



St. Clement.

"One faith, one hope, one Leader, sternly trained
Far from earth's noise, to learn the eternal song,
And gain the conquest of a heavenly land."

THE court of the emperor Tiberius was graced by the presence of many noble families, but there were few, if any, which were more distinguished than that of Faustus, who being said to be nearly related to the emperor, was much patronised by him. He was married to a Roman lady of exquisite beauty, whose name was Mattidia, and was the father of three sons, named Faustinus, Faustus, and Clement. His happiness, however, was interrupted by his wife informing him that she had been warned in a dream to depart for a time, with her two eldest sons, from Rome. In thus relating her vision she did not exactly speak the truth, but being desirous for family

reasons to withdraw from Rome, she wished to do so without inflicting on her husband the pain which the real motive for her departure would occasion.

Much as Faustus regretted his separation from the object of his affections, he did not hesitate to comply with her request; and accordingly sent her and his two eldest sons to Athens, thinking that their education would not be interrupted by their residence in that famous school of philosophy. Matidia and her children had been long absent without any tidings being received of them; and although messengers were frequently sent, Faustus could obtain no intelligence of those he so dearly loved: he therefore determined to go in search of his wife and children, and having left his youngest son Clement under the care of a trusty guardian, he set out with an anxious heart to Athens. After encountering many adventures by land and by sea, Faustus met with the objects of his search, and the meeting was one of great joy to all the family.

Clement, who was now separated from his parents, pursued his studies with considerable diligence, and was equally distinguished by

the manliness of his character, and the virtue of his life and conversation. He was greatly beloved by all his acquaintance, and his amiable manners made a deep impression upon all who came within the reach of his influence. But although he was thus beloved and admired by others, he had subjects of deep interest and painful inquiry harassing the peace of his own bosom. In vain did he strive to allay the agitation which prevailed, and which seemed to bid defiance to every exertion on his part. The subject which most troubled his mind was the question of the immortality of the soul, as well as the nature of the life which was beyond the grave. He could not bring himself to believe that the life of man is bounded by the narrow span of the present scene of existence. He felt persuaded that so intelligent a being as man must have a widely different destiny to that of the brute creation, and he accordingly set himself to work to find out the truth of this. But long did he search in vain; difficulty after difficulty presenting itself to his notice. At length, after again and again diving into the depths of his own mind for the discovery of the truth, without deriving any

satisfaction from his inquiries, he betook himself to the schools of the philosophers, but there he met with no better success. Instead of obtaining a calm and rational solution of his difficulty, he found nothing but fierce contentions, and endless disputes about trifles. The leaders of the different sects were only anxious for victory in their disputes. To obtain this they were often forgetful of the truth itself, and had recourse to the most sophistical reasoning in order to silence an opponent, and to carry off the palm of philosophical victory. It was, therefore, impossible for Clement to obtain any satisfaction from this quarter. His anxiety, however, was not lessened by what he had heard; and being still desirous of arriving at the truth, he determined to consult the Egyptian priests, who were said to be deeply skilled in magic, and able by their incantations to recall to the world departed spirits. He thought if he could only hold converse with a spirit thus recalled, his difficulties would be at an end, and all his doubts would be removed. But before he carried this determination into execution, he heard that the SON OF GOD Himself had been upon the

earth, and that he had published some very wonderful doctrines in Judea; he was, therefore, anxious to ascertain the truth of this report, and during his inquiry St. Barnabas came to Rome. No sooner had this holy man arrived in Rome, than Clement visited him, and without any hesitation placed himself under his instruction. By him he was taught all those truths after which his heart had so long yearned; and he gladly embraced that doctrine which promised him happiness, not only in the life that now is, but also in that which is to come. When St. Barnabas left Rome, Clement followed him to Alexandria in Egypt, and from thence to Judea. On arriving at Cæsarea he met St. Peter, by whom he was further instructed in the truths of the Christian religion, and at whose hands he received the sacrament of baptism. St. Peter was much interested in this youthful convert from heathenism; and as their attachment was mutual, Clement continued to be the companion of St. Peter until the martyrdom of that Apostle.

Many and long were the travels of these faithful followers of JESUS CHRIST: and when in Rome, where they arrived together, it is

said that St. Peter appointed St. Clement to be the bishop of the imperial city. It is a matter of doubt whether St. Peter himself ever presided over the see of Rome, as the ancient writers are not decided with regard to that point: but it is an historical certainty that St. Clement himself was a bishop of that city. When St. Peter wished to appoint his companion to the high and responsible office of a bishop, St. Clement shrunk from so arduous a situation, alleging the consciousness of his own unfitness for it. But St. Peter strongly urged him to undertake it; and after delivering a long discourse on the duties he would have to perform, and defining the offices of the different orders of ministers in the Church, he laid his hands on St. Clement, and compelled him to take his seat as bishop of Rome. Little is said in ecclesiastical history about the manner in which he discharged his duties, but the Epistle which bears his name is an evidence of much zeal and active exertion in fulfilling the duties of the high office in which he was reluctantly placed. The city of Rome was free from those persecutions to which the early Christians were exposed, from the time of Nero until the

reign of Domitian ; and amidst the persecution which raged during his reign St. Clement was preserved. On the death of Domitian a calm and peaceful season prevailed under the mild and gentle sway of Nerva ; but the calm, alas ! was succeeded by a still darker storm which burst upon the Church under the auspices of Trajan, who, although a just and excellent prince in other respects, was, as we have seen in the case of St. Ignatius, a determined supporter of the heathen religion, and consequently was strongly opposed to everything which threatened it. Among other laws which were enacted during his reign, there was one which forbade the meetings of various societies in the empire, at which business was transacted, and a spirit of love and friendship promoted : societies not unlike, in their constitution and object, those which now exist in this country for the mutual aid of their members. It was believed that these societies were nurseries of treason and sedition, and that they therefore ought to be suppressed. Unfortunately Christian assemblies were classed under this head, because they were all under one president or bishop, and carried on a system of worship widely

different from the religion of the empire. The enemies of the Christian religion took advantage of this law, and proceeded against the members of the Church at Rome, in which St. Clement, as bishop, was sure to have the greatest share of sufferings. But that which more immediately drew down the wrath of the heathens upon St. Clement was the conversion to Christianity of a noble Roman lady named Theodora, together with her husband, who had been a great favourite with the late emperor Nerva. These illustrious converts brought others in their train: and the envy of the heathen magistrates being in consequence excited, St. Clement was soon afterwards charged with practising magic and sorcery! They brought against him a still heavier charge than this, which was that of being a contemner of the gods whom the Romans worshipped. They determined to put his constancy to a severe trial, and cried out, saying, "He shall either offer sacrifice to our gods, or else he shall expiate his impiety with his blood." The præfect of the city, whose name was Mamertine, endeavoured to appease the tumult which was raised, and sent for St. Clement with a view of prevailing

upon him to comply with the demand which had been made. His endeavours, however, were useless; and when he found the holy man inflexible, he sent a statement of his case to the emperor, who immediately gave directions that St. Clement should either offer sacrifice to their gods, or be banished to Cherson, a city beyond the Black sea, and there be compelled either to dig in the marble quarries, or work in the mines. The præfect, who was a very humane man, unwillingly complied with this severe edict, and prepared with reluctance to convey the bishop to the place of his banishment. To be banished to Cherson was the severest punishment, excepting death, which the Romans ever inflicted. The person who was thus sentenced was exposed to every kind of inhumanity, being whipped, chained, deprived of all his possessions, and degraded to the condition of a slave; and, moreover, rendered incapable of making a will. Nor was even this all. The criminal had his head half shaved, his right eye bored out, his left leg disabled, and his forehead branded with an infamous mark: not to mention the hunger and thirst, the cold and nakedness, to which

the unhappy victims of a cruel law were exposed. .

On arriving at his place of destination, St. Clement found a vast number of Christians in the same miserable condition with himself. His appearance, however, among them was a great consolation amid the evils by which they were surrounded. So wonderfully does the ALMIGHTY overrule the intentions of His enemies, that the banishment of these faithful Christians led to the conversion of the neighbouring heathens, who being much struck by the conduct of St. Clement and his fellow sufferers, willingly received their instruction; and in a very short time Christianity completely triumphed, where heathenism in all its cruel forms had before prevailed.

The account of this wonderful change having reached the emperor's ears, he immediately despatched Aufidian to check, if possible, the further progress of the Christian religion. The severest punishments were inflicted upon the Christians, and great numbers were put to death. These cruelties were unavailing in accomplishing the emperor's object. The martyr who suffered to-day only strengthened his brethren to undergo the

torments of to-morrow. So fearless were they of death that they even pressed forwards to execution, each being anxious to show his faithfulness; and rejoicing in being thought worthy to suffer death for the truth.

Aufidian finding that he could not deter these faithful men from their purpose, resolved to single out one of greater eminence than the rest for a cruel death; hoping that by such a display of the emperor's vengeance he should be able to drive the others from their constancy. But here again the wrath of man was overruled by an Almighty power, and rendered subservient to the advancement of that very cause which it was intended to destroy.

St. Clement was, as might be expected, the individual who was thus selected; and every kind of temptation was employed to make him swerve from his purpose. When his enemies found they could not prevail, they gave orders for him to be conveyed out to sea, and then to be thrown overboard in order that his body lying at the bottom of the deep, the Christians might not be able to find it, and show it that honour which the memory of so holy a man deserved. He

offered no resistance to his murderers, but calmly went on board the vessel which was ordered to carry him to execution, as though he were setting out on an ordinary voyage. But however unmoved St. Clement himself might be at the prospect of his approaching end, being strengthened by Him who will always give His servants strength for whatever occasion it may be wanted, his fellow sufferers could not behold their bishop and their friend removed from them without feeling that they were now about to become truly desolate. The sorrows which they had experienced before his arrival were then forcibly presented to their minds, and they looked forward to a repetition of them now that he was no longer to be with them. Before St. Clement left them, however, he exhorted them to resist every attempt which might be made to shake their fidelity in their crucified LORD, and reminded them that this was only a short and an evil life; and that if they remained faithful unto death, they should be rewarded with crowns of glory that should never fade away.* Those who had the charge of St. Clement were impatient to be gone, and

* Revelation ii. 10.

hurried off their prisoner as soon as he had given his blessing to those who were assembled to witness his departure. The vessel which bore him away was quickly out of sight, but was followed by the prayers and the tears of those who were left behind.

On this sad voyage, St. Clement had no friend with whom he could converse; and as he was surrounded by men who were to be his executioners, we do not know what passed in his last moments, but we may be quite sure that the holy man would lose no opportunity of promoting his Master's glory, either by persuading others to embrace His religion, or by manifesting his own faithfulness, even unto death.

The cruel sentence was executed, and the martyr was soon buried among the waves. But although his body thus perished, his soul was quickly received into CHRIST's heavenly kingdom, to his eternal and great reward.