

report thereof. So true is it that the Lord overcomes the counsel of the crafty.

Ignatius being thus condemned by the Emperor Trajan was entrusted to the keeping of a band of ten soldiers—of whom we find him speaking in one of his Epistles. "I fight," he says, "with beasts both by sea and land, both night and day, being bound to ten *leopards*, that is to say, to such a band of soldiers, who though treated with all manner of kindness are the worse for it. But I am the more instructed by their injuries, yet am I not therefore justified." Having left Antioch and gone to Silencia, he embarked in a ship to go to Rome. And as we learn after a good deal of toil, they arrived at Smyrna, in which city, Polycarp, his fellow-scholar, was bishop, and so being landed, Ignatius was permitted to remain with him for a season. When tidings of his arrival were spread abroad, the bishops and other persons from the neighbouring cities, Ephesus, Magnesia and Tralles came to meet him, not more from esteem for so excellent a person than with the desire of spiritual improvement to themselves. And though thus happily in the midst of friends who loved him as they loved their own souls, he does not forget the baptism that is before him, but he beseeches them and the whole church "to contend with God in his behalf, that being suddenly taken by the beasts from the world, he might appear before the face of Christ." It would seem he remained some little time in Smyrna, as it was four months after this before he reached his destination. And while here he writes epistles to the churches in these cities by their bishops and others, in which he urges much on them charity among themselves, and unity of spirit, with those who were set over them in the Lord. Thus writing to the Ephesians, he says: "Wherefore it will become you to run together according to the will of your bishop, as also ye do. For your famous presbytery, worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to the bishop as the strings are to the harp. Therefore in your concord and agreeing charity Jesus Christ is sung, and every single person among you makes up the chorus; that so being all consonant in love, and taking up the song of God, ye may in perfect unity, with one voice, sing to the Father by Jesus Christ, to the end that he may both hear you, and perceive by your works, that ye are indeed the members of his Son: wherefore it is profitable for you to live in an unblamable unity, that so ye may always have a fellowship with God."

It was in Smyrna, also, that he wrote his epistle to the Romans—and which he committed to the care of certain friends who were to proceed to

Rome before him. In this epistle, too, he expresses the same earnest desire to depart and be with Christ. And with the views he had, this was the more needful, as it appears there were members of the Church in that city who might have been able to procure a respite of the sentence—and at all events who wished to "appease the people that they should not desire the destruction of the just." All such services, however, Ignatius positively declines; "I beseech you," he says, "that you show not an unseasonable good will towards me. Suffer me to be food unto the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ." And again, "all the ends of the world and the kingdoms of it will profit me nothing: I would rather die for Jesus Christ than rule to the utmost ends of the earth. Him I seek who died for us. Him I desire who rose again for us. This is the gain that is laid up for me." There can be no doubt that Ignatius erred in declining to use the means that were in his power to procure his deliverance. His duty to the church required this at his hands. Doubtless, he had labored long in the vineyard, and had borne the burden and heat of the day, and in the evening of life, he desires rest from his toils; nevertheless, this must be in subordination to the will of God. And so long as he had any lawful means in his power of preserving his continuance among his people, he ought not to have declined them. It may be supposed at the same time that if he had been permitted to enjoy the fellowship of his brethren in Smyrna, he would have been comforted in spirit, and might have expressed his longings for dissolution with less earnestness.—It appears, indeed, that he had a desire to pitch his tent for a longer season among them, but the soldiers were bent on proceeding that they might be in time for the spectacles, and therefore urged their prisoner to hasten forward in the voyage. Accordingly leaving Smyrna along with certain brethren of the church there, and of that in Philadelphia, they set sail and arrived in Troas; and while at this place he wrote his remaining epistles—namely, to the Philadelphians, Smyrneans and Polycarp. In his former epistles from Smyrna, we find him expressing his concern about the state of his people in Antioch, and beseeching the prayers of all the churches in their behalf, but now having arrived at Troas and hearing that the persecution against them had ceased, he is filled with joy for their sakes. And so writing to the Smyrneans he says, "Your prayer is come to the church of Antioch which is in Syria: from whence being sent bound in chains, I salute the churches; being not worthy to be called from thence, as being the least among them. Nevertheless, by the will of God