

## THE HEROD OF SCOTLAND.

## A TALE OF COVENANTRY DAYS.

Now when the soldiers came near to the huddled cluster of bairns, that same little heart-broken bleating which I have heard the lambs make, broke again from them. It made my heart bleed, and the blood tingle in my palms. And this was King Charles Stuart making war! It had not been his father's way. But the soldiers, though some few were smiling a little, as at an excellent play, were mostly black ashamed. Nevertheless, they took the bairns and made them kneel, for that was the order, and without mutiny they could not better it.

"Sodger man, will ye let me tak' my wee brither by the hand and dee that way? I think he would thole it better!" said a little maid of eight, looking up. And the soldier let go a great oath, and looked at Westerha', as though he could have slain him.

"Bonny wark," he cried, "deil burn me gin I listed for this!"

But the little lass had already taken her brother by the hand. "Bend doon, bonny Alec, my man, doon on your knees!" said she.

The boy glanced up at her. He had long yellow hair. "Wull it be sair?" he asked, "think ye, Maggie? I houp it'll be no awfu' sair!"

"Na, Alec," his sister made answer, "it'll no be either lang or sair."

But the boy of ten, whose name was James Johnston, neither bent nor knelt. "I hae dune nae wrang. I'll ust dee this way," he said; and he stood up like one at drill. Then Westerha' bid fire over the bairns, heads, which was cruel, cruel work and only some of the soldiers did it. But even the few pieces that went off made great noise in that lonely place. At the sound of the muskets some of the bairns fell forward on their faces, as if they had been really shot, some leaped into the air, but the most part knelt quietly and composedly. The little boy, Alec, whose sister had his hand clasped in hers, made as if he would rise.

"Bide ye doon, Alec," she said, very quietly, "it's no oor turn yet!"

At this the heart within me gave way, and I roared out in my helpless pain a perfect "growl" of anger and grief.

"Bonny Whigs ye are," cried Westerha', "to dee without even a prayer. Put up a prayer this minute, for ye shall dee, every one of ye."

And the boy, James Johnston, made answer to him, "Sir, we cannot pray, for we be too young to pray."

"You are not too young to rebel, nor yet to die for it!" was the brute-beast's answer. Then, with that the little girl held up a hand as if she were answering a dominie in a class.

"An' if it please ye, sir," she said, "me and Alec canna pray, but we can sing, 'The Lord's my Shepherd,' gin that will do. My mother learned it us afore she gaed awa.'" And before anyone could stop her, she stood up like one that leads the singing in a kirk.

"Stand up Alec, my wee mannie," she said.

Then all the bairns stood up. I declare it minded me of Bethlehem, and the night when

Herod's troopers rode down to look for Mary's bonny Bairn. Then from the lips of babes and sucklings arose the quavering strains:

"The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want,  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green; He leadeh me  
The quiet waters by."

As they sang, I gripped out my pistols and began to sort and prime them, hardly knowing what I did. For I was resolved to make a break for it, and, at the least, to blow a hole in James Johnston of Westerha' that would mar him for life, before I suffered any more of it. But as they sang, I saw trooper after trooper turn away his head, for being Scot's bairns, they had all learned that Psalm. The ranks shook. Man after man fell out, and I saw the tears hopping down their cheeks. But it was Douglas of Morton, that stark persecutor, who first broke down.

"Curse it, Westerha'," he cried, "I canna thole this langer. I'll war na mair wi bairns for a' the earldoms i' the North."

And at last even Westerha' turned his bridle rein and rode away from off the bonny holms of Shield hill, for the victory was wi the bairns. I wonder what his thoughts were, for he, too, had learned that Psalm at the knees of his mother. And as the troopers rode loosely up hill and down brae, broken and ashamed, the sound of these bairns' singing followed after them, and soughin across the fells came the words:

"Yea though I walk in Death's dark vale,  
Yet will I fear none ill:  
For Thou art with me; and Thy rod  
And staff me comfort still."

Then Westerha' swore a great oath, and put the spurs in his horse to get clear of the sweet singing.—S. R. Crockett, in *Men of the Moss-Hags*.

## DRIFTING.

A few years ago there lived in the coal regions of Pennsylvania a Scotchman, who had been raised in the Presbyterian faith. Under the influence of the teachings of the missionaries of the Seventh-Day Adventists, this man gave up his time-honored faith in the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath.

Thus his drifting began, but it did not end there. Having once given up a tenet of his faith, it became easier to do so again. He became like a child, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. One article of faith was abandoned after another, until to-day he has surrendered all, even his belief in God and a future life, and is living a worldly, churchless, godless life.

This incident points out the danger of the slightest deviation from our faith. One step rapidly leads to another, until, before we realize it, all is lost. Let us guard against the slightest tendency to surrender our faith, our form of worship, or our manner of life.—Exchange.