

The Biography of John Welch

An Excerpt from *The Scots Worthies* by John Howie

MR. John Welch was born a Gentleman, his Father being Laird of Coliestoun, (an Estate rather competent than large, in the Shire of Nithsdale) about the Year 1570, the Dawning of our Reformation being then but dark. He was a rich Example of Grace and Mercy; but the Night went before the Day, being a most hopeless extravagant Boy: It was not enough to him, frequently, when he was a young Stripling, to run away from the School, and play the Truant; but, after he had past his Grammar, and was come to be a Youth, he left the School and his Father's House, and went and joined himself to the Thieves on the English Border, who lived by robbing the two Nations, and amongst them he stayed till he spent a Suit of Clothes. Then, when he was clothed only with Rags, the Prodigal's Misery brought him to the Prodigal's Resolutions, so he resolved to return to his Father's House; but durst not adventure, till he should interpose a Reconciler. So, in his Return homeward, he took Dumfries in his Way, where he had a Friend, one Agnes Forsyth, and with her he diverted some Days earnestly entreating her to reconcile him to his Father. While he lurked in her House, his Father came providentially to the House to salute his Cousin, Mrs. Forsyth, and after they had talked a while, she asked him, Whether ever he had heard any News of his Son John? To her, he reply'd with great Grief. O! cruel Woman, How canst thou name his Name to me, the first News I expect to hear of him is that he is hanged for a Thief; She answered, Many a profligate Boy hath turned a virtuous Man, and comforted him. He insisted upon his sad Complaint, but asked her whether she knew his lost Son was yet alive? She answered, Yes, he was, and she hoped he should prove a better Man than he was a Boy; and with that she called upon him to come to his Father: He came weeping, and kneeled, beseeching his Father, for Christ's Sake, to pardon his Misbehaviour, and deeply engaged to be a new Man. His Father reproached him and threatened him: Yet, at Length, by the Boys Tears and Mrs. Forsyth's Importunities, he was persuaded to a Reconciliation. The Boy entreated his Father to put him to the College, and there to try his Behaviour, and if ever thereafter he should break, he said, he should be content his Father should disclaim him for ever. So his Father carried him home, and put him to the College, and there he became a diligent Student of great Expectation, and shewed himself a sincere Convert: and so he proceeded to the Ministry.

His first Post in the Ministry was at Selkirk, while he was yet very young and the Country rude. While he was there, his Ministry was rather admired by some than received by many: For he was always attended with the Prophet's Shadow, the Hatred of the Wicked; yea, even the Ministers of that Country were more ready to pick a Quarrel with his Person than to follow his Doctrine, as may appear to this Day in their Synodal Records, wherein we find he had many to censure him, and only some to defend him: Yet it was thought his Ministry in that Place was not without Fruit, though he stayed but short Time there. Being a young Man unmarried, he tabled himself in the House of one Mitchel, and took a young Boy of his to be his Bedfellow, who, to his dying Day retained both a Respect to Mr. Welch and his Ministry, from the Impressions Mr.

Welch's Behaviour made upon his Apprehensions, though but a Child. His Custom was, when he went to Bed at Night to lay a ScotsPlaid above his Bed Clothes, and when he went to his Night-Prayers, to sit up and cover himself negligently therewith, and so to continue. For, from the Beginning of his Ministry to his Death he reckoned the Day ill spent, if he stay'd not seven or eight Hours in Prayer; and this the Boy would never forget till hoary Hairs.

I had once the Curiosity, traveling through the Town, to call for an old Man, his Name was Ewart, who remembered upon Mr. Welch his being in that Place; and after other Discourses, enquired of him, What Sort a Man Mr. Welch was? His Answer was, O, Sir! He was a Type of Christ. An Expression more significant than proper; for his Meaning was, That he was an Example that imitated Christ; as indeed in many Things he did. He told me also, That his Custom was, to preach publicly once every Day, and to spend his whole Time in spiritual Exercises; that some in that Place waited well upon his Ministry with great Tenderness, but that he was constrained to leave that Place, because of the Malice of the Wicked.

The special Cause of his Departure was a profane Gentleman in the Country, one Scot of Hawickschaw, whose Family is now extinct; but because Mr. Welch had either reprov'd him, or merely out of Hatred, Mr. Welch was most unworthily abused by the unhappy Man; and, among the rest of the Injuries he did him, this was one, Mr. Welch kept always two good Horses for his Use, and the wicked Gentleman, when he could do no more, either with his own Hand, or his Servants, cut off the Rumps of the two innocent Beasts, upon which followed such Effusion of Blood that they both died; which Mr. Welch did much resent, and such base Usage as this persuaded him to listen to a Call to the Ministry at Kirkcudbright, which was his next Post. But when he was to leave Selkirk, he could not find a Man in all the Town to transport his Furniture, except only Ewart, who was at that Time a poor young Man, but Master of two Horses, with which he transported Mr. Welch his Goods, and so left him; but as he took his Leave, Mr. Welch gave him his Blessing, and a Piece of Gold for a Token, exhorting him to fear God, and promised he should never want: Which Promise Providence made good through the whole Course of the Man's Life, as was observed by all his Neighbours.

At Kirkcudbright he stayed not long, but there he reaped a good Harvest of Converts, which subsisted long after his Departure, and were a Part of Mr. Samuel Rutherford's Flock, though not his Parish, while he was Minister at Anwith: Yet when his Call to Air came to him, the People of the Parish of Kirkcudbright never offer'd to detain him; so his Transportation to Air was the more easy.

While he was in Kirkcudbright, he met with a young Gallant in Scarlet and Silver-Lace, the Gentleman's Name was Mr. Robert Glendoning, new come home from his Travels, and much surpriz'd the young Man, by telling him, he behov'd to change his Garb and Way of Life, and betake himself to the Study of the Scriptures, (which at that Time was not his Business) for he should be his Successor in the Ministry at Kirkcudbright; which accordingly came to pass some Time thereafter.

Mr. Welch was transported to Air, in the Year 1590, and there he continued till he was banished. There he had a very hard Beginning, but a very sweet End: For when he came first to the Town, the Country was so wicked, and the Hatred of Godliness so great that there could not one in all the Town be found to set him a House to dwell in, so he was constrained to accommodate himself the best he might in a Part of a Gentleman's House for a Time, the Gentleman's Name was John Stewart Merchant, and sometime Provost of Air, an eminent Christian, and great Assistant of Mr. Welch.

And when he had first taken up his Residence in that Town, the Place was divided into Factions, and so filled with bloody Conflicts, that a Man could hardly walk the Streets with Safety. Mr. Welch made it his first Undertaking to remove the bloody Quarrellings; but found it very difficult Work: Yet such was his Earnestness to pursue his design, that many Times he would rush betwixt two Parties of Men fighting, even in the Midst of Blood and Wounds; he used to cover his Head with a Head-piece, before he went to separate these bloody Enemies, but never used a Sword, that they might see he came for Peace, and not for War; and so, by little and little, he made the Town a peaceable Habitation.

His Manner was, after he had ended a Skirmish amongst his Neighbours, and reconciled these bitter Enemies, to cause cover a Table upon the Street, and there brought the Enemies together, and, beginning with Prayer, he persuaded them to profess themselves Friends, and then to eat and drink together: Then, last of all he ended the Work with singing a Psalm. So, after the rude People began to observe his Example, and listen to his heavenly Doctrine; he came quickly to that Respect amongst them, that he became not only a necessary Counsellor, without whose Counsel they would do nothing, but an Example to imitate, and so he buried the bloody Quarrels.

He gave himself wholly to ministerial Exercises; he preached once every Day; he prayed the third Part of his Time; was unwearied in his Studies; and for a Proof of this, it was found amongst his other Papers, that he had abridged Suarez his Metaphysicks when they came first to his Hand, even when he was well stricken in Years. By all which it appears, that he was not only a Man of great Diligence, but also of a strong and robust natural Constitution, otherwise he had never endured the Fatigue.

But if his Diligence was great, so it is doubted whether his Sowing in Painfulness, or his Harvest in Success, was greater; for if either his spiritual Experiences in seeking the Lord, or his Fruitfulness in converting Souls, be considered, they will be found unparalleled in Scotland. And many Years after Mr. Welch's Death, Mr. David Dickson, at that Time a flourishing Minister at Irvine, was frequently heard to say, When People talked to him of the Success of his Ministry, That the Grape-gleanings in Air, in Mr. Welch's Time, were far above the Vintage of Irvine in his own. Mr. Welch's Preaching was spiritual and searching; his Utterance tender and moving: He did not much insist upon scholastic Purposes. He made no Show of his Learning. I heard once one of his Hearers, (who was afterwards Minister at Moorkirk in Kyle) say, That no Man could hardly hear him, and forbear weeping, his Conveyance was so affecting. There is a large Volume of his Sermons now in Scotland; but never any of them came to the Press, nor did ever appear in

Print, except in his Dispute with Abbot Brown the Papist, wherein he makes it appear his Learning was not behind his other Virtues: And in another Piece, called Dr. Welch's Armageddon, printed, I suppose, in France, wherein he gives his Meditation upon the Enemies of the Church, and their Destruction. But the Piece itself is rarely to be found.

Sometimes, before he went to Sermon he would send for his ELDERS and tell them, he was afraid to go to Pulpit; because he found himself sore deserted: And thereafter desire one or more of them to pray, and then he would venture to the Pulpit. But, it was observed, this humbling Exercise used ordinarily to be followed with a Flame of extraordinary Assistance; so near Neighbours are many Times contrary Dispositions and Frames. He would many Times retire to the Church of Air, which was at some Distance from the Town, and there spend the whole Night in Prayer; for he used to allow his Affections full Expression, and prayed not only with an audible, but some Times a loud Voice; nor did he irk in that Solitude, all the Night over; which hath (it may be) occasioned the contemptible Slander of some malicious Enemies, who were so bold, as to call him no less than a Wizard.

There was in Air, before he came to it, an aged Man, a Minister of the Town, call'd Porterfield, the Man was judged no bad Man, for his personal Inclinations; but of so easy a Disposition, that he used many Times to go too great a Length with his Neighbours in many dangerous Practices; amongst the rest, he used to go to the Bow-Buts and Archery on Sabbath-Afternoon, to Mr. Welch's great Dissatisfaction. But the Way he used to reclaim him was not bitter Severity; but this gentle Policy: Mr. Welch, together with John Stewart, and Hugh Kennedy, his two intimate Friends, used to spend the Sabbath-Afternoon in religious Conference and Prayer; and to this Exercise they invited Mr. Porterfield, which he could not well refuse; by which Means, he was not only diverted from his former sinful Practice, but likewise brought to a more watchful and edifying Behaviour in his Course of Life.

He married Elisabeth Knox, Daughter to the Famous Mr. John Knox, Minister at Edinburgh, the Apostle of Scotland, and she lived with him from his Youth, till his Death. By her, I have heard, he had three Sons. The first was called Dr. Welch, a Doctor of Medicine, who was unhappily kill'd upon an innocent Mistake in the Low Countries, and of him never heard more. Another Son, he had most lamentably lost at Sea; for when the Ship, in which he was, sunk, he swam to a Rock in the Sea, but starv'd there fore want of necessary Food and Refreshment; and when sometime afterward his Body was found upon the Rock, they found him dead in a praying Posture, upon his bended Knees, with his Hands stretched out, and this was all the Satisfaction his Friends and the World had upon this lamentable Death, so bitter to his Friends. Another Son, he had who was Heir to his Father's Graces and Blessings, and this was Mr. Josias Welch, Minister at Temple-Patrick, in the North of Ireland, commonly called the Cock of the Conscience, by the People of the Country, because of his extraordinary wakening and rousing Gift. He was one of that blest Society of Ministers, which wrought that unparalleled Work in the North of Ireland, about the Year 1639. But was himself a Man most sadly exercised with Doubts about his own Salvation all his Time, and would ordinarily say, That Minister was much to be pitied, who was called to comfort weak Saints, and had no Comfort himself. He died in his

Youth, and left for his Successor Mr. John Welch, Minister at Iron-Gray in Galloway, the Place of his Grand-father's Nativity. What Business this made in Scotland, in the Time of the late Episcopal Persecution for the Space of twenty Years, is known to all Scotland. He maintained his dangerous Post of preaching the Gospel upon the Mountains of Scotland, notwithstanding of the Threatenings of the State, the Hatred of the Bishops, the Price set upon his Head, and all the fierce Industry of his cruel Enemies. It is well known, that bloody Claverhouse, upon secret Information from his Spies, that Mr. Welch was to be found in some lurking Place, at forty Miles Distance, would make all that long Journey in one Winter's Night, that he might catch him; but when he came he miss'd always his Prey. I never heard of a Man endured more Toil, adventured upon more Hazard, escap'd so much Hazard, not in the World. He used to tell his Friends, who counseled him to be more cautious, and not to hazard himself so much, That he firmly believed dangerous Undertakings would be his Security, and that whenever he should give over that Course, and retire himself, his Ministry should come to an End. Which accordingly came to pass, for when after Bothwelbridge, he retired to London, the Lord called him by Death, and there he was honourably buried, not far from the King's Palace.

But to return to old Mr. Welch; as the Duty wherein he abounded and excelled most was Prayer, so his greatest Attainments fell that Way: He used to say, He wondered how a Christian could lie in Bed all night and not rise to pray. And many Times he rose, and many Times he watched. One night he rose from his Wife, and went into the next Room, where he stayed so long at secret Prayer, that his Wife fearing he might catch Cold, was constrained to rise and follow him, and as she hearkened, she heard him speak as by interrupted Sentences, Lord, wilt thou not grant me Scotland; and after a Pause, Enough, Lord, enough; and so she returned to her Bed, and he followed her not knowing she had heard him; but when he was by her, she asked him what he meant by saying, Enough, Lord, enough: He shewed himself dissatisfied with her Curiosity, but told her, he had been wrestling with the Lord for Scotland, and found there was a sad Time at Hand, but that the Lord would be gracious to a Remnant. This was about the Time when Bishops first over-spread the Land, and corrupted the Church. This is more wonderful I am to relate, I heard once an honest Minister, who was a Parishioner of Mr. Welch's many a-Day, say, That one Night as he watched in his Garden very late, and some Friends waiting upon him in the House; and wearying because of his long stay; one of them chanced to open a Window towards the Place where he walked, and saw clearly a Light surround him, and heard him speak strange Words about his spiritual Joy. I do neither add nor alter: I am the more induced to believe this, having heard it from as good a Hand as any in Scotland, that a very godly Man (though not a Minister) said, That after he had spent a whole Night in a Country House of his, at the House in the Muir, declared confidently, He saw such an extraordinary Light as this himself, which was to him both Matter of Wonder and Astonishment. But tho' Mr. Welch had, upon the Account of his Holiness, Abilities and Success, acquired among his subdued People a very great Respect, yet was he never in such Admirations, as after the great Plague which raged in Scotland about the Year, And one Cause was this,

"The Magistrate of Air, forasmuch as this alone Town was free, and the Country about infected, thought fit to guard the Ports with Sentinels and Watchmen; and one Day two

traveling Merchants, each with a Pack of Cloath upon a Horse, came to the Town, desiring Entrance, that they might sell their Goods, producing a Pass from the Magistrates of the Town whence they came, which was at that Time sound and free; yet notwithstanding all the Sentinels stop'd them till the Magistrates were called, and when they came, they would do nothing without their Minister's Advice: So Mr. Welch was called, and his Opinion ask'd; he demurred, and put off his Hat, with his Eyes towards Heaven for a pretty Space, though he uttered no audible Words, yet continued in a praying Gesture; and after a little Space, told the Magistrates they would do well to discharge these Travelers their Town, affirming with a great Asseveration, the Plague was in these Packs; so the Magistrates commanded them to be gone, and they went to Cumnock, a Town some ten Miles distant, and there sold their Goods, which kindled such an Infection in that Place, that the Living were hardly able to bury their Dead. This made the People begin to think Mr. Welch as an Oracle. Yet as he walked with God, and kept close with him, so he forgot not Man: For he used frequently to dine abroad with such of his Friends, as he thought were Persons with whom he might maintain the Communion of the Saints; and once in the Year, he used always to invite all his Familiars in the Town, to a Treat in his House, where there was a Banquet of Holiness and Sobriety."

He continued the Course of his Ministry in Air, till King James his Purpose of destroying the Church of Scotland, by establishing Bishops, was ripe; and then it fell to be his Duty to edify the Church by his Sufferings, as formerly he had by his Doctrine. The Reason why King James was so violent for Bishops, was neither their divine Institution, which he denied they had, nor yet the Profit the Church should reap by them, for he knew well both the Men and their Communications, but merely because he believed they were useful Instruments to turn a limited Monarchy into absolute Dominion, and Subjects into Slaves; the Design in the World he minded most. Always in the Pursuit of his Design he followed this Method; In the first Place, he resolved to destroy a General Assembly; knowing well that so long as Assemblies might convene in Freedom, Bishops could never get their designed Authority in Scotland; and the Dissolution of Assemblies he brought about in this Manner:

The General Assembly at Holy-Rood-House, in the Year 1602, with the King's Consent, indicted their next Meeting to be kept at Aberdeen, the last Tuesday of July, in the year 1604; and, before that Day came, the King, by his Commissioner, the Laird of Lauriestoun, discharged them to meet. Mr. Patrick Galloway Moderator of the last Assembly, in a Letter directed to the several Presbyteries, continued the Meeting till the first Tuesday of July 1605, at the same Place. Last of all, in June 1605, the expected Meeting to have been kept in July following, is, by a new Letter from the King's Commissioner, and the Commissioners of the General Assembly, discharged and prohibited; but without naming any Day or Place for any other Assembly absolutely: And so the Series of our Assemblies expired, never to revive again in due Form, till the Covenant was renewed in the Year 1638. However, many of the godly Ministers of Scotland, knowing well, if once the Hedge of the Government was broken, the Corruption of the Doctrine would soon follow, resolved not to quit their Assembly so. And therefore, a Number of them convened at

Aberdeen, upon the first Tuesday of July 1605, being the last Day that was distinctly appointed by Authority; and when they had met, did no more but constitute themselves, and dissolve, and that was all. Amongst those was Mr. Welch, who though he had not been present upon that precise Day, yet because he came to the Place, and approved what his Brethren had done, he was accused as guilty of the treasonable Fact committed by his Brethren. So dangerous a Point was the Name of a General Assembly, in King James's jealous Judgment.

Within a Month after this Meeting, many of these godly Men were incarcerated, some in one Prison, some in another; Mr. Welch was sent first to Edinburgh Tolbooth, and then to Blackness; and so from Prison to Prison, till he was banished to France, never to see Scotland again.

And now the Scene of his Life begins to alter; but, before his blessed Sufferings, he had this strange Warning:

After the Meeting at Aberdeen was over, he retired immediately to Air; and one Night he rose from his Wife, and went into his Garden (as his Custom was) but stayed longer than ordinary, which troubled his Wife. Who, when he returned, expostulated with him very hard, for his staying so long, to wrong his Health: He bid her be quiet, for it should be well with them; but he knew well, he should never preach more in Air. And accordingly, before the next Sabbath, he was carried Prisoner to Blackness Castle. After that, he with many others, who had met at Aberdeen, were brought before the Council of Scotland, at Edinburgh, to answer for their Rebellion and Contempt, in holding a General Assembly, not authorized by the King; and because they declined the Secret Council, as Judges competent in Causes purely spiritual, such as the Nature and Constitution of a General Assembly is; they were first remitted to the Prison at Blackness, and other Places; and thereafter, six of the most considerable of them, were brought under Night from Blackness to Linlithgow, before the Criminal Judges, to answer an Accusation of high Treason, at the Instance of Sir Thomas Hamilton, the King's Advocate, for declining, as he alleged, the King's lawful Authority, in refusing to admit the Council Judges competent in the Cause of the Nature of Church Judicatories. And after their Accusation, and Answer was read, by the Verdict of a Jury of very considerable Gentlemen, they were condemned as guilty of high Treason, the Punishment continued till the King's Pleasure should be known; and thereafter their Punishment was made Banishment, that the cruel Sentence might somehow seem to soften their severe Punishment, as the King had contrived it.

But after he left Scotland, some remarkable Passages in his Behaviour are to be remembered. And, first, when the Dispute about Church Government began to warm, as he was walking upon the Street of Edinburgh, betwixt two honest Citizens, he told them, they had in their Town two great Ministers, who were no great Friends to Christ's Cause presently in Controversy; but it should be seen, the World should never hear of their Repentance. The two Men were Mr. Patrick Galloway, and Mr. John Hall; and accordingly it came to pass; for Mr. Patrick Galloway died easing himself upon his Stool; and Mr. John being at that Time at Leith,

and his Servant Woman having left him alone in his House while she went to the Market, he was found dead all alone at her Return.

He was some Time Prisoner in Edinburgh Castle before he went into Exile, where one Night sitting at Supper with the Lord Ochiltry, who was Uncle to Mr. Welch's Wife, as his Manner was, he entertained the Company with godly and edifying Discourse, which was well received by all the Company, save only one debauched popish young Gentleman, who sometimes laughed, and sometimes mocked, and made Faces: Whereupon, Mr. Welch brake out into a sad abrupt Charge upon all the Company to be silent, and observe the Work of the Lord upon that profane Mocker, which they should presently behold: Upon which immediately the profane Wretch fell down and died beneath the Table; but never returned to Life again, to the great Astonishment of all the Company.

Another wonderful Story they tell of him at the same Time. The Lord Ochiltry, the Captain of the Castle of Edinburgh, and Son to the good Lord Ochiltry, who was Mr. Welch's Uncle-in-Law, was indeed very civil to Mr. Welch, but being for a long Time, through the Multitude of Affairs, kept from visiting Mr. Welch in his Chamber, as he was one Day walking in the Court, and espying Mr. Welch at his Chamber-Window, asked him kindly, How he did? And if in any Case he could serve him? Mr. Welch answered him, He would earnestly intreat his Lordship, being at that Time to go to Court, to petition King James, in his Name, that he might have Liberty to preach the Gospel; which my Lord promised to do. Mr. Welch answered, My Lord, both because you are my Kinsman, and for other Reasons, I would earnestly intreat and obtest you, not to promise, except you faithfully perform. My Lord answered, He would faithfully perform his Promise; and so went for London: But tho', at his first Arrival, he was really purposed to present the Petition to the King; yet when he found the King in such a Rage against the godly Ministers, that he durst not at that Time present it, he therefore thought fit to delay it, and thereafter fully forgot it.

The first Time Mr. Welch saw his Face after his Return from Court, he asked him, What he had done with his Petition? My Lord answered, He had presented it to the King; but that the King was in so great a Rage against the Ministers at that Time, he believed it had been forgotten, for he had gotten no Answer. Nay, said Mr. Welch to him, My Lord, you should not lie to God, and to me, for I know you never delivered it, tho' I warned you to take heed not to undertake it, except you would perform it; but because you have dealt so unfaithfully, remember God shall take from you both Estate and Honours, and give them to your Neighbour in your own Time. Which accordingly came to pass, for both his Estate and Honours were, in his own Time, translated upon James Stuart, Son to Captain James, who was indeed a Cadet, but not the lineal Heir of the Family.

While he was detained Prisoner in Edinburgh Castle, his Wife used, for the most Part, to stay in his Company; but, upon a Time, fell a longing to see her Family in Air, to which with some Difficulty he yielded: but when she was to take her Journey, he strictly charged her not to take the ordinary Way to her House when she came to Air, nor to pass by the Bridge thro' the

Town, but to pass the River above the Bridge, and so to get the Way to her own House, and not to come into the Town; for he said, Before you come thither, you shall find the Plague broke out in Air. Which accordingly came to pass.

The Plague was, at that Time very terrible, and he being necessarily separate from his People, it was to him the more grievous. But when the People of Air came to him to bemoan themselves, his Answer was, That Hugh Kennedy, a godly Gentleman in their Town, should pray for them, and God should hear him. This Counsel they accepted, and the Gentleman, convening a Number of the honest Citizens, prayed fervently for the Town, as he was a mighty Wrestler with God, and accordingly after that the Plague decreased.

Now, the Time is come he must leave Scotland, and never to see it again; so, upon the seventh of November, 1606, in the Morning, he, with his Neighbours, took Ship at Leith, and though it was but Two a-Clock in the Morning, many were waiting on, with their afflicted Families to bid them Farewell. After Prayer, they sang the twenty-third Psalm, and so, with the great Grief of the Spectators, set Sail for the South of France, and landed in the River of Bourdeaux. Within fourteen Weeks after his Arrival, such was the Lord's Blessing on his Diligence, he was able to preach in French, and accordingly was speedily called to the Ministry, first in one Village, then in another; one of them was Nerac, and thereafter was settled in Saint Jean d'Angely, a considerable walled Town, and there he continued the rest of the Time he sojourned in France, which was about sixteen Years. When he began first to preach, it was observed by some of his Hearers, that while he continued in the doctrinal Part of his Sermon, he spoke very correct French, but when he came to his Application, and when his Affections kindled, his Fervour made him sometimes neglect the Accuracy of the French Construction; but there were godly young Men, who admonished him of this, which he took in very good Part: So, for the preventing Mistakes of that Kind, he desired the young Gentlemen, when they perceived him beginning to decline, to give him a Sign, and the Sign was, they were both to stand up upon their Feet, and thereafter he was more exact in his Expressions through his whole Sermon; so desirous was he not only to deliver good Matter, but to recommend it in neat Expression.

There were many Times Persons of great Quality in his Auditory, before whom he was just as bold as ever he had been in a Scots Village; which moved Mr. Boyd of Troch-rig, once to ask him, after he had preached before the University of Saumur, with such Boldness and Authority, as if he had been before the meanest Congregation, how he could be so confident among Strangers, and Persons of such Quality? To which he answered, That he was so filled with the Dread of God, he had no Apprehension from Men at all: And this Answer, said Mr. Boyd, did not remove my Admiration, but rather increased it.

There was in his House, among many others who tabled with him for good Education, a young Gentleman of great Quality, and suitable Expectations, and this was the Heir of the Lord Ochiltry, who was Captain of the Castle of Edinburgh. So that this young Nobleman, after he had gained very much upon Mr. Welch's Affections, fell sick of a grievous Sickness, and after he had been long wasted with it, closed his Eyes, and expired, as dying Men use to do. So, to the

Apprehension and Sense of all Spectators, he was no more but a Carcass, and was therefore taken out of his Bed, and laid upon a Pallat on the Floor, that his Body might be the more conveniently dressed, as dead Bodies use to be. This was to Mr. Welch a very great Grief, and therefore he stayed with the young Man's dead Body full three Hours lamenting over him with great Tenderness. After twelve Hours, the Friends brought a Coffin, whereinto they desired the Corpse to be put, as the Custom is: But Mr. Welch desired, that, for the Satisfaction of his Affections, they would forbear the Youth for a Time; which they granted, and returned not till twenty-four Hours after his Breath was expired: Then they returned, desiring with great Importunity the Corpse might be coffined, that it might be speedily buried, the Weather being extremely hot; yet he persisted in his Request, earnestly begging them to excuse him for once more. So they left the Youth upon his Pallat for full thirty-six Hours: But even after all that, though he was urged, not only with great Earnestness, but Displeasure, they were constrained to forbear for twelve Hours yet more. After forty-eight Hours were past, Mr. Welch was still where he was, and then his Friends perceived he believed the young Man was not really dead, but under some Apoplectic Fit; and therefore proponed to him, for his Satisfaction, that Trial should be made upon his Body by Doctors and Surgeons, if possibly any Spark of Life might be found in him; and with this he was content. So the Physicians were set a-Work, who pinch'd him with Pincers in the fleshy Parts of his Body, and twisted a Bowstring about his Head with great Force; but no Sign of Life appeared in him, so the Physicians pronounced him stark dead; and then there was no more Delay to be desired: Yet Mr. Welch begged of them once more, that they would but step into the next Room for an Hour or Two, and leave him with the dead Youth; and this they granted. Then Mr. Welch fell down before the Pallat, and cried unto the Lord with all his Might for the last Time, and sometimes looking upon the dead Body, continuing in wrestling with the Lord, till at Length the dead Youth opened his Eyes, and cried out to Mr. Welch, who he distinctly knew, O, Sir, I am all whole but my Head and Legs: And these were the Places they had sore hurt with their pinching.

When Mr. Welch perceived this, he called upon his Friends, and shewed the dead young Man restored to Life again, to their great Astonishment. And this young Nobleman, though his Father lost the Estate of Ochiltry, lived to acquire a great Estate in Ireland, and was Lord Castle Stuart, and a Man of such excellent Parts, that he was courted by the Earl of Strafford, to be a Counsellor in Ireland, which he refused to be, until the godly silenced Scottish Ministers, who suffered under the Bishops in the North of Ireland, were restored to the Exercise of their Ministry, and then he engaged; and so continued for all his Life, not only in Honour and Power, but in the Profession and Practice of Godliness, to the great Comfort of the Country where he lived. This Story the Nobleman communicated to his Friends in Ireland, and from them I had it.

While Mr. Welch was Minister in one of these French Villages, upon an Evening a certain Popish Friar, traveling through the Country, because he could not find Lodging in the whole Village, addressed himself to Mr. Welch his House for one Night. The Servants acquainted their Master, and he was content to receive this Guest. The Family had supp'd before he came, and so the Servants convoyed the Friar to his Chamber, and after they had made his Supper, they left him to his Rest. There was but a Timber Partition betwixt him and Mr. Welch, and after the Friar

had slept his first Sleep, he was surprised with the Noise of a silent but constant whispering Noise, at which he wondered very much, and was not a little troubled with it.

The next Morning he walked in the Fields, where he chanced to meet a Country-Man, who, saluting him because of his Habit, asked him where he had lodged that Night? The Friar answered, He had lodged with the Hugonot Minister. Then the Country-Man asked him, What Entertainment he had? The Friar answered, Very bad; for, said he, I always held there were Devils haunting these Ministers Houses, and I am persuaded there was one with me this Night, for I heard a continual Whisper all the Night over, which I believe was no other Thing than the Minister and the Devil conversing together. The Country-Man told him, He was much mistaken, and that it was nothing else but the Minister at his Night-Prayers. O, said the Friar, does the Minister pray any? Yes, more than any Man in France, answered the Country-Man, and if you'll please to stay another Night with him, you may be satisfied. The Friar got him Home to Mr. Welch's House, and pretended Indisposition, entreated another Night's lodging, which was granted him.

Before Dinner, Mr. Welch came from his Chamber, and made his Family-Exercise, according to his Custom: And first he sung a Psalm, then read a Portion of Scripture, and discoursed upon it; thereafter he prayed with great Fervour, as his Custom was: To all which the Friar was an astonished Witness. After the Exercise they went to Dinner, where the Friar was very civilly entertained, Mr. Welch forbearing all Question and Dispute for that Time. When the Evening came, Mr. Welch made his Exercise as he had done in the Morning, which occasioned yet more wondering in the Friar; and after Supper to Bed they all went: But the Friar longed much to know what the Night-Whisper was, and in that he was soon satisfied, for after Mr. Welch's first Sleep, the Noise began; and then the Friar resolved to be sure what it was; so he creep'd silently to Mr. Welch's Chamber-Door, and there he heard not only the Sound, but the Words exactly, and Communications betwixt God and Man, and such as he knew not had been in the World. Upon this, the next Morning as soon as Mr. Welch was ready, the Friar went to him, and told him, that he had been in Ignorance, and lived in Darkness all his Time; but now he was resolved to adventure his Soul with Mr. Welch, and thereupon declared himself Protestant. Mr. Welch welcomed him, and encouraged him, and he continued a constant Protestant to his dying Day. This Story I had from a godly Minister, who was bred in Mr. Welch's House in France about the Year 16—.

When Lewis XIII of France made War upon the Protestants there, because of their Religion; the City of St. Jean d'Angely was by him and his royal Army besieged, and brought into extreme Danger. Mr. Welch was Minister in the Town, and mightily encouraged the Citizens to hold out, assuring them, God should deliver them. In the mean Time of the Siege, a Cannon-Ball pierced the Bed where he was lying; upon which he got up, but would not leave the Room, till he had by solemn prayer, acknowledged his Deliverance. During this Siege, the Townsmen made stout Defence, till once one of the King's Gunners placed a great Gun, so conveniently upon a rising Ground, that therewith he could command the whole Wall, upon which the Townsmen made their greatest Defence. Upon this they were constrained to forsake the whole

Wall in great Terrour, and though they had several Guns planted upon the Wall, no Man durst undertake to manage them. This being told Mr. Welch with great Affrightment, he, notwithstanding, encouraged them still to hold out; and running to the Wall himself, found the Cannonier (who was a Burgundian) near the Wall; him he entreated to mount the Wall, promising to assist him in Person: So to the Wall they got. The Cannonier told Mr. Welch, that either they behoved to dismount the Gun upon the rising Ground, or else were surely lost. Mr. Welch desired him to aim well, and he should serve him, and God would help him; so the Gunner falls a-scouring his Piece, and Mr. Welch ran to the Powder to fetch him a Charge; but as soon as he was returning, the King's Gunner fires his piece, which carried both the Powder and Shot out of Mr. Welch's Hands; which yet did not discourage him; for having left the Ladle, he filled his Hat with Powder, wherewith the Gunner loaded his Piece, and dismounted the King's Gun at the first Shot. So the Citizens returned to their Post of Defence.

This discouraged the King so, that he sent to the Citizens to offer them fair Conditions; which were, that they should enjoy Liberty of their Religion, their civil Privileges, but their Walls should be demolished: Only the King desired, for his Honour, that he might enter the City with his Servants in a friendly Manner. This the City thought fit to grant, and the King with a few more entered the City for a short Time. But while the King was in the City, Mr. Welch preached as was his ordinary, which much offended the French Court; so one Day, while he was at Sermon, the King sent the Duke d'Espernon to fetch him out of the Pulpit into his Presence. The Duke went with his Guard, and as soon as he entered the Church where Mr. Welch was preaching, Mr. Welch commanded to make Way, and to set a Seat that the Duke might hear the Word of the Lord. The Duke, instead of interrupting him, sat down, and gravely heard the Sermon to an End; and then told Mr. Welch, he behoved to go with him to the King; which Mr. Welch willingly did. When the Duke came to the King, the King ask'd him, Why he brought not the Minister with him, and why he did not interrupt him? The Duke answered, Never man spake like this Man, but that he had brought him with him. Whereupon Mr. Welch is called, and when he entered the King's Room, he kneeled upon his Knees, and silently prayed for Wisdom and Assistance. Thereafter the King challenged him, How he durst preach where he was, since it was against the Law of France, that any Man should preach within the Verge of his Court? Mr. Welch answered, Sir, if you did right, you would come and hear me preach, and make all France hear me likewise; for, said he, I preach not as those Men you hear preach; my Preaching differs from theirs in these two Points, First, I preach you must be saved by the Death and Merits of Jesus Christ, and not your own. Next, I preach, said he, that as you are King of France; you are under the Authority and Command of no Man on Earth; those Men, said he, whom you hear, subject you to the Pope of Rome, which I will never do. The King replied no more, but & bien vous etiez mon Ministre. Well, well, you shall be my Minister; and some say, called him Father, which is an Honour the King of France bestows upon few of the greatest Prelates in France: However he was favourably dismissed at that Time, and the King also left the City in Peace.

But within a short Time thereafter the War was renewed; and then Mr. Welch told the Inhabitants of the City, that now their Cup was full, and they should no more escape; which accordingly came to pass, for the King took the Town; and as soon as ever it fell into his Hand,

he commanded Vitry, the Captain of his Guard, to enter the Town, and preserve his Minister from all Danger; and then were Horses and Wagons provided for Mr. Welch, to transport him and his Family for Rochel, whither he went, and there sojourned for a Time. This Story, my Lord Kenmure, who was bred at Mr. Welch's House, told Mr. Livingstoun, Minister at Ancrum, and from him I had it.

After his Flock in France was scattered, he obtained Liberty to come to England; and his Friends made hard Suit that he might be permitted to return to Scotland, because the Physicians declared there was no other Way to preserve his Life, but by the Freedom he might have in his native Air. But to this King James would never yield, protesting he should never be able to establish his beloved Bishops in Scotland, if Mr. Welch were permitted to return thither; so he languished in London a considerable Time; his Disease was judged by some to have a Tendency to a Sort of Leprosy; Physicians said, he had been poisoned. A Langour he had, together with a great Weakness in his Knees, caused with his continual Kneeling at Prayer: By which it came to pass, that tho' he was able to move his Knees, and to walk, yet he was wholly insensible in them, and the Flesh became hard like a Sort of Horn. But when, in the Time of his Weakness, he was desired to remit somewhat of his excessive Painfulness; his Answer was, He had his Life of God, and therefore it should be spent for him.

His Friends importuned King James very much, that if he might not return into Scotland, at least he might have Liberty to preach at London; which King James, would never grant, till he heard all Hopes of Life were past, and then he allowed him Liberty to preach, not fearing his Activity.

Then as soon as ever he heard he might preach, he greedily embraced this Liberty; and having Access to a Lecturer's Pulpit, he went and preached both long and fervently; which was the last Performance of his Life; for after he had ended Sermon, he returned to his Chamber, and within two Hours, quietly and without Pain, he resigned his Spirit into his Maker's Hands; and was buried near Mr. Derling the famous English Divine, after he had been little more than 52 Years of Age.