

**LIFE OF THE REV. JAMES  
RENWICK. THE LAST OF  
THE SCOTTISH MARTYRS**

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Life of the Rev. James Renwick. The Last of the Scottish Martyrs by Robert Simpson

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**ROBERT SIMPSON**

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LIFE  
OF  
THE REV. JAMES RENWICK,

THE LAST OF THE SCOTTISH MARTYRS.

BY  
THE REV. ROBERT SIMPSON,

SANQUHAR.

ACCOMPLISHED BY THE "TRADITION OF THE COVENANTS," &c.



"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

EDINBURGH:  
JOHN JOHNSTONE, HUNTER SQUARE.  
LONDON: R. GROOMBRIDGE.

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MDCCLXIII.

## PREFACE.

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THE last persecution in Scotland, which existed for the space of eight-and-twenty years, commenced with the restoration of Charles the Second, 1660. This prince, infamous alike for his profligacy and perfidy, resiled from all his vows and engagements, and turned his hand against his best friends. No sooner did he ascend the throne, than he laid the hand of demolition on the ancient Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the constitution of which he had sworn, on his coronation at Scone in 1651, to maintain in all its integrity. He had formed the project of rearing the fabric of a religious and civil despotism, and he scrupled not to employ any means, however nefarious, to accomplish this end. The ladder by which he hoped to climb to the elevation of absolute monarchy, was Episcopacy, the subserviency of which in promoting his designs, he firmly counted on. Immediately after his restoration, therefore, he entered, contrary to his most solemn oaths, and to every honest man's expectation, on an impious crusade against the liberties and the lives of his sub-

jects. He violated the social compact, and overstepped the limit which forms the legal barrier to the encroachment of the ruler on the popular rights. This reckless monarch found, on entering on his daring enterprise, many ready instruments for the accomplishment of his purpose, among his unprincipled minions both in Church and State,—to an extent, indeed, which brands with an indelible infamy the character of sundry classes of the community in that age, from whom better things were expected.

Charles was determined that all should be subject to his control, and that no man in his dominions should gainsay his absolute authority. He usurped the supremacy in Church and State, and required every class of his subjects to bow before the great idol which he had set up. The entire lordship which he assumed over the consciences of men, and his tyrannical aggression on their civil rights, were what a great proportion of the Scottish populace, at least, was determined not to brook. In swearing the Covenants he had vowed to maintain the Presbyterian Church, and to assert the rights and liberties of the citizens; and they had vowed allegiance to him on these conditions; and therefore, though *he* might act in violation of his engagements, *they* were resolved to adhere to the covenanted cause, and to abide the consequences. It was to subdue this determination on their part, then, that Charles waged

the war of persecution against his honest and unoffending subjects,—a war which he pursued till the end of his days, and which his successor prosecuted with the same rigour, till he was forced to abdicate the throne.

The period between the Restoration and the Revolution, is the darkest and most melancholy, without exception, in the entire history of the Scottish nation. Thousands and thousands of the best subjects in the land, because they refused to yield subjection to an unconstitutional and lawless domination, were either despoiled of their property, or banished from their country, or deprived of their lives.

The subject of the following Memoir was one of the most renowned of the sufferers in that dismal period, when every religious and patriotic man's life hung in doubt before his eyes. He was born and cradled in persecution. His home was the wilderness, and his hiding-chambers were the dens and caves of the earth. He maintained his testimony on the recognised footing of the Reformation principles, in the face of all the opposition he met with, and at last sealed it with his blood.

His character was maligned by his enemies, and bitterly assailed by false brethren. Even to this day the aspersions that were cast on his name have not been fully wiped off, nor have the minds of many been disabused of certain injurious notions



entertained of him. How far the following attempt to place his character in its proper light has been successful, the reader is left to judge.

In this biographical sketch, the people of the moorlands, in the south and west of Scotland, may probably feel some interest. It was among their ancestors that Mr Renwick mainly sojourned. His memory is warmly cherished by them to this day; and they still retain many of the anecdotes respecting him, with as much vividness of impression, and correctness of detail, as if the incidents had occurred but yesterday. A considerable number of these traditionary notices, for the first time published, are interspersed throughout the work, and inserted as nearly in the order of the events as can be conjectured.

This little volume is given to the world, with the sincere desire that it may profit the reader, and in the expectation that those who peruse it will be led to examine more particularly the history of that eventful period to which it refers, and to investigate more fully the great principles on which our illustrious ancestors took their stand, and in the defence of which they suffered unto the death.

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