

of the most touching and instructive, and to its consideration we now proceed. A brief account of his life and work will first be given, and then some lessons will be deduced therefrom. May the spirit guide us !

I. AN OUTLINE OF STEPHEN'S LIFE AND WORK.

He was one of the seven first deacons in the Christian Church. He seems to have been one of the ablest and most devoted of the seven. Of him it is specially stated that "he was man full of faith and the Holy Ghost." Not only was he diligent in the discharge of his proper duties as deacon, but he was also devoted as an exponent and defender of the faith of the Gospel. Being full of faith and power "he did great wonders and miracles among the people." His burning zeal and consecrated ability enabled him to expound and defend the Gospel with such success that those who contended with him were "not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." This, as in the case of our Lord, irritated the Jewish rulers and leaders, and made them very angry, so that they made their wicked plans to destroy him. Unable to answer him by reason, they determined to silence him by force. As in the case of his master, false witnesses were secured, and he was accused of blasphemy. He was speedily brought into the Jewish Council, to make answer for himself : and then, with calm composure, the outlookers saw the face transformed by a radiance from heaven—till it no more seemed a human face, but it shone "as it had been the face of an angel."

Then the High Priest who presided over the Council gave Stephen an opportunity to defend himself, and this defence we have in substance in the seventh chapter of the Acts. This defence with matchless skill recounts God's dealings with the Jewish nation, and traces the prophecies forward to their fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth. Then waxing warm and glowing with burning eloquence Stephen charged the Jewish rulers with the guilt of the death of Jesus. This cut the Jewish rulers to the heart, and made them so angry that they gnashed on him with their teeth ; and, forgetting all the proprieties of judicial procedure, they hastened to his destruction. The Council broke up into an angry mob, and "ran upon Stephen with one accord," and hurried him out of the city to the place of stoning.

In the midst of all this Stephen was calm and faltered not. "He looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus the son of man standing on the right hand of God." Then as the end drew near, and