

he exercised considerable influence, would not have engaged in the criminal enterprise which had terminated thus fatally ; and that now he had become his destroyer a second time, since, but for his obstinacy, Robertson might have effected his escape. Minds like Wilson's, even when exercised in evil practices, sometimes retain the power of thinking and resolving with enthusiastic generosity. His whole thoughts were now bent on the possibility of saving Robertson's life, without the least respect to his own. The resolution which he adopted, and the manner in which he carried it into effect, were striking and unusual.

Adjacent to the tolbooth or city jail of Edinburgh is one of three churches into which the cathedral of St. Giles is now divided, called, from its vicinity, the Tolbooth Church. It was the custom that criminals under sentence of death were brought to this church, with a sufficient guard, to hear and join in public worship on the Sabbath before execution. It was supposed that the hearts of these unfortunate persons, however hardened before against feelings of devotion, could not but be accessible to them upon uniting their thoughts and voices, for the last time, along with their fellow-mortals, in addressing their Creator. And to the rest of the congregation it was thought it could not but be impressive and affecting to find their devotions mingling with those who, sent by the doom of an earthly tribunal to appear where the whole earth is judged, might be considered as beings trembling on the verge of eternity. The practice, however edifying, has been discontinued, in consequence of the incident we are about to detail.

The clergyman whose duty it was to officiate in the Tolbooth Church had concluded an affecting discourse, part of which was particularly directed to the unfortunate men, Wilson and Robertson, who were in the pew set apart for the persons in their unhappy situation, each secured betwixt two soldiers of the City Guard. The clergyman had reminded them that the next congregation they must join would be that of the just or of the unjust ; that the psalms they now heard must be exchanged, in the space of two brief days, for eternal hallelujahs or eternal lamentations ; and that this fearful alternative must depend upon the state to which they might be able to bring their minds before the moment of awful preparation ; that they should not despair on account of the suddenness of the summons, but rather to feel this comfort in their misery, that, though all who now lifted the voice, or bent the knee, in conjunction with