

Literature, &c.

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THE PERSECUTOR'S DAUGHTER.

BY CHARLES J. PATTERSON.

THE last days of November are at hand, and the melancholy words, shorn of their foliage, stood skeleton-like against the cold, lowering sky; or tost their branches to and fro, with a low moaning sound, in the fitful tempest. Hark! how the gale swells out with the cathedral organ, or dies plaintively away like the cry of a lost child in the forest. The sky is covered with cloud rifts of a dead leaden color, only a spot of blue sky being here and there visible; but occasionally the sun, bursting out like a god, from the darkness that encircles him, covers the brown hills with an effulgent glory, while the opposite firmament is lit up with a dull fiery glow, that has something almost spectral in its aspect. The streams are swollen and discolored, and roll down their turbid waters hoarsely onward. Along the fields the brown grass whither in the wind, and the bare flower stalks rattle with a melancholy tone, in the garden. Now and then, drops of rain plash heavily to the ground. The wind comes with a sudden chill to the nerves—the bay is crisped into foam by the fitful gusts—and along the bleak coast the new mountain waves roll in with a hoarse, sullen roar, forewarning us of shipwreck and death. Sad thoughts insensibly possess the mind, and tales of sorrow, that had long been forgot, came up to our memories. One such is even now heavy on our heart—listen! and we will rehearse it.

It was on just such a morning as this, many a long year ago, and far away from our own happy land, that a little congregation was gathered together in the hills to worship God. The time was in those sore and evil days when the decree of a tyrannical king had gone forth, that no man should worship except as a corrupt hierarchy and lascivious court might ordain—and when, all over Scotland, those who would not give up the free birthright of their fathers, were driven to meet in mountain glens, and on lonely moors, whither their pastors—the holy men who had baptized them in their infancy, and united them to the dear objects of their love—had already been hunted. And often, in solitary places, where hitherto only the cry of the eagle had been heard, the Sabbath hymn rose sweetly up from tender maidens and tearful wives, while their brothers and husbands listened with weapons in their hands, or watched from some neighboring eminence, lest the fiery dragons of Claverhouse should be in sight. And when these God-defying troopers, with hands red with the blood of the saints, burst into the little flock, woful was the tale, and loud the wailing that went through all the vales around. Every new Sabbath brought its tale of slaughter, until the land smoked with blood, and the incense thereof went up from a hundred hills, crying for vengeance from the Most High.

And such a congregation had now met in the hollow of three hills, far away from the usual track of the persecutors. A simple rock served the hoary headed pastor for a pulpit; while hard by, a ravulet, brawling over its pebbly bed, and then for a moment expanding into a mimic lake, bottomed with silvery sands, formed the holy font for baptism. Around was gathered the little flock—aged sires and young striplings, staid matrons and meek-eyed maidens, young children and stalwart men—all gazing up into the pastor's face, a sacred throng. But there was one other there, who seemed equally with him an object of anxious interest, and on whom occasionally every eye was turned—a bright, beautiful being, with far more of heaven than earth in her deep, azure eyes. Oh! lovely was that fair haired girl, even as we may have dreamed a seraph to be, all glorious with golden wings, under the throne of God. And now there sat in those soft blue eyes an expression of meek sorrow, tempered with high and holy faith, for many and sore had been the trials of Helen Graeme,—but grace had been given her to withstand them all, and even to rise above them, with a courage which had made her dear unto every heart among these wandering and persecuted ones.

The father of Helen was the last son of a family which had been decaying for centuries, and which, of all its once mighty possessions, retained only

the comparatively small estate of Craighburnie, in one of the southern counties of Scotland. To rebuild the fortunes of his house had been the darling wish of her father. For this purpose he had entered the army of the covenanted, during the wars of the great revolution, and served with some distinction, though without permanent advantage, in consequence of the return of the king. On the happening of this event, Mr Graeme retired to his estate, soured and disappointed. Here he would have been far more discontented than he was, but for his wife, a lady of the meekest piety, and whose single minded charity was known throughout all her native hills, for Mrs. Graeme was the daughter of one of the holiest ministers of the kirk, and inherited not only his piety, but the fervent admiration with which he was regarded by his parishioners. She early instilled into her child the pure precepts of our holy religion, and often might the little girl be seen seated at her mother's knee, lisping the word of God, which the parent taught her thus early to peruse. And, on the Sabbath, who listened more attentively to the venerable pastor, or joined with sweeter voice in the anthem of praise? Nurtured thus, what wonder that at seventeen she seemed the counterpart of the mother, and was regarded by the poorer folk around the Brae—her mother's birth-place, and where she spent several months each year—almost with veneration, for had not many of them, in times of sore trial been sustained by the bounty, and cheered by the smiles of the heavenly girl?

But at length her mother fell sick, and for many a weary month Helen watched by the sufferer's bedside, a ministering angel. During this illness she noticed that, at times, her father would seem lost in thought, as if something weighed heavily on his mind; but Helen regarded it little, attributing it to his suspense at her mother's danger, for he loved both her and his child with an intensity seemingly in contradiction to his hard, unbending character, but which, in truth, was the result of his total seclusion from the world,—for the sympathies shot out from others lavished themselves wholly on his wife and daughter. At length, Mrs. Graeme died, and for many days it seemed as if that strong man's heart would break, while Helen wept in silence, though not less uncontrollably. Her father was now sterner than ever, though not to her. He was more alone, often indulged in fits of musing, and was absent at Edinburgh for some days—an unusual occurrence—and when he came back it was as Sir Roland Graeme, a title which men said he had purchased by selling himself to the Court. Helen heard these rumors—which, however, came to her ears in whispers, and which, at first she could not believe—with sorrow and despair of heart,—but no word of reproof broke her lips. Her sufferings were endured silently—but so deep was her grief, that she pined away, seeming to all eyes a being lent awhile to earth, and gradually exhaling to heaven. Her father, thinking her sorrow sprung wholly from her mother's death, and wishing, perhaps, that she should be from home when he should first act for the government, sent her to her mother's native vale, alleging, and doubtless hoping, that change of air would restore her to health. It were doing him no more than justice to say, that his paternal love was so fully aroused to Helen's danger, and that he took the only possible means to keep at his side this dear bud of her who was now in heaven. He forgot how much the little family in the Brae leaned toward the persecuted sect—he forgot the disaffected character of the district into which Helen went, he forgot the danger lest her own feelings should become enlisted in behalf of those against whom he was so soon to draw his sword,—for was he not a father?—that his child's health was in danger, and that a residence in the mountain district where she had been born and where she had spent so many happy years, was the sole chance of saving her life.

And now Helen was once more amid the scenes where her childhood had been spent, and every old counsel and prayer of her mother, recalled to mind by the spots where they had been first heard, rose up before her, and softened her heart, and often, at Sabbath eve, or in the still watches of the night, it seemed to her as if the spirit of that sainted mother hovered over her, whispering her heavenward, and bidding her never to forget or forsake her God. All the sympathies which now surrounded her, drew her to the persecuted sect;

for her cousin and aunt were both among the non conformists; and though the little kirk, standing all alone in the hills, a cool well in a parched desert, was now closed, and he who, had formerly ministered there an outcast, yet the sight and recognition of him at more than one stolen meeting, recalled to Helen's mind the time when he blessed her, nestling bird like to her mother's bosom, she looking the while half affrightedly, yet oh, how reverentially, up into the face of the mild old man! And was not her heart softened, even to tears, when the patriarch, well remembering her—for none did he ever forget—sought her among the crowd, and, laying his hands on her head, blessed her, hoping that God still kept her in the way her mother had trod? From that hour Helen became a changed being. The light heartedness of youth was gone. She wept often, and prayed in solitary places by herself; for lo! the struggle in her bosom, between duty to her parent, and a higher duty to God, waxed stronger and stronger; but daily she yearned more and more to the oppressed remnant, until finally it was whispered in the scattered congregation that the persecutor's daughter—that child of many prayers—was to become a professed member of the flock. And old men and nursing mothers in the church blessed God as they heard it.

On this Sabbath morning, Helen had, for the first time, openly attended a meeting in the hills. At first, she had come with fear and trembling, but when she saw the looks of kindly sympathy with which all regarded her, she became more composed, and could enter on the holy duties of the day in a fitting mood. And when the aged pastor gave out the hymn, and the congregation joined in the sacred anthem, what voice sang of redeeming love so sweetly as that of Helen?

Lo! the vision of light has passed from our souls, and in place of that seraphic countenance, we behold the face of a stern warrior, in every feature of which we read of cruelty and blood. Even now he is hot in pursuit of the suffering remnant, and with his troop of fiery dragons interrupts the Sabbath quiet of the vales and glens, with the jingling of broad swords and the ribald jests of scoffers; and many a dark browed peasant scowls on the persecutor as he passes, and prays that God will yet avenge his slaughtered saints. Nor, if the popular rumor is to be believed, is that vengeance altogether withheld; for men say that Sir Roland Graeme, having sold his religion for the paltry honors of earth, has been already cursed from on high, and that, sleeping or waking, he finds no rest from the stings of remorse; yet, like one who has committed the unpardonable sin, he cannot draw back from his career of blood, but is impelled onward, as if by some irresistible power, to still darker crimes. Look upon his face again, and tell us if there is not something there which you shudder to behold—something of untold horror in that stern, God defying brow, as if the arch enemy had already been suffered to affix his seal upon it.

And whether was that man of blood going? Far, far over hill and dale, to the slaughter of the saints. He had heard, through some traitor, of the assemblage to be held that morning in the hills, and with the first dawn of day he and his troopers had been on the saddle, thirsting to participate in the bloody sacrament. For the last half hour he had seemed lost in thought, and now he suddenly drew in his reins, and turned to his lieutenant.

‘Lennox,’ he said, ‘I believe I will not lead these brave fellows to day, but surrender the command to you. I see, over yonder hill, the blue summit that looks down on the Brae, where my daughter is visiting. I have not seen her for months, nor is it probable I shall be in this district for many months more. The country he is widely disaffected, and therefore an unbecoming residence for a child of mine. It has just struck me that I might cross the hills, and bring her home with me this afternoon. And yet something whispers to me that I ought rather to pursue these traitors and schismatics,’ he continued, as if to himself, ‘however, I can trust to you, and it is imperative that my daughter leave this district. We will meet here by four o’clock. Your road lies down yonder glen. All I have to say is, spare none!’

‘I understand,’ said the subordinate; ‘neither age nor sex.’

‘Neither age nor sex, nor even those of rank, if such there be,’ sternly said Sir Roland; ‘when the poison has sunk deep, nothing but the cautery will cure. And hark ye! on the faithful execution

of your commands depends your hope of preferment. I would not spare my own child, if I found her among these spawn of Satan!’

And, with these memorable words, he ordered a detachment of his company to follow him, and rode off, though at first reluctantly, in the direction of the Brae.

The route was passed in silence, for Sir Roland was buried in thought. There was indeed cause for it. One or two things in the last letter he had received from his daughter—and that missive had now been written a month—made him feel uneasy, lest she looked more favorably on the persecuted sect than became a daughter of his,—and it was this fear, all at once recalled to mind by the business on which he had set forth this morning, that determined him so suddenly to leave the dispersion of the conventicle to his lieutenant, while he should ride over to the Brae, and bring his daughter home. Other thoughts, too, were busy within him. The long coveted rank had brought little alleviation to his soured and disappointed mind, for his fortune was now more than ever inadequate to his condition, and all the peculiarly sensitive feelings of a proud man were stung to quick by the indignities to which, in consequence, he was often exposed. Moreover, he was aware of the light in which he was held, since his change of politics, not only by the common people, but by large portions of the gentry,—so that, on every hand, he was soured and irritated, and longed to wreak on the Covenanters the hate which he felt toward all men.

And yet as he approached the Brae, and saw at a distance the low roof of the mansion from which he had taken his bride, gentler feelings stole into his bosom. He thought of her whom he had once loved with all the fervor of a first passion—he remembered the happy years they had spent together—and when he recollected that she was no more, and that the last time he had beheld these roofs he had been in her company, a tear almost gathered into his eye. Then he thought of his daughter. As her image rose up before him, his heart was fully melted. With all the sternness of his character he loved that daughter as few fathers loved—ay! loved her doubly since her mother's death, for she was the only object in the whole wide world on which he could bestow aught of affection. And now, joy at the prospect of meeting her gave to his spirits the glad exhilaration of boyhood, and quickening his pace, he galloped gaily across the hills, nor drew his rein until he reached the door of the old mansion.

[To be concluded.]

IMPORTANCE OF A HAPPY HOME.

BY THE REV. H. WOODWARD.

THE main endeavor of those who desire their children's spiritual welfare, should be to provide them with a happy home. It is vain to expect that young persons can be brought to love what is not amiable in itself. If religion be presented to them disfigured and deformed, as it too often is, how can it be imagined that they will prefer it to the smiles and blandishments of the world? If, at each return they are met with moping melancholy, and dismal looks—if fire side squabbles, and petty provocations—if a constant wear and tear of family rudeness, unkindness, and affronts—which make up in multitude what they want in magnitude—if this be the repast prepared to satisfy the ardent longings of the youthful soul for pleasure, no wonder that it should fly to forbidden paths, and take refuge, wherever it can, from so comfortless and miserable a scene.

It was not of a cheerless home like this, that the prodigal bethought himself, when he said, ‘How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!’ It was the remembrance of a father's house which haunted him in exile, and followed him through all the stages of his misery; it was the image of his home drawn upon his heart, and wrought into the texture of his soul—it was the magic influence of that thought, the rising of that solitary star in the darkness of the hour of his extremity—it was this which struck out the lost path of life within him which converted economy into that resolve, which stands on record to the great endless comfort of spirits who have wandered far from God—I will arise and go to my father,’ &c. But it is more immediately to our point to observe, that it was the sweet attractions of a peaceful home, and the blessing of such a father as presided over it,