earnest voice uttering mysterious sounds in the stable beneath, and superstitious fears crept over them. They felt as if they were in an old haunted castle, and actually supposed that the place was infested with spirits of evil. The poor ignorant men were not accustomed to the voice of prayer, and more especially in such a place, and at such an hour. Mr Renwick prayed, and the soldiers lay trembling on their beds, not daring to stir in the darkness. When he had ended his devotions he waited on the good landlord, to take leave of him; but no sooner was he ready to depart, than honest Willy Smith, faithful in his attachment, was at his side,—the kind creature having watched the opportunity to conduct him in the darkness through the intricacies of the moorland path which they had to trace. The place of meeting was at no great distance from the inn, and when Willy had safely lodged him in the hands of his friends, he instantly returned, to watch the movements of the soldiers, and to convey intelligence to the conventiclers. When the day dawned, the soldiers were again in motion, and made a mighty noise about the fright they received in the night-time, and felt peculiarly grateful that they were so soon to leave a place so

infested with demons as they asserted it was. The commander, who had brought his troopers to disperse the conventicle, found nothing, for all was over before the break of day, and the worshippers had retired to their several homes. The soldiers returned to their garrison at Carsphairn, without having obtained their object. Carsphairn was at this time infested by troopers ; for there were no less than two garrisons in this rural district. So disaffected was the place, or rather, so numerous were the witnesses that were reared under the ministry of the devoted John Semple, that Peter Pearson, the curate who succeeded him, and who was an active informer, and an inveterate enemy to the Covenanters, required all the military assistance he could command to subdue the refractory spirit of the populace, and hence a more than ordinary proportion of soldiers was located in the parish, and all was at the disposal of the infamous Lagg, who rioted in cruelty and oppression, and who hunted with his merciless wolves the poor wanderers like sheep on the hills ; and many were the deeds of ferocity perpetrated by this wicked man, and which live in the painful remembrance of the peasantry to this day. Lagg is justly ranked among those

“ ——— Bloody men,
Whose deeds tradition saves,
Of lonely folk cut off unseen,
And hid in sudden graves.”

Willy Smith was of eminent service to Mr Renwick on another occasion. A conventicle was appointed to be held at a place called Gatelock, in Girthland, of which the military had received notice. Accordingly, a party was despatched to seize the

preacher, and disperse the assembly. The meeting was held in the day-time, and when the services were well advanced, the warders, who were stationed at the proper distances, announced the approach of the military. The intelligence threw all into confusion, and the people fled with all speed from the face of the foe. It was the concern of every one to secure the minister from harm, and as they were planning his escape, Willy Smith presented himself, and pulling Mr Renwick by the arm, said, "Come with me; the soldiers will not suspect you in my company." To this proposal he agreed, and requested that no one should follow him. He walked away with Willy, with perfect confidence in his fidelity and affection. He conducted him to a glen, in the bosom of which was a natural recess among the rocks, the mouth of which was concealed among the pendent branches of the thick bushes which grew on the steep sides of the ravine. The place was well known to Willy, who, in his wanderings, noticed many things unobserved by other people. The cavity could easily contain several persons without inconvenience, and it appeared to be a very eligible retreat in time of danger. Here Willy secreted Mr Renwick, and tended him with the utmost assiduity. The soldiers were perfectly aware that he was hidden in some place in the vicinity, but where his concealment was, neither friend nor foe could tell, and Willy was determined to reveal it to none. In order, if possible, to secure his person, the troopers formed a sort of cordon around the place, and if they could not seize him, at least to cut off his retreat. Willy, however, was a privileged person, and he could go and come reckless of the notice of the

soldiers, into whose mind it never once entered that he had any intercourse with Mr Renwick. Whether he stayed with him all night is not said, but he supplied him with food, which he carried, as mendicants do, in his wallet; and as the prophet of the Lord was fed by ravens when he dwelt by the brook, so this servant of Christ was sustained by a person who himself lived on alms, and he drank of the rill that murmured past the mouth of his cave. Willy was now the daily companion of the fugitive, whom he encouraged by every means in his power, and spoke kindly to him; and it is said he never retired from the cave without begging an interest in Mr Renwick's prayers. So faithfully did Willy keep Mr Renwick's secret, that his friends began to suspect the simpleton of treachery, and the idea was entertained that he was either betrayed or murdered. A man of the name of M'All, who was more forward than the rest in giving expression to his fears, attacked Willy, who was so greatly indignant at the base suspicion, that he proceeded forthwith to the commander of the troopers, and stated, that M'All was in his opinion a person whom he ought to apprehend; and on this suggestion M'All was seized, and carried to Carsphairn; and what became of him is not known. After this, the soldiers, finding their efforts fruitless, left the place, and Mr Renwick emerged from his concealment, and appeared once more among his friends. Willy's conduct, which now appeared in its true light, was much approved of, and the poor man was now noticed and esteemed by many who formerly heeded him not. There were many other instances, doubtless, which tradition has forgotten, in which Willy

was helpful to Mr Renwick. It is asserted, that when Willy heard of his apprehension in Edinburgh, he went all the way from Galloway to see him, and to try what could be done for his liberation.

The grace of God, operating on the heart and dispositions of persons strikingly characterised for their mental imbecility, is much to be admired; and it is pleasant to think that such instances are not rare. The inhabitants of Peeblesshire well remember the mendicant whom they termed *Daft Francis Anderson*. He was for many a long year familiar in every cottage in that district; every one knew his religious dispositions. He was a man of prayer, a regular attendant on divine ordinances, and it was with reluctance that he consented to lodge a night in a house in which the worship of God was not observed. The God who perfects praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, can also enlighten and sanctify those who, to human apprehension, are incapable of receiving the simplest elements of religious truth; he can make his paths so plain, that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." It would be well for some who are inclined to value themselves on account of their mental accomplishments, were they to manifest the same soundness of heart and Christian kindness of disposition as "Silly Willy Smith."

CHAPTER X.

Increase of Labours.—Searching manner of Preaching.—Proclamation by the Council.—Traditions.

MR RENWICK'S labours were greatly increased during the *eighty-seven* ; for though many had left the societies by means of the few erratic preachers who endeavoured to throw their associations into confusion, yet the people flocked in large companies to hear the gospel in the fields. The truth is that the persecutions which Mr Renwick endured, and the loud clamours that were raised against him, published his name far and wide, and attached to him a universal degree of popularity as a preacher, quite contrary to the design of his enemies, who thought "to cast out his name as evil." His audiences were constantly on the increase : those who heard him once longed to hear him again, and his preaching stations multiplied on every side. The peasantry, notwithstanding the threatenings denounced against them, assumed a greater boldness in facing danger for the Truth's sake ; and, as if inspired by a new spirit, they disregarded every inconvenience and every hazard in crowding around

this devoted servant of Christ, and in supporting and encouraging him in the good work of the Lord. The eagerness of the people to hear, and the evident blessing that attended the gospel, created a great desire in the breast of Mr Renwick for an accession of labourers. His heart was full when he thought on the immense good that might be done, provided a few zealous and godly men would offer themselves for the service. "There is," he remarks, "there is much work to be had in Scotland, notwithstanding of all the persecution, as would hold ten ministers busy, O blessed be the name of the Lord; and if I had some with me to help to plenish the country, and to act more judicially and authoritatively, through the Lord's assistance the cruelty of the enemy, and the malice and underminings of other parties, would not be able to mar the work in our hands." Mr Renwick's popularity as a preacher did not arise from his pleasing men, and prophesying smooth things to them; he dealt faithfully with the consciences of men, and acted on the principle that it was better that his hearers should dread the worst, than feel the least, of the wrath to come. He accordingly used great plainness of speech, setting before his audience their wretched and helpless state by nature, their exposure to divine wrath, and the necessity of an instant application to the blood of the atonement for the remission of sins. He was particularly solicitous in guarding men against self-deception in matters of experimental religion, showing that "they are not all Israel who are of Israel, and that he is not a Jew who is one outwardly." As a specimen of his searching manner of preaching, we may lay before the reader the following remarks made by

him in one of his letters to some religious ladies with whom he was in the habit of corresponding.

“O, much honoured ladies, consider the indispensable and absolute need ye have of a Saviour; consider the awful commands, full promises, free offers, hearty invitations, and serious requests given forth in the Word, all crying aloud, with one voice, unto you to match with the Lord of glory. Consider the assurance that his own testimony hath given you, of dwelling with him throughout eternity in his heavenly mansions, where ye shall see him as he is, have a full sense of his love, and a perfect love to him again, and ever drink of the rivers of pleasure that flow at his right hand, if ye shall embrace him upon his own terms. Consider the peremptory certification of everlasting destruction, of dwelling with continual burnings, and lying under the burden of his wrath, a curse running always out upon you in the overflowing flood if ye shall neglect to make your peace with him [that is, to be reconciled to him] and reject his salvation. I say, consider these things, and ‘give all diligence to make your calling and election sure,’ and see well that ye be not deceived, for there are many mistakes and a great mystery in that business. Many think themselves to be something when they are nothing, and so deceive themselves, and come short of the grace of God; instead of founding upon the immoveable rock of ages, they build upon the sand of their own attainments, for folk may go a great length and yet be void of true saving grace; they may have a great speculative knowledge of the matters of God and mystery of salvation, and strong gifts; they may abstain from many pollutions and gross evils that

others are given to ; they may externally perform many duties, as reading, prayer, and be very much in these ; they may have a very great sorrow for sin, not because of the dishonour done to God but the hurt to themselves, not because they are polluted but because they are destroyed by it ; they may have a desire after grace, which yet is not for grace's sake but for heaven's sake ; they may have an historical faith, and give an assent of the mind to all that is revealed in the Word, yea, to the spiritual meaning of the law ; they may have big hopes, and that in the mercy of God, which, nevertheless, is but presumption, for they forget that he is just, and neglect to lay hold upon Christ for satisfaction of his justice, whereas he is merciful to none out of Christ ; they may have the common operations of the Spirit, and a ' taste of the heavenly gift and the powers of the world to come ' ; they may be convinced that it is good to close with Christ, and comfort themselves as if they had done it, whereas they are still in their natural state ; they may suffer many things materially for the cause of God, and toil much in following ordinances, undergoing the same out of respect for their own credit ; I say, people may, and many do, arrive at all these and such like attainments, and notwithstanding remain in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. It may make us all tremble to think what a length folk may go, and yet never have gone out of themselves, and passed through the steps of effectual calling. Many will say to him in that day, ' We have eaten and drunken in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets ; have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many

wonderful works,—whom he will chase away from his presence with that awful sentence, *Depart ye*, professing unto them that he never knew them.

“ Let this alarm you to make sure work in this great concern ; and do not deceive yourselves with a counterfeit instead of a reality, with a flash instead of conversion, and a delusion instead of Christ ; but get ye a sight of your sinful and miserable state, a sense and feeling thereof putting you in perplexity, and discouraging you from resting in it, a conviction of your inability to help yourselves, and of your unworthiness that God should help you out of it ; and look unto Christ as your alone Saviour, receiving him wholly in his threefold office, of King, Priest, and Prophet,—welcoming him, and taking up his cross against the world, the devil, and the flesh, and resting upon him alone for salvation ; and the business will be done, and all will be sure—then you may defy devils and men for plucking you out of his hand.

“ And if ye have thus closed the bargain with Him, then you will find in you a war declared and *maintained* against all sin—a respect to all the commandments of the Lord, a liking of the way of happiness as well as happiness itself, a high esteem of justification and sanctification, a prizing of Christ and a longing to be with him, and an admirable change wrought in you,—a new judgment, a new will, a new conscience, a new memory, and new affections ; in a word, all the faculties of the soul will be new in regard of their qualifications, and all the members of the body in regard of their use. Now, if ye have attained to a saving interest in Christ, ye may find these and the like marks and evidences of it.

“ O halt not in this great matter, rest not in uncertainty, and satisfy not yourselves with a may-be, but ‘ examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates.’ In setting your faces towards Zion, ye may expect that Satan will raise all his storms against you; but fear him not, for the grace of God is sufficient for you. Give yourselves wholly to the Lord, to serve him and to love his name, to choose and follow the things that please him; your greatest honour lieth in this your greatest duty, your greatest profit, and your greatest pleasure. Count the cost of religion; God is a liberal dealer; deal not niggardly with him, prig not with him about your estates. Who in heaven is like unto him? and who on the earth is to be desired like him? Lay down to him your names, your enjoyments, your lives, and your all at his feet, for he only is worthy to have the disposal of them; and the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed. Think it not much to quit the vain and carnal delights of the world; they cannot satisfy your senses, much less your souls. The earth is round and the heart of man three-nooked, therefore *this* cannot be filled by *that*; and though ye could find content in them, yet how vain were it because inconstant? and how unsolid because uncertain?”

No one can read these remarks without some degree of solicitude, and a desire to become better acquainted with himself, lest he should unwittingly be acting the part of a self-deceiver. Many think they are right when they are wrong—many suppose

they are in a state of grace, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. The heart is deceitful, and from our natural self-love we are inclined to form a good opinion of ourselves, and consequently of our state before God. A *profession* of religion is one thing, and its *reality* is another ; it is the *thing* and not the *name* that God looks to ; and if the heart is not right with Him, all our external reformation is of no avail in His sight. Faith in Christ, a new heart, and a sanctified nature, are necessary to constitute us genuine Christians in the sight of Him who searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men.

If, then, Mr Renwick's preaching was highly esteemed, it was because of its faithfulness, and the power by which it was attended ; and the day of the last reckoning only can reveal the real and extensive good which the ministrations of this much maligned servant of the Lord accomplished.

While Mr Renwick was thus busy in preaching the gospel, and labouring to win souls to Christ, his persecutors were no less active in plotting his destruction. Within the space of five short months after the toleration was granted, no fewer than fifteen desperate attempts were made to apprehend him, and the mean and dastardly council of Scotland issued the following proclamation :—

“ Forasmuch as one Mr James Renwick, a flagitious and scandalous person, has presumed and taken upon hand these several years bygone, to convoke together numbers of our unwary and ignorant commons to house and field conventicles, which our law so justly terms nurseries of sedition and rendezvouses

of rebellion,—we, out of our royal care and tenderness to our people, being desirous to deliver all our loving subjects from the malign influence of such a wretched impostor, have therefore prohibited and discharged all our subjects that none of them offer or presume to harbour, reset, supply, &c., but do their utmost endeavours to pursue him as the worst of traitors. And if, in the pursuit of the said James Renwick, he or any of his rebellious associates, resisting to be taken, any of our subjects shall happen to kill or mutilate him, or any of them, we hereby declare that they nor none assisting them shall be called in question, and that their doing thereof shall be reputed good and acceptable service to us. And for the better encouragement to such as shall apprehend and bring in the person of the said Mr James Renwick, traitor foresaid, *dead or alive*, he or they shall have the reward of one hundred pounds sterling money, to be instantly paid to him by the commissioners of our treasury.”

What was this infamous proclamation but just a license from the Government, 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. How would we, in these days, brook the issuing forth of such a mandate by the Government against the numerous sections of non-conformists that now overspread the land? There would be the simultaneous movement of millions like the swelling of a mighty flood, which no human arm could check, and no royal edict assuage, till it swept the purifying waters of its high-crested waves over the breadth and length of the nation.

With such a might and mastery set in array against him, it appears truly wonderful that Mr Renwick should have at all escaped; and yet he continued traversing the country night and day, in all seasons, for the space of four years and a-half, vigorously plying his heavenly vocation. We could not so escape now if we were similarly situated; a few weeks or months at most would put us in the grasp of the enemy. Circumstances, no doubt, contributed to his preservation for so long a time: the uncultivated state of the country, the want of roads through the moorlands and glens, and the great spaces of natural forest now cut down or decayed, afforded in those times ample means of concealment and escape. The Divine Providence, however, operating no doubt by means, was in an especial manner his shield of protection, till he had fulfilled the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, for "every man is immortal till his work be done."

Notwithstanding all the denunciations of vengeance with which he was followed, he never quailed for fear of the enemy, nor did he in the least degree relax his diligence. The success which accompanied his labours inspired him with fresh zeal, and he rejoiced to encounter peril for the gospel's sake. "As to the present state of the country, Clydesdale," he says, "continueth firm as it was; Nithsdale is as one man upon their former ground, together with Annandale. Some in Kyle are gone off, but many continue; the few that are in Livingston and Calder are put all in a reel—the Lord knoweth how they will settle. Since our last meeting with those ministers, I have made a progress through Galloway,

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and found never such an open door for preaching the gospel, the people coming far better out than they did before ; and we got eight field meetings kept there without any disturbance, and six in Nithsdale, many coming out who were not wont to come, and none in any of these places staying away that came out formerly."

It seems, that as the persecuting period was drawing nearer to its close, the people, generally speaking, were beginning to entertain a higher appreciation of the principles for which Mr Renwick was contending. A spirit of inquiry was spreading through the community, and was producing the most salutary effects ; a hidden under-current had set in, which, gradually augmenting, at last obtained a strength and impetuosity so overwhelming, as to carry along with it the entire sentiments of the nation, and accomplished the Revolution.

The following anecdotes are told in connection with Mr Renwick's labours in Galloway :—A meeting had been appointed to be held at a place called the Waterhead of Deuch, a wild district among the desert mountains, for to such localities the wanderers resorted, seeking the remotest recesses in the bosom of the hills, that there they might worship God with the less likelihood of interruption. This situation was otherwise convenient as a meeting-place to the inhabitants of the contiguous parishes of Dalmelington, New Cumnock, and Carsphairn. In these places there was a considerable sprinkling of stedfast adherents to the good cause. When the persecution became hot, the sufferers crowded in greater numbers to the hilly districts ; and when at any time it was more tolerable, they naturally retreated to the

lower and more sheltered parts. Mr Renwick, in proceeding to the upland solitudes to meet his friends, had to pass near Carsphairn ; and in order to avoid any of the strolling parties of the soldiers belonging to the garrison in that place, he travelled in the darkness of the night in company with a friend, who acted as his guide through the wastes. They arrived without any disastrous incident at a place called Castle Maddie. The good man of Castle Maddie befriended the sufferers, and exerted himself in their behalf ; he constructed an ingenious hiding-place for those who might occasionally resort to his dwelling, and a place which it was not easy for the prying eyes of even the practised troopers to discover. In the wilder localities the fuel of the peasantry consists chiefly of peats, and in the immediate vicinity of the farm houses especially, there are to be seen enormous piles of this material, formed like bricks, well dried, and baked in the sun. The farmer of Castle Maddie built his peat-stack close to the end of his cow-house, in the gable of which was a small window. It occurred to the worthy man that in rearing his peat-stack, the end of which closed up the aperture, he might so fashion the interior as to form a snug chamber, neatly walled and arched over with the dry peats, which might afford a seasonable and secure retreat to the persecuted people in the time of danger. Accordingly he accomplished his design, and made the opening in the end of the wall the entrance, which, in order to prevent suspicion, was filled with peats ; into this hiding-place the retreat was easy, and could be made on the shortest warning. On Mr Renwick's arrival he was kindly received by the honest farmer, with whom he resided

for some time. During his stay at Castle Maddie a company of troopers made their appearance, for they sometimes visited places for the mere purpose of eating and drinking, as well as for making searches after persons in concealment. Mr Renwick instantly withdrew to the peat-stack, accompanied by the master of the house, who entertained his own fears respecting the designs of the enemy, and more especially as he was now become a suspected person. Having built up the aperture with peats, they sat down in the murky apartment to wait the result. The soldiers having found nothing, retired, and Mr Renwick and his friend issued from their concealment, and proceeded to Waterhead to meet the conventicle. The worshippers assembled at a place called Craignew, and notwithstanding the secrecy observed on such occasions, information was communicated to the soldiers at Carsphairn, who instantly hastened to disperse the meeting. Mr Renwick escaped and returned to the parish of Girthland, where it is probable he occupied Willy Smith's cave, as the glen still bears his name, which doubtless arose from the circumstance of its having been his frequent resort.

The following incidents took place when Mr Renwick was preaching on the banks of the Dee in Galloway :—The river was much swollen by the rains that had fallen in high lands, and was considered to be unfordable. A party of troopers made their appearance on the margin of the stream, immediately opposite the conventicle ; the deep rolling waters, however, darkly tinged by the hundreds of mossy rills and torrents that form the tributaries which feed the majestic current, offered an effective barrier

to the assailants, and the meeting was in no haste to separate. The soldiers presented themselves in a hostile attitude on the brink of the flood, and fired their muskets across to the conventicles, but no ball reached their resting-place, and no horseman durst ford the impetuous stream. The prey of the enemy, though fully in their sight, and even within the reach of their voices, was safe from the attack, and all their fire-arms were for the time being perfectly innocuous, for Providence had laid an obstacle across their path, which was utterly insurmountable. The worshippers remained at their ease, and continued in their devotions in the very face of their foes, and reckless of all the symptoms of disappointment and rage which they exhibited. At length, when it suited themselves, they dispersed, and deliberately wended their way to their different homes. Mr Renwick, and a few friends who wished to keep him company, betook themselves to the heights, for they knew the restlessness of their persecutors, and were fully aware that if by any means they should happen to cross the river, they would search every house and hiding-place in the neighbourhood. They deemed it not safe, therefore, to lodge in any house in case of a surprisal in the night season. The weather appears to have been mild, and it was probably the summer season, for the wanderers ascended one of the rugged hills with which that part of the country is so thickly studded, and crouched down in the bosom of one of those little scars on the face of the mountain, under the shelter of which the sheep ensconce themselves from the high winds and storms which sweep with great vehemence around the sides of the steep heights and down the narrow glens. In this place

they abode during the night, under the open canopy of the firmament, but under the covert of Him, the shield of whose protection is ever thrown over those who put their trust in Him.

When the morning sun had risen upon the earth, and when the little company of wanderers had offered up their devotions to the Preserver of their lives, it was agreed that some of their number should undertake to procure some food to satisfy the cravings of their hunger. As they were deliberating on what was best to be done, and how to proceed with the greatest caution, as there were so many spies and informers all around them, they observed a man in the garb of a solitary shepherd wandering on the hill, and apparently directing his steps accidentally toward their retreat in the scar. As he drew near they discovered themselves to him, thinking that probably Providence might send them relief by his means; but the man was a spy in the guise of a friend, who had come to seek out their hiding-place; and knowing that they were concealed somewhere on the hill, and being pretty confident that he would find them, he brought a company of troopers at his back to seize them. The soldiers, however, remained at a considerable distance behind to prevent, on the part of the fugitives, any suspicion that they were connected with the strolling shepherd. The shepherd congratulated the friends on their escape from the enemy, informing them at the same time that several of the dragoons, in attempting to cross the river, had been swept away by the impetuosity of the current. When Mr Renwick heard this he lifted up his hands to heaven, and expressed his gratitude to God for the deliverance vouchsafed

them, and spoke in such a strain as completely overawed and melted the emissary who had been sent out to entrap them. By this time the soldiers made their appearance, and were marching slowly along the foot of the hill, but they did not observe the fugitives in the concealment of the scar. The shepherd now fell on his knees, and with tears confessed that he was an informer, who had come for the express purpose of delivering them up to the persecutors, but that since he came among them, God had touched his heart by means of what he had seen and heard, and that he was now determined to renounce his infamous vocation, and henceforth to espouse the cause in which they were suffering. The little company was struck mute with astonishment, and the truth of what the man stated was obvious, for there were the troopers wending their way slowly about the hill, and apparently looking out for their guide to direct their further movements. The poor man, whose name, it is said, was Reid, a native of Lanarkshire, became a true penitent, and abandoned the party in whose service he had been engaged. Mr Renwick and his friends escaped at this time, and kept themselves close in the scar till the soldiers left the hill.

These incidents plainly show the Saviour's watchful care over his servant in preserving him for the work assigned him. It is obvious, at the same time, that notwithstanding the affected contempt expressed of him by his enemies, that Mr Renwick was in their view a man of no small importance; the price which they set on his head was a hundred pounds

sterling, no trifling sum in those days truly, and a whole army was employed to make war against him, and to hunt him down. Had Mr Renwick been a common man, or a man of little influence in the land, we would have heard of no such preparations, on the part of the Government, for the purpose of crushing his cause. The truth is, there was no man more dreaded by the council than he, for he seemed to be a host in himself, and his name was in every person's mouth. He was a man to whom the attention of friends and foes alike was directed for several years, a sort of prodigy that had appeared in the land; and the amazing influence he possessed not only proved that he was a person of rare godliness, but also of no inferior talents. His enemies feared that he would revolutionize the country in their very face; and indeed his labours were rapidly tending to this, and hence their solicitude to get him into their power. Argyle and Monmouth were much more easily defeated than Mr Renwick; his enemies might indeed defeat the man, but they could not defeat the cause that was daily gaining ground, and in its civil aspect it in a few months accomplished the memorable Revolution.

In his wanderings Mr Renwick came to Lochgoin, in the parish of Fenwick, in Ayrshire. Lochgoin is the noted residence of the Howies, who have occupied the spot for several centuries. This place, in the very heart of the lonely moors, was the resort of the worthies in the times of persecution. Gentlemen and ministers, as well as those in the humbler ranks of life, were all welcome to Lochgoin, as sufferers in the good cause. When Mr

Renwick, in his journeyings through the desert, came to this friendly house, he was in a state of considerable destitution, as it respected his habiliments, and James Howie furnished him with a pair of good shoes, and otherwise assisted him for his Master's sake.

CHAPTER XI.

Protestation against the Toleration—Escape at Peebles—Apprehension in Edinburgh—His Indictment—Interview with his Mother—His Trial—His Situation and Conduct in Prison.

WE now advance to the closing year of the persecution, the famous 1688, when the tyrant was chased from the throne amidst the just execrations of an insulted and indignant people, and when the rights of the nation, civil and religious, were restored, and their future possession secured to the subjects. The great Revolution which so distinguished this period, after the endurance of a persecution of no less than eight-and-twenty years' continuance, amply justified the principles generally maintained by the sufferers in Scotland, and which were more specifically bodied forth in the various declarations and apologies emitted by them at different junctures.

This was the last year of Mr Renwick's eventful life, for in a few weeks after its commencement he gained the martyr's crown. His godly sincerity and zeal in his Master's service seemed to increase more and more as he approached the end of his course.

For, "drawing near the close of his days," as Alexander Shields remarks, "he ran very fast, and wrought very hard, both in the work of his own salvation as a Christian, and in the work of his generation as a minister and a witness for Christ." He felt a strong desire to emit a declaration against the toleration, and the sinful compliances of those who had been ensnared by it. On his way to Edinburgh for this purpose, he visited the town of Peebles, in which were a number of his adherents, with whom he had agreed to hold a meeting. In this, however, he and his friends were disappointed, for just as the meeting was about to be held, the town was all in an uproar in the pursuit of some persons who had been guilty of theft. When the brethren perceived the commotion in the town, they supposed it was for the purpose of interrupting the little conventicle and apprehending the minister, and, on this supposition, the meeting was prevented from being held, and Mr Renwick, having narrowly escaped, proceeded on his journey.

When he arrived in Edinburgh he was anxious to meet with the indulged ministers that he might lay his protestation before them, but finding that there was no likelihood of any convention taking place, he left it in the hands of the Rev. Hugh Kennedy, their moderator. After this he went over to Fife to visit the friends in that district, where he kept sundry conventicles, for he never was satisfied unless he was preaching, or catechising, or holding conferences. The last sermon he preached was at Borrowstounness, from the text, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" This discourse,

which is printed in his volume of Sermons, is a mere outline of what must have been delivered,—but, meagre as it is, we see all the grand and essential truths which constituted the theme of his ministry, and on which he enlarged with so much sweet and heavenly eloquence.

On the last day of January he returned to Edinburgh, and late in the evening came to a house on the Castle-hill, where he lodged. This house was frequently visited by the Customhouse officers, in search of contraband goods which were sometimes secreted there. This circumstance rendered this lodging rather unsafe for Mr Renwick; and one John Justice, an active officer, who had been prowling about in the evening in the way of his vocation, heard distinctly the voice of prayer in the family, and instantly suspected that there were some intercommuned persons in the house. The master of the house was supposed to be a favourer of Mr Renwick, and probably Justice had learned that he had lodged here on his way to Fife, and that there was a likelihood of his returning in a short time, and consequently had determined to watch him. The reward of a hundred pounds was a tempting lure to the cupidity of a man like Justice, and the opportunity of his capture was not to be lost. Next morning, about seven o'clock, the officers burst into the house on pretence of searching for uncustomed goods, but in reality to apprehend Mr Renwick. While his assistants entered the house, Justice stationed himself at the door to prevent the escape of him of whom he had come in quest. When the men entered, Mr Renwick moved toward the door, and in presenting

himself in the passage Justice exclaimed, "My life for it, this is Mr Renwick." He then bawled out, "all within this house must go to the guard, that they may show what trade they are of." Mr Renwick answered, "I shall soon show you what my trade is." The officer then ran to the street calling out for help to secure the "dog Renwick," as he termed him.

In the meantime, two of his friends attempted to escape by another door, but when they opened it they found it closely guarded, and when one of the party made an effort to break through the ranks of the assailants, he was repelled with great violence, and forced to retreat within the house. On this Mr Renwick discharged a pistol, the startling report of which made the assaulters fall back. He then sprung forward, and fled through the opening which they had involuntarily made for him, while one of them struck him violently, with a long staff, on the breast, which greatly enfeebled him in running. He fled down the Castle Wynd toward the head of the Cowgate, but, owing to the stunning effect of the blow he had received on the chest, he fell several times, and having lost his hat, the circumstance attracted notice, and he was seized by a man on the street, while the other two escaped. Graham, the Captain of the Guard, to whom he was delivered, exclaimed, when he looked on his youthful and comely countenance, "Is this the boy Renwick that the nation has been so much troubled with?" "I am," replied he, with a smiling aspect and gentle demeanour. One Bailie Charters, a blustering insolent person, accused him of frequenting houses of bad fame, which base insinuation he

repelled with becoming indignity. He was next carried before a quorum of the Council ; and when Graham delivered him into their hands he was heard to say, " Now, I have given Renwick up to the Presbyterians, let them do with him what they please."

After this he was committed to prison and laid in irons. As soon as he found himself alone in his dreary cell, and fully in the power of his enemies who had so long thirsted for his blood, he turned to God, his heavenly Father, and poured out his heart before him in solemn prayer. He was now about to be offered up on the altar of Prelatic violence, and he had no refuge but God, and he sought no other. He made an unreserved surrender of his life to the Lord, and besought, as a special favour, that his enemies might not be permitted to torture his body, but merely to take his life, and this request was granted. How natural to God's people is it to turn to him in the day of their distress, and to make supplication before him,—as natural it is as for a child who fears danger to run to the arms of his parent. How widely different was the condition of Mr Renwick from that of a felon cast into the prison-house for his crimes? And how different their feelings and experience,—the one frets, and chides, and curses ; and the other prays, and blesses God, and pleasantly resigns himself into His hand.

Prior to his receiving his indictment he was brought before the Chancellor in the Viscount Tarbet's lodgings, and there privately examined respecting his owning the king's authority, the paying of cess, and carrying arms at field meetings.

To all which he answered with a frankness and ingenuousness which both astonished and perplexed his adversaries. He was particularly interrogated respecting the cess, because there was found on him a note-book containing the outlines of some sermons on this specific subject. In the same book they found the names of sundry persons, fully written, and a number of others whose initials only were marked. The latter he explained, at their request, in order to avoid torture, considering that the persons were already as well known and as obnoxious as they could be. The Chancellor asked him of what persuasion he was. He replied that he was a Presbyterian. This question probably was put to him because the report had spread abroad that he was a Papist, and had that turned out to be the case, the likelihood is, that he would have been the more leniently dealt with. The Chancellor next asked him why he, being a Presbyterian, differed so widely from his brethren of the same persuasion respecting the indulgence and the king's authority. His reply was, that he adhered to the old Presbyterian principles which had been avowed by the whole nation, and especially maintained for twenty years prior to the Restoration, but from which many of his brethren had swerved for a little liberty, as you yourselves, said he, have done for a little honour. The Chancellor had the candour to remark, that these, he believed, were the true Presbyterian principles, and that his brethren only wanted his courage and honesty to make the same avowal.

On the 3d of February he was indicted to stand his trial before the Justiciary Court. The following is a part of his indictment:—"Nevertheless,

it is of verity that ye, the said Mr James Renwick, having shaken off all fear of God, respect and regard to his Majesty's authority and laws, and having entered yourself into the society of some rebels of most damnable and most pernicious principles, and disloyal practices, you took upon you to be a preacher to these traitors, and became so desperate a villain, that ye did openly and frequently preach in the fields, declaiming against the authority and government of our Sovereign Lord and King, denying that our most gracious Sovereign, King James the Seventh, is lawful King of this realm, and asserting that he was an usurper, and that it is not lawful to pay cess or taxes to his Majesty, but that it was lawful and the duty of the subjects to rise in arms, and to make war against his Majesty and those commisionate by him." Such is the strain of the entire document, and written in a style worthy of the lowest miscreants, who could scarcely employ viler terms in their attempt to bespatter the character of the most worthless of their class.

After he had received his indictment, his mother, through the favour of the keepers of the jail, was admitted into his apartment. This worthy woman who had sought a child from the Lord, and who, when she had obtained him, dedicated him to the service of Christ, was now about to be bereaved of him. The news were brought to her as she sat in her lowly cottage, that her dear son, who had for so many years been the child of her solitudes and her prayers, and who for so long a time had laboured in the gospel at the risk of his life, wandering among his native hills and glens, was now seized. That day had now come which she had for many an

anxious month anticipated, the day of his capture by his ruthless enemies, and now he was immured within the dark prison walls, from which there was no expectation of a release till its doors were opened for his procession to the scaffold. And this good woman, who was called, but not unexpectedly, to bow before God's terrible things, arose, and with a heavy heart plodded her weary way to visit the gloomy cell that contained what was most dear to her on earth, and dearer than even her own life. She went, and God was with her. She lingered not, for her bowels yearned over the son of her vows. At length the dark turrets of the city loomed in the distance,—the city in whose streets had flowed the blood of many a precious saint of God, and her heart throbbed high as she painted in her imagination the likely scene of the next execution, the martyrdom of her own child. But she was supported, for she had a service to perform and a fiery trial through which to pass, and her God had said, "As thy day so shall thy strength be."

Elizabeth Corsan was admitted into the cell of her son, who, like a malefactor, lay in irons. The interview was of the most affecting and edifying nature, but what passed at this time has not been preserved, owing to the agitation of his mother's mind on the shock she received at the circumstances in which they met. When the Sabbath came, which fell on the 5th of February, three days before his trial, he expressed great sympathy with his poor flock that was scattered among the mountains as sheep without a shepherd, and bleating mournfully to their fellows as they traversed the barren heath in quest of pasture. He regretted that he

was to leave them in their destitute circumstances, lest they should become a prey to devouring wolves. At the same time he remarked, that though his heart was with his flock, among whom he was ready to spend and to be spent, he feared to return to the world again, and to that conflict with the body of sin which he had so long sustained, a conflict much more painful, and stubborn, and incessant, than that which he maintained with his persecutors who sought his life night and day. He affirmed that if he were again to preach the gospel in the fields he would use the same freedom and faithfulness in upholding the standard he had reared : this he deliberately declared in full prospect of the sufferings he was to undergo, and to which he was already in part subjected. The fear of man did not discourage him, nor did the terror of death frighten him from his purpose.

On another occasion, his mother asked him how he did. He answered, "I am well ;" but added, "since my examination I can hardly pray." This reply stunned his poor sorrow-stricken parent, and smote her to the heart. She gazed on him with unutterable perplexity and distress, when he speedily removed her suspense by exclaiming, that he could hardly *pray*, being so much taken up with *praising*, he was so greatly ravished with the joy of his Lord. His mother was one day expressing her fears lest she should faint when the time approached, saying, "How shall I look upon that head and these hands set up among the rest on the ports of the city ; I have so much self that I shall never be able to endure such a sight." O who can describe a mother's heart in such circumstances ; no wonder

that the poor woman felt solicitous, for with what feelings could she behold the mangled body of a son so tenderly beloved. His severed limbs and head exhibited ignominiously on places the most conspicuous that they might be gazed on and insulted by the rabble,—this was too much for the heart of such a mother, and she was ready to sink at the prospect of a trial so insupportable. On seeing the distress of his mother he smiled, and said that she should never witness that sight, “for,” continued he, “I have offered my life to the Lord, and have sought that he will bind them up that they may do no more, and I am persuaded that they shall not be permitted to torture my body nor touch a hair of my head further.”

It is remarkable that the fears with which he was haunted when at liberty, respecting the torturing of his body, in the event of his being apprehended by the enemy, were entirely removed when in prison. He always shuddered at the idea of the infliction of bodily pains, for he was possessed of great gentleness and sensibility, and he instinctively shrunk at the thought of the cruelties to which many of his suffering brethren had been subjected; and many a lonely moment did he spend in the wilderness, ruminating on what might, in this way, befall him. So high occasionally were his feelings on this point wrought up, that he would hold up his hands before his face, and gazing on them, exclaim, “How shall I endure to have these struck off, and my legs tortured in the boots, and my head taken from my body!” In the prospect of these afflictions he prayed and attained submission; and now, when he was brought near to the trial, he prayed again,

and reached the persuasion that he would obtain an exemption from that which he feared. So entire was his confidence in reference to this, that he declared, "that the terror of them (the tortures) was so removed, that he would rather choose to be cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, than do any thing that might wrong the Truth." The day of trial, when contemplated at a distance, is often more terrible than when it actually comes.

Several friends besides his mother were admitted to see him, with whom he conversed in the most affectionate manner, and with all earnestness exhorted them to be reconciled to God, and to remain steadfast in His ways to the end. When they expressed their deep sorrow at being about to be deprived of him, at a time when his services were so much needed, he said, that "they had more need to bless the Lord that he should now be taken away from these reproaches which had broken his heart, and which could not be otherwise wiped off, even though he should get his life without yielding in the least." This statement shows, in the most impressive and affecting manner, how heavy were the reproaches which were cast upon him, which nothing could wipe away from his name, as he supposed, but the shedding of his blood. Presbyterians and Prelatists alike reviled him, and their calumnies were not to be refuted, as he conceived, by any thing short of his martyrdom. O how often must that sensitive heart have been crushed with grief, with a grief expressed to none but to his God; when he longed for death to clear him of the obloquies so liberally heaped upon him by enemies, and those from whom better things might have been expected!

Two days before his trial he wrote the following letter to a friend :—“ I have no cause of complaining of my lot ; there is a great necessity for it, and the Lord hath seen it for his glory, and he maketh me joyful in it. But there is one thing that doth a little trouble me, and yet when I look upon it again, I think there is not much cause of trouble,—the matter is this : when I was apprehended and searched, there was found upon me a little memorandum, containing the names of some persons to whom I had lent and from whom I had borrowed some books, as also a direction of letters to some doctors of divinity, or ministers abroad. Upon this I was interrogated in the Tolbooth, by a committee, who said they had orders to torture me if I was not ingenuous. So as to the direction to the doctors or ministers abroad, which were full in the memorandum, I told that there was a purpose of writing letters to them, but that none were written. And being asked about the scope or design of the letters, I told that it was to represent our sufferings, and to procure sympathy. I was asked with whom I kept correspondence abroad ; and I told, with Mr Robert Hamilton, which I thought could do no injury. And as to the names of the persons that were written short, I judged there was no hazard in explaining their names, who were in the same hazard already, so I told that A. S. was Alexander Shields. . . . Now I shall say no more as to this, but only desire persons who are in my circumstances, either not to keep such memorandums, or not to keep them upon them, which I did inadvertently and inconsiderately. You may communicate this to whom you think fit, especially to the persons con-

cerned ; but see that you take along with you all the circumstances. I studied to save myself from lying, to preserve them from trouble, and to evite the threatened torture. . . . I have nothing further to write at the time, for I resolve to write some after this, which I would have more public than this. I desire that none may be troubled on my behalf, but rather rejoice with him who, with hope and joy, is waiting for his marriage and coronation hour."

On the 8th of February, Mr Renwick was placed at the bar of the Justiciary Court, and his indictment being read over, he was asked if he acknowledged all the charges that were brought against him. "All," he replied ; "but when it is said I have cast off all fear of God, that I deny ; for it is because I fear to offend God, and to violate his law, that I am here standing ready to be condemned." He was asked if he owned authority, and especially if he acknowledged King James the Seventh to be his lawful sovereign. "I own all authority," said he, "that hath its prescriptions and limitations from the Word of God ; but I cannot own this usurper as lawful king, seeing, both by the Word of God, such a one is incapable to bear rule, and, likewise, by the ancient laws of the kingdom, which admit none to the crown of Scotland, until he swear to defend the Protestant religion, which a man of his profession cannot do." The following questions were pressed upon him :—"Can you deny him to be king ? Was he not the late king's brother ? Had the late king any children lawfully begotten ? Was he not declared to be king by act of Parliament ?" To those interrogatories he firmly replied, "He is king *de facto*, but not *de jure* ; that he was

the late king's brother, he knew nothing to the contrary; what children the other had, he knew not, but from the Word of God, which ought to be the rule of all laws, or from the ancient laws of the kingdom, it could not be shown that he had or could have any right." He was next asked if he had taught it to be unlawful to pay cess and taxes to his majesty. To this he answered,—“For the present cess, exacted for the present usurper, I hold it unlawful to pay it, both in regard it is oppressive to the subjects for the maintenance of tyranny, and because it is imposed for the suppression of the gospel. Would it have been thought lawful for the Jews, in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, to have brought every one a coal to augment the flame of the furnace to devour the three children, if so they had been required by that tyrant? And how can it be lawful either to oppress poor people for not bowing to the idols the king sets up, or for their brethren to contribute what may help forward their oppression on that account.” He was next asked if he advised his hearers to come armed to conventicles, and if he taught the doctrine of resistance in case of opposition. In answer to this he said, “It was inconsistent both with reason and religion to do otherwise: you yourselves would do it in like circumstances. I own that I taught them to carry arms to defend themselves, and to resist your unjust violence.” They asked if he owned the note-book and the sermons which it contained. He replied, “If you have added nothing, I will own and am ready to seal all the truths contained therein with my blood. He was then requested to subscribe his confessions, which he at first refused, but at length

he said, "I will subscribe the papers as my own testimony, but not in obedience to you." When the jurymen were called and sworn by fives, he was asked if he objected to any of them. He replied, "That he did not, but protested that none might sit on his assize, that professed not Protestant or Presbyterian principles, or an adherence to the covenanted work of reformation." The verdict of guilty was returned, and he was sentenced to be executed in the Grassmarket on the Friday following. Lord Linlithgow, the Justice-General, asked if he desired longer time. He replied, "That it was all one to him; if it were protracted, it was welcome; if it were shortened, it was welcome; his Master's time was the best." It is very noticeable, that while those who called themselves Presbyterians, and who were men eminent in the tolerated meetings, did not scruple to sit as jurymen, and consent to his death, some even of the opposite faction rather submitted to the fine, than to give their verdict against him. "Sommerville, chamberlain of Douglas, though he appeared, yet, when he saw Mr Renwick turn about and direct his speech to them, ran away, saying, he trembled to think of taking away the life of such a pious-looking man, though they should take the whole of his estate."

He was respited by the council till the 17th of the month; but though this favour was granted without his knowledge, he refused to make the least concession, which might in any way be construed into an abandonment of his principles.

During the few days he had to live, he was carefully secluded from his friends, who were not allowed to visit him, but he was continually ex-

posed to the intrusion of Prelatists and Papists, who wasted his time with their arguments, and harassed him with their proposals. Bishop Paterson frequently visited him, and on one occasion said to him, "Think you that none can be saved but those of your principles? Will you kill yourself with your own sword, seeing you may have your life on so easy terms?" "I never said nor thought," replied he, "that none could be saved except they were of these principles; but these are truths for which I suffer, and which I have not rashly concluded on, but deliberately, and of a long time have been confirmed that they are sufficient points to suffer for." The bishop then took his leave, and expressed some concern on his account, and added, "It was a great loss he had been of such principles, for he was a pretty lad." On the evening before his execution, the bishop sent to inquire if he could be in any thing serviceable to him. Mr Renwick returned thanks for his kindness, and said there was nothing that he needed, and therefore nothing that he could ask.

One M'Naught, a curate, visited him, and conversed with him on various points, and professed himself much pleased with his candour and integrity.

Dalrymple, the king's advocate, also visited him, and expressed no little solicitude on account of his death, and more especially on account of the part he himself had been obliged to take in the matter. He earnestly urged Mr Renwick to sue for pardon, and to acknowledge the king's authority, but he remained inflexible. It appears that both the prelates, and others of the members of the council, experienced certain painful misgivings on account

of Mr Renwick's condemnation, and that any concession on his part would have been gladly seized by them, as a seasonable pretext for commuting his sentence, and sparing his life. His appearance before his judges had made an impression which was not easily effaced; and in their consciences they felt that they were guilty of a crime of no common magnitude, in putting to death so holy and harmless a man. Several petitions had, unknown to him, been prepared, begging a commutation of the sentence; these were sent to him for signature, but he positively refused to append his name to any such documents. He was resolved to give no colour to the ungenerous surmises that were already believed by many, that he had resiled from his principles to save his life.

Three days prior to his execution, he was again brought before the council, where he was closely questioned respecting the Informatory Vindication. What passed on this occasion, however, never transpired further than what he himself communicated in a letter to a few friends the day following. In the letter, he says,—“ My dear friends in Christ, I see now what hath been the language of my reprieve,—it hath been that I might be further tempted and tried; and I praise the Lord that he hath assisted me to give further proofs of stedfastness. I have been assailed by some Popish priests, but the last time they came, I told them I would debate no more with such as they were, and that I had lived and would die a Protestant, and testify against the idolatries, heresies, superstitions, and errors of that antichristian way. But yesterday I was cast into a deep exercise, and made to dwell

under the impression of the dreadfulness of every thing that might grieve the Spirit of God. I found sin to be more bitter than death, and one hour's hiding of God's face more insupportable. And then at night I was called before a part of the council, and the Chancellor produced the Informatory Vindication, and asked if I knew it. I answered, I did know it. And being interrogated, I confessed that I had a great hand in the writing of it. They pressed me to tell my assistants. I told them they were those whom they persecuted, but would satisfy them no further. They also urged me, upon pain of torture, to tell where our societies were,—who kept our general correspondence? and where they were kept? I answered, though they should torture me, which was contrary to all laws, after sentence of death, I would give them no further notice than the books gave. I was moreover threatened to tell my haunts and quarters, but I refused to make known to them any such thing, so I was returned to prison. Such exercise as I had was very needful for such a trial, and I would rather endure what they could do unto me, than have dishonoured Christ, offended you, and brought you into trouble. But I hope, within three days, to be without the reach of all temptation. Now I have no more to say. Farewell again, in our blessed Lord Jesus."

After this examination, in which he had displayed so much firmness and honesty of principle, he experienced, on his return to the jail, an unwonted degree of the communications of the Holy Spirit. His heart overflowed with gratitude and joy, that he was counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ, and in his cell there was nothing heard but the voice of gladness and of triumph.

When some asked how he did, he replied, "I am very well, but will be better still within three days." He lived under a strong impression that he would one day fall by the hand of violence; such impressions were not uncommon in those days, and were just what was to be expected. Men's lives hung in doubt before their eyes, and none could tell when they awoke in the morning, but that their blood might water the heath ere the evening; but then this consideration tended greatly to abstract their thoughts from the world, it induced them to live near God, and made death, when it came, no stranger.

Mr Renwick expressed his conviction that his death would be productive of much more good than his life, even though he should be spared for many years to come. When he was asked what he thought God would do with the remnant that were left, he said, "It would be well with them, for God would not forsake nor cast off His inheritance."

In his dying testimony, which he wrote the day previous to his death, he says, "It hath pleased the Lord to deliver me up into the hands of men, and I think fit to send you this salutation, which I expect will be the last. I dare not desire to have escaped this lot, for no less could have been for his glory and the vindication of his cause on my behalf. And now my blood shall either more silence reproaches, or more ripen them for judgment; but I hope it will make some more sparing to speak of those who shall come after me, and so I am the more willing to pay this cost for their instruction, and my successor's ease.

"Since I came to prison, the Lord has been

wonderfully kind to me, he has made his Word to give me light, life, joy, courage, and strength; yea, it has dropped with sweet smelling myrrh unto me. O what can I say to the Lord's praise; it was but little that I knew of him before I came to prison, but I have found sensibly much of his divine strength, much of the joy of his Spirit, and much assurance from his Word and Spirit of my salvation.

"I have met with many assaults in prison, some from the indulged party, and some from prelates; but, by the strength of God, I was enabled to stand, that they could neither bend nor break me. I was assaulted by some of the Popish party, but they found none of their own stuff in me.

"Now my dear friends in precious Christ, I think I need not tell you, that as I have lived, so I die, in the same persuasion, with the true reformed and covenanted Presbyterian Church of Scotland; and I adhere to the testimony of the day as it is held forth in our Informatory Vindication, and in the testimony against present toleration, and that I own and seal with my blood all the precious truths, even the controverted truths that I have taught.

"I exhort you to make your personal reconciliation with God in Christ, for I fear that many of you have that yet to do; and when you come where I am, to look pale death in the face, you will not be a little shaken and terrified, if you have not laid hold on eternal life. I would exhort you to much diligence in the use of the means. Do not fear that the Lord will cast off Scotland, for he will certainly return again, and show himself glorious in our land. But watch and pray, for he is bringing on a sad overthrowing stroke, which will make

many say, that they have easily got through that have got a scaffold for Christ.

“ I may say this to His praise, that I have found his cross sweet and lovely to me, for I have had many joyful hours, and not a frightful thought since I came to prison. I am now longing for the joyful hour of my dissolution, and there is nothing in the world that I am sorry to leave but you ; but I go to better company, and so I must take my leave of you all. Farewell beloved sufferers and followers of the Lamb ; farewell Christian intimates ; farewell Christian and comfortable mother and sisters ; farewell sweet societies and desirable general meetings ; farewell night wanderings in cold and weariness for Christ ; farewell sweet Bible, and preaching of the gospel ; farewell sun, moon, and stars, and all sublunary things ; farewell conflicts with a body of sin and death ;—welcome scaffold for precious Christ ; welcome heavenly Jerusalem ; welcome innumerable company of angels, and general assembly and Church of the first-born ; welcome crown of glory, white robes, and songs of Moses and the Lamb ; and above all, welcome O thou blessed Trinity and one God, O Eternal One ! I commit my soul into thy eternal rest.”

CHAPTER XII.

The Morning of his Execution—His Last Letter—His Behaviour in Prison—His Martyrdom—His Character.

THE morning of an execution is in general one of extreme perturbation and terror to the poor criminal, who has forfeited his life to the laws of his country. The first dawns of day on the dingy walls of his prison-house send through his frame a thrill of horror. It is the light of that day which numbers his last on earth, of a long series of sinful days, and days of forgetfulness of God. His conscience is burdened with crimes, and he has nothing but the blackness of despair before him. His futurity is covered with a pall of the deepest shading, and not one ray of hope pierces the gloom to cheer his wretched spirit. "Having cast off all fear of God," and rejected the gracious overtures of the gospel, he is about to pass out of time into eternity, with the terrific forebodings of eternal perdition. His heart is ready to burst with anguish, as the deep-toned bell, with solemn and dreadful knell, announces that his hour is come. O the helplessness of human nature in such a crisis, and how vividly does such

a scene depict the "exceeding sinfulness of sin," and the woful wretchedness that follows a life of iniquity unrepented of and unforgiven! O, at such a moment, how precious are faith's views of the atoning blood of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!

The 17th of February 1688 was the last day of Mr Renwick's brief and checkered pilgrimage on earth. It was a day not unlooked for, and a day that was hailed by him with unspeakable joy. The last sun that shone for him, was to him the gayest and the brightest that ever gilded the firmament; it was a sun that blazed in a cloudless sky, and which imaged forth the splendours of that eternal day on which he was just about to enter. The hour of his martyrdom was the hour of his triumph. In *his* prison-cell were heard no groanings of anguish, and no wailings of despair, but the humble voice of prayer, and songs of praise to the God of his salvation: "the voice of rejoicing and salvation is heard in the tabernacles of the righteous." Instead of the torture of a guilty mind looking forward to the judgment-seat, he experienced the peace of God, and the joyful anticipations of an immediate entrance on the heavenly blessedness. It was "the day of his espousals, the day of the gladness of his heart;" for he was like the bride arrayed in beauteous robes, and waiting for the coming of the bridegroom. He was admitted to much nearness of intercourse with the Saviour, in whose cause he was now about to offer up his life; and the communications of divine consolation filled his soul to overflowing. Death had no terrors to him, it was the welcome porter that opened the gates of the celestial mansions to

admit his happy spirit into the joy of his Lord. Nay, his prison-chamber appeared to those who visited him, to be the threshold of heaven itself, where angelic voices were heard, and the sweet foretastes of eternal blessedness enjoyed. His enemies were confounded, his friends delighted, and the grace of God magnified. Greatly mistaken were they who thought, that if they killed him, they would inflict on him the greatest calamity and dishonour. He reasoned in quite a different strain; he hailed his death as his greatest gain, and his highest glory. The immediate prospect of death tests a man's principles and experience to the uttermost; and Mr Renwick, in the bloom of youth, in good health, and in the full possession of all his mental faculties, and with many a tempting offer of life, deliberately preferred to die, rather than bring his character and his cause into the least discredit. He endured the fiery trial, and came forth like gold of the seventh refining.

His last letter he wrote on earth was to his dear friend, Mr Robert Hamilton, at that time on the continent. It is as follows:—"Right honourable, and dear Sir,—This being my last day upon earth, I thought it my duty to send you this my last salutation. The Lord hath been wonderfully gracious to me since I came to prison; He hath *assured* me of his salvation, helped me to give a testimony for him, and own before his enemies all that I have taught, and strengthened me to resist and repel many temptations and assaults, O praise to his name!

"Now, as to my testimony which I left in your hands when I first entered the work of the ministry, I do still adhere unto the matter of it; but I think

the manner of expression is in some things too tart ; and it containeth sundry men's names, some whereof are now in eternity ; also, it is not so pertinent to our present affairs, for the state of our controversies is altered ; therefore I judge it may be destroyed, for I have testimony sufficient left behind me in my written summons, and in my letters. But if this trouble you, and you desire to keep it for yourself and your own use, you will keep this letter with it, and not publish it abroad ; yet you may make use of any part of the matter of it, that may conduce to the clearing of any controversy. And as for the direction of it unto you, if I had lived, and been qualified for writing a book, and if it had been dedicated to any man, you would have been the man ; for I have loved you, and I have peace before God in that, and I bless his name that I have been acquainted with you.

“ Remember me to all that are friends to you, particularly to the ladies at Lewarden, to whom I would have written, if I had not been kept close in prison, and pen, ink, and paper kept from me. But I must break off. I go to your God, and my God. Death to me is as a bed to the weary. Now be not anxious ; the Lord will maintain his cause, and own his people. He will show his glory yet in Scotland. Farewell, beloved and comfortable Sir.”

Early on the day of his martyrdom, the captain of the jail entered his cell, and requested that when on the scaffold, he would not mention the causes of his death ; that he should say nothing that might tend to irritate, and that he should cast no blame on his opponents. This request was sufficiently

unreasonable, and plainly shows the fear entertained by his enemies, lest his last speech should bring to light more of the truth than was desirable, and lest too favourable an impression should be made on the populace, convened to witness his execution. Mr Renwick answered, "What God gives me to speak that will I speak, and nothing else, and nothing less." The captain then stated that his life might yet be spared, and that his reprieve was certain, if he would only sign the petition which he now presented to him. The contents of this petition are not mentioned, but there is every reason to believe that the particulars were the same as those embodied in the former proposals. This demonstrates the solicitude of those who had a hand in his condemnation, to obtain his release, from a conviction of the iniquity of the sentence. His enemies were conscience-smitten, and felt as if about to bring innocent blood upon their heads, if he should die under the hand of the executioner. His refusal to comply with the suggestions of the captain was coupled with the remark, that he could find no precedent in Scripture, nor from ecclesiastical history, of any of the ancient martyrs formally petitioning their persecutors to grant them their lives in the way in which he was now asked to do; although martyrs might justly remonstrate with their enemies on the wickedness of taking away their lives from the earth. As for his part, in his present circumstances, he considered that the preferring of a petition to save his life, would amount to a swerving from the principles of truth, and a plain refusal to bear his testimony for Christ. The captain, chafed at his obstinacy, as he considered it, replied, "that

many martyrs would have thought it a great privilege to have the offers he had." Mr Renwick waived further discussion, and begged that he might be permitted to speak with his mother and sisters for a brief space. To this the captain demurred, lest he should give them papers to carry out secretly, when Mr Renwick replied, "that he might search them if he pleased."

His request was acceded to, and his mother and sisters were permitted to hold their last interview with him on earth. The little family was now alone, and free to open their hearts without the restraint of strangers. O who can tell the mingled emotions of this affectionate company,—the meeting of hearts, the deep expression of condolence, the tears, the prayers, and the benedictions. And may we not suppose that the spirit of the departed husband and father, who had for so many years been in the better state, was also present, deputed with good angels, to convey the emancipated spirit of his martyred son to the regions of the blessed.

Before they parted they partook of a little refreshment together, and in giving thanks for what God in his providence had set before them, he uttered the following words:—"O Lord, now hast thou brought me within two hours of eternity, and this is no matter of terror to me, more than if I were to go to lie down on a bed of roses. Nay, through grace to thy praise, I may say I never had the fear of death since I came within this prison. But from the place I was taken in, I could have gone away composedly to the scaffold."

At another time he said, "O how can I contain the thoughts of this, to be within two hours of the

crown of glory!" In speaking to his mother and sisters to prepare for death, he said, "It is in itself the king of terrors, though not to me now, as sometimes it was when I was in my hidings. But now let us rejoice and be glad, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. Would ever I have thought that the fear of suffering and death could be so taken away from me? But what shall I say of it? it is the doing of the Lord, and marvellous in our eyes." He further remarked, "I have many times counted the cost of following Christ, but never expected it would have been so easy; and now who knows the honour and happiness of that, 'He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father.'" He said frequently, "Now I am near the end of time, I desire to bless the Lord it is inexpressibly sweet and satisfying to me, that he hath kept me from complying in the least with enemies."

Perceiving his mother weeping, he bade her remember, that they who loved any thing better than Christ, were not worthy of him. "If ye love me," he said, "rejoice that I am going to my Father, and to obtain the enjoyment of what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive it."

After having made these observations, he turned to his heavenly Father with the voice of supplication, as one about to enter into his immediate presence; but he had not continued long in this exercise, till he burst forth in the raptures of praises, for his heart was enlarged, and his faith had risen to the full assurance of hope. Indeed it appears that his chief work in prison was praise. A doubt of his salvation

he had not, and he could not help expressing, in songs of thanksgiving, his admiration of the riches of God's redeeming love. In prayer he expressed his full confidence, that in a short space he would be beyond all conflicts with sin and sorrow, and be in that place where no distance from Christ would be experienced more. He prayed that the Lord would be with the suffering remnant, and raise up holy and devoted men, who should transmit the testimony to succeeding generations. He expressed a confidence that the Lord would be gracious to the land, and bless his Church in the midst of it.

At length hearing the drum beat to assemble the guard to lead him from the prison, his heart was filled with a joy inexpressible, and he cried out in a transport, "Yonder the welcome warning to my marriage, the bridegroom is coming, and I am ready, I am ready."

He then took his last farewell of his mother and sisters, the objects dearest to him on earth. And O! how painful must have been the separation between hearts that were so knit together, kindred spirits that were blended into one, and whose mutual affections were like the powerful current of a deep and placid river, the onward pressure of whose stream nothing can arrest, till its waters commingle with the ocean. O! the power of motherly tenderness, and sisterly attachment. But was there no heroism in the constitution of these poor sorrowing females? Yes, for they were enabled to resign him, whom above all earthly creatures they loved with an intense affection, to the Lord, and to consent that he should die an honoured witness for Jesus Christ. When the youthful martyr saw them bathed

in tears, and crushed with grief, he comforted them, and spoke kindly words to their heart ; and like an angel of mercy about to return to heaven, he was the messenger of consolation to their troubled minds, and diffused over their spirits the healing balm of a heavenly consolation. He encouraged them, and said, " that ere all was done, they should see matter of praise in that day's mercy."

Having, as was customary in such cases, been taken to the council-room to hear his sentence read, he was requested to say there, what he intended to say on the scaffold. He replied, I have nothing to say to you, but what is written in the following words of Jeremiah : " As for me, behold I am in your hand, to do what seemeth good and meet unto you ; but know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof."

When he refused to comply with their request they informed him that his voice would not be audible on the scaffold, for the drums would be beaten during the whole time of the execution. They desired him to pray in the council-room, for the same reason that they besought him to make his speech, which when he refused to do, he asked if they would beat the drums at any other time than when he was making remarks on the conduct of his persecutors. They commanded him to make no reflections ; but he firmly answered, " I will not be limited by you what to speak ; I have not premeditated any thing, but what the Lord gives me that will I speak." They asked him if there was any particular minister he wanted to have with him on

the scaffold. He replied, "If I would have had any of them for my counsellors and comforters, I should not have been here this day; I require none with me but this one man," meaning the man that stood beside him.

He was now conducted to the scaffold, which he ascended with the greatest alacrity, and seemed even in a transport of joy. His situation excited a great deal of interest, and an immense crowd gathered to witness his end. Great were the meetings which occasionally convened, in the moorlands, to hear from his lips the words of eternal life, but his death assembled more at one time than ever his preaching did; and the witnessing of his execution, and the words he uttered, though imperfectly heard by the multitude, were probably productive, at the moment, of a good no less efficient and extensive. It is said of Samson, that "the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life;" and in all likelihood the happy effects of Mr Renwick's martyrdom were ultimately greater than those produced by his ministrations in the fields during the four years and a-half of his busy and eventful life. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

On his first appearance on the scaffold he was entreated not to speak to the people, because, owing to the beating of the drums, his address would not be heard; but of this he took no notice. One of the curates who had stationed himself near the scaffold, accosted him in an insulting manner, and cried out, "Mr Renwick, own our king and we will pray for you." "I will have none of your prayers," said he in a calm and dignified manner;

I am come here to bear my testimony against you, and all such as you are." The unfeeling curate persisted in his annoyance, and exclaimed, "Own our king and pray for him, whatever you say against us." To this he meekly replied, "I will discourse no more with you; I am within a little to appear before Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, who shall pour shame and contempt upon all the kings of the earth that have not ruled for him." It has been justly remarked, that the "conduct of this officious and cruel Episcopalian, who could thus tease and harass a dying man, is just a specimen of the abominable proceedings of the persecuting prelates, during the whole period of Episcopal rule."

He then sang a part of the 103d Psalm, and read the 19th chapter of the Book of Revelation, after which he prayed and committed his soul into the hands of his heavenly Father, through the ever blessed Mediator, and besought the Lord to vindicate, in his own time, the cause for which he suffered. In prayer he said, "that the day of his death was the most joyful he ever had in this world, and that it was a day he much longed for. He blessed God that he was to be honoured with the crown of martyrdom, an honour that angels are not privileged with, being incapable of laying down their lives for his princely Master."

Owing to the beating of the drums, and other interruptions, he complained that he was hindered in worshipping God, but said, "By-and-by I shall be above these clouds. There I shall enjoy Thee, and glorify Thee without interruption, and without

intermission, for ever." When he had ended his devotions, he began to speak to the crowd in the following strain :—" Spectators, I am come here this day to lay down my life for adhering to the truths of Christ, for which I am neither ashamed nor afraid to suffer. Nay, I bless the Lord that ever He counted me worthy, or enables me to suffer any thing for Him ; and I desire to praise His grace that He hath not only kept me from the gross pollutions of the time, but also from the ordinary pollutions of children ; and as for such as I have been stained with, He hath washed and cleansed me from them in His own blood.

" I am this day to lay down my life for these three things,—for disowning the usurpation and tyranny of James Duke of York ; for preaching that it was unlawful to pay cess expressly enacted for the bearing down of the gospel ; and for teaching that it was lawful for people to carry arms for defending themselves in their meetings for the enjoyment of the persecuted gospel ordinances. I think a testimony for these is worth many lives ; and if I had ten thousand, I would think it little enough to lay them all down for the same.

" Dear friends, I die a Presbyterian Protestant. I own the Word of God as the rule of faith and manners ; I own the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Sum of Saving Knowledge, Directory for Public and Family Worship, Covenants, National and Solemn League, Acts of General Assemblies, and all the faithful contendings that have been for the Covenanted Reformation.

" I leave my testimony approving of preaching

in the fields, and of defending the same by arms. I adjoin my testimony to all these truths that have been sealed by bloodshed, either on scaffolds, fields, or seas, for the cause of Christ.

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He was at this stage of his speech commanded to cease. He said, “ I have nearly done ;” and then continued,—“ Ye that are the people of God, do not weary to maintain the testimony of the day in your stations and places ; and whatever ye do, make sure of an interest in Christ, for there is a storm coming that shall try your foundation. Scotland shall be rid of Scotland before the delivery come. And you who are strangers to God, break off your sins by repentance, else I will be a sad witness against you in the day of the Lord.”

When he had said this, they caused him to descend, and ascend the ladder. When he had gone up, he said,—“ Lord, I die in the faith that Thou wilt not leave Scotland, but that Thou wilt make the blood of Thy witnesses the seed of Thy Church, and return again and be glorious in our land. And now, Lord, I am ready ; the bride, the Lamb’s wife, hath made herself ready.”

When the napkin was tied about his face, he said to his friend that attended him,—“Farewell; be diligent in your duty, and make your peace with God through Christ. There is a great trial coming. As to the remnant I leave, I have committed them to God. Tell them from me not to weary nor to be discouraged in maintaining the testimony. Let them not quit nor forego one of these despised truths. Keep your ground, and the Lord will provide you teachers and ministers; and when He comes, He will make these despised truths glorious upon the earth.”

He was then turned over with these words in his mouth,—“Lord, into Thy hands I commit my spirit; for Thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of truth.”

Thus died Mr James Renwick, on the third day after he had completed the six-and-twentieth year of his age,—a young man, but a matured Christian,—a young minister, but a renowned martyr of Jesus Christ, for whose sake he “loved not his life unto the death.” “His righteous soul from insult springing,” winged its way, under the guidance of guardian angels, to the immediate presence of God and of the Lamb; his trials and privations, and wanderings in moorlands and on mountains, in the prosecution of his Master’s work, all terminated in the heavenly blessedness. Heaven was the place to which he constantly looked forward as the consummation of his happiness; and many were the sweet hours of absorbing meditation on the beatitudes of eternity which he spent in the lonely caves and in the dreary deserts; and, as he mused, the fire burned, and he longed to be away to his Father’s

house ; and hence the unutterable joy he felt as the time of his release drew near,—the time when he was to be admitted an inhabitant in that great house in which there are many mansions, and which Christ has been preparing as a residence for his redeemed people.

With what sensations must a ransomed spirit approach the threshold of heaven, and survey for the first time the splendours and glories of the celestial world, which is the perfection of the Divine workmanship, where all the magnificence of the Deity is displayed, and all the grandeur of God's eternal majesty revealed ! O, what scenes of glory, and beauty, and sweetness, in endless and enchanting variety, created by Him whose munificence and skill are unbounded ! With what surprise and interest inexpressible will that soul which is for the first time admitted to behold the blessed Jesus, contemplate His person ! What must it be to look on that countenance which is like the sun shining in his strength,—to see those hands and feet that were pierced by the nails when He hung on the tree,—and to hear that voice that ever fell with gracious accents on the ears of sinners ! No tongue can express, and no heart can conceive, what that sight must be ! With what a reception do the spirits of just men meet, on their entrance into the august palace of the universe ! They are welcomed by the Eternal Father from his high and glorious throne, and admitted to his immediate presence, for the sake of His own adorable Son, whose people they are, and whose image they bear.

Mr Renwick found, when he came to grapple

with the last enemy, that his aspect was not half so terrible as when contemplated in the obscurity of the distance. But nothing can untinge death but an interest in the blessed propitiation ; for no circumstance without this can make death happy.

When all was over, and the crowd dispersed, the lifeless body was taken down, and prepared for burial. His afflicted mother and sisters needed the assistance of kind friends to enable them to perform the last office that relations can perform on earth. Helen Alexander of Pentland, a mother in Israel, and one who had suffered much in those days of trial, assisted on this melancholy occasion. "Some months after this," says she, "Mr Renwick being taken, I went and saw him in prison. When discoursing about several things, I said, 'Sir, within a little you will get the white robes.' He added, 'and palms in my hands ;' and when he was executed, I went along to the Greyfriars' churchyard, took him in my arms until stripped of his clothes, helped to wind him in his grave-clothes, and helped to put him into the coffin. This was a most shocking and sinking dispensation—more piercing, wounding, and afflicting than almost any before it."

With regard to Mr Renwick's character, there can be but one opinion. A youth more holy, zealous, and amiable, is not to be found, perhaps, in the annals of martyrdom. He was illustrious alike both for his patriotism and his Christianity: the glory of his Master and the salvation of souls was the great object of his life. His self-denial was remarkable; and the privations to which he was subjected, and which he bore without a murmur, were enough to break down the spirits and exhaust

the energies of any ordinary man. His humility and meekness endeared him to the peasantry of Scotland, and made him a welcome inmate in the cottages of the moorlands. He was a man possessed of much greatness of soul, and true dignity of character. His moral heroism was conspicuous to all; for neither reproaches nor personal hazards could frighten him. While others, in the meanness and cowardice of spirit, were guilty of foul compliances to save themselves from trouble, he maintained his ground with unflinching steadfastness, and was prepared to outbrave the fiercest storms of persecution in the defence of what, in his conscience, he believed to be the Truth. His determined opposition to tyranny, Prelacy, and Popery, and the general defection of the times, brought against him a whole host of enemies, political and ecclesiastical, whom he feared not to combat single-handed. Nor did he fight in vain; for the solicitude of his enemies on his account, and their eagerness to silence him, plainly shows that their fears, occasioned by him alone, were almost as great as if an army of ten thousand invaders had landed on our shores. On his side he had Truth both political and religious, and this his enemies well knew. His appearance was uncommonly prepossessing; and his youth and comeliness of aspect, and the modesty of his demeanour, excited the admiration and pity of even his persecutors. His death created a great sensation throughout the land,—much greater, perhaps, than that of any of the preceding martyrs. A conviction of his innocence and integrity of purpose seems to have obtained a secret lodgment in the breasts of his adversaries, which caused them

no small uneasiness, on account of the ungracious part they had acted towards him. Even his murderers said they thought he went to heaven. The Viscount Tarbet remarked one day in company, when Mr Renwick happened to be the subject of conversation, "that he was one of the stiffest maintainers of his principles that ever came before them. Others we used always to cause at one time or other to waver," said he, "but him we never could move. Where we left him there we found him; we could never make him yield nor vary in the least." He was the last of that cloud of witnesses that suffered during the long reign of tyranny and persecution,—a reign of nearly thirty years' continuance,—when the best blood of Scotland's sons was shed like water on fields and on scaffolds, for an honest adherence to the civil and ecclesiastical constitution of the nation.

Mr Renwick had little leisure for literary avocations, yet he left behind him the *Informatory Vindication*, the *Testimony against King James's Toleration*, two volumes of *Sermons*, a collection of *Letters*, a *Treatise on the Admission of Ruling Elders*, a *Testimony in Defence of the Persecuted Presbyterians of Scotland*, and a few other pieces of inferior interest.

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