

taining their privileges as Christians, and their rights as citizens; and, therefore, it is proper that those times and scenes should frequently be made to pass in review before us, that we may know how much we owe to the men who contended so bravely and so Christianly for those liberties we now so richly enjoy. We cannot tell what days of trial may yet be awaiting ourselves, and, therefore, it is good to have before our minds the peculiar circumstances of our persecuted ancestors, that we may be duly impressed with the greatness of their sufferings, and that we may learn a lesson from their constancy in enduring their manifold tribulations. And truly theirs were no light afflictions; for it is believed that the worst times of the Roman Cæsars can scarcely equal those of the royal brothers, during the eight-and-twenty years of civil and ecclesiastical oppression, which so prominently characterized their cruel and iniquitous reign. A brave and loyal people, religious and high-principled, were prostrated in the dust under the crushing weight of a tyrannical mis-rule, and subjected to the insults and the spoliation of every craven hireling whom a ruthless government saw fit to employ as its tools. No person can conceive, unless he be thoroughly acquainted with the veritable history of the period, to what an extent of confusion and distress the country was then reduced. The loss of property, of liberty, and of life, was the fate of thousands and thousands of virtuous and patriotic persons, whose consciences could not submit to the unconstitutional and infamous measures of the unprincipled party who infringed on all religion, order, and law; and who, with the boldest effrontery, trampled under their feet the rights and immunities of the peaceable and unoffending subjects. The great social compact between the ruler and the people was traitorously violated, and all the safeguards of the public welfare were recklessly broken down. The spirit of anarchy and mischief was let loose over the breadth and length of the land, and wicked and daring men, like ships broken from their anchorage in the wild ravings of the tempest, roamed at liberty over the spacious field, where, without restraint or responsibility, they acted their part as the base hirelings of a still baser junto.

The miserable attempt of the king to establish an absolute supremacy in civil and ecclesiastical matters, produced a train of disasters and an amount of calamity which no pen can adequately describe. All classes of society felt the disturbing force, but the derangement which was produced, was experienced more especially by the loyal and religious orders, who are at once the support and the honor of a nation. The attempt to change a nation's principles must be attended with violence, and hence despotic measures were resorted to, in order to force men to adopt the views which the king chose to entertain. The privy council, who conducted everything according to the royal mind, was the source of dreadful affliction to the country. The members of this infamous court imprisoned, confiscated, and killed at their pleasure, and authorized the perpetration of deeds of atrocity almost incredible. A graceless soldiery, under the management of a savage leadership, spread themselves like an army of locusts over the land, and murdered and plundered at their will. By means of this military license, the poor peasantry were fearfully harassed, and no conscientious man could call his home or even his life his own. The deserts, and moorlands, and the loneliest glens became the resort of men of whom the world was not worthy; for it was in the remotest solitudes that they sought a retreat from the face of the persecutor. In these hiding-places in the dens and caves of the earth, they were subjected to the severest privations. Hunger, and cold, and weariness, and sickness, and watchfulness, and peril, and treachery, wore their lot. They were hunted like wild beasts on the mountains, and shot like fowls on the heath without ceremony, wherever they were found; and their graves are now to be seen in the dreary wastes. Informers, and curates, and dragoons, and traitors, were in constant search after those who refused to conform to Prelacy. While families were driven from their houses whenever it pleased the ruffian soldiery to enforce their ejection, and that whether in the dead of night or in the depth of winter, as it best suited their cruelty or their caprice. Husbands were shot before the eyes of their wives, and children before the eyes of their parents. The possession of a Bible was deemed a crime enough to deprive a man of his life; and if any individual on the highway, or in the field, happened to manifest a disposition to avoid the soldiers, this was sufficient to induce suspicion, and to prompt these booted apostles to pursue, and, either through sport or mischief, to fire on the helpless fugitive; and if any humane person presumed to remonstrate in behalf of those who were thus used, he was instantly laid hold of as a suspected individual, and subjected to the same treatment.

These murders were often committed at what were termed conventicles, where great multitudes of the nonconformist Presbyterians met in the wilderness to worship God, and hear his gospel. These meetings were often attacked by the troopers, who traverse the country in their raids of mischief in all directions, and who even invaded the loneliest and most inaccessible retreats of the desert, because it was there that they expected to meet their prey. So precarious was the situation of these congregations in the wilds, that the precaution of placing wardens in the distance on the tops of the hills and at the openings of the glen, was uniformly resorted to; for the soldiers often came so suddenly upon them, that their sacrifice was sometimes mingled with their blood. On occasion of those field meetings, the numbers that attended were sometimes prodigious. No fewer than ten thousand at a time have been known to assemble on the flowery heath among the lonely mountains; and great crowds, too, even in the depth of winter, convened in the glens, and sat amidst the cold wreaths of snow for hours together, listening to the words of eternal life. These were days of privations, but they were also times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; "for the wilderness and the

solitary place was glad for them." They were driven, it is true, from place to place, for they were not allowed to worship God except by stealth; but though they had no certain dwelling-place, and though their life hung in constant doubt before their house, yet they were happy; for God was with them, and the Saviour, who is ever with his Church in affliction, retired to the deserts with them. So happy were they in these times of suffering, that some who survived the persecuting period affirmed that if they had it in their power to choose what space of their past life they would prefer to live over again, they would unhesitatingly say, "The days of persecution," "That good-ill time of persecution," as some of them termed it.

The destitution of the people was very great, when those who adhered to their principles were what was called "intercommuned;" that is, were declared out-laws, and when every person was interdicted from holding intercourse with them, and when even their nearest kindred were forbidden, on the pain of rebellion, to converse with them, or to afford them any assistance whatever. In this situation they were obliged to roam among the hills and wilds to avoid observation, and were often in great want of food and shelter, especially in the inclement seasons of the year, when they were exposed to the buffeting of the storms, from the which they sought a refuge in cold dripping caves, or among the thickets in the woodland dells. It was generally in the dark night that they stole from their hiding-places, to visit, under the pressure of hunger and other necessities, either their own homes or the friendly houses of some well-wishers, who were ready to screen them in the hour of peril, and to supply their wants, even at the risk of their own lives. The narrow escapes which, in these circumstances, they often made, were truly amazing and almost incredible, were it not that veritable history has vouched for their truth. The soldiers sometimes passed the mouth of the cave in which they were concealed, at the very moment engaged in family worship, without discovering them. These escapes were the more remarkable, when we consider the great number of soldiers that were dispersed all over the country, for the purpose of exterminating at one fell swoop the whole party of the recusants. "Troopers, heritors, dragoons, and highlandmen," says Defoe, "forming themselves into a great army, spread themselves from one side of a whole country to the other, having their men placed, marching single at a great distance, but always one in sight of the other, so marching forward, every one straight before him, they by this means searched the rocks, rivers, woods, wastes, mountains, moorles, and even the most private and retired places of the country, where they thought we were hidden; so that it was impossible anything could escape them. And yet so true were the mountain men, as their persecutors called them, to one another, that in all that famous march they found not one man, though many a good man, perhaps, with trembling heart and hands lift up to Heaven for protection, saw them, and were passed by them undisturbed."

The numbers killed by the troopers in the fields were very great. As a specimen, Defoe relates, "that Claverhouse alone is said to have killed above one hundred men in his cold-blooded cruelty, making it his business to follow and pursue people through the whole country, and having at his heels a crew of savages, highlanders, and dragoons, whose sport was in blood, and whose diversion was to haul innocent men out from their houses or hiding-places, and murder them. His companion in this work was Colonel James Douglass. These two, with their men, killed twenty-eight men in a very few days, and at several places, in the shire of Galloway, most of them without the least evidence of their being guilty, all of them without any legal prosecution, and some without so much as examination." Hundreds, probably, were butchered in the moorlands, the greater part of whom have neither been noted by the historian, nor retained by tradition. Multitudes of graves are discernible in the wilds, of which no account can be given, further than that they are the graves of martyrs. Many died through fatigue, and cold and hunger; and though they escaped the murderous hands of the troopers, yet they are as justly to be classed with the martyrs, as if their blood had been shed on the heath; and it is to be remarked, that the bones of not a few of these witnesses were found bleaching in the moors after the troublous times had passed away. "It is not to be calculated," says the author of the Memoirs of the Church of Scotland, "how many were starved in this manner, and whose bones, many of them, were found afterwards, who had perished in the most deplorable circumstances, and were not discovered by any other remains. It would make the heart of any considering Christian bleed, to contemplate the miseries of these people who perished in this deplorable manner, when such was the cruelty of their persecutors, that even the parents durst not relieve nor entertain their children, or children harbour or nourish their parents; but if the person was accused of having been at one of these field meetings, they were immediately proscribed and intercommuned, by which it was made death for any one so much as to speak with them, much more to harbour or relieve them." "The dragoons," says the same author, "patrolled all over the country by night as well as by day; so that the distressed people who lay hid in the mountains, could not come down to the houses of their friends in the night, as they usually did, for succour, and so retreat again in the morning before day. But now they got no liberty to come down, but at the utmost hazard; so that their wives and children, or relations, and sometimes charitable and compassionate Christian friends, went to them to the hills, and the caves, and the holes in the earth, where they were harboured, to carry them necessaries and relief, and without which they must have perished for mere want of food; and notwithstanding which, they endured in those vast and desolate hills inexpressible hardships, ex-