

Youths' Department.

THE YOUNG MARTYR.

At the time of the severe persecution of the Christians, in the reign of the Emperor Diocletian—about 300 years after the birth of our Lord—the saying of King David was remarkably verified in a circumstance that occurred at the martyrdom of a Christian deacon. It is written in the Psalms, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength, because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger." And the history of the little martyr, which I am about to relate, appears to exemplify these words.

It was at Antioch, the city where the disciples were first called Christians, that a deacon of the Church of Cæsarea—the place from whence the devout centurion of the Roman army sent for St. Peter—was subjected to the most cruel tortures, in order to try his faith, and force him to deny the Lord who bought him with His own precious blood. The martyr amidst his agonies, persisted in declaring his belief that there is but "One God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." His flesh was almost torn to pieces; the Roman Emperor, Galerius, himself looking on. At length, weary of answering their taunting demands that he should acknowledge the many gods of the heathen mythology, he told his tormentors to refer the question to any little child, whose simple understanding could decide whether it were better to worship one God—the Maker of heaven and earth—and one Saviour, who was able to bring us to God—or to worship the gods many, and lords many whom the Romans served.

Now it happened that a Roman mother had approached the scene of the martyr's sufferings, holding by the hand a little boy of eight or nine years old. Pity, or the desire of helping the sufferer, had probably brought her there; but the Providence of God had ordained for her an unexpected trial. The judge no sooner heard the Martyr's words than his eye rested on this child, and pointing to the boy from his tribunal, he desired the Christian to put the question he proposed to him.

The question was asked, and to the surprise of most of those who heard it, the little boy replied, "God is one, and Jesus Christ is one with the Father."

The persecutor heard, but far from being either softened or convinced, he was filled with fresh rage. "It is a snare," "O base and wicked Christian! thou hadst instructed this child to answer thus." Then turning to the boy, he said more mildly, "Tell me, child, who taught you thus to speak. How did you learn this faith?"

The boy glanced up to his mother's face, and then replied, "It was God's grace that taught it to my dear mother; and when I sat upon her knees a little baby, she taught me that Jesus Christ loved little children, and I learned to love Him for His love to us."

"Let us see, now, what the love of Christ can do for you," cried the cruel judge; and, at a sign from him the Lictors, who stood ready with their rods, after the fashion of the Romans, instantly seized the poor trembling boy. Fain would the mother have saved her timid dove, even at the expense of her own life; she could not do so; but she could whisper him to trust in the love of Christ, and to maintain truth. And the poor child, feeble and timid as he was, did trust in that love; nor could all the cruelty of his tormentors separate him from it.

"What can the love of Christ do for him now?" asked the judge, as the blood streamed from that tender flesh.

"It enables him to endure what his Master endured for him, and for us all," was the reply.

And again they smote the child to torture the Christian mother.

"What can the love of Christ do for him now?" they asked again. And tears fell even from heathen eyes as that Roman mother, a thousand times more tortured than her son, answered,—

"It teaches him to forgive his persecutors."

And the boy watched his mother's eye as it rose up to heaven for him, and he thought of the sufferings of his dear Lord and Saviour, of which she had told him; and when his tormentors inquired whether he would not now acknowledge the false gods they served and deny Christ, he steadfastly answered "No! there is no other God but one; Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of the world. He loved me, and I love Him for His love."

Then, as the poor child fainted beneath the repeated strokes, they cast the quivering and mangled little

body into the mother's arms, crying, "See what the love of your Christ can do for him now."

And as the mother pressed it gently to her bleeding heart, she answered.

"That love will take him from the wrath of man to the peace of heaven."

"Mother," murmured the gasping child, "give me a drop of water from our cool well upon my tongue."

"Child, thou wouldst not have time to receive it; ere it was here thou wouldst be drinking of the river of life in the paradise of God."

She spoke over the dying—for the little martyr spake no more—and thus the mother continued—

"Already, dearest, hast thou tasted of the well that springeth up to everlasting life—the grace of Christ given to His little one—thou hast spoken the truth in love—arise now, for thy Saviour calleth for thee—Young, happy martyr for His sake, may He grant thy mother grace to follow thy bright path!"

The boy faintly raised his quivering eyelids, looked up to where the elder martyr was, and said again, "There is but one God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent;" and so saying, he died.—*The Churchman's Companion.*

Selections.

Speech of His Royal Highness The Prince Consort, at the Educational Conference, held at Willis's Rooms, Monday, June 22:—

"Gentlemen—We have met to-day in the sacred cause of education—of national education. This word which means no less than the moral and intellectual development of the rising generation, and therefore the national welfare, is well calculated to engross our minds, and opens a question worthy of a nation's deepest interest and most anxious consideration.—Gentlemen, the nation is alive to its importance, and our presence here to-day gives further evidence, if such evidence were needed, of its anxiety to give it that consideration. Looking to former times we find that our forefathers, with their wonted piety and paternal care, had established a system of national education based upon the parish organisation, and forming part of parish life, which met the wants of their day, and had in it a certain unity and completeness which we may well envy at the present moment. But in the progress of time our wants have outstripped that system, and the condition of the country has so completely changed, even within these last fifty years, that the old parochial division is no longer adequate for the present population, which has increased during that period, in England and Wales, from 9,000,000 to 18,000,000 in round numbers; and where there formerly existed comparatively small towns and villages, we now see mighty cities like Liverpool, Manchester, Hull, Leeds, Birmingham and others, with their hundreds of thousands springing up almost as it were by enchantment. London having increased to nearly two and a half million of souls, and the factory district of Lancashire alone having aggregated a population of nearly three millions within a radius of thirty miles. This change could not escape the watchful eye of a patriotic public, but how to provide the means of satisfying the new wants could not be a matter of easy solution, whilst zeal for the public good, a fervent religious spirit, and true philanthropy are qualities eminently distinguishing our countrymen, the love of liberty and an aversion to being controlled by the power of the State in matters nearest to their hearts are feelings which will always most powerfully influence them in action. Thus the common object has been contemplated from the most different points of view, and pursued upon often antagonistic principles. Some have sought the aid of Government, others that of the Church to which they belong; some have declared it to be the duty of the State to provide elementary instruction for the people at large; others have seen in State interference a check to the spontaneous exertions of the people themselves, and an interference with self-government. Some, again, have advocated a plan of compulsory education, based upon local self-government, and others the voluntary system in its widest development. Whilst these have been some of the political subjects of difference, those in the religious field have not been less marked and potent. We find on the one hand, the wish to see secular and religious instruction separated, and the former recognised as an innate and inherent right to which each member of society has a claim, and which ought not to be denied to him if he refuses to take along with it the inculcation of a particular dogma to which he objects as unsound; whilst we see, on the other hand the doctrine asserted that no education can be sound

which does not rest on religious instruction, and that religious truth is too sacred to be modified and tampered with, even in its minutest deductions, for the sake of procuring a general agreement. (Cheers.) Gentlemen, if these differences were to have been discussed here to-day, I should not have been able to respond to your invitation to take the chair, as I should have thought it inconsistent with the position which I occupy and with the duty which I owe to the Queen and the country at large. I see those here before me who have taken a leading part in these important discussions, and I am happy to meet them upon a neutral ground—(loud cheers)—happy to find that there is a neutral ground upon which their varied talents and abilities can be brought to bear in communion upon the common object, and proud and grateful to them that they should have allowed me to preside over them for the purpose of working together in the common vineyard. (Cheers.) I feel certain that the greatest benefit must arise to the cause we have all so much at heart by the mere free exchange of your thoughts and various experience. You may well be proud, gentlemen, of the results hitherto achieved by your moral efforts, and may point to the past, that since the beginning of the century, while the population has doubled itself, the number of schools, both public and private, has been multiplied 14 times. In 1801 there were in England and Wales—of public schools, 2,876; of private schools, 487; making a total of 3,363. In 1851 (the year of the census) there were in England and Wales—of public schools, 15,518; of private schools, 30,524; making a total of 46,042; giving instruction in all to 2,144,378 scholars, of whom 1,422,982 belong to public schools, and 721,396 to the private schools. The rate of progress is further illustrated by statistics, which show that in 1818 the proportion of day scholars to the population was 1 in 17; in 1833, 1 in 11; and in 1851, 1 in 8. These are great results, although I hope they may only be received as instalment of what has yet to be done. But what must be your feelings when you reflect upon the fact, the inquiry into which has brought us together, that this great boon thus obtained for the mass of the people, and which is freely offered to them, should have been only partially accepted, and upon the whole so insufficiently applied as to render its use almost valueless? We are told that the total population in England and Wales of children between the ages of 3 and 15, being estimated at 4,908,696 only 2,054,848 attend school at all, whilst 2,861,848 receive no instruction whatever. At the same time an analysis of the scholars with reference to the time allowed for their tuition shows that 42 per cent of them have been at school less than one year, 22 per cent. during one year, 15 per cent. 2 years, 9 per cent. 3 years, 5 per cent. 4 years, 4 per cent. 5 years. Therefore, out of the two millions of scholars alluded to, more than 1½ million remain only two years at school. I leave it to you to judge what the results of such an education can be. I find further that of these two millions of children attending school only about 600,000 are above the age of 9. Gentlemen, these are startling facts which render it evident that no extension of the means of education will be of any avail unless this evil, which lies at the root of the whole question, be removed, and that it is high time that the country should become thoroughly awake to its existence and prepared to meet it energetically. To impress this upon the public mind is the object of our conference. Public opinion is the powerful lever which in these days moves a people for good and for evil, and to public opinion we must therefore appeal if we would achieve any lasting and beneficial result. You, gentlemen, will richly add to the services which you have already rendered to the good cause if you will prepare public opinion by your inquiry into this state of things, and by discussing in your sections the cause of it, as well as the remedies which may be within our reach. This will be no easy matter, but even if your labours should not result in the adoption of any immediate practical steps, you will have done great good in preparing for them. It will probably happen that in this instance, as in most others, the cause which produces the evil will be more easily detected than its remedy, and yet a just appreciation of the former must ever be the first and essential condition for the discovery of the latter. You will probably trace the cause to our social condition, perhaps to a state of ignorance and lethargic indifference on the subject amongst the parents generally, but the root of the evil will, I suspect, also be found to extend into that field on which the political economist exercises his activity—I mean the labour market—demand and supply. To dissipate that ignorance, and rouse from that leth-