

THE WANDERERS.

A CHAPTER OF COVENANTING STORY.

Early next morning 'the prophet' and Robert were on their way to Glenhead. Many a wish was now being expressed, and many a search made, in different parts, for Mr. Peden's capture and life. Of this he was well aware. Hence they kept aloof, in their journey, from the villages and towns, passing over to the south side of the Irvine, and travelling by Galston Hill till they reached Cessnock, whence they speedily entered the parish of Sorn, and arrived at their destination.

Only the day before a party of soldiers had been there from Kilmarnock, ransacking the place, treating with indignity the inmates, and carrying away with them whatever they thought of value. Mr. Peden expressed to his brother, in feeling terms, his deep grief that for his sake he should meet with so much ill-treatment and injury. But he was immediately interrupted by the exclamation, 'Say not so, brother, it is for God and for His cause you live and labour—the God we love, the cause in which we too delight; "it is through much tribulation we enter the kingdom." But see, they have not taken away this treasure—our father's Bible—and does it not tell us that "blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for their's is the kingdom of heaven?"'

After a scanty meal had been partaken of, and family worship had been engaged in, every spot where 'the prophet' was wont to frequent, and especially the well-remembered walk at a little distance from the house, was visited by him. It was a considerable time since he had been at home, for he knew that his pursuers had spies who were constantly lingering about the place in the hope of taking him. In fact, many were the hair-breadth escapes which he had experienced during his wearisome journeyings. On one of these occasions, having come from Mauchline, he was passing over the moor towards Glenhead, when suddenly there appeared in sight several moss-troopers, as they were called, a sort of wild cavalry, whose duty it was to ride from one place to another over the dreary heath frequented by the Covenanters, in order to seize them and drag them to suffering, and frequently to death. Seen by them, they made towards him, in full gallop. He ran for a well-known glen, on the banks of the river Ayr, where he had frequently before found a safe retreat from his persecutors. The way was rugged, over bog and heath, and the chase was long. But just as he came to the water-side and found himself unable to leap over it, his foot slipped and he fell. Near where he lay he discovered, in a moment, a small cavern, which had been scooped out by the running stream, partly concealed by the overhanging grass. He rolled himself into it, but had scarcely done so, before his pursuers, rushing down the bank, and looking around after their prey, of whom they had lost sight, dashed into the water and rode over—the hoof of one of the horses sliding down in front of his hiding-place, and so near him, that it grazed his head, trampling his bonnet into the earth beneath. Mr. Peden was not a man to overlook the providence of Him, without whose knowledge even a sparrow falls not to the ground, in such a memorable interposition as this. Often would he refer to such cases, as to exhibitions of immediate Divine interposition.

To return to our native place after long absence and many changes, is ever an occasion of serious reflection and solemn thought. They who were babes at our forthgoing, the fathers and mothers now—the young men then, the old men now—the aged all, or almost all, gone—the scenes around the same and even perhaps more beautiful, as seen by older eyes and more experienced judgment—society new, in fact the world a new one, into which we need a new introduction, we remembering few, and few remembering us—a whole generation sunk into the dust, another entered into life, and the only remaining one having gone on and grown old—there are few who have been long from their natal spot, visiting again, can do so without the most tender remembrances and subdued feelings.

Not entirely thus, for he had not been so many years away; but yet, in part this was the experience of Mr. Peden at this time. His honoured father and beloved mother were no more, and he had not been there since their decease. His sister had married, and gone to live at a distance. His two brothers, brought