

February 1685 the two sisters went secretly to Wigtown, to see some friends, but being discovered, were taken prisoners and instantly thrust into the "Thieves' hole" as "the greatest malefactors," whence they were afterwards brought to the Tolbooth, where "several others were prisoners for the like cause, particularly Margaret Lauchlison of Kirkinner Parish." Agnes Wilson was liberated on her father's bond of "one hundred pounds sterling, to produce her when called for," after the sentence of death had been passed against her.

On the assize at which these women were indicted, which met at Wigtown, 13th April, 1685, there sat David Graham, sheriff (the brother of Claverhouse), the Laird of Lagg, Major Winram, and Captain Strachan, who found them guilty of rebellion, and sentenced them "to be tyed to palisades fixed in the sand, within the flood-mark, and there to stand till the flood overflowed them, and drowned them." A sad sentence! but they received it "with a composed smiling countenance, judging it their honor to suffer for Christ's truth." This dreadful sentence was carried out to the letter. From the prison they were brought by Major Winram with a guard of soldiers, to the place of execution, whither also they were accompanied by a numerous crowd of spectators whose feelings we may, in part, surmise. In that crowd was Elizabeth Miliken, daughter of the aged martyr, who watched, with sad and sorrowful heart, the mother that gave her birth going down to the rising tide that was to engulf her; and so vividly was the scene chronicled in her memory that in 1718 she told her minister, Mr. Campbell, that she dreamed she saw her mother at the Cross at Wigtown, "with the garb, gesture, and countenance she had five minutes before she was drowned." Arrived at Wigtown strand the two prisoners were fastened to stakes fixed in the sand between high and low water mark. "The Kirkinner heroine, the elder, was placed near to the rising flood, in the hope that her last suffering might terrify the younger into submission. The sight was dreadful, but the courage of the survivor," says Macaulay, in his summary of Wodrow, "was sustained by an enthusiasm as lofty as any that is recorded in martyrology. She saw the sea draw nearer and nearer, but gave no sign of alarm." She sang the 25th Psalm "from verse 7th downward a good way," and read the 8th of Romans, and prayed. We can imagine how that "virgin Martyr," waiting for death on the Wigtown sands, rejoiced in spirit as she sang these words:—

"The secret of the Lord is with

Such as do bear His name;

And He His holy Covenant

Will manifest to them.

Towards the Lord my waiting eyes

Continually are set:

For He it is that shall bring forth

My feet out of the net."

Or when she read, in Romans—"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us." A precious legacy this—a hope with which death loses all its terrors. In the spirit of this hope she poured forth her soul in prayer and praise, till the "waves choked her voice." "After she had tasted the bitterness of death, she was, by a cruel mercy, unbound and restored to life. When she came to herself, pitying friends and neighbours implored her to yield. Dear Margaret, only say, 'God save the King.' The poor girl, true to her stern theology, gasped out, 'May God save him, it is be God's will.' Her friends crowded round the presiding officer, Major Winram. 'She has said it; indeed, sir, she has said it.' 'Will she take the abjuration?' he demanded. 'Never,' she exclaimed; 'I am Christ's, let me go,' and the waters closed over her for the last time." This, then, is the "last scene of this strange eventful history;" and I humbly and reverently bring my laurel wreath, feeling that in laying it on the tomb of Margaret Lauchlison and Margaret Wilson, I am but paying a natural tribute to two noble heroines who were "hunted out of the world." Martyrs, in the true sense, who died for the truth they held dearer than life, "hunted up to Heaven" for the sake of Christ's cause and Covenant:—

There sleep they—two of Scotia's daughter-fair—

A matron and a maid—in the old churchyard.
Hard by the banks of Bladnoch's limpid stream
That gently smacks the fair cheek of Baldoon.
Two saintly women, heroines, martyrs true.
Who made one offering of their days to Him
Whose cause and Covenant and Kirk were dear.