

“Here Martyn lies ! In manhood’s early bloom
The Christian hero found a pagan tomb ;
Religion, sorrowing o’er her favorite son,
Points to the glorious trophies which he won.
Eternal trophies, not with slaughter red,
Not stained with tears by hopeless captives shed,
But trophies of the cross. For that dear name
Through every form of danger, death and shame,
Onward he journeyed to a happier shore,
Where danger, death and shame are known no more.”

Henry Martyn was born in Cornwall, England, in 1781. At sixteen he entered Cambridge University. He was intensely ambitious, and was nettled because at the early examinations he took only the second position. But at twenty he graduated as Senior Wrangler, with the first honor.

He could, however, apply his mind better than control his passionate nature. Angered one day he threw a large knife at a comrade, who dodged it, and let it stick quivering in the wall, instead of in the intended victim’s heart. He was self-willed even to obstinacy and surliness to his father. No natural saint was he.

His after saintliness was not due to development, but total change, point-blank conversion. Its occasion was the death of his father, and the thought that it was now too late to ask from those cold lips forgiveness for his undutiful conduct. He could only go to God for it. But, having once come before that throne, and felt upon his soul the shadow of God’s condemnation for sin, all his pride was crushed ; having felt the light of God’s countenance reconciled, his soul was ever after filled with gratitude and love. From this time Martyn was another man. That strong willfulness became strong willingness, as he gave his whole being up to his Redeemer. He was ambitious still, but he had now an Over-lord, even Christ. His favorite text was “Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not, saith the Lord.” So thoroughly did he belong to Christ that selfish honors no longer pleased him. When he graduated first in his class, he wrote : “I obtained my highest wishes, but was surprised to find I had grasped a shadow.” His energy was not lessened, rather intensified, by having higher appeals, those of conscience and service, added to natural desire ; and his faculties were new-fired by his communion with the Holy Spirit. Yet he was not without tremendous temptations from his old ambition. For a while he proposed to study law, “chiefly,” he says, “because I could not consent to be poor for Christ’s sake.” But he did not know his newer self when he thought that way, and when the moment of decision came he turned his back upon all prospect of secular gain, and sought the ministry. He could not restrain his impulse for Christian service ; it came out in daily incidents of conduct. He once rebuked a fellow student for sinful trifling.