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## A Martyr's Creed.

'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' This is the first Christian martyr's dying prayer. It is also a confession of his faith. As we listen to these words we seem to see the foundations of his inner life laid bare, and can understand what it was that made him so calm and strong in that awful hour. As we study them, we see not only the grandeur of the human soul, which can rise to be almost independent of external things, but also, and chiefly, the grandeur of the Gospel of Christ, which can bring

being, or that his individual life may be swallowed up in the life of the race. He believes he has a soul, immaterial, so that no blow can hurt it; immortal, so that death cannot lay its hand upon it. And if only that soul be safe, as he doubts not it will be in Christ's care, he feels assured that death can do him little harm.

Happy faith! We all fancy, perhaps, that we share it. It may be we dread the very name of Materialism. We shudder at the thought of death ending all, and wonder how

travelled, on one occasion, over the ice for thirty days directly towards the Pole, and at the end of that time he found, on taking his bearings, he had scarcely made any progress. It seems that the ice-field over which he was moving was slipping down southwards as fast as he was going northwards. There is an undercurrent of unbelief and indifference in the minds of many with regard to the spiritual world and their spiritual nature. Until it is checked, they will make little progress heavenwards.

It is possible a man may only come to realize, 'I have a spirit, which will live after death,' at the very moment God's voice is heard, summoning that spirit to appear at His judgment throne. Stephen had long since commended his soul to Christ, and had lived to commend Christ to the souls of others; and so, when death suddenly appeared, he simply continued to do what he had done so long; his only thought was about his own spirit and the spirits of his murderers. 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,' he prayed for them; while for himself he cried, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'

Stephen believed he had a Saviour who was greater than all his foes.

How much about Christ is given us in those five simple words! He calls Him 'Jesus,' the name He bore on earth, a name which holds Him up to us as our brother, bone of our bone, able to sympathise with "all His suffering brethren. He calls Him 'Lord;' he sees Him at the right hand of God; he commends his spirit to His care; to his eye Christ is Divine, infinite in knowledge and power to help. As Heaven opens, he sees in Christ the link that joins it to this world, the one Mediator between God and man—dwelling with God and pleading for men—and to Him he prays in his hour of need.

He is not afraid of Christ, nor yet afraid Christ should fail him. He has no dread of falling into His hands, and no fear of falling through them into the hands of any foe. Faith in Christ had robbed death of its sting. The crown of thorns driven down so cruelly on His head, thus blossomed before the eyes of His enemies into a radiant crown of glory.

It was easy for Stephen to trust Christ even in death, I fancy someone saying; for Christ manifested Himself to his bodily eye. The heavens open on and up before his gaze, till the highest Heaven is reached, and the throne of the Eternal God disclosed to view. The Temple courts fade from his sight, and the Holy of Holies, in the New Jerusalem, is revealed to him, and lo! the Great Priest-King has risen from His throne of glory to help and to receive His suffering servant. Who could not die happy after such a vision as that? We must remember, however, that Stephen believed on Christ, and witnessed nobly for Him, before he saw that glorious sight. He believed, and therefore spoke; and so spoke that his enemies must either submit to him or silence him.

The lesson of Stephen's death is not, wait for some grand revelation to fit you to live and to die; such visions of glory have been



Heaven into the heart in the very darkest hours of life, and make the sufferer's face to shine, as if it were the face of an angel.

Stephen believed he had a spirit, and thought more about it than about his body.

'God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.' That doctrine is powerfully enforced in Stephen's last address. God is a Spirit; and as I am made in God's image, I must have a spiritual nature also; for it is not in my body that my resemblance can be to Him who has no bodily parts.

This truth is embodied in Stephen's dying prayer. In that moment of agony, when the real man came out, the hope which he expresses is not that he may pass utterly out of

any man can hold to a doctrine so degrading and debasing. Yet we can only judge a man's faith by its effect on his habits and his life. If I really believe in my spiritual and immortal nature, I shall always put the interests of the spirit first, and treat the body as its servant. I shall seek rather to build up for myself a noble character—the only thing I can take with me when I die—than to raise heaps of gold and silver, which may slip from under me at any moment. And looking out on men around me, and remembering that they, too, have spirits like my own, my first thought will be how to reach them and win them for Christ and glory. I fear that few of us would be able to stand the test.

I have read that Peary, the Arctic explorer,