



RUINS OF EPHEBUS.

Their work was sweet, for they expected Jesus to come. They had seen Him go up to the heavens, and day after day, and night after night they cast quick glances up to those heavens expecting to see Him again, and no doubt their cry was what has been the cry of Christianity ever since, "Why does He stay away so long?"

Take an example from one of them. Take St. John. Some very dear tie existed between him and his Master; he was "the disciple whom Jesus loved." No doubt he, of all others, was most lonely without his Lord, and he most wistfully watched the heavens for His return.

And yet this did not prevent them from living very busy lives. They saw Christianity spreading in a way which must have surprised them. We are familiar with the Churches of Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Colosse, Philippi and Thessalonica, because we have in the New Testament epistles that were written to them. But besides these there were many other Churches established. St. John, apparently, had been just as busy establishing Churches as had been St. Paul, and the Churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, all in "Proconsular Asia," or as, perhaps, we better understand it, "Asia Minor," lying close to one another, were soon well-known and rejoicing in the personal supervision of the beloved disciple.

How busy must he have been, working among these Churches of Asia, moving, if we may borrow the Saviour's expression, among the golden candlesticks! He had not time to think very much about seeing his Lord again, for, in the midst of his own work, he began to encounter trouble. The cry of persecution, that horrid cry which afterwards became so familiar, was raised against the Christians. The bishops and rulers of the Church were seized. Some

were put to death and some were banished. Pergamos and Smyrna, and, indeed, all the Churches manfully withstood this trouble, and the crown of martyrdom was set up in their midst.

"I know thy works," said Jesus, in His message to the Church at Pergamos: "Thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you." And to Smyrna, where, too, there had been martyrdom, he said: "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

It was, no doubt, early in this persecution that St. John was banished.

In the Ægean sea, washed by its restless waters, there is a lone, rocky island called Patmos. It was used as a place suitable for receiving banished prisoners. To it the beloved John was sent. He may have had fellow-exiles; he may have had guards placed over him; he may have had to work in the mines. We are not told. He was a prisoner. In his younger days his mother had been proud of him. She had asked the Lord that he and his brother James might sit, "the one on His right hand and the other on His left," in His kingdom, and the Master asked, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" And their reply was, "We are able." They did not know then what the cup or the baptism of Jesus was. They saw it afterwards in His dreadful crucifixion and death. They saw it, too, when James himself was led out to execution at the command of Herod. But John lingered on. He never met the martyrdom which the words of Jesus had seemed to indicate for him; but he met suffering.

For his active soul, burning with a desire to work for Jesus and be among his Churches, it must have been a bitter trial to be tied down to the dull, cruel work of a prisoner. John, who leaned on the Master's breast at supper, worked side by side, it may be, with felons in a lonely island far from the homes of men. Then it was that Jesus found him. "I was in the isle that was called Patmos," he tells us himself: "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet saying unto me, I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last."

Here was Jesus, the same Jesus whom John had known, but yet a very different Jesus. To him, at least, the promise was fulfilled, that He would come again. While he was busy at work among the Churches he did not note the