

mere act of enduring would secure endless glory: they were a meek and an inoffensive people,—despised by the great,—contemned and scorned by the basest and the vilest,—jeered and ridiculed even at the stake or on the bloody arena,—by the congregated multitude: but they were not moved. With noble grandeur, they braved suffering, and calmly and firmly sustained every pang.

We know the secret of this; we know the source of this more than human fortitude and courage. We can account without hesitation for that which astonished and confounded the heathen persecutors. We know that they were Divinely supported, that,—as they were “baptised for the dead,”—as they contemplated the jeopardy in which they stood, as they pictured the savage beast ready to devour them,—they turned to the promises which they knew were written and were sure; and as they read, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,” and “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,” they went fearlessly on with the work of their master and welcomed,—when he came,—Death in his most terrible and appalling aspects.

The season for which St. John wrote was fruitful in such scenes: often was the ground