

THE CHILD MARTYR.

A TRUE STORY.

Printed by Request.

PART I.

It was a summer morn in May,
The air was sweet and mild ;
The birds sang in the leafy trees,
And nature round me smiled.

I left my inn, and wandered forth,
In meditative mood,
And bent my steps, I know not why,
To where a churchyard stood.

It was a quiet resting place,
And crowned a lofty hill ;
The dark blue sea beneath it rolled,
The spot was hushed and still.

'Mid humble graves, a monument*
In beauty stood alone,
A wondrous work ; the sculptor breathed
A life into the stone.

A group in marble, pure as snow—
Two maidens young and fair ;
The hands of one were clasped ; her eyes
Looked up to heaven in prayer.

And o'er them both an angel bent,
So graceful, tender, light ;
A starry crown was in her hand,
Of lilies pure and white.

The marble seemed to speak to me—
To whisper in mine ear—

" I have a history to tell,
You would do well to hear."

The sexton soon was at my side—
A feeble, aged man ;
His form was bent, his hair was white,
His face was pale and wan.

To my quick questions, slow, he said :

" Ay, sir, full well I know,
As sad a tale as e'er was told,
Of them who sleep below."

" Yes, sit ye here upon this stone,
The legend I will tell,
My mother told me when a boy,
And, sir, I love it well."

He put aside his spade, and sat
Upon a gravestone cold ;
His aged eye regained its fire,
As thus the tale he told.

PART II.

" 'Twas in the time of ancient strife,
'Neath religion's sacred name,
When bloody Mary held the sway
O'er England's fair domain.

" Amidst these rocky, frowning hills,
This northern Scottish land,
High in the mountain fastnesses,
There dwelt a Christian band.

" Among the few who weekly met
To pray 'mid rising fears,
Two lovely sisters always came,
Two girls of tender years.

" The elder maiden, Margaret,
Was only twelve years old,
She'd deep blue eyes, and golden hair,
A spirit firm and bold.

" The younger one was Alice called,
She'd but ten summers seen ;
Her eyes were dark, her hair was brown,
A little Highland queen.

" They with their father lived alone,
High on the mountain side ;
Their mother died some years ago,
He was their only guide.

" But ere that mother slept, she called
The eldest to her bed,
And gave her Bible, old and loved,
To keep when she was dead.

" ' I have not long to stay, my child,
It is my last request,
Oh, read and prize this precious book,
When I have sunk to rest.

" ' Dark times are coming o'er the land—
The scourge, the stake, the sword—
And they who love the simple faith
May suffer for their Lord.

" ' I see the clouds—I hear the roar
Of bigotry's fierce flood ;
You, child, may suffer for your faith,
And seal it with your blood.

" ' Should ever that dark trial come,
Be firm for Christ that day ;'
So saying, with a faint sweet smile,
Her spirit passed away.

" But in that tender heart those words
Held long a mystic sway ;
And how she kept that last request.
My story soon will say.

" Ay, sir, 'tis well for you and me
We worship undismayed ;
In perfect liberty and light,
None maketh us afraid.

" But not so then—soon tidings came
Of sainted men, who bore
Both axe and flame for Christ's dear name
As in the days of yore.

" And soon a stern command went forth
From crown and Roman see,
That all should go to mass, or burn'd
As heretics should be.

*The monument is to be seen in Stirling churchyard.