HENRY MARTYN

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BY THE REV.

CHARLES D. BELL, D.D.,

Honorary Canon of Carlisle, and Rector of Cheltenham.

Author of "Night Scenes of the Bible," etc.

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CHAPTER I.

MARTYN'S EARLY LIFE.

[1781—1802.]

THERE are names in ecclesiastical history more conspicuous than his who is the subject of the following memoir; but it may be doubted whether any one of them is more worthy of being held in everlasting remembrance. It may be safely said that none of those who sleep in the martyr's grave, and wear the martyr's crown, ever laid himself more willingly a living sacrifice on the altar of the Lord, or more readily surrendered home and country, love and ambition at the call of God, than did Henry Martyn.

From the great world without there are borne to our ears high-sounding phrases about heroes and heroic deeds. If we ask the world for the man whom it dignifies with the title of hero, and whose name it embalms in its annals, it points us to men of high daring and lofty enterprise—to the victor on the red field of war, to the patriot who defends the altars and the hearths of his native land. No one can be insensible to the charms

that invest the chivalrous deed or the patriotic exploit. The heart must be cold indeed which does not kindle as it thinks of the soldier who goes forth for no selfish end, nor to weave the laurel round his own brow, but simply at the call of his country, to dare and to endure only so far as she commands, and having accomplished his mission returns home to repose gratefully among the citizens whose rights he has defended, and whose liberties he has secured. The heroic element exists in such a character, and demands our warmest recognition. True greatness is not to be measured by cities ravaged and villages overrun, that one man may set his individual self on a pedestal which culminates above the world; but it is to be looked for rather through the light of self-sacrifice, when the strongest ties are severed, and the fondest hopes are relinquished; when danger is braved, and toil endured that others may benefit by the peril that has been encountered, and the enjoyment that has been resigned. If the spirit of self-sacrifice enters, as it must, into the character of every one who deserves the name of hero, then where are we to turn for the most striking illustrations of this virtue? Where shall we find the most touching records of men who, with no earthly reward in prospect, with no anticipation of worldly honour, or glory, or gain, have trampled on every selfish thought, content to bear all that wrings the heart or wears down the frame; yea, to be brought face to face with death, that blessings may be secured to others by their heroic

self-offering and devotion? Not to the red scutcheon on which is emblazoned the name of the warrior; not to the monument of marble or brass where stands the form of the statesman; nor to the medallion engraven with the features of the poet or historian, however worthy they may be of a place in the great heart of a nation's love: but to the records of some noble missionary society, where we read of men who have cast aside the ties of country and kin, and have hastened to polar snows or to burning sands, that they might carry the tidings of salvation to the benighted and degraded of our race; not shrinking from death itself, but "hazarding their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Are not a Brainerd, a Schwartz, a Williams,—all of them martyrs in spirit, and one of them in terrible reality,—deserving a niche in the temple of Fame, and should not their names have a place on the bead-roll which is consecrated to those who are benefactors of mankind?

And Martyn, who, though crowned with the highest honours a university could bestow, and distinguished by talents which attracted the admiration of one of our most celebrated seats of learning,—Martyn, who joyfully abandoned the shades of academic renown for distant lands and a burning clime, devoting every energy of mind and body to the service of the Cross,—shall we not venerate his memory, and give him a foremost place in our honour and regard? As we advance in his story it will be seen that he was endowed with a patience, a fortitude, a humility, a love, a zeal for the Divine glory and

the salvation of men, such as has not been often paralleled since the days that apostles trod the earth, and made manifest in every place the savour of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.

Henry Martyn was born in Truro, in the county of Cornwall, on the 18th of February, 1781. He was the third child of a numerous family, of whom two sons and two daughters survived their father. John Martyn, the father, was originally a man of humble life, having been a working miner in the mines of Gwennap, the place where he was born. He had, however, a large share of energy, mental as well as physical; and he took advantage of every period of relaxation from manual labour, and devoted it to the improvement of his mind. The miners used to work and rest alternately every four hours; and in the hours of rest he acquired a complete knowledge of arithmetic, and some acquaintance with mathematics. This diligence in self-culture obtained its reward. He rose gradually from a state of poverty to one of comparative comfort; and being admitted into the office of Mr. Daniel, a merchant at Truro, he lived there respected and esteemed by all his acquaintance. It was while he was chief clerk in this office that his son Henry was born, a child of a delicate nature, for he, as well as the other children, inherited the consumptive constitution of their mother.

When Henry was between seven and eight years of age, he was placed by his father at the Grammar School in the town, the master of which was the Rev. Cornelius