

As might be naturally expected, these field meetings or conventicles stirred up the wrath of the king and his councillors. Royal proclamations were issued against them. Bands of soldiers were commissioned to scour the country for their suppression. But as it was with Israel in Egypt, the more vigorous the measures were that were adopted to put them down, the more they multiplied and grew. To these conventicles the people repaired in still increasing numbers. The Spirit of God was there. The Most High demonstrated in the blessed experience of His people that His gracious presence is not confined to temples made with hands. The hill-side was often a mount of transfiguration, where the disciple could say—"It is good for us to be here."

Thus far baffled in their designs, the king and his councillors tried another plan to wear out the Presbyterian Church and to make way for the full establishment of prelacy throughout the land. After nine years of blood they tried what effect an Indulgence would have, *i. e.*, a permission granted to the ejected ministers to return to the exercise of their ministry on certain specified conditions. In the year 1669 an Act was passed permitting them to return to their parishes, and ther usual pastoral work, on condition that they would yield to certain restrictions; such as that they would not go beyond the boundaries of their own parishes—that they would not preach in the fields—that they would not allow persons from other parishes to wait on their ministry, and that they would not open their lips to speak against the ecclesiastical supremacy of the king. This was a trap laid for the suffering Church of Scotland. In the words of the perfidious Sharpe, who suggested the measure, it was intended to be "a bone of contention"; and well did it serve the purpose. The greater number of the presbyterian ministers accepted the "Indulgence," as it was called, returned to their charges, submitted to the restrictions imposed upon them, and thus practically abandoned the great principle of the Presbyterian Church—the exclusive Headship of the Redeemer over the Church. A small remnant of the suffering Church of Scotland refused the royal bait. Flowing as it did from the usurped royal ecclesiastical supremacy, and imposing so many unscriptural and Christ dishonouring restrictions in the exercise of their ministry, like Daniel and his companions, they could not defile themselves with the king's meat. They declined the "Indulgence."

This Indulgence served not only the purpose for which it was specially intended, *viz.*, to divide, and so weaken the Church; but it furnished also a pretext for severer measures against the small remnant that refused it. In order to make short work of these, the fiery furnace was heated sevenfold. The laws against house and field conventicles became more and more severe. "Letters of Intercommuning," as they were called, were issued against numbers, by which all subjects of the realm, under pain of rebellion, were forbidden to show them any courtesy, or even to afford them any relief in the most urgent necessity. The father could not harbor the son, or the wife her husband, but at the peril of life. Many were mercilessly tortured by the thumb-screw, and the boot, and by having lighted matches placed between their fingers. Many were crowded into loathsome dungeons from which death would have been a welcome release. Many perished on the scaffold, and their bodies were cast into