

ST. EPHREM THE SYRIAN.—JULY 9.

THIS devout and holy saint, who is commemorated on the 9th of July in the Western Church, but on January 28 by the Greeks, and some of whose "Works" were happily given to the Church of England in a translation, in the "Library of the Fathers," was a Syrian, born at Nisibis in Mesopotamia. His parents consecrated him to God from his cradle, and eventually he became a devout hermit; like the apostle of old, however, exercising a trade, by making sails for ships. He spent many years of devotion, humility, and retirement in the desert, conquering himself by grace; after which he left his own country for Edessa, where he was greatly honoured by all ranks and orders of men. There he was ordained deacon, and preached repentance with eminent zeal and many blessed results. This saint was endowed with great natural talents, being both a poet and a logician. His learning, however, was not tinged with the false and questionable principles of Greek philosophy. He was well versed in the Holy Scriptures, and a perfect master of the Syrian tongue. His eloquence was something very remarkable; his ideas were luminously expressed; his diction was always pure and agreeable; his similes were appropriate; his imagery rich; his language powerful and accurate in expression. But his greatest glory was that his heart was penetrated with the most perfect sentiments of divine love, confidence, humility, and patience. St. Ephrem brought many idolators to Christ, and converted numbers of Arian and Sabellian heretics. He confronted and confounded the followers of Bardesanes, who had denied the resurrection of the flesh, and had, during the preceding century, spread his impious errors at Edessa. His devotion to the faithful, his constant labours, his eloquent sermons, his rich and beautiful poems, his blessed example, served to do their work under God's abiding blessing; and in his death he did but carry out the precepts of his life. This was his dying sentiment: "Entering upon so long and dangerous journey, I have my food for the way in Thee, even in Thee, O blessed Son of God. In my extreme spiritual hunger I will feed on Thee, O Jesus, the repairer and restorer of mankind. So it shall be that no fire of the fiend shall be able to hurt me: for the sweet saving odour of Thy Body and Blood will be my protection."

He died at an advanced age about the year 378. St. Gregory, of Nyssa, preached his funeral sermon. The Orientals depict him as tall and venerable, bent with age, but with a sweet and beautiful countenance. His works have always been very popular in the East; for they are full of the truest Gospel Truth, eminently scriptural, and are saturated with the glorious doctrine of the Incarnation, and all its legitimate and orthodox deductions and consequences.

DE Q.

J. E. Hills.
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