

Literature, &c.

THE COVENANTER'S BURIAL.

A LEGEND OF THE SCOTTISH PERSECUTION.

DEEPLY embosomed in the wild gorges of the Pentland Hills, seven Scottish miles, at least, from any human habitation, there stands a small, old mossgrown chapel, partly dilapidated, although it is still in use, built in the very earliest style of Norman architecture. It has no tower, nor aisles, nor transept, and could not readily obtain a hundred worshippers, consisting merely of one oblong apartment, with a short, massive column at each angle, whence spring the groinings grotesquely carved in deep grey freestone, which support the steep slated roof. It is lighted by one large pointed window at the east end, and a small loophole, more resembling a crenelle for arrow-shooting than an aperture designed to admit air and light on either side. The entrance is by a low-browed arch facing the window, and immediately beneath the little open belfry, which is perched like a dove cot on the point of the gable. The whole exterior of the chapel has, evidently, at some former day, been decorated by full many a sculptured effigy of virgin, saint and angel, as may be still seen from the empty niches wherein they stood enshrined until the rude hand of the puritans in the days of Scottish reformation, hurled them down, and ground, in the wild zeal of their new faith, the very stones of which they were composed, into dust, which they scattered to the four winds of heaven. In the interior, likewise, two or three vacant niches still remained, with a large font of stone, made to hold holy water, now consecrated to baptismal uses; besides this, a few oaken benches of the most rude and antique form, and a huge reading desk of the same material, composed the furniture of this most primitive place of worship. Around the wall lay a small burial ground, with many a green, half-sunken headstone peering up from out the rank growth of dark coarse herbage, nettles and thistles, and yet viler weeds, which betrayed by their rank luxuriance, the fatness of the soil, enriched from the decay of mortal bodies. A few of them had been, as was still evident, the last homes of persons not void of dignity and rank—there was one, in particular, a vast uncouthly sculptured block of freestone, where might be distinguished the form of human figure, with a small hood upon his head, a heater-shaped shield suspended from his neck, his folded hands resting upon the hilt of a huge cross-handled sword, and his legs crossed in that peculiar manner, which indicates that he who sleeps beneath, was a Knight Templar. Upon the shield were some faint relics of armorial bearings, but it would now have puzzled the keenest antiquary that ever pored over mouldering ruins, to detect the obliterated blazonry which would have told the name of him who slumbered there, as still as though he never had pealed the war cry, Ha! Beauseant, or battled for the cross of Christ, knee deep in Paynim gore. Another heavy stone displayed the mitre and the pastoral crook of some proud abbot, and some two or three more of the number bore marks of decoration which, though now much decayed and broken, showed that they had been in old-time dedicated to the long since forgotten memories of the pure, the beautiful, the noble or the wise. The rest were low grass covered mounds, without a stone to bear the name, or record the destinies of their inhabitants, and the most of them from their sunken ridges, and half obliterated outlines, were evidently of no recent origin. Nothing could possibly be more wildly or more gloomily romantic than the spot chosen for the site of this place of rural sepulchre. It was a small deep hollow, scooped, as it were, out of the bosom of the huge moorland hills that raised their bare, round-headed summits, treeless and bleak, and desolate, on every side around it. On the right hand side, the little burial ground abutted on a steep, precipice of rifted sand-stone rock, which rose straight as a wall for sixty yards above it, and then sloped still further upward, till it was merged in the heather of the loftier fell—behind the chapel was a thick grove of matted yews, filling up the whole width of the gorge between the hills, through which a little brooklet rushed murmuring and sparkling in a thread of liquid silver, girdling the churchyard round on the left side, and to the front, where it was crossed by a small, one-arched bridge of freestone. The margin of this stream was bordered by a long

line of ash trees, probably chance sown there by emigratory birds, for not another of the species was to be found for several miles distance from the spot, and above these, the hill sloped boldly to the westward, showing beyond its rolling summit the crests of loftier mountains looming up blue and indistinct in the far distance. It was a dark and gloomy afternoon, although in the fairest time of summer, but the air was surcharged with electricity, and damp withal, and very sultry and oppressive. There was not a breeze to fan the lightest leaves of the ash by the stream nor to wave even the slight stalk of the blue hare bells on the rock, but the clouds mustered heavily, sweeping up, as it seemed before some higher current that was not felt below, mass above mass, till the whole sky was crowded with their huge towering volumes—the sun, when he shone out, at times, from the interstices of the dense thunder cloud, shot a hot brassy glare, that seemed as if it came from the mouth of some vast furnace—no bird was heard to warble or even chirrup, from the bushes, the thistle and the black bird, those never silent songsters of a Scottish summer, were hushed in sad anticipation of the coming storm—only the plaintive cry of the lapwing from the upland, and the shrill scream of a kite wheeling in airy circles above the solitary belfry, disturbed the death like stillness of the valley. Death like indeed it was—and not unfittingly, for in the churchyard hard by the bank of the little stream, and under the shadows of the yews, there was an open grave—the pile of earth, ready to fill its yawning mouth upheaved upon the sod beside, mattock and spade planted in the grass by its brink—an open grave waiting its silent tenant. At some short distance from the grave, there sat upon a fallen headstone, as motionless as though he had been himself a part of it, an old grey-headed wrinkled man, in attitude of melancholy thought, with a small, long backed terrier wire-haired, and with a face as grey and wrinkled as his master's, dozing among the weeds beside him. For nearly an hour, he sat there without stirring, unless when at times he raised his head for a moment, and appeared to listen, and then not hearing what he seemed to be expecting, relapsed into his grim and gloomy meditations. At last the sounds which he awaited made themselves heard at a distance, the well known death hymn of the puritans swelling up awfully among the bleak bare hills, a volume of wild, doleful music.—The old man rose up at the signal, and tottering to the porch, opened the iron studded door, and in a few moments the dissonant clash and clang of the old cracked chapel bell rung harshly out over the lonely valley. It was not long before the melancholy train came slowly into sight, winding along the narrow road, which, following the mazes of the brook, gave access to that lonely place of worship, from the more cultivated glen of the lower country.—The first of the procession was the old covenanting pastor, bent almost double with the infirmities of age, with a bold head, and stern, harsh features, but a quiet, flashing eye, full of enthusiastic life and zealous energy.

Immediately behind him came the coffin, of rude plain boards, undecked by any plate or ornament, with neither pall nor plumes, upborne upon the stalwart shoulders of eight stout peasants, dressed in their wonted garb of shepherds' plaid, and broad blue lowland bonnets—following the body—hapless and helpless mourners—an old woman, so aged that her frail limbs had scarcely enough left to support them, and a fair, blue eyed, flaxen haired girl, crept along—the latter bathed in the fast flowing tears which flow so readily, and seem to sweep away in their flow the sorrows of the young—the former, stern, cold and tearless, as if the grief which penetrated to her heart's inmost core, had mustered there, and checked her very breath, and froze up the fountains that gush so readily at any transient grievance in the young days of sentiment and sympathy—the mother and the niece of the deceased—for it was the widow's son, who was borne thus to his long home—the widow's son, who yesterday so full of stirring spirit and quick life, had been so cruelly cut off—cut off before his prime, and hurled a mere clod of the valley at the foot of his wretched parent, by the fell mandate of the Tiger Laird.

Twelve aged farmers, the patriarchs of the glens, the grandsires of all who followed them, tottered along, staff in hand, behind the mourners, lifting their tremulous voices to swell the deep wild hymn that echoed up the valley, and then

for the rest part, like their pastor, were all unarmed, and helpless. Yet even of these, two or three had buckled their old broadswords on their thighs, as if they could have done them aught of service, in case of an armed onslaught on their pacific train; but in the rear of these, there came a party of widely different character in spirit. In front of them stood one well known in after days as Hackstoun, of Rathillet, a stern, dark featured man of middle age, hawk nosed, thin flanked and tall—the very picture of one of those martial saints of Cromwell, with whom the sword was second only, if second, to the Bible. Armed to the teeth, with broadsword on his hip, and dirk and pistols in his girdle, and a short musketoon slung over his broad shoulders—fury and vengeance flashing from his grey eye—the gloomy martialist strode onward, and at his heels, all armed like their leader, six or eight men, whose stubborn front and erect bearing showed that they had seen service, clad in bodden grey, but heavy muskets, or long barrelled fowling pieces on their shoulders, and knives and pistols at their waists, followed with the deep air of dogged resolution, that seems disposed to court rather than shun encounter with aught of man or fiend that should oppose them. The rear of this wild and ill-assorted train was brought up by a body of young men, variously weaponed with scythes set each on poles and fishing spears, and clubs and axes; and all alike mourners and aged men and boys and stubborn warriors, were pealing forth one of those wild denunciatory hymns in which their souls delighted. On they filed, and they entered now the precincts of the lone churchyard, and clustered round the grave. No prayers were read over the senseless, such ritual being held in the eyes of those stern puritans as an abomination of abomination. The wild hymn sunk into dead silence—the coffin was lowered into the pit prepared for it—the heavy clods rattled upon the lid—the earth was trampled down with a deep hollow sound—the grave was heaped, the sods were levelled and beat smooth by the old sexton's spade—and not a sound was heard except the childish sobbings of the infant niece, until the last blow had been struck, and then the voice of the frail aged woman arose among the hushed loud awe struck throng, clear as a silver trumpet: 'The Lord giveth,'—she exclaimed,—the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord! A deep hum followed her submissive exclamations—the solemn acclamation of the puritans, and then at once the gathered concourse burst into a loud hymn. It ended, and as it did, before the echoes of the old hills had ceased to reverberate to the strange melody, Hackstoun, of Rathillet, drew his long broadsword from the scabbard, and stepped at once to the head of the grave. 'Countrymen—Bretheren,' he exclaimed, 'the blood'—but as he spoke, the tramp of hoofs was heard, the click of steel along the winding road, and another instant the Laird of Livingston and eight of his fierce troopers might be seen winding up the road.—'It is enough,' cried Hackstoun. 'It is enough! The Lord hath given them into our hands—we have them in a net—smite, kill—slay utterly!—suffer not one of them to go hence scatheless! Then, in a calmer tone, he added: 'Keep peace until they be upon us, down with your arms upon the turf—and raise them not 'till I cry 'Havoc!—then on and leave none living.' His orders were obeyed upon the instant. Meanwhile, the troopers, with the young laird leading, rode into the enclosure; taking a proclamation from his holster with that same fiendish smile upon his lip which played there when he had bidden them to slay the widow's son, he had begun to read it, when Hackstoun, stooping suddenly snatched up his carbine from the ground, and shouted his word 'Havoc!—took a quick aim and fired. Upon the instant his men followed his example! A quick, sharp strangling volley rattled above the grave of the murdered peasant, and four of his slayers leaped up in their saddles, and fell lifeless, surprised, but daunted nothing the soldiers fired an answering volley, and charged, sword in hand—but Hackstoun met the foremost—he struck two blows—two only! the first fell on the charger's neck where the spine joins the skull, and hurled him lifeless—the second clove through the casque, the skull—the teeth of the trooper—musket-butt, scythe, and pitch fork, were plied fiercely, and ere ten minutes, not a man lived of all their foes, save Livingston. He, when he saw all hope lost,—he had fought foremost 'till he did so—turned his horse at the brook with a fierce shout, leaped it, and galloped over the

wild hill. Hackstoun and his stern band rushed after him in wild pursuit. Ten minutes more, and the lone yaid was utterly deserted, save by the corpses of his slayers—the slaughter of his murderers finished the obsequies of the poor widow's son.

A GOOD DAUGHTER!

A good daughter! There are other ministers of love more conspicuous than her, but none in which a gentler, lovelier spirit dwells, and none to which the heart's warm requitals more joyfully respond. There is no such thing as a comparative estimate of a parent's love for one or another child, there is little which he needs to covet, to whom the treasure of a good child has been given. But a son's occupations and pleasures carry him abroad, and he resides more amongst temptations, which hardly permit the affection that is following him, perhaps over half the globe to be wholly unmingled with anxiety, until the time when he comes to relinquish the shelter of his father's roof for one of his own; while a good daughter is the steady light of her parent's house. Her idea is indissolubly connected with that of his happy fireside. She is his morning sunlight and his evening star. The grace and vivacity and tenderness of her sex have their place in the mighty sway which she holds over his spirit. The lessons of recorded wisdom which he reads with her eyes, come to his mind with a new charm as blended with the beloved melody of her voice. He scarcely knows weariness which her song does not make him forget, or gloom which is proof against the young brightness of her smile. She is the pride and ornament of his hospitality, and the gentle nurse of his sickness, and the constant agent in those nameless, numberless acts of kindness, which one chiefly cares to have rendered because they are unpretending but expressive proofs of love. And then what a cheerful sharer she is, and what an able lightener of her mother's cares! What an ever present delight and triumph to a mother's affection! Oh! how little do those daughters know of the power which God has committed to them, and the happiness God would have them enjoy, who do not every time that a parent's eye rests upon them, bring rapture to a parent's heart! A true love will almost certainly always greet their approaching footsteps. That they will hardly alienate. But their ambition should be, not to have it a love merely, which feelings implanted by nature excite, but one made intense and overflowing, by approbation of worthy conduct; and she is strangely blind to her own happiness as well as undutiful to them to whom she owes the most, in whom the perpetual appeals of parental disinterestedness do not call forth the prompt and full echo of filial devotion.

From the Youth's Gazette.

LIFE.

WHAT a strange thing is life! and what a strange life is this we lead! We can no more fathom the deep hidden mysteries of the one, than define the peculiarities, the shades and circumstances of the other. Its destiny, what an enigma is that! No whisperings from eternity ever fell upon the ear of time—no one ever came from the dead to reveal the dark secrets of the tomb. All is dark, voiceless, unknown there! The light of science has not penetrated it, the march of intellect never reached it, or lifted the impenetrable veil that hides its mysteries from the eyes of the living.

A knowledge of the future is barred against us. It is like an impenetrable wall of polished surface, reflecting back the rays of the present only—moving steadily on before us. Reader, did never the fearful darkness and uncertainty of the next moment rush upon you, paralyzing, for a moment, your whole faculties, as you were scheming out some enterprise, or perhaps in the more simple act of stepping over the threshold of your door? No one can tell what dangers lie hid around him, what events may be brooding in the darkness before him—what destiny the future may be weaving for him. We should start back with amazement, were our true position—the circumstances that environ our life struggle, revealed to us. No one can tell how often the sword, hung by a single hair, is suspended over him. Notwithstanding how men live! how they pass their existence, as if no yawning gulf was gaping to receive them into its dark and fathomless abyss! Is not this stranger than the strangest fiction? It seems strange to us that we can close our eyes in sleep, that we can, will and do without trembling. Most of us live as if no evil could befall us—as if this wondrous life was a breath—a plaything.