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THE
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The Little Seegoodinall.



WAS sitting in my arm-chair, by the window, one cold winter morning. I sat there as a naughty child stands in a corner, not exactly with the tip of my forefinger in my mouth, but with the whole five fingers resting on my head, or, rather, my head resting upon them. I was in a naughty mood—feeling wilful, thinking there was not much good in anything, and especially with anything with which *I* had to do, or that had to do with *me*. The truth was, I was idle, had been up late; and all who desire to do well and serve God know what a sad, listless feeling this lateness brings on—what a “naughty child” feeling—what a dissatisfied feeling—what an almost angry feeling with every one but the *right* person—oneself! As I sat thus, a slight tap at the glass, as though a leaf had been blown against it, caused me to move two fingers, so as to get a clear look out. The tap was from the beak of a small brownish-grey bird, which had been evidently blown against the window by the high wind

The widow left the town ; but the precious loving words, like good seeds, took root in the heart of Alice, and brought forth the precious fruit of a loving life : redeeming love was the theme she loved to dwell upon ; and her love to God was accompanied, as it always is, by love to man. In every cottage where there was sickness her loving words did as much good as the medicines, so the poor people said, and she pointed many dying eyes to Calvary. When in want or sorrow, the poor always sought her door ; and to see her face, with a bright heavenly smile upon it, was like a sermon upon the happiness of loving God. When Miss Stanley died, there was not one relation to follow her to the grave, for she had none, but their want was supplied by spiritual children ; and of her might be said, as of Stephen, "Devout men carried her to her burial, and made great lamentation over her." When her will was read, it was found that she had bequeathed her money to build a dispensary ; and as I passed the neat white stone building I thought of the poor widow, lying in the London churchyard, without a stone to mark where she rests ; but her words will prove an ever-living memorial, her loving words are living still.

The Martyrdom of Polycarp.

BY DR. PLUMER.

JOHAN, who was the beloved disciple, and who wrote the Gospel and Epistles which bear his name, and the book of Revelation, lived to a great age. He did much good, and led many to Christ. Among his disciples was Polycarp, who became bishop of the church in Smyrna, and served it long and faithfully. In the year of our Lord 166 this holy man became the victim of persecution, and at the age of ninety-five years he was arrested and brought before the Roman proconsul. When this officer said to him, "Curse Christ, and I will set you free !" the good old man answered, "Eighty and six years have I received

only good at His hand. Can I, then, curse my King and Saviour?"

When the proconsul continued to press him, Polycarp said, "Well, then, if you desire to know who I am, I tell thee freely *I am a Christian*. If you desire to know what Christianity is, appoint an hour and hear me."

The proconsul, who here showed some tenderness and respect for the old disciple, and who perhaps would have saved him if he could have silenced the clamours of the multitude, said to Polycarp, "Only persuade the people!" The good old saint replied, "To you I felt myself bound to render an account, for our religion teaches us to treat with becoming reverence the powers ordained of God, so far as is consistent with our salvation, but as for those without, I consider that they deserve at my hands no defence."

He was right. The best defence to an infuriated rabble would have been beating the air, or casting pearls before swine. To a wild, fanatical mob the gentle words of the gospel would have been useless.

After the governor had in vain threatened him with the wild beasts and the fire, he caused the herald publicly to announce in the circus that Polycarp had confessed himself a Christian. These words contained the sentence of death against him. The people at once cried out, "This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the enemy of the gods, who has taught so many not to pray to the gods and not to sacrifice!"

As soon as the proconsul had complied with the demand of the populace that Polycarp should be burned alive, Jews and Gentiles hastened with the utmost eagerness to collect the wood from the workshops and other places. The fuel being gathered, it was proposed to fasten him with nails to the pile of wood. But the old saint said, "Leave me thus, I pray, unfastened! He who has enabled me to abide the fire will give me strength also to remain firm on the stake."

Before the fire was lighted, he thus prayed: "O Lord God

Almighty, the Father of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the knowledge of Thee ! God of the angels and of the whole creation, of the whole human race and of the saints who live in Thy presence ! I thank Thee that Thou hast thought me worthy of this day and this hour, to share the cup of Thy Christ among the number of Thy witnesses !” Thus praying, the flame was kindled, and he ascended to heaven, as it were, in a chariot of fire.

The above narrative has never been contradicted, and is everywhere accepted in the Christian world as a correct account of the death of a great and good man for the testimony of Jesus. It teaches these lessons :

1. The world asks too much of God’s people when it calls on them to break with Christ, to disown Him and to renounce His service. How can they do it? Yet it has always demanded no less. The governor said to Polycarp, “Curse Christ !” It is bad to break with father and mother, and brother and sister, yet they may be so opposed to all that is good that no other way is left us if we would save our souls. But to curse Christ is to give up hope and heaven, and all that will be esteemed of any paramount value when this short life is ended. The world asks too big a price for its smiles and its favour.

2. The people of God are constrained by the love of Christ. Christ’s love to them was amazing, wonderful, surpassing all other love. This begets love in the hearts of His people toward Him. True, they have also a godly fear, but there is no torment in it. It is clean. It is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death. But they love Christ because He first loved them. This love is a mighty principle ; it moves the depths of their natures.

3. We may never deny Christ, no, not even to save life itself. Polycarp was ninety-five years old, and might on account of his age have expected kindness and tenderness from men. But when men required him to disown his Saviour, he rightly chose to die rather than do that great wickedness. He acted wisely. “If we deny Him, He also

will deny us."¹ He has said so, and he will keep His word.² Oh, witness a good confession at all times !

4. To those who wish to know the truth we ought always to be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in us ; but we are not bound to reprove a scorner, nor to give that which is holy unto the dogs.³ When we do speak for Christ and His cause, it should be with meekness and fear. But silence is often wisdom and a duty ; yea, it is sometimes the sharpest reproof we can give.

5. The enmity of men and their madness against Christ are amazing. There is on earth no more dreadful malice than that which opposes the cause of the Redeemer. It makes men traitors ; it converts them into savages ; it deprives them of natural affection ; it is cruel to women and children ; it despises the hoary head, even when found in the way of righteousness ; it murdered Polycarp ; it crucified the Lord Jesus. Men always have it in their hearts till they are born again. When fully aroused in the mass of men, it makes them senseless, brutal ; it causes them to utter threats against the innocent, the delicate, and the venerable, and to execute them too.

6. Christianity can make no terms with idolatry. "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"⁴ They that worship idols serve devils.⁵ Idolatry is a denial of the true God, and a shocking insult to His heavenly majesty. The early Christians were right in refusing to sacrifice to idols, even when they knew they must die for their refusal.

7. There is an entire harmony of feeling between all classes of ungodly men in their dislike of truth and holiness. Jews and Gentiles hastened to gather fagots to burn Polycarp. Unconverted men of every denomination and of no denomination readily unite, in times of great excitement, against the flock of Christ. It has always been so. It will be so to the end of the world.

8. It is in vain for good men to hope to escape persecu-

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 12.

² Matt. x. 33.

³ 1 Pet. iii. 15 ; Prov. ix. 8 ;

Matt. vii. 6.

⁴ 2 Cor. vi. 16.

⁵ 1 Cor. x. 20.

tion. It is sure to come if they are true to their principles. The Bible declares, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." If it does not come in one shape, it will come in another. It is not in vain that the Scripture saith, "The spirit that is in us lusteth to envy." Jesus said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." We cannot please carnal men without being faithless to Christ.

9. God's way to heaven is very different from that which would be marked out by our love of ease, our sloth, or our unbelief; and yet God's way is the best. The road to heaven is soaked with the tears and blood of His people, yea, and of the Saviour Himself.

"His way was much rougher and darker than mine;
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?"

In every trial let us say, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." Our business is submission, acquiescence, obedience. We are not fit to rule. It is a great mercy that the Lord reigns. We should soon ruin our cause if left to ourselves.

10. There is such a thing as true piety in the world. There is a piety that proves itself to be genuine by its constancy and consistency. It is the same in youth and in old age, in health and in sickness, in prosperity and in adversity, in peace and in persecution. Such was the piety of Polycarp. Such is the piety of some still on the earth. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some men they follow after; likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand, and they that are otherwise cannot be hid." Blessed be God! there is yet godly sincerity in the world. There is a piety that is from above, "pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

11. What an experience some have! What treasures of wisdom and grace must Polycarp have had after walking with God fourscore and six years! Let us become rich

“CLING TO THE ROCK, JOHNNY.”

toward God. Let us lay up treasure in heaven. Let us bring forth fruit in every stage of our earthly progress. Let us not count ourselves to have attained, but forgetting the past, press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

12. There may be genuine, living, early piety. Polycarp at his martyrdom believed he had known and loved the Saviour from the time he was nine years old. And why should we not encourage even the youngest to love the Lord Jesus? It requires no more mind to love and obey than to hate and rebel. As sure as the latter-day glory comes, “the child shall die an hundred years old.” Jeremiah and John the Baptist were regenerated in infancy. Let us pray and labour in hope for the early conversion of our little ones. Jesus says, “Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

“Cling to the Rock, Johnny.”

“ MAN shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, *as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*” How blessed the vision of the prophet who thus saw “the future pass before him!”¹ What wondrous provisions of peace and comfort are thus predicted! And of whom? “*A Man!*” So exalted shall His name be, that He must stand far above all the sons of men, as a great rock looms up on the level and desolate plain. This is the Strong Man who bids the weary and heavy-laden, the storm-driven of all the world, come to Him as to the shelter of a great, immovable rock, and find rest. “The government is upon His shoulder: His name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God,” the God-Man. Those who have turned aside from the storms of sin and

¹ Isa. xxxii. 2.