

stop me, Hope, I've more to say. Well, here's the shop wanting hands, and here's Faith, a slip of a girl that needs good air, and Hope and you up to anything you choose to undertake—and the long and short of it is, I ask you, Jonas Halliwell, to come

and take up my work and live with me, and there—I'd better have it out at once—the business and my savings shall all be yours when I go. It's a good offer; don't be in a hurry to say nay. There's the shop-bell—I'll go; you think over my words.'

(To be continued.)

Heroes of the Christian Faith.

I.—SS. IGNATIUS AND POLYCARP.

FRESH and vigorous was the Christianity of the days of which I am going to speak. Fervent was the faith of its professors, pure and simple their lives. The world was dark and corrupt enough, but its darkness only served to throw into relief the brightness of the true Light.

I have to tell of the bravest of Christian heroes that have lived in the past—men and women who, by their patience and their heroism, have shown what God's grace can make of our poor frail, fallen humanity.

If we may but learn to love them the more, and, loving, strive to imitate them—if we may but come to think of them in their lonely uphill lives, and then ourselves thank God and take courage, the purpose of these stories will be fulfilled.

It was early in the second century that two of the chief followers of the Apostles lived and worked—Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, and Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. The spirit of their times was far different from that of ours. Christianity had not yet made its mark upon the world. Faith in the old heathen gods had long been fading away, and nothing as yet had taken its place. Everywhere men were asking in despair, 'What is truth?'

The prevailing unbelief had wrought its usual havoc. Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. The whole head of human society was sick, and the whole heart faint. All the horrible sins referred to by S. Paul in his 1st chapter to

the Romans were stalking abroad in the world unchecked, uncondemned. Alas! it is fearful to tell. Children were frequently put to death by their own mothers. Slaves were sometimes massacred by hundreds for not preventing their master's murder. They were beaten, tortured, crucified at the will of the man who bought them. To witness the barbarous fights in the amphitheatre, Roman ladies might be seen eagerly thronging with their husbands and children. The governors of distant provinces set at nought all principles of justice, and plundered from those committed to their care. 'Everyone for himself' had become the only principle the world recognised. 'Everyone for himself!' is ever the cry of those among whom God is forgotten.

All this we must bear in mind as we turn our attention to the one gleam of brightness—the little growing Christian community. Such pure, such loving, such joyful lives in the midst of it all! How this rebukes our own murmurings and discontents!

Pliny, a heathen writer and ruler of a province at this time, watched the Christians with curiosity.

He tells us that men and women of all ranks and conditions might be found among the followers of the Crucified—that they bound themselves by an oath or sacrament to abstain from dishonesty and vice, and to lead strict and moral lives. Some of them, he says, were put to death, but only as obstinate enthusiasts. He does not detect anything really wrong in their religion.