

THE
LADIES OF THE COVENANT.

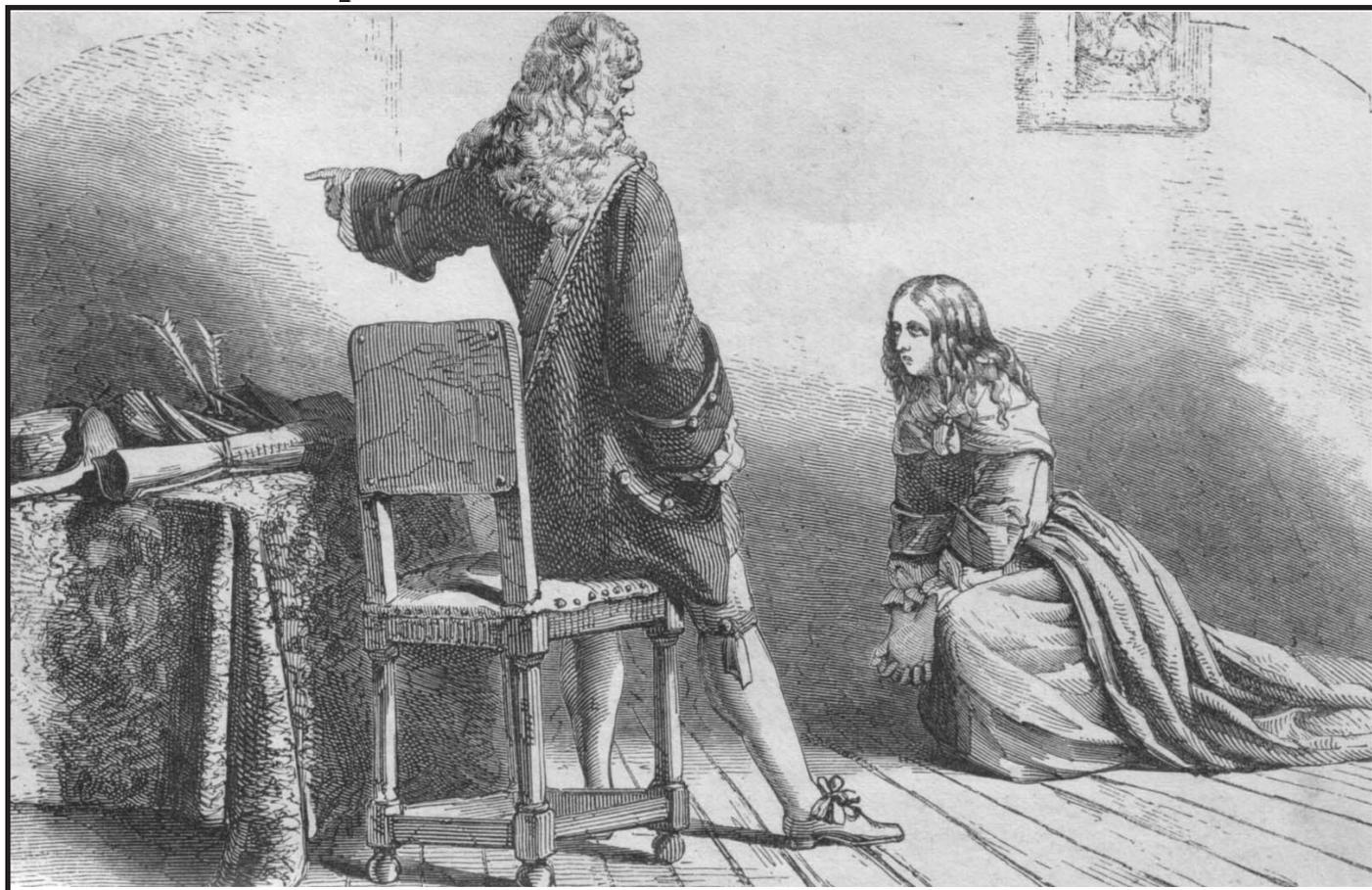
MEMOIRS OF
DISTINGUISHED SCOTTISH FEMALE CHARACTERS,
EMBRACING THE
PERIOD OF THE COVENANT AND THE PERSECUTION.

BY THE
REV. JAMES ANDERSON.



BLACKIE AND SON:
QUEEN STREET, GLASGOW; SOUTH COLLEGE STREET, EDINBURGH;
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M D C C C L L



Lady Mary, Countess of Caithness, interceding with Middleton for permission to remove her Father's Head.

PREFACE

In collecting materials for "The Martyrs of the Bass," published some time ago in a volume entitled "The Bass Rock," it occurred to the author, from the various notices he met with of Ladies who were distinguished for their patriotic interest or sufferings in the cause of nonconformity, during the period of the Covenant, and particularly, during the period of the persecution, that sketches of the most eminent or best known of these ladies would be neither uninteresting nor unedifying. In undertaking such a work at this distance of time, he is aware of the disadvantage under which he labours, from the poverty of the materials at his disposal, compared with the more abundant store from which a contemporary writer might have executed the same task. He, however, flatters himself that the materials which, with some industry, he has collected, are not unworthy of being brought to light; the more especially as the female biography of the days of the Covenant, and of the persecution, is a field which has been trodden by no preceding writer, and which may, therefore, be presumed to have something of the freshness of novelty.

The facts of these Lives have been gathered from a widely-scattered variety of authorities, both manuscript and printed. From the voluminous Manuscript Records of the Privy Council, deposited in her Majesty's General Register House, Edinburgh, and from the Wodrow MSS., belonging to the Library of the Faculty of Advocates, Edinburgh, the author has derived much assistance. The former of these documents he was obligingly permitted to consult by William Pitt Dundas, Esq., Depute-Clerk of her Majesty's Register House. And to the Wodrow MSS. he has, at all times, obtained the readiest access, through the liberality of the Curators of the Advocates' Library, and the kind attentions of the Librarians. He has also had equally ready access to such books in the invaluable Library, many of them rare and expensive, as served to illustrate his subject. In the course of the work, he has had occasion to acknowledge his obligations to several gentlemen, from whom he has obtained important information. As to some of the ladies of rank here noticed, there probably exist, in the form of letters, and other documents, materials for more illustrating their lives, among the family manuscripts of their descendants, to which the author has not had access. The publication of such papers, if they exist, or of selections from such other papers as relate to the civil and ecclesiastical transactions of Scotland in the olden time, which may be lying, moth-eaten and mouldering away, in the repositories of our noble families, would furnish valuable contributions to this department of the literature of our country; and an example, in this respect, well worthy of imitation, has been set by Lord Lindsay, in his very interesting work entitled, "Lives of the Lindsays."

These Biographies it has been thought proper to precede by an Introduction, containing various miscellaneous observations bearing on the subject, but the chief object of which is to give a general view of the patriotic interest in the cause of religion taken by the ladies of Scotland, during the period which these inquiries embrace. The Appendix consists of a number of papers illustrative of passages in the text; some of which have been previously printed, and others of which are now printed from the originals, or from copies, for the first time.

In compiling these Memoirs it has been the aim of the author throughout to reduce within moderate limits his multifarious materials, which might easily have been spread over a much larger surface. At the same time, he has endeavoured to bring together the most important facts to be known from accessible sources respecting these excellent women, and has even introduced a variety of minute particulars in their history, which he was at considerable, and, as some may think, unnecessary pains to discover. But he believes that careful research into minute particulars, in the lives of ladies so eminent, and who were closely connected with so important a period of the history of our church, as that of the struggles and sufferings of the Scottish Covenanters in the cause of religious and civil liberty, is not to be considered as altogether unnecessary labour. "As to some departments of history and biography," says Foster, "I never can bring myself to feel that it is worth while to undergo all this labour; but," speaking of the English Puritans, he adds, "with respect to *that noble race of saints*, of which the world will not see the like again (for in the *millennium* good men will not be formed and sublimed amidst persecution), it is difficult to say *what* degree of minute investigation is too much - especially in an age in which it

is the fashion to misrepresent and decry them.” [*Foster’s Life, vol. ii. p. 127.*] This remark is equally applicable to the Scottish Covenanters. Their pre-eminent worth warrants and will reward the fullest investigation into their history, independent of the light which this will throw on the character and manners of their age. Of course, it is not meant to affirm that they were exalted above the errors and infirmities of humanity, or that we are implicitly to follow them in everything, whether in sentiment or in action, as if we had not as good a right to act on the great Protestant principle of judging for ourselves, as they had; or as if they had been inspired like prophets and apostles. But it may be safely asserted that, though not entitled to be ranked as perfect and inspired men, they had attained to an elevation and compass of Christian character, which would have rendered them no unmeet associates and coadjutors of prophets and apostles; and even many of their measures, ecclesiastical and civil, bore the stamp of such maturity of wisdom, as showed them to be in advance, not only of their own age, but even of ours, and the defeat of which measures, it may be said, without exaggeration, has thrown back the religious condition of Britain and Ireland for centuries.

J.A.

EDINBURGH, *September* 1850.

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INTRODUCTION

The period embraced in the following sketches is the reigns of James VI, his son, and two grandsons, but more particularly the reigns of his two grandsons, Charles II and James VII, the materials for illustrating the lives of such of our female worthies as lived during their reigns, being most abundant. All the ladies here sketched, whether in humble life or in exalted stations, were distinguished by their zeal, or by their sufferings in the cause of religious truth; and it is by this zeal and these sufferings that the most of them are best known to us. Our notices, then, it is obvious, will be chiefly historical, though not exclusively historical as to forbid the introduction of such illustrations of the personal piety of these ladies, as time has spared; and of such portions of their domestic history as may seem to be invested with interest, and to furnish matter of instruction.

It is first of all worthy of special notice, that the peculiar ecclesiastical principles contended for, or sympathized with by all these ladies, were substantially the same. This arose from the circumstance that all these monarchs sought to subvert substantially the same ecclesiastical principles. Bent on the acquisition of absolute power, they avowedly and perseveringly laboured to overturn the Presbyterian government of the Scottish Church, which, from its favourable tendency to the cause of liberty, was an obstruction in their path; and to impose by force, upon the Scottish people, the prelatic hierarchy, which promised to be more subservient to their wishes. As to the means for attaining this object, all these monarchs were unprincipled and unscrupulous; and each, more degenerate than his predecessor, became, to an increasing degree, reckless in the measures he adopted. James VI, who plumed himself on his king-craft, endeavoured, by corrupting and overawing the General Assemblies of the Church, to get them to destroy their liberties, by introducing, with their own hands, Prelacy, and the ceremonies of the Anglican Church. Charles I adopted a more bold, direct, and expeditious course, attempting to impose a book of canons and a liturgy by his sole authority, without consulting any church judicatory whatever, in which, however, he failed of success, his tyranny issuing in the triumph of the cause he intended to destroy. Charles II, following in the steps of his father, proceeded, on his restoration, to establish Prelacy on the ruins of Presbytery in like manner by his sole authority; and, having more in his power than his father, to enforce conformity by the exaction of fines, by imprisonment, banishment, torture, public executions, and massacres in the fields. James VII, who went even further than his brother, father, or grandfather, attempted to exercise absolute power in a more unmitigated form than they had ever done, and determined, what none of them had ventured to do, to make Popery the established religion throughout his dominions. And in this infatuated course he obstinately perse-

vered, till he alienated from him the great body of his subjects of all ranks, and, till after a short reign of three years, he was driven from his throne. Thus the same ecclesiastical principles being assailed by all these monarchs, the testimony of our Presbyterian ancestors, under all their reigns, was substantially the same. The great principles for which they contended may be reduced to these three, from which all the rest flow as corollaries: first, That Christ is the alone King and Head of his church, having the alone right to appoint her form of government; secondly, That Presbytery is the only form of church government which he has instituted in his Word; and thirdly, That the church is free in her government from every other jurisdiction, except that of Christ. These principles, all the ladies sketched in this volume either maintained or sympathized with; and many of them suffered much in their behalf. During the whole extent of the period we have embraced, there is evidence of the existence of a public religious spirit among the women of Scotland, and as we advance downward, we find this spirit becoming more generally diffused.

In the reign of James VI, ladies in every station of life warmly espoused the cause of the ministers who opposed the monarch in his attempts to establish Prelacy. Some of them even wielded the pen in the cause with no small effect. The wives of Mr. James Lawson and Mr. Walter Balcanquhal, ministers of Edinburgh, wrote vigorously in defence of their husbands, who had been compelled to fly to England for having publicly condemned in their sermons the *black acts*, as they were called, of the servile Parliament of 1684, by which Presbytery was overthrown, and the liberties of the church laid at the feet of the King. They boldly entered the lists with Patrick Adamson, Archbishop of St. Andrews, who had written in condemnation of the conduct of their husbands, and answered him in a long paper, exposing with energy, acuteness, and success, the falsehood of his assertions and the imbecility or fallacy of his reasonings; treating him at the same time with little ceremony. As to the old and common reproach, they say, against God's servants - troublers of commonwealths, rebels against princes, irreverent speakers against those in authority, they may bear with it, since their Master was similarly reproached, yea, was even accused of speaking by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. "We will say but this much shortly," they add, "as Elias said to Ahab, 'It is thou and thy father's house that trouble Israel.' It is thou and the remnant of you, pharisaical prelates, because ye are not throned up in the place of popes that would mix heaven and earth, ere the pomp of your prelacies decay." [*Calderwood's History*, vol. iv. p. 127.] The power of this defence may be estimated from the irritation which it caused the prelate, and from the manner in which he met it. So completely had "the weaker vessel" pinned him, that though he "haid manie grait giftes, bot specialie excellit in the toung and pen," [*James Melville's Diary*, p. 293] he shrunk from encountering these spirited females with their own weapons, and, skulking behind the throne, directed against them the thunderbolt of a royal proclamation, which charged them instantly, under pain of rebellion, to leave their manses. This they accordingly did, selling their household furniture, and delivering the keys of their manses to the magistrates. By the same proclamation, several other ladies of respectability, who are described as "worse affected to the obedience of our late acts of parliament," are commanded, under the same pains, "to remove from the capital, and retire beyond the water of Tay, till they give farther declaration of their disposition." [*McCrie's Life of Melville*, vol. i. p. 327.]

The ardent and heroic attachment to the cause of Presbytery displayed by Mrs Welsh, the wife of Mr. John Welsh, minister of Ayr, and the wives of the other five ministers, who, with him, were tried at Linlithgow in 1606, on a charge of high treason, for holding a General Assembly at Aberdeen in July the preceding year, is also worthy of special notice. When informed that a verdict of guilty was brought in by a corrupt jury - a verdict which inferred the penalty of death, "instead of lamenting their fate, they praised God, who had given their husbands courage to stand to the cause of their Master, adding, that like him, they had been judged and condemned under covert of night." [*McCrie's Life of Knox*, vol. ii. p. 271] Of these ladies, Mrs. Welsh, who was the daughter of our illustrious Reformer, John Knox,* is best known. The curious interview which took place between her and King James, when she petitioned him for permission to her husband to return to his native country for the benefit of his health, [*Welsh, and the other ministers had been banished the King's dominions for life.*] must be too familiar to our readers to be here repeated.

* Her name was Elizabeth. She was his third and youngest daughter by his second wife, Margaret Stewart, daughter of Lord Ochiltree,

a nobleman of amiable dispositions, and his steady friend under all circumstances. A curious anecdote connected with Knox's marriage to Lord Ochiltree's daughter is contained in a letter written by Mr. Robert Millar, minister of Paisley, to Wodrow, the historian of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, dated November 15, 1722; and, as it has never before been printed, it may here be inserted: - "Mr. John Campbell, minister at Craigie," says Mr. Millar, "told me this story of Mr. Knox's marriage, so far as I mind it. John Knox, before the light of the Reformation broke up, travelled among several honest families in the West of Scotland, who were converts to the Protestant religion, particularly he visited oft Stewart, Lord Ochiltree's family, preaching the gospel privately to those who were willing to receive it. The Lady and some of the family were converts: her ladyship had a chamber, table, stool, and candlestick for the prophet, and one night about supper, says to him, 'Mr. Knox, I think you are at a loss by want of a wife;' to which he said, 'Madam, I think nobody will take such a wanderer as I;' to which she replied, 'Sir, if that be your objection, I'll make inquiry to find an answer 'gainst our next meeting.' The Lady accordingly addressed herself to her eldest daughter, telling her she might be very happy if she could marry Mr. Knox, who would be a great Reformer, and a credit to the church; but she despised the proposal, hoping her ladyship wished her better than to marry a poor wanderer. The Lady addressed herself to her second daughter, who answered as the eldest. Then the Lady spoke to her third daughter, about nineteen years of age, who very frankly said, 'Madam, I'll be very willing to marry him, but I fear he'll not take me;' to which the Lady replied, 'If that be all your objection, I'll soon get you an answer.' Next night, at supper, the Lady said to Mr. Knox, 'Sir, I have been considering upon a wife to you, and find one very willing.' To which Knox said, 'Who is it Madam?' She answered, 'My young daughter sitting by you at the table.' Then addressing himself to the young lady, he said, 'My bird, are you willing to marry me?' She answered, 'Yes, Sir, only I fear you'll not be willing to take me.' He said, 'My bird, if you be willing to take me, you must take your venture of God's providence, as I do. I go through the country sometimes on my foot, with a wallet on my arm, a shirt, a clean band, and a Bible in it; you may put some things in it for yourself, and if I bid you take the wallet, you must do it, and go where I go, and lodge where I lodge.' 'Sir,' says she, 'I'll do all this.' 'Will you be as good as your word?' 'yes, I will.' Upon which, the marriage was concluded, and she lived happily with him, and had several children by him. She went with him to Geneva, and, as he was ascending a hill, as there are many near that place, she got up to the top of it before him, and took the wallet on her arm, and, sitting down, said, 'Now, goodman, am not I as good as my word?' She afterwards lived with him when he was minister at Edinburgh." "I am told," adds Mr. Millar, "that one of that Lady Ochiltree's daughters, a sister of John Knox's wife, was married to Thomas Millar of Temple, one of my predecessors." - *Letters to Wodrow, vol. xix. 4to, no. 197.*

Among the ladies of rank who, in the reign of James VI, were distinguished for their piety and devotedness to the liberties of the church, were Lady Lilius Graham, Countess of Wigton, to whom Mr. John Welsh, who intimately knew her, wrote that famous letter from Blackness Castle which has been repeatedly printed and often admired; [*Select Biographies printed for the Wodrow Society, vol. i. p. 18.*] Lady Anne Livingstone, Countess of Eglinton, who, "although bred at court, yet proved a subdued and eminent Christian, and an encourager of piety and truth; [*Ibid., vol. i. p. 347.*] Lady Margaret Livingstone, Countess of Wigton, the friend and patron of Mr. John Livingstone, and whom, together with the two preceding, he classes among "the professors in the Church of Scotland of his acquaintance, who were eminent for grace and gifts;" and, omitting many others, Lady Margaret Cunningham (sister to the Marchioness of Hamilton), who was married, first to Sir James Hamilton of Evandale, secondly to Sir James Maxwell of Calderwood; a lady, whom Robert Boyd, in recording her death, which took place about September 1623, describes as "that virtuous lady, equal, if not beyond any I have known in Scotland," "a woman of an excellent spirit, and many crosses through her whole life," "diligent and active, and a fearer of God." [*Wodrow's Life of Boyd, printed for the Maitland Club, p. 266.*]

In the reign of Charles I, a public-spirited interest in the cause of religious and ecclesiastical freedom prevailed still more among women of all classes in our country. Those in the humbler ranks became famous for their resolute opposition to the reading of the "black service-book," which was to be read for the first time by the Dean of Edinburgh in the Old Church of St. Giles on Sabbath, July 23, 1637. To witness the scene, an immense crowd of people had assembled, and among the audience were the Lord Chancellor, the Lords of the privy council, the judges and bishops. At the stated hour, the Dean ascended the reading-desk, arrayed in his surplice, and opened the service-book. But no sooner did he begin to read, than the utmost confusion and uproar prevailed. The indignation of the people was roused; "False antichristian," "wolf," "beastly-bellied god," "crafty fox," "ill-hanged thief," were some of the emphatic appellations which came pouring in upon him from a hundred tongues, and which told him that he occupied a somewhat perilous position. But the person whose fervent zeal was most conspicuous on that occasion, was a humble female who kept a cabbage-stall at the Tron Kirk, and who was sitting near the reading-desk. Greatly excited at the Dean's presumption, this female, whose name was Janet Geddes - a name familiar in Scotland as a household word, exclaimed, at the top of her voice, "Villain, dost thou say mass at my lug?" and suiting the action to the word, launched the cutty stool on which she had been sitting at his head,

“intending,” as a contemporary writer remarks, “to have given him a ticket of remembrance, but jouking became his safeguard at that time.” [*The immortal Jenet Geddis,* as she is styled in a pamphlet of the period (*Edinburgh’s Joy, &c., 1661*), survived long after her heroic onslaught on the Dean of Edinburgh. She kept a cabbage-stall at the Tron Kirk, as late as 1661. She is specially mentioned in the *Mercurius Caledonius*, a newspaper published immediately after the Restoration, as having taken a prominent share in the rejoicings on the coronation of Charles II in 1661. See *Wilson’s Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time*, vol. i. pp. 92, 93, and vol. ii. p. 30.] The same writer adds, “The church was immediately emptied of the most part of the congregation, and the doors thereof barred at commandment of the secular power. A good Christian woman, much desirous to remove, perceiving she could



Janet Geddes in St. Giles’ Church, Edinburgh.

get no passage patent, betook herself to her Bible in a remote corner of the church. As she was there stopping her ears at the voice of popish charmers, whom she remarked to be very headstrong in the public practice of their antichristian rudiments, a young man sitting behind her began to sound forth, ‘Amen.’ At the hearing thereof she quickly turned her about; and, after she had warmed both his cheeks with the weight of her hands, she thus shot against him the thunderbolt of her zeal: - ‘False thief,’ said she, ‘is there no other part of the kirk to sing mass in, but thou must sing it at my lug?’ The young man being dashed with such a hot unexpected rencounter, gave place to silence in sign of his recantation. I cannot here omit a worthy reproof given at the same time by a truly religious matron; for, when she perceived one of Ishmael’s mocking daughters to deride her for her fervent expressions in behalf of her heavenly Master, she thus sharply rebuked her with an elevated voice, saying, ‘Woe be to those that laugh when Zion mourns.’” [*Brief and True Relations of the Broil which fell out on the Lord’s day, the 23d of July, 1637, through the occasion of a black, popish, and superstitious Service-Book, which was then illegally introduced and impudently vented within the Churches of Edinburgh;* published August thereafter. Printed in *Roth’s Relations, &c., Appendix*, pp. 198, 199.]

At that period the gentler sex were particularly unceremonious towards turn-coat or time-serving ministers. Baillie gives a very graphic account of the treatment Mr. William Annan, the prelatie minister of Ayr, met with

from the women of Glasgow: "At the outgoing of the church, about thirty or forty of our *honestest women*, in one voyce, before the bishope and magistrats, did fall in rayling, cursing, scolding, with clamours, on Mr. William Annan; some two of the meanest were taken to the Tolbooth. All the day over, up and down the streets where he went, he got *threats* of sundry in words and *looks*; but after supper, when needleslie he will goe to visit the bishope, he is no sooner on the causey, at nine o'clock on a week night, with three or four ministers with him, bot some hundreds of *inraged women* of all qualities are about him, with neaves, and staves, and peats, but *no stones*; they beat him sore; his cloak, ruff, hatt, were rent; however, upon *his cries*, and candles set out from many windows, he escaped all bloody wounds; yet he was in great danger even of *killing*." [Baillie's Letters and Journals, vol. i. p. 21.]

In this, and in some other instances, the indignation of the "honest women" of those day at renegade or persecuting clergymen may have carried them somewhat beyond the bounds of moderation. On other occasions, acting more decorously, they assembled peacefully together to petition the Government for liberty to the nonconforming ministers to preach wherever they were called or had opportunity. And, though precluded from bearing a part in public debates, they contemplated with the deepest interest those ecclesiastical movements, which, guided by men of great talents, firmness, and spirit, issued in the glorious triumph of the church over the attempts of the court to enslave her. Nor was this interest limited to women in the humbler and middle classes of society. The baronesses, the countesses, the marchionesses, and the duchesses of the day partook of it, and encouraged their husbands and their sons to stand by the church in her struggles for freedom, regardless of the frowns and the threats of power. The zeal with which the Marchioness of Hamilton, Lady Boyd, and Lady Culross, maintained the good cause, appears from the brief notices of their lives which have been transmitted to our time, and to these might be added the names of other ladies in high life, many of whom would doubtless have gladly subscribed the National Covenant of 1638, had it been the practice for ladies to subscribe that document.*

* Many of the subscribed copies of the National Covenant, as sworn at that period, have been carefully examined by David Laing, Esq., Signet Library; and, from the absence of the names of ladies, it appears not to have been customary for ladies to swear and subscribe it. In describing some of the numerous copies of that Covenant, signed in different parts of the country in 1638, he, however, took notice, some time ago, in a communication to the Society of Antiquaries, of one in the Society's Museum, which seems to be quite peculiar in having the names of several ladies. From the notorial attestations on the back of a great many persons, in the parish of Maybole, who adhered to the Covenant, but were unable to write, he inferred that this copy had been signed in that district of Ayrshire. In the first line of signatures towards the right-hand side, along with the names of Montrose, Lothian, Loudoun, and Cassillis, are those of Jeane Hamilton, evidently the sister of the Marquis of Hamilton, and wife of the Earl of Cassillis - and of Margaret Kennedy, their daughter, who afterwards became the wife of Bishop Burnet. Lower down, toward the right hand of the parchment, are the names of other ladies, who cannot now be so readily identified - Margaret Stewart, Jeane Stewart, Grizil Blair, Isabill Gimill, Helene Kennedy, Elizabeth Hewatt, Anna Stewart, Elizabeth Stewart, Dame Helene Bennett, and Janet Fergusone. For the information contained in this note I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Laing, whose extensive acquaintance with Scottish history is so much at the service of others.

In the reign of Charles II, the fidelity of the Presbyterians was put to a more severe test than it had ever been before. Charles became a ruthless persecutor. Inclining at one time, in matters of religion, to Popery, and at another to Hobbism, it was natural for him to persecute. Popery, the true antichrist, which puts enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, is essentially persecuting. Hobbism, which maintains that virtue and vice are created by the will of the civil magistrate, and that the king's conscience is the standard for all the consciences of his subjects, just as the great clock rules all the lesser clocks of the town, is no less essentially persecuting. Whether, then, Charles is considered a Papist or as a Hobbist, he was prompted by his creed to persecute. In addition to this it is to be observed, that the Presbyterian Church of Scotland had excited his irreconcilable hatred, not only from its being unfriendly to despotism, but from its strict discipline, the experience of which, in early life, had made a lasting impression upon his mind. All these things being considered, the motives inducing his determination, a determination from which he never swerved, to destroy the Scottish Presbyterian Church, are easily explained. To assist him in this work, a set of men, both statesmen and churchmen, pre-eminently unprincipled, of whom Middleton, Lauderdale, and Sharp, may be considered as the representatives, were at his service. Many of these had sworn the Solemn League and Covenant, and had been zealous for it in the

palmy days when its champions walked in silver slippers. But they were too worldly-wise to strive against wind and tide. They were in fact just such men as Bunyan describes in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, My Lord Turn-about, My Lord Time-server, Mr. Facing-both-ways, Mr. Anything, Mr. Two-tongues, Mr. Hold-the-world, Mr Money-love, and Mr. Save-all. Such servile agents, it is evident, were in no respect actuated, in persecuting the Presbyterians, by motives of conscience, as some persecutors have been, but solely by corrupted and interested views. Had the King changed his religion every half year, they would have changed theirs, and have been equally zealous in persecuting all who refused to make a similar change.

But this fiery ordeal, the faith, the devotedness, and the heroism of the pious women of Scotland stood. We find them in every station of life, maintaining their fidelity to their conscientious convictions in the midst of severe sufferings. With the ejected ministers they deeply sympathized; and their sympathy with them they testified in many ways; nor did they feel, or show much respect to, the intruded curates. This was true even as to the more ignorant of women in the lower ranks. Many of this class signalized themselves by their opposition to the intrusion of curates, as in Irongray, where a body of them boldly assailed a party of the King's guard, who came to that parish with the view of promoting the intrusion of a curate into the place of their favourite ejected minister, Mr. John Welsh. "A party with some messengers," says Mr. John Blackadder, "was sent with a curate, to intimate that another curate was to enter the kirk for their ordinary. Some women of the parish hearing thereof before, placed themselves in the kirkyard, and furnished themselves with their ordinary weapons of stones, whereof they gathered store, and thus, when the messengers and party of rascals with swords and pistols came, the women so maintained their ground, defending themselves under the kirk dyke, that, after a hot skirmish, the curate, messengers, and party without, not presuming to enter, did at length take themselves to retreat, with the honourable blae marks they had got at that conflict." [*Blackadder's Memoirs, MS. copy in Advocates' Library.*] Nor was this by any means a singular case; for the same writer adds, "Many such affronts did these prelates' curates meet with in their essays to enter kirks after that manner, especially by women, which was a testimony of general dislike and adersion to submit to them as their ministers." In a similar way does Kirkton speak. After stating that "the first transgressors of this kind were (as I remember) the poor people of Irongray," and that "the next offenders were in Kirkcudbright, where some ten women were first incarcerated in Edinburgh, and thereafter set with papers on their heads," he goes on to say, "but these were followed by, I believe, a hundred congregations up and down the country, though the punishment became banishment to America, cruel whipping, and heavy fines." He, however, at the same time adds, "These extravagant practices of the rabble were no way approved by the godly and judicious Presbyterians; yea, they were ordinarily the actions of the profane and ignorant; but I think they were enough to demonstrate to the world what respect or affection the curates should find among their congregations." [*Kirkton's History, pp. 162, 163.*]

The favourable disposition to the suffering cause was not, however, limited to *ignorant* women in the lower ranks. It was partaken of more largely, and displayed more intelligently, by the great body of *well-informed* women, in the lower and middle ranks, and even by many of them in the higher, to some of whom the reader is introduced in this volume. At field meetings they were often present. "Not many gentlemen of estates," says Kirkton, "durst come, but many ladies, gentlewomen, and commons, came in great multitudes." [*Kirkton's History, pp. 352, 353.* "A vast multitude," says the editor of Kirkton, "of the female sex in Scotland, headed by women of high rank, such as the Duchess of Hamilton, Ladies Rothes, Wigton, Loudon, Colvill, &c., privately encouraged or openly followed the field preachers."] The agents appointed by the Government throughout the country, for putting in execution the laws for suppressing conventicles and other "ecclesiastical disorders," had upon all occasions represented to the privy council that women were "the chief fomenters of these disorders." [*Register of Acts of Privy Council, January 23, 1684.*] Besides supporting the persecuted cause of Presbytery themselves, these ladies, by their intelligent piety and firmness of mind, had a powerful influence in infusing the principles of nonconformity into their husbands, and in sustaining on many occasions their wavering resolution. Archbishop Sharp complained heavily of this, and it gave peculiar energy and bitterness to his hatred of Presbyterian women whom he was in the habit of branding with every term of opprobrium and contempt. In a letter to a lady, who acquired notoriety in her day by the vigorous suppression of conventicles, and of whom we shall afterwards speak more particularly, [*This was Anne Keith,*

a daughter of Keith of Benholm (brother to Earl Marischall), and, by the courtesy of the time, styled Lady Methven, her husband being Patrick Smith of Methven. Sharp's letter to her is dated St. Andrews, March 27, 1679] he says, "I am glad to find your husband, a gentleman noted for his loyalty to the King, and affection to the church, is so happy as to have a consort of the same principles and inclinations for the public settlement, who has given proof of her adersion to join in society with separatists, and partaking of that sin, to which so many of that sex do tempt their husbands in this evil time, when schism, sedition, and rebellion, are gloried in, though Christianity does condemn them as the greatest crimes." [Kirkton's History, pp. 355-361.]

The unyielding steadfastness displayed by so many of the women of Scotland in the cause of nonconformity, was a perplexing case to the Government. Imprisonment they saw would not remedy the evil, for they could not find prisons to hold a tithe of those who were guilty. The method they adopted in making the husband responsible for the religious sentiments of his wife, and in punishing him, though a conformist himself, for her nonconformity, if not more effectual, proved, as may easily be conceived, a prolific source of domestic contention and misery. "Many husbands here," says a writer of that period, in relating the sufferings of Galloway and Nithsdale, in 1666, "who yield to the full length, are punished by fining, cess, and quarter, for their wives' non-obedience, and ye know, Sir, that it is hard. There are many wives who will not be commanded by their husbands in lesser things than this; but I must tell you this hath occasioned much contention, fire, and strife in families, and brought it to this height, that some wives are forced to flee from their husbands, and forced to seek a shelter elsewhere, and so the poor good man is doubly punished for all his conformity." [Wodrow MSS., vol. xxvii. 4to, no. 6.] Another writer of that period also says, "When these debating courts [These were circuit courts, held in various parts of the country, for discovering and punishing nonconformists.] came through the country, husbands were engaged to bring their wives to the courts, and to the kirk, or to put them away, and never to own them again, which many of them did. So after the women had wandered abroad, and when they came home again, their husbands and other relations took them by force to the kirk. Some of them fell a sound when they were taken off the horses' backs; others of them gave a testimony that enraged the curate." [An account of the Sufferings in Tunnergirth and other parishes in Annan, Wodrow MSS., vol. xxxvii. 4to, no. 14.] Finding, after the persecution had continued for more than twenty years, that the zeal of the ladies against Prelacy was by no means abated, and that the methods hitherto adopted in meeting the evil had proved singularly unsuccessful, the Government came to the resolution of meeting it by severely fining the husbands of such ladies as withdrew from their parish churches. Such a punishment, they imagined, was better calculated than any other, to strike terror and to make husbands active in their endeavours to persuade their wives to attend the church. Many husbands were thus fined in heavy sums for their wives' irregularities. The case of Sir William Harden was very severe. His wife, Christian Boyd, sixth daughter of Lady Boyd, who is noticed in this volume, having declined to attend the curate, Sir William was on that account fined by the privy council in November 1683, in the sum of £1500 sterling, [Fountainhall's Decisions, vol. i. p. 243.] and long imprisoned in the castle of Edinburgh. He was forced to compromise and pay the fine, which in those days was an enormous sum. He desired the privy council to relieve him of responsibility for his wife's delinquencies in future, as she would on no consideration engage to hear the curates. But the council held that husbands were to be accounted masters of their wives *de jure*, whatever might be the case *de facto*. Lady Scot was under the necessity of leaving her husband, and she retired into England, and died at Newcastle. [Wodrow MSS., vol. xl. folio, no. 3.]

But making the husbands responsible for the conformity of their wives, and thus throwing a bone of contention into families, was only a small part of the sufferings endured by many nonconforming women of that period, on account of their principles. The sufferings of a few, and only a few of them are recorded in this volume. None of our female worthies were indeed subjected to the torture of the boot, or of the thumbscrew, though some of them were threatened with the former punishment. [Mrs. Crawford, Mrs. Kello, a rich widow, and Mrs. Duncan, a minister's widow, were so threatened. After Mitchell's attempt on the life of Archbishop Sharp, they were imprisoned, under suspicion of knowing who the intended assassin was, and, on being brought before the Council, and strictly interrogated concerning houses that lodged Whigs or kept conventicles, or if they knew the name of the assassin, they were, on refusing to answer, threatened with the boot; and the last of these ladies would one day have actually endured the torture, had it not been for the Duke of Rothes, who told the Council that it was not proper for gentlemen to wear boots. - Kirkton's History, pp. 283, 284. Dalziel also threatened Marion Harvey with the boot.] But they were cruelly tortured in other ways. In the parish of Auchinleck, a young woman, for refus-

ing the oath of abjuration, had her finger burned with fire-matches till the white bone appeared. In the same parish, Major White's soldiers took a young woman in a house, and put a fiery coal into the palm of her hand, to make her tell what was asked her. [*Wodrow MSS., vol. cxxvii. 4to, no. 1. This paper was communicated to Wodrow by Mr. Alexander Shields.*] Hundreds of women were fined in large sums of money. Hundreds of them were imprisoned. Hundreds of them were banished to his Majesty's plantations, and discharged from ever returning to this kingdom, under the pain of death, to be inflicted on them without mercy; and before being shipped off, they were in many cases burned on the cheek, by the hands of the hangman, with a red-hot iron; while some of them, being too old to banish, after lying in prison till their persecutors were weary of confining them, and grudged the expense of supporting them, were whipped, burned on the cheek, and dismissed. [*Register of Acts of the Privy Council, July 14, 1685.*] Hundreds of them, to escape imprisonment, banishment, and other hardships, were under the necessity of leaving their houses in the cold winter season, and lodging in rocks and caves, amidst frost and snow. And not to mention those women who were put to cruel deaths, hundreds more, even when the hostility of the Government was not directed against themselves personally, were greatly tried, from the sufferings to which their husbands, from their opposition to, or noncompliance with, the oppressive measures of the Government, were subjected. In how many instances, while the husband was compelled to flee for safety, did the wife suffer the execrable barbarity of savage troopers, who, visiting her house, would abuse and threaten her in the very spirit and language of hell, seize upon her corn and meal, and throw them into the dunghill, or otherwise destroy them, plunder her of her poultry, butter, cheese, and bed-clothes, shoot or carry away her sheep, and cattle, reducing her and her family to great distress! If the husband was fined, intercommuned, imprisoned, tortured, banished, forfeited for life and property, or put to death, the wife suffered; and who can calculate the mental agony, and temporal privations, which many a wife with her children then experienced, in consequence of the injustice and cruelties perpetrated upon her husband? Such were the sufferings endured for conscience sake during that dark period, by thousands of the tender sex in our unhappy country.

Never, indeed, did a severer period of trial pass over the Church of Scotland, than during the persecution. Previously she had fought, with various success, many a battle against kings and statesmen. But even when she had sustained defeat, she again mustered her forces, and by persevering effort recovered the ground she had lost. During the persecution it was different. It was all disaster. She was not indeed destroyed, which was what her enemies aimed at. But she was laid prostrate, a bleeding and a helpless victim. All she could do was exercise constancy, patience, and fortitude, under the fury of her enemies. Had the period of suffering been of short duration, these graces it would have been easier to exercise. But it lasted for nearly a whole generation. It was the "Twenty-eight years' Conflict," of our own day. The latter was running with the footmen in the land of peace; the former was contending with horses in the swelling of Jordan.

It is extremely gratifying to find that our country-women, who submitted to such sufferings in the cause of Presbytery, were generally distinguished for sincere and enlightened piety. Apart from this, knowledge, zeal, courage, and self-sacrifice, even to the death, are of little estimation in the sight of God, and of little advantage to the possessor. "Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing." But this charity, this love in its most extensive sense, embracing both God and man, was the predominating element in the character of those of whom we now speak. Their piety was indeed the true reason, and not obstinacy or fanaticism, as their enemies calumniously affirmed, why they submitted to suffer what they did for matters of religion. The fear of God, and respect to his authority, were the governing principles; and so long as these principles held the sway in their understandings, consciences, and hearts, they could not, at the bidding of any man, renounce what they believed to be the truth of God, and profess as truth what they believed to be a lie, whatever it might cost them. Nor were the persecutors ignorant of the fact, that the sufferers were generally distinguished for godliness. They knew it well, and resembling in disposition the first murderer Cain, who was the wicked one, and slew his brother, because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous, it was chiefly this which prompted them to hate and murder their inoffensive victims. So well did they know it, that they regarded irreligion or profanity as sufficient to clear a man or woman of all suspicion of the taint of Presbyterianism. As proof of this, we may quote the following passage from Kirkton's history, in reference to

what took place in the parish of Wistoun, in Clydesdale:- “The church,” says he, “being vacant, and a curate to enter, the people rose in a tumult, and with stones and batons chased the curate and his company out of the field. A lady in that parish was blamed as a ringleader in the tumult, and brought before the council; she came to the bar, and after her libel was read, the chancellor asked if these accusations were true or not? She answered briefly, The devil one word was true in them. The councillors looked one upon another; and the chancellor replied, ‘Well madam, I adjourn you for fifteen days;’ which never yet had an end, and there her persecution ended; such virtue there was in a short curse, fully to satisfy such governors, and many thought it good policy to demonstrate themselves to be honest profane people, that they might vindicate themselves of the dangerous suspicion of being Presbyterians.” [*Kirkton’s History*, pp. 354, 355.]

In our sketches we have included several ladies, who, though not sufferers during the persecution, either in their own person or in their friends, sympathized with and relieved the sufferers. Nor was it only from such ladies as the Duchess of Hamilton, the Duchess of Rothes, and others who favoured the persecuted principles, that the evil-entreated Covenanters met with sympathy and relief, but even from many ladies, who, though not attached to the Presbyterian cause themselves, were enemies to intolerance and persecution. Many of the wanderers could bear the same testimony to the generosity and humanity of woman, which is borne by a celebrated traveller: [*Mr. Ledyard*.] “To a woman,” says he, “I never addressed myself, in the language of decency and friendship, without receiving a decent and friendly answer. If I was hungry or thirsty, wet or sick, they did not hesitate, like men, to perform a generous action. In so free and kind a manner did they contribute to my relief, that if I was dry, I drank the sweetest draught; and if hungry, I ate the coarsest morsel with a double relish.” Of this, so numerous were the examples that were constantly occurring during the persecution, as to corroborate the evidence upon which the poet, Crabbe, pronounces compassion, as peculiarly characteristic of the female heart:-

“Wherever grief and want retreat,
In woman they compassion find;
She makes the female breast her seat,
And dictates mercy to the the mind.”

But true as this eulogium on the female character may be in the main, instances are to be met with, in which even the heart of woman has become steeled against every humane feeling; and such instances, though happily of rare occurrence, were to be met with during the period of the persecution. The Countess of Perth was one of these instances. Her treatment of the wife of Alexander Hume, portioner of Hume, in the close of the year 1682, was revoltingly atrocious. Mr. Hume was a nonconformist and though nothing criminal was proved against him, he was condemned to die at the market-cross of Edinburgh upon the 29th of December. He was offered his life if he would take the test, which he refused to do. By the interest of his friends at court, a remission was, however procured from the King, which came down to Edinburgh four or five days before his execution; but it was kept up by the Earl of Perth, a relentless persecutor, who was then chancellor. On the day of Hume’s execution, his wife went to the chancellor’s lady, and begged her, in such moving terms as might have softened even a cold and hard heart, to interpose for her husband’s life, urging that she had five small children. But the heart of the Countess was harder than the nether millstone. She had no more feeling for the afflicted wife and her children than if they had been so many brute beasts. Not only did she refuse to comply with her prayer, but with infernal cruelty, barbed and venomed the refusal with language so coarsely savage, as is hardly to be repeated. Her answer was, “I have no more regard to you than to a bitch and five whelps.” [*Her answer is not recorded in Wodrow’s History* (vol. iii. p. 417) but it is given in his MSS., vol. xxxvii. 4to, no. 31.]

Lady Methven, formerly referred to, is another instance. To put down a large field conventicle on her husband’s ground, she boldly marched forth, armed with a gun and sword, at the head of her vassals, swearing by the God of heaven, that she would sooner sacrifice her life, than allow the rebellious Whigs to hold their rebellious meetings on his ground. But this intrepid energy, for which the enemies of the Covenanters have held her up as a heroine, was nothing more than animal courage, the mere effect of iron nerves. From her letters, it is evident, if we are to judge from the oaths with which they are interlarded, that she was a profane godless woman; and it is no

less evident from them, that inveterate malignity to the Covenanters was her impelling principle. In a letter to her husband, then at London with the Marquis of Montrose, dated Methven Wood, October 15, 1678, she thus describes her exploits: - "MY PRECIOUS LOVE, - A multitude of men and women, from east, west, and south, came the 13 day of this October to hold a field conventicle, two bows'-draught above our church; they had their tent set up before the sun upon your ground. I seeing them flocking to it, sent through your ground, and charged them to repair to your brother David, the bailie, and me, to the Castle Hill, where we had but 60 armed men: your brother with drawn sword and bent pistol, I with the light horseman's piece bent, on my left arm, and a drawn tuck in my right hand, all your servants well armed, marched forward, and kept the one half of them fronting with the other, that were guarding their minister and their tent, which is their standard. That near party that we yoked with, most of them were St. Johnston's people; [*Perth*] many of them had no will to be known, but rode off to see what we would do. They marched toward Busbie: we marched be-west them and gained ground, before they could gather in a body. They sent off a party of an hundred men to see what we meant, to hinder them to meet; we told them, if they would not go from the parish of Methven presently, it should be a bluddie day; for I protested, and your brother, before God, we would ware our lives upon them before they should preach in our regallitie or parish. They said they would preach. We charged them either to fight or fly. They drew to a council among themselves what to do; at last, about two hours in the afternoon, they would go away if we would let the body that was above the church, with the tent, march freely after them; we were content, knowing they were ten times as many as we were, and our advantage was keeping the one half a mile from the other, by marching in order betwixt them. They seeing we were desperate, marched our the Pow, and so we went to the church, and heard a feared minister preach. They have sworn not to stand with such an affront, but resolve to come the next Lord's day; and I, in the Lord's strength, intend to accost them with all that will come to assist us. I have caused your officer warn a solemn court of vassals, tenants, and all within our power, to meet on Thursday, where I intend, if God will, to be present, and there to order them, in God and our King's name, to convene well armed to the kirkyard on Sabbath morning by eight hours, where your brother and I, with all our servant men, and others we can make, shall march to them, and, if the God of heaven will, they shall either fight or go out of our parish. [*In another letter to her husband, she says, "They are an ignorant, wicked pack; the Lord God clear the nation of them!"*] My blessed love, comfort yourself in this, that, if the fanatics should chance to kill me, it shall not be for nought. I was wounded for our gracious King, and now, in the strength of the Lord God of heaven, I'll hazard my person with the men I may command, before these rebels rest where ye have power; sore I miss you, but now more than ever This is the first opposition they have rencountered, so as to force them to flee out of a parish. God grant it be good hansell! There would be no fear of it if we were all steel to the back. My precious, I am so transported with zeal to beat the Whigs, that I almost forgot to tell you my Lord Marquis of Montrose hath two virtuous ladies to his sisters, and it is one of the loveliest sights in all Scotland, their nunnery." This letter is dated "Methven Wood, the 15th instant, 1678." [*Kirkton's History, pp. 355-361.*] About a year after this, Lady Methven met with a melancholy death. She fell off her horse, and her brains were dashed out, upon the spot where she opposed persons going to that meeting, namely, at the south-west end of Methven Wood. [*Wodrow MSS., vol. xxxiii. folio, no. 143.*]

Of a very different character were the ladies whose memoirs we have attempted. So far from hating, maligning, and adding to the hardships of the persecuted, they protected and relieved them and in many cases shared in their sufferings. They were indeed distinguished by general excellence of character, and are entitled both to the grateful remembrance and imitation of posterity. They form part of the great cloud of witnesses with which we are encompassed. Though belonging to past generations, whose bodies are now sleeping in the dust, and whose spirits have gone to the eternal world, they yet speak. By their piety towards God, not less than their benevolence towards man, by the exemplary part they acted in every relation of life, as daughters, as sisters, as mothers, by their liberality in supporting the ordinances of the gospel, and in encouraging its faithful ministers, by the magnanimity with which they suffered either personally or relatively in the cause of truth, often rivalling the most noble examples of Christian heroism to be found in the church's history; they became instructors to the living generation in passing through this scene of temptation and trial. They have especially, by the magnanimity with which they suffered in the cause of truth, emphatically taught us the important principle that we are in all things

and at all times to do what is right; and as to the disapprobation, opposition, and persecution of men, in whatever way manifested, or to whatever extent, we are to let that take its chance - a principle, the importance of which it is difficult to over-estimate, which lies at the foundation of all that is great and good in character, which has enabled the greatest and the best of men, by the blessing of God, to achieve the great purposes they have formed for advancing the highest interests of mankind, and upon which it is necessary for the good soldier of Christ to act in every age; in an age in which the church enjoys tranquility, as well as when she suffers persecution.