

Light from the East

WITNESSES—From the earliest times it seems to have been possible to procure witnesses, who, for a sufficient money consideration, would swear to anything desired. The custom was known in Egypt, and is proverbially common in Turkey and China to this day. Very likely its prevalence had something to do with the origin of the examination of witnesses under torture, as it was thought that pain could compel them to speak the truth. The Old Testament required two witnesses to establish a charge, and a false witness suffered the punishment due to the offence he sought to establish, but according to Pharisaic usage, it was hard to

prove them false. They were always examined separately, and they were not punishable if they merely contradicted one another. Nor would they be proved guilty if the accused proved an alibi, but only if an alibi were proved against the witness himself. Evidence was given after a solemn adjuration in the name of God to speak the truth, which compelled an answer to every question, and in which any falsehood would be perjury. Women, slaves, idiots, deaf, blind and dumb persons, and those of infamous character could not be received as witnesses, nor could the high priest legally be compelled to give evidence except in a case affecting the interests of the king.

APPLICATION

Stephen, v. 8. The name in Greek means a crown. It has been well said, that Stephen received three crowns. The first was the beautiful crown of grace with which his heavenly Lord adorned him, so that, by his life and his words, he had such power with men. Then, there was the bloody crown of martyrdom, like the Master's crown of thorns, crushed down on his brows by his foes. And there was the heavenly crown of honor and glory. The King our Saviour offers to each of us the crown of grace. And though the crown of suffering may come to us, it will surely be followed by the glorious crown which we shall wear in heaven forever.

Stirred up the people, v. 12. Men of sagacity put small value upon the cheering crowds, knowing the fickleness of the excited human throng. When Napoleon returned to Paris from his Italian victories, illuminations, bonfires, bell-ringing, and the cheering of thousands, accompanied him all the way. He scarcely noticed the commotion. "It must be delightful", said a courtier, "to be greeted with such demonstrations of enthusiastic admiration." "Bah!" Napoleon said, "this unthinking mob under a slight change of circumstances would follow me just as eagerly and enthusiastically to the scaffold." It matters comparatively little what the changeable crowd thinks or says about us. What really counts is the approval of God

and our own conscience. If we have these we can afford to do without the praise of men.

All . . . saw his face as it had been the face of an angel, v. 15. The secret of the shining face is in the heart. Henry Drummond

wrote about a young girl of very winsome character whose presence was a charm to her friends. These friends were content to take what she could give them without trying to discover the secret of her lovely disposition. She had, evidently, a source of goodness that was unknown to them, but that was all it concerned them. On her death bed she had frequent visits from one girl, who asked her how it was she was always so buoyant and happy and helpful. "When I am gone", said the sick one, "you will find the secret written in this locket that I wear; read it and try for yourself if it is not all I find it." When she died the locket was found to contain a slip of paper bearing these words: "Whom having not seen, ye love".

He . . . looked up steadfastly into heaven, v. 55. A small boy found a ladder against a very tall building, and started to go to the top of it.

When half-way up, he grew tired and stopped and looked down. At once his head began to swim with dizziness, and a violent trembling seized him. He was about to fall, when a kind voice above him said, "Look up, my boy, and keep looking up, and climb!" He obeyed, and soon felt the strong arm of

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